

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 26 & 27, 2020

First Sunday of Christmas

Senior Pastor	Alan Kethan	<u>Home:</u> (979)-942-9060	<u>Cell:</u> (830)-708-1200
Deacon of Word and Service			Sandye Fletcher
Youth & Family Specialist			Stephanie Polasek
Music Minister			Robert Eaton
Congregational Chair			Curtiss Schonenberg
Creative Child Center Director			Briana Bedford
Secretary			Elena Holub
Custodian			O. C. S.
Parish Nurse Program Coordinator			DyAnn Lauzon
Saturday Organist			Joan Hunsicker
Sunday Organist			Elena Holub

MISSION STATEMENT: Love God, Love Neighbor

VISION STATEMENT: Showing our love of God and neighbor, we will work to double the number of members that are serving as well as those that are being served from 2018 to 2021.

- *As we enter into a sacred time and space, a friendly reminder to please set your cell phone to vibrate.*
- ***We want to welcome all of our guests today and thank you for worshiping with us. If you have any questions or would like more information regarding our services, programs, day care, or preschool programs at St. Paul, please visit our Welcome Center in the narthex immediately following our service, and an attendant will be more than happy to assist you. If this is your first time at St. Paul, we hope you will take a gift along with you. We also have a gift bag for children.***

* This symbol indicates that the congregation is invited to stand physically or in spirit.

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.

PRELUDE:

Saturday – Joan Hunsicker

Sunday – Praise Band:

1. “Love Comes Down”
2. “Light of the World”
3. “Bethlehem’s Treasure”

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who was in the beginning, who makes a dwelling among us, who covers us with justice and mercy.

C Amen.

P Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another, first privately then together publicly.

Silence for reflection and private confession of personal sins, then join in with combined voices this printed confession.

P God of goodness and lovingkindness,

C we confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbors. We have turned away from your invitation to new life. We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden. In your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins, those we know and those known only to you, for the sake of the one who came to live among us, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

P Hear the good news of peace and salvation! God forgives us all our sins, not through our own work, but through † Jesus Christ, made known to all people. With all who come to the manger, rejoice in this amazing gift of grace.

C Amen.

* **HYMN ELW - #288 “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”**

1. **Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice; give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today; ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now. Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**
2. **Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice; now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this! He has opened heaven’s door, and we are blest forevermore. Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!**

**3. Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale
Music: German carol, 14th cent.; arr. Robert L. Pearsall

* **GREETING**

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.

* **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.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:10--62:3

A Our first reading is from Isaiah, chapter 61, verse 10 through chapter 62, verse 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.

The reading begins:

Chapter 61:

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.

Chapter 62:

¹For 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.

A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 148

A The Psalm today is Psalm 148. We will read the Psalm responsively. The congregation will please respond by reading the words in bold print.

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

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

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

⁴Praise 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,

⁶who 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;

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

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

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

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

¹²young 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.

¹⁴The 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

A Our second reading is from Galatians, chapter 4, verses 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.

The reading begins:

⁴When 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.

A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

A Please stand as you are able for the gospel.

* **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** (Sung)

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

* **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.

P The holy gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 2, verses 22-40.

C Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

SERMON

* **HYMN ELW - #296 "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 son on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!**

CCLI Song #30983 Words: William Chatterton Dix

Music: Traditional English Folk Melody "Greensleeves"

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* **APOSTLES' CREED**

A With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

C 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.**

(The congregation may be seated during the prayers.)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

A Night and day, all creation praises you, O God. Strengthen your church across nations, denominations, and traditions. Fill us with wisdom and unify our proclamation of your forgiveness and mercy. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A The nations are upheld by your hand, O God. Cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, inspiring leaders to serve with compassion and integrity. Send your spirit of discernment upon legislators grappling with complex decisions for the sake of the common good. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A Send the spirit of your Son into our hearts, O God. Come quickly to hearts that race with fear, hearts that break with grief, and hearts that long for wholeness. Reveal your power to heal and to save. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A Adopt us into your family, O God. Bless our elders with the peace and joy of Simeon and Anna. Strengthen those who have retired, those who work in older age, and those in need of income, food, company, or health care. Connect young and old across generations. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for those in need of healing and whose needs are diverse and known to you including:
Cindy Kahlden; Melanie Appelt; Janis Stancik; Verna Nell Dittmar; Mae Dene Zajicek; Tiger Bergfeld; those on our Prayer Team's list; and those we name in our hearts before you (*Pause*). Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray those battling cancer that they may know healing and comfort. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Hear us, O God.

Jo Ann Moeller; Lily Presswood; Denise Lange; Cliff Grohmann; Doug Mason; Wanda Sutton; Fran Gillett; Dr. Tom Hancher; Stanley Yearwood; Joe Berry; Joyce Templeton; Tim Dahlstrom; Gracie Brune; Margaret Rogers; Leonard Kahlden; Curtis Wallin; Harvey Skow; Megan Burch; Jennifer Aleman; Lisa Grazier; Phyllis Behrend; Bill Stolle; Jamie Stokes; Jessica Mauchlen; Larry Guthrie; Donna Tiner; Libby Divin; Tina Barten; Anthony Baumbach; Cindy Masek; Denver Meyer; Diane Brooks; Bob Loy; Joe Hluchanek; Devon Tiffin; Stanley King; Monty Gillett; Dawn Foster; Amber Smith; Edward Halcolm; Alison Randazzo; Amber Kutach; Louis Camacho; Melvin Schobel; Janet Greene; Karen Teal; Sabrina Galindo; Debbie Grimes; Horst Traub; Margie Fisk; Preston Carter; Penny Miller; Carl Hahn; Megan Cain; Bob Rutta; Amanda Fuchs; Cyndi Wallace; Karen Broussard; Donna Young; Sharon Heimann; and Brenda Baker.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for all expectant mothers that they have healthy terms and deliveries, and if not, may they find comfort and peace. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Hear us, O God. Hannah Pavlicek; Kelsey Maertz Zapalac; Courtney Busselman; Chandler Divin; and Kelsey McNeely.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for those who reside in care facilities and the homebound that they receive your caring and compassion. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Hear us, O God. Coy Dell Schindler; R. O. (Reuben) Barten; Clemons Venghaus; Deanna Lee; Dolores Wessels; Alma Larmer; Doris Poppe; Bill Rodgers; Barbara McMath; Linda Munos Rodgers; Mabel Krenek; Judy Brisco; Barbara Prause; Lou Cordes; Madeline Menke; Adeline Spross; Doris Horndt; Helen Perrard; Delores Purcell; Curtis Berger; Marjorie Brune; Dolores Hoelscher; Jesse Grabow; Beatrice Zikuhr; Robert Eaton; James Booker; Adrian Fritsch; Don Morrison; and Sylvia Marburger.

C Your mercy is great.

A We pray for all law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers, 9-1-1 dispatchers and active duty military personnel that they are protected and kept safe. (*Pause for those we are praying for.*) Hear us, O God.

Law enforcement officers: Troy Neisner; Jacob Gorman; Marley Mayo; Johnny Kovar; Abbigail Weido; Dustin Lattimore; Andrew Lattimore; Luke Kanz; Bruno Flores; Jessica Dimas; Zane Weido; as well as Donnie Templeton and Jason Templeton who are also fire fighters. For all fire fighters, first responders, healthcare workers and 9-1-1 dispatchers, especially Brent Gorman, Sr.; Brent Gorman, Jr.; Reid Brasher; Dusty Dittmar; John Maertz; Ron Luedke; Randy Neuendorff; Pastor Alan Kethan; Kristi Weyand; Eric Weyand; Bradley Berger; Jon Berger; James Chollett; Edward Thraen, Jr.; Garrett Flores; Kyle Burris; Dylan Walcik; Brenda Henkes; Jan Willette, as well as those active duty military members including Jeanna Willett; Arturo Mares; Keven Rios; Michael Graham; Brian Anderson; Landon Cheatham; Bryan Kubena; Brad Bergfeld; Cody Jowers; Kyle Appelt; Montana Appelt; Douglas Neuendorff; Scott Cherniss; Kameron Page; Ryan Neisner; Anthony D'Angelo; Dalton Kapel; Kindra Dawson; and William Phillips

C Your mercy is great.

A God of mission, we pray for the church throughout the world. May we all proclaim the good news of your love effectively. We ask, especially, that you would bless the ministry of our sister congregation, Cristo Rey in Peru, all Missionaries, especially St. Paul's supported missionary, Dina Anton de Espinoza, and our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A Let us depart in peace, O God, according to your word. For all your saints, we give you thanks. Prepare our salvation in the sight of all your witnesses of every time and place. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus.

C Amen.

* **PEACE**

P The peace of the risen Lord be with you always.

C And also with you. (Share the "Peace of the Lord" with your neighbors.)

(We will be collecting offerings before and after worship each week. This includes Power of One dollars.)

OFFERING and POWER OF ONE

"Power of One" is a ministry sponsored by your Stewardship Team. We are asking each and every one of our members to give \$1.00 above what your normal giving would be. We are asking each member to place this \$1.00 bill or change in the offering plate each week. The team is also inviting all children to participate to develop the habit of giving as part of their worship experience. Parents, a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar bill, any of these will do to help your children develop a habit of giving. These "Power of One" dollars will be used to support local ministries and ministries abroad. The purpose of this ministry is to demonstrate that something as small as one dollar can be used to make a difference in the lives of others.

* **OFFERING PRAYER**

P Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

C Amen.

* **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

* **LORD'S PRAYER**

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**C 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 The Word is revealed in a manger, in simple bread and wine. Come meet Christ in this meal.

C Amen.

Saturday (7:00 PM): DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION (Continuous with Individual Cups)
{Distribution will be continuous. Please come down the center aisle starting from the front. Follow directions of the ushers, coming up one side at a time. Please keep 6 feet between those who are not your family members. Pastor will hand you the bread. If you wish to have a gluten-free wafer, please tell Pastor "Gluten-free, please." Afterward, you will choose either wine or white grape juice from the individual cups in the tray – white grape juice in the center with wine surrounding. Place the empty cups in the baskets located off to the side. Although communion is continuous, you are welcome to kneel at the rail in prayer after receiving communion. Please return to your seat by the side aisles.}

Sunday: INSTRUCTION FOR COMMUNION AT HOME:

Break the bread and give it to each other and say "the body of Christ given for you." Then pass the cup and say "the blood of Christ shed for you."

* **BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION**

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.

* **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P We give you thanks, gracious God, that you have once again fed us from your very self with the body and blood of Christ. Through this mystery, send us forth to proclaim your promise to a world in need, through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior.

C Amen.

* **BLESSING**

P Almighty God, who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary, proclaimed joy through the angels, sent the shepherds with good news, and led the magi by a star, bless you this day † through the Word made flesh.

C Amen.

* **HYMN ELW - #290 "Go Tell It on the Mountain"**

REFRAIN:

***Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!***

- 1. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. REFRAIN**
- 2. The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. REFRAIN**
- 3. Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. REFRAIN**

* **DISMISSAL**

P Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

C Thanks be to God, and we will.

POSTLUDE:

Saturday – Joan Hunsicker

Sunday – Praise Band – “What a Glorious Night”

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USHERS: SAT: Harvey Poenitzsch; Bob Poenitzsch; Audrey Rester

LAY READERS: SAT: Ruth Poncik

SUN: Mike Hackfeld

ACOLYTE: SAT: Sydnie Shepard

ALTAR GUILD: Janeen Venghaus, Belle Dungen, DyAnn Lauzon and Sharon Johnson

WELCOME: This weekend we continue to celebrate Christmas – and God's lavish gift of love, Jesus. Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Church!

We are pleased to have Rev. John Hunsicker sharing his message with us this weekend. Pastor John is presiding over worship service Saturday, December 26 while Pastor Alan is enjoying some well-deserved time off. Thank you, Pastor John!! ☺

COLLECTION OF OFFERING: Offering for the worship services is collected before and after worship. Offering bowls are placed in the back entrance and inside the side sanctuary door for you to place your offering in. This includes “Power of One” dollars.

Amount needed for average weekly budgeted expenses: \$8,405.00

Attendance: Wed., Dec. 16, 2020 – 38

Contributions: Wed., Dec. 16 – \$3,042.00

Attendance: Dec. 19 & 20 2020 – 115

Contributions: Dec. 19 & 20 – \$18,636.15

Power of One: Dec. 19 & 20, 2020 – \$36.30

Campaign Fund: Dec. 19 & 20 - \$200.00

Thank you to those who contributed to last week's offerings. Loving God/Loving Neighbor.

ATTENTION: *Names on the prayer list in the bulletin will be printed for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks, the names will be removed from the bulletin unless the church office has been notified to keep them.*

♦ **GLUTEN-FREE WAFERS:** For those who are allergic to gluten, we will have a few gluten-free wafers available at communion. Please tell Pastor when coming forward, “Gluten-free, please.”

**** NOTICE REGARDING BULLETINS:** Please take your bulletin home after worship. If you do not wish to take your bulletin home, please place it in the recycling container after worship. We will **not** be reusing them. Thank you! ******

**** Get the new year off to a good start! 2021 Pocket Calendars** are available for you to pick up in the narthex and church office for your use. They are a gift from the Evangelism Team. Enjoy!

► **2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES ARE HERE!!!** Please check the coat area of the narthex for your 2021 offering envelope boxes. You can also take the box of a family member, friend or neighbor and deliver it to them. That would be appreciated very much! The boxes are in alphabetical order. Thank you!

**** ATTENTION – ALL MINISTRY TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS!!** All Annual Reports of all Ministry Teams and Organizations are **due in the church office Wednesday, January 6, 2021.** I know it is early, but it takes quite a while to get all of the reports organized, copied, and assembled for the Annual Report. The Annual Report has to be made available for the congregation two weeks prior to the Annual Congregational Meeting.

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Dec. 28, 2020 – Jan. 1, 2021 – Office Closed! (Happy Holidays!)

Sat., Jan. 2, 2021 –

7:00 PM – Holy Communion Worship

Next Sun., Jan. 3, 2021 –

9:00 AM – Holy Communion Worship

10:00 AM – Adult Sunday School & Confirmation

11:05 AM – Holy Communion Contemporary Worship

Wed., Jan. 6, 2021 –

Annual Reports due in the Church Office!

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Sunday, December 27, 2020 John, Apostle and Evangelist

The son of Zebedee and brother of James, John was one of the twelve disciples and witness to the transfiguration. Tradition has named him also the writer of the Gospel of John, the three New Testament letters bearing his name, as well as Revelation.

Monday, December 28, 2020 The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

This day commemorates the young children killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his jealous attempt to murder the baby Jesus, a sobering reminder of the evil that led Christ to be born for our salvation.

Friday, January 1, 2021 Name of Jesus

By Jewish law, every baby boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day of life, so on the eighth day of Christmas the church celebrates this event in Jesus' life. The keeping of the covenant as well as Jesus' name are signs of God's salvation given to us through him.

Saturday, January 2, 2021 Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, renewer of the church, died 1872

A nineteenth-century German Lutheran pastor, Loehe worked to enliven the church with the eucharist at its center, from which would flow evangelism and social ministry. He sent pastors to North America, Australia, New Guinea, Brazil, and the Ukraine.

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SERVICE OVERVIEW: *GO IN PEACE – THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS*

With Simeon and Anna we receive consolation and good news: Jesus frees us to go in peace. God's Word is incarnate, and we have seen the light of our salvation! "*Go in peace*" is our call to action — a reminder that we are freed from sin and death and sent out to share that good news with the world. "*Go in peace*" is also our prayer as life ends — a reminder of a love more powerful than death.

And yet... right along with these words of peace come troubling words from Simeon. The infant Jesus will be a source of turmoil for his people and his family. The words "*and a sword will pierce your own soul too*" must have been the opposite of peaceful and comforting to young mother Mary. Luke even includes the detail that Mary and Joseph offered the least expensive purification sacrifice, a reminder that Jesus was born into poverty. Even in the presence of God's incarnate peace, all is not well with the world.

This is where we enter the story, full of questions. How do we experience God's peace in our own broken world? Faced with the reality of war, poverty, hunger, destruction, and loss, how do we speak of peace? How do we live God's peace in our lives? Like Simeon and Anna, we have faith in God's promise of peace because we have faith in the One who promises. As Simeon and Anna witnessed, God's word has been, is, and will be fulfilled.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

Christmas is celebrated for twelve days, culminating at Epiphany, the thirteenth day. The first worship within these twelve days focuses on the biblical stories of Jesus' childhood. Today we hear Luke's story of the ritual at which the infant Jesus is presented in the temple. Receiving them in the temple are Simeon and Anna, two old people who speak about the redemption that will come through Jesus' death. Welcome to worship! We continue to celebrate Jesus' birth, and we remember his death.

The rest of the world may have already moved on, but in the church this is only the *beginning* of the Christmas season. One of the gifts of spreading out the season is the joy of reflecting more fully on the gift of the Christ child. This also creates the opportunity in the church to draw attention to gifts that cannot be wrapped and placed under a tree. Now that the excitement (or

anxiety) of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day has passed, there is space to consider the gift of Jesus more deeply. Jesus has become one of us. He is a gift to humanity, to be with us and to bring healing to our world. Luke's narrative of Jesus presented in the temple is a stark reminder that Christmas is the beginning of the death of Christ. Animals are slaughtered, the infant son is temporarily saved from sacrifice, and two old people are themselves ready to die. Yet in this word of death is the very light of the world.

But we know something those first hearers did not know - that redemption comes through His death on the cross.

The motifs of birth and death are intimately intertwined in today's gospel. Jesus, as a firstborn son, is "redeemed" from death through his presentation in the temple, and yet he is born so that his death will save all people. Simeon has lived his entire life to see this hope and is now ready to die. Look at the paschal candle in the chancel. It is a symbol of the sometimes surprising connection between birth/life and death; it is prominent at both baptisms and funerals so that we can remember how Christ draws both of these life-changing events into one promise.

What a gift to have Anna there as a prophet and preacher from the beginning. As soon as she sees the Christ child she praises God and tells everyone she can about the hope and promise she has seen revealed in the child. It is no coincidence that Jesus was born into poverty. It is no coincidence that one of the first witnesses to Jesus is a woman, while later at the cross and then at the empty tomb the first ones to proclaim the resurrection are women as well. Jesus did not come for *some* people. This Jesus came for *all* people! Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female.

KID STUDY:

40 days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph took him to the temple to present their child and to dedicate him to God. Simeon was in the temple as he usually was. As soon as Simeon saw the baby, he knew that Jesus was the Christ and that God had kept his promise that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. Simeon took the child in his arms and praised God, saying, "Lord, now let your servant die in peace. As you have promised, I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people." Anna, a prophet, was also in the Temple. She was always at the Temple worshiping and praying. She came along just as Simeon was talking to Mary and Joseph. When she heard what Simeon was saying, she began praising God and telling everyone that this child was the Savior that God had promised. Both Simeon and Anna knew that God is faithful to his promise just as he is faithful to his promises to you and me. As we begin a new year, let's remember that just like God is faithful in keeping promises to us, we should be faithful in keeping *our* promises, too. It doesn't matter whether it is a promise to ourselves, a promise to a friend, or a promise to God.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION:

Mary and Joseph are faithful, religious parents. Part of what this means is that they bring Jesus to Jerusalem at the designated time in infancy to present him to the Lord. Reverent and expectant, they likely approach the temple with the kind of anticipation many families approach

the baptismal font. It is a big day in the life of this small, holy family. Into the city of Jerusalem they go, winding their way through town and into this holy place. They're not entirely sure what will happen but there is ritual that can be anticipated. What couldn't be anticipated is Simeon. It's easy to get swept away into the beauty of Simeon's Song along with its heady lyrics. He sings about God's salvation in the presence of all people, Jew and Gentile alike. Simeon's excitement is infectious. Art work depicting Simeon singing to the baby Jesus is filled with joy, awe and tears. What's easy to miss is that Simeon is ready to die. This song is entitled the Nunc Dimittis which means in Latin, "Now send away." It's a song sung in Communion liturgies and compline prayers at the end of the day. It's a song of comfort but it is also stark. Simeon is so faithful and so ready to die. - Caitlin Trussel

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Next Week's Theme (January 2 & 3): The Word became Flesh

Next Week's Scriptures (January 2 & 3):

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14

"Joy at the gathering of God's scattered flock."

Psalm: Psalm 147:12-20

"Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion." (Ps. 147:12)

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

"The will of God made known in Christ."

Gospel: John 1:[1-9] 10-18

"God with us: the incarnation of the Word."