

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.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 24, 2023

9:30 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 **“My Lord, What a Morning”**
(Spiritual, arr. Anne Krentz Organ)

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 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” #257

**1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
 and ransom captive Israel,
 that mourns in lonely exile here
 until the Son of God appear.**

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

**2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
 embracing all things far and nigh:
 in strength and beauty come and stay;
 teach us your will and guide our way. *Refrain***

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.



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.

Prayer of the Day

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

Let us pray

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The congregation may be seated.

WORD

First Reading **2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16**

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, “See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.” ³Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will

plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹⁶Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

L:The Word of the Lord.

R:Thanks be to God!

Luke 1:46b-55

(Read Responsively)

- ^{46b}My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,
⁴⁷my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,
⁴⁸**for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your | lowly servant.**
From this day all generations will | call me blessed:
⁴⁹you, the Almighty, have done great | things for me
and holy | is your name.
⁵⁰**You have mercy on | those who fear you,**
from generation to | generation.
⁵¹You have shown strength | with your arm
and scattered the proud in | their conceit,
⁵²**casting down the mighty | from their thrones**
and lifting | up the lowly.
⁵³You have filled the hungry | with good things
and sent the rich | away empty.
⁵⁴**You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,**
to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,
⁵⁵the promise made | to our forebears,
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever.

²⁵Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

L:The Word of the Lord. **R:**Thanks be to God!

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia.* Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word. *Alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 1:26-38

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

R/ Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will

overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

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

Youth Sermon

Sermon

HYMN “My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness” #251

- 1 My soul proclaims your greatness, Lord; I sing my Savior's praise!
You looked upon my lowliness, and I am full of grace.
Now ev'ry land and ev'ry age this blessing shall proclaim—
great wonders you have done for me, and holy is your name.**
- 2 To all who live in holy fear your mercy ever flows.
With mighty arm you dash the proud, their scheming hearts
expose.
The ruthless you have cast aside, the lowly throned instead;
the hungry filled with all good things, the rich sent off unfed.**
- 3 To Israel, your servant blest, your help is ever sure;
the promise to our parents made their children will secure.
Sing glory to the Holy One, give honor to the Word,
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all adored.**

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.

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 anthem “Comfort, My People” (Kenneth Kosche)

Comfort, comfort, comfort, my people.

- 1. In the wilderness, a voice bidding mourners to rejoice, crying out for all to hear that God’s kingdom now is near.**
- 2. For the glory of the Lord stands revealed in God’s own Word: Let the valleys rise to greet and the hills fall at his feet.**
- 3. Boldly, let us then proclaim peace and pardon in God’s name, that we in this time and place may declare God’s word of grace.**

Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful
Offering Song



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.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980

Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923

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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.

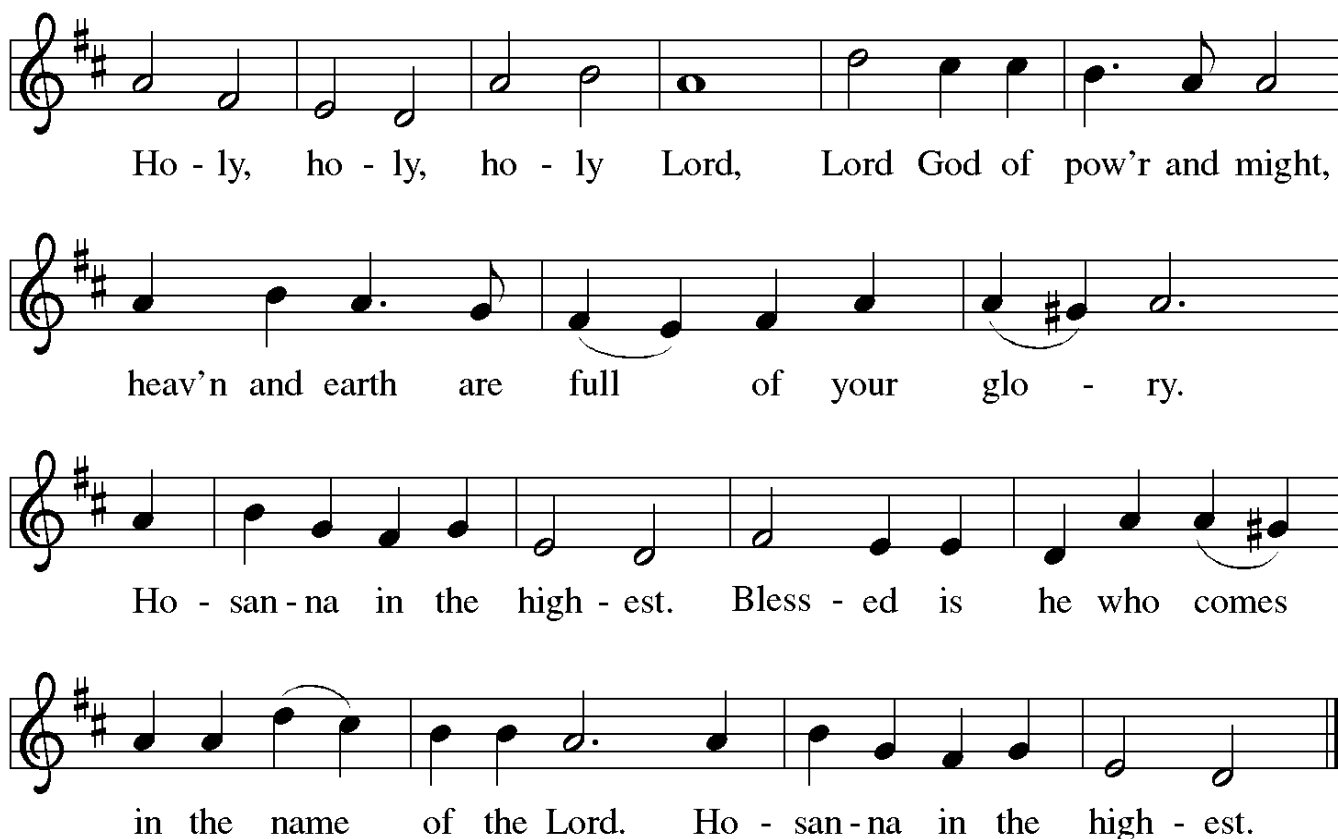
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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



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 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.

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

Amen.

HYMN "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" #257

- 3 O come, O come, O Lord of might,
as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe. *Refrain***

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

- 4 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain***

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

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BLESSED TO BLESS

SERVING TODAY:

ACOLYTE is Addy Saraceni.

LECTOR is Malcom Sias.

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."*

Psalms 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, Patricia, Pam, Karen, Phil, Dean, Cecelia, Cindy, Nola, Tieesha, Christina, Annie, Daniel, Betty Jean, Barry, Stephen, and the family of Craig Williams.

THE ALTAR FLOWERS are given in memory of our fathers by Terry and Charla Keffer.

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.

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.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

OFFICE CLOSED Monday, December 25

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).

PROPERTY Wednesday, 6:30 PM.

NEWSLETTER FOLDING Thursday, 10 AM

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

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE last Sunday morning was 154.

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.



CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24

7:00 PM Candlelight Communion Service.

December 31 One service of Lessons & Carols at 9:30 AM.

Stewardship Snippets

[The angel Gabriel said to Mary,] “Nothing will be impossible with God.” –Luke 1:37

Fear is a big part of our modern life. How would you live if you had no fear? Gabriel’s words to Mary are his words to us today: Nothing is impossible with God. So, stop fearing, have faith, and live!

YEAR-END IS A TIME FOR GIVING: A monetary gift in any amount is a convenient and popular way to show your faithful support for the church or other ministries. If you itemize, the full amount of your gift qualifies for a 2023 charitable income tax deduction. Make certain your check is dated 2023. Cash, check or online gifts must be received or postmarked no later than December 31, 2023, to receive a deduction this year.

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!

MISSION STATEMENT

“As Servants of Jesus Christ, we strive to impact our families, neighbors and the world by sharing our faith, empowered by God’s Grace”

**Developed by Church Council
October 2016**