



# Weekly Update

## January 21, 2023

To subscribe to the e-newsletter, go to  
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Worship every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. at 1820 5th Avenue, Rock Island

### The Saddest Day of the Year

Recap of sermon from January 21, 2024

Scripture: Luke 2:22-38

A combination of pseudoscientific figuring and clever marketing has dubbed the third Monday of the year “Blue Monday.” January 24 has also been pinpointed as the most depressing day of the year. That is this week. And around here, Mother Nature seems to be cooperating.

To call one day the most depressing is a little preposterous, but the idea has just enough logical backing to make it plausible. Christmas is pretty far in the rear view. Most decorations are down, and the ones that are up seem to be more a nuisance than cheery. What hasn’t gone away from Christmas though? The bills. Credit card bills with the downside of all those gifts are staring people in the face.

A year of promise, blank calendars, and resolutions is starting to crumble. The calendar is filling up. The resolutions are already broken. The days are getting longer, but not much. It is still dark at 5:00 p.m., and around here we are buried in over foot of snow, which is no longer white and beautiful, but gray, dirty, and melting just enough to make it even more messy. Blue Monday might not be a scientifically accepted concept, but it certainly feels like it.

Enter Anna and Simeon. This is perfect timing for this story, because it takes place about a month after Jesus’ birth. It was right in the middle of the saddest month of the year. Of course, I’m joking. None of the cultural baggage that makes this week depressing existed then, but we can imagine what Mary and Joseph may have been feeling. First and foremost was probably exhaustion.

As Luke tells the story, we are a month into having a new baby. The birth was on the heels of an arduous journey. The birth itself was full of strange visitors and a crowded home. Now a month later, Mary’s body might be well on its way to recovery, but the trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem was about five miles. Plus, throw in the nerves and anxiety of bringing the infant to one of the Wonders of the World.

I remember the joy, excitement, and anxiety of bringing my babies to church for the first time. It was a wonderful feel-

ing to be able to introduce them to the community that already loved them so much, but it was also exhausting.

Anna and Simeon are two older people who have been fixtures in the Temple. They see Jesus and the Holy Spirit prods them into action.

They praise God. Simeon is thankful he has seen the Messiah before he dies. Yet he also understands that the birth of Jesus brings great joy as well as great conflict. He knows that the life of a Messiah is not easy, and that many will reject him. Anna, who is already called a prophet, tells everyone she can of this joyful event.

A month after Christmas it is easy to fall into the doldrums. As a congregation we had two amazing weeks. In short order we had Christmas Eve, a wonderful Baby Show for Mary, and a joyful Confirmation. Our attendance was higher for three weeks than it has been since COVID. And now we have this natural lull. It is a depressing time of year, but we can celebrate like Anna and Simeon.

There is so much to look forward to in this new year. We are close to another Lenten season, with opportunities to worship and grow with other congregations. We have great plans to expand our African ministry with Pastor Daniel’s church in Cedar Falls, to have a celebration for Native American Ministries Sunday with Pastor Lisa Wiedman at Camp Milan. We have a poetry showcase planned in April to showcase the Young Lions Roar. We have youth events this summer that have the potential to change lives.

This might be the most depressing week of the year, but we can take a page from Anna and Simeon and celebrate the joy of Christ on Earth.



*Simeon in the Temple, Rembrandt (1627), Wikimedia commons.*

**Next Week: Luke 2:41-52**  
**Mary Loses Jesus in the Temple**

# TWO RIVERS CHURCH WEEKLY UPDATE

To subscribe to weekly e-newsletter, go to [TwoRiversUMC.org/subscribe](http://TwoRiversUMC.org/subscribe)

The Two Rivers Youth and Methodist Men are teaming up to help send kids to Summer Camp and on a Mission Trip this summer. We had 11 young people baptized or confirmed this year, and many of them - and maybe a few more - want to go to Summer Camp or join in a mission trip to Denver. To help make it possible, the youth and Methodist Men are teaming up to make pizzas.

These are all fresh ingredients hand chopped and hand made on the day you pick them up! They come wrapped in plastic for easy freezing, or bake them the next day for the Superbowl. Bring a stack to your party and be a big hit. Order some for your office or for those friends who gave you unexpected Christmas cookies. Sell some to your neighbors and support a great cause!

Pick them up on Saturday, February 10 between 4:00-6:00 p.m. The Superbowl is Sunday, February 11.

Order online at [TwoRiversUMC.org/pizza](http://TwoRiversUMC.org/pizza); by phone at 309-788-9384; or order over the next few Sundays in the West Entrance at church.

You can also pick up an order form to sell to your friends and neighbors.

## PIZZA

HELP SEND OUR KIDS TO SUMMER CAMP AND MISSION TRIP.



### MENU AND PRICING

**CHEESE: \$10 ALL OTHERS: \$12**

- Cheese (\$10)
- Sausage (\$12)
- Pepperoni (\$12)
- Sausage & Pepperoni (\$12)
- Veggie (\$12) black olive, green pepper, onion, mushroom, and sauerkraut
- Veggie, no sauerkraut (\$12)
- Supreme (\$12) sausage and all the veggies

## SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK OF JAN. 28: Luke 2:49

*"Why are you looking for me? Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?"*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Jan. 28	Sunday	Luke 2:41-52	Mary loses Jesus
Jan. 29	Monday	Isaiah 60:1-6	People gather for God
Jan. 30	Tuesday	Isaiah 60:8-16	Jerusalem rebuilt
Jan. 31	Wednesday	Isaiah 60:17-22	Violence no longer
Feb. 1	Thursday	John 1:1-18	The Eternal Word
Feb. 2	Friday	John 1:19-34	John's witness
Feb. 3	Saturday	John 1:35-51	The first disciples

### UPCOMING SERMONS:

#### **‘Mary, Mother of God’**

Jan. 28	Mary Loses Jesus in the Temple	Luke 2:41-52
Feb. 4	Mary attends the wedding at Cana	John 2:1-11
Feb. 11	Mary Waits for Jesus	Matthew 12:33-37, 46-50