

December 20, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! Please review some of our reopening guidelines below.

Masks must be worn. We have some available to take if you don't have one. Some are cloth masks and can be taken home to wash and reuse. There are also disposable masks.

Please do not congregate in the Narthex (entrance area) either as you arrive or leave.

To minimize direct contact, we will use the outside aisles only for entry and exit. The center aisle will be used for communion, special needs, or emergency exit.

Ushers will fill the pews from the front to the back of the church and dismiss from the back to the front. Please follow their directions. We are sorry everyone cannot have their usual seat.

Due to increased cases of Covid in Lucas County, we are returning to no corporate singing or spoken responses. Dr. Tony and Annette Slater will provide music. The service will be recorded and published to the website. Future plans are to "live stream" the service.

Elders will wear gloves. You can get a bulletin at the check-in table when you walk in. Please do not leave your bulletin in the pew when you exit; take it home or put it in the recycling bin at the front door.

There is a small wooden church just to the right of the main door when you come in. It has a slot for your offering.

Restrooms are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take the left set of steps down. The ladies room is at one end of the hallway, and the men's room is at the other. Return to the Narthex using the opposite set of stairs. Please, one person only in the restroom area.

Diaper Changing: A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

Flowers: If you would like to sign up for flowers for a Sunday, please call the church office during the week to check on availability.

HOPE ☆ PEACE ☆ JOY

LOVE

O how lovely, O how pure,
gracious gift to human kind!

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Prelude Dr. Pattin
Ringing of the Bell
Opening Song "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (v. 1 & 2)
(sung by Annette)

Invocation

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity (+) one God, the Lord of Israel who comes to set us free, the mighty Savior who comes to show mercy, the Dawn from on high who guides us into peace. Amen.

P: Let us come before God in confession.

(silence is kept for personal reflection)

P: To you, O God, we lift up our souls. You know us through and through; we confess our sins to you. Remember not our sins; remember us with your steadfast love. Show us your ways; teach us your paths; and lead us in justice and truth, for the sake of your goodness in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

P: Children of God, come with joy and draw water from the well of salvation. Remember the gift of baptism: your sin is washed away in the name of (+) Jesus; you belong to Christ; you are anointed to serve. Stand up and raise your heads! The reign of God is near.

Lighting the Fourth Candle

P: Blessed are you, God of hosts, for you promised to send a son, Emmanuel, who brought your presence among us; and you promise through your Son Jesus to save us from our sin.

P: As we light these candles, turn again to us in mercy; strengthen our faith in the word spoken by your prophets; restore us and give us life that we may be saved.

P: O house of David, come.
Let us rejoice, for the Son of God, Emmanuel, comes to be with us. Amen.

ADVENT HYMN: Cold December Flies Away (sung by Annette)

*Cold December flies away at the rose-red splendor.
April's crowning glory breaks while the whole world wonders
At the holy unseen pow'r of the tree which bears the flow'r.
On the blessed tree blooms the reddest flow'r. On the tree blooms
the rose here in love's own garden, full and strong in glory.*

*In the hopeless time of sin shadows deep had fallen.
All the world lay under death. Eyes were closed in sleeping.
But, when all seemed lost in night, came the sun whose golden light
Brings unending joy, brings the endless joy of our hope,
Highest hope, of our hope's bright dawning, Son belov'd of heaven.*

*Now the bud has come to bloom, and the world awakens.
In the lily's purest flow'r dwells a wondrous fragrance.
And it spreads to all the earth from the moment of its birth;
And its beauty lives. In the flow'r it lives, in the flow'r,
and it spreads in its heav'nly brightness sweet perfume delightful.*

Greeting

P: The grace given to us in Christ Jesus, the help of the Holy Spirit living in us, and the power of God who calls us with a holy purpose be with you all.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. 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. Amen.

Announcements

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

Instead of David building a house (temple) for the Lord, the Lord 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, the Lord's anointed.

Now when David the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the 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." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I 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. ⁷Wherever 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?" ⁸Now 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; ⁹and 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. ¹⁰And 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, ¹¹from 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. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life. Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation (please stand) *(sung by Annette Slater)*

*Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ, her little child.*

*And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love;
For that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heav'n above;
And he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.*

Gospel Announcement

P: The Gospel according to St. Luke, Chapter 1.
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 (Mary) from little-known places (Nazareth). 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 his gospel.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He 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. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The 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.

³⁶And 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. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then 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.

Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

MESSAGE

Message Song

Pastor Rayl
"Love Has Come" (v. 1 & 2)
(sung by Annette)

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,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again 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.

Pastoral Prayer *(Each petition concludes with this response)*

P: Hear us, O Lord. Your mercy is great.

The Offering *(As you exit, please place your offering in the wooden church in the Narthex if you have not already done so.)*

Musical Offertory

Dr. Pattin

Offering Prayer

P: Let us pray. God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

P: Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth. In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son, that all those who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as he comes to us in his Holy Supper.

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

P: Remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

P: God fills the hungry with good things. Taste and see that the Lord is good. We come to be filled with your life and goodness.

The Communion *(distribution will be continuous)*

If you wish to receive apple juice instead of wine, place your hand over your shoulder as you approach the person distributing the wine.

"All baptized Christians, believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, bringing to us the gift of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life, are welcome to gather at the Lord's table. Infants, children and others who have not been baptized are welcome to come to receive a blessing; please make an X with your arms across your chest."

Communion Hymns- During the distribution of Communion Annette will sing the following:

*"Angels We Have Heard on High"
"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"*

*(After all have communed and returned to their seats,
please stand as you wish and are able.)*

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and sustain you in God's grace. Amen.

Prayer after Communion

P: Let us pray. Holy One, we give you thanks that in this bread and cup we have feasted again on your endless love. Let that love overflow more and more in our lives, that we may be messengers to prepare your way, and bearers of your eternal Word, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Blessing

P: May God direct your ways in peace, make you abound in love for one another and for all, and strengthen your hearts until the coming of our Lord Jesus. Almighty God, Father, (+) Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen.

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Christ is with you.
Thanks be to God.

Closing Song *"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"* (v. 1, 2, 4)
(sung by Annette)

Postlude Dr. Pattin

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

ELDERS

Darold Henninger, Kevin Ruedy

SOLOIST

Annette Slater

SOUND BOARD

Andy Hodges

December 20, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Faith and Trust

In a sermon from 1527, Martin Luther referred to today's reading from Luke as a "happy and charming gospel." Indeed, the prelude to the events of this coming Christmas season all find their fulfillment in the annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel that she will bear a son and name him Jesus.

Today's gospel story has been the subject of many a renowned painter, sculptor, stained glass artist, poet, and composer. This story has spiritually moved generations of Christians who have wondered at Mary's faith, obedience, and readiness to be the chosen vessel of God in the mystery of the incarnation. Mary's permanence in the communion of saints remains. She is a model of faith and a woman whose example inspires us for all times.

Very soon Christmas will be here, and we will celebrate the truth of this biblical narrative. In the joyful observance of our Savior's birth we will not forget our faith and trust in the word and promise of God to us. This faith is rooted in the gospel story of the annunciation itself. Mary's faith and trust allowed her to welcome the angel's announcement, strange though it was. She could not understand at first how and why God had chosen her. The conception that was to take place was beyond her senses. Only God's gift of grace enabled Mary to believe and to offer herself willingly to God's service.

Mary's gift of faith and obedience was not hers alone. We, too, trust in the word announced to us. This gift of wonder and this sense of a holy task before us are available to all who humble themselves before the manger of Jesus Christ. This "happy and charming gospel" is ours forever.