



St. John's

Ev. Lutheran Church

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DECEMBER 2021

'TIS THE SEASON

Ever notice how when the high holy days of the Christian church year come around that's exactly when all the revisionist TV shows on Jesus get their airing?

Not a big surprise. For, so Luther, where God builds a church, there the devil also builds a chapel. Well, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord we'll be celebrating this month is something of a church the Lord has planted and fixed in the calendar. But no sooner is Christmas around the corner—this calendrical “church of God”—than the devil is busy setting up his little chapels all around it in the secular TV calendar, just as Luther predicted.

This year we get treated on PBS to “From Jesus to Christ.” (I can't imagine what the History Channel will show!) This business about some purported difference between Jesus and Christ is an old saw of Christianity's sophisticated detractors. At first, they attempted to deny even the existence of Jesus. That got a little tough. The evidence is overwhelming that He existed. When that failed, the next gambit was to drive a wedge between the “historical Jesus” and the “Jesus [Christ/Messiah] of the Holy Scriptures,” as if the historical Jesus didn't think, say or act like He was the Christ. That's what “From Jesus to Christ” is all about: how the Jesus of the Bible (“Christ”) is an invention of fanatics based upon the life of a Jewish man named Jesus. I haven't seen the show yet, but I have seen the featured scholars and I can guarantee that our Lord's birth of a Virgin will come in for some heavy weather.

But theories like this fall upon themselves. What it takes to sustain the argument is nothing short of breathtakingly convoluted. To make it all work, you have to say that the *primary* source we have for the life of Jesus—the Gospels—is inaccurate (i.e., the picture they give of Jesus and the real Jesus don't really match up). Problem is, you then lose your primary source about Jesus. But if He's real, then how do you even know? Then you have to posit an implausibly late date for the writing of the Gospels. Most surprisingly you have to read right over the evidence of the Old Testament, like Isaiah 7:14, “Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” If Jesus' Virgin birth were an invention of the 2nd or 3rd century A.D., how in the world would Isaiah, whom we know to have lived some 10 centuries earlier (one entire millennium—in our terms that's the gap between A.D. 1021 and A.D. 2021), have prophesied it? And why in the world would the Qumran scrolls dating 150 years before the birth of Jesus contain Isaiah 7:14 if the Virgin birth of Christ is the invention of a later date? What scholar in his right mind would ever assert that something that is clearly in evidence *before* got invented *later*? It boggles the mind.

Of course, it all begins with a naturalistic presupposition that there is no such thing as God never mind a God who “spoke to His people of old by the prophets and now in these last days has spoken to us through a Son” (Hebrews 1:1). But read Romans 1. We shouldn’t expect anything different.

Looking for Jesus, Finding Heresy

Which gets me to my next point. Let the reader, listener, and viewer beware!

Every Christian has lots of questions. That’s a good thing. Is the Virgin birth real? Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Did He descend to hell? If so, what was He doing there? Is the bread in the Sacrament really Christ’s Body? You want to know because you want to know Jesus better, right?

Well, ask any of those questions of the internet and you’ll get a gagillion answers. For “Did Jesus rise from the dead?” Google returns 87,400,000 results. And all the *wrong* results rise to the top. So with over 87M answers how do you know which is the right answer?

My suggestion—if you must inquire of Google—would be to add one of a couple additional things to your search term. Instead of “Did Jesus rise from the dead?” try “Did Jesus rise from the dead? Lutheran” or better yet “Did Jesus rise from the dead? LCMS”. If I ask about the bread in the Sacrament and the Body of Christ without those additions I get 7,340,000 answers, and none Lutheran on the first several pages of results. But if I just add “LCMS” to it, I get 115,000 answers, and the first page full of *Lutheran* responses—nay, *LCMS* responses. The *Lutheran* responses matter because Lutherans take seriously that what the Bible says is true. Start there and it’s tough to go wrong.

Three Books Every Lutheran Family Should Own

Which brings me to my final point. With Christmas right around the corner invest in some good Lutheran books for you and your family. Instead of Googling and thinking you’ll find what is godly, good, right, and salutary, and instead of feeding your curiosity on PBS’s “From Jesus to Christ,” there are some really excellent references that aren’t expensive to own and will *always* return a good answer.

- (1) *The Lutheran Study Bible* (available from CPH or church). This ESV Bible with nearly line-by-line commentary will help you understand what it is the Scriptures are saying and, equally importantly, what they *aren’t* saying.
- (2) *Luther’s Small Catechism: With Explanation*, 2017 edition (available from CPH or church). This handbook of Christian theology is well-organized by topic and has an index that will help you trace out answers to nearly any question you might have on doctrine and practice.
- (3) *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (available from CPH or church). Compiled in 1580, this volume contains the numerous documents that constitute the public confession of our church. Supplied with a good index and with topics clearly identified, this is a great resource of Christian doctrine.

St. John’s doesn’t make a penny off selling these volumes, so the fact that they’re here is just a convenience to the congregation. We hope you’ll consider acquiring one or more of them!

But even better yet, come to Bible study (Sunday morning and Wednesday evening) and ask your questions there. Your questions may not be part of the plan for the day, but the pastors love “rabbit holes.”



Senior Pastor - Rev. J. S. Bruss, ext. 104

Associate Pastor – Rev. D. M. Kerns, ext. 101

Kantor - Bethany M. Johnson

TLS Teachers – Kathy Bartels, Joshua Grass, Erin Grass, Andrea Kosmicki

**ST. JOHN’S MUSIC ACADEMY
“MEDITATIO” IN MUSIC**

Among the many other musical pieces and exercises for method instruction for their musical instruments, students at St. John’s Music Academy also learn from some of the greatest treasures of church music – our hymnody! Here is a snippet of the “meditatio” (a theologian’s meditation on God’s Word) that takes place during the lesson and while playing music:

One organ student is learning how to play “O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is” (LSB 372), a hymn whose melody carries a comforting Christmas text. It proclaims to us how our Savior, the Word made flesh, joins us to Himself and brings us to His manger where we delight in the paradise of receiving God’s Word through faith and thus obtaining everlasting life and joy. Throughout all earthly suffering and sorrow, we by faith can hold onto Christ as our true treasure.

We encourage all children of God to delight in His gift of music for us! For more information on SJMA, please contact Bethany Johnson (bjohnson@stjlcms.org or 469-400-4382) or visit our website: <https://stjohnlcmstopeka.org/learning/sjma/>

ADVENT SERIES: MIRACULOUS BIRTHS

On Wednesdays in Advent we take up the “Miraculous Births” of the Old Testament, all of which point to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Advent Vespers is scheduled for noon on Wednesdays December 1, 8 and 15 and at 7 p.m. on Wednesdays December 1 and 8. On the evening of December 15, our Children’s Christmas Program will be held at 6:30 p.m. Sound Words Academy will not be held Wednesday December 15, 22 or 29.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING CANCELED

Due to covid restrictions for most of the nursing homes and senior living facilities, our caroling has been canceled.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM PRACTICE

Rehearsals are taking place SWA Wednesday evenings at 6:25-6:55 p.m. for PreK-5th grade in the Nave and on Sundays at 9:45-10:00 a.m. for PreK-8th grade in their specific Sunday School rooms. Please also have your children plan to attend the Christmas Program rehearsal on Saturday, December 11 from 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Save the Date! The program will be held Wednesday, December 15 at 6:30 p.m.

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP: BUDGET AND RECEIPTS REPORT

In an effort to keep our congregation informed about our financial situation, the Board of Stewardship has agreed to publish monthly budget reports. These reports are designed to give you a snapshot of our congregational support of the budget adopted by the voter’s assembly for 2021. We hope that you will find this information useful. Several annual pledges have already been received in full – giving a very good financial picture to date.

YTD Projected Budget Receipts through October 2021	\$ 596,223
<u>Actual Receipts through October 2021</u>	<u>\$ 642,217</u>
Year to Date Receipts Over (Under) Budget	\$ 45,994

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A VOTING MEMBER?

Our constitution defines “voting member” as a communicant member who has reached the age of 18 years and been received as a voting member upon application for such privilege and approval of the voters of the assembly. **We encourage all eligible St. John’s members to join the voters assembly.** You can contact the office, a pastor, or your elders to get instructions on how you can become a voter.

2022 FLOWER CALENDAR

The 2022 Flower Calendar is now up. If you would like to provide flowers for a particular service this coming year, sign your name next to the date of your choice. The calendar is located on the bulletin board outside of the church offices.

NO MONTHLY BREAKFAST IN DECEMBER

There will be no monthly breakfast in December. Our next potluck breakfast will take place on Sunday, January 9.

A NOTE FROM KC BIER

Congratulations on a successful Oktoberfest and the raising of \$700 for missions. KC Bier Co is pleased to assist with the bier. I am particularly pleased to hear you are supporting the Siberian Seminary. Rev. Dan Johnson is a son of our congregation at Holy Trinity in Grandview. He previously assisted with the Siberian Seminary. God Bless. *Stephen R Holle*

ST. JOHN’S WOMEN’S LEAGUE

Our circles will not meet in December. We will resume in January 2022.

Sarah circle meets the 2nd Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. for bible study, a short meeting and fellowship.

Dorcas circle meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 1:00 p.m. for bible study, a short meeting and fellowship.

Our annual **Christmas Bazaar and Cookie Walk** will take place Saturday, December 4 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Sunday, December 5 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Luther Hall. There will be no luncheon this year. See flyer below for more details.

St. John’s Women League continues to collect **Best Choice labels**. Best Choice labels may be purchased at Apple Market in Topeka. Ask your friends and family to save them for you. Place them in the box labeled stamps along with any stamps you collect. Money received from the Best Choice labels is used for our special projects.

Donations for quilt projects are being accepted. Items must be cotton fabric and embroidery floss. Thank you in advance to anyone who donates. If you would like to give a monetary donation, send it to the church office and Erika will see it gets to the Women’s League.



St. John's Women's League (LWML)
Christmas Bazaar & Cookie Walk
 Crafts, Gift items, Baked Goods, Sweet Shop

Saturday Dec 4 & Sunday Dec 5, 2021
(Masks are recommended)

Booths open: Saturday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Sunday 8:00 am - 1:00 pm

Come shop before or after worship services

Proceeds will be donated to Missions

Monetary donations can be given using
 donation boxes when entering church
 or in Luther Hall

Volunteers are welcome and needed!
 Contact Ruth Scott or Nancy Taylor

<p><u>You may bring your items on:</u></p> <p>Thursday 1 - 4 pm or Friday 9 am - 12 pm</p> <p>Come to the south glass doors</p> <p>Cookies must be brought by Saturday 8:30 am</p> <p>Be sure to price your items!</p>	<p>Please pick up any unsold items</p> <p>Monday from 9 am - 12 pm</p>
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PALLIATIVE CARE PRESENTATION

One of our own St. John's members will be giving a presentation at Faith Lutheran on Palliative Care, Hospice, and Advance Care Planning on January 17, 2022 at 7:00 pm. They are starting a caregiver support group for their church and other members of the synod. Faith Lutheran has invited all of St. John's members to attend as well. The contact person about the event is their Parish Nurse, Pat Shultz 785-633-8763 if you would like more information.

PRAYER REQUESTED FOR TLS PRINCIPAL FRANCIK

Mr. Francik, the TLS principal, has received a call to be the principal at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Royal Oak, Michigan. Please pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance as Mr. Francik discerns his call to Topeka Lutheran School and his call to St. Paul's Lutheran School and the effects these decisions have on him, his family, and the churches and schools involved.

POSITION AVAILABLE AT TOPEKA LUTHERAN CYC

Topeka Lutheran School Center for Young Children is looking for a full time Pre-K 3 lead teacher. This position offers health insurance, retirement, and PTO. Requirements include: Child Development Associate Credential (in preschool), 5 or more years of experience, certified in First Aid and CPR, must

pass KBI/Fingerprint background check and meet current qualification requirements by KDHE for licensed child-care centers. If you or someone you know is interested, contact Valerie at 785-272-1704 or cyc@topek Lutheran.org.

PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH INSTALLATION

Pastor Kevin DeHope has answered the call to serve at Prince of Peace in Topeka. He along with his wife and two children will be arriving in Topeka at the beginning of December. A service of Installation and celebration will be held on Sunday, December 12 at 3:00 p.m. at Prince of Peace. Members of St. John's are welcome to join Prince of Peace Lutheran Church as we welcome Pastor DeHope and his family. Refreshments will follow the service.

A NOTE FROM THE OLD LATIN SCHOOL IN WITTENBERG, GERMANY

Thank you very much for your support of the Old Latin School in the past years with \$2,700. We wish you a very blessed Thanksgiving and that peace, grace and mercy may abound amongst you. From yours truly in Luther City. *Angelika and Wilhelm Weber*

DOORSTEP NEWS

Doorstep continues plans for its Christmas Store – even though it's more of a Christmas Adoption Project. They plan to adopt 260 households with more than 800 individuals from the Christmas Bureau. All of the households adopted will receive a food order, health kit, blanket, a household item and a family fun pack including games, puzzles etc. and school supplies if appropriate and a \$20 gift card per person in the household. Distribution days will be December 14 – 17.

Some specific items they are in need of include: 83 Full/Queen and King sized blankets, Pots & pans, skillets and dish sets. Doorstep asks to have items delivered to them by December 1 because distribution will take extra organization. With the cost of the gift cards and the food, Doorstep's budget is already at least \$30,000. Where they have asked for items in the past, consider helping monetarily for the gift cards and food by sending a check, or go to www.doorsteptopeka.org to donate by credit card. Please note your congregation with your donation.

Doorstep greatly appreciates all the support and donations to make this year's project a success. Don't forget your year-end donations and Doorstep's 55th Anniversary fund to replace the 60+ year old HVAC system.



2021 Doorstep Christmas



Adoption Wish List

Initially we were hoping to have our regular Christmas Store this year, but, it was not meant to be. We will have a Christmas Project similar to last year, with more items for the adopted households.

We are adopting 260 Households from the Christmas Bureau which includes 800+ individuals for Christmas, and **we greatly need your help with a few select donations!**

This year each household will receive from Doorstep:

- Christmas Food Order
- \$20 Visa gift card for each household member listed on their intake
- Blanket
- Health Kit
- Household Item
- Family Fun Kit with games, puzzles & toys
- School Supplies



How You Can Help...

This year we only need a few things, but we need larger numbers of each.

Money - Our Biggest Need -

To purchase the food, gift cards for 800+ people, and other items we don't receive in donations.

Blankets - Full/Queen & King sizes

Household Items - Coffee Pots, Crockpots, Toasters, Skillet Sets, & Electric Skilletts

Fun Pack Items - Board Games & Puzzles



We will not have the volunteer opportunities available like when we do the actual Christmas Store. In an effort to be safe, we are using our regular volunteers to help with the Christmas Adoption Project this year.

Please Bring Donations to Doorstep at 10th & Buchanan, Mon - Fri from 9am - 2pm (South Door) By December 1st.

Send your monetary donation to Doorstep, 1119 SW 10th Avenue, Topeka, Ks 66604 or visit www.DoorstepTopeka.org - Donate.



Growing God's Children
for generations to come
Topeka Lutheran School

PRAYER

Lord God, our Maker and Redeemer. As we approach another Advent season and we look forward to celebrating another Christmas here on earth, we are reminded You daily shower us with Your love for us through Your Son, Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross for our sins. We ask that You continue to watch over, guide and direct our teachers, support staff and especially our children as they strive to learn about You and all that You do for us, without us even asking. All this we pray in Christ's Holy Name, Amen.

SUPPORT TOPEKA LUTHERAN TODAY! CLICK TO DONATE.

<https://www.topekalutheran.org/pledge-tracker>

TOTAL COMMITMENTS

Total Amount Committed: \$834,868

Total Pledged Gifts Received: \$719,087

Total # of Pledges Received: 125

Haven't yet made your pledged gift for 2021? Please consider doing so very soon to take advantage of any tax benefits from your charitable contribution! Call the Foundation Office at 785.357.1468 if you have any questions.

THANK YOU!

- To the faculty, families, and Board members who attended the November 5 OWL (Outdoor Wildcat Lab) dedication and Capital Campaign celebration. Special thanks to Pastor Micheel and musicians for leading the OWL dedication and worship, to Jacob Kosmicki for overseeing the bonfires, and to Darrel Savage for donating firewood. What a great event!
- To the staff and members of St. John's Lutheran Church for welcoming TLS students and families on November 7 for TLS Sunday!

TLS UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 10 - PTL Christmas Center for K-8 Students
- December 14, 7:00pm - TLS K-8 Student Christmas Program
- **SAVE THE DATE!** January 28 - Chili Supper

TEACHER HIGHLIGHT

Kathy Bartels, the new TLS middle school teacher, is a graduate of TLS, Topeka West High School, and Concordia University-Nebraska. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education, a Lutheran Teachers Diploma, and a Master's Degree in Education from Concordia. A rostered LCMS teacher, she has more than 20 years of experience teaching at the middle, high school, and college levels in Lutheran, Catholic, and public schools. Mrs. Bartels currently serves as the teacher for 1st Year Catechesis and teaches Junior High Sunday Bible Class at St. John's. Kathy and her husband, David (also a graduate of TLS), have been married for 22 years. She has three step-children: Ben, Claire, and Samantha.

NEW STATE OF THE SCHOOL REPORT

To learn more about TLS recruitment, professional development by faculty, engagement with churches and alumni, and solid teaching of the Lutheran faith, check out the new State of the School report available at: <https://www.topekalutheran.org/state-of-the-school-report>. This provides a summary of the four Strategic Outcomes, Action Steps, and additional data points for faculty and staff.

Thank you to Mrs. Emma Taylor for her work in developing this helpful resource!

December 2021

St. John's Lutheran Church - Topeka, Kansas

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
8am - DIVINE SERVICE 8am - LWML BAZAAR 9:20am - COFFEE & 9:25am - JR LUTHERANS 9:45am - BIBLE CLASS/ISS 11am - DIVINE SERVICE	8am - DIVINE SERVICE 8am - LWML BAZAAR 9:20am - COFFEE & 9:25am - JR LUTHERANS 9:45am - BIBLE CLASS/ISS 11am - DIVINE SERVICE	8am - DIVINE SERVICE 8am - LWML BAZAAR 9:20am - COFFEE & 9:25am - JR LUTHERANS 9:45am - BIBLE CLASS/ISS 11am - DIVINE SERVICE	8:10am - TLS CHAPEL 12pm - ADVENT VESPERS 5:15pm - SOUND WORDS 7pm - ADVENT VESPERS	6:15pm - ECCLESIA BELLS 7pm - TLS BOARD 7:15pm - KANTOREI		10am - LWML BAZAAR
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8am - DIVINE SERVICE 8am - LWML BAZAAR 9:20am - COFFEE & 9:25am - JR LUTHERANS 9:45am - BIBLE CLASS/ISS 11am - DIVINE SERVICE	8am - DIVINE SERVICE 8am - LWML BAZAAR 9:20am - COFFEE & 9:25am - JR LUTHERANS 9:45am - BIBLE CLASS/ISS 11am - DIVINE SERVICE	8am - DIVINE SERVICE 8am - LWML BAZAAR 9:20am - COFFEE & 9:25am - JR LUTHERANS 9:45am - BIBLE CLASS/ISS 11am - DIVINE SERVICE	8:10am - TLS CHAPEL 12pm - ADVENT VESPERS 5:15pm - SOUND WORDS 7pm - ADVENT VESPERS	6:15pm - ECCLESIA BELLS 6:30pm - ELDER CALLING 7pm - BOARD OF ELDER 7:15pm - KANTOREI		9am - SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS REHEARSAL
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
8am - DIVINE SERVICE 9:20am - COFFEE & 9:25am - JR LUTHERANS 9:45am - BIBLE CLASS/ISS 11am - DIVINE SERVICE	4:30pm - TRUSTEES	4:45pm - PARISH ED 6:30pm - STEWARDSHIP 8:15pm - MISSIONS/EVANG	8:10am - TLS CHAPEL 12pm - ADVENT VESPERS 6:30pm - CHILDRENS PROGRAM	6:15pm - ECCLESIA BELLS 7:15pm - KANTOREI		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
NO BIBLE STUDY OR SS 10am - DIVINE SERVICE	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	ST. THOMAS, APOSTLE 6:30pm - COUNCIL			CHRISTMAS EVE OFFICE CLOSED 7pm - CHRISTMAS 7:01pm - CAROL SERVICE 10pm - CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT DIVINE SERVICE	CHRISTMAS DAY OFFICE CLOSED 10am - CHRISTMAS DAY DIVINE SERVICE
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
NO BIBLE STUDY OR SS ST. STEPHEN, MARTYR 10am - DIVINE SERVICE	ST. JOHN, APOSTLE	HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS			EVE OF CIRCUMCISION & NAME OF JESUS NEW YEAR'S EVE OFFICE CLOSED	CIRCUMCISION & NAME OF JESUS NEW YEAR'S DAY OFFICE CLOSED



THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19–20a)
So that we may obtain faith in Christ, God instituted the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Through the gospel and sacraments, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel. (*Augsburg Confession*, Article 5)