

Epiphany of Our Lord *Wednesday, January 6, 2021*

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout the ELCIC are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While we cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home.

*Epiphany offers an occasion for a **blessing for a home** . Following the prayers, and closing hymn, an order for blessing is included that you may use in your own home.*

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle near where you pray. One person may lead in this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.



Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.

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

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Almighty and ever-living God, you revealed the incarnation of your Son by the brilliant shining of a star. Shine the light of your justice always in our hearts and over all lands, and accept our lives as the treasure we offer in your praise and for your service, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The readings for this day may be read, as follows:

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

¹Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

²For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and the glory of the LORD will appear over you.

³Nations shall come to your light,
and rulers to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;

your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.
⁵Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
⁶A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

The Psalm may be sung or read in response to the First Reading.

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

¹Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the king's son;
²**that he may rule your people righteously
and the poor with justice;**
³that the mountains may bring prosperity^l to the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
⁴**Let him defend the needy among the people,
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.**
⁵May he live as long as the sun and moon endure,
from one generation to another.
⁶**Let him come down like rain upon the mown field,
like showers that water the earth.**
⁷In his time may the^l righteous flourish;
and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall^l be no more.
¹⁰**May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles pay tribute,
and the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.**
¹¹May all kings bow down before him,
and all the nations do him service.
¹²**For the king delivers the poor who cry out in distress,
the oppressed, and those who have no helper.**
¹³He has compassion on the lowly and poor,
and preserves the lives of the needy.
¹⁴**From oppression and violence he redeems their lives,
and precious is their blood in his sight.**

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:1-12

¹This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—²for surely you have already heard of the commission of God’s grace that was given me for you, ³and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶that is, the Gentiles have become heirs with us, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given me by the working of God’s power. ⁸Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that God has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²through faith in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Choir Anthem: *On Hills of Bethlehem* by: *Robert Scholz (Composer)*

Media Link: <https://ms.augsburgfortress.org/audio/9781506447667.mp3>

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the East came to Jerusalem, ² asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him

homage.”⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection by: *The Rev. Dr. Gordon Lathrop*

Having read these readings, think on this:

Herod has a way to see the world: it is centered on himself, his power, his privileges, his city. He is willing to lie and kill to keep the world that way. And he consults religious authorities to try to augment this view; after all, he thinks religion has promised that Jerusalem will be the center to which all the nations shall come. We may often be like Herod, centered on ourselves, using religion only for our own purposes. But, if we will listen, this story reconstructs our world. The magi, representing those many nations, do come. But the light they see leads them finally not to the city, but to a village; not to a palace, but to a house; not to a king, but to a child; and their gifts foretell this child’s death. The child, grown to be our crucified and risen Lord Jesus, the very mystery of God revealed, draws us and all things into God. There is the center: Jesus Christ, the presence and glory of God. That center is present wherever this word is heard: every house of the church in all the world, when we can gather; our very own homes, when the scripture is read and we pray for all the nations; the places of our needy neighbors, with whom Christ identifies. Let the star of these texts lead you. They will show you a whole new way to see the world, one centered on God, not on us. Arise, shine, for your light has come.

Hymn: *ELW #301 Bright and Glorious Is the Sky*

Bright and Glorious Is the Sky



1 Bright and glo - rious is the sky, ra - diant are the
 2 On that ho - ly Christ - mas night through the dark - ness
 3 Sa - ges from the east a - far, when they saw this
 4 Him they found in Beth - le - hem, yet he wore no



heav - ens high where the gold - en stars are shin - ing.
 beamed a light; all the stars a - bove were pal - ing,
 won - drous star, went to find the king of na - tions
 di - a - dem; there they saw a maid - en low - ly



All their rays to earth in - clin - ing beck - on us to
 all their lus - ter slow - ly fail - ing as the won - drous
 and to of - fer their ob - la - tions to the child, the
 with an in - fant pure and ho - ly rest - ing in her



heav'n a - bove, beck - on us to heav'n a - bove.
 star drew nigh, as the won - drous star drew nigh.
 new - born king, to the child, the new - born king.
 lov - ing arms, rest - ing in her lov - ing arms.

5 Guided by the star, they found
 him whose praise the ages sound.
 We too have a star to guide us,
 which forever will provide us
 with the light to find our Lord,
 with the light to find our Lord.

6 And this star, as bright as day,
 that will never lead astray
 with its message so appealing,
 is the word of God, revealing
 Christ, the way, the truth, the life,
 Christ, the way, the truth, the life.

Text: Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig, 1783–1872; tr. Jens Christian Aaberg, 1877–1970, alt.
 Music: DEJLIG ER DEN HIMMEL BLÅ, Danish, 19th cent.
 Text © 1958 Service Book and Hymnal, admin. Augsburg Fortress
 Reprinted with permission under OneLicense # A-710956

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION & LORD’S PRAYER

Then pray these intercessions:

Let us pray that everyone will receive the blessings of Epiphany, responding to each bid with the words “**Hear our prayer.**”

A brief silence.

For all the baptized, that even in hardship we grow deeper into the mystery of God, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, shining with grace, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For believers in all the world’s religions, that God welcome also their devotion, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, greater than the church, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For the earth, that each season provide sustenance for plants and animals, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, preserver of creation, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For scientists, that they probe what is both beyond and within what we see, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, keeper of all knowledge, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For the leaders of nations, that they strive for peace and justice, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, monarch of all peoples, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For the House of Commons of Canada and the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, that God grant it wisdom for its tasks, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, guidance for government, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For all persons who have means, that they assist those who have little, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, great in generosity, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For victims of injustice and prejudice, that their cries be heeded, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, compassionate savior, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For children, that they be protected from harm, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, loving parent, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For all who are suffering from the coronavirus, that they come to health and wholeness, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, giver of life, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For all who have asked for our prayers, . . . , and for those we too often forget, that God meet their multitude of needs, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, refuge of the downhearted, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

For each of us, that as if with a star God guide us throughout the journey of life, we pray:

A brief silence.

O God, light of holiness, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

In thanksgiving for all who have died in the faith, that at our end we join them in life with God:

A brief silence.

O God, goal of our days, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

That God will receive these prayers, for the sake of the divine infant before whom we kneel, we pray, now and forever.

Amen.

Hymn: *ELW #301 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise*

Songs of Thankfulness and Praise



1 Songs of thank-ful - ness and praise, Je - sus, Lord, to thee we raise;
2 Man - i - fest at Jor - dan's stream, proph-et, priest, and king su - preme;
3 Man - i - fest in mak - ing whole weak-ened bod - y, faint - ing soul;
4 Grant us grace to see thee, Lord, pres - ent in thy ho - ly word;



man - i - fest - ed by the star to the sa - ges from a - far,
and at Ca - na wed - ding guest in thy God-head man - i - fest;
man - i - fest in val - iant fight, quell-ing all the dev - il's might;
grace to im - i - tate thee now and be pure, as pure art thou;



branch of roy - al Da - vid's stem in thy birth at Beth - le - hem:
man - i - fest in pow'r di - vine, chang-ing wa - ter in - to wine;
man - i - fest in gra - cious will, ev - er bring-ing good from ill:
that we might be - come like thee at thy great e - piph - a - ny,



an - thems be to thee ad - dressed,
 an - thems be to thee ad - dressed, God in flesh made man - i - fest.
 an - thems be to thee ad - dressed,
 and may praise thee, ev - er blest,

Text: Christopher Wordsworth, 1807–1885, alt.
 Music: SALZBURG, Jakob Hintze, 1622–1702

Then conclude with the Lord's Prayer:

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Save us from the time of trial,
 and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours,
 now and forever.

Amen.

Closing Hymn: ELW # 677 This Little Light of Mine

This Little Light of Mine



1 This lit - tle light of mine, I'm goin' - a let it shine;
 2 Ev - 'ry - where I go, I'm goin' - a let it shine;
 3 Je - sus gave it to me, I'm goin' - a let it shine;



this lit - tle light of mine, I'm goin' - a let it shine;
 ev - 'ry - where I go, I'm goin' - a let it shine;
 Je - sus gave it to me, I'm goin' - a let it shine;



this lit - tle light of mine, I'm goin' - a let it shine,
 ev - 'ry - where I go, I'm goin' - a let it shine,
 Je - sus gave it to me, I'm goin' - a let it shine,



let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Text: African American spiritual
Music: THIS JOY, African American spiritual

Blessing for a Home

We heard in Matthew's gospel that when the magi saw the shining star stop overhead, they were filled with joy. In the home, Christ is met with family and friends, in visitors and strangers. In the home, faith is shared, nurtured and put into action. In the home, Christ is welcome.

*For gatherings of families, each member may take turns in parts of the blessing. 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).*

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*)

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*)

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-one years ago.

+ Christ, bless this house,

+ and remain with us throughout the new year.

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.

Then speak the Blessing:

Almighty God,
who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary,
proclaimed joy through the angels,
sent the shepherds with good news,
and led the magi by a star,
bless us this day ✝ through the Word made flesh.
Amen.

Portions of the Liturgy from Evangelical Lutheran Worship and Icon from
sundaysandseasons.com, © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.
Reprinted with permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License number: SAS007054
Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop.
Intercessory Prayers by: Gail Ramshaw – ELCA (adapted)
Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE.
License # A-710956

Readings from *Readings for the Assembly* © 1995, 1996, 1997 Augsburg Fortress. Citations from the Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Scripture quotations from NRSV Bible, Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, adapted and edited with permission by Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw.