

Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights

Vol. 6, No. 1

<http://ImmanuelHouston.org/>

December 2016

Jingle Bells

"³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:31-33)



As many of us consider firing up our heater for the first time this season, there are carols coming from the speakers at every store and colored lights are turning on around town. It is a season that is dominated with gift-buying, festive dinners, and rushing from errand to errand.

This is the Christmas Season. Or maybe it would be more appropriate to say, this is the Holiday Season... at least to our culture.

But for you, for me, and for other Christians, we have a very different idea of what Christmas is. Christmas is the day which we begin the long journey to the Cross. Although He is the rightful King of ALL creation, Jesus did not come to rule as a king of this world. He was born in a lowly estate so that He could fulfill all righteousness that you and I are unable to do. What's more, He took on human flesh and was born so that He could take your place and mine in a sinner's death.

So often we see the beautiful manger scenes and think only of the angelic baby and the awe and wonder of those gathered for the celebratory birth heralded by angel song. But you and I know the truth, that Jesus did not come so we could have a brightly lit tree and presents in abundance. He came to give us peace – Peace with our Heavenly Father.

As you trim the tree and sip on eggnog, remember why it is the whole of creation has reason to celebrate. Pause in the rush, the hustle, the bustle, and remember to thank God for loving you so very much that He came to reconcile you to Himself forever. Amen.



*~In Christ,
Pastor King*



Stamps for Missions

In the hallway just off the Narthex, we have a wall display of clear boxes for comments, drink tabs, and cancelled stamps. The stamps are a LWML project; cancelled stamps are collected, sorted, and many are sold to stamp collectors. The money collected is used to support missionaries in other countries.

Our Naomi Ladies are part of the LWML organization. Immanuel has one very faithful donor – Diana Hernandez, niece of Immanuel member Dora Schulle, who lives in Brownsville, TX. Diana heard of the stamp project and for the last four years has sent cancelled stamps through Dora whenever Dora visits her in Brownsville.



Evelyn Marsh (left) and Dora Schulle unload bags of stamps
--photo submitted by Pastor Pérez

Diana is employed by the Cameron County Jail as a secretary who handles the in-coming and out-going mail for the entire jail. Last month she asked for someone to pick up 2 1/2 bags, and the Pérezes, who were in the Valley, picked up the bags and delivered them to Evelyn Marsh, treasurer of Naomi. After cutting and sorting the stamps, she will deliver them to the next LWML convention. Special thanks to Diana and Dora!

~Pastor Pérez



December Events

Thurs. Dec. 1	Girls Soccer 5:00 p.m. Boys Soccer 6:00 p.m.
Fri. Dec. 2	Boys Soccer 5:00 p.m.
Wed. Dec. 7	Girls Basketball 5:30 p.m.
Fri. Dec. 9	Girls Soccer 5:00 p.m.
Sun. Dec. 11	Christmas Concert 3:00 p.m.
Fri. Dec. 16	Boys Basketball 7:00 p.m.
Sat. Dec. 17	Boys Basketball 2:00 p.m.
Tues. Dec. 20	Boys Basketball 2:00 p.m.

For additional information see the website

<http://www.lutheranhightnorth.org>

or call (713) 880-3131.

~Lynn Eickemeyer



Sunday School

The Sunday school staff, along with the children, would like to say "Thank you" to the Immanuel congregation for the new area, furniture and technology equipment for Sunday school. We continue to have fun each Sunday morning sharing the Word of Jesus through Bible stories, singing, crafts, and playing games.

During November, we focused on "Thankfulness," and in December, we will study "Amazing Christmas". The doors to downstairs under the gym are always open. Children under 3, when accompanied by an adult, are welcome to join us.



"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



Harvest Party

October 31, 2016



Our Harvest Party was a huge success, with about 1,000 visitors coming and going through our gate between 6:00 and 8:30 p.m. The volunteers did a great job keeping up a fast-paced effort to provide the community with food, drinks, and treats! There was nothing left to be given away by 8:30 p.m. We estimated that more than 600 bags of popcorn, 400+ hot dogs, 400 bottles of water, and 575 bags of candy had been distributed along with Bibles in both English and Spanish. Pastor King, Pastor Pérez, and Pastor Ben were all on hand to greet our visitors along with a bevy of volunteers. There were some awesome costumes and we got to meet a lot of our neighbors. Thank you to our volunteers and everyone who donated candy to fill all those treat bags. It was a great evening!

~Winnie McNamara

More Harvest Party

*~photos submitted
by Winnie McNamara*



OPERATION DIAPER DROP – 2016

Immanuel ECE delivers more than 8,000 diapers to
The Heights Interfaith Ministries Food Pantry!





Operation Diaper Drop was a huge success! Your generous donations enabled us to deliver more than 8,000 diapers to The Heights Interfaith Ministries Food Pantry. Diapers and baby items are always in high demand. We had great fun collecting the diapers as the children got really excited as the "pile" of diapers increased by leaps and bounds. Every single class met or exceeded their goal and three classes collected more than 1,000 diapers each.

The teachers had a box decorating contest and all the entries were adorable. The first place winner, Heidi Luker, is pictured above with her class and the prize-winning donation box, which is a replica of the logo of the food pantry. Ms. Luker won a \$50 Lakeshore gift card for her wonderful effort.

An Immanuel teacher and church member delivered the carloads of diapers and were surprised at the attention they drew while making the delivery. The sight of box after box of diapers being unloaded and stacked impressed clients, food pantry staff and other donors as well. It was an amazing moment. It was clear to all that there were a lot of caring people from the ECE at Immanuel. We proved that a small group of people can make a big difference! Thank you all so much for your kindness and generosity and for making a difference in the lives of so many.

~photos submitted and text by Winnie McNamara

ECE Thanksgiving Feast



Immanuel's Early Childhood's Thanksgiving Feast was Friday night, November 11. ECE staff served 345 meals to parents and children. Along with the great food, the families were able to take pictures with Albuquerque Turkey (*above*), pet the many animals at the petting zoo, ride the ponies (*below*), and bounce for as long as they were able to in the two bouncy houses.



The Early Childhood teachers and staff have been providing our families with this time of fellowship for 8 years. The teachers and I feel that this is a great way to tell our families that Immanuel Lutheran is glad that they are with us each year. I pray that your families have a blessed Thanksgiving.

~photos submitted and text by Cathy Swanstrom

Comfort, Comfort Ye My People - LSB 347

"Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

"A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'" (Isaiah 40:1-5)

In this beautiful Scripture passage the Lord promises comfort and restoration for the Babylonian exiles. These promises, fulfilled through John the Baptist's ministry, have personal consequences for us and for all people. Just as the Lord doubles the comfort and forgiveness for the exiles, He has doubled comfort and forgiveness for us in the person of His Son.

The hymn, "Comfort, Comfort Ye My People" is based on Isaiah 40:1-5, originally put in poetic form in German by Johann Olearius (1671), later translated into English by the prolific translator Catherine Winkworth (1863), and altered since then. It was originally written for the day of John the Baptist, June 24. His was the voice crying in the wilderness, calling for repentance before the coming of Jesus. And so this hymn is assigned to the Advent portion of our *Lutheran Service Book*, sung as we prepare for Christmas, as we prepare for our Savior who was present at the creation of the world,

who came at Christmas in human flesh, and who will come again at the final resurrection on Judgement Day when the glory of the Lord will be revealed.

The tune *Freu dich sehr* comes from a 1551 Geneva hymnal edited by Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510-61). Our Immanuel Adult Choir will be singing a setting of the first stanza of this hymn on Sunday, Dec. 11 and again on Wednesday, Dec. 14. In this setting, phrases of the hymn are separated by short organ interludes. An organ motif of the first three notes of the hymn moving upward shows anticipation, and a beautiful rocking motion in the inner voices provides a feeling of comfort. The arrangement was composed in 1956 by Paul G. Bunjes, Professor of Music at Concordia, River Forest, and prolific composer and organ designer. Listen for it!

Information for this article was taken from The Lutheran Study Bible, Concordia, 2009; and Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship, Fortress Press, 1981.

~Diane Robinson

Newsletter Staff

Editor.....	Barbara Szalkowski
Contributors.....	Kathy Angst
.....	Cathleen Chevallier
.....	Lynn Eickemeyer
.....	Karen Evans
.....	Rev. Joel Fritzsche
.....	Becky Harvey
.....	Rev. David Kim
.....	Rev. Jeffrey King
.....	Winnie McNamara
.....	Rev. Claudio Pérez
.....	Diane Robinson
.....	Cathy Swanstrom
Graphic Design.....	Matthew Szalkowski

Focus on Stewardship

Every Christmas present that sits wrapped under your Christmas tree will wear out. It will break or go out of style. This fact was there, somewhere, in the back of your mind even as you bought them, but you bought them anyway. For you love the person you bought them for, you wanted to see that look of joy it brings to their face.

So also God gives to you. But greater. What He gives will never wear out, break down, or go out of style. For what He gives is His eternal and only-begotten Son, wrapped in your flesh, and placed upon the tree of the Cross. He gives His Son for you. He gives that you may have everlasting joy. He gives because He loves you. This is why the Word became flesh to dwell among you.

And that is who is given to you. The Word who is God yet was with God from all eternity. The Word through whom all things were made. The Word who is the only-begotten Son of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, being of one substance with His Father. The One who called all things into existence, the One who spoke to Moses from the bush that burned yet was not consumed, the One whose glory filled the tabernacle to dwell among His people, God Himself, has taken on your flesh.

Even though the Word is made flesh, even though God became Man, His Divinity is not lessened. His Divinity is not changed. His Divinity remains, pure and unchanging, but your flesh, your human nature, is exalted. Your flesh and humanity is assumed into God. God became man so that you would become like

unto God—holy and righteous, without sin, without death.

And so it is that the Son given to you wrapped in your flesh is placed upon the tree of the Cross. And no tree was ever adorned more beautifully. Its ornaments were nothing less than the Blood of God, poured out as an atoning sacrifice for your sins. Its garland the Body of God, hanged in death that you may have life. Its light the incarnate Light of the world, strung up to call you and all men unto Himself, to enlighten you, to make you His own. He gives you His life, He gives you joy and peace—peace with God in heaven and peace with one another on earth.

And from the tree of the Cross the Lord Jesus places another gift for you upon the Altar. It is the Fruit of the Cross, His crucified and risen, living Body and Blood, the Fruit of the Tree of Life, wrapped in bread and wine and given to you. He fills you with His Glory. He makes your mouths and your hearts His manger. He abides in you and you in Him.

The Word became flesh to be placed under the Cross for you. You are forgiven. This is why we give. We give because He has first given to us. And just as it was a joy for Him to give all He had to us, it is a joy for us to give to one another and His church so that this message of forgiveness, life, and salvation may be proclaimed.

(Stewardship newsletter insert for December 2016, provided on the LCMS website <https://www.lcms.org/Document.doc?src=lcm&id=4374>)

~submitted by Kathy Angst





Dominican Republic Ministry

Excerpt from the October 2016 newsletter, available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/329106101/Fritzsche-Family-Mission-Newsletter-October-2016>

Twice a year we gather together with partners who support our Dominican Republic Lutheran Mission (DRLM). Of course, you are our partners in mission as you support MISSIONARIES, our family in our life and work here in the Dominican.

But we also have partners who support the daily operating needs of the mission. We are blessed to have these partners, just as we are blessed to have you. Our DRLM FORO partners support the mission not only financially, but also have a seat at the table as we make decisions regarding strategic planning and the overall direction of the mission.

Partners gather with us twice a year, listening to presentations from Dominican church leaders and missionaries that highlight the past six months of work and set goals for the six months ahead. They also spend time with us in worship, missiological study and prayer.

This year we invited LCMS U to come and see firsthand what the Lord is doing here in the DR and to explore mutually beneficial partnerships that will assist the mission here as well as positively support and impact the awesome campus ministry work being done around the USA.

~Rev. Joel Fritzsche



SEEK. DISCIPLE. MULTIPLY.

[Facebook post dated October 30, 2016.]

10,000+ people hungered for God's word at Imo International Conference Center, Nigeria. The governor of Imo state said, "Our state never will be the same because of the Word planted in those lives and this is simply beginning of the greater things yet to come and greater things yet to be done."

I believe not only Africa, but also America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania need Jesus more than anything else. I was so honored to be part of this move of God among His people through gospel proclamation and gospel demonstration (and generous food distribution to all widows sponsored by VOEI, Dr. & Mrs. Agwu).

~Rev. Dr. David Kim

Follow Glocal's ministry on their website
<http://glocalmission.org/>

On Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/glocalmission1?ref=ts>

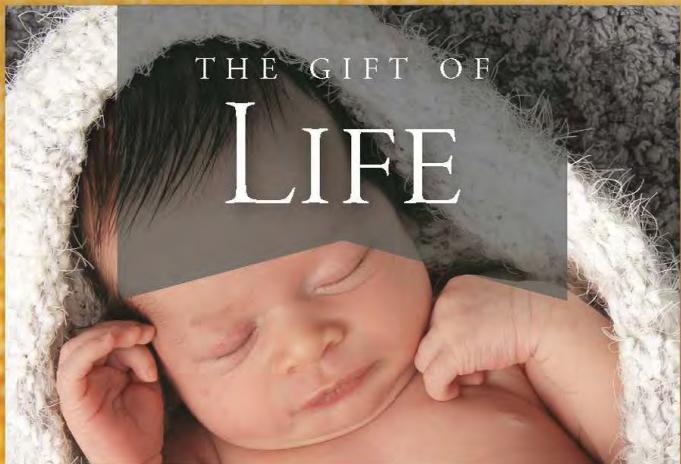
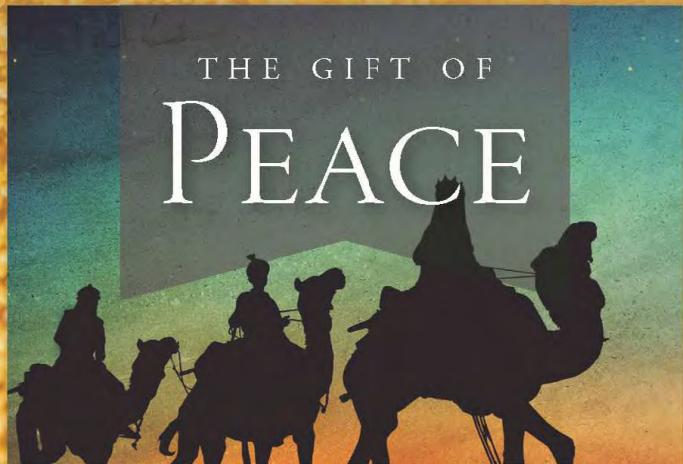
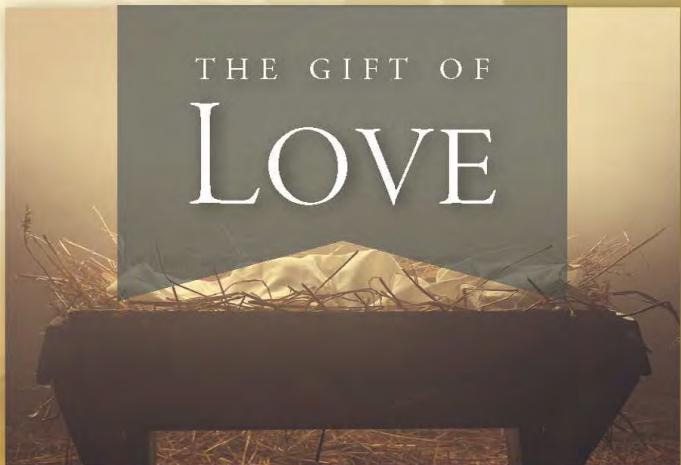
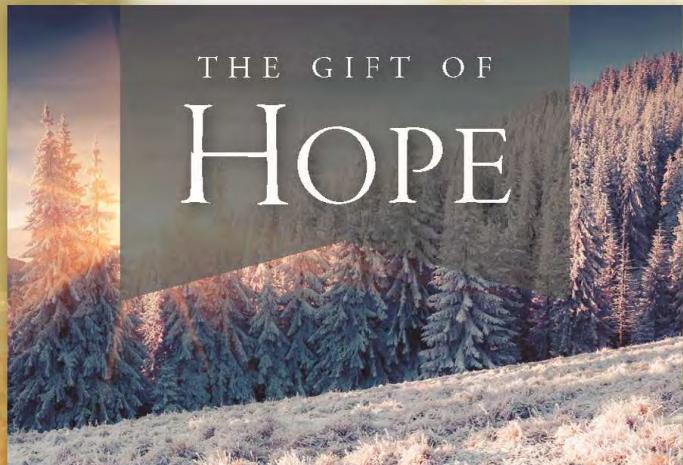
On Twitter
<https://twitter.com/GlocalMission>





ADVENT WEEKLY WORSHIP SERIES

As the 500th anniversary of the Reformation approaches, let Martin Luther's beloved hymn "From Heaven Above" speak to you in our special Advent worship series. Each service in the 4-part series focuses on the divine gifts that come down to us through the birth of Jesus.



Immanuel Lutheran Church - December 2016						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Bingo @ 1:00–3:00 pm HAWC Gift Basket Assembly 5-9pm Bells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	2 Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00–8:00 pm	3 Miertschin Hall Glocal @ 8:00 am–5:00 pm
4 Usher Team #5 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am Naomi Christmas Party @Cleo Fischer's House @ 5:00 pm	5 Evening Bible Study @ 6:30–8:00 pm Young Life Club Gym @ 5:30 – 9:00 pm	6 All Boards @ 7:00 pm	7 Bible Study @ 10:30 am Usher Team #1 Advent Worship Service @ 7:00 pm	8 Bells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	9 Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00 – 8:00 pm	10 FOD Holiday Dance @ 4:00–9:00 pm
11 Usher Team #2 Worship @ 9:00 am Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am Christmas Family Gathering & Dinner @ 11:30–1:30 pm Caroling 1:30-4:30 pm	12 Young Life Club Gym @ 5:30 – 9:00 pm	13	14 Usher Team #3 Advent Worship Service @ 7:00 pm Bells after Service	15 ECE Children Christmas Program @ 6:30 pm Church & Miertschin Hall Choir 7:30 pm	16 Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00–8:00 pm	17 Miertschin Hall Rental @ 1:00-5:00 pm
18 Usher Team #4 Worship @ 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School Unveil Church @ 10:15 am	19 NO Bible Study	20	21 Bible Study @ 10:30 am Usher Team #5 Advent Worship Service @ 7:00 pm	22 Offices Closed Bells 6:30 pm Choir 7:30 pm	23 Offices Closed Unveil Lutheran Church Gym Setup 6:00–8:00 pm	24 Usher Team #1 Christmas Eve Worship @ 7:00 pm Unveil Church @ 5:00 pm
25 Christmas Day Usher Team #2 Worship w/Communion @ 9:00 am 	26 Offices Closed January 2nd Offices Closed	27	28	29	30 Offices Closed	31 New Year's Eve



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To the Family of:

Loving God ~ Loving Neighbors ~ Serving Others

SPECIAL DECEMBER EVENTS

Wednesdays

Dec. 7, 14, 21 • 7:00 p.m.

Midweek Advent Services



Thursday, Dec. 15 • 6:30 p.m.

ECE Children's Program



**Sunday, December 11
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Family Gathering & Dinner
1:30-4:30 p.m.
Caroling to Shut-Ins**

**Saturday, December 24 • 7:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

Sunday, December 25 • 9:00 a.m.

**Christmas Day
Communion Service**

