

**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>*



**February 18, 2026  
at 12:00pm & 6:00pm  
Ash Wednesday  
HOLY COMMUNION**

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

## INTRODUCTION

*On Ash Wednesday we begin our forty-day journey toward Easter with a day of fasting and repentance. Marking our foreheads with dust, we acknowledge that we die and return to the earth. At the same time, the dust traces the life-giving cross indelibly marked on our foreheads at baptism. While we journey through Lent to return to God, we have already been reconciled to God through Christ. We humbly pray for God to make our hearts clean while we rejoice that “now is the day of salvation.” Returning to our baptismal call, we more intentionally bear the fruits of mercy and justice in the world.*

## GATHERING

*The assembly gathers in silence.*

### **Psalm 51:1-17**

- <sup>1</sup>Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- <sup>2</sup>**Wash me through and through from my wickedness,  
and cleanse me from my sin.**
- <sup>3</sup>For I know my offenses,  
and my sin is ever before me.
- <sup>4</sup>**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.**
- <sup>5</sup>Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,  
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- <sup>6</sup>**Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,  
and would have me know wisdom deep within.**
- <sup>7</sup>Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.
- <sup>8</sup>**Let me hear joy and gladness;  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**
- <sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my wickedness.
- <sup>10</sup>**Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within me.**
- <sup>11</sup>Cast me not away from your presence,  
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- <sup>12</sup>**Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**
- <sup>13</sup>Let me teach your ways to offenders, and sinners shall be restored to you.
- <sup>14</sup>**Rescue me from bloodshed, O God of my salvation,  
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness.**

<sup>15</sup>O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.  
<sup>16</sup>**For you take no delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.**  
**You are not pleased with burnt offering.**  
<sup>17</sup>The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit;  
a troubled and broken heart, O God, you will not despise.

## **GREETING**

**ELW p. 251**

**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.

## **\*PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**P:** Let us pray,

**C:** Gracious God, out of your love and mercy you breathed into dust the breath of life, creating us to serve you and our neighbors. Call forth our prayers and acts of kindness, and strengthen us to face our mortality with confidence in the mercy of your Son, 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: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17**

*Because of the coming Day of the LORD, the prophet Joel calls the people to a community lament. The repentant community reminds God of his gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.*

<sup>1</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
sound the alarm on my holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—  
<sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom,  
a day of clouds and thick darkness!  
Like blackness spread upon the mountains,  
a great and powerful army comes;  
their like has never been from of old,  
nor will be again after them  
in ages to come.

<sup>12</sup> Yet even now, says the LORD,  
return to me with all your heart,

with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;

<sup>13</sup> rend your hearts and not your clothing.

Return to the LORD your God,

for he is gracious and merciful,

slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love,

and relenting from punishment.

<sup>14</sup> Who knows whether he will not turn and relent

and leave a blessing behind him,

a grain offering and a drink offering

for the LORD your God?

<sup>15</sup> Blow the trumpet in Zion;

consecrate a fast;

call a solemn assembly;

<sup>16</sup> gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation;

assemble the aged;

gather the children,

even infants at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room

and the bride her canopy.

<sup>17</sup> Between the vestibule and the altar,

let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.

Let them say, "Spare your people, O LORD,

and do not make your heritage a mockery,

a byword among the nations.

Why should it be said among the peoples,

'Where is their God?' "

A: The Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10**

*The ministry of the gospel endures many challenges and hardships. Through this ministry, God's reconciling activity in the death of Christ reaches into the depths of our lives to bring us into a right relationship with God. In this way, God accepts us into the reality of divine salvation.*

<sup>20b</sup> We entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

<sup>6:1</sup> As we work together with him, we entreat you also not to accept the grace of God in

vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says,

“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,  
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! <sup>3</sup> We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: in great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> in purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup> truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors and yet are true, <sup>9</sup> as unknown and yet are well known, as dying and look—we are alive, as punished and yet not killed, <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything.

A: The Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

*“Return to the Lord”*

**ELW p. 142**

P: The holy gospel according to Matthew the 6<sup>th</sup> Chapter.

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

**Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>5</sup> “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>16</sup> “And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

## SERMON

**\*HYMN OF THE DAY**

*“Savior, When in Dust to You”*

**ELW #601**

- 1 Savior, when in dust to you  
low we bow in homage due;  
when, repentant, to the skies  
scarce we lift our weeping eyes;  
oh, by all your pains and woe  
suffered once for us below,  
bending from your throne on high,  
hear our penitential cry!**
- 2 By your helpless infant years,  
by your life of want and tears,  
by your days of deep distress  
in the savage wilderness,  
by the dread, mysterious hour  
of the insulting tempter's pow'r,  
turn, oh, turn a fav'ring eye;  
hear our penitential cry!**
- 3 By your hour of dire despair,  
by your agony of prayer,  
by the cross, the nail, the thorn,  
piercing spear, and torturing scorn,  
by the gloom that veiled the skies**

**o'er the dreadful sacrifice,  
listen to our humble sigh;  
hear our penitential cry!**

**4 By your deep expiring groan,  
by the sad sepulchral stone,  
by the vault whose dark abode  
held in vain the rising God,  
oh, from earth to heav'n restored,  
mighty, reascended Lord,  
bending from your throne on high,  
hear our penitential cry!**

Text: Robert Grant, 1779-1838, alt.

## **INVITATION TO LENT**

P: Friends in Christ, today with the whole church we enter the time of remembering Jesus' passover from death to life, and our life in Christ is renewed.

We begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance and for God's mercy. We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended.

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent—self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love—strengthened by the gifts of word and sacrament. Let us continue our journey through these forty days to the great Three Days of Jesus' death and resurrection.

## **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P: Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

P: Most holy and merciful God,

**C: we confess to you and to one another,  
and before the whole company of heaven,  
that we have sinned by our fault,  
by our own fault,  
by our own most grievous fault,  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.**

P: We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

**C: Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: We have shut our ears to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

**C: Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

**C: Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

**C: Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

**C; Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

**C: Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

**C: Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

**C: Have mercy on us, O God.**

P: Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

**C: Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.**

## **IMPOSITION OF ASHES**

P: Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth.

May these ashes be a sign of our mortality and penitence, reminding us that only by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ are we given eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C: Amen.**



P: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.  
*(congregation may come forward for the Imposition of Ashes)*

P: Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,  
**C: that we may show forth your glory in the world.**

P: By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,  
**C: bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

P: Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.  
**C: Amen.**

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

P: Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.  
*A brief silence.*

A: Guide your church, O God. Accompany all Christians in this season of repentance, and renew our faith in the riches of grace you give to us in baptism. Hear us, O God.  
**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: Heal this earth, O God. Satisfy the needs of every parched place, every diverse ecosystem, every suffering creature. Though all return to dust, grant beauty and purpose to each living thing. Hear us, O God.  
**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: Restore the nations, O God. Let your healing spring up quickly across the world. Give all in authority the will to loose the bonds of injustice and let any who are oppressed go free. Hear us, O God.  
**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: Deliver your people, O God. Comfort any whose hearts are rent by grief, uphold any who are sick, bring food to those who hunger, and give housing to all without shelter. Hear us, O God.  
**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: Bless this assembly, O God. Reconcile us to one another and to you. Strengthen our resolve to fast from evil, open our hands in sharing, and quicken our prayer. Hear us, O God.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

A: Hold us forever, O God. We thank you for all who now know their treasure in heaven, and for all who on earth proclaimed your abounding, steadfast love. Hear us, O God.

**C: Your mercy is great.**

P: Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

**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: O God, maker of heaven and earth,

**C: your steadfast love embraces all creation.**

**You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth  
and bring forth its bounty.**

**Through these gifts of bread and wine,  
draw us into the death and life of your Son,  
who calls us to bear witness to his saving work.**

**We ask this in Jesus' name. 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.**

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: Blessed are you, O God of the universe.  
Your mercy is everlasting  
and your faithfulness endures from age to age.

Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth.  
Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood.  
Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea.  
Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness  
to the land of milk and honey.  
Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one.  
Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ.  
Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

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.  
With this bread and cup  
we remember our Lord's passover from death to life  
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C: Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

P: O God of resurrection and new life:  
Pour out your Holy Spirit on us  
and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
Bless this feast.  
Grace our table with your presence.

**C: Come, Holy Spirit.**

P: Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread.  
Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world.

Breathe new life into us.  
Send us forth,  
burning with justice, peace, and love.

**C: Come, Holy Spirit.**

**P:** With your holy ones of all times and places,  
with the earth and all its creatures,  
with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God,  
blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

**ELW p. 255**

*(right side)*

## **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

**P:** Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!  
Come to the table; taste and see.

*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**

*"Here Is Bread"*

**ELW #483**

**1 Here is bread, here is wine,  
Christ is with us, he is with us.  
Break the bread, taste the wine,  
Christ is with us here**

*Refrain:*

**In this bread there is healing,  
In this cup is life forever.  
In this moment, by the Spirit,  
Christ is with us here.**

**2 Here is grace, here is peace,  
Christ is with us, he is with us.  
Know his grace, find his peace,  
Feast on Jesus here.**

*Refrain*

**3 Here we are, joined in one  
Christ is with us, he is with us.  
We'll proclaim till he comes  
Jesus crucified.**

*Refrain*

Text: Graham Kendrick, b.1950

Music: Graham Kendrick

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### **\*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**P: God of our salvation,**

**C: we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls,  
reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey.**

**Through the body and blood of your Son,  
may we become Christ's body in the world,  
bearing witness to your love for all creation,  
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

### **SENDING**

### **\*BLESSING**

**P: Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity:**

**God, who calls all things into existence,**

**Jesus Christ, who redeems us,**

**and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation,**

**✠ bless you now and always.**

**C: Amen.**

### **\*SENDING HYMN**

*"Be Thou My Vision"*

**ELW #793**

**1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:  
thou my best thought both by day and by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**

**2 Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.  
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r,  
raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.**

**3 Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.**

**4 Light of my soul, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.**

Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931

**\*DISMISSAL**

**A: Go in peace. Believe the good news.**

**C: Thanks be to God.**

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## Participants

Presiding and Preaching  
Assisting Minister @ 12:00pm  
Slides @ 12:00pm  
Assisting Minister @ 6:00pm  
Slides @ 6:00pm  
Organist/Bell Choir Director  
Interim Choir Director  
Technical Director  
Audio/Visual  
Bell Ringer  
Greeter  
Check-In  
Acolyte  
Communion Aide  
Money Counters

Minister Claire Vail  
Bob Tyler  
Denise Troester  
Bill Fitzgerald  
Jim Oettel  
Rick Strine  
Milton Scott  
Mason Oliver  
Abbey Jordan & Audio/Visual Team  
Mike Reynolds  
Mike & Karen Reynolds  
Bob & Carol Tyler  
Karen Reynolds  
Karen Reynolds  
Arlene Mannlein & Gary Beck

## Prayer Requests

Connie Andrews, Matt Andrews & Family, Peg Books,  
Jeanie Dennis, Esther Gregory, Paul Kopetz,  
Jan Lawson, Friends & Family of John Margias,  
Marilyn Oftedal, RuthAnn & Don Ruby,  
Sebastian (Bass) Smallwood, Mary Ann Stolley, Ken Stolley,  
Rick Strine, Ann Thompson, Linda Williams, 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.*



**Ash Wednesday February 18**

FELC Worship Service at 12:00pm & 6:00pm

**FELC Midweek Lent Services -**

Wednesdays at 12:00pm

Soup Supper at 6:00pm

7:00pm Evening Prayer with Short Homily

on February 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25

(Theme: Baptismal Promise)

**Five Sundays in Lent**

February 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22