

To  
you  
is born this day  
a Savior

LUKE 2:11

**Called by the Spirit, we serve Christ, sharing God's love with all.**

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**WEBSITE: firstlutherantopeka.org**  
**1234 Fairlawn Road, Topeka, KS 66604**  
**Church office: (785) 272-5302 CDO office: (785) 272-5999**

*Ministers*  
*Senior Pastor*  
*Coordinator of Stewardship and Outreach*  
*Children's Day Out (CDO) Director*  
*Caring for Kids 1<sup>st</sup> Director*  
*Organist*  
*Director of Music*  
*Director of Handbell Choirs*  
*Secretary*  
*Assistant Secretary*  
*Bookkeeper*  
*Missionaries in Russia*  
*Missionaries for Ripe For Harvest World Outreach*

*All Members of First*  
*Pastor Jenny Jackson*  
*Pastor Bob Dealey*  
*Julie Lamott*  
*Julie Bradley*  
*Jerry Anderson*  
*Mark Fuller*  
*Linda Anderson*  
*LaDonna J. Little*  
*Jill Loomans*  
*Cindy Crawford*  
*Rev. Bradn & Natasha Buerkle*  
*Jim & Dawn Anderson*

**A BRIEF WORD ABOUT WORSHIP PRECAUTIONS.**

**MASKS:** A mask must be worn during the entire time in church, covering the mouth and nose. This is done to provide protection for others and for your own safety.

**MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING IS A HIGH PRIORITY AT ALL TIMES DURING IN-PERSON WORSHIP:** All members are to maintain a 6-foot distance from other people/households at all times. This includes gathering in the parking lot, arriving or exiting through church doors, or standing in the fellowship areas. Ushers and greeters will be present to help with arrival, seating, communion, and departing church.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!** Welcome to First Lutheran Church. We pray that the Child of Bethlehem will find a welcome in your heart and in your life, that you may know the wonder of being loved unconditionally, cherished unceasingly, and saved eternally. If you have no place where you regularly worship, we would love to welcome you into our Christian family, so that our church home may become yours.  
*Pastor Jenny Jackson and the members and staff of First Lutheran Church*

**PLEASE FILL OUT THE "PRESENCE AT WORSHIP" SHEET** that was handed to you with your bulletin. Please place the sheet into the offering plate at the back of the sanctuary.

We ask that worshippers please return their **CANDLE PROTECTORS** to the containers at the back of the sanctuary as they leave so that we can use them again in the future.

# THE CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP AT FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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## CHRISTMAS EVE

**3:30 & 7:30 P.M.**

**DECEMBER 24, 2021**

*Before worship, talk to God. During worship, let God talk to you. After worship, talk to your fellow worshipper.*

*Worship begins with the music of the organ.*

*Through its power and brilliance may you feel the majesty of God; in its quietness His peace.*

**PRELUDE** “Gloria” (T. Albrecht)

“Von Himmel hoch” (“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”)

Chorale

Improvisation

Fuga

(Paul Manz)

(J. S. Bach)

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

(arr. J. Wayne Kerr)

“In dulci jubilo” (“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”)

Chorale Prelude

Improvisation

Chorale Prelude

(F. Zachau)

(Paul Manz)

(J. S. Bach)

“Gesù Bambino”

(P. A. Yon)

“O Holy Night”

(A. Adam)

“Noel – Grand Jeu et Duo” (“The Echo Noel”)

(Louis C. D’Aquin)

*Congregation shall stand or sit as able.*

## CHIMES

**GATHERING SONG** “O, Come, All Ye Faithful”

**Introduction and Hymn**

1. O, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!  
O, come ye, o, come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him born the king of angels:

### *Refrain*

**O, come, let us adore him, o, come, let us adore him,  
O, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

2. The highest, most holy, Light of light eternal,  
Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;  
Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! **R**

3. See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle,  
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;  
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps: **R**
4. Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,  
We would embrace thee, with love and awe;  
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly?: **R**
5. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God in the highest: **R**
6. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: **R**

### **APOSTOLIC GREETING**

P: A child has been born for us, a son given to us.

**C: He is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

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

**C: And also with you.**

### **HYMN OF PRAISE** *"Angels We Have Heard on High"*

1. Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.:  
**Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**
2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?: **R**
3. Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.: **R**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

*Congregation shall sit.*

### **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7**

*Originally, this poem was written to celebrate either the birth or the coronation of a new Davidic king. After the fall of Jerusalem, this poem came to be viewed as an expression of the hope that eventually God would raise up a new ruler who would possess the qualities described in the text.*

<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**SECOND READING: Titus 2:11-14**

*The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.*

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

<sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*Congregation shall stand or sit as able.*

**GOSPEL HYMN “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”**

1. Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”  
Joyful, all you nations, rise; Join the triumph of the skies;  
With angelic hosts proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”  
*Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king!”*
2. Christ, by highest heav’n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
Late in time behold him come, Offspring of a virgin’s womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!  
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!  
*Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king!”*

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.



*Congregation shall sit.*

## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

### **SERMON**

*Congregation shall remain seated.*

### **HYMN OF THE DAY** *"What Child Is This"*

1. What child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet While shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the king, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
Haste, haste to bring him laud, The babe, the son of Mary!
2. Why lies he in such mean estate Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here The silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, The cross be borne for me, for you;  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The babe, the son of Mary!
3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; Come, peasant, king, to own him.  
The King of kings salvation brings; Let loving hearts enthrone him.  
Raise, raise the song on high, The virgin sings her lullaby;  
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, The babe, the son of Mary!

*Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.*

### **CREEDAL LITANY**

A: He was born in a stable,

**C: but at his birth angels sang, plain people knelt to worship, great men rose to pay homage.**

A: He grew up in obscurity,

**C: but when he declared himself, it was as if a new sun had risen.**

A: He lived a life of love and died a death of shame,

**C: but the life he lived and the death he died were for our redemption.**

A: Death's dark womb could not hold him: on Easter morning he was born anew.

**C: O God, let him be born anew at Christmas, this Christmas, in me, in us!**

A: But asking for your love to be born anew in us may not be proper, O God,

**C: unless we first face and admit our own lack of love.**

A: Yes, we find it very hard to love the unlovely.

**C: We sadly shake our heads at our Lord's command, "Love your enemies!"**

A: We limit our love to people we find lovable.

**C: We forget, Holy One, that in your sight none of us may claim your love by right.**

A: We find it hard to love even our loved ones, our best friends,

**C: without trying to change them to suit us or otherwise using them. We forget that, with you, love means acceptance first.**

A: And yes, Gracious God, we may not even love ourselves properly, overestimating, or underestimating ourselves,

**C: and we suspect that our poverty in showing love may come from our failure to accept the freely offered riches of your Love.**

A: But this is Christmas Eve.

**C: So we pray that he who was born in that stable --**

A: at whose birth angels sang, plain people knelt to worship and great men rose to pay homage--

**C: may enter our hearts and fill us with forgiving and self-forgiving love.**

A: "O, holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;

**C: cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.**

A: We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;

**C: O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel."**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

A: Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

A: Love proclaims that a Savior has been born to us! Inspire your church throughout the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth to all who seek salvation, hope, and new life. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Love whispers to a weary world that the time for rest and restoration has come. Maintain healthy cycles of wake and sleep for all creatures. Where light pollution disrupts natural rhythms, encourage new practices. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Love cries to a warring world that the time for peace is at hand. Direct those in power who make decisions on behalf of others, that they nurture and sustain all that is healthy, good, and holy. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Love sings through the wails of a newborn baby. Respond to all who cry out in pain, despair, or need this night. Bring comfort to those for whom separation, grief, or loss makes the Christmas season especially difficult. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Love murmurs words of comfort to a newborn child and exhausted parents. Bless new and expectant parents or caregivers, especially those who are alone or afraid this night. Pour out your love upon families of every kind. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: God's ever-present love is proclaimed through the faithful who came before us. We give you thanks for Mary, John the baptizer, Elizabeth his mother, Joseph the dreamer, and all who point toward your love. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

P: Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

**PEACE** P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

*The ministers and congregation may greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

Peace be with you.

R: Peace be with you.

***Brief word about peace:*** As we practice Social Distancing, the sharing of the peace will take place as we remain in our pews: waving, bowing, blessing, or sharing the peace sign with our fellow worshipers.



*Congregation shall sit.*

**CHOIR ANTHEM** “Lullaby, Jesu”

*(R. C. Lau)*

**Brief word about offering:** *Offering plates are available at the back of the worship space, on the bulletin table. To give online, please go to [FirstLutheranTopeka.org](http://FirstLutheranTopeka.org) and click on ‘contribute’.*

***Please place attendance form in the offering plate.***

*Congregation shall stand or sit as able.*

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

A: Gracious God,

**C: your Word-made-flesh brings harmony to the earth. As we offer ourselves and these your gifts, prepare us to receive the grace and truth you offer at this table and renew in us the song of your salvation, in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

**THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**      tune: “O, Come All Ye Faithful”

**Sung Responsively**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And with you, His servant.**

P: O, come, let us lift our hearts unto the Lord.

**C: With hearts uplifted thanks to Him we render:**

**With joy we come before Him in gratefulness implore Him,**

**With thankful hearts adore Him evermore!**

P: It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy . . .

*(Here the minister continues with the preface appropriate to the day or season, concluding:)*

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

Tune: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

**Sung by Congregation**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord! God of hosts, by all adored!**

**Heav’n and earth cannot contain All the glory of Your name!**

**Hail, hosanna, God most high! Blest is He who now draws nigh**

**In the name of God the King! Hallelujahs glad we sing:**

**Hail, hosanna! Praises due. Be forever, Lord, to You!**

### **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

P: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

## LORD'S PRAYER

*(Tune: "Away in a Manger")*

**Our Father in heaven, All praise to your name!  
Your kingdom among us, Your will done the same  
By mortals and angels. Come, Lord reign, alone;  
Oh, hear us and bless us from heaven's high throne.**

**The bread that we yearn for, Provide us each day;  
As we forgive others, Our sins take away;  
In times of temptation, To lead us be near;  
From evil deliver Your children most dear.**

**For yours is the kingdom; O'er all things you reign,  
And yours is the power; All things you maintain,  
To you be the glory, Resounding again  
From all of creation, Forever! Amen.**

P: In Christ's manger, at Christ's table, come, see what God makes known for you.

*Congregation shall sit.*

## COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

*In respect to the spiritual nature of communion, we ask that you refrain from visiting with your fellow worshippers until after the service.*

**Brief word about communion:** *The process for receiving communion will be explained by the Pastor. For these services, wine or grape juice will not be distributed. Pastor will bring you communion in your pew. Hand sanitizer is available in the pews to use before receiving communion.*

**Brief word about candle distribution:** *During communion distribution, a candle will be given to you for the candlelighting that will be taking place after communion.*

## COMMUNION VOLUNTARY

**(7:30)** *"Still, Still, Still"* Jubilation Ringers Bell Choir *(Traditional / arr. S. Stokes)*

*"Silent Night, Holy Night"* *(F. Gruber / arr. C. W. Ore)*

*Congregation shall stand or sit as able.*

## POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

**Congregation: Amen.**

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: We thank you, wondrous God, for Jesus, God with us, in these gifts of bread and wine. As we have shared this feast of love, strengthen us to share your love with all the world. In Jesus' name we pray.

C: **Amen.**

## THE CELEBRATION OF THE INCARNATION

The Christmas Story According to Saint John

*(The Pastor, taking a large candle, lights it from the Christ candle, which symbolizes Christ, the Light of the world of whom St. John speaks. The ushers light their candles from the Pastor's candle, then light the candle of each worshipper nearest the aisle. The lighted candle is never tilted, but is always held upright when giving light to another.)*

P: 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. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

C: ***Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.***

P: The true light, which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.

C: ***Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight:  
Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia!  
Christ the Savior is born! Christ the Savior is born!"***

P: The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

C: ***Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from your holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord at your birth, Jesus, Lord at your birth.***

## BLESSING

P: The God of hope fill us all with joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, † through Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh.

C: **Amen.**

*Please extinguish your candle and return it to the containers in the back of the sanctuary as you leave.*

## SENDING SONG "Joy to the World!"

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is Come! Let earth receive its King;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,  
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sin and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,  
And wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

**Brief word about dismissal:** *Since our fellowship space is small and we are practicing social distancing, we encourage you to enjoy conversation in the parking lot. May God go with you, sustain you, and renew your spirit.*

**DISMISSAL**

- A: Glory to God in the highest!                      **C: Peace to God's people on earth!**  
A: Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.            **C: Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE** *“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing / Angels from the Realms of Glory”* (Whitworth)

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**THE ALTAR FLOWERS** *are given by the Roark Family.*  
*“With trumpets and the sound of the horn, shout with joy before the King, the Lord.” Psalm 98:6*

**POINSETTIAS may be picked up after the 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Communion service.**

**DECEMBER 24<sup>th</sup> CHRISTMAS EVE**

**3:30 pm**

<b>Assisting Minister</b>	Ann McConkey
<b>Lectors</b>	Lucas Jackson, Austin Jackson
<b>Acolyte</b>	Barb Collins
<b>Candle Distributors</b>	Nancy Besta, Barb Collins, Randy Debenham, Bryan Harold
<b>Council Member on Duty</b>	Robert Hanna
<b>Altar Guild</b>	Altar Guild Members
<b>Ushers</b>	John & Linda Harold
<b>North Door Greeter</b>	Nancy Vaughn
<b>South Door Greeter</b>	Carolyn Olson

**DECEMBER 24<sup>th</sup> CHRISTMAS EVE**

**7:30 pm**

<b>Assisting Minister</b>	Ralph Krumins
<b>Lector</b>	Robert Hanna
<b>Acolyte</b>	Allison Montague
<b>Candle Distributors</b>	Alan Hageman, John Hanna, Richard & Judy Price
<b>Council Members on Duty</b>	Bob Wollin, Diane Dukat
<b>Altar Guild</b>	Altar Guild Members
<b>Ushers</b>	David & Patricia Drake, Denny & Darlene Payne
<b>North Door Greeters</b>	Bill & Phyllis Buch
<b>South Door Greeter</b>	Kathy Couch
<b>Bus Driver and Hostess</b>	Alan Hageman and Leslie Malone



## **PARISH NOTICES**

### ***HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE***

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26<sup>th</sup> FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**  
**10:00 a.m. – CHRISTMAS CAROL COMMUNION AND HEALING SERVICE**

### ***HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS***

**Monday, December 27<sup>th</sup> – OFFICE CLOSED**

**Friday, December 31<sup>st</sup> – OFFICE CLOSSES AT NOON**

**Monday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> – OFFICE CLOSED**

***BUILDING ALARM WILL BE SET WHEN OFFICE IS CLOSED***



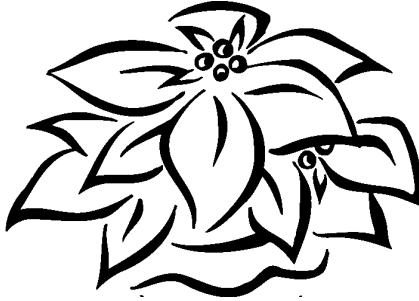
**PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING US HAVE FRESH FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR IN 2022.**

**OPEN 2022 DATES FOR BOTH VASES (unless indicated otherwise) ARE:**

2/6 (one vase); 4/24; 5/1 (one vase), 5/15, 5/29; 6/5; 7/3, 7/10, 7/17, 7/31; 8/7, 8/28;

11/20 (one vase); 12/11 (one vase).

**Please call the church office at (785) 272-5302 or Jeanie Schuler 785-845-7964 if you have questions.**



## **2021 POINSETTIAS**

*Carol & Billy Ashwill in memory of Hilton Ragsdale and in honor of their grandchildren.*

*George Bales in memory of Joan Bales and Susan Bales.*

*Penny & Marvin Boleski in honor of their kids and grandkids.*

*Pat Booth in memory of loved ones.*

*Bill & Phyllis Buch in honor of Family and Friends.*

*Barb Collins in memory of Evelyn & Les Kutscher.*

*Pastor Bob & Rhonda Dealey in memory of loved ones.*

*Kevin Eaton & Lora Carlson*

*The Einck Family in memory of Freeman, Lois & David Vicory & in honor of our church family.*

*Phil & LaVerne Engelhardt in memory of their parents: Einar & Gladys Johnson and  
Milton & Catharine Engelhardt.*

*Ted & Elna Ensley in honor of their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren: Doug, Sue, Ian, Sarah, Isaac, Noah, Caroline, Bethany, Adam, Lauren, Kathy, Heath, Dahnika, Hazen, Matilda, Frances, Alexis, Naomi, Blake, Connie and Scott.*

*Orvin Grondahl in honor of First Lutheran Staff.*

*Anne Hageman in memory of Rev. Donald Conrad and in honor of Janice Conrad.*

*John & Linda Harold in memory of Dave & Marilyn Horvath and Chuck & Marcy Harold and  
in honor of Lindsey, David, Sarah, James and Julia.*

*Kathy Koch in memory of Bob Koch.*

*Ralph & Maureen "Mo" Krumins in honor of their children and grandchildren.*

*Trudi Myers in memory of her husband, mother and sister.*

*Carolyn Olson in memory of her grandparents and parents who brought their Swedish Heritage  
to America and in honor of her present family members who continue those traditions today.*

*Rob & Nancy Peterson in memory of Peterson's, Bryan's, Parents.*

*Brenda Sanders in memory of William & Marie Parr and George Besta and in honor of  
Nancy Besta and Family.*

*The Schultz's in honor of Melanie Schultz.*

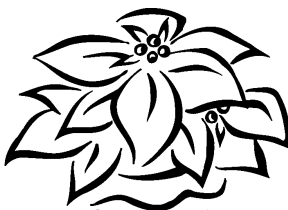
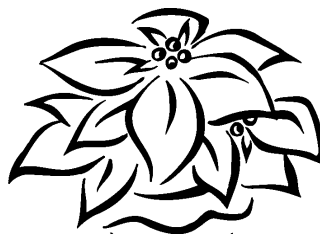
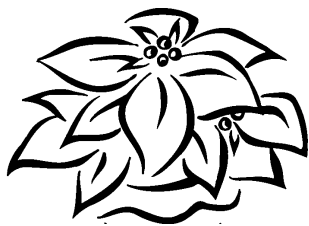
*Jerry & Marsha Serk in memory of Freeman, Lois and David Vicory.*

*Jim & JoAnn Stanley in honor of their grandchildren.*

*Nancy & Charlie Vaughn in memory of Lois Armstrong and in honor of Verla Buch.*

*West & Shirley Waugh in memory of his father, Charles Waugh & her parents, Max & Anna Moore.*

*Sue Wild in memory of her parents, Pat & John Wild.*



## Unplanned, but Filled with Peace

Although many of us spend a great deal of time and energy preparing for Christmas, most of us have learned that things don't always go according to plan. Whether due to a sick parent, a gift that cannot be found, or an unexpected guest, pivots of one kind or another often need to be made as Christmas draws near.

This reality directly relates to the Christmas story. In more than one way, the birth of Jesus did not go the way Mary and Joseph likely planned. Yet perhaps this is part of the point: after all, there is nothing routine about God coming to us as a baby. Similarly, it is nothing short of incredible that this one would come to dwell among us in order to show us God's love, set us free from sin, and make possible a life that is whole and abundant.

On this Christmas Eve, we are reminded that nothing can separate us from the love of God made known to us in Jesus, Emmanuel. The birth of Jesus reveals that God has come not for perfect people or those who think they have it all figured out, but rather for people whose lives are messy and noisy, who do not always feel filled with hope, who have worked long hours, who feel the ever-present tension between the already and the not yet. The promise that endures is that the light of Jesus has come into the world for the sake of the *whole* world, and nothing can overcome it. This promise sustains us through the unexpected and sometimes surprising events that come our way. May the goodness of this truth fill us with both wonder and peace.