



Celebrating Seventy-seven Years of God's Amazing Grace

February Focus: A Season of Love, Justice, and Reflection

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.

Dear First Evangelical Lutheran Family,

As we step further into 2026, the calendar turns to February, bringing a unique blend of traditions, celebrations, and opportunities for deep reflection. This month beautifully captures the journey of our shared life—new experiences, expectations, and traditions—navigated together as a community that has weathered the many seasons of our church's history.

This month, we look at three distinct milestones from our history, our holidays, and our church calendar:

1. Honoring Justice: Black History Month

February is a powerful time to collectively honor and celebrate Black History Month. It is a dedicated period to recognize the profound contributions, resilience, and often untold stories of our African American brothers and sisters. For our community, this isn't just a historical observance; it is a vital part of our ongoing commitment to justice, equity, and understanding.

Let us use this month to learn, listen, and reflect on the persistent call for justice in our world, living out the love and inclusivity at the heart of our faith.

2. Celebrating Connection: Love and Friendship

Mid-February brings the sweeter side of Valentine's Day. Whether it's the joy of lifelong friendship, the romance of partnership, or a simple act of appreciation, this is a time to celebrate the connections that enrich our lives. While flowers and chocolates are lovely tangible symbols, let us remember that **love in all its forms** is the true glue that holds our community together.

3. A Time for Reflection: Ash Wednesday and Unconditional Love

Even as we embrace these celebrations, February brings us to the threshold of the Lenten season. **Ash Wednesday** offers no chocolates or candy grams; instead, it offers something far more profound: a sacred time for reflection, repentance, and spiritual renewal.

On Ash Wednesday, we are reminded of our mortality and our dependence on God's grace. It is a powerful reminder of a love that transcends all earthly celebrations—the unconditional love of Jesus. As we prepare for this season, I invite you to embrace this opportunity for spiritual self-care, drawing closer to God and the divine love that anchors us through every season of life.

Looking Ahead

February asks us to hold many things in balance: celebration and solemnity, outward action and inward reflection. It challenges us to live fully in our faith—advocating for justice, nurturing relationships, and deepening our spiritual walk.

I pray that this month brings you moments of profound connection and a renewed sense of God's abiding love.

**Blessings,
Pastor Luis 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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Email: felc@firstevlutheran.com
Web: www.firstevlutheran.com

First Evangelical now accepts contributions via the Zelle app.

Search for
“felc@firstevlutheran.com”



Worship With Us
IN-PERSON & ONLINE 9:30 AM

Livestream link:
<https://www.youtube.com/@felutheranstreams>



Ash Wednesday
Worship
February 18
6 PM



Change for Change through March:

This quarter, we are collecting change for ELCA Disaster Relief



Spanish Bible Study followed by Fellowship

Wednesdays at 6 PM



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

Lent Season 2026



This Lent, I invite you to step out of the chaos and into a sanctuary of intentional listening. **"Frequency: Tuning the Heart Through the Noise"** is more than just a sermon series—it is a five-week sensory experience designed to help you recalibrate your spirit.

In a world that refuses to be quiet, we often lose the "still, small voice" of God beneath the static of anxiety, digital clutter, and busyness. Throughout this series, we will move through a curated **soundscape**—ranging from the jarring strike of a drum to the deep resonance of a cello—to help us name our distractions and find our way back to the Shepherd.

It Will Be A Participatory Experience

Each week, you won't just listen; you will engage. Our services will feature:

- **Physical Prayer Actions:** We will gather at the Cross to physically lay down our "noise" and vocalize our commitment to peace.
- **The Light of the Candle:** As we navigate the "hardship of silence," we will use the flame of a candle as a visual anchor to remind us that God's light reclaims the spaces where noise once lived.

The Power of Stillness: We will practice the discipline of silence together, learning that God is often waiting to speak precisely when the world stops shouting.

Join us as we transform our internal groans into a **new song** of victory. Whether you are feeling overwhelmed by the world's volume or simply seeking a deeper connection to the Divine, there is a frequency waiting for you here.

"Frequency: Tuning the Heart Through the Noise"

February 25-Week 1: Naming the Static

March 4-Week 2: The Hardship of Silence

March 11-Week 3: Tuning to the Whisper

March 18- Week 4: The Voice of the Shepherd

March 25-Week 5: From Noise to a New Song

Message from Church Council President

Happy New Year! As we begin 2026, we give thanks for God's faithfulness and for the strength of our congregation. We look ahead with hope, trusting in God's guidance as we continue to grow together and serve.

Thank you to everyone who attended our November Town Hall Meeting! I am so grateful for the time you shared and for your enthusiasm in coming together in fellowship and conversation. It was truly a joy to gather and share information.

Council is excited to keep you informed and connected! Open communication is very important to us, and gatherings like our Town Hall Meetings are a wonderful opportunity to listen, share ideas, and grow together. Because these moments are so valuable, we plan to hold three Town Hall Meetings this year. Mark your calendar for May, August, and November.

Scripture reminds us in Isaiah that God promises an abundant life, even amid challenges and uncertainty. With God's guidance, our church is strong and resilient. When we stand together in faith, we become a loving and faithful presence in our neighborhood, living out God's call to support one another with compassion. I am truly thankful for each of you and look forward to continuing this journey together in faith.

Serving with you, Traci Laasch



New Alarm Panel Procedure:

In addition to signing the log when **disarming**, we now ask that **anyone who arms the alarm also sign the log** located by the control panel.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

The Property Committee is in need of a 7 1/2 grinder or a walk behind concrete grinder to level the concrete in the courtyard.

Donation of used tools, loans, or funds to purchase one are being requested.

Please reach out to Louie with any questions.



Saturday, February 7

1- 4 PM in the Great Room

Cost: \$25

Interested in signing up? Questions?

Call Marilyn 480-926-3345



Soup-er Giving on Super Bowl Sunday, February 8

Celebrate Super Bowl Sunday by giving back!

Bring a **can of soup** or place **money in the container** for the team you're cheering for. No matter how you give, it's a **win-win for our food pantry!**



Join the Out to Lunch Bunch!

Tuesday, February 10, 11:30 AM

1221 South Gilbert Road
Mesa 85204

First Evangelical Lutheran Church

Council Meeting Minutes for December 30, 2025

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

A. Devotional Pastor Luis. Traci Laasch opened meeting at 12:03 PM

B. Review of Council Minutes

Treasurer's Report.

Discussed possible rent increases and/or reductions in expenses to balance the budget.

C. Old Business

Grant writing Committee

- Grant request from Hidden Treasures for campus improvements was declined. Grant for Youth Initiatives including Nursery and Sunday School will be announced January 26.
- School Kitchen fire suppression hood inspection is due in October/April.
- Job Description for property manager. Will set up Work Order System and keep a list of projects.
- Former Gift Shop space has been cleaned up and awaits decision on use.
- Town Hall Meetings are proposed for May, August and September to discuss the DEM's Ministry Report.

D. New Business

- Budget Review. Reviewed proposed budget. Ellen motioned to approve. Traci seconded. Motion approved.
- Roof Leaks Bids Update. Traci received bids. The one from Prime Roofing for \$8,170 was selected. Sharon moved to accept, Ellen seconded. Motion passed.
- Reduce Liability. There are 22 payments of \$1155/month remaining on refinancing debt to the Endowment fund. Suspending payments until future time will save the budget \$13,860. Traci motioned to approve plan. Sharon seconded. Motion passed.
- Annual Meeting Agenda was discussed.
- Change for Change recipients were chosen. ELCA Disaster relief and RiC funds for Jan-March, and April-June.
- Membership – Inactive members will be contacted to see if they wish to remain members.
- TV in Great room has no sound. Will ask Randy to look into.
- Council meeting date. - Council approved switching meetings to last Sunday of each month at 10:45 AM.
- Recommendations taken for possible new Council members. These will be approached and asked to consider acceptance to be nominees.
- 1st Place Events. Council members were encouraged to attend more 1st Place events.

F. Adjournment and Closing with Lord's Prayer

- Ellen made motion. Corrine seconded. Meeting closed at 2:01 PM.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

As of 12/31/25	Actual 2025	Budget 2025	Actual 2024	Budget 2024
Offerings	100,995	116,996	112,691	114,004
Other Income	148,808	142,341	106,645	98,496
Total Income	249,803	259,337	219,336	212,500
Expenses	280,063	259,879	224,473	212,500
Inc. Less Exp.	-30,260	1,458	-5,137	0



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.

Invitation to Abundant Life (Epiphany: Jan. 25 to Feb. 15, 2026)

Jesus' ministry continues as he calls those around him into new life. Each interaction reveals more about Jesus' identity and the promises of God, as well as God's desire for all to know abundant life. From invitations to be born anew through the Spirit, to promises of living water, these encounters with Jesus leave the individuals changed and further illustrate Jesus' purpose and ministry of bringing life to all.

Following Jesus (Lent: Feb. 22 to Mar. 8, 2026)

Upon entering Lent, the time when we draw near to Jesus as we prepare to remember his death and resurrection, more is revealed about Jesus' call to discipleship. Jesus invites all to follow him and promises to be the good shepherd providing and caring for his flock. His disciples are to listen to his voice and serve as he serves. Jesus' great love is clear as he weeps over Lazarus' death, and his great power evident as he raises him back to life. In Peter's denial, we see that we often struggle to live up to this call to follow Jesus.



February 7, 2026

Mesa *AGLOW* Lighthouse

Concordia Charter School

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

Fellowship and beverages 9:30 am

Meeting begins at 10:00 am



Jean de Dieu Ndahiriwe and his wife, Eugenia, are planting Christ Embassy Church in Avondale. Their church plant is dedicated to bringing hope and healing to those on the margins through the transformative power of relational evangelism and discipleship.

The Ndahiriwes both have a personal history as refugees, and their mission is to serve the immigrant and refugee community, especially those from Sub-Saharan Africa and other conflict-ravaged regions. Jean also serves as a clinical chaplain with the AZ Dept. of Corrections.

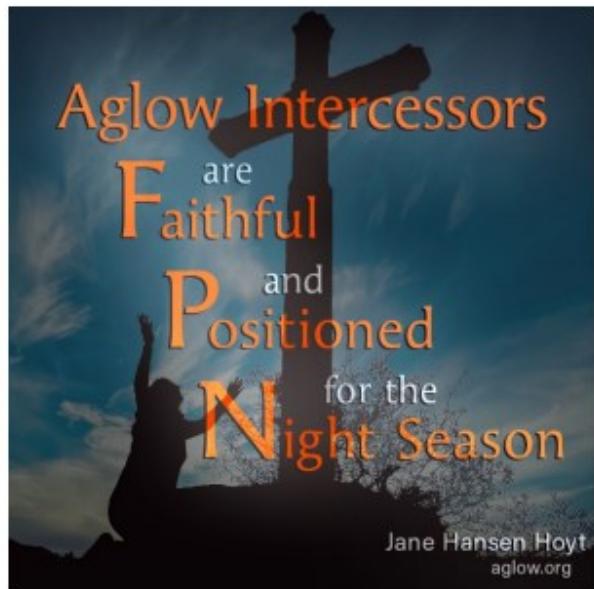
Jean and Eugenia live in Surprise with their young son and have older children currently studying on the East Coast.

FREE Childcare is available!!!

NOTE: Reservations ARE required a week in advance to ensure a Caregiver is available

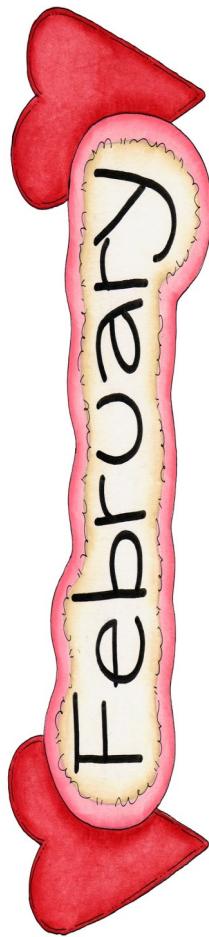
Call Celine: (602) 653-4597

Is our Father Calling YOU to step into the Children's Program?



Jane Hansen Hoyt
aglow.org

Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with My righteous right hand.



2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 4th Sunday in Epiphany 9:30 FELC Worship—S 10:30 Fellowship—GR Potluck luncheon FELC Congregational meeting	2 DEADLINE: BULLETIN 6 PM Spanish Bible Study - GR	3 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Court- yard 10 AM LSS Messy Play—GR 11 AM LSS Raising a Reader—GR 5:30-8:30 PM ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families) - GR	4 3 PM LSS Raising a Reader - GR 4 PM LSS Kids in the Kitchen - GR	5 OFFICE CLOSED 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Court yard 9:30-11:30 AM Mesa Migrant	6 OFFICE CLOSED 10 AM LSS Parent Café - GR 11 AM LSS Family Connections - GR	7 8:30-1 Aglow - CCS Gym
8 5th Sunday in Epiphany 9:30 FELC Worship—S FELC Council Installation 10:30 Fellowship—GR	9 DEADLINE: BULLETIN 6 PM Spanish Bible Study - GR	10 NO LSS-SW Food Pantry 10 AM LSS Messy Play—GR 11 AM LSS Raising a Reader—GR 11:30 AM Lunch Bunch 5:30-8:30 PM ACA - GR	11 DEADLINE: NEWSLETTER 11:30 AM 1st PI Coordinating Comm - OCR 9:30 AM LSS Readiness Basket - GR 3 PM LSS Raising a Reader - GR 4 PM LSS Kids in the Kitchen - GR 5-7 PM LSS-SW Food Pantry - Court- yard	12 OFFICE CLOSED 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Court yard	13 OFFICE CLOSED 10 AM LSS Parent Café - GR 11 AM LSS Family Connections - GR	14 10 AM LSS Zumbini -GR 11 AM LSS PlaySPOT - GR 12 PM LSS Birthday Celebration - GR
15 Transfiguration of Our Lord 9:30 FELC Worship—S 10:30 Fellowship—GR	16 President's Day OFFICE CLOSED 6 PM Spanish Bible Study - GR	17 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Court- yard 10 AM LSS Messy Play—GR 11 AM LSS Raising a Reader—GR 5:30-8:30 PM ACA - GR	18 Ash Wednesday 9:30 AM LSS Readiness Basket - GR 3 PM LSS Raising a Reader - GR 4 PM LSS Kids in the Kitchen - GR 5 PM LSS Family Connections - GR 6 PM Ash Wednesday Worship - S	19 OFFICE CLOSED 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Court yard	20 OFFICE CLOSED 10 AM LSS Flourishing Families - GR 11 AM LSS Family Connections - GR	21 10 AM LSS Zumbini -GR 11 AM LSS PlaySPOT - GR 12 PM LSS Milo & Moxie (Fire Safety)
22 1st Sunday in Lent 9:30 FELC Worship—S 10:30 Fellowship—GR 10:45 AM Church Council - OCR	23 DEADLINE: BULLETIN 6 PM Spanish Bible Study - GR	24 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Court- yard 10 AM LSS Messy Play—GR 11 AM LSS Raising a Reader—GR 5:30-8:30 PM ACA - GR	25 9:30 AM LSS Readiness Basket - GR 3 PM LSS Raising a Reader - GR 4 PM LSS Kids in the Kitchen - GR 5:30 PM Lent Soup Supper—GR 6 PM Lent Worship Service—S	26 OFFICE CLOSED 9 AM LSS-SW Food Pantry- Court yard	27 10 AM LSS Parent Café - GR 11 AM LSS Family Connections - GR	28 10 AM LSS Zumbibi -GR 11 AM LSS PlaySPOT - GR

FRC = Family Resource Center	CCS = Concordia Charter School
GR = Great Room	C = Cafeteria/Fellowship Hall
S = Sanctuary	* Off-campus
OCR = Olsen Conference Room	