

# ITEMS

A newsletter for the family and friends of Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church



Volume 62 No. 12

December 2020



## GIVING TREE

### Visit Our Giving Tree in the Immanuel Lobby *By Barb Malm*

The Giving Tree is now up in the church lobby. Please consider donating to one of the following organizations: St. Matthews Soup Kitchen, Rays of Hope, Lutheran World Relief, Bethesda, LCMS Disaster Relief, or Lutheran Bible Translators. Simply place your check or cash donation in the white envelope attached to tag and place in the donation box next to the tree. Thank you and Merry Christmas!



### Warm Hearts With Our Winter Coat Drive For MorningStar Mission *By Delynn Flannery*

MorningStar Mission needs gently used winter coats for Men, Women and Children of all ages and sizes. If you have cleaned out your closets and found that you have coats you no longer need or no longer fit please consider donating them to MorningStar Mission.

**PLEASE DROP-OFF DONATIONS:  
NOVEMBER 28/29 & DECEMBER 5/6**

**Place coats in the Appropriate Collection Box Located in the Narthex/Lobby**

*If you are unable to drop them off on the weekend the coats may be left in the blue bin outside the church office door. Please let Delynn Flannery know if you leave them in the blue bin so she can collect them. If you have any questions or if you leave coats in the blue bin outside the church office entrance, please call or text Delynn Flannery at (708) 217-7094.*

### Help Adorn the Altar for Christmas - Orders due December 6<sup>th</sup> *By Ruth Society*



Visit [immanuelmokena.org](http://immanuelmokena.org) and see the link to order on the home page under the story or pick up a paper order form in the lobby. Order your red poinsettia plants that will adorn Immanuel's altar this Christmas. Forms are due no later than December 6, 2020. After completing the online/paper form, kindly make checks payable to Ruth Society at the rate of \$12 per plant. Payments for your order should be placed in the offering plate, black lockbox by church office

entrance or the Ruth Society Mailbox. Be sure to write Poinsettia on the memo line. Plants may be taken home after the 10pm Christmas Eve Worship Service.

## 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	OCT 2020	2020 YTD	2019 YTD	YOY Change	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	%
Offering	22,008	262,851	288,058	-25,207	-9
Interest	25	2,041	2,079	-38	-2
Facility	0	2,350	5,190	-2,840	-55
Expense	23,305	280,090	292,591	-12,501	-4
<b>Balance</b>	<b>-1,272</b>	<b>-12,848</b>	<b>2,736</b>	<b>-15,584</b>	<b>-316</b>

> Mortgage Balance \$185,696

**IN-PERSON SERVICES CONTINUE**  
**Contemporary Saturdays at 5:00 pm**  
**Traditional Sundays at 9:00 am**

*We have limited congregational responses and singing during worship to help keep the spread of germs to a minimum. The praise band and organist will still perform in a limited capacity.*

**ARE YOU IN NEED OF FINANCIAL, PASTORAL OR OFFICE SUPPORT?**

**Please Contact Us:**

Pastoral Support: 708-479-5600 x2

Office Support: 708-479-5600 x1

## Bulletin & Items Publishing

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

Articles for the November *Items* are due by **December 23** and will be on our website, emailed, and mailed after **January 1st**. The *Items* Newsletter is also available online at [immanuelmokena.org](http://immanuelmokena.org)

\* **Please consider signing up on our website to receive the newsletter via email.**

## Official Acts

No Official Acts to Report in November

## 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 312-952-1727**

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

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

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

**Elder 6: Lynn Gilmore 815-600-6855**

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



## Update Your Info!

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**

*Include on Memo: God's Kids Club*

**Ruth Society**

**MAKE CHECK PAYABLE**

**Rays Of Hope**

**Immanuel Lutheran**

**Ruth Society**

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

## Live-Streamed Weekly Worship

Tune in to Facebook, YouTube Channel or [immanuelmokena.org](http://immanuelmokena.org) (click connect, live stream) to view the services live from the comfort of your home. Service times are listed above.



## CONVERSATION STARTERS FROM THE PASTOR

### *We Need A Little...*

"We need a Little Christmas  
Right this very minute..." With

Advent and Christmas right around the corner, it's not uncommon to see many people getting ready for that special holiday season a bit early. And if there ever was a year when everybody needed a little bit more cheer, encouragement, reasons to be merry, and opportunities to boost their spirits, 2020 has been that year!

I firmly believe that God created us to enjoy life in all of its goodness, to find reasons to celebrate the good things that He places in our lives, the mountain of blessings that He piles into the landscape of our journey, the overflowing abundance of goodness and healing balm that He pours into the deep wells of our often discouraging circumstances. We were made and designed by God to **enjoy** life. Whether circumstances are terrible... and they have been, many times, in this world... there is a dauntless spirit embedded deep into the core of every human being that longs for reasons to celebrate. The "joy of every longing heart" (as the line from the hymn "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" goes) may look different than God intends it to, because the object of that joy is meant to be Jesus. But even if a person doesn't know which direction God intends that impulse to be pointed or where to find the object of that joy, all people, even people who don't follow Jesus, have that impulse to seek goodness and life and celebration.

Mary certainly knew the focus of her thanks and praise and joy. Drawn into the story of God's people in such a central but unexpected way, with no certainties of the future except that God would guide, direct, and protect her, Mary walks with God through unimaginable circumstances...in the same way that many of us are now during a pandemic. The path for Mary leads to the welcoming arms of her relative Elizabeth, whose recognition of God's plan and the immensity of Mary's honorable position and opportunity to serve Him brings Mary to this moment of realization. After the dizzying announcement by Gabriel and days of wondering how this will be, how it will affect her life, it finally clicks. Mary sees. And her response is an inspiration to us all, especially in these troubled times. Mary **celebrates!** "And Mary said: 'My soul

proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, because He has looked with favor on the humble condition of His slave. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and His name is holy'" (Luke 1:46-49, CSB).

Regardless of their circumstances, Christians through the ages have always celebrated the birth of the Messiah, the King of the world, their Rescuer from sin, death, and the power of the devil, and the One who breaks the darkness of this world with His marvelous light. We celebrate the birth of a Baby, and what's more, a King. We watch His hero's journey begin with awe and wonder, knowing full well that in a few short months we will look on with a similar reverent awe mixed with ponderous sorrow as He faces the cross. But we will also celebrate with overwhelming joy the actual power in which we find our salvation... Resurrection! Rebirth! Renewal and everlasting life promises! This is a message so good that every human being on the face of the planet needs it. We need a little Christmas, certainly, but we also need a little good Friday and a whole lot of Easter, too.

My prayer for you during this joyous season, which may not feel as enjoyable in its celebrations and family connections as it usually would be, is that you would see God's hand of blessing providing all you need, from a little Christmas to a little cup of holiday cheer. I pray that the tiny Child of Bethlehem, in whom all the power of God dwells, protects you and your loved ones from COVID and all other bits of sin's brokenness that may come your way. May God bless our advent journey to the manger, and find us ready to run with the shepherds and tell everyone about what He has done for us. In Advent, at Christmastime, during COVID, this still holds true...

*Adventure is out there!*

*Pastor Aaron*

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## Tentative Holiday Worship Schedule

### Online Midweek Services - Available after 4pm

[Mid-week Advent Week 1 - Wednesday, December 2](#)

[Mid-week Advent Week 2 - Wednesday, December 9](#)

[Midweek Advent Week 3 - Wednesday, December 16](#)

**Christmas Eve: December 24, 4 pm & 10 pm**

**Christmas Day: Hosted Online, 4pm**

*\*\*There will be no Saturday, December 26th Worship Service\*\**



Mite box offerings will continue to be collected on the first weekend of each month. Pick up a mite box (bank) from the LWML table in the narthex and encourage all members of your family to participate in this

“super-easy” way of supporting missions – thanking you in advance for your support in sharing the love of God around the world!!

## Women of the Word Returns

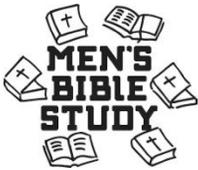


Online Bible Study

We've resumed meeting using Zoom. If you would like a link to be invited to our virtual Women of the Word, please send an

email to Leeann at [dceleeann04@yahoo.com](mailto:dceleeann04@yahoo.com). We will continue looking at each Fruit of the Spirit. Newcomers are welcome!

**Meeting Dates:** December 14



## Men of the Word Returns

We've started a *new*, inter-generational conversation centered on the question, "What does it mean to be a godly man in today's world?" Stay tuned for meeting location...

**Meeting Dates:** December 7 @ 7pm

## Thank You & Farewell



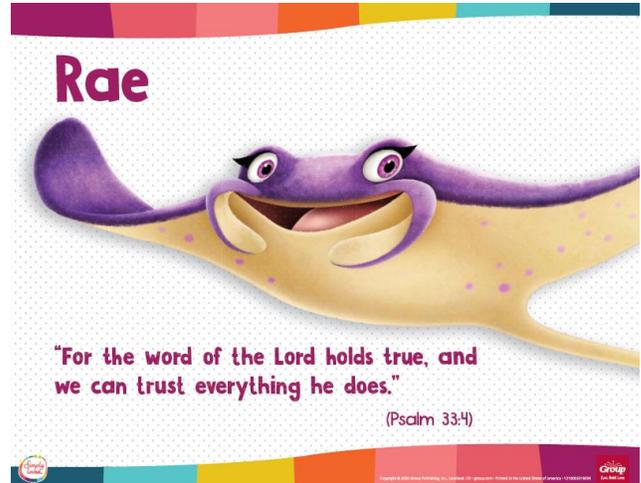
Dear Immanuel Family, It is with both joy and sadness that I share that I have been blessed with a new opportunity. My last day will be November 27<sup>th</sup>. In these uncertain times, taking this new position will provide more stability for my

family. I want to thank everyone for making my time here at Immanuel so wonderful. I truly enjoyed getting to know everyone of you and being welcomed as a part of your church family. I will miss my days being filled with all the love and kindness everyone extended to my family – my boys always felt like celebrities when they would come to Immanuel. I have offered my assistance to help with anything I can for a smooth transition. Wishing all of you health & joy for the holidays. Warmest Regards, Nicolette Fitzpatrick

## Altar Flowers *By Barb Belanski*

If you would like to sign up for Altar Flowers please contact Barb Belanski, (773) 704-1416. Each bouquet is \$20. Checks should be made payable to the Ruth Society and placed in the offering plate or lockbox by office entrance. Be sure to write Altar Flowers on the memo line. The Ruth Society would like to thank all those that have ordered flowers in the past and for honoring the Lord.

## God's Kids Club Moves in to Unit 2 and is a Virtual Success *By Lyn Thorne*



God's Kids Club is offered through our virtual classrooms using Zoom. New students are always welcome to join us, simply register on our website. If you have questions reach out to Lyn Thorne via email at [gkcdirector@immanuelmokena.org](mailto:gkcdirector@immanuelmokena.org).

This month's Bible point is WE CAN TRUST GOD and our bible verse this month is "For the word of the Lord holds true, and we can trust everything he does" Psalms 33:4. Thank you for your continued prayers and support for our children's ministry. We are truly blessed.

## Ways to Submit an Offering

- **Drop off** a check (or cash in sealed envelope with your name) in the secure black lockbox by the church office entrance door.
- **Mail** a check to the office: 10731 W La Porte Rd, Mokena, IL 60448
- **Electronic Giving** – go to the website, [www.immanuelmokena.org](http://www.immanuelmokena.org), and click on Electronic Giving under the Giving menu. Fill in the secure form with either credit card or checking account information to submit offering.
- **Joyful Response:** many members already use this service which automatically debits their

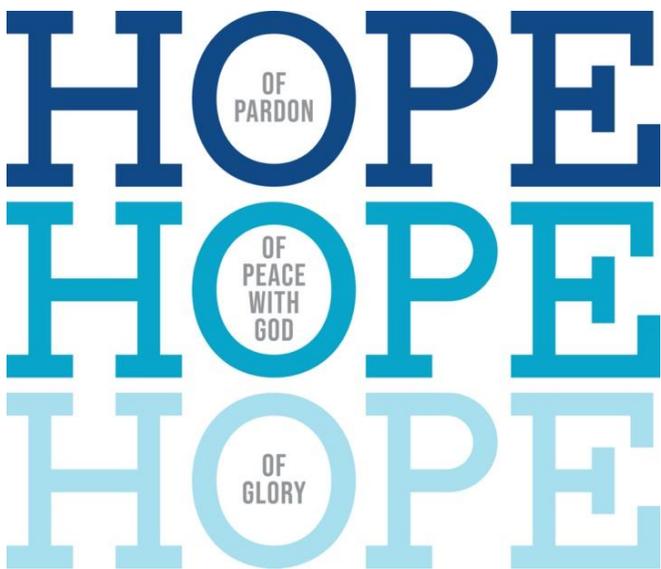
checking account at a specified interval (weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, etc.) for a specified amount. The form can be found on the Electronic Giving page on the website – just fill it out and drop off or mail to the church office.

## December Christian Symbol



**Advent Wreath:** The Advent wreath is a symbol of watchfulness and increasing joy as we anticipate Jesus' birth. The wreath's circular shape symbolizes eternity, or life without end. The candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World — he brought light and life to a

dark world (see John 1:4-5). On each of the four Sundays of Advent, we light a new candle. As the light grows, so do our hope and joy.



## Seasons of Hope Source NewsletterNewsletter

The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity — hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory — because at the Father's will Jesus Christ became poor, and was born in a stable so that 30 years later he might hang on a cross. —J.I. Packer

## Faith at Home Options

*By Nicolette Fitzpatrick*

### How to find the Vlog and Live Streaming Worship Services...

- [www.immanuelmokena.org](http://www.immanuelmokena.org) – Go to Connect, Select Faith@Home or Live Stream
- Facebook – Follow us @ImmanuelMokena
- YouTube – Our channel is Immanuel Lutheran Mokena (you can subscribe to the channel to be notified when new videos are posted)

## Cookie Walk Reimagined 2020

*By Lyn Thorne*

The Board of Fellowship is looking forward to providing "Cookie Making Platters" which will include a Christmas devotion, 5 recipes, and a \$10 gift card. The weekend of 12/12 and 12/13, they will be out on a table in the lobby with the name of the person who donated the gift card on it. It is our hope that these simple little platters will give you an opportunity



to share the true meaning of Christmas and a small gift to a friend or neighbor that needs to see God's love through us.

If you have donated more gift cards than you want to personally share, there will be a second table in the lobby with a sign on it that states COOKIE PLATTERS TO SHARE. For our members that may not have had the ability to participate, you are welcome to take a platter or two from that table and reach someone in your neighborhood.

From chapter 15 of our *Joining Jesus* book we are reminded of Mother Teresa's quote "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

If you have any questions, please reach out to anyone on the Board of Fellowship.

# DECEMBER

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Birthdays

01 Bob Fleckenstein  
01 Adam Tustin  
02 Hannah Goetsch  
02 Natalee Schellhas  
03 Kelly Baker  
05 Brandon Hohl  
09 Jim LaRocco  
09 Bev Whittier  
10 Tyler Seputis  
10 Logan Wojno  
10 Jeremy Zagrakalis  
14 Olivia Hutson  
15 Pam Bakken-Miller  
15 Tina Bowlds  
17 Donald Compagnoni  
19 John Wojno  
21 Aaron Schellhas  
22 John Lupe  
23 Gavin Marnul  
23 Lois Yunker  
24 Robb Schuldt  
25 Nicole Maranto  
25 John Mirocha  
25 Sophie Pattenaude  
27 Theresa Bubeck  
27 Jeff Sneideraitis  
27 Ray Steinbrenner  
29 Mitchell DeVivo  
30 David Bechtel

### Anniversaries

02 Jim & Tina Bowlds	31 years
03 Jerry & Karen Vrshek	43 years
19 John & Nancy Mirocha	50 years
22 Kevin & Maetha Smith	50 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.*

### Why Advent? Source NewsletterNewsletter

Waiting can be hard, and not just for children. But I do love Advent: this four-week time when the Christian church prepares for Christmas.

Maybe I like Advent so much because it involves active waiting, not thumb-twiddling. It is a gift the church offers the world, to be active (which isn't the same as busy) in ways that open our hearts — and the hearts we touch — to the true meaning of Christmas.

Mother Teresa said, "At this Christmas when Christ comes, will he find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving others with God's own love and concern."

When I take time during Advent to remember in prayer and with gifts of money and time those who have less food than I do, those who are lonely, those without a home; when I pause to share love with a child or an elder, or gratitude for a healthcare worker, pastor or teacher; when I wait for justice to replace oppression but, while I wait, find ways to work for that result ... the Spirit's warmth fills my waiting heart. I am ready to welcome Jesus.

—Heidi Mann



### Preschool is Showered With Love & Support By Linda Marquardt

On behalf of our Preschool Ministry we would like to thank the congregation of Immanuel Lutheran Church for their generosity in supporting our Preschool Shower. Blessings to all of you for supporting our ministry.



## 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

### **December 6, 2020 – Second Sunday in Advent**

Psalm 85:1-7; **2 Peter 3:3, 5, 7-13; Mark 1:1-8**

“Judgment Day Truths” - Sermon Text: 2 Peter 3:3, 5, 7-13 - Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

On Judgment Day God will destroy the universe with fire. That truth reveals other truths about God. All these truths give us believers great encouragement. We joyfully live for the Lord now and look forward to the Last Day.

### **December 13, 2020 – Third Sunday in Advent**

Psalm 126; Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; John 1:6-8, 19-28

“Giving Up for Advent” - Sermon Text: John 1:23 - Rev. Thomas Eggold

Jesus came to be the Way for those who were lost; and Jesus came to be the Truth for those who were confused; and Jesus came to be the Life for those who were dead. Jesus Christ came to save us sinners, to create new hearts, to cleanse consciences, and to change our lives. That is what God's Son does with repentant heart...and that is why Advent message matters!

### **December 20, 2020 – Fourth Sunday in Advent \*The Nativity of Our Lord – Christmas Day Observed**

Psalm 98; Isaiah 9:2-7; **Luke 2:1-20**

“The Usual Christmas?” - Sermon Text: Luke 2:11 - Rev. Shayne Jonker

If we look into the manger and gush over the image of a sweet and pure child, but see no cross, we miss the whole point. If we forget that this precious child came to shed His precious blood for sin, then why are we even celebrating him anyway? For this is the perfect and spotless Lamb of God, appointed for sacrifice, to take away the sins of the world. This doesn't happen every day, but it did happen on Christmas and Good Friday.

### **December 27, 2020 – First Sunday after Christmas**

Psalm 111; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

“We Are Family” - Sermon Text: Galatians 4:4-7 - Rev. Paul Shoemaker

The birth of a child is a special event for the entire family. The birth of our Savior was a special event that changed each person's future. As a child and an heir, we have an eternal inheritance.