
ITEMS

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



Volume 63 No. 1

January 2021



COMING SOON ...

From Red Letter Challenge – a church-wide assessment to assist both individuals and Immanuel as a whole in becoming greater followers of Jesus. This 7-10 minute survey will replace our traditional Time & Talent surveys and commitment cards. Instead, this tool and the resulting report you receive will give you information to help you set your own discipleship goals for 2021.

Watch your email for more information and a link to the RLC Assessment!!

THANK YOU FROM THE BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

By Sarah Bechtel

Thank you for your generous donations during the Christmas season! Immanuel members shared the love of Jesus in several different ways:

MorningStar Mission Stars of Hope: Gifts were provided for 17 children making their Christmas brighter.

Coat Drive for MorningStar Mission: 62 gently-used coats were donated to keep others warm this winter.

Immanuel Giving Tree: You provided financial support to St. Matthew's Soup Kitchen (\$250), Lutheran World Relief (\$300), and Bethesda Lutheran Communities (\$100). All of these organizations are the hands and feet of Jesus – some locally and others around the world!



What a blessing!!



Poinsettias Adorn The Altar

The Ruth Society wants to thank the congregation for the purchase of Poinsettias. The Church was beautifully decorated for the Christmas Season. We are very thankful for those who helped decorate.

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	NOV 2020	2020 YTD	2019 YTD	YOY Change	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	%
Offering	25,471	288,321	312,603	-24,282	-8
Interest	26	2,067	2,176	-109	-5
Facility	200	2,550	5,190	-2,640	-51
Expense	24,478	304,568	317,220	-12,652	-4
Balance	1,219	-11,630	2,749	-14,379	-521

> Mortgage Balance \$177,945

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

Live-Streamed Weekly Worship

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

Bulletin & Items Publishing

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

Articles for the February *Items* are due by **January 25** and will be on our website, emailed, and mailed after **February 1st**. The *Items* Newsletter is also available online at immanuelmokena.org

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

Official Acts

Funeral Service – December 10:
Josephine Wilhelmsen (May 24, 1921 – Nov 10, 2020)
Funeral Service – December 11
Gary Dortmann (June 28, 1944 - Dec 4, 2020)

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

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.*



CONVERSATION STARTERS FROM THE PASTOR

In the Bleak Midwinter (January 2021)

Like many people, I studied a fair amount of poetry in my literature class in high school. I wouldn't consider myself a lover of poetry, and it's not what I gravitate towards generally. But there are a few poems that capture my imagination and my heart in ways that have taught me to cherish the beauty that such life-giving words can bring. "All That Is Gold Does Not Glitter" from Tolkien's Lord of the Rings is one. John Donne's "Death Be Not Proud" is another. And most recently, Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" has taught me to see Jesus in those around me, in their eyes and in their actions.

Around Christmastime, the beautiful poem "In the Bleak Midwinter" by Christina Rossetti tends to occupy my imagination. It doesn't hurt that the plaintive but magnificent [musical setting](#) by Gustav Holst magnifies the beauty of the simple but powerful juxtaposition of heaven and earth. All of heaven finds its joy in and focus on a little child in a manger, and we're invited to come to the manger in awe and worship, too. Most people (I myself included) enjoy Rossetti's observation in the final stanza that the best gift we can give in response to God's amazing generosity is everything we are: our hearts. But what really caught my attention this year was the second to last verse:

"Angels and Archangels/May have gathered there,/Cherubim and seraphim/Thronged the air;/But only His Mother/In her maiden bliss/Worshipped the Beloved/With a kiss."

All the company of heaven leaned in to be close to the baby Savior, but the one who got to interact with him by kissing Him and loving Him in a very physical, human way was His mother. A mother's tender kiss on the cheek or forehead is a beautiful act of love even in normal circumstances. But in this case, Mary is also kissing the face of God Himself. Heaven touches earth, and earth responds.

My prayer for you, in this seemingly bleak midwinter, as we journey where God leads us, is that He would give you eyes to see where His presence, love, and care are breaking into this world. The Lord knows we

need these reminders at a time like this. And He is faithful. He always provides. In fact, His abundance to us is so vast that it overflows from our lives into the lives of those around us. With eyes to see His working and arms open wide to receive His plan, you can respond the same way that Mary did to Gabriel's announcement that she would be the mother of God Himself: "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38, ESV). So recognize God's presence and generosity to you this year, and let it overflow to others by your presence with them. In a tiny way, God's Spirit working in you will make heaven touch earth in the same way that Jesus received His mother's kisses and embrace.

Adventure is out there!
Pastor Aaron



The Elders are looking for a few members to help with the streaming of regular church services. You will need a phone that has access to the internet. We will instruct you in the process. If you are interested please call Jerry Vrshek at (815) 469-5059.



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 dceleeeann04@yahoo.com. We will continue looking at each Fruit of the Spirit. Newcomers are welcome!

Meeting Dates: January 11 & 25



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: January 4 & 18 @ 7pm



WELCOME

We would like to welcome Michelle Hoag to the Immanuel staff in a new role. Michelle has been a preschool teacher at Immanuel since 2017. With the temporary closing of the preschool, Michelle was available to step into the administrative assistant's role

when Nicolette Fitzpatrick left at the end of November. We are fortunate to have someone already familiar with Immanuel and very familiar with LCMS, since her husband, Doug, is pastor of Trinity Lutheran in New Lenox.

Michelle and her husband have two sons, Chris and Cam. She enjoys reading, walking, and dark chocolate.

Please extend a warm welcome to Michelle when you visit the church office!

Altar Flowers By Barb Belanski

If you would like to sign up for Altar Flowers please contact Barb Belanski, (773) 704-1416 or sign up in the Opportunity Book by the church office. 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 Sings for Christmas

By Lyn Thorne



Here you can see the little ones practicing their "Happy Birthday Jesus" song for this year's Christmas Day service. We want to thank the parents and especially Tammi Carlson for the technical support to make our virtual Christmas special.

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.



2020 Offering Envelopes

Please be sure to pickup your envelopes in the lobby or your church mailbox. Didn't receive envelopes?

Please contact the church office at

office@immanuelmokena.org

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, 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.

Preschool News

Happy New Year from the Board of Christian Education

By Nancy Kaczmarczyk

Here is the latest update regarding Immanuel Preschool. The Preschool committee has decided not to open the Preschool in January due to the high COVID numbers. All Preschool families were sent a letter of notification and their registration fees were refunded. Linda Marquardt, Preschool Director, has requested a leave of absence starting January 1, 2021 but we will be in contact with her by email and phone. Please keep Linda in your prayers. Registration for the fall 2021 school year will take place in late spring.

The Preschool's Toy Lending Library will continue with volunteers from the Board of Christian Education. Dates for January are Thursday, January 21 from 2 – 6 pm and Friday, January 22 from 10 am – 2 pm. February dates are Thursday, February 18 from 2 – 6 pm and Friday, February 19 from 10 am – 2 pm.

Thank you again to our Immanuel congregation for their generous donations toward the Preschool items needed when it reopens in 2021. An account was established to purchase those items when the time is appropriate. Thank you notes have been sent out from the Preschool to the donors. The electromagnetic sprayer and Ecofriendly solution (that kills COVID) was purchased from the donations. It is being used in the Preschool area and is available for church use as well.

God's blessings to all of you in the new year! We have much to be thankful for. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Faith at Home Options

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

- 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)



First Annual Christmas Caroling

By Lyn Thorne

Adorned in masks and standing at a safe distance, we visited a few of our members and surprised them with a carol or two. It was so much fun and we will hopefully do it again next year. Stay tuned next December!

Cookie Walk Reimagined 2020

By Lyn Thorne

Thank you to all of you who bought grocery gift cards and participated in the 2020 event. There were 40 platters created with a variety of cookie recipes, a Christmas devotion and a \$10 gift card for purchasing the ingredients. They were distributed to friends and neighbors and the remaining 6 were brought to the Frankfort Food Pantry in time to share with those less fortunate. Here are some of the comments that were shared with us:

"It felt so good to surprise people. I already had a friend call to thank me--she said the gift was a cute idea and she did read the devotion included. We had a wonderful chat--so nice to catch up with friends at Christmas."

"Two were sent across the country because the gift cards were for stores that are also located in California and Arizona."

"I gave one to my mailman, who was sincerely touched by the gift."

JANUARY

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- 1 Dee Culbertson
- 3 Evan Perrin
- 4 Billy Nagy
- 7 Garrett Flesch
- 9 Max Loucks
- 9 Candy Whittier
- 10 Bruce Malm
- 11 Savannah Bubeck
- 11 Randy Krause
- 11 Marilyn Miller
- 12 Nadia Kruspe
- 12 Nancy Mirocha
- 13 Marie Victor
- 16 Austin Bubeck
- 17 William Nagy
- 23 Mark Fuka
- 24 Emily Baker
- 24 Ted Obis
- 25 Matt Howard
- 25 Judy Mentzer
- 25 Maryanne Schultz
- 27 Amanda Hutson
- 28 Ryan Klode
- 28 Nicole Mackey
- 29 Dave Proskan
- 29 Kelly Zellers
- 30 Mackenzie Burke
- 30 Steve Magnani
- 30 Steve Malm
- 31 Harold Oesterreich

Anniversaries

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----------|
| 10 | Bill & Carole Sluis | 51 years |
| 25 | Tom & Lisa Bartnik | 36 years |
| 25 | Michael & Gina Dudczyk | 28 years |
| 26 | Russ & Arianna Fleckenstein | 30 years |
| 27 | Joe & Pam Bakken-Miller | 9 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.



The Alpha Alumni Chapter of Beta Sigma Psi - National Lutheran Fraternity has scholarship opportunities to offer Lutheran high school seniors. The Alumni Chapter is offering a \$3,000 scholarship given out to a Lutheran male freshman attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Fall 2021. There is no obligation to join Beta Sigma Psi or be related to a member of the fraternity to receive this award. Runner-ups may be eligible for \$500. Our scholarship application may be found online at <https://forms.gle/pJdPAff57oZHokDT9> All applications are due March 20th, 2021. The Beta Sigma Psi Educational Foundation also offers additional scholarships and grant opportunities for members of the Lutheran community. These opportunities can be found here <https://www.betasigmapsi.org/scholarships-for-high-school-students/>

LIFE QUOTES

“God is not just our God or the God of just our people or just our nation or our congregation or our denomination or our demographic category or our tribe or our ethnicity or our language. There is no justice if it's just about just us. No, God is the God of all time and all space and all people. In Christ, all things hang together. Step into your new year with this fresh recognition that the Holy Spirit wants to fill every nook and cranny of your life until you overflow with God's everlasting love for everybody.” *Pastor John Nunes on The Lutheran Hour – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • lutheransforlife.org*



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 (Sermon Summaries)

Email: info@LMMinc.org

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

January 3, 2021 – Second Sunday after Christmas *The Epiphany of Our Lord Observed

Psalm 72:1-11; Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-2

“Your Light Has Come!” - Sermon Text: Isaiah 60:1-6

Rev. William Mueller

Centuries before the magi brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the prophet Isaiah prophesied nations would come from afar to worship this Light. This Light – Jesus Christ – shines upon us as well. Royalty and peasants alike receive and rejoice in this Light!

January 10, 2021 – First Sunday after the Epiphany *Baptism of Our Lord Observed

Psalm 29; Romans 6:1-11; Mark 1:4-11

“Our Servant King” - Sermon Text: Mark 1:11

Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

Jesus Christ is both our Lord and our Savior. As Our Servant King, He reveals God as commanding enough to be our Sovereign while caring enough to be our Servant.

January 17, 2021 – Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Psalm 139:1-10; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; John 1:43-51

“Your Connection to Heaven” - Sermon Text: John 1:51

Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

We tend to think of heaven as far removed from this earth, as a place we will go to someday. Indeed, we are not yet in heaven, but we are right now joined to heaven. How is this so, and what does this mean for us here on earth?

January 24, 2021 – Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Psalm 62; Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20

“God’s Call” - Sermon Text: Jonah 3:10

Rev. Thomas Eggold

God’s call cannot be ignored. Through the call of His gracious Word, He puts our sinful nature to death, so that He can raise us to new life. And that is what the story of Jonah is all about.

January 31, 2021 – Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Psalm 111; Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Mark 1:21-28

“Authority of God” - Sermon Text: Deuteronomy 18:15

Rev. Shayne Jonker

Jesus Christ is Lord, the Holy One of God, and He says you are forgiven and holy and justified. That’s a Word you can count on. That’s a Word you can die with. That’s a Word with the authority of God.