

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

**Website: www.felcdecatur.org
Email: felc_decatur@outlook.com**

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

You are to name him
Jesus

MATTHEW 1:21



**December 21, 2025, at 9:30 am
Fourth Sunday of Advent
HOLY COMMUNION**

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

INTRODUCTION

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

HANDBELL CHOIR

"Carol for Advent"

William Moats

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,
whose home is heaven and earth,
whose salvation is sure.

C: Amen.

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God
and of one another.
Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Long-expected God,

**C: we confess that we look to ourselves
for the peace and security only you can provide.
We reach for swords and spears,
reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war.
We become impatient while waiting
and weary of keeping awake.
Free us from self-reliance,
and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.
Increase our trust in God's timing,
and awaken us to your advent among us,
that we may abound in the hope you have promised. Amen.**

P: God judges us not as we deserve,
but according to God's own righteousness.

✝ You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.

C: Amen.

***GATHERING SONG**

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

ELW #254

GREETING

ELW p. 98

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. 98-99

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“Glory To God”

ELW p. 99-100

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray,

C: Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE ADVENT WREATH

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Hymn during wreath lighting

“He Came Down”

C: He came down that we may have love; *(sing 3 times); hallelujah forevermore*

He came down that we may have joy; *(sing 3 times); hallelujah forevermore*

He came down that we may have peace; *(sing 3 times); hallelujah forevermore*

He came down that we may have hope; *(sing 3 times); hallelujah forevermore*

He came down that we may have light; *(sing 3 times); hallelujah forevermore*

P: Praise to you, O God, who lives with us, sharing our flesh and bones.

As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed, so we wait and dream for you.

Bless us and let your face shine upon us, more radiant than these candles, and dearer than all else we seek. Restore us when we fail to refuse the evil and choose the good and banish all our fears. We pray in the name of Emmanuel, your promised child and our Savior.

C: Amen.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-16

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.”

¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

ANTHEM

CHOIR/BELL CHOIR/FLUTE

“He Will Come!”

Patrick Liebergen

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

- ¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph [|] like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- [|] on the cherubim.
- ² **In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, [|] and Manasseh,**
stir up your strength and [|] come to help us.
- ³ Restore [|] us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we [|] shall be saved.
- ⁴ **O LORD [|] God of hosts,**
how long will your anger fume when your [|] people pray?
- ⁵ You have fed them with the [|] bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of [|] tears to drink.
- ⁶ **You have made us the derision [|] of our neighbors,**
and our enemies laugh [|] us to scorn.
- ⁷ Restore us, O [|] God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we [|] shall be saved.
- ¹⁷ **Let your hand be upon the one at [|] your right hand,**
the one you have made so strong [|] for yourself.
- ¹⁸ And so will we never turn a- [|] way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- [|] on your name.
- ¹⁹ **Restore us, O LORD [|] God of hosts;**
let your face shine upon us, and we [|] shall be saved.

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter’s opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God’s gospel. The gospel’s content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul’s mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God

with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

"Alleluia"

ELW p. 102

P: The holy gospel according to Matthew the 1st Chapter.

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

Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

ELW #257

***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: In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

A: In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival. Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

A: The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

A: You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. May we meet the Christ-child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

A: When tears of grief, exhaustion, or loneliness come, or physical or emotional hurt overwhelms us, come to our aid. Uphold all who are anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Surround expectant parents and those suffering from infant loss with communities of support. Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

A: We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service. Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines upon us and we are held in your love. God of grace,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

C: Amen.

***PEACE**

MEAL

OFFERING

“Christ, Be Our Light”

**ELW #715
(Refrain/st. 1/ Refrain)**

(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: Nourishing God,

C: you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

**Through this meal, satisfy our parched places,
that we may rejoice and be for the world
signs of your kingdom come. 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.
You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer,
through whom you will also make all things new
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.
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:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

ELW p. 108

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.
Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,
the Word made flesh.

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.

P: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

C: Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

P: With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.
We look with hope for his coming.

C: Come, Lord Jesus.

P: Holy God, we long for your Spirit.
Come among us.
Bless this meal.
May your Word take flesh in us.
Awaken your people.
Fill us with your light.
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

C: Come, Holy Spirit.

P: All praise and glory are yours,
Holy One of Israel,
Word of God incarnate,
Power of the Most High,
one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p. 112

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

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
FLUTIST**

"Lamb of God"

**ELW p. 112-113
Colleen Hillyer-Pacey**

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P: God our host,

C: at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus. Amen.

SENDING

***BLESSING**

P: May God who comes among us, Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit,
grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,
and good news to share today and always.

C: Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

“All Earth Is Hopeful”

ELW #266

***DISMISSAL**

A: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: Thanks be to God.

***POSTLUDE**

Liturgy from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* copyright © 2006. All Rights reserved.
Reprinted by permission of Augsburg Fortress

Lectionary - Copyright © 2025 Augsburg Fortress.
Permission is granted for congregations to reproduce copies for local use only and this copyright notice appears.

All reprints used by permission© John Ylvisaker, Box 321, Waverly, IA 50677
CCLI License # 2368672 | One License #A-734658

Participants

Presiding and Preaching

Minister Claire Vail

Assisting Minister

Larry Osborne

Slides

Jim Oettel

Organist/Bell Choir Director

Rick Strine

Interim Choir Director

Milton Scott

Flutist

Colleen Hillyer-Pacey

Technical Director

Mason Oliver

Audio/Visual

Abbey Jordan & Audio/Visual Team

Bell Ringer

Mike Reynolds

Greeter

Karen & Mike Reynolds

Check-In

Marsha Corley

Acolyte

Gemma Berry

Communion Aide

Kris Sites

Money Counters

Karen & Steve Wenger and Carol & Ken Broeking

Flowers

Karen & Mike Reynolds

Prayer Requests

Connie Andrews, Matt Andrews & Family, Peg Books, Leslie Casssity, Family & Friends of Kandy Donahue, Sandy Fitzgerald, Esther Gregory, Charlotte Hubbard, Paul Kopetz, Jan Lawson, Marilyn Oftedal, RuthAnn & Don Ruby, Mary Ann Stolley, Ken Stolley, Rick Strine, 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.*

Welcome to everyone here and to those participating on-line

Announcements

- **The AMELCA** team served 107 clients on Wednesday.
- There are a few remaining **Cookies in a Jar**. **This is a fundraiser for AMELCA**. The cost is \$15 a jar. There are 3 types of cookies available this year.
- **Poinsettia deliveries are due in the church by 10:00am on Monday, December 22nd**. I have only received information from 3 families. Contact Kay early Monday morning if you are having a poinsettia delivered and have not given her your "In Memory of/ In Honor of" information. Christmas Eve bulletins will be printed Monday morning.
- Over the Advent season we will be **collecting items for Dove clients**. Look for a collection box near the baptism font. Please bring personal care items (soap, lotion, shampoo, hair oil...) specifically for African American needs, and feminine care items. Please see Marty Brilley with questions.
- This is the last Sunday for **Baby Jesus donations**. Infant clothing, onesies, receiving blankets, diapers, etc. will be collected through 12/21.
- Annual Reports were due **December 7th**. If you have not sent in your report, please email it to felc_decatur@outlook.com. 2025 Financial reports are due by Monday, January 12th.
- **Christmas Eve Service is at 7:30pm on December 24th**.

- **Offering envelopes** will be a little late this year. Expected delivery is the first week of January. I believe the veterans among us would call this a SNAFU. Please use a plain mailing envelope with your name on it until the 2026 envelopes are distributed. We apologize for any confusion. -Finance Committee-



HOLIDAY CHURCH OFFICE CLOSINGS:

- The church office is closed Wednesday, December 24th – Friday December 26th.
- The church office is closed Wednesday, December 31st – Thursday, January 1st.
- The church office will continue to be closed every Tuesday.

Let us Prepare our Hearts and Minds for Worship