



In Response to the Good News of Jesus Christ:

Our Purpose...

Gathered to worship!
Sent to witness and serve!

Our Vision...

To become more diverse, creative, nurturing, and welcoming within our congregation and in the wider community.

Our Guiding Principles...

We will follow Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

We will read, teach, and preach God's Word faithfully.

We commit to prayer and worship as a way of life.

We invite people to know Jesus Christ.

**Reconciling in Christ
Welcoming
Statement**



First Evangelical
Lutheran Church/

Santa Trinidad commits to being a loving and welcoming community of faith, centered in the Good News of Jesus Christ. We continue to proclaim this is a safe and inclusive place for all types of people. This includes all races, ethnicities, creeds, income levels, ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, educational levels, family structures, political affiliations, marital statuses, physical or mental abilities. Equally important, we advocate for racial equality. All are welcome here - come as you are!

The Messenger is a bi-monthly publication of First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mesa, Arizona. Please submit information by email to felc@firstevlutheran.com or in written form to the church office by the 15th of the month prior to publication.

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
142 North Date Street Mesa, Arizona 85201

Mission Moments
October-November 2025
Volume 20 Issue 12

Celebrating Seventy-seven Years of God's Amazing Grace



The Season of Advent: A Time of Expectation and Hope

As another year draws to a close, a mix of emotions settles upon us. For some, it brings a sense of joyful anticipation; for others, a quieter sadness or a moment for reflection. No matter your circumstances or the season you are navigating, remember the profound significance of this sacred time we are entering.

Advent is more than just a countdown to a holiday. It is a holy period of preparation, reflection, and devotion centered on the most pivotal moment in human history: the birth of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

This season is a dual invitation:

To Remember the Past: To humbly reflect on the First Coming of Christ—the moment God entered our world as an infant, bringing light into the darkness.

To Anticipate the Future: To look forward with profound hope and expectation to the glorious Second Coming of Christ.

Therefore, take this sacred time to pause, rest, and reflect. Seek the positive aspects of life and anchor yourself to the unshakeable promise of faith. Know with certainty that we have a Jesus who is with us—**Emmanuel, "God with us"**—not only born in Bethlehem but present in our lives today, offering comfort, guidance, and eternal salvation.

In this spirit, we hold fast to the promise of Scripture:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." —
Romans 15:13 (ESV)

May this Advent Season fill your heart with **Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love.**
Pastor Luis E Ochoa



First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Serving our neighbors is our FIRST priority!

OFFICE HOURS

Mondays through Wednesdays:
8:30AM-2:30PM

Staff

Luis Ochoa, Pastor
 Joy Petroff, Admin. Secretary

Congregational Officers

Traci Laasch, President
 Sharon Shields, Vice President
 Kathleen Rogers, Treasurer
 Ellen Riske, Secretary

Congregational Council

Corinne Cursi
 Traci Laasch
 Ellen Riske
 Kathleen Rogers
 Rhonda Schmidt
 Sharon Shields

Contact Us

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Web: www.firstevlutheran.com

First Evangelical now accepts
 contributions via the Zelle app.

Search for
 “felc@firstevlutheran.com”



Advent Season Worship Service

Sundays at 9:30 AM
 Wednesdays at 6 PM

Livestream link:

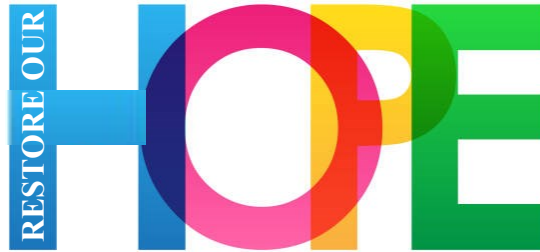
<https://www.youtube.com/@felutheran/streams>



JOIN US FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL

We're having fun in Sunday School!
 Won't you join us!

Advent Worship Services
Wednesdays December 3, 10, 17
6 PM



An Advent Midweek Prayer Service

Overview

This liturgy is an adaptation of evening prayer in which we return to Sunday's psalmody and hear readings from the prophet Isaiah. In this service, the assembly will reflect on scripture and the season in light of the many pressures of our surrounding culture that challenge the message of Advent.

Readings:

December 3 - **Advent 1:** *Isaiah 1:24-31*- Preacher Patrick

December 10- **Advent 2:** *Isaiah 35:3-7* - Pastor Luis

December 17- **Advent 3:** *Isaiah 11:1-9* - TBD



<<<<<<< Bell Choir
 December 3, 10, 17
 Wednesdays at 6:30 PM

Vocal choir >>>>>>>>
 Sundays at 8:30 AM



CHRISTMAS GARDEN OF POINSETTIAS

We will adorn our Sanctuary with a Garden of Poinsettias at our Christmas Eve Services.

You can provide poinsettias by filling out the following form. Your gift will be acknowledged in the Christmas Eve Bulletin.

The cost of each poinsettia plant is \$15.

We do need your request completed by **December 14.**

Simply complete the information below, place this form in the Offering Plate, or bring/send it to the Church Office.

Please print all information

A gift of _____ poinsettia plants at \$15 each

Donated by _____

☐ In Loving Memory of _____

☐ In Honor of _____

☐ To the Glory of God

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Checks should be made out to First Lutheran Church.



The word posada means "inn" or "shelter" in Spanish. In this tradition, the Bible story of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and their search for a place to stay is re-enacted. The tradition also involves a special song, as well as a variety of Spanish Christmas carols, breaking piñatas, and celebration.

All are welcome to join us *Saturday, December 20*

A Posada procession will begin in the First Evangelical Lutheran Church courtyard (near the food pantry) at 6 PM.

Following the procession at 7 PM, a celebration will be held in the Great Room (access from the courtyard).

We will be serving Barbacoa and the children will receive a candy goody bag.



Piñata fun will happen in the courtyard!



Green Corner RESTAURANT

Join the Out to Lunch Bunch!

Tuesday, December 9

11:30 AM

1010 W Southern Ave #7,
Mesa, AZ 85210

TAMALE MAKING CREW



Monday, December 15

6 PM

Great Room

Learn how to make the season's special food
while enjoying the company of
others in our community.



Readers needed for December 28 Carols & Lessons service

If you would like to be
a part of this service,
please contact Pastor Luis.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Mark your calendars for February 1, 2026
Annual Congregational Meeting & Potluck
after church!

See you there!



DECORATE the Church

**December 21
after worship**
**Contact Rhonda
for more
information**



Save the Date!

Christmas Drive

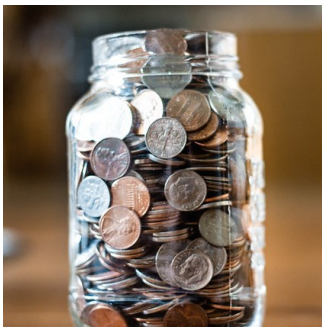
The Christmas season is approaching
We'd love your support in collecting gift



We will distribute gifts to clients in every LSS service area,
with your help - new slippers and robes for older adults,
and toys and games for children of all ages.

Gifts can be dropped off in Tucson or Phoenix no later than December 15.
You can also follow the link below to access the Amazon Wish List.

[https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/35E007E1LVV8M?](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/35E007E1LVV8M?ref_=wl_share&vcrmeid=dPZTC0HH4USa6jXltmMagw&vcrmiid=YcstZnyXokCf5FQ1hPg9NA)
[ref_=wl_share&vcrmeid=dPZTC0HH4USa6jXltmMagw&vcrmiid=YcstZnyXokCf5FQ1hPg9NA](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/35E007E1LVV8M?ref_=wl_share&vcrmeid=dPZTC0HH4USa6jXltmMagw&vcrmiid=YcstZnyXokCf5FQ1hPg9NA)



Change for Change Offering

Continue to bring in your change and drop it into the
Change for Change Jar in the Narthex.
We are supporting Hosana Scouting Troop this quarter.
Mia and Joleen, our youth members,
have been in Scouting America for a few years.
Support their troop if you are able. Thank you!

**First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Council Meeting Minutes for October 28, 2025**

Present: Corrine Cursi, Traci Laasch, Pastor Luis, Ellen Riske, Rhonda Schmidt and Sharon Shields.
Absent: Kathleen Rogers

A. Devotion and Prayer Pastor lead a brief prayer. Tracy Laasch opened meeting at 4:28 PM.

B. Review of Council Minutes

Reviewed minutes from September 30. Sharon made motion to accept, Rhonda seconded.
Motion approved.

C. Review and of Reports

- Treasurer's Report – Council set up a Spending Review Committee headed by Ellen Riske and Richard Schmidt to look for ways, large and small, to reduce our expenses. The congregation will be asked to assist in this project..
- Pastor's Report – Pastor announced he had left his position as Youth Activities Leader at Holy Trinity. This allows him to adjust his hours here. He will still be doing youth activities here and may include Holy Trinity in these.

D. Old Business

- Concordia Charter School incurred a \$16,000 bill for air conditioning. First will pay half.
- Fire Inspector's Suggestion – The inspection to install a lock box with keys for entrance has been put on hold while Council considers when, where and how much we can handle.
- Property Manager's Job Description - A list of responsibilities for our Property Manager, Louie Orozco has been developed and he has started working on our list of needs.
- The former Gift Shop space has been cleaned out in preparation for new use of the space.
- Church Holiday Calendar – A Calendar has been set up for Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas. Volunteers will be recruited as the dates come nearer.

E. New Business

- Lipovic Heating and Cooling – The contract has been signed and Lipovic has started to evaluate needed maintenance and repairs.
- Grant writing Committee - Committee is working on grant requests from Hidden Treasures for church campus improvements including trimming dead trees, installing benches and purchasing a new banner for the front of the church building. A Grand Canyon Synod grant has been requested for Youth Initiatives for Nursery and Youth Sunday School expenses.
- A Town Hall/Pie Social has been scheduled for November 23 to create a financial 'going forward' agenda.
- Church Mutual Insurance Increase – Our costs increased by 15.9% or \$3,419, from \$21,516 in 2025 to \$24,935 in 2026.
- Pastor David's (DEM) team has submitted its Ministry Site Review. Placed on hold until after Town Hall meeting.
- Stewardship planning - Also on hold until after Town Hall meeting.
- Two Council positions will need to be filled due to term limits.
- Budget proposal is due in December so Council can review and prepare it for the Annual Meeting.

F. Adjournment and Closing with the Lord's Prayer

Rhonda moved and Sharon seconded that meeting adjourn at 5:56 PM. Motion passed.

Next meeting is November 25 at 4:30 PM.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

As of 10/31/25	Actual 2025	Budget 2025	Actual 2024	Budget 2024
Offerings	84,287	95,830	96,395	94,670
Other Income	128,270	120,137	88,354	82,080
Total Income	212,857	215,967	184,947	176,750
Expenses	242,327	213,593	177,731	176,570
Inc. Less Exp.	-29,470	2,374	7,018	180



Narrative Lectionary Explained

This Scope and Sequence for Sunday School helped me connect all the lessons to the theme for the year and to see the bigger picture for each chunk of lessons and sermons. I hope you like it!

Traci Laasch

Called by God, Blessed to Serve (Year 4, 2025-2026)

The stories of the Year 4 Narrative Lectionary tell of God's invitation into relationship given to all people, and the ways in which God provides gifts of grace at every turn. While Abraham seemed too old to father a nation, Moses too quiet to lead a people, and David too young to take over Israel, we see throughout the Old Testament that God repeatedly calls the unexpected to step out in faith. As the people answer God's call, God never fails to equip them for the journey. Throughout Scripture, gifts of grace are given to those answering God's call, especially at some of the most trying moments. From gifts of manna in the wilderness to the promise of new life for the struggling Israelites, God's call to discipleship is never without God's blessing and provision each step of the way. As God chooses to dwell among us in Jesus Christ, God's commitment to relationship is distinctly clear. Jesus' invitations to abundant life reveal a relentless love that desires that all people know and serve God. His teachings reveal a kingdom that opposes traditional expectations of power and importance, always calling the least expected into God's mission of redemption. As the hope of the resurrection spreads, God's grace abounds in everyday moments and throughout the significant challenges of the early church. These early churches learn to rejoice, even in trials, always trusting in God's provision. Each of us are invited into a life of discipleship by our loving Creator. God's continued presence and abounding grace allows us to answer God's call, and through those blessings, to live in hope as we serve Jesus through our neighbor.

God's Presence Brings Life (Advent: Nov. 30 to Dec. 21, 2025)

God's everlasting promise to be in relationship with the Israelites and all creation allows hope to take root in even the most hopeless circumstances. God continues to provide and be faithful, bringing life where there was once death, like dry bones being gathered back to life. As texts move into the New

Testament in this Advent season, hope is ultimately embodied in human form as God will go to any length to show love, even becoming flesh and dwelling with us. God's presence is found among us in the humble form of a child in Jesus, the one who brings true life to all.

Encountering the Messiah (Epiphany: Dec. 28, 2025 to Jan. 18, 2026)

In the beginning of John's Gospel, Jesus' ministry is launched with his baptism by John. These stories represent a series of first encounters: Jesus' first interaction with the disciples, his first miracle, and his first conflict with the religious establishment. While these early stories in the Gospel reveal Jesus' power and his call to discipleship, they also set up questions regarding his true identity as Jesus hints—even now—that he is headed to the cross.



Grand Canyon Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

November 12, 2025

Dear Siblings in Christ,

2025 has been a year for calling. A year of voices heard, lives transformed, and ministries born anew.

Thanks to your faithful congregational mission support, the Grand Canyon Synod is celebrating a historic milestone: **six ordinations so far this year, plus Vicar Wanda Frenchman's ordination scheduled for December 11th makes it seven!** Also, for the first time in our synod's history, we have welcomed two deacons into Word and Service Ministry!

Your gifts not only sustain ministry, they multiply it!

We give thanks for all who have answered God's call to ordained ministry in 2025.

Each of these seven ordinations represents years of prayer, study, discernment, and community support. Each a celebration of God's faithfulness and yours.

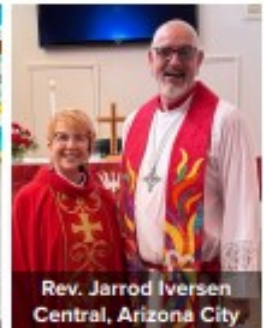
I would like to share the story of one of our newly ordained leaders, **Pastor Solomon Kuch**, whose story invites us to witness what happens when God's call meets courage, community, and support.



Dcn. Wendi Van Beek
UofA Campus Ministry



Dcn. Emma Janzen
Resurrection, Oro Valley



Rev. Jarrod Iversen
Central, Arizona City



Rev. Kevin Anderson
Spirit of Hope, Mesa



Rev. Kylee Bestenlehner
Peace, Peoria



Rev. Solomon Kuch
Emmanuel, Glendale

On August 24, 2025, Pastor Solomon was ordained as pastor to Emmanuel Sudanese Lutheran Fellowship in Glendale, Arizona. His journey to that moment was anything but easy.

A refugee from South Sudan, Pastor Solomon has led Emmanuel for five years while working 12-hour night shifts at the Arizona State Mental Hospital, raising six children with his wonderful wife Elizabeth, and completing seminary studies. During that time, he served his congregation faithfully without formal recognition as a rostered leader.

Emmanuel is a vibrant faith community of more than 200 South Sudanese refugees and second-generation families. The congregation includes 33 family units living in 11 cities across the Valley, creating a mission field that spans over 1,000 square miles. Seventy percent of the congregation is under the age of 18. These children and youth are growing up as first-generation Americans, shaped by both the trauma and the faith of their parents who fled war and displacement.

Continue on next page...

Now ordained, Solomon's vision is taking new shape. He is deepening pastoral care for far-flung families, mentoring the congregation's over 140 children and youth, and nurturing a spiritual home that speaks both Dinka and English speakers, connecting heritage and hope in a shared life of faith.

This is what leadership looks like when a community is empowered to call one of its own.

Your Mission Support Makes This Possible

Because of your generosity, the Grand Canyon Synod is able to walk alongside leaders like Solomon as they discern and follow God's call. Your congregation's mission support provides:

- **Candidacy support** through the synod's candidacy committee, made up of lay and rostered leaders who accompany candidates through every step of the process
- **Seminary financial assistance** that helps reduce the burden of tuition and student debt
- **Resources and staff support** for ethnic-specific ministries and vulnerable communities
- **Congregational transition support**, including interim ministry when needed, to prepare congregations for new pastoral and diaconal leadership

We Are Blessed to Be a Blessing

Because of your commitment to this shared ministry, every congregation, regardless of language, culture, or geography, can welcome the leadership God is raising up in their midst. In the Grand Canyon Synod, we are communicating Jesus, connecting people, and creating possibilities for all to hear and respond to God's call. Thank you for being the church together!

With gratitude for your partnership in ministry,



The Rev. Deborah K. Hutterer
Bishop, Grand Canyon Synod of the ELCA



**Office Closed
Christmas Eve Day
Wednesday, December 24**



**Offices closes at 11:30 AM
New Year's Eve**

December 6, 2025

Mesa **AGLOW Lighthouse**

Concordia Charter School
142 N Date Street, Mesa, AZ 85201 *[see map]*

Fellowship and beverages 9:15 am
[Snacks are welcome]

Meeting begins at 10:00 am

We are gathering in December to share short testimonies of trials and triumphs, miracles and praise-worthy stories to close out 2025.

We will sing with **JOY**, enjoy **FELLOWSHIP** and **FOOD** and **PRAISE OUR FATHER** for the goodness He has for us!



Is our Father Calling YOU to pray or step into one of these assignments?

- Audio\Visual Assistant
- Children's Program

FREE Childcare is available!!!

NOTE: *Reservations ARE required a week in advance* to ensure Caregivers are available

Call Celine: (602) 653-4597

.....
1 Corinthians 15:58 Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

DECEMBER 2025

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
7 2nd Sunday in Advent 8:30 AM Choir - S 9:30 FELC Worship—S 10:30 Fellowship —GR	1 DEADLINE: BULLETIN	2 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Courtyard 10-11 AM LSS Messy Play - GR 11 AM-12 PM LSS Family Connections 11 AM-1PM LSS Triple P L2Eng/SP 6 PM Manna Night @ Zoo Lights 6:30-8:30 PM ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families) - GR	3 3 PM LSS Raising a Reader - GR 4 PM LSS Kids in the Kitchen - GR 5:30 PM Advent Soup Supper —GR 6 PM Advent Worship Service—S 6:30 PM Bell Choir - S	4 OFFICE CLOSED 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Courtyard 3-6 PM LSS event - GR	5 OFFICE CLOSED 10AM LSS Parent Café - GR 11 AM-12 PM LSS Family Connections	6 8:30-1 Aglow - CCS Gym 8 AM-1PM LSS Tamale Time- K 10 AM Zumbini - GR 11 AM LSS PlaySPOT - GR
14 3rd Sunday in Advent 8:30 AM Choir - S 9:30 FELC Worship—S 10:30 Fellowship —GR	8 DEADLINE: BULLETIN	9 NO LSS-SW Food Pantry 10-11 AM LSS Messy Play - GR 11 AM-12 PM LSS Family Connections 11 AM-1PM LSS Triple P L2Eng/SP 6 PM Manna Night - CCS 6:30-8:30 PM ACA - GR	10 11:30 AM 1st Pl Coordinating Comm - OCR 3 PM LSS Raising a Reader - GR 4 PM LSS Kids in the Kitchen - GR 5:30 PM Advent Soup Supper —GR 6 PM Advent Worship Service—S 6:30 PM Bell Choir - S 5-7 PM LSS-SW Food Bank - Courtyard	11 OFFICE CLOSED 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Courtyard 9 AM Mesa Migrant - Great Room	12 OFFICE CLOSED 10AM LSS Parent Café - GR 11 AM-12 PM LSS Family Connections	13 10 AM Zumbini - GR 11 AM LSS PlaySPOT - GR
21 4th Sunday in Advent 8:30 AM Choir - S 9:30 FELC Worship—S 10:30 Fellowship —GR	15 DEADLINE: BULLETIN NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 6 PM Tamale-Making - GR	16 LSS Special Event 6 PM Manna Night - CCS Christmas Concert 6:30-8:30 PM ACA - GR	17 LSS Special Event 5:30 PM Advent Soup Supper —GR 6 PM Advent Worship Service—S 6:30 PM Bell Choir - S	18 OFFICE CLOSED 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Courtyard	19 OFFICE CLOSED 8AM-7PM LSS Christmas gift distribution	20 10 AM Zumbini - GR 11 AM LSS PlaySPOT - GR 12 PMLSS Family Connections /Bday Celebration - GR 6 PM Las Posadas
28 1st Sunday in Christmas 9:30 FELC Worship—S 10:30 Fellowship —GR	22 DEADLINE: BULLETIN 6 PM Spanish Bible Study - OCR	23 6-9 PM Manna Night 6:30-8:30 PM ACA - GR	24 Christmas Eve OFFICE CLOSED 7 PM Christmas Eve Worship—S	25 Christmas OFFICE CLOSED	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27
29 DEADLINE: BULLETIN 6 PM Spanish Bible Study - OCR	30 4:30 PM Council Mtg - OCR 6:30-8:30 PM ACA - GR	31 OFFICE CLOSES AT 11:30 AM	31 OFFICE CLOSES AT 11:30 AM	FRC = Family Resource Center GR = Great Room S = Sanctuary OCR = Olsen Conference Room	CCS = Concordia Charter School C = Cafeteria/Fellowship Hall * Off-campus	