

LUKE 2:30

MY
EYES
HAVE SEEN YOUR
SALVATION

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: 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 5th grade** takes place during our worship service again beginning **January 7th**. 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 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

A CHRISTMAS CAROL EUCHARIST and HEALING SERVICE

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

DECEMBER 30 & 31, 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 “*In Dulci Jubilo*”

(arr. G. Kemner, 1932-2007)

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.**

269 GATHERING SONG “Once in Royal David’s City”

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Congregation shall sit.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORD

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

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:10-62:3

To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

^{62:1}For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. ²The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. ³You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 148 (Spoken Responsively)

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise God in the heights.

²**Praise the LORD, all you angels; sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**

³Praise the LORD, sun and moon; sing praise, all you shining stars.

⁴**Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens, and you waters above the heavens.**

⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD, who commanded, and they were created,
⁶**who made them stand fast forever and ever, giving them a law that shall not pass away.**

⁷Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps;

⁸**fire and hail, snow and fog, tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**

⁹mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars;

¹⁰**wild beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds;**

¹¹sovereigns of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the world;

¹²**young men and maidens, old and young together.**

¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD, whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

¹⁴**The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants, the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. Hallelujah!**

SECOND READING: Galatians 4:4-7

Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.

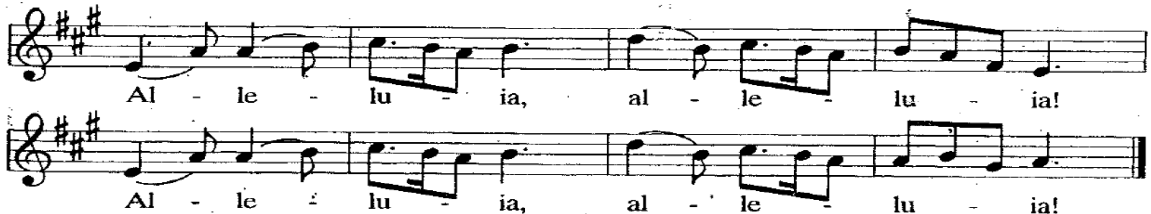
⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

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 Luke, the 2nd chapter.

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

GOSPEL: Luke 2:22-40

Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, [Joseph and Mary] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, ²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; ³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

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"* ***Please stand for Stanza 5***

Congregation shall remain standing or sitting, 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: Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

A: You inspire faith in our hearts and call us to rejoice with our whole selves at the salvation you bring. Make our churches places of belonging for all people in the fullness of their being. Raise up the gifts and the witness of people who are neurodivergent, living with disability, or bearing invisible illness. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Your praise is sung throughout creation in all times and seasons. As the new year turns, ground us in your changeless and sustaining love. Keep us attentive to the rhythms of the cosmos and inspire us to live in harmony with all the earth. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Give hope and stamina to leaders who work tirelessly for the sake of the most vulnerable. We pray especially for organizations working on behalf of children to provide basic needs, to protect from abuse and neglect, to address trauma, and to rescue from trafficking. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Sustain all people who, like Simeon and Anna, have been waiting for salvation and wholeness especially Stephen, 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. We pray especially for anyone living with cancer or chronic illness, all people who are in physical rehabilitation or addiction recovery, and those experiencing complications from long COVID. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Let this community of faith be a joyful and welcome place for all ages and generations. Teach us to honor the wisdom of children, the inquisitiveness of youth, the thoughtfulness of adults, and the knowledge of elders. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: We give thanks for all the beloved who lived with expectation and departed this life in peace. Sustain us in joy until we join them around your throne. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

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.

Congregation shall sit.

VOLUNTARY *"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

(G. Holst, 1874-1934, arr. J. D. Kimball, b. 1958)

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

OFFERING PRAYER

A: God of abundance,

C: receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. 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 the 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"*
**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.**

Sung by Congregation

**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.

COMMUNION VOLUNTARY *"Still, Still, Still"*

(arr. P. Manz, 1919-2009)

"What is This Lovely Fragrance"

(arr. Manz)

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

C: Amen.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

LITANY FOR THE NEW YEAR

A: God of our Life, we thank you for the year that is passed and for the dawn of another year.

C: We thank you for whatever happiness has been our lot.

A: We thank you for whatever trials have come our way.

C: And we pray for you to transform both our happy memories and the remembrance of trials into nurture for our spirits.

A: In the New Year, Timeless One, may your Spirit's presence compel us to be faithful co-workers with you, pursuing your purposes in this hate-filled, pain-racked world:

C: freedom, peace with justice, compassion without bounds.

A: God Beyond Time, at a time when we stand between memory and hope,

C: we pray for those having too many memories and little or no hope, except in your final mercy.

- A: Be with those who are walking in death's shadow,
C: and equip us for the ministry of presence that we may at least be with them, near them, even if there is nothing else we can do.
 A: We pray in the name of him whose own years on Earth were few, but whose impact for healing was incalculable.
C: Jesus Christ, the Lord of the old year and of the new and of all our years, the Lord of history and of eternity. Amen.

HEALING

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

LITANY FOR HEALING

Hymn 617 "We Come to You for Healing, Lord" Verse 1

- P: Gracious God, by day and night we pour out our prayer to you. We are crying out for justice, yearning for healing and wholeness in body and spirit, and longing for your peace. Come quickly to help us, O God.
 A: We feel the suffering, sorrow, and shame of the oppressed, and your people cry,
C: How long, O Lord?
 A: We hear of hateful violence and abuse, and your people cry,
C: How long, O Lord?
 A: We see your creation destroyed by carelessness and greed, and your people cry,
C: How long, O Lord?
 A: We weep for the victims of war, for the aid workers and peacemakers, and the wailing of those who hunger for peace, and your people cry,
C: How long, O Lord?
 A: We long for a day when death will be no more, mourning, crying, and pain will be no more, and your people cry,
C: How long, O Lord?
 P: Gracious God, keep us working and praying for the day when your justice will roll down like waters, and your righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24) Replenish our strength and stir up our hope as we look for signs of your coming reign. And fill us with the peace that passes understanding--the deep peace of Jesus Christ, our Savior, in whose holy name we pray.
C: Amen.

Hymn 617 "We Come to You for Healing, Lord" Verse 1

- A: Let us pray.
 A: O God who created the heavens and stretched them out,
C: We praise you!
 A: You fashioned the earth and all that lives there,
C: We praise you!
 A: You give breath to the people upon it, and Spirit to those who dwell on it.
C: We praise you and thank you, O God!

P: May the broken hearted be healed, the poor hear the good news, the captives be brought out of darkness,

C: **Your Kingdom come, O Lord, Your will be done. Amen.**

(Silence is kept.)

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 may come forward at this time to receive prayer, the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. You may kneel, sit, or stand at the communion railing. Those congregants who do not come forward are invited to spend time in silent prayer or lift their voices in song.

Hymn 617 “We Come to You for Healing, Lord” Verses 2-5

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!**

313 SENDING SONG “O Lord, Now Let Your Servant”

DISMISSAL

A: Called by the spirit,

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

A: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE *"Glory to God in the Highest"*

(G. B. Pergolesi, 1710-1736)

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The CHOIR will not be singing today. REHEARSAL WILL RESUME JANUARY 4th.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS *are given by Kay Cole in loving memory of her husband, Charles and parents, Andrew & Ramona Riotto and by Barb Collins – We made it through another year – Thank God.*

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.*

*In Our Thoughts
& Prayers*



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

Stephen Blank (home), Richard Price (home), Cherie McGinnis (home), Ruth Denno (Lexington Park Rehab), Alice Purdy (Kansas Rehab Hospital), Dean Johnson (home), Donna Kruger (Lexington Park Rehab), 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), Aneka Lilya (LaDonna Little's sister-in-law), 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).

LAY MINISTERS 12/31	NEW YEAR'S EVE 10:00 a.m.
Assisting Minister	Joyce Koenig
Lector	Lindsay Blank
Acolyte	Katie Krumins
Communion Assistants	Barb Collins, JoAnn Stanley
Greeters	Pat Booth, Susan Schaeffer
Ushers	Erv & Ann Sanders
Council Member	Laura Garner
Coffee Host	JoAnn Stanley
Bus Driver & Host/Hostess	Randy Debenham, Barb Collins
Saturday Lector	Rob & Nancy Peterson
Altar Guild Setup/Clean up	Nancy Vaughn, Jeanie Schuler, Karen Wollin, Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrell
Tech Team	Stephen Blank, Austin Jackson
Stephen Minister on Call	Sara Welch

LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT WEEK

LAY MINISTERS 1/7	BAPTISM OF OUR LORD 10:00 a.m.
Assisting Minister	Joyce Koenig
Lector	Jenn Betz
Acolyte	Cole Schultz
Communion Assistants	Nancy Besta, JoAnn Stanley
Greeters	Randy Debenham, Dana Nelsen
Ushers	Kevin Eaton, Bob Wollin
Council Member	LaVerne Engelhardt, Nancy Johnson
Wise Men	John Hanna, Dan McCready, Brad Merryman
Sunday School Leaders	Barb Collins, Karon Gambrell
Coffee Host	Kathy Couch, Carolyn Olson
Bus Driver & Host/Hostess	Marvin & Penny Boleski
Saturday Lector	Sherrie Petersen
Altar Guild Setup/Clean up	Barb Collins, Kathy Couch, Karen Wollin, Nancy Besta, Karon Gambrell
Tech Team	Jenn Betz, John Hanna
Stephen Minister on Call	Dick Schaeffer



✠ 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 31

FIRST AFTER CHRISTMAS

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

NEW YEAR'S EVE



Monday, January 1

NEW YEAR'S DAY

HOLIDAY – OFFICE CLOSED

Tuesday, January 2

6:30 p.m. – Cub Scout Pack 175 (PH)

Wednesday, January 3

CDO Staff Returns

9:00 a.m. – What-Sew-Ever

6:30 p.m. – Parish Life Committee (202)

6:30 p.m. – Music Staff Meeting (Z)

7:00 p.m. – Worship Committee (Z)

Thursday, January 4

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. - CDO Resumes

6:15 p.m. – Bell Choir Rehearsal

7:00 p.m. – Vocal Choir Rehearsal

Friday, January 5

Pastor Jenny's Day Off

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

Saturday, January 6 EPIPHANY

9:00-11:00 a.m. – Pinewood Derby Workshop (PH)

5:00 p.m. – Worship Service (Chapel)

Sunday, January 7

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

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

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

11:30 a.m. – Children, Youth & Family Ministry

6:00 p.m. – Pastor Jenny at Arbor Court Worship

LESSONS JANUARY 6 & 7

Genesis 1:1-5 Psalm 29

Acts 19:1-7 Mark 1:4-11

PARISH NOTICES



ANNUAL REPORTS ARE PAST DUE

Please email reports to the Church Secretary, LaDonna at lstlutherantopeka@sbcglobal.net or mail a typed copy to the church office. Thank you!



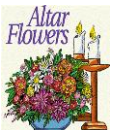
EARTH FIRST will be holding a meeting for the congregation on **Thursday, January 11 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Sanctuary regarding First Lutheran moving in the direction of **installing solar panels**. Guest speakers will be Mr. Clyde Schwanke from Southern Hills Mennonite Church and Mr. Bill Wood from Cromwell 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.

PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING US HAVE FRESH FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR IN 2024.

OPEN 2024 DATES FOR BOTH VASES (unless indicated otherwise) ARE:

3/31, 4/14 (one vase), 4/21 (one vase), 4/28, 6/30 (one vase), 7/14 (one vase), 7/28, 8/18,
8/25 (one vase), 12/8, 12/29.

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



ANNUAL MEETING



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

~VERY IMPORTANT~

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

JANUARY 28, 2024

Immediately following worship in the sanctuary.



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

MARGARET WORRELL and HELEN NUNEMAKER MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

The Endowment Committee is pleased to announce that \$750 scholarships will be available from the Margaret Worrell and Helen Nunemaker Memorial Funds for the Spring 2024 academic term, and will be awarded to qualified applicants, and previous scholarship recipients may apply.

These scholarships are for members of First Lutheran for the purpose of pursuing undergraduate, graduate, technical, or such other training which enables members of this congregation to grow in education, Christian faith, and service to God's people.

APPLICATION DEADLINE is January 28, 2024, and application information is available from the Church Office or from any member of the Endowment Committee: Char Taggart, Bob Wollin, Erv Sanders, Diane Dukat, or Bill Barker.

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.



Affirmation and Expectation

Imagine the baptism of an infant on a winter Sunday morning. Imagine the baby, dressed in a fragile heirloom, and family members and sponsors crowded around the font. Imagine the richness of the ritual—the pronouncement of ancient promises, wet hands and hair, an oily cross on soft skin, a freshly lit candle, laughter and applause.

Now, imagine that an elder in the congregation rises and, unprompted, takes the baby in his arms. As the people look on in stunned silence, he sings a hymn of heartfelt gratitude and wonder. Then another elder stands, turns to face the assembly, and testifies to God’s goodness on account of this child. Imagine the surprise. Imagine the indelible memory.

Something similar happens when Mary and Joseph bring the baby Jesus to the temple to present him to the Lord. Once they have done their part to mark Jesus as a member of God’s people, two strangers unexpectedly acknowledge him too. Simeon and Anna have each spent a lifetime on the lookout for a sign of God’s promised redemption. And stumbling upon him in the temple, they do not hesitate to say so: “My eyes have seen your salvation,” Simeon sings, “which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.”

But it isn’t all good news. Peering into Mary’s eyes, the prophet also foresees that Jesus will uncover the thoughts of many a heart, and that the end result will feel like a blade to her soul. As if she did not already have plenty to ponder (Luke 2:19)!

There is perhaps nothing like the arrival of a child to inspire our hopes and fears for the future. And spoken words of affirmation and expectation have the power to illuminate the possibilities. Jesus is the child in whom God makes the greatest promises. So rejoice with prophets like Simeon and Anna, those who see him for who he is. And, come what may, hold tight to their testimony until God’s promises are fulfilled.

Cover: Presentation of Jesus at the temple (1963), fresco, by Dom Georges Sagat. Keur Moussa Abbey, Keur Moussa, Senegal. Photo copyright © Godong/Robert Harding Picture Library/Superstock. Used by permission.

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