

ITEMS

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



Volume 63 No. 2

February 2021



COMMUNION

Holy Communion will return to our worship services on February 6 & 7 and February 20 & 21. There is no need to sign up before the service.

Interim Communion will continue to be held on February 10 & 24. You will need to register for a time slot for these dates.

LENTEN SERVICES

Wednesday Lenten services will be a meditation on Lenten hymns and songs. They will be posted online only, with no in-person component. Services will start on Ash Wednesday, February 17.



RED LETTER CHALLENGE ASSESSMENT

By Sarah Bechtel

Thank you to those who completed the assessment – we just received Immanuel's results. We had a total of 36 participants, and we hope they found the process valuable. Overall, based on that group, Immanuel scored "Good" in the categories of Serving, Forgiving and Being. Our areas of "Growth" are Giving and Going. More detailed information on these results to come!

SEE HOPE *by Doreen Pomykala*

What? Covid, loneliness, fear, despair - NO MORE!

Enter: **SEE Hope!** **Send**
Encouragement
Everyday

How? Reach out to others! Show you care!
Share a card, thank you, a smile, a gift card, a poem, a drawing, food, flowers...

Who? You!



Share with your friends, family, neighbors, church family, coworkers, and people you see as you go about your day.

Join me as we make a difference!

We can do this!

We can brighten other people's days!

God is Good! Join the conversation at #seehope

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 2020	2020 YTD	2019 YTD	YOY Change	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	%
Offering	31,164	319,485	351,233	-31,748	-9
Interest	524	2,591	2,746	-155	-6
Facility	200	2,750	6,090	-3,340	-121
Expense	23,366	327,935	343,045	-15,110	-5
Balance	8,522	-3,109	17,024	-20,133	-648

> 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 March *Items* are due by **February 22** and will be on our website, emailed, and mailed after **March 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 – January 4:

Arletta Mundt (August 14, 1931 – December 30, 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

Practicing Christians

I caught myself doing it the other day. Something I had told myself I wasn't going to do anymore. A habit I thought I had kicked. I was looking down at my feet. Now, I could absolve myself by saying that I was deep in thought or that the sharp January wind made it difficult to look up, but we all know that those would just be excuses. I had once engaged in the practice of holding my head up while walking from place to place, with the intent of paying more attention to my environment and especially the people in it, but the habit of that practice had slipped. It was time to re-engage that practice and rediscover its value.

I've met quite a few people in my travels who could be considered "nominal Christians," in-name-only Christians. They do "Christian things" (sometimes). They would lightly express their fealty to the Christian church, if asked. But when their lives are examined, there is little to no evidence of their travels with Jesus, or that His life has had much impact on theirs.

It would be far too easy to contrast "nominal Christians" with "practicing Christians" and place ourselves comfortably on the "right" side of that line. But even those of us who are heavily involved in the life and operations of the church can be shown at times to present evidence that our priorities don't line up with God's. That's a pretty good definition of sin. Or idolatry. "I want what I want" versus "I want what God wants." We all have the propensity to pay God lip service. Thank God that **He** doesn't just talk about things...He **does** something about our sin, by bearing it all on the cross. The Word made flesh shows us what a life with the Father looks like (John 1). The Word sacrifices Himself so that we can live, and He challenges us to give our lives each day, just like He did.

How do we live like Jesus? Well, it takes practice. You never get good at something overnight. It takes some experience. It often takes some failure...sometimes a lot. But it takes practice. So what kinds of things should we be practicing? What kind of spiritual practices should we engage in to walk more closely with God?

Two that come immediately to mind are the two "sides" of a conversation with God: Word and Prayer. Reading God's Word and insights into it through devotional books or other resources is a way that God can speak into our lives. And one of the most important responses we can give is simply to respond through language, spoken or thought. Prayer. While God knows us intimately, through-and-through, and knows all the words in our hearts before any of them leave our lips (Ps. 139:4), He still invites us to approach Him in prayer as a dearly-loved child (Luther's Small Catechism - Lord's Prayer Introduction).

During the season of Lent, I'd like to invite you to take a journey with me into a deeper life with God through a new practice of prayer. We'll be using the book [*Prayer: Forty Days of Practice*](#) by author, songwriter and pastor Justin McRoberts and illustrator Scott Erickson, to excavate what God is doing in our hearts and lives. We'll learn to convert those thoughts, feelings, and impulses into prayers that honor God and grow His Kingdom in our hearts and lives. I'll be inviting you all to join me for a brief, 5-minute foray into this conversation each day of Lent at 10 AM online (FaceBook Live & YouTube), and these brief conversations with some of you and other guests will also be available afterward to guide you in your engagement with the book.

I really appreciate the perspective that Justin and Scott present at the beginning of the book, that the illustrations and short prayers are not "content," but that our lives and God's Word connected to it are the real content. "They are excavation tools that help dig toward and into the real content: the ongoing, ever-present conversation between us and the Divine." The words on the page and the simple but poignant pictures are meant to open us up to recognize how God is at work in our lives, "messaging with us," gently nudging us (sometimes not so gently!), trying to get our attention that He is living and active inside us, shaping us for love and service. This approach follows beautifully in line with how John presents Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel: "The Word became flesh and took up residence among us" (John 1:14a). Indeed, if God had only remained in words on a page, His power would have never been expressed through all the powerful miracles in Scripture, especially the matchless miracle of our God dying and rising again. God invites us to walk with Him, to allow His Word and His Spirit to spur us into godly action, to love and forgive like Him. We participate in the Word made flesh when we live like our Savior did.

I'm still working on my walk with Jesus. I'm still learning to pray. I practice everyday, but I still have much to learn. I'm grateful for fellow travelers on the road, and I'm thankful to count you as one of them. I pray that our individual and congregation-wide practice of prayer will lead us all into deeper relationship with God and shape our hearts to be more eager to follow where He leads.

So, I'll plan to see you out there on the "road." And hey, if you ever happen to catch me looking down as I walk by, please feel free to flag me down with a gentle, "Hey! I'm up here!" I'm still learning to enjoy and embrace the gift of the people that God puts in my path. And I'm often delighted to be reminded that...

Adventure is out there!
Pastor Aaron



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

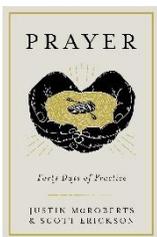
"super-easy" way of supporting missions – thanking you in advance for your support in sharing the love of God around the world!!



Women of the Word

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 dceleann04@yahoo.com. We will continue looking at each Fruit of the Spirit. Newcomers are welcome! **Meeting Dates:** February 8 & 22



GET THE BOOK!

Prayer: Forty Days of Practice by Justin McRoberts & Scott Erickson is the book Pastor Aaron will be using for his short daily online gathering. We encourage you to obtain the book to participate. We have copies which you can purchase in the

church office for \$13 or you can purchase a hardcopy or e-book via [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).



Men of the Word

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?" If you would like a link to the online meeting, contact Pastor Aaron.

Meeting Dates: February 1 & 15 @ 7pm



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.

WORLD MISSION 2021

By Sarah Bechtel

We have usually revealed our world mission focus in February each year. However, things are not "usual" right now, so we are delaying a bit! In the spring, we plan to introduce a different way of looking at world missions.

Rather than selecting a specific organization, we will be choosing three LCMS missionaries who serve in varied locations around the world. The congregation will get to know these missionaries — who they are, what they do — and will have the opportunity to support them. We will focus on one missionary/missionary family for an entire month rather than just one weekend. Those who wish to contribute will be able to give at church or by mail or electronically. More information to come!!





**Preschool
will be
reopening
in Fall 2021!**

Registration begins April 1. Check out the [preschool webpage](#) for a virtual tour and more information.



LUTHERANS FOR LIFE ESSAY CONTEST

Lutherans for Life of Illinois is sponsoring an essay contest for Lutheran students in grades 6-12. Students will write a life-affirming essay

based on the theme: God Chose You with the Bible verse: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit”. (John 15:16) Prizes are \$100 for first place and \$50 for second place. Deadline is April 1, 2021. Contact office@immanuelmokena.org for more information.

TRINITY LUTHERAN SCHOOL INFORMATION SESSIONS

Trinity Lutheran School in Tinley Park educates students through 8th grade. It is Nationally Accredited and State Recognized, educating children in a Christ-centered, nurturing environment. Information sessions are:

- Wednesday, February 24, 2021
- Friday, March 19, 2021
- Sunday, April 25, 2021

Registration is **REQUIRED** by contacting the school office at school@tlcs.org or 708.532.3529; or Victoria West at admissions@tlcs.org so that they do not exceed the attendance maximum. Drop-ins will not be able to attend. To uphold safety measures, Covid-19 guidelines will be followed and all guests are required to wear a mask and respect social distancing requirements.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS STUDENTS

Do you have a student member of your family attending or planning to attend University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign? If so, the University Lutheran Church in Champaign would love to reach out to them. You may submit contact information via their website at <https://uniluchampaign.org/referral/>



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!!

“God controlled your salvation from start to finish. He gave you faith in Baptism and strengthens faith through the Word. You can trust that He will continue to keep control of your life because you rest in the palm of His loving hand. Stand firm because God is in control.” *Rev. Peter Sulzle, St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, Minnesota – A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life*



Love is *patient,*
love is *kind.*
It does not *envy,*
it does not *boast,*
it is not *proud.*

1 Corinthians 13:4

FEBRUARY Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- 2 Terri Hutson
- 3 Jim Bowlds
- 3 Matthew Fuka
- 3 Ginger Krol
- 4 Emille Liberty
- 4 Payton Spargo
- 5 George Tolsky
- 6 Sarah Hayes
- 10 Sara Tustin
- 10 Stephanie Victor
- 12 Jenna Kaiser
- 12 Adam Sekula
- 13 Brittany Bubeck
- 13 Betty Jansen
- 13 Abby Olsen
- 13 Bill Sluis
- 14 Molly Zagorski
- 15 Kathy Disabato
- 15 Frank Strobel
- 16 Barry Schulz
- 16 Carly Weis
- 16 Kristina Zawora
- 17 Earl Baker
- 17 Rachel Dudczyk
- 18 Amanda Baker
- 18 Judy Smith
- 19 Jeremy Nagy
- 20 Katie Kaczmarczyk
- 20 Aaron Marcotte
- 20 Sandy Zagorski
- 21 Laura Bechtel
- 21 Lawrence Hansen
- 21 Dana Tiffin
- 21 Jerry Vrshek
- 22 Barbara Baker
- 22 Georgia Goetsch
- 24 Diana Quigley
- 25 Julia Bowlds
- 25 Dee Dee Nilson
- 26 Raiden Moffitt
- 27 Hayley Ackerman
- 27 Laura Fenn
- 28 Tom Flannery
- 28 Linda Miller
- 29 Ava Goetsch

Anniversaries

15 Don & Donna Bakken

47 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.

Altar Flowers By Barb Belanski

We have two Sundays open in February 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.

2020 Offering Statements

2020 offering statements were mailed or e-mailed. Didn't receive a statement? 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.
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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)



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

February 7, 2021 – Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Psalm 147:1-11; 1 Corinthians 9:16-27; Mark 1:29-39

“Preaching and Healing” - Sermon Text: Mark 1:29-39 - Rev. Paul Shoemaker

Jesus came preaching the Good News of our salvation to establish His authority and the truth of His proclamation. He fulfilled Old Testament prophesy by healing and casting out demons.

February 14, 2021 – The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6; Mark 9:2-9

“Lift the Veil!” - Sermon Text: 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6 - Rev. William Mueller

When you look at the central figure on the Mountain of Transfiguration, whom do you see? The Word of God by the Apostle Paul reminds us of the constant need to repent and remove the “veils” that prevent us from seeing and believing who this person is...the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Savior!

February 21, 2021 – First Sunday in Lent

Psalm 25:1-10; Genesis 22:1-18; **Mark 1:9-15**

“The Lord Will Provide” - Sermon Text: **Genesis 22:14** - Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

Whatever challenge you face today – in body or soul – know that *The Lord Will Provide!* He provides for and sustains your life. He provides the Way to everlasting life in Jesus Christ. And He provides the faith to receive and respond to His many gifts to us. The Lord “knows my needs and *well* provides me.”

February 28, 2021 – Second Sunday in Lent

Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 5:6-11; Mark 8:34-38

“True Discipleship” - Sermon Text: Mark 8:34-38 - Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

We want to be disciples of Jesus. He tells us what true discipleship means. We are to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. Is there any good news here? Yes, absolutely!