

## First St. John Lutheran Church

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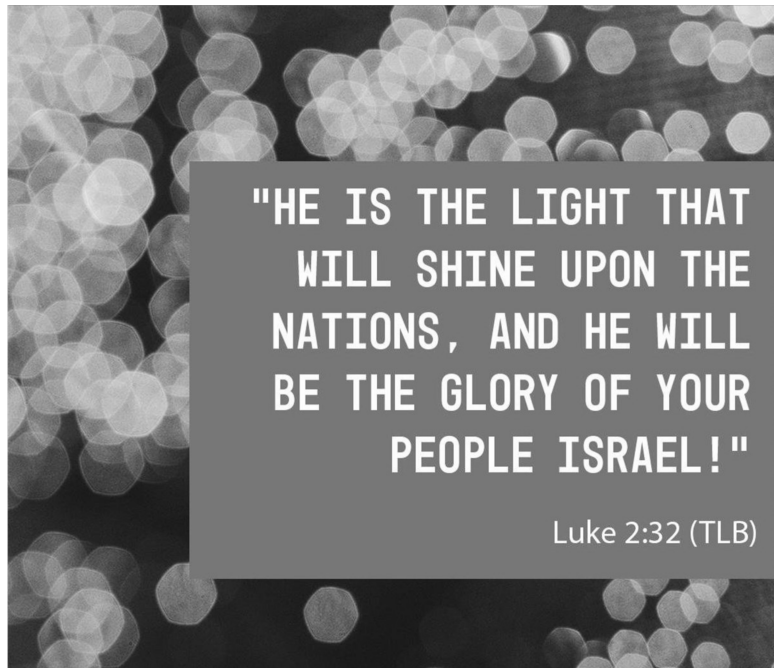
Rev. Jerald K. Rayl, Pastor

Dr. Joan Walldorf, Director of Music

Dr. Anthony Pattin, Church Musician

Cheri Sergent, Bell Choir, Director

Jennifer Hess, Office Manager



**December 31, 2023**

**First Sunday of Christmas**

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! We offer two services with Sunday School for youth and adults and catechism. Our regular Sunday schedule is:

8:00 am	Early Worship
9:15 am	*JAM Sunday School
9:15 am	*Adult Bible Study
10:30 am	Late Worship
11:45 am	2nd Year Catechism (every other Sunday)

\*\*JAM and Adult bible study will resume on Jan 7th

**LIVESTREAM AND RECORDED WORSHIP:** We livestream the service on our church website at [www.firststjohn.com](http://www.firststjohn.com). Also, the service will be recorded and published to the website

**SMILE! YOU'RE ON CAMERA:** Please remember you may be on camera during the livestream and the recording of the service.

**IMPORTANT REMINDER:** Please remember to silence your cell phone before church begins. Thanks!

**ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL** meets at 9:15 am in the lounge every Sunday.

**CHILDREN AGES 3 THROUGH 5TH GRADE** will meet at 9:15 am for Sunday School in the basement of the church (JAM Room).

**2ND YEAR CATECHISM CLASSES:** Second year class will meet every other Sunday at 11:45 am.

**NURSERY** is in the church basement and is currently unstaffed; you are welcome to sit with your child. A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

**RESTROOMS** are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take either set of steps to the basement hallway. The ladies room is at one end, and the men's room is at the other.

**FLOWERS:** If you would like to sign up for altar flowers, there is a book in the lounge. Or, you can call the church office during the week to check on availability.

**MEMORIALS:** If you wish to give a memorial in honor or memory of a loved one, you may mail it in or pick up a memorial card in the church office.

**ORDER OF WORSHIP—8:00 am / 10:30 am**

Prelude Dr. Anthony Pattin

Ring of the Bell (Please stand)

**Opening Hymn** “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” No. 282

**Confession and Forgiveness**

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.**

**Sharing of the Peace**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Let us share the peace of the Lord.

*The congregation may greet one another by shaking hands, fist bumping, or any other form of greeting with the words, “Peace be with you.” We conclude the sharing of the peace by singing:*

**Hymn**

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

No. 289

**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.

**C: And also with you.**

**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.**

*(Please be seated)*

**Announcements**

**Introduction**

The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon’s song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God’s salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.

**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.*

<sup>10</sup>I 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.

<sup>11</sup>For 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.

<sup>62:1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>The 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.

<sup>3</sup>You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 148** — Congregation responds in **BOLD**.

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens;  
praise him in the heights!

<sup>2</sup>**Praise him, all his angels;  
praise him, all his host!**

<sup>3</sup>Praise him, sun and moon;  
praise him, all you shining stars!

<sup>4</sup>**Praise him, you highest heavens,  
and you waters above the heavens!**

<sup>5</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
for he commanded and they were created.

<sup>6</sup>**He established them forever and ever;  
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.**

<sup>7</sup>Praise the LORD from the earth,  
you sea monsters and all deeps,

<sup>8</sup>**fire and hail, snow and frost,  
stormy wind fulfilling his command!**

<sup>9</sup>Mountains and all hills,  
fruit trees and all cedars!

<sup>10</sup>**Wild animals and all cattle,  
creeping things and flying birds!**

<sup>11</sup>Kings of the earth and all peoples,  
princes and all rulers of the earth!

<sup>12</sup>**Young men and women alike,  
old and young together!**

<sup>13</sup>Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
his glory is above earth and heaven.

<sup>14</sup>**He has raised up a horn for his people,  
praise for all his faithful,  
for the people of Israel who are close to him.  
Praise the LORD!**

## **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.*

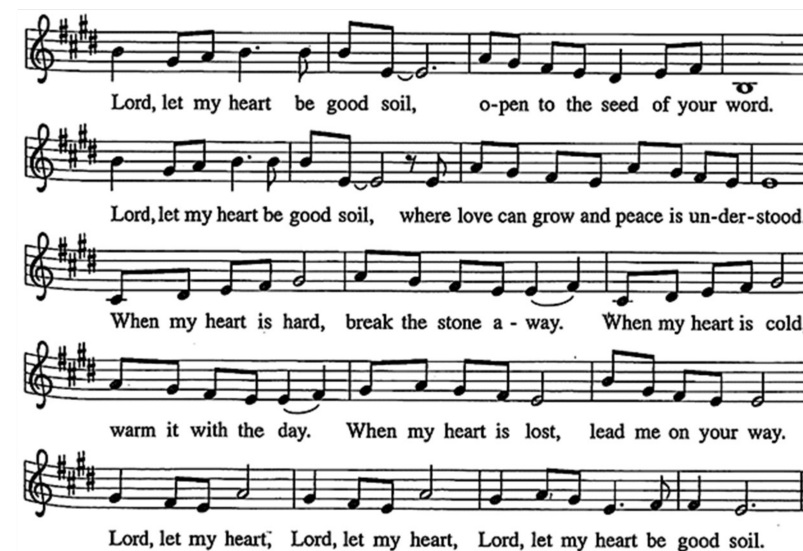
<sup>4</sup>When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. <sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,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

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*(Please stand)*

## **Gospel Acclamation**



Lord, let my heart be good soil, o-pen to the seed of your word.

Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is un-der-stood.

When my heart is hard, break the stone a - way. When my heart is cold,

warm it with the day. When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.

Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.

## **Gospel Announcement**

P: The Gospel according to Luke Chapter 2.

**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.*

<sup>22</sup>When 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 <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now 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. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided 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, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,  
according to your word;

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

<sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then 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 <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

<sup>36</sup>There 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, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At 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.

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

## **Gospel Response**

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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

*(Please be seated)*

## **SERMON**

Pastor Rayl

### **Sermon Hymn**

"Angels From the Realms of Glory"

No.275

*(Please stand)*

### **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: Merciful God,

**C: Receive our prayer.**

*(Please be seated)*

### **The Offering**

### **Offertory Music**

*Dr. Anthony Pattin*

*(Please stand)*

### **Offering Prayer**

P: God our provider, by your merciful hand abundance springs up  
from the earth. Receive and bless these gifts of your own  
bounty. Let them be a sign of your steadfast love and  
faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

## The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



P: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink of this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

P: Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

### The Lord's Prayer *(prayed by all)*

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.

*(Please be seated)*

### Invitation to Communion

P: In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together.

**C: Come, take your place at the table.**

### The Communion *(distribution will be continuous)*

*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."*

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

*(After all have received communion, please stand.)*

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

**C: Amen.**

**Prayer after Communion**

P: 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.**

**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.**

**Closing Hymn**

*"Joy to the World"*

No.267

**Dismissal**

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude**

Dr. Anthony Pattin

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***PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE***

**ELDERS**

8:00 am: Darold Henninger, Dick Haar

10:30 am: Tom Gaskins, Terry Ruedy

**READER**

8:00 am: Carol Haar

10:30 am: Toni Wilbarger

**SOUND BOARD**

10:30 am: Mark Ackerman

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***December 31, 2023***

***FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS***

**Embodied Love**

The mystery is so immense as to be almost incomprehensible. That the very Word of God, present at creation when God's Spirit moved over the waters, should take on human skin and share our life, is a wonder we grasp only by faith.

That incarnate Word, whom we know as Jesus Christ, is both messenger and message. Jesus, the bearer of light to an uncomprehending people, is himself the very Light of the world. Jesus, the Word, is God's gracious word to us. It is a curious fusion, this unity of person and mission, life and teaching.

This fusion continues today in our own embodiment of Jesus' example and teaching. Through us, Jesus is not simply a concept, but real, tangible. We "live" Jesus. How? By speaking a word of encouragement to one verging on despair. By serving those whose circumstances cause them to doubt the presence or goodness of God. By modeling the love of Christ in our families, churches, and communities. By calling for an end to practices that unjustly benefit a few at the expense of many. By experiencing in suffering the redeeming presence of the God who suffers with us. By gathering weekly with other Christians to hear the word proclaimed, preached, and sung. By sharing the holy meal in which we not only receive Jesus in bread and wine, but become the very body we receive: the body of Christ.

Our witness to the Jesus who lived and suffered like us is only possible because, like Jesus, we are kept close to God's heart. We can make Christ known only because Jesus blazed the way by showing us what God is like. In this season when we celebrate the incarnation, we rejoice that Jesus reveals the very heart of God, so that we, too, might live in that love and bear it in our very bodies to all creation.