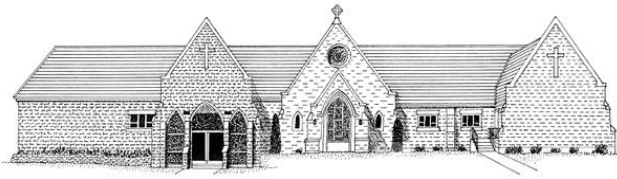


THE MESSENGER



Monthly news for Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Menominee, Michigan

December

2020

Midweek Advent Worship schedule

All services will be broadcast on Facebook Live at 10:00 am

December 9th Pastor Scott Ehle

“Mary’s Journey to Bethlehem”

December 16th Pastor Mark Laatsch

“Joseph’s Journey to Bethlehem”

December 23rd Pastor Doug Schoen

“The Shepherd’s Journey to Bethlehem”

Children’s Christmas Program

The video will be scheduled to run on our Facebook page at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 20th and will also be available on our website on December 21st.

Christmas Eve Worship Service

December 24th at 4:00 pm via Facebook Live

Christmas Day Word and Prayer Service

With Virtual Holy Communion 9:00 am via Facebook Live
(Drive-through Communion from 9:30 am – 10:00 am)

FROM THE PASTOR

Brothers and Sisters in Christ;

As we transition from the old year into the new, first within the church (The Season of Advent, the beginning of the church year, began on November 29th), and then to our calendar year on January 1st, we do so with silver linings to the dark clouds of the past year. 2020 has been a year of waiting, hoping, and setbacks, so let us hope and assume that the waiting and hoping will come to fruition in the new year and that the setbacks will be left behind. But, as I take stock of the past year in preparation for the new one, I will do so focusing on those silver linings.

For starters, during the past eight months, I've not had a single person fall asleep in church while I'm preaching (which means, yes, I do see you when you fall asleep in church while I am preaching!). The fact that you may be in your pajamas in your bed and asleep during the Facebook Live broadcast is not missed by me, but, since I can't see you, I'll chalk it up as you are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

Second, when I tell a bad joke and nobody laughs, it's okay, because there's nobody there to laugh. I've come to the conclusion that this means that I should probably get all of my bad jokes out of my system while I can before you all return.

Lastly, not a single person during the time the church has been in isolation has received a shock from me when I've placed the communion wafer in their hand, an experience that I have shared with many of you in my five years here. Talk about an electric presider!

If you're shaking your head and rolling your eyes right now, I can't see it anyway, so just go with it.

But isn't the season of Advent, the time of waiting, a most appropriate time of the year to see the light in the darkness? Is there a better time to spot hope in what is seemingly hopelessness, to find that silver lining in the dark clouds? As the pandemic drags on and as our time apart grows longer, it also means that the time when it will be safe for us to be together again is growing shorter. Hope grows out of the darkness that is the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Season of Advent reminds us that in a time of darkness and despair is when our Savior comes to us. Our Old Testament reading for the 3rd Sunday of Advent, December 13th, is the 61st chapter of Isaiah, the announcement of Good News. The language of this text is as beautiful as it is powerful, with the first two verses setting the table for what follows:

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn. (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Oppressed, brokenhearted, captive, and mourning are all words that every one of us can find a place for in 2020. It shows that God identified with God's people and what they were going through as they struggled to find their place and remember who they were post-Babylonian Exile, some 500 years before Christ was born. It shows us that God heard their cry, and so God came to them as a child born to a teenage mother in a stable in Bethlehem. From there, Jesus Christ would proclaim freedom from sin until he was crucified at Golgotha, and then rising three days later, having crushed sin, death, and the devil underfoot.

This is where we turn our hearts and minds to as well during these difficult days. God knows what we are going through right now, and God will deliver us from it. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ assures us of this. But, like the Israelites in the time of Isaiah, we wait, we hope, and we trust. But let this not be a time of anxious waiting. Instead, let us find and dwell in the good things that God is doing around us and through us and with us, for in the midst of pain and sadness and longing, there is joy that is the promise of Christ, Emmanuel, God with us.

As we wait with joyful anticipation, a most blessed Christmas to all!

In Christ,
Pastor Mark

Children's Christmas Program "Love Came Down at Christmas!"



Our Sunday school children are providing their traditional Christmas program in video format this year. Individual children or family groups have been filmed following CDC and state health guidelines. The video will be scheduled to run on our Facebook page at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 20th and will also be available on our website on December 21st.



Emmanuel's Outreach Projects

Christmas Gift Card Collection



This year, because of the Covid-19 pandemic concerns, we will be giving gift cards instead of our traditional food and gift collections to families and individuals in need in our community.

The Outreach Committee is asking those congregation members who are interested in helping to make Christmas a bit brighter for those in need, to purchase a gift card in any amount from a local store or gas station and bring the card to the church office by **Monday, December 7th**. Please be sure the store name is clearly identified and the dollar amount is stated on the card or card holder. The cards will be organized by store/amount and distributed to the families we receive from Rainbow House and individuals from Haven of Hope Shelter and the community.

Advent Meditation

It has undoubtedly been an incredibly difficult year, in our personal lives, as well as in the life of the church. While we still cannot safely gather together in person to worship, we as the church staff want to remind you that the sanctuary is open and accessible to those who would like to spend time in prayer and reflection. To add to the experience, beginning Tuesday, December 8th, the Advent candles and the Christmas trees will be lit and Christmas hymns will be played over the sound system during the following times: Tuesdays, December 8th, 15th, and 22nd from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, Wednesdays, December 9th, 16th, and 23rd from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, and Thursdays, December 10th and 17th from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. We ask that all those in attendance please honor social distancing and hygiene practices to keep the sanctuary as safe as possible. If you would like to have time in the sanctuary, but these times do not work for you, please contact the church office and we will accommodate as best we can.

The Journey to Bethlehem

A combined Emmanuel/Bethel virtual midweek Advent worship service will be offered on Wednesdays, December 9th, 16th, and 23rd at 10:00 am on Facebook Live. *“The Journey to Bethlehem,”* this year’s story, will focus on the unique journeys of Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, as told by Pastor Scott Ehle, Pastor Mark Laatsch, and Pastor Doug Schoen. If you are interested in participating in these services and would like an accompanying bulletin, please contact the church office and we will get you one!

Christmas Worship – Facebook Live

Our Christmas worship will undoubtedly be different, as there will be no in-person worship services. But we are working hard to create a unique Christmas Eve worship experience as we tell the story of our Savior’s coming in Word and Music. The Christmas Eve Worship service will be at 4:00 on Christmas Eve. 9:00 am Christmas Day worship will be a brief order of Word and Prayer and will include the Words of Institution from Martin Luther’s German Communion Mass of 1526. Drive-thru communion will also be offered from 9:30-10:00 am Christmas Day.



Called to their promised eternal home in November

Donna Bayerl on November 10. Our sympathy to her children, Jeffery, Chuckie, Bobby, Becky, Timmy and Beth and their families.

Norman Hipke on November 13. Our sympathy to his wife, Donna, and daughter, Gina and her family.

Jeanne Mushynski on November 14. Our sympathy to her children, Deb (Bob) LaCombe and Robert (Jennifer) Mushynski and their families.

Adeline Miller on November 17. Our sympathy to her sons, Steven (Mona) and Dan and their families.

June Jacques on November 20. Our sympathy to her children Ronald Cuyler, Garry (Rose) Cuyler, Georgeann (Dave) Ennocenti, Karen (Clay) Malke and Michelle Hayward and their families.

Jerome Camps on November 24. Our sympathy to his wife, Cheryl and children, Cory (Debra) Camps, Lori (Tony) Dura and Jeremy (Brianna) Camps and their families.

Robert Beyersdorf on November 25. Our sympathy to his extended family and friends.

As we praise God during this Advent season of hope and anticipation, may all who mourn be filled with the promised hope of resurrection to eternal life made possible through the Christ child.

Taking Care of our Members

Terrie Porras is graciously and enthusiastically piloting a program to reach out to Emmanuel's members, specifically those who may not be connected virtually, to check on the well-being and accessing the needs that any may have right now. If you would like to take part in assisting in making calls or making yourself available to assist members in need, please contact the church office or Terrie Porras directly.

Emmanuel Lutheran Church Endowment Committee

The Emmanuel Lutheran Church Constitution requires that 5% of the value of the Mission Endowment Fund is to be distributed annually in the following manner: 20% local, 20% national, 20% international, and 40% toward any of the prior 3 designations, per the discretion and approval of the Endowment Committee. This year, the Endowment Committee had a total of \$5,368.40 to distribute. In October, the Committee gathered together and prayerfully voted to distribute to the following:

Local \$1,073.68 – Emmanuel Lutheran Church Home Mission Fund. This is an existing fund designated to assist those in need in our community, to be distributed per the pastor's discretion. Examples of this would be to assist those in need with utility bills, gas, food, etc. If you would like to contribute to this fund as well, please contact the church office.

National \$1,073.68 – Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. For 80 years, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has offered welcome and hope to more than half a million refugees. Since 1939, LIRS has transformed lives, to welcome the most vulnerable to the United States. LIRS is a ministry which supports, equips, and empowers new Americans, while advocating for policy that protects all of God's children. If you are interested in learning more about LIRS, please check out their website at lirs.org.

International \$1,073.68 – Compassion International. Compassion International works with churches and individuals around the world, tailoring their holistic child development model to the contextualized needs of the children in its community, to best deliver whole-life care that children need. Compassion International works primarily through child sponsorship, but also have specific initiatives to help babies and mothers, to develop future leaders, and to meet critical needs. If you would like to learn more about Compassion International, please check out their website at compassion.com.

Committee Discretion \$2,147.36 – Northern Great Lakes Synod "Equipping the Saints" Pastor Debt Relief. This is a program set up with the Bishop's office with the intention of assisting pastors in paying off the accrued, and sometimes crippling, Seminary debts that many pastors bring into their ministry. If you are interested in learning more of how

you can contribute to this fund, please contact the NGLS office at (906) 228-2300 or go to their website at nglsynod.org.

As well, if any of you are interested in having a conversation about leaving a portion of your legacy to assist in this continuing work of the church, in our community and in our world, please contact Pastor Mark in the church office.

EMMANUEL BUDGET NEWS

As of October 31, 2020

*Your Contributions to the General Fund	\$183,477.79
*Your Approved Budget Amount	\$220,011.46

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee, thank you to everyone who prayerfully responded to our Fall 2020 Stewardship Ministry appeal. Through November 30th, we have received a total of 90 responses for \$131,186! Remember, you can still submit a pledge for next year. Your financial responses enable us to create our budget for 2021 and beyond, empowering us to carry out the ministry that Christ has called his church to. As well, several of our committees drew in new members this year, faithful additions to these specific ministries. Thanks be to God for Emmanuel Lutheran Church and for those who make up her membership!

Annual Meeting

While we don't know what the future holds, and things can change in the next month, but as of right now, with the COVID infection rate continuing to be elevated in our area (the risk assessment tool which we utilize states that there is still a 90% chance that at least one person in a gathering of 50 will be COVID positive), the Emmanuel Lutheran Church council is preparing to hold our Annual Meeting on Sunday, **January 24th**, in a virtual setting. For those who would like to be present for this unique and historic meeting, please contact the church office and let us know how many will be in attendance, as well as the best email address to send the Zoom invite to so that you can participate in the meeting. For those who do not have access to a computer and would like to participate in the annual meeting, please contact the church office and we will assist you in making accommodations so that you can be present for this meeting. Should the COVID-19 situation in our area change during the next month, and the risk level drop to a point in which we feel safe to gather, we do have the flexibility to resort back to an in-person meeting on rather short notice, and will do so. More specific information as to how the meeting will be conducted will be forthcoming in the January Messenger.

Fellowship Room and Kitchen Repairs

A little over a year ago a pipe broke in the kitchen, covering much of our kitchen and fellowship hall in water. During the past year the Emmanuel Property Committee has worked very hard in addressing the damage and working with contractors to make our fellowship area as welcoming as possible. This has included replacing the fellowship room floor and the kitchen countertops. Lastly, a new sink was put into the kitchen, which has been very graciously donated by Tri-City Plumbing! We are blessed indeed! Thank you to all who have committed to this work and we can't wait to show the rest of the congregation!



CHRISTMAS MEMORIALS

All Christmas memorials must be received by

Sunday, December 13th

to be included in the

Christmas Memorial booklet.

Your gifts are greatly appreciated.

I would like to:

\$_____ Place a poinsettia in the chancel (\$12.00 each)

\$_____ Emmanuel Maintenance Fund

\$_____ Youth Mission Fund

\$_____ ELCA – World Hunger Appeal

Given _____ In memory of _____

_____ In honor of _____

_____ In thanks to God _____

By _____

Envelope Number _____

Christmas Memorials Descriptions

Even though there will be no in-person gatherings for Christmas this year, we are still offering the traditional memorial opportunities for anyone who would like to give toward them. Below are descriptions for each of our offered memorials.

Poinsettias: Will be placed on the altar and will be displayed during our virtual Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. For those who purchase plants and wish to take them home, they can be picked up from church anytime following Christmas Day worship.

Emmanuel Maintenance Fund: As our church campus grows older, the maintenance needs become a bit more pronounced. This fund has been established to be responsive to the ongoing physical maintenance of the church building and property.

Youth Mission Fund: The COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately brought our various youth endeavors to a stop, but once it is safe to do so again, we will be coordinating mission trips, gatherings, and other opportunities. This fund enables us to have seed money for whatever mission opportunity or service project we are able to participate in.

ELCA – World Hunger Appeal: A long-standing Christmas tradition. This money is directed to assist those around the world who are in need. In addition to feeding the hungry, money is designated towards farming education and provisions.

The Christmas Memorial booklets will be available by Monday, December 21st. If you would like one, please stop by the church during hours of operation or contact the office and we will provide one for you.



A Letter from Bishop Finegan

Bishop Katherine's monthly article is available to all on the Northern Great Lakes Synod website, which is <http://www.nglsynod.org/>

As well, for those interested in understanding how churches are making decisions on when to open back up and how to do so, you can learn more by referring to the Wisconsin Council of Churches guidelines at

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/09/23/returning-to-church-an-early-fall-update/>

or at the article on phases of recovery

<https://religionnews.com//2020/09/14/the-pandemic-at-six-months-welcome-to-the-disillusionment-phase/>

Synod-Wide Christmas Eve Worship Broadcast

The Northern Great Lakes Synod is hosting a Christmas worship service that will be televised on WLUC and FOX-UP! The *tentative* days and times of the broadcast are listed below, but please be sure to check the Synod website, Facebook page and E-Notes for updates leading up to Christmas. Gather your household in the living room and enjoy this special event!

Christmas Eve

WLUC: 4-5 pm ET

FOX-UP: 7-8 pm ET

Christmas Day

WLUC: 12-1 pm ET

FOX-UP: 9-10 am ET

God equips us for ‘new things’

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”—Isaiah 43:19

Advent and Christmas are all about celebrating that most amazing “new thing” God brought about for our sake – incarnating God’s divine essence in the human form of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

We prayerfully ask at the beginning of every church year, “To what ‘new things’ is God calling us?” But this Advent the question holds special significance.

With its racial unrest, political divisiveness, riots, wildfires, hurricanes and COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 will be remembered as one of the most troubled years in recent history. And everybody is bracing for a “new normal” that is still unknown.

The pandemic has caused us to cancel many of our cherished Advent and Christmas observances. We pray the Holy Spirit will give us the creativity and wisdom to find new ways faithfully to steward the mystery of the incarnation and tell God’s story.

More broadly, we also pray for guidance to steward our lives that we may be, as Jesus directed, the salt of the earth and light to a world that needs us more than ever.

As we listen for God’s direction, preparing us for “new things,” the four traditional Advent themes may offer a path. We cultivate these themes in our hearts and congregations and share them with the world:

- **Hope** as an antidote to the culture of despair.
- **Peace** in our hearts to bring to an angry world.
- **Love** for our friends and enemies alike.
- **Joy** in Christ, who makes all things new.

God, who promises to make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, will prepare us and equip us to do “new things” to steward our lives and congregations to meet the challenges ahead.

—Rob Blezard

Copyright © 2020, Rev. Robert Blezard. Pastor Blezard serves as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, MD

Because we are unable to be together in our church building on Sundays, here are Bible verses for you to reflect on in your personal stewardship practices. You can read one each week, or all at once if you like!

December 6, 2020 Second Sunday of Advent

“A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” --

Isaiah 40:3

2020 has certainly upended our worship and community life. Christmas will be much different from what we’ve known. As faithful stewards, we prepare to welcome Jesus, even if circumstances are not what we expect or desire. Remember: God is faithful and Christ is with us.

December 13, 2020 Third Sunday of Advent

*“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.” – **John 1:6-7***

Like John, we are sent as witnesses to testify to the Christ at work in the world. In addition to preparing our own hearts and minds in Advent, faithful stewards know that the Spirit gives us the power to share the good news of God among us.

December 20, 2020 Fourth Sunday of Advent

*“For nothing will be impossible with God.” – **Luke 1:37***

This Sunday we celebrate Mary’s faithfulness and willingness to do God’s will. This brave young woman hears the angel’s words and believes. As a faithful steward, what possibilities do you see for our community and congregation?

December 24, 2020 Nativity of the Lord

*“But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” – **Luke 2:19***

It's easy to get caught up in our treasured aspects of Christmas and still miss out on the wonder and awe of the story that changed the world. This year listen to the story with fresh ears and see new possibilities. Steward these mysteries as Mary did, by treasuring them and pondering what they mean for you.

December 27, 2020 First Sunday after Christmas Day

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. – Isaiah 61:10

What's the appropriate response to Christmas? Joy and praise, of course! This week's lessons brim with both. This Christmas season steward not only your resources but also your joy and praise for the One who changed everything.

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT EMMANUEL

Online Worship 9:00 a.m.

Livestreamed on our Facebook page

CONTACT US:

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Email: mail@e-mmanuel.com

Council President, Rhonda Pedersen

Email: elcpresident@e-mmanuel.com

or

Visit us on the Web at www.e-mmanuel.com



Follow us on Instagram and Facebook at
Emmanuel Lutheran Church Menominee Michigan ELCA

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Director of Youth & Family Ministry

Mrs. Patti Treptow

Church Secretary

Mrs. Judy Raygo

Custodian- inside Mrs. Carol Parrish

Custodian - outside Mr. Lee Parrish



We are a congregation of the Northern Great Lakes Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America