

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

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October 2019

Pastor Craig Engel • 320-444-7641

I Need More...FAITH

"I Need More faith." I can't imagine any honest Christian who wouldn't say a hearty "Amen" to that statement. Because of the common weakness of our sinful, human nature, the fervent request that a greatly distressed father made to Jesus regarding his son's great need and his own weakness of faith has often struck a chord: "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

Notice how that statement is punctuated with only a semicolon regarding his faith, but an exclamation point with regard to his unbelief. Unfortunately, that's the reality of the faith-life of God's people. We wish our own faith was punctuated with an exclamation mark or at least a simple period. But we know a question mark suggesting uncertainty or doubt gets in the way too often.

On every Sunday the worshipers in our churches make a confession of faith with the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. The key truths of the Christian faith are very briefly and yet adequately summarized in those statements. There are no exclamation points in either of those great, ancient creeds—just commas and periods that acknowledge the basic scriptural facts. That's an important aspect about saving faith: knowing the truth about the true God and the Savior he has given us.

Since this faith is totally a gift, we need to keep going to the Lord with this request, "Lord, I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" We keep having a problem with unbelief because it's such a natural part of us. Faith is a supernatural thing, and it is kept alive and strong only with the supernatural Word of our supernatural God.

The most important thing to remember about faith is that it derives all its strength from its object, that on which it rests. As a famous preacher once said, "It is not your hold on Christ that saves you; it is Christ. It is not your joy in Christ that saves you; it is Christ. It is not even your faith in Christ that saves you, though that be the instrument. It is Christ's blood and merit." There might indeed be many instances where our trusting faith is shaky, but the Savior and his promises are rock solid. With this subject of faith, it's most important to hear him speak with exclamation points, "I love you! I have saved you! I will never let you go!" Consider memorizing this stanza of Luther's great Easter hymn which beautifully and picturesquely defines and describes faith:



Here the true Paschal Lamb we see,
Whom God so freely gave us;
He died on the accursed tree—
So strong his love—to save us.
See, his blood now marks our door;
Faith points to it; death passes o'er,
And Satan cannot harm us.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

October Worship Themes

We continue to live the non-festival half of the church year. Sometimes this part of the year is called “the Half Year of the Church.” We never leave behind Christ and his work for us which was the center of our attention in the Half Year of Our Lord; but now the emphasis shifts to the result of his work through the Word: the work of defining faith, of creating it and inspiring its fruits in the Church collectively and in each of us individually. After reliving the great events of the life of Christ, the worshipping Church spends half a year focusing on the teachings of Christ. The Church wears green during the season of Pentecost as the Spirit uses those teachings of Jesus to strengthen the faith of believers. Here are the themes for the month:

- Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 6 - Christians Love the Lost Like Christ
- Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 13 - Christians Have a Right Relationship with Worldly Wealth
- Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 20 - Christians Find Real Wealth in Heavenly Treasure
- Reformation Sunday (Observed), October 27 - Set Free to Stand Firm

Potluck and Voters' Meeting

We will enjoy a potluck meal on October 20th after Bible classes. The voters' meeting will begin at 12:15 p.m.

Sunday School Children Sing

Parents, please remember that your children will sing the first two stanzas of A Mighty Fortress Is Our God on October 27th. Please use the stanzas at home (maybe as a morning or an evening prayer) to supplement what they learn on Sunday mornings during music time.

Mission Festival

Rev. Paul Prange, Chairman, Joint Mission Council will be presenting

on Grace, Hmong Outreach in Vietnam at Immanuel on January 26, 2020 for our mission festival. The following blog post was written by Pastor Lor, Hmong Asia Ministry Coordinator about one of the pastors serving in Vietnam.

I met Pastor Fang for the first time in 2012. He and a few other leaders from the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC) gathered with me in a small hotel room in Hanoi, Vietnam. We spent a few days together studying the Word of God, quietly, so as not to attract attention. Then the men left to their villages.

Fang was a very polite and humble student in my class, but he challenged me with all kinds of questions about Scripture and leadership. At that time I seemed like a baby pastor to them, compared to many other Hmong pastors who preached their philosophies, ideologies and traditions. For almost two years, Fang and I confronted each other in the classroom on a regular basis. He thought that my teaching—that sinners are saved by grace alone—was not based on the Bible. His reasoning was that if sinners are saved by grace alone, it is too simple and can't be trusted. It's like giving a math test of $1+1 = ?$ to university students. He said, “Sinners need to cooperate in their salvation by doing good and living a holy life.” He added, “None of the other Hmong pastors teach like you. They all teach that if we are good, God will love us, and we earn our salvation through our own merits.” Even so, he kept coming to my training - thanks to God.

In June 2014, Fang came to me and said, “Pastor Lor, I apologize for being angry with you and even labeling you as a cult preacher. Now, I totally admit that sinners are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. Throughout my ministry, I've tried so hard to please God with good works. I thought that I could be saved through them. But the harder I tried, the more distant from God I felt. The more guilty I felt. I also gave many rules to my members. After two years of studying with you, I have been moved by the Holy Spirit to believe

that I am saved through faith in Christ alone.”

Salvation by grace alone means a lot to Fang. He told me that since his members understood grace, they are more active in the church's activities and more confident in their outreach to their community. Now they can say that they are saved and that they are children of God. Before that, they were hesitant to witness that they were saved because they weren't sure that they were good enough to be saved.

Last October, I was invited to preach for the Hmong National Conference in Lai Cau. More than 1,000 people attended the conference. Fang and his wife, Yong, came to me. She said, “Pastor, I appreciate your hard work and how you trained my husband in the word of God. He is now a better husband and is a more caring pastor to his members.” I asked his wife, “How so?” She said, “The love of God motivates my husband to love us more. He was a man of traditions, but now he has a gentle and humble heart.” I told her, “Praise God for his love and mercy! And continue to support your husband's ministry.”

Sadly, on July 18, 2019, Fang was taken home to his Lord. He was on a trip to assist another family who had lost a loved one just two days earlier. He preached for several hours under a hot sun, and then he was invited to stay with a family for the night. Early in the morning when the lady was done cooking, she called out for everyone to come to breakfast. Fang didn't answer the call. The man of the family went to wake him up. We still don't know the cause of his death.

He will be missed by many, especially his fellow workers in Vietnam. His associate called me hours after his death, “Pastor Lor, Pastor Fang passed away this morning. It was a tremendous loss to the congregations in this area because he served his Lord and members from his heart. We all miss him a lot. We know that you will miss him too. Through his ministry, the Holy Spirit brought many to believe in Jesus. He was a model of faith not only to his members, but also to the community near and far

in Northern Vietnam. Both he and his wife worked so hard in their rice field to make sure that they could serve their family and members.” He told me, “Pastor, I am not rich but I thank God that he gives me the strength to work in my rice field so that I can support my family and do the work that my Lord has entrusted to me.” I remember one day, after a break from long hours of training, he brought me a well-cooked whole chicken and said, “Pastor, my wife and I thank you for sharing the word of God with us. We have nothing to pay you, so we brought you this chicken.” I didn’t know what to say, so I split the chicken and ate it with him and the other students. That was one of the most enjoyable moments in my life. I ate the

chicken with tears in my heart.”

More than 600 people, both the Christian and non-Christian community, attended Fang’s funeral. I thank God that he knew the truth that he was saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. No doubt he could have accomplished much more if he had lived longer, but God knows what is best for him and his family. Now, he is united with the saints in heaven, safely in the arms of our Heavenly Father. He is protected by our Lord Jesus Christ. He has no more tears, and he suffers no more persecution due to his faith in Christ. No more worries about his rice field so that he can take good care of his family and members. Peace is his in Christ forever!

Brothers and sisters, let’s remind ourselves daily that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. Grace may not mean much to some of us, but for Fang, it was his only hope: his only hope in Jesus. He was willing to endure hardships for the sake of the gospel so that he could bring it to lost souls—sinners saved by grace through faith alone in Christ. God gives us the best treasure, so let’s share our best treasure to all nations, tribes, and languages through our prayers and stewardship.

Thank you for supporting the training in Hanoi, and please continue to pray for your brothers and sisters in Vietnam.

(<https://wels.net/faces-of-faith-fang/>)

Church Council Meeting Minutes July 14, 2019

Opened with lesson: Philippians 2:12-30 and Lord’s Prayer

Meeting called to order by Rollie Nissen. Martin Fabrizio volunteered to record the minutes.

Agenda: Motion made to accept agenda. Approved.

Secretary’s Report: No report.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

Elders Report:

- No report.

Trustees Report:

- Mowing has been getting done by volunteers – no issues so far.
- Jim will undertake some minor repairs to parsonage fence.
- Sheetrock repair is needed in basement of church, Jim will consult with Scott, council encourages Trustees to seek professional help with repairs.
- Gabe Okins has moved to Wisconsin, should we seek a replacement? Pastor will contact Gabe regarding resigning from the council.

Board of Education Report: Aaron plans to contact teachers early this summer regarding committing to teaching for upcoming Sunday school year.

Financial Secretary’s Report: Motion to approve report, accepted.

Treasurer’s Report: Motion to approve report, accepted.

- Currently \$95 in memorials, \$20 unallocated, \$75 designated to be distributed to a needy family.
- Motion made to move the \$75 to Pastor to distribute to a needy family and for the \$20 to move to the Planned giving committee. Motion approved.

Planned Giving Committee: No report.

Pastor’s Report: Pastor will be gone: 7/18 and 7/22 through 8/5. Responsibilities to open and close church during his absence:

Thursday July 18th: Rollie Nissan

Thursday July 25th: Martin Fabrizio

Sunday, July 28th: Bruce Schriener

Thursday, August 1st: Todd will be responsible for finding someone for this day.

Sunday, August 4th: Todd Marxhausen

For Thursday – please open church by 6:30 pm, check that AC is on (it is programmed to be on just need to make sure all is well). For Sunday – please open church by 8 am. Check that AC is on.

OLD BUSINESS

AV committee – no report.

Church sign committee – Pastor has been approached by Ben Dols regarding knowing someone who could do the sign for less money. The council has chosen to refer this back to the committee to look into. Council asked Pastor to include the elders and trustees on the referral back to committee. Sign design as presented also need to be update with the full WELS logo that includes the name “WELS”. Funding for sign was discussed. We agreed that a specific amount should be requested from the Planned Giving committee. Motion was made to ask the Planned giving committee for \$10,000. Motion carried. Other discussion: talked about having any sign special offering that exceeds the need should go back into the building fund.

NEW BUSINESS: none.

Upcoming meetings:

July 21, 2019 10:45 am (quarterly meeting)

August 11, 2019 10:30 am

September 8, 2019 11:30 am

Meeting adjourned. Pastor closed with the blessing.

Respectfully Submitted, Martin Fabrizio

SPOTLIGHTING Our Members



Harold and Rose (Rosalie) Pederson have been members of Immanuel since moving to Willmar in June of 1982. They moved here from Montevideo with their two daughters Brenda and Beth. Harold had retired from over the road trucking, but that lasted only three months; so he now works part time for Best Veterinary Solutions as a truck driver. Rose retired in July of 2018 after working for 37 and a half years for Westberg Eischens PLLP as an accountant. Prior to that she worked for seven years in Montevideo for a CPA firm as an accountant. Rose is enjoying her time doing nothing but reading, setting puzzles, golfing and going to Snap Fitness.

They feel very fortunate to have both of their daughters and families living closeby. Brenda and Jason live in Olivia. Brenda is a realtor for Edina Realty, and Jason owns his own trucking business. They have two children, Michaela in her third year at SDSU Brookings for nursing, and Zachariah who graduated this May from high school and is attending Southeast Technical College in Sioux Falls for sales and marketing. Beth and Keith live in Alexandria. Beth is an elementary school teacher, and Keith is a sergeant with the Alexandria police department. They have two children. Morgan graduated from St. Thomas University in May with a degree in sales and marketing. She is living and working in downtown

Minneapolis. Shaelyn graduated from high school this year and is attending Moorhead State University for elementary education.

As for serving at Immanuel, Rose has sung in the choir and a quartet and served as president of the Wednesday evening women's group, but has retired from all of this to leave it up to the very awesome young women of Immanuel. Harold still ushers, and they still serve as greeters. Rose also serves as the LWMS reporter for Immanuel and has served as President of the Crow River Circuit LWMS. She was also very honored to be elected to serve as treasurer on the International Board of the LWMS for four years where she met many women from all over the U.S. and Canada and was fortunate to talk to many missionaries and people from all over the world.

They feel God has truly blessed them, first with giving them Christian parents and then with giving them each other for 52 years. Being able to attend a church where the true word of God is taught and preached is very important to them, always has been and always will be.

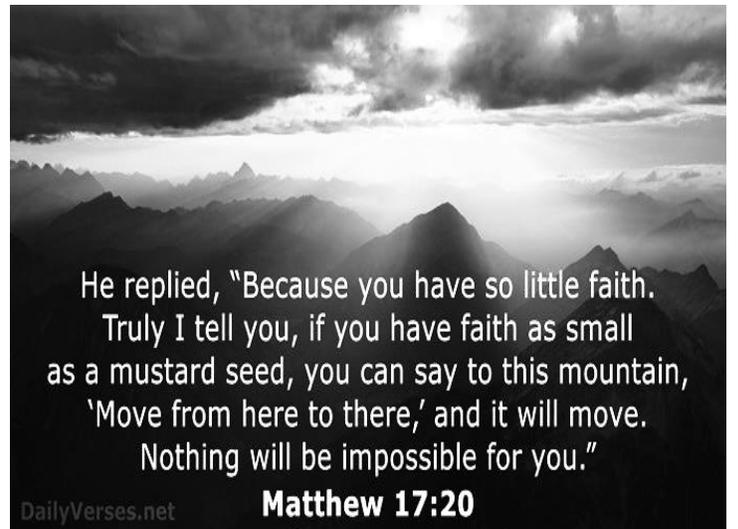


Volunteers

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.

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. Take a listen to them and tell your friends about them.



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