

O Lord our God, you show your mighty power through your abundant mercy. You show your righteousness through steadfast love. You show your love for us through the gift of your only Son. Grant unto us, we pray, such a blessing for your grace that we will seek you early and follow your commandments in faithful obedience. Through the grace of Christ our Lord, let us become partakers of your heavenly gifts, for it is in his name we pray. Amen, Pastoral prayer: Our hearts are strangely warmed, O God, by all the sights and sounds of Christmas. The familiar carols and the sacred lessons remind us of that holy night when the One who made everything that is was born of a woman and cradled in a manger, was safeguarded by a poor father and sheltered in a stable.

We kneel before this Christmas mystery, O God, and give thanks to you for every reminder of your mercy. Your saving love has been manifest among us. Now by the prompting of your Spirit grant to each of us this gift within - love that is pure, love that is blameless, love that is real, love that never fails.

We rejoice today in the peace and joy of Christmas. Forbid that they should find room in our hearts only for a brief time. Rather cause the Spirit of Christmas to stay with us in all the ordinary places of our lives - in our poverty, our brokenness, our human frailty, and our responsibilities.

May all we do and say in the Christmas season bring honor to your name. Forbid that any of our festivities dishonor the child we adore and bring sadness to Counterman and his cheer. May the goodwill and loving kindness that have so markedly changed our homes and neighborhoods these days also change us, that the birth of Christ becomes nothing less than new birth for all who bear his name.

In the name of Christ who came to save his people from their sin, we pray -