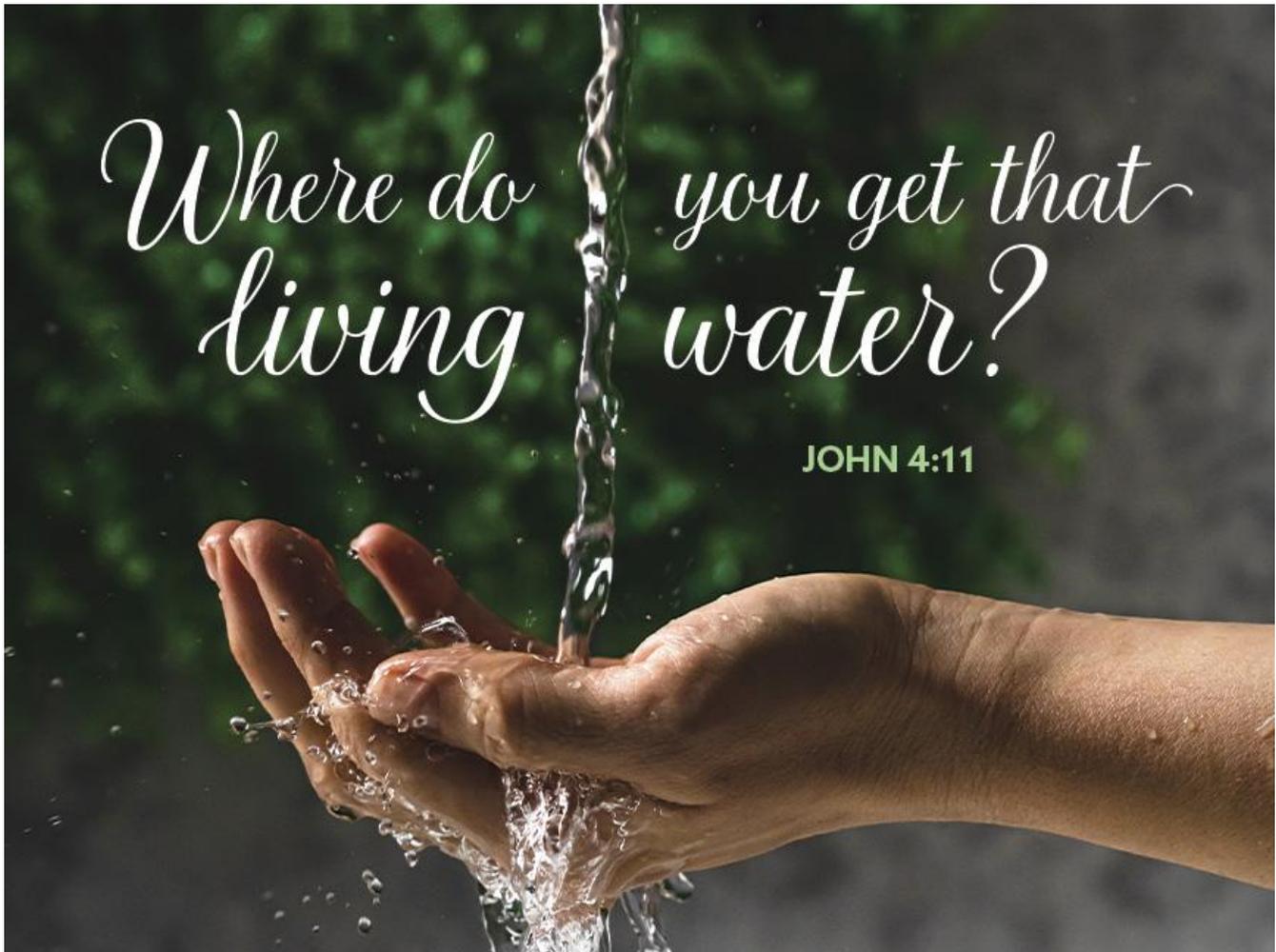


**First Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 W. Decatur St.
Decatur, Illinois
(217) 423-7783**

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

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



JOHN 4:11

**March 8, 2026
at 9:30am
Third Sunday in Lent
HOLY COMMUNION**

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

INTRODUCTION

In today's gospel the Samaritan woman asks Jesus for water, an image of our thirst for God. Jesus offers living water, a sign of God's grace flowing from the waters of baptism. The early church used this gospel and those of the next two Sundays to deepen baptismal reflection during the final days of preparation before baptism at Easter. As we journey to the resurrection feast, Christ comes among us in word, bath, and meal—offering us the life-giving water of God's mercy and forgiveness.

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 disdaining 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** *"Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty"*

ELW #777

**1 "Come to me, all pilgrims thirsty;
drink the water I will give.
If you knew what gift I offer,
you would come to me and live."**

Refrain:

**Jesus, ever flowing fountain,
give us water from your well.
In the gracious gift you offer
there is joy no tongue can tell.**

**2 "Come to me, all trav'lers weary;
come that I may give you rest.
Drink the cup of life I offer;
at this table be my guest." *Refrain***

**3 "Come to me, believers burdened;
find refreshment in this place.
Come, receive the gift I offer,
turn to me and seek my face." *Refrain***

**4 "Come to me, repentant sinners;
leave behind your guilt and shame.
Come and know divine compassion,
turn to me, I call your name." Refrain**

**5 "Come to me, distressed and needy;
I would be your trusted friend.
Come and seek the gift I offer,
come, your open hands extend." Refrain**

**6 "Come to me, abandoned, orphaned;
lonely ways no longer roam.
Come and take the gift I offer,
let me make in you my home." Refrain**

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

Text © 1992, 1996 Sisters of St. Benedict, 104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN 56374

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: Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth 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: Exodus 17:1-7

Because the thirsty Israelites quarreled with Moses and put God to the test, Moses cried out in desperation to God. God commanded Moses to strike the rock to provide water for the people. The doubt-filled question—"Is the LORD among us or not?"—received a very positive answer.

¹ From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ² The people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” ³ But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” ⁴ So Moses cried out to the LORD, “What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵ The LORD said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. ⁶ I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 95

¹ Come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

² **Let us come before God’s presence with thanksgiving
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

³ For you, LORD, are a great God,
and a great ruler above all gods.

⁴ **In your hand are the caverns of the earth;
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

⁵ The sea is yours, for you made it,
and your hands have molded the dry land.

⁶ **Come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

⁷ For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God’s pasture and the sheep of God’s hand.

Oh, that today you would hear God’s voice!

⁸ **“Harden not your hearts,
as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert.**

⁹ There your ancestors tested me,
they put me to the test, though they had seen my works.

¹⁰ **Forty years I loathed that generation, saying,
‘The heart of this people goes astray; they do not know my ways.’**

¹¹ Indeed I swore in my anger,
‘They shall never come to my rest.’ ”

Second Reading: Romans 5:1-11

Though we often hear that God helps those who help themselves, here Paul tells us that through Jesus' death God helps utterly helpless sinners. Since we who had been enemies are reconciled to God in the cross, we now live in hope for our final salvation.

¹ Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³ And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸ But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more surely, therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

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 4th Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel: John 4:5-30; 39-42

Jesus defies convention to engage a Samaritan woman in conversation. Her testimony, in turn, leads many others to faith.

⁵ Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."
⁸ (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God

and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”¹¹ The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?”¹² Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?”¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.”¹⁷ The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband,’¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”¹⁹ The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet.²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”²¹ Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.²³ But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?”²⁸ Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,²⁹ “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?”³⁰ They left the city and were on their way to him.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.”⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.⁴² They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

(to the tune of Wayfaring Stranger)

- 1 Sometimes our only song is weeping;
our only sound is gasping breath.
Sometimes it seems that God is sleeping
while our brief lives are bound in death.
Who hears the song our sorrows swallow
and offers hope to calm our fears?
When all our words seem frail and hollow,
God heeds the prayers within our tears.**

- 2 Sometimes we catch the faintest humming,
a far-off tune our hearts know well.
Sometimes we sense the Spirit coming.
Our song returns; our voices swell.
The Spirit sings though we are shaken,
and Christ has shared our heartfelt cries.
Restored, our weary souls awaken
to join God's song that never dies.**

Text: Adam M. L. Tice, b. 1979

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***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: O God, when suffering arises, preserve your church. Give to pastors, deacons, bishops, and all servants of your gospel the endurance that produces character and the hope that will never disappoint. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: When the waters run dry, sustain this earth. Send water to places languishing with drought. We ask that spring rains will fill our local water reservoirs and lakes, and bring relief to places damaged by floods. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: When quarrels ensue, soften our hearts. Quell hostilities between nations and peoples. We pray especially for peace in the Middle East and Ukraine. Send wisdom to our leaders that they may strive for peace and justice in all the world. Guard and protect those serving in the armed forces. Reconcile all humans across the lines of race, class, nationality, moral conviction, religion, and all else that divides or oppresses. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: When your people thirst, satisfy their needs. Send water and food to all who need nourishment. Grant welcome to all who are excluded. Show your mercy to any in need. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: When we gather to worship, send us your Spirit. Renew our hearts through the joyful noise we make and bless the work of our church musicians and musical ensembles. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: O God, when death draws near, we rejoice in the promise of life with you. We remember all who have entered eternal rest, and we pray that you bring us the hope of sharing in your glory. 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

“Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery”

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

- 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 3

**Living Water of salvation,
be the fountain of each soul;
springing up in new creation,
flow in us and make us whole.**

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.

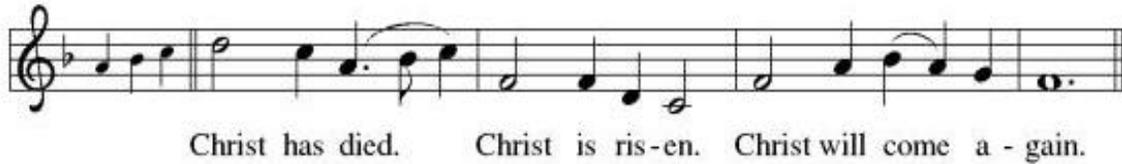
The cry of the poor has become your own cry;
our hunger and thirst for justice is your own desire.
In the fullness of time, you sent your chosen servant
to preach good news to the afflicted,
to break bread with the outcast and despised,
and to ransom those in bondage to prejudice and sin.

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.



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.

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**

“Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me”

ELW #623

**1 Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy riven side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure;
cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.**

**2 Not the labors of my hands
can fulfill thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know,
could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone;
thou must save, and thou alone.**

**3 Nothing in my hand I bring;
simply to thy cross I cling.
Naked, come to thee for dress;
helpless, look to thee for grace;
foul, I to the fountain fly;
wash me, Savior, or I die.**

**4 While I draw this fleeting breath,
when mine eyelids close in death,
when I soar to worlds unknown,
see thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee.**

Text: Augustus M. Toplady, 1740-1778

***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	Terri Arnold
Slides	Galen Arnold
Organist/Bell Choir Director	Rick Strine
Interim Choir Director	Milton Scott
Technical Director	Mason Oliver
Audio/Visual	Abbey Jordan & Audio/Visual Team
Bell Ringer	Mike Reynolds
Greeter	Ken & Carol Broeking
Check-In	Bob & Judy Carney
Acolyte	Ensley Dalen
Communion Aide	Karen Reynolds
Money Counters	Karen & Steve Wenger and Carol & Ken Broeking
SonRise Café	Congregational Forum sponsored by FELC Council

Prayer Requests

Barb Ahlenius, Connie Andrews, Matt Andrews & Family, Peg Books, Jeanie Dennis, Esther Gregory, Janice Isaacs, 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

- Please stay for **SonRise Café Congregational Forum** after Worship Service this morning to discuss the gift we received from the Waddell Farmland.
- The **Front Door** is not closing tightly. Please pull on the door as you enter and leave to ensure it is fully closed and locked.
- Mike & Karen Reynolds and the Margias Family **Thank You** for your thoughts, prayers, cards, and memorials for John Margias.
- **The AMELCA Team** served 76 clients on Wednesday, March 4th.

- **Grief Group** meets Monday, March 9th at 11:00am in the Lounge.
- **Personnel Committee** meets Tuesday, March 10th at 3:00pm in the Lounge.
- **Decatur Choral Board** meets Tuesday, March 10th at 5:00pm in the Lounge.
- **Mid-week Lent Services** are Wednesdays at 12:00pm and a soup supper at 6:00pm followed by Evening Prayer & Homily at 7:00pm.
- **Meet, Eat & Greet Luncheon** is Thursday, March 12th at noon. Pat Dalen is serving Hot Ham & Cheese sandwiches. Sign-up sheet is in the Narthex by the front door. Please sign-up to bring a side dish or dessert. All Are Welcome!!
- **Finance Committee** meets Thursday, March 12th at 4:00pm via Zoom.
- **Foundation Board** meets Thursday, March 12th at 5:30pm via Zoom.
- 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.
- Those who sleep under a quilt, sleep under a blanket of LOVE. **Quilters are sponsoring SonRise on March 22 in honor of National Quilting Day.** LWR quilters are celebrating 80 years of making over 28 million quilts for people around the world. Thank you, to all of the dedicated FELC quilters.
- Please submit your **Easter Flower form** to the office by Wednesday, March 25th. Any type of potted plant should be delivered by 10:00am Saturday, April 4th. Forms for “In Memory of” or “In Honor of” are in the Narthex.
- **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 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.
- **We need a few more Hosts for MEG!** We need a few more 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!!