

**Bethel Lutheran Church
Epiphany, Year A
Sunday, January 4, 2026**



Musician: Rowen Erickson

Worship Volunteers

Assisting Minister: Cindy Michalski

Reader: Doris Brack

Altar Guild: Karen Hervas

Communion Assistant: Gayle Peot

Ushers: Kay Smith & Dar Schuurmans

Video Tech: Lucas Dean

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

Into our world as into Mary's womb . . .

Come, Lord Jesus.

Into the forgotten places,
Into the lives of the poor, bringing hope;
into the lives of the powerful, bringing caution;
into the lives of the weary, bringing rest;
into the lives of the wise, bringing restlessness;
and into our lives and longings, whatever our estate . . .

Come, Lord Jesus.

The angels proclaimed,
the shepherds heard,
a mother and child,
God's promise is born.

God's promise is born for you and for me. Amen

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,
the Word made flesh,
our life and our salvation. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn Bright and Glorious Is the Day

Cranberry 301



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.

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LITANY OF LIGHT Isaiah 60:1; 9:2, 6 read responsively

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

²**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.**

⁶For a child is born to us, an heir is given us,
upon whose shoulders dominion will rest.

This One shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Strength of God, Eternal Protector, Champion of Peace.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The grace of our Savior Jesus Christ, Word made flesh,
born of Mary, be with you all. **And also with you.**

Let us pray, Everlasting God, **the radiance of all faithful people, you brought the nations to the brightness of your rising. Fill the world with your glory, and show yourself to all the world through him who is the true light and the bright morning star, your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 60:1-6

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

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

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

4 Lift 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 in their nurses' arms.

5 Then 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.

6 A 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.**

PSALM: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 (read responsively by verse)

1 Give the king your justice, O God,
 and your righteousness to a king's son.

**2 May he judge your people with righteousness
 and your poor with justice.**

3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
 and the hills, in righteousness.

**4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
 give deliverance to the needy,
 and crush the oppressor.**

5 May he live while the sun endures
 and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

**6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
 like showers that water the earth.**

7 In his days may righteousness flourish
 and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

**10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute;
 may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.**

11 May all kings fall down before him,
 all nations give him service.

**12 For he delivers the needy when they call,
 the poor and those who have no helper.**

13 He has pity on the weak and the needy
 and saves the lives of the needy.

**14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight.**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 3:1-12

1 This is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you gentiles, 2 for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you 3 and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, 4 a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. 5 In 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: 6 that is, the gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7 Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. 8 Although 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 9 and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so 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. 11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have access in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLIMATION



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12

The Holy Gospel according to Mathew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

1 In 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 in the east and have come to pay him homage.”

3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They 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.’ ”

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then 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.” 9 When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On 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. 12 And 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.**

HYMN OF THE DAY

As with Gladness, Men of Old



1 As with glad - ness men of old did the guid-ing star be - hold;
2 As with joy - ful steps they sped, Sav - ior, to thy low - ly bed,
3 As they of - fered gifts most rare at thy cra - dle, rude and bare,
4 Ho - ly Je - sus, ev - 'ry day keep us in the nar - row way;
5 In the heav'n-ly coun-try bright need they no cre - a - ted light;



as with joy they hailed its light, lead - ing on - ward, beam-ing bright;
there to bend the knee be - fore thee, whom heav'n and earth a - dore;
so may we with ho - ly joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,
and when earthly things are past, bring our ran - somed souls at last
thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;



so, most gra-cious Lord, may we ev - er - more be led by thee.
so may we with will - ing feet ev - er seek thy mer - cy seat.
all our cost-liest trea - sures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav'n-ly king.
where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glo - ry hide.
there for - ev - er may we sing al - le - lu - ias to our king.

Text: William C. Dix, 1837–1898, alt.

Music: DIX, Conrad Kocher, 1786–1872

APOSTLES 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 THE PEOPLE

Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Repairer of the breach, you separate us from our sin and unite us with one another. Heal the animosity in our hearts, and bind us together in love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Author of life, you sent your spirit over the waters, your breath into your children, and guiding stars across the sky. Awaken us to the plight of the planet and send us to care for your creation.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Light that leads the way, you make yourself known to the nations. Illuminate just paths and guide leaders in the church and the world in your holy will.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Voice of the silenced, you cast the mighty from their thrones and fill the hungry with good things. Grant those in need the courage to demand equality and those with abundance the wisdom to share. Respond to any who call out in need this day.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Proclaimer of promises, you raise up prophets and messengers in the places we least expect. Equip us to listen well to those who bring both good news and painful truths.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

For what else do the people of God pray?
Spoken and silent prayers welcome.

Redeemer of the saints, you gift us with many people throughout our lives who point the way to you. We give you thanks for the recently departed and all who have loved us.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

Glory to God in the highest! **And peace to God's people on earth.**

Please share a sign of Christ's peace with those around you.

Please be seated.

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

MEAL

OFFERING

OFFERTORY HYMN

WE THREE KINGS

BLUE 646



1 We three kings of Orient are; bearing gold I in - cense breathes a King and
 2 Born a king on Beth - le - hem's plain,
 3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I;
 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume
 5 Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise,



gifts we tra - verse a - far, field and foun - tain,
 bring to crown him a - gain; king for - ev - er,
 owns a de - i - ty nigh; prayer and prais - ing,
 life of gath - er - ing gloom; sor - rowing, sigh - ing,
 God and Sac - ri - fice; heav'n sings al - le -'



moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 ceas - ing nev - er, o - ver us all to reign.
 glad - ly rais - ing, wor - ship - ing God Most High.
 bleed - ing, dy - ing, sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

Refrain



Oh, star of won-der, star of night, star with roy - al beau-ty bright;



west-ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light!

Text: John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820–1891, alt.

Music: THREE KINGS OF ORIENT, John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820–1891

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray.

God of glory,

**great are your wonders among us
and many are the blessings you bestow.**

**Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world,
that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace,
through Christ our Savior.**

Amen.

INVITATION TO PRAYER & STAR WORDS

It is a prayer practice in churches all over the world to give people a star word on Epiphany Sunday. There are many reasons behind this tradition. First, we know that the magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus.

Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus.

Secondly, we trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words offer a tool to actively seek and reflect on God's presence among us, both in the moment and in hindsight.

Finally, we know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. However, this practice invites a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful way to connect with God.

So in just a moment, you will be invited to select a star word. Consider this a guiding word for the year ahead. We invite you to remember your star word often, seeking the ways God might be moving through the meanings and definitions the word contains. However, as we prepare our hearts and minds for this centering moment, let us pray. . .

Beckoning God,

from every corner we have come looking for you.

A thousand monsters reared their heads along the way,
threatening to derail us. But we are here nonetheless.

We have gone over, around, under, and through our fear.

And when we faced fears we couldn't evade,

we took that fear by the hand and dragged it along with us on the journey, because we will stop at nothing to follow you.

Your star calls us forward, ever forward
toward our convictions,
toward our dreams,
toward a world that reflects your justice, peace, and love,
toward our belonging in the great family of creation.

Your star calls us forward, and the gifts that await are too great to hand over to fear. May we find courage and strength for the journey in these star words we are about to receive. When fear threatens to stop us, may we hold onto these words and remember what lies ahead. When the journey is challenging, lift our heads to see our companions on the journey and the shining star that lights the way.

You go with us, and if you are with us, what shall we fear?

Beckoning God, we follow you into the unknown,
with heads held high or knees quaking in fear.

When the way ahead is unsure, we return to what we know:

You are Emmanuel, God-With-Us.

We join now in one voice to pray in the way Jesus taught us, saying...

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

RECEIVE A STAR WORD

Please come forward as the ushers instruct. We invite you to draw out a star word. God is always calling us forward. Let us hold our fear gently as we respond to the invitation.

PRAYER

Holy God,
you always show up.
Even in our fear,
even in times of uncertainty,
even when we can't seem to take the next step,
you are with us.
You are behind us, before us, and beside us,
hemming us in with your love.
As we sit with these star words, open our hearts to the
wisdom they hold. Keep our minds nimble and flexible,
awake to the constellation of meanings we may find
in a single word. May they challenge us, comfort us,
and call us forward.

Let these words be a reminder of your presence with us.
May they give us courage and guidance for the year ahead.
Let them shine in the dark, pointing us toward you.
And at the end of this year, may we look back at
the paths we took and see how in every moment,
you journeyed with us.
Gratefully we pray, amen.

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

SENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

If you ordered a Poinsettia, please take them home with you today. There are sleeves in the lounge.

Choir practice will be after fellowship hour!

SENDING HYMN O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright



1 O Morn - ing Star, how fair and bright! You shine with
2 Come, pre - cious dia - mond, light di - vine, and deep with -
3 Lord, when you look on us in love, at once there
4 Al - might - y Fa - ther, in your Son you loved us,



God's own truth and light, a - glow with grace and mer - cy!
in our hearts now shine; there light a flame un - dy - ing!
falls from God a - bove a ray of pur - est plea - sure.
when not yet be - gun was this old earth's foun - da - tion!



Of Ja - cob's line, King Da - vid's son, our Lord and Sav - ior,
In your one bod - y let us be as liv - ing branch - es
Your word and Spir - it, flesh and blood re - fresh our souls with
Your Son has ran - somed us in love to live in him here



you have won our hearts to serve you on - ly! Low - ly,
of a tree, your life our lives sup - ply - ing. Now, though
heav'n-ly food. You are our dear - est trea - sure! Let your
and a - bove: this is your great sal - va - tion. Al - le -



ho - ly! Great and glo - rious, all vic - to - rious, rich
dai - ly earth's deep sad - ness may per - plex us and
mer - cy warm and cheer us! Oh, draw near us! For
lu - ia! Christ the liv - ing, to us giv - ing life



in bless - ing! Rule and might o'er all pos - sess - ing!
dis - tress us, yet with heav'n - ly joy you bless us.
you teach us God's own love through you has reached us.
for - ev - er, keeps us yours and fails us nev - er!

5 Oh, let the harps break forth in sound!
Our joy be all with music crowned,
our voices gaily blending!
For Christ goes with us all the way—
today, tomorrow, ev'ry day!
His love is never ending!
Sing out! Ring out!
Jubilation!
Exultation!
Tell the story!
Praise to Christ, who reigns in glory!

6 What joy to know, when life is past,
the Lord we love is first and last,
the end and the beginning!
He will one day, oh, glorious grace,
transport us to that happy place
beyond all tears and sinning!
Amen! Amen!
Come, Lord Jesus!
Crown of gladness!
We are yearning
for the day of your returning.

Text: Philipp Nicolai, 1556–1608; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: WIE SCHÖN LEUCHTET, Philipp Nicolai
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DISMISSAL

Glory to God in the highest!

And peace to God's people on earth!

Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Fellowship hour continues in the lounge.

Funding for Mission & Budget

Monthly Receipts through 12/31/25	\$21,066.50
Monthly Budget Expenses:	\$20,033.00
YTD Receipts through 11/30/25:	\$209,184.00

The Bethel Weekly

Baby Shower: Elta & Laurance, our Haitian friends & students are expecting a baby boy mid February. We would like to shower them with gifts of needed baby boy items. Please bring items to church by January 11th.

Fellowship Hour: Please, if you are able to help on a future date in January, sign up in the hallway.

2026 Offering Envelopes: Are available in the lounge. Please pick them up so they do not need to be mailed.

Annual Reports Due: All Bethel committee and organization chair-persons are asked to turn in their annual reports to the church office **by January 15th** so that the 2025 Annual Report can be printed and made available to the congregation by February 1st.

Bethel Photo Directory: Ashley has been updating the Directory. Please let her know if you have contact information to update. If you'd like an updated photo you can email the church or bring it to the office for scanning.

Salvation Army Senior Meal: Is January 19th. Please see the sign-up sheet in the hallway for needed items.

Handbags for Hope: In conjunction with the Resurrection Food Pantry, we are asking all the ladies to bring in any unwanted purses. Donations are also needed of travel size hygiene items such as toothbrushes, shampoo, lip balm, etc. to fill the purses prior to distribution. Suggestions can be found on the front of the bin in the lounge.

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Liturgy adapted from *How Does a Weary World Rejoice?*

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