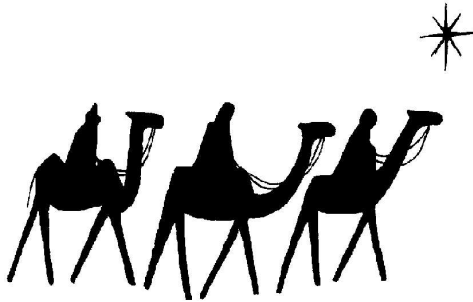


*Christ  
bless this house*



*Christus  
mansionem benedicat*

## Epiphany: *Blessing of the Chalk*



There is a tradition of blessing chalk at Epiphany to mark the threshold of our homes with a new year blessing. It picks up Old Testament traditions of marking the doorposts of the house with biblical texts (Deuteronomy 6:9), the theme of the Holy Family welcoming visitors to their home to visit the Christ-child, and a reminder of the importance of hospitality throughout the Scriptures. Because of the timing of Epiphany at the start of the year, it also offers a chance to pray for God's blessing at the start of the new year.

The letters and numbers that people chalk on their doors pick up the new year, the Epiphany story, and the prayer for blessing in a simple formula, written like this 20 + C + M + B + 26. The 20 and 26 are of course the beginning and end of the year's date. The middle three letters stand for the traditional names of the wise men (magi): Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. They also represent the initials of the Latin phrase "Christus mansionem benedicat" – "Christ bless the house." Together they represent our prayer at the start of the year that our homes, too, may be places blessed by the love and light of Christ.

## In church

*These prayers may be used between the post-communion prayers and the final hymn, or between the final hymn and the blessing.*

Min Our help is the name of the Lord,  
All **who has made heaven and earth.**

Min The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in;  
All **from this time forth for evermore.**

*The chalk is blessed.*

Min Blessed are you, Lord our God:  
in the home of Mary and Joseph  
you provided a dwelling-place on earth  
for your eternal Word.  
Bless this chalk,  
that those who mark their doorways with it  
may know your blessing in their home,  
and share your love with all who cross its threshold;  
we make our prayer through Christ our Lord.  
All **Amen.**

*The church door may be marked at this point, or after the final hymn.*  
20 + C + M + B + 26

*This prayer may be used after the marking of the church door.*

Min Gracious God,  
as your people gathered in worship,  
may we welcome friend and stranger.  
As your people sent out in mission,  
may we serve all as sister and brother.  
At the threshold of the church,  
at the threshold of the year,  
bless us in our coming in and our going out,  
that the light of Christ's love may be our lode-star,  
and walking in its light all the days of our life,  
we may find our ourselves at home in your eternal presence,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
All **Blessed be God for ever.**

## Prayers for use at home

Leader The Lord be with you  
All **and also with you.**

*Matthew 2:1-12 may be read.*

Leader The wise men, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, saw from afar the star of  
God's Son who took our flesh 2024 years ago. Following this sign, they came  
to Bethlehem and crossed the threshold of his birthplace, where they found  
the blessing they had sought so long. As we mark the threshold of our  
home in memory of their journey, at this threshold of the new year, we pray  
Christ will bless our home and remain with us throughout this year.

*The doorway is marked with chalk:*  
20 + C + M + B + 26.

Leader Visit, Lord, we pray, this home with the joy of your presence.  
Bless all who live here with the gift of your love.  
Help us share your care and compassion with one another,  
to make this a place of welcome and strength,  
of blessing and friendship,  
that all who pass through this doorway  
may find a hearth and home lit by the light of love.  
All **May we grow with Christ in truth and wisdom,  
learn to follow in his steps,  
and take on his yoke,  
as we walk in his light into the adventure of this new year. Amen.**

Leader May Christ refresh us with his grace,  
help us live life in all its fullness,  
and bring us safe to our eternal home  
in the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
All **Blessed be God for ever.**

All **May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, now and for ever. Amen.**