

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.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 15, 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 “Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers” #244

**1 Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear;
the evening is advancing, and darker night is near.
The bridegroom is arising and soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle; at midnight comes the cry.**

**2 The watchers on the mountain proclaim the bridegroom near;
go forth as he approaches with alleluias clear.
The marriage feast is waiting; the gates wide open stand.
Arise, O heirs of glory; the bridegroom is at hand.**

**3 The saints, who here in patience their cross and suff'rings bore,
shall live and reign forever when sorrow is no more.
Around the throne of glory the Lamb they shall behold;
in triumph cast before him their diadems of gold.**

**4 Our hope and expectation, O Jesus, now appear;
 arise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this benighted sphere.
 With hearts and hands uplifted, we plead, O Lord, to see
 the day of earth's redemption that sets your people free!**

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

Assisting minister

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

All

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 the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; 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

Zephaniah 3:14-20

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The Lord has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.

The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Do not fear, O Zion;

do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The Lord, your God, is in your midst,

a warrior who gives victory;

he will rejoice over you with gladness,

he will renew you in his love;

he will exult over you with loud singing

¹⁸ as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,

so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors

at that time.

And I will save the lame

and gather the outcast,

and I will change their shame into praise

and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home,

at the time when I gather you;

for I will make you renowned and praised

among all the peoples of the earth,

when I restore your fortunes

before your eyes, says the Lord.

L: The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God!

Isaiah 12:2-6 (Read Responsively)

² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not ¹ be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might, and has
become ¹ my salvation.

³ **With joy you ¹ will draw water
from the wells ¹ of salvation.**

⁴ And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call ¹ on
God's name;

make known the deeds of the Lord among the nations; proclaim
that this name ¹ is exalted.

⁵ Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done | gloriously;
let this be known in | all the earth.

⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, O | royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy | One of Israel.

Second Reading

Philippians 4:4-7

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

L: The Word of the Lord.

R: Thanks be to God!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. I am sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you. *Alleluia.*

Gospel

Luke 3: 7-18

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

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

⁷ John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?” ¹¹ In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?” ¹³ He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?” He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸ So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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

Youth Sermon

Sermon

HYMN

“He Came Down”

#253

**1 He came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have love;
hallelujah forevermore.**

**2 He came down that we may have light;
he came down that we may have light;
he came down that we may have light;
hallelujah forevermore.**

**3 He came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have peace;
hallelujah forevermore.**

**4 He came down that we may have joy;
he came down that we may have joy;
he came down that we may have joy;
hallelujah forevermore.**

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:

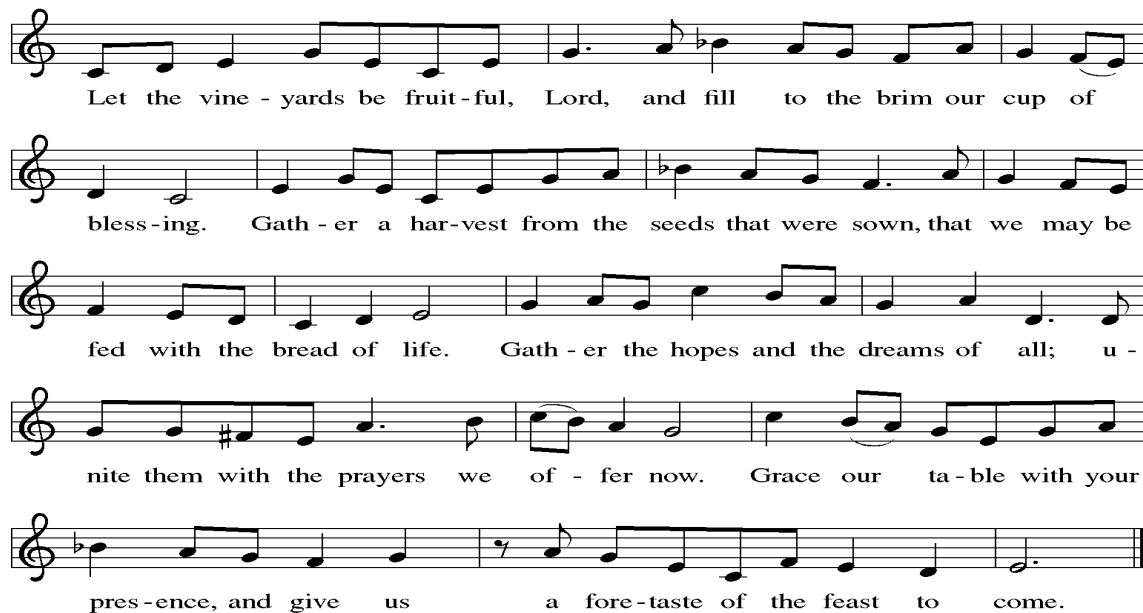
Checks can also be mailed to: First Lutheran, 246 S. Main Street, Greensburg, PA 15601.



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 **"An Advent Hosanna"** (Paul Laubengayer)
Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

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

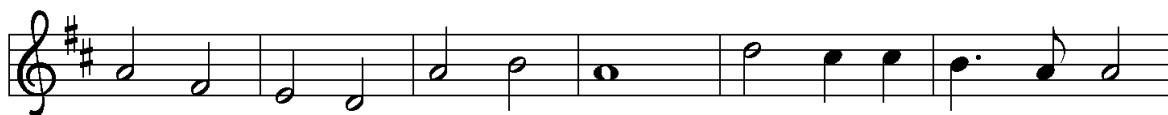
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

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



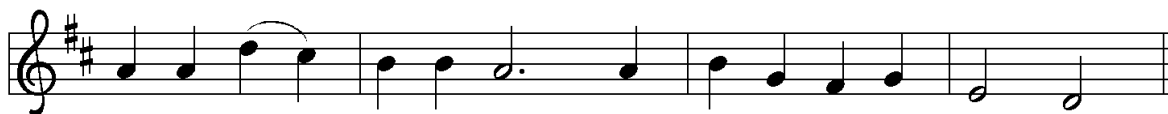
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,



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 "Hark, the Glad Sound!" #239

**1 Hark, the glad sound! The Savior comes,
the Savior promised long;
let ev'ry heart prepare a throne
and ev'ry voice a song.**

**2 He comes the pris'ners to release,
in Satan's bondage held.
The gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield.**

- 3 He comes the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace
to enrich the humble poor.**
- 4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace,
your welcome shall proclaim,
and heav'n's eternal arches ring
with your beloved name.**

Dismissal

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

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BLESSED TO BLESS

SERVING TODAY:

LECTORS are Kim Woodley and Dianna Marusko.

WORSHIP ASSISTANT is Dianna Marusko.

SERVING IN NOVEMBER:

ALTAR GUILD for December includes Dianna Marusko - coordinator.

PRAYER CONCERNS:

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this week Brandie, Suzy, Terry, Cullen, Doug, Gavin, Dennis, Larry, Connie, Cooper, Carol, Chris, Hollie, Willis, Brenda, Taylor, Lily, and Kiera.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS are given in memory of Bonnie S. Barnhart by her family.

THE CHANCEL FLOWERS are given in memory of Louis and Nancy Leone by David and Beth Leone.

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.

**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

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

THANKS to Michele Boulet for her musical assistance today.

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE last Sunday was 86.

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

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE Monday, December 16.

BIBLE STUDY Monday 1:30 PM and 6:00 PM. The Workers in the Vineyard.

FINANCE 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 the church).

BELLS REHEARSAL Thursday, 6:15 PM.

FOOD BANK DISTRIBUTION is this Thursday. Assistance is needed around 7:30 AM to help with the set-up and the need for assistance increases at 8:00 AM to unload the truck and prepare for distribution. If you can lend a hand on Thursday morning, your effort will be greatly appreciated.

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.

Stewardship Snippets

Philippians 4:4 –Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. *Joy is the theme for the third Sunday of Advent. Philippians reminds us to rejoice – find the joy – in God. Always! Though we live in a world that has many troubles, we can always find joy, in God’s love. Joy is a way of life for steward/disciples.*

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.



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.

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 16, 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!

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, 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.

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!

MATCHING GIFT PROGRAM 2024

First Lutheran has sponsored a Matching Gifts program since 2002. Members of First Lutheran are invited to make a gift to any non-profit, human service organization whose mission is in accordance with First Lutheran's mission, as agreed upon by our Community Outreach Committee. Write your check out to First Evangelical Lutheran Church and mark "Matching Funds" on the memo line on the bottom left corner of the check. Next to "Matching Funds" write the name of the organization(s) to whom you wish to donate matching funds (Example: Matching Funds...Westmoreland Food Bank). Such gifts will be matched by a First Lutheran check and will be sent to the organization. Also, such gifts can be made throughout the year until the total budgeted amount of \$10,000.00 is met. More details regarding the Matching Gift Program are available from the office.

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 \$ _____