

# Immanuel Lutheran News

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Visit our web site at [www.immanuelaltamont.org](http://www.immanuelaltamont.org)

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## From Pastor Wright

### *Come Back to Church*

If you are looking for a New Year's resolution, I have one for everyone. Come back to church! God invites us to gather together to rest, reflect on His Word, and receive his forgiveness in order to strengthen our faith in Him.

Did you know that ten percent of the members on the books of Immanuel have not attended a worship service in over a year? Not Christmas. Not Easter. Not once. Some have been absent for two years or more. This is a serious problem for us. If you *do* come to church regularly, every Sunday and major festivals, read on, because God makes rich promises for you to enjoy.

We have a commandment about coming to church. The Third Commandment is "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." Although God no longer requires us to observe the Old Testament Sabbath day on Saturday, this commandment continues to apply to our Christian life and worship. Luther's Small Catechism says we keep the Sabbath when "we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." If you didn't talk to a close family member for a year, or even a week, they would conclude that you despise them. How much more is this true for the God who created us and redeemed us by the blood of His Son?

We fear and love God by taking time to reflect on His Word. We treasure God's Word as sacred. We devote ourselves to his Word in private devotion and public worship. When we will not come together in worship, the opposite is true about us. We despise God's word when we fail to gather together in worship to receive His Word and Sacraments. Hebrews 10:25 says, "Do not neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the [last] Day drawing near." We reject and disregard God's word when we have no time to learn from Him by hearing his word preached and taught.

Colossians 3:16 reads, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

So what keeps you from coming church? Think about that carefully. God is offering you the riches of heaven whenever you step inside the church door. What is more important to you than that? Does that thing love you as much as God does? Did it suffer and die for your sins? Can you take it with you when you

die? Will it raise you from the dead? Surely not. Then why are you allowing it to keep you from the God who does everything to love you?

Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday so we have a weekly anniversary of the resurrection every Sunday morning. Some may have to work on Sunday, so we have a Saturday service every week. We also have occasional services during the week in Advent and Lent. We gather together in Bible classes to learn more about God's Word.

Why is it so vital for us to gather together with fellow Christians in public worship? God is present when His Word is preached and His Sacraments are administered. Through these means of grace He gives us gifts and blessings. The greatest of these is the forgiveness of our sins. If you don't have any sins to forgive, then there's nothing I can say to convince you to come to church, but then you really aren't a Christian and have no need of Jesus in your life. We all have sins and Jesus invites us to come together to receive forgiveness. Though it is delivered through ordinary, fallible men and the simple means of preaching, water, bread and wine, it is not to be scorned. Besides, Sunday worship is a public testimony to our faith in Christ and His resurrection from the dead for us.

We need one another and the encouragement we receive from each other. We share our blessings, burdens, and joys in prayer and hymns with those who come. We pray for other Christians throughout the world and gather offerings to care for one another.

Finally, Colossians 3:16 tells us to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." There is no better way than to gather together as God invites.

If you are one of the people who haven't been to church in a while, come back. If you know someone who doesn't come regularly, encourage them to come back to church now. Make it your resolution.

*(Update on Lisa: she finished her chemotherapy on December 4. Other infusions continue for six months. Surgery will be soon. She is grateful to everyone for their prayers, cards and encouragement. God is faithful.)*

*Pastor Wright*

### Music Corner

Mixed choir will practice Christmas Day at 8:30 a.m.

All other practices will resume in January on Wednesday evenings at the usual times.

## From Pastor Ross

Dear friends in Christ,

The decorations are up, the presents are wrapped, the hymns have been sung, and we are ready for Christmas! It truly is a high and great holy day for us, as we celebrate that God was Incarnate as man and was born in Bethlehem to be our Savior! Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to those on whose God's favor rests (that's you and me!) and sing praises to Christ, born that man no more may die!

But right around the corner is New Year's, and we will together enter the Year of Our Lord, 2019. As joyful as the Christmas holidays are, what problems and troubles disappeared with the Christmas hymns and the gifts and the time with family? Unless perhaps a frayed relationship was mended, none: the hymns and the gifts are wonderful distractions from our problems, yes, but distractions they are. As 2019 comes, all of our 2018 problems with our health, finances, frustrations & anxieties, personal battles and failings will follow us, and if we're honest, many of them will become even worse.

Now that I've sucked the Christmas joy out of you, I will pick a very opportune time to point out that **Christians are Optimists!** Yes, dear friend, that is what we are. How is that possible? Well, are we celebrating Christmas, or aren't we? Jesus Christ was born as our Lord and King, was he not? When we sign those beloved Christmas hymns, we believe the words we're singing, right?

We celebrate Christmas because yes, Christ has been born as our Savior, and that means He went to the cross and His death covers all of our sins, and His resurrection from the dead guarantees that we will live forever with Him and each other in a perfect world to come. Compared to an eternal Savior, what's an earthly Christmas present? Compared to the forgiveness of sins on account of His blood, how strong do you think your sins truly are? Compared to the eternal life you will spend with your Lord and all the faithful of all ages, what is a mortal lifetime of pain or frustration?

We celebrate Christmas because God's promises all came true, and they will continue to come true. Nothing in heaven and earth – not even your own frustrations and failings can separate you from the love of God that is ours in the Babe of Bethlehem or the Lamb on Calvary. When we consider God's richness of love and mercy *to you* – not just as a general thing, but specifically *to you*, how can we help not being optimists? Whatever we suffer or don't suffer in this life, whatever our failings, or fears, or anything else, the joy of Christmas is yours: not just for the 12 days of Christmas, but throughout the year, and because your Savior is eternal, this Christmas joy is yours for eternity as well!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Ross, Optimist

**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.

## **Stewardship Corner**

It is no secret that God calls us to be generous with the gifts He has given us. Throughout the Bible, we read that just as God has generously given to us, so are we to give generously one to another. As Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35) and "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

But God also calls us to give to Him. And He, who does all things well, presses it into service for the benefit of all the people of God. See for example what God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, after he and the people were safely brought out of Egypt across the Red Sea on dry land:

The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. (Ex. 25: 1-9)

Notice in verse two that the Lord instructs Moses to tell the Israelites to "take for me a contribution" and that from everyone motivated from gratitude for what God has just accomplished and given to them, Moses is to gather up "the contribution for me."

Pay attention, though, why the Lord wants the people of Israel to gather up these contributions for Him. God tells Moses precisely why: "let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." The purpose for the contribution of the Israelites was so that He may dwell with them, that He would live among them. Through the tabernacle and the priesthood, through their rites and ceremonies, through their feasts and festivals, as through means, the Lord God, who brought them out of the bondage of Egypt would live and dwell among them and be their God, and lead them into the promised land, which flowed with milk and honey.

God dwells among us still. In the fullness of time, God's son was born of woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law. He brought us out of

bondage to sin, death, the devil, and Hell, and He did this by His obedient suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension. But He is not gone. He dwells with us through the means of His Word and His sacraments, through the preaching and the teaching of our pastors, through the rites and ceremonies of our liturgy. He dwells with us in the Church through those means. And He is leading us to the true promised land, to the new heavens and the new earth in the new creation.

In the meantime, as God, even now, continues to call us to give to Him, let us, who have been saved from slavery to sin and death, the devil and hell, be so moved in our hearts as to give generously to Him so that the means of grace, the means of His gracious dwelling among us, would continue now and into the future. For just as He did then so does He do now. He presses the gifts given to Him into service for the benefit of all His people. He puts it to use so that we may have Him with us always, even unto the end of the age. (*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*)

### **Christmas Worship Schedule**

**Christmas Eve Children Family** Serv. Dec 24, 6:30 PM.

**Christmas Eve Candlelight** Service Dec, 24, 11PM.

**Christmas Day** Service December 25 at 9:00 with HC.

**New Years Eve** Service December 31 at 6:30 PM with HC.

(No New Year's Day worship.)

*Regular schedule for Saturdays and Sundays.*

**Epiphany:** HC both Sunday Services on January 6.

**No HC** on Saturday, January 5.

**Installation** of new and returning officers Jan. 5 & 6.

**Life Team** This year we have raised funds to send youth members Nathan Budde, Carl Weishaar, and chaperone John Weishaar to Washington D.C. as our representatives at the National March for Life and LCMS Life Conference, January 17-20. We now have thirty Life Team members at Immanuel. One of our projects is to maintain encouraging contact with our high school graduates who are on the front lines of life issues.

**LERT Team** Several years ago we had training at Immanuel for Lutheran Early Response Teams who provide support to churches after disasters. On December 1, 30 tornadoes hit Central Illinois. The worst damage was in Taylorville. 207 trained LERT team members deployed there on December 8, walking the streets and talking with residents and helping with cleanup efforts. Read more about the effort online at [lcms.org](http://lcms.org). To join the LERT team, check for upcoming training at [cidlcms.org](http://cidlcms.org) and click on "news and upcoming events."

**2019 Offering Envelopes** are in the narthex. Chances are you will have a new number, so it is important: **Do not use the new envelopes until January.**

**Immanuel** relies heavily on a seasonal increase in giving during the Christmas season to support our ministry now and throughout the year. Please plan your year-end gifts to our general fund knowing they will assist Immanuel Lutheran to continue to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with our community.

### **Children's Sunday School Classes and Sunday Adult Bible Classes location changes-January 6.**

Minor changes in **Sunday School/Bible Class locations beginning January 6**

1. 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday School classes will be relocating from ALIS to the Parish Hall lower level - first and center rooms on the left.
2. All other SS classes currently at ALIS will remain *unchanged*.
3. Current PK classes in Parish Hall lower level will remain *unchanged*.
4. The Parent Class currently meeting in the PH lower level will move to one of the ALIS classrooms vacated by the SS move.
5. Pastor Wright, Dave Corder, the High School and Young Adult Bible classes remain *unchanged*.
6. The above changes will create the possibilities to begin a Parents of PK students class in the PH lower level – third room on left, and additional adult classes at ALIS including parents of SS students already in the school building.

### **"Read through the Bible" in 2019**

Daily reading schedules are available in the PH Lobby and the narthex. Two reading choices:

- a. Beginning to End (*Genesis to Revelation*)
  - b. Chronological (*as events occurred in real time*).
- Please use the "sign up sheet" and take a copy of the reading calendar. Average reading time is 15 minutes a day. (*That's 15 out of 1440 minutes/24 hr. day*)

**Ladies Aid** Thursday, January 3 at 7PM in the Parish Hall. Devotion by Carol Kassel; topic is Concordia Students. Hostesses are Marilyn Burrow and Deb Frailey.

### **Prayer Corner**

- For healing of Kenneth Budde, Tiffany Dunaway, Abbey Franzen, Wayne Franzen, Adela Goers, Jim Jones, Pam Kepley, Louis Kroening, Amiee Lowry, JR Newby, 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 for sale. Proceeds to After School Care.

**Altamont Ministerial Alliance Food Pantry**  
Needed: *KIDS CEREAL*; we helped 53 people last week.

**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.

**Year End Statements** - If you are leaving for an extended stay, notify the church to mail your year-end statements to your winter address before you leave.

**CEFS Meal Deliveries** for Immanuel continue through Dec. 28.

**Order SCRIP** and a portion goes to ALIS. Select gift cards and order forms are available between Sunday services or may be purchased online at [www.shopwithscrip.com](http://www.shopwithscrip.com) using ALIS code A86DB45918678. Some gift cards are also available online for instant download and printing with a small 15¢ transaction fee.

**Annual Christmas Cantata** at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Troy, IL is Sat. Dec. 22, 6PM and Sun. Dec. 23, 10:30AM. Handicap accessible.

**Christmas CDS:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church is selling Advent/Christmas CD's for \$10. CD's are produced by St. Paul's Music Conservatory Council Bluffs, IA. All proceeds go to Bethlehem's Pipe Organ Fund. Call Bethlehem Church Ofc 618-483-6756 to place an order. Visit [stpaulsmusicconservatory.org](http://stpaulsmusicconservatory.org) for more information.

**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.

## **November Sunday School Perfect Attendance**

(\* is Perfect Attendance for the Year)

### **3 year olds**

Briar Berg  
Olivia Ross  
Evan Stuemke  
Cooper Wendling

### **4th**

Joseph Frederking  
Cooper Hankins  
Laila Hankins  
Ella Nelson  
Landon Savage  
\*Kaiden Wolff

### **4 year olds**

\*Connor Alwardt  
Harper Arend  
\*Reed Bowman  
Max Wolff

### **5th**

Brayden Elam  
\*Kade Milleville  
Cooper Pals

### **Kindergarten**

Weston Robertson

### **6th**

\*Kylie Osteen  
Abigail Weishaar  
Gabriella Weishaar

### **1st**

\*Olivia Bowman  
Preston Kroening  
Konnor Robison  
Daniel Ross  
\*Liam Schnarre  
Aubrey Scholes  
Blaire Suckow  
\*Nolan Winter  
\*Reagan Winter

### **7th**

Kaden Davis  
Dillan Elam  
Grace Nelson  
Ethan Robbins  
\*Nathan Stuemke

### **2nd**

\*Brock Beccue  
Kale Davis  
Garrett Frederking  
Chase Pals  
Blake Stuemke  
Grant Suckow  
Maggie Wolff

### **8th**

None

### **3rd**

\*Adison Alwardt  
Haley Arend  
Lilly Burrow  
Eli Elam  
\*Evan Elam  
Cooper McManaway  
\*Carson Milleville  
Kolton Robison  
\*Adilyn Schnarre  
\*Reed Stuemke

## **Sunday Night Gene/ Vicki Robinson Bible Class**

meets again on Sunday, January 20, 6:30PM.



