



The Image

December 2020



Immanuel Lutheran Church

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Dear People of Immanuel,

Advent and Christmas greetings!

I hope in the midst of this strange Christmas season you can still find joy in anticipating and celebrating the birth of Christ. Advent often focuses on the theme of waiting. We are waiting to celebrate the birth of Christ and we are waiting to fully experience the presence of Christ. This year we know all about waiting! This year we are learning the lessons of waiting in a unique way, due to the pandemic. Many of you have had a lot of waiting to do. Perhaps waiting on a test result, waiting until your quarantine is over, waiting to hear from a loved one that you haven't seen in a while, or waiting for your body to heal. We embody Advent this year.

Like Advent, this time of waiting because of COVID-19 is purposeful. We wait to gather in person for worship, so that we can stay safe. We wait for a vaccine that will protect us. We wait to do our usual activities to help the hospitals with overcrowding. Our waiting has purpose. Here at church we are trying to make the most of this time of waiting, by making necessary repairs and improvements to the sanctuary. The walls are being restored and painted. The organ will be reinstalled, hopefully in working order! The altar will be covered in new paraments. These outward changes will hopefully be a metaphor of the spiritual transformation we are undergoing as God's people as well. Maybe this time of waiting can make us more compassionate and loving people. Maybe this time of waiting can help us to address issues of inequity that our communities face. Maybe this time of waiting can help you slow down and savor the quieter moments of life!



Although it is important and purposeful, our waiting is not forever. Like Advent, it is only a season. We all lament the loss of our usual traditions, especially during the holidays. Yet we hold onto the hope that we will once again join our voices in song and our bodies in embraces. This waiting is not forever. Hold tight, dear church! God enters into our waiting. Christ will be born anew in our hearts again this year. Thanks be to God!

Christmas blessings!

Pastor Jamie Brieske



Are you missing our online worship services because you don't have access to the technology needed to view them? We have a solution for you! A grant was approved by the Immanuel Trust Fund to purchase iPads that will be available for congregation members to borrow. They will be all ready to go with everything you need to watch the worship service, and training on how to use them will be provided. Please contact the church office if you have questions, would like more details or would like to participate in this program.



01 Rylie Hansen
 04 Aidan Tarpenning
 04 Elijah Drier
 05 Kevin Bogstad
 05 Sarah Nix
 06 Stephanie Fey
 08 Donna Lehmkuhl
 10 Diane Kaufmann
 10 Kurt Lothe
 12 Marty Fankhauser
 12 Michael Hokanson
 13 Dave Langhus
 13 Elizabeth Redetzke
 13 Ava Weber
 13 Rozi Balts
 14 Erv LaFave
 14 Lynn Fox
 14 Jennifer Lashley
 15 Raegan Schumacher
 16 Greg Kaufmann

16 Dave Christopher
 16 Erika Albano
 19 Eric Lundberg
 20 Campbell Dean
 21 John Bowman
 22 Mark Olsen
 22 Carrie Hansen
 22 Karyn Odell
 22 Amber Calkins
 23 Jennifer Dean
 23 Karla Hegde
 24 Melissa Haas
 24 Leah Carter
 26 Emilie Anderson
 26 Bryon Rassbach
 27 Klair Hanson
 28 Diane Blanshan
 28 Nathan Schlieve
 29 Carol Hanson



06 Mike & Luella Calkins
 20 Nathan & Linda Aaseng
 27 Greg & Diane Kaufmann
 31 Chuck & Becky Ihle



Due to the current situation with the COVID-19 virus in our community, the Immanuel Council has decided it's in the best interest of our staff and visitors to the church to close the building. Preschool and Camp Create closed on November 19,

and the church office closed on November 23. Our staff continues to work from home, so if you have any questions or needs, please email a staff member or call the church office and leave a message. You can also reach Pastor Jamie on her cell phone, 715-563-3145.



Thanksgiving Baskets

Thanks to your very generous donations, we were able to help several families enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Thank you to all who contributed!!



An Update from our Care Ministry Leader, Janet Carlson

Did you know that several ministries have been put in place during this time of COVID-19 to help our members who might be feeling isolated, vulnerable or alone?

- Calling Ministry - members of Immanuel will call to say hi, see how you're doing and ask if you need help with anything. If you are not receiving a call and would like to, please let me know.
- Helping Hands Ministry - Need help with groceries, running other errands? Let one of our "helping hands" do it for you! Contact the church office to make arrangements.
- Eucharistic Ministry - this ministry is supported by Pastor Jamie, myself and six

other trained Eucharistic Ministers. For the time-being, until it is safe to be face-to-face again, communion will be done by phone, using either your own bread and wine/grape juice or disposable elements from the church (that your Eucharistic Minister will deliver to you). If you would like to have a Eucharistic Partner, please let me know.

I ask for your prayers as we continue to find inventive ways to continue to work as a caring congregation. I welcome any and all Ideas!

Youth and Family Ministry

~Alyssa Engedal

Journey of Faith Updates:

For those who have been following along on our New Testament reading journey, we have read about the birth of Jesus, his childhood and much of his life & ministry. In January our stories will focus on the final days of Jesus' life and end with the story of Pentecost - often called the birthday of the church! It would be fun to celebrate that story with a party at home! Once you've completed all the stories, text a picture of your Challenge Worksheet to me and I will send you a little something to recognize your accomplishment.



We are working on some new, fun and creative ways to celebrate Advent & Christmas together (while apart!). I am putting together new take home bags for each of our Journey of Faith families. For those who haven't yet picked up their bags, these can be picked up from the church between 10:00 - 11:00 AM on Sunday, November 29 or 4:00-5:00 PM on Wednesday, December 2. If you are unable to pick up your bag during those times, please contact me to make other arrangements.

Our Journey of Faith families are also going to be working together (apart!) to create a virtual sharing of the Christmas story. This will be available on our social media pages beginning on December 20, and we will also have a Zoom Party that day and watch the video together! If your family is interested in participating in the video or playing special music, please let me know.

High School Ministry:

Thank you to the five high school youth who served at The Community Table in November! It was a great opportunity to be together while serving our community. We look forward to hopefully serving again in January, so watch for the sign up link.

The Synod Youth Board will be offering (at least) one more opportunity to gather via Zoom for prayer and conversation with other high school youth from our Synod. The December date is Sunday, December 20 at 8 pm. The Zoom link is available on the SYB website. (www.nswsi.org/synod-youth-board)

SHYN Christmas Party - join me for a Zoom party on Wednesday, December 16 at 7:30 pm! We will play (virtual) games and I will have (actual) prizes!

Summer Trip - Our high school & college youth are planning to go on a summer trip next year, we just don't know yet what it will look like! I have been in conversation with some organization leaders, as well as brainstorming with colleagues to come up with a safe, fun, flexible trip. We will begin officially forming our team and starting our fundraising soon! I will share more information as I have it.

Middle School:

Our Middle School youth have been gathering weekly on Zoom for Confirmation Classes, and we are having a great time! We have been studying the life and legacy of Martin Luther, and we end each class with a quiz and a prize for all correct answers...and we've been giving lots of prizes away! We are thankful for technology that allows us to remain connected.

Immanuel Lutheran Church Council Minutes November 17, 2020

Council Members Present: Emilie Anderson, Karen Betzig-Lundbergh, Sandra LaValley, Pastor Jamie Brieske, Calvin Dean, Jennifer Dean, Natalie Forrest, Becky Ivey, Lang Jacobson, Keith Martin, Bill Schwengel, Bob Wilcox.

Absent: Al Ludwig

Gathering

Devotion - Bob shared with us his faith journey and the enjoyment of church and the strong connections made along the way. He has especially enjoyed the cadence of church life, in which an expectation of church on Sunday leads to reflection during the week of the lesson, and a return on the next Sunday, especially when sharing the church experience with his children and family.

Thank you notes - Council would like to thank Don Schlieve, Mary Bischel, Brian Bischel, Al Ludwig, and Bill Schwengel for cleaning and preparing the building and grounds for winter through a variety of working including removing leaves and clearing drains. The council would also like to thank Kitty for assisting the COVID team on a continual basis as they navigate the needs of our church and community.

Minutes

October minutes were approved via email and submitted for The Image.

Reports

Pastor - The report can be found on the shared drive. Services will continue in a live stream format with the virtual sharing of communion twice per month as available.

Property - The report can be found on the shared drive. Metzenbauer Painting will potentially be starting the work in the sanctuary later in the month. The furniture in the sanctuary has been moved out in preparation for the work to begin and the organ pipes have been moved to the community room. Installation of the organ will resume when the sanctuary work is completed. A Metzenbauer designer helped select a color and when the narthex and Luther Hall are due for repainting, corresponding colors will be used. A work day was completed by those who could safely meet with precautions in place. The team of volunteers, Don S., Mary B., Brian B., Al L, and Bill S. collected and bagged leaves and checked that the roof was clear around drains. Bill and the property committee will be looking ahead to determine future maintenance needs for 2021 to bring before the council.

Finance - The reports can be found on the shared drive. The paper form of the Payment Protection Plan forgiveness application has been prepared and approved by the finance committee. RCU is still not prepared for the online form to be launched yet; however, a soft opening of the online system may launch via email on Nov 30th. Discussion was brought up regarding the potential of developing a reserve fund to set funds aside to assist in protecting against any future emergency or unexpected hardship, such as the large-scale impact this past year has brought. Another idea discussed was for the church to give in support of others, such as donating to the foundation or tithing to a charitable organization. The council will seek the input of Casper Haas and the finance committee with these ideas.

A motion was made by Becky to approve the reports, seconded by Keith, and passed unanimously.

New Business

Food Pantry-hours, lighting: The hours of the food pantry have been 4:00 - 6:30 p.m., with the majority of the clients arriving before 6:00 p.m. With the regular volunteers staying on to support this ministry, it has been decided that the hours may need to be shortened by 30 minutes for the time being. This will result in the pantry closing at 6:00 .pm. LIGHTING: It has been suggested we consider adding a little lighting to the entrance that is currently used for the food pantry. A simple solution will be looked into for this need, such as adding solar lights, to help provide a safe entrance for the food pantry.

Virtual Christmas: One live stream service will be provided for viewing on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Pre-school update: Currently the CAW 4K program is still meeting in person, similar to other 4Ks in the community at this time. Katy LoRusso would like to continue the in person instruction with the two small classes. The Immanuel COVID planning team will connect with Katy and others to assist in this process. Camp Create, the 2-year old program will be pulled back for December and will not meet in person.

Old Business

COVID Planning Committee - Plan Approval: The COVID Team Plan has been shared with council via the shared drive. The team is requesting council's approval of the plan. Discussion suggested adding a COVID team report to the monthly reports reviewed and approved by the council as this is an ad hoc committee and will work closely with council. Keith made a motion to approve the COVID team's plan, it was seconded by Bob, and passed unanimously.

Closing Prayer - Lang led us in a closing prayer.

Adjournment - Natalie made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Emilie seconded the motion, and the council unanimously passed the motion.



The CRISIS of CHRISTMAS¹

Dear Members and Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

Christmas 2020 will occur while we are living through of a series of crises. Here's the list: the pandemic, economic losses, protests against racial injustices, an ongoing climate crisis, and a divided country following a contentious

presidential election. I'm not going to lie, it's been stressful for me, and I imagine it has been for you, too. As Christians, we have been moving through these crisis-filled days with the expectation that God is present and God's promises are true. We move forward with hope.

The two Chinese characters for the word “**crisis**,” 危机, have often been translated as “danger” and “opportunity.” Others say that a better translation is “danger” and “change point.” What dangers do you see as your congregation moves toward celebrating the Birth of our Savior – Christmas - in a totally new way? What “opportunities” or “change points” do you see that could propel your church forward in a positive way into God's future?

Mary experienced a theological crisis when the angel Gabriel revealed to her God's plan to enter this world by the baby in her womb. Mary's body was the center of a theological crisis² - much like the theological crisis caused by a virus that has invaded the bodies of our loved ones, and the theological crisis of abused and broken black and brown bodies, and the theological crisis experienced in the misuse of this planet on which all bodies live. Where is God in the crisis? What does this mean?

In a crisis, God comes to us. John 1:1,14 *In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and lived among us.* Jesus is God, divine *and* human. God took up residence and moved into our neighborhood. God goes where God's people go and is who the people are.³ This is the theological promise of John's gospel. God is present with us in our times of crisis and suffering. This is the foundation of Luther's theology of the cross.

God is revealed through the crisis of Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' untimely birth in a Bethlehem barn. God is revealed in the crucifixion; through the body of Jesus, hanging on a cross. God is revealed through the risen body of Jesus on Easter Morning.

No matter how different Christmas is for you this year, no matter what crisis arises, God is there, present as promised, in the WORD made flesh. May the story of Jesus' birth bring you much needed joy and hope this holiday season and may the presence of God comfort you in the new year.

AMEN

Rev. Laurie Sta. Johnson

¹ Photo credit: Design by Artist Paul Johnson for the 2019 Concordia College Christmas Concert Mural

² Thank you to Dr. Karoline Lewis for her thought provoking presentation to NWSWI on 11/7/2020 that inspired this article.

³ Dr. Karoline Lewis, Working Preacher.org, Dec. 2016

December 2020

If you shop on Amazon, log into Amazon Smile. We receive \$ from your purchases. <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/39-0990139>

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29 Advent 1 9 AM Livestream service	30 6:30 PM - H3 (Zoom) 4:00-6:00 PM Food Pantry open	1 9:30 AM H3 (Zoom)	2 10 AM Sr Bible Study via Zoom 6 PM WoW via Zoom 6:45 PM Confirmation (Zoom) 7:30 PM Mentor meeting	3	4	5
6 Advent 2 9 AM Livestream service	7 6:30 PM - H3 (Zoom) 4:00-6:00 PM Food Pantry open	8 9:30 AM H3 (Zoom)	9 10 AM Sr Bible Study via Zoom 6 PM WoW via Zoom 6:45 PM Confirmation (Zoom)	10	11	12
13 Advent 3 9 AM Livestream service	14 6:30 PM - H3 (Zoom) 4:00-6:00 PM Food Pantry open	15 9:30 AM H3 (Zoom) 7 PM Council Mtg	16 10 AM Sr Bible Study via Zoom 6 PM WoW via Zoom 6:45 PM Confirmation (Zoom)	17	18	19
20 Advent 4 9 AM Premiere (Facebook) of Immanuel Lessons & Carols	21 4:00-6:00 PM Food Pantry open	22	23 Immanuel serves @ Community Table No Sr. Bible Study No WoW or confirmation	24 2 PM - Livestream Christmas service	25	26
27 9 AM Premiere (Facebook) ELCA Lessons & Carols	28 4:00-6:00 PM Food Pantry open	29	30 No WoW or confirmation No Sr. Bible Study	31		



Immanuel Lutheran Church
3214 Golf Road
Eau Claire, WI 54701
Address service required

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*A congregation of the
Northwest Synod of the ELCA of Wisconsin*