

December 2023 Newsletter
Volume 1, Issue 12



Merry Christmas Everyone

Immanuel Lutheran Church, ELCA
631 Grand Street, Allegan, MI 49010

December Anniversaries:

Keith & Linda Scott - December 14

Bill & Jessie Cronkhite - December 15



December Birthdays

Bob Teske - December 6

Linda Scott - December 11

Rev. Dan Ward - December 11

Russell Davis - December 13

Michael Aksamit - December 15

Sandy Horwath - December 18

Trevor Horwath - December 27

Mallory Horwath - December 29



December Activities

The “Hanging of the Greens” will be held this year on Saturday, December 2nd, beginning with the decorating of the sanctuary and fellowship hall at 4:30pm, followed by dinner at 5:30pm and the much anticipated arrival of Santa around 6pm. Each family is asked to bring a dish to pass and the sign-up sheet is on the round table.

Our annual congregational meeting is scheduled for Sunday, December 10th immediately following the worship service. The Committee Reports Packets are on the round table for you to review prior to the meeting.

Hearts and Hands will not meet in December but will resume in January.

Bible and Brew will meet on Monday, December 11th at 6pm at the Trestle Stop in Hamilton.

Coffee for Vets will meet on Tuesday, December 12th from 9-11am.

The Book Group will meet on Wednesday, December 20th at 1:00pm. The book selection of the month is entitled “Killers of the Flower Moon” by David Grann.

The deadline for ordering a Christmas poinsettia is Sunday, December 10th. Please include your payment of \$8.00 when ordering and we ask that you take your plant home with you after the Christmas Eve Candlelight service.

Please consider adding to our Christmas celebration by lending your talents to our Christmas Prelude. If you would like to read a poem, sing a song (solo, duet, etc.) or play an instrument, please let Lori know by December 10th so that we can plan for a festive and joyous Christmas with a great amount of congregational inclusion.



December Worship Volunteers

December 3

Reader: Linda Havens

Assistant: Jim Horwath

Counters: Joyce Davis and Linda Scott

Greeters: Jim and Marie Combs

December 10

Reader: Linda Scott

Assistant: Donna Preisler

Counters: Joyce Davis and Pam Hopkins

Greeters: Jim and Marie Combs

December 17

Reader: Michele Radke

Assistant: Joyce Davis

Counters: Laura Compton and Jim Combs

Greeters: Jim and Marie Combs

December 24 - 10am

Reader: Ken Kingsbury

Assistant: Mike Fusillo

Counters: Joyce Davis and Linda Scott

Greeters: Jim and Marie Combs

December 24 - 7pm

Reader: Pam Hopkins

Assistant: Jim Horwath

Counters: Joyce Davis & Linda Scott

December 31

Reader: Joyce Davis

Assistant:

Counters: Laura Compton & Pam Hopkins

Background: This is a modified reprint of my pastor's page for December 2019 in my previous call. Paige not only granted me permission to write this article, she approved the final product. This will make sense when you read the article.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

- Luke 1:26-28, NRSV

I learned young that how we greet one another is very important. When I was about 8 years old, my mother dropped me off at daycare, and another little boy ran up to greet me. How did I reply? My face and shoulders fell, and I said "oh". Clearly, he was not the first person I wanted to see - and now, he knew it.

When the angel Gabriel visits Mary, the first words out of his mouth are "Greetings!" He wants her to know that, despite his sudden appearance, he is on her side. He wants her to know that, despite the fear most people feel when they meet an angel, he is bringing her good news.

Perhaps this is why Mary responded with questions, not fear.

The way we greet one another is important. Paige Brown was early to Easter worship this year, and I noticed that many folks greeted her with words like "O wow - it's great to see you here-it's been too long!" I'm guessing that most folks meant "I'm so glad to see you!" While I don't know how Paige heard these greeting, what I heard was "you're not here enough!"

I know I've said things that sounded just like this (though not with Paige on Easter, that I can remember. I also know that, regardless of what my intensions were, I've stuck my foot in my mouth more times than I can remember.

Christmas and Easter are the Christian holidays that bring with them the highest worship attendance of the year, so we'll have lots of opportunities to greet people we don't see in worship very often (but would like to see more). During each of those interactions, we'll also have the opportunity to stick our feet in our mouths, so it's best to have a plan on how to react; I have some suggestions:

"How are you?"

"Glad you're here."

"Hi!"

. . .or perhaps some combination thereof.

Pastor's Page Two for December 2023

Greetings give others their first impression of us, individually and as a congregation. If a person is already not coming very often, there might be a reason . (I recognize that we don't have control over all those reasons, but let's not give anyone extra reasons not to return.) The angel Gabriel, sent by God, kept it simple when he greeted Mary. Let's follow his example.

SDG,

Pastor Chris

From Luther:

Therefore let go of your own thoughts and feelings, and regard this Scripture as the highest and noblest sanctuary, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, so that you may find that divine wisdom that God lays before you here so simply and plainly, in order to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds. Plain and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but precious is the treasure, Christ, who lies wrapped in them.

. Martin Luther, "Preface to the Old Testament," in *The Interpretation of Scripture*, vol. 6, The Annotated Luther, page 48.

Update on Sandy Rankin

In a previous newsletter I had made the suggestion for anyone who knew Sandy and had some time to think about visiting her. Well, a couple people did and I am sharing that Sandy was so delighted to have visitors from Immanuel. I visited her on November 21st and she was feeling more positive. What did she say about the visitors: "It made me feel I was not forgotten." I'd also like to suggest sending a card to some of the home based members such as George Preisler and Sandy too. Maryann Fusillo

Immanuel Giving Tree

Won't you help us brighten the holidays for a couple of families from the Hillside Learning Center this Christmas Season? There are over 50 tags for various budgets on our giving tree in the fellowship hall. Take a tag, purchase the item, wrap it up and attach the tag to the gift so we know what's inside. If you are purchasing one of the many gift cards, don't wrap, just leave in an envelope with the tag. All items are needed back by Sunday, December 17, so we can get them delivered in time for Christmas. Thank you for your generosity helping our brothers and sisters in God's family. If you have any questions, ask anyone from the Mission and Outreach Committee (Joyce Davis, Sharon Aksamit Jesse Cronkhite, Pam Hopkins, Sandie Horwath and Meri Gorr.



Meet Immanuel's Newest Members

Mike and Sharon Aksamit

Pam had asked me to write up a little bio about Mike and I, so here it goes! We've lived most of our lives on the east side of the state in Monroe County (most southern eastern part of the state) and then we moved one county over to our home on Devils Lake in Lenawee County in July 2021 and downsized to one home. We both worked at the University of Michigan a combined 73 years and retired in December 2021. If you would have told us three years ago that we would be living on the west side in Allegan, we would have laughed! But we found a wonderful condo in Highbanks and we traded the lake for a river. We have two daughters who live in Allegan and Kalamazoo and now we have a 5 month old grandson who lives just one mile from us. We feel blessed and the first time we visited Immanuel Lutheran we knew we found a church and would look no further. I've been a Lutheran my whole life and Mike converted from Catholicism when we married 37 years ago. We've been longtime members at Prince of Peace, Ida, Michigan, which is also an ELCA Lutheran Church. Thanks to Pastor and each one of you for making us feel so welcome and making our decision to get involved at Immanuel an easy one. We look forward to where God will lead us with our new church family. If we haven't met you yet, please introduce yourself to us. Blessings,

Mike and Sharon Aksamit

