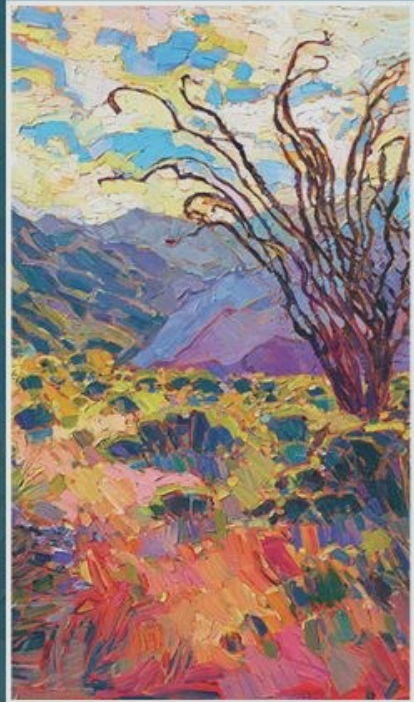


Third Sunday of Advent | Gaudete Sunday
Word & Eucharist
December 14, 2025 | 10 AM
Onsite & Online

The
desert shall
rejoice
and
blossom

ISAIAH 35:1



God Loves. We Love.
Everyone!
Dios Ama. Amamos.
Todos!

3001 Whitis Avenue
Austin, Texas 78705
info@felcaustin.org
512.478.1933 church

Everyone is welcome. This means you.

Welcome to First English Lutheran Church (FELC). We are a congregation of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). You are invited to fully participate in a community of faith and friendship that gathers for worship, relationship building, personal growth, and service in the community and the world. Following Christ's example, this congregation welcomes you exactly as you are.

Worship is at the heart of the Christian life. It is in worship that we encounter God, express our theology, define our identity, and are formed and transformed as the people of God. As we are gathered together, we receive the Word of God, give thanks, and are sent to be living, active images of divine love.

FELC is committed to the work of racial equity, justice, and advocating for marginalized groups. We welcome people in all places on the journey of faith and life. We celebrate differences in age, appearance, economic status, ethnic origin, nationality, race, family configuration, marital or relationship status, political leaning, religious background, and those who are differently abled physically or mentally. Since 1989, FELC has openly welcomed persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions to full participation in the church and society. For more on our welcome and life, visit www.felcaustin.org.

When we gather in the **Chapel of the Saints**, we gather as the saints of God in prayer, worship, and community. We gather with the saints of the past that we remember in various ways: the names engraved on the Columbarium, the Cloud of Witnesses mobile hanging in the Chapel containing the names of all who have died at FELC since 1936, and the icons displayed on the walls that remind us of people who inspire our faith and action today. The icons in the Chapel, by artist Kelly Latimore, are diverse saints, ancient and contemporary, and eight more are installed in the hallway outside the north transept entrance. The Columbarium consists of separate niches that can hold up to two urns each.

All Gender Restrooms, with infant changing tables, are located in the hallway off of the sanctuary near the fellowship hall. **Hearing assistance devices** are available for the sanctuary, with two options: an earpiece, or a hearing loop for those who use hearing aids; please connect with an usher for a hearing assistance device. **Seat cushions**, for use on our wood pews and chairs are available from an usher in the narthex.

A diversity of music is an important part of our witness, including the acoustics of our nave. As we grow our music ministry, we embark on a restoration campaign for our valued and aged pipe organ.

We acknowledge the presence of God's people living on this land long before European conquest. These lands and waters have sustained the Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Jumanos, Lipan Apache, Sana, Tonkawa, and other indigenous peoples for thousands of years. Gathering today to worship on ancestral homelands, we acknowledge and honor our indigenous sisters, siblings, and brothers who continue to care for the land and water and call this land home.

The Season of Advent

We announce the presence of God who welcomes us to name our blessings, our hurts, our need for healing, and our hopes for what is to come. The Advent liturgy reflects the mood, color, and themes of Advent, allowing us to enter this time of waiting, preparation, and hope. The primary color blue points toward expectation. The Advent wreath helps us mark time and contemplate patience even as we trust in God to act. The lighting of candles on an Advent wreath was a tradition imported from northern Europe in the nineteenth century and is now a common practice.

On November 9 we began a seven-week series called “Out of the Blue” - a time before and during the Advent season in reflective waiting for Christ’s coming into the fullness of life. The bible stories in this series follow the regular lectionary (set of readings) that are offered in many Christian churches. On December 14 we gather in the theme “Beyond the Superbloom” where we can experience the color and diversity of divine life even in the mundane. This Third Sunday of Advent takes its name from the scriptures and the Latin word *Gaudete* (“Rejoice”), the first word of the ancient opening song from 476 CE. Call it pink — or, more fittingly, rose — a traditional color on this Gaudete Sunday shows a glimpse of the joy that awaits us at Christmas.

✝ GATHERING ✝

ADVENT 3, YEAR A

The Holy Spirit gathers us into community.

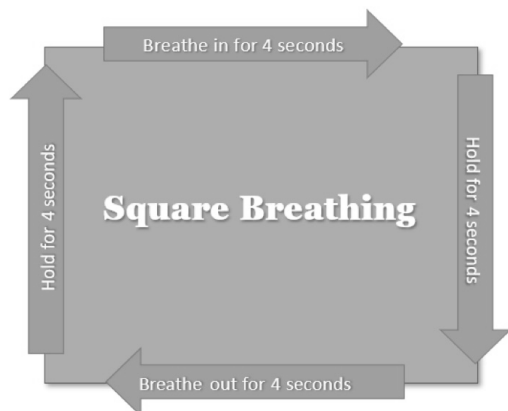
Throughout the liturgy, the singing bowls sound, calling us to focus our attention.

Welcome to Community

If this is one of your first times with First English, please use this QR code.
We are grateful for the opportunity to connect more.



Breathing Together



The assembly stands, as able.

Gathering Song O Come, O Come, *Emmanuel*

Text: Köln, 1710; Music: French (15thc.)

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.**

Refrain

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.**

- 2 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain***

- 3 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's deep shadows put to flight. *Refrain***

Greeting

From the One who was, who is, and who is to come: grace and peace are with you now.
And also with you.

One of the best-known customs for the season is the Advent wreath. The wreath and winter candle-lighting amid growing darkness strengthen some of the Advent images found in the Bible. The unbroken circle of greens is an image of everlasting life, a victory wreath, the crown of Christ, or the wheel of time itself. Christians use the wreath as a sign that Christ reaches into our time to lead us to the light of everlasting life. The four candles mark the progress of the four weeks of Advent and the growth of light. Sometimes the wreath is embellished with natural dried flowers or fruit. Its evergreen branches lead the household and the congregation to the evergreen Christmas tree. In many homes, loved ones and guests gather for prayers around the wreath.

Advent Candle Lighting


Blessed are you, God of might and majesty, for you promise to make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the strangers, and to set the prisoners free.

The third Advent Candle is lighted.

As we light these candles, satisfy our hunger with your good gifts, open our lives to the great things you are doing, and fill us with patience and joy until the coming of the Lord.

O people of joy, come, **let us enter into Zion with singing. Alleluia!**

Response



Praise to God, the One who made us. Praise to Christ, the soon - born Son.
the new* - born

Praise the Spir - it, ev - er___ with us. Praise the God - head, Three in___ One.

Clear a path! Pre-pare the way! Ad - vent leads to Christ - mas Day!

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your people, Lord God, and open our ears to the proclamation of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of mercy and justice; through Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

✝ WORD ✝

God speaks in scripture, proclamation, song, silence, and prayer, and in each person.

Faith of a Child & Spirit Space

Children and families are invited to gather near the baptismal font.

Prayer: Thank you, God, for your beautiful world, for Jesus' love,
for church friends and family, and for making me, me. Amen.

Children and families are invited to a Spirit Space in the North Transept, with a rug, floor pillows, and other supplies. Children and adults may engage in the worship service and stay together in the Spirit Space. We welcome children and the joy and curiosity they offer.

First Reading

Isaiah 35:1-10

¹ 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.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

Thanks be to God.

The psalm is chanted responsively.

Response

Luke 1:46b-55 Magnificat



- ^{46b} My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,
⁴⁷ my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,
⁴⁸ **for you Lord have looked with favor on your | lowly servant.**
From this day all generations will | call me blessed:
⁴⁹ you the Almighty have done great | things for me
and holy | is your name.
⁵⁰ **You have mercy on | those who fear you,**
from generation to | generation.
⁵¹ You have shown strength | with your arm
and scattered the proud in | their conceit,
⁵² **casting down the mighty | from their thrones**
and lifting | up the lowly.
⁵³ You have filled the hungry | with good things
and sent the rich | away empty.
⁵⁴ **You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,**
to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,
⁵⁵ **the promise made | to our forebears,**
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever.

The assembly stands to welcome Christ in the gospel.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia Plainsong



Verse: I am sending my messen- | ger before you,* who will prepare your | way before you. Matthew 11:10

The assembly repeats the Alleluias.

*The gospel is announced. Response: **Glory to you, O Lord.***

Holy Gospel

Matthew 11:2-11

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.”

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ!**

The assembly repeats the Alleluias.

Sermon

✠PRAYER & MEDITATION✠

Your prayers are invited for the earth; the nations; the poor, ill, oppressed, lonely, homeless, homebound, imprisoned, bereaved, & joyful; for justice & mercy; for the communities where we live, worship, play, & work; for ourselves, our loved ones & our enemies; & for the sorrows & thanksgivings we bring today. A prayer list is found on page 16.

Confession & Healing Prayer Station

You may make a confession of brokenness, hear God’s forgiveness, or receive healing prayer, which may include the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. Come to a minister at the kneeler in the Chapel where you may kneel, stand, or sit in the chair.

Jesse Tree Station

A Jesse Tree is a Christian Advent tradition featuring a tree or depiction of a tree with figures and symbols that help point to where family lives. From the Hebrew Scriptures, tracing Jesus's lineage (from Jesse, David's father) to his birth, symbolizing God's covenant and story salvation, the Tree is often created using a branch from a stump as a visual for Isaiah 11:1, and tying into bible stories during Advent. This Advent we include a Jesse Tree prayer station in our worship and are sharing prompts for its use that are part of the weekly Advent Devotions from our newsletter. The First English Family is invited to interact with the Jesse Tree through the prompts below. Each week there is a different invitation to bring something that can be added to the tree. You may bring an item from home and there will also be supplies available at the station to write or draw what you would like to contribute to the Jesse Tree. By the end of the Advent season, the First English Jesse Tree will be full of examples of where our family lives.

December 14: Advocacy

Find something that you're willing to speak up for. Examples include a branch from nature, a photo of people you care about, or a news article about a cause important to you. Place it near the Jesse Tree.

December 21: Joyfulness

Find something that sparks genuine joy for you, even in the midst of hard times. Examples include a program from a special event, a memento from a particular occasion, a photo of a person who brings you joy, or your baptismal candle. Place it near the Jesse Tree.

Peace Station

You may engage the map of the world on the floor in the Chapel, placing a stone on any places of war and conflict as we pray for lasting peace. The stones will be cleared each week, inviting us to engage the prayer station each Sunday.

Music during Prayer

Best of All Rooms

Text: Robert Herrick, 1591-1634; Music: Douglas E. Wagner

Christ, He requires still, where e're He comes,
To feed or lodge, to have the best of rooms,
Give Him the choice; Grant Him the nobler part,
The best of all the heart.

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn | ELW 242

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen

At the conclusion of prayer and meditation, we ask God for courage.

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths untrodden, through things unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The assembly stands, as able.

Sharing the Peace

The peace of Christ be with you all. **And also with you.**

The assembly returns to their places.

The exchange of peace within the gathered community is an ancient Christian practice. Gentle signs of reconciliation and love renew and build relationships prior to celebrating the Eucharist at Christ's table.

✠MEAL✠

God feeds and blesses us with the presence of the risen Christ.

Welcome to Communion & Offering

All of life is an offering. God has entrusted us with gifts and abilities, and we're invited to share them for the mission of the church and the care of those in need. Financial gifts may be shared through the offering plate, in post mail to the church office, or online at www.felcaustin.org/information/giving. God welcomes generosity.

The assembly stands as bread, wine, and other gifts are presented and prepared for blessing.

Offering Song

Once He Came in Blessing

1. Once he came in bless - ing, all our ills re - dress - ing; came in like-ness low - ly,
2. Still he comes with - in us, still his voice would win us from the sins that hurt us,
Son of God most ho - ly; bore the cross to save us, hope and free-dom gave us.
would to Truth con - vert us: not in tor-ment hold us, but in love en - fold us.

Text: Johann Horn, c. 1490-1547; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1829-1878, alt.

Music: Gottes Sohn Ist Kommen, Latin melody, 15th cent.

Offering Prayer

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. **Amen.**

Great Thanksgiving

God is with you. **And also with you.**

In praise, lift up your hearts. **We lift them to God!**

Let us give thanks to the God of our salvation. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Holy God, once you created humans you could not help but be in love. And from the first human mistake, you planned the path of return to your intention. Yet even when you set clear signs of promise in the sky and stars, in the mouths of prophets, or the faces of newborns, people still were astonished to receive your goodness. Lord Jesus, at your birth, your dear parents greeted you with wonder. On the cross, your enemies crushed you, then marveled as you exuded grace. Again and again we share the age-old story of your love. So with angels, archangels, all the saints, and all creation now, we sing with wonder when you appear out of the blue:

Sanctus

Plainsong



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est.
Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Thanksgiving at the Table

That night in which Jesus was at table with his friends, he loved them, and he loved them to the end, and he took bread, and gave thanks to the Father; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

We proclaim together the mystery of faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Holy God, we call on your Spirit. Come among us still. Bless this meal.
✠ May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people. Overflow your love in us.
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

All praise and thanks are yours, Holy One of all the Universe, Word of God Incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever. **Amen!**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

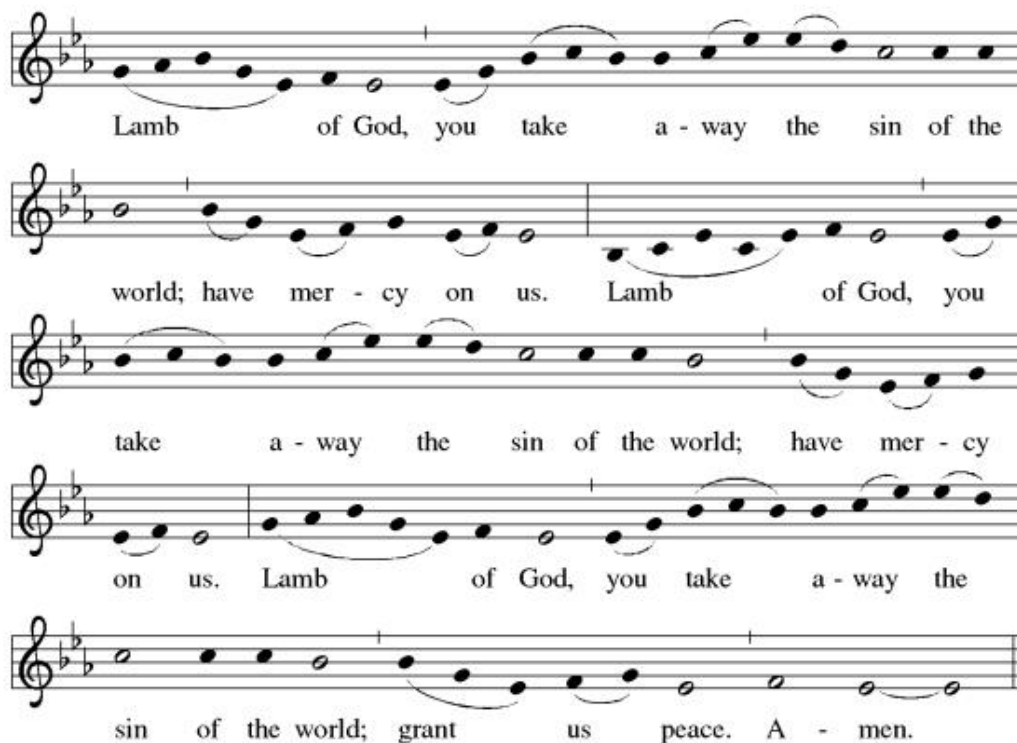
Breaking the Bread

We belong to Christ, tied to Jesus in his death and made new in his resurrection. And even when we feel unwelcome or unworthy, Jesus brings us to the table where we meet the saints and find new friends.
We break this bread and take our place at the feast that never ends.

The assembly is seated.

Song of Response

Lamb of God



Invitation to Communion & Blessing

God, in Christ, fully welcomes people of every age to this Meal, which is known by many names: the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Mass, the Sacrament, the Eucharist. We encourage you to participate in ways that are meaningful for you.

For those participating onsite, ushers will direct you by the center aisle to a station to receive bread in your hand for you to eat, then proceed to a station and receive a small cup, where wine will be poured and consumed. Gluten-free wafers/ grape juice are available upon request. If you desire not to receive bread or wine, you are invited to a station for a prayer of blessing. Return to your seat by a side aisle. We join in prayer, meditation, and music. If you desire communion or a blessing at your place, let an usher or minister know.

Communion Music

Toda la Tierra | ELW 266

Text: Alberto Taule, b. 1932; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946

Music: TODA LA TIERRA, Alberto Taule

The assembly remains seated as we offer our thanks.

Prayer after Communion

Jesus, the world looks different from your table. Here, there are no strangers, and grace is never a surprise. Life always thrives in the desert, and a promise never shades with doubt. As we rise from this table, our memories of this goodness fade. Bring us back every day to your promises: astonish us again. **Amen.**

✠ SENDING ✠

God sends us in mission and service.

Community Invitations & Announcements

The assembly stands, as able.

Blessing

May you be sent anywhere God will have you go, knowing God is with you.
May God place upon you any burden and desire, knowing God is with you
May God break any tie that binds you, knowing God is with you;
and the blessing of God, Creating, Redeeming, ✠ and Sustaining,
continue with you, and those you love, serve, and challenge, this day and forever. **Amen.**

Sending Song

Prepare the Royal Highway | ELW 264

Text: Frans Mikael Franzen, 1772-1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*

Music: BEREDEN VAG FOR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.

Dismissal to Mission

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Hospitality

✝ Our Worship Has Ended. Our Service Begins ✝

LEADERS IN LEARNING, LITURGY, & HOSPITALITY | SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14

Ministers	All the People of God
Altar Care Server	Margaret Bruesch
Assisting Minister	Betsy Appleton
Building Open/Close	LaRu Woody
Faith Formation	Merrily Porter, Leigh Northcutt-Benson
Lector	Desmond Peterson
Livestream Minister	JP Northcutt-Benson
Music Ministers	FELC Choir; Cantor Bryan Rust
Presiding & Preaching	Pastor Katie Rode
Usher	Terry Porter

CAREGIVER’S CIRCLE | MONDAY, DECEMBER 15

Caregiving can be very isolating at times. Even though motivated by love, it can lead to moments of resentment and dismay. It is also rewarding, knowing that God is enabling you to love, sometimes sacrificially. Come and hear how others are coping and let us support you. We’re ready to listen. And what you share may be just what someone else needs to hear! The FELC Caregiver’s Circle meets monthly on the third Monday, 7-8:30 pm on Zoom. Each caregiver shares as much or as little as desired, hears about available resources, shares ideas, and makes time for prayer and meditation. Participants pledge strict confidentiality to one another. All are welcome to the next meeting on Monday, December 15, 7-8:30 pm. Contact Barbara Wiederaenders, bwiederaenders@att.net, to request the Zoom link for the meeting.

AUSTIN CANTORUM | SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20

Join FELC music partner Austin Cantorum on Saturday, December 20 at 7:30 pm for an evening of Lessons and Carols with an Austin twist! Pairing classic holiday favorites and sing-along carols with new choral works by local composers and heartfelt memories shared by Austinites. This relaxing and intimate concert will explore some of the many ways that Austin celebrates the season AND comes with free holiday cookies! Featuring special guests Flutist Adrienne Inglis and Pianist Benjamin Dia. Free admission with suggested donation of \$25. RSVP at austincantorum.com to secure your spot today!

PRAYER CONCERNS & JOYS

As a community of faith, we pray for:

people of various faith traditions, & people of goodwill,
including those celebrating Hanukkah
FELC congregation, council, & our mission & ministry;
benevolence ministry partners and their leaders: Micah 6 Food Ministries,
LuMin, Global Refuge, & Casa Marianella;
the whole church & church leaders throughout the world;
citizens & leaders of, immigrants, & refugees to the United States;
places of violence, war, oppression, disaster, conflict & recovery;
those who advocate for healing, safety, justice, inclusion, & equity;
all in need of safe shelter, nourishing food, & quality care, & for those who offer it;
all living with addiction, cancer, grief, & with spiritual, health, & employment needs;
all who are homebound;
safety & joy for all traveling, especially during holiday times;
Susan Johnson & family, on the death her mother, Evelyn Harris, age 103;
Oliver & Anita Rajamani, on the death of Oliver's father, Dr. Alfred Rajamani;
Leon Noren, for continuing recovery & health;
Stan Cravatt & Ann Graham, as Stan continues chemotherapy;
Emily Schottmann, undergoing cancer treatment;
Fred & Sonia Ralls Dalbey, friends of Dave & Nancy Neuse,
upon Fred's rapid decline in health;
strength & a spirit of justice for all who have worked & continue to support
peacemaking efforts in Gaza and in Ukraine;
Israeli prisoners & detained Palestinians released;
all in any need & thanksgiving.

The FELC Prayer Circle gathers faithfully to offer prayer. Contact: bschutz@sbcglobal.net.

CELEBRATE ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, & EPIPHANY

Sundays in Advent | December 14, 21 | 10:00 am

Onsite & YouTube livestream

Jesus is coming!

Wednesdays in Advent Evening Prayer | December 17 | 7:00 pm

Holden Evening Prayer by Candlelight

Onsite & YouTube livestream

Blue Christmas Winter Solstice | Sunday, December 21 | 5 pm

A service of quiet reflection in this holiday season

Onsite & YouTube livestream

Christmas Eve | Wednesday, December 24 | 7:00 pm

Onsite & YouTube livestream

Holy Communion & Candlelight | 7:00 pm

Prelude Music begins at 6:45 pm

Sunday after Christmas Lessons & Carols | December 28 | 10:00 am

Onsite & YouTube livestream

Worship together with scripture, poetry, and music for Christmas

Epiphany Sunday | January 4, 2025 | 10:00 am

Onsite & YouTube livestream

Epiphany Celebration Hospitality

WELCOME TO FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH

The mission of First English Lutheran Church is to declare the Word of God and the love of Jesus Christ through proclamation, teaching, worship, and a caring ministry to all people. Visit felcaustin.org to learn more about the FELC welcome, worship, community life, learning, engagement, racial justice, and reconciliation ministries. To subscribe to a weekly email newsletter, contact office@felcaustin.org.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL

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felcpresident@felcaustin.org
Vice President Leigh Northcutt-Benson
Secretary Nancy Baden
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Teresa del Aguila & family
FELC Bookkeeper
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Worship Ministry
Trish Karli
Learning Ministry
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Betsy Appleton

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