

# Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

## N E W S L E T T E R

### Take a Closer Look

One of North America's biggest diamond mines was discovered in a very unlikely place—in the far north of Canada. Up until a few years ago, you couldn't even give the land away. Composed almost entirely of granite covered by a glacier, it has some of the world's harshest weather and sparsely populated countryside. But at times, some of the most worthwhile things come to those who look past the exterior and take a closer look. That's wise advice.

Jesus had similar advice in a story he once told. It was about a man on a walk who found a valuable treasure hidden and buried in a dusty, dirty field. An ordinary field is definitely not the backdrop Hollywood would pick for a movie about a hunt for buried treasure. There is nothing glamorous about a dirt field, and that's just the point. The man would never have found the treasure had he not taken a closer look beneath the plain surface.

It's easy to miss things. Jesus didn't have the most glamorous life. Isaiah was spot on when he prophesied that there was "no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). He was born in a barn beside a Bethlehem hotel with a no vacancy sign out front. He had to be whisked off to Egypt so that he would not be killed because of King Herod's murderous fiat. He worked with his hands as a carpenter and spent most of his life around common people. When one person was told that the Christ was now here in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the man scoffed and doubted that anything good could come from Jesus' hometown. Jesus is tried and executed as a criminal and his lifeless body is placed in a tomb. Nothing special, you might say, just like that dirty, barren little field. But wait, take a closer look.

When you dig below the surface of Jesus' state of humiliation, there is a great wealth of treasure. At Jesus' birth, angels sang him praises and the wise men worshipped him and brought him presents to mark the entrance of the Savior into the world. Even as they viewed a child, they recognized him and believed in him as the King of the Jews. People were astounded, including Mary and Joseph, when a common, ordinary twelve-year old was speaking the wisdom of God in the Temple. Some of those common fellows with whom he hung around became his disciples, bringing a message of renewal and joy to the world. By his death, you are given forgiveness for every missed opportunity and failed attempt to love God and serve your neighbor—and from the guilt that comes along with them. What is more, by Jesus' rising from the grave, you are given the treasure of life forevermore in the joy of heaven. And every day of your life, you don't need to worry or be afraid because Jesus promises to watch over you and provide for your needs. Now those are true treasures!

*Jesus said, "The  
kingdom of heaven  
is like treasure  
hidden in a field.  
When a man found  
it, he hid it again,  
and then in his joy  
went and sold all he  
had and bought  
that field"  
-- Matthew 13:44*

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### UPCOMING DATES

January 7  
Elders

January 14  
Council Meeting

January 21  
Annual Meeting

It's just a story, right? It may appear to be as simple as a dry, dirty, good-for-nothing field. But it is a short story of Jesus that speaks volumes for our lives. This treasure contains all the wealth that Jesus has in his kingdom: righteousness, pardon, peace, joy, confidence, comfort, strength, hope and eternal life. How precious are these to you? Do you always consider Jesus to be your greatest treasure? Would you act like the man Jesus described in this short parable? Does the way you spend your time reveal that you would give everything you could to have this treasure? When you prioritize what you will do during the week, how are your priorities ranked? When it comes time to plan your weekends, where does receiving this treasure rank?

Thanks be to God that you were the treasure that Jesus sought out. That you were the treasure died to win. That you were the treasure Jesus rose to secure. In this new year of God's same yet ever-new grace, rededicate yourself to receiving the treasures of Jesus in Word and Sacrament.

Hence, all earthly treasure!  
Jesus is my pleasure,  
Jesus is my choice.  
Hence, all empty glory!  
Naught to me thy story  
told with tempting voice.  
Pain or loss  
or shame or cross  
shall not from my Savior move me  
since he deigns to love me. (CW 823:4)

## Epiphany Worship

The Greek word epiphany means "appearance." If it were not for the revelations God made about himself in the Bible, we would know very little about him. From creation and conscience, we could learn that he is wise and powerful, holy and just. But we could never know him as the one, true and only God. We could never find out that he is the God who saves us. During Epiphany, we have the opportunity to see God reveal who he is through Jesus. Week after week, revelation after revelation, we learn more about Jesus – who he is and what he come to do – and in that revelation, we see the true God. The focus for the Sundays in Epiphany is: Jesus Is Revealed and the themes for the Sundays in January are:

- ✠ January 7<sup>th</sup> – The Baptism of Our Lord – Revealed As Our Substitute At His Baptism
- ✠ January 14<sup>th</sup> – The Second Sunday after Epiphany – Revealed As The Messiah Who Calls Us To Follow Him
- ✠ January 21<sup>st</sup> – The Third Sunday after Epiphany – Revealed As The Messiah Through The Ambassadors He Calls
- ✠ January 28<sup>th</sup> – The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – Revealed As The Prophet With Authority

## Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 12:15 a.m. The voters will hear the final reports of 2023 from the financial secretary (our offerings) the treasurer (our expenses) and committees,

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they will set a budget for 2024, they will elect men to serve on the church council, they will approve our annual mission subscription to WELS. The voters will hear a proposal about how the congregation will use funds from the 2024 disbursement of the Bailey Family Trust. There will be a potluck meal before the meeting.

## Mission Festival

Mr. Sean Young, Senior Director of Mission Operations and former Home Mission Administrator, will be at Immanuel for our mission festival to make a presentation about our synod's efforts in opening 100 missions in 10 years. Our mission festival will be held on February 4, 2024 and Mr. Young's presentation will be in the fellowship hall from 10:30-11:30 a.m. A meal will be served at 11:30. Please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex for the meal so we know how much food to get. There is no cost for the meal.

## Bailey Family Trust

In 2021, we learned that Immanuel would receive an annual gift from the Bailey Family Estate. In January 2023, the voters of the congregation approved a proposal where we would disburse each annual gift in four equal parts to: 1) WELS Home Missions; 2) WELS World Missions; 3) WELS Ministerial Education; and, 4) Work to be done at Immanuel. For 2024, the voters will act on a proposal to disburse the funds to: 1) 100 Missions in 10 years; 2) Grace-Hmong Outreach in Vietnam; 3) Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for tuition for Seminarian Nathaniel Stein. Nathaniel is a son of Immanuel and will be entering his final year at WLS in August 2024; 4) Immanuel to save in order to replace the Bibles we use for the Service and Bible classes.

## Bible Information Class

A new class which examines the teaching and central message of the Bible will begin on Tuesday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>. We will meet on Tuesdays starting at 4:00 p.m. Please talk to pastor if you are interested in attending.

## Ladies' Serving Groups

Please check the serving group list in the narthex. Make corrections as needed to your phone number. If you would like to switch serving groups, either make the adjustment on the sheet or speak to your serving group leader.

## Facebook

If you use Facebook, please like and share Immanuel's posts when you see them so that they will be seen by more people.

## Bible Readings for 2024

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!

## 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

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## Church Council Meeting Minutes

November 12, 2023

**Members Present:** Rollie Nissen, Jim Buffington, Tom Jurgenson, Scott Claussen, Aaron Buttenhoff, Justin Kannas, Pastor Engel, Ross Malkuch

**MMSP = Motion Made, Seconded, Passed**

We opened with The Lord's Prayer, and Chairman Nissen called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.

**Agenda:** The agenda was approved with correction to eliminate hail damage estimate discussion.

### Secretary's Report:

- September's meeting report was approved with correction on Planned Giving Committee report. "On" changed to "of," in bullet point 1.
- October 8, 2023 minutes were approved.

## Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

**Chairman:** No report.

**Elders:** No report.

### Trustees:

- Kim's Electric will be working on a few issues which include parking lot lighting and changing florescent lighting to LED in the Narthex and Education building.
- They are also scheduling a "fall leaf cleanup" for Saturday morning November 18.

**Financial Secretary's Report:** The report was presented. MMSP.

**Treasurer's Report:** MMSP.

### Planned Giving Committee Report:

- The committee has met in the past week and has decided to move the balance of undesignated memorials and GPGC monies to the WELS Trust Fund. Their reasoning was that the proposed evangelism budget may require some funds from the trust in next year's budget.
- The committee will also be doing an annual review of investments.

### Pastor's Report:

- Pastor reports that the Evangelism Committee doesn't want to be in charge of a potential community garden project.
- Discussion on evangelism projects for Bailey monies will be held in July.

## Old Business and Action Committees

**AV committee:** No report.

**Lighting:** See Trustee's Report.

**Budget Committee:** Proposals for the 2024 budget were presented and reviewed.

Called Worker Compensation Committee: Changes to Called Worker compensation were presented and discussed. This included Federal and State mandated changes for employers. Available hours of PTO need to be printed on each pay stub.

## New Business

Nominating Committee for 2024:

Todd M.  
Justin K.  
Jim B.

### Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- December 10, 2023 at 11:30 a.m.
- January 14, 2024 at 11:30 a.m.
- January 21, 2024 our annual voter's meeting after a meal.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Closed with the blessing.

Respectfully,  
Jay Remmele, Recording Secretary

## Baptism of Our Lord

On January 7<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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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The background of the lower half of the page is a black and white photograph of a landscape. On the left side, there are dark, silhouetted trees. The rest of the image shows a bright, hazy sky with some clouds, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The text is overlaid on this background.

Nations shall come to your  
**LIGHT**,  
and kings to the  
**BRIGHTNESS**  
of your dawn.

ISAIAH 60:3, NRSV