

First English Lutheran Church

Nativity of Our Lord ~ Christmas Eve ~ 6:30 pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service



December 24, 2025

On a long winter evening we gather to proclaim the coming of the light. Isaiah announces that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Paul reminds us that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. In the familiar account of Christ's birth, the evening sky is bright with the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest." Amid our broken world we proclaim that the Prince of peace is born among us. God comes to us in human flesh—in Christ's body and blood—so that we may be bearers of divine light to all the world.

Jesus as the Word of God made flesh,

PRELUDE

Prelude of Special Music for Preparation
*(please hold your applause &
thank the musicians after the service is over)*

Bells

Welcome & Announcements

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: Let us kneel in the darkness,
Until we see God's light emerge.

C: Let us wait with hope filled hearts,

P: As Christ's image grows within us and shows us life.

C: Let him speak to us and teach us love,

Until we open our hearts to be his home.

Advent Candle Lighting: *The four candles are lit.*

P: On this most holy day we light all four candles in our Advent wreath, and we are reminded of the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of God. Later as we light the Christ Candle, we recognize that the promise of God has been fulfilled in this Baby born in a manger.

Gathering Carol 'O Come, All Ye Faithful' (vs. 1-2) #283

1. 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:

(Refrain): **O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

2. The highest, most holy, light of light eternal, born of a virgin, a mortal he comes; Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! (Refrain)

Text: attr. John Francis Wade, 1711-1786; tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802-1880, sts. 1, 3-4; tr. unknown, st. 2.

GREETING

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

CHRISTMAS EVE COLLECT

P: Let us pray... On this holy night, we welcome with joy the light of your life among us, Baby Jesus. Thank you for being the light of our lives every day. Shatter the darkness of sin and death. Break through the shadows of sadness. Reveal the warmth of your love. Let your brilliance shine through each one of us that we may show the world the power of your bright presence in and around us. Help us to always glow with your greatness and shimmer with your grace that more may come to your Light and be blessed by you. **C: Amen.**

NARRATIVE:

P: The nativity scenes during Advent are to represent this special – joyous night we celebrate. But it's hard to do that when the world is so dark... Not just because of the long nights and how close we are to the winter solstice. But because of the darkness of evil, hatred, and despair in the world today. It distracts us from the joy we should feel... The humble scene of the nativity with this young mother and helpless baby laying in a manger doesn't speak loud enough to draw us out of our brokenness. How do we find joy... where do we find hope in this darkness... and how do we feel loved... The nativity doesn't seem to give us that warm fuzzy feeling... amidst the fear... Or hope in the despair... How can the light force back the darkness... when all we see are smirking faces... hear voices of discontent... and all around us are stressed and intolerant people... Where's the real Christmas story?

NARRATIVE:

P: The prophet Isaiah wrote that poem some 700 hundred years BEFORE Jesus was born. At the time, the world was a dark place after the massive destruction and fall of Israel. Israel did not hear... and would not listen to the prophets warning... The oppressed were broken down... judgement fell on those who refuse to accept God's word of promise... only a tenth of the descendants of the House of David survived the brutal attacks.

When Jesus was born... there was also darkness...It was a world where tyrants ruled forcing a census for sociopolitical control, soldiers killed because of culture or race, people were persecuted for their beliefs and thrown into slavery by corrupt courts. Everyone was distressed, in debt, living in fear, suffering and life was truly uncertain. That doesn't seem like a happy Christmas story of hope and love. Who could have known the birth of this baby would change the world?

CHRISTMAS CAROL: "Mary Did You Know" vs 1-2

**1. Mary did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?
Mary did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This Child that you delivered will soon deliver you?**

**2. Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to the blindman?
Mary did you know that you baby boy would calm the storm with His hand?
Did you know that you baby boy has walked where angles trod,
when you kiss you little baby you kissed the face of God?**

Words and Music by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene. Arr. by Jay Rouse.

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NARRATIVE:

P: The gospel writings show total control over the people at the time. St Luke established Jesus in Bethlehem and continues the royal house of David amidst all this upheaval and poverty of God's people. Even through the corruption and violence, God's purpose was served by deceitful emperors and oppressive governments who were not even aware of it... The census required Joseph to return to his homeplace showing us how God is at work in our world... not just through miracles or blessed events... but God can use all things, including evil and chaos, as instruments to accomplish His will. ... Even through a babe born in a manger...

1. What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

2. Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear; for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you; hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!

NARRATIVE:

P: Luke writes in plain simple terms, bare of all decorations that would remove it from the lowly, poor, and marginalized of the earth. The shepherds, the poorest and most outcast of society, are the first to hear the angel's announcement... the good news of joy and peace... not emperors or royalty... We see in this... how the good news is for all people, especially the poor... the oppressed... the downtrodden... as Jesus Himself came into the world as a child of the poor.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SONG: "Child of the Poor" (Sung by the Pastor)

3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come, peasant, king, to own him. The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him. Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby; joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898, Music: English ballad, 16th cent.

NARRATIVE:

P: Jesus placed His moral vision with the marginalized and oppressed people of the world beginning with the shepherd.

Shepherds tie us to the story of the shepherd king, David... and are on the guest list of the kingdom of God... as are the maimed, the blind, the lame...and all who are broken... The sheep... who hear the shepherds' voice... They wonder... they ponder... they are like us... Looking for answers... but struck by the awesomeness of this Savior... coming down to us for our salvation.

Bethlehem was a small, off the road and out of the way place... nothing that could ever boast of greatness. The stable was simple and bare, and the manger was an insignificant work of craftsmanship... nothing to brag about... That way there can be no claim... and no declaration of merit made by anyone involved in this miraculous event... Only the glory of God... floods the darkness... on this little town in Bethlehem...

CHRISTMAS CAROL: 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' (verse 1) #279

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by; yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893. Music: Lewis H. Redner, 1831-1908.

Holy Gospel: Luke 2:1-20 (Lector)

NT pg. 44

CHRISTMAS CAROL: 'Angels We Have Heard on High' (vs 1-2) #289

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

(Refrain): Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song? (Refrain)

Text: French carol; tr. H. F. Hemy, The Crown of Jesus Music, 1864. Music: French carol; arr. Edward S. Barnes, 1887-1958.

Holy Gospel Continues (Lector)

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Praise and glory be to you, O Christ.**

OFFERING FOR THE MISSION & MINISTRY
of First English Lutheran Church
(The ushers will come forward to receive the offering.)

OFFERING 'The First Noel' vs 1-2 #300

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)

Text: English traditional. Music: English traditional; arr. John Stainer, 1840-1901.

DEDICATION PRAYER OF THE CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS:

P: Let us pray... **C: Holy God, your beauty shines forth from the manger and your love flows from the cross. As you gather us around these signs of your love come among us, warm us to extend your care among the hungry and all in need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

P: Lord in your mercy, **C: hear our prayer.**

P: All these things and whatever else you know that we need, grant us, O God, for the sake of Our Savior, who died, and rose again, and now reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, forever. **C: Amen.**

THE MEAL

SHARING THE MEAL The Great Thanksgiving (spoken)

pg. 129

P: The Lord be with you. **C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts. **C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Preface P: Lord, we greet you this happy night, for you have been at work in our world throughout all time. You made all things and called them good.

You claimed your people Israel, freed them from the bondage, and journeyed with them through the wilderness. You sent prophets to call your people back to you. Then in the fullness of time you sent your Son Jesus, your Word in flesh. He was one of us, giving up all his glory for our sake. Then you raised him up again to overcome the power of death so we could live a new life. We wait for the day when we too will share the fullness of life in him and with him.

And so, O God, come among us tonight. Show us your presence in this bread and this cup, the body and blood of Christ. By the power of your Holy Spirit, unite us with Christ and all who share this feast.

PRAYER AT THE TABLE: CHRISTMAS

P: The bread and wine we're about to share joins us to the people throughout history and across the world who have come to this meal in search of life....We pray, God of love, you will send your Holy Spirit upon us and touched by your Spirit, we may be signs of life and love to each other and all the world. **C: Amen**

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

P: Joy to the world! Come, let every heart receive the Savior.

Distribution Hymn

'Joy to the World'

#267

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king; let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. No more let sin and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

4. He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748. Music: English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792-1872.

Distribution Hymn

'Love Has Come'

#292

Post Communion Blessing:

P: May this body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace... May it give you courage to be God's people, to show justice, grace, mercy, peace, and love, and to be a part of Christ transformation of our world until the day when the baby whose birth we celebrate tonight comes again in peace and we sing His praise and glory now and forever more. **C: Amen.**

Post Communion Prayer:

P: Let us pray, **C: God of wonder, in Jesus we behold the light of the world come near. As you have come among us now, send us out in joy, hastening to share the good news of your love. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the Spirit dwelling in us and among us now and forever. Amen.**

The Christ candle in the Advent Wreath will be lit during the following reading to symbolize Christ, the Light of the world, of whom John's gospel speaks, who comes to us on this night... to signify the promise fulfilled.

Titus 2:11-14 (Pastor Cheryl)

NT pg. 167

NARRATIVE:

P: The angels declare not only the birth of Jesus... but testify to prophetic fulfillment of scripture: that Jesus is of the house of David; He is the Savior; He is Christ the Messiah; and He is Lord.

Joy and peace come to those who have their hope in Christ... the baby born in a manger... Peace comes... because of God's love for all His creation... especially because of His love for you.

THE SENDING

CHRISTMAS BLESSING:

P: May the God of love, who gave His only Son to be born for you, fill your life with love and peace.

May the Word made Flesh, the Savior Jesus, who took on flesh and came down to live among you, give you truth and hope

May the Light shining in the darkness, the Spirit of our Lord, bring joy to your hearts this day and always...

And may almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **C: Amen.**

CANDLE LIGHTING

(Please stand and light your candles during the reading)

The Gospel of the Incarnation

Holy Gospel: John 1:1-5, 14 (Pastor Cheryl)

NT pg. 70

P: ¹ In the beginning...the Word became flesh and lived among us.

C: Behold the light of the world!

NARRATION:

P: Before we encounter a people who see a great light, we must first encounter a people thrust into thick darkness. The story of Christmas is a testimony to the Word made flesh... For those who hear... for those who listen... there is hope... on them the light will shine... on them... has been given great love...

Sending Carol

'Silent Night, Holy Night!'

#281

1. 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.

2. Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight; glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia! Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!

3. 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.

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885. Music: Franz Gruber, 1787-1863.

You may turn your candles off at this time.

Dismissal

L: Go now in peace... for the light shines in the darkness.

C: And the darkness will not be overcome!

Bells

Sending Hymn

'Go Tell It On The Mountain'

#290

(Refrain): **Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere; go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!**

1. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night, behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. (Refrain)

2. The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth rang out the angel Refrain that hailed our Savior's birth. (Refrain)

3. Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born; and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. (Refrain)

Text: African American spiritual, (Refrain); John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt. Music: African American spiritual.

Postlude

9 NW 3rd Street; Ortonville, MN 56278

Rev. Cheryl Rondeau-Bassett, Pastor

Lisa Berdan, Senior Choir Director

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John 10:27 "My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me."

Pastor Cheryl's Hours: Mondays (FELC Pastor Office 10 am to 4 pm), Tuesdays (Zion Lutheran 10 am to 4 pm), Wednesdays (FELC Pastor Office 10 am to 3:30 (and then teaching confirmation classes), & Thursdays (FELC Pastor Office 10 am – 4 pm (unless up at FWV/or visiting members) or by appointment. Contact her anytime via text (605-237-1501) or email at CMQRondeau@outlook.com.

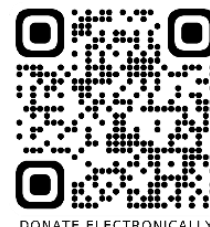
Welcome to all visitors and guests! May the joy of Christ fill you as we worship today. Friendship Pads are at the ends of each pew (by middle aisle). Fill them out, pass them on to your neighbor(s), and send them back to the middle aisle.

KDIO Radio Broadcast is sponsored in memory of Dallas Hanson & Rev. L. F. Mueller & Carol Mueller from Marilyn Hanson. [2026 Radio broadcast cards are available in the narthex; cost is \$100/week].

OFFERING UPDATE: You're encouraged to visit our webpage for Online Giving at www.firstenglish.net or scan the QR Code from the offering cards or bulletins.



	<u>November 2025</u>	<u>Year-to-Date 2025</u>
Offerings/Gifts:	\$21,933.07	\$199,132.27
Zion Receivable:	\$3,446.52	\$32,827.48
Total Revenue:	\$25,379.59	\$231,959.75
Expenses:	\$17,091.82	\$222,195.48
Balance:	\$8,287.77	\$9,764.27



DONATE ELECTRONICALLY

December's pink envelope emphasis is for ELCA Missionaries. You can find special pink envelopes for designated giving in the Narthex.

We would like to thank Marilyn Hanson for her prelude music and accompanying us during our 6:30 pm service.

God's Creations Fundraiser Calendars are running out! If you'd like one, they can be bought in the office. They're \$8.00. First come, first served. You can bring cash or pay by check (please write checks for calendars out to **FELC Youth**).

Please return your completed opportunity sheets and pledges from your envelope. There is a box in the Narthex that says "Leave commitment cards and opportunity sheets here" on it. If the office is open, you can leave them with Barbara instead. It's important that they be turned in before the end of the year. The first Sunday of 2026 we dedicate the pledges, and the opportunity sheets will be compiled into a list for the council in January.

Annual report information is due in the office ASAP (*the deadline has passed*). (Electronic files preferred but a hard copy is also appreciated!)

Organizations with financial reports should turn those reports into the office by January 5th (*or as soon after as possible*) for our internal audit of FELC books.

The Board of Evangelism will be discontinuing serving coffee before the church service. But Pastor Cheryl will be around before the service, and you are more than welcome to come with your own coffee in a spill-proof mug to have some before & during church.

Let's go roller-skating, Zion and FELC!



FELC Board of Education is planning a roller-skating outing for BOTH congregations on Sunday, January 11th from 10:30am-1:30pm ("come & go") at Sioux Historic. Skating will be FREE for ALL members from both congregations, and ALL ages are welcome to join!

52 quilts stitched with love and handmade Christmas Greetings

attached were delivered to all the residents at the Fairway View Nursing Home and to the Madison Home.

Gratitude and appreciation were shared with tears, smiles and a twinkle in their eye as they conveyed their message of thanks. Thanks again to the Board of Evangelism and to all who have donated in any way to help make this possible.



PRAYERS FOR HEALING and COMFORT for Kelly Athey, Gail Olson, Nancy Pierzina, Harris Selvig, Beth Swanson, Brandi Tweeter, Jean Zielike; Bishop Craig Anderson, Monty Athey, Paul Erdman, Rosie Frank, Dustin Hanson, Larry Helgeson, Natalie Henneberg, McCoy Jipson, Janice Redfield, David Scholberg, and Jerry Stotesbery. AT FAIRWAY VIEW NEIGHBORHOODS: Ricky Anderson, Arvilla Bergseth, Adeline Burgess, Jim Hipple, Vivian Janssen, Arlen LaCombe, Roger Nornes; Aletta Simonitch; and Mary Lou Olson in Madison. ALL OUR MILITARY who are deployed to areas of conflict especially Jacob Hamann, Colin Hartman, Tyler Ruby, and Thomas Halverson; and our Haitian student, Ycherson Soh and South African students Sanelisiwe Dlamini and Andiswa Mbatha. If you would like a name to be added/removed, please contact the church office.



This Week's Ministry Assistants—Wed. December 24th 6:30 PM

Organist: Marilyn Hanson

Acolytes: Miley Block & Volunteer

Lay Assistants: Sara Mattison, Judy Beckman & Volunteer

Lector: Kathy Randall

Ushers: Marilyn Chindvall & TBD

Tech Desk: Marge Dragseth & Volunteer

Greeters: Volunteers

Next Week's Ministry Assistants—December 28th

Organist: Amy Adelman

Tech Desk: Liz Ketz & Cody Backstrand

Lector: Marge Dragseth

Acolytes: Chase & Cameron

Greeters: Connie & Carol Newman & Tino Cochran

Ushers: Eugene Stotesbery, Gale May, Art Vollmer & TBD

A holiday invite from Pastor Cheryl



I'll be having a Christmas Lights Open House from 4 to 6 pm on December 29th at my house in Wilmot for those who'd like to stop by and see the lights, checkout the Christmas Village and stop in for a snack at 706 5th Ave. If you take the 3rd road into Wilmot—which is SD Hwy 123 - you'll see them as soon as you turn in. Turn your radio to 90.5 FM to listen. *Come around the corner to the door between the garage and the house.*

Pastor Cheryl

Merry Christmas

Christmas Poinsettias/Floral Arrangements have been given...

... in honor of the Christmas season and the magic it brings from Josh & Sara Wollschlager.
... in loving memory of Richard Janke from Patricia Janke.
... in loving memory of Patrick Ketz and Donald & Corinne Tiegs from Liz Ketz and family.
... in loving memory of Dallas I Hanson, Rev. L F Mueller & Carol Mueller from Marilyn Hanson.
... in loving memory of Bob & Donna Thompson from Chuck & Carol Thompson, Greg & Pat Thompson, Mark & Sheila Thompson, & families.
... in memory of Bob Reiffenberger from Glenda and family.
... in memory of Barb Nornes from Dick & Marla Strei and family.
... in memory of Diane Schultz from Dave and Lori Larson.
... in memory of Jerry and Katie Dragseth from family.
... in memory of Herman & Alice Ellingson and Adeline Brown from David & Debbie Ellingson and girls.
... in memory of loved ones from Lynne & Keith Giese and family and Steve & Lori Strei and family.
... (Christmas Cactus) in memory of Leo and Darlene Barnhardt and Bonnie Hill.
... (Blue carnations) in memory of loved ones from our Blue Christmas Service on Dec. 20th.



WEEKLY CALENDAR

Wed – 12/24 CHRISTMAS EVE

2:00 pm FELC Special Christmas Prelude Music
2:30 pm FELC Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Communion
- Broadcast live on KDIO and Facebook Livestream
4:30 pm Zion Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Communion
5:30 pm Channel 3 Broadcast
6:30 pm FELC Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Communion

Thurs – 12/25 CHRISTMAS DAY – CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

Pastor Cheryl will take vacation until Dec. 31st.

Fri – 12/26 CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

Sun – 12/28

9:00 am Worship – Broadcast on KDIO & FB Live

Wed – 12/31 NEW YEARS EVE

9:30 am Channel 3 Broadcast
5:30 pm Channel 3 Broadcast

Thurs – 1/1/2026 NEW YEAR'S DAY – CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

