

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

**Office hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

**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.

**FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
CHRISTMAS EVE, 2023, 7:00 P.M.  
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION**

Prelude            **The Holly and the Ivy**  
                          **(Traditional Carol, arr. Anna Laura Page)**

**The holly and the ivy, when they are both full grown, of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown.**

***REFRAIN:* Oh, the rising of the sun, and the running of the deer, the playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir.**

**The holly bears a blossom, white as the lily, Mary bore Jesus, our Savior sweet. The holly bears a berry as red as any blood, Mary bore Jesus to do sinners good. *REFRAIN.***

**The holly bears a prickle, as sharp as any thorn, and Mary bore Jesus Christ on Christmas Day in the morn. The holly bears a bark, bitter as any gall, and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ for to redeem us all. *REFRAIN.***

Confession and Forgiveness

**P:** In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **C:** Amen

**P:** God of Grace and Truth,

**C:** In Christ Jesus, you come among us as light shining in the darkness. We confess that we have not welcomed the light nor trusted the good news to be good. We have closed our eyes to glory in our midst, expecting little, and hoping for less. Forgive our doubt and renew our hope, so that we may receive the fullness of your grace and live in the truth of Christ our Lord. Amen

P: Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen**

Hymn      **“O Come, All Ye Faithful”** (*Please Stand*)

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
Come and behold him, born the king of angels:  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God in the highest:  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

**Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

The Apostolic Greeting

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

**R/ And also with you.**

## **Hymn of Praise      “Angels We Have Heard on High”**

**Angels we have heard on high,  
sweetly singing o’er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply,  
echoing their joyous strains.**

**Gloria... in excelsis Deo; Gloria... in excelsis Deo.**

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?**

**Why your joyous strains prolong?**

**What the gladsome tidings be  
which inspire your heav’nly song?**

**Gloria... in excelsis, Deo; Gloria... in excelsis Deo.**

**The Prayer of the Day**

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

**Let us pray.**

**Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus’ presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**The First Lesson:                      Isaiah 9:2-7**

<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light;

those who lived in a land of deep darkness—

on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation,

you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you

as with joy at the harvest,

as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onwards and for evermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The Word of the Lord.

**R/Thanks be to God!**

Reading Response: "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"

**1 It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heav'n's all-gracious king."  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.**

The Second Lesson: Titus 2:11-14

<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

The Word of the Lord.

**R/Thanks be to God!**

Gospel Acclamation “Go Tell It on the Mountain” (*Please Stand*)

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev’rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

**While shepherds kept their watching o’er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.**

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev’rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

**The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth rang  
out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior’s birth.**

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev’rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:

<sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

<sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Gospel Acclamation “Go Tell It on the Mountain”

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev’rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

**Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;  
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.**

**Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev’rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

Youth Sermon

The Sermon

Hymn “The First Noel” (*Please Stand*)

**1 The first Noel the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.**

*Refrain*

**Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!  
Born is the King of Israel.**

**2 They looked up and saw a star  
shining in the east beyond them far;  
and to the earth it gave great light,  
and so it continued both day and night. *Refrain***

**3 And by the light of that same star  
three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it went. *Refrain***



**4 This star drew near to the northwest,  
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;  
and there it did both stop and stay  
right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain***

**5 Then entered in those wise men three,  
full rev'rently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence  
their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. *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,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## The Prayers of the Church

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

**Amen.**

## The Peace

## Offering

**ANTHEM:** “Brightest and Best” (Paul Sjolund)

**Brightest and best of the stars of the morning, dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid. Star of the east, the horizon adorning, guide where our infant redeemer is laid.**

**Cold on his cradle the dewdrops are shining; low lies his head with the beasts of the stall; angels adore him in slumber reclining, maker and monarch and savior of all.**

**Shall we now give him in costly devotion, gifts of incense and off'rings divine; gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean, myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?**

**Vainly we offer the rarest oblation; vainly with gifts would his favor secure; richer by far is the heart's adoration, dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.**

Offertory Response "Angels We Have Heard on High"

**Come to Bethlehem and see  
him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord, the newborn king.  
Gloria...in excelsis Deo; Gloria....in excelsis Deo.**

Offertory Prayer (in unison)

**Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, 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.**

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.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh  
you have opened the eyes of faith  
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,  
that, beholding the God made visible,  
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.  
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, God of pow'r and might,



heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



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



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

## Thanksgiving at the Table

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.**

## The Lord's Prayer

Lord remember us in your kingdom and help us to pray.

**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.**

## The Fraction

When we eat this bread, we share the body of Christ. When we drink this cup, we share the blood of Christ.

**Reveal yourself to us, O Lord, in the breaking of bread, as you once revealed yourself to your disciples.**

## 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 receptacles 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.*

## Table Blessing

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

## Prayer after Communion

Let us pray.

Radiant God, with our eyes we have seen your salvation, and in this meal we have feasted on your grace. May your Word take flesh in us, that we may be your holy people, revealing your glory made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## The Candlelight Ceremony

*(The ushers will direct the lighting of the candles beginning from the center aisle.)*

## The Gospel of the Incarnation: John 1:1-14

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

<sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.



Candlelight Hymn      “Silent Night, Holy Night!”

**Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright  
round yon virgin, mother and child. Holy Infant,  
so tender and mild, sleep in heavenly peace, sleep  
in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the  
sight;  
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts  
sing Alleluia!  
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ the Savior is  
born!**

**Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure  
light  
radiant beams from your holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your  
birth.**

## Benediction

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

## Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## The Organ Postlude

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**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, Tiesha, Christina, Annie, Daniel, Betty Jean, Barry, Stephen and the family of Craig Williams.

**THE ALTAR FLOWERS** are in memory of Dr. and Mrs. William S. Keck by their family.

**ACOLYTE** is Aaron Woodley.

**LECTOR** is Rebecca Brunetta.

**WORSHIP ASSISTANT** is Rebecca Brunetta.

**THANKS** to Tawnya Combs and Eric Combs for their musical assistance.

**POINSETTIAS** may be taken home following worship.

**FOOD FROM THE HEART** Wednesday. A **BROWN BAG** lunch is provided from 12 to 12:45 PM. Lunches will be available for pick up by people walking at the lobby entrance to the education building and to those driving at the gray door at the intersection of Bononi Way and Third Street (alley behind the church).

**SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL** will **NOT** meet Sunday, December 31, 2023. Sunday School will resume January 7, 2024.

**THE CHURCH OFFICE** will be closed Monday, December 25 and Monday, January 1.

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

**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!

This Christmas is the 205<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the writing and first performance of "Silent Night". Joseph Mohr, pastor of the Church of St. Nicholas in Oberndorf, a village near Salzburg, Austria, discovered that the church organ was not working. Perhaps it was due to rust, or perhaps mice had chewed the leather bellows. No one really knows. Pastor Mohr had written a poem a few years before. He asked organist, Franz Gruber, to write a melody that could be sung with guitar. In a few hours, Gruber wrote the melody. Gruber and Mohr sang "Silent Night" for the congregation that Christmas Eve. Twenty years later, the song was brought to the United States. It was sung in German at Trinity Church in New York City. It wasn't translated into English until 1863. Today "Silent Night" has been translated into over 300 languages and sung all over the world.

*"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*



**THE STAFF** at First Lutheran – Pastor Chris, Jaison Smith, Marvin Huls, Patricia Pluck, Gretchen Fischer and Patti Sias - extends hearty best wishes and our prayers for each of you to have a blessed and joyous Christmas Day and season.

## **IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY CHILD, WELCOME!**

We are happy that you have come to worship  
with us.

If you are visiting just for this evening, we  
pray that God will be with you on your  
journey.

If you are seeking a church home, we would  
be happy to welcome you into our  
church community.