

Immanuel Lutheran News

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This month I'm adapting an article I read online for all to think about.

10 Things I Wish Church Members Knew About Ministry This is from a pastor's perspective. I've lost who wrote the original article.

1. I wish people would stop obsessing over the style of music. It grieves the heart of God when his people use worship as a point of **division** instead of **unity**. Many times we make this an issue of newer vs. older music, but that argument misses the point. Rather, it's an issue of **good vs. poor music**. There is **older music that is good**, and **older music that is poor**. There is also **newer music that is good**, and **newer music that is poor**. The wise worship leader will be able to tell the difference, and the mature church member will be able to participate in a style that is relevant to the church's ministry, despite his or her personal preference.

It's probably helpful for church members to know what constitutes a good worship song. Here are some criteria I follow:

- **It's singable.** The average person should be able to learn it after hearing it a few times.
- **It's theologically sound.** The song should reflect good Lutheran biblical theology. Jesus is at the center of the meaning. Works righteousness is nowhere present. It speaks through both the law and the gospel (If you don't know what this is, see me soon.) It tells us we should expect God to communicate with us through Scripture, not through our emotions, intuition, mother nature, or to expect immediate revelations from God apart from the Bible. If it sings about love, it should be primarily speaking about God's love for sinners, not our love for God, which is at best lukewarm most of the time.

- **It's playable.** Church musicians should be able to play and lead the song with excellence (assuming they have practiced and prepared).
- **It's understandable.** The message of the song should be clear and unambiguous.

2. I wish you knew how much we need your help. You can pretty much assume that in any given church, 10% of the people do 90% of the work. It takes a small army of volunteers to make things happen each week. Most people come to church and don't think about how the sound is operated, the communion is prepared, the offering is counted, how the music is selected, or any of a hundred other large and small tasks get done. When you give your time, even just an hour or two a week to help us, it makes a tremendous difference. And not just for a week or a year—**it makes a difference for eternity.**

3. I wish you would come to me personally (and privately) when you have a complaint. Don't write a letter (especially an anonymous one). Don't call me on the phone or send an email. Don't talk to someone else about the issue. Don't air your grievance on social media. Please, come to me personally if you are unhappy about something I have done (or haven't done). If you don't have the courage to speak to someone personally about a complaint, how can a correction be made? In addition, don't complain about a problem unless you plan to be part of the solution. This is not an attempt to cover over my (our) problems, but if we are not going to follow Jesus' teaching about how to deal with conflict (Matthew 18:15 ff), we are adding to the problem. I really try hard not to be a problem to you and to be approachable.

4. I wish everyone in our church would help visitors feel welcome. I realize that on Sunday mornings you like to talk to your friends. If it feels like a family reunion, it's

because it is! But imagine the first time you walk into a new place. You want to feel welcomed and accepted, not ignored. Unfortunately, that's how many church visitors and newer members feel when we don't intentionally try to welcome them in our services. Can you take a few minutes on Sunday mornings to spot new people and say hello? It could mean the difference between someone returning, or walking out the door and never coming back. How about one Sunday a month you look for someone you don't know, introduce yourself, and offer to take them out to lunch? That would go a long way to making Immanuel a friendlier church and a place where friends are made.

5. I wish more parents took responsibility for spiritual leadership in their homes. We have a great parochial school association. However, many parents seem to believe that it's the job of the church and the school teachers to educate their children about spiritual matters. While the church certainly plays an important role, the parents have the primary responsibility for their children's spiritual welfare. (See Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6.)

Fathers, you play an especially important role as the leaders at home. You set the spiritual temperature for your family. Will you rise to the challenge?

6. I wish more men would rise to the challenge of leadership. Men have become strangely passive in our culture. Fewer and fewer men are rising up as good, strong, godly leaders in their homes, businesses, communities and churches.

To the younger men, I say: There is a cultural expectation that adolescence now extends into your 20's, and that you need to take that decade to shrug off as much real responsibility as possible as you "find yourself." There's an old Latin phrase that describes this concept well: **a load of garbage**. You don't need to go find yourself, you need to lose yourself by serving others and doing work that matters. Take your 20's to invest as much as

you can in yourself and your future in the church.

To the men in mid-life I say: This is a busy time in your life. You are deep into your families and careers, and have little time for other things. But we need your expertise, your passion, your leadership in the church. Don't put God on the back burner. Make Him a priority for the sake of your family, the church, and your legacy.

To the older men, I say: Church has changed a lot in your lifetime. It's easy to be frustrated, I realize. But please don't be just a passive observer. We need your experience and your wisdom. We need you to mentor younger men. You're not finished making a difference!

To the men who are involved, to the men who pray and lead, to the men who serve with humility, I say this: A very sincere thank you.

7. I wish more people would trust God with their money. Any time I teach about stewardship, it's an uphill battle because everyone believes the church only talks about money. It's definitely not all about money, but it's pretty high on the priority list of teaching topics. The reason is because money touches every aspect of your life. There is a spiritual component to money that we cannot dismiss. When you begin to trust God with your money and use it according to His principles, strange (but good!) things begin to happen. I just wish more people would take that step of faith and experience the blessings God has in store for them.

8. I wish people would make a decision about a church home and stick with it. Maybe I'm a little old-fashioned, but whatever happened to loyalty? These days, many families are content to float in and out of churches like spiritual butterflies, never setting down roots or establishing deep relationships. Churches should not be treated like Target and Walmart, where you can hop in and out according to which one has the best deal going this week. If you want to stay, then stay and be a fully functioning member. If you want to leave, I hope you find a church home that's a

good fit. But I beg you, please don't come expecting to only receive and never contribute your time and resources.

9. I wish you knew how much your encouragement means. I usually do a pretty good job of hiding discouragement. When you send me an encouraging email or note, when you pray for me personally, when you show love to my family, when you offer to help...**that's huge.** Your encouragement can turn my whole week around. The main point here is that pastors and church members should work together in humility, learn from one another, and respect each other. That's what makes the Church so awesome: we all play different roles, but we're unified as one in the body of Christ.

10. I wish you know how much I appreciate you. Immanuel has been so supportive over the past twelve years I have been your pastor. You seem to know how busy I am in a church this size teaching catechism classes, visiting the sick and elderly, studying for sermons and classes I teach, preparing and leading worship services, and having meetings. You have supported the church so that I have excellent health insurance. You know we have needed that the past three years when Lisa was treated for breast cancer and my daughter Lillian had extensive brain cancer surgery and treatment. It's been the hardest time of my life, but it seems it has been the best part of my ministry. I don't know how that is possible, but it is the truth.

When you show up for worship every weekend, I am thrilled to see you! That's the number one way I know that what I am doing is making a difference for the kingdom of God. I know I make mistakes and could do better, but you keep coming anyway. That has to be because you know how much God loves you through Jesus. You hear and experience that at church and just have to be there. I really want to keep serving as your pastor as long as God enables me. You are my family here in Illinois (although we do like to get back to Michigan once in a while to visit our birth families). I thank God everyday for all of you.

My prayer to God is that you will have a blessed Christmas, and a New Year full of faith in Jesus' great love for you.

Pastor (and Lisa) Wright

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

- Christmas Eve Family Service 6:30 PM
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 11PM
- Christmas Day Festival Service 9:00 AM
(*No Saturday Evening Service on 12/25*)
- Sunday After Christmas, December 26 (at regular times)

Prayer Corner

- For healing: Debi Bernahl, Barb Busby, Roumaine Dammermann, Tiffany Dunaway, Gloria Fortkamp, Abbey Franzen, Keith Green, Gerald Holste, Pam Kepley, Todd Luedtke, Margaret Miller, JR Newby, Ruth Ann Owens, Evelyn Shumaker, Declan Robertson, Shirley Siddens, Norma Siebert, Lilly Wright and others.
- Comfort to the family and friends of Carl Becker, Angela Ohnesorge and Barbara Smith.
- Church staff, ALIS school staff and families.
- For Lutheran missionary Ted Krey & Family
- For our government for protection of unborn children and elderly
- For peace in the world, For Afghanistan, an end to violence in the name of God, and for harmony among nations.
- For those persecuted for their faith in Jesus.
- For police, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel, and those who serve in our military and their families

Information from Andy and the LYF

Together Time- Resumes Jan. 12th. Jr. High 5:00-7:30 PM. Sr. High 6:00-8:30 PM

LCMS Gathering Meeting(youth only)- January 23, 2022 from 7:30-8:30 pm.

Immanuel Youth Group is starting to prepare for the 2022 LCMS Gathering in Houston, TX. The theme for this Gathering is In All Things based on Colossians 1:15-20. Every month until the Gathering, I hope to dive into a bit of what we are learning as we prepare and what we will learn while we are at the Gathering.

A new year often brings new goals and perspectives. So does the LCMS Gathering. The

LCMS gathering is full of information for youth to learn about God, themselves, and their peers. The gathering provides speakers to inform and challenge youth in an array of different topics, many of them having to do with the challenges they will face in their lives and how to approach them in a Godly manner. It seems like every generation is met with different obstacles, and there is no doubt that the world is running farther and farther away from God and His ways. The gathering allows our youth to learn how to react before the world's sin overcomes them. Simply put, the gathering is the work of God for our youth. It allows them to see the love of God, not just in their church but in the people of the church around the world.

One of the things I love about the gathering is the resources provided. Sometimes we neglect the preparation of a large group of people in our church (the youth) for their future. Concordia Universities from around the country are at the gathering to talk to the youth of our church. Lutheran camps provide Christ in a fun and faithful summer setting. LCMS U is there to display its great ministry. A ministry that engages and supports Lutheran students in college. It helps them face countless challenges in college that challenge their biblical worldview, doctrine, ethics, and practices. While LCMS U is also on Concordia campuses, this is primarily a resource for students going to public or non-LCMS Universities. I benefited greatly during college at Texas A&M from this ministry! Many other great resources and groups have attended the gathering, such as Lutherans for Life, Lutheran Young Adult Corps, and Concordia Publishing House.

I truly believe that God uses the LCMS Gathering to prepare our church for the blessings He has bestowed on us. The blessings of showing youth they are not alone. The blessings of teaching youth what God says about an array of topics. The blessings of being united in community with the church of God.

Through Christ In All Things,
Andy Wendling, Director of Youth and Family

What fundraisers are happening now?

- Houston Contribution Envelope Fundraiser- How it works: In the Narthex there will be a wall of envelopes numbered sequentially from 1 to 144. This fundraiser will allow you to contribute to our trip to Houston by filling an envelope with the dollar value corresponding to the number on the envelope: \$1 goes in the envelope marked 1, \$50 goes into the envelope

marked 50 and so on, all the way up to 144. You can pick whatever number you want, fill the envelope, and return it to the bucket by the envelope wall or in the offering! **HELP US MEET OUR GOAL OF GETTING ALL THE 3's OFF OUR BOARD IN THE MONTH OF DECEMBER!**

- Trivia Night Fundraiser-Friday, February 11, 2022. Doors open at 6:30pm. Trivia starts at 7:00 pm. All are invited to participate! \$10 participation fee or \$80 total to reserve a team table. Max of 10 members per team.

2022 "God's Creation" appointment

Calendars with Bible verses and great pictures are now available in the church ofc. Price is \$7.

CEFS Meal Delivery schedules for Immanuel are December 13-17 and 20-23. No delivery on Friday, December 24.

Service of the Longest Night is Tues Dec 21, 7PM at Salem Lutheran Church, Salem, IL. This service is planned as a blessing for anyone for whom Christmas is not going to be a joyous holiday due to loss. Listen to God's Word, offer prayer and light a commemorative candle. A time for fellowship will follow the service.

Thank you for your generous contributions for Family Life Center "Baby Shower". Your donations were appreciated.

Haiti Clothing Project

Thank you for your support in making dresses and shorts, for donating fabric and for giving money in support of our Haiti Clothing Project. On November 14, we were able to send around 110 items to Nashville (to the headquarters of Trinity Hope), where they will soon be taken on to Haiti. Many of these items were made or donated by YOU! Thank You!

We will also be sending 24 small dresses to an orphanage in Tanzania, Africa. Cassie Stanfield, formerly of Effingham, works there with children ages 1-4 years old. Cassie will be home for Christmas and will be able to take the dresses back with her. There are many little girls in the orphanage, as the families are sometimes able to keep the little boys, but sadly not the girls.

We will continue to send clothing (and again in spring), so your donations will be appreciated.

Thank You for your support to our Haiti Clothing Project. Sincerely, Gloria Fortkamp