

FELC Friendship Pads

Please fill out the Friendship Pad when asked during worship. If the church office does not currently have your contact information or it has changed, please indicate that in the appropriate column.

Nursery Care

The Downtown Site Nursery (located across from the Library in the Gathering Area) is open for family use during all services and staffed during the 9:15 a.m. service. The North Site Nursery (off the main hallway, across from the restrooms) is staffed at both services. Please ask an usher for assistance.

Hearing Assistance

If you are in need of a personal receiver, ask a Downtown Site usher, or a North Site soundboard technician.

Large-print Resources

If you are in need of a large print Bible or bulletin, ask an usher at the Downtown Site, or a greeter at the North Site.

AED Units on Site

Automated external defibrillators are outside the Downtown Site Usher's Room and next to the North Site sound booth.

Video Recording

The 8 a.m. Downtown Site worship service is video-recorded to share with our homebound members upon request.

In Need of Prayer?

For additions to the prayer chain, email or call the church office (felc@felc.com; 733-2303) or email Pastor Mary (mbauer@felc.com).

More Information

For detailed information on these and more FELC events, opportunities and ministries, pick up a newsletter in the Gathering Area, visit our website at www.felc.com, or check the bulletin boards and kiosks in the Gathering Area.

The Week of Nov. 19, 2017 At-A-Glance

Sunday, Nov. 19

8:50 a.m.
9:15/9:25 a.m.
9:15 a.m.
9:15/9:25 a.m.
9:30 a.m.

Monday

9 a.m.
5:30 p.m.
5:30 p.m.
6:45 p.m.
8:30 p.m.

Tuesday

6:30 a.m.

Wednesday

10:30 a.m.
6:15 p.m.

Thursday

Friday

6:30 a.m.

Sunday, Nov. 26

8:50 a.m.
9:30 a.m.

DS = Downtown Site NS = North Site

Scrip Sale Pick Up, Both Sites

Cherub/Angelus Choir Rehearsal, DS 220/Choir Room
Adult Learning Time, DS Lounge/NS Library
Confirmation Youth Group, NS Activity Center & Youth Room
Children's Learning Time, DS/NS
Women's Study, NS Library

Monday Morning Quilters, DS Fellowship Hall
Executive Committee, DS Lounge
Congregational Life Ministry Team, DS 114
Finance Committee, DS 110
Pick Up Basketball, NS Activity Center

Men's Ministry, NS Library

Bible Study with Pastor Mary, DS 221
Thanksgiving Eve Worship, DS Sanctuary

Thanksgiving Day

Men's Ministry, NS Library
Troop 12 Christmas Wreath Delivery, Both Sites

Cherub Choir Rehearsal, DS 220
Women's Study, NS Library

North Site Cross

If you drive past the North Site you may notice a building addition - a cross. This cross was lovingly removed from downtown Appleton church, Trinity Lutheran, by a group of dedicated FELC volunteers. It was carefully refurbished and in mid-November enthusiastically rehung and will be dedicated at the North Site, Christ the King Sunday, Nov. 26. Our prayers and thanks to Trinity Lutheran for passing on this lovely cross which hung faithfully on their building for many, many years calling the community to Christ.

Echoes, A Christian Thrift Store

Serve this vibrant ministry by donating a few hours each week or month to volunteer at Echoes. This FELC run thrift shop is looking for volunteers to sort and price, run the front desk or general organization of store departments. If you are interested, please connect with Kathy at the store by calling 882-8172.



First English Lutheran Church
www.felc.com felc@felc.com

Downtown Site

Sunday Worship: 8, 9:15, & 10:30 a.m.
Wednesday Worship: 6:15 p.m.
Office Hours: M-Th: 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m.
F: 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Love Jesus. Live your call.

Sunday at FELC

Altar Flowers

The Downtown Site altar flowers are provided by Jim and Joanne Moard in honor of their 61st wedding anniversary on Nov. 10.

The second arrangement is provided by the Bakken family to the glory of God and in honor of Erik's birthday on Nov. 20.

New Study Group for Women Begins Today at the North Site

Join us Sundays from 9:30-10 a.m. in the North Site Library as we prepare our hearts and minds for the upcoming holiday season by defeating the "dirty villains of motherhood." Our group will read and discuss *The Supermom Myth* by local Christian author Becky Kopitzke. Grab a coffee, the book and a fellow imperfect mom as we learn to break free from the joy killers of motherhood and marriage and "rest in the grace and power of our one true Superhero God."

Books are available in the Gathering Area for \$9. Please contact Deni Kuchler at deni.kuchler@gmail.com for more information or sign up at www.felc.com/forms.

Count Me In!

First English is in need of many extra volunteers for special events, worship services, etc. in the month of December. Please take a moment to sign up on the *Count Me In* insert in today's bulletin.

Announcements
Week of Nov. 19, 2017

North Site

Sunday Worship: 8:15 & 10:30 a.m.
Office Hours: M-Th: 3-6:30 p.m.

2018 Pledge Cards

Please remember to turn in your 2018 Pledge Cards to as soon as possible. They can be placed in the offering plate on Sunday or mailed to the church office. It is important to receive these in time to prepare the 2018 budget. Thank you!

Freed in Christ

We continue our study looking at the ELCA's Social Statement on Race and Culture: *Freed in Christ*. This Sunday morning we will look outward, asking ourselves how we can better understand those from different cultures, races, and ethnicities.

- Today, 9:15 a.m. with Diane Putzer
Downtown Site Lounge

FELC Youth Thank You For "Buying In" (Literally and Figuratively!)

Thank you to all who participated in the Scrip fundraiser for youth attending the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston this summer. With your help, \$17,440 in gift cards were purchased, which helped our youth profit over \$800!

Gift card pick up is happening today in the Gathering Area. The next Scrip Sunday is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 3. All orders will be due to the office by noon on Monday, Dec. 4, with pick up at the site designated on your order form on Sunday, Dec. 10, just in time for Christmas.

Salvation Army Bell Ringing Red Kettle Campaign

Signup for FELC Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army is happening TODAY. Please visit the table in the Gathering Area to sign up for this important ministry. The one hour time slots traditionally fill fast. FELC bell ringing will take place at various locations on:

- Saturday, Dec. 9 from 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
- Monday, Dec. 11 from 6-8 p.m.
- Wednesday, Dec. 13 from 6-8 p.m.

Some confirmation students will be ringing bells on Wednesday, Dec. 13, their service night. Please consult small group leaders for more information. Thank you.

Looking Ahead

Ukulele Combo Rehearsal

Join the First English Ukulele Combo! An extension of the previously offered Ukulele class, the Combo focuses on learning songs to play for Worship. The next rehearsal is Thursday, Nov. 30 at 7:30 p.m. in the Downtown Site Choir Room. For those of you who would feel more comfortable with continued learning rather than performance, or for more information, please contact Rodney McComb at rmccomb@felc.com.

Church Leadership Positions

The Nominations Committee is looking for individuals to serve in FELC leadership roles. Would you be interested in attending the Synod Assembly in May held in Green Bay? How about serving on the Congregation Council? If you or anyone you know would consider being a candidate, please connect with the Brenda in the church office (920)733-2303.

Thanksgiving Worship Schedule

Please join us for a Thanksgiving Eve worship service on Wednesday, Nov. 22, at 6:15 p.m. at the Downtown Site. Please note there is no worship at First English on Thanksgiving Day.

Advent Wreath Lighting

Advent Wreath Lighting is a worship volunteer opportunity that can be done by yourself, with family, or even with a group of friends. In this role you will read a short excerpt and light the advent wreath. If you'd like to volunteer, a Sign Up Genius link has been posted to the front page of the FELC website, you can call the church office, or sign up in the Gathering Area. Questions? Contact Hannah Sprenger at hsprenger@felc.com.



Save the Date: Honey Sale

Don't forget to bring your wallet or check book to church the first two Sundays of December (Dec. 3 and 10). The annual honey sale will be happening for you and your future toast, yogurt, or on whatever you choose to pour some of this sweet nectar of God's creation. Jars will be \$12 and all of the proceeds will go toward FELC Youth attending the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston this summer! Thank you!

FELC Advent Devotional

The FELC Advent Devotional is back! This is a daily devotional booklet written by FELC members meant to enhance your Advent season. Pick up your copy in the Gathering Area today.

Noon Hour Philosophers

The Noon Hour Philosophers meet for an hour at noon each Wednesday in the Downtown Site Fellowship Hall. If you have questions please contact Mary Poulson at mmaryjep@att.net or (920)734-8137.

There will be no Noon Hour Philosophers on Wednesday, Nov. 22. The next session will be Nov. 29: *The Art of Cutting Gem Stones and Some Related History*.

Calling all Bakers

Calling all Bakers! We are in need of Sunday Morning Coffee Hour baked goods at the Downtown Site. Please consider sharing your gift of baking and indicate by completing the signup sheet located near the Coffee Room. Each baker should plan on bringing approximately four dozen goodies. Thank you for your generosity!

Fox Valley Lutheran Homes Apartments for Rent!

Linwood Place Apartments has openings: large 2 BR with 1½ bath, large 2 BR, and 1 BR. Our waiting list is empty-this is the time to act! Call now to see an apartment or to secure a spot for the future. Call Becky (734-7225), John (419-5754), or Brian (840-3578.)

God's Work: Quilting With Our Hands

The Monday morning quilters meet weekly from 9-11:30 a.m. in the Downtown Site Fellowship Hall. Please drop by any part of the morning to help cut fabric, tie knots, iron, lay-out fabric squares or sew seams. All quilts made are donated to those in need in the local community and world.

AA Corner

If you are or someone you know could use some confidential help with stopping drinking, please call Dale R. at (920)419-2794.

Prayer Connection

Prayer connects us to each other in this community of faith and to Christ. To be included in the list of prayers, submit names to the church office or the First English staff. Names are removed after one month, but can always be extended by request. Please remember these First English members, friends and families in prayer in the coming week:

Prayers of Healing, Wholeness & Peace

- Nathan Meissner
- Angel Manos
- Todd Hollenberger
- Mary Lou Garnsworthy
- Brooklyn Ann Converse
- Jacob Schwab
- Justin Schwab
- Laurie Niles
- Lynn Boenker
- Debra Boushley
- David Heindel
- Doug Hansen
- George Krempin
- Amy Ponomarev
- Moore Peregrine
- Harold Rohlfing
- Jacob Frerking
- Tom Roy
- Melissa Heins
- Je'Ann Johnson
- Paul Henrikson
- Kathy Skaar
- Bob Gauerke
- Juanita Gauerke
- Shana Weber
- Todd Kauti
- Dianne Droster
- Debra Nuthals

Prayers of Comfort Families of:

- Larry Beyer
- Mildred Bohm
- Pamela VandenWyngaard
- Nancy Brunette
- Donald Schabo
- Lance Schmidt

Prayers for Those Called to Serve in Other Countries

- Stephanie Olson

Prayers for Those in Seminary

- David Shudy

Prayers for Those in the Military

- BM3 Kyle Kramer, USCG
- LCPL Robert Kopesky II
- PFC Samuel Sinclair



High School Youth News

Grades 9-12

Nov. 19 2017

reFUEL

DS YOUTH ROOM
WEDNESDAYS 7-8PM
For Grades 10-12

11/22: NO reFUEL

Happy Thanksgiving!

11/29: Friendsgiving
Potluck Dinner
Contact Heidi with what you would like to contribute!

High School Breakfast Club

High school boys and girls are invited to bond over food and conversation Tuesday mornings at 6:15am

Tuesday, Nov.21
at North Site Copper Rock



ELCA Youth Gathering Fundraiser today

Card Pick Up
11/19

Next fundraiser:

12/3: Honey Sale and Scrip Sale
12/10: Honey Sale and Scrip Pick-Up

Please contact Heidi (hschreiner@felc.com) if you have not received the sign up or have additional questions.

Happy Thanksgiving

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.
1 Chronicles 16:34

May your stuffing be tasty, may your turkey be plump.

May your potatoes and gravy have nary a lump.

May your yams be delicious, and your pies take the prize.

And may your Thanksgiving dinner be monster in size!



Follow **felc.youth** on Instagram and **FELC YOUTH** Facebook!



Nov.19, 2017



Information for FELC Youth and Families
Grades K-12



Find us on Social Media Outlets

Instagram: felc.youth Facebook: FELC YOUTH

Connect with FELC Youth Staff

Kirsten Owens, Faith Formation Coordinator: kowens@felc.com
Heidi Schreiner, Youth & Summer Ministry Coordinator: hschreiner@felc.com

Love Jesus. Live your call.



Elementary Sunday School, Song, And Special News



Keepin' It Simple & Close To Christ

This year our Christmas program will look a little different. On Dec. 17 we will still see our beautiful FELC children in their Sunday finest singing and celebrating the birth of Christ. Yet, this story belongs to us all as a community. Similar to some of the new elements we have included in Sunday School this year, we are

inviting and encouraging folks of all ages to be part of telling this important story, one that binds us together as a community. Kids need to know that joyfully sharing these stories isn't just up to them. There is no "graduation" out of connecting to one another through these special times in the church. Instead, all of us, at any age, should be hearing, learning, and re-telling these stories to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ (fancy duds are optional).

So, if you feel called to be a reader, singer, or leader of stars, shepherds, angels, or magis, let Kirsten know. For most it will mean you only need to be there for rehearsals on Dec. 10 & 17. There is a place for everyone this year in the telling of Jesus' birth. Even though there will (hopefully) be more folks of different ages we are keeping the story and music simple because, ultimately, it's just about keeping close to Christ and community.

Hope to be singing next to you!

No Sunday School Next Week!

We celebrate
our blessings
with family near and far!



Downtown Choirs Sing

> Cherub Choir-
Dec. 3, 9:15 a.m.
worship

> Angelus Choir-Dec. 6, 6:15 p.m.
Advent Vespers worship

Remember, it's never too late to
join choir.



Confirmation and Middle School Scoop



No Confirmation This Wednesday Take Time to Give Thanks!

*I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my
heart; I will tell of all your wonderful
deeds. - Psalm 9:1*

Check out today's Count Me In insert for
great Family Assignment ideas!



Ho! Ho! OH NO! Our Christmas Parties NEED HELP

All of our class
Christmas parties need
parent helpers.



- > 7th grade needs 3 party planners
and 1 treats person
- > 8th grade needs 4 party planners
(there are currently none), 2 treats
people, and 1 drink person.
- > 9th grade needs 5 party planners
(there are currently none), 4 treats
people, and 5 drink people.

Christmas is closing in fast,
without helpers there are no parties so
sign up soon so we can get our rein-
deer in a row! Contact Kirsten if you
need the Sign-Up Genius link.

If you attend the Downtown Site
let Kirsten know if you can help
with the Christmas program.

What's CYG Up To This Week?



Today for Confirmation Youth
Group the focus is being
THANKFUL! We'll share with
each other the certain people,
places, even foods, or anything
that has made an impact on our
lives. Want to engage in conver-
sation? Meet in the North Site
Activity Center at 9:15 a.m.!

*Have questions or want to volunteer?
Contact Kirsten Owens at kowens@felc.com or 733-2303.*



What is Count Me In? Count Me In is a periodic emphasis to lift up volunteer opportunities within FELC, the community and the world. Take a look - some will be short term obligations while others may be ongoing worship roles that are in need of more volunteers.

DECEMBER'S COUNT ME IN

Name: _____

Phone Number and Email: _____

Service I/We tend to worship at: _____

___ **Fox Valley Lutheran Homes, Dec. 17, 1:30 p.m.**
Games and Sing-Along (TV on for Packers game)
___ Will bring cookies or dessert

___ **Salvation Army Bell Ringing**
We will contact you with available times.

___ **Advent Wreath Lighting Sun./Wed. Services**
We will contact you with available times.

___ **Artificial Christmas Tree Assembly**
___ DS ___ NS
We will contact you with date and time.

___ **Christmas Decorating of Tree and Sanctuary**
___ DS ___ NS
We will contact you with date and time.

___ **50+ All Congregational Lunch, Dec. 13, 11 a.m.**
___ Make a dessert, recipe will be provided
___ Setup or clean up assistance

___ **Advent Vespers Meal, Dec. 6, 4:45 p.m.**
___ Make a dessert of your choice
___ Setup or clean up assistance

Christmas Worship Services Volunteer Roles

- ___ Worship Assistant
- ___ Greeter or Usher (Circle One)
- ___ Reader
- ___ Communion Setup/Server (Circle One)
- ___ Acolyte
- ___ Soundboard
- ___ NS Media Builder
- ___ NS Media Tech

Please indicate all services you wish to help with.

Christmas Eve Worship Services

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| Downtown Site | North Site |
| ___ 3 p.m. | ___ 4 p.m. |
| ___ 4:30 p.m. | ___ 7 p.m. |
| ___ 6 p.m. | |
| ___ 10:30 p.m. | |

Christmas Day Worship Service

- ___ Downtown Site 10 a.m.

___ **TV Room Filming/Editing** (Training Provided)

___ **North Site Media Builder** (Training Provided)

___ **Soundboard** (Training Provided)
___ Downtown Site ___ North Site

___ **Echoes, A Christian Thrift Store**

- ___ Front Register
- ___ Specific Department Organizing
- ___ Sorting/pricing

___ **Confirmation Small Group Leader**

Informational meeting on Jan. 17

Christmas Program Helpers

___ Readers (All Ages)
(Must attend rehearsals on mornings of Dec. 10 & 17)
___ DS ___ NS

___ Guides (Middle school to adult)
(Must attend rehearsals on mornings of Dec. 10 & 17)
___ DS ___ NS

___ Music
(15 mns at start of Sunday Children's Learning Time)
___ DS ___ NS

General Helpers (Morning of the Program Dec. 17)
___ DS ___ NS

Post Christmas Program Helpers

- ___ DS ___ NS
- ___ Bring Treats
- ___ Bring Drinks
- ___ Set-up & Clean-up small treat area

Perform Special Music for DS Christmas Services

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Christmas Eve | Christmas Day |
| ___ 3 p.m. | ___ 10 a.m. |
| ___ 4:30 p.m. | |
| ___ 6 p.m. | |
| ___ 10:30 p.m. | |

You will be contacted by our Music Director

FELC DS Engage Page: November 19, 2017

Matthew 25:14-29 *"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave 5 talents, to another 2, to another 1, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the 5 talents went off at once and traded with them, and made 5 more talents. In the same way, the one who had the 2 talents made 2 more talents. But the one who had received the 1 talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the 5 talents came forward, bringing 5 more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me 5 talents; see, I have made 5 more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the 2 talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me 2 talents; see, I have made 2 more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Then the one who had received the 1 talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the 10 talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ...*

Sun., Nov. 19: Family Project: Spend some time talking about talents—the ways that each member of the family is gifted. It might be a good sense of humor, mathematical aptitude, or one of the arts. Then spend some time discussing ways that you can use your talents to honor God.

Mon., Nov. 20: Whenever I read “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (v. 30), I get pretty uncomfortable. Prof. David Jacobsen writes, “This pronounced... judgment seems far from our world these days and does not comport well with the cozy glow of churchy stained glass windows and padded pews.” It isn’t ours to determine the exact relationship between judgment and grace, but may we take comfort in knowing the God of judgment is the merciful God who gave his life on the cross.

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3469

Tues., Nov. 21: The third servant in this parable KNOWS the master is to be feared, and he acts on that belief. We may be tempted to act on the fears we have of those who hold power over our jobs or security. God grant that our fears don't get in the way of wise and generous actions.

Wed., Nov 22, Ezek 34:11-16, 20-24 In reading this passage there is a clear differentiation between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. The fat sheep are those who have abused their leadership positions, who have taken advantage of the weak in their pursuit of power. Professor Charles Aaron writes, “The passage might offer a special word of healing to those who feel abused or guilt-tripped by the church. Within Ezekiel 34, God offers care to those who were hurt by the failings of shepherds, those in authority positions. For those who have felt damage from the church, this passage offers God’s initiative-taking care. God will hold accountable those who have caused the hurt.” For all who feel out of place, God encourages us back into community, where God will feed us, give us rest, and bind up our hurts.

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3480

Thurs, Nov 23, Psalm 95 Imagine enacting this psalm. In verses 1-5, the congregation is outside the temple, waiting to join the procession into their place of worship. Then the people enter the sanctuary and are called to kneel before God in verses 6-7. Finally they are ready for the sermon. In his book on the Psalms, James Limburg describes that sermon. “As long as you have a chance, as long as there is a ‘today,’ hear and believe the good news, and enter into the sort of life that allows you to let your weight down on God, to rest on God, trusting God’s promises. Such is the sort of Sabbath rest promised to God’s people, who know that whatever may happen, they are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”

Psalms, James Limburg (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000) p. 325.

Fri., Nov 24: Ephesians 1:15-23 My idea of royalty has been mainly informed by Walt Disney princes and princesses. Even if I had lived in a monarchy, I might not have a good understanding of the absolute power wielded by Caesar when this was written. Paul tells the Ephesians that Christ is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, above every name that is named...” (v.21) - even Caesar. Furthermore, says Paul, Christ’s power is FOR US. As we, like the Ephesians, come to know Christ, may we be inspired to use that power in humble love and service.

Sat., Nov 25: Matthew 25:31-46 Tomorrow is Christ the King Sunday with readings of judgment that remind us of God’s ultimate power. We are also invited to live into and help create a world where God’s kingdom is a reality. Prof. Karoline Lewis writes, “If we invite a throne mentality now, what difference would this make? We always wait for January to get on with our lives, but what would happen if we chose to get on with life now? How would Advent and Christmas be different? Because then, our presence and our preparation would actually reflect the reality of Christ’s kingdom in-breaking now. Christ’s reign will not wait until we are ready to sign up for our New Year’s resolves. When we are fully prepared and perfect. It’s here and now. What if we meet Christ today... And say, okay, here, I am ready to go. “

<http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=3437>

For an online discussion of these and other questions concerning the texts, go to our Facebook FELC Engage Page: <https://www.facebook.com/FELCEngagePage>

FELC NS Engage Page: November 19, 2017

Matthew 25:1-13 *"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, & five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you & for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*

Sun., Nov. 19: Family Project: The song *"Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning"* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWcgwUJPOF0>) paints a picture of this story that Jesus tells. The song encourages us to keep faith even through difficult times. The lyrics *"Darker midnight lies before us"* and *"Children don't be weary"* make it clear that life can include hardships. Talk as a family about some hardship you have had. How can you prepare for future hardships? What are ways your faith can be like keeping a lamp trimmed and burning.

Mon., Nov. 20: According to Greg Carey, *"The parable of the virgins ... calls Jesus' disciples to a state of constant alertness, of perpetual openness to God's dramatic future. We all know a few people, just a few, who tend to live that way. I think especially of some cancer survivors I know ... We're talking about living with a keen awareness of Jesus' return, an alertness tempered by preparation for a long haul."* Since Jesus was expected to return nearly 2000 years ago, it's hard to anticipate it happening soon. If we are to keep awake, we must live with an understanding of the import of each moment in being about God's work as we await God's return. http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2207

Tues., Nov. 21: Matthew recorded this parable during a time when the future for Christians was uncertain. Jesus' return was delayed, and the political climate brought persecution. The people who heard this parable might easily be tempted to leave the faith, and not prepare for Christ's return. We still have temptations to desert Christianity. The growing irrelevance of faith in our society can move us to deny or minimize our beliefs. Be prepared with extra oil for your lamp by cherishing and prioritizing the centrality of Jesus in your life.

Wed., Nov 22, Ezek 34:11-16, 20-24 In reading this passage there is a clear differentiation between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. The fat sheep are those who have abused their leadership positions, who have taken advantage of the weak in their pursuit of power. Professor Charles Aaron writes, *"The passage might offer a special word of healing to those who feel abused or guilt-tripped by the church. Within Ezekiel 34, God offers care to those who were hurt by the failings of shepherds, those in authority positions. For those who have felt damage from the church, this passage offers God's initiative-taking care. God will hold accountable those who have caused the hurt."* For all who feel out of place, God encourages us back into community, where God will feed us, give us rest, and bind up our hurts.

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Psalms, James Limburg (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000) p. 325.

Fri., Nov 24: Ephesians 1:15-23 My idea of royalty has been mainly informed by Walt Disney princes and princesses. Even if I had lived in a monarchy, I might not have a good understanding of the absolute power wielded by Caesar when this was written. Paul tells the Ephesians that Christ is *"far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, above every name that is named..."* (v.21) - even Caesar. Furthermore, says Paul, Christ's power is FOR US. As we, like the Ephesians, come to know Christ, may we be inspired to use that power in humble love and service.

Sat., Nov 25: Matthew 25:31-46 Tomorrow is Christ the King Sunday with readings of judgment that remind us of God's ultimate power. We are also invited to live into and help create a world where God's kingdom is a reality. Prof. Karoline Lewis writes, "If we invite a throne mentality now, what difference would this make? We always wait for January to get on with our lives, but what would happen if we chose to get on with life now? How would Advent and Christmas be different? Because then, our presence and our preparation would actually reflect the reality of Christ's kingdom in-breaking now. Christ's reign will not wait until we are ready to sign up for our New Year's resolves. When we are fully prepared and perfect. It's here and now. What if we meet Christ today... And say, okay, here, I am ready to go. "

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