

# Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights  
Celebrating 100 Years • 1919-2019

Vol. 9, No. 6

<http://ImmanuelHouston.org/>

May 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Hymn 459 and 460 of *Lutheran Service Book* join together to confess the Christian faith in a profound and beautiful way:



***Christians to the Paschal Victim***

***Offer your thankful praises!***

***The Lamb the sheep has ransomed:***

***Christ, who only is sinless,***

***Reconciling sinners to the Father.***

***Death and life have contended***

***In that combat stupendous:***

***The Prince of Life, who died,***

***Reigns immortal.***

***Christ is a-risen from the grave's dark prison.***

***So let our joy rise full and free; Christ our comfort true will be.***

***Alleluia!***

I encourage you to read the remaining stanzas and meditate on the words. *(See page 15.)*



*(continued on page 2)*

# Christ Is Arisen!

*(continued from page 1)*

The Easter season has not been celebrated the way we thought we would be celebrating. We have been stuck in our homes watching church on TV or on the computer. Certainly we are closer to a day when we may gather together in our Lord's House and receive His gifts – together – as a church family. We pray that this day may come quickly! Please watch and listen for updates as the day of our return to church approaches.

The next two great feasts of the Church, Ascension and Pentecost, are joined together in the promises of our Lord, "If I depart, I will send Him [the Holy Spirit] to you." Jesus said these words to His disciples in John 16:7 on the night when He was betrayed. In fact, for that very reason, Jesus says that "it is to your advantage that I go away."

At His Ascension, Jesus repeats this promise (*Acts 1:8*), "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Ascension of our Lord is a Feast that celebrates the great "advantage" that is ours in Christ. He has "gone away" by His death, resurrection, and ascension. He has thereby atoned for our sins, won forgiveness and eternal salvation, and overcome death and hell and the power of the devil. By His institution of preaching, Baptism, Absolution, and Holy Communion during the days of His Passion and resurrection, He distributes this salvation to us, forgives us our sins, and opens the kingdom of heaven to us.

Jesus' "going away" does not mean that He is far from us, it only means that we cannot see Him now. His promise to be "with us always" (*Matthew 28:20*) still stands, even when we do not see Him. His presence, and the distribution of all His blessings, takes place in the saving gifts of the spoken and written Word, Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper.

At Pentecost we celebrate the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in these same gifts. The bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the church is the culmination and fulfillment of all that Christ Jesus did for us in His passion and resurrection. The Spirit, by whom the worlds were made, now imparts life to us through the Gospel. "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Your love."

May God the Father, who created you; may God the ✝ Son, who by His blood redeemed you; may God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified you to be His temple, keep you now and forevermore!

*~God bless you all,  
✝ Pastor Gaub*



## Service Information

**Online every Sunday 9:00 am**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR-hisEqBqNFxPfVR82K2mQ>

**In-Person Communion Services**

9:00 am & 9:30 am every Saturday & Sunday. Please call the church office (713) 864-2651 to sign up for a time.

# Sunday School, The Social Distancing Way Keeping in touch, Sharing Jesus with the Students

Since the decision to cancel Sunday school, the Sunday school dept has been staying in touch with the children of the congregation. Week one, started with sending a children's lesson entitled, "Fear Not" with coloring pages. During these times of uncertainty, the children were taught to not fear because God is in control and will take care of us.

Week two, the children received an Easter lesson with a Science "Egg"periment and an Easter craft. When I received this picture, Kyla's smile warmed my heart so that I had to share it with the other SS teachers. Her Easter craft is beautiful. *(right)*



Week three was the week before Palm Sunday. This mailer included a lesson, craft and Holy Week devotion for the family. The lesson covered Darrell, the daydreaming donkey. The craft had each child making their own donkey headpiece. I received pictures of the cutest donkeys named Evie *(left)*, Isaac and Joy *(right)*.



Week four was Holy Week, the week before Easter. This week needed to be special, but how when we are under a stay home/work safe order and social distancing? After asking parents' permission, I planned an Easter Door/Porch Drop. Each family received an Easter box which contained goody bags with candy and toy-filled eggs, goldfish, bubbles, and an Easter craft. Each child received an activity book and an Easter book. Each



family received an Easter Devotional book that can be used every year.

*(continued on page 4)*



# Sunday School . . .

(continued from page 3)

On Wednesday before Easter, with the help of my driver, Karen Evans, the SS Easter bunny hit the road. We delivered the Easter boxes from Pasadena to north on I-45 to west on US 290 to south of I-10 and back to Woodland Heights. Each drop was made followed by an email notification. At a couple of drops, we were greeted with smiles and waves from the children and parents.



Let us share their smiles with you. Eve, Siena, Colette, Finn and Esther enjoying their Easter box (left). Isaac and Joy checking out their box. (right) Isaac and Joy shared their "He is Risen" craft (bottom left). The children decorated Easter eggs back in March during Sunday School. This artwork was also included in the box (bottom



right). Nikki spent time putting an Easter puzzle together during her stay at home (bottom middle).



As each week goes by, the Sunday school will continue to stay in touch by sending the children inspirational packets. We really miss the children, their smiles, and their laughs. We miss our time together learning and growing with Jesus. Until we can get together again, we pray that everyone stays safe and stays well. God will get us through these times.

~Cathleen Chevallier, Sunday School Superintendent

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

# Easter Celebration Service Online



~photos by Robert McFarland

# C.S. Lewis on Forgiveness

I find that when I think I am asking God to forgive me I am often in reality (unless I watch myself very carefully) asking Him to do something quite different. I am asking Him not to forgive me but to excuse me. But there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing. Forgiveness says "Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology, I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before." But excusing says, "I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it, you weren't really to blame."

Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without any excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness and malice, and nevertheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it.

From *The Weight of Glory*  
Compiled in *Words to Live By*

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~submitted by Winnie McNamara



## Through the Church the Song Goes On...

To say that these are strange or interesting times would be an obvious understatement. We have all been affected by Covid-19 in some way. Yet, even as we struggle to find the much-desired Charmin rolls, our song goes on.

This year, Christendom experienced Holy Week and Easter Celebrations unlike any other. While separated, many of us gathered around the computer screen Easter Sunday to witness and participate in a pre-recorded service. We joined in the singing of our Alleluias, we rejoiced in the good news that is Christ's dying and rising to defeat death, and we in some ways felt a sense of relief in this midst of all the uncertainties surrounding a virus. While it may seem awkward to sing alone while watching a worship service via YouTube, you aren't alone. We with Christians all over the world are still singing, "Our Christ is risen!" even if it is in the confines of our homes. The gates of Hell shall not prevail, our Christ descends to the depths to proclaim that we will not be bound to our sin any longer. The record screeches and the party is disrupted; Satan is now put in his place once and for all. This is our song, this is why we so earnestly desire to be gathered together in our house of worship to receive the gifts our Lord has given to us.

We continue to sing of the salvific work of Christ, and the comfort found in His dying and rising. Nothing can silence our voices, not even social distancing. So let your joyous strains of Alleluias resound throughout your home, may your neighbors hear you boldly singing the great hymns of the church. During the many years that the nation of Estonia endured communist occupation by the U.S.S.R., the

Estonian people turned to the folk song tradition, and used it as their power to press on in the midst of such despair. So we too can turn to our great repertoire of hymnody to help sustain us in these grey and latter days. I leave you with the text of this wonderful Easter hymn written by the great Lutheran hymn-writer, Paul Gerhardt. Gerhardt penned some of his greatest hymns in the midst of personal tragedy, and his texts resonate deeply in times such as these. May it be a source of comfort to you, and may we soon be gathered together once again, singing the church's song...

- 1 Awake, my heart, with gladness,  
See what today is done;  
Now, after gloom and sadness,  
Comes forth the glorious sun.  
My Savior there was laid  
Where our bed must be made  
When to the realms of light  
Our spirit wings its flight.
- 2 The foe in triumph shouted  
When Christ lay in the tomb;  
But lo, he now is routed,  
His boast is turned to gloom.  
For Christ again is free;  
In glorious victory  
He who is strong to save  
Has triumphed o'er the grave.
- 3 This is a sight that gladdens—  
What peace it doth impart!  
Now nothing ever saddens  
The joy within my heart.  
No gloom shall ever shake,  
No foe shall ever take  
The hope which God's own Son  
In love for me has won.

*(continued on page 11)*

# Immanuel ECE Busy At Home



Hello! I am at home listening to music, walking, working with my dogs, exercising, and doing Bible study. Blessings to all. Miss you guys – Ms. Randi



A Shout out of THANKS to the ECE family who donated our masks!

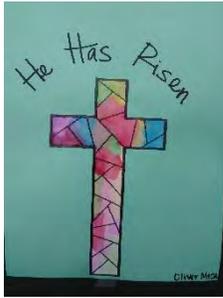


Since this all began, we have had family devotions, homework, a ton of food, played all the board games we own, cleaned the garage, worked out and watched movies daily. We even had a cold enough night for the fire pit! We pray you all are well and that this blows over soon. –Ms. Audrey



Curriculum packets were made available to all the children at Immanuel to pick up by driving through our parking lot.





As much as you are missing us, we are missing you! Ms. Hayley







Thank You to our families who keep us well supplied for our “quarantine snacking”.



# The Song Goes On . . .

*(continued from page 6)*

- 4 Now hell, its prince, the devil,  
Of all their pow'r are shorn;  
Now I am safe from evil,  
And sin I laugh to scorn.  
Grim death with all its might  
Cannot my soul affright;  
It is a pow'rless form,  
Howe'er it rave and storm.
  
- 5 The world against me rages,  
Its fury I disdain;  
Though bitter war it wages,  
Its work is all in vain.  
My heart from care is free,  
No trouble troubles me.  
Misfortune now is play,  
And night is bright as day.
  
- 6 Now I will cling forever  
To Christ, my Savior true;  
My Lord will leave me never,  
Whate'er He passes through.  
He rends death's iron chain;  
He breaks through sin and pain;  
He shatters hell's grim thrall;  
I follow Him through all.
  
- 7 He brings me to the portal  
That leads to bliss untold,  
Whereon this rhyme immortal  
Is found in script of gold:  
"Who there My cross has shared  
Finds here a crown prepared;  
Who there with Me has died  
Shall here be glorified."

*~Stephen Hernandez  
Music Director*

# ECE Provides Essential Service

Immanuel's ECE has remained open in order to serve essential personnel families. We are happy to be able to provide the children in these families with a safe and loving environment. We thank them for all that they do to keep our country moving forward! Please keep all of our ECE families in your prayers.

Our routine was very different when we returned from Spring Break in mid-March. The Texas District and the State of Texas had set some new ground rules for person-to-person contact as well as other mandates. Our hours of operations changed. Adults, other than ECE workers, are no longer allowed in the classrooms or the buildings. This necessitated a plan to allow drop-offs and pick-ups to take place in a drive-thru scenario.



Every employee and child who expects to enter our campus must have their temperature taken daily before they enter the classrooms, and only those with normal temperatures are admitted. As you can imagine, there is a lot of handwashing going on. Classrooms, toys and all surfaces are sanitized daily. Nap mats are sent home daily for washing.

*(continued on page 12)*



## Focus on Stewardship

Our Savior calls us to follow Him in generosity. "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you." (*John 13:15*) We cannot give our lives for the salvation of the world, of course. Praise God – that job's already done!

But with hearts full of thanksgiving for what Jesus has given us, we can follow Jesus' example of generous giving. And this is not merely an example alone. It's also our Lord's command. "The one who contributes, (let him give) in generosity." (*Rom. 12:8*)

So, when we give to help others who are in need, and when we bring offerings to the Lord, we should strive to heed His command and follow the pattern He has established for us. Jesus did not give us leftovers. He gave His best. So, we should not give leftovers, either, but the first and best of what He has given us. Jesus did not give as an afterthought, but according to the plan of salvation God established from the foundation of the world.

So, when it comes to our offerings to the Lord, we should make a thoughtful plan to give generously, in proportion to the way He has blessed us. Like the Macedonian Christians, who gave according to their ability – and even beyond their ability (*2 Cor. 8:3*) – we can and should give a generous portion of the income that God provides us to honor the Lord.

So also, we should give freely, just as Jesus gave freely for us. There is no compulsion

involved in our works of love and our offerings to the Lord. Nor do we give grudgingly. We should give freely and cheerfully because we want to out of thanksgiving. "Each as he purposes in his heart," as the Lord says. (*2 Cor. 9:7*) There is no New Testament ceremonial law involved here. Rather, we are free to give as generously as our Savior has given for us.

In the same way, our Lord teaches us to give generously out of love – love for Him and for our neighbor. Genuine love is always love in deed (*1 John 3:18*), love such as Jesus showed us all.

*(continued on page 13)*

## ECE Service . . .

*(continued from page 11)*

Every morning after drop-off, the children and teachers, led by Cathy Swanstrom, begin the day with our Two-Fingered Blessing, the Pledge of Allegiance, the Doxology and prayer.

The children have been playing outside a lot in the beautiful weather we have been experiencing as well as having lessons. Some of our classes are keeping in touch via the internet. Curriculum packets, along with Easter activities were prepared for every child. These packets were distributed in our drive-thru line in the church parking lot before Easter. With everyone remaining in their cars, we were able to visit while maintaining acceptable physical distancing requirements. We love all the children and miss the absent ones so much! We are looking forward to the day we can all be together again and return to a more - *the way it used to be* - routine.

*~Cathy Swanstrom, ECE Director*

## Stewardship . . .

*(continued from page 12)*

It is love that sees our neighbor in need and gives generously to help him. It is love that hears the Word of the Lord and does what it says. If we truly love, we give generously. If we give without love, our giving is not truly following Jesus.

Finally, we follow Jesus in generosity when we give for a good purpose to thank the Lord and support His gospel ministry and other works of mercy. The people of Israel gave generously for the service of God's gospel purposes, to construct and support the operation of the tabernacle. For that was the place where the Lord received the Old Testament sacrifices, through which He bestowed the forgiveness of sins on His people. So, they gave abundantly – so abundantly that they had to be told to stop giving. (*Ex. 36:5-6*)

In the same way, we should bring generous offerings to support the Lord's work of bestowing His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in our congregations through the preaching and teaching of His Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. We should support the Lord's work of caring for those who are poor and needy.

Our Savior calls us to follow His example in generous giving. Let us then, with thankful hearts, rededicate ourselves to following Him in generosity.

*~submitted by Kathy Angst*

*[Stewardship newsletter insert for May 2020, from the LCMS website <https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=FSAAODEPjeUjpi1RMus5rJOowYd86avt> ]*

## Mission Report The Fritsche Family: A La Republica Dominicana

*[Excerpt, January/February/March 2020 newsletter]*



Greetings from Santiago, DR in this most holiest of weeks, Semana Santa, as it is referred to here. Lent is coming to a close now as we complete our pilgrimage to Calvary. We leave Lent behind for another year to resume the shouts of Easter joy. Here we are rounding out Lent, staying at home, maintaining social distancing, doing our best to keep COVID-19 contained. Like you, we have given up a lot here in the DR, but we haven't given up mission and ministry. In a way, it's ramped up more than ever.

We have gone completely online since March 18. We have five residential students sheltering in place in their dorm in Palmar Arriba. We set up a classroom in their study area where they meet for our classes. Professors and married students Zoom in for each class.

*(continued on page 14)*

# Mission Report . . .

*(continued from page 13)*

Our three married students and Mario, our Pueblo nuevo vicar, live in Cerro Alto where we missionaries live. Everyone is doing well, despite sheltering in place.

Our students are being formed as evangelists, that is church planting pastors. Normally they spend 10-15 hours a week outside of classes in the communities around our missions. Since we can't do local on site ministry, students are assisting in the change to digital ministry. They are each writing four devotions per week. Each works with an individual pastor to revise and prepare the devotions for distribution. This helps us have a multitude of devotional resources to share with all of our pastors around Latin America.

Another seminary adjustment we have had to make is with planned events. Every year we invite partner church leaders here to the DR for our theological symposium. The event would conclude with our graduation of ten men. We have postponed the planned symposium and are going to offer a virtual one this May that relates to ministry in times of pandemic. We also hope to have our graduation in September.

On the church front, we have also gone completely digital. Thankfully, we have a membership who very actively communicates in our church text group. This has been invaluable as we share devotions and announcements each day.

We have offered Facebook Live devotions on Sunday mornings and now throughout Holy Week, with good participation of members. We are keeping up with our members with regular

"virtual" visits like phone calls and text messages. We have done one round of food and medicine deliveries in the community. Deaconess Caitlin has done wonders with keeping up with the needs of our members.

*~Pastor Joel Fritsche*

## Updates from the Missionary Wife

We pray this newsletter finds you all well amidst the COVID-19 craziness.

We are all fine here in Santiago but things are certainly different. Things have gotten progressively strict here as more cases of the virus are reported. What first began as warnings and advisories has turned into sheltering in place and curfews. Everyone must be inside from 5:00 pm-6:00 am. We only leave to get groceries and essential items. This is usually a very intense event as they are very careful about how many people they allow in the store. It usually involves waiting in line awhile.

Family life has continued pretty much as normal here despite the virus. Because the boys already are taking classes online, they can continue their schedule without much interruption. They have been very helpful providing music online for our church members. It has been nice to have Joel around a little more and spend time outside in the backyard in the afternoons.

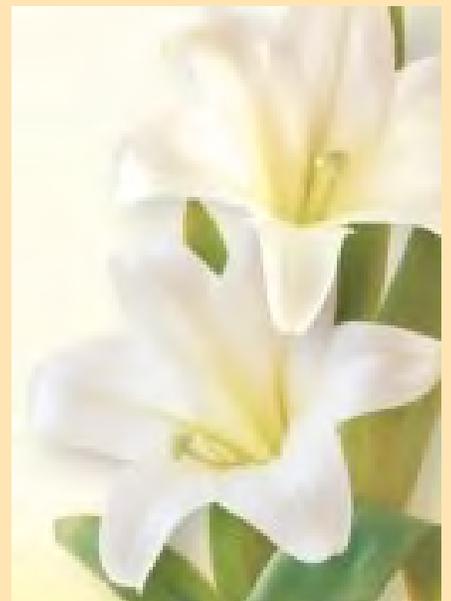
Life goes on and we praise God for keeping us safe and healthy!

*~Clarion Fritsche*

*[To read the entire January/February/March 2020 newsletter issue, see <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ps94yqhz2a97zsl/Jan%20Feb%20March%202020%20Newsletter.pdf?dl=0> ]*

*Christians, to the Paschal Victim (LSB 460) / Christ Is Arisen (LSB 459)*

1. Christians, to the paschal victim  
offer your thankful praises --  
a lamb the sheep redeeming,  
Christ, who only is sinless,  
reconciling sinners to the Father.  
Death and life have contended  
in that combat stupendous;  
the prince of life, who died, reigns immortal.  
Christ is arisen from the grave's dark prison.  
So let our joy rise full and free; Christ our comfort true will be.  
Alleluia.
  
2. Speak, Mary, declaring  
what you saw when wayfaring.  
"The tomb of Christ, who is living,  
the glory of Jesus' resurrection;  
bright angels attesting,  
the shroud and napkin resting.  
My Lord, my hope, is arisen;  
to Galilee he will go before you."  
Were Christ not arisen, then death were still our prison.  
Now, with Him to life restored, we praise the Father of our Lord.  
Alleluia.
  
3. Christ indeed from death is risen,  
Our new life obtaining.  
Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!  
Amen. Alleluia.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Now let our joy rise full and free;  
Christ our comfort true will be.  
Alleluia.





**National Day of Prayer  
Thursday  
May 7, 2020**

**Online Service 5:00 pm**

**<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR-hisEqBqNFxPfVR82K2mQ>**



The May 2020 meeting is cancelled.  
The August 2020 meeting has been moved from August 9 to August 16.



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**Return Service Requested**

To the Family of:

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



**See Page 2 for  
Link to Online Services,  
Details for Signing Up  
for Communion Services**

## **Service Schedule**

**Online Every Sunday 9:00 am**

**In-Person Communion Service  
Every Saturday & Sunday  
9:00 am & 9:30 am**

**Online National Day of Prayer  
Thursday May 7 • 5:00 pm**

**In-Person Day of Ascension  
Thursday May 21 • 7:00 pm**