

**First Evangelical Lutheran Church
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Decatur, Illinois
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*We have a livestream option on our website!
<https://felcdecatur.org/live>*

**Take
the child
and his
mother,
and flee**

MATTHEW 2:13



**December 28, 2025, at 9:30am
First Sunday of Christmas
HOLY COMMUNION**

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

INTRODUCTION

As we celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, our gospel today confronts us with the death of innocent children at the hands of Herod. The birth of Christ does not remove the power of evil from our world, but its light gives us hope as we walk with all the “holy innocents” of past generations and today who have suffered unjustly. In our gathering around word and meal, God continues to redeem us, lift us up, and carry us as in days of old.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✙ one God,
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty Savior,
Prince of Peace.

C: Amen.

P: Trusting in God’s steadfast love and faithfulness,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Reconciling God,

**C: we yearn for your presence to transform
our grief, pain, and despair.**

**We confess that we have not always prepared
room in our hearts for your love;
we have not always recognized
your presence among us;
we have not always embraced your message of peace.**

**We cry out, weary with the burden of violence,
oppression, and fear.**

**We confess our failure to make room
for those seeking refuge;
our participation in violent systems
that harm your innocent ones;
our reluctance to embody your good news.**

**Be born in us today
and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation. Amen.**

P: God's grace upon grace flows over you.

✠ Christ's presence redeems the whole creation.

Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad!

C: Amen.

***GATHERING SONG**

"Love Has Come"

ELW #292

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: O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 63:7-9

God does not delegate divine intervention to a messenger or angel. God's own presence brings salvation. The prophet and all who read these words join in celebrating God's gracious deeds. God trusts that God's people will not act falsely.

⁷ I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD,
the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,
because of all that the LORD has done for us
and the great favor to the house of Israel
that he has shown them according to his mercy,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

⁸ For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not act deceitfully,"
and he became their savior

⁹ in all their distress.

It was no messenger or angel
but his presence that saved them;
in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 148

¹ Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise God in the heights.

² **Praise the LORD, all you angels;
sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**

³ Praise the LORD, sun and moon;
sing praise, all you shining stars.

⁴ **Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,
and you waters above the heavens.**

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
who commanded, and they were created,

⁶ **who made them stand fast forever and ever,
giving them a law that shall not pass away.**

⁷ Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps;

⁸ **fire and hail, snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**

⁹ mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars;

¹⁰ **wild beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds;**

¹¹ sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the world;

¹² **young men and maidens,
old and young together.**

¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

¹⁴ **The LORD has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful
servants, the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD. Hallelujah!**

Second Reading: Hebrews 2:10-18

*Through Jesus' suffering and death, the trail to eternal salvation has been blazed for us.
We do not fear death, because he has conquered the power of death. Thus Christ, our
merciful and faithful high priest, has the final say over the destiny of our lives.*

¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹² saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

¹³ And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Here am I and the children whom God has given me.”

¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels but the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

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 2nd Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

In a dream, Joseph is warned to flee to Egypt to protect the infant Jesus from the jealousy of Herod.

¹³ Now after the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

¹⁶ When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. ¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰ “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” ²¹ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³ There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazarene.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

“Let All Together Praise Our God”

ELW #287

***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: Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

A: God of grace, you show us mercy not according to our worthiness, but according to the abundance of your steadfast love. Grant us the courage to go into the world and do likewise. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of abundance, the sun and moon praise you and the shining stars sing of your love. Where we have desecrated your creation, make us into a healing balm for what we have broken. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of righteousness, when leaders fail to fulfill their calls to enact justice, you suffer alongside us. Propel those in power to see you reflected in the faces of all they serve. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of life, you claim us as your own and care for us as Christ's siblings. Pour out your compassion in every place your people suffer, and protect them in the palm of your hand. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of compassion, you nurture children as the apple of your eye. As you sheltered your son Jesus from Herod's grasp, shelter all children in danger. As you comforted Rachel, comfort all who have lost children to violence. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: God of love, you console those who weep for lost beloved ones. Even as we mourn, we offer thanks for those who have gone before us, trusting in your comfort and protection. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior. 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: God of Glory,

**C: great are your wonders among us
and many are the blessings you bestow.**

**Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world,
that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace,
through Christ our Savior. 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.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,
that beholding the God made visible,
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.
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

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: God is now in flesh appearing. Come to the feast of joy!

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. 112-113

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P: Incarnate God,

C: you are among us at this table.

**May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts
the mystery of your presence.**

**Move us to discover the wonders of your love
in the everyday moments of our lives,
through Christ born in us. Amen.**

SENDING

***BLESSING**

P: The triune God, glorious Mystery,
holy Incarnate One, abiding Comforter,
✠ bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy.

C: Amen.

***DISMISSAL**

A: Glory to God in the highest!

C: And peace to God’s people on earth!

A: Go in joy. Embody God’s redeeming grace.

C: Thanks be to God.

***POSTLUDE**

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Participants

Presiding and Preaching

Assisting Minister

Slides

Organist/Bell Choir Director

Interim Choir Director

Technical Director

Audio/Visual

Bell Ringer

Greeter

Check-In

Acolyte

Communion Aide

Money Counters

Minister Claire Vail

Janice Isaacs

Larry Osborne

Rick Strine

Milton Scott

Mason Oliver

Abbey Jordan & Audio/Visual Team

Mike Reynolds

Karen & Mike Reynolds

Ruth Nihiser

Ensley Dalen

Karen Reynolds

Karen & Steve Wenger and Carol & Ken Broeking

Prayer Requests

Connie Andrews, Matt Andrews & Family, Peg Books, Leslie Cassity,
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

- **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-
- Our next **Joint Worship service is January 4th at Holy Cross** celebrating Epiphany. Please stay after worship service for a snack in the fellowship hall.



HOLIDAY CHURCH OFFICE CLOSINGS:

- 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