

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

1816 5th Street SW, Willmar, MN 56201

Office: (320) 235-5996 • Parsonage: (320) 235-6728

Office Hours: 9:00am - 4:30pm, Tuesday - Thursday

Website: www.willmarwels.net



December 2020

Pastor Craig Engel • 320-444-7641

Christmas—God's Gift to You

This year in our monthly articles we are considering favorite verses from the Bible.

This month's favorite Bible verse is: **Galatians 4:4,5**

***“When the time had fully come, God sent his Son,
born of a woman, born under law,
to redeem those under law,
that we might receive the full rights of sons.”***

It's the moment for which children wait so excitedly: the time for tearing open Christmas presents. It's thrilling to see their excitement and joy to find out what lies beneath the bow and paper. But often, just as quickly as the excitement erupted, it begins to disappear. When the flying bows and paper settle, feelings of disappointment and ingratitude so often start to surface. The moment everyone so eagerly looked forward to becomes yet another disappointment.

For so many, the Christmas season and celebration ends up like the boxes strewn across the floor—empty. Because, eventually, the decorations are taken down, the parties end, and life goes back to normal.

But this won't be the case when we remember what Christmas is really about. Christmas is the celebration of the gift of God's one and only Son, a gift he gave to the world. It's the gift that I need, that you need, that this whole world needs. You see,

this world—including you and me—is wrapped and covered in sin. It is this covering of sin that leaves us empty and disappointed and looking for more gifts and other presents that we hope will fill the void. But they can't.

***The Word became flesh and
made his dwelling among us. We
have seen his glory, the glory of
the One and Only, who came from
the Father, full of grace and truth.***

— John 1:14



It is only through the gift of God's Son, and his life and death that removes from you the ugly covering and wrapping of your sins. Jesus did not come to be placed under a Christmas tree, but to hang upon a tree, not as an ornament, but as the one who would die upon it to pay for all of your sins. His perfect, innocent life and death are gifts he offers to you to make you his perfect and holy child and heir of heaven.

Christmas is so much more than presents placed beneath a tree. It's the sure and certain fulfillment of God's most treasured gift to you—your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ.

Sunday School

Christmas Rehearsals

We will hold rehearsals to prepare for the Christmas on December 6th, 13th and 20th. We will also meet on Saturday, December 19th, from 9:00-11:00 a.m. The Christmas service will be held on December 20th at 4:00 p.m. Due to COVID restrictions, we will not be serving a meal this year.

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 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd at 7:00 p.m. 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: Jesus The Son Of _____. Each week we will consider a portion of the genealogy of Jesus recorded in Matthew 1 and be encouraged to 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

During 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 in December:

- ✠ December 6th:
Christ Is Coming! Repent!
- ✠ December 13th:
Christ Is Coming! Rejoice!
- ✠ December 20th:
Christ Is Coming! Receive Him
in His Word!



Christmas Eve Worship

Our Christmas Eve service will be a service of lessons and carols. There will be three evening services on Christmas Eve, at 4:00, 5:30 and 7:00. The services at 5:30 and 7:00 will be the traditional lessons and carols service. There will be a limit of 80 people for each of the services. Please sign up for a service on the website or call the church office. The 4:00 p.m. service will include the same lessons but there will be no singing. Instead, there will be time after each lesson is read for personal meditation as a hymn is played. There will be a limit of 40 people for this service. The reason we are including the 4:00 p.m. service with fewer participants and no singing is that we want to serve those who are uncomfortable with the larger attendance and singing during the service.

Christmas Day Worship

We will have Divine Service on Christmas Day at 9:00 a.m. to celebrate the Word made flesh to save.

Sunday School

There will be no Sunday School classes on Sunday, December 27th and January 3rd. Sunday School teachers will send lessons home with the children to complete there.

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 17th, beginning at 11:00 a.m.

Mission Festival

Rev. Dan Linder, WELS Campus Ministry Mission Counselor Chairman, will be at Immanuel on January 24, 2021 for our mission festival. He will speak about our synod's efforts on college campuses across the country. It is a timely topic as 2020 marks 100 years WELS has been involved with campus ministry.

Winter Weather and Worship

Please be re-Minded 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.



Church Council Meeting Minutes October 11, 2020

Members Present: Rollie Nissen, Norm Riediger, Jay Remmele, Jon Heller, Todd Marxhausen

MMSP = Motion Made, Seconded, Passed

Rollie opened with a reading from 1Thessalonians 2:1-12. Following the opening reading, the meeting was called to order by Chairman Nissen at 11:42 am.

Agenda: MMSP to accept the agenda as presented

Secretary's Report: MMSP to accept the minutes from the September 13th council meeting with no corrections.

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Chairman's Report: No report.

Elders Report:

- Elders are evaluating church service and Sunday school times.
- There was a question asking if the verse on the church sign can change. It seems other churches do this and if it never changes people may quit looking at it.

Trustees Report: There was discussion of the hallway carpet. We will revisit this topic again at the next meeting.

Board of Education Report: Sunday school has started.

Financial Secretary's Report: MMSP to accept the Financial Secretary's report as presented.

Treasurer's Report: MMSP to accept the Treasurer's report as presented.

Planned Giving: No report .

Pastor's Report: No report.

Old Business and Action Committees

AV: Currently on hold due to the circumstances with covid-19

Equipping Christian Workers:

- This campaign has been put on the back burner until the covid-19 crisis has passed
- We will keep this on the agenda as a place holder until we can pursue it again

Nominating Committee: The committee is working on finding nominations to fill the following position –Trustee.

WELS Pension Premium Holiday August 2020:

- In light of the covid-19 crisis WELS pension will not be charging premiums in October, so we will not have to pay the premiums.

Budget Committee: Will have a brief meeting after the council meeting.

Called Worker Compensation Committee: Health insurance open enrollment is still open. Usually it is closed before the committee starts meeting so there is a chance the committee can make a decision before enrollment closes. The committee plans on having an insurance coverage recommendation before the next council meeting.

New Business

No new business.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- October 18, 2020 11:30 a.m. voters meeting
- November 8, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. council meeting
- December 13, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. council meeting

Meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully,
Jay Remmele, Recording Secretary



A Christmas Prayer

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Loving Father,
help us remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of love all over the world.
Let kindness come with every gift
and good desires with every greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessing
which Christ brings,
and teach us to be merry with dear hearts.

May the Christmas morning
make us happy to be thy children,
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Advent and Christmas Devotion

Luke 2:17,18,20 - When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Again we have to say it: What great saints these shepherds are! They are not the least bit ashamed of what they find there in the manger. He is their Savior! That's what the Lord had told them in the message of the angels. And God does not lie or deceive. The lowliness of the God-man wrapped in rags does not cause them doubt or throw them into confusion. They simply rejoice to receive him in the Word of promise and then worship and adore him.

Note too how they show their joy and delight in the Savior who has come for them. They tell everyone they come across about the One they have seen in the manger. Again, we might be tempted to give them some advice: best you leave the telling to others; after all, you are just shepherds. No one is going to be interested in anything you have to say. And when they hear it from you—this message of God's birth in a barn—surely they will laugh at you for being so silly.

But the shepherds show no shame or hesitation. They tell everyone all about it. Even the response of the people they tell does not keep them quiet. Look at the response: People are amazed, but there is no record that anyone went to the manger to see for themselves, to receive the Christ Child for themselves, or to worship and adore him for themselves. One wonders of what their amazement consisted. Did they just marvel at the boldness of the shepherds? Did they just think the message too odd to be believed? Whatever the nature of their amazement, it did not stop the shepherds from sharing and continuing to share. Won't it be interesting to meet these shepherds in heaven and hear from them about how the rest of their lives went after the amazing events of this holy day?

Once we have heard from them in heaven how their lives went, we can share with them how our lives went because of the message concerning this holy child, which the Lord in this Christmas season has made known to us. May we say and confess it with the shepherds: I too told people about him; I told my spouse and my children; I did not keep it a secret from friends and coworkers and neighbors. I was not ashamed of the baby of Bethlehem, even though some who heard about him from me thought me a bit odd that I would still believe such things. I was not ashamed to be as silly as the shepherds seemed to the many who saw and heard them. For lowly though I am, not wise or eloquent, the message is high and holy; the message is the unerring wisdom of God that saves those who hear it and by its power, believe it.

So let the many in the world who are too high and mighty and too clever in their own eyes for this message say what they will; my joy in this holy child is too great to keep it a secret. Some—I don't know which ones—may hear it now or remember hearing it from me previously and come also to seek the holy child, their Savior. And then they too will yet find him in the manger of his Word, wrapped in the lowliness of the sacraments. It is good that heaven lasts forever; it will take that long to find all the reasons for rejoicing in him, and in the message of his coming we will rejoice with the shepherds and with those who heard of the Savior from someone like me!

Then think too what the shepherds themselves had to occupy their minds and attention for the rest of their lives. Could there be more tedious work than tending sheep? Could anything be more mind-numbing than doing the same thing over and over again, day in and day out, year after year? And for what? Crummy wages, smelly clothes, no appreciation, and even less respect! But then they could look up into the sky and see in their mind's eye again the angelic host. Over the racket made by the sheep, they could still hear the song of the angels. In the midst of whatever humdrum their lives had become, there was still this: They found Mary and Joseph and the baby. Ah, there he is: the reason for living, the cause of all real peace and true joy—the Savior, Christ the Lord!

A nice recipe for us, don't you think? Tomorrow, next week, next month, when the cold of winter depresses, when the noise of the house and of the world just annoy, when best efforts on my part are received with icy ingratitude, or when my own irritation with myself rises again, then there he is. Look up into the sky. Do you see the angels? Can you hear their song? Do you remember hastening with the shepherds to Bethlehem? There they were in the Christmas gospel. Yes, and there he still is—the Savior born just for you, Christ the Lord. And seeing him still there longing for your salvation and achieving it at so great a price, sing again with the holy angels: Glory to God in the highest! For unto us is born in Bethlehem, the Savior, our Savior, my very own and only Savior, Christ the Lord!

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy child, you take away more than my sin and guilt by your coming. You take away even the crushing tedium of life that often seems to have no point or purpose or meaning apart from you and your coming to be my Savior. I worship and give you thanks and praise that you are pleased to give me the honor of serving you and delighting you as I serve those around me with my words about you and my work done as for you. Forgive me when I forget that, and plant deep in my heart the peace and joy of your coming to be my Savior and my Lord. Amen.

Daniel M. Deutschlander
On Giving Advice to God

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
1816 5th Street SW
Willmar, MN 56201



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*"For my eyes have
seen your salvation
that you have
prepared
in the presence
of all peoples."*

LUKE 2:30-31

