

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
 246 South Main Street
 Greensburg, Pennsylvania 15601-3183
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 felchurch.org

PASTOR.....Chris Combs
 DIRECTOR OF MUSIC.....Marvin Huls
 CHURCH TREASURER..... Patti Sias
 OFFICE MANAGER.....Patricia Pluck
 OFFICE SECRETARY.....Gretchen Fischer
 CUSTODIAN..... Jaison Smith

CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Debra Black
 Rebecca Brunetta Vice President
 Brian Erdman
 Tom Flory
 Linda Griffith
 Charlie Kaylor
 Dan Krack Secretary
 Bobbie Laciak
 Leon (Bud) Nusselt
 Cheryl Pfeifer
 Holly Rowe President
 Cullen Shuster

WORSHIP WITH US

Sunday Church School 9:30 A.M.
 SCS does not meet in June, July or August
 Sunday Worship 8:15 A.M. & 10:45 A.M.
 Summer Schedule 9:30 A.M.

Elevator and Hearing Assistance Available

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
 246 SOUTH MAIN STREET
 GREENSBURG, PA 15601-3183
 RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
 US POSTAGE PAID
 GREENSBURG, PA 15601
 PERMIT #436

**FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
 GREENSBURG, PA**



PHONE 724-834-1457
 FAX 724-834-1469

office@felchurch.org

December 2024

Pastor's Note

Dear Friends in Christ,

I was in our church library again. As I was looking for what we had related to Advent, I came across some periodicals titled, *ideals*. I don't ever recall hearing of this publication before, but it caught my eye, because there were issues related to Adventure, Easter, and there were two on the shelf for Christmas. Not exactly what I was looking for, but I picked it up anyway.

As I flipped through the pages of pictures and poems, I came across a poem by Nadine Brothers Lybarger, titled "In Just a Single Night." Here it is,

Most of the seasons gradually
 To our eyes appear...
 The grass grows greener bit by bit
 In springtime every year.

But winter is impetuous...
 One eve the earth is bare,
 The fields and trees are somber brown,
 No brightness anywhere.

The summer's brilliance follows,
 Flower by full-blown flower;
 And fall grows fiery red and gold
 Through many a frosty hour.

Next morning when we awake from sleep,
 Such beauty greets our sight...
 Such beauty greets our sight...
 Such beauty greets our sight...

While this poem is focused on the changing of the four seasons, we are also changing seasons in the church and starting a new year as we begin the season of advent. What struck me about this poem was the lack of brightness anywhere in winter, which can be changed overnight into a wonderland.

(Continued on Page 2)

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That is what we wait for in this season of Advent. We wait for that single night, expecting our savior. Jesus comes into the world and the darkness is overcome. He is the light of the world changing everything as Emmanuel, God with us.

As you prepare for Christmas, waiting for that single night when everything changes, remember that a light has come into our world and the darkness cannot overcome it. May you all have a blessed Advent as we wait together for the night that changes everything.

Together in Christ,
Pastor Chris

**Installation of Council Members will be held
December 22 during the service.**



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



FIRLU HAS HEARD...

-that as of October 24th, our offering receipts were \$156,001. Last year they were \$145,734.

-that **Noisy Offering** will be collected the first Sunday of December to benefit Lutheran World Relief—Palestine.

-that Angel Food cakes (home baked or purchased) are needed the first Sunday of every month for Meals on Wheels. Bring your cake to the church office. Thanks!

-that Food Bank distribution is **Thursday, December 19**. 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, December 19, your effort will be greatly appreciated.

-that there is **NO Food from the Heart December 25 or January 1**.

-that you are invited to attend **FIRST THURSDAY WORSHIP & LUNCH** at Zion's Lutheran Church Thursday, December 5, 2024. Services begin at 12:05 PM and lunch is served following the service at 12:30 PM. Suggested lunch donation- \$5.00. There will be no service or lunch in January.

-that the deadline for the **January newsletter is Monday, December 16**. Please be prompt. You may submit your articles to office@felchurch.org.

-that the church office will be closed December 25 - 26 and January 1.

See you at worship,
FIRLU

Serving At Worship In December 2024

12/1 12/8 12/15 12/22 12/29

LECTORS

Sue Boggs	Jean Miller	Kim Woodley		Liz Rowe
Sunshine Keiser	Dan Krack	Dianna Marusko		Malcolm Sias

ASSISTING MINISTERS

	Carolyn Hanzel			
Rebecca Brunetta	Tawnya Combs	Dianna Marusko	Rebecca Brunetta	Tawnya Combs

ALTAR GUILD

Dianna Marusko
Babs Pascarella



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

Psalm 62:6

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

December 24



4:00 PM Candlelight Communion Service

**8:00 PM Traditional Candlelight
Communion Service**

December 29 only one service at 9:30 AM.

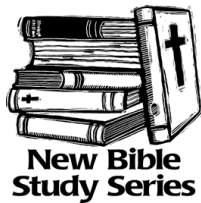


PLEASE NOTE: The security system has been upgraded. If you have previously accessed the building and armed/disarmed the system, please make sure that you have an access code. Please reach out to Pr. Chris if you have not already received a code, the old code will be discontinued in the near future.

NOISY OFFERING FOR DECEMBER

Lutheran World Relief for Palestine

Due to the horrific, ongoing violence in and around Gaza, a severe humanitarian crisis continues to escalate in the Holy Land. The ELCA is walking with many partners in the region, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and Augusta Victoria Hospital, to address the most pressing needs for people in the areas surrounding Gaza, including the West Bank and other occupied territory.



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

Interested in Jesus teaching through parables? Join the conversation as we explore some of Jesus' most interesting and challenging teachings.

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

MESSAGE FOR THRIVENT FINANCIAL MEMBERS

Thrivent members are given Thrivent Cash Dollars to direct to charitable organizations.

When you are considering where to spend your Cash Dollars, please consider giving your gift to the General Fund of First Lutheran Church. Thrivent Financial considers our congregation and any committee a valid recipient for Cash Dollars. Call (800-847-4836) say Thrivent Choice or email fraternal@thrivent.com.

OPERATION REINDEER GIFT SUGGESTIONS continued:

Miscellaneous

Craft kits, puzzle books,
CDs/DVDs Games, activity books, handheld games,
CDs/DVDs, Batteries (especially AA),
Wallets, watches Portable CD players, radios,
Sports memorabilia (especially Pittsburgh teams),
Writing paper, stationary items especially with stamps,
Diabetic or sugarless items,
Gently used luggage.

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.



First Lutheran will again participate in Operation Reindeer. Your gifts should be new, unboxed and unwrapped. Please bring them to the church office by Monday, December 9. Thank you!

OPERATION REINDEER GIFT SUGGESTIONS

Operation Reindeer is Mental Health of America's annual drive to provide Christmas gifts for Westmoreland County residents at Torrance State Hospital, a long term facility for psychiatric patients. These items make being away from family at Christmastime easier for patients who struggle with mental illnesses.

Please, no items with glass, belts, razors or other safety hazards!

Clothing

**New Men's size XL or larger Women's size L or larger
(XXL and larger and 1X and larger sizes are greatly needed)**

Sweat shirts & pants, tops, tee shirts, pants or jeans

Bathrobes (no belts), jackets, coats, outerwear,

Socks, mittens, gloves, hats, ear muffs

Sweaters, undergarments, pajamas

Toiletries

Shampoo/conditioner, soap, body wash,

Brushes, pony tail holders,

Hand/body lotion, shaving gel/creams,

Lipstick, gloss, powder, eye shadow, mascara, lip balm, blush.

'It's the thought that counts'

Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you." -Luke 6:38

Why is it so hard to find that all-too-elusive "perfect gift" for the loved ones in your life? For many of us, it's because they already have everything they need and most of what they want.

It sometimes feels impossible to find a gift that won't be banished to that closet for unwanted, unneeded, and unused presents -- alongside the loud ties, the strong perfumes, the unread books, and the garish sweaters.

When it comes to gift-giving, it's often said, "It's the thought that counts." If that's true, why do we still put so much emphasis on the gift?

This year focus on the thoughts behind your Christmas gifts. Thoughts in keeping with the season. Thoughts of meeting real needs and giving where it will be much appreciated. With so many disadvantaged people in the world, at least some of our Christmas budget would be well spent helping our needy neighbors.

If you are buying for a loved one who has everything, consider instead giving a monetary donation in their honor to a worthy charity that helps the poor. Some charities, such as Heifer International and ELCA Good Gifts, let you buy a specific item – such as a goat or pig for a family, or a water well for a village – to help people in the developing world.

Make the gift in your loved one's name or honor, and then describe it in a card attached to a low-cost "token" gift, such as a small box of chocolates or a bottle of wine. The better part of your gift will go to someone who truly needs it, and your loved one will share the joy of loving and helping your neighbors in need.

Just remember, 'It's the thought that counts!'

Copyright © 2021, Rev. Robert Blezard. Pastor Blezard serves as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, MD, and works as content editor for www.stewardshipoflife.org. He blogs at www.thestewardshipguy.com.



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 \$ _____

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. We will gather all of our blessed hats, gloves, snow pants, and jackets. They will be mailed to Curtis (who is in charge of Donor Relations) in Ashland, Montana. He will distribute our winter wear to the children of the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Reservation.



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

The Westmoreland County Children’s Bureau makes arrangements for children from birth to 18 years of age in family emergencies. These children are often removed from their homes with only the clothes they are wearing and little, if any, personal belongings, such as a toy or a favorite stuffed animal. The Bureau maintains a “children’s closet” for those under their supervision. The closet is currently low on supply items, namely children’s socks, underwear and toys.

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




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 **Sunday, December 15, 2024.**

Our Sunday School students will be making the Angels again this year. Please choose an angel from the Christmas Tree and attach the gift card to the angel and place it in the offering plate or bring 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!



I will Follow God like Ruth

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

Financial Update Through October 2024		
Giving		
2024	2023	Budget
\$ 177,464	\$ 166,077	\$ 195,833
Expense		
2024	2023	Budget
\$ 341,537	\$ 316,535	\$ 375,540

December 2024 *Please note that this schedule of events is subject to change.*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:15 Worship 9:30 SCS 10:00 Choir 10:45 Worship NOISY OFFERING	2	3 6:00 Executive	4 FOOD/HEART Noon	5 6:15 Handbells	6	7
8 8:15 Worship 9:30 SCS 10:00 Choir 10:45 Worship JAVA TABLE	9	10 6:00 Council	11 FOOD/HEART Noon	12 6:15 Handbells 7:00 Ruth Circle	13	14
15 8:15 Worship 9:30 SCS 10:00 Choir 10:45 Worship Advent 3	16 NEWLETTER DEADLINE 1:30 & 6:00 Bible study	17 6:30 Finance	18 FOOD/HEART Noon	19 FOOD BANK 6:15 Handbells	20	21
22 9:30 Worship Children's Christmas Program Advent 4	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 4 PM & 8 PM	25 Office Closed 	26 Office Closed	27 NEWSLETTER FOLDING	28
29 9:30 Worship Lessons & Carols Christmas 1 NO Sunday School	30	31				

OFFERING ENVELOPES AVAILABLE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8



2025 offering envelopes will be available in the Narthex beginning Sunday, December 8. 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.