

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 Jan. 26, 2020 At-A-Glance

Sunday, Jan. 26

8:50 a.m.
9:15 a.m.
9:15/9:25 a.m.
9:30 a.m.
9:35/9:45 a.m.
11:45 a.m.

Monday

9 a.m.
8 p.m.

Tuesday

6:30 a.m.
1 p.m.
8 p.m.

Wednesday

10:30 a.m.
Noon
5:45 p.m.
6:30 p.m.
7 p.m.

Thursday

6 a.m.
9 a.m.
4 p.m.

Friday

6:30 a.m.

Sunday, Feb. 2

8:50 a.m.
9:15 a.m.
9:15/9:25 a.m.
9:30 a.m.
9:35/9:45 a.m.

DS = Downtown Site

Winter Camp Grades 3-6 Ends, Crossways Pine Lake

Cherub/Angelus Choir Rehearsal, DS 220/Choir Room
Adult Learning, DS Lounge
Sunday School Learning Time, DS/NS
Women's Study Group, NS Lounge
Birth-to-Preschool Faith Formation Group, NS/DS Nursery
New & Review Week Three, Pastor Jeff's Home

Quilting, DS Fellowship Hall
Pick Up Basketball League, NS Activity Center

Men's Ministry, NS Lounge
Setup NS Library Books, New NS Library Area
ATC Basketball, NS Activity Center

Bible Study with Pastor Mary, DS 110-111
Noon Hour Philosophers, DS Fellowship Hall
Handbell Choir Rehearsal, DS Choir Room
Parish Choir Rehearsal, DS Choir Room
High School-led Worship for Confirmation, DS Sanctuary

Early Risers Women's Study, DS Lounge
Adult Bible Study, DS Lounge
Parament Banner Task Force, NS Lounge

Men's Ministry, NS Lounge

Boy Scout Sunday; New Member Sunday

Cherub/Angelus Choir Rehearsal, DS 220/Choir Room
Adult Learning, DS Lounge
Sunday School Learning Time, DS/NS
Women's Study Group, NS Lounge
Birth-to-Preschool Faith Formation Group, NS/DS Nursery

NS = North Site

Annual Reports

Copies of the 2019 Annual Report and Congregation Council Nominee Bios are available in the Gathering Area and online at www.felc.com. Remaining financial reports are forthcoming.

Dessert Time Again

We are looking for bakers to donate a dessert for the Feb. 9 Celebration of Mission/Annual Meeting. If you would be willing to donate a dessert, please drop it off in the North Site Kitchen anytime on Sunday, Feb. 9 prior to our 11:40 a.m. dinner. If you have time, it would be very helpful if the baked goods were pre-cut. Any desserts left after the meal will be packaged to be placed in the North Site freezer to be used at future coffee hours. Thank you.



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

Downtown Site

Sunday Worship: 8, 9:15 & 10:30 a.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.

Announcements
Week of Jan. 26, 2020

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.

Downtown Site Epiphany Adult Forums

Visit the Lounge at 9:15 a.m. Sunday mornings through February and enjoy forums that focus on how people have shared God's love through using their talents away from home. Today, hear Sandra Potts and Jeff Rettler share about their work with Habitat for Humanity, International. On Feb. 2, Diane Putzer speaks on her trip to Appalachia; Feb. 16, Heidi Schreiner shares experiences about high school mission trips; and on Feb. 23 the forums wrap up with the group from First English that traveled to Sibiu, Romania this past fall. Grab a cup of coffee and join us!

New Look Downtown

The chancel at the Downtown Site has received a facelift . . . with a new coat of paint! Along with this, the hymn boards have been removed, making projection onto the wall much easier. Thanks to all who have been involved in this project.

Boy Scout Sunday

On Feb. 2, 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. 8.

Looking Ahead

"On Your Mark, Get Set,...!"

Neighbor Network is a "Go!" Several very strong candidates recently stepped forward for the role of Neighbor Network Coordinator.

Following interviews with each, we are pleased to announce that Deni Kuchler has accepted the position. In this half-time staff role, Deni will now lead this exciting new ministry initiative.



In addition to her professional experience, Deni has actively volunteered on the FELC Congregation Council, Leadership Transition Task Force, North Site Women's Study Group, Mothers of Pre-Schoolers (MOPS), and Reconciling in Christ Core Team. She brings a deep sense of call to this role and begins Feb. 10. With Deni's move to the FELC staff position, upon assuming her role she will be stepping down from her seat on the Congregation Council. Please thank her for her last two years of service.

Small Groups: Where You can Explore Faith and Experience Community

Anyone who has been in a small group Bible study or a community where God was the focus knows the many blessings that can be experienced. Participants from the *A Counter-Cultural Community* small group study last fall shared, "Being part of the small group challenges me to think deeper on how to live my life in meaningful ways." Another participant writes, "attending a small group has helped make me feel even more welcome in my new church home."

Gather a group of friends and host a small group or join an existing group! Hosting is very simple, you just need a heart for people, open up a place to meet, serve a snack and turn on a video. The Lenten study *Why Jesus* will begin the week of Feb. 26. Training and materials provided. Contact Jeanne Gronholm at jgronholm@felc.com or 733-2303 to host or sign up for a group.

Private Tour to Israel

Pastor Jeff and Barb's tour to the Holy Land will be a more intimate affair than originally planned. Going as a smaller group is a great way to travel . . . better quality, quicker transitions, and less time in lines. Only a few of the 20 seats remain open for this trip to Istanbul and Israel, which departs from Chicago on May 19. Interested persons should check out <http://www.felc.com/IsraelTrip2020> or email jtengesdal@felc.com. The registration deadline is Feb. 8.

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministers are members of our congregation who listen, care, and provide emotional and spiritual support to people who are facing a crisis or going through tough times. To learn how you or someone you know can receive care, please speak with a pastor.

Make an IMPACT!

This fundraising event supporting the FELC Summer Intern Ministry will be held Friday, Mar. 6, from 6:30-9:30 p.m. Mark your calendar and invite friends. We are excited to share that this event will be held at a new venue - Gordon Bubolz Nature Preserve! Tickets are currently available for purchase online at www.felc.com/impact and will be for sale between services Feb. 9, 16, and 23. The price is \$25 per person and includes admission to the event, entertainment and hors d'oeuvres for the evening. See you there!



Fair-Trade Product Sunday Next Week

The income from fair-trade sales allows farmers and artisans to educate their children, build health clinics, dig wells that provide clean drinking water to their villages and much more. All these are made possible because of the simple choice you can make.

Look for opportunities to share a gift of fair-trade coffee and be sure to share your knowledge about fair trade to others. There's strength in numbers as we join more than 3,300 parishes in our support of this worthwhile cause.

We are selling coffee, tea, hot chocolate and chocolate bars again on Sunday, Feb. 2. Let's do what we can to support small-scale farmers across the globe.



Noon Hour Philosophers (NHP) 2019

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

• Jan. 29: Philosophy, Hobbies and other Useless Things

Evan Kreider, (Ph.D. University of Kansas)
Professor of Philosophy
UW Oshkosh - Fox Valley Center

Echoes' Needs

Echoes, A Christian Thrift Store, (a ministry of First English) is in need of these specific donations: infant/toddler clothing birth to size four, and furniture. The store also invites ALL to stop and shop-your patronage is appreciated! 1320 W. Wisconsin Ave., Appleton.

"Strong Roots, Amazing Achievements" Black History Month Celebration

Saturday, Feb. 1, 3-6 p.m.

Appleton North High School

Sponsored by Appleton Area School District's Black Student Union, Appleton Area School District, City of Appleton Dignity & Respect Campaign

Featuring keynote speaker, Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes, the event includes the following: Awards Presentation, Tribute to the Culture, Black Student Union Cultural Expression, and Soul Food Dinner catered by Cozy Corner.

Prayers For Community Care

Each week we lift up an organization that works to provide vital services in our community. Consider praying and possibly volunteering for the groups we mention. This week's focus:

Appleton International Airport
www.atwairport.com; (920)832-5267

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
- Sylas Garcia
- Rev. Kathryn Kuhn
- Shirley Larson
- Luke Wilson
- Jake Wilson
- Michael Stange
- Hannah Haverkorn
- Karen Swoboda
- Tom Swoboda
- Gene Hollenberger
- Alice Boyd
- Kathy Owens
- Lynn Bryan

Prayers of Comfort

Families of:

- Ken Anderson
- David Larson
- Joan Overbo
- Jeremy Thiel

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Baptism of:

- Delilah Holli Green

Those Called to Serve in Other Countries

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

Those in the Military and Their Families

- Erika Brehmer
- Christian Cramer
- SFC Matt Grey and Unit 1/25 SBTC
- BM3 Kyle Kramer, USCG
- LCPL Robert Kopesky II
- Sgt. Samuel Sinclair



High School Youth News

Grades 9-12

Jan. 26, 2020



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

1/29: Lead worship for the Confirmation students

2/5: Discuss Philippians Chapter 1

And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.
-Philippians 1:9-11

2/12: Valentine's Week Celebration

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:7
I have loved you with an everlasting love. Jeremiah 31: 3
There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear. 1 John 4:18

Social Media

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



Mission Trip 2020
NASHVILLE, TN
June 14-19

Watch for texts to vote on t-shirt designs!

Questions, contact Heidi
hschreiner@felc.com

Jan. 26, 2020



Information for FELC Youth and Families
Grades K-12

Getting Earlier with More Perks in September

This month, after a review of attendance patterns, the decision was made to no longer offer Wednesday night worship except during Lent and other special times of the year. This tough decision makes space for some exciting structural changes and additions to religious education, many of which return to schedule patterns of the past. Here's some info about Wednesday nights in the fall of 2020:

- > **Confirmation & refuel will meet from 6:15-7:15 p.m. except during the five weeks of Lent in the spring when classes will follow worship from 7-8 p.m.** This provides an earlier time to return home for other work and rest for both students and leaders.
- > **Kid's Life for elementary age students will be offered** during this earlier time also being a better fit for the bedtimes of younger children.
- > **Grab 'n' go simple sandwiches and other snacks will be offered** for kids that don't have time for dinner.



Mark your calendars and keep an eye out for more information moving toward fall.

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



Kid's Life Will Start Up Again in September We Need Leadership

An earlier start time for religious education in the fall means our younger siblings in Christ can also meet without having to worry about a conflict with earlier bedtimes. We are looking for a person, pair, or team of individuals that are excited to take on the role of Kid's Life

leader. As a leader you offer a game, service project, arts and crafts project, or other activity that connects to faith during the 6:15-7:15 p.m. class time.

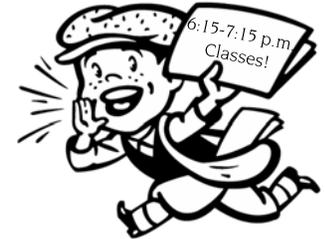
The meeting is offered for students kindergarten to grade 6. This is a super opportunity for younger siblings and parents of middle and high school-age students to enjoy time together while Confirmation and refuel are meeting. Contact Kirsten Owens at kowens@felc.com for more info on this fun and important role.



Confirmation and Middle School Scoop



BREAKING NEWS! Confirmation Will Meet Earlier Next Year!



In case you didn't read the front of this week's Youth Insert, catch the email sent home, or receive the text, here's Confirmation's breaking news... All youth programming will return to the earlier time it was offered in past years!

Confirmation will meet from 6:15-7:15 p.m. except during the five weeks of Lent in the spring when meetings will follow worship from 7-8 p.m. providing an earlier time to return home for other work and rest for both students and leaders. We hope that this change will make Wednesday night schedules easier for students with younger siblings, help those with heavy midweek homework loads, get families that drive from out of town home earlier, and provide additional support in programming for families with elementary age children.

Have a Child Under Age 3?

We've Got a Place For You to Be!

Join us for Birth-to-Preschool Faith Formation Groups at each site every Sunday. This is a casual drop-in group run by its attendees, which provides fellowship for families that matches the needs of our youngest siblings in Christ. At North Site, feel free to join the opening of Sunday School in the Lower Level at 9:25 a.m. to participate in the music and Bible lesson introduction. Then head upstairs to the Nursery at 9:35 a.m. for social time for adults and play time for children. At Downtown Site, you're welcome to join the congregation for the beginning of 9:15 a.m. worship. Then head to the Nursery at 9:45 a.m. to meet and play.



Communion Class is Mar. 30 with an optional Seder on Apr. 9 offered for students in grades 2 and higher and their parents. Register in advance online at www.felc.com/forms.

refuel High School Led Worship this week!



Meet in your small group room for the first 15 min. then we gather in the Sanctuary at 7:15 p.m. for a great service led by your friends!

Feb. 8 is the First Deadline for Confirmands

A reminder to 9th grade families that the first deadline for important Affirmation of Baptism forms is Feb. 8. The following items are due:

- > Gown order form
- > Photo order form
- > Scripture verse
- > FELC Church Member Form

If you do not have these forms please contact Kirsten.



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

RSVP to the FELC Celebration of Mission, Annual Meeting and Chicken Dinner!

On Sunday, Feb. 9, all First English members are invited to take a moment to reflect and celebrate FELC's accomplishments, while enjoying another great opportunity for congregation-wide fellowship. Included in the morning's plan:

- **9:30 a.m.:** In the North Site Gathering Area, an extended coffee hour with special treats begins after the North Site 8:15 a.m. worship service. Live music, informational booths and even raffles add to the morning's festivities. Sunday School activities are as normal at both sites, with no 10:30 a.m. services at either site.
- **10:45 a.m.:** The 2020 Annual Meeting in the North Site Sanctuary shares updates of FELC's 2019 victories and upcoming 2020 projects. Members will have the opportunity to select lay leadership for important congregation roles. A review of the 2019 Treasurer's Report and the 2020 FELC Budget will be shared. *A quorum of 75 members is needed; childcare will be provided.*
- **11:40 a.m.:** A traditional "FELC Sunday Chicken Dinner" catered in and served by First English volunteers will be offered in the Activity Center, with the morning's celebration wrapping up at 12:30 p.m.

This will be a great opportunity to spend time together with extended church family! The event is FREE for all to attend, with a free-will offering opportunity for the chicken dinner portion of the event. Please RSVP with the number in your party for lunch by filling out the form below, calling the Church Office at 733-2303 or online at www.felc.com. See you there!

**Yes! Reserve my spot on Sunday, Feb. 9, for the
Celebration of Mission, Annual Meeting,
and FREE Chicken Dinner!**

Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

How many (including you) will be in your party? _____

Tear off and place in the offering plate. You can also call the Church Office at 733-2303 or visit www.felc.com to RSVP. See you there!

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Email: _____ Phone: _____

How many (including you) will be in your party? _____

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Mark 5:1-20 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. He lived among the tombs; & no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles & chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, & the shackles he broke in pieces; & no one had the strength to subdue him. Night & day among the tombs & on the mountains he was always howling & bruising himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran & bowed down before him; & he shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding; & the unclean spirits begged him, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them." So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out & entered the swine; & the herd, numbering about 2000, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, & were drowned in the sea. The swineherds ran off & told it in the city & in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. They came to Jesus & saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed & in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; & they were afraid. Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac & to the swine reported it. Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. But Jesus refused, & said to him, "Go home to your friends, & tell them how much the Lord has done for you, & what mercy he has shown you." And he went away & began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; & everyone was amazed.

Sun. Jan 26: Family Project: Tell the story of the Gerasene Demoniac while bound by ropes or chains. Talk about times you felt trapped, hurt or sad about something. Jesus walks with us in our hard times, freeing us from our hurts the way someone chained up can be freed from chains. Remove the binding, explaining that Jesus can heal us when we hurt, .

Mon. Jan 27: Although Jesus was an example of love and wisdom, the townspeople treated him with suspicion. They would rather deal with the disfunction of the Demoniac than deal with Jesus changing the status quo. Pray that God would help you recognize and embrace healthy change.

Tues. Jan 28: Prof. C. Clifton Black writes of resisting evil. *"The first step in capitulation to diabolism is our refusal to see it. The first step in resistance is our embrace of the Lord who masters it. To ask for the coming of our heavenly Father's kingdom is to repel the reign of the Evil One. For what else do we pray when begging for deliverance from evil?"*
http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4229

Wed. Jan 29, Mark 5:21-23 & 35-43 Prof. Emerson Powery writes a challenge. *"Jesus' life, along with his death, grants life-changing healing. It is a healing authority that crosses boundaries, both ethnic (cf. 5:1-20) and gender ones (cf. 5:21-43). Jesus chooses not to leave people in the conditions in which he finds them. And he has the power to alter that condition. Do we? Can the Christian community alter the conditions of people's lives? Can it, too, bring healing into troubled circumstances? Must it not also cross boundaries -- whether they are related to ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, politics or any other boundaries that divide our society -- and advocate life-giving meaning and change? May God grant us the courage to do so!"*
http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1323

Thurs. Jan 30, Psalm 131 James Limburg recounts a story he heard as a student. *"A young pilot once succeeded in convincing his grandmother to take her first airplane ride with him in his small private plane. The takeoff went smoothly, and they were soon cruising over the town where she lived and the farm where she had been born. Then her grandson noticed that his passenger was tense and pale and that her knuckles were white as she hung onto the arms of the seat for dear life. When he landed the plane, the rest of the family waiting on the ground couldn't wait to get her reaction. "Grandma, how did you like the ride?" they asked. "Oh it was fine," she said, "but let me tell you a secret. I never really let all my weight down." The flight would have been so much more enjoyable had she only relaxed and let her weight down. Psalm 131 is an invitation to relax, to let one's weight down, to live a life of trust in the Lord."* (p. 449, "Psalms", James Limburg)

Fri. Jan 31, Mark 5:24-34 As a little girl, I practiced the skill of moving unseen through a crowd –of being invisible. This was easier when you yourself believed that you had little to bring to a situation, & that your ideas, opinions, & strength were rarely if ever needed. As an adult, I have grown more adept at the other end of this talent. I am able to look past people. Perhaps they don't have the skills or expertise to help me with what I'm doing. Or maybe their presence makes a new demand on my time or resources, possessing a need that calls for involvement. Jesus calls us not only to see value in those we may have discounted, not simply to open our eyes to see those in need around us, but finally to ask for and physically seek out those who have been helped, and to remind them that they are not invisible –that they are lovely people of faith.

Sat. Feb 1, Mark 5:21-43 In comparing these stories of healing, we should note the different ways that Jairus and the woman approach Jesus. Firstly, Jairus is named—he is a prominent member of the temple community. He approached Jesus openly, & may have even felt buoyed by the respect that people carried for him. In contrast, the woman has no name & would have been ritually unclean for 12 years, with so little social standing that her last ditch attempt at a cure was accomplished by stealth. By stopping everything and asking to find her, Jesus helps her move beyond fear to recognize her own value. Thankfully, Jesus still looks into the heart, seeing faith and worth when we are stuck in human judgments, and reaching out to help insiders and outsiders

*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/FELCEngagePage>.

Mark 4:2-25 *He began to teach them many things in parables, & in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, & the birds came & ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, & it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; & since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, & the thorns grew up & choked it, & it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil & brought forth grain, growing up & increasing & yielding 30 & 60 & 100 fold." And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" When he was alone, those who were around him along with the 12 asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that they may indeed look, but not perceive, & may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again & be forgiven." And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes & takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. But they have no root, & endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, but the cares of the world, & the lure of wealth, & the desire for other things come in & choke the word, & it yields nothing. And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word & accept it & bear fruit, 30 & 60 & 100 fold." He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, & not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, & still more will be given you. For to those who have, more will be given; & from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."*

Sun, Jan 26: Family Project: Our heart can be like a hard path that God's word doesn't penetrate. It can be like rocky soil that blunts initial enthusiasm. Or we can allow the cares of the world to choke out God's voice. Discuss what hardens your heart, zaps your energy, or obstructs God's voice.

Mon, Jan 27: We can be the architects of our own misery. When our hearts become hardened, we are more apt to focus on self, seeing other people & viewpoints as problems. When our hearts are soft, we rejoice in the gift of each person & each day. Even if they are difficult! May our hearts be open.

Tues, Jan 28: Jesus said, *"to those who have, more will be given; & from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."* Most of us have experienced the exponential growth of love and good feeling that happens when we share with those in need. However, when we become stingy, when we don't act on our good impulses, those impulses go away! What do you want to multiply in your life? Share it with others! Whether it's love or grace or hope, what we share comes back to bless us!

Wed., Jan 29, Mark 5:1-13 I have prayed repeatedly for time to hide the evidence of having done something wrong. This behavior started young! I clearly remember hiding in the pantry after cutting myself while trying to close a folding knife (an unsuccessful attempt to whittle inspired by Girl Scout Camp.) I was looking for bandages to repair the damage, hoping to have everything under control before I had to confess. Thankfully for me, my older brother came looking when he found blood all over the bathroom sink. He wasn't looking for a perfect sister—he was looking for ME, bleeding hand & all. When Jesus arrived in the country of the Gerasenes, the demoniac came to him & knelt before him. He was a mess. He made no attempt to be better on his own, to hide his faults. His conversation & looks screamed out his need for help. And Jesus welcomes him as he does all of us who come confessing (*not hiding*) our need.

Thurs, Jan 30, Psalm 89:1-4 Do you have a favorite love song? When I hear a love song being sung by one of my favorite artists, it makes me feel romantic but it also challenges me. Is the kind of love I am willing to give the kind of love that is being spoken about? So many of the Psalms are love songs to God. In Psalm 89, we hear, *"I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens."* Be assured that the God who formed the universe is deserving of our love, and be challenged to love God in a way that overflows with praise.

Fri, Jan 31, Mark 5:14-17 I can't imagine the degree of anguish experienced when the owner of 2,000 pigs suddenly realized that his entire investment had been decimated. The swineherds were quick to run off to town—perhaps to make sure that they weren't blamed for the tragedy. Even though the townspeople were amazed at the miracle of seeing the man who had been possessed sitting around in a clear state of mind, they couldn't ignore the fact that this Jesus had also caused chaos and destruction. How do we respond to Jesus when his presence calls us to put aside our plans and even be willing to see our goals destroyed in pursuit of a higher calling. Our joy must be following Jesus even when it is difficult, even when it conflicts with what is best for our financial or personal aspirations. In the end, God's way leads to life.

Sat, Feb 1, Mark 5:18-20 After the demoniac is healed, he begs to go along with Jesus in his travels. It must have been so difficult to deal with the fleeting glances of people who knew him well—people who were simply waiting for some of his former, crazed self to make an appearance. Perhaps he was also afraid that those old demons would come back to haunt him. Jesus refuses his request, saying, *"Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you."* It's a good reminder to all of us that missions means sharing our experience of God's faithfulness with friends & neighbors & not simply going far away to strangers. May we be willing to share love and to proclaim God's mercy even to those who might meet our words with skepticism, letting our friends see the fruits of a changed life.

*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/FELCEngagePage>.