

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

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DECEMBER 2018

Pastor Craig Engel • 320-444-7641

God's Encouraging Word ... when I wonder if I will go to heaven

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
John 3:16

He saw his name on Santa's list! He was so excited. He didn't think it would be there. He got mad and hit his sister on Thanksgiving Day. But he admitted his fault. Since then, he was very well behaved. After all, Santa brings good things to good boys, right? He saw his name! He was getting a puppy for Christmas! He did it! He made up for his sin.

Christmas came and no puppy. He was crushed. He thought he deserved one. He thought Santa loved him. Was the name on Santa's list someone else with the same name as his? Did Santa think his apology was insincere? Was hitting his sister such a horrible thing that he would totally reject him? No puppy that Christmas.

What if God treated us like that? We would never be sure we are going to heaven. But God does not treat us like that, and we can be sure we are going to heaven. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...”**

Notice what God did not say, “God so loved the ones that don't hit their sisters...” “God so loved the good ones... the top 50%... those who help themselves.” No, God loves sinners, all sinners, you and me. He loves the whole world.

God gave us the greatest gift of all. Jesus, God's Son, was born to save the world from sin and hell. God gave us a gift only he can give—eternal life. God did that by sending Jesus into this world to live a life without sin. Jesus never hit his sister. He never even thought angry or insulting thoughts about anyone. Jesus was punished for all our sins, in our place. Jesus rose from the dead to guarantee our sins are paid for. He did this for the whole world. That includes you.

Jesus is the greatest gift ever given. Trusting him as your Savior, you can be certain you will go to heaven. Enjoy God's gift of Jesus this Christmas. ☒

“*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*”

John 6:68



December Worship



Advent Preparation

Unlike the world, the Church does not prepare by frantic doing or frenzied promises to get something done. Instead, the Church prepares by receiving. To help us receive the gifts of Christ and be prepared for his threefold coming, we offer midweek Vespers during Advent. These services will begin at 7:00 p.m. on December 5th, 12th and 19th. The Vespers service is the church's evening prayer. The word "vesper" comes from the Latin word which means "evening." The service is meditative and repentant in tone and fits in well with the penitential and preparatory nature of the Advent season. The theme for this year's Advent Vespers is: Your King Is Coming. Each week we will be reminded that we wait, pray and live by faith in God's promises. This is a message that is completely counter-cultural yet one that is completely necessary. Make plans now to receive Christ's Advent gifts as you look forward to celebrating his return.

Advent Sunday Focus

A new church year begins with the season of Advent. Advent is a word that means "Coming." Advent is a season of preparation and anticipation. The Church looks for the coming of her Savior in this threefold advent: his coming in the flesh; his return in judgment; his daily coming in Word and Sacrament. The Church encompasses all these facets of the season in the single word that defines Advent worship: "Come!" Throughout the prayers, verses, and lessons that single word is our invitation, our anticipation, our sure and certain hope. Come, Lord Jesus! The following are our themes for the Sundays in Advent:

- December 2nd: Your Advent King Comes To Save

- December 9th: Repent! Christ Is Coming!
- December 16th: Rejoice! Christ Is Coming!
- December 23rd: Christ Is Coming to Bring Rescue and Deliverance

Christmas Worship

Our Christmas Eve service will be a service of lessons and carols beginning at 5:30 p.m. We will have Divine Service on Christmas Day at 9:00 a.m. to celebrate the Word made flesh to save.

BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS

Saturday, December 1st
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Come celebrate Jesus' birthday.

All children ages 4 to 10 and their friends are welcome. Join us for games, activities and snacks. Please sign up your children and their friends on the sign-up sheet in the narthex.

Youth Group members are making this event possible for the children of our congregation.



Sunday School Christmas Rehearsals

We will hold rehearsals to prepare for the Christmas service on December 2nd and 9th. We will feed lunch to the children at 11:30 and our rehearsal will begin at noon. The children will be dismissed at 1:00 p.m. The final rehearsal will be held on Saturday, December 15th, from 9:00-11:00 a.m. The Christmas service will be held on December 17th at 4:00 p.m. A meal will follow the service.



Jesus Cares Christmas Service

Our Jesus Cares group will have their Christmas service on Tuesday, December 4th at 7:00 p.m. Cookies and coffee will be served following the service. Everyone is invited to attend.



"Beautiful music ... is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us."

—Martin Luther



Sunday School

There will be no Sunday School classes on Sunday, December 23rd and December 30th. Sunday School teachers will send lessons home with the children to complete there. There will be a brief Bible class on the last two Sundays in December.

New Year's Eve

Worship is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve.

Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, January 20th, beginning at 12:15 p.m.

Mission Festival

Our mission festival will be held on January 27th. Pastor Paul Lindhorst from Great Plains Lutheran High School in Watertown, South Dakota will serve at Immanuel for mission festival. Pastor Lindhorst served at St. Paul's in Litchfield until 2014. We will enjoy a meal after the presentation. A sign-up sheet for the meal will be in the narthex in January.

Daily Devotions

On our home page (willmarwels.net), there is a link for daily audio devotions. These devotions were written and prepared by a group of WELS pastors over the course of the last year. Take a listen to them and tell your friends about them.

WORSHIP AND WINTER WEATHER

Please be reminded that we will hold our regularly scheduled services for those who are able to make it to church. If conditions are poor enough, we may cancel Sunday School, Bible classes and other activities but we will always hold our services. Check Operation Snowdesk for cancellations. Please use your sound judgment to determine whether or not you should travel to and from church in hazardous conditions.

Volunteers

We are in need of some volunteers for the following: folding bulletins and newsletters and preparing the elements for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Please consider helping out in this way. The sign-up sheets are on the shelf in the Narthex.

Bible Quiz

According to the fourth Gospel, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the ____."

- A. love
- B. life
- C. light
- D. Lord

Answer:
See John 1:6-7



Church Council Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2018

Members Present: Jim Buffington, Norm Riediger, Scott Schultz, Steve Kremin, Bruce Schriener, Justin Kannas, Martin Fabrizius, Pastor Engel, Todd Marxhausen

Pastor opened with a reading from Ephesians 4:17-32 and the Lord's Prayer

The meeting was called to order by Chairman pro-tem Engel at 11:40 am

Agenda: The agenda was approved as submitted

Secretary's Report: Motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the September 16, 2018 council meeting minutes as submitted.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Elders Report:

- Motion was made, seconded and passed to accept by Holy Baptism Kyle Douglas Hanneman
- The November/December service schedule was reviewed
- Elders are continuing to work on a systematic way to contact those not hearing God's Word. The system will be introduced to the congregation in a 5 week series of articles distributed in church mailboxes.

Trustees Report:

- Fall cleanup – Trustees will pick a date to clean up the leaves
- Parsonage items – RO system and garbage slide has been taken care of
- Trustees will obtain quotes for lawn mowing for next summer to be submitted to the budget committee for consideration. There was discussion that there continues to be a lack of volunteers to sign up for weekly lawn mowing so the congregation will need to decide on paying someone to perform the weekly mowing.

Financial Secretary's Report: A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the report.

Treasurer's Report: A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the report. Norm shared information with Jay from the CPGC regarding a special investment account that WELS has specific for endowments.

Old Business

- AV Committee – Committee met this past Tuesday and is working on developing a policies and procedures document. Scott Schultz will be video taping some of the upcoming services to refine a work flow system that can be implemented into the policies and procedures document. Other committee members are researching items pertaining to storage, publishing, copyrights, etc. The document will be presented to the Church Council in a couple of months after it has been fully completed.

- Called Worker Compensation Committee – The committee has met and discussed different health insurance options with Pastor. For the past many years, WELS VEBA Plan Option 1 (lowest deductible plan) has been selected. The committee is recommending moving to WELS VEBA Plan Option 3 with an HSA account. This is a high deductible plan but the funding of the HSA account by the congregation would offset the additional cost to Pastor for the high deductible plan. Benefits of the HSA account are that unused funds can stay in the account year after year and stay with the account holder (Pastor), even after retirement. Pastor is willing to go with the Plan Option 3 with HSA. Costs of the plans for 2018 would be:

Plan 1 = \$28,800

Plan 3 = \$27,216 (Savings of \$1,584 assuming we fully fund the HSA to the maximum amount per year of \$6,900)

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A Christmas Devotion from Martin Luther

Church Council Meeting Minutes
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Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity just as we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather his flesh. Look upon the Baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify man. Inexpressible majesty will crush him. That is why Christ took on our humanity, save for sin, that he should not terrify us but rather that with love and favor he should console and confirm.

Behold Christ lying in the lap of his young mother, still a virgin. What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! What fairer than her youth! What more gracious than her virginity! Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in him. Doubt nothing. Watch him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with him. Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. See how God invites you in many ways. He places before you a Babe with whom you may take refuge. You cannot fear him, for nothing is more appealing to man than a babe. Are you affrighted? Then come to him, lying in the lap of the fairest and sweetest maid. You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust him! Trust him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save.

A Christmas Prayer from Paul Gerhardt: Consider speaking or singing this hymn as a prayer during the Christmas season.

O Jesus Christ, Your manger is
My paradise where my soul is reclining.
For there, O Lord, We find the Word
Made flesh for us—your grace is brightly shining.

He whom the sea And wind obey
Comes down to serve the sinner in great meekness.
Now God's own Son With us is one
And joins us and our children in our weakness.

The light and grace Our guilt efface,
Thy heav'nly riches all our loss retrieving.
Immanuel, thy birth doth quell
The pow'r of hell and Satan's bold deceiving.

Dear Christian friend, On him depend;
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move you.
For God's own child In mercy mild
Joins you to him—how greatly God must love you!

Ponder again What glory then
The Lord will give you for your earthly sadness.
The angel host Can never boast
Of greater glory, greater bliss or gladness.

The world may hold Her wealth and gold;
But you, my heart, keep Christ as your true treasure.
To him hold fast Until at last
A crown is yours and honor in full measure.

Motion was made, seconded and passed to recommend to the voters to change the health insurance plan to WELS VEBA Option 3 with an HSA contribution by the congregation of the maximum allowed per year of \$6,900/year.

Church Sign Replacement Update – Todd received a call from driver's insurance company (American Family) asking if we intend to file a claim with their insurance. Todd said yes we want to continue with our claim as we indicated a couple of months ago. American Family said the claim is in process. The only question from the insurance company was they didn't see tax included in the estimate. We should see a check from American Family shortly – hopefully by the end of this month.

- The sign committee is in the process of being formed. Scott is waiting to hear back from one or two additional potential committee members.

Upcoming meeting dates were reviewed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm. We closed with the Blessing.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Justin Kannas, Secretary*



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Say among the nations,

*“The LORD
Reigns.”*



PSALM 96:10, NIV