

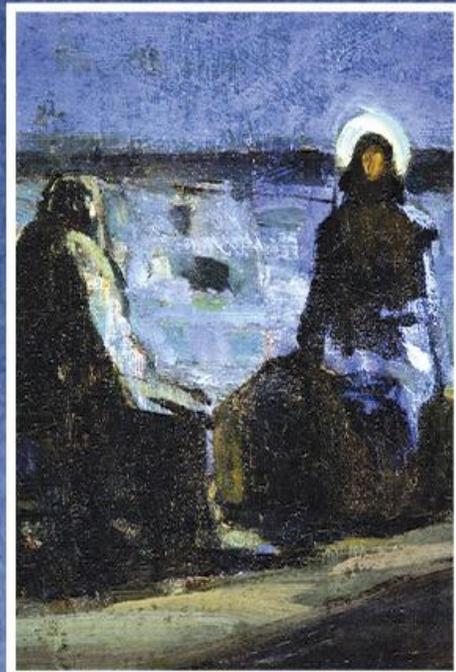
**First Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 W. Decatur St.
Decatur, Illinois
(217) 423-7783**

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

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

Nicodemus came
to
Jesus
BY NIGHT

JOHN 3:2



**March 1, 2026
at 9:30am
Second Sunday in Lent
HOLY COMMUNION**

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

INTRODUCTION

During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as children of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world.

WELCOME

PRELUDE

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

C: Amen.

P: Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt
and blots out all offenses.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdain the living
water Christ offers: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and
hope in the world: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound.

Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace.

C: Amen.

***GATHERING SONG**

"Oh, Love, How Deep"

ELW #322

**1 Oh, love, how deep, how broad, how high,
beyond all thought and fantasy,
that God, the Son of God, should take
our mortal form for mortals' sake!**

**2 God sent no angel to our race,
of higher or of lower place,
but wore the robe of human frame,
in Christ our Lord to this world came.**

**3 For us baptized, for us he bore
his holy fast and hungered sore;
for us temptation sharp he knew;
for us the tempter overthrew.**

**4 For us he prayed; for us he taught;
for us his daily works he wrought,
by words and signs and actions thus
still seeking not himself, but us.**

**5 For us by wickedness betrayed,
for us, in crown of thorns arrayed,
he bore the shameful cross and death;
for us he gave his dying breath.**

**6 For us he rose from death again;
for us he went on high to reign;
for us he sent his Spirit here
to guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.**

**7 All glory to our Lord and God
for love so deep, so high, so broad;
the Trinity whom we adore
forever and forevermore.**

Text: Thomas á Kempis, 1380-1471; tr. Benjamin Webb, 1819-1885, alt.

GREETING

ELW p. 203

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. 203

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray,

C: O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son, 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: Genesis 12:1-4a

God's call of Abram and Sarai has a clear purpose—that through them all the families of the earth would gain a blessing. As they set out on their journey, they are accompanied by promises of land, nation, and a great reputation.

¹ The LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

^{4a} So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills;

from where is my help to come?

² **My help comes from the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth.**

³ The LORD will not let your foot be moved
nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

⁴ **Behold, the keeper of Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep;**

⁵ the LORD watches over you;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ **the sun will not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.**

⁷ The LORD will preserve you from all evil
and will keep your life.

⁸ **The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in,
from this time forth forevermore.**

Second Reading: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

In the person and example of Abraham we discover that a right relationship with God does not involve earning a reward from God but entails trusting God's promises. Abraham is the forebear and model for both Jews and Gentiles, because we too trust that ours is a God who gives life to the dead.

¹ What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh?

² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵ But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is

written, “I have made you the father of many nations”), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

“We Are Turning”

ELW p. 205

P: The holy gospel according to John the 3rd Chapter.

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

Gospel: John 3:1-21

A curious Pharisee visits Jesus by night to learn from the teacher his friends reject. Jesus speaks to him about life in the Spirit and the kingdom of God.

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “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.

¹⁷ “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.”

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ 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**

“Jesus Is a Rock in a Weary Land”

ELW #333

Refrain:

**Jesus is a rock in a weary land,
a weary land, a weary land;
my Jesus is a rock in a weary land,
a shelter in a time of storm.**

**1 No one can do like Jesus,
not a mumbling word he said;
he went walking down to Lazarus' grave,
and he raised him from the dead. *Refrain***

**2 When Jesus was on earth,
the flesh was very weak;
he took a towel and girded himself
and he washed his disciples' feet. *Refrain***

**3 Yonder comes my Savior,
him whom I love so well;
he has the palm of victory
and the keys of death and hell. *Refrain***

Text: African American spiritual

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

A brief silence.

A: Faithful One, you renew us by grace. As you have inspired faith through the work of church artists and hymnwriters throughout the ages, give your church the means to praise your beauty today. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Living One, you delight in this world. The sun and moon, the wind and the water declare your goodness. Preserve this earth, and protect conservationists, scientists, and all who labor in service to creation. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Ruling One, you bless us to be a blessing. Open the hearts of all leaders to seek the flourishing of every person and lend your help to all who wait for justice, deliverance, and peace. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Compassionate One, you send your Son to save. Declare your word of acceptance to any who feel condemned and lift up any brought low by hatred and exclusion. Tend to all who are struggling with illness or loss. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Guiding One, you watch over our going out and coming in. Bless newcomers and new members in this assembly and accompany those who have recently left this community to journey elsewhere. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Eternal One, you neither slumber nor sleep. Be our keeper in life and in death. Thank you for our beloved who have died, and for your promise which saves this whole world by your 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://felcdecatour.org/give>, or by mail.)

OFFERING

“Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery”

**ELW #334
st. 1-3 & Lent 2**

- 1 Tree of Life and awesome myst'ry,
in your death we are reborn;
though you die in all of hist'ry,
still you rise with ev'ry morn,
still you rise with ev'ry morn.**
- 2 We remember truth once spoken,
love passed on through act and word;
ev'ry person lost and broken
wears the body of our Lord,
wears the body of our Lord.**
- 3 Christ, you lead and we shall follow,
stumbling though our steps may be;
one with you in joy and sorrow,
we the river, you the sea,
we the river, you the sea.**

Lent 2

**In our call to be a blessing,
may we be a blessing true;
may we live and die confessing
Christ as Lord of all we do.**

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 call your people to cleanse their hearts
and prepare with joy for the Paschal feast,
that renewed in the gift of baptism,
we may come to the fullness of your grace.
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. 207

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
you have brought us this far along the way.

In times of bitterness you did not abandon us,
but guided us into the path of love and light.
In every age you sent prophets
to make known your loving will for all humanity.

The cry of the poor has become your own cry;
our hunger and thirst for justice is your own desire.

In the fullness of time, you sent your chosen servant
to preach good news to the afflicted,
to break bread with the outcast and despised,
and to ransom those in bondage to prejudice and sin.

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 all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.



Christ has died. Christ is ris-en. Christ will come a - gain.

P: Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection,
we await the day when Jesus shall return
to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death.
Come, Lord Jesus! And let the church say, Amen.

C: Amen.

P: Send your Holy Spirit, our advocate,
to fill the hearts of all who share this bread and cup
with courage and wisdom to pursue love and justice in all the world.
Come, Spirit of freedom! And let the church say, Amen.

C: Amen.

P: Join our prayers and praise with your prophets and martyrs of every age,
that, rejoicing in the hope of the resurrection,
we might live in the freedom and hope of your Son.
Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.



LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p. 208

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Come to the table. Feast on God's goodness and 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. 208

*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.**

*EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS

P: In the name of God:

**We send you forth with Word and Sacrament to our homebound,
that they may share with us in the communion of Christ's Body and Blood.
We who are many are one body, because we all share one bread,
one cup in Christ Jesus, Our Lord. Amen.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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**

“Blessed Assurance”

ELW #638

**1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.**

Refrain:

**This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior, all the day long:
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.**

**2 Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. *Refrain***

**3 Perfect submission, all is at rest;
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love. *Refrain***

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820-1915

***DISMISSAL**

A: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

***POSTLUDE**

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Participants

Presiding and Preaching	Minister Claire Vail
Assisting Minister	Isaac Ford
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	Steve Wenger
Greeter	Bruce & Tami Cannon
Check-In	Bob & Judy Carney
Acolyte	Hudson Page
Communion Aide	Kris Sites
Money Counters	Karen & Steve Wenger and Carol & Ken Broeking
Flowers	Bob & Judy Carney celebrating their 60 th Anniversary

Prayer Requests

Connie Andrews, Matt Andrews & Family, Peg Books, Jeanie Dennis,
Esther Gregory, Janice Isaacs, Paul Kopetz, Jan Lawson, Sharon Lindeman,
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.,
Medical/Dental Mission trip for safety and love for the Honduras people in care.

*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.*

Announcements

- **Safe Church Training** is after Worship this morning. This is mandated annual training for everyone who works with our children (Faith Formation Team) or does home visits (like our homebound Communion Teams). Please gather in the Fellowship Hall after Worship for the training.
- **Watch for the clipboards being passed around!!** Today, March 1st, we are Marching Forth to Serve the Lord!! During the offering, we will pass around clipboards with opportunities to sign-up for a variety of tasks that enhance our community. **Flowers, **SonRise, **Soup Supper, **Worship Support (Bell Ringer, Communion Aide, Slide Operator, acolytes), **Funeral lunch helpers.
- **“First Fruits”** is an on-going special offering on the first Sunday of each month for AMELCA. Please make a donation of a non-perishable item like canned vegetables & fruit, canned soup, canned tuna, ramen noodle packs, canned pork & beans, boxed saltines, boxed mac & cheese, laundry pods, toilet paper or a financial contribution.
- **Mid-week Lent Services** are Wednesdays at 12:00pm and a soup supper at 6:00pm followed by Evening Prayer & Homily at 7:00pm.
- **You are invited to the Congregational Forum on March 8th** to discuss the gift we received from the Wadell Farmland. Please join us in the Fellowship Hall after Worship Service next Sunday.
- **The AMELCA Team** served 81 clients on Wednesday, February 25th.
- **Book Study** meets Monday, March 2nd at 12:15pm in the Lounge.
- **Dove Staff meeting** is Tuesday, March 3rd at 11:00am in the Fellowship Hall.
- We invite you to attend the **East/Central Conference Assembly** at Grace Church in Champaign (313 S. Prospect) on Sunday, March 15th. The conference is an opportunity for the area churches to come together for fellowship and do a bit of business. One of the items of business is to select a

voting member from a church in our Conference to be on Synod Council. This is a perfect way to deepen area relationships and find ways to serve. ALL ARE WELCOME to attend this event. Please see Minister Claire for additional details.

- **We need a FELC voting member delegate to attend 2026 Synod Assembly on June 6th.** This assembly will be held via zoom rather than in person. Molly Berry will represent FELC as one of the delegates and we need 1 other person to volunteer as the 2nd FELC voting delegate. “Synod Days” of learning, worship, and fellowship for East Central Conference will be held October 4th. The theme for the assembly and synod days is “for the work of ministry,” based on Ephesians 4:1-16.
- **Central/Southern Illinois Synod** is looking for a voting member to be on Synod Council. Molly Berry is the VP of Synod Council and can provide additional information. Please see Molly if you are interested.
- **We need a few more Hosts for MEG!** We need hosts to sign up for our upcoming Meet, Eat & Greet monthly lunches. The church will reimburse you for your expenses. The Sign-up sheet is on the table by the front door. Please consider signing up as a Host. Thank you!!

