

# Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

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**January 2021**

Pastor Craig Engel • 320-444-7641

## Unchanging Hope for an Ever-changing World

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

This month's favorite Bible verse is: **Hebrews 13:8**

***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."***

As one year ends and another begins, columnists and commentators look back at the previous year. What changed? What stayed the same? Whose passing did we mourn? Whose new arrival did we celebrate?

At the same time, we make predictions about the coming year. What will the new year hold? What will change? What will stay the same?

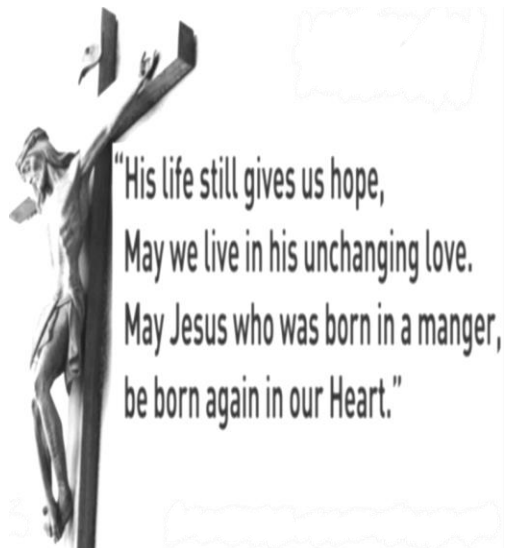
As fun and exciting as it may be to reminisce about the past and dream about the future, it can also be a little sad and scary. Things will likely never be what they used to be. Loved ones who have passed away don't come back. Jobs that are lost seldom reappear quickly. Even when broken dreams and broken relationships are repaired, they rarely return to their former glory. Many times our experiences in an ever-changing world are difficult.

Yet we sometimes look at our lives and see a need for change. Many of us make New Year's resolutions: "I'm going to exercise more and eat less." "I'm going to save more and spend less." "I'm going to love more and hate less." But too often, our good intentions disappear, and only poor excuses remain.

No matter what (or who) changes from one year to the next, there is one who never changes—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He always exists, from before time, throughout the course of time, and at the end of time for eternity. Jesus loved you before you were born. He loves you today, and he will always love you.

That's what Christmas is all about. Jesus loved you so much that he wanted you to experience his unchanging love forever. So he came into the world to live up to God's perfect demands in your place. He took the punishment for your imperfection and gave you the reward for his perfection. That reward is an eternity far away from this world's sorrows and disappointments—the unchanging peace and joy of a place called heaven.

Jesus—the same yesterday, today, and forever—promises to be with us, love us, care for us, and give perfect peace with God to all who trust in him. Only Jesus offers unchanging hope to an ever-changing world.



## Bible Readings for 2021

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!



## Epiphany

January 6th is the Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord. The word *epiphany* means "manifestation" or "visible display" and refers to the "revealing" of Jesus as Savior, not only of the Jews but of all the peoples of the world. The Eastern Christian churches celebrate Christmas when we celebrate Epiphany - January 6, the Twelfth Day of Christmas. This Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord is the celebration of Christ our King to whom the Magi (the Wise Men) offered gifts and worshiped. The Magi were Gentiles (non-Jewish) who worshiped the King of the Jews.

The Magi represent the end of God's separation of his chosen people, the Old Testament Israelites (Jews) from the Gentiles. Israel's Lord is God of all. We who are also Gentiles, give praise to the God of all, who revealed his love and light in the One whom the Wise Men worshiped.

The lessons for the Festival of the Epiphany are: Matthew 2:1-12; Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-12; Psalm 72.

Prayer of the Day for Epiphany: Lord God, by the leading of a star you once made known to the nations your one and only Son. Guide us, also, who know him now by faith, to come at last to the perfect joy of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



## 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:

- January 3<sup>rd</sup> - The Hidden Christmas  
Miracle Is Made Known
- January 10<sup>th</sup> - Jesus' Glory Is Revealed in His Baptism
- January 17<sup>th</sup> - Jesus' Glory Is Revealed in the Power of His Words
- January 24<sup>th</sup> - Jesus' Glory Is Revealed in Whom He Calls
- January 31<sup>st</sup> - Jesus' Glory Is Revealed by the Power of His Gospel

## Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, January 17th, beginning at 11:00 a.m. There will not be a potluck meal before the meeting.

## Mission Festival

Rev. Dan Lindner, 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.

## Equipping Christian Witnesses

With support from the WELS Conference of Presidents, this two-year capital campaign will celebrate the 2020 silver anniversary of Martin Luther College. The title, "Equipping Christian Witnesses," reflects not only the mission of our institution—to train a corps of Christian

witnesses to meet WELS ministry needs—but also the pillars of this campaign. Pray boldly that we use this celebration to recruit with rigor countless Christian witnesses . . . to increase our financial support of our students . . . and to provide the necessary facilities to equip our students for their future ministries. Watch for ways that we as a congregation and our individual members may participate. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Justin Kannas.



## 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](http://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.

## Winter Weather and Worship

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.



# Church Council Meeting Minutes

## November 8, 2020

MMSP = Motion Made, Seconded, Passed

Pastor read the lesson: 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20.

President Nissen called the meeting to order.

**Agenda:** MMSP

**Secretary's Report:** Minutes from October 11, 2020 council meeting - MMSP

### REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

**Chair:** No report.

**Elders:** Discussed service time and occupancy. Recommendations will be made month to month.

**Trustees:**

1. An alarm was put on the sump pump that will text Pastor if there are problems.
2. Received insurance payment for \$3707.23 for water damage in parsonage. Deductible was \$2500.

**Board of Ed.:** No report.

**Financial Secretary:** Report was approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Report was approved.

**Planned Giving Committee:** No report.

**Pastor's Report:** Motion was made to gift \$250 to the three organists who devoted extra time to the extra services as a token of our appreciation. MMSP.

### OLD BUSINESS

**AV committee:** Document forwarded to the elders.

**Equipping Christian Witnesses:** Campaign will resume in January 2021 and go for two years.

**Budget Committee:** On track, have met once and passed out forms to groups in congregation.

**Called Worker Compensation Committee:** have had one meeting.

### NEW BUSINESS

**Snow Removal Contract:** Some discussion of the lawn damage. Contract MMSP.

**Lift:** Questions regarding service contract with lift. Is some of the upcoming maintenance necessary, considering how infrequent our lift is used. Pastor will ask about need vs. schedule. Service payment was approved – MMSP.

### Upcoming meetings:

- December 13, 2020 at 11 am
- January 10, 2021 at 11 am
- January 17, 2021 at 11 am

Respectfully Submitted,  
Martin Fabrizius, Secretary Pro Tem

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## The Epiphany Hymn "How Lovely Shines the Morning Star"

In general, the period of time between Luther's death (1546) and the beginning of the 30 Years' War (1618) is considered to be a period of drastic decline as far as Lutheran hymn writing goes. That observation is not entirely correct. To be sure, in this era, there were many duds. But there were in Luther's day as well. The same dogmatic precision set to poetic language and carried by sturdy, singable tunes could still be found. This Epiphany hymn is one of them. Another of this author's hymns is certainly notable. Wake, Awake, For Night Is Flying and How Lovely Shines the Morning Star are commonly known as the King and Queen of the Lutheran Chorales.

The author of these two hymns, Philipp Nicolai, is the great hymn writer of this era. Like many of his contemporaries, he had to suffer much because of his staunch confession of the truth, both against the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches. But it wasn't that suffering that weighed most heavily. Pastor Nicolai served a congregation at the time of dreadful pestilence. It was this suffering that most intimately informed and shaped his hymn writing. At this time he would see up to 30 burials a day in the church cemetery. It was in these sad and trying days that he wrote a little pamphlet entitled, "Mirror of Joy." In this pamphlet he wrote, "O Jesus, how I wish that I might speak of thee in shouts of joy like those choirs of angels! O how happy I should be to use my thoughts and talents in the service of Thy praise. How devoutly I should sing angelic hymns with heavenly melodies in the midst of the Christian congregation to Thy glory and honor forever!" And sing in the midst of the congregation he did! And he still does with these two hymns, the King and Queen of the Lutheran Chorales.

Pastor Nicolai found nothing so comforting as the contemplation of eternal life. After searching the Scriptures, he determined to put into writing the wonderful comfort contained in the Bible. He did this, fully knowing that the plague may also claim his earthly life and that this would be his gift to those remaining on earth. On the other and, he wrote it knowing that if his life were spared, that it would serve those living with him in the same way. He expressly made it known that he wanted to serve as many as possible with his hymns by turning people's thoughts away from the matters of sickness and death and to the eternal home in heavenly bliss.

How Lovely Shines the Morning Star is full of scriptural references and allusions, all of them proclaiming, praising and extoling the glorious Bridegroom Jesus Christ, all singing the praise of him who called us out of darkness to his marvelous light. Rightly has this chorale been called "a song of high degree, one that should really be sung in three tongues, that of faith, that of love, and that of hope." The friendliness, the loveliness and the glory of the heavenly Bridegroom are here richly displayed.

## Baptism of Our Lord

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, we will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. God reveals his glory in Jesus' baptism and in our baptisms. Because of the importance of this tremendous gift of God, the following from Luther's Catechisms is offered for your meditation.

<sup>37</sup> So you see plainly that there is no work done here by us, but a treasure, which God gives us and faith grasps [Ephesians 2:8-9]. It is like the benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, which is not a work, but a treasure included in the Word. It is offered to us and received by faith. Therefore, the "new spirits" violate us by shouting against us as though we preach against faith. For we alone insist upon it as being so necessary that without it nothing can be received or enjoyed.

<sup>38</sup> So we have these three parts, which must be known about this Sacrament, especially that God's ordinance is to be held in all honor. <sup>39</sup> Now there is not only God's commandment and injunction here, but also the promise. Because of this, Baptism is still far more glorious than whatever else God has commanded and ordained. It is, in short, so full of consolation and grace that heaven and earth cannot understand it. <sup>40</sup> But it requires skill to believe this, for the treasure is not lacking, but this is lacking: people who grasp it and hold it firmly.

<sup>41</sup> Therefore, every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and to do all his life. For he has always enough to do by believing firmly what Baptism promises and brings: victory over death and the devil [Romans 6:3-6], forgiveness of sin [Acts 2:38], God's grace [Titus 3:5-6], the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts [1 Corinthians 6:11]. <sup>42</sup> In short, Baptism is so far beyond us that if timid nature could realize this, it might well doubt whether it could be true. <sup>43</sup> Think about it. Imagine there was a doctor somewhere who understood the art of saving people from death or, even though they died, could restore them quickly to life so that they would afterward live forever. Oh, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain. No one could find access to him because of the throng of the rich! But here in Baptism there is freely brought to everyone's door such a treasure and medicine that it utterly destroys death and preserves all people alive.

<sup>44</sup> We must think this way about Baptism and make it profitable for ourselves. So when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say, "Nevertheless, I am baptized. And if I am baptized, it is promised to me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." <sup>45</sup> For that is the reason why these two things are done in Baptism: the body—which can grasp nothing but the water—is sprinkled and, in addition, the Word is spoken for the soul to grasp. <sup>46</sup> Now, since both, the water and the Word, make one Baptism, therefore, body and soul must be saved and live forever [1 Corinthians 15:53]. The soul lives through the Word, which it believes, but the body lives because it is united with the soul and also holds on through Baptism as it is able to grasp it. We have,

therefore, no greater jewel in body and soul. For by Baptism we are made holy and are saved [1 Corinthians 6:11]. No other kind of life, no work upon earth, can do this. (The Large Catechism)

## THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

### *First: What is Baptism?*

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

### *Which is that Word of God?*

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!"

## THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

### *Second: What does Baptism do for us?*

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

### *What are these words and promises of God?*

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

## THE POWER OF BAPTISM

### *Third: How can water do such great things?*

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not baptism. But with this Word it is baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

### *Where is this written?*

St. Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."

## THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

### *Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?*

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

### *Where is this written?*

St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

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