

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 sound-board 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 Nov. 24, 2019 At-A-Glance

Sunday, Nov. 24

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

Monday

9 a.m. Quilting, DS Fellowship Hall
8 p.m. Pick Up Basketball League, NS Activity Center

Tuesday

6:30 a.m. Men's Ministry, NS Library
6:30 p.m. Congregation Council, NS Library
8 p.m. ATC Basketball, NS Activity Center

Wednesday

10:30 a.m. Bible Study with Pastor Mary, DS 110-111
6:15 p.m. Thanksgiving Eve Worship, DS Sanctuary

Thursday

Thanksgiving Day; Office Closed


Friday

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

Sunday, Dec. 1


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

DS = Downtown Site NS = North Site



Christmas Greenery and Poinsettias

Help decorate the church by providing greenery and/or poinsettias in memory or in honor of a loved one. Return this order form with your payment of \$12 for each plant or greenery item ordered to the offering plate or the Church Office. Payments may be made by check or online at www.felc.com and each will be acknowledged in the Christmas bulletin. The deadline to order is Monday, Dec. 16, 2019.



YOUR NAME _____

IN HONOR OF _____

or

IN MEMORY OF _____

\$12 x _____ Poinsettias \$12 x _____ Greenery Items

Amount due: \$ _____

Please feel free to take your poinsettias home following the Christmas Day service.



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. (Closed this Thursday)
F: 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (Closed this Friday)

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 Vern and Sue Kraft in honor of their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 29.

The additional arrangement at the Downtown Site is provided by Gardner and Sharon Orsted in honor of the baptism of their grandson, Sebastian Rain Bowden.

Advent Devotionals

The First English Advent Devotional Booklet is back by popular demand and available in the Gathering Area and at www.felc.com. (Note: During Advent, this devotional will replace the Engage Pages.)

Ripples of Faith

If you haven't done so, please prayerfully consider your gifts to First English for the upcoming year and complete your 2020 *Statement of Intent* card. This can also be done at www.felc.com/stewardship. Thanks to the 300 households who have completed their *Statement of Intent* for the 2020 Stewardship Appeal.

Looking Ahead

Thanksgiving Eve Worship

Wednesday, Nov. 27

6:15 p.m.

FELC Downtown Site

Announcements
Week of Nov. 24, 2019

A Look at Advent

Through the Old Testament

A Study by Matt Woodley, with Kyle L. White
Downtown Site Sunday Adult Learning Time
9:15 a.m. in the Downtown Site Lounge

Drawing on the prophetic voices of the Old Testament, this study is meant to prepare our hearts for Christmas. Weekly topics include, *The Power of Hope* on Dec. 1, *The Refining Love of God* on Dec. 8, *God's Protection and Delight* on Dec. 15 and *The Peace Jesus Brings* on Dec. 22. Each week is a stand-alone study, and no preparation is necessary. This makes it easy to attend whenever you are able and be blessed by conversation and learning.

Krumkake Bake

The Early Risers women's study group will have its annual Krumkake Bake on Thursday, Dec. 5 at 6 a.m. in the Downtown Site Kitchen. Join them as they create and deliver krumkake to some FELC homebound members and others. If you are interested in participating, contact Diane Putzer at dkputzer@yahoo.com.

Fair Trade Sunday Sale

Through the Fair Trade Coffee Project, enjoy great coffee and give meaningful gifts while helping small farmers as they build a better future for themselves and their families. On Sunday, Dec. 8 in the Gathering Area, a variety of products (coffee, tea, hot cocoa, olive oil and candy bars) will be available for purchase. Thank you for your continued support!

Christmas Worship Times

This year, the Christmas worship schedule is as follows:

- **Christmas Eve:**
 - **Downtown Site** - 1, 3, 5 and 10:30 p.m.
 - **North Site** - 4 and 7 p.m.
- **Christmas Day:**
 - **Downtown Site** - 10 a.m.

Communion is served at all services. Visit www.felc.com/Christmasworship for details on the different services.

Arts for All Choir Concert

The Arts for All Choir (formerly VSA Choir) Christmas concert will be held in the Downtown Site Sanctuary on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 6:30 p.m. This is a great group of singers with and without disabilities. Several First English members participate in this choir and FELC is generous in providing the choir space to rehearse and perform. Please join us for awesome Christmas music.

Lunch & Learn Seminar

Wichmann-Fargo Funeral Homes & Crematories will be conducting a complimentary Lunch & Learn Seminar on Wednesday, Dec. 4, at 11 a.m. at *Wichmann Tri-County Chapel, 1592 Oneida Street, Menasha*. This program will explain the emotional and financial benefits of advance funeral planning followed by informal questions, answers and a complimentary light meal. Seat reservations should be made by calling (920)297.2742.

Advent Vespers

Mark your calendar for Advent Vespers on Dec. 11. Enjoy a supper of chicken from Mary's Restaurant starting at 4:45 p.m. (No registration necessary!) Crafts for the kids will begin at 5 p.m., and we'll move to the Sanctuary for the Christmas story, *The Crippled Lamb* by Max Lucado, at 6:15 p.m. This FELC Christmas tradition is family friendly and a fun night for all.

Help Us Find Good Applicants

If you or someone you know is interested in any of the positions below, please visit www.felc.com/employment for complete job descriptions and to apply, or contact Church Administrator Brenda Smongeski at bsmongeski@felc.com or Pastor Jeff at jtengesdal@felc.com, with any questions.

- **AV Specialist:** This part-time position entails five hours per week, primarily on Sunday mornings, to oversee and coordinate the audio and video aspect of worship for both sites and special events. One emphasis of the position is empowering volunteers to develop their AV skills in worship.
- **Facility Tech:** This very important part-time position of 20 hours/week focuses on daily maintenance and building issues. Duties may include carpentry, painting, plumbing and landscaping with flexible days.
- **Neighbor Network Coordinator:** FELC is currently accepting applications for the role of Neighbor Network Coordinator, a new position to lead an exciting new ministry initiative of FELC. A key function of this role will be matching people's joyful need to serve with others' unmet needs. The person who fills this role is a servant leader, has a passion for deepening community, and will become integral within the life and ministry of our congregation. A half-time position, the role has potential for future expansion and will report to the senior pastor.

Noon Hour Philosophers (NHP) 2019

The Noon Hour Philosophers meet for an hour at noon in the Downtown Site Fellowship Hall each Wednesday. The group will not meet this week (Happy Thanksgiving!) But resumes the following week. If you have questions please contact Mary Poulson at mmaryjep@att.net or (920)734-8137.

• Dec. 4: Vaping and Nicotine Addiction

Bruce Hetzler, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology Emeritus
Lawrence University

Summer Intern Applications are Open

Consider applying to be an FELC Summer Intern. This is a paid internship beginning at the end of May and ending in mid-August. This unique opportunity will help you grow as a Christian leader, grow in community and relationship with God, with the church and the community, make new friends, and strengthen old ones. Lastly, it will challenge you to discover the ways God is calling you to serve in this world. Applications can be found online at www.felc.com/summer and are due in the Downtown Site Office or emailed to Heidi Schreiner, Youth and Summer Ministry Coordinator, at hschreiner@felc.com by Dec. 31. Applicants must be at least one year out of high school. Any further questions, contact Heidi or reference the website: www.felc.com/summer.

Advent Invitation from Linwood Place, A Ministry of Fox Valley Lutheran Homes

During Advent, we prepare for the coming of Jesus into the world and remember the real meaning of Christmas. You are invited to Advent worship services at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday Dec 4, 11 and 18 followed by a luncheon in Linwood Commons, 425 N. Linwood Ave., Appleton. Join us in worship and fellowship as we prepare for Christ's coming.

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
- Debra Boushley
- David Heindel
- Amy Ponomarev
- Moore Peregrine
- Robb Schaefer
- Carol Peterson
- Bev Hoff
- Alex VanMaren
- Debra Nuthals
- Mitzi Hansen
- Sylas Garcia
- Rev. Kathryn Kuhn
- Shirley Larson
- Debbie Nussbaum
- Carl Coleman
- Luke Wilson
- Jake Wilson

Prayers of Comfort

- Families of:
- Don Kayser
 - Fred Russler
 - Jerry Thiel

Prayers of Thanksgiving

- Baptism of:
- Sebastian Rain Bowden

Prayers for Those Called to Serve in Other Countries

- Sarah Bauer-Myanmar
- Jack Kent-Slovakia
- Spencer Wentland-Japan

Prayers for Those in the Military

- Erika Brehmer
- Christian Cramer
- Cpl. Alex Grebe
- BM3 Kyle Kramer, USCG
- LCPL Robert Kopesky II
- Sgt. Samuel Sinclair

Prayers For Community Care

- **Wisconsibs**
info@wisconSibs.org; (920)968-1742



High School Youth News

Grades 9-12

Nov. 24, 2019



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

11/27: No refuel...



12/4: Off-site Salvation Army Bell Ringing at Pick'N'Save 7-8 p.m. 2400 W. Wisconsin Ave, Appleton Exit Vestibule

12/11: Advent Vespers
4:45-6 p.m. Helping with kids Advent crafts and eating Dinner
6:15-7:15 p.m. Advent Vespers Service
7:15-8 p.m. refuel

Social Media

Follow us at FELC YOUTH on Facebook and felc.youth on Instagram!



Mission Trip 2020 NASHVILLE, TN June 14-19

Fundraiser and payment calendar found at www.felc.com/highschool

Next Fundraiser:
Dec. 8 Scrip Sale and Honey Sale

Second Payment was Due:
Wednesday, Nov. 20 \$150
Questions, contact Heidi (hschreiner@felc.com)

November 24, 2019



Information for FELC Youth and Families
Grades K-12

Giving Thanks For Messy Work



Every Wednesday and Sunday I look down the halls and into classrooms buzzing with students, small group leaders and teachers grabbing binders and checking for their students' faces, and large group leaders and pastors digging in to stories we share as a community of believers. I watch as parents help their children pick up sermon notes and projects, ask questions about Bible passages, or offer to help sub knowing how many commitments they juggle every day and I am humbled. When folks struggle to understand the concept of the Holy Spirit this is what I suggest as an example. None of this work is simple. We come together, be it by traditional calling, faithful conviction, hopeful curiosity, the hunger for community, or any mix of things, because in a world that struggles to find the relevance of God, we know that nothing is relevant without Him. It's messy work to keep putting in time and energy on nurturing faith, both on our own and as a team in Christ. But I am so thankful your hearts stay open to the Spirit to do it. This is my prayer of Thanksgiving.

Blessings, Kirsten

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 News



The Christmas Program's Coming And YOU Are In It!

We are calling YOU and all others in the congregation to be part of this year's Christmas program! What does this mean?

It means on Dec. 15 at the Downtown 9:15 a.m. worship and the 10:30 a.m. worship at the North Site those who attend will help us read the story of Jesus' birth,



sing Christmas songs, and listen to a few songs students have learned together (in fancy duds or not). No parts to memorize, no costumes required, although you can make a simple Mary, Joseph, Angel, Shepherd, or animal costume or use one of the basic headpieces offered on your way into church if you like. Preparing as a family, all generations, for this day can be a memorable, cherished activity. This year we make the story, community, and learning about Advent central to our time as a congregation as we enter this beautiful season of anticipation, reflection, and joy! REJOICE!

Make Thanksgiving Worship A New Family Tradition!

If you're in town for the holiday consider attending the Thanksgiving Eve worship service at the Downtown Site on Nov. 27 from 6:15-7:15 p.m. It's a great opportunity to slow down for an hour and become centered on the loving, sustaining blessings God showers upon us every minute of every day. What a great family tradition!



Winter Camp's Not Far Away

Now that our first snow of the season has fallen, it's a good time to get excited about Winter Camp at Crossways Pine Lake Camp for grades 3-6! Camp is Jan. 24-26 and registration is due by Dec. 15. Go to www.felc.com/forms to request registration information.



Confirmation and Middle School Scoop



Pass On Class But An Invitation To Worship

This week we don't have Confirmation class due to the Thanksgiving holiday but we will still have an opportunity to get together as a faith family to share an hour of Thanksgiving worship.

If you're able, join us for the Thanksgiving Eve worship service from 6:15-7:15 p.m. at the Downtown Site.

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



Don't Forget! Adopt-A-Family Sign-Up For the 7th Grade Christmas Party

This week all 7th grade families should have received an email with information about the 7th grade Christmas party adopt-a-family project. Please remember to click the Sign-Up

Genius link to let your party team know if you will be donating to the project.

Black Friday deals are super shopping opportunities for this event!

**DEC. 4 IS
CONFIRMATION SERVICE NIGHT!**
**Do you know where to go? If not, contact
your student's small group leader for
information a.s.a.p.!**



Keep Those Cans Rolling In

A big thanks to those that have contributed items to the Confirmation St. Joe's food drive! We are hoping to fill the better part of a truck with donations and will be collecting until Dec. 11, the night of Advent Vespers. Drop off donations from now until Dec. 11 in the marked bins in the Gathering Area.

And once again...THANK YOU!

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

Sharing the Love of Jesus

Ours is a faith community that finds meaning and joy in reaching out to others. We are grateful for the ways you do that each and every day. Here are some opportunities to make Jesus' love real in this holiday season.

~Pastors Jeff & Mary

You CAN Help Our Confirmation Students and St. Joe's



Confirmation small groups are collecting food for St. Joe's until Dec. 11, the night of Advent Vespers. On Dec. 11, provided our giving bins are full, we will be asking all in our congregation to help load donated items on to the St. Joe's truck in our parking lot. As we come together to celebrate the gift of Jesus, it's the perfect time to share gifts with others. Drop off donations from now until Dec. 11 in the marked bins in the Gathering Area. What a beautiful way to close a night together as a faith family.

Fill the Shoe Box!

Fill a wrapped shoe box with NEW gifts for someone in need. This year's recipient is Harbor House in Appleton. Harbor House is a 55 bed shelter facility and houses women and children (men seeking safety are provided alternative shelter locations based on need and level of danger). It's mission is to empower communities to be free from domestic abuse through safety, knowledge, and engagement.



A list of suggested gifts is on the Fill the Shoe Box table in the Gathering Area. *Please wrap top and bottom of gift separately and label the top with the appropriate age/gender.* Leave donated boxes on the table in the Gathering Area. Questions? Contact Gloria at (920)734-1591. Thanks!

Echoes Needs Your Help

Echoes, A Christian Thrift Store, (a ministry of First English) is looking for help this Christmas season. Assistance with pricing, sorting, stocking and register check-out are the primary areas where help is needed. If you have one hour or more, your assistance is appreciated. Training will be provided. Call Kathy, Echoes Store Manager, at (920)882-8172.



1320 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Store Hours: Tuesday-Friday:
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sunday & Monday: Closed

See reverse side for more opportunities.

Salvation Army Bell Ringing Red Kettle Campaign

Sign up for a one-hour time slot to ring bells for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign, which runs from Nov. 15 - Dec. 24. This year, we invite members of the congregation to visit the user friendly Red Kettle Campaign website at www.registertoring.com to sign up for a time and location that works best for you. To reserve a shift, log in to your bell ringer account. If you don't have an account, create one by clicking *Create Individual Account*. The website will then walk you through the process of selecting a location, a date and a time for which you would like to volunteer. If you have any questions, contact the Bell Ringing Coordinator at foxcitiesbellringing@yahoo.com or call (920)955-1225. Let's bless the campaign with a huge volunteer response from FELC.

Operation Christmas 2019

Once again First English can help bring a Christmas wrapped in Christ's love to Lutheran affiliated and other local non-profits through "Operation Christmas." Our focus again this year is five organizations that serve others: **Lutheran Social Services, LEAVEN, Crossways Camping Ministries, COTS, and Riverview Gardens.**



Beginning Dec. 1, select "ornaments" from the Operation Christmas Tree found in the Gathering Area. Each ornament identifies gift items to help fulfill wishes and needs for these organizations and the people they serve. Gifts should be placed under the trees by Dec.16. The needs among our Lutheran affiliates and in our community are varied and great. Please help First English bring the compassion of Christ to them.

Alternative Gift Fair

Dec. 1 (Downtown Site) Display; Dec. 8 (North Site) Display

On the first and second Sundays of December, FELC holds its 16th annual Alternative Gift Fair. In addition to supporting projects FELC is directly involved with, we work with ELCA Good Gifts and Alternative Gifts International (AGI) to offer "Gifts Inspiring Change" to help people in crisis around the world. At this year's fair, alternative gifts will support over thirty domestic and international relief and environmental programs. 2019 gifts include: Support of 2020 Youth mission trip, chickens, bees, farming in Haiti, books for donkey mobile libraries in Ethiopia, and much more. Visit www.felc.com/forms for a 2019 Alternative Gifts shopping list. More project information can be found at www.alternativegifts.org and www.ELCA.org/goodgifts.

For questions or to assist with the Fair, please contact Diane Putzer at (920)284-9228 (text or call) or dkputzer@yahoo.com.

See reverse side for more opportunities.

FELC DS Engage Page: Nov. 24, Christ the King Sunday

2 Kings 22:1-10, 23:1-3 Josiah ... reigned 31 years in Jerusalem. ...He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, & walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. In the 18th year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the secretary, to the house of the LORD, saying, "Go up to the high priest Hilkiah, & have him count the entire sum of the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people; let it be given into the hand of the workers who have the oversight of the house of the LORD; let them give it to the workers who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house, that is, to the carpenters, to the builders, to the masons; & let them use it to buy timber & quarried stone to repair the house. But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly." The high priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." When Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, he read it. Then Shaphan the secretary came to the king, & reported to the king, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, & have delivered it into the hand of the workers who have oversight of the house of the LORD." ... "The priest Hilkiah has given me a book." Shaphan then read it aloud to the king... Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah & Jerusalem should be gathered to him. The king went up to the house of the LORD, & with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, & all the people, both small & great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. The king stood by the pillar & made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, & his statutes, with all his heart & all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant.

Sun, Nov 24: Family Project: When the high priest Hilkiah was in the house of the Lord, he happened to find the book of the law. God put the book in his path to remind him & eventually to remind the king and all of Israel that they needed to obey God. Have everyone in the family find and describe one treasure that has reminded them of God's power & grace.

Mon, Nov 25: Sometimes failure motivates us to try harder (like Josiah), while sometimes it tempts us to give up. Which path we take is less dependent on our perceived chances for success than on our basic understanding of the role that struggle plays in our lives. May we embrace the opportunities for learning that failures and struggles and trying can bring.

Tues, Nov 26: I find verse 7 shocking. "But no accounting shall be asked from them for the money that is delivered into their hand, for they deal honestly." This is so unwise! Good money habits should encourage honesty. However this passage reminds us that craftsmen are also called into ministry, and that, not only their product, but also their faith must be respected.

Wed., Nov 27, Jeremiah 33:14-18 As Christians we are quick to point out the ways that Jesus fulfills the promises of the prophets. When we read Jeremiah 33:15 ("In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."), we see so clearly our Lord who has shone a light on the ways in which humanity grabs for power and comfort over justice and righteousness. But then we go on to the next verse ("In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.") & we have to pause. When was it that Jerusalem lived in safety? Here we see clearly the "not yet" and "already" coming of the kingdom of Christ. We are caught in the in-between times, when we catch glimpses of that future reality every time we experience the grace and love of Christ. This is what faith is. In the sometimes glorious and sometimes terrible present, we hold on to and press into the future realization of the kingdom of God.

Thurs, Nov 21, Psalm 89:8-9, 11-16 Why do you praise the Lord? What attributes of God cause your heart to lift in song? I think of the grace God shows, the steadfast love that sustains through difficult times, the genius of creation, & the wisdom & insights that help to live a life of meaning & joy. However, I don't generally think to praise God for God's righteousness. I take that for granted, sometimes associating it negatively with the blind self-righteousness that humans exhibit. Take time to praise God today, knowing we follow a righteous God, one that extols good over evil & calls us to do the same.

Fri, Nov 29, Jeremiah 33:14-18 Surrounded by the forces of Babylon, Judah awaited conquest. Both food and hope were in short supply. Jeremiah's words of warning to the king had been interpreted as treasonous and he had been arrested and jailed. From prison, he speaks these words of hope. Kathryn Schifferdecker describes their ongoing application. "The same proclamation is given today to us, inheritors of Jeremiah's task. We are called to speak a word of hope and promise in a world often filled with fear and uncertainty, even despair. Especially in this season of Advent, we speak words of hope. In the midst of darkness, light is about to break in. In the midst of despair, hope erupts. After long waiting, a branch will sprout. The complete fulfillment of God's promises has not yet happened, but it is coming. Such is Advent faith, and Advent hope." http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=448

Sat, Nov 30, Mark 8:27-29 Do you think that Peter ever got tired of being the poster child for human reactions? Did he castigate himself for driving away Elijah & Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration? Did he hold back tears when Jesus said "Get behind me Satan" after Peter questioned Jesus' march toward death? Did he have to be the one who denied the Lord three times the long & lonely night of Jesus' passion? Peter is a case in point for Martin Luther's concept of *simul justus et peccatur*—always 100% saint & 100% sinner. One moment we mess up horribly while the next a holy affirmation of Christ as Messiah may come out of our mouths. May we take comfort knowing that we needn't be perfect, we are simply called to be open to the Spirit's promptings.

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

FELC NS Engage Page: Nov. 24, Christ the King Sunday

Isaiah 5:1-7, 11:1-5 Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!...A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

Sun. Nov 24: Family Project: These passages are a very definite movement from despair to hope. Isaiah starts out lamenting the inability of people to get it right –to do what God has asked and expects. Then Isaiah moves toward hope. “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. As a family, discuss those things that bring you to despair. Perhaps it is a missed goal in soccer or a failed test in algebra. Then make a choice to move toward hope. Remember that the Lord is with you through all your moments of despair.

Mon. Nov 25: What are the signs of the kingdom of God? According to Isaiah, wisdom, understanding, a strong and caring spirit, one who knows and fears the Lord and who acts with righteousness and faithfulness. This passage is a call to give voice and power to the poor and meek, and not to judge by the exterior facade of what our eyes see and our ears hear.

Tues. Nov 26: These two passages are so different in tone that it’s hard to imagine that they were written during the same time in history. Isaiah and the northern kingdom were facing conquest at the hands of the Assyrians between 740-700 BC. The movement from warning and condemnation at the faithlessness of Israel to hope and expectation in the faithfulness of God is not based on events in the world. Rather, like Isaiah, we all choose to move toward hope as we remember the character of our loving God.

Wed., Nov 27, Jeremiah 33:14-18 As Christians we are quick to point out the ways that Jesus fulfills the promises of the prophets. When we read Jeremiah 33:15 (“In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”), we see so clearly our Lord who has shone a light on the ways in which humanity grabs for power and comfort over justice and righteousness. But then we go on to the next verse (“In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.”) & we have to pause. When was it that Jerusalem lived in safety? Here we see clearly the “not yet” and “already” coming of the kingdom of Christ. We are caught in the in-between times, when we catch glimpses of that future reality every time we experience the grace and love of Christ. This is what faith is. In the sometimes glorious and sometimes terrible present, we hold on to and press into the future realization of the kingdom of God.

Thurs. Nov 28, Psalm 89:8-9, 11-16 Why do you praise the Lord? What attributes of God cause your heart to lift in song? I think of the grace God shows, the steadfast love that sustains through difficult times, the genius of creation, & the wisdom & insights that help to live a life of meaning & joy. However, I don’t generally think to praise God for God’s righteousness. I take that for granted, sometimes associating it negatively with the blind self-righteousness that humans exhibit. Take time to praise God today, knowing we follow a righteous God, one that extols good over evil & calls us to do the same.

Fri. Nov 29, Jeremiah 33:14-18 Surrounded by the forces of Babylon, Judah awaited conquest. Both food and hope were in short supply. Jeremiah’s words of warning to the king had been interpreted as treasonous and he had been arrested and jailed. From prison, he speaks these words of hope. Kathryn Schifferdecker describes their ongoing application. “The same proclamation is given today to us, inheritors of Jeremiah’s task. We are called to speak a word of hope and promise in a world often filled with fear and uncertainty, even despair. Especially in this season of Advent, we speak words of hope. In the midst of darkness, light is about to break in. In the midst of despair, hope erupts. After long waiting, a branch will sprout. The complete fulfillment of God’s promises has not yet happened, but it is coming. Such is Advent faith, and Advent hope.”
http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=448

Sat. Nov 30, Mark 8:27-29 Do you think that Peter ever got tired of being the poster child for human reactions? Did he castigate himself for driving away Elijah & Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration? Did he hold back tears when Jesus said “Get behind me Satan” after Peter questioned Jesus’ march toward death? Did he have to be the one who denied the Lord three times the long & lonely night of Jesus’ passion? Peter is a case in point for Martin Luther’s concept of *simul justus et peccatur* –always 100% saint & 100% sinner. One moment we mess up horribly while the next a holy affirmation of Christ as Messiah may come out of our mouths. May we take comfort knowing that we needn’t be perfect, we are simply called to be open to the Spirit’s promptings.

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