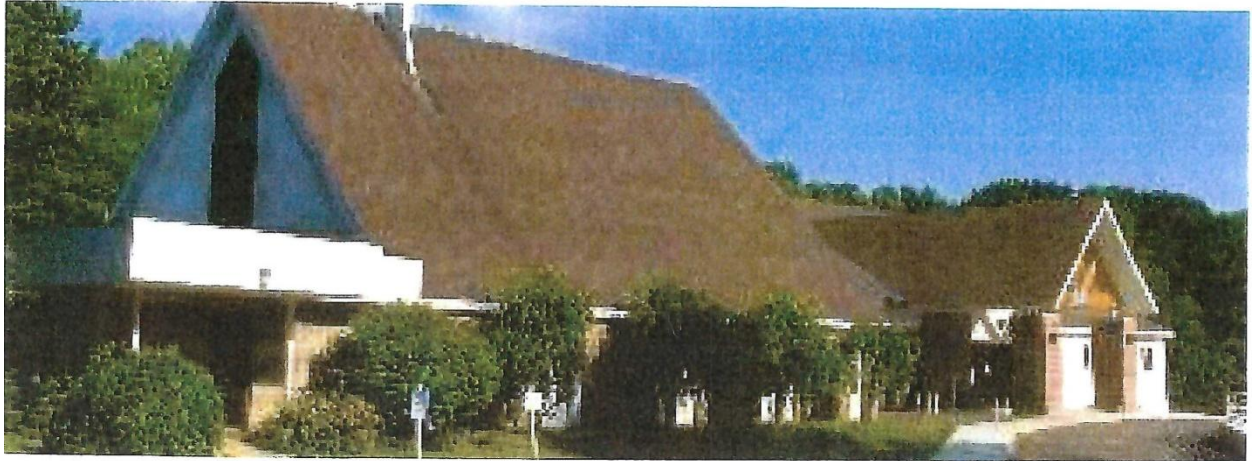




OCTOBER 2026



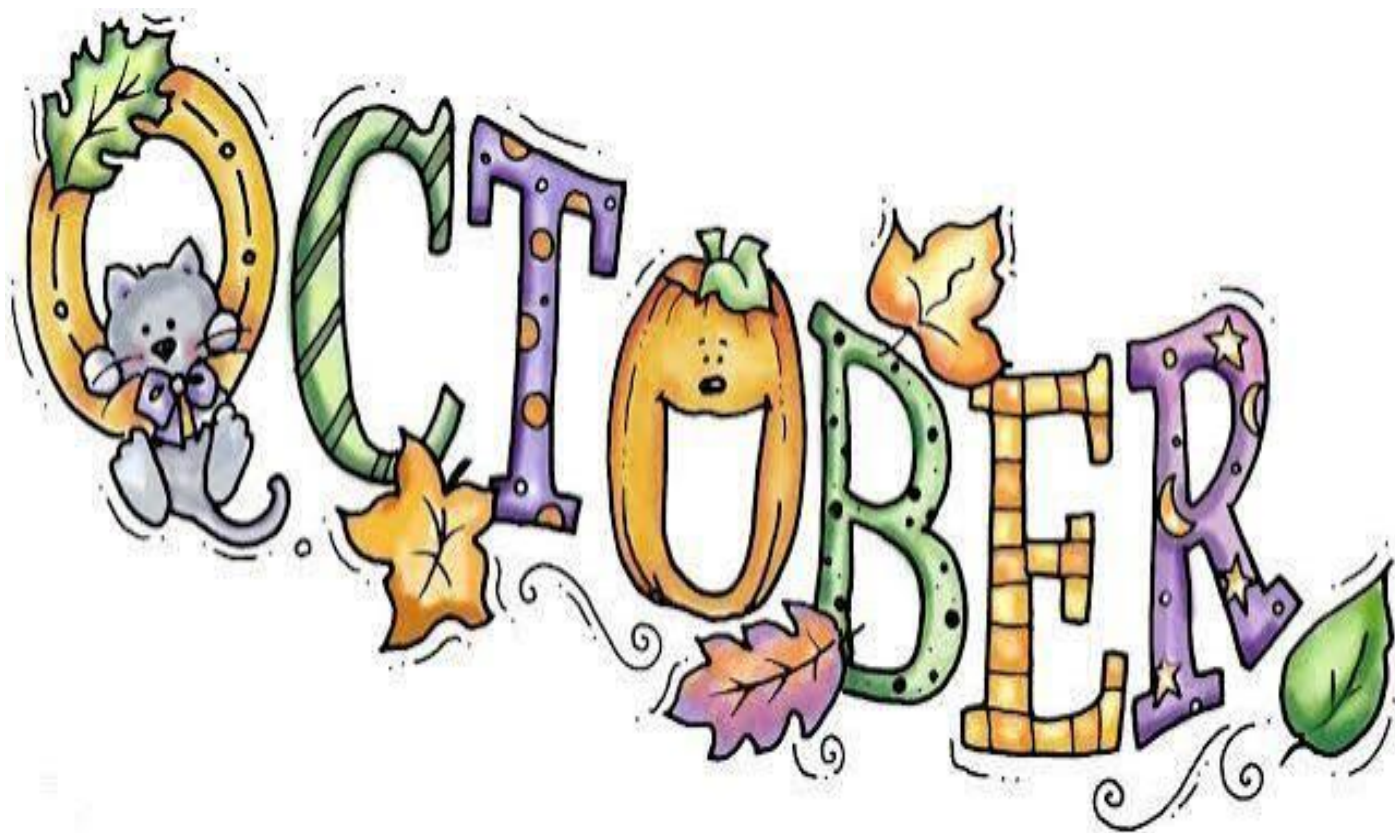
IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA
631 Grand Street, Allegan Michigan



OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Rick Bierlein – Oct 6

Tessa Compton – Oct 25





OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

Tyler & Amarilla Burnett – Oct 1
Ethan & Jacquelyn Burnside – Oct 2
Gerald & Ursala Armourillo – Oct 11
Jeremy & Jennifer Vance – Oct 11
Doug & Tammy Reed – Oct 19
Michael & Karen Acosta – Oct 29



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS FOR OCTOBER

October 4

Reader - Carter Vance
Assistant - Jim Horwath
Counters - Laura Compton & Nancy Brauer
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

October 11

Reader - Bernie Lenau
Assistant - Linda Scott
Counters - Joyce Davis & Jim Combs
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

October 18

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

October 25

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, October 2026: Things I Wish Jesus Didn't Say, Part IV

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

- Jesus, Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23 (with slight variation)

You may be thinking to yourself: "didn't Pastor just preach on this?" If you are thinking that, then you are correct. But I'm taking a different approach here, and since you remember that sermon, I won't revisit those points here – but I will assume that you remember them. 😊

I really wish Jesus did not say these words. I do not want to take up a cross – mine or anyone else's. The cross sounds like a terrible way to die, and I would not choose it voluntarily.

And yet, here we are: Jesus tells us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. Because if we're following where he's leading, then he's headed to the cross.

"But we don't crucify people on crosses anymore."

Good catch!

But there are a lot of ways to deny ourselves and follow Jesus on the path of selflessness and self-sacrifice.

So here's one practical way that I'm going to try to follow Jesus on the path, and I encourage you to do the same:

Marie and Jim Combs published a letter letting us know about Marie's condition, so I'm getting tested to see if I'm a match and can act as a kidney donor.

And there's no point in getting tested if I'm not willing to go through with the donation.

What does the process look like? I'll include information in each newsletter so that you know. It'll follow the steps that UofM required of me so that you know.

But really, is that my "cross to bear"? Perhaps, perhaps not. I've got two kidneys, and I only really need one of them. Apparently, if I've only got one kidney, I'll never be able to take ibuprofen again, and that was my only hesitation (especially since my accident, as I've taken more ibuprofen in the last 2 weeks than in the previous 9 months).

But I like my kidneys where they are, thank you very much. So I really wish Jesus hadn't told me to deny myself as I follow him. But following Jesus is the path of life,

SDG,

Pr. Chris

Notes from Pastor Chris:

Quilt Blessing!

We will give thanks to God for, and bless, the quilts during worship on Sunday, 4 October, shortly before we send them off to Lutheran World Relief.

Parent-Teacher Conference

Twice each year, Principal Laura Feffer of L. E. White Middle School asks us to provide dinner for her teachers during parent-teacher conferences. There's a sign up sheet for what we need on the round table.

Pastor Is About to Retire from the Army, Part VI

For as long as I've been a pastor, I've written that today is 22 September 2026. I retire on 31 December 2026. But the next day will be January 1st, 2027, and I suspect that other pieces of my military etiquette will go by the wayside (though not all of them... 😊).

Speaking of the Army:

I will be at the Rock Island Arsenal for my last quarterly Inactive Duty Training / Battle Assembly this month! I will leave after worship on Sunday and be home the evening of Saturday, 24 October (in time for worship on Sunday morning, 25 October, which is Reformation Sunday).

Reformation Sunday!

My second-favorite liturgical holiday! You are welcome, but not required, to wear red.

Kidney Donation through U of M

I called 1-800-333-9013 and a real human being actually answered the phone! She asked for Marie's birthday and address, and then asked me a series of medical questions. Having passed that test, she sent me an e-mail that allowed me to set up a MyChart with the University of Michigan. Someone looked through my MyChart and saw that my blood pressure was elevated (because, you know, I've been in pain the last two times I saw a medical professional); they have asked me to get five more blood pressure readings before I can proceed.

Looking ahead:

This serves as your official notification, in writing or electronically, that the annual congregational meeting will be on Sunday, 13 December, following worship.

Another Reflection

During worship on Sunday, 20 September, I mentioned the death of Osama bin Laden. What follows is my reflection on that event and our responses to it; I wrote this the next day and have edited twice since then.

Late in the evening of 1 May 2011, a friend called to let me know that Osama bin Laden had been killed by US forces. Rachel and I made the decision to stay up to hear President Obama's remarks, after which we spent a few minutes on Facebook.

I was not surprised by the comments made. I was born, raised, and lived between New York City and Washington, DC on September 11th, and, with only one exception, all of my friends from the place where I grew up were ecstatic. Jubilant. Along with the people in stadiums, outside the White House, and even at "ground zero," they were elated. Exuberant. Even my most liberal, pacifist friends from that area seemed to rejoice at the death of the man who has been called "the face of evil." Some even suggested that we mutilate bin Laden's body on national television.

I'm also an ordained minister in what is, arguably, one of the most liberal Christian denominations in America. Thus, many of my colleagues and seminary friends' Facebook comments took a very different tone: they were disgusted with the national elation at the death of anyone. Many quoted

Scripture passages such as “turn the other cheek,” and “love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,” both from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The next morning, some of the responses were more moderate, with one colleague posting, “I was so SO about to post some take on the sentiment of ‘GOT HIM!’ when I read an opinion from a much higher source: ‘Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him.’ Proverbs 24:17-18 ESV.”

I understood most of the reactions I saw, even the ones that I found to be radical. This man hurt us. Deeply. And, as a wise friend once told me (and as I preached recently), “hurt people hurt people.” It is human nature to “do unto to others and they’ve done to you – and worse, so that they won’t hurt you again.” It is a part of who we are – or at least a part of who *I am* as a flawed and sinful human being.

But while these responses are natural, they are also unchristian, and I am not proud to admit that I fall into both traps far too readily.

I also understand the desire to correct people with Scripture, especially the words of Jesus; I really do understand that God’s Word is “a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path,” that it really is the source and norm of faith and life. What’s more, I do adhere to an understanding of the doctrine of God’s Two Realms (“Two Kingdoms”) which teaches that private citizens are not called to the use of violence, including violent words (though I have lived this very poorly at times).

But to post Scripture in such a way as to condemn those with whom we disagree or in whom we find disgust is the very thing that Jesus himself condemns in the religious establishment of his day; I suspect that we condemn in others what we dislike in ourselves. As I indicate above, I have been guilty of this response as well, and it is as unhelpful as the first option.

So, where does this leave me? I could not fully process an answer in that moment, and this is just the most recent update to how I reflected on bin Laden’s death the next morning. I started this reflection because I had a parishioner who contacted me, struggling with this question himself. As I wrote then “this... is a work in progress.”

In all of the Biblical reflections I saw in those days, no one mentioned Jesus and his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. On the night in which Jesus was handed over, all four gospels report that one of Jesus’ disciples (who had been asleep) jumped to Jesus’ defense and drew his sword, prepared to strike. Presumably, he was ready to die for Jesus, whom the disciple may have been hoping would wrest control of Judea from the Empire, and build an earthly kingdom in the way we

people know how to build earthly kingdoms – by violence. The Romans called it the “Pax Romana” or Roman Peace, but we used the phrase “peace through superior fire power.”

But that is not what Jesus did – in fact, he did quite the opposite; in three of the gospels, he told the disciple (whom John identifies as Peter) to surrender. In Matthew, we hear that “...[then] Jesus said to him, ‘return your sword to its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword....’” (26:56, my translation). As we continue to listen in on what Jesus said – Jesus tells his disciple that he came to die, not fight.

These words are true in the context of this story, in the wider context of the gospels, and in our lives: “all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” It was and is true of those who subscribe to the notion of “peace through superior fire power,” it was true of Osama bin Laden, and it is true of “all those who take up the sword” or live by violent force today.

That is not the end of story. For a time, it seemed as though Jesus was overcome by those who wanted him dead, overcome by the Empire, overcome by violence. But as we confess and believe, “on the third day he rose again.” Sadly, when he “ascended into heaven,” he did not leave the world perfect: he conquered sin and took away its sting, and we no longer need live in or act out of fear, but there is still sin in the world today. And in this sinful world we must live and interpret God’s will for our lives.

From this understanding of living in a sinful world comes the doctrine of Just War to which I adhere and which Lutherans have (classically) confessed. It teaches that death, while sometimes necessary, is always tragic and never a source of rejoicing. But the only way we have ever been able to establish and maintain order – the only way for just governments to flourish and promote peace and justice – is through the old, terribly flawed “peace through superior fire power.” Sometimes, in the administration of justice, sometimes, in order to stop the spread of violence, sometimes, governments are justified in using violence to overcome the violent.

In a democratic society and government like the one we have established and under which we live, justice is not in the hands of one person. With Luther and Paul, I believe that God establishes governments to administer justice, but vengeance belongs to God alone. I am not always certain, however, where the line between “justice” and “revenge” lies, be it arbitrated by individuals or governments. I do know that the line blurs and can be a very difficult one to walk, and that my definition and the definition of others differ, and I continue to struggle with it.

Thus, when Jerry Falwell reportedly said “Blow them all away in the name of the Lord,” I found serious fault with that crusader mentality. It may be our first response, as it was for the Psalmist

who cried to God in Psalm 137 for his enemies' babies' heads to be dashed upon rocks, but too often when governments or individuals enact violence and call it "justice," it is wrong and more aptly called "vengeance."

But in our cries to God, and perhaps even in our Facebook posts, asking God to enact vengeance is not wrong, so long as we give it to God and let it go, not acting on it ourselves. This is how I read the Psalms.

The soldiers who are called to take up the sword often die by it. That is what soldiers do. Some of my soldiers who returned from war assure me that, while they did not physically die, they died in other ways. Pray for soldiers who must enact violence so that most need not.

I understand why people got so animated that night and through the week that followed. Even at the time, I think the emotion I felt most clearly was relief, followed by sorrow at the brokenness of our world, that a man who was created in God's image just as all people were, could do such horrible things and necessitate that we end his life. I do not rejoice that this man is dead, but would rather he never have become who he became. Perhaps, then, I would refer to Ezekiel 33:11 (NRSV): Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

And yes, in obedience to the command of Jesus, I pray for those who persecute me (us), even as I struggle to love and forgive them.

On a final note: there has also been a great deal of speculation on the eternal assignment bin Laden receives; I, for one, believe that God is sovereign and do not speak for God in terms of whom God chooses for eternal life and whom God permits to be eternally damned. I struggle to forgive, but just because I struggle does not mean that God does. Still, I firmly believe that God is sovereign and God can redeem whomever God chooses.

SDG,

Pr. Chris



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN HEALTH
MICHIGAN MEDICINE



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.

Wednesday, November 4, 2026
6:15-8:00 p.m.
Virtual

Registration is required.
Please go to <https://michmed.org/jjWKz> to register or scan QR code below.



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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Quilting Group meets every Tuesday in the Quilting Room at 9am. Immanuel has been known over the years for our support and participation in the quilting ministry. These quilts are sent all over the world through Lutheran World Relief, including some for the homeless here in the United States. If you are willing, please join us for three hours on Tuesday mornings.



BLESSING OF THE QUILTS: We will have many of the quilts produced this year on display in the sanctuary for the blessing on Sunday October 4th. The following weekend they will be brought to the distribution center in preparation to be sent all over the world for the Lutheran World Relief.

Bible Study Group meets every Wednesday at 10am in the Study Room. We discuss the Bible Readings for the upcoming Sunday Worship Service. If you would like to be placed on the email list to receive an advance copy of the readings, please contact the church office. We always have a lively and interesting discussion and we encourage you to join us if you are able.



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 at 9am for coffee, cinnamon rolls, and fellowship. This was first instituted in 2019 by Bill and Jessie Cronkhite while Pastor Ward served as our interim Pastor. It has continued to grow



over the years. If you know of a veteran, *please invite them to join our group*. This is a great way for our Veterans to have fellowship and discuss shared experiences.

GOD'S GARDEN: *Please take a moment when you pull up to the church to appreciate the beautiful landscaping.* We have a dedicated group that



meets on the First and Third Tuesday of every month. They tend to limit the work time to about *One Hour* each day. If you are able, please join us as many hands make the work load light.

BIBLE AND BREW will meet on Monday October 12th at 5:30pm at the Trestle Stop in Hamilton. This is a great time to get to know one another better over a good meal and the individual discussion of interesting questions. Pastor Alex Steward started this in 2014 as a Question and Answer program and it developed into this discussion group. Please come and join us. The signup sheet is on the Round Table.



THE CHURCH COUNCIL will meet at 6:30pm on Monday October 19th in the Adult Bible Study Room. If anyone has a report to be presented at the council meeting, please send it to the church office before Noon and we will print copies for you. Anyone is welcome to attend the council meeting, especially if you have something that they need to know about.

BOOK GROUP will meet on Monday October 26th at 1pm in the



Fellowship Hall. We always choose the next month's reading at each gathering so join us and share your favorite book. Watch the Sunday bulletin for the announcement of this month's reading. You will also find all the selections, including those for last year, on our church web page under *Ministries*.



DINNER NITE OUT: We will be gathering on Saturday October 10th at 5:30pm for our monthly time of great fellowship and good eating. This month we will gather at Hunan Garden in Kalamazoo and there is a signup sheet on the Round Table with directions. Come and join us for a special evening. And if you have a favorite restaurant to suggest, why not sign up as sponsor for an upcoming month. It is very easy!

TRICK OR TREAT: Once again this year we will be inviting the children of our community to Immanuel Lutheran Church for our Halloween (All Hallows Eve) festivities. It will be on October 31st from 5:00pm to 7:00pm inside the church building. In addition to lots of candy, we will be supplying cider and donuts for everyone. There will be a signup sheet on the Round Table. If you have any questions, please see Sharon Aksamit.



L. E. WHITE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER LUNCHEON: The school staff will be having their Parent-Teacher conferences on Thursday October 15th and we can make their day much easier by providing their lunch. It is so important that our local teachers realize that we support them and this is one way in which we can give that message. There is a signup sheet on the Round Table giving a list of what is needed. Thank you everyone for sharing in this ministry.

A TRADITIONAL HYMN SING: The First Congregational Church of Allegan is hosting an old fashioned hymn sing evening on Saturday October 10th and they are inviting the community. This is a great opportunity for u8s to gather as one church to sing our praises to the Lord. It will begin at 6:30pm and there are brochures on the Round Table.



REFORMATION DAY: This is the day we recognize when Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the church entry doors of Wittenburg Germany on October 31, 1517 (All Hallows Eve). We will celebrate this on Reformation Sunday (October 25th) and many in the church will be wearing red on that day. All that Luther wanted to do was to initiate a scholarly discussion with the theologians of his day over certain abuses he saw in the church of his day. With that in mind, these 95 discussion points (theses) were written in Latin, the educated language of the day. So, what was the big deal?



This was a period of enormous change. In 1440 a man named Johannes Gutenberg invented a printing press using moveable type and an oil-based ink. Prior to this almost everything was written by hand in single copies. Someone decided to take Luther's 95 theses and print copies in the German language making everyone aware of what he was criticizing the church about. This simple discussion among intellectuals has now become an open debate. Rather quickly Luther became known as an enemy of the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire. At the Diet of Worms, Germany in 1521 he was placed literally on trial for his life because of his teaching and declared an outlaw. It was in Worms that Luther summarized his defense with the words; *My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.* Upon leaving, friends spirited him off before he could be arrested and hid him in Wartburg Castle. While in hiding, Luther translated the New Testament into the German language and once again the Gutenberg Press did it's work. By 1534 Luther had translated the entire Bible. Several others before Luther had translated the Bible, but Luther had the Gutenberg Press. John Wycliff was even burned at the stake for his translation.



And less we forget, it was in 1492 That Christopher Columbus "sailed the ocean blue". Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543 Proposed the theory that the earth and all the other planets revolved around the sun. Things were being turned upside down in many ways. By 1545 the Roman Catholic Church gathered at the Council of Trent and addressed many of the issues brought up in Luther's 95 theses. The world would never be the same again!

