

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

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April 2020

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Easter is Reason to Celebrate!

John 14:19 “Because I live, you also will live.”

“Happy Holidays!” Does this sound out of place in April? It doesn’t have to. This month marks, arguably, the most important holiday of the year—Easter. Why? Because at Easter we celebrate that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This miraculous event is certainly a reason for celebration. It proves that Jesus has power over even death.

And, what’s more, he promises that he has power over your death. You may not be thinking about death at Eastertime. You may not like to think about death at all. (Who does?) Still, we are all facing that reality. Sooner or later, our lives will end.

Then what? Plenty of people have plenty of ideas about what happens after we die. But there is one person who can tell us with certainty what will happen because he has already been there and done that. Jesus experienced death...and came back to life! Now, listen to what he promises all of his followers, “Because I live, you also will live.”

Could there be any better news? Could there be anything more worth celebrating? Through Jesus, you do not need to be afraid to die. You can be sure that one day he will raise your body back to life. And you will never die again.

What a reason to celebrate!

***I am the
resurrection and
the life.
- John 11:25***



Coronavirus Measures and Plans Update

As of this writing (March 26th), all activities are cancelled at Immanuel until further notice. Since a stay at home order has been issued, we will no longer have services with small groups of members at church.

Make the hearing of God's Word a priority in your homes. There are resources that you can use on the website (willmarwels.net), including daily devotions, Lenten services and Sunday School lessons. There is a Lutheran Chapel service on KNUJ 860 on Sunday mornings at 7:45 a.m. If you would like to receive Word and Sacrament, please call pastor to set up a time to do so.

At this time we are unable to make a plan for Easter Sunday. We will do so as we get closer to that date. Information about Holy Week and Easter are still included in this month's newsletter so that you may still ponder these holy days and follow them.



The Holy Week: The Holy Triduum (Three Days)

The word Triduum comes from the Latin words tria and dies - literally, a space of three days. A special practice of the early Christian worship was to treat the three days from Maundy Thursday evening to Easter Sunday as an act of one continuous worship. In fact, the practice of the Triduum predates the 40-day Lenten season.

Sadly, most people do not view these three days together as a unit. Instead, they separate them into different occasions. This thinking is most evident in the statement: "I either go to church on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. There's really no need to go to both." To say or think such a thing is exactly the same as saying: "I went to a play last night. There were three acts, but I only watched the first and the third. There was really no reason for me to be there for all three."

But if, in fact, you did that, you'd miss one-third of the play.

These three days (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday) are a unit - three acts of the same play. Together they recount the dramatic happenings of our Savior's suffering, death and resurrection for the salvation of the world. No more important events have ever taken place.

The enormous significance of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection has always been the central focus of Christian worship. Prior to the fourth century, Easter Day itself included all three emphases but thereafter they were distributed over three days of special observance, which Augustine called "the most holy Triduum of the crucified, buried, and risen Lord." In other words, one without the others is incomplete.

Easter Season Worship Notes

- ✠ Easter Sunday has the place of prominence in all of the Sundays of the Christian Church year.
- ✠ Scripture records that Christians continued to gather for worship on Sundays in remembrance of the Resurrection.
- ✠ The fifty days of the Easter season make up the oldest season of the Christian Church year.
- ✠ The Sundays of Easter and the Festival of Ascension all highlight the victory of Christ's resurrection and the temporal and eternal blessings the resurrection imparts. Our worship in the Easter season strives to rejoice in this.
- ✠ During the Easter season, the 1st Lesson read in the Service is from the New Testament book of Acts. These lessons highlight and proclaim the power of the Risen Christ.
- ✠ The Paschal Candle has been used in the Christian Church since the 5th or 6th Century.
- ✠ During the Easter season, the Paschal Candle will be lit for all of our services before worshippers enter the Sanctuary. The Paschal Candle will remain lit until those worshipping leave the Sanctuary each Sunday.

✠ On Ascension Day, the Paschal Candle will be extinguished after the Gospel. This symbolizes and emphasizes the visible removal of Christ's physical presence from his disciples after his ascension into heaven.

✠ During the rest of the year, the Paschal Candle will be lit at baptisms and funerals. It serves as a visual reminder of the close connection between Easter and baptism; Christ's resurrection and our resurrection to life everlasting.

✠ At the beginning and conclusion of our services during the Easter season, pastor will address the congregation with the words, "Christ is risen!" The congregation responds, "He is risen indeed! Alleluia!" These words are sometimes called the Paschal Greeting. In following this ancient custom of the church we share in the certainty and joy of the resurrection.

Easter Season Worship Themes

- 4/12 - The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Festival Divine Service - Victory!
- 4/19 - The Second Sunday of Easter: Peace Be With You
- 4/26 - The Third Sunday of Easter: The Ancient Hope Has Been Restored

Easter Breakfast

Plans for Easter breakfast are uncertain at this time.

Easter Greeting

During the season of Easter, we will use the Church's traditional greeting at the beginning and close of our services. The pastor will say, "Christ is risen!" The congregation responds, "He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

Quarterly Meeting

Our quarterly meeting is scheduled to be held on April 19th. We'll enjoy a potluck meal starting at 11:30 and the meeting will begin at 12:15. This may need to be rescheduled.

Bearing Fruit in a Time of Need

by Rev. Jon Hein, director of WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling

In his book *The Rise of Christianity*, Dr. Rodney Stark estimates that Christianity grew an average of 40 percent per decade for the first few centuries of its existence. To put that in perspective, if WELS grew at that rate, in two generations we would have over two million members.

How did that happen? Christianity was started by misfits from the armpit of the Roman Empire. Christianity didn't worship in opulent temples. Early believers worshiped in homes. Christianity had no sociological advantages. Becoming a Christian made it likely you would experience ridicule or even persecution. How does Christianity explode in *those* circumstances?

The gospel. The gospel was entirely unique. There were plenty of religions that talked about powerful gods who demanded you offer sacrifices to them. The gospel told of an all-powerful God who became weak and sacrificed himself for you. Other religions offered some version of life after death, but it was always conditional. Do good work; get a good eternity. You faced death with fingers crossed, hoping for the best. The gospel offered physical resurrection and eternity in paradise entirely on the basis of Christ's work, not your own. His death and his resurrection meant you had assurance *now*. You faced death confidently, knowing you were going to an infinitely better place.

St. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "The gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world" (1:6). The supernatural power and beauty of the gospel—that is what caused the early church to explode.

However, that doesn't tell the whole story. It wasn't simply that the early Christians proclaimed the gospel. By the way they lived their lives, they gained an audience for the gospel. A good example of this occurred during a pandemic.

In the early fourth century, the historian Eusebius wrote about a plague that was rolling over the eastern half of the Empire. Healthy people would flee the cities for the safety of the countryside. But one group largely stayed behind—Christians. "All day long, [Christians] tended to the dying and to their burial, countless numbers with no one to care for them." Eusebius states that as people witnessed this compassion, "[the Christians'] deeds were on everyone's lips, and they glorified the God of the Christians." There are dozens of examples of history noting how Christians took care of the sick. It didn't matter if the sick person was a Christian or pagan.

Christians were known to care for the poor too. The Roman Emperor Julian wanted to wipe out Christianity and re-institute emperor worship. After a few years of trying, Julian wrote a letter to a pagan priest in which he explained why he now believed Christianity would take over the empire. "[Christians] support not only their poor, but ours as well. All men see that our people

lack aid from us." Christians showed levels of mercy and benevolence that won them an audience. When people would ask Christians, "Why do you do what you do?" they could share the gospel.

COVID-19 is undeniably awful. Many thousands are going to die. The economies of the world are in shambles. It is bad. However, COVID-19 is also an amazing opportunity. It is, first and foremost, an opportunity to serve Christ by serving our fellow man in whatever way they need.

- Maybe you contact all the at-risk residents on your block—the elderly, those with compromised immune systems, etc.—and offer to make all their grocery store runs for them. (You can leave the bags on the porch, ring the bell, then step back ten feet to make sure they get them.)
- If you live near a single-parent hospital worker or first responder, maybe you offer to watch their child when they need to work.
- Maybe you pick up your dinner a couple nights a week from the mom-and-pop restaurant that could easily go out of business in the lockdown.
- Is there a single person you know who is shuttered up, perhaps a widow or widower? Maybe you set aside 20 minutes a day to talk to them on the phone or FaceTime. Have your kids do the same. Help them deal with the crushing loneliness.
- If the federal government ends up giving funds to citizens and you don't really need it to survive, maybe you give yours away to others who are hit harder by the economic downturn than your family.
- Do you own a business? When this is over, hire all you can. Don't consider the bottom line. If you can hire, hire.

As we seize those God-given opportunities to serve our neighbor, perhaps Christ will give us another opportunity—to share why we do what we do . . . to share the hope we have.

You probably know that American Christianity is falling apart. People have been leaving the church in droves over the last three decades, especially younger generations. There have been multiple studies about why this is happening. One of the biggest reasons is many people think Christianity is irrelevant. COVID-19 is an opportunity to prove that is the furthest thing from the truth! If Americans are caught in a nexus of needs and fears, fine.

Let us be the ones who step up first to meet those needs.

Let us be the ones to explain why we need not fear anything.

Let us do all this, not because we want to grow by 40 percent. Let us do this simply because we are the body of Christ. We do what he would do. And we want him glorified. "They glorified the God of the Christians."

In these challenging days ahead, may the Spirit strengthen your faith with his unbreakable promises. May Christ give you health and compassion.

<https://wels.net/bearing-fruit-in-a-time-of-need/>

SPOTLIGHTING Our Members



The Marxhausen Family

Todd and Jenny came to Immanuel 20 years ago. Jenny is from Fairfax, and Todd grew up in Lewiston, MN. They have always been very active in the church serving as youth leaders for several years. Todd has served on the council in various positions, while Jenny has helped with confirmation and the Women of Immanuel. The family has shared their musical talents in our services. As the years have flown by, they have added three lovely children to their family: Marissa (17), Chase (13), and Bria (11). They also hosted Emily, our music student/teacher, for two years.

Jenny serves as a school counselor at New London-Spicer High School. Todd is a business analyst at Duinick companies.

Besides church activities, Todd likes to hunt and fish; Jenny does crafts, gardening and reading. Marissa's interests are theater, drawing, singing and writing; Chase likes to watch sports and hunting; and Bria enjoys volleyball, singing, ice skating, and basketball.

They appreciate our worship and synod because it is founded in God's Word and that our pastors are trained in the original languages. They also thank God that they grew up in Christian schools that gave them a rock solid foundation for all of their family.

Bible Readings for 2020

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!

Summer Bible and Music Academy

We have received the disappointing news that we did not receive a candidate to serve at our Bible and Music academy this summer. While this wasn't what we planned or wanted, we look forward to holding these lessons next summer.

Spring LWMS Rally

The Spring Rally will be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Graceville (County Road 15) on Saturday, April 25th. Rev. Pheng Moua, Pastor of Immanuel Hmong Church in St. Paul, will discuss the efforts made with Hmong evangelism here and overseas. Registration is at 10:30 a.m. The opening devotion begins at 11 a.m. All women of the Crow River Circuit are invited and encouraged to bring guests. A freewill offering to support the work of the LWMS is planned. Watch for more information about when. Make checks payable to LWMS. If you have any questions, please speak with Rose Pederson.

MN Prairie OWLS

Will meet April 14th at 9:00 a.m. at St. John's in Redwood Falls. The speaker will be Professor James Pope from the Lutheran Chapel on KNUJ. Coffee at 10:00 a.m. and potluck at noon. Finished by 12:30 p.m. Please feel free to join us.

Ladies Fellowship

Thursday, April 23rd at 1:00 p.m. Lunch at 2:30 p.m. with devotion. All are welcome. We will start with cleaning altar ware.

New to the Church's Library

Two new books have been added to our library: *Bloom Where God Plants You—Reflections of a Missionary Mom in Africa* by Rebecca Wendland and *10 Things To Tell Your Grand Kids Because You Love Them So Much* by Laura Selena. Please check out these and many more books in the library.



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