

Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights

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<http://ImmanuelHouston.org/>

January 2021

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I have provided below a very fine newsletter article from Pastor David Jay Webber that was published in January 2016.



Epiphany: The Christmas of the Gentiles

The Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord is one of the four major festivals of Christ in the church year. The other three are Christmas, Easter, and Ascension. The word "epiphany" means "manifestation." The theme of the Festival of the Epiphany, which commemorates the visit of the Magi to the boy Jesus, is the *manifestation* of Christ to the gentiles.

God had established his chosen nation from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But most of us who are reading this article are, according to our ethnicity and family heritage, gentiles. The patriarchs of Israel are not our ancestors. But this does not mean that God forgot about our forebears, or about us. When the Messiah of Israel was finally sent, he was sent also for us.

When Jesus was born, the angel announced to the Jewish shepherds outside of Bethlehem that their Savior had been born. And they then walked the few miles that they needed to traverse, to find him and worship him. But Jesus came into the world not only for those who were close to him – religiously, culturally, and geographically. He came also for those who were far away. He came also for our ancestors, and for us.

The story of Epiphany is the story of the star announcing to the Magi in the East – many, many miles from Bethlehem – that also *their* Savior had been born.



(continued on page 2)

Epiphany . . .

And so they launched out on a major trek, traversing deserts and plains, crossing rivers, and exposing themselves to all kinds of danger, so that they could find, and worship, the Redeemer of the entire human race. Epiphany is, in a sense, the Christmas of the gentiles. It is, in a sense, *our* Christmas.

Those in the world today, who are invited by the story of Epiphany to come and worship Christ today, are indeed often very far away from him when they receive that invitation. Their hearts are enslaved by the fear of death. Their minds are darkened by the satanic lies they believe. Their wills are perverted by a self-destructive yearning after sin. Their consciences are twisted by a hatred for that which is their only hope. But these gentiles of today are nevertheless invited by the star of Bethlehem to come and find Jesus, and to worship Jesus, as he makes himself available to us today in his Word and sacraments. Even if they must come, as it were, from a great distance, they are still invited to come. The star of the gospel draws them, and energizes them, to come. That star invites all gentiles – and all Jews as well! – to receive Christ into their hearts, minds, wills, and consciences. The star offers to all gentiles – and to all Jews! – the liberation, the enlightenment, the purification, and the peace that only Jesus can give.

The visit of the Magi was an important event in the life of Christ on earth. The Festival of the Epiphany is, accordingly, an important observance in the church year for

us. Especially if you are a gentile, go to church on Epiphany. Worship the Savior who was sent for you, and who has been manifested to you. This is your festival! This is your Christmas!

[Editor's note. Originally published in The Valley Evangel, newsletter of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, Arizona. Reprinted online at <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2016/01/epiphany-the-christmas-of-the-gentiles-pr-david-jay-webber/>]

A blessed season of Epiphany to you all!

*~In Christ,
Pastor Richard Gaub*



Immanuel will observe the festival of Epiphany with a special Divine service with Communion on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at 7:00 pm. We invite everyone to come and adore Him, Christ the Lord!

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**Immanuel
Lutheran ECE**

Thanksgiving



“Albuquerque Turkey Feathers”

~Connie Meave



Grateful

Thankful

Blessed

Remembering the History and Contributions of the Naomi-Willing Workers

~by Cathleen Chevallier



Wick's organ in 1932, floor coverings for the church and basement, communion ware, kitchen furnishings and equipment. (25th Anniversary Pictorial)



As the congregation grew, in 1969 the Willing Workers included five ladies' groups called Dorcas, Mary & Martha, Naomi, Priscilla and Rebecca Circle (*left*). By 1989, there were only two remaining, Naomi (*below*) and Priscilla. As time passed, sometime after 1999 the Priscilla joined Naomi because of the decline in their membership. Naomi-Willing Workers remained part of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML). While the organization of Immanuel changed to cover major projects as those mentioned above, the support

of various mission projects around Immanuel and abroad continued over the years.

Naomi would take turns hosting the Spring or Fall local LWML rallies with other churches in their circuit. These rallies were a time for the LWML ladies to get together for an afternoon of business focused on missions, food, and fellowship among churches. Naomi would annually send a representative to the Texas District Conference or National Conference of the LWML.



Naomi-Willing Workers (continued)

Going forward, Naomi retained their membership with the LWML. Regular monthly meetings were led by a board consisting of a president, secretary and treasurer. They supported various mission projects through monetary donations that helped to cover postage or shipping cost for National LWML mission projects. Until May of 2019, Naomi organized and worked the monthly Hamburger Fry for many years. They often used proceeds to support mission projects such as The Good Samaritan/Bethesda Group Home in Cypress and Lutheran High North.



Over the years, the Naomi group has done numerous mission projects such as collecting soap, making healthcare kits and school supply kits, or, in recent years, collecting paper products twice a year. The paper products were donated to the Bethesda group home to help defray supply costs.



Lastly, when the ladies were not working hard on their own projects, they have volunteered many hours and supported numerous church events since the beginning of Immanuel. Their Christmas celebrations were special among the members each and every year.

Sadly, this trip down the Naomi memory lane has come to an end. In 2021, the Naomi-Willing Workers will no longer meet. Time has taken its toll and the members are unable to continue their commitment, passion and love for Immanuel, the LWML and missions.

Thank you for your numerous years of commitment to Immanuel, to the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, to missions for furthering God's kingdom and sharing God's Word. God Bless You All!

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Praise the Lord for all God's People! In Sunday School we continue to share the Word of Jesus to God's little people. While they may be years younger, they are sponges just waiting to soak up God's Word.

In November, the Sunday school celebrated Thanksgiving by focusing on what all we have to be thankful for. During our party we shared our thoughts of **"What does Thanksgiving Means to You"** through words and pictures on the tables. Then we did a Thanksgiving craft by using our hands to make leaves and on those leaves were written what or who we were thankful for. The leaves were put on our **"Thankful Tree"**. Part of being thankful is to realize there are many who are going without and are not as blessed. As a service project, each student and adult put together a **"Blessing Bag"**. The blessing bag was to be given to someone less fortunate.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

December has been a time of decorating and preparing for the birth of Christ. Lessons focused on the Advent wreath. The meaning of the candles and the story leading up to Christmas were shared each Sunday.



Happy New Year



4th Annual ILC Sunday School **“Love”** Project 2020 Update

-A True Blessing from God-

By Thursday, December 10th, the Sunday School **“Love”** Project had received donations totaling **\$2725**. We purchased **109** shoeboxes at \$25 per box. We are going to be blessing 109 children with Christmas that they may have not had. God is in Control!

We exceeded and almost tripled our goal of \$1000/40 shoeboxes.

***Thank you from the bottom of our hearts
for your overwhelming generosity!
May the Lord Bless each and every one of you!***

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it.” Proverbs 22:6

~Cathleen Chevallier
Sunday School Superintendent



Mission Report Cayman Islands Rev. Dr. Gerald and Heidi Paul

On Sunday, December 13, Rev. Dr. Gerald and Heidi Paul visited Immanuel and shared their plans to begin mission ministry in the Cayman Islands in spring 2021.



The Pauls' will first spend some time at the Seminary in Dominican Republic, getting better acquainted with the LCMS work in Latin American and the Caribbean and immersing themselves in daily use of Spanish, and then settle in Grand Cayman in the spring. Pastor Paul will also serve as an adjunct professor at the Seminary remotely from the Caymans. Mrs. Paul, with a master's in early childhood education, will be supporting the mission as well as exploring the possibility of starting a preschool.

Immanuel is excited to partner with the Pauls in their new ministry, and Pastor Gaub presented them with a check from the congregation in support of their ministry.

If you would like to personally support the Pauls' ministry, you can do so online, by mail, or by phone:

Read more about the Pauls and donate online at <https://www.lcms.org/gerald.paul>

Send a tax-deductible gift by mail:
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Write "Paul-Cayman Islands Support" on the memo line.

or call (888) 930-4438.



Dear Members of Immanuel,

Thank you so much for the gift cards and money which you gave my family and me. Your show of love and support means the world to us and was greatly appreciated. I have now completed my chemotherapy and will continue to monitor. I know that my heavenly Father is watching over us and will guide my path.

May the Lord continue to bless and keep all the members of Immanuel.

*~In Christ,
Cathleen Chevallier*



Focus on Stewardship

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. **It's a time when we sit down to plan** and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year.

Often, we find this difficult and daunting and **even joyless, but it doesn't have to be. In fact,** it is really quite simple and full of joy. So, here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions:

- Who are you?
- To whom do I give?
- And how much?

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in the *Luther's Small Catechism* informs us. Are you a hearer of **God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family?** Stewardship covers these three estates: **church, society, and family. We don't** particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties, and our questions arise in giving to the Church.

So, what is our duty as members of the Church with regard to giving? Again, the Table of Duties, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer – a member of the Church who receives instruction – **St. Paul taught: "Let the one who** is taught the word share all good things with

the one who teaches" (*Gal. 6:6*). This means the local congregation is primary.

Your pastor is the one called to preach the **Gospel to you and administer the Lord's** blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the Church, He has the local congregation in mind. **For "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel"** (*1 Cor. 9:14*).

How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are to give:

- Regularly (*1 Cor. 6:1–2*);
- Proportionally (*1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12*);
- Generously (*2 Cor. 8:20*);
- Of our first fruits (*Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30*); and
- With a spirit of eagerness (*2 Cor. 9:2*), earnestness (*2 Cor. 8:7*), cheerfulness (*2 Cor. 9:7*), and love (*2 Cor. 8:23*).

In other words, giving to the Church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent.

~submitted by Kathy Angst

[Stewardship newsletter insert for January 2021, from the LCMS website <https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=7M3vle2VyTOvfYWEZLDcaPRT16W88BF4>]

New Year's Resolutions

As we begin a new year, one of the most common things that most people do is to **create a New Year's resolution**. We often make resolutions to help change past mistakes or regrets, and vow to make this year even better. We think that the commitment might help us to change and that a new year equals a new and blank slate.

Paul gives us some words from Romans that will shape our lives and how we approach the new year. **In it, he tells us what his New Year's "resolution" is. Despite** the odds against us, Paul gives us a great suggestion about what **our New Year's resolution and life focus should** be for the upcoming year. He gives us a resolution that will never fail because it focuses upon God and what He does for us.

The word resolution **means "determining upon an action, course of action."** It also means **"determination."** When we make resolutions, we determine to do something. But Paul is challenging us to do something more.

Hear what Paul's resolution is. He says, "For I am sure," or as other translations say, "I am convinced," "I am persuaded," "that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8: 38-39). This is what he focuses on and determines to know. He determines to know that nothing will separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is confident, convinced, and persuaded of this. He determines to know this.

In Paul's resolution, God is the subject. He is **focusing on God's love and how we cannot be** separated by it. Who is the object? Paul is, **because he is receiving God's love. He is** focusing not upon himself but on what God has done for Him.

So why does Paul resolve and determine to know the love of God that we have through **Jesus? It is because God's unconditional love** for us led Him to give us His Son. His love for us led Him to not even spare His own Son for us, when Jesus died on the cross in our place. And since Christ died for us and intercedes for us, who can bring any charge against us? Satan cannot accuse us before God because we have been completely forgiven. Although we are sinners, we are saints in the eyes of God. Through Christ, we are holy and righteous before God; we are forgiven. Just as we cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ, we cannot be separated from this forgiveness as well! This is why Paul determines to know the love of God because in it he sees his salvation and all of the good and gracious acts that God does for him! This love and forgiveness will never fail! We can always depend on this.

We know what Paul's resolution is for the upcoming year. What is your resolution going to be?

(Excerpt from article originally published in Emmaus Footprints, Vol. XIX, Number 6, January 2018, Emmaus Lutheran Church LCMS, St. Paul MN, online at <https://www.emmaus-lutheran-church.org/2018/01/01/new-years-resolution/>)

[Volunteers Needed for the Sound and Media Teams during worship services. Contact Ray Thomas to volunteer for Sound or Barbara Szalkowski for Media.](#)



What Would Happen If We Treated Our Bible Like We Treat Our Cell Phones?



- What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?
- What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?
- What if we flipped through it several times a day?
- What if we used it to receive messages from the text?
- What if we treated it like **we couldn't live without it?**
- What if we were "lost" without it?**
- What if we gave it to our children as gifts?
- What if our children asked and begged for it?
- What if we used it as we travel?
- What if there was an emergency and everyone around pulled one out (and knew how to use it!)?

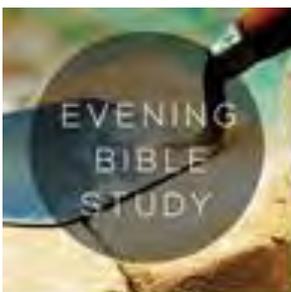
With The Bible

- No Battery Pack is needed, it is always charged and ready to go.
- No call waiting, you get right in every time.
- It is World Wide ... works no matter where you are.**
- Direct connect to His ears ... no need to leave a voice message.**
- Unlimited minutes every day!

God's Phone Number: Jeremiah 33:3

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

Make a Lifetime Resolution Today!



Monday Night Bible Study will resume January 4, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in Miertschin Hall and via Zoom. Pastor Gaub is leading a study of Baptism. For a study booklet, please contact the Church office. To join by Zoom, please contact Pastor Gaub or Barbara Szalkowski to get the Zoom link.



Immanuel Lutheran Church - January 2021



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 ECE Closed Offices Closed 	2
3 Usher Team #3 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am	4 Bible Study @ 7:00 pm	5	6 Usher Team #4 Epiphany Worship Service @ 7:00 pm	7	8	9
10 Usher Team #5 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am	11	12 Church Council @ 7:00 pm	13	14	15	16
17 Usher Team #1 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am	18 Bible Study @ 7:00 pm	19	20	21 Offices Closed ECE Closed Teacher in-Service	22 Offices Closed ECE Closed Teacher in-Service	23
24 Usher Team #2 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 Usher Team #3 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Voters @ 10:15 am Bible class & Sunday School @ 10:30 am Social Ministry Door Offering						

Serving Immanuel January-February 2021

	Sunday January 3	Wednesday January 6	Sunday January 10	Sunday January 17	Sunday January 24	Sunday January 31
Elder	Phil N.	Phil N.	Phil N.	Phil N.	Phil N.	Phil N.
Acolyte	Eve H.	<i>Elder</i>	Malachi W.	Molly H.	Nikki B.	Emily H.
Usher Team	#3 Lonnie A.	#4 John C.	#5 Bill O.	#1 Bill E.	#2 Larry G.	#3 Lonnie A.
Media	Karen E.	<i>No Media</i>	Melissa T.	Jackie A.	Barbara S.	Karen E.
Audio	Gerald O.	Max B.	Ray T.	Gerald O.	Ray T.	Max B.
Altar Guild	Maria O.	Maria O.	Maria O.	Maria O.	Maria O.	Maria O.

	Sunday February 7	Sunday February 14	Ash Wednesday February 17	Sunday February 21	Wednesday February 24	Sunday February 28
Elder	Steve H.	Steve H.	Steve H.	Steve H.	Steve H.	Steve H.
Acolyte	Eve H.	Malachi W.	<i>Elder</i>	Molly H.	<i>Elder</i>	Nikki B.
Usher Team	#4 John C.	#5 Bill O.	#1 Bill E.	#2 Larry G.	#3 Lonnie A.	#4 John C.
Media	Melissa T.	Jackie A.	<i>No Media</i>	Barbara S.	<i>No Media</i>	Karen E.
Audio	Gerald O.	Ray T.	Max B.	Ray T.	Gerald O.	Max B.
Altar Guild	Carolyn B.	Carolyn B.	Carolyn B.	Carolyn B.	Carolyn B.	Carolyn B.

If you would like to fill in, trade, or substitute please contact the church office. Thank you.



Immanuel Lutheran Church
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TEXAS

Witness, Mercy, Life Together ✝
In Christ, for the Church and the World



**Epiphany
Worship**

Divine Service
w/Communion
Wednesday
January 6
7:00 pm