The image features a landscape with a sunset sky in shades of orange, red, and yellow. In the background, dark mountains are silhouetted against the sky. The foreground is a cracked, dry ground surface, with the cracks forming a mosaic of colorful patches in various colors including red, green, blue, purple, yellow, and pink. The overall scene is a mix of natural and artistic elements.

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

MARK 1:3

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

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

WEBSITE: firstlutherantopeka.org

1234 SW Fairlawn Road, Topeka, KS 66604

Church office: (785) 272-5302 CDO office: (785) 272-5999

Ministers

Pastor

Children's Day Out (CDO) Director

Caring for Kids 1st Director

Organist

Director of Music

Director of Handbell Choir

Secretary

Assistant Secretary

Bookkeeper

Missionaries in Russia

Missionaries for Ripe For Harvest World Outreach

All Members of First

Pastor Jenny Jackson

Julie Lamott

Bryleigh Willis

Jerry Anderson

Mark Fuller

Linda Anderson

LaDonna J. Little

Jill Loomans

Cindy Crawford

Rev. Bradn & Natasha Buerkle

Jim & Dawn Anderson

WE WELCOME all who worship with us today! We extend a special greeting to our visitors and invite you to worship with us again soon. Please make yourselves known to our pastor and people.

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION: Lutheran Christians believe that in the sacrament of Holy Communion, by the power of God's Word and Holy Spirit, we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, along with the bread and wine, for our forgiveness and salvation. If you share in this belief, you are welcome to participate with us. Non-communing children and adults may come forward to receive a blessing. White grape juice is available, as well as gluten free wafers. If you desire to receive communion at your pew, please alert an usher during the prelude. Communion is done by intinction.

GREETINGS PARENTS: **Sunday School for children Pre-K through 5th grade** takes place during our worship service. Children will be invited up for a children's sermon with the pastor, after which any who would like are invited to attend Sunday school. This will include a Bible reading, story, craft, and more. The teachers will bring the students back to worship in time for communion with your family. Should you prefer your child to remain in the sanctuary during worship, we have Children's Bibles in the pews and worship activity bags just outside the sanctuary. Faith Formation for our middle school and high school students will take place during the week at our youth group times.

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.

WHEELCHAIR available in the north entranceway or in the church office.
EARPHONES for the hearing impaired and **LARGE PRINT BULLETINS.**



THE CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP AT FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH AN ADVENT EUCHARIST

5:00 P.M. & 10:00 A.M.

DECEMBER 9 & 10, 2023

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 “*Freu Dich Sehr*” (“*Comfort, Comfort Now My People*”) (arr. K. T. Kosche, b. 1947)

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

CHIMES

CALL TO WORSHIP

A: Blessed be God, the eternal † One-in-Three, who was, and is, and is to come.

C: Blessed be God forever and ever.

A: As the world is groaning in pain and suffering

C: we prepare and expect your appearing.

A: Your Spirit has brought us to faith, and your Spirit sends us into mission.

C: We prepare and engage in advocacy and justice-building.

A: We who are baptized into Christ have been called to serve as Jesus’ body in the world.

C: We prepare and rejoice that you already dwell among us.

A: Come, O Christ, and set us free.

C: Come, Emmanuel, bring in your reign of justice and peace.

264 GATHERING SONG “*Prepare the Royal Highway*”

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who opens the heavens and draws near to us with salvation.

C: Amen.

P: God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance. Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Everlasting God,

C: you love justice and you hate wrongdoing. We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness that make us reluctant to work against oppression. We are complicit in systems of exploitation. We choose comfort over courage. We are careless with creation’s bounty. Look upon us with mercy. Turn our hearts again to you. Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways for the sake of our waiting world. Amen.

P: Hear these words of assurance: God clothes you with garments of salvation and covers you with robes of righteousness. In the tender compassion of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. God's covenant is eternal, and God's blessing rests upon us all.

C: Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

SM: Sometimes we see endings, yet God still calls us to expect life.

C: Even from what once seemed beyond hope.

SM: A shoot springs forth fresh and new, the wolf and the lamb can rest together.

C: For a peaceable world emerges, life expectant even from our hearts of stone.

ADVENT HYMN "Light the Candle" Stanza 2 PEACE (The second candle is lit.) See Bulletin Page 11

SM: We light this candle to shine forth with peace, for we know a new day is dawning even if the timing is unexpected.

C: We live in anticipation, awake to divine possibilities.

SM: Praise to you, O God, who gives us courage to start again. You fasten righteousness around your waist and baptize with the Holy Spirit's fire. Bless us as we mirror your mighty fire in these simple flames and teach us to mirror your justice in the paths we prepare. We ask that peace abound in all the earth.

C: Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Congregation shall sit.

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEDICATION OF CHRISTMAS TREE AND CHRISMONS

WORD

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

NOISY OFFERING and CHILDREN'S MESSAGE - Saint Lucia Celebration See Bulletin Page 12

FIRST READING: Isaiah 40:1-11

In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.

¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. ²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. ³A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." ⁶A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. ⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. ⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. ⁹Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. ¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 85:1-2, 8-13

Righteousness shall prepare a pathway for God. (Ps. 85:13)

¹You have been gracious to your | land, O LORD; * you have restored the good for- | tune of Jacob.

²**You have forgiven the iniquity | of your people * and blotted out | all their sins.**

⁸I will listen to what the LORD | God is saying; * for you speak peace to your faithful people * and to those who turn their | hearts to you.

⁹**Truly, your salvation is very near to | those who fear you, * that your glory may dwell | in our land. R**

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have | met together; * righteousness and peace have | kissed each other.

¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up | from the earth, * and righteousness shall look | down from heaven.**

¹²The LORD will indeed | grant prosperity, * and our land will | yield its increase.

¹³**Righteousness shall go be- | fore the LORD * and shall prepare for | God a pathway. R**

SECOND READING: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.

⁸But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

L: This is the Word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God.**

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

CELTIC ALLELUIA



P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Mark, the 1st chapter.

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

GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-8

The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; ³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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

Congregation shall sit.

SERMON

256 HYMN OF THE DAY "Comfort, Comfort Now My People"

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

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 INTERCESSION

A: With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

A brief silence.

A: Send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness. Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: Reveal your majesty in mountain peaks, flowing rivers, and blossoming wilderness roads. Heal the earth where it longs for renewal. Bring wholeness to the earth and all its creatures. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: Turn the hearts of the nations toward righteousness and peace. Increase cooperation for justice between countries, commonwealths, political parties, and diplomatic leaders. In times of prosperity, direct leaders to be generous for the sake of all. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: Comfort your people with tender words of love and healing. Surround all who are grieving, all who know depression or anxiety, or all who feel lonely or forgotten. Be a steadfast presence when all else feels uncertain. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: Grant holy patience to all who are waiting this season especially Richard, Ruth, Alice, Dean, Donna, Jeanie, and Rob 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. Give hope to those seeking employment. Bring reassurance to people awaiting new diagnoses or treatments. Protect expectant parents. Watch with those who keep bedside vigil. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

A: With you a thousand years is like a day. Bless the memory of the saints from ages past and the anticipation of saints yet to be born. Inspire us to live with faith as we await your new heaven and new earth. Merciful God,

C: receive our prayer.

P: Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

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.

Congregation shall sit.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING VOLUNTARY *Improvisation on “Savior of the Nations, Come” (arr. P. Manz, 1919-2009)*

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

OFFERING PRAYER

A: God of our waiting and watching,

C: we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives to the service of all your people. Prepare the way before us as we meet you in this simple meal, through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our peace. Amen.

ADVENT DIALOGUE AND PREFACE

Spoken Responsively

P: God is with us,

C: in this place and in our lives.

P: Let us give thanks to God,

C: in memory and in hope.

P: Illuminating God, source of creation, our Salvation, Hope and Peace. We praise you for your creative labor, bearing expectations for life and love. You spoke to us through unexpected prophets: Isaiah envisioned a blossoming desert; Mary proclaimed a world turned upside down, John the Baptist cried out for repentance. At this expectant hour, your Son Jesus came to bring us extraordinary love and to heal our suffering world. And so, with the shepherds in the fields, with the angels and all the heavenly hosts, we praise your name and join their unending song.

SANCTUS

(tune: “*Angels, from the Realms of Glory*”)

Sung by Congregation

Lo, the Heav’nly host rejoices: “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord!”

Lo, God’s people join their voices: “God of hosts, by all adored,

Heav’n and earth proclaim Your glory, Sing Your praise with one accord!”

Blest is He who now draws near us in the name of God the King!

Blest is He who comes to cheer us - Let our welcome joyful ring:

“Hail! Hosanna! Hallelujah!” Highest praises echoing.

THE CONSECRATION

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

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

P: In this meal, righteousness and peace join together. Come, take your place at the table.

Congregation shall sit.

AGNUS DEI

(tune: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel")

Sung by Congregation

**O Lamb of God, You take away
The sin of all. Have mercy, Lord, we pray!
O Lamb of God, You take away
The sin of all. Have mercy, Lord, we pray!
O Lamb of God, our faith increase,
And grant us now Your gift of peace!**

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

COMMUNION VOLUNTARY *"Reprise on 'E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come'"*

(Manz)

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

C: Amen.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: Generous God, in bread and cup you have revealed your glory for all people to see together. Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim your good news of liberation and release, brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior.

C: Amen.

SENDING

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

BLESSING

P: The God of peace bless you, the love of Christ sustain you in hope, and the anointing of the Spirit † remain upon you now and forever.

C: Amen.

249 SENDING SONG *"On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry"*

DISMISSAL

A: Called by the spirit,

C: **We serve Christ, sharing God's love with all.**

A: Go in peace. Christ is PEACE.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE *“Bereden väg för Herran” (“Prepare the Royal Highway”)*

(Swedish folk tune, 17th century, arr. J. B. Weber, b. 1988)

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ALTAR FLOWERS *are given by Pat Booth in honor of all members and friends leading us through our Advent preparation for Christmas!*

THE ETERNAL CANDLE FOR DECEMBER *is given by Jerry & Marsha Serk in thanks and appreciation to the Music Staff and to all members of our various choirs.*

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

Richard Price (Stormont Vail Hospital), Ruth Denno (Stormont Vail Hospital), Alice Purdy (Stormont Vail Hospital), Dean Johnson (home), Donna Kruger (Kansas Rehab Hospital), Jeanie Schuler (home), Rob Peterson (home), Carren Reed (home), Allyn Lockner (Brewster Health Care), Kathy Cheatham (home), Vera Pearce (home), Verla Buch (Presbyterian Manor), Blake Hopper (home), Frank Phillips (Bonnie's son), Barbara Aubert (friend of Nancy Vaughn), Janine Wagner (Donna Kruger's sister), David McGinnis (Board Member of TLHA), Manny Ramos (Shirley Perry's nephew), Leuita Meyer (Verla Buch's sister-in-law), Don Kaphingst (Margaret Stewart's brother), Heidi Mark (Bill & Joyce's daughter), Sam Pierson (Sherrie Petersen's nephew-in-law), Loren Johannes (friend of Erv & Ann Sanders), Sydney Geneles (Karen Papp's son), Jayne Cool (friend of the Lubers), Anita Freeman (neighbor friend of Nancy & Ken Sherbert), Robert Jones (friend of Sylvia Levings), June Fisher (friend of Marvin Wingert), Gloria & Dennis Lyon (Barb Collins' aunt & uncle), Charline Matheny (friend of Patti Klein), Cheryl Koch (Kathy's sister-in-law), Linda Falchek (friend of Wendy Sanders), Linda Meyer (Verla Buch's sister-in-law), Drew Hartz (Steve & Kathy Couch's son-in-law), Dan Fraleigh (Sherrie Petersen's brother-in-law), Velda Jacobs (Eileen Caspers' aunt), Lenette Kottas (Eileen Caspers' mother), John Browne (Penny & Marvin Boleski's brother-in-law), Katelynn Herring (Jeanie Schuler's great-niece).

MANY THANKS to our *Boy Scouts* for helping assemble and decorate our Christmas tree. They mastered the new tree and Chrismons, having it all in place quickly.

We appreciate their support. Altar Guild Members

LIGHT THE CANDLE



Light the can-dle of LOVE to-day, the Giv-er of love is
 Light the can-dle of PEACE to-day, the Giv-er of peace is
 Light the can-dle of JOY to-day, the Giv-er of joy is
 Light the can-dle of HOPE to-day, the Giv-er of hope will



here! Wel-come the love we live and die for, but
 here! Wel-come the peace we fight and cry for, but
 here! Wel-come the joy we crave and pray for, but
 come! Wel-come the hope we long and wait for, but



on - ly Christ can give. Flick-er and flame and
 on - ly Christ can give. Flick-er and flame and
 on - ly Christ can give. Flick-er and flame and
 on - ly Christ can give. Flick-er and flame and



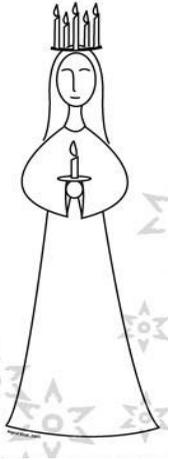
glow with love, light up the world a -
 glow with peace, light up the world a -
 glow with joy, light up the world a -
 glow with hope, light up the world a -



round you. Flick-er and flame and glow with love,
 round you. Flick-er and flame and glow with peace,
 round you. Flick-er and flame and glow with joy,
 round you. Flick-er and flame and glow with hope,



light up the world a - round you.
 light up the world a - round you.
 light up the world a - round you.
 light up the world a - round you. **RETURN TO BULLETIN PAGE 4**



SINCE THE DAYS when the Vikings were Christianized, *Saint Lucia* has been a favorite Christmas tradition among the Swedish people. She was a Sicilian saint, but the Swedes eagerly adopted her. According to legend, *Lucia* was a medieval saint who carried food and drink to hungry folk during a period of famine. Early in the morning, the modern Lucia, traditionally the oldest daughter of the family carries a tray of special buns and cookies to each one in the family as she sings the lovely old melody, “*Santa Lucia.*” *Lucia* wears a white robe with a crimson sash. On her head, she wears a crown of lighted candles, which dispels the blackness of the season of long nights.

**PLEASE BRING NON-PERISHIBLE ITEMS FOR DOORSTEP
DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER.**

SANTA LUCIA

Santa Lucia,
Thy light is glowing
Through darkest winter night
Comfort bestowing.
Dreams float on wings bedight,
Comes then the morning light,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!

Santa Lucia,
Christmas foretelling,
Fill hearts with hope and cheer,
Dark fears dispelling.
Bring to the world again,
Peace and good will to men,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!

✠ 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 10 SECOND ADVENT

SAINT LUCIA

10:00 a.m. – Worship Service (Sanctuary)

10:10 a.m. – Pre-K thru 5th Grade Sunday School

5:00-7:00 p.m.

DRIVE THRU LIVING NATIVITY

Monday, December 11

1:00 p.m. – Staff Meeting

6:30 p.m. – Church Council Meeting (Zoom)

7:00 p.m. – Boy Scout Troop 175 (PH)

Tuesday, December 12

ORGAN TUNING ALL DAY IN SANCTUARY

6:00 p.m. – Cub Scout Den Meetings

7:00 p.m. – Stephen Ministry Supervision (202)

Wednesday, December 13

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

9:00 a.m. – What-Sew-Ever

12:30 p.m. – W-ELCA Gathering at Perkins Restaurant

6:00 p.m. – Advent Midweek Worship Service

Thursday, December 14

5:30 p.m. – Pizza and Caroling (PH)

7:00 p.m. – Den Meeting

Friday, December 15

Pastor Jenny's Day Off

10:00 a.m. – Coffee & Lectionary (202)

Saturday, December 16

10:00 a.m. – Lessons and Carols Rehearsal

5:00 p.m. – Worship Service (Sanctuary)

Sunday, December 17 THIRD ADVENT

LESSONS AND CAROLS

10:00 a.m. – Worship Service (Sanctuary)

LESSONS DECEMBER 17 & 18

Genesis 3:8-15

Genesis 22:15-18

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Micah 5:2-4

St. Luke 1:26-38

St. Matthew 1:18-23

St. Luke 2:8-16

St. Matthew 2:1-11

St. John 1:1-14



LAY MINISTERS 12/10	ST. LUCIA & DTLN	10:00 a.m.
Assisting Minister	Ann McConkey	
Lector	Kathy Koch	
Acolyte	Lucas Jackson	
Advent Candlelighters	Stephen Ministers	
Communion Assistants	Patricia Drake, Joyce Koenig	
Greeters	Barb Collins, Kathy Koch	
Ushers	Laura Garner, Bob Wollin	
Council Members	LaVerne Engelhardt, Nancy Johnson	
Sunday School Leaders	Lydia Peterson, Bob Wollin	
Coffee Host	SAINT LUCIA	
Bus Driver & Host/Hostess	Marvin & Penny Boleski	
Saturday Lector	Karen Wollin	
Altar Guild Setup/Clean up	Pat Drake, Nancy Vaughn, Karen Wollin, Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrill	
Tech Team	Austin Jackson, John Hanna	
Stephen Minister on Call	Diane Dukat	

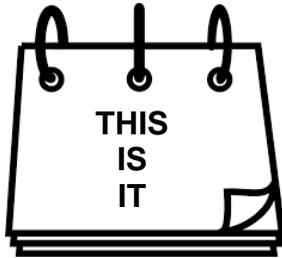
LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT WEEK

LAY MINISTERS 12/17	LESSONS & CAROLS	10:00 a.m.
Assisting Minister	Diane Dukat	
Lesson 1-3 Readers	1. Jeff Montague	2. Elwyn Luber
Lesson 4-6 Readers	4. Char Taggart	5. Lea Welch
Lesson 7-9 Readers	7. Dick Schaeffer	8. Pastor Jenny
		9. John Hanna
Acolyte	Abram Crawford	
Advent Candlelighters	Stephen Ministers	
Greeters	Karon Gambrill, Linda Harold	
Ushers	Bill & Phyllis Buch	
Council Member		
Coffee Host	Linda Harold	
Bus Driver & Host/Hostess	Randy Debenham, Barb Collins	
Saturday Lectors	Karen Wollin, Sherrie Petersen, Tina Lewis, Joyce Mark	
Altar Guild Setup/Clean up	Karen Wollin, Dana Nelsen, Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrill	
Tech Team	Jenn Betz, Austin Jackson	
Stephen Minister on Call	Patti Klein	



WE ARE THE CHURCH

PARISH NOTICES



**DRIVE THRU LIVING NATIVITY
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 5:00-7:00 P.M
Lights, camera, action!!**

**Today's THE day to present our gift to the Topeka community.
If you are not signed up to help, there may be last-minute needs.**

**At the very least, we hope that you will drive through the
Drive Through Living Nativity.**

Questions? Contact Jeff Montague (785-249-4024, jjimickey@hotmail.com) or
Dana Nelsen (661-972-4100, duanan@verizon.net).

MIDWEEK ADVENT WORSHIP EACH WEDNESDAY AT 6:00 P.M.

Gather for scripture, song, prayer, and wassail!

LOOKING AHEAD December 13 - Joy: This week we will reflect on God's gift of joy. We will be collecting toys that bring joy to children for families that cannot afford them. Games, books, puzzles, stuffed animals, school supplies, etc.



LADIES OF THE CHURCH, please come join WOMEN OF THE ELCA on December 13th at Perkins Restaurant at 12:30 p.m. for a TREAT YOURSELF HOLIDAY CELEBRATION! Please contact Carolyn Olson to reserve a place at our table. EITHER CALL 785-633-3786 OR EMAIL ME AT COLSON3958@YAHOO.COM BY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10th.



ALL MEMBERS of First Lutheran are invited to go CHRISTMAS CAROLING to our HOMEBOUND MEMBERS on Thursday, December 14th. We will meet in the Parish Hall at **5:30 PM for pizza.** We will divide into teams and from **6:00-8:00 PM** we will spread Christmas cheer to our shut-in members. **Please RSVP to Marsha Serk at jermar812@aol.com by December 11th** if you plan to attend and the number in your family so that we have enough pizza for everyone to enjoy. We hope you will join us. The smiles on our Homebound Members faces are well worth our time and we have fun as well.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

It has been the custom at First Lutheran to provide a monetary gift to First's staff at Christmas. If you would like to make a contribution for the **STAFF CHRISTMAS GIFT**, please either mail in or drop off checks payable to "First Lutheran Church" and indicate "staff gift" in the memo line. You can also go to our website www.firstlutherantopeka.org and use the contribute tab.

Please have all contributions in by December 17th. *Stephen Couch, Council President*



ANNUAL REPORTS DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27th

ALL Committees and Organizations may submit their annual reports to the church office by **Wednesday, December 27th**, so that the annual booklet of reports can be printed and collated for availability to the congregation by **Sunday, January 21st**. Please email reports to the Church Secretary, LaDonna at 1stlutherantopeka@sbcglobal.net or mail a typed copy to the church office.

Thank you!



WANTED: COFFEE HOSTS

If you're enjoying coffee after the Sunday service, please consider being a host. If we want to keep this hospitality going, we're going to need volunteers. It's very simple, pick up a "jug" of OJ, arrive at the church a tad before the 10:00 a.m. service and get the coffee brewing. Set out the creamer, sugar, and stir sticks. Duck out of service a tad before the end and start to fill a few cups of coffee and juice. All supplies provided, except the OJ (you can be reimbursed for that). Please sign up on the clipboard lying on the coffee service table. **Contact Parish Life Chair Jeff Montague** (in church directory) with any questions or for more detailed instructions. One person can certainly handle the duties, but two is more fun, so recruit a helper.

GRACE

WRAP-UP STEWARDSHIP EMPHASIS 2023 –

BLESSINGS-OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S GRACE

Ephesians 2: 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Part 1 - Thank you for your generous response to God's grace. The Finance Committee and Church Council will use our commitments to develop a budget and a spending plan, as we seek to carry out God's mission to the world. If you haven't already, it's never too late to submit your Blessing Response. Thank you to those of you that have submitted their Blessing Response. If you have not, we invite you to do so.

Blessing Response Cards are available in the Nave Lounge, or you may contact LaDonna in the office for a replacement to be mailed to you. You may also make a verbal response by contacting Jill Loomans through the office, or Ralph Krumins. Questions? Please contact Ralph Krumins, Stewardship Chair - 785-554-1162, or leave a message at the church office – 785-272-5302, and he will return your call.

Part 2 – As the end of the year approaches, if you have questions about the commitments you made for 2023, please contact Jill Loomans through the office - 785-272-5302. She is normally in the church office on Monday mornings. Thank you.



ETERNAL CANDLES can be found in both the main Worship Center and our beautiful Chapel. In **2024** 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 lstlutherantopeka@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. THE LAST AVAILABLE MONTH IS MAY.**

ALTAR FLOWERS FOR 2024

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 2024 now.

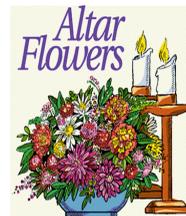
There is a chart of reserved dates and forms to complete in the hallway by the offices. You may complete the questionnaire and leave it there. You may also contact either LaDonna at the church office 785-272-5302 or Jeanie Schuler 785-845-7964 and we will gladly take your information over the phone.

The form includes a place for an email address or cell phone to which our florist may send your invoice in order to reduce costs. Should you require a paper invoice be mailed, he will accommodate your request. The florist, Mark Lamantia, also invites you to call him with a credit card payment if that is your preference.

For those with annual orders, the chart has been completed and we will call/email 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 2024 DATES FOR BOTH VASES (unless indicated otherwise) ARE:

1/7, 3/31, 4/14 (one vase), 4/21 (one vase), 4/28, 5/26, 6/30, 7/7, 7/14, 7/28, 8/18, 8/25, 9/22, 11/17 (one vase), 12/8, 12/29.





SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24th

10:00 a.m. – FOURTH ADVENT WORSHIP

3:00 p.m. – Special Christmas Prelude Music

3:30 p.m. - CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS COMMUNION

7:00 p.m. - Special Christmas Prelude Music

7:30 p.m. - CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS COMMUNION

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30th

5:00 p.m. - CHRISTMAS CAROL COMMUNION AND HEALING SERVICE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31st FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

10:00 a.m. – CHRISTMAS CAROL COMMUNION AND HEALING SERVICE

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

Monday, December 25th – OFFICE CLOSED

Tuesday, December 26th – OFFICE CLOSED

Friday, December 29th – OFFICE CLOSSES AT NOON

Monday, January 1st – OFFICE CLOSED

BUILDING ALARM WILL BE SET WHEN OFFICE IS CLOSED





Red poinsettias may be ordered now for the Chancel area for the Christmas Eve, December 24th worship services. Plants are \$7.75 each and come in a 6½ inch pot with 5 to 6 blooms.

The ***DEADLINE TO ORDER*** is ***TODAY, December 10th***.

Poinsettias may be picked up after the 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service.

Person donating poinsettia is responsible for picking it up.

Tear off and return to the church office or place in the offering plate.



Name _____

Number of poinsettias _____

Amount Enclosed _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

New Beginnings

There are lots of ways to open a story, perhaps most famously “Once upon a time . . .” Similarly, the gospel-writer Mark starts out, “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ,” even though his narrative lacks the birth, angelic announcements, and childhood stories Matthew and Luke tell about Jesus. And John’s gospel starts even farther back, at the beginning of creation, before skipping to Jesus’ adult years. What we can take from these varying opening narratives is that the story of Jesus does not have *one* beginning, but many beginnings—each a new entry point into the old, old story of God’s love breaking into the world.

Mark starts with an invitation to baptism, repentance, and forgiveness of sins. Even so, John the baptizer declares that another new start is coming, with the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus will bring. What’s more, while his baptism by John is clearly not the first event in Jesus’ life, it marks a new beginning just before he heads off to the wilderness and then on to start his public ministry.

We celebrate Advent every year at this time, but each time is a new experience, a new beginning of the church year, a new chance to anticipate grace. What has changed for you since last Advent? What has changed for your family and community? What expectations or hopes do you have for God’s presence with us? What new beginning would be a blessing?

Every Sunday is a celebration of the resurrection, and each time we take part in confession and forgiveness we experience a fresh start. Mark opens with baptism, which is a new beginning for each of us. Remembering our baptism offers us daily assurance of the new things God is always unfolding around us. Today as we worship, we pray for the Holy Spirit to stir up something new in, with, and among us.

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