Family of Christ Lutheran Church
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 20, 2026

Welcome, Announcements and Prayer Requests

Confession and Forgiveness

Our hearts cry out for restoration. Our spirits plead for illumination. Let us come before God in confession and in trust. Our salvation is near.

(*silence*)

Before God and one another, **we confess our hesitation, O God, to live as your disciples. We worry about what others think of us. We feel wary of taking risks. We sell ourselves short. We close ourselves off to the needs of our world. Where we have failed to act, forgive us. Where we have failed to love, reorient us with your mercy. Liberate our hearts to say "yes" to the life of faith to which you call us and make us bold in love. Amen.**

We hold in our hearts the good news that nothing is impossible with God. Let us receive this gift of forgiveness ☩ and remember our belovedness. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn: ELW 257 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (verses 1, 2, 7, 8)

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*

7 O come, O King of nations, come,
O Cornerstone that binds in one:
refresh the hearts that long for you;
restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*

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

Please be seated

<u>Greeting</u>
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.

<u>Lighting of the Advent Wreath</u>
During this busy season, we pause to breathe and worship. We

surround ourselves with candles, lights, greenery, and beauty. May these sights and sounds remind us that we are people of faith, guided by the light of the world. We listen for words of love on this fourth Sunday of Advent.

Brief pause for silence.

L 2: We are gathered here in this place, longing to be seen, valued, and cared for.
L 1: Places to find true community and genuine care are harder to find these days.
What can we do? Where is our love?
L 2: Dear ones, you were grafted into the story of God's love at birth.
L 1: Just as you are, without needing to prove yourself or justify your worth.
L 2: As we live between the already and the not yet, we remember salvation doesn't happen when all is right in the world.
L 1: The Messiah draws near now, breaking into the present through moments of compassion and flourishing.
L 2: In this season of holy waiting, we first light the candle of hope, welcoming the coming of Christ.

Light the first candle.

L 2: Then, we light the candle of peace, remembering that Advent peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the active work of preparing pathways for healing, justice, belonging, and restoration.

Light the second candle.

L 2: Next, we light the candle of joy, reassuring one another that joy emerges when we discover that God is already near, often in ways we do not expect.

Light the third candle.

L 2: And today, we light the candle of love.

Light the fourth candle.

L 1: And we welcome the call to share the love that was freely given to us with all we encounter.

May the love of God-with-us uplift and encourage us.

Prayer of the Day

Loving Redeemer, the psalmist sings, "I will sing of your love forever." Indeed, O God, your love surpasses all understanding and extends to all the earth, and we are grateful. We are grateful for the way your love heals, protects, provides, and shows that we all get to participate in your story. Help us usher your love into this world so all may know and feel the comfort your love brings. **Amen.**

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

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

[1]Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, [2]the 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." [3]Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

[4]But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: [5]Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? [6]I 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. [7]Wherever 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?" [8]Now 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; [9]and 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. [10]And 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, [11]from 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. [16]Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

<u>Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55</u>

[46b]My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
[47]my 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:
[49]you, 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.
[51]You 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.
[53]You 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 promise of mercy,
[55]the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

[25]Now 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 [26]but 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—[27]to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Please rise as you are able.

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

The Gospel according to Luke, the 1st chapter.
Glory to you, O Lord.

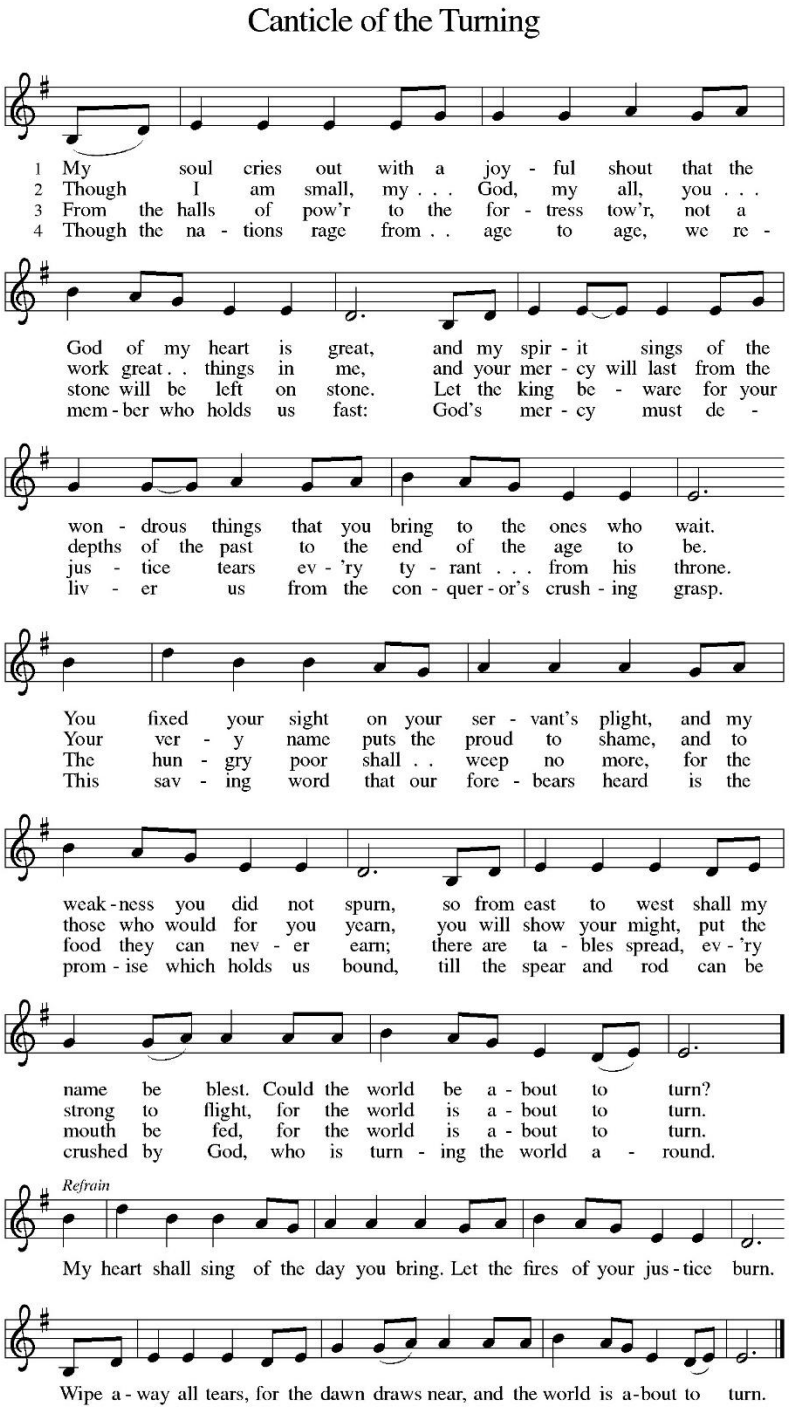
In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

[26]In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town
in Galilee called Nazareth, [27]to a virgin engaged to a man whose
name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was
Mary. [28]And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one!
The Lord is with you." [29]But she was much perplexed by his
words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. [30]The
angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found
favor with God. [31]And now, you will conceive in your womb and
bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. [32]He 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. [33]He will reign over
the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no
end." [34]Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a
virgin?" [35]The 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. [36]And 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. [37]For nothing will be impossible with God." [38]Then
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.

This is the Gospel of our Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Hymn of the Day: ELW 723 Canticle of the Turning



Text: Rory Cooney, b. 1952, based on the Magnificat
Music: STAR OF COUNTY DOWN, Irish traditional
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Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Please be seated

Prayers of the People

In hope and expectation, we bring to God our prayers for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church. Reassure all who gather in your name of your steadfast presence with us in joys and sorrows, in hope and uncertainty. God, in your mercy,

receive our prayer.
We pray for the healing of the earth: for clean air, clear water, rich soils, and thriving ecosystems. Revive your creation for generations to come. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
We pray for legislators, mayors, governors, and all who hold elected office. Fill leaders with a commitment to service, humility, and justice for all people. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
We pray for vulnerable people in our communities, for families experiencing poverty, for people in prisons, for individuals facing a difficult diagnosis, and for any who are ill. We pray for those on our prayer list and those we name before you now *(brief pause)*. Come to their aid and assure them of your faithfulness. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
We pray for all who travel to be with loved ones as Christmas approaches. Make their roads safe and their journeys smooth. Abide with any who cannot travel or who are alone in this season. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
We remember all who have died in Christ, Katharina von Bora Luther and the faithful saints whose lives magnified your name, that your world-turning love continues to shine forth. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.
We entrust these and the prayers of our hearts to you, most holy God, in the name of Christ Jesus our Savior. **Amen.**

Sharing of the Peace

The one for whom we wait is our Prince of peace and Reconciler of the world. We share the peace with a weary world. We share the peace to offer God's grace. We share the peace to anticipate and recognize God's salvation in our world. May the peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

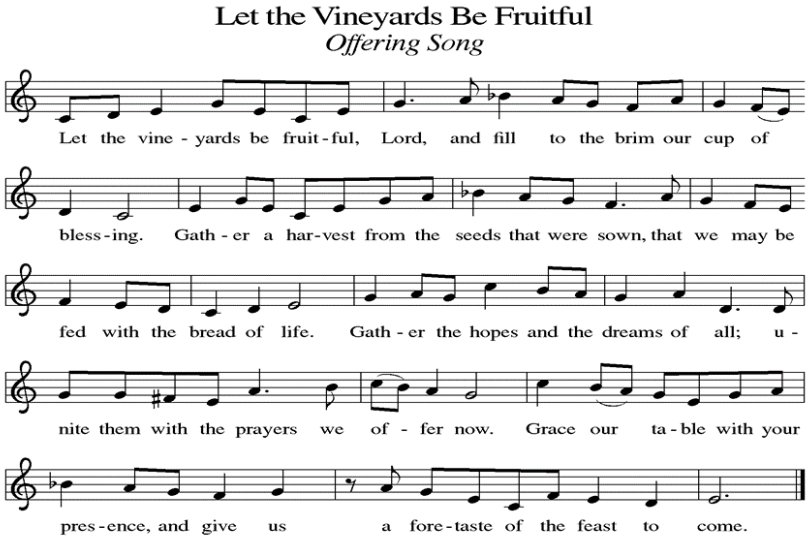
Please share a sign of Christ's peace with those around you.

(Please share a sign of peace however you're comfortable today: fist bump, handshake, high five, peace sign, or gentle wave.)

Offering is collected

Offering and Elements Are Brought to the Table

Offering Song: ELW 182



Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980
Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923
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Offering Prayer

Gracious God, **in this Season of Advent, as we wait for the Messiah, we offer not only ourselves but our tithes and gifts as well. May these offerings work to bring about healing, justice, belonging, and the thrill of hope to a weary world. Amen.**

Communion

God be with you.

And also with you.

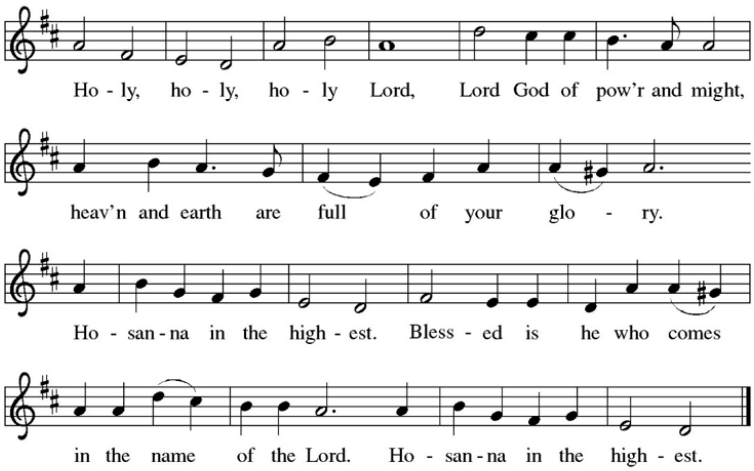
Lift up your hearts full of holy anticipation.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to Immanuel, God with us.

We joyfully 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. 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 a thrill of hope in our hearts, 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 are you, O God, and blessed is your almighty name.
When the faithful cry out to you, you draw near. Salvation comes.
As we long for healing, restoration, and wholeness, you model the power of mercy, compassion, and generosity through your Son, Jesus Christ.

On the night Jesus gathered his friends to eat together, a common meal was transformed into elements of grace to be shared, remembered, and celebrated by generations upon generations.

On that night, Jesus took a simple loaf of bread.
Blessed it.
Broke it.
And Shared it.
He said, “Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

Then Jesus took a cup of wine.
Blessed it.

Passed it.
And said, “Drink from it, all of you. 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 our faith:
Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Gracious God, pour out your Spirit on us and these your gifts of grace. May they be for us a reminder of how your salvation breaks through in everyday life to everyday people. May we remember the Messiah who saved us is saving us and will save us. Fill our hearts with gratitude for this table where there is enough for all. **Amen.**

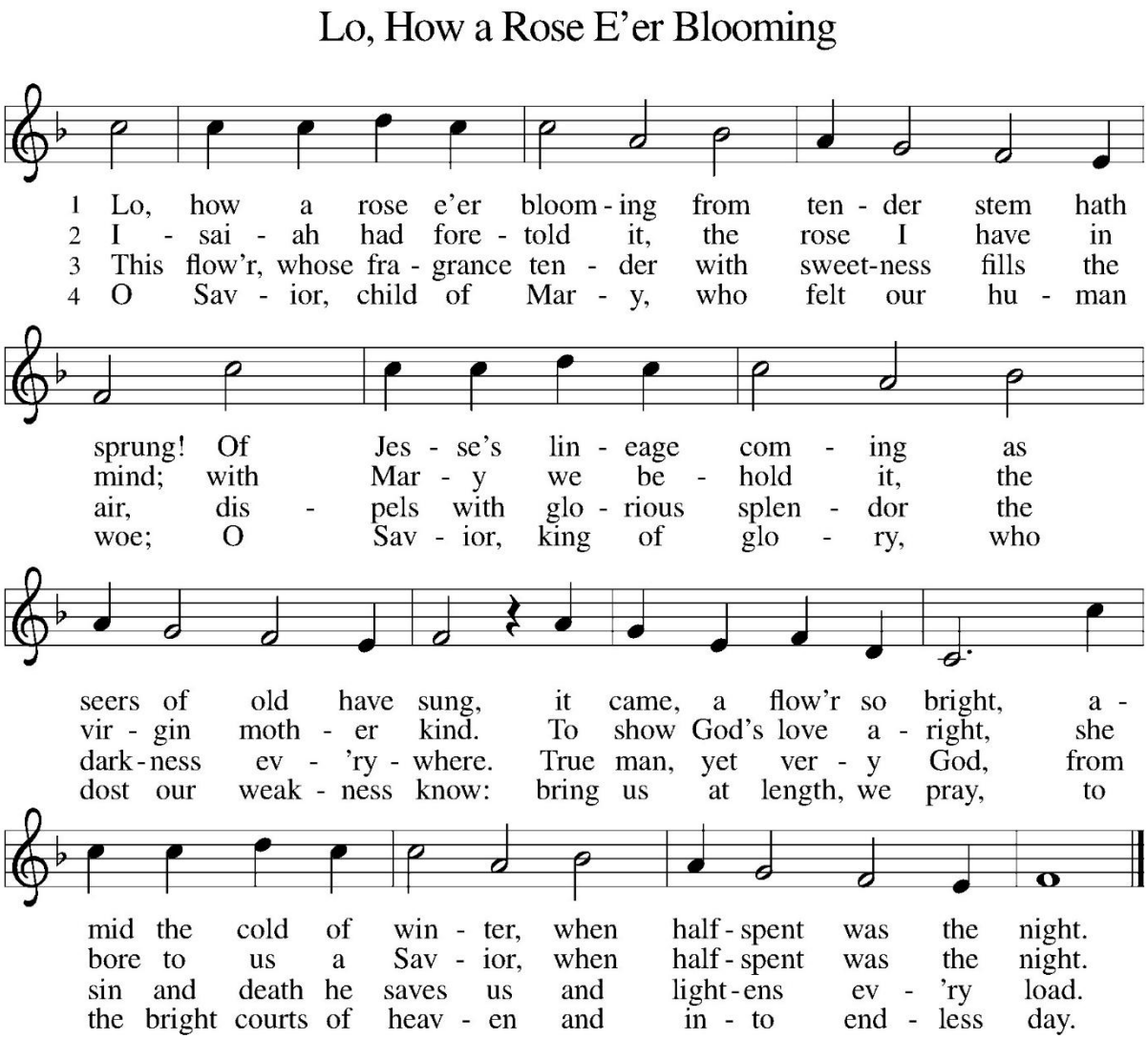
With confidence, we pray the prayer Jesus taught us:
Lord’s Prayer
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion
God invites all people to this table. Here we find a thrill of hope, the promised peace, the joy of grace, the love of God. Come, not

because you are perfect, but because God's love is perfect and given freely. **Amen.**

(All are welcome at the Table. The juice is the innermost circle on the tray. Reminder: You commune fully even if you consume just one of the elements.)

Communion hymn: ELW 272 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming



Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851–1934, sts. 1–2; Harriet R. Krauth, 1845–1925, st. 3; John C. Mattes, 1876–1948, st. 4
Music: ES IST EIN ROS, *Alte catholische geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1599

Post-Communion Blessing

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

Prayer after Communion

Ever-present God, **you bring grace and good news into our midst in these tangible gifts of bread and cup. As this meal has nourished us with your promises of life, so send us forth as messengers of your good news of great joy for all people. Amen.**

Blessing

May the blessing of God, our salvation, Christ, our peace, and the Spirit, our joy, ☩ thrill your heart and sustain your spirit, now and always. **Amen.**

Sending hymn: ELW 267 Joy to the World



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

Dismissal

Go to share tidings of love for all people.

Thanks be to God.

Announcements:

- **Christmas Pageant:** Dec. 27, 10 a.m.
- **Annual Meeting:** Jan. 17, right after service.
- **Getting Crafty:** Jan. 20, 6:30 p.m.
- **Book Club:** Jan. 28, 7 p.m.

focelca.com
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Pastor Jane Brda, SAM
Ellen Mueller — Music

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