

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Pastor Craig Engel • 320-444-7641

I Need More...FAITHFUL FRIENDS

A friend is someone who knows all about me and likes me anyway. Have you ever heard that description of a friend? How would you define what a friend is? Are you happy with the friends you have? Do you wish you had more friends or different kinds of friends? Do you ever long that your friendships were healthier or more helpful?

People might define friends and friendship in various ways, but one thing is certain. God designed people with a need for friendship. When he created the first man, he offered this observation: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). We naturally feel the need that God observed, but faithful friends might be hard to come by.

In the internet world, friends often call each other BFF's—Best Friends Forever. But those same friends often turn on each other and end up more as enemies than as friends. No matter how well someone knows and likes you, there really is no friend who knows all about you. Your innermost secrets remain locked within you, and there are deeper feelings than anyone could ever understand.

God wants you to know what you might have suspected all along. He does know all about you. He observes that you need someone to whom you can pour out your heart, and he is willing to be that one.

But do you want God to be a BFF, when deep down you know what he knows about you? As his own Word says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8). Few of us would make such a claim, but the good news is that God still wants to claim us as friends, despite our sins and unfaithfulness.

That is why Jesus Christ, God's Son, came into the world long ago. He came to do what only the best of friends would do—he came to lay down his life for you. He came to stand in for you and take whatever punishment God's justice demanded for your sins. And God accepted his own Son's sacrifice to wipe out the guilt of your sin.

That is why God invites you to see him as your best friend. He knows all about you and everything that you need. He extends his love to you without conditions, for the sake of his Son's death on the cross.

You will not find a more faithful friend than God. Look to the living God and learn more about his faithfulness and love. The more you learn, the more you will find that he is a true Friend that you can always trust.

John 15:13

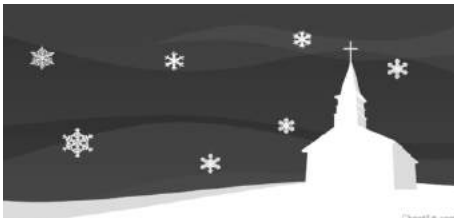
"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."



Epiphany Worship

During the Epiphany season, our lessons carry forward the emphasis we heard in the Christmas season: Christ is revealed as God and Savior. Watch and listen, especially in each Sunday's appointed Gospel, how the words and works of Christ reveal who he is and what he has come to do, even as his glory remains hidden. Rejoice that in a miracle of epic proportion, the Holy Spirit has opened your eyes to receive the One adored by the Magi, baptized in the Jordan, silencing the devil, doing everything well and revealing himself in glory. The themes for the Sundays in January are:

- February 3rd – Jesus' Glory Is Revealed Even As Many Reject Him
- February 10th – Jesus Reveals His Glory As He Calls His Messengers
- February 17th – Jesus Reveals His Glory In Proclaiming Blessing And Curse
- February 24th – The Revealed Glory Of Christ Is Reflected In Love For Others



Worship and Winter Weather

Our practice is that we will hold services for whomever is able to attend. On the one hand, please use your sanctified common sense about traveling to and from church. On the other hand, don't allow Satan to use the weather to keep you away from the gifts of Christ in the Divine Service and from the gift of fellowship with your fellow believers. We do publish the lessons and hymns for the following Sunday in every bulletin and on our website so if you are stuck at home, you can join those who are able to attend with hearing the Word and raising your voices in hymns and prayers.

Bible Readings for 2019

One year of a three year plan to read through the Bible is available in the Narthex. The schedule is worked so that you don't have to start with year one. The Spirit will bless your time in the Word!

Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting was held on Sunday, January 20th. The voters set our 2019 mission subscription at \$27,000. The following men were elected to Church Council positions. Chairman: Rollie Nissen; Elder: Ross Malkuch; Trustee: Gabe Okins; Board of Education: Aaron Jaspersen. We thank them for their willing service. We also thank those council members whose terms have now come to an end: Steve Iverson, Steve Kremin, Dwight Munneke Cory Netland.



Lent Begins

The penitential and preparatory season of Lent starts on March 6th. Ash Wednesday begins this season of the church year as we prepare ourselves to go up to Jerusalem and ponder again all that Christ suffered to win our salvation. Worship begins at 7:00 P.M. on each of the Wednesdays in Lent. One of the highlights of the midweek vespers service is that we hear the passion history of our Lord read. This is the only time of the year that the whole passion history of our Lord is read in worship. On the Sundays in Lent, the focus of our worship stresses the Savior's perfect obedience and work in our place. We see this especially in the appointed Gospels.

Chili and Soup Suppers

A chili supper will precede Ash Wednesday Divine Service. Soup suppers will precede our midweek Vespers in Lent. A sign-up sheet is in the Narthex.

A Devotion on the Seeming Absence of God

On January 21st, a 19 year-old female student at Wisconsin Lutheran College was found dead in her dormitory room. The following is a devotion that one of WLC's professors, Rev. Wade Johnston, wrote:

Isaiah 45:15

"Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior."

God's omnipresence, that He is in all places, can be both law and gospel. I shudder at the thought of God being present for my every sin. I am terrified at the fact that I have sinned even though I know full well He is present.

God's omniscience, that He knows all things, can be both law and gospel. It makes me sick to know that God can read my mind. I know the thoughts I've had, unintentional and intentional, and they are anything but pretty. How hollow my works must seem if, more than simply seeing their visible appearances, He knows my motivations, which are often much less impressive than appearances would indicate.

Sometimes we like the thought of God's absence. We can compartmentalize things that way. There are God-things and not-God-things. It helps us avoid paradox, inconsistency, and tension in life and between life and faith. It helps us stay sane. It helps us feel somewhat clean. But God isn't absent. He hides, but He is never absent.

How does that make you feel? Are you comforted? Is that law or gospel? "Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior."

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Church Council Meeting Minutes

December 9, 2018

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

Pastor opened with a reading from Ephesians 5:22-33 and the Lord's Prayer

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Iverson at 11:39 am

Agenda: The agenda was approved as submitted with one add from Bruce

Secretary's Report: Motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the November 11, 2018 council meeting minutes as submitted.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Elders Report:

- Motion was made, seconded and passed to transfer out Marty LaFrenz to St. John's Wood Lake, MN.
- Motion was made, seconded and passed to release from membership Marion Ruplinger.

Trustees Report:

- Several lights have been repaired and all are now working
- Working on cabinets for the sacristy

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.

Planned Giving Committee: The committee met last Sunday. They anticipate a report at the annual meeting.

Pastor's Report: Mission Festival will be January 27, 2019 with a Christian Education focus.

OLD BUSINESS

AV Committee – Scott has been video taping the services. The Jesus Cares service was taped and had a number of views on Youtube. Kelly is working on some WI-fi improvements to continue improvements for uploading. The committee needs to meet soon to work out some final details of the work flow procedures. Once the process and procedure is finalized, they will disseminate this info to the congregation.

Called Worker Compensation – The committee presented a written report. One modification to the report was to add \$550 for TSA (Tax Sheltered Account). Motion made, seconded and passed to approve the recommendations of the committee as amended for the TSA amount.

Church Sign – The committee is formed and in place consisting of all 3 trustees, Dianne Kremin, Pat

Lesteberg, and Jodi Okins. The committee has not met yet. Todd has been in communication with American Family multiple times within the past week on reimbursement – we should be getting payment soon and been assured by American Family its in the process.

Budget – No action was taken. The preliminary budget was reviewed. New carpet in the main classroom upstairs and hallway between the classroom and fellowship area is included in the budget. The committee will be meeting again to tweak the proposed budget.

The following budget requests were received by the committee but have not been included in the budget:

- Request from a group for \$600/year to put in budget for Pastor to distribute to members in need. We already have a \$1000 budget line item for this.
- Convert lights to LED bulbs
- Replace the maintenance garage/shed
- Funding for sign improvements (\$20,000)
- Projector and screen for sanctuary (\$3,000 to \$4,000)

Nominating committee – The committee has met but there is no report from the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Parsonage Allowance for 2018 - Under the provision of Sec. 107 of the Internal Revenue code of 1986 as amended, the minister of the Gospel listed below may have a portion of their compensation designated as a parsonage allowance. The amount indicated shall be the designated parsonage allowance for the year 2019. Should any workers listed be provided with a house, he shall have rent-free use of the house for the year 2019.

A motion was made, seconded and approved for the following: Pastor Craig A. Engel - \$12,000. Fair market value of the parsonage will be set at \$1000/month

Appoint CPGC Members – Motion was made, seconded and passed to appoint Ross Malkuch and Virginia Fabrizio to another 3 year term.

Scholarship Committee – Motion was made, seconded and passed to appoint Todd Marxhausen and Ron Lesteberg to the Scholarship Committee.

Add Agenda Item - Bruce Schriener – Starting December 31st Bruce will be gone for about 6 weeks. Justin will volunteer to fill in as the Financial Secretary. Todd has agreed to be a backup to Justin.

Upcoming meeting dates were reviewed. The meeting was adjourned. Pastor closed with the Blessing.

Respectfully Submitted,
Justin Kannas, Secretary

SPOTLIGHTING Our Members



Jon and Jen Heller moved to Willmar five years ago already from Pierre, SD. They have two high-energy boys, Archer, age 5 who attends Sunday School, and Finley, age 3. We love to see them and greet the boys on the way out of the Sanctuary.

Jon is the manager at Walgreens. Jen has taught math in the past, but is taking some time off. Jen has sung in the choir. Jon and Jen aren't pursuing any hobbies at this time, as they are kept busy wrangling kids. A treat for the couple is to watch a movie that is not cartoons.

They value the WELS because they know the message is gospel driven, giving the comfort that Jesus is with you. They also appreciate the continuity of the service when you worship in other WELS churches.

Jen would love to see some babysitting offered for young parents at a Bible Study or just a get together of young parents with babysitting offered. The price of a babysitter now is cost prohibitive.

We are thankful to have this family as part of our church family.

A Devotion on the Seeming Absence of God

(Continued from Page 3.)

Friends, it is gospel. God hides for us. He wants us to find Him where He reveals Himself, and that is in the gospel, in Word and Sacrament, where He is beyond a doubt there for us with grace and mercy. He wants us to know Him by the crucifix, not by a natural disaster, sickness, or inexplicable tragedy. And yet, even in those things, He is there. He is just hidden.

God knows all things, but He also knows you. He really knows you. He knows you beyond intellectual knowledge. He has descended into the flesh and become you. He knows you and He loves you. In Baptism you have, together with the Church, become His bride. He knows you and nothing He knows keeps Him from being for you grace and mercy. He is present in all places, but in Word and Sacrament, in Christ crucified for sinners, He makes plain that the presence that He wants to define Himself by with you is for you and not against you.

Surely He is a God who hides Himself, but that God who hides is always present, and always present as the crucified and risen One, for us even when everything seems against us, even when it seems for sure that He couldn't be farther away. Why doesn't He make His presence known in the natural disaster, in sickness, in the inexplicable tragedy? Because that's not how He wants us to know Him, even as He promises that none of those things shall separate us from Him.

We live in a fallen world. Sad, terrible, heart-rending, thoroughly fallen things happen here, and we shouldn't sugarcoat it, theodiceize it away, or pretend it isn't so. Platitudes ring hollow. We live in a fallen world. It is so, and it's that indisputable, if unacceptable, fact that brought God from heaven to earth, into the mire, and put Him on a cross and brought Him out of His tomb.

Where is God? He is where He promised to be. Find Him, like the thief, on the cross. Find Him, like the frightened women, sprung from the tomb. Find Him, most importantly, in the preaching of the gospel, in Word and Meal. He cannot but be there, because He's wed Himself to these Means. He cannot but be there for you, because that is the only way He would have you know Him there. In the meanwhile, we take up our crosses, not for salvation, but as those saved through the cross of the One who came to make God known, and to make Him known as compassion, life, and hope, even in the midst of hatred, death, and darkness. "Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior."

<https://www.letthebirdfly.com/2019/01/21/the-god-who-hides-himself-for-us/>

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