

Bethesda and St. John Lutheran Church

Sunday, January 3, 2021

Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

GATHERING

WELCOME

Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. (Ps. 147:12)

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father,
and of the ✙ Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.
Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✙ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG *Love Has Come* (ELW 292)



1 Love has come— a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der. Love is God now a -
3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us! Love is life ev - er -



Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav - en has come to pro - claim it;
sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth - er;
last - ing and free. Love is Je - sus with - in and a - mong us.



hear how their song of joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to
what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the
Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the



you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.
gift of Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

GREETING

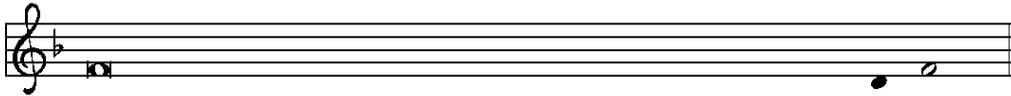
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

KYRIE



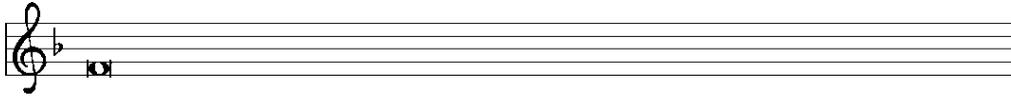
In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



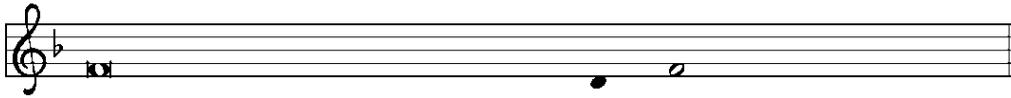
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



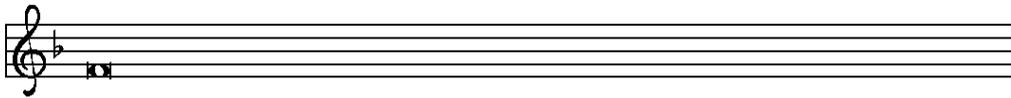
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



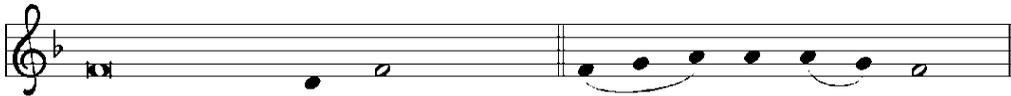
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



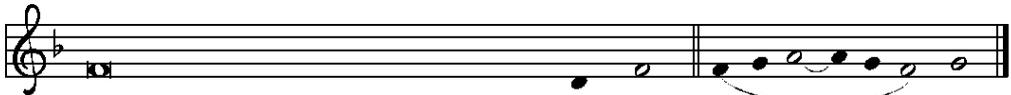
Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. **By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through**

Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:7-14

God promises to bring Israel back to its land from the most remote parts of exile. In Zion Israel will rejoice over God's gifts of food and livestock. Young women will express their joy in dancing; God will give gladness instead of sorrow.

⁷Thus says the LORD:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
proclaim, give praise, and say,
“Save, O LORD, your people,
the remnant of Israel.”

⁸**See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,
among them the blind and the lame,
those with child and those in labor, together;
a great company, they shall return here.**

⁹With weeping they shall come,
and with consolations I will lead them back,
I will let them walk by brooks of water,
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I have become a father to Israel,
and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, **“He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.”**

¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

¹²They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,

and they shall never languish again.

¹³Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy,

I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

¹⁴I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,
says the LORD.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 147:12-20

Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. (*Ps. 147:12*)

¹²Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem;
praise your God, O Zion,

¹³**who has strengthened the bars of your gates
and has blessed your children within you.**

¹⁴God has established peace on your borders
and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

¹⁵**God sends out a command to the earth,
a word that runs very swiftly.**

¹⁶God gives snow like wool,
scattering frost like ashes.

¹⁷**God scatters hail like bread crumbs.
Who can stand against God's cold?**

¹⁸The LORD sends forth the word and melts them;
the wind blows, and the waters flow.

¹⁹**God declares the word to Jacob,
statutes and judgments to Israel.**

²⁰The LORD has not done so to any other nation;
they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:3-14

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before

the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵**He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,** ⁶**to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.** ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹**In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,** ¹²**so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.** ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the



words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL: John 1:1-18

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

John begins his gospel with this prologue: a hymn to the Word through whom all things were created. This Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the world.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹**The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.**

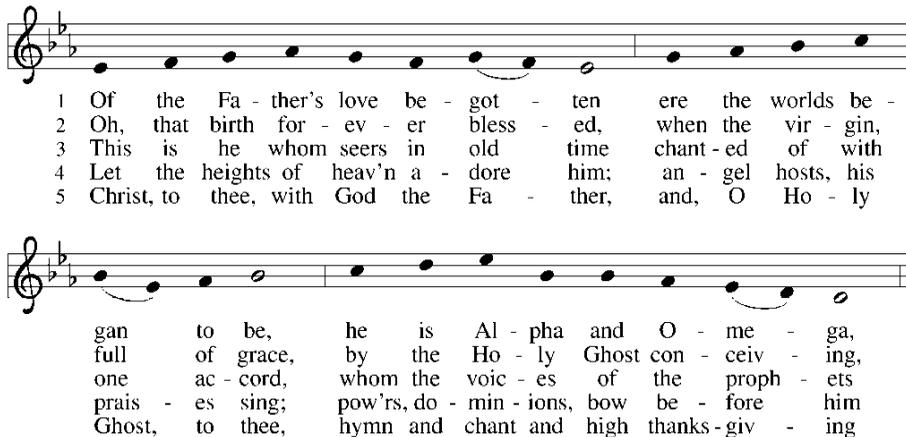
¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴**And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.** ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY *Of the Father's Love Begotten (ELW 295)*



1 Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten ere the worlds be -
 2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed, when the vir - gin,
 3 This is he whom seers in old time chant - ed of with
 4 Let the heights of heav'n a - dore him; an - gel hosts, his
 5 Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther, and, O Ho - ly

gan to be, he is Al - pha and O - me - ga,
 full of grace, by the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,
 one ac - cord, whom the voic - es of the proph - ets
 prais - es sing; pow'rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore him
 Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing



he the source, the end - ing he, of the things that are. that
 bore the Sav - ior of our race, and the babe, the world's re -
 prom - ised in their faith - ful word; now he shines, the long - ex -
 and ex - tol our God and King; let no tongue on earth be
 and un - wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do -



have deem - ed; si - min
 been, - er, - lent, - ion,
 and that fu - ture years shall see,
 first re - vealed his sa - cred face,
 let cre - a - tion praise its Lord
 ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring
 and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry



ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more!
 A - men.

CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Redeeming God, you gather together your people from the farthest parts of the earth. Protect your church from stumbling. Let it not be overcome by sorrow, division, or despair. Make us radiant with goodness, that we might live always to the praise of your glory. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You bring together heaven and earth. All creation testifies to your splendor. Hold the ecosystems of this earth in delicate balance, from coastlands to farmlands, forests to wetlands, deserts to rainforests. Show us new ways to live in harmony with the world around us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You overflow with grace upon grace. Expand the imaginations of those who serve in positions of authority. Open their hearts to the needs of their nations and communities. Protect all those in harm's way and those risking danger for the sake of others. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You bring consolation to those who weep. Embrace those who feel far-off, excluded, or defeated. Accompany those living with chronic and invisible illness. Sustain the weak and weary. Refresh those who labor under the weight of pain or sickness . especially **Lenyce** Lawrence, **Wes** Moffatt, **Ethel Mae** Kratz and *at St. John*: **Charlie** Arvik, **Jodi** Klein, **Karen** Cadwell, **Jean** Dommer, **Audrey** Androy, **Davie** Vander Kolk, **Grant** Gorham, **Jim** Berka, **Pat** DeLong and **Pam** Odland and those we name in our hearts or on our lips. O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You come to us in the beauty of darkness and of light. Bring justice and reconciliation to communities divided by oppressions and misuse of power. Guide us to speak holy words of advocacy and truth. Help us to honor your image in one another. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You turn our mourning into joy. We give thanks for those who have died in faith (*especially*). With all the saints, give us our inheritance in Christ. In the fullness of time, gather us all together in your mercy. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

RESPONSE

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. Good and loving God, **we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

SENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

The God of steadfastness and encouragement
grant you to live in harmony with one another,
in accordance with Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The God of all grace ✠ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

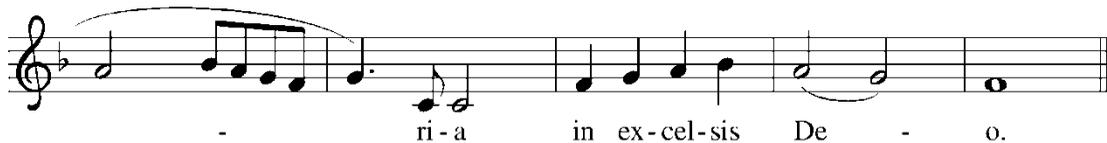
SENDING SONG *Angels We Have Heard on High* (ELW 289)



1 An - gels we have heard on high, sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,
2 Shep-herds, why this ju - bi-lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;



and the moun-tains in re - ply, ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
What the glad - some tid - ings be which in - spire your heav'n - ly song?
come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born king.



DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

Truth beyond the Facts

There are many questions today about facts. Who do we trust to give us the facts? What sources and individuals are reliable? Social media can be a great tool for sharing, but it has also become a means of spreading misinformation, false beliefs, and bad advice. Many people today are suspicious of what some claim to be the facts.

Even if we have the right facts, we might not have something more important: the truth. Facts can be a partial representation of the truth. Facts might tell us that it is sunny and warm this morning, but the weather forecast might say thunderstorms are coming in the afternoon. The latter statement is truth. Truth is the larger reality that smaller facts don't capture, and sometimes contradict.

John tells us that Jesus is God's Word, full of grace and truth. In Jesus we get the full truth of God, not merely the facts. What are the facts we might see? We are all sinful and have strayed from God's just and loving ways. The world is a mess. Left to our own ways, we are surely lost. These are the facts, as if we woke up to a dangerous thunderstorm but don't know what the weather forecast is after that. Jesus is the fuller truth that in spite of the stormy mess of the world and our individual lives, God's grace is a gift to us in Christ. There is a blue sky and a safe calm that is ours through divine love.

Some of us live with messages that tell us we are not the right kind of person to receive God's grace because of our past mistakes, or ethnicity, or gender identity, or level of education, or poverty. The truth of Jesus Christ tells us we are children of God. "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16). This is the truth that gives us life.

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WELCOME

Welcome to Bethesda Lutheran Church.
We are glad you joined us for worship this morning!
Please join us again for worship soon!

This Week at Bethesda

Today 8:45 AM – Worship Online
Wed. Pastor's at St. John
Thurs. Pastor's at Bethesda
Sun. 8:45 AM – Worship Online

THANKS TO THOSE WHO HELPED WITH THE SERVICE THIS MORNING

Reader:

Organist: Deb Lauritsen

Next Sunday, January 10, 2020

Reader:

Organist: Deb Lauritsen

Birthdays This Week

 **Monday, January 4.....Susan Johnson**



Wednesday, January 6 is Epiphany. This is the day we celebrate the visit of the Wise Men at the manger. An ancient custom is to mark the entrance to you house on Epiphany. The service order is at the end of this bulletin. You can use ordinary chalk to mark above your door. Please be safe. It's okay to mark an interior door, too.

WELCOME

Welcome to St. John Lutheran Church.
We are glad you joined us for worship this morning!
Please join us again for worship soon!

This Week at St. John

Today 10:30 AM – Worship with Holy communion
Wed. Pastor's at St. John
Thurs. Pastor's at Bethesda
Sun. 10:30 AM – Worship

THANKS TO THOSE WHO HELPED WITH THE SERVICE THIS MORNING

Reader: Karren Giovannetti
Organist: Damon Hopkins

Next Sunday, January 10, 2020

Reader:
Organist: Damon Hopkins

Attendance & Offering

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Dec. 20 th Attendance..... | 32 |
| Envelope offering..... | \$1230.00 |
| Loose offering | \$60.00 |
| Dec. 24 th Attendance..... | 26 |
| Envelope offering..... | \$1232.00 |
| Loose offering | \$177.00 |

In order to meet the proposed budget for the church year, we need a weekly offering of approximately \$1600. Thanks.



Wednesday, January 6 is Epiphany. This is the day we celebrate the visit of the Wise Men at the manger. An ancient custom is to mark the entrance to your house on Epiphany. The service order is at the end of this bulletin. You can use ordinary chalk to mark above your door. Please be safe. It's okay to mark an interior door, too.

Our Long-Term Prayers

Each week we lift up each other in prayer. Sometimes the need for prayer continues for extended periods of time. As a church family, we care about those long-term needs. Please continue to keep these individuals and families in your prayers as they deal with long term illnesses and life changes. Also, please keep Pastor Chip and the office updated so the congregation knows when extra prayers are needed.

At Bethesda

- ✝ Lenyce Lawrence
- ✝ Wes Moffatt
- ✝ Ethel Mae Kratz

At St. John

- ✝ Audrey Gorham
- ✝ Sam and Diane Jacobs
- ✝ Russ Miller (Leonard and Helen Miller's nephew)
- ✝ Joel Berka
- ✝ Dennis Schrauth (Suzie Schutz's brother-in-law)
- ✝ Arlene Eisermann (Ron Holst's Sister)
- ✝ Cheryl Rath (Tom Heistand's sister)
- ✝ **Grant Gorham address:**

Grant Gorham
3333 Burnet Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45229-3026

Grant has been hospitalized.

Your prayers are especially needed at this time

Blessing for a Home at Epiphany

Matthew writes that when the magi saw the shining star stop overhead, they were filled with joy. “On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother” (Matt. 2:10-11). In the home, Christ is met in family and friends, in visitors and strangers. In the home, faith is shared, nurtured, and put into action. In the home, Christ is welcome.

Twelfth Night (January 5), Epiphany of Our Lord (January 6), or another day during the time after Epiphany offers an occasion for gathering with friends and family members for a blessing for the home. Someone may lead the greeting and blessing, while another person may read the scripture passage. Following an eastern European tradition, a visual blessing may be inscribed with white chalk above the main door; for example, 20 + CMB + 21. The numbers change with each new year. The three letters stand for either the ancient Latin blessing *Christe mansionem benedicat*, which means “Christ, bless this house,” or the legendary names of the magi (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar).

Greeting

May peace be to this house and to all who enter here.
By wisdom a house is built
and through understanding it is established;
through knowledge its rooms are filled
with rare and beautiful treasures. (*Proverbs 24:3-4*)

Reading

As we prepare to ask God’s blessing on this household, let us listen to the words of scripture.

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came into being through him,
and without him not one thing came into being,
and the life was the light of all people.
The Word became flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.
From his fullness we have all received,

grace upon grace. (*John 1:1-4, 14, 16*)

Inscription

This inscription may be made with chalk above the entrance:

20 † C M B † 21

Write the appropriate character (left) while speaking the text (right).

The magi of old, known as

C Caspar,

M Melchior, and

B Balthasar,

followed the star of God's Son who came to dwell among us

20 two thousand

21 and twenty years ago.

† Christ, bless this house,

† and remain with us throughout the new year.

Prayer of Blessing

O God, you revealed your Son to all people

by the shining light of a star.

We pray that you bless this home and all who live here

with your gracious presence.

May your love be our inspiration,

your wisdom our guide,

your truth our light,

and your peace our benediction;

through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Then everyone may walk from room to room, blessing the house with incense or by sprinkling with water, perhaps using a branch from the Christmas tree.

Adapted from *Come, Lord Jesus: Devotions for the Home* (Augsburg Fortress, 1996).

See also "Blessing for a Home" in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care*, pp.

337–353.

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