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 10, 2023 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 "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying"

(based on hymn #436)

(Johann Gottfried Walther, 1684-1748)

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.

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.

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.

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

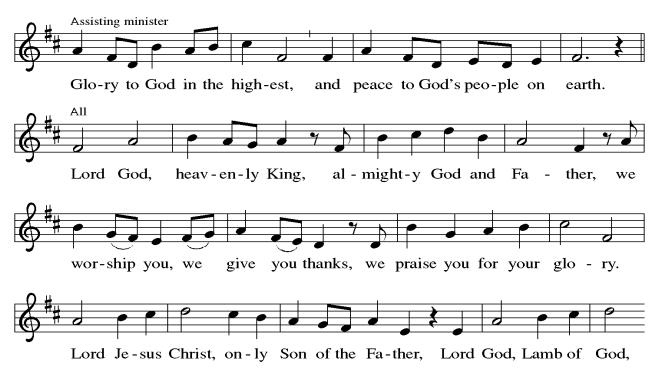
- On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh; awake and hearken, for he brings glad tidings of the King of kings!
- Then cleansed be ev'ry life from sin; make straight the way for God within, and let us all our hearts prepare for Christ to come and enter there.
- We hail you as our Savior, Lord, our refuge and our great reward; without your grace we waste away like flow'rs that wither and decay.

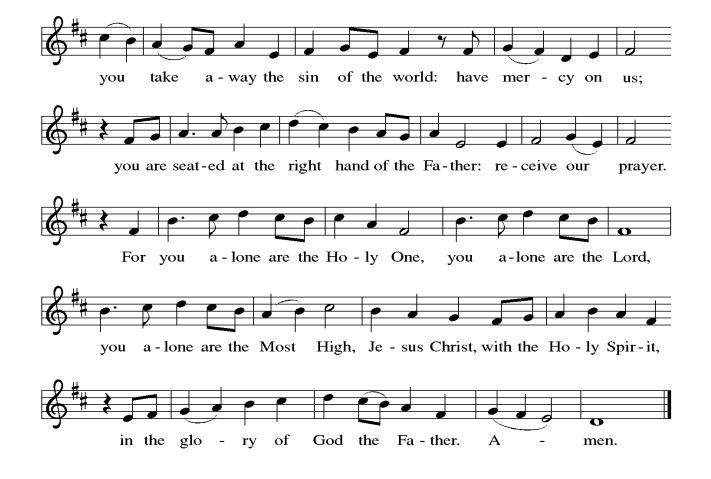
- 4 Stretch forth your hand, our health restore, and make us rise to fall no more; oh, let your face upon us shine and fill the world with love divine.
- 5 All praise to you, eternal Son, whose advent has our freedom won, whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit, evermore.

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





Prayer of the Day

The Lord be with you. And also with you.

Let us pray

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The congregation may be seated.

WORD

First Reading Isaiah 40:1-11

¹Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low;

the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,

their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,

O Zion, herald of good tidings;

lift up your voice with strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear;

say to the cities of Judah,

"Here is your God!"

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him,

and his recompense before him.

11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

L:The Word of the Lord.

R:Thanks be to God!

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 (Read Responsively)

¹You have been gracious to your | land, O LORD; you have restored the good for- | tune of Jacob.

²You have forgiven the iniquity | of your people and blotted out | all their sins.

⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying; for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.

⁹Truly, your salvation is very near to | those who fear you, that your glory may dwell | in our land.

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have | met together; righteousness and peace have | kissed each other.

¹¹Faithfulness shall spring up | from the earth, and righteousness shall look | down from heaven.

¹²The LORD will indeed | grant prosperity, and our land will | yield its increase.

¹³Righteousness shall go be- | fore the LORD and shall prepare for | God a pathway.

Second Reading

2 Peter 3:8-15a

⁸Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will

be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? ¹³But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; ^{15a}and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

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

Mark 1:1-8

P: The Holy Gospel according to Mark the 1st chapter.

R/Glory to you, O Lord.

¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' "

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to

him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Youth Sermon (10:45 am)

Sermon

HYMN "On Jordan's Stormy Bank I Stand" #437

1 On Jordan's stormy bank I stand, and cast a wishful eye to Canaan's fair and happy land, where my possessions lie.

Refrain

I am bound for the promised land, I am bound for the promised land; oh, who will come and go with me? I am bound for the promised land.

- 2 All o'er those wide extended plains shines one eternal day; there God the Son forever reigns and scatters night away. Refrain
- 3 No chilling winds or pois'nous breath can reach that healthful shore; sickness and sorrow, pain and death, are felt and feared no more. Refrain

4 When shall I reach that happy place and be forever blest? When shall I see my Savior's face and in God's bosom rest? Refrain

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,

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.

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

At each petition, Merciful God, receive our prayer.

At the conclusion

Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

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.

THE MEAL

Offering

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:

8:15 Largo (Edward Elgar, 1857-1934)

10:45 Prepare the Royal Highway (Swedish hymn tune, arr. Hal Hopson)

Prepare the royal highway, the king of kings is near. Let ev'ry hill and valley, a level road appear. Then greet the King of glory, foretold in ancient story. Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word. Oh, sing a joyful song, sing alleluia, praise the Lord.

Offertory Response "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful" # 182

Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful Offering Song



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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 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.

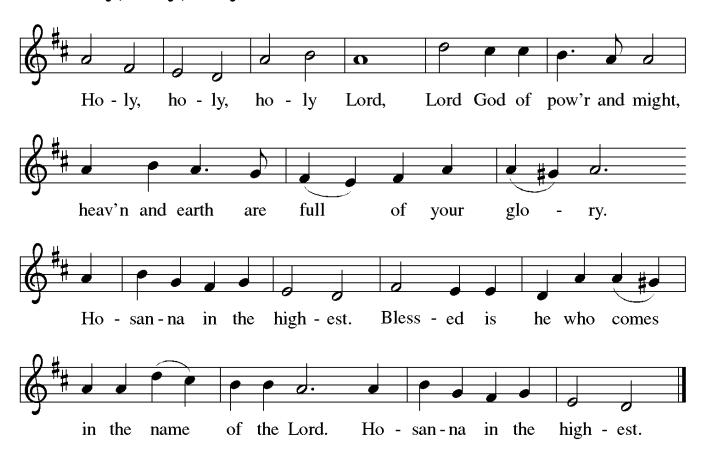
The presiding minister continues:

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



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 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.
- Cups can be placed in the empty 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.

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.

Table Blessing

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in eternal life. **Amen.**

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

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.

Amen.

- Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free; from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.

 Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art, dear desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.
- Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king; born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone; by thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

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BLESSED TO BLESS

SERVING TODAY:

ACOLYTES are Noah Boggs and Benjamin Gustafson.

LECTORS are Sue Boggs and Joan Orr.

WORSHIP ASSISTANT is Rebecca Brunetta.

SERVING IN DECEMBER:

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

"How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God. Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."

Psalm 36:7

PRAYER CONCERNS:

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this week Brandie, Suzy, Lois, Terry, Joyce, Cullen, Doug, Gavin, Felicia, Kacie, Dennis, Pat, Connie, Jeff, Janice, Judy, Nancy, Jack, Kim, Craig, Patricia, Pam, Karen, Dean, Phil, Cecelia, Cindy and Nola.

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 Excela 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.

OFFERING ENVELOPES are available in the Narthex. You are asked to pick 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 your new 2024 envelopes before January first as your envelope number may have changed!

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

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.

CHOIR REHEARSAL 10:00 AM today.

CHRISTIAN ED/YOUTH Tuesday, 6:30 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 to those driving at the basement door on Bononi Way (alley behind the church).

FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION is this Thursday. Assistance is needed by 8:00 AM to unload the truck and sort groceries (Both unloading and inside help is much needed for FOOD BANK this Thursday at 8:00). If you can lend a hand on Thursday morning, your effort will be greatly appreciated.

BELLS REHEARSAL Thursday, 6:15 PM.

RUTH CIRCLE will meet Thursday, December 14 at 7:00 PM in the parlor for an evening of fellowship. On the agenda is a business meeting, a program and a delicious dessert. All church women are invited and welcomed.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Monday, December 18.

TEN COMMANDMENTS BIBLE STUDY Monday December 18, 1:30 and 6:00 PM.

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

NOISY OFFERING last Sunday was \$243.

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE last Sunday morning was 112.

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.

Special Congregational Meeting December 17, 2023

Church Council is calling a special meeting of the congregation following the church service for the purpose of voting on a recommendation from Council to accept an offer to purchase the property at 450 S. Main St.

To facilitate this meeting there will only be **one service at 9:30 on 12/17/2023**. In addition, we plan to have a question and answer session between the regularly scheduled services on December 10, 2023. This will be in the Fellowship Hall in conjunction with our continental breakfast.



CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

December 17 Only one service at 9:30 AM.

CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24

9:30 AM Fourth Sunday of Advent. 7:00 PM Candlelight Communion Service.

December 31 Only one service at 9:30 AM.



A CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM will be held December 17 at the 9:30 AM service Students will meet at 8:30 AM to prepare.

There will be a celebration after this service with Birthday cake for Jesus and punch for all to enjoy.

ANGEL TREE 2023



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 3.

Donations of \$25-dollar gift cards for Target or Walmart will be accepted until **Monday**, **December 11**, **2023**.

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 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 off in the church office. Thank you!

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO SERVE AT FIRST?

We are in need of volunteers to serve as lectors, particularly at the 8:15 service. We are also in need of Worship Assistants and members to serve on Altar Guild. Please consider if this is a way you can use your gifts at First. If you have any questions about what is involved, please get in touch with Pastor Chris.



HELP US DECORATE OUR "NATIVE AMERICAN CHRISTMAS TREE"

Native American children need our help this Christmas. The Northern Cheyenne and Crow Reservation in Montana is in desperate need of warm clothing for their children. Every winter, Native Americans face weather conditions that could lead to hypothermia. Fifty nine percent of homes are substandard: lacking water, electricity, insulation, or a sewage system. 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, scarves and mittens. Susan from Saint Labre Indian School stated they have 400 students from infants to high school students who are in need. You may

On December 17, we will gather all of our blessed hats, scarves, gloves and mittens and mail them to Susan (who is in charge of Donor Relations) in Ashland, Montana. She will distribute our winter wear to the children of the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Reservation.

place your purchases on the tree, under the tree or bring them to the church

Stewardship Snippets

office.

"Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts." –Psalm 85:8

Are you listening for what God is saying to you? To your congregation? All of God's people? It's hard to hear anything with the anxious noise of the world. Living right, we turn away from the noise and listen for God's word of peace. And we live it!

POINSETTIAS



Poinsettias will again decorate our church on Christmas Eve. You are invited to purchase a plant at a cost of \$10.00 and "lend" it to the parish. Plants that are purchased may be removed from the church following the 7:00 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 18.**
