

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 (off of the Gathering Area) and the North Site Nursery (across from the restrooms) are open for family use during all worship services. Please ask an usher if you need assistance. At the North Site, the child-friendly space just inside the Sanctuary doors is supervised by staff and available to children during worship services.

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

At the Downtown Site, if you are in need of a large print Bible or bulletin, please ask an usher.

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).

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 Feb. 3, 2019 At-A-Glance

Sunday, Feb. 3

8:50 a.m. Cherub/Angelus Rehearsal, DS 220/Choir Room
9:15/9:25 a.m. Children's Learning Time, DS/NS
9:15 a.m. Adult Learning Time, DS Lounge
9:30 a.m. Women's Study Group, NS Library
9:30 a.m. Middle School Music Class, NS Sanctuary

Monday

9 a.m. Quilters, DS Fellowship Hall
6:30 p.m. Board Games Guild Life Group, NS Library

Tuesday

6:30 a.m. Men's Ministry, NS Library
1 p.m. Judith Circle, DS 114
8 p.m. ATC Basketball, NS Activity Center

Wednesday

10:30 a.m. Bible Study with Pastor Mary, DS 110
Noon Noon Hour Philosophers, DS Fellowship Hall
1 p.m. Intern Enrichment Ministry Team, DS Lounge
5:30 p.m. Handbell Choir Rehearsal, DS Choir Room
6:15 p.m. Wednesday Worship, DS Sanctuary
6:30 p.m. Parish Choir Rehearsal, DS Choir Room & Sanctuary
7 p.m. Confirmation General Session, All Grades, DS
7 p.m. Kid's Life, (Grades K-6) DS 014
7 p.m. refuel (Grades 10-12), DS Youth Room

Thursday

6 a.m. Early Risers Women's Study, DS Lounge
9 a.m. Adult Bible Study, DS Lounge
1 p.m. 50+ Planning, DS 114

Friday

6:30 a.m. Men's Ministry, NS Library

Sunday, Feb. 10

8:50 a.m. Cherub/Angelus Rehearsal, DS 220/Choir Room
9:15/9:25 a.m. Children's Learning Time, DS/NS
9:15 a.m. Adult Learning Time, DS Lounge
9:30 a.m. Women's Study Group, NS Library
9:30 a.m. Ukulele Combo Rehearsal, NS Sanctuary
11:30 a.m. Soup Luncheon, DS Fellowship Hall
12:15 p.m. FELC Annual Meeting, DS Sanctuary
1:30 p.m. FELC Family Open Gym, NS Activity Center

DS = Downtown Site NS = North Site

FELC to participate in History Fair

The Appleton Historical Society is holding its 18th annual History Fair Saturday, Mar. 2, from 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at the Appleton City Center Plaza. The focus of this year's event is Appleton's historic churches and synagogues that have been active for 75 years or more. FELC has been invited to host a table displaying artifacts and memorabilia representing our 100+ years of worship. The event takes place in conjunction with Appleton's Downtown Winter Farm Market. Questions? Contact Julie Nussbaum at 731-3645 or wnussbaum@att.net.



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.

North Site

Sunday Worship: 8:15 & 10:30 a.m.

Love Jesus. Live your call.

First English is committed to being a welcoming, inclusive congregation.

Sunday at FELC

Altar Flowers

The Downtown Site altar flowers are provided by Lou Chicquette.

Small Group Ministry

It's never too late to be involved in Small Group Ministry! The first study which is based on the 6-week sermon series *Fearless Faith*, began on Jan. 20. But since the sermons can also be found online, you can put together a group anytime and begin your discussions. If you choose to host a group there are also HOST training videos online. Please visit www.felc.com/smallgroup for all the videos, and more about small groups. If you have questions or would like to be placed in a group, please contact Pastor Mary Bauer at mbauer@felc.com.



Looking Ahead

FELC Annual Meeting

Sunday, Feb. 10, 12:15 p.m.

Downtown Site Sanctuary

Soup Lunch

starting at 11:30 a.m.

Downtown Site Fellowship Hall

Free-will offering to benefit youth attending the 2019 Mission Trip

Announcements
Week of Feb. 3, 2019

2018 Annual Progress Reports

Copies of the FELC 2018 Annual Progress Report are available in the Gathering Area. If you take one, please bring your copy with you to the Annual Meeting on Feb. 10 as a limited number were printed to conserve resources.

Congregation Council Absentee Ballots are available in the Downtown Site Church Office. Copies of the nominees' bios are in the Gathering Area and in the Annual Progress Report.

Coffee Sale: Today at the North Site Next Sunday at the Downtown Site

Just as Jesus engaged the disciples, we have been called by God to fulfill the needs of our brothers and sisters living in poverty around the world. The *Coffee Project* is one way we can help. Visit the Gathering area at the North Site today, or at the Downtown Site next Sunday, Feb. 10. We are well stocked with your favorite items. Thank you for your generous support of this ministry.

Boy Scout Sunday

On Feb. 10, we celebrate Boy Scout Sunday. If you are a Boy Scout or leader, wear your uniform to church so we can recognize and honor you. FELC is the chartering organization for Troop 12, Troop 73, and Pack 3022. We also look forward to honoring Girl Scouts and their leaders on Mar. 10.

Slight Delay

Year-end statements and the FELC February newsletter will be arriving to your mailbox a little late due to the extreme weather we had last week. We are sorry for the inconvenience and appreciate your understanding!

Rescheduled: Faith, Communication, and Leonard Bernstein's MASS Wednesday, Feb. 6, 5:30-6:45 p.m. First Congregational UCC

This is an opportunity to join members of other churches and the cast of Lawrence University's production of *Mass*, an operatic theater work. All participants will also be able to attend a dress rehearsal of the opera, get reduced-price tickets for one of the Feb. 14-17 performances, and join cast members for a post-performance talk back.

New & Review 2019

Are you interested in joining the First English church family? Please plan on attending the upcoming *New & Review* three-week series offered in March. The weekly Sunday morning sessions are held at both sites as it is valuable for new members to be able to visit both locations. For complete details or to register, visit www.felc.com/newmember. Questions? Contact Karen Kneisler at kkneisler@felc.com.

Find Cancellations at www.felc.com

Check the FELC website under the Facebook section, lower right hand margin on the homepage, for any cancellations. The church calendar will also be updated. In all instances, use your best judgment when deciding on driving to church for a scheduled worship, class or activity.

Fox Valley Lutheran Homes News

The FVLH annual meeting will be Apr. 27, with registration at 8:30 a.m. (with refreshments) and the meeting to begin at 9 a.m. All congregations are eligible to bring 2 delegates. Congregations with 500 plus members can bring an additional delegate for each 500 members.

Don't Miss Out on Some Super Training Saturday, Feb. 23; 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Downtown Site Fellowship Hall

Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge or is in crisis. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders. This event is open to the public. Please register in advance for this free training at www.felc.com/forms. Lunch will be provided. Contact Kirsten Owens, FELC Faith Formation Coordinator, at kowens@felc.com or (920)733-2303 ext. 312.

Memory Tree

Parents, grandparents and sponsors - here is a wonderful way to honor your child's baptism. For a gift of \$100 to \$500 you can have your child's name and baptism date engraved on a "Leaf" of the Memory Tree at either or both sites. All gifts support the reduction of building debt at FELC.

A Memory Tree hangs in the Gathering Area at each site. You can choose the site at which to memorialize this special day, or you can sponsor a leaf at both sites.

If you would like more information, or to order a leaf, contact Brenda in the Church Office at 733-2303 or bsmongeski@felc.com.

Noon Hour Philosophers 2019

The Noon Hour Philosophers meet for an hour at noon in the Downtown Site Fellowship Hall each Wednesday.

If you have questions, contact Mary Poulson at mmaryjep@att.net or (920)734-8137.

• Feb. 6: All Public School Advocacy is Local

Jim Bowman, Coordinator

Fox Cities Advocates For Public Education

World Interfaith

Harmony Celebration

Wednesday, Feb. 6, 6:30-8 p.m.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

140 S Green Bay Rd, Neenah

Join ESTHER together with faith and fellowship communities from the Fox Valley to explore our faiths' views on friendship. See how we're alike. Explore how we're different. Connect with new friends. Share what you want others to understand about your faith! No charge. Refreshments served.

Little Dresses for Africa

As long as there are little girls there will be a need for little dresses. We continue to make them for little girls in orphanages in Africa as we have for a few years. They are sent to Nancy's Notions in Beaver Dam to send directly to orphanages.

If you are willing to get involved in this project, feel free to pick up patterns for either a pillow case dress or a dress from new material at the display in the Downtown Site Gathering Area. Trims have been donated for this cause so help yourself to them as well. If you are using pillow cases be sure they are new or gently used to prolong the life of the outfit. Please bring you finished dress to the Downtown Site display. We will be sure that they are sent on to Nancy' Notions.

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

- Mary Lou Garnsworthy
- Nathan Meissner
- Angel Manos
- Jacob Schwab
- Justin Schwab
- Laurie Niles
- Debra Boushley
- David Heindel
- Doug Hansen
- Amy Ponomarev
- Moore Peregrine
- Paul Henrikson
- Juanita Gauerke
- Robb Schaefer
- Carol Peterson
- Bev Hoff
- Cindy Schneider
- Alex VanMaren
- Debra Nuthals
- Mitzi Hansen
- Syllas Garcia
- Caryl Bates
- Rolf Jeppson
- Jim Moard
- Arlene Gade

Prayers of Comfort

Family of:

- Lloyd Cohen
- Kim Norland
- Evelyn Weber

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Baptism of:

- Finley John Johannsen

Prayers for Those Called to Serve in Other Countries

- Michael Bauer
- Sarah Bauer
- Stephanie Olson

Prayers for Those in the Military

- Lt. Josh Anderson
- Christian Cramer
- BM3 Kyle Kramer, USCG
- LCPL Robert Kopesky II
- SPC Samuel Sinclair

This Week's Community Care Focus

• Junior Achievement

(920)882-0773; pwarmenhoven@javis.org
Wisconsin.ja.org/Winnebago-region-district

Feb. 3, 2019



Information for FELC Youth and Families
Grades K-12

Open Ears & Hearts Needed

We need First English individuals who have open ears and hearts to be faith interviewers for this year's confirmands. Every year our confirming 9th grade students are required to spend 15-20 minutes in a faith interview with a team of two members of the congregation as they express their unique thoughts on faith.



Faith interviewers often note how much they enjoy their brief conversations and appreciate our super FELC kids! Faith interviews will take place on Wednesday, April 3, either before worship (5-6:15 p.m.) or after (7-8 p.m.) at the North Site. Feel free to sign up for one or both sessions at www.felc.com/forms. Contact Kirsten Owens,

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



Can You Think Of A Better Story To Tell?

This year we will be merging two important events at the end of Lent. Our congregation continues to enjoy the gathering of our community during the Palm Sunday brunch. Yet, Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, one of the most, if not *the* most significant story of the Christian church as Jesus begins His walk to the cross. We need to share this story together and what better time to do it then when we are gathered for brunch on Palm Sunday?

We are looking for a group of six to ten individuals of all ages to help prepare a brief Holy Week story presentation for Palm Sunday morning during brunch.

Go to www.felc.com/forms to sign-up. Most of the preparation can occur during or after Learning Time on Sundays. Help us bring the Holy Week story to life as we enjoy one another in community.



Holy Week

Kid's Life Is Back This Week!

Calling all grades K-6 kids to c'mon back! We'll see you from on Wednesday from 7-8 p.m. in Downtown Site Room 014.



Communion Class

Registration Continues

On March 11, 6-8 p.m. in the North Site Gathering Area for students grades 2 and higher that would like to learn about and receive communion during worship services. Go to www.felc.com/forms to register

Choir Corner

Angelus Choir sings
Feb. 10
at the 8 a.m. service
Cherub Choir sings TODAY at
the 9:15 a.m. worship



Next FELC Games & Open Gym Day is Feb. 10 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. at North Site. Don't miss it!



Confirmation and Middle School Scoop



No Unity Worship And We're Back At It Without Missing a Beat

Well, the cold snap cracked the Unity Worship out of our schedule. The event has been rescheduled for April 24, a full month after the last spring class for grades 7 & 8 and the same night of 9th grade rehearsal and photos. Our tickets are available for any families or individuals that would like to attend on April 24. Contact Kirsten if you'd like some.

This week we're back to our regular schedule with large group:

- > **7th grade** families should have read chapter 8 prior to Wednesday
- > **8th grade** families should have read chapter 8 prior to Wednesday
- > **9th grade** students will have a presentation by the Fox Wolf Watershed Alliance as we start to think about being good stewards of God's creation

SPRING CONFIRMAND DEADLINES BEGIN FEB. 6

9th grade students, don't forget that your Confirmation gown & photos orders, as well as, your scripture verses

are due this Wednesday. Contact Kirsten if you need additional forms.



That Canoe Is Coming Up In Your Rearview Mirror

If you have a student beginning 7th grade Confirmation in September don't forget to submit your Request for Confirmation Camp Registration so we can get you on the list now to avoid any increase in camp fees. The deadline to request is March 1. Confirmation camp is one of the best weeks in the program. Don't let the canoe pass you by!



Been collecting for Compassion Pantry? Keep grabbing donations!

Have questions or want to volunteer?

Contact Kirsten Owens at kowens@felc.com or 733-2303.



High School Youth News

Grades 9-12

Feb. 3, 2019



For Grades 10-12
Wednesday nights
DS Youth Room
7-8 p.m.

2/6 How the Truth, Not
Perfection, Sets You Free.
Short videos and discus-
sion.

2/13 Valentine's Day Eve
Bible, love, healthy
relationships
Greek words for love
5 Love Languages
Joe Davis Spoken Word

IMPACT! Volunteers

Heidi is searching for 2-3
high school volunteers to
babysit kids whose
parents are attending the
Make an IMPACT! Event
Friday, Mar. 1,
6:30-9:30 p.m.

Please contact Heidi if
you're able to help
hschreiner@felc.com.



High School Mission Trip Blue Ridge Mountains, NC

Next Fundraiser:

Feb. 10 Annual Meeting Soup
Luncheon-DS

Feb. 10 Scrip Sale-Both Sites

Feb. 17-Scrip Card
Distribution-Both Sites

Signups can be found at
www.felc.com/highschool

***Due to last week's weather
and canceled activities, some
of you may not have had the
chance to drop off the
payment that was due Jan. 30.
Please get it to
DS Office asap***

Social Media Corner

Follow us at FELC YOUTH
on Facebook
and felc.youth
on Instagram for information,
inspiration, and humor!

DS Engage Page: Feb 3, 2019—Epiphany 4/ Loneliness

Luke 4:21-30 *Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.*

Sun. Feb. 3: Family Project: When Jesus started teaching and healing, it was hard for those in his hometown to accept him. Perhaps they were asking themselves, *"Where did he get this knowledge and ability? He's no one special. We know his family. He played with our kids."* So Jesus was not able to teach or to heal many people in his hometown. Talk together about how to hear God's voice, even when listening to people who we know well.

Mon. Feb. 4: Since our one desire in life should be to will the good, Kierkegaard asks the question, *"What then must I do?"* His first answer is to *"Live as an Individual."* He recognizes that the crowd always seems the strongest, but, *"In eternity you will look in vain for the crowd...Eternity scatters the crowd by giving each an infinite weight, by making him heavy—as an individual."* Eternity does not ask what our crowd did, but what we did. Looking for safety in a crowd makes us more susceptible to the fear of loneliness. Looking to Jesus -listening to act for the good –helps us to be aware of and responsive to those around us, sharing love and humanity

Tues., Feb. 5: If we are to act as individuals, should we avoid relationships? Kierkegaard says, *"You should not withdraw & sit brooding over your eternal accounting. To do this is to deserve something further to account for. You will more & more readily find time to perform your duty & your task, while concern over your eternal responsibility will hinder you from being "busy" & busily having a hand in everything possible –an activity that can best be called: time-wasting."* Living as an individual helps us have more meaningful relationships, since we are not dependent on others for our sense of well-being.

Wed., Feb. 6, Isaiah 6:1-8 Isaiah confesses, *"I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips."* (v.5). In God's presence, Isaiah was brought face to face with his own unworthiness. Sometimes we allow our own shortcomings to paralyze us. If we hear an amazing piano player, we don't want to play in front of them. If we watch an incredible athlete, we would not presume to be on the same team as they are on. But it's good to remember that directly after experiencing his own flaws, Isaiah hears God's call. It's as though the realization of his sinfulness was a prerequisite to hearing and answering the call of God. Like Isaiah, in our own flawed state, may we hear God's call & answer, *"Here I am; send me!"* (v.8)

Thurs. Feb. 7, Psalm 138 The psalmist writes, *"I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise."* (v.1) Who are these other gods? These words may have referred to foreign gods, or the psalmist may have been stating their steadfast commitment to praise God anywhere –even in heaven itself. However, in my life, it is important for me to declare God's praise in front of my false gods. Am I addicted to comfort? I praise God for the disruptions in my life. Am I overly concerned about the impression others have of me? I praise God right in front of those I am most eager to impress. Have I made my family my God? I relieve them of the pressure of having to sustain me by reminding them that I am held by God. Give thanks today before your gods.

Fri., Feb. 8, I Cor.15:1-11 C.S. Lewis proposes that most of us don't want to be forgiven, we want to be excused. He writes, *"Forgiveness says "Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology; I will never hold it against you...But excusing says "I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it; you weren't really to blame." If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive."* In this passage, Paul is not offering excuses. He is not trying to justify himself by saying, *"Because I believed this was heresy..."* or *"I was really only trying to protect the Jewish faith."* Rather he leans fully into God's grace, saying, *"By the grace of God, I am what I am."* May we rest in the grace of both asking for and extending forgiveness –not for what we can excuse in ourselves or others, but for the inexcusable –for sin.

Sat. Feb. 9, Luke 5:1-11 *"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."* Had I been Peter, thinking of catching people is what would have made me afraid. Having failed the night before in my fishing, and having realized my sins in Jesus presence, the thought of embarking on a new vocation would have been overwhelming. But Jesus makes it clear that he isn't looking for success in his followers, but rather obedience. Peter welcomed Jesus in his boat; he put out into deep water at Jesus request; he let down the nets; he followed Jesus. May we be willing to follow Jesus, going fearlessly through failure & success in pursuit of God.

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

NS Engage Page: Feb 3, 2019—Epiphany 3/ The Good

Luke 4:14-21 *Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Sun. Feb. 3: Family Project: Epiphany is a season of new beginnings. Today we read about the beginning of Jesus ministry. God is at work in Jesus—something is commencing here with these words that will change the world for the good. We can rejoice that God is at work in us too! Get a handful of potting soil from a gardener and plant a seed. As you all watch it grow, remember that God is at work in you also, helping you to grow in faith and to work for the good.

Mon. Feb. 4: Kierkegaard's premise is *"If it is to be possible, That a "Person" Can Will Only One Thing, Then They Must Will the Good"* (I use "Person" and "they" to replace "Man" and "he" in original throughout.) He goes on *"If one should consider this matter properly, must they not first consider, one by one, each goal in life that a person could conceivably set up...., mentioning separately all of the many things that a person might will... If someone should begin in this fashion, then they would never come to an end...Oh, Thou the unfathomable trustworthiness of the Good! Wherever a person may be in the world., whichever road they travel, when they will one thing, they are on a road that leads to Thee!"* Instead of worrying if we have chosen the right goal in life (profession, marital status, family size), we choose to will the good, and those goals become incidental to the main point of single-mindedly pursuing God.

Tues. Feb. 5: Kierkegaard discusses many barriers to single-mindedly willing the Good. One barrier is willing the Good for honor or acclaim. He writes, *"Like worldly contempt, worldly honor is a whirlpool, a play of confused forces, an illusory moment in the flux of opinions. It is a sense-deception, as when a swarm of insects at a distance seem to the eye like one body; a sense-deception, as when the noise of the many at a distance seems to the ear like a single voice."* Pursuing the good for honor is like trying to hold onto a projected image. We are so susceptible to having our actions and motives questioned by others. Instead, pursue the good without thought of punishment or reward.

Wed., Feb. 6, Jeremiah 1:4-10 In this passage, the LORD speaks to Jeremiah, saying, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you;"* (v. 5) Part of dealing with our fear of loneliness is truly believing that God formed us in the womb, and consecrated us to act on God's behalf even before we were born. When loneliness eats away at our self-image, we are tempted to believe that God made some mistake when forming us, and can wonder if we have any value. That's when we must remember that we were made for a purpose—a purpose that cannot be accomplished by the crowd, but only by each of us as individuals. Our purpose might not be something that we or others see as important, but it is part of God's kingdom come to earth.

Thurs. Feb. 7, Psalm 71:1-6 We might be tempted to believe that when we age it becomes easier to trust in God. Unfortunately, as our bodies betray us with new signs of weakness or illness, we have more and more reasons both to lean on God, and to doubt God's will. The psalmist declares, *"Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb."* (v. 6) This is written by someone who has held onto faith through many years. In the midst of the struggles and indignities of old age, they say, *"In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me."* Remember that your value is not determined by how much you can produce, but by your identity as God's child.

Fri., Feb. 8, I Cor.13:1-13 This beautiful passage is one of the most well-known in scripture. It is a standard at weddings and not uncommon at funerals. We find a compelling picture of what love looks like. Insert your own name into verses 4-7 to challenge yourself to be a more loving person. Accordingly, I would read, *"Mary is patient,...kind, ...not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. Mary does not insist on her own way (ouch); and is not irritable or resentful (double ouch)."* The image of a beautiful love—a good love—becomes an indictment of my own inability to love in that way. As we pursue acting for the good in every situation, may we never forget to rely on God to help us in our weaknesses.

Sat. Feb. 9, Luke 4:21-30 I bristle at anyone who questions the competence of a group I belong to. Small town people? No, we are not hicks. Women? Yes, we can lead. People over 50? We can do technology just fine. Why do I react this way? Only in part so those groups will receive respect. Unfortunately, I can fall prey to crowd-based identity. I have yet to get to the point of throwing someone off a cliff if they question my group, but I do become angry and resentful. In our pursuit of the good, may we grow thick skins to the opinions of others, working to challenge prejudice when we can, while not letting anger control us when we can't.

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