

Immanuel Lutheran News

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Visit our web site at www.immanuelaltamont.org

December 2018

From Pastor Wright

Theme for Advent: Who is Jesus?

The celebration of Christmas is all about Jesus. I don't get too upset about the commercialization of Christmas, and here's why. It used to bother me that stores were setting up Christmas displays in October and holiday music was played the day after Thanksgiving on the radio and in shopping centers. It's true that the world is cashing in on a Christian holy day and forgetting the real reason for the season. This has been going on since long before I was born.

I don't complain about it anymore because Christianity is not the dominant force on our American society as it once was. While it used to be true that most people had some association with a Christian church, much fewer people do today. So when people go shopping for presents and gather together with their families and at office parties because it's Christmas, we ought to see that as a sort of victory. It's true that the world has blinded most people from the real truth of the holiday. But whether they recognize it or not, Americans are celebrating the birth of Jesus into the world. So it becomes an opportunity for us to witness for the faith to people who have little contact with the gospel's good news for them.

When someone asks you what you will be doing for Christmas, mention the less obvious. You plan to celebrate the arrival of God into our world. You could say that you are preparing for the holidays by meditating on the Word of God. Tell them that you can't wait to sing praise to the God of the universe who once visited us, and plans to come again. Say that on Christmas you will gather with the people of your congregation to hear the story of how God loved the world and gave His Son. Invite them to experience this with you. The worst thing that could happen is that they refuse. The best thing would be if they would accept, meet you at a church service, and you could have a conversation about who Jesus is.

This year part of our congregational preparation at Wednesday night Advent services will be hearing about who Jesus really is.

- Advent 1 Jesus is the Son of David (Matthew 1:1,6, & 17) Wednesday, December 5.
- Advent 2 Jesus is the Son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1) Wednesday, December 12.
- Advent 3 Jesus is the Son of Solomon (Matthew 1:6) Wednesday, December 19.

All services happen at 6:30 PM with a fellowship meal following.

The time of Advent is preparation to celebrate, worship, and witness about the birth of Jesus Christ and his imminent return. We are all about that at Immanuel because we are all about Jesus. Have a blessed Christmas.

(Update on Lisa: she finishes her chemotherapy on December 4. Other infusions will continue for six months. Surgery sometime in January. Thank you, everyone for your prayers, cards, and encouragement. It means a lot. Thanks be to God she has had no cold or flu during treatment.)

Pastor Wright

Preschool Sing at Advent 3 Service – Practice has begun for Preschool Sunday School classes to sing at the December 19, 6:30 p.m. Advent Service.

Christmas Worship Schedule

Christmas Choir Cantata: Saturday, December 15 at 6:00 PM, Sunday December 16 at 9:00 AM (one Sunday service only).

Advent Wednesday Services begin December 5 at 6:30 PM with meal following.

Christmas Eve Children's Family Service
December 24 at 6:30 PM.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 24 at 11:00 PM.

Christmas Day Service December 25 at 9:00 with the Lord's Supper

New Years Eve Service December 31 at 6:30 PM. (No New Year's Day worship.)

Regular schedule for Saturdays and Sundays.

From Pastor Ross

Dear friends in Christ,

Thanksgiving is over, many of us are a few pounds heavier, and in this final month of the Year of our Lord 2018, we find ourselves looking ahead to Advent, Christmas, and New Year's. While marking out our calendars with a "last day of the month or year" is an artificial creation, and Advent is a season of preparation, as Christians, we all know that Christmas is what is most important: the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in Bethlehem, born that man no more may die!

In our joy and celebration of Christmas, it defines us throughout the year – **Christians are Christmas People**. How so, exactly? Even our smallest children know what Christmas is all about – "Baby Jesus" and "presents." When we celebrate that Christ came to be our Savior as the greatest present of all from God to us – the present of a Savior from sin, death, and the devil – then our focus is on Christ, and the gifts He brings (and is), and this is not limited to the days leading up to and following December 25th!

Christians are a Christmas People because we celebrate the good gifts that God has given us through our Lord Jesus Christ. His perfect life, death, and resurrection are all gifts to us, freely given, and unearned; just as you give gifts to people because of who they are to you (and not because they have earned them), so Christ is God's gift of love to you. So also all the works of Christ – the forgiveness of our sins in Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, our admittance into heaven upon our deaths, our resurrection of the body on Judgment Day, our inheritance of the new heavens and the new earth...all gifts, freely given to you and to me and to all who believe in Christ our Lord.

So yes, celebrate Christmas with all the joy you can, because we are Christmas People, and our celebration of God's gifts is not just on December 25, but on every day of the year! Yours in Christ,
Pastor Ross, Christmas Person

Thank Offering We are gathering an offering to pay off our church's debt by December 2. Use your congregational "Thank-Offering" envelope or mark your gift accordingly.

My Commitment Members are encouraged to make a commitment for 2019 of time, talent, and treasure. Forms are available to place this record in a sealed envelope in the box under the altar. The commitments will be mailed back to you next fall unopened.

Stewardship Corner

Throughout his epistles and his preaching recorded in the Book of Acts, St. Paul refers, in one way or another, to thanksgiving and thankfulness nearly 50 times. Whether vertically toward God, or horizontally toward the neighbor, thanksgiving is a major theme within St. Paul's body of work.

What does this mean? It means thankfulness is intrinsic to the life of those baptized into Christ. In other words, giving thanks is what Christians do as they live out their lives in this world.

The problem is that we often forget this. Consider your average, run-of-the-mill, normal day. When you get home, and your parents, your spouse or your children ask about your day, what first comes to your mind? After 99 percent of things went right, went exactly as planned, were enjoyable and blessings, we tend to focus on and remember the 1 percent of things that went poorly, that didn't go as planned, and that were nuisances.

We remember the bad things. We focus on discontent. And we fail to give thanks in all circumstances for everything (Eph. 5:20) and to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4).

Thankfulness and contentment go together. We are content with things for which we are thankful. St. Paul could be content with having plenty or when in need because He gave thanks to the Lord for all things. He thanked the Lord for those who had prayed for him and listened to his proclamation of the Gospel. He gave thanks for their good works in and for the Church of Christ. He gave thanks for the grace of God in Christ Jesus and found that God's grace was sufficient for him.

So, give thanks for all things and in all circumstances dear brothers and sisters in Christ. For you have been saved from sin, death, and hell by the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. You have been added to the very family of God in an adoption of grace through Holy Baptism. God is your Father. Our Lord, Jesus Christ is your brother.

But He not only provides for your spiritual well-being, He cares also for this body and life. Your Father in heaven provides food and clothes, house and home, husband, wife, and children. He gives you reason and all your senses. He has given you the raw talents that you have developed into careers. Everything you are and everything that you have is a gift from His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in you.

Give thanks for these things. Make a list – every morning if you must. Say them out loud. Sing about them within the congregation of the saints.

And remember this: God has given you these things so that you may be of service to those around you – your family, your neighbors, your brothers and sisters in Christ. For to whom much is given; much shall be required (Luke 12:48).
(LCMS Stewardship)

Proposed Children's Sunday School Classes and Sunday Adult Bible Classes location changes beginning January 6th.

Following the request at the October voters' meeting to consider moving some children's Sunday School classes from A.L.I.S. to the church Parish Hall, discussion has been held with Sunday School leaders/teachers, ALIS staff, Immanuel Bd. of Ed. members and Immanuel Elders.

This discussion has led to a decision to proceed with the plan to take place on Sunday, January 6th.

All parents of Sunday School age children PK-8th grade and adults who are currently attending Adult Bible classes (*or not*), should **take note** of December bulletin announcements, bulletin inserts, Immanuel website updates and Immanuel Facebook notices.

Details will be published and announced throughout December.

The Altamont Zone LWML continues to collect food and personal items for the St. Louis Seminary on through Sunday, December 2. The collection will be loaded on a trailer at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Altamont on Sunday, Dec. 2 from 1-2 pm. It will be delivered to the seminary on Dec. 4.

The Food Bank provides a tremendous blessing of groceries and household items to students and their families. They may shop twice a month during the school year and once a month during the summer. This opportunity allows them to stretch their resources by reducing their out of pocket grocery expenses. Thank you for sharing your blessings with these families as they prepare for church work.

Elders request: *Fill out attendance card* for each service you attend and circle your name if you take communion. Holy communion is celebrated on 2nd, 4th & 5th Sundays of each month.

Decorate the church – this Sunday, December 2 at 1:30PM.

Thankoffering/Debt Fund Turn in check by Dec. 12 and make payable to Immanuel. Order poinsettias by Dec. 3 and make check payable to Blossom Paradise.

Music Corner

Immanuel Lutheran Church will present.....

Praise Noels cantata on Saturday, December 15, 6pm and Sunday, December 16, 9 am (one service) directed by Sheryl Marble. We will hold cantata practices on Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m.

Bells practice on Tuesdays, Dec. 4, 11, 18, 6:30pm.

Large Print workers needed Tues. December 4.

Sign the chart in narthex or call Eloise 483-6439.

Ladies Aid Christmas Party Thursday, December 6 at 6PM in the Parish Hall. Committee is Marilyn Burrow, Ruth Spilker, Charla Wolff, Deb Winter. Please regrets only to Marilyn Burrow 618-322-0054.

Christmas Cookie Cheer Bags - Please help Ladies Aid on Sunday, Dec. 9, 1:30PM in the Parish Hall. Baked cookies and volunteers are needed to pack and deliver Christmas Cookie Bags. *This is done to show appreciation to our members over 80 years. Merry Christmas!*

Steve Voelker, who has made several trips to Africa, will have a presentation on his various African construction projects on Wednesday, December 12, 10AM in the parish hall. *Everyone is welcome.*

Cookie Walk (Dec.15): 8AM to Noon.

Parents of all Junior and Senior LYF are asked to make cookies for the Walk.

This fundraiser benefits the entire youth group!

Prayer Corner

- For healing of Kenneth Budde, Tiffany Dunaway, Abbey Franzen, Wayne Franzen, Pastor Ted Gall, Adela Goers, Lawrence Heiser, Jim Jones, Pam Kepley, Louis Kroening, Melissa Kruse, Amiee Lowry, JR Newby, Karen Richter, Paul & Shirley Schulze, Doris Strullmyer, Candy Stuemke, Elizabeth Weidner, Lisa Wright and others.
- For our pastors, church staff, ALIS school staff.
- For Lutheran missionaries Ted Krey, Andrew Schlund, Britt Odemba and for their families.
- For all who travel
- For peace in the world, an end to violence in the name of God, and for harmony among the nations.
- For those persecuted for their faith in Jesus.
- For police, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel, and those who serve in our military and their families, Chelsea Giovanetti on USS Wasp, Derek Jahraus, Michael Weishaar

2019 “God’s Creation” appointment

Calendars with Bible verses and great pictures (*as in past years*) are still available in the PH lobby, church office. Price is \$7. All proceeds will benefit the After School Care program. 50 calendars are available.

Take advantage of our Electronic Giving: Make your donations to the church automatically. Your offering will be marked with your envelope number. If interested, contact Barb Busby 618-694-5499.

Tax Savings Take advantage of this tax law allowing IRA distributions to go to a Qualified Charity. Consider donating your IRA Required Minimum Distribution to the Church and pay no tax on the amount distributed.

Offering Envelopes – To save money on envelopes, we will be renumbering 2019 offering envelopes.

Thank you to Ron Hoffmeister and Phil Schultz for snow removal.

Thank you to Claudia Berg, Sally Mayhaus and Steve Miller for decorating the sanctuary for Thanksgiving.

Afghans for Cannon Place Quilts for Veterans

The LWML CID will be gathering items for Christmas gifts for 200 veterans at the Danville Convention next April. As part of those gifts, we would like to present them with a new bed covering (quilt). The afghans or quilts need to be full size, 80” x 85” or so. The request was originally for knitted and crocheted afghans (it seems they really like granny square afghans). If you don’t knit or crochet, as I don’t, a nice quilt would be lovely.

This request is being sent out now as it takes time to make these quilts and we will need 200! By my math, this means 16.6 quilts per zone, round to 17. I greatly appreciate all your efforts to make this happen. The ladies of the LWML CID have always come up to my challenges and you make me so happy with your love of serving the Lord. God Bless you all, Laura Strattman, Human Care Committee Chairman LWML CID.

Read the Bible in a Year – Plans are to have sheets that instruct how to read the Bible in one year. Find them on the Parish Hall shelf in January.

Christmas Walk – Cookie Sale Sunday, Dec. 9. Tour homes and the church 1-4PM featuring homes of Eric & Barb Grobengieser; Dan & Myrna Hites; Dean & Karen Manuel and Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Free will donations accepted at any location and will be used for restoration fund of Bethlehem’s 1958 Schantz Pipe Organ.

Refreshments served in the Bethlehem Parish Hall and a ‘Cookie Sale’ from 1-5PM.

2018 German Christmas Service Sunday, December 16 at 4:00 p.m. At 645 Poplar St. in Terre Haute, IN. Service includes German hymns and the sermon in German by Rev. Philip G. Meyer. Followed by pastries (some authentic) prepared by members and friends; cookies; and German Kaffee, as well as regular coffee and tea. An English translation of liturgy and hymns and a synopsis in English of the sermon will be provided.

Trinity Lutheran School Raffle – Tickets sold until Jan. 31, 2019 or until sold out. \$50 per ticket for a 2018 Polaris Ranger 500 Solar Red Courtesy of Car Corral, Flora, IL 618-662-2641. Proceeds to Trinity Preschool. Need not be present to win. Drawing held Feb. 9, 2019 or 2 weeks after last ticket is sold. Tickets available at Trinity Lutheran School Office at 217-682-3881.

Earn a Return and Help Our LCMS Churches! – The Central Illinois District Church Extension Fund (CID-CEF) provides resources to churches in our Central Illinois District that wish to grow God’s ministry through building or expansion. We are able to do this because of conscientious LCMS members like you who support our churches by investing in the CID-CEF - we need *your* continued support and investments! As an added blessing for your investment, we are now offering a 24-Month SPECIAL RATE of 2.35% (minimum investment \$500) to you as well as our church organizations to support the LCMS ministry. Please contact Chris Anderson or Susan Short at the CID-CEF (phone: 217-793-1802, email: cef@cidlcms) or visit our website (www.cidlcms.org, see link in lower left corner) for this special interest rate and other recent rate increases for our investment options. Thank you for investing in the future of our LCMS!

Advent Booklets, both regular and large print, are at each of the church doors.

