

CHRIST BE OUR LIGHT

ADVENT STUDY GUIDE



First Lutheran
discover more : together

This study guide is written for households, individuals, and small groups to be used in conjunction with the Advent worship series “Christ Be Our Light” from Nov. 29 through Dec. 24.

Online Resources:

Digital Study Guide at firstlutherancr.org/grow

Live streaming at youtube.com/firstlutherancr

Sermon Recordings at firstlutherancr.org/resources/sermons

FaithFirst Podcast at firstlutherancr.org/grow/podcast

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Advent 2025: Christ Be Our Light / Christ IS Our Light

As the days grow shorter and the nights longer, the season of Advent invites each of us to turn our hearts toward the light—toward Christ, who comes into the world to dispel darkness and bring faith, hope, love, and peace. This year’s theme, “**Christ Be Our Light,**” leads us through the four weeks of Advent with a prayerful longing for Christ’s presence. On **Christmas Eve**, the theme shifts to “**Christ IS Our Light,**” celebrating the fulfillment of that longing in the birth of Jesus.

Special Gift for every household!

Throughout Advent, each week centers on a different aspect of Christ’s light: **Faith, Hope, Love, and Peace**. These themes are reflected in Scripture, prayer, and weekly candle lighting rituals designed for both worship and home devotion. Each household will receive a beautiful base that was created just for First Lutheran, four flameless candles, and a devotional booklet. Keep it simple or decorate the base with your own items. Read the scriptures and follow along with lighting the candles symbolizing that week’s theme as a visual reminder of the growing light and deepening meaning of the season. Worship will focus on the weekly theme with the lighting of a large wreath.

- **Week 1: Faith** calls us to trust in God’s promises, even when the way forward is unclear. We hear Isaiah’s vision of peace, Paul’s call to wake from spiritual sleep, and Jesus’ reminder to be ready for His coming.
- **Week 2: Hope** invites us to expect God’s justice and renewal. The shoot from Jesse’s stump and John the Baptist’s call to prepare the way remind us that hope is rooted in God’s faithfulness.
- **Week 3: Love** celebrates the incarnation—God’s love made flesh in Jesus. We are called to reflect that love in our relationships and communities.
- **Week 4: Peace** proclaims Christ as the Prince of Peace, reconciling us to God and one another. We are sent into the world as peacemakers, bearing witness to God’s kingdom.

Christmas Eve

On **Christmas Eve**, we declare with joy:
Christ IS Our Light. The wait is now over. The promise is fulfilled.

The evening will be filled with meaningful worship and fellowship.

3:00 p.m. Traditional Worship

Casual family friendly feel with music from Junior Choir

5:00 p.m. Contemporary Worship

Casual and welcoming - Praise Team Music
with music from Youth Choir and Handbells

7:00 p.m. Traditional Worship

Handbells and brass ensemble

9:00 p.m. Traditional Worship

Choir and brass ensemble

Extended preludes from organ, piano & ensembles will begin
30 minutes prior to the 3, 7, & 9 p.m. worship services.

All four services will be streaming live at
firstlutherancr.org/live or youtube.com/firstlutherancr

**The light has come into the world,
and the darkness cannot overcome it.**

*This Advent, may your home and heart be filled with light.
May Christ be your light in the waiting—and your joy in the arrival.*

First Week of Advent

Faith

Theme: Trusting God's promise and the call to live by faith while we wait.

Candle Liturgy: *(To be read as you light the Faith Candle)*

Leader: We light the candle of Faith.

Response: We remember the God who keeps promises. In the darkness of doubt and fear, God speaks words of comfort.

Leader: By faith, we trust God's promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ

Prayer: O God of promise, kindle our faith that we may live as your people now and always. Amen.

Introduction to the Readings:

Isaiah 2:1–5, Psalm 122, Romans 13:11–14, Matthew 24:36–44

Advent begins with a call to awaken—to live in faith, trusting that God's promises are unfolding even when we cannot see the full picture. Isaiah 2 offers a vision of peace and transformation, where nations stream to the mountain of the Lord and weapons of war are turned into tools for growth. This is a future shaped by faith—a trust that God's justice and peace will prevail.

Psalm 122 echoes this longing, expressing joy at entering the house of the Lord. It's a reminder that faith is not only personal but communal. We gather in hope, trusting that God meets us in worship and forms us into a people of peace.

Romans 13 intensifies the urgency: "The night is far gone, the day is near." Faith means waking up to God's presence and putting on the armor of light. It's a call to live differently—to embody the values of Christ in a world that often resists them.

Finally, Matthew 24 reminds us that the coming of the Son of Man will be sudden and unexpected. Faith is readiness. It's not fear-driven but rooted in trust that God is faithful and near. As we light the candle of faith this week, we ask: How can we live as people who trust God's promise, even during uncertainty?

Readings:

Isaiah 2:1-5 *NRSVue*

¹The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. ² In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills all the nations shall stream to it.

³Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Psalm 122 *NRSVue*

¹ I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" ² Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

³ Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together. ⁴ To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. ⁵ For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David. ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; "May they prosper who love you. ⁷ Peace be within your walls and security within your towers." ⁸ For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you." ⁹ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

Romans 13:11-14 *NRSVue*

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Matthew 24:36-44 NRSVue

³⁶ “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left.

⁴² Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Small Group Questions

- 1) What stories of faithful people (biblical or personal) encourage your faith?
- 2) How does baptism shape your confidence to live as a person of faith?
- 3) Do you feel doubt or fear this Advent? How does God’s promise speak to that?
- 4) Can you recall a story from your childhood or this Christmas that you put your faith in?

Children & Family Questions

- 1) Name one thing that makes you giggle, smile, or laugh?
- 2) Name a teacher, coach or friend who makes you feel good about yourself.
- 3) Surprise someone like a neighbor by helping them! How does helping make you feel?

Second Week of Advent

Hope

Theme: Advent hope as confident expectation in God's coming and God's justice.

Candle liturgy: *(To be read as you light the candle of Hope)*

Leader: We light the candle of Hope.

Response: We wait with confident expectation for God's new things. Even in darkness, God makes a way and plants signs of promise.

Prayer: God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in you, so our hope may overflow in witness and service. Amen.

Introduction to the Readings:

Isaiah 11:1–10, Psalm 72:1–7, 18–19, Romans 15:4–13,
Matthew 3:1–12

Hope in Advent is not vague optimism—it is a confident expectation rooted in God's promises. Isaiah 11 describes a shoot growing from the stump of Jesse, a symbol of new life and leadership emerging from what seemed dead. This ruler will bring justice, equity, and peace — a hope for the marginalized and weary.

Psalm 72 echoes this vision, praying for a king who defends the poor and brings abundance of peace. Romans 15 reminds us that Scripture was written to encourage us and sustain our hope. Paul calls the community to live in harmony, welcoming one another as Christ welcomed them. This is hope in action—hope that builds bridges and heals divisions.

Matthew 3 introduces John the Baptist, whose call to repentance is also a call to prepare for the newness God is bringing. Hope is not passive; it prepares, expects, and acts.

As we light the candle of hope, we ask: Where do we see signs of God's new things? And how can we be part of that hope in our communities?

Readings:

Isaiah 11:1-10 *NRSVue*

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. ² 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. ³ 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, ⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge for the poor and decide with equity for the oppressed 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.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist and faithfulness the belt around his loins. ⁶ The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Psalms 72:1-7

¹ Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son. ² May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice. ³ May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. ⁵ May he live while the sun endures and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

⁷ In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

Romans 15:4–13 *NRSVue*

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the ancestors ⁹ and that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will confess you among the gentiles and sing praises to your name”; ¹⁰ and again he says, “Rejoice, O gentiles, with his people”; ¹¹ and again, “Praise the Lord, all you gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him”; ¹² and again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the gentiles; in him the gentiles shall hope.” ¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:1–12 *NRSVue*

³ In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ² “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” ³ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” ⁴ Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?

⁸ Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, ⁹ and do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to

Abraham. ¹⁰ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Small Group questions

- 1) What difference does hope, or putting hope in someone or something make in your everyday life?
- 2) Where have you seen signs of God’s new things this year?
- 3) How might our congregation be a visible sign of hope in the community?

Children & Family Questions

- 1) What makes you happy?
- 2) What makes you sad?
- 3) Wishing is different than hoping.

Wishing is often something like saying, it would be nice but...if not...well, okay...I didn't really think it was true or possible.

Hope, is putting your trust in God. Feeling okay to ask lots of questions at the same time, trusting God to be God!

We GROW in our faith – in trusting more and more!

Third Week of Advent Love

Theme: God's love revealed in Christ and our vocation to love neighbor.

Candle liturgy (*To be read as you light the candle of Love.*)

Leader: We light the candle of Love.

Response: We remember the astonishing love of God shown in the incarnation—God with us.

Prayer: God of love, you have shown your love in Jesus. Move our hearts to love our neighbors and work for understanding, compassion, and reconciliation. Amen.

Introduction to the Readings:

Isaiah 35:1–10, Psalm 146:5–10, Luke 1:46–55, Matt 11:2–11

Love is the heart of Advent—God's love revealed in the coming of Christ.

Isaiah 35 offers a vision of restoration: deserts bloom, the blind see, and sorrow turns to joy. This is the power of divine love to heal and renew. Psalm 146 celebrates God's love for the vulnerable—the hungry, the prisoner, the stranger—reminding us that love is justice in action.

Luke's Magnificat is Mary's song of love and liberation, proclaiming that God lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things.

In Matthew 11, Jesus affirms John the Baptist's role and points to the signs of the kingdom—healing, restoration, and good news for the poor.

Lighting the candle of love, we remember that God's love is not abstract. It is embodied in Jesus and calls us to love our neighbors with compassion, courage, and grace.

Readings:

Isaiah 35:1–10 *NRSVue*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. ³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.” ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; ⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes. ⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. ¹⁰ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalms 146:5–10 *NRSVue*

⁵ Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. ⁹ The Lord watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. ¹⁰ The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the Lord!

Luke 1:46–55 *NRSVue*

⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; ⁵⁰ indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

James 5:7–10 *NRSVue*

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Matthew 11:2–11 *NRSVue*

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” ⁴ Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.” ⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell

you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way before you.’ ¹¹ “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Small Group questions

- 1) Where have you experienced God’s love in an unexpected way?
- 2) How does knowing God loves you change how you relate to others?
- 3) What concrete acts of neighborly love could our congregation undertake this Advent?

Children & Family Questions

- 1) What surprises you? Do you like surprises?
- 2) Name one thing you love!
- 3) Name one way you can share love with your family?
With your neighbors? at school?

Advent Week Four

Peace

Theme: Peace as reconciliation—God’s shalom (peace) is fulfilled in Christ and our work as peacemakers.

Candle liturgy (*To be read as you light the candle of Peace.*)

Leader: We light the candle of Peace and all the candles of Advent.

Response: Christ is the Prince of Peace. In him God reconciles us to Godself and calls us into the work of reconciliation.

Prayer: Prince of Peace, break the powers of violence and fear and make us instruments of your reconciliation. Amen.

Introduction to the Readings:

Isaiah 7:10–16, Psalm 80:1–7, Romans 1:1–7, Matt 1:18–25

Peace in Advent is the promise of God’s presence with us—Immanuel. Isaiah 7 speaks of a child to be born, a sign that God is near even in times of fear and uncertainty.

Psalm 80 is a plea for restoration, asking God to shine His face upon us and bring salvation. It’s a longing for peace that only God can give. Romans 1 opens with Paul’s greeting to the church, affirming that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promises. This peace is not just personal—it is cosmic, reconciling all things to God. Matthew 1 tells the story of Jesus’ birth, emphasizing that He is “God with us.” In the midst of confusion and scandal, Joseph chooses peace—trusting God’s message and stepping into his role in the story of salvation.

As we light the candle of peace and all four candles of Advent, we remember that Christ is our peace. We are called to be peacemakers, bringing reconciliation and healing to a world in need.

Readings:

Isaiah 7:10–16 *NRSVue*

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Psalms 80: 1–7, 17–19 *NRSVue*

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth ² before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! ³ Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. ⁴ O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people’s prayers? ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. ⁶ You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. ⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Romans 1:1–7 *NRSVue*

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1:18–25 *NRSVue*

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Small Group questions

- 1) When and where do you most need peace this Advent?
- 2) How can we be peacemakers in our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces?
- 3) What barriers to peace must be named and addressed in our community?

Children & Family Questions

- 1) Is it easier or harder to ask someone to play at recess?
- 2) When other children won't take turns at recess, do you help them out or get mad?
- 3) Name one way you could be kinder to at least one person who is really hard for you to be around?
- 4) It's almost Christmas Eve and Day! What are you most excited about?

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Christ Is Our Light

Theme: “Christ is the Light” — We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, who breaks into our darkness with peace, joy, and salvation. The scripture readings remind us that God's promises are fulfilled in the most unexpected and beautiful ways.

Candle liturgy (*To be read as you light all four candles.*)

Leader: Tonight, we light the Christ Candle.

All: The waiting is over. The Light has come.

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

All: On those who lived in a land of deep darkness—light has shined.

Leader: For a child has been born for us, a son given to us.

All: He is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

All: The light no darkness can overcome.

Leader: Let us walk in the light of Christ.

All: Thanks be to God!

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Reflection

We gather in awe and wonder at the mystery of God made flesh. The prophet Isaiah's words echo through the ages: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” (Isaiah 9) In the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World breaks into our darkness—not with fanfare or force, but with the cry of a newborn in a humble manger. The angels' song to the shepherds proclaims peace and joy, reminding us that God's love reaches even the most ordinary and overlooked among us.

As we sing with the psalmist, “Sing to the Lord a new song,” (Psalm 96) we are invited to rejoice in the grace that has appeared for all people, as Titus 2 proclaims. This grace is not earned but given freely in Christ, who teaches us to live with hope, love, and courage.

We remember that Christmas is not just a story from long ago—it is the ongoing story of God’s light shining in our lives today. In the humble birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, announced by angels and witnessed by shepherds (Luke 2), we see God’s radical grace made flesh—God with us, not in power or might, but in vulnerability and love, shining light into the world’s deepest darkness.

May we, like the shepherds, go forth glorifying and praising God for all we have seen and heard. (Luke 2) May we rejoice that Christ IS the Light and may we shine that light for all to see.

Small Group Questions

- 1) Isaiah speaks of light breaking into darkness.
Where do you see God’s light shining in your life or in the world today?
- 2) The shepherds were the first to hear the good news.
What does this tell us about who God chooses to include in the story?
- 3) Titus speaks of grace training us to live differently.
- 4) How might the birth of Christ inspire you to live with more hope, love, or courage in the coming year?

Children & Family Questions

- 1) What do you think it was like to be a shepherd and hear angels singing? How would you feel?
- 2) Why do you think Jesus was born in a stable instead of a palace? What does that tell us about God?
- 3) Christmas Challenge! *What’s one way we can share the light of Jesus with others this Christmas and the days after?*

Prayer

God of all Creation, on this holy night we rejoice in the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ. You have come to dwell among us, bringing light to our darkness and hope to our hearts. Help us to receive this gift with joy and to share your love with the world. May the light of Christ shine in our homes, our communities, and our lives. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Ministries at First Lutheran

Discover more about all ministry areas by visiting
firstlutherancr.org/connect



Children in **PreK thru 4th Grade** are invited to the Discovery Zone 4 Kidz where they will Discover the expansive love of God!
The Discovery Zone is located on the third floor and is open during the school year on Sunday mornings at 10:15 and Wednesday evenings at 7:15pm.
This summer children are invited to "Rainforest Falls" Vacation Bible School and day camp coming July, 2026!

Middle School Youth (5th-8th grade) are invited to participate in ECHO Ministry on Wednesday evenings throughout the school year to grow and discuss their faith with mentors and small groups.

High School Youth (9th-12th grade) meet Wednesday evenings and some Sundays in the Youth Room for fun and fellowship and participation in small groups with caring adult leaders to discuss the highs and lows of life. For one week each July, Middle and High School youth come together for Vacation Bible School, where they serve as leaders and attend leadership training.



Many year-round and short-term opportunities are available for **adults at all stages of life**. Faith-formation classes, small groups, and bible studies meet on Sundays and throughout the week both on and off-site, and are led by pastors and lay-leaders. Retreats for spiritual growth and connection are an important part of this ministry and are held year-round. The ministry also coordinates Milestones such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, and more.

First Lutheran's Outreach Ministry has a decades-long history of **service** in the **community** and across the **globe**! Saturday Evening Meal Program (SEMP) has been serving hot meals to the community for 30+ years. The Housing, Hunger, & Hope Team partner with local and global organizations to further serve those in need. The church has an ongoing Global partnership with Samé Lutheran Parish in Tanzania that has fostered an ongoing exchange of prayer and generosity.



First Lutheran's Music Ministry is home to generations of **musicians that use their talents to praise God**! Vocal and Handbell Choirs meet weekly for Children (Gr. 1-4), Youth (Gr. 5-8), and Adults (Gr. 9-Adult). The Celebration Band (Adults and youth) leads at Contemporary and ECHO worship services, practicing weekly throughout the year. The Music Ministry also hosts many Concert Series highlighting local, regional, and national artists.

HUGS (Hospitality, Ushers, Greeters, Servers) is the re-imagined **volunteer and welcome ministry**! HUGS volunteers focus on "Welcoming Like Christ" in every role they do, both in and out of worship. From serving a hot cup of coffee to a new guest, helping a young family find the nursery, making sure the sanctuary is set just-so for each worship service, to helping with tasks around the church and community. Folks of all ages and abilities are invited to join!



COMING SOON

At First Lutheran

We hope to see you soon at one of our upcoming special events and services.



January 8

Newcomers Dinner & Class

5:30pm

You are invited to a free dinner and course to learn what it means to be a member of First Lutheran.

Ash Wednesday Worship

12 Noon

6:30pm

February 18



February 25

March 4, 11,

18, 25

Lenten Mid-Week Worship

12 Noon, 6:30pm

Followed by light lunch in the Narthex



Spring Serenade Concerts

12:30pm

Mini concerts ft. Coe College music faculty

February 25

March 11

March 25



March 6

Women's Gathering

6:30pm, Ascension Lutheran Church, Marion

An evening of fellowship, celebration, meditation, and more!

Register online by February 27

Cedar Rapids Concert Choral

2:30pm

Handel's Messiah, Pts II & III

March 8



Holy Week Observances

Palm Sunday - 9 & 11am
Maundy Thursday- 11am & 6:30pm
Good Friday - 6:30pm & 8pm
Easter Saturday Vigil - 5pm

**March 29-
April 4**



April 5

Easter Sunday Worship

8 & 9:30am Traditional
11:15am Contemporary

Newcomers Dinner & Class

5:30pm

Join us for a free dinner and learn what it means to be a member of First Lutheran
Alpha Course weeks of April 12, 19, 26

April 9



April 19

Sing Out! Hymn Festival

4:00pm

Ft. Dr. Jeffrey Blersch, and will include a mass choir from local ELCA churches

Meals from the Heartland Packing Event

12-6pm All Ages; 6-8pm Youth
Register by April 23
for Local & National Food Banks

April 29



May 3

Building Dedication & Open House

Time TBD

A celebration weekend of the completion of church-wide renovations.

Vacation Bible School and Camp EWALU Daycamp

Kids finishing PreK-4th Grade
Explore the Nature of God at Rainforest Falls!
Registration Opens April 5

July 13-17



For registrations, more details & events, visit:
firstlutherancr.org/resources/calendar



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CHRIST IS OUR LIGHT

Christmas Eve

Worship At First Lutheran

3pm Family Oriented

Traditional music featuring Junior Choir

5pm Contemporary

Celebration Band-led featuring Youth Choir & Handbells

7pm Traditional

Featuring Adult Handbells and Brass Quintet

9pm Traditional

Featuring Adult Choir and Brass Quintet

Extended preludes from organ, piano & ensembles will begin
30 minutes prior to the 3, 7, & 9 p.m. worship services.



First Lutheran

discover more : **together**

1000 Third Ave SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403
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FAITH
HOPE
LOVE
PEACE