

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church



April 2021

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Visit us on our Website @
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"Inspired by God's grace to love and serve all"

Pastor's Message ~ Opportunities to meet the Divine

Romans: 8:8

"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

While I was on retreat in February, I read an article about meeting obstacles as opportunities. I thought, well 2020 certainly brought us a lot of obstacles to overcome! So...this must mean we have a lot of new opportunities to discover. For example, we discovered how we could 'do church' outside the building by using technology. Many joined us for worship from across the nation. It was beautiful to see! We discovered new ways of praying during Lent by using Lectio Divina. (Latin for Divine Reading). We connected through cards and emails and phone. We discovered how to slow down and take care of ourselves and others. We now have new opportunities to continue to 'be church' to one another, in and outside the walls of the sanctuary.

As I continued to read this article, the author invited us to embrace our successes as well as our failures as opportunities to meet the Divine. Look for the gifts of grace that we receive in **all** that we have been given.

When demonstrating a ritual a student asked: "What if I forget what I am supposed to do? What if I make a mistake?" The instructor said, "How would it feel to make a mistake?" The student replied, "Terrible, I don't like to make mistakes. I'd be embarrassed." The instructor then said, "Perhaps there is another possibility to consider about mistakes. Try to imagine a world without them – a world without any mistakes."



Offering a graphic example, the instructor continued, "Think of an oak tree. If a tree had no obstacles or mistakes in its growth pattern, it would grow completely straight and tall. Everywhere we look, trees would be straight as an arrow, with every branch uniform. But instead, when we look at the oaks on the hillside, their beauty comes from their curved branches, their response to every obstacle they encountered. Every place they turned was a 'mistake' from their original growth path, but every turn ultimately became their beauty." (Excerpt from Presence – An international Journal of Spiritual Direction, March 2019, article written by Ellen Grace O'Brian)

I am, you are, we are, life is, perfectly imperfect, formed in God's image, mistakes and all. Let us embrace all that we are, and face our obstacles as opportunities to share God's amazing love with the world.

Yours in Christ +

Pastor Tammy

PRESIDING BISHOP

GOD *will* TRANSFORM THIS CHURCH

By Elizabeth A. Eaton



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. That's our name. At least two parts of our name, "Evangelical" and "Church," are either misunderstood or an outright stumbling block for a significant percentage of the American population.

Pew Research reports that over one-fifth of the U.S. public—and a third under 30—are religiously unaffiliated. These are the "nones." The religiously unaffiliated, whether never church or dechurched, don't have a favorable impression of church. They see it as extremist, full of hypocrites, judgmental, anti-science, anti-intellectual, dogmatic, overly concerned about other people's morality, naïve and out of touch. Ouch.

In the eyes of the nones, the ELCA gets lumped in with everyone else. Though we aren't perfect, and some of the characteristics of church apply to us at various times, we have a theology based on a liberating gospel of Jesus Christ that is the *euangelion*—the good news. The "Evangelical" in our name points to the transforming love of Jesus, to reconciliation, to freedom, to grace. It's expansive, for everyone and all creation. It doesn't require our effort or our merit, only our trust in God's promise.

It's not naïve. Scripture, Martin Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others were clear-eyed about the reality of human sin and brokenness and the devastating consequences for individuals, groups of people and creation that result. There is judgment, but it is God's, not ours. Our evangelical understanding of God's word is that it is both law and gospel, judgment and promise. We aren't an everything goes, antinomian church.

I remember the light bulbs going off in my catechism students' heads when learning about grace. Does it give us license to do anything we want? Paul had to address the same line of thinking in the letter to the Romans. No. Grace makes it possible to be honest with ourselves and face our sin because the Spirit grants us the space, time and desire to turn from our sin to the source of life.

Our evangelical witness is full of paradox—we are simultaneously saint and sinner. Yes, there is hypocrisy in the church—welcome to humanity! But there is also

beauty and love poured by the Spirit into sometimes stubborn and broken hearts. There is law and gospel. We are at once perfectly free and lord of all and bound and servant of all (Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian*).

Our evangelical witness is that God called the creation good; that we have been given the gift of curiosity that compels us to study the natural world, to engage in scientific research. The more we know about creation, the closer we draw to the Creator. We aren't anti-intellectual—Luther was a college professor after all.

I happen to know some millennials who had conversations with their none neighbors. These conversations were open and engaged. The none neighbors carried the above-mentioned perceptions of church, but they also knew that their millennial friends served as Young Adults in Global Mission and were active in their congregation. The nones were trying to reconcile their perceptions of church with their experience of actual Lutherans—one of whom is a scientist. Without that relationship, the nones would never have known a true evangelical witness to the liberating good news of Jesus.

In this issue you have read about Future Church (page 20). God is calling us into this exciting mission, and the Spirit will activate each of us to invite people to know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love. The ELCA can hold up our evangelical witness, which is an alternative face of Christianity—not for institutional survival, but so that more people will experience the deep love of Jesus, be transformed and liberated by that love and "work for justice and peace" (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, Holy Baptism).

This mission will take all of us, and it means actual relationships with real people led by an incarnational God. I believe that God will transform this church. †

A monthly message from the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
Her email address is bishop@elca.org.

SO MORE PEOPLE MAY KNOW THE WAY OF JESUS

ELCA IMPLEMENTS FUTURE CHURCH DESIGN

By Megan Brandsrud

On Feb. 1, the ELCA churchwide organization implemented Future Church, a new working structure focused on motivating the entire church to actively share the way of Jesus with more people so that they might experience community, justice and love. The design emphasizes the belief that members, congregations, synods, the churchwide organization and its partner organizations all have important roles in the church's mission.

The church's three expressions (congregations, synods and the churchwide organization) will remain, but the Future Church design is centered on a "One Church" identity that will bring greater collaboration to the mission of sharing the gospel and God's grace in the world.

This new design stresses three goals:

- **A welcoming church that engages new, young and diverse people.**
- **A thriving church rooted in tradition but radically relevant.**
- **A connected, sustainable church that shares a common purpose and direction.**

To implement the Future Church design, structural changes were made that resulted in a 5% reduction in staff and the creation of new departments, called home areas (see page 23).

Living Lutheran talked about Future Church and what it means for the life of the ELCA with Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton; Phil Hirsch, executive director of ELCA Christian Community and Leadership; Mikka McCracken, executive director of ELCA Innovation; and Bill Horne, ELCA vice president. The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

***Living Lutheran:* What is the purpose of Future Church, and what is most important for people to know about it?**

Eaton: We've tried to emphasize that this isn't something that just sprang up because of or during the pandemic, but this is building on work that we've done for years. We're not doing this to combat or counteract the trend lines that we see in the church, though that is something we're concerned about.

We're trying to find a way to activate each of us to invite more people into the way of Jesus and find community, justice and love. That's it. The way of Jesus.

When you talk about church out in the world, especially when you have an "evangelical" in it, it's a church that is anti-science, anti-intellectual, anti-gay, anti-having any kind of dialogue, and we have a theology that is the opposite of that. How can we now be the ones to grab hold of that doctrine of grace and justification that brings freedom, and invite more people into that and have that be heard as an authentic voice of Christianity?

Hirsch: This is something that's authentically Lutheran. Martin Luther, at a time when the church of his day was facing a crisis of its own, what did he have them do but drill down to the core of the gospel message and hold true to a few core principles and then innovate on everything else. That's what he taught us, and that's what we're doing here. So, we talk about becoming an innovation denomination, but that's who we've been since the start.

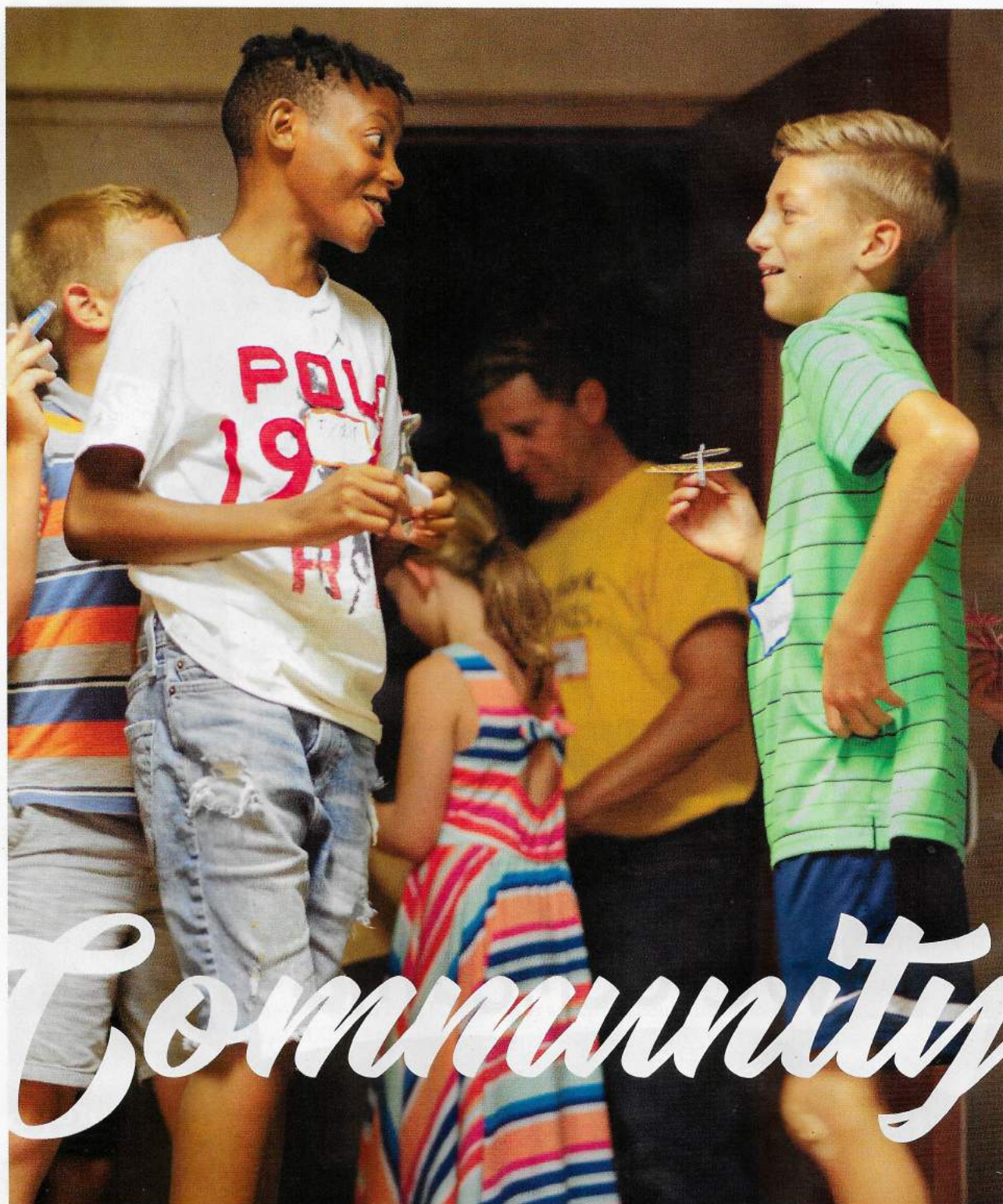
McCracken: Innovation is a means—not an end. Part of this purpose statement of activating each of us is, for me, about connecting to that sense of vocation. For Luther you could be a bread maker, a shoe fixer ... as long as you were doing that in service to the neighbor and with the heart of the gospel, you were connecting and living your life of faith. How do we return to that as we think about innovation?

Each person has a vocation that's a gift from God. When we become the body of Christ and live more fully into that collective, all things are possible.

What are some of the disruptions that have affected the church's ability to reach people, and how does Future Church address them?

Hirsch: One is that people don't just come to church as a matter of course anymore. Instead of expecting that people are going to come to us, maybe we need to think about going to them, particularly for young adults.

Secondly, we are a very monocultural church in a very multicultural world. The issue there is, what witness does it bear to the kingdom of God—the way we understand God to be and the kingdom of heaven to be—to be that very white church in an increasingly



Community

diverse world? The way to get at it is to begin by naming it and then take some steps. Instead of expecting people to come to us, we go to them and listen to what their needs are and then craft ministries to begin to meet those needs. When it comes to becoming a more multicultural church, more diverse people, there's a lot to be said about that, but we have to learn about and respect our neighbor's culture in ways that we haven't before.

Eaton: And certainly being forced to shelter in place. We were disrupted that we couldn't do business in the same ways, and we found out we could be a lot more creative and efficient in this new way. That would've never happened if we weren't forced out of the office or out of our congregations. And we've adapted. We're reaching more people now than we have reached before with the good news of the gospel of Jesus.

So when we can worship in person, which I think is an extremely important component of the Christian life, how do we make sure we still stay in contact with those people who will not come into our church buildings? And what have we learned or can we learn about online community?

Hirsch: I think one of the disruptions is also that the way human community is forming is changing at an increasingly rapid rate. People form human communities now online, and it's not just a virtual experience to supplement the in-person. It is its own experience. That is new to human community. The world nor the church have seen this before, and the church has now taken a huge step to adapt to this.

We need to be able to make adaptations like that as a regular course of what we do because it's changing so quickly.

McCracken: To build on that piece, about human community, it's not only the forming but the finding and belonging that changes with that. When you consider that 48% of Gen Z (born in the late 1990s and early 2000s) is going to be people who don't identify as white in terms of racial identity, what does that mean for us? How do we have to grow and adapt so that we can be this place for all, that vision that we have?

Hirsch: And it is not just our vision for the church; this is our understanding of the kingdom of God, and it was the way of the early church. So in a way, it's a callback to the roots of who the church was from the start, which was not only more ethnically diverse but more economically diverse than what we are today.

The Future Church design focuses on working as "One Church." How will the expressions of the church be working together in this new design?

Eaton: It's our intent to contact a million new people and introduce them to the ELCA as this community of Jesus. This has to be our great mission and our great purpose. It can't be done by those of us in the churchwide organization developing programs or issuing directives. It can't be done just by congregations. We have so many other beautiful resources that can be brought into play to give people entry points to come into this community. I mean, 1 in 50 Americans is touched by a Lutheran service organization. Right there, we are in contact with people.

Hirsch: This is something we hope everyone will see their place in—that they will be able to find a way to reach out to somebody new around them. We know that belonging usually precedes believing. So we're hoping that people will have a sense of belonging to each other, and then we need to do better at helping people understand the way of Christ.

New home areas

The Future Church design has created four new home areas that encompass the work of the churchwide organization.

Christian Community and Leadership

Led by Phil Hirsch, this home area recruits, trains and deploys leaders, and establishes and grows Christian communities. Programs include congregational vitality, campus ministry, the ELCA Youth Gathering, children's ministry, young adult ministry, worship, federal chaplaincy, Young Adults in Global Mission, and ELCA colleges and universities.

Innovation

Led by Mikka McCracken, this home area champions and drives innovation culture (the development of new and useful things) and leaders. Programs include Resourceful Servants and Innovation Services.

Service and Justice

Led by Rafael Malpica Padilla, this home area fosters and facilitates the church's engagement in service and promotes efforts to call and act for justice. Programs include global service, ethnic ministries and associations, ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, advocacy, and the Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) strategy.

Operations

Operations comprises the work of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, Office of the Secretary and Office of the Treasurer. This home area includes the work of development, ecumenical and interreligious relations, theological discernment, communications, the archives, synod relations, rosters and records, finance and information technology.

We've been very good at that for people who would come and baptize their babies and bring them up in Sunday school and confirm them, but when that is no longer the primary way people are engaging with religion, we need to make some shifts and begin to ask how else we can bring along adults and help them discover this way of living and of loving in the world. And to be changed by the grace of God.

Eaton: I think here is where the innovation lab is going to be a very important incubator for us, because we need new ideas and new ways to do this that we haven't even thought of.

McCracken: If this year of working with the lab has taught us anything—the best ideas, no offense to us, don't necessarily come from churchwide. Synods and congregations are encountering this more and have more aptitude for innovation because they're closer to the members, they're closer to the community.

"One Church," I think, means, "How might we learn from one another in new and different ways so we don't have to re-create the wheel and are able to share good ideas and offer encouragement?" One person with a good idea really only needs a little bit of encouragement.

How can members get involved in this shared mission—the purpose of Future Church?

McCracken: Check out what's already happening by you. I have been in so many conversations with places like Augsburg University or Luther and a handful of synods that are far out ahead of us in this innovation work and have been doing it for many years. There are a lot of resources that exist already, and that's something that we would hope to build on.

Also, the ELCA is just so excited about the opportunity to work on the "Congregations Lead" initiative with support from Lilly [Endowment Inc.] and their Thriving Congregations work. That will be a fairly small group in terms of a pilot group for that work, but we know we're going to learn so much from those congregational partners and synods. And hopefully those will be some inspiration points and ideas that we're able to share back with the church.

Hirsch: This is maybe going to sound very basic, but I would also encourage people—if they're really going to be active in this—to be grounded in their Christian life through prayer and reading Scripture. You can't give what you don't have, and the more our own people have the sense that they are so completely loved by God and unconditionally, the better they're going to be able to share that with others. If they don't have that, it will be a program, but if they have that, everything else will become clear.

Horne: Our focus on innovation gives our members an opportunity to show that love for Jesus to others. Working in a much more collaborative environment, that is where the person in the congregation can see a connection to others who may work in other parts of the church and, because of what they do, can help give life and meaning to some ideas that they have, where they are located. We can become better connected because we share that experience with Christ.

Eaton: Phil is absolutely right. This is not just a technique or a program, but it's a way of being. And as Bill just mentioned, we're not used to being one

church, working all together. We don't see ourselves as connected, but in baptism we are connected already.

What are you most excited about with the Future Church design, and what do you want members to feel hopeful about for what's to come?

Horne: I hope when they read this article, they come to the conclusion that there are so many possibilities of how we can be church. For years I've heard people complain and criticize the church for not being able to do this or do that, and often the criticism was directed at how our three expressions function. When they begin to experience what it means to be one church, these barriers melt away because there are things that you can do, and we're committed to being church in a way that embraces good ideas, embraces innovative ways of serving God.

Eaton: We are on a mission from God. That's exciting! Our lives have meaning, deep meaning. They've been given meaning because we're beloved of God. And then we're free to share that.

I think we live pretty isolated lives in the United States in a lot of ways, but we're not alone. We don't do this alone; we're invited into this great cloud of witnesses. That, to me, is exciting. That we have this mission that's been given to us—and doing it all together!

Hirsch: I know that some people are concerned that focusing on new people, on others, will take away something from their experience of church. My experience is that when people see others come to faith, experience the love and the belonging that is in community, the longing for justice and peace, the people who were there all along are energized in a way that's hard to describe. My hope for the church is that we will have that experience again. Because I think once people get a taste of it, there's just nothing like it.

McCracken: To speak very personally, as someone who is as old as the ELCA and has only ever known this denomination, I would love to be part of a future church movement that isn't only defined by decline and failure to reflect the diversity in which God gifts and creates. I want to be part of telling the old, old story of Jesus and God's love so more people have a chance to think about church and community in new ways. I want to be part of a church—the people of God—that trusts so deeply in the transformative power of life in Christ that we insist on change.

I believe the abundance of God is going to be so incredible, we're not even going to know what to do with it. That's my hope. †

Download a study guide at livinglutheran.org by clicking on the "Spiritual practices & resources" tab.

GROUNDING IN GRACE

A LENTEN JOURNEY OVER ROCKY GROUND

By Angela !Khabeb

This Lenten journey is unlike any other in our lifetime. A year ago, our leaders encouraged us to shelter in place for two weeks. Many of us acquiesced, albeit reluctantly, hoping that we would be back to normal in a few days. We could see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. Little did we know, the light was actually a train—a pandemic train that ran us over.

Now, in the aftermath of 2020, we find ourselves in varying locations on a bizarre continuum ranging from constant inconvenience to chronic isolation, from economic devastation to the death of a loved one, and from lingering depression to complete mental health collapse.

I'm reminded of the words of the apostle Paul: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). We continue to grow even though our circumstances are less than ideal. And even though we are brokenhearted, we hold on to hope.

This rocky hope reminds me of a flower pushing through a crack in a sidewalk. That flower should be the poster child for 2021.

Siblings in Christ, our Lenten journey will take us over tough terrain filled with potholes and pitfalls. We will need to navigate pandemic fatigue, political divisions, financial hardship, injustice and grief. Our nation is hurting and there is no better time to be the body of Christ. We are faced with challenges and choices. As we continue to trek across rocky ground, we can choose justice, equity and accountability.

While this may seem like a daunting task, we can each find faithful ways to live out our baptismal calling. Paul encourages us: "Do not lose heart" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Trekking over rocky ground is much more exhausting than walking a smooth, familiar path. The journey will make us weary, and hope is a desperate commodity. In the immortal words of writer James Weldon Johnson:

*Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
felt in the days when hope unborn had died; yet with*



a steady beat, have not our weary feet come to the place for which our parents sighed? ("Lift Every Voice and Sing," Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 841).

Try to find meaningful ways to encourage one another on this rocky Lenten journey so that, even when we find ourselves drowning in ambiguity, we can trust in our distant hallelujah hope.

**Walking this
rocky road
with Jesus,
through pain and
promise,
brings us to a deeper
understanding of
Easter.**

The reign of God is near and we have hope, and this hope does not disappoint. Although the past months have challenged our faith, we can take comfort in that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

And even if things get worse, God's promises are true. So we can be gracious with ourselves and one another as we struggle to release the nostalgia and belief that our lives will return to normal. Just as Martin Luther remained faithful during the bubonic plague—the pandemic of his day—we have the spiritual inheritance to do likewise today.

Walking this rocky road with Jesus, through pain and promise, brings us to a deeper understanding of Easter. Siblings in Christ, I am hopeful there is light at the end of the tunnel and that this time it's not a train. I'm hopeful that this time, as we strain ahead, we see the shimmer of Easter morning off in the distance. On our Lenten journey, all roads—even the rockiest terrain—lead to Easter. †

Thank you's

Thank you to J.R. for maintenance and parts on the furnace .

Thank you to Gene Frane and John Plautz for installing new windows!

Thank you to Gene Frane for shoveling during the month of March.

Thank you to Glenn Johnson & Butch Gregory who continue to paint the interior of the church meeting rooms.

Thank you to those who provide meals for Frederick Place and those who donate items from their Wish List.

Thank you to all members of Immanuel who continue to use their gifts and talents to further the kingdom of God. (Especially those who work behind the scenes and are not seen.) You are appreciated!!



Thank you to all our Food Pantry Volunteers!!





Northwoods Memory Café

...where friends gather together

The Northwoods Café is a gathering place for people with memory loss and their care partners. Come for refreshments, conversation, activities, programs – and most of all a place to be with friends.

Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church, 1st Thursday, 10:30 – noon. 21 Timber Drive, Rhinelander. For more information or to register, call the church at **715-362-5910**.

This program is **FREE!!** Registration is appreciated, but not required!

Cancelled



NAMI Northern Lakes

Providing support, education and advocacy for people living with mental illness and their families in Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties. Monthly meetings: open to anyone; 4th Tuesday of

each month at 7 p.m. at First Methodist Church, Rhinelander. Northern Lakes Center located in Trinity Lutheran Church, Rhinelander. Closed until further notice.

WI FACE MASK WARRIORS

WI Face Masks Warriors – are currently operating out of Immanuel's Fellowship Hall. They could use your assistance with making masks and working on other small tasks.

If you can assist, please call Kathy Cutforth at 715-499-0138.



Mission Statement: We are a collection of volunteers providing free, hand-made cloth face masks to those who are the most vulnerable and least supported within our communities from the state of Wisconsin.



COVID ADVISORY TEAM March 2021 Report

Immanuel's Covid Advisory Team met on March 4 to thoughtfully and prayerfully evaluate the CV19 data from the Oneida County Health Department and the guidelines for returning to worship established by the Wisconsin Council of Churches and our NGLS Synod. The team was elated by the continuing decline in active Covid cases and the sudden uptick in vaccinations. It appears that nearly 25% of residents have been vaccinated at least once, though two are required. And, the newest vaccine by Johnson and Johnson will be available soon, requiring only one vaccination. Bravo we said.

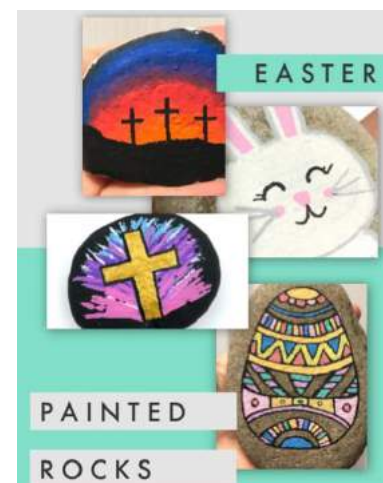
The Advisory Team pondered over the safety and possibility of opening to one or more small services during Holy Week. We ruled out the Easter Sunday Worship because the crowds would much exceed the safe maximums (estimated at 25 or so). Our discussions considered that Holy Week was still three weeks away, and therefore we could hope but not be certain that we would actually meet WCC **minimum** requirements. (More than 50% vaccinated, less than 10% positivity in Covid tests, and new cases per day are less than 5 per 100,000 residents). In Oneida County, we are currently at 25% vaccination, 7% positivity, and about 15 new cases per day per 100 thousand. So, NO, not yet. Furthermore, the Team decided that Pastor Tammy must be vaccinated before we start in-person worship. We are unanimous in the opinion that Pastor is our irreplaceable Shepherd. Last Minute Good News: Pastor Tammy has received her first vaccination! Next one in April.

The Covid Team will meet again on Tuesday, March 23, as council plans to meet on Wednesday March 24th to discuss and further evaluate future opening dates, perhaps in the second half of April? We are optimistic that being able to worship in small gatherings is near. The data will inform us. In that anticipation, the Team has prepared a thorough list of revised Church worship and visitation practices, many of which are already implemented and others that are ready to implement. Finally, we urge everyone to seek vaccinations as soon as they are eligible based on Health Department protocols. More Last Minute Good News: Free vaccination clinics for **everyone from anywhere** have been started, as in Watersmeet, Michigan, sponsored by the LVD Community Health Center. There will be others too, we have heard. Please stay alert.



Painted Rocks

We are looking for youth who would like to paint rocks. They will be part of our Easter display outside and can be exchanged with rocks from other youth!



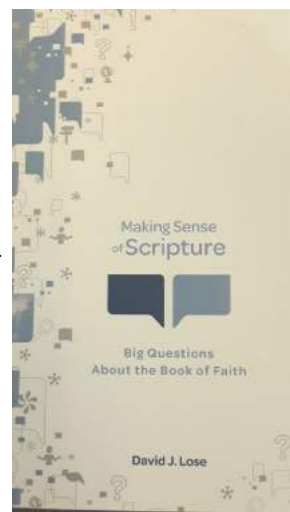
Making Sense of Scripture Study

Making Sense of Scripture – Big Questions About the Book of Faith by David J. Lose. The Rev. Dr. David J. Lose is the senior pastor of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. From 2014 to 2017, he served as president of The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (LTSP). He was Marbury E. Anderson Associate Professor of Biblical Preaching at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, before accepting the presidency at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Making Sense of Scripture invites the reader to engage in a conversation, one that he/she imagines discussing around his/her kitchen table, about seven major questions of the Bible. (What is the Bible? Is the Bible True? How is the Bible the Word of God?

Where Did the Bible Come From? How Can I Read the Bible with Greater Understanding? Is There a “Center” to Scripture? And What Kind of Authority Does the Bible Hold?)

More than a standard biblical reference book, Making Sense of Scripture is a dialogue that encourages readers to bring their questions or doubts to the table when reading Scripture. During this conversation, there are different opportunities for the reader to interact with the Bible, ultimately leaving room for personal transformation of the heart and mind.



This study will be offered after Easter. (April – May) Dates TBA when participants agree on a date and time that would work best for them. If you would like to participate, please call the office by April 1, so we can order books.

Did you know?...

Immanuel's Stewardship Committee has begun discussion about Caring for Creation. The ELCA has a social statement on Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice. I was surprised to see that this statement was adopted on August 28, 1993. That was over 27 years ago. It says that this statement: “recognizes the severity of the crisis”. And that “our acceptance of caregiving responsibility has often been weak and uncertain”.

Global temperatures have slowly followed a pattern of warming and cooling over thousands of years. But now, the temperature has spiked upward to exceed its highest value in 10,000 years and continues to climb. This is not a natural, nor expected, climate change. The rapidly rising temperature is caused by the rapidly increasing concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide and increasing greenhouse effect. And the major contributor to the increasing amount of carbon dioxide is the burning of fossil fuels. We use this energy mainly for transportation and generation of electricity so these can become our targets to become “decarbonized” as soon as possible.

What can we do? Coal and natural gas power stations cannot be replaced overnight by carbon-free electricity generation, but, if we use less electricity, they will not have to run as much during the time when they are being replaced. Replace old light bulbs with LED bulbs, turn off (and unplug) electrical devices when not in use and buy less “stuff” (so less “stuff” has to be made). These are just a few things. I bet that each of you reading this knows some good way to slow the degradation of God's gracious gift of creation. I challenge you to come up with ways that we as individuals, as a church and as a community can *Care for Creation*.

...This is Stewardship!

~ JoAnne Barrix

*“May the God of hope
fill you with all joy and peace
in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
~Romans 15:13*

Dear Northern Great Lakes Synod,

There is a scene from the movie, *The Shawshank Redemption* where the protagonist, Andy, is convicted of a crime he did not commit. He spends some 30 years in a dreadful prison until finally he escapes to begin a new life in a little oceanside village in Mexico. He sends a letter to his inmate friend, Red, and invites him to join him after Red is paroled from his own lifetime sentence for a regrettable crime he committed in his youth.

As we watch Red ride a bus towards Mexico, we hear his voice say, “I find I am so excited I can hardly keep a thought in my head. I hope I can make it across the border. I hope to see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope.”

Hope is a powerful force. It pulls us forward through the present as we reach for a different future. It was hope that made Andy’s and Red’s prison time more bearable. And it is hope for so much that pulls us forward from our present circumstances toward a future that promises:

- an end to the pandemic.
- gathering around tables with coffee-filled cups and bakery in hand.
- laughter and conversation once again filling fellowship halls, restaurants, and living rooms.
- voices raised in songs of praise, in harmony, with great gusto.
- ministry without masks.

I can hardly wait!

I Corinthians 13:13 proclaims, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

The greatest of these IS love. But this year, in the year of our Lord 2021, our theme will focus on HOPE.

Make no mistake, we need love and faith too. But right now, we *really* need HOPE.

As I write this, the inauguration looms large. Plans for armed and potentially violent demonstrations outside each state’s capitol building are being reported, and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff has issued a public reminder to all military branches of their oath to defend the Constitution. It is more than a little unsettling that they felt such a reminder was necessary.

By the time you read this, whatever happens next week and before the end of January will be in the past. We all will have watched the news, heard the reports, and prayed over what right now has not happened yet.

And still, whatever is going to happen, does not change what we have always proclaimed to be true, that our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. What that means for our present circumstances has taken on more urgency. The more we feel the chaos and uncertainty of our present, the more we reach for that which is true and solid and constant.

I hope we find a way towards healing, in our congregations and in our nation. I hope as people of faith we have a witness that is authentic to the gospel message of Jesus. I hope our congregations and pastoral leaders can hold on a little longer. I hope.

*“O God our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.”*

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Katherine Finegan

IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Council Meeting Minutes: February 10, 2021

Council Members Present: President: Matt Johnson, Vice-President: Becky Eades, Secretary: JoAnne Barrix, Gene Frane, Glenn Johnson, Darlene Machtan, Bill Mattson, Jackie Waldorf, Charlie Strong, Keith Snyder, Mary Wolf, Pastor Tammy Barthels.

Opening

President Matt opened the virtual meeting at 6:02 PM.

Devotion by Jackie: “Do you know who is in control?” Be still and know that I am God. When we go from being particular to wanting control we need to remember “who” is in charge.

Action – Motion/Second/Carried... Approved the minutes from the January 13, 2021 Council Meeting

Pastor's Report: Matt asked about the Faith Formation Class: Biases in our Community. Pastor Tammy commented that it was a good class. The goal is to continually realize our own biases. She also mentioned the Racial Equity Challenge that will be presented synod-wide during Lent. There were 37 contacts for spiritual support, virtual meetings, correspondence and cards sent.

Long Term Items (Great Commission Schedule and Constitution Article C12.04)

Witness: Sharing the Gospel – Our virtual services have attracted new people. Pastor Tammy will be leading a Bible Study after Easter. With Food Pantry, NATH meals, etc. we witness with our actions even more than words.

Goals: review and discuss – At this point in time we feel that churches have a huge role in forming a civil society. We need to promote unity by being welcoming, accepting and loving. Darlene thanked the band, Brittany and Charlie for working on the CD “The Best of 2020”. Plans are for another CD of Lenten and Easter music. These are to help keep us connected.

Create or modify long-range plan – We do have a long range building and property plan. We talk about ministries each month. It is felt that things are too transient at this time to make any specific long-range plans. Our mission statement is our plan: Love God and love our neighbors.

Short Term Items: New Business:

There was discussion about the annual meeting being in January at a very busy time in the church year. The constitution states that the annual meeting must be held in January. We can have the meeting on the last Sunday in January to gain an extra week for preparations of the annual report, but to move it to another month the constitution must be changed. The constitution will be updated per Synod recommendations in July of 2022, and we could make all changes at that time. Discussion was also held about council terms possibly starting in February after the annual meeting. It was agreed that the annual report should go out earlier and questions be solicited by email so they can be addressed during the meeting.

Action – Motion/Second/Carried... All council and officer terms will run from February to February as long as the annual meeting is in January.

Housing Allowance Resolution: In order to permit Rev. Tammy Barthels to benefit from the provisions of Section 107 and 108 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, the council specifies that the total compensation paid to her includes a housing allowance. Rev. Tammy Barthels estimates that she will spend \$25,200 a year for housing expenses. Since such approval by the council would permit her to deduct that amount from her taxable income and has no further effect upon our congregation or budget, it was resolved that the total compensation paid to Rev. Tammy Barthels includes a housing allowance of \$25,200.

The Stewardship Committee advised the Congregation Council that under the tax laws an ordained, licensed, or commissioned individual is not subject to Federal Income Tax with respect to housing/furnishings allowance. When the individual owns a home, the amount of the allowance will be an amount equal to the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances such as a garage, plus cost of utilities. The Council, after considering the statement of (the individual) Rev. Tammy Barthels setting forth estimates of the amount expected to be spent on renting or otherwise providing for a home during a given year. In light of the Federal Income Tax code and of the established salary level, the council's motion duly made and seconded, adopted the following resolution: Resolved that (the individual) Rev. Tammy Barthels receive a salary of

\$32,000 for the year 2021, and a housing allowance of \$25,200 for this year and years after until changed by the request of the individual. The housing allowance is designated in the official records.

Signed by: JoAnne Barrix Council Secretary

Action – Motion/Second/Carried... Approved housing allowance and salary per the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church budget of 2021.

Pastor Tammy has had questions about interpretation of scripture. She is planning to lead a book study: “Making Sense of Scripture” sometime in April or May.

Transfer of Don and Candi Besaw to Calvary Baptist Church – They will miss the friendships that they formed at Immanuel.

Property/Maintenance committee structure and projects – Discussion about ongoing church upgrades and upkeep. There was a consensus that whatever we can do in-house with volunteers should be done ourselves. A project that is too big or needs equipment that we do not have can be hired out.

Action – Motion/Second/Carried... Approved the Building Maintenance Policy as follows: If you are wanting to assist in the maintenance and upkeep of the building, including painting, cleaning, etc., you must set up a time with the Tuesday morning crew to arrange when these projects can be done. (At this time 2/2021 John Plautz – cell 715 367-3762 and Gene Frane – cell 715 362-3050).

The Tuesday morning crew is aware of other maintenance projects that are taking place that you may not be aware of and may conflict with your project. The Tuesday morning crew will also make sure that thermostats are set so heat will be available during the time you are in the building. 2/2021

Painting and internal appearance of the church – John Plautz and Gene Frane may set up a subcommittee of the Property/Maintenance Committee to formulate a plan for oversight if necessary.

Holy Week worship – Worship and Music Committee has discussed plans for small group services for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil on Saturday. These services would allow 20-30 people to sign up in advance to attend and also be live streamed. Plans for these services would involve the stipulations set forth by the Covid advisory committee on return to in-person worship. Easter service would still be closed to in-person worship and the service would be carried on Zoom. Bill gave information about the current Covid pandemic including vaccine and Covid variant statistics. The Covid team will meet again before the next council meeting.

Synod assembly – The meeting will be May 10-15 virtually. Everyone can attend since it will be virtual, however, we need 1 male and 1 female voting representative. May 15th is the business/voting day at 9 AM central time. The representatives need not be council members.

Committee Actions:

Blood Drive will be on March 23rd. Contact Jackie.

Stewardship Committee recommends purchase of one or two audio interfaces for streaming and recording of music. Money for the purchase would come from the special appeal fund.

Action – Motion/Second/Carried... Approved the purchase of one or two audio interfaces as needed for up to \$250.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:27 PM.

Closing Prayer by Pastor Tammy

Respectfully submitted,
JoAnne Barrix, Council Secretary

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2021

Synod Assembly 2021 will be online! To avoid screen fatigue, we will announce dates and times for when and how the WHOLE synod can be involved in workshops and Synod-wide worship and orientation for voting members. We will have a Synod Assembly WEEK with opportunities all week for engagement, discussion, worship, and information. Stay tuned for more information!

Voting members – if you are interested in being a voting member at Synod Assembly this year, please contact the office. We are looking for 1 female and 1 male who is an active member of Immanuel. Voting members will need to be available for Saturday May 15th. Each voting member must have their own device (voting members cannot share devices). Each voting member will choose a unique voting username and password and receive important instructions and information for the online voting process during the orientation. Each voting member is required to view 4 online orientation videos prior to Synod Assembly: Technology, Budget, Synod Constitution and Repudiation Friday, May 14 at 7 PM ET / 6 PM CT - Voting Member Live Zoom session "Testing the Technology"

Kids in Church

A Sunday school teacher asked her class, "What was Jesus' mother's name?"
 One child answered, "Mary."
 The teacher then asked, "Who knows what Jesus' father's name was?"
 A little kid said, "Verge."
 Confused, the teacher asked, "Where did you get that?"
 The kid said, "Well, you know, they are always talking about Verge n' Mary."

Wish List

Frederick Place Most Needed Items

1. Gallon Ziplock Bags
2. Quart Ziplock Bags
3. Bathroom Cleaner
4. Scotch Tape
5. Black Sharpies
6. AAA batteries
7. Yellow Highlighters
8. Brooms



Household items are given to
residents when they leave
Frederick Place



NATH
Northwoods Alliance
for Temporary Housing

Providing Safe
Housing & Basic
Needs ♥ Promoting
Self-Sufficiency &
Independent Living



204 West Frederick Street
Riverside, WI 54401
Office Phone: (715) 369-9777
FAX: (715) 369-9774
nathnorthwoods@gmail.com
www.nathnorthwoods.com

April 2021

Immanuel Lutheran Church 715-362-5910
21 W Timber Drive, Rhinelander

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
				10am Record Worship 7pm Zoom Maundy Thursday Worship	Pastor's Sabbath 7pm Zoom Good Friday Worship	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9:00 Easter Worship 10-11am Communion served @ parking lot entrance	Office Closed 7pm AA & Alanon	1-2pm Pastor Zoom with Bishop		10am Record Worship	Pastor's Sabbath	10:30-1:00 Food Pantry
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9:00 Worship	10-1 pm Text Study 7pm AA & Alanon	1-2pm Pastor Zoom with Bishop 5pm Stewardship	8pm Council	10am Record Worship <div>Newsletter Articles Due!!!</div>	Pastor's Sabbath	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:00 Worship	7pm AA & Alanon	11:30 Zoom Headwater Conference 1-2pm Pastor Zoom with Bishop 6-8 Women's Circle	6-7pm Confirmation via Zoom	10am Record Worship	Pastor's Sabbath	
25	26	27	28	29	30	
9:00 Worship	10-1 pm Text Study 6:15 Zoom Mutual Ministry 7pm AA & Alanon	1-2pm Pastor Zoom with Bishop	4:30 Meal @ Frederick Place			

All Nursing home worship services are cancelled this month!

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

February 2021

GENERAL FUND:

Beginning Balance	\$20,523.52
Offerings	\$15,278.00
Expenses	(13,677.67)
Ending Balance	\$22,123.85

BENEVOLENCE:

February Offering	\$ 1,792.25
2021 Pledge	\$19,000.00
YTD Remittance	\$ 3,048.02

BUILDING FUND:

Beginning Balance	\$20,840.96
Offerings	\$ 1,770.00
Expenses	(\$ 0)
Ending Balance	\$22,610.96

Income exceeded the
Expenses by \$1,600.33.

February Attendance:

	9:00 a.m.	Other	Total
2/7	48	16	64
2/14	46	16	63
2/21	53	15	68
2/28	45	16	61

Our average online Sunday attendance
for the month of February was 64.

	Noon	7pm	Total
2/17	Ash Wednesday		60
2/24	11	28	38

Our average Lent Midweek Services for
the month of February was 49.



4/1	Duane Snyder	4/16	Sandra Kolbe
4/4	Allison Fortier	4/16	Brenda O'Rourke
4/6	Jake Morrison	4/17	Richard Fortier
4/7	Butch Gregory	4/18	Kathy Maule
4/8	Karen Bergsbaken	4/21	Broden Kohnhorst
4/8	Lexi Morrison	4/22	Gary Grant
4/8	Jean Wood	4/22	Havi Snyder
4/9	Joyce Palm	4/23	Julianne Duffy
4/13	Edna Snyder	4/23	Bobbi Kunzman
4/14	Scott Borski	4/26	Brock Snyder
4/14	Scott Eades	4/28	Jessica Meyer
4/15	Kevin Kirby	4/29	Lawrence Levijoki



4/7	JoAnne & Rev. Devon Barrix
4/9	Scott & Rebecca Eades
4/14	Jonathan & Savannah Keckeisen
4/20	James & Jean Wood

May Your Day Be Special!

If you were omitted or listed in error, please contact the church office at 715-362-5910. Thank you!

IMMANUEL'S MESSENGER

21 West Timber Drive
Rhineland, WI 54501

Electronic Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
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PAID
Rhineland, WI
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JOIN US FOR
ONLINE WORSHIP

Sundays at 9 a.m.
Zoom.us

Meeting ID: 951 871 5130
Password: 199712

Call in from any phone: 1-312-626-6799
(you will need the meeting ID and the password)

If you do not receive the weekly Zoom link for Worship, or the Monday communication email, please call the office and update your email address.
Office number is 715-362-5910.