



JANUARY 2025



IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA
631 Grand Street, Allegan Michigan



Michael Wathen - January 1
Pam Hopkins - January 5
Joy Winger - January 5
Bobbie DeVries - January 7
Lillian Horwath - January 7
Judith Caudill - January 12
Karen Acosta - January 12
Pat Jones - January 15
Pam Kraai - January 17
Keith Scott - January 17
Willow Goodyke - January 24
Jan Teske - January 31





Michael & Maryann Fusillo - January 19



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS FOR JANUARY

January 5

- Reader - Linda Havens
- Assistant - Jim Horwath
- Counters - Laura Compton & Linda Scott
- Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

January 12

- Reader - Linda Scott
- Assistant - Donna Preisler
- Counters - Joyce Davis & Mike Aksamit
- Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

January 19

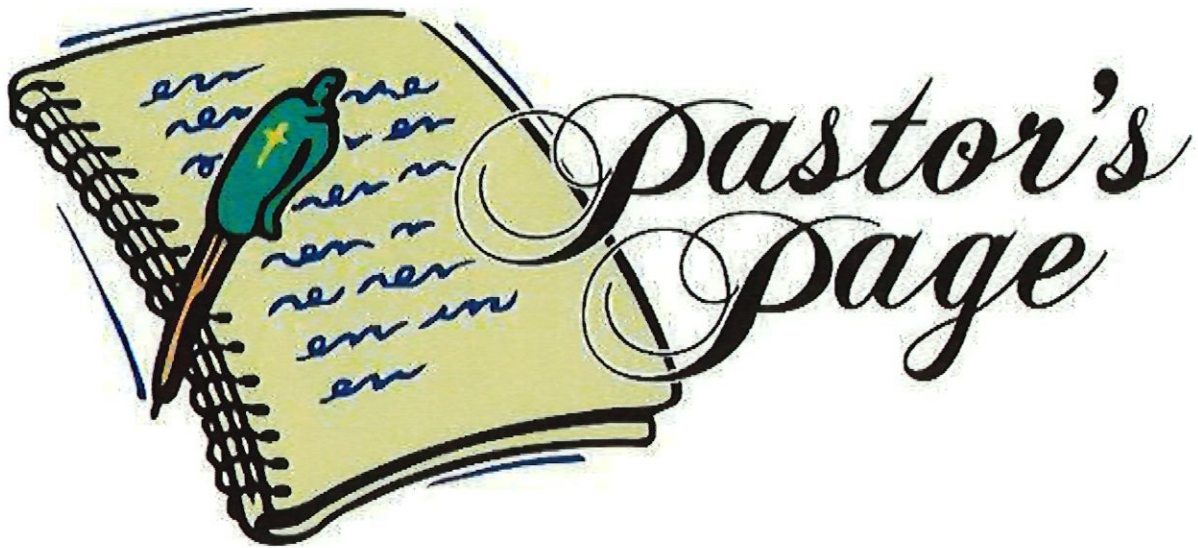
- Reader - Michele Radke
- Assistant - Mike Fusillo
- Counters - Laura Compton & Linda Scott
- Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

January 26

- Reader - Sharon Aksamit
- Assistant - Mike Aksamit
- Counters - Joyce Davis & Jim Combs
- Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS: We really appreciate everyone that serves during our worship service and *would love to have more people involved*. If you would like to serve as a reader, worship assistant, counter, or greeter, please talk to Pastor Chris or Ken Kingsbury. We can be reached in the office Monday through Thursday from 9 am to 1pm.





Pastor's Page, January 2025: Repent / Repentance

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

- Mark 1:14-15

When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent," he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

- Martin Luther, *First of the 95 Theses*, LW 31, p. 25

This year, unless circumstances require me to respond to a specific issue, situation, or scenario, I will take each month's pastor's page to reflect on one word we use in the Church. That word may or may not be specifically Lutheran, but I will always reflect on it from a Lutheran perspective (I'm sure you're shocked 😊).

First, you have to admit that you're a sinner – otherwise, you would have nothing for which to repent! (I will discuss Sin [and sins] in a later newsletter.)

The rubber met the road on this one recently when Mike Melms

requested “Spirit in the Sky” at his funeral, and I told him that I can’t allow the phrase “I’m not a sinner / I never sinned...” because it’s not what Lutherans (or most other Christians) believe. (He found a version with different words 😊)

Second, you need to be sorry for what you’ve done wrong. If you’re not sorry (which may be related to the above paragraph), then you’re not repenting. Think about making one child apologize to another. How often is the apology sullen and resentful; with the child only saying or doing it because an adult has made him or her?

True repentance is not forced; it “must be voluntary” (Martin Luther, Large Catechism, Book of Concord, p476). It’s not a joke. It’s not an excuse, and it’s not a source of manipulation (“well, I said I’m sorry – now **you** *have* to forgive me!” - repentance is about you, not the other person). Repentance is specific, and it’s not just words.

If a person says, “I’m sorry,” but keeps doing what hurts you without any apparent effort to change, is that person truly sorry? Maybe that person *is* trying. Maybe you can’t see it. But forgiveness is harder when it looks like the person doesn’t really care about you. (Forgiveness, a related topic, will also be another pastor’s page. 😊)

We admit that we did something wrong. We say we’re sorry for that wrong. And then we work to try to do better. Are we going to do better? Maybe, but probably not. But Sin is **not** an excuse (again, a future pastor’s page) – we need to try to do better. Usually, when we’re trying, it’s evident. Will trying to do better save us? No. Only God can do that, in spite of our Sin, but that’s not why we try to do better. We try to do better because we want to be in right relationship with other people.

Luther taught that repentance is a way of life. It’s a posture before God, and acknowledgement of *specific sins* and that I am and you are sinful. That’s why every one of our worship services begins with confession and forgiveness.

Admitting that you are sinful and that you have sinned is hard, because it leaves us vulnerable; but since we’re talking about God, before whom

everyone (we all must give an account) and all of creation is vulnerable, we're all on a level playing field.

Perhaps in 2025, we can work to be a people of Repentance, a Repenting People. People who know that we are sinners in desperate need of God's grace, people who are sorry for what we've done, and who can work to be in right relationship with one another.

SDG,

Pr. Chris



Notes:

A big THANK YOU to the congregation for the very generous Christmas gift!

Also, a big thank you to everyone who makes Immanuel's ministries happen. From altar guild to Coffee for Vets to Bible and Brew to Christmas Families to Backpacks to the Blessing Box to food for teachers during parent-teacher conferences to Youth Fundraisers to Grand Ravine Brunches to the Veterans Luncheon to Trunk or Treat to the Hanging of the Greens, Immanuel seems to have something happening all the time and YOU make it happen.

Clearly, I did not make it to visit with each individual or family in 2024. I will try again in 2025 (this time, I'll move backward through the directory 😊).

We will degreen the sanctuary after worship on Sunday, 5 January. There will be no adult Sunday school that day.

We will install council members on Sunday, 12 January, during worship.

Adult Sunday school will restart on Sunday, 12 January, after worship. We will study the parables of Jesus.

Pastor will be at the Rock Island Arsenal from 26 January through 1 February. Pastor Vicky Blough will lead worship on Sunday, 26 January, and Pastor Julia Humenik will be on call for pastoral care emergencies.

Epiphany worship! Our third annual Epiphany worship will be at Hope Lutheran Church in Plainwell (290 12th St) at 5pm. Bishop Satterlee will preach this year, and a cookie reception will follow (if you make cookies that you really enjoy and would like to share or show off, you are welcome to bring them but there is NO EXPECTATION THAT YOU WILL – though I suspect that your cookies are better than Hope's cookies... 😊). Hope will take a collection for Grand Ravine.

From Prince of Peace in Portage to the Bishop's office in Lansing back here to Immanuel, scammers strike again! 😞 Pastor Chris will never ask you for money or gift cards by text or e-mail. If you receive such a request claiming to be from me, get out of the e-mail or texting program, find your copy of the directory, then call or text me by typing in the number yourself.

Our next youth pancake breakfast fundraiser will be on Saturday, 18 January 2025 from 9-10:30am. (Yes, we will still have dinner night out that evening.)

Ms. Laura Feffer, principal of LE White Middle School, has reached out to us and asked us to provide dinner for her teachers during their next parent-teacher conferences on Wednesday, 5 February. This will be much like last time (October?), but we will put out more information as we get closer.

Did you enjoy the daily readings posted on YouTube and Facebook? How about the different format for the prayers of intercession that we used during Advent?

The rotating bulletin board has our prayer partner letters on it; please read them and try to find Pastor James Smith (St. John's Lutheran Church, Three Rivers) or Linda Havens' sisters (Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Rose City). The items that were on the bulletin board are currently in Pastor Chris' office and will return to the rotation around 20 January. 😊 There is also a thank you note from North Ward.

Special thanks to the folks who put the new televisions on the wall:

Jim Horwath

Trevor Horwath

Craig VanMelle

Brad VanMelle

Bill Cronkhite

Rick Beilein

Jason Lorenz (if you don't know who this is, ask Brad or Trevor)

This was heavy and difficult work, requiring much two attempts, specialized tools, research, consultation, being high up off the floor, and brute force. These folks saved the congregation \$2,000, the price Best Buy specialty operation would have charged to bring in their sub-contractors.

While Pastor Chris *has discussed* a **more helpful** way to collect the offering WITH THE CHILDREN, please also be gracious toward them as they are not

perfect (if you're confused about that last point, please reread my pastor's page 😊).

Please do not remove food from the kitchen without first speaking to Pastor Chris; some items for the youth breakfasts have recently gone missing.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Quilting Group meets every Tuesday in the Quilting Room at 9am.

Bible Study Group meets every Wednesday at 10am in the Study Room. We discuss the Bible Readings for the upcoming Sunday Worship Service. We will NOT meet on New Year's Day

Praise Team Practice meets every Wednesday at 4pm. Watch the Bulletin and the church web page for changes during the holidays.

Coffee for Vets meets on the second Tuesday of every month in the Fellowship Hall for coffee and fellowship. If you know of a Vet who might like to participate, please invite them.

BIBLE AND BREW will meet Monday January 13th at the Trestle Stop in Hamilton. We meet at 6pm for a meal, fellowship, and a lively discussion on random questions on a wide variety of subjects. It is a lot of fun and we hope to see you there.

BOOK GROUP will meet Monday January 27th at 1pm to discuss the book chosen for this month. Members of the group suggest and decide on which book they will read for the following month. Watch the Sunday Bulletin for the announcement of the monthly selection.

Zumba meets in the Fellowship Hall every Wednesday at 6pm and every Saturday at 10am.

Dinner Nite Out will take place Saturday January 18th at 5:30pm. The hosts for this month are Bill and Jesse Cronkhite and we will be meeting out at The Grill House on M-40. Please see the sign-up sheet on the Round Table if you would like to host and choose the restaurant.

REMOVAL OF THE GREENS: We will gather in the sanctuary after the worship service on Sunday January 5th to remove the Christmas decorations. They were so beautiful again this year and we wish to thank everyone that helped to make this happen. We are truly blessed.

EVENTS CONTINUED:

CONFIRMATION CLASS BREAKFAST: As part of their fundraising efforts for the youth outing at Stoney Lake the Confirmands will be serving breakfast for us again on the morning of Saturday January 18th beginning at 9am. There will be a sign-up sheet on the round table to give us an estimate of how many will attend. Bring your friends and family.

OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2025 have been placed in your church mailbox. If you did not receive a set of envelopes and would like a set, please see Ken Kingsbury in the church office.

EPIPHANY WORSHIP SERVICE will be at Hope Lutheran Church on Monday January 6th beginning at 5pm. Bishop Satterlee will be giving the message and we encourage everyone to attend. There is more information in the Pastor's notes.



CHRISTMAS EVE POINSETTAS

IN MEMORY OF.....

Our Parents - given by Mike and Karen Acosta
Our Brothers & Sisters that are gone but not forgotten - given by Mike & Karen Acosta
George & Virginia Reeder - given by Nancy Boysen
My husband, Tom Compton - given by Laura Compton
Chris Davis (my brother) - given by Erin Davis
Chris Davis (Russ's son) - given by Russ and Joyce Davis
Lyn Kingsbury - given by Ken Kingsbury
Walter Karakula - given by Ken Kingsbury
Dennis Kraai - given by Pam Kraai
Joan Laughlin - given by Emily Ottinger
Barb & Jerry Richlich - given by Lori Querback
June & Glenn Querback - given by Lori Querback
Amado Resendiz - given by Lori Querback
Margaret Coffin (my mother) - given by Lisa Sandor
Arne & Vi Hellgren (Linda's parents) - given by Keith & Linda Scott
Sam & Pat Scott (Keith's parents) - given by Keith & Linda Scott
Milton & Joyce Schafer - given by Leland Schafer

IN HONOR OF.....

The Birth of Our Savior - given by Mike & Karen Acosta
Soli Deo Gloria - given by Pastor Chris Laughlin
Staci Wathen (recovering from breast cancer) - given by Michael & Laura Wathen



PERSONAL LETTER FROM MARIE COMBS

Dear Church Family,

As many of you know, I have **CKD (chronic kidney disease)**. At present I am in late Stage 4 and my transplant team at the University of Michigan has told me it is time to start my transplant journey. It is very difficult for me to share my private life, but it is time for me to be more transparent about my current situation. As much as I want to control this disease, I realize that I cannot do this without the help of others. I am reaching out as a member of Immanuel Lutheran for help in **my search for a living donor**.

A living donor is my best opportunity in that it expedites the transplant process, and significantly improves my chances of a healthy life. The wait time on the donor list in Michigan according to the National Kidney Foundation is currently 6 years. With this type of disease, I may not have 6 years.

You can help me win this fight in several ways:

1. Spread the word to your family and friends who might know someone who is willing to serve as a donor.
2. Your prayers and words of encouragement are always welcome and much appreciated.
3. You can learn more about the living donation opportunity from the National Kidney Foundation at www.kidney.org/transplantation/livingdonors

Please understand that I don't make the request lightheartedly. I simply want to continue to enjoy life, greeting at Immanuel Lutheran Church, making a joyful noise in the choir and to grow old with my loving family.

To be a donor, you need to be in generally good health. (AGE IS NOT A BARRIER.) Routine tests are performed to determine the potential donor's viability. Kidney donors go on to live long healthy lives with one kidney.

All costs incurred by the donor are covered by Medicare, or the U of M. The average recuperation time is 1 – 2 days and two to three weeks of easy living at home or work. To learn more about becoming a live kidney donor, call the U of M Transplant Center **800-333-9013**. You can also visit www.uofmhealth.org/transplant to learn more about the process.

Even if the donor is not an exact match, they can still help me indirectly through the paired donor program.

Many of you have heard of or know of people who are on dialysis, which is another option. However, a living donor is more desirable. Any help you can provide in any way would be appreciated in conquering this disease.

For additional information, please see the enclosed flier.

Thank you for taking your time to read this!

God Bless,

Marie Combs





National Kidney Foundation®



Overcoming Common Kidney Donation Myths

Myth	Fact
The donor will have many out of pocket expenses	The medical costs are covered by the recipient's insurance. There are grants to apply for which can assist with some uncovered costs
Once a donor begins the donor evaluation process, s/he may feel obligated and afraid to change her/his mind	A donor can change their mind at any time
My religion prevents me from being a donor	Most religions support living donation
If a person does not offer to donate, that must mean s/he is not interested in donating	Many people don't know that living donation is an option
A donor will have trouble getting health insurance/life insurance after s/he donates	There are protections in place to ensure donors have appropriate access to care
Living kidney donors won't live a healthy life with just one kidney	Donors are carefully screened to ensure they are healthy and can have a nephrectomy. They are encouraged to have regular checkups and follow a healthy lifestyle
Living kidney donors live a shorter life	There is no evidence that donation shortens a lifespan
Living kidney donors are more likely to get kidney disease after donating	Donors are counseled about their individual risk associated with donation
Only younger people should be able to get a kidney transplant	All patients who are medically suitable are eligible for transplant



National Kidney Foundation®

Myth	Fact
Adults over age 50 can't donate	Donors must be healthy and can donate primarily on a basis of health, not age
Gay (homosexual) people and those with tattoos can't be living kidney donors	All donors are screened for medical and infectious diseases and are only cleared if it is safe for both the donor and recipient
A kidney donor can no longer participate in sports or exercise	A donor should be able to return to regular activities and exercise about 4 to 6 weeks after surgery
Kidney donors will have to take medications for the rest of their lives	Generally, prescriptions for pain and stool softeners will be necessary in the immediate postoperative period only
A kidney donor will have debilitating pain for an extended period of time	Ordinarily, there will be some pain after surgery, which will diminish and can be controlled with pain medication
A kidney donor will be on bed rest following surgery	A kidney donor will be out of bed and walking before discharge from the hospital
A kidney donor will be in the hospital for an extended period of time after surgery	A kidney donor will be hospitalized on average for 2 nights
Living kidney donors don't choose which person they want to donate their kidney to	A donor can select a person they know
A donor will have to follow a new diet plan following donation	A donor should eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, but there are no dietary restrictions
A donor can no longer consume alcohol following donation	While excessive alcohol use is always dangerous, a kidney donor can consume alcohol in moderation
A female donor should not get pregnant after donation	A female donor should wait to become pregnant until medically cleared after donation
A donor's sex life will be negatively affected by donation	Donors may engage in sexual activity when they feel well enough to do so



The University of Michigan Transplant Center is pleased to invite you to a kidney transplant educational program on living donation. The program includes information on ways to help you or your loved one find a potential living kidney donor. We hope you will be able to join us for this session. The program is open to patients, families, friends, or anyone interested in learning more about living donation.

*Facts and Myths of Living Donation and How
to Find a Living Donor*

Program will include "Explore Living Donation" video, patient and donor stories, and a panel of transplant experts.

Thursday, February 6, 2025
6:15-8:00 p.m.
Virtual

Registration is required.
Please go to <https://michmed.org/kq5NR> to register.

For questions, please contact:
transplantoutreach@med.umich.edu or (734) 936-7093