

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

NEWSLETTER

Meditation on The Circumcision and Naming of Jesus

There are a number of beautiful but short verses in the Bible that sum everything up. This is one of the most sublime of those kinds of passages.

It is the eighth day and in accordance with the Law of Moses, every Hebrew male must be circumcised on this day to mark the child as a member of God's covenant people. Wonder of wonders: The Son of God joins himself to the people of God by this bloody act. On this day he begins the work of our redemption; a sinful human performs a ritual that makes the sinless Son of God cry in pain as for us he sheds blood for the first time—but not for the last time. We might be tempted to object to this first shedding of his blood. Why should the sinless Son of God need this ceremony that was intended for children conceived and born in sin? He doesn't need a ceremony to make him a member of God's people. He was already God's child. He was the whole point of Israel's existence as a people. But there he is, humbled and obedient to the law down to the smallest detail, not for himself but for us.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

-- Luke 2:21

Later, he who cried out on the eighth day will replace for us the sacrament that called for the shedding of blood and called forth cries of pain with a sacrament of washing with water and the Word. Even the rite he institutes later for our entry into fellowship with him he makes gentle and soothing instead of painful and bloody. He wanted to bring an end to that earlier pain by his own pain and remove the necessity of shedding blood from us by taking it on himself.

And then, so we don't miss the point: Just as we receive our name in Christ at our baptism, so he receives his at his circumcision. It is the name of his and his Father's own choosing. It is the name he wanted since the promise made in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve fell into sin. It is the name Jesus, the name that means "Savior." For that is what he has come to do: to save us. And how will he do it? By the shedding of his blood, which begins on this holy day.

And from what has he come to save us by the shedding of his blood? From the very curse that the law hangs around our necks when it declares us guilty of breaking it. He submits this day to the whole of the law, no part of which we could keep. He, who as God's own Son was above the law, keeps it perfectly, not for himself but for us. Then when the work of perfect submission begun on this bloody day has been finished, he will shed his blood again to finish the work promised by his name: the work of our Savior. Bookends to his whole earthly life—that's what the shedding of his blood is for us and for our salvation.

Rich indeed are the special promises of God to his Son on this day when Jesus was made a child of promise, when he first shed his blood, and then when he received the name Jesus. And all of those promises were meant for his benefit? Oh, no! They were all for our benefit, both the promises and their fulfillment in all that Jesus did to accomplish our salvation.

There it is in this first summary of the life of Jesus: The recently sung, joyous song of the angels is tinged with his cries of pain and with the shedding of his blood. And so it will ever be in his earthly life—and in ours too, as we all know well. But this is his feast day (January 1). So we will be content to bow low in adoration and in thanksgiving that today he began to shed his blood for us so that, for us, he might become what his name promised: our Jesus, our Savior. Yes, and we will give thanks as well that our entrance into his family so full of promises to us is accomplished not by our cries of pain in the shedding of our blood but by his washing us clean from our sins in the saving and gentle waters of Baptism. (Daniel Deutschlander, *On Giving Advice to God*)

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UPCOMING DATES

January 4
Elders

January 11
Church Council

January 14
Women of Immanuel

January 18
Annual Meeting

January 25
Mission Festival

January Worship Themes

The theme for the first Sunday in January is: **Christ the Savior Is Born.** It draws on themes found in the well-known Christmas hymn, “Silent Night.” That hymn was written originally in German by Joseph Mohr, with music composed by Franz Gruber. The carol was first performed on Christmas Eve in 1818 at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. Legend says the church organ was broken, prompting Gruber to compose a simple guitar accompaniment. Subsequently accompanied by many instruments and translated into many languages, the text paints the picture of the incarnation. The last phrase is repeated, so in the second stanza we hear it twice: “Christ the Savior is born!” Every word of that phrase is significant, and every line of the Christmas carol describes a Bible truth. We use the beloved hymn to ponder the profound message of the Twelve Days of Christmas. After the twelve days of the Christmas season, we enter into the season of Epiphany. This year, the theme for our Epiphany service is: **Identity Revealed.** “Epiphany” comes from a Greek word that means “reveal.” It is the season when you see Jesus begin his public ministry, revealing the reason the Son of God came to earth. During Epiphany, you will come to understand that when the true identity of Jesus is revealed, you realize your own true identity as well.

- 1/4 – Second Sunday of Christmas – The Dawn of Redeeming Grace
- 1/6 – The Epiphany of Our Lord – Love’s Pure Light Beams from Thy Holy Face
- 1/11 – First Sunday after Epiphany: Baptism of Our Lord – Jesus Is The Christ, The Anointed One
- 1/18 – Second Sunday after Epiphany – Jesus Is The Lamb of God
- 1/25 – Third Sunday after Epiphany – Jesus Is The Light

Epiphany

January 6th is the Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord. We will have Epiphany Vespers beginning at 7:00 p.m. 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.

In the season of the Church called Epiphany, we hear that salvation has appeared in the person of Jesus Christ. In Epiphany, the Church explores everything that Christ makes apparent about God. You see, we need God to appear to us and make himself known to us. For not only is God beyond our understanding, his works and his ways are contrary to mankind’s natural assumptions about him. In other words, the truth about God cannot possibly be *discovered* by us. Rather, it needs to be *uncovered* for us. It needs to be revealed to us. That’s what the Spirit is doing for us during this season of Epiphany. Week after week, truths about Jesus our King and life in his kingdom will be uncovered.

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.

Congregational Potluck and Annual Meeting

We will have a potluck meal on January 18th preceding our annual meeting. The meal will start at 11:30 a.m. and the meeting will begin at 12:15 p.m. The voters will hear the final reports of 2025 from the financial secretary (our offerings) the treasurer (our expenses) and committees, they will set a budget for 2025, they will elect men to serve on the church council, and they will approve our annual mission subscription to WELS. The voters will also act on a proposal to disburse the funds we will receive from the Bailey Family Estate in 2026 to: 1) WELS Home Missions; 2) WELS World Missions; 3) Martin Luther College; and, 4) Immanuel.

2026 Mission Festival

Our mission festival is scheduled for January 25, 2026. Rev. Jacob Behnken, Dean of Chapel and Professor of Music at Martin Luther College, will be at Immanuel on that day to lead worship and make a presentation on MLC. There will also be a meal served after Pastor Behnken’s presentation. There is no cost for the meal but please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex so that we know how much food to purchase.

Baptism of Our Lord

On January 11th, 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.

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ 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. ³⁹ 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. ⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ 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]. ⁴² In short, Baptism is so far beyond us that if timid nature could realize this, it might well doubt whether it could be true. ⁴³ 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. ⁴⁴ 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.” ⁴⁵ 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. ⁴⁶ 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.”

2026 Offering Envelopes

Please pick up your offering envelopes for 2026 if you haven't already.

Bible Readings for 2026

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!

Volunteers to Provide Transportation

We are in need of some more volunteers to give rides to church on Sunday morning. Please talk to pastor if you would be willing to help.

Vacancy

Please keep the members of Zion, Olivia in your prayers as they await a full-time pastor.

Winter Weather and Worship

We will hold our regularly scheduled Sunday 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.

Volunteers

We are in need of some volunteers for the following: folding 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.

Church Council Meeting Minutes

November 9, 2025

Members Present: Martin Fabrizio, Jim Buffington, Michael Ziebell, Justin Kannas, Tom Jurgenson, Pastor, Jay Remmele

MMSP = Motion Made, Seconded, Passed

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 11:35 a.m.

Opened with the Lord's Prayer.

Agenda: MMSP to accept the agenda with the addition of "New Pew Registers" under New Business.

Secretary's Report: MMSP to accept the September 14, 2025 council minutes as corrected under New Business.

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees:

Chairman's Report: No report.

Elders Report: MMSP to receive by profession of faith: John and Dawn Kappers.

Trustees Report:

- Thank you for all the help on Fall Clean Up Day.
- Trustees will look into options to replace the accordion style partition in the basement. They are looking for one that will fit the existing track if possible to make installation easier.
- Trustees are still looking into the cost and feasibility of making one set of front doors handicap accessible with remote door opener switches.

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

Treasurer's Report:

- MMSP to accept the September report as presented.
- MMSP to accept the October report as presented.

Planned Giving: No report.

AV Committee: No report.

Pastor's Report: Olivia vacancy: they have a meeting scheduled November 25, 2025.

Old Business and Action Committees:

Pew Committee: The hymn racks will be lowered.

Church Operation Manual: MMSP to accept the Treasurer job description as presented.

Budget Committee:

- Preliminary numbers were presented.
- The property insurance has gone up considerably. We will check with other insurance companies to see if it is worth switching.

Called Worker Compensation Committee: The numbers were submitted to the budget committee. Health insurance has increased 8%.

Updates in Narthex: Water cooler options are being explored.

New Business:

Appoint Nominating Committee:

- Aaron Butenhoff, chairman of committee; Jay Remmele and Tom Jurgenson.
- Positions to be filled: Secretary, Financial Secretary, Elder.
- Aaron may serve another term. Jay and Tom have completed two terms.

Paid Family and Medical Leave Act: Justin spoke with the WELS expert on the subject and will get this implemented.

New Pew Registers: Pastor will get quotes on new register covers.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- December 14, 2025 after Bible class
- January 11, 2026 after Bible class
- January 18, 2026 after meal

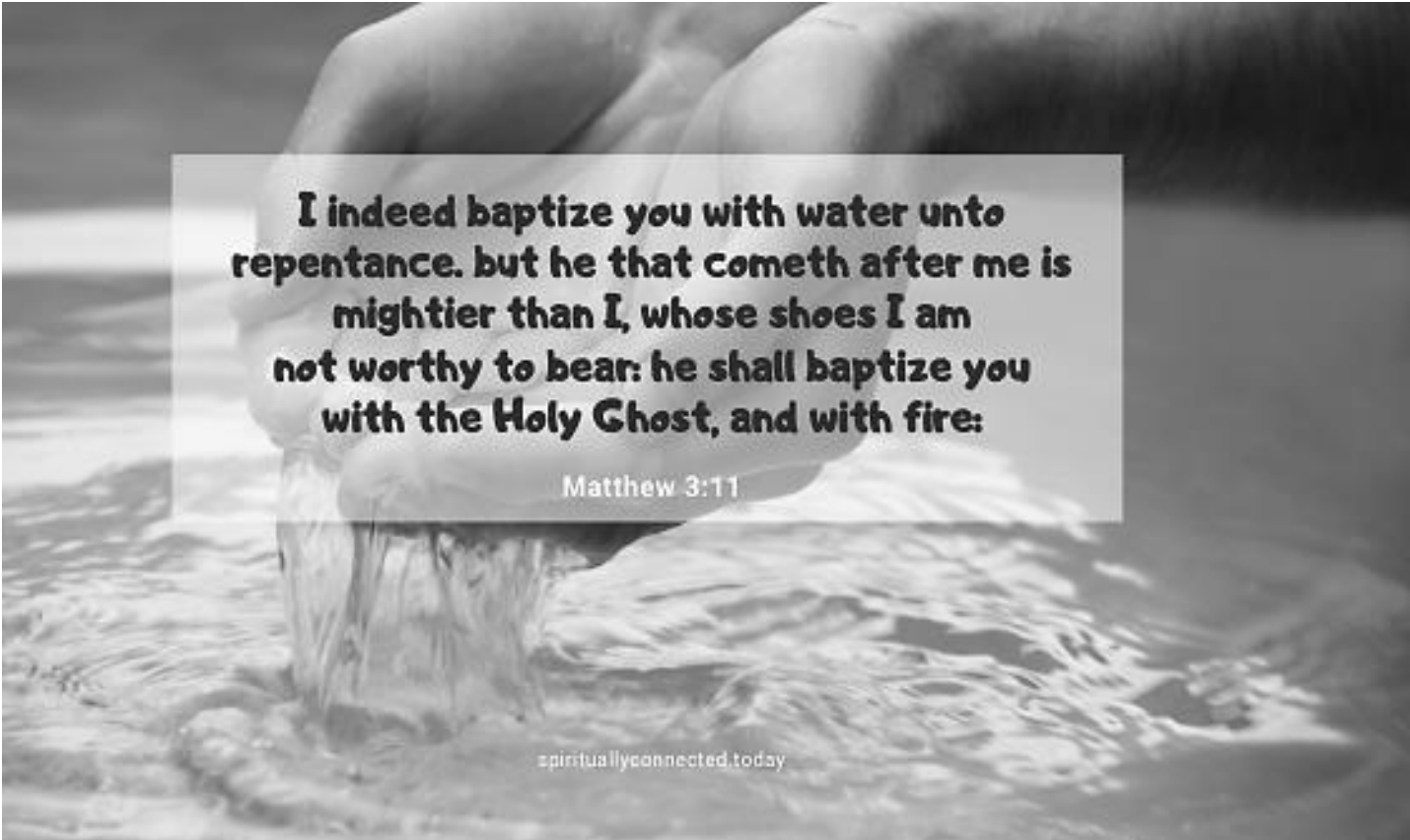
MMSP to close the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully, Jay Remmele, Recording Secretary

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



**I indeed baptize you with water unto
repentance. but he that cometh after me is
mightier than I, whose shoes I am
not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you
with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:**

Matthew 3:11

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