

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

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Email: felc_decatur@outlook.com**

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



***Go and work
in the
vineyard
today***

MATTHEW 21:28

**September 27, 2026, at 9:30am
HOLY COMMUNION**

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

INTRODUCTION

Because God is the Holy Community of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are created in God's image of this Holy Community with all of God's creation. In fact, the divine Trinity dwells in our human community through the grace and love of God in Jesus. Which means, this community surprises us a LOT! It's not who we think will be in this Holy Community, but those whom God thinks and those who do God's will! Be awake! Be aware! Be surprised and join in!

WELCOME

PRELUDE

GATHERING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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,
who pours love into our hearts and healing upon the earth.

C: Amen.

P: Confident that God justifies us by grace through faith, let us confess our sin.
Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Compassionate God,

**C: we confess that we struggle to embody your goodness
in the world and in our own hearts.**

Creation groans from overuse.

Jealousy and bitterness strain our relationships.

Indifference keeps us from seeking justice.

**Divisions disrupt your call to show genuine love
to others. Turn our hearts back to you.**

Restore our world and reconcile us to one another.

**Renew us to live as your holy people,
following the way of Jesus Christ.**

Amen.

P: Hear this good news:

We have peace with God through ✝ Jesus Christ,
in whom there is no condemnation,

but only forgiveness and the promise of eternal life.

Receive freely this healing gift of grace.

C: Amen.

***GATHERING SONG**

"God is Here! "

ELW #526

- 1 God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.**
- 2 Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence, as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.**
- 3 Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;
here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.**
- 4 Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!**

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903-2000

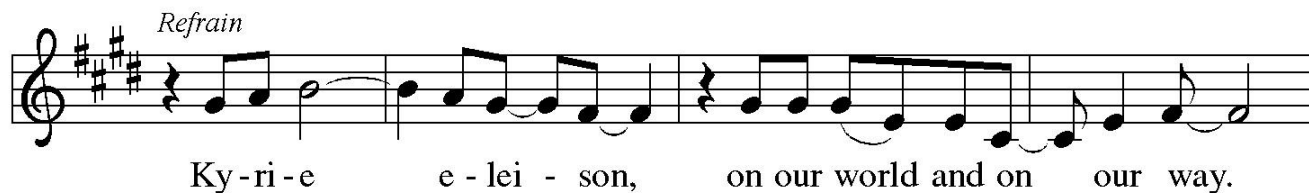
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GREETING

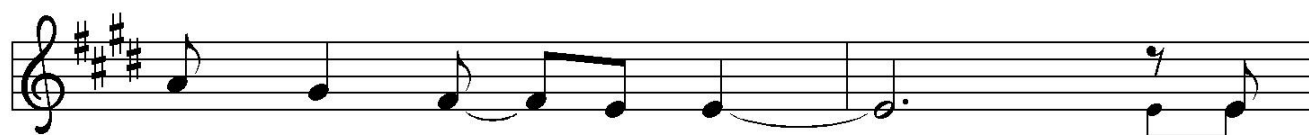
ELW p. 184

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.



- 1 For peace in the world, for the health of the church, for the
 2 That we may live out your im-passioned re-sponse to the
 3 For peace in our hearts, . . . for peace in our homes, . . for
 4 For your Spir-it to guide; that you cen-ter our lives in the



u-ni-ty of all; for
 hun-gry and the poor; that
 friends and fam-i-ly; for
 wa-ter and the word; that you



this ho-ly house, for all who wor-ship and praise,
 we may live out truth and jus-tice and grace,
 life and for love, for our work and our play,
 nour-ish our souls . . . with your bod-y and blood,



let us pray to the Lord, let us pray to the Lord.

Refrain

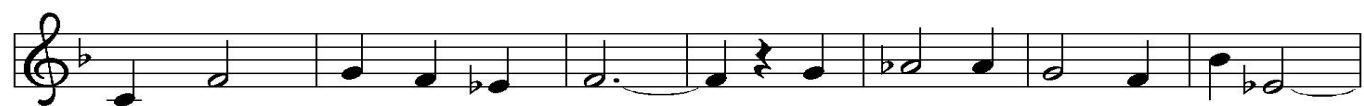


Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and



peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

1 Lord God, heav-en - ly King, al - might-y God and Fa - ther,

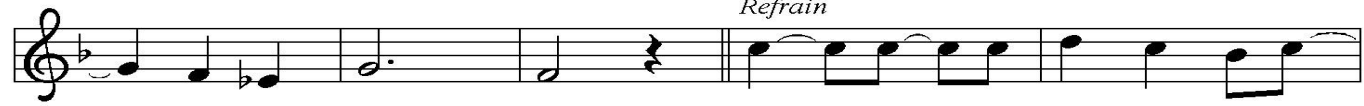


we wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you

Refrain



for your glo - ry. Glo - ry to God in the high-



est, the high - est, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

2 Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God,



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the



world: have mer - cy on us; you are seat - ed at the



right hand of the Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer.

***HYMN OF PRAISE** (*continued*) “Glory to God in the Highest” ELW p. 185-186

Refrain

Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and
peace to God's peo - ple on earth. 3 For you a -
lone are the Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord,
you a - lone are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the
Ho - ly Spir - it, in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther.
A - men. A - men. A - men.

Final refrain

Glo - ry to God in the high - est, the high - est, and peace to God's
peo - ple on earth. Glo - ry to God in the high -
est, the high - est, and peace to God's peo - ple on earth.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray,

C: God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

WORD

First Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Ezekiel challenges those who think they cannot change because of what their parents were and did, or who think they cannot reverse their own previous behavior. God insistently invites people to turn and live.

¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ² What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³ As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴ Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins who shall die.

²⁵ Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶ When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed, they shall die. ²⁷ Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸ Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

³⁰ Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 25:1-9

¹ To you, O LORD,
I lift up my soul.

² **My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.**

³ Let none who look to you be put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.

⁴ **Show me your ways, O LORD,
and teach me your paths.**

⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.

⁶ **Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love,
for they are from everlasting.**

⁷ Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.

⁸ **You are gracious and upright, O LORD;
therefore you teach sinners in your way.**

⁹ You lead the lowly in justice
and teach the lowly your way.

Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-13

As part of a call for harmony rather than self-seeking, Paul uses a very early Christian hymn that extols the selflessness of Christ in his obedient death on the cross. Christ's selfless perspective is to be the essential perspective we share as the foundation for Christian accord.

¹ If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he existed in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be grasped,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
assuming human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a human,

⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God exalted him even more highly
and gave him the name
that is above every other name,

¹⁰ so that at the name given to Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence
but much more now in my absence, work on your own salvation with fear and trembling,

¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good
pleasure.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

“Alléluia”

ELW p. 188

Al-le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the

words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

P: The holy gospel according to Matthew the 21st Chapter.

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

Gospel: Matthew 21:23-32

After driving the moneychangers out of the temple (21:12), Jesus begins teaching there. His authority is questioned by the religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple.

²³ When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, “By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?” ²⁴ Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?” And they argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say to us, ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’ ²⁶ But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet.” ²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

²⁸ “What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹ He answered, ‘I will not,’ but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰ The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON - “Surprised by Community”

***HYMN OF THE DAY**

“O God, My Faithful God”

ELW #806

**1 O God, my faithful God, true fountain ever flowing,
without whom nothing is, all perfect gifts bestowing:
give me a healthy frame, and may I have within
a conscience free from blame, a soul unstained by sin.**

- 2 Give me the strength to do with ready heart and willing
whatever you command, my calling here fulfilling--
to do it when I ought, with all my might--and bless
whatever I have wrought, for you must give success.**
- 3 Keep me from saying words that later need recalling;
guard me, lest idle speech may from my lips be falling;
but when, within my place, I must and ought to speak,
then to my words give grace, lest I offend the weak.**
- 4 When dangers gather round, oh, keep me calm and fearless;
help me to bear the cross when life seems dark and cheerless;
help me, as you have taught, to love both great and small,
and, by your Spirit's might, to live at peace with all.**

Text: Johann Heermann, 1585-1647; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt.

***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: Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that
God hears us.**

A brief silence.

P: God, we praise you Lord Hear us O God,

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Center your church in humility as we strive to follow in your way. Help us listen to the cries of those who have been unfairly hurt by the church and dare to name difficult truths. Show all your love. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: You call us to care for your creation. Lead us into your promise of a better world through sustainable practices and respect for your handiwork. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Inspire all in positions of authority to act honorably. Remind them of their call to use their authority for the sake of the common good. Give them the gift of humility. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Comfort those who come before you in fear and trembling. Calm troubled hearts with your forgiveness. Help all those in need. Grant us your salvation. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Change this congregation's heart when we say no to your call. Open us to courageous learning and service in our community, especially in new or challenging places. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

A: Your steadfast love holds all the saints who have finished their work and are at rest. As we grieve, remind us of your mercy so we may also give thanks. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.

C: Amen.

***PEACE**

MEAL

OFFERING

(We thank you for your time, talent, and treasure toward ministry at FELC and beyond. Please place your donation in the offering basket at the back of church, or on-line at <https://felcdecatur.org/give>, or by mail.)

OFFERING PRAYER

P: God of creation,

C: you send rain and the earth springs forth abundantly.

All blessings are from you; make us generous with what we have.

Use our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts in service to you and in love to our neighbors, today and always. Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.
Fulfilling the promise of the resurrection,
you pour out the fire of your Spirit,
uniting in one body people of ev'ry nation and tongue.
And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter
and all the witnesses of the resurrection,
with earth and sea and all their creatures,
with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry, full of your glo-ry. Ho -
 san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high -
 est. Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
 san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son,
 who reached out to heal the sick and suffering,
 who preached good news to the poor,
 and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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.

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord...

C: Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

ELW p. 191

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Christ invites you to this table. All who are thirsty, all who are hungry, come!

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). 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. 191

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have

mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the

world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the

world; grant us peace, grant us peace, Lamb of God.

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

P: Sustaining God,

C: with this bread and cup, you nourish us with mercy and abundant life.

By your Spirit, send us from this table to serve a needy world.

**Make us living signs of your liberation, healing, and love,
following the way of Jesus, in whose name we pray.**

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SENDING

***BLESSING**

P: The God of love draw you into full accord and one mind,
in the body of Christ Jesus.

C: Amen.

P: The God of hope grant you strength and joy in all circumstances
through the interceding of the Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: The God of grace ✝ bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

***SENDING HYMN**

“The Lord Now Sends Us Forth”

ELW #538

**The Lord now sends us forth
with hands to serve and give,
to make of all the earth
a better place to live. *Repeat***

**The angels are not sent
into our world of pain
to do what we were meant
to do in Jesus' name;
that falls to you and me
and all who are made free.
Help us, O Lord, we pray,
to do your will today. *Repeat***

***DISMISSAL**

A: Go in joy. Be led forth in peace.

C: Thanks be to God.

***POSTLUDE**

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Prayer Requests

Matt Andrews & Family, Peg Books, Mary Broomfield,
Tonya Deberry, Bill Fitzgerald, Scott Geiger, David Goldsborough,
Esther Gregory, Janice Isaacs, Jan Lawson, Marilyn Oftedal,
Dale Pelz (Brother of Nancy Salefski), Bill Voss,
Sebastian (Bass) Smallwood, Mary Ann & Ken Stolley,
Rick Strine, and former FELC Pastor Rich Wolf

*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.*

Participants

Presiding and Preaching
Assisting Minister
Slides
Organist/Bell Choir Director
Choir Director
Technical Director
Audio/Visual
Bell Ringer
Greeter
Check-In
Acolyte
Communion Aide
Money Counters
Indoor Plant Watering
Flowers

Rev. Dr. Sarah Cordray
Isaac Ford
Tami Cannon
Rick Strine
Milton Scott
Lucas Reynolds
Abbey Jordan & Audio/Visual Team
Steve Wenger
Lin & John Malachowski
Lin & John Malachowski
Ensley Dalen
Gary Beck
Jim & Judy Oettel and Dick & Donna Donahue
Gail Rotz
Bruce & Tami Cannon

Upcoming Joint Events & Worship Services

- **October 4th is the East Central Conference ‘Synod Day’.** It will be held at Grace Lutheran Church, 313 S. Prospect Ave., Champaign from 2:00pm-7:00pm. This is a follow-up to our June 6th C/SIS Synod Assembly. Our C/SIS Synod Office will have a variety of events including Cross-generational worship, Activities for children & families, Shared meal, State of the synod video, Q&A with the synod staff, Mission moments from each conference, & Four “Spirit Labs” workshop options: *The Foolishness of Trying to Save Your Church: Letting Go So We Can Go!* (Led by Bishop Greg Busboom); *Jesus Journeys and Faithful Field Trips* (Led by Deacon Jason Fisher); *Body Building with Love: Tools for Adaptability* (Led by Pastor Kristen Schmid); *Here I Am, Send Me!: A Vocational Workshop* (Led by Pastor Amy Zietlow). Register online at CSIS-ELCA.org/synoddays26. The cost is \$10 per Adult (18 and over) and \$5 for youth (3-17). Registration closes on September 28.
- **Thursday, October 29th** **‘TRUNK ‘R TREAT’** event from 5:00pm-7:00pm in the parking lot at First United Methodist Church, 201 W. North St. Rather than putting on the event with only Holy Cross, we have decided to join forces with other churches and organizations in the area. **We need volunteers from both FELC and HC.** So many creative things can be displayed and things handed out to the kids. Partner with another member or family and together come up with a theme for decorating the trunk of your car. Some suggestions for handouts are Christian coloring books, pens or pencils with our church name & address, glow sticks and much more – and we cannot skimp out on the candy!! That’s the main event!! **Please consider donating candy &/or a small toy.** This is going to be so much fun and it provides for a safe trick or treat experience!! Please sign-up on the **‘TRUNK ‘R TREAT’** sheet in the Narthex. **Everyone is invited to participate!!!**
- **Sunday, November 29th is joint Worship Service** at Holy Cross. Worship service will begin at 9:30am and there will be fellowship following Worship. All are welcome!!!

Announcements

- The AMELCA Team served 123 clients on Wednesday, September 23rd.
- **Book Club** meets in the Lounge every other **Monday** at **12:15 pm** - next meeting is **Monday, September 28th**. The Book that is being read & discussed is “*Red State Christians*”. There’s still time to join in on the thought-provoking conversations.
- **Pastor Sarah will be out of the office** attending the Fall Theological Conference from Monday, September 28th through Wednesday, September 30th.
- **Our Grief Group** will resume meeting January 11th, 2027. This group meets every other Monday from 11:00am-12:30pm in the Lounge.
- **AA Love’s Home Group** meets Thursdays at **6:00 p.m.** in the Fellowship Hall.
- **AA Back to Basics** meets **daily** in the Fellowship Hall



TRUNK 'R TREAT

October 29th 5:00pm-7:00pm
at First United Methodist
Church
201 W. North St.
Sign-up to decorate your trunk
and/or pass out candy.