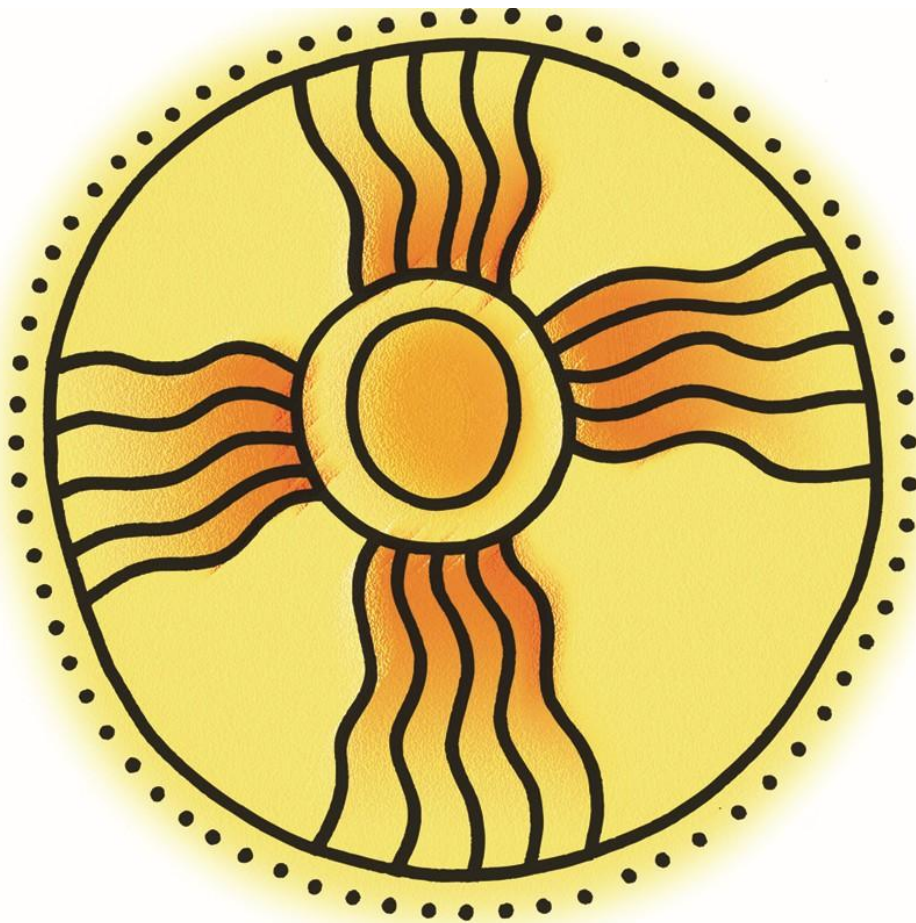


**First Evangelical Lutheran Church  
250 W. Decatur St.  
Decatur, Illinois  
(217) 423-7783**

**Website: [www.felcdecatur.org](http://www.felcdecatur.org)  
Email: [felc\\_decatur@outlook.com](mailto:felc_decatur@outlook.com)**

*We have a livestream option on our website!  
<https://felcdecatur.org/live>*



**September 14, 2025, at 9:30 am  
Holy Cross Sunday  
HOLY COMMUNION**

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

## INTRODUCTION

*This festival, which originated in the fourth century, celebrates the triumph of the cross. Paul reminds us that Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God. As Moses put a serpent on a pole to be a source of healing for the Israelites, we lift high the cross as the sign of our health and salvation. Each time we make the sign of the cross we remember our baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ.*

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## PRELUDE

## GATHERING

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
our maker, our helper, and our keeper.

**C: Amen.**

P: Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin  
in the presence of God and of one another.  
*Silence is kept for reflection.*

P: Merciful and loving God,  
**C: we are your stiff-necked people.**  
**We trample on the needy.**  
**We grumble about your grace to others.**  
**We turn away from the poor.**  
**Have mercy on us and forgive our sins.**  
**Rejoice over us as ones who were lost**  
**and have been found. Amen.**

P: Even when we are faithless, God remains faithful.  
Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.  
You who were lost have been found.  
In the name of † Jesus, your sins are forgiven!  
**C: Amen.**

## \*GATHERING SONG

*"Come, All You People"*

**ELW #819**

## GREETING

ELW p. 138

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.

## \*KYRIE

ELW p. 184-185

## \*HYMN OF PRAISE

*“Glory to God in the Highest”*

ELW p. 185-186

## \*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray,

C: Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross so that he might draw the whole world to himself. To those who look upon the cross, grant your wisdom, healing, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## WORD

### First Reading: Numbers 21:4b-9

*When the people spoke against God and Moses, the Lord sent poisonous snakes against them. Moses interceded for the people, and the Lord ordered him to erect a serpent of bronze on a pole. All who looked at it after having been bitten by a serpent would live.*

From Mount Horeb the Israelites set out, <sup>4b</sup> but the people became discouraged on the way. <sup>5</sup> The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” <sup>6</sup> Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup> The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” <sup>9</sup> So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it upon a pole, and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

## **Psalm 98:1-4**

- <sup>1</sup> Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done marvelous things,  
whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.  
<sup>2</sup> **O LORD, you have made known your victory,  
you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of the nations.**  
<sup>3</sup> You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.  
<sup>4</sup> **Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands;  
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.**

## **Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-24**

*At the heart of the Christian message is the word of the cross. This proclamation seems foolish to many because it reveals true divine power in the absolute weakness of Christ's crucifixion. True wisdom understands how ours is a God who suffers for and with humankind in the cross.*

<sup>18</sup> The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

<sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

A: The Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*“Alleluia”*

**ELW p. 188**

P: The holy gospel according to John the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

## **Gospel: John 3:13-21**

*After explaining to Nicodemus that one must be born of water and Spirit, Jesus speaks of being lifted up on the cross, with reference to the bronze serpent lifted up by Moses in the desert. Here the Son of God is revealed as the source of healing.*

Jesus said: <sup>13</sup> “No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup> “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.” <sup>18</sup> Those who believe in him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

## **SERMON**

**\*HYMN OF THE DAY**

*“Lift High the Cross”*

**ELW #660**

**\*APOSTLES’ CREED**

**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**

### **\*PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Gracious God, we come to you in prayer for the church, the world, and all in need.  
*A brief silence.*

A: Sustaining God, guide your church on the way. Give us patience in our journey, and protect us from division and doubt. May we look to the cross and live. God of grace,

**C: SM #178 “Hear Our Prayer”**

A: Creator God, renew the earth. Heal our planet from the venom of greed and exploitation, and direct us to respect all life as a gift from you. May we look to the cross and live. God of grace,

**C: SM #178 “Hear Our Prayer”**

A: God of wisdom, grant discernment to those in authority. Thwart the plans of the proud, bring low the mighty, and uphold those who work for peace. May they seek the way of the cross and live. God of grace,

**C: SM #178 “Hear Our Prayer”**

A: God of grace, alleviate suffering. Comfort the sick and the grieving (*especially*). Come to the aid of those who are hungry or needing shelter. May they find hope in the cross and live. God of grace,

**C: SM #178 “Hear Our Prayer”**

A: Good Shepherd, guide your flock. Protect us from the world’s lies and lead us in the way of truth. Strengthen us in our faith and inspire us to serve others. May we follow you to the cross and live. God of grace,

**C: SM #178 “Hear Our Prayer”**

A: Merciful God, you receive into your loving embrace those who have died. Giving thanks for them, may we find comfort in the cross and live in the hope of resurrection. God of grace,

**C: SM #178 “Hear Our Prayer”**

P: We entrust these prayers to you, O God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our redeemer and friend.

**C: Amen.**

**\*PEACE**

## **MEAL**

### **OFFERING**

*(We thank you for your time, talent, and money toward ministry at FELC and beyond. Please place your money donation in the offering basket at the back of church, or on-line at <https://felcdecatur.org/give>, or by mail.)*

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

P: Lord of the harvest,

**C: we return to you a portion of what you have given to us.**

**Turn us to set our hope not on the uncertainty of riches,  
but on you, who richly provides for us.**

**Multiply what we have gathered  
to bless all who are suffering and in need,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: 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.  
Fulfilling the promise of the resurrection,  
you pour out the fire of your Spirit,  
uniting in one body people of every nation and tongue.

And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter  
and all the witnesses of the resurrection  
With earth and sea and all their creatures,  
and with angels and archangels,  
cherubim, and seraphim,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

**ELW p. 190**

## **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

P: 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.

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

**ELW p. 191**

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. Come to this meal of mercy.

*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**

*"Lamb of God"*

**ELW p. 191**



## **\*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P: O God,

**C: through this meal you have strengthened us  
and appointed us to be your servants. Send us to do good and to share our  
possessions with all in need. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.**

## **SENDING**

## **\*BLESSING**

P: The God of righteousness,  
who gives justice to the oppressed,  
who gives food to the hungry,  
who sets the prisoners free,  
✠ bless you now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

## **\*SENDING HYMN**

*“Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus”*

**ELW #802**

## **\*DISMISSAL**

A: Go in peace. Do not lose heart.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

## **\*POSTLUDE**

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Welcome to everyone here and to those participating on-line

## Announcements

- **The AMELCA** team served 93 clients on Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>.
- **Youth Faith Formation begins today.** Ms. Abbey will be conducting the younger group's first lesson class. That same day the older group will be having their first Music class with Mr. Rick. On the 21st, Ms. Molly will be having our first craft/bulletin board session. On the 28th Ms. Kris will be having our first lesson class with the older group while the younger group will be having their first Music class with Mr. Rick. Mom & Dad, Grandma & Grandpa, please mark your calendars and bring your children so they can join in on the fun. Faith Formation's full calendar is in the September FLAME.
- This is also the first Sunday for **Adult Ed with Terry Shields**. Please join Terry in the Lounge after worship service.
- Please keep **Esther Gregory & her family** in your prayers; her son Kevin passed away on Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. Kevin's visitation will be Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at Graceland/Fairlawn Funeral Home, 2091 N. Oakland Ave., Decatur, from 10:00am-11:00am. Graveside service will follow in Graceland Cemetery. Minister Claire Vail is presiding. The family requests casual attire.
- **New Book Study** begins Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at 12:15pm in the Lounge.
- **Church Council** meets Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm.
- **Minister Claire** will be attending the **Interim Workshop** on Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>.
- **Art Workshop** will meet on Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> 1:00-2:30pm in the Fellowship Hall.

- **Dove Finance Committee** meeting will be Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> 4:00-5:00pm in the Lounge.
- **Discover & Invite** will meet Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 5pm in the Lounge.
- Church Council has approved for “**Back to Basics**” **Alcoholics Anonymous** group to meet here at FELC in the Fellowship Hall. They are a 12-step discussion group that meets daily in our Fellowship Hall. Meeting times are 8:00am – 9:15am Monday – Saturday and 6:00pm – 7:00pm Sunday.
- **Son Rise Café** needs hosts & hostesses! Nothing elaborate is required – just the desire to extend a little fellowship. Some suggestions have been fruit, or cheese & crackers, baked goods, etc. There’s a signup sheet on the bulletin board, so I hope you feel ‘nudged’ to sponsor a Sunday. Thank you for your contribution!
- We need a **host for Meet, Eat & Greet in December**. The church will reimburse you for your expenses. Please email or call the office if you are willing to host MEG on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Thank you!
- **October 19<sup>th</sup>** is the **Blessing of the Quilts**. As a gentle reminder, there will be a noisy offering during worship service. Donations from the noisy offering are used to help with shipping fees. The quilts will likely be placed on the sanctuary chairs on Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>. Anyone that would like to view the quilts on Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, is welcome between 9:00am-4:00pm. It will likely be quiet in the sanctuary, so feel free to find a favorite quilt, sit in that chair and have some quiet prayer time.
- FELC is thrilled to host your activity, meeting or event. Please contact the office to secure a **building use request** form 2 weeks prior. Thank you!

**Let us Prepare our Hearts and Minds for Worship**

## Prayer Requests

Connie Andrews, Matt Andrews & Family, Galen Arnold, Dave Bachmann,  
Peg Books, Bob Cloney, Brandon Ellison, Sandy Fitzgerald, Esther Gregory,  
Friends & Family of Kevin Gregory, James Jackson, Paul Kopetz,  
Jan Lawson, John Margias, Jarrod Renfro, Pastor Barbara Stroud-Borth,  
Dennis Tangney, Mary Ann Stolley, Ken Stolley, Rick Strine,  
Joyce Sweazy, Renee Wiedenkiller, Rudy Zucker Sr.

*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	Minister Claire Vail
Assisting Minister	Bob Tyler
Slides	Tami Cannon
Organist/Bell Choir Director	Rick Strine
Interim Choir Director	Milton Scott
Technical Director	Mason Oliver
Audio/Visual	Abbey Jordan & Audio/Visual Team
Bell Ringer	Mike Reynolds
Greeter	Marilyn Oftedal
Check-In	Nora & Gary Beck and Jan Stoll
Acolyte	Nora Beck
Communion Aide	Gary Beck
Money Counters	Jim & Judy Oettel and Gary & Carolyn Likins
Flowers	Nancy Salefski in Memory of Dolores Holderness