

JOINT WORSHIP SERVICE
Holy Cross Lutheran Church &
First Evangelical Lutheran Church

Epiphany of Our Lord

January 4, 2026

Worship at 9:30 am



First Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 W. Decatur St.
Decatur, IL 62522
217- 423-7783

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

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
3778 N. Water St.
Decatur, IL 62526
217-877-2258

Website: HolyCrossLutheranDecatur.org
Email: holycross3778@yahoo.com
Facebook @ [HolyCrossLutheranDecaturIL](https://www.facebook.com/HolyCrossLutheranDecaturIL)

WELCOME TO WORSHIP

It is our deepest hope that you feel welcome here. Restrooms and drinking fountains are available in the lobby area. We welcome all baptized Christians to Christ's table for Holy Communion. Instructions for distribution are shown before the Dialogue. This worship guide is designed to provide you the information you need to join us in worship, but should you have any questions, please feel free to ask an usher, the pastor, or someone near you. Let us join in praising God as we are nourished by the Word and at the Table.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY

The feast of Epiphany ("manifestation") concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God's glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God's love to all people.

PRELUDE AND BELLS

ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRAYER REQUESTS

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (Stand as you are comfortable)

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

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.**

OPENING HYMN

Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies

ELW 553

**1 Christ, whose glory fills the skies, Christ, the true and only light,
Sun of righteousness, arise, triumph o'er the shades of night;
Dayspring from on high, be near; Daystar, in my heart appear.**

**2 Dark and cheerless is the morn unaccompanied by thee;
joyless is the day's return, till thy mercy's beams I see,
till they inward light impart, glad my eyes, and warm my heart.**

**3 Visit then this soul of mine, pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
fill me, radiancy divine, scatter all my unbelief;
more and more thyself display, shining to the perfect day.**

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

P The grace of Jesus Christ our Savior, the reconciling love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C **And also with you**

HYMN OF PRAISE

Glory Be To God In Heaven

ELW pg. 204

(Tune: Joyful, Joyful We Adore You)

**1 Glory be to God in heaven; peace, good will to all the earth.
Mighty god of all creation, Father of surpassing worth:
we exalt you, we adore you, we lift high our thanks and praise.
Saints and angels bow before you; here on earth our songs we raise.**

**3 Holy One we now acclaim you; Lord alone, to you we call;
Holy One in faith we name you God most high, yet near to all:
Jesus Christ, with God the Spirit, in the Father's splendor bright.
For the peace that we inherit, glory be to God on high!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Let us pray together,

C **O God, on this day you revealed your Son to the nations by the leading of a star. Lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives, and bring us at last to the full vision of your glory, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

Jerusalem is assured that nations will make a pilgrimage to her because the light of God's presence is in her midst. The bountiful food of the sea and the profits of international trade will come streaming to Jerusalem and thereby declare God's praise.

¹ Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

² For darkness shall cover the earth
and thick darkness the peoples,
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

³ Nations shall come to your light
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together; they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried in their nurses' arms.

⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you;
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

L The Word of the Lord. **C** **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm: 72:1-7, 10-14

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the king's son;
- ² that he may rule your people righteously
and the poor with justice;
- ³ that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ Let him defend the needy among the people,
rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.
- ⁵ May he live as long as the sun and moon endure,
from one generation to another.
- ⁶ Let him come down like rain upon the mown field,
like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷ In his time may the righteous flourish;
and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.
- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles pay tribute,
and the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.
- ¹¹ May all kings bow down before him,
and all the nations do him service.
- ¹² For the king delivers the poor who cry out in distress,
the oppressed, and those who have no helper.
- ¹³ He has compassion on the lowly and poor,
and preserves the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their lives,
and precious is their blood in his sight.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:1-12

What had been hidden from previous generations is now made known through the gospel ministry of Paul and others. In Christ both Jews and Gentiles participate in the richness of God's promised salvation.

¹ This is the reason that I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you gentiles, ² for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you ³ and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴ a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵ In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶ that is, the gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷ Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am the very least of

all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ ⁹ and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have access in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

L The Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

He Came Down

ELW 253

(stand as you are comfortable)

P The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 2nd chapter

C **Glory to you, O Lord**

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

God's promise shines bright in the night as magi follow a star to honor a new king. Strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited messiah of Israel.

¹ In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, ² asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶ 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold,

frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM – “The Jesse Tree”

HYMN OF THE DAY

We Three Kings

WOV 646
st. 1 & 5

**1 We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.**

Refrain

**Oh, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light!**

**5 Glorious now behold him arise, King and God and Sacrifice;
heav'n sings alleluia: alleluia the earth replies. Refrain**

Text: John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820-1891, alt.

Star Word Liturgy

When extraordinary things happen in the sky, we stop and notice. We look for comets, shooting stars, full moons. We watch for rocket launches, satellites drifting in space, and the space station circling our orbit. The Magi were paying close attention to the sky when they saw something different—a star that shone so brightly, they were compelled to follow it.

Just as the Christmas star once shined for all people to see, the light of Christ still shines for all people. May we use these star words as reminders of the Christmas star we invite into our lives so that we might be led toward Jesus Christ.

Prayer

ONE: We are seekers—just like the Magi.

ALL: Light our paths and lead us closer to you.

ONE: We are looking for hope, peace, joy, love and so much more that Christ brings.

ALL: Light our paths and lead us closer to you.

ONE: We long for the abundant life God promises.

ALL: Light our paths and lead us closer to you.

ONE: May this star word be one of encouragement.

ALL: Light our paths and lead us closer to you.

ONE: May this word guide our intentions in the days to come.

ALL: Light our paths and lead us closer to you.

ONE: May we pay attention to where God is present.

ALL: Light our paths and lead us closer to you.

ONE: May God use these words to show us how to live and love in the world.

ALL: Light our paths and lead us closer to you. Amen.

Liturgy by Courtney Mills Jones Willis, 2020 Permission is granted for home and congregational use.

HYMN

Brightest and Best of the Stars

**ELW 303
st. 1, 3-5**

**1 Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,
dawn on our darkness and lend us your aid.
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant redeemer is laid.**

**3 What shall we give him, in costly devotion?
Shall we bring incense and off'rings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?**

**4 Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would his favor secure;
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.**

**5 Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,
dawn on our darkness and lend us your aid.
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant redeemer is laid.**

Text: Reginald Heber, 1783-1826, alt.

APOSTLES' CREED

**C I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again 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.

After each petition, the congregation responds:

P Hear us, O God. **C** Your mercy is great.

The prayers conclude:

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.

C Amen

PEACE

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C And also with you.

OFFERING

An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need. You are welcome to mail your offering to the church or access our on-line giving option: <https://tinyurl.com/bp6yzvs4>

OFFERING PRAYER (stand as you are comfortable)

P Let us pray,

C God of glory, 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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to the Table

ELW 481

C Come to the table of mercy, prepared with the wine and the bread.
All who are hungry and thirsty, come, and your souls will be fed.

**Come at the Lord's invitation; received from his nail-scarred hand.
Eat of the bread of salvation; drink of the blood of the Lamb.**

Text: Claire Cloninger, b. 1942

Music: COME TO THE TABLE, Martin J. Nystrom, b. 1956

Text and music © 1991 Integrity's Hosanna! Music: Juniper Landing Music, admin. Word Music; and Word Music.

COMMUNION

We welcome all whom God has claimed in baptism to the Lord's Table. Those who desire receiving communion in their seat, please notify the usher.

DIALOGUE

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.

By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations;
in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son;
and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

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:

SANCTUS (tune: "Angels from the Realms of Glory" ELW 275)

**C Holy, holy, Lord most holy, God of pow'r and God of might:
Heav'n and earth reveal your glory. Hail, hosanna, Lord of light!
Blessed be the coming Savior. Hail, hosanna, Lord of light!**

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.

As you take the wafer, hear these words.

"The body of Christ given for you." *Partake of the bread.*

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.

As you take the cup of wine or juice, hear these words.
“The blood of Christ shed for you.” *Partake of the wine/juice.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER

C Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

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

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

P Incarnate God, 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.

C Amen.

BLESSING

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

C Amen.

SENDING HYMN

Shine, Jesus, Shine

ELW 671

Refrain

**Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.**

**Flow, river, flow flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your Word, Lord, and let there be light!**

1 Lord, the light of your love is shining, in the midst of the darkness, shining; Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us, set us free by the truth you now bring us. Shine on me, shine on me. *Refrain*

2 As we gaze on your kingly brightness, so our faces display your likeness, ever changing from glory to glory, mirrored here, may our lives tell your story. Shine on me, shine on me: *Refrain*

Text and music © 1987 Make Way Music (admin. by Music Services in the Western Hemisphere) All Rights Reserved. ASCAP

DISMISSAL

P Glory to God in the highest!

C **And peace to God's people on earth!**

P Go in joy, Embody God's redeeming grace.

C **Thanks be to God.**

The worship has ended: the service begins

From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2026 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #42052. Permission to podcast/stream the music in this service obtained from One License with license #A-731018 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

SPECIAL THANKS TO TODAY'S FAITHFUL SERVANTS

Presiding:	Minister Claire & Vicar Chris
Organist:	Paul Foster
Greeter:	Pam & Jim Musser
Usher:	Pam & Jim Musser
Lector:	Kay Warren
Communion Deacon:	Kay Warren
Coffee Hosts:	Holy Cross
Altar Guild:	Trisha Blazier & Tedi Simer
Cleaning:	Ted Corrigan (A & B)

HOLY CROSS PRAYER REQUESTS

Betty Behnke (Emily Buhnerkempe's grandma),
Family of Alma Buhnerkempe (first holiday season after her death),
Danyus Family,
Elaine Jarvis-Decker,
Patricia Page Flanagan (Vicar Chris' Mother),
Hamilton Family,
Mark & Joyce Jennings,
Jan Lawson,
Robinson Family & Friends,
Cindy Stricker,
Larry Weber (Emily Buhnerkempe's dad)

FIRST LUTHERAN PRAYER REQUESTS

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Both churches have their Annual Congregation Meeting on Sunday, January 25th immediately following worship service. All voting members are encouraged to attend.

HOLY CROSS:

- Please pick up your 2026 **Offering Envelopes** in the Narthex.
- If you ordered a **poinsettia**, please pick it up today.
- **Holy Cross Annual Committee Reports** are due to the office for the Annual Report. If you haven't submitted your report, please do so at your earliest convenience.
- Year-end **contribution statements** will be available January 11th.
- **Year-end Holy Cross Financial Audit** takes place Wednesday, January 14th at 5pm. There will not be a finance meeting.
- **Confirmation Class** will resume Sunday, January 18th after worship service.
- **Adult Bible Study** will resume on February 8th after worship service.

FIRST LUTHERAN:

- **Offering Envelopes** have arrived. Chuck has labeled them and put them on the Check-in table in the Narthex at FELC. You can pick them up next Sunday or during the week when the office is open.
- **Meet, Eat & Greet** is Thursday, January 8th at noon in the fellowship hall. Sausage/Chicken Gumbo with garlic bread will be served. Please sign-up to bring a side dish or dessert. All are Welcome!!
- **Grief Group** meets on Monday, January 12th at 11:00am in the Lounge.
- **Personnel Committee** meets on Wednesday, January 14th at 3:45pm in the Lounge.
- **Art Workshop** meets on Thursday, January 15th at 1:00pm in the Fellowship Hall.
- **FELC Finance Committee** meets on Thursday, January 15th at 4:00pm via zoom.
- **Friday, January 16th, the FELC office will be closed.**

Star Words

What are star words?



The use of star words, also called “star gifts,” is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year that has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade now. The idea is that a list of intention words, or guiding words, are written or printed on paper stars. These paper stars are then distributed at random. Individuals are often encouraged to place their star word somewhere they will see it regularly throughout the year to allow consistent reflection on how God has moved through, around, or in connection to that word.

There Are Several Theological Statements Being Made in this Tradition:

1. The Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus.
2. We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.
3. We trust that it is often easy to miss God in our daily midst. Having an intention word to consider both in present days, as well as to reflect on at the end of the year, allows for us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before. This is the greatest gift.
4. We know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. We believe that star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.
5. By receiving a star word chosen at random, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control.

Ideas for using your star word:

You might display your star word in your home. Get creative—seek beautiful ways to add your star words to spaces around your home so that you will continue to see them and think about them throughout the year.

Prompts for using the star words for daily prayer:

A. Look up the definition of your word, even if it is a word you know well. You may even look into the etymology of the word and how its meaning has changed throughout history. If you drew a non-English word, do as much research as you can into the meaning of the word in its original culture.

B. What does this word remind you of? Does it recall any memories or experiences? How might God be speaking to you through this word?

C. See if you can find your word—or a synonym—in the Bible. What scripture passages can you find? How is the word used in these passages? Are there other scripture passages that remind you of your word?

D. Write or speak aloud a prayer using your word. (This is a fun challenge for children using the star words.)