

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
246 South Main Street
Greensburg, Pennsylvania
724-834-1457

Office hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

office@felchurch.org

Chris Combs
Marvin J. Huls

Pastor
Director of Music

WELCOME TO FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH!

We gather here every Sunday to experience the life changing and life-giving grace of God. In this place we discover the truth of which the Bible speaks, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor. 5:17).

We are thankful for your presence among us, thankful to God for His abiding presence that goes with you this week, and hopeful that you will be among us when we gather again.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 8, 2024

8:15 AM & 10:45 AM

THE WORSHIP SERVICE

The beginning of the organ prelude is a call to silent, personal preparation for the worship of God.

GATHERING

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

PRELUDE

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

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

Amen.

The presiding minister may lead one of the following or another prayer of preparation.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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

The assembly kneels or stands. Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

The presiding minister announces God's forgiveness with these or similar words.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

Amen.

HYMN “On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry”

#249

**1 On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!**

**2 Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.**

**3 We hail you as our Savior, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flow'rs that wither and decay.**

**4 Stretch forth your hand, our health restore,
and make us rise to fall no more;
oh, let your face upon us shine
and fill the world with love divine.**

**5 All praise to you, eternal Son,
whose advent has our freedom won,
whom with the Father we adore,
and Holy Spirit, evermore.**

Greeting: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Hymn of Praise: Glory to God in the Highest



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



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



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



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.



Prayer of the Day

The presiding minister leads the prayer of the day.

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The assembly is seated.

WORD

First Reading

Malachi 3:1-4

¹ See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

L: The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God!

Luke 1:68-79 (Read Responsively)

⁶⁸ Blessed are you, Lord, the [|] God of Israel,
you have come to your people and [|] set them free.

⁶⁹ **You have raised up for us a [|] mighty Savior,
born of the house of your [|] servant David.**

⁷⁰ Through your holy prophets, you promised of old to save us [|] from
our enemies,

⁷¹ from the hands of [|] all who hate us,

⁷² **to show mercy [|] to our forebears,
and to remember your [|] holy covenant.**

⁷³ This was the oath you swore to our [|] father Abraham:

⁷⁴ to set us free from the hands of our [|] enemies,

free to worship you [|] without fear,

⁷⁵ **holy and righteous before you, all the days [|] of our life.**

⁷⁶ And you, child, shall be called the prophet of [|] the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to pre- [|] pare the way,

⁷⁷ **to give God's people knowledge [|] of salvation
by the forgiveness [|] of their sins.**

⁷⁸ In the tender compassion [|] of our God

the dawn from on high shall [|] break upon us,

⁷⁹ **to shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shad- [|] ow of
death,**

and to guide our feet into the [|] way of peace.

³ I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴ constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵ because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰ to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹ having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

L: The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Prepare the way of the Lord. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. *Alleluia.*

Gospel

Luke 3:1-6

P: The Holy Gospel according to Luke the third chapter.

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵ Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ ”

P/The Gospel of the Lord. **R/ Praise to you, O Christ.**

Youth Sermon

Sermon

HYMN O God of Peace, You Sent Us John (Text: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, Tune: #282, It Came Upon the Midnight Clear)

1. O God of peace, you sent us John who called, “Prepare the way!”

**He challenged all we counted on and promised us a new day.
He cried out in the wilderness and made the pathway straight.
He filled the valleys, smoothed the roads, and taught us how to wait.**

**2. We wait for Christ and look around at all that is not good.
We see the crooked places found in our own neighborhood.
We see within this land we love the children cast aside.
May we who long for peace be moved to answer when they cry.**

3. We hear the words that John proclaimed as we await Christ’s birth.

**We long for peace to come one day and fill this troubled earth.
So could it be that we’re called to be peacemakers in our day?
By doing so, O God, may we again prepare the way.**

NICENE CREED

With the whole church we confess our faith.

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of the Church

To stay current with our many continuing prayer needs, we will refresh our prayer list at the beginning of each new month by starting with a clean slate. We understand that many people will continue to need prayer beyond the length of one month. If you wish to continue to have someone listed in the bulletin for public prayer, please call the office by the last Wednesday of the month.

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

At each petition,
Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

At the conclusion
Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Peace

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.
The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace and may say Peace be with you or similar words.
The assembly is seated.

THE MEAL

Offerings may be placed in the plates as they are passed. You can utilize your regular envelopes or the gold envelopes in the pews. You can also utilize our new online giving tool through Tithe.ly by visiting felchurch.org or utilize the QR code here:

Checks can also be mailed to: First Lutheran, 246 S. Main Street, Greensburg, PA 15601.



Thank you for your generous support of First's Ministry.

(Children, please bring your offering to the front of the church and place it in the "Thank You Jesus" Jar.)

Offertory

Offertory Response "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful" # 182



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of
bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be
fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -
nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your
pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

Offertory Prayer (in unison)

Let us pray.

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

The presiding minister greets the assembly and invites all present to give thanks.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The presiding minister continues:

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 comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer,

through whom you will also make all things new

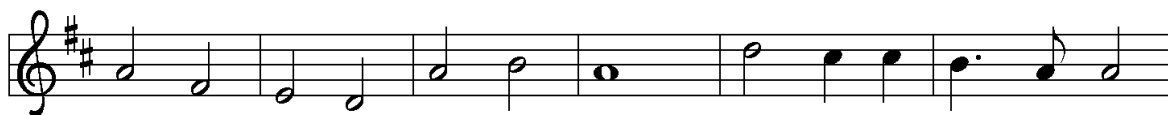
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

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



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes



in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Thanksgiving at the Table

The presiding minister continues, using one of the following or another appropriate form.

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:

Blessed are you for the birth of creation.

Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.

Blessed are you for your promise to your people.

Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.

Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.

Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,
the Word made flesh.

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.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us,
full of grace and truth.

We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.

We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.
Come among us.
Bless this meal.
May your Word take flesh in us.
Awaken your people.
Fill us with your light.
Bring the gift of peace on earth.
Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours,
Holy One of Israel,
Word of God incarnate,
Power of the Most High,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

COMMUNION

All baptized who wish to receive the body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and the nourishment of their lives are welcome. It is not necessary to be a member of First Lutheran to receive the sacrament.

For those receiving the sacrament please note the following:

Communion is at the rail for those who desire.

- *We encourage everyone to continue using hand sanitizer before coming forward for communion.*
- *As you approach the chancel, take a plastic cup from the tray.*
- *The communion rail will fill from both sides of the congregation.*
- *We encourage everyone to leave added space at the rail, primarily between family units.*
- *For those who need gluten free or grape juice, please tell the Pastor or assistant during the distribution.*
- *Cups can be placed in the trays near each side aisle as you return to your pew.*
- *For those who would like to receive communion, but are not comfortable coming to the rail, please let an Usher know so that the Pastor and Assisting Minister can bring communion to you.*

The assembly may be seated.

When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and each person may respond Amen.

After all have received,

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion

The assisting minister leads a prayer after communion.

Let us pray.

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

Blessing

The presiding minister proclaims God's blessing.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace.

Amen.

HYMN "Blessed Be the God of Israel" #250

**1 Blessed be the God of Israel
who comes to set us free
and raises up new hope for us:
a Branch from David's tree.
So have the prophets long declared
that with a mighty arm
God would turn back our enemies
and all who wish us harm.**

- 2 With promised mercy will God still
the covenant recall,
the oath once sworn to Abraham,
from foes to save us all;
that we might worship without fear
and offer lives of praise,
in holiness and righteousness
to serve God all our days.**
- 3 My child, as prophet of the Lord
you will prepare the way,
to tell God's people they are saved
from sin's eternal sway.
Then shall God's mercy from on high
shine forth and never cease
to drive away the gloom of death
and lead us into peace.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news.
Thanks be to God.

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BLESSED TO BLESS

SERVING TODAY:

LECTORS are Sue Boggs and Dan Krack.

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS are Carolyn Hanzel and Tawnya Combs.

SERVING IN NOVEMBER:

ALTAR GUILD for December includes Dianna Marusko - coordinator, and Babs Pascarella.

**Saved by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit
we share God's love, through word and deed,
in service to all of God's Children**

*"God alone is my stronghold, so
that I shall never be shaken."*

Psalm 62:6

PRAYER CONCERNS:

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this week Brandie, Suzy, Terry, Cullen, Doug, Gavin, Dennis, Larry, Connie, Cooper, Carol, and Chris.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS are given in memory of Gladys Erickson by Gwen Irwin.

PRAYER REQUESTS for First's Prayer Chain may be made at any time by calling the church office or by writing the request on the prayer cards in the pew racks and placing it in the offering plate. **If for whatever reason you do not want your name listed but would like to be on the prayer list, just let us know when you make your request.**

INDEPENDENCE HEALTH SYSTEM (formerly Excelsa Health) does not notify the church of member admissions. Please notify the pastor or call the church office if you or your loved one is hospitalized.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE last Sunday was 80.

CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST is available today and each Sunday, 9 - 10:30 AM in the fellowship hall.

JAVA TABLE will be open in the Fellowship Hall today between worship services. Fair Trade coffees, teas and chocolates will be available for purchase.

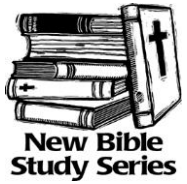
NOISY OFFERING Lutheran World Relief – Palestine Collected \$110.

COUNCIL Tuesday, 6:00 PM.

FOOD FROM THE HEART Wednesday lunch continues as a **BROWN BAG** lunch provided from 12 to 12:45 PM. Lunches will be available for pick up by people walking at the gate to the park and the church).

BELLS REHEARSAL Thursday, 6:15 PM.

RUTH CIRCLE will meet on Thursday December 12th at 7:00 PM in the church parlor. All women of the congregation are welcome to join us for an evening of fellowship and always delicious dessert.



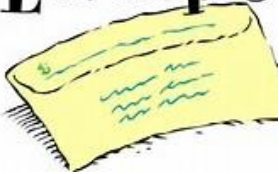
THE PARABLES OF JESUS

We will gather at 1:30 PM and 6:00 PM on December 16 (The Workers in the Vineyard). Hope to see you there!

A **NURSERY** is available for children to use on the second floor of the Education Building, down the hall from the Library.

PASTOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION: Pastor Chris Combs may be reached either by calling the church office at 724-834-1457, by email at PastorChris@felchurch.org or by calling or texting his cell phone at 412-973-4179. If the concern is of an urgent nature, please call his cell phone.

Offering Envelopes



OFFERING ENVELOPES AVAILABLE TODAY

2025 offering envelopes will be available in the Narthex. You are asked to pick up your envelopes before or after worship, or anytime during the week. Please deliver a box to a shut-in, family member, or neighbor who may not be able to take their box.

Please **DO NOT** use **2025** envelopes before January first as your envelope number may have changed. Offerings received in the church office or postmarked on or before December 31st will be credited as gifts for 2024.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT You are invited to Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 140 S. Pennsylvania Avenue for a concert of Christmas Music featuring David Bridge, organist, and pianist, on the Steinway Grand Piano and the newly refurbished Moller Pipe Organ. Take some time out of your busy day and relax with the beautiful sounds of the season. The concert is at 2:00 PM Sunday, December 22. There is no admission charge.

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

December 22 Only one service at 9:30 AM.



CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24

4:00 PM Candlelight Communion Service

8:00 PM Traditional Candlelight Communion Service

December 29 Only one service at 9:30 AM.

Lessons and Carols



**A CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM will be held
December 22 at the 9:30 AM service**

ANGEL TREE 2024



It is that time of the year to donate for the Angel Tree! We will be accepting gift cards for the children of our Food Bank families. Angels will be available the first Sunday of Advent, December 1. Donations of \$25-dollar gift cards for Target or Walmart will be accepted until **Monday, December 15, 2024**. Our Sunday School students will be making the Angels again this year. Please choose an angel from the Christmas Tree and attach the gift card to the angel and place it in the offering plate or bring it to the church office. If you would like to keep the angel, place the gift card in an envelope, write "ANGEL TREE" on the outside of the envelope and place it in the offering plates or drop it off in the church office. Thank you!

THRIVENT FINANCIAL ACTION TEAM
SUPPLY ITEMS – SOCKS, UNDERWEAR AND TOYS
November 1 – December 9

Thrivent Financial Action Team is collecting new toys, children's socks and underwear for the children under the care of the Westmoreland County Children's Bureau. One way you can help these children in need is to donate children's socks, underwear, and toys. **Collection boxes are located in the education building foyer, the narthex at the back of the church, and in the Fellowship Hall.** If you wish to make a monetary contribution, please make checks payable to "First Lutheran" and place them in an envelope.

HELP US DECORATE OUR
"NATIVE AMERICAN CHRISTMAS TREE"



This year our "Christmas Tree" will be transformed into a "Native American Christmas Tree" Please help us decorate the "Native American Christmas Tree" by purchasing new children's & youth's hats, gloves, snow pants, and jackets. Curtis from Saint Labre Indian School stated they have 400 students from infants to high school students who are in need. **You may place your purchases on the tree, under the tree or bring them to the church office.**

December 22 is the last day to bring hats, gloves, snow pants and jackets to decorate our Native American Christmas Tree.



PLEASE NOTE: The security system has been upgraded. If you have previously accessed the building and armed/disarmed the system, please make sure that you have an access code. Please reach out to Pr. Chris if you have not already received a code, the old code will be discontinued in the near future.

Stewardship Snippets

Philippians 1:9-11 –And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Love is the theme for the Second Sunday in Advent. When we cultivate love in our lives as steward/disciples, it does overflow and guide our lives on the paths of strength and joy.

FOOD from the HEART: Recently FFTH has found it difficult to keep our cupboards stocked with nonperishables. We are asking the congregation for small monthly donations in the early months of 2025 to assist us with this problem. There will be boxes available in the Fellowship Hall for donations in Jan. Feb. and March.

Here is our wish list:

January: a can of green beans, mixed vegetables, corn or carrots.

February: cans of fruit or jars of apple sauce.

March: broth, diced or crushed tomatoes or spaghetti sauce.

We appreciate your help!

POINSETTIAS



Poinsettias will again decorate our church on Christmas Eve. You are invited to purchase a plant at a cost of **\$11.00** and “lend” it to the parish. Plants that are purchased may be removed from the church following the 8:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.

Your purchase may be made “in memory of” or “in honor of” the person(s) of your choosing. Please indicate your preference and return this form with your payment. We must have your order by **Monday, December 16.**

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM:

In honor of _____

By _____

And/or

In Memory of _____

By _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____