

First Evangelical Lutheran Church

250 W. Decatur St.

Decatur, Illinois

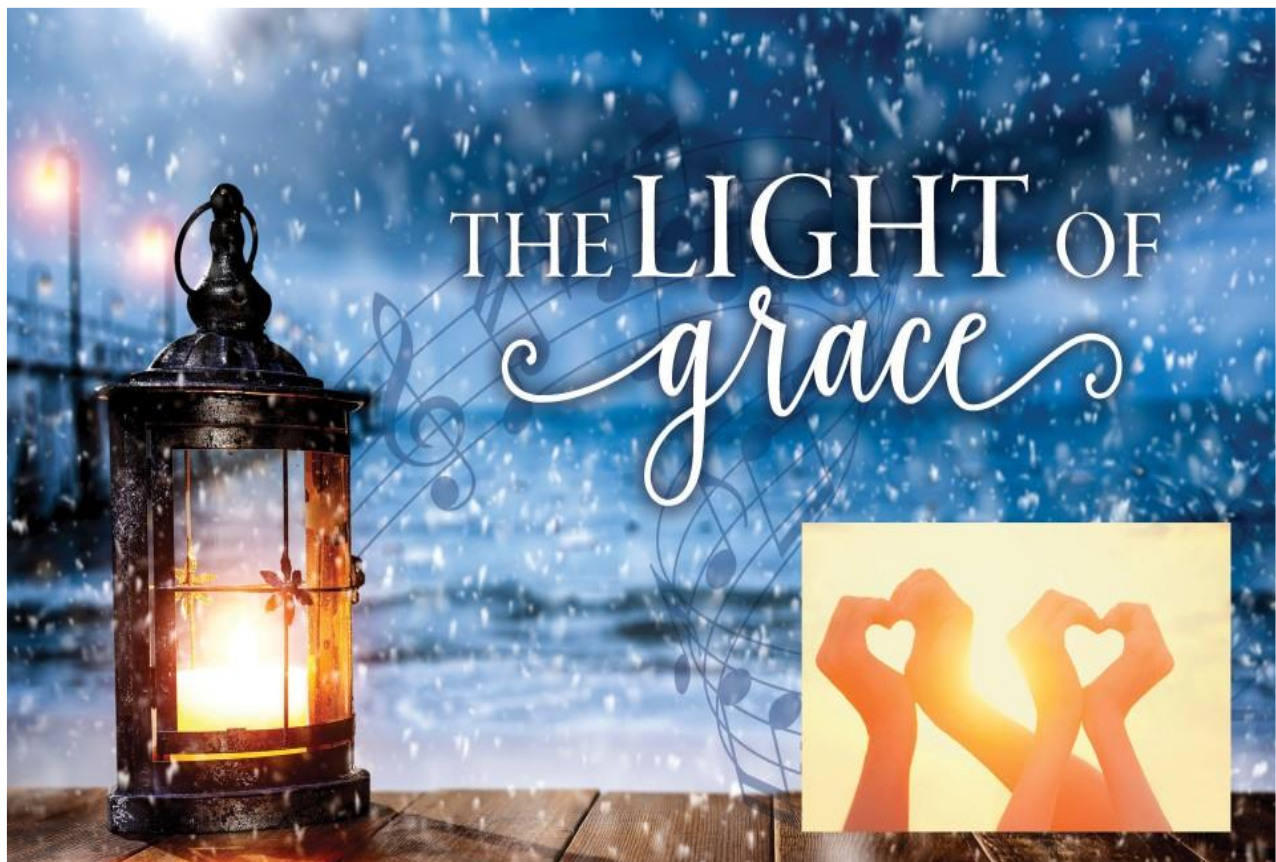
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We have a livestream option on our website!

<https://felcdecatur.org/live>



CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24, 2023, at 4:30 pm

HOLY COMMUNION

Come Experience God's Unlimited Grace, in a Most Welcoming Place

*My steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed ... Isaiah 54:10*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

“Winter Snow” by Audrey Assad

MOLLY BERRY

GATHERING

***GATHERING SONG**

“Love Has Come”

ELW #292

INVOCATION & LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

(Three purple candles and one pink candle are lit on the Advent wreath.)

P: Today we light the fourth candle on the Advent wreath, the candle that represents love. God had promised that his steadfast love would not depart from his people. He would remember his covenant promise. Now the time had come for his promise to be fulfilled.

C: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ...” (John 3:16).

P: In his grace, God chose Mary, a virgin in Nazareth of Galilee, to be the mother of our Lord. The virgin-born son would be the Son of God. He was to be named Jesus, which means “God saves.”

C: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ...”

P: The apostle John writes, “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

C: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

P: Let us confess our sins to God, asking him to remember his covenant love and forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

C: Almighty God, your steadfast love endures forever. Our love so often fails. We do not always trust you as we should. We know that you love us, but we do not always love others as we should. We do not walk in love as Jesus our Savior did. We follow our own selfish desires instead of looking to the needs of others. Have mercy on us, and forgive our sins.

P: God remembered his covenant promise and in his steadfast love he sent his Son to be our Savior. I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

C: Almighty God, your steadfast love will not depart from us!

HYMN OF RESPONSE: *“Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound”*

**Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.**

**Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come:
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.**

**The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.**

**Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.**

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray,

C: Almighty God, in your grace and steadfast love, you promised to send the Messiah, the Savior. The promise was repeated through the centuries as the prophets reminded your people of your covenant promise. Finally, when the time was right, you kept your promise. It was time for the Savior to be born. The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah. She was to name him Jesus. Your covenant promise was fulfilled in the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Lead us by your Spirit and light to walk in love, reflecting our Lord's care and compassion in the world.

(Pause – Light the Christ candle on the Advent wreath.)

Hear our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Birthnight of a King” by Milt Scott

MILT SCOTT

WORD

FIRST READING:

ISAIAH 54:7-10

⁷For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.
⁸In overflowing wrath for a moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,
says the LORD, your Redeemer.
⁹This is like the days of Noah to me:
Just as I swore that the waters of Noah
would never again go over the earth,
so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you
and will not rebuke you.
¹⁰For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING:

GALATIANS 4:4-7

⁴But when 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

"Angels We have Heard on High"

ELW #289

The holy gospel according to Luke, the 1st chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

*GOSPEL READING:

LUKE 1:46-55

^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸**for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.**
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
⁴⁹you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.
⁵⁰**You have mercy on those who fear you,**

from generation to generation.

⁵¹You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,

⁵²**casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.**

⁵³You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴**You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
to remember the promise of mercy,**

⁵⁵the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

ELW #295

Stanza 1 – All

Stanza 2 – Women

Stanza 3 – Men

Stanza 4 – Choir

Stanza 5 – All

APOSTLES CREED

ELW p. 105

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Almighty God, you sent the angel Gabriel to announce to a young virgin, Mary of Nazareth, that she would give birth to a Son, the Son of God, the promised Messiah. It was time for your promise to be fulfilled.

Our God and Savior,

C: Your steadfast love endures forever.

A: Almighty God, Mary rejoiced in your love and the fulfillment of your ancient promise to send a Savior. All generations would call her blessed because of the great things you were doing in her life. Through Mary’s Son, you have done great things for us. In Jesus, we have forgiveness for our sins and the gift of eternal life.

Our God and Savior,

C: Your steadfast love endures forever.

P: Almighty God, in love you kept your promise to send your Anointed One, the Messiah, our Savior Jesus Christ. We bring before you those who are suffering from illness and grief, those

who are troubled and doubting and all those we name in our hearts ... Look on them with love and compassion, and bring healing according to your will.

Our God and Savior,

C: Your steadfast love endures forever.

A: Almighty God, your love never fails. Lead us by your Spirit to walk in love as Jesus did and to reflect the Savior's care and compassion in our lives. We pray that your love will be reflected in our acts of kindness and in our words of witness.

Our God and Savior,

C: Your steadfast love endures forever.

P: Almighty God, we look forward to the day when another promise will be kept, the promise that Jesus our Lord will return. As we prepare to celebrate his birth, lead us to look with repentant joy for his return. We long for the day when we will live in your presence for all eternity.

Our God and Savior,

C: Your steadfast love endures forever. Amen.

*** PEACE**

MEAL

OFFERING

"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" arr. Brian L. Hanson

OFFERING PRAYER

P: Let us pray,

C: 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. Amen.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p. 145 (right side)

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together. Come, take your place at the table.

At each worship service FELC celebrates communion around the altar rail using non-alcoholic sacramental wine so that all present may receive God's Grace in this sacrament. If anyone is unable to come to the altar, the Pastor and assistants will bring the sacrament to you. (If

possible, please alert the Pastor or Assistant prior to Worship service if you want communion at your seat). You are also welcome to pick up a disposable chalice containing wine or juice at the back of the church. If you are taking communion at the rail and feel less steady on your feet, feel free to come to the front of the communion rail rather than walking around toward the back.

COMMUNION

*“What Child Is This”
“O Come, All Ye Faithful”*

ELW #296

ELW #283

NOTE: After receiving communion, please pick up a white candle from the basket located on the chairs in the front row. At the end of Worship Service, please return the candle to the large basket in the back of the sanctuary.

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P: Let us pray.

C: 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. Amen.

HYMN

“Silent Night”

ELW #281

- 1 Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2 Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 3 Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

SENDING

***BLESSING**

P: When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

C: To redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

P: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: Amen.

***SENDING SONG**

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

ELW #270

***DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Keep awake.
Thanks be to God.

***POSTLUDE**

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Prayer Requests

Matt Andrews and Family, Tyson Binion, Whitley Blankenship, Tom Brennan,
Mary Ellen & Tom Burns, Debra Jones, Jan Lawson, Doris Oliver, family of Ryan Snyder,
Rick Strine, family of Glen Sweitzer, Patty & Ken Tague, Anna Young

*If you'd like to add someone to the Prayer Request list, please contact Kay at the office.
Prayer requests remain on the list for 3 weeks and can be extended longer at your request.*

Participants

Presiding and Preaching	Pastor Rita Augsburger
Assisting Minister	Allie Allgeier
Coordinator of Music and Technology/Organist/Handbells	Rick Strine
Choir Director	Sarah Boline
Technical Director	Jeremy Hahn
Audio/Visual	Audio/Visual Team
Bell Ringer	Mike Reynolds
Greeters	Mike & Karen Reynolds
Check-In	Toni Ellison
Communion Aide	Janice Isaacs
Money Counters	Karen & Steve Wenger & Jim Oettel
Acolyte	Ella Taute



Poinsettia Donations

<i>Given By:</i>	<i>In Honor of:</i>
Karen & Steve Wenger	Family
Larry, Nancy, MacKenzie & Sam Osborne	The Glory of God
<i>Given By:</i>	<i>In Memory of:</i>
Wayne & Connie Banfield	Ann Banfield, Harry Banfield, Clara Banfield, Bill & Mary Jane Osborne
Gary & Nora Beck	Daughter, Tamberlin L. Beck
Patricia Cox	Robert E. Cox and Parents William L. & Bertha A. Glore
John & Jean Mikels	Roberta Hathorne and Harold & Frances Mikels
Dick & Kris Sites	Loved Ones

Welcome to all of you here and to those participating on-line

Announcements

1. The AMELCA Team served 78 clients on Wednesday, December 20th.
2. The next Grief Group meeting is Monday January 8th from 11:00am-12:30pm in the Lounge.
3. Church History Class is being offered at no charge. If interested in attending via zoom from church, please notify Pastor Rita. Classes are on Saturdays 9:00am-12:00pm. The first class date has changed from January 13th to January 20th. See more details on the back side of the bulletin.
4. Art Workshop will start up again on January 18th at 1:00pm-2:30pm in the fellowship hall. Please contact Kay or Pastor Rita to sign-up.
5. Annual Congregational Meeting will be January 28th following Worship Service.
6. Please see the Suggestion/Question Box on the Greeters Table in the Narthex. We need your Suggestions for 2024 Goals and Welcome your questions about shared ministry. Forms are located on the side pocket of the box. Including your name is optional, however, it's helpful for follow-up.
7. The church office will be closed on Monday, December 25th, Tuesday, December 26th and Wednesday, December 27th. The office will also be closed on Monday, January 1st and Tuesday, January 2nd. The office is closed on both Mondays due to the holidays and is always closed on Tuesdays. Kay is taking a vacation day on Wednesday, the 27th. Contact Kay in the office with any questions.
8. Altar Guild Meeting/Luncheon will be February 10th at 11:30am for current Altar Guild members as well as anyone interested in learning more about serving on FELC's Altar Guild. See additional details on the following page.
9. And before you know it, Lent will be here. Ash Wednesday is February 14th. We will have Worship Services at 12:15pm and at 6:00pm.
10. It has been Carolyn Renton's great pleasure to engage in the ministry of sending cards to our congregation members. Over the past 5 years approximately 3,000 cards have been sent. We thank Carolyn for this ministry. She would like you to know that if you don't get the card by the actual birthday or anniversary date it is often because the mail takes various amounts of time to get to the recipient. Please contact the office if your address has changed. Blessings to you all. We remember you in our thoughts and prayers.
11. Jane Cade extends a "THANK YOU" for your generosity in donating to the Baby Jesus program.
12. Bob Tyler extends a "THANK YOU" for supporting FELC's Toys for Tots collection. A perfect example of First doing God's work with our hands. More details to follow in the January Flame.

Let us Prepare our Hearts and Minds for Worship

UPCOMING DATES TO MARK ON YOUR CALENDAR

(MEG)
MEET, EAT & GREET

Upcoming MEG Luncheons Second Thursdays at Noon

*Jan. 11	*May 9	*Sept. 12
*Feb. 8	*June 6	*Oct. 10
*Mar. 14	*July 11	*Nov. 14
*Apr. 11	*Aug. 8	*Dec. 12



THE GRIEF GROUP will meet on Mondays from 11:00am-12:30pm in the lounge on the following dates:

- Jan 8, 15, 29
- Feb 12, 26
- Mar 11, 25
- April 8, 22



ART WORSHIP CLASSES will begin again in January. Classes will be in the fellowship hall from 1:00pm-2:30pm the 3rd Thursday each month:

*January 18	*March 21	*May 16
*February 15	*April 18	

Please contact Kay in the office or Pastor Rita to sign up.



A luncheon meeting for all Altar Guild members, and anyone interested in learning more about serving on FELC's Altar Guild, will be held on Saturday, February 10th at 11:30 in the Fellowship Hall. Because a light lunch will be served, attendees are asked to confirm their attendance by contacting Carol Tyler via text at 217-620-1356 or email at cjtyler5@msn.com. Those attending are also asked to bring their own beverage of choice. Please note, in case of inclement weather, Saturday, February 17th is the back-up date.

A course offering of the Faith Formation Committee
of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod – ELCA

Church History Survey

Saturdays Online via ZOOM 9:00 AM to Noon

January 20 & 27

February 10 & 24

March 9 & 23

**There is no cost for this class thanks to a generous gift
from a congregation in our synod.**

Pr. Luanne Cantrell – Course Instructor

Course Description:

As with any history course, this course will be looking at events that have shaped the world in which we now live. Specifically, the events that have shaped the Church as we know it today. The course will take us on a journey through time where we will discover both the triumphs and mistakes which will provide us the opportunity to learn their impact on the Church itself.

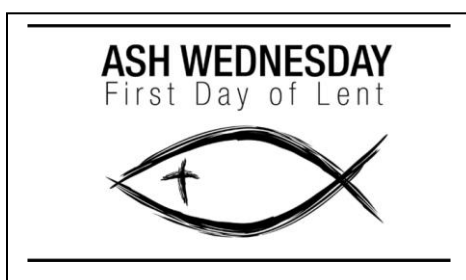
Below is the link to register for this class.

[Adult Faith Formation: Church History Survey - Central/Southern Illinois Synod \(csis-elca.org\)](https://csis-elca.org)

Please contact Pastor Rita if you are interested in attending this class by zoom in the Lounge at church. Even if you attend via zoom at church, you must register prior to January 13th which is the first class.



Please plan to attend the
Annual Congregation Meeting
on January 28, 2024.
The meeting will be held after
Worship Service.



Please mark February 14, 2024 on your
calendar to attend **Ash Wednesday**
Worship Services at 12:15pm and 6:00pm.