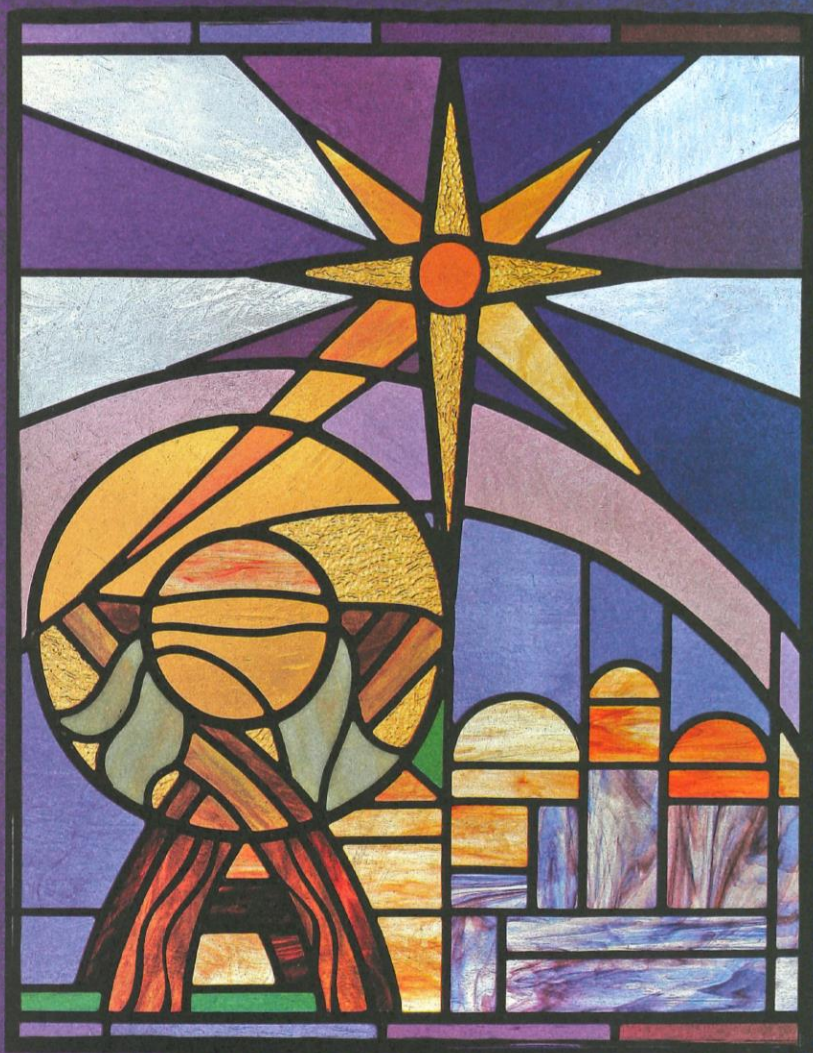


To you is
born this
day a

Savior

LUKE 2:11



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

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

WEBSITE: firstlutherantopeka.org

1234 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 & Children's 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

MERRY CHRISTMAS! Welcome to First Lutheran Church. We pray that through the gift of Jesus, that you may know the wonder of being loved unconditionally, cherished unceasingly, and saved eternally. If you are looking for a place to worship, we would love to welcome you into our church community, so that our church home may become yours.

Pastor Jenny Jackson and the members and staff of First Lutheran Church

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

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.

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

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.

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

CHRISTMAS EVE

3:30 & 7:30 P.M.

DECEMBER 24, 2023

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

Worship begins with the music of the organ.

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

PRELUDE “Gloria” (T. Albrecht, b. 1950)

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

Chorale

Improvisation

Fuga

(Paul Manz, 1919-2009)

(J. S. Bach, 1685-1750)

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” (African American Spiritual, arr. J. Wayne Kerr, b. 1958)

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

Chorale Prelude

Improvisation

Chorale Prelude

(F. Zachau, 1663-1712)

(Paul Manz)

(J. S. Bach)

“Gesù Bambino”

(P. A. Yon, 1886-1943)

“O Holy Night”

(A. Adam, 1803-1856)

“Noel – Grand Jeu et Duo” (“The Echo Noel”) (Louis Claude d’Aquin, 1694-1772)

Congregation shall stand or sit as able.

CHIMES

GATHERING SONG “O, Come, All Ye Faithful”

Introduction and Hymn

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

Refrain

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

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

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

APOSTOLIC GREETING

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

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

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

C: And also with you.

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

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

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

C: Amen.

Congregation shall sit.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(7:30) CHILDREN'S CHOIR *"Away in a Manger"*

(Traditional)

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

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

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

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

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

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

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

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALMODY

(Tune: "Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming")

Sung by Congregation

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to God, all you lands.

Sing of salvation always; God's glory now at hand. God's love shall never cease.

God comes to rule with justice; God comes to rule with peace.

Let earth and heaven glory; let ocean depths rejoice.

Let hills and plains and forests sing praises with one voice. God's love shall never cease.

God comes to rule with justice; God comes to rule with peace.

SECOND READING: Titus 2:11-14

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

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

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

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Congregation shall stand or sit as able.

GOSPEL HYMN "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

1. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations, rise; Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
 Late in time behold him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!
 Pleas'd as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

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



GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

Luke tells the story of Jesus' birth with reference to rulers of the world because his birth has significance for the whole earth, conveying a divine offering of peace.

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see--I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
 and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.



HYMN *“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”*

3. Hail the heav’n born Prince of Peace! Hail the son of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, Ris’n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise each child of earth, Born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn king!”

Congregation shall sit.

SERMON

Congregation shall remain seated.

HYMN OF THE DAY *“What Child Is This”*

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

Congregation shall stand or sit, as able.

CHRISTMAS CREED

We believe in God, the creator of the universe, who spoke, “Let there be light!” and there was light, setting in motion all of creation and blessing it to this day.

We believe Jesus Christ, the light that shines in the darkness, who embodied humanity in the image of God.

Who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible, who looked at people and made them see what God’s love saw in them, who by love brought forgiveness, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the guiding light of God in our world, who has brought us faith, And we believe in the power of transformation, here in this world and in the world to come. 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: Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Glory to you, God, for Mary's loving care. Lead us to tend to one another in time of need. Share the comfort of your presence with all people tonight who are alone or separated from loved ones due to estrangement, incarceration, or illness. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Glory to you, God, for the faithfulness of the shepherds in their vocation. Grant rest to any who feel exhausted from their work during this season: retail and restaurant workers, church musicians, administrative staff, and clergy, organizers of charitable-giving events, and service workers doing essential tasks. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Glory to you, God, for the multitude of the heavenly host. We rejoice in the zeal of all your saints who have witnessed the appearing of your grace, and who reveal to us your salvation for all. 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 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.

(7:30) CHOIR ANTHEM "Lullaby, Jesu"

(Polish Carol, arr. R. C. Lau, b. 1943)

Brief word about offering: *Offering plates are available at the back of the worship space, on the bulletin table. To give online, please go to FirstLutheranTopeka.org and click on 'contribute'.*

Please place attendance form in the offering plate.

Congregation shall stand or sit as able.

OFFERING PRAYER

A: 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.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING (Tune: "O, Come All Ye Faithful")

Sung Responsively

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And with you, His servant.

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

C: With hearts uplifted thanks to Him we render:

With joy we come before Him in gratefulness implore Him,

With thankful hearts adore Him evermore!

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

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

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

(Tune: "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing")

Sung by Congregation

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

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

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

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

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

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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

Do this for the remembrance of me.

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

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

Do this for the remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

(Tune: "Away in a Manger")

Our Father in heaven, All praise to your name!

Your kingdom among us, Your will done the same

By mortals and angels. Come, Lord reign, alone;

Oh, hear us and bless us from heaven's high throne.

The bread that we yearn for, Provide us each day;

As we forgive others, Our sins take away;

In times of temptation, To lead us be near;

From evil deliver Your children most dear.

For yours is the kingdom; O'er all things you reign,

And yours is the power; All things you maintain,

To you be the glory, Resounding again

From all of creation, Forever! Amen.

P: Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.

Congregation shall sit.

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

In this part of worship where we gather for this sacred meal, God bless your waiting, watching and reflections on this divine gift.

COMMUNION VOLUNTARY

(7:30) *"Hark! The Herald Angel's Sing"* Jubilation Ringers Bell Choir
(Traditional / arr. Kevin McChesney, b. 1963)

"Silent Night, Holy Night" (F. Gruber / arr. C. W. Ore, b. 1936)

Congregation shall stand or sit as able.

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

Congregation: 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.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE INCARNATION

The Christmas Story According to Saint John

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

P: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (*John 1:1-5*)

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

P: The true light, which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God. (*John 1:9-12*)

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

P: The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. (*John 1:14*)

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

P: The light of the world is born in us this night: In our hearts, our minds, and our lives. May this light be kindled in us and lead to the shining truth that God is with us, for us, and in us.

BLESSING

P: God bless you and keep you, † Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

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

SENDING SONG “*Joy to the World!*”

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is Come! Let earth receive its King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sin and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
And wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

DISMISSAL

A: Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

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

(A. C. Whitworth, b. 1938)

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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.*

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

DECEMBER 24th CHRISTMAS EVE	3:30 pm
Assisting Minister	Diane Dukat
Lector	John Rasmussen
Acolyte	Abram Crawford
Communion Assistants	Nancy Besta, Bryan Harold
Council Member	Jenn Betz
Altar Guild	Karen Wollin, Nancy Vaughn, Barb Collins
Candle Distributors	Barb Collins, Nancy Vaughn
Ushers	John & Kim Rasmussen
North Door Greeters	Nancy Besta, Brenda Sanders, Keira Witherspoon
South Door Greeters	Cheryl Hjetland, Nancy Vaughn

DECEMBER 24th CHRISTMAS EVE	7:30 pm
Assisting Minister	Robert Hanna
Lector	Shirley Waugh
Acolytes	Will Hitch, Bloom Tork, Lucas Jackson
Communion Assistants	Kathy Couch, Patricia Drake
Council Member	
Altar Guild	Nancy Vaughn, Barb Collins, Karon Gambrell, Jeanie Schuler
Candle Distributors	Scott & Melanie Schultz
Ushers	Randy Debenham, John Hanna, Bob Wollin
North Door Greeter	Barb Collins
South Door Greeter	Karon Gambrell
Bus Driver and Hostess	Alan Hageman, Leslie Malone
Tech Team	Stephen Blank, Jenn Betz



PARISH NOTICES



HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

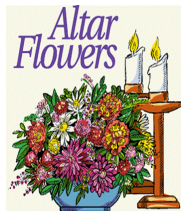
Friday, December 29th – OFFICE CLOSURES AT NOON

Monday, January 1st – OFFICE CLOSED

BUILDING ALARM WILL BE SET WHEN OFFICE IS CLOSED



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 to sign-up and give information that will be included in the bulletin. **The cost will be \$20 for the month.**

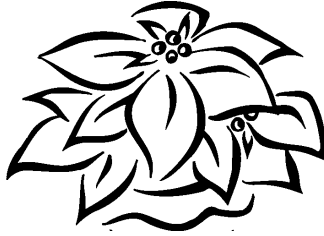


PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING US HAVE FRESH FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR IN 2024.

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.

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



2024 POINSETTIAS

Pat Booth in memory of Bess and Bill Neill.

Bill & Phyllis Buch in honor of Family and Friends.

Lowell & Lorraine Chellberg in memory of their parents, and Larry Larson, Bob Larson, and Kelly Chellberg and in honor of their sons, David and Steven and their families.

Kay Cole in memory of her parents, Andrew & Ramona Riotto and her husband, Charles Cole.

Barb Collins in memory of her parents and in honor of her children.

Stephen & Kathy Couch in memory of Robert & Bonnie Couch, Andrew & Romona Riotto, Isabella Hartz and Charles Cole and in honor of their granddaughter's marriage, Carter & Stephanie Wirth.

Bob & Rhonda Dealey in memory of loved ones.

Kevin Eaton & Lora Carlson

Russ & Judy Haley in memory of their parents and in honor of their family.

John & Linda Harold in memory of their parents and grandparents and in honor of Lindsey, Mike, David, Sarah, James and Julia.

Trudi Myers in memory of Jerry Myers and Louise and Herta.

Jerry & Marsha Serk in memory of their loved ones, Freeman, Lois and David Vicory and Herb & Helen Nunemaker.

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



To You This Day

Luke sets the stage for Jesus' birth by placing it within the royal history of the Roman Empire: "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus" (Luke 2:1). Prior to this chapter, Luke tells us the story is also set in the days of King Herod. World history is often told as a story of powerful rulers and wealthy people. We frequently have the impression that these people are the ones who truly matter. Most of us do not see ourselves in the pages of history, common folks living ordinary lives.

Luke, however, is writing a very different kind of history in the gospel story. While the story is set in the times of particular kings and emperors, these powerful men aren't the focus of the story. Instead of sending out the royal birth announcement for the King of kings in a gold-embossed birth letter to Herod, Augustus, and other so-called important people, God first shares the news of the newborn Messiah and Savior with shepherds camped out for the night in lonely fields. Lowly Mary and humble Joseph hunker down in the back of a crowded house where the animals eat. Jesus, the royalty of God, is born into a world barely aware—except for a few nobodies who are invited to notice.

Along with the shepherds, you also are invited to notice. "You" is the operative word in the shepherds' story. "To you is born this day . . . a Savior" (Luke 2:11). In the story, "you" refers to shepherds, the last people one would expect to be the first to receive news of Jesus' birth. But today, in this divine night, in this sacred story, in this liturgy of the nativity, "you" is *you*. To *you* is born a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. You are receiving the royal announcement because God brings good news to common folks living ordinary lives. This lovely, lonely night is for you because Christ is God's love for *you*.

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