

# ITEMS



Volume 62 No. 02

February 2020

## Upcoming Events

- Feb 01: Art Show/Spaghetti Dinner
- Feb 06: Ruth Society Meeting
- Feb 09: Buy A Joining Jesus Book
- Feb 10: 2020-21 Preschool Registration Open to Public
- Feb 13 & 27: Women's Bible Study
- Feb 13: Serving at St. Matthew's
- Feb 18 & 19: ILP Chapel Days
- Feb 21: Quilting
- Feb 23: LWR Offering & Quilt Blessing
- Feb 26: Lenten Dinner (6p) & Ash Wednesday Worship Service (7p)



**Men of the Word Bible Study**  
1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays, 7pm

**Women of the Word Bible Study**  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays, 7pm

**People of the Word Bible Study**  
5<sup>th</sup> Monday, 7pm (Men & Women)

**Women's Morning Bible Study**  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays, 9:15 am

**Adult Bible Study / God's Kids Club**  
Sundays, 10:15 am – All Welcome!



**Did you snap a photo at one of our events?**  
Please share it with us by emailing it to:

[office@immanuelmokena.org](mailto:office@immanuelmokena.org)

## Blessing Our Quilts For Lutheran World Relief

By Delynn Flannery



On February 23, 2020 The Quilting Circle will have over 25 quilts displayed in the Sanctuary. Pastor Aaron will Bless the quilts which will then be delivered to Lutheran World Relief's warehouse. The quilts will then be sent to where ever the greatest need is at this time. The quilting Circle would like to thank the

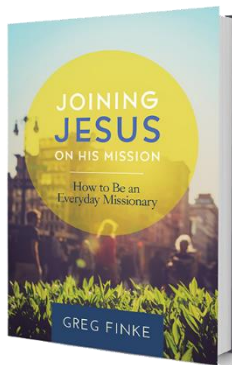
congregation for their generosity in donating material, sheets and monetary donations for purchasing batting.

There will be a free will offering for Lutheran World Relief this weekend as well! (See more about LWR on Page 5)

## Journey With Us This Lenten Season

By Pastor Aaron

If you enjoyed the Red Letter Challenge last year then you should pick up this year's book, "Joining Jesus on His Mission." The first two steps on this journey are to purchase the book for \$12 each in the lobby after worship or the church office during the week, and second we encourage you to sign up for a Small Group.



"Joining Jesus on His Mission" is a simple, powerful, practical book that will move you and your people from merely thinking about being everyday missionaries to launching. You will feel both relief and hope as you gain insights into how to recognize where Jesus is already at work in your everyday world and join Him." - [www.dwelling114.org](http://www.dwelling114.org)

**We will begin our journey on Celebration Sunday, March 1st!**

## SERVING THE LIVING LORD AT IMMANUEL

**Mission Statement:** "Caring and sharing since 1850, the mission of the family of God at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mokena is to effectively teach the Word of God, promote the spiritual growth of the Christian family, and continuously reach out with love and service."

Connecting people in loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, with each other in contagious Christian community, and with our calling of servanthood in the world.

## Financial Summary

YOY Comparison	DEC 2019	2019 YTD	2018 YTD	YOY Change	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	%
Offering	38,620	351,233	327,568	23,665	7
Interest	570	2,746	2,323	423	18
Facility	900	6,090	5,400	690	13
Expense	25,815	343,045	283,306	59,739	21
<b>Balance</b>	<b>14,275</b>	<b>17,024</b>	<b>51,984</b>	<b>-34,960</b>	<b>-67</b>

\* 2018 Offering & Expense Were Low Due To Pastoral Vacancy.

## Weekly Attendance

### 5:00 pm Saturday Services

Jan 04.....42    Jan 18.....40  
Jan 11.....40    Jan 25.....34

### 9:00 am Sunday Services

Jan 05.....95    Jan 19.....66  
Jan 12.....75    Jan 26.....85

**Baptized Membership: 751**

**Confirmed Membership: 600**

**Households: 375**

## February Worship Schedule

### Saturday Worship (5 pm)

Contemporary: 1,8,15

Traditional: 22

*No Worship Service on Feb 29<sup>th</sup>*

### Sunday Worship (9 am)

Traditional: 2,9,23

Blended: 16

### Ash Wednesday (7pm)

February 26 – Lenten Dinner at 6pm

## Bulletin & Items Publishing

Bulletin articles are due on Wednesdays by 9 a.m.

Articles for the March *Items* are due by **February 28** and will be on our website, mailed, and in the lobby after **March 7**. The *Items* Newsletter is also available online at [immanuelmokena.org](http://immanuelmokena.org)

## Official Acts

### New Members:

Shane, Sara, Kailey, Alyssa, & Tyler Bell  
Noah, Tina & James Kruspe & William Wilson  
Herb & Joanne Teske

**Memorial Service – January 25:** Pat Disabato

## Elders

Immanuel has elders who assist the pastor during the worship service and outside of worship. Their job is to be of service to you in any cares/concerns you may have with the congregation and within your family. Here are your elders:

**Elder 1: Marty Olsen 815-464-4373**

**Elder 2: Jim Bubeck 815-469-7573**

**Elder 3: Bruce Bechtel 815-485-5455**

**Elder 4: Nick Whittier 815-485-9269**

**Elder 5: Jerry Vrshek 815-469-5059 (Director)**

*Please contact these Elders should you have any needs/concerns/questions.*



**Have you moved or  
has your contact**

## information changed recently?

If the answer is yes, please call or email the church office with your new information so you don't miss out on our communications for church events/info!

## Church Office Contact Information:

708-479-5600 | [office@immanuelmokena.org](mailto:office@immanuelmokena.org)

## Donations To Special Groups

*Please follow the below instructions for submitting donations via check to any of the following groups.*

### GROUP

**Rays of HOPE**

**God's Kids Club**

**Ruth Society**

### MAKE CHECK PAYABLE

**Rays Of Hope**

**Immanuel Lutheran**

*Include on Memo: God's Kids Club*

**Ruth Society**

*\* For Special Group Donations: Clearly write on the outside of your offering envelope where the funds should be designated.*



## CONVERSATION STARTERS FROM THE PASTOR

### **Honesty**

(February 2020)

There's an old Billy Joel song for which the lyrics of the chorus go like this:

"Honesty is such a lonely word/Everyone is so untrue/Honesty is hardly ever heard/And mostly what I need from you." SO true, right? In an agreeable society like ours, honesty can be a rarity. On the positive side, it's good that we're paying attention to the lessons of our history, lest we doom ourselves to repeat them. The story of God's people is littered with chapters and whole volumes in which our spiritual ancestors exchanged the beauty of a relationship with God for a counterfeit identity. Jesus saw it in the fanatical devotion of the Pharisees to the temple and the Sabbath. The Crusades were a dark blot of misdirected religious fervor toward geographic expansion instead of fishing for people's hearts. Luther and other reformers had to valiantly oppose the economic machine of the medieval church/state that ran roughshod over the Gospel on its way into people's pockets. Yes, the story of God's people has its dark chapters of misfires and failures. Not much better can be said for the broader society in general, either, if we're being honest. We all struggle with honesty, whether it's as blatant as actively promoting lies in court or fudging our age or the speed we were driving. And heaven help the husband whose wife asks him, "Honey, do I look fat in this?"

So honesty is NOT generally very popular. It can be rather painful to be brutally honest. But we have to be honest with God and ourselves to admit when we're wrong, and taking an honest look at our own lives can be mighty uncomfortable. If we say we have no sin, we're fooling ourselves and not allowing the truth to lead us to a right relationship with God; only in honesty and through contrition can we find forgiveness and restoration (see 1 John 1:8-9). Looking at the lives of those around us with a gracious but appraising eye is a dangerous enterprise, and even with pure motives of helping another grow in faith and love, our ability to communicate it with the right balance of grace and truth is near-impossible to get right. And while we DO live in an amazingly good society that provides us with manifold benefits, it has its issues. That's the truth. But

are we willing to address those issues honestly and openly?

When we are willing to start an honest conversation about the current state of the church, one of the easiest things to do is to criticize the wider society. "The reason the church has seen such a precipitous downturn in our time is the shift of culture away from Judeo-Christian values, or a prosperity that keeps people from spiritual pursuits, or the breakneck speed of our society...take your pick." And while each of those concerns could be accurately described as a legitimate factors the church must address, it doesn't get at the heart of the matter, the disease that is underlying it all: a slow but steady abandonment of biblical, relational discipleship, the kind of spiritual formation Jesus practiced.

I know I must be honest about what I'm seeing and experiencing. It may not be popular. It may provoke some frustration or anger. It may break some hearts (as it has mine, on occasion). So here's my moment of honesty: sometimes God's people have lost their collective focus on the things that really matter, and start chasing after things that are poor replicas of the life He longs to give them. I don't think it's often intentional; in fact, most of the time I believe it's done with the best of intentions. I have participated in some of these misguided efforts myself, as I'm guessing you have as well, and found myself just as frustrated and empty at the end as you may have felt. It doesn't feel good. It feels a lot like failure. If we're all honest, we have fallen into patterns in which it was easier to simply go with flow than fight for something meaningful or valuable. And yet, I cling to the promise that God doesn't allow His Word, sown in the hearts of people, amount to nothing (see Isaiah 55:9-11). I am confident that by the power of Jesus' Spirit that still lives on in each of us, we can reclaim the healthy patterns of biblical, relational discipleship that Jesus modeled for us. I know it's going to take some work. It won't always be easy. But I am confident that with some intentional shifts in our focus, being willing to allow God to shape our lives so that they reflect both the character and competencies of Jesus, the tide will turn. But we can't do it alone. We have to be on the same page...all of us.

These simple but powerful shifts will be part of the conversation at the Church Chat 2.0 on February 22. I really hope to see you there because we've got some important, life-giving

things to talk about, and there's a seat at the table for you. It's about being ready to go where Jesus calls us, to take on the adventure of spreading the story that He's already won the victory for us. And that's some beautiful honesty that is hardly ever heard in this world, but mostly what we need from God, what we need to hear from one another, and what a broken world is dying to hear. Good honesty. Life-giving honesty. Good news!

*Adventure is out there! Pastor Aaron*



## 2020 Altar Flower Sign-Up Sheets Have Been Released!

Check the Opportunity Book to sign up today for dates in 2020! We appreciate the congregation's generosity in helping to beautify the altar for each service throughout the year.

*Please make checks payable to **Ruth Society** and do not forget to fill out the message portion that will be included in the bulletin. Place checks in offering plate or Mailbox D1 by the church office.*

(1) Bouquet = \$20 / (2) Bouquets = \$40



## Save the Date: Vacation Bible School 2020!

*By Nancy Kaczmarczyk*

The theme for Vacation Bible School at Immanuel in 2020 will be "Rocky Railway – Jesus' Power Pulls us through". The VBS that's just the ticket! Climb

aboard for mountains of fun at Rocky Railway! On this faith-filled adventure, kids discover that trusting Jesus pulls them through life's ups and downs. Plans are to hold VBS the week of June 15 – 19. We will need your help for this most important outreach to share the love of Jesus with the children in our community. More details to follow. Please keep our VBS ministry in your prayers.

## You're Invited to Led by the Spirit

*By Barb Belanski*

The Northern Illinois District of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League is inviting the women of Immanuel to attend their annual Lenten Inspiration on Saturday, March 7 at Our Savior

Lutheran Church in Joliet. The theme, "Daily Led by the Spirit" is from Psalm 143:10: *Teach me to do your will for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*

The Lenten Walk will feature presentations and reflections by Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss, our NID LCMS President and Bill Indelli, Executive Director of Walcamp. In addition, the event will include worship and time for fellowship as well as lunch. Registration begins at 8:15, followed by coffee/and – opening worship at 9:15.



Registration forms are in the Opportunity Book – the deadline is Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Hope you consider joining your LWML sisters and spend time together in being "Led by the Spirit".

## Serving St. Matthew's Soup Kitchen



On each of our visits, we are humbled and thankful for God's blessings on this ministry. Our next visit is planned for **January 9<sup>th</sup>**. Everyone is invited to join us – we leave Immanuel about

10:45am and are back to Mokena by 2:00pm – please **call Barb at 708.995.5375 if you are interested in joining us.**

**2020 Serving Dates: 2/13; 3/12; 4/9; 5/14; 6/11; 7/9; 8/13; 9/10; 10/8; 11/12; 12/10**

## Lutheran Women in Mission

Your mite box offerings are helping to fund ten mission grants selected at the LWML NID 2018 convention. To view these grants visit our website, select Serve, and click World. Help yourself to a mite box – your whole family is invited to participate. Thank you for supporting our Northern Illinois District and National LWML mission grants – you are a blessing to so many!!!



Mite offerings are collected on the first weekend of the month in the large mite box in our narthex. **Next Mite Box Collection: March 1st.** Thank you for supporting LWML – your gifts are a blessing to many!

## Life Sunday Commemorated With Donations for Aid for Women

By Sarah Bechtel

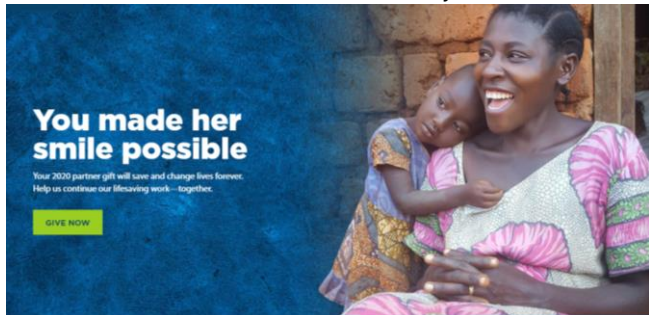
January 19th was this year's National Sanctity of Human Life Sunday. The Board of Stewardship organized a free will offering for Aid for Women at



the services that weekend and also collected donations of new baby clothes to assist those mothers who seek help at the Aid for Women pregnancy centers. One of their centers is in the south suburbs in Flossmoor. They help women understand their choices and offer many resources, including pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, counseling, and even a residential center for expectant mothers and new mothers and their children. **Thank you for your generosity – we collected \$335 as well as 58 baby outfits and 12 baby supply items.** All of the donations are very much welcomed and appreciated by Aid for Women.

## Lutheran World Relief – World Mission Focus for 2020

By Sarah Bechtel



The board of stewardship has decided to continue our focus on and support of Lutheran World Relief - the organization which we introduced as our world mission focus in 2019. We encourage you to learn more about what they do and where their efforts are focused by visiting their website [lwr.org](http://lwr.org).

## LWR Mission, Vision & Values

**Mission:** Affirming God's love for all people, LWR works with Lutherans and partners around the world to end poverty, injustice and human suffering.

**Vision:** Empowered by God's unconditional love in Jesus Christ, LWR envisions a world in which each person, every community and all generations live in justice, dignity and peace.

**Values:** Gratitude, Calling, Accompaniment, Stewardship, and Innovation

February 22nd and 23rd, we will have a free will offering to support LWR. On Sunday, 2/23, we will also have a blessing of the quilts that have been made by Immanuel members and are being donated to LWR for distribution where needed most.

## Spring Food Drive

By Sarah Bechtel

We will once again support the Frankfort Township Food Pantry with a spring food drive. **This year's collection dates are March 21st through 29th.** Any non-perishable food items or paper



products are always welcome donations. More information about the pantry's specific wish list will be included in the March newsletter.

As a reminder, you are welcome to bring food pantry donations to Immanuel any time – no need to wait for a specific food drive. In the set of cabinets along the back wall of the lobby, the cabinets second from the right contain bins for donations. The board of stewardship periodically takes these donations to the Frankfort Township Food Pantry.

Also, we encourage members to take donations directly to the local food pantries. The addresses of those in our immediate area are:

### Frankfort Township Food Pantry

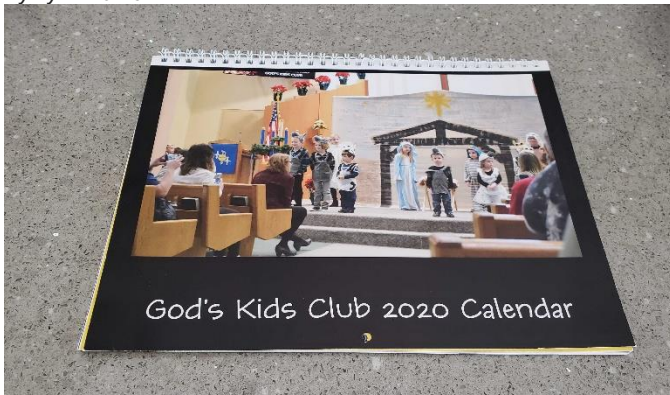
[11000 W. Lincoln Hwy](#) (located on the northeast lower level)

### New Lenox Township Food Pantry

[1100 S. Cedar Road](#)

## Coffee with God's Kids Club Parents

By Lyn Thorne



God's Kids Club held their first Coffee for Parents this week and although most parents could not stay for the entire hour that their kids were in class, many great conversations were started and relationships forged. The parents were especially excited to be given the new 2020 God's Kids Club calendar that featured their sweet kiddos.

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## Finances and Capital Projects Looking Back and Forward

By Sarah Bechtel

Immanuel Lutheran ended 2019 with a positive balance for the year (income exceeded operating expenses) of \$17K. In addition, we were blessed with a large gift from the estate of member, Laverne Cohen. In the November voters' meeting, those present agreed to designate this gift of over \$150K for capital projects (building improvements, etc.).

The first project which the gift helped fund was the balance remaining on the lobby remodel, since not enough donations were received to fully fund the project. Donations to the lobby project were approximately \$43K and the total project cost will be over \$60K. In addition to the lobby, the following capital projects were approved at the November meeting:

- Door Replacement and Security System/Upgrades – replace the main church doors; improve building security by installing new key card access doors by the office and preschool area and adding video cameras for surveillance; add alarms on some doors and equipment; replace other doors as needed
- Preschool Playground – improve drainage and replace mulch
- Hot Water Heat Regulators– System Overhaul – repair/replace controls in

entire system to allow for proper heat regulation in each room

- A/C Units – install units in church office, pastor's office, and senior youth room to allow proper cooling of each area
- Sanctuary Cameras – cameras, computer, and monitor to provide ability to record video of services and remote viewing in lobby

The balance on the lobby and the estimates for the above total approximately \$110K. We are hopeful that some of the projects may cost less than their initial estimates -- the trustees work diligently to find the best combination of price and quality when choosing products and suppliers.

As we move into 2020, we do have some financial concerns. Even though offerings were higher in 2019 than 2018, this can be attributed to the Saturday night service being restored. To reach our budgeted offerings for 2020, we will need to see a 2.5% increase in offerings from 2019 to 2020. While this may not seem like much, the trend at Immanuel and most other churches is a downward one.

In addition to the concern with offerings, our budgeted expenses for 2020 are over \$10K higher than our projected income. It was agreed at the voter's meeting that we would move forward with a deficit budget this year and, if needed, cover that deficit with reserves. Obviously, we cannot continue to operate with a deficit year after year.

We know that God has blessed Immanuel Lutheran in Mokena for almost 170 years! We are confident that as we move forward together in the work of His Kingdom, we will find solutions to the problems we encounter along the way.

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## Our Lenten Focus By NewsletterNewsletter

Lent, the church-year season that begins on Ash Wednesday, is a time of penitence and spiritual renewal. Some people give up a luxury or vice during Lent as a form of self-denial; others undertake a project that benefits others.

The point isn't to denigrate ourselves or to see how much we can do without. Instead, Lent helps us reflect on Jesus' death. As Timothy Keller writes in *The Reason for God*: "The Christian Gospel is that I am so flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet I am so loved and valued that Jesus was glad to die

for me. This leads to deep humility and deep confidence at the same time. It undermines both swaggering and sniveling. I cannot feel superior to anyone, and yet I have nothing to prove to anyone. I do not think more of myself nor less of myself. Instead, I think of myself less.”

# FEBRUARY

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

# Preschool News

By Linda Marquardt



### Annual Art Show & Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser

Thank you, thank you, thank you! To say the Art Show and Spaghetti dinner and silent auction was a success, is an understatement!

The staff and congregation did a fabulous job! Thank you to the donors and supporters!

### Birthdays

- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 01 Allison Bednarski | 16 Carly Weis            |
| 02 Terri Hutson      | 17 Earl Baker            |
| 03 Jim Bowlds        | 17 Rachel Dudczyk        |
| 03 Matthew Fuka      | 18 Amanda Baker          |
| 03 Ginger Krol       | 18 Judy Smith            |
| 04 EMille Liberty    | 19 Jeremy Nagy           |
| 04 Payteon Spargo    | 20 Katie Kaczmarczyk     |
| 05 George Tolsky     | 20 Aaron Marcotte        |
| 06 Sarah Hayes       | 20 Sandy Zagorski        |
| 09 Lydia Paterek     | 21 Laura Bechtel         |
| 10 Sara Tustin       | 21 Lawrence Hansen Jr    |
| 10 Stephanie Victor  | 21 Dana Tiffin           |
| 12 Jenna Kaiser      | 21 Jerry Vrshek          |
| 12 Adam Sekula       | 22 Barbara Baker         |
| 13 Brittany Bubeck   | 22 Georgia Goetsch       |
| 13 Betty Jansen      | 24 Nicolette Fitzpatrick |
| 13 Abbey Olsen       | 24 Darlene Habel         |
| 13 Bill Sluis        | 24 Diana Quigley         |
| 14 Robert Beckstrom  | 25 Julia Bowlds          |
| 14 Molly Zagorski    | 25 Rod Nagy              |
| 15 Kathy Disabato    | 25 Dee Dee Nilsen        |
| 15 Angela Hufnagle   | 27 Hayley Ackerman       |
| 15 Frank Strobel     | 27 Laura Fenn            |
| 16 Kristina Navratil | 28 Tom Flannery          |
| 16 Barry Schulz      | 28 Linda Miller          |

### preschool registration



### Preschool Registration 2020-2021

Are you looking or know someone who is looking for a preschool program for your 3 – 5 year olds? See below for registration dates

for Immanuel's preschool.

#### 2020-2021 ILP Registration Dates:

- Alumni Siblings: Feb 5-10
- Public: Feb 11 at 9:30 am

### Anniversaries

- |                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| 15 Donna & Don Bakken | 46 years |
|-----------------------|----------|

*We wish God's blessings on all these people celebrating a birthday or anniversary. If we have forgotten anyone's special day or it is in error, please contact the church office.*

### Upcoming Schedule

- 02/01: Art Show
- 02/10: 2020-21 Registration Open to Public
- 02/12-13: Valentine Celebrations
- 02/14 & 17: No School – Teacher & President's Day
- 02/18: Chapel Day (2day AM) 9:15am
- 02/19: Chapel Day (5day & 3day AM & PM) 9:15am & 12:30pm



## Sunday Morning at 8:00 AM on Chicago's CW station WPWR channel 50 (Comcast 184)

Tel: (260) 471-LOVE (5683) | Toll-Free: (888) 286-8002

[www.worshipanew.org](http://www.worshipanew.org) (Sermon Summaries)

Email: [info@LMMinc.org](mailto:info@LMMinc.org)

Lutheran Ministries Media, Inc. 5 Martin Luther Drive, Fort Wayne, IN 46825-4996  
Chicago and Northwest Indiana

### **February 2, 2020 – The Purification of Mary and The Presentation of Our Lord**

Psalm 84; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-32

“Cleansed and Claimed” - Sermon Text: Isaiah 52:7-10 - Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

What does it mean to be a Christian? What rests at the heart of a Christian's reality and experience? God answers these questions and more when Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus come to Jerusalem's temple 40 days after His Christmas birth.

### **February 9, 2020 – Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany**

Psalm 112:1-9; Isaiah 58:6-9; Matthew 5:14-16

“Lights, Shine!” - Sermon Text: Matthew 5:14-16 - Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

You, who are joined to Christ in faith, have light and are light. Jesus says to you, “Shine!” Great! But what does all of this mean?

### **February 16, 2020 – Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany**

Psalm 119:1-8; Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Matthew 5:21-37

“He Is Your Life” - Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 - Rev. Thomas Eggold

Like the children of Israel, we are facing a future that is full of transition. For some of you, these transitions will be trying and traumatic, and for all of us, the reality of change brings with it the temptation to walk our own way. But the story of God's action in our lives sustains us, and the Spirit of God strengthens us, and in the midst of life's transitions, and in the face of our fear and weakness, God is always there to meet our sinful disobedience with forgiveness and life and salvation.

### **February 23, 2020 – The Transfiguration of Our Lord**

Psalm 2:6-12; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

“God and Man” - Sermon Text: Matthew 17:2 - Rev. Shayne Jonker

“Jesus was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.” Peter, James, and John saw that: Jesus, the Son of Man, in the glory of His kingdom. God of God, Light of Light. It's Transfiguration Sunday, the last of the Epiphany Sundays, the big epiphany where we hear of Jesus shining like the sun in the presence of Moses and Elijah. It's here that we find there's much more to Jesus than meets the eye.