

Newsletter, March 2024

Immanuel Lutheran Church

Pastor's Page: "The Priesthood of All Believers"

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

- The Son of Man, in his glory, at The End of All Things, Matthew 25:40

I preached on this parable less than a month ago as I write this article (Christ the King Sunday, 26 November 2023). Do you remember what I said then? What did he say they were doing? Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, visiting the sick and imprisoned.

Remember: the Good News here is that Jesus is the sick, imprisoned, stranger, hungry, etc. The Command here is that we who are "better off" need to feed, clothe, visit, etc.

Jesus was not just speaking to pastors – he was speaking to "all the nations."

No, this is not a way for me to get out of visiting you – in fact, I hope to work through the directory in 2024, visiting those who want me to visit.

And, I'm pointing out that Jesus wants you to visit, too.

Lutherans call this "the Priesthood of All Believers," which is where you, the believer in Jesus, represent Christ to the world.

Luther never actually used that phrase (or any of the other phrases, like "the ministry of the baptized" or "the ministry of the laity" [I find some of these insulting] or whatever other phrases Protestants have coined since the Reformation), but he clearly laid out the sentiment more than once:

Hence, all of us who trust in Christ are all priests and kings in Christ, as 1 Pet. 2[:9] states: "You are a chosen race, an acquired people, a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom, so that you may recount the powers of the one who called you from darkness into his marvelous light."

- Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in *The Roots of Reform*, vol. 1, The Annotated Luther, p504

Accordingly, we are all consecrated priests through baptism, as St. Peter says in 1 Pet. 2[:9], "You are a royal priesthood and a priestly realm."

- Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Improvement of the Christian Estate," in *The Roots of Reform*, vol. 1, The Annotated Luther, p382

(Can you tell that Luther really liked 1 Peter 2:9 ???? 😊)

When I visited Walter, he would often ask about you. He is hardly alone, in part because folks who are ill often feel disconnected. Or just ask Maryann about how much Sandy Rankin enjoyed her visits (or read what she wrote in previous newsletters... 😊). Do they want to see me? Of course. But they would be thrilled to see you – and so would Jesus... 😊

Again, I am thrilled to visit you – expect a call or e-mail sometime in the coming year. But this ministry of visitation – in hospitals and homes, especially when folks are ill or otherwise struggling – belongs to all Christians.

I invite you to join me in this ministry we share.

SDG, Pr. Chris

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Upcoming Events:

Quilting is every Tuesday in the Quilting Room starting at 9am.

Midweek dinner and worship on Thursday, 7, 14, & 21 March. Dinner starts at 6, worship follows at 6:30pm.

Easter flowers for the altar! They will be \$9 each, and your options are daffodils or tulips. Order forms are available at Immanuel.

Daylight Saving Time: 10 March – don't forget to set your clocks ahead!

Hearts and Hands: Monday, 11 March, 1pm, in the Quilting Room

Bible & Brew: Monday, 11 March, 6pm, at the Trestle Stop in Hamilton

Vets Coffee: Tuesday, 12 March, 9-11am

On 17 March, during worship, we will welcome Chloe Ann, Laura Compton's newest goddaughter, into Christ's Church through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism!

Pastor will be on orders with the Army (assuming Congress passes a budget or continuing resolution) from 18 – 22 March at the Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois. He will **NOT** miss the Sundays on either side – in other words, he will be in worship every Sunday in March.

Council: Monday, 18 March, at 6:30pm, in the Bible study room

Book Club: Monday, 25 March, at 1pm, in the gathering space

Maundy Thursday worship will be at Allegan United Methodist Church at 7pm on Thursday, 28 March.

There will be two options for worship on Good Friday, 29 March: 3pm at Hope Lutheran Church in Plainwell or 7pm at Immanuel.

Reminder: all events at Immanuel are canceled if Allegan School District cancels school.

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Next month:

Pastor Chris will be on vacation from 1-8 April, and then will attend a conference from 8-12 April. Pastor Jim Foster will preach and lead worship on Sunday, 7 April, and Pastor Julia Humenik will be on call for pastoral emergencies.

On Sunday, 14 April, we will have a special congregational meeting for the purpose of discussing how we will repair the windows.

Temple B'nai Israel and the Congregation of Moses will host a joint Passover Seder on Tuesday, 23 April 2024. Congregation of Moses will host, but they have yet to determine a time. When we know more, we will put a sign up sheet on the round table.

Notes:

The price of the weekly altar flowers has gone up to \$32.

If you would like to donate candy for the Easter egg hunt on Easter morning, please put it in the cardboard box under the mailbox.

Hope Lutheran will be hosting a Soup Supper Benefit Dinner Wednesday, April 10th from 5-7:00 p.m. A free will offering will be collected from each person attending the dinner and all proceeds go to supporting Christian Neighbors.* Hope would appreciate donations of salads, desserts, and bread. Donations of food can be dropped off at Hope on Wednesday, April 10th 4:00 p.m. or by bringing them to Immanuel by 3pm that day. Thank you so much for your help and support in serving our community!

*Christian Neighbors is a social service agency next to Hope Lutheran Church in Plainwell that provides local families in need with food, emergency financial assistance, and skill building education to create self-sufficiency in the Plainwell, Otsego, and Martin areas.

As we learned several months ago, Marie Combs is having issues with her kidneys. While it is difficult for her to discuss, there are more options than dialysis (for which she is not a good candidate). She would like to invite you to join a Zoom meeting about organ donations (not just for her). The flier is also in this newsletter and hanging at Immanuel.

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Notes from Pastor Chris:

Thank you so much for the very generous Christmas gift! I am very blessed to be at Immanuel, and I look forward to seeing where God will take us in 2024.

Some members of Immanuel Lutheran Church received an e-mail claiming to be from me. It was not from me.

Please carefully check an e-mail claiming to be from me: I will never e-mail from a meeting about a “confidential matter.”

If you ever have a question about a communication from me, please contact me in a way different from the communication claiming to be from me – for example, if you receive a text you think might not be from me, please call or e-mail me.

Also, my e-mails almost always follow the same pattern: address (“Dear Members of Immanuel Lutheran Church,”), body, salutation (“SDG”), and my signature block. 😊

From Joyce Davis:

Thank you very much to everyone who made our giving tree a success this Christmas! The gifts and food went to Hillside on Tuesday, December 19th, and they went to families in great need of them.

A reminder (it happened twice):

Pastor Chris will never call or text parishioners to ask for money. Someone ran a scheme about this time last year claiming to be Pastor Chris and asking for money. If you have any questions, please call, text, or e-mail Pastor Chris directly from your own contacts list – do not reply to a text or an e-mail claiming to be from him but asking for something. (He might call or ask you to do something for Immanuel, like bake cookies or read or iron or something like that but he will never ask for money or gifts!).

January noisy offering: \$81.11

February noisy offering: \$124.40

Shrove Tuesday offering: \$114

Ash Wednesday offering: \$380 + \$40

(All noisy, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, and mid-week offerings will go toward the Blessing Box)