

*Greetings, favored one!*  
*The Lord is*  
*with you*

LUKE 1:28



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

**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**WEBSITE: [firstlutherantopeka.org](http://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 1<sup>st</sup> 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:** We are glad you are here! Children's Bibles are in the pews and worship activity bags are on a cart just outside the sanctuary to provide additional resources to enrich this time of worship for you and your family. **Sunday School for children Pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade** takes place during our worship service again beginning January 7<sup>th</sup>. During Sunday School, 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.

**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.**

**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 23 & 24, 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** “Noel sur les Flutes”

*(Louis Claude d'Aquin, 1629-1696)*

*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 night grows longer, and the shadows settle in,

**C: we ponder your marvelous designing.**

A: When our hearts are wintering, weary with grief and woe,

**C: we ponder and seek your wisdom beyond our understanding.**

A: In each moment fleeting, each fragile life beholding, in each gift of your bestowing,

**C: we ponder and trust your promises fully.**

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

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

**254 GATHERING SONG** “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” (Sung to Tune: *Hyfrydol*)

### 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 FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE

SM: As our Advent pilgrimage draws to completion, may we find courage to share God's love.

C: **Love for the unexpected challenge.**

SM: Love for the vulnerable one.

C: **Love for the presence of God.**

ADVENT HYMN "*Light the Candle*" Stanza 1 LOVE (*The fourth candle is lit.*) See Bulletin Page 11

SM: We light this candle as a symbol of God's love for us and our love for one another.

C: **For the Lord rejoices over us with gladness and renews us with His love.**

SM: He exults over us with singing and turns our shame to praise.

C: **Come, Lord Jesus, Come!**

SM: Praise to you, O God, who lives with us, sharing our flesh and bones. As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed, so we dream and wait for you. Bless us and let your face shine upon us, more radiant than these candles, and more dear than all else we seek. Restore us when we fail to refuse the evil and choose the good and banish all our fears. We pray in the name of Emmanuel, your promised child and Savior.

C: **Amen.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

*Congregation shall sit.*

### WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

## WORD

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

### NOISY OFFERING and CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

#### FIRST READING: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

*Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.*

<sup>1</sup>Now when David the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you." <sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup>Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" <sup>8</sup>Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

#### **PSALM 89:1-4, 19-26** (*Spoken Responsively*)

<sup>1</sup>Your love, O LORD, forever will I sing; from age to age my mouth will proclaim your faithfulness.

**<sup>2</sup>For I am persuaded that your steadfast love is established forever; you have set your faithfulness firmly in the heavens.**

<sup>3</sup>"I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn an oath to David my servant:

**<sup>4</sup>I will establish your line forever, and preserve your throne for all generations.**

<sup>19</sup>You spoke once in a vision and said to your faithful people: "I have set the crown upon a warrior and have exalted one chosen out of the people.

**<sup>20</sup>I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him.**

<sup>21</sup>My hand will hold him fast and my arm will make him strong.

**<sup>22</sup>No enemy shall deceive him, nor shall the wicked bring him down.**

<sup>23</sup>I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

**<sup>24</sup>My faithfulness and steadfast love are with him, and he shall be victorious through my name.**

<sup>25</sup>I will set his hand on the sea, and his right hand on the rivers.

**<sup>26</sup>He will say to me, 'You are my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.'**

#### **SECOND READING: Romans 16:25-27**

*Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.*

<sup>25</sup>Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup>but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— <sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

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 three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The melody is written on a five-line staff. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple 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 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

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

### GOSPEL: Luke 1:26-38

*In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.*

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

*"Magnificat"*

Sung by Quartet

*(S. S. Wesley, 1810-1876)*

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Congregation shall sit.*

### SERMON

### 723 HYMN OF THE DAY *"Canticle of the Turning"*

*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: You promise mercy to Abraham and Sarah and their descendants forever. Bring your church into thoughtful, caring, and collaborative relationship with those of other faiths. Strengthen our shared values, that we work together in caring for our world. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: As fields and crops lie dormant, bless them with holy rest. Prepare them to thrive, that they provide abundant food in due season. Protect animals who hibernate and provide for all who scavenge for food in the lean season. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: You raise up the lowly and cast down the arrogant. Teach humility to all in positions of authority. Break down systems of oppression, especially systems that perpetuate inequity and exclusion. Do not allow wealth, power, or pride to become idols that obscure your call to justice. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Look with favor upon all who cry out to you. Accompany with tenderness all who are afraid or ill especially Richard, Cherie, 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. Rescue all who experience abuse or who live under threat of violence, especially refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers in search of a safe and stable home. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: You are pleased to make your home among us. Make our homecomings joyful as we gather with friends, families, and chosen families in celebration. Grant safety to all who travel. Sustain the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and other ministries that assist in setting up new homes. Merciful God,

**C: receive our prayer.**

A: Blessed are you for Mary and all your servants in every generation who lived according to your promise of mercy. Strengthen us by their example until the revelation of your glory is made known. 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** “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

*(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 "Aria" ("Hock sei gepriesen unser Gott")**

*(P. Fey, b. 1998)*

*Based on Luke 1:68-71*

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.*

*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.**

## 242 SENDING SONG *“Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn”*

## DISMISSAL

A: Called by the spirit,

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

A: Go in peace. Christ is LOVE.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

## POSTLUDE *“The King Will Come”*

*(arr. M. Burkhardt, b. 1957)*

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**ALTAR FLOWERS** *are given by Ralph & Maureen Krumins in memory of their parents,  
Rolfs & Rosalia Krumins and James D. & Helen F. Call.*

**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.*

**OUR CONDOLENCES** to *Carren Reed* on the death of her son, Loren Reed.



## 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**

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

Richard Price (home), Cherie McGinnis (home), Ruth Denno (Lexington Park Rehab), Alice Purdy (Kansas Rehab 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), Lura Granberry (LaDonna Little's mother), 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).

<b>LAY MINISTERS 12/24</b>	<b>FOURTH ADVENT</b>	<b>10:00 a.m.</b>
<b>Assisting Minister</b>		Jeff Montague
<b>Lector / Acolyte</b>		Aurora Stone / Lucas Jackson
<b>Advent Candlelighters</b>		Stephen Ministers
<b>Communion Assistants</b>		Barb Collins, John Hanna
<b>Greeters / Ushers</b>		John Hanna, Robert Hanna / Alan & Anne Hageman
<b>Council Member</b>		Diane Dukat
<b>Saturday Lector</b>		Joyce Mark
<b>Altar Guild Setup/Clean up</b>	Ann McConkey, Jeanie Schuler, Karen Wollin, Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrill	
<b>Tech Team</b>		Stephen Blank, Jenn Betz
<b>Stephen Minister on Call</b>		Teresa Smith

**LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT WEEK**

<b>LAY MINISTERS 12/31</b>	<b>NEW YEAR'S EVE</b>	<b>10:00 a.m.</b>
<b>Assisting Minister</b>		Joyce Koenig
<b>Lector / Acolyte</b>		Dean Johnson / Katie Krumins
<b>Communion Assistants</b>		Barb Collins, JoAnn Stanley
<b>Greeters / Ushers</b>		Pat Booth, Susan Schaeffer / Erv & Ann Sanders
<b>Council Member</b>		
<b>Coffee Host</b>		JoAnn Stanley
<b>Bus Driver &amp; Host/Hostess</b>		Randy Debenham, Barb Collins
<b>Saturday Lector</b>		Rob & Nancy Peterson
<b>Altar Guild Setup/Clean up</b>		Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrill
<b>Tech Team</b>		
<b>Stephen Minister on Call</b>		Sara Welch

## ✠ IN THE FIRST PLACE THIS WEEK ✠

*CDO schedule: Christmas Break December 20<sup>th</sup> through January 4<sup>th</sup>*

### **Sunday, December 24 FOURTH ADVENT**

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

### **CHRISTMAS EVE**

3:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. –

Candlelight Christmas Communion

### **Monday, December 25 CHRISTMAS DAY**

**HOLIDAY – OFFICE CLOSED**

**Tuesday, December 26**

**HOLIDAY – OFFICE CLOSED**

7:00 p.m. – Witness Committee (Z)

**Wednesday, December 27**

**ANNUAL REPORTS DUE**

**Thursday, December 28**

**Friday, December 29**

Pastor Jenny's Day Off

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

**OFFICE CLOSSES AT NOON**

### **Saturday, December 30**

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. – Parish Hall in Use

5:00 p.m. – Christmas Carol & Healing Service

(Chapel)

**Sunday, December 31**

**FIRST AFTER CHRISTMAS**

10:00 a.m. –

Christmas Carol and Healing Service

(Sanctuary)

### **LESSONS DECEMBER 30 & 31**

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

Psalm 148

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:22-40



### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>**

**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 30<sup>th</sup>**

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

### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31<sup>st</sup> FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS**

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

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

**Monday, December 25<sup>th</sup> – OFFICE CLOSED**

**Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup> – OFFICE CLOSED**

**Friday, December 29<sup>th</sup> – OFFICE CLOSSES AT NOON**

**Monday, January 1<sup>st</sup> – OFFICE CLOSED**



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

# PARISH NOTICES



## ANNUAL REPORTS DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27<sup>th</sup>

ALL Committees and Organizations may submit their annual reports to the church office by Wednesday, December 27<sup>th</sup>, so that the annual booklet of reports can be printed and collated for availability to the congregation by Sunday, January 21<sup>st</sup>. Please email reports to the Church Secretary, LaDonna at [1stlutherantopeka@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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.

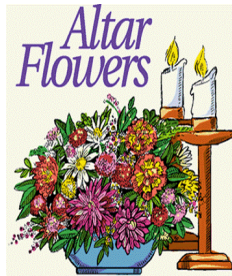
**Part 2** – As the end of the year approaches, if you have questions about the commitments you made for 2023, please contact Jill Loomans through the office - 785-272-5302. She is normally in the church office on Monday mornings. Thank you.



**EARTH FIRST** will be holding a meeting for the congregation on **Thursday, January 11 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Sanctuary regarding First Lutheran moving in the direction of **installing solar panels**. Guest speakers will be Mr. Clyde Schwanke from Southern Hills Mennonite Church and Mr. Bill Wood from Cromwell Environmental. Please come out to learn about the benefits of solar energy. Bring your questions and concerns! We hope you will plan on attending to learn how we at First can continue being good stewards of God's creation! If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Couch at 570-449-5021 or [couch1093@gmail.com](mailto:couch1093@gmail.com).



**MAY IS THE LAST MONTH AVAILABLE FOR ETERNAL CANDLES.** Please contact LaDonna, in the church office, (785) 272-5302 or email her at [1stlutherantopeka@sbcglobal.net](mailto:1stlutherantopeka@sbcglobal.net) to sign-up and give information that will be included in the bulletin. **The cost will be \$20 for the month.**



### 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, 12/8, 12/29.

## How Can This Be?

Mary receives a visit from the angel Gabriel, who shares the news that she will give birth to a holy one who will be called the Son of God. Her answer is not surprising: “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” We also hear that Elizabeth has conceived a child in her old age. How can *this* be?

While not always asked in just this way, the sentiment resounds throughout scripture. Noah is told of a coming flood, Abram and Sarai are promised a child in their old age, Moses is called to lead the people of Israel out from slavery under Pharaoh, and prophets foretell an end to exile. Every time, people wonder, *How can this be?*

Today we join Mary and Elizabeth in anticipation of the promised coming of the Son of God who will reign forever, and of the prophet-son who will prepare Jesus’ way. Mary’s question is an Advent question. But as we head through this new church year, it is a question we can return to again and again. It is a Christmas question that could have come from the mouths of the shepherds. It is an Epiphany question brought to mind by the bright light of a star. It is an Easter question from the women at the tomb and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It is a Pentecost question for those set afire with the Holy Spirit and for those who hear their proclamation about Jesus in their own languages.

If we could make all things new on our own, we would not need God. If we could conquer death and bring reconciliation to the world, we would not need grace. But since nothing is impossible with God, we encounter new life in ways we have not imagined and find ourselves asking, *How can this be?* In joyous fear and trembling, we too can echo Mary and the others who each in their own way said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord!”