

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER FOR FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

142 North Date Street Mesa, Arizona 85201

Serving our neighbors is our FIRST priority!

Time and time again, the Spirit works

Dear First Evangelical Community,

As our year draws to a close, we enter a season rich with celebration. It begins with All Saints' Day, moves into a time of thanksgiving, journeys through Advent toward Christmas, and concludes on New Year's Eve. Year after year, we fill our lives with these traditions. For many, they bring cherished memories; for others, they are approached with heavy or tender hearts.

Yet the simple truth remains: we never truly know when the grace and light of Christ will break through these moments. My hope for you this season is that you feel no pressure to force yourself into the "holiday spirit." Instead, may you allow the Holy Spirit to meet you right where you are—guiding, comforting, and sustaining you through the end of the year.

I am profoundly grateful to have witnessed the Spirit active among us this past year. Even through challenges, we took meaningful steps forward in creating a welcoming, thriving environment for our community. I am deeply proud of this extraordinary congregation for giving so generously of your time, energy, and warmth. The love and blessings you share are the very reason my heart beats for this community.

As this year comes to a close—whether it brought high peaks, deep valleys, or profound change—I pray that you find abiding peace, strength, and love in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Blessings,

Pastor Luis Ochoa

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 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!

Staff
Luis Ochoa, Pastor
Joy Petroff, Admin. Asst.
Bob Stagger, Finance
Rui Xi, Pianist

Congregational Officers
Traci Laasch, President
Sharon Shields, VP
Rhonda Schmidt, Treasurer
Ellen Riske, Secretary

Congregational Council
Diane Johnson
Traci Laasch
Ellie Orozco
Louie Orozco
Ellen Riske
Rhonda Schmidt
Sharon Shields

Contact
felc@firstevlutheran.com
www.firstevlutheran.com
480-969-7221



We worship Sunday mornings at 9:30 AM

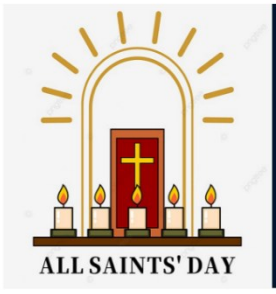
in the sanctuary.

You can find our worship online on our Facebook page
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064896961975
or follow the link from the website:
https://firstevlutheran.com/worship
where you can also download a worship bulletin.

All Saints Sunday and Dia de los Muertos

Sunday, November 1
9:30 AM

Bilingual Worship Service







Followed by a potluck meal.

Advent Wednesday Worship

Unusual as it may seem, the first Advent Wednesday is
November 25, the day before Thanksgiving!



Here's the schedule:
5:30 PM Advent "Happy Hour" in the Great Room. Pastor is hosting Nov. 25
6 PM Advent Worship Service—S
6:30 PM Choir Rehearsal – S
7 PM Bell Choir – S

The 2026 series is The Songs of Christmas:
Unwrapping the Theology and Wonder of Christmas Carols



November 25 centers on HOPE, using "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" as the carol to lead us through the theme of *Waiting in darkness for the promised Deliverer.*



December 2 we will explore PEACE using he theme: *Reconciliation and peace between God and humanity.* "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" is the carol to point us toward peace.

December 9 we unwrap JOY as the focus while singing "Angels We Have Heard on High". *Heavens declaring peace and uncontainable joy to a weary world* is the theme.

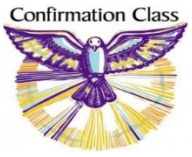
December 16 LOVE, *the quiet, humble arrival of divine love* theme is encapsulated in the carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem".



Join us for a time just for kids!
Children grades K-5 are welcome.
They will be dismissed from the church service after the Opening Prayer



Choir rehearsal is on Wednesdays at
6:30 - 7:30 PM in the Great Room.



Confirmation Class will take place the 3rd Sunday of each month.



Lunch Bunch meets monthly on the second Tuesday of each month at 11:30 AM.

Join the bunch as we explore dining in our area!

Join the Lunch Bunch

Tuesday, November 10
11:30 AM
Cracker Barrel at
Mesa Riverview 1007 N. Dobson Rd

Tuesday, December 9
11:30 AM
Famous Dave's at Mesa Riverview
1011 N Dobson Rd, Mesa 85201

Adult Morning Bible Study



Tuesdays at 10 AM in the Great Room

We will continue studying the Old Testament through November.

During Advent we will use a seasonal study to assist us in our preparation for Christmas.

First Place Community Center

is a vital partner to First Evangelical Lutheran Church.
Events are held, some weekly, some monthly
to bring the community together.

Manna Nights are every Tuesday night at 6 PM in the Concordia Charter School cafeteria.
The meal is followed by games and activities for children and adults alike.



CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED
Wednesday, November 25



Bingo Nights
take place on the final Friday of each month at 6 PM
in the Concordia Charter School cafeteria.
Snacks are provided and
a good time is had by all!!



Church Council Retreat
November 21, 10 AM – 1 PM at Pastor Luis' house
Church Council Meeting
December 27 following worship in the Conference Room.

Town Hall Meeting and Pie Social
November 29 following worship.



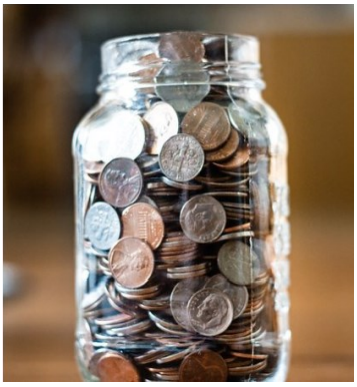
Bring a pie or your favorite fall dessert to share and get updated on what is happening at church.





Annual Congregational Meeting + potluck - February 7, 2027

Change for Change through December



Until the end of the year, we'll be collecting items for Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest.
You can donate these items through December or place money in the Change for Change Jar and we'll shop for you.

Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest

LSS-SW Resource Center on our campus has a Wish List:

Baby wipes, baby toys, sanitary napkins, hair clips, brushes, belts, socks. Gift cards for hair cuts. Personal items like soap, lotion, deodorant, toothpaste and toothbrushes.

Sabbath Rest in a Busy Season



Back-to-school stress has settled, and now we are entering the busy fall and winter holidays. Exodus 20:8 says to "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Our pastor's sermon on the 10 Commandments really struck a chord. While the commandments focus upward and outward, I have a tendency to keep going outward to be helpful. It is always good and necessary to find small moments of rest to stay grounded — and remember to not stretch myself too thin. Sometimes, rest doesn't look like an entire day off; often, it looks like a quiet cup of coffee in the morning, a pause to breathe deeply before walking into a busy room, or simply giving yourself permission to say "no" so you can say "yes" to your own well-being. I hope you are able to find stillness and rest in the busyness of this life's season.

Serving beside you,
Traci Laasch,
Council President

FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF SEPTEMBER 31, 2026

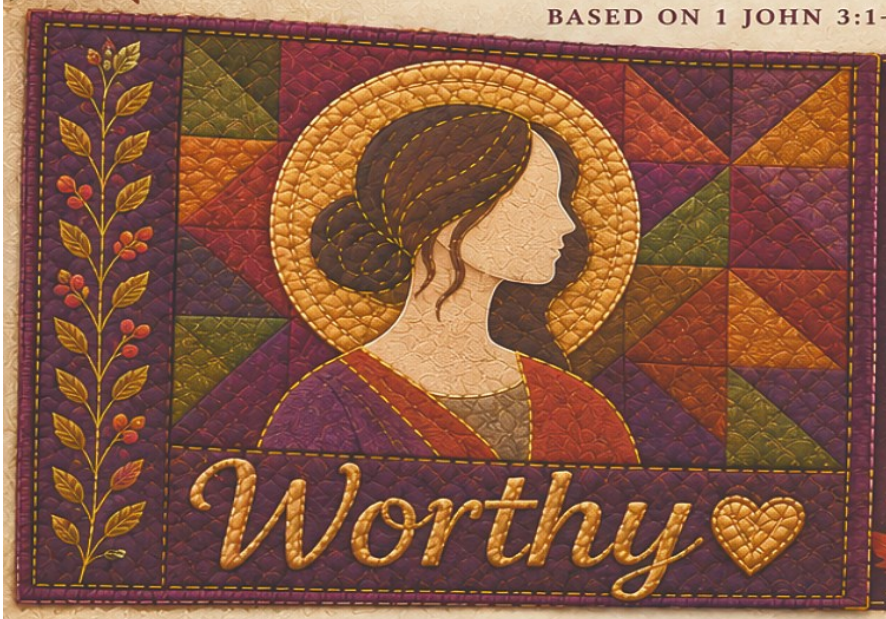
	ACTUAL 2026	BUDGET 2026	ACTUAL 2025	BUDGET 2025
Offering	$71,697	$83,997	$74,782	$88,247
Other Income	$84,896	$84,617	$116,272	$106,035
Total Income	$156,593	$168,614	$191,054	$194,282
Expenses	$180,815	$200,202	$211,966	$191,450
Income Less Expenses	$-24,222	$-31,588	$-20,912	$2,832

GRAND CANYON WOMEN'S RETREAT 2026

We Are Worthy

A sacred day of connection, sisterhood, and spiritual renewal.

BASED ON 1 JOHN 3:1-2



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2026

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

LOVE OF CHRIST LUTHERAN'S COMPASSION CENTER
1525 N Power Rd
Mesa, AZ 85205

RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS

- Music with Christina Hall
- Bible Study on the theme with *Rev. Dr. Adele Resmer*
- Keynote Address: *Beloved, you belong* with Dr. Jennifer Hockenbery, Executive Director, Women of the ELCA
- Hands-on Painting Activity *"Lavished in Love"*
- Closing Worship with Music and Communion

SPECIAL NOTES

- In-kind Offering: Christmas towel sets (2 towels, 2 handtowels) in colors other than white for LSS-SW Christmas gifting.
- Complimentary registration to all rostered women in the GC Synod.
- Complimentary scholarships available to lay women of color.

Join us

for a transformative day reminding every woman that she is chosen, loved, and *worthy*.

REGISTER TODAY!

Scan the QR code or visit grandcanyonwomen.org/events/

ALL WOMEN WELCOME!



All are welcome to join our annual event!

Friday, December 18

A Posada procession will begin in the First Evangelical Lutheran Church courtyard at 6 PM.

Following the procession, a celebration will be held in the Great Room.

Food, Fun, Fellowship!

And of course, piñatas!

December 20 after worship>>>>>



CHRISTMAS GARDEN OF POINSETTIAS ORDER FORM



You can provide poinsettias to adorn the Sanctuary on Christmas Eve.
This year's cost is **$13 per plant**.
Orders need to be submitted by **December 13.**



Donated by _____

○ In Loving Memory of _____

_____

_____

○ In Honor of _____

_____

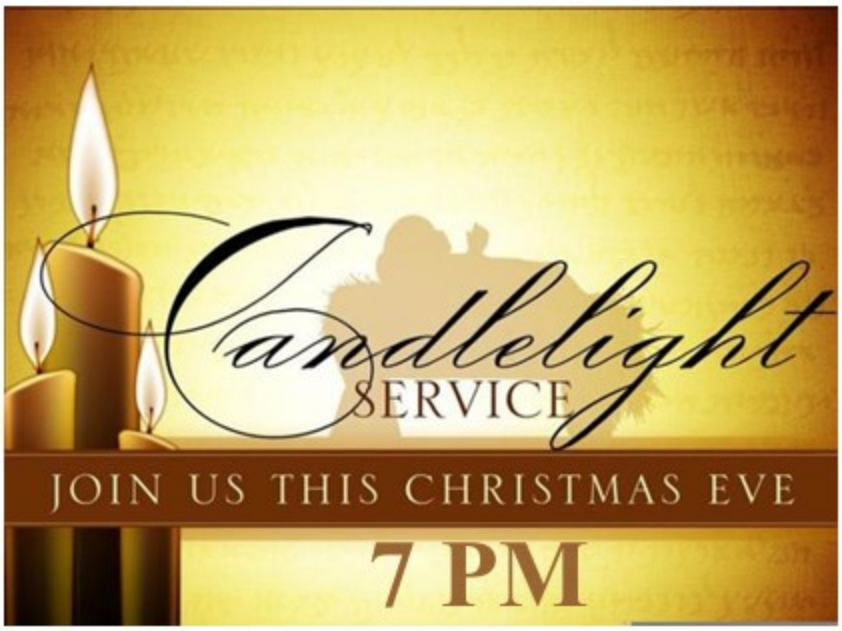
○ To the Glory of God



Sunday, December 20, 3 PM
Great Room

Join the community as we make the season's special holiday food!

PLEASE sign up on the office door or call/text Pastor Luis so supplies can be purchased.





Office Closed
Christmas Eve Day

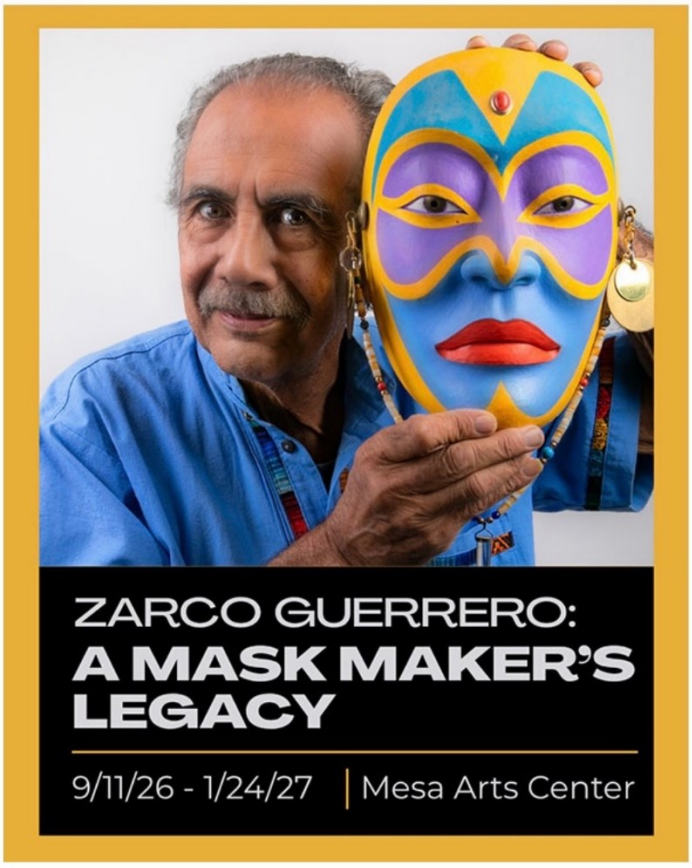
Offices closes at 11:30 AM
New Year's Eve



On Sunday, December 27
at 9:30 AM,
we will have our annual
Lessons & Carols
worship service.

Please contact the office/Pastor Luis
if you are willing to serve as a reader.

If you haven't had a chance, maybe now is the time, to see Zarco's exhibition.



I'm excited to announce the most important exhibition of my artistic career to date – Zarco Guerrero: A Mask Maker's Legacy!

This exhibit will showcase a collection that encompasses my 50 year professional career, including various mediums such as bronze, woodcarving, puppets, installations and of course MASKS!