

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”



First Sunday of Christmas
December 26, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! Here are a few notes to make you feel more at home as we praise this God of new life together!

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) are available to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.
- Portions marked with * are when we invite you to stand as you are able to do so.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns!
- There will not be a separate time for an offering, so a basket is placed in the back for those who wish to support our local ministry as well as the wider church.
- We will commune from our respective seats, where the presiding minister will invite you to open your respective cups with the Communion elements. We believe this meal is for everyone who wishes to partake, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. This tangible gift of God's love is meant for the world to enjoy!
- Following the recommendation of the Cuyahoga County Board of Health regarding COVID-19, we ask that you wear a mask for the duration of your time in the building.

Our Worship Leaders & Staff

Ministers
Presiding Minister
Organist
Lector
Parish Administrator
Custodian

All People
The Rev. Bradley Ross
Robin Crawford
Nel Lanese
Jennifer Lasher-Dobush
Vince Besednjak

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First Sunday of Christmas

On the first Sunday of Christmas, we find the boy Samuel and the boy Jesus, both in the temple, both growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and humankind. We too have returned to the house of God “to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God,” who has gifted us with a savior. As the festival continues, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” It is Christmas, still.

Prelude *Love Came Down at Christmas* (SHACKLEY)

Welcome & Announcements

*Call to Worship

We give thanks to God for the new life given to the whole world in Jesus Christ (based on Psalm 98).

Sing to God something brand new!

For God has done wonderful things!

God has not forgotten to love us all!

Even the ends of the earth have heard!

Make a joyful noise!

Break forth in song!

With strings and horns,

sing praise to the Holy One!

With the roaring sea and everything in it!

With all the land and everything in it!

The floods clap their hands.

The hills sing for joy.

Praise to you, O God! God has come to set everything right:

Justice for everyone, compassion for all.

Sing to God something brand new!

For God has done wonderful things!

*Gathering Hymn *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

ELW #279

*Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you.**

Hymn of Praise *Once in Royal David's City*

ELW #269

Prayer of the Day

Shine into our hearts the light of your wisdom, O God, and open our minds to the wonderful goodness of your Word made flesh, that in all things we may live continually in the light of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen!**

First Lesson

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Having dedicated her son Samuel to God's service, Hannah visits him every year when she and her husband Elkanah come to the temple to offer sacrifices. God grants Hannah more children, and Samuel himself gains favor in the sight of all.

¹⁸Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home.

²⁶Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

(The bold verses are sung by the congregation using the tone below)



Antiphon: The splendor of the LORD is over earth and heaven. (Ps. 148:13)

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD¹ from the heavens;
praise God¹ in the heights.

²**Praise the LORD,¹ all you angels;
sing praise, all you¹ hosts of heaven.**

³Praise the LORD,¹ sun and moon;
sing praise, all you¹ shining stars.

⁴**Praise the LORD, heav-¹ en of heavens,
and you waters a-¹ bove the heavens.**

⁵Let them praise the name¹ of the LORD,
who commanded, and they¹ were created,

⁶**who made them stand fast forev-¹ er and ever,
giving them a law that shall not¹ pass away. *Antiphon***

⁷Praise the LORD¹ from the earth,
you sea monsters¹ and all deeps;

⁸**fire and hail,¹ snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, do-¹ ing God's will;**

⁹mountains¹ and all hills,
fruit trees¹ and all cedars;

¹⁰**wild beasts¹ and all cattle,
creeping things and¹ flying birds;**

¹¹sovereigns of the earth¹ and all peoples,
princes and all rulers¹ of the world;

¹²**young¹ men and maidens,
old and¹ young together. *Antiphon***

¹³Let them praise the name¹ of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over¹ earth and heaven.

¹⁴**The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all¹ faithful
servants,**

the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD.¹ Hallelujah! *Antiphon*

Just as newly baptized Christians in the early church were clothed with new garments upon arising from the baptismal waters, so all who have received God's gift of life in Jesus Christ are covered with the character of Christ.

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Word of God, word of life!

Thanks be to God!

*Gospel Acclamation

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the

words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*Gospel

Luke 2:41-52

Jesus grew up in a family that went to the Passover festival each year. It was in this environment of faithful adherence to the law that Jesus grew into spiritual maturity and an understanding of his identity and mission.

The Gospel according to Luke, the 2nd chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord!

⁴¹Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Love Has Come*

ELW# 292

*Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

* Prayers of Intercession

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

You come to us in gatherings of your whole church across the globe, including with our own Covenant family. Unite us with those who celebrate your birth even when they are weighed down by grief, loss, poverty, hunger, or injustice. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us in the diverse splendor of the entire universe. Grant us the humility to trust our place in the network of creation, that we live in service to you and the natural world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us through relationships of many kinds: families, friendships, communities, and nations. Guide us in these relationships, that we recognize the Christ child in one another and show your love to those most vulnerable. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us through people whom the world forgets. Poor shepherds and an imprisoned Paul announced your good news. Comfort all who are imprisoned, struggling with addiction, unwell, or in any need this day. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us in acts of justice and forgiveness. Open our hearts to forgive one another, without permitting injustice. Supply us with the wisdom to be clothed with love, binding all things together in perfect harmony. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You come to us through those who have died yet live with you forever. We give thanks for Stephen, deacon and martyr, who the wider church also celebrates this day in the memory of his life to tell the story of your love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen!**

* Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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.
In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,
that, beholding the God made visible,
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.
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:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

*Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life,
 at the birth of time
 your word brought light into the world.

In the fullness of time,
 you sent your Word, born of Mary,
 to shine in our humanity,
 making us your precious children forever.

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.

Remembering, therefore,
his birth and life among us,
his death and resurrection,
we await his coming again
when all things will be restored to wholeness.

Holy Spirit, bless us and this bread and cup,
that, held and nourished by you,
we may live as disciples proclaiming hope and new life,
shining with the light of the Messiah.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
both now and forever. **Amen!**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Communion

Music Interlude *Es ist ein' Ros'* (ARR. PURIFOY)

Ann Droste, Flute

*Prayer after Communion

Emmanuel, God with us,
you grace us with life and breath
and give us bread for the journey.
Send us out in service to this world that you love,
telling the amazing news of your coming
as Savior and Lord.

Amen!

*Blessing

Grace from God's own heart,
peace from the † Child in the manger,
and strength from the Spirit of life,
be blessings for you today and forever.

Amen!

*Sending Hymn *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*

ELW #288

*Dismissal

Christ is born! So, go in peace! Rejoice in our Savior!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *Angels We Have Heard on High* (KUEHMANN)

Ann Droste, Flute

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Vince Besednjak, Bob Buettner, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Donna Franz, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Judy Jones, Matt Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Heather Lasher, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Don Rusher Jr, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 12/19/2021: \$1000

To the glory of God, and in loving memory of Doris & Ray Eckert, a memorial was given by Dennis Eckert.



For our latest video recordings of worship, bulletins, newsletters, as well as links to daily devotions and other resources, please visit: covenantmaplehts.org.

Check us out on Facebook for the latest updates for community activities and a dose of Good News on your news feed!



Lectionary Blog: Growing Up

Some years ago, I returned to a former parish to preach at a special occasion. As the worship leaders prepared for the procession, the crucifer, a teenager came over and said, “Do you remember me? You baptized me as a baby on Christmas Eve!” That baptism was just a month before I left to accept a call in another state, and I hadn’t seen her since. I’m proud to say that I refrained from stating the obvious: “My goodness, you’ve grown!”

The feeling I had that day is similar to the one I had when I read today’s Gospel. One is tempted to say, “My goodness, Jesus has grown!” Just last Sunday we were reading about a barely pregnant Mary visiting the very pregnant Elizabeth. On Monday night we celebrated Christmas Eve and read about Jesus’ birth. Tuesday was Christmas Day when we celebrated that birth. Now, just five days later, Jesus is a pre-teen—complete with superior attitude and smart mouth. It’s enough to make your head spin. And what’s even worse is next Sunday is Epiphany and we’ll be back to the baby Jesus with the story of the magi and King Herod.

If you take Jesus' name out, it's surprising how ordinary this story is—so ordinary it could be an after-school special or Disney Channel movie. It's a quaint story about a minor domestic crisis. There are no miracles, no revelatory pronouncements, no enigmatic parables about the nature of the kingdom of God. It's just a simple little story about a devout Jewish family going on holiday to the temple. A group from the village travels to and from Jerusalem on foot with groups from other villages. As with any rural and traditional culture, there is a large network of aunts, uncles, cousins and friends along for the trip, and a child would feel as comfortable walking with the others as with his own family. All very normal—until Jesus turns up missing.

Joseph and Mary had assumed that he was hanging out with friends or relatives. It's only when they discovered he wasn't anywhere to be found that they hurried back to Jerusalem. In the days before police departments, Amber Alerts and missing person bulletins, they were on their own to find him. Can you imagine the panic they felt as they hurried from place to place for three days, finding no sign of him?

Then, as now, the last place you would think to look for a 12-year-old boy was the church, but, finally, they went to the temple. There he was sitting in on a graduate student seminar, holding his own in the discussion (“and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers”). Some people have turned this into a story about Jesus revealing his divine nature through an extraordinary and spiritual understanding of the Scriptures. That's not necessary. They would have been astounded that any pre-teen boy knew enough about the Scriptures to ask the sort of questions Jesus was asking.

In Luke 2:48-49, the dialogue between Mary and her son is interesting in light of the later developed idea that Jesus is both “fully human and fully divine.” On the divine side of the equation, Luke portrays Mary as referring to Joseph as his father—“your father and I”—and Jesus quite pointedly responded: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house.” On the human side, the boy has behaved exactly like what he is—a boy. An exceptionally smart, focused and devout boy to be sure, but a boy nonetheless.

Only a boy would get so focused on what he was interested in that all else would fade away, including his parents' feelings and needs. Only a boy would be so impressed with himself that he couldn't recognize the damage he had done—indeed would blame the victims for it, telling his parents, “It's your fault you're upset. You should have known where I was. Honestly, you people don't understand anything.” As a parent, I suspect there is a significant amount of one-sided conversation and extra chores lurking behind

the little phrase “was obedient to them” in verse 51. Jesus was a special child, but he was still a child, and had a lot of growing up to do.

The Revised Common Lectionary Committee picked this Gospel reading for this day for a reason. Fred Craddock summarized it this way: “It is time now for internalizing the meaning of Christ’s coming and for expressing that meaning in personal and social life. This is especially true of Luke 2:41-52, which offers a childhood experience of Jesus as a model of growth toward others and toward God” (*Preaching Through the Christian Year, C. 1994, page 47*).

Just as it took time for Jesus to grow up and grow into his identity as the Christ (“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor) and Mary had to meditate upon and learn from her experiences with this odd child (“His mother treasured all these things in her heart”), we are always in the process of beginning to understand what it means, in our time and in our place, to be recipients of the gift of the Christ child in our lives. Like the boy Jesus, we will often go off in wrong directions and make missteps because of a combination of enthusiasm and naivete. Like his mother Mary, we will often be confused and not a little frightened by what it means to have the Christ child as part of our life.

But in the end, we can be assured that it is a good thing to have Christ in our life, to be Christians, “little Christs” to one another. As we seek each day to follow where Jesus leads us, we can trust that God hasn’t forgotten us. He was there at our baptism, there when the pastor intoned the words “child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. Amen” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 231*). Amen and amen!

Originally published December 24, 2018, on LivingLutheran.org, where you can find the current edition Lectionary Blog and other resources for your journey of faith.

Delmer Chilton is originally from North Carolina and received his education at the University of North Carolina, Duke Divinity School and the Graduate Theological Foundation. He received his Lutheran training at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, S.C. Ordained in 1977, Delmer has served parishes in North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee.