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FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

December 28, 2025

God Still Speaks



Today's gospel reading contains a terrible story. There is no way around that fact; there is no way to wrap this account in fancy paper and tie it with a bow, disguising the fact that this is a terrible story. There have always been terrible stories; maybe there always will be. And yet, tucked in and around and between Bible stories of death, despair, and hopelessness are often stories of new life, courage, and hope. This gospel text is no exception.

Where is God when evil happens? This is a question people have pondered since time began. What the Bible tells us over and over is that God never abandons people, no matter how bad things get. As God was with Joseph, Mary, and Jesus as they rushed to leave the area and find shelter in Egypt, God was with all families in Bethlehem too, weeping alongside them.

In today's story, God speaks to Joseph through his dreams. Remarkably, Joseph responds by fleeing to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, and then returning to Judea after Herod dies. While we're more likely to set dreams aside as we look at all the facts and weigh all our options, Joseph simply pays attention and acts. If he had waited for some sort of proof that Egypt was the only way out for him and his family, this would be a very different story.

God still speaks to us today, especially in holy baptism, holy communion, and the Bible. In the gospel reading, what might God be saying to you and to your faith community? How might you spend more time listening for God this week?

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Pastor: Rev. Dr. Wendy S. Farone

Assisting Minister: Loran Bohman

Lector: Daisy Shields

Organist: Drew Pogyor

Altar Care: Loran Bohman

Altar Flowers: are given to the glory of God by Jessica Wurm in honor of her brother Zach Wurm's birthday.

The Sanctuary Light: is given to the glory of God by Barbara Jo Cush in memory of Mathilda Benson.

The Columbarium Light: is given to the glory of God.

Carols for Sunday

ELW 263 Savior of the Nations, Come

ELW 282 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

ELW 279 O Little Town of Bethlehem

ELW 267 Joy to the World

ELW 277 Away in a Manger

ELW 270 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

ELW 283 O Come, All Ye Faithful

Communion- If you need assistance or are unable to come to the communion rail, stay in your pew, and the Pastor will come to you. If you are unable to receive either the consecrated bread or wine, receiving either one is a complete and valid reception.

Membership- There are many ways to be connected with our congregation. Everyone is welcome to participate in any congregation activities, and anyone baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is welcome to Holy Communion. We welcome your membership request.

December 21, 2025 Attendance: 39

Bible Study Attendance: 20

Offerings:

Weekly Need: \$3,300.00

December 7, 2025: \$2,070.00

Congregation Good Gifts 2025 donation: \$1,468.00

Faith Announcements:

Pastor Wendy's Installation will take place on Sunday, January 4th at 3 pm. Please bring your leftover Christmas cookies! There is also a covered dish sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

Pastor's Podcast- New episode!

Understanding Church: Chatting with Bishop Melissa Stoller

<https://www.belc.org/podcast/> or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Welcome, Visitors and Guests,

We are glad you are here! We welcome you to participate fully in worship and to engage in all church activities. If you are considering joining as a member or have any questions, please get in touch with Pastor Wendy Farone at (412) 443-9122 (c), the Church Office at (412) 673-2296, or email flcpastorwendy@gmail.com. We look forward to speaking with you soon.

Everyone needs a church home and family. We hope to be yours!

Pastor Wendy

Council Meeting: January 15, 2026 at 12:30 pm

Bible Storytelling Updates!

Bible Study will be on break on December 30th. January 6, Tuesday, 10:00, we continue with our study of the complex book of Hebrews.

Prayer List October - December 2025

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| <u>Nikki</u> Amhurst | <u>John</u> Konik & Family |
| <u>Katie</u> Bachinger | <u>Teresa</u> M |
| <u>Becky</u> Ball | <u>Berty</u> McMillen |
| <u>Jean</u> Bickerstaff | <u>Georgina</u> McMarlin |
| <u>Jean</u> Bodenlos | <u>Marlene</u> Newman |
| <u>Barry</u> D | <u>Helen</u> Pula |
| <u>Kara</u> Eaton | <u>Corey</u> Rhodes |
| <u>Rose</u> Gombas | <u>Tracy</u> Scott |
| <u>Heather</u> Grantz | <u>Sandy</u> Seitz |
| <u>Bill</u> Grimm | <u>Maxine</u> Smith |
| <u>Jerry</u> Groves | <u>Steven</u> T |
| <u>Eric</u> Harshman | <u>Theresa</u> Zell |
| <u>Renee</u> K | <u>Nick</u> |
| <u>Ken</u> K | <u>Dominick Family</u> |
| <u>Ellio</u> Keiser | <u>Filapose Family</u> |
| <u>Nancy</u> Kimling | <u>Mundy Family</u> |
| <u>Bill</u> Kimling | |

*Please email flcwhiteoak@gmail.com for any additions or removals from this list.

Synod Weekly Announcements: Further Info at swpasynod.org

Installation of Pastor Terri Luper Church

Sunday, January 11: 3PM

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church

3104 West Liberty Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 1521

Your prayers and presence are requested as Pastor Terri Luper Church is installed as pastor of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries. Ministers are invited to vest and process; the color of the day is white. Refreshments to follow, RSVP to bethany-dormont@verizon.net.

*They will always be remembered and greatly praised,
because they were kind and freely gave to the poor*

~Psalm 112:9

Faith Lutheran Church Congregants Built a Barnyard!



The generosity of this congregation never fails to amaze me! Who needs turtle doves when your kindness offers “Good Gifts” to those in need through the ELCA World Hunger efforts?

Purchases:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| 1 Cow- | produces a few gallons of milk each day-- |
| 1 Herd of Goats- | they survive in challenging conditions and offer daily milk |
| 8 Piglets- | offers a source of natural fertilizer for crops, and if needed, butchering can produce cash for necessary items such as doctor's visits and to cover school costs |
| 8 Roosters- | adding a rooster to a chicken coop causes more chickens and eggs |
| 15 Chicks (3)- | when adults, these chicks provide protein-rich meals through their meat and egg production |
| 4 Honey bees- | this buzzworthy gift supports farmers to grow colonies of pollinators |

Thank you so very much for serving the Lord by serving His people all around the world.

Peace,
Pastor Wendy

Upcoming Commemorations

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

Sunday, December 28, 2025

This day commemorates the young children killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his jealous attempt to murder the baby Jesus, a sobering reminder of the evil that led Christ to be born for our salvation.

Name of Jesus

Thursday, January 1, 2026

By Jewish law, every baby boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day of life, so on the eighth day of Christmas the church celebrates this event in Jesus' life. The keeping of the covenant as well as Jesus' name are signs of God's salvation given to us through him.

Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, renewer of the church, died 1872

Friday, January 2, 2026

Loehe was a pastor in nineteenth-century Germany. Loehe's chief concern was that a congregation find its life in the holy communion, and from that source evangelism and social ministries would flow. He sent pastors to North America, Australia, New Guinea, Brazil, and Ukraine.