

Jesus
increased in
wisdom
and in **years,**
and in divine and human
favor LUKE 2:52

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 1st 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.



THE CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP AT FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

A CHRISTMAS CAROL EUCHARIST and HEALING SERVICE

10:00 A.M.

DECEMBER 26, 2021

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

GATHERING

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

PRELUDE “*In Dulci Jubilo*”

(G. Kemner)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

CHIMES

CALL TO WORSHIP

A: It is you who light my lamp; you, my God, who lights up the darkness.

C: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

A: Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the honest of heart.

C: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

A: For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

C: O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

P: Amidst the darkness of this world, let us confess our sin and welcome the light of God's forgiveness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Mary accepted your call to be the mother of Jesus.

C: Forgive our lack of faith and trust in your will.

P: Your Son was born in the poverty of a stable.

C: Forgive our neglect of the poor.

P: The shepherds left their flocks and went to Bethlehem.

C: Forgive our selfishness and complacency.

P: The Magi followed the star to find the Savior of the nations.

C: Forgive our reluctance to seek you with all our hearts.

P: The angel said, you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. With great joy, I announce to you the entire forgiveness of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

INVOCATION

P: God of manger and star, open us to the depths and heights of your incredible love, which comes through humble stories and glorious songs. Speak to us in word and music and lift us to the realms of glory.

C: Amen.

275 GATHERING SONG *“Angels, from the Realms of Glory”*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Shine into our hearts the light of your wisdom, O God, and open our minds to the knowledge of your word, that in all things we may think and act according to your good will and may live continually in the light of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Congregation shall sit.

MEMORIAL

See Bulletin Page 12

WORD

God speaks to us in scriptures read, sung, and preached.

FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Having dedicated her son Samuel to God's service, Hannah visits him every year when she and her husband Elkanah come to the temple to offer sacrifices. God grants Hannah more children, and Samuel himself gains favor in the sight of all.

¹⁸Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home.

²⁶Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Colossians 3:12-17

Just as newly baptized Christians in the early church were clothed with new garments upon arising from the baptismal waters, so all who have received God's gift of life in Jesus Christ are covered with the character of Christ.

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

CELTIC ALLELUIA

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

The image shows two staves of musical notation for a Celtic Alleluia. Both staves are in the treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The melody is written on a five-line staff. The lyrics 'Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!' are written below the notes. The first staff ends with a double bar line, and the second staff continues the melody and lyrics.

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the 2nd chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

GOSPEL: Luke 2:41-52

Jesus grew up in a family that went to the Passover festival each year. It was in this environment of faithful adherence to the law that Jesus grew into spiritual maturity and an understanding of his identity and mission.

⁴¹Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them.

⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

P: The Gospel of the Lord. **C:** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Congregation shall sit.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON

295 HYMN OF THE DAY "Of the Father's Love Begotten"

Stanza 1. Women 2. Men 3. & 4. **ALL** *Please Stand* 5. **ALL**

Congregation shall remain standing or sitting, as able.

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,

maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,

begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit

and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures;

he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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: You come to us in gatherings of your church across the globe. Unite us with those who celebrate your birth even when they are weighed down by grief, loss, poverty, hunger, or injustice. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You come to us in the diverse splendor of the universe. Grant us the humility to trust our place in the network of creation, that we live in service to you and the natural world. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You come to us through relationships of many kinds: families, friendships, communities, and nations. Guide us in these relationships, that we recognize the Christ child in one another and show your love to those most vulnerable. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You come to us through people whom the world forgets. Poor shepherds and an imprisoned Paul announced your good news. Send your Spirit to all who are imprisoned, struggling with addiction, unwell, or in any need this day especially Sara, Joyce, Laura Haefke, Carolyn, Diane, David, Kevin, Laura Martin, Lois and Phil, as well as our homebound members, all unable to worship this weekend, and all family, friends and even enemies we name now, either out loud or in the silence of our hearts (pause). Surround them with your unwavering presence. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You come to us in acts of justice and forgiveness. Open our hearts to forgive one another, without permitting injustice. Supply us with the wisdom to be clothed with love, binding all things together in perfect harmony. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: You come to us through those who have died yet live with you forever. We give thanks for Stephen, deacon and martyr, who gave his life to tell the story of 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 “God has come to dwell among us. To bless and to heal us. To befriend and give us peace.”

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

The ministers and congregation 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.

VOLUNTARY “*In the Bleak Midwinter*” (Cranham)

(G. Holst / arr. J. D. Kimball)

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 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.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

“God With Us”

This morning we are using a hymn setting for Holy Communion entitled “God With Us”.

The Communion liturgy will be sung to Christmas carols.

PREFACE

tune: “*O, Come All Ye Faithful*”

Sung Responsively

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with you, His servant.

P: Oh, 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!

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Spoken by Pastor

P: Thanks and praise be to You, our Father, almighty Creator, merciful Lord, God of promise and fulfillment. Of old Your faithful people waited for the day of Your visitation, manifest at last when the time had fully come and You sent forth Jesus Christ, Your Son. Having seen His glory, now we wait for the day of consummation, when He will come again as Judge and King. And so, with the Church on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise Your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS

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!**

CONSECRATION

Tune: *"I Heard the Bells"*

Sung by Congregation

**The night Lord Jesus was betrayed
He took the bread, and when He'd prayed,
He broke and gave them of the bread
And unto his disciples said:**
(The pastor speaks the words of institution for the bread.)

**Then, when the sacred meal was o'er,
Our blessed Savior spoke once more:
He offered thanks, and lifted up,
To give to all the blessed cup.**
(The pastor speaks the words of institution for the wine.)

LORD'S PRAYER

Tune: *"It Came Upon a Midnight Clear"*

Sung by Congregation

**Our Father, Lord on heav'n's high throne,
Most holy be Your name.
Your kingdom come. Your will be done
On earth -- in heav'n the same.
Give us this day the food we need;
Forgiven may we be;
Into temptation do not lead;
From evil set us free.**

**Yours is the kingdom; unto You
In grateful love we bow;
And Yours the pow'r; Lord, let us view
Your mighty presence now.
The glory Yours; Your praise be sung
By angel hosts and men
In ev'ry land, by ev'ry tongue
Forevermore! Amen.**

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

Congregation shall sit.

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.*

COMMUNION VOLUNTARY “*Still, Still, Still*”

(arr. P. Manz)

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

C: Amen.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: God of wonder, in Jesus we behold the light of the world come near. As you have come among us now, send us out in joy, hastening to share the good news of your love. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit dwelling among us now and forever.

C: Amen.

HEALING

God hears our prayers for healing and marks us with the cross of Christ.

LAYING ON OF HANDS AND ANOINTING WITH OIL

A: In James 5, it says, “Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

P: The laying on of hands and anointing with oil are signs first given to us in baptism. They remind us that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked forever with the cross of Christ, who is health and salvation for the whole world. Sisters and brothers, I invite you to come and receive a sign of healing and wholeness in the name of the triune God.

Those who sense the need for God’s healing in any aspect of their lives or in the lives of family or friends may come forward at this time to receive prayer, the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. You may kneel or stand at the communion railing or at a station at the back of the sanctuary. Those congregants who do not come forward are invited to spend time in silent prayer or lift their voices in song.

785 HYMN “*When Peace like a River*” (“*It Is Well with My Soul*”)

HEALING PRAYER

P: Living God, through the laying on of hands and anointing, grant comfort in suffering to all who are in need of healing. When they are afraid, give them courage; when afflicted, give them patience; when dejected, give them hope; and when alone, assure them of the support of your holy people. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

SENDING

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

BLESSING

tune: "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Sung Responsively

P: The Lord bless and keep you, Look with love upon you,
Be gracious, and cause His face to shine with peace!

C: Glory to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

The Savior close beside us,

God's love from harm to hide us,

The Spirit's pow'r to guide us evermore!

267 SENDING SONG "Joy to the World"

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: Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

C: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE "Noel 'Etranger"

(L. C. d'Aquin)

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The CHOIR will not be singing today. REHEARSAL WILL RESUME JANUARY 6th.

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

ETERNAL CANDLE FOR DECEMBER *is given by JoAnn Stanley in memory of her parents,*

Amy & Wilbur Carlson and her brother, Gary.

OUR CONDOLENCES to the family and friends of **Deneen Dotzel**, who died December 19, 2021.

OUR CONDOLENCES to the family and friends of **Helen Nunemaker**, who died December 21, 2021.

A service has been tentatively scheduled for mid-January.

THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH ARE REQUESTED FOR THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE:

Sara Welch (home), Joyce Koenig (home), Laura Haefke (home), Carolyn Sandquist (home), Diane Dukat (home), David Schmidt (home), Kevin Eaton (home), Martha Donohoe (home), Laura Martin (home), Lois Lykins (home), Phil Engelhardt (home), Verla Buch (home), Blake Hopper (home), Monica Collins (friend of Barb Collins), Michael Kuner (friend of Mark Fuller), JoAnn Likness (friend of Barb Collins), Heidi Mark (Bill & Joyce’s daughter), Richard Holliday (Marian Orton’s son), Amanda Gill (friend of Trudi Myers), Drew Hartz (Steve & Kathy Couch’s son-in-law), Mackenzie Lamott (CDO Director Julie’s daughter), Sheila Mitchell (Shirley Brower’s niece), Deloris Patton (Nancy & Charlie Vaughn’s sister-in-law), Don Kaphingst (Margaret Stewart’s brother), Linda Byrd (friend of Barb Collins), Newt Newstrom (Dawn Graham’s father), William Durham (Trudi Myers’ son-in-law), Tavia Shaker (friend of Lindsay Blank), Pat Grant (friend of Ron Bessler), Dan Fraleigh (Sherrie Petersen's brother-in-law), Velda Jacobs (Eileen Caspers' aunt), Lewis Sanders (Rachelle Witherspoon’s father), Syndee Haake (daughter of friend of Nancy Vaughn), Blanche Stephansen (Ron Bessler’s sister), Nicole Klein (Patti’s God-daughter), Georgi Peterson (Rhonda Dealey’s mother), Lawrence & Lenette Kottas (Eileen Caspers’ parents), John Browne (Penny & Marvin Boleski’s brother-in-law), Camille Baehni Engler (former member), Brennan Soukup (Julie Bender’s cousin), C.A. & Mary Lou Brunkhorst (Ann Sanders’ parents), Heather Roesch (Tracy’s sister-in-law), Katelynn Herring (Jeanie Schuler’s great niece), Linda Myers (Trudi’s daughter-in-law), David Metzenthin (Bud’s son).

LAY MINISTERS 12/26	10:00 a.m.
Assisting Minister	Jeff Montague
Lector	Diane Dukat
Acolyte	Altar Guild
Greeter / Ushers	Barb Collins / Erv & Ann Sanders
Council Member	Bob Wollin
Bus Driver & Host/Hostess	Marvin & Penny Boleski
Altar Guild Setup/Clean up	Jeanie Schuler, Ann McConkey, Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrill
Tech Team	

LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT WEEK

LAY MINISTERS 1/2	10:00 a.m.
Worship Leader	Pastor Bob Dealey
Assisting Minister	Robert Hanna
Lector	Dean Johnson
Acolyte	Max Roark
Greeter / Ushers	Nancy Besta, Leslie Malone / Denny & Darlene Payne
Council Member	Robert Hanna
Bus Driver & Host/Hostess	Chris & Cindy Lear
Saturday Lector	Sherrie Petersen
Altar Guild Setup/Clean up	Barb Collins, Ann McConkey, Karen W., Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrill
Tech Team	



TRANSFERRED TO THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

DENEEN MERLYN DOTZEL

Born into this world September 12, 1929

Entered eternal rest December 19, 2021

HELEN LOUISE (OVERBAUGH) NUNEMAKER

Born into this world August 26, 1922

Entered eternal rest December 21, 2021

P: With reverence and affection we remember before you, O everlasting God, your faithful servants, Deneen and Helen.

C: We thank you, dear God, for the life they so willingly and joyfully shared with us.

P: We thank you, dear Lord, for giving them to us to know and to love,

C: and we thank you for receiving them into the arms of your everlasting mercy through the merits of Jesus Christ, their Lord.

P: Almighty God, deal graciously, we pray, with those who mourn, that, casting all their sorrow on you, they may know the consolation of your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Hymn 815 *“I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light ”* **Stanzas 1 & 3**

I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.

God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain: In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

I'm looking for the coming of Christ. I want to be with Jesus.

When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus. **R**

✠ IN THE FIRST PLACE THIS WEEK ✠

Children's Day Out Preschool (CDO) schedule: M, T, W & T 9am-3pm Friday 9-11:30 am

Sunday, December 26

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

10:00 a.m. – Christmas Carol Communion and Service of Healing

Monday, December 27

OFFICE CLOSED

Tuesday, December 28

Wednesday, December 29

Thursday, December 30

5:30 p.m. – Ministry Moving Forward Meeting (Zoom)

Friday, December 31

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Office Closes at Noon



Saturday, January 1

5:00 p.m. – Worship Service

Sunday, January 2

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

ENDOWMENT SUNDAY

10:00 a.m. – Worship Service

11:15 a.m. – Children, Youth & Family Ministry (Library)

4:00 p.m. – Parish Life Committee (Zoom)

LESSONS JANUARY 1 & 2

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Psalms 147:12-20

Ephesians 1:3-14

John 1:1-18



PARISH NOTICES

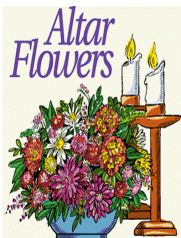


ANNUAL REPORTS DUE TOMORROW, MONDAY, DECEMBER 27th
ALL Committees and Organizations may submit their annual reports to the church office by Monday, December 27th, so that the annual booklet of reports can be printed and collated for availability to the congregation by Sunday, January 23rd. Please email reports to the Church Secretary, LaDonna at 1stlutherantopeka@sbcglobal.net or mail a typed copy to the church office.
Thank you!



ETERNAL CANDLES can be found in both the main Worship Center and our beautiful Chapel. In 2022 you may **DONATE** both candles in remembrance or in honor of someone for the entire month. Please contact LaDonna, in the church office, (785) 272-5302 or email her at 1stlutherantopeka@sbcglobal.net to sign-up for a month and give information that will be included in the bulletin. **The cost will be \$20 for the month. Available months are: September, October, and November.**

ALTAR FLOWERS FOR 2022



Fresh flowers on our altar are a special way to enrich our worship space and to honor and memorialize special people in our lives. Please join in this beautiful practice by reserving your dates for 2022 now.

There is a chart of reserved dates and forms to complete in the hallway by the offices. You may complete the questionnaire and leave it there. For those who are not coming to the building at this time, please contact either LaDonna at the church office 785-272-5302 or Jeanie Schuler 785-845-7964 and we will gladly take your information over the phone.

For those with annual orders, the chart has been completed and we will call you to confirm your order information. **The altar flowers cost \$25 per vase plus tax.** Reservations may be made for one (\$25) or two vases (\$50). Pulpit flowers are also an option to recognize a special occasion for \$50 plus tax.

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).

ANNUAL MEETING



~VERY IMPORTANT~
ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
JANUARY 30, 2022
Immediately following worship in the sanctuary.



CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING

Obedience and Praise

The act of praising God fairly leaps off the page in today's readings. And hand in hand with that joyful response is the practice of obedience. They can seem to be opposing actions; we tend to think of praise as a spontaneous eruption of joy, while obedience puts us in mind of rules and limits that dampen our fun. In God's world, though, obedience and praise are naturally joined.

The boy Samuel is in the temple because of a vow his mother, Hannah, made to God. It is her obedience that places him in that sacred space. And each year, Eli the priest blesses Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, praying for the formerly barren couple to have children. And they do!

In the gospel reading from Luke, the boy Jesus can also be found in the temple, after a frantic search by his parents. Mary and Joseph do not understand why he would be in the temple, and Jesus does not understand why his parents did not think to look there first: he is, after all, in his Father's house because of obedience to his life's work. After the misunderstanding, though, Jesus "went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:51). Mary too is full of praise as she sees her son's obedience to his call and identity from God.

Far from being the fun-spoiler, obedience leads us to praise. When we let our words and actions point toward God, we will find reasons for praise on every side. And Paul's words to the Colossians bring home the startling realization that obedience is our glad foundation: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful" (Colossians 3:15). It turns out our greatest joy comes from following God's guidance.

Cover: Young Jesus among the doctors of the law in the temple. Crypt of the lower church of San Pio da Pietrelcina, San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. Copyright © RealyEasyStar/Claudio Pagliarani/Alamy Stock Photo. Used by permission.

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