CALL TO WORSHIP

DECEMBER 2026

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH **SONSHINE ARK PRESCHOOL & DAYCARE**

WE ARE A D.O.J.O.Y. CONGREGATION

1406 6TH Street, Floresville, TX 78114 Phone: (830) 393-2747

Pastor John Conrad Email:

Office@dojoy.org

2026 Advent Series: MAKE ROOM

Watching, Preparing, Witnessing, and Receiving Christ

Advent is a season of getting ready—not simply for Christmas, but for Christ. We watch for his coming, prepare the way for him, point others toward him, and finally receive him with faith. This Advent, we are making room for Christ. We **WATCH** for him. We **PREPARE** for him. We **WITNESS** to him. We **RECEIVE** him. When Christmas comes, we will be able to say, **"We watched. We prepared. We witnessed. And now Christ has come."**

Here's what our Advent journey will look like:



Sunday	Movement	Text	Sermon Title	Focus
Nov. 29	**WATCH**	Mark 13:24–37	**Stay Awake!**	Christ is coming
Dec. 6	**PREPARE**	Mark 1:1–8	**Prepare the Way**	Make room in your heart
Dec. 13	**WITNESS**	John 1:6–8, 19–28	**Point to the Light**	Point others to Jesus
Dec. 20	**RECEIVE**	Luke 1:26–38	**Let It Be**	Receive Christ with faith

I look forward to being with you on the journey!

Pastor John

OUR SPECIAL OFFERING THIS CHRISTMAS EVE

Restoring Hope in the Land of Eagles: The Ministry of Denis and Ela Shallari
Albanians in Action for Christ (AIAFA), through the Spiritual Orphans Network (SON)

Denis and Ela Shallari are dedicated NALC Global Workers serving in Albania, once declared the world's first atheist state. Their ministry focuses on planting churches, reaching the marginalized Roma community, and building Christ-centered families in places where the Gospel has rarely been heard.



Albania: A Nation in Need of Hope
Albania has a complicated religious history. Christianity took root there in the early Church (Romans 15:19), but 500 years of Ottoman rule brought widespread conversion to Islam. From 1946 to 1991, the communist government outlawed religion and attempted to replace faith in God with state ideology.

Although religious freedom returned in 1991, many Albanians today identify with Islam primarily as a cultural tradition rather than a personal faith. Decades of religious oppression have left deep spiritual scars and a generation with little exposure to the Bible.

Two Journeys, One Calling
Denis first encountered the Gospel in 1999 when missionaries showed *The Jesus Film* in his village. At thirteen, he chose to be baptized, despite strong opposition from his traditional Muslim father, who considered it a betrayal of the family. Eventually, both of Denis's parents also became Christians.

Ela grew up in an Orthodox family where religion was more tradition than personal practice. Her perspective changed through an evangelical children's ministry, where the unconditional love and kindness of others helped her discover her identity as a child of God.

Denis and Ela eventually met at Bible school in Albania and discovered a shared calling to bring the Gospel to their own people.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

Church planting in Albanian villages presents significant challenges. Christianity can be viewed as a rejection of one's cultural identity, while poverty and social isolation create additional hardships.



Denis and Ela believe that demonstrating Christ's love through practical service opens doors for sharing the Gospel. Their ministry includes:

- **Helping Families Recover:** In the village of Moravë, they assist families affected by flooding through practical aid and personal visits, offering both material and emotional support.
- **Reaching the Roma Community:** They build friendships with Roma families who face discrimination and extreme poverty. Recent outreach has included providing free haircuts for children in Saver and Moravë.
- **Building Strong Families:** Through Bible studies and children's ministries, they encourage biblical faith and Christ-centered homes.



A New Vision: Albanians in Action for Christ

Denis and Ela have established a new organization, Albanians in Action for Christ (AIAFA), to expand their ministry into more populated areas and villages with little or no Christian presence.



Their vision is to live among the people, build genuine relationships, and share the hope of Christ through everyday life. Their priorities include reaching Roma families, establishing Christian communities in unreached areas, and introducing the Bible to Albanians who have had little opportunity to encounter God's Word.

Our Christmas Eve offering will help Denis and Ela bring the hope of the Gospel to a nation that desperately needs it. Thank you for being part of this ministry and helping share the love of Christ in Albania!

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, NOV. 29

The advent wreath will be up! Look forward to seeing you!



CHRISTMAS CAROLING



Before you know it, it's going to be that time of the year for a trailer caravan with singing kids and O.W.L.'s (Older Wiser Lutherans) going through the streets sitting on hay bales. If you are interested in participating, sign-up sheets are in the annex. This is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 9 starting at 5pm.** The Monthly Youth Gathering will be taking part in this.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICES AT NURSING HOMES

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, DEC. 17

FELC will be having candlelight services before Christmas at all three nursing homes in Floresville. Please consider helping at one service or all three services. This is a wonderful outreach ministry and as always, assistance is needed at each service. Your participation would be greatly appreciated at any of the services.



SONSHINE ARK CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Friday, December 18 at 4:00 pm.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM, SUN., DEC. 20 DURING SECOND SERVICE.



CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES:

4:00 PM, 6:00 PM, & 10:30 PM, THURS., DEC. 24



The special offering at the Christmas Eve services will go toward the ministry of Denis and Ela Shallari in Albania. See article on their ministry within this newsletter.

ONE SERVICE ON SUN., DEC. 27 AT 9:30 AM



Given that many will be away with family, we will have one combined worship service at 9:30 AM, Sun., Dec. 27.

YEAR-END TAX-DEDUCTIBLE GIVING

There are several wonderful opportunities to help advance Christ's kingdom through your giving at First Lutheran. Our Endowment Fund continues to grow, and once it reaches $25,000, we will be able to begin issuing annual grants from its earnings. As for our General Fund, generous year-end contributions will help ensure we finish the year in the black. Our Capital Campaign is also entering its final stretch, with December 31, 2026, marking its conclusion. If you are making a special contribution to any of these funds, please be sure to designate it appropriately on your offering envelope. Thank you for your continued generosity and for the many ways you support God's work through First Lutheran!



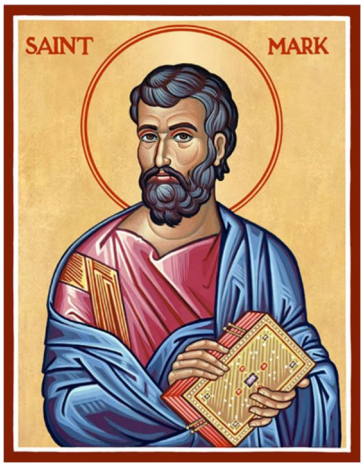
CAPITOL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Our first campaign was May 2019 thru April 2022. A little over $1,000,000 was raised. The funds went primarily to pay for the land. Our second Campaign started in Jan 2024 and will end Dec 31, 2026. It was projected we could raise $1,100,000.

$1,055,668.05	raised by end of Sept. 30, 2026
$ + 17,579.80	raised from Oct. 1 – Nov. 13, 2026
$1,073,247.85	raised during this 2nd campaign
$ 1,100,000.00	projected 2026 goal
$-1,073,247.85	raised during this 2nd campaign
$ **26,752.15**	needed to be raised by Dec. 31 to meet our pledge

We are very close to goal of $1,100,000! Thanks for all the effort everyone has put into these campaigns. I believe we can reach our goal.

The Year of Mark



A lectionary is a schedule of Scripture readings assigned to particular days throughout the church year. The New Revised Common Lectionary, used by many Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, and other churches, follows a three-year cycle beginning with Advent. Each year focuses primarily on one of the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, or Luke—with readings from John included throughout. This coming church year is **The Year of Mark**.

Authorship

Early Christian tradition identifies John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37) as the author. Mark was associated with both Paul and Peter and is traditionally believed to have recorded Peter's eyewitness accounts of Jesus' ministry. Although many modern scholars question this connection, it remains an important part of early Christian tradition.

Date

Mark is generally considered the earliest Gospel, written sometime between AD 64 and 70. Many believe it was written for Christians in Rome experiencing persecution under Emperor Nero, encouraging them to remain faithful even in suffering.

Mark's Ending

The earliest and most reliable manuscripts end at Mark 16:8, with the women fleeing the empty tomb in fear. Later manuscripts include an additional ending describing resurrection appearances and Jesus' commissioning of the disciples. Most contemporary scholars believe the shorter ending was original.

Major Emphases

- **The Cross:** Mark emphasizes both the human responsibility and divine necessity of Jesus' suffering and death.
- **Discipleship:** Following Jesus means being willing to share in his suffering and sacrifice.
- **Jesus the Teacher:** Although Mark records fewer extended teachings than the other Gospels, he frequently portrays Jesus as a teacher.
- **The Messianic Secret:** Jesus repeatedly instructs people to keep quiet about his identity and certain miracles.
- **The Son of God:** Mark emphasizes Jesus' humanity while clearly affirming his divine identity.

As we enter the Year of Mark, we have an opportunity to take a fresh look at Jesus' life, his mission, and what it means to follow him.

LAWN CREW SCHEDULE DECEMBER 2026



December	6	13	20	27
	T-2 Charles Ogburn, Clay Archer, Charles Koenig, Charlie Glowka	T-3 Danny Curtis, Frankie Dippel, Kari & Ryan Schroeder, Harold Heimer, Curtis Holcombe	T-4 Brad & Bodean Pfeil, Leon Johnson, Justin Pfeil, Ben Munoz, Brian Trees, Roy & Luke Thayer	T-1 John Moring, Doug Bielefeld, Ray McHorse, Bill Stolle

DAILY WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT



If you have not signed up for the Daily Words of Encouragement, you may do so by letting the office know. These links via text are scheduled daily at either 6 am or 12 noon Mondays through Saturdays.

CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATE



LAST CHANCE TO GET YOUR PICTURES IN!! Using the Church Connection Card, please provide any updates (cell phone numbers, email addresses, mailing/physical address) if anything has changed. An updated photo can also be taken between the services, or one can be emailed to Dan at office@dojoy.org at your convenience. We are looking to print in December!



LADIES BIBLE STUDY



Come and follow in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul as we study "To Live is Christ; The Life and Ministry of Paul." Our group normally meets on the **3rd Monday of each month** at Lord's Acres, beginning at 6:00 pm to approximately 8:15 pm. (*December meeting will be Monday, December 14!*) Bring your beverage of choice and snacks as we fellowship, study and learn of how the Apostle Paul risked life and loneliness to take Christ's gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. Contact Nina Koenig at 361-816-6721 for more information or to join our group!

FLC ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING

FLC Budget Meeting scheduled for **Sunday, December 13** at 9:30 am in the Annex. Hope to see you there!

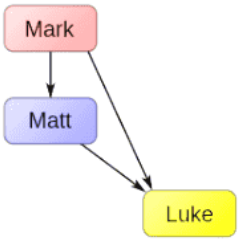


ANNUAL REPORTS DEADLINE

The deadline for annual reports for ALL ministries is **Monday, January 4, 2027**! Please submit them to the church office.

TUESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Now is your chance to get in at the beginning! On the last Sunday in November, we welcome Advent and a new Liturgical Year. It's also the start of the Lectionary Year for the Gospel of Mark, the earliest Gospel and one of the sources for Matthew and Luke.



More than the other Gospels, Mark gives us an understanding of Jesus' humanity/emotions as well as His divinity. It is believed possible that Mark was an eyewitness to the Last Supper, Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Crucifixion. He is also believed to be the John Mark who accompanied Peter and Paul on their missionary journeys.

All are welcome to come learn with us – men and women, Lutherans and others – on **Tuesday mornings** at 10:00 am in the DoJoy House as we look into the Gospel of Mark and the accompanying Old Testament reading for the coming Sunday. Please join us! If you have any questions, please contact Liz Scheitle or Clay Archer.

CALLING ALL FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH YOUTH AND FAMILIES!

We are starting a list of those planning to attend church camp at Camp Chrysalis in the summer of 2027. Kids in 1st through 11th grade can attend. We are planning for the 4th full week in June, but the dates are tentative. We will know more in December when the official camp dates are released. A sign-up sheet will be available in the annex for anyone interested in attending. Please add your name so we can begin planning fundraisers and working through registration. We look forward to another summer of faith, fun, and fellowship!



RUTH CIRCLE CHRISTMAS OUTING



Join the Ruth Circle Bible Study for a Christmas outing on Friday, December 4, 2026, at 11:00am at Nickel BBQ, 1301 Hospital Blvd, Floresville, TX 78114. **Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend!** If you plan to attend, call or text Anna Willis at 210-722-3410 by Wednesday, December 2.

Starting in 2027, the Ruth Circle Bible Study will meet at 2:00pm on the first Thursday of each month.

COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING SERVICE

A few folks from FLC joined in the Community Thanksgiving Service held at the Floresville Christian Fellowship Hall on Sunday, November 21. A lot of local churched were represented. There was scripture, live music, dancing, turkey, stuffing, vegetables, desserts, and a lot of praise and thanksgiving. It was an evening to remember!!










PRAYER REQUESTS FOR MEMBERS AND REGULAR WORSHIPERS

Jeanette Blackburn- Prayers for comfort hand healing from health issues.
Tom Ortmann- Prayers for comfort and healing.
Marcia Drane- Prayers for comfort and Peace.
Olivia Macek and Family- Prayers for complete healing and wholeness.
Sherry Lerich- Prayers for healing after fall and surgery.
Sandra Jandt- Prayers for comfort and healing, cancer treatment.
Susan Thompson- Cancer treatment, Prayers for comfort and healing.
Bonnie Caisse- Prayers for comfort and complete healing from surgery.
Vernon Blocker- Prayers for comfort and complete healing.
Natalie Adams- Prayers for continued healing and wholeness.



PRAYERS FOR THOSE IN NURSING HOMES OR LIVING ALONE

Marcella Hartmann
Sherry Lerich