***“Following God through Jesus***

***in work and word.”***

**IMMANUEL MESSENGER**

May/June Volume 24, Issue 3

**IMMANUEL**

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**(EVANGELICAL & REFORMED)**

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Dates to Remember

May 12 – Mother’s Day

May 19 – Worship with communion

May 26 – 9:00 am Worship

June 16 – Father’s Day

Some Thoughts on Grace

A hymn of the church is entitled, “God of Grace and God of Glory.” The words were written by one of America’s great preachers – Harry Emerson Fosdick. While it might be worth our while to consider Dr. Fosdick’s life, I’d like you to consider with me for a short time, the nature of Grace.

Grace, that which is freely given to all but which all too often is seen as a gift to a few. Grace, the experience of the grateful, of these who reckon that we are of God. That we are dependent upon someone greater than ourselves and that One determines our lives, our being.

There are so many concepts of Grace that do it an injustice and render it almost as whimsical as the wind. Sometimes it’s stated by someone looking upon the misfortune of another with the words; “there but for the Grace of God go I!”

But, the Grace of God is not given to some people and not to others, nor is it suspended for a time for some and not others. That Grace is withdrawn when something dreadful occurs. Grace is not an experience or a way that separates us from others who have experienced or are experiencing misfortune. We live and we die in Grace.

Grace is not getting away with something, and missing out on some calamity. It is living with the conviction of heart and mind that there is God, and God prevails. Despite the outward thrust of events that depersonalize, that inhibit or restrict, that above all, above every human situation, there is God. It is to say with Job amid his despair; “I know that my redeemer lives…” and in that affirmation to declare one’s existence, a state of Grace.

Grace is not the calm before the storm. It is not getting away with something a neighbor didn’t get away with. It’s not the postponement of some fearsome inevitable. It is living with the certainty that there is God and that we, all of us are God’s very own and we live by the Grace of God.

Ernie Huntzinger

**Leadership Forward**

Leadership Forward is a 5-year program initiated by the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ to raise funds for 3 areas of investment and stewardship. The program started about a year ago and is described on the Wisconsin Conference website: “Leadership Forward is a $2 million campaign to equip laypeople, clergy, and congregations with wisdom and skills to meet God’s challenge to be the Church today and tomorrow.”

$1 million dollars is being sought to “sustain the Damascus Project in perpetuity.” The Damascus Project has risen out of the initial Lay Academy to provide clergy and lay people to become leaders of the church. Immanuel and other area churches have benefited greatly by the education and training dedicated individuals have received through this program.

$500,000 is being sought to support Catalyst Grants which are offered to churches for programs that meet program guidelines. Several years back Immanuel applied for and was offered a grant to purchase the camera used to record our church services to enable worship while being unable to attend in person.

$500,000 is being sought to provide Ministerial Assistance to “support active and retired clergy and lay church workers in the Wisconsin Conference.” At Immanuel we know how difficult it is to attract settled clergy and how important it is to be able to support dedicated people in ministry.

More can be found out about the Leadership Forward campaign by visiting the Wisconsin Conference UCC website and clicking on the “Generosity” tab at the top of the page. Instructions on how to contribute are given on the website. Donations can also be made to Immanuel UCC by designating the money for Leadership Forward.

Sincerely,

Rodney Thieleke

**Report on the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Association of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ**

The meeting was held on April 20, 2024, at the Daycholah Center on Green Lake. Pam Hodgson and I were delegates from our church.

The keynote speaker was the Reverand Breanna Illene, Director of Ecumenical Innovation and Justice Initiatives at the Wisconsin Council of Churches. Her basic message was that our Facebook and websites need to be clear about our location, worship times, and other programs that we offer as a congregation.

The business meeting followed; I will place a copy of the various reports at the back table at church so you can read these reports. We had a quorum, so the business could proceed. One of the takeaways of this part is that we have a small surplus at the end of 2023. The reason for this is because all of our divisions meet via zoom thus saving the costs of travel by the members of these groups.

After a delicious lunch, I attended a breakout session about how de we function now and in the future as an Association. One item that was discussed was the possibility of groups from our churches getting together to share insights. For instance, our Mission Committee could zoom with other Mission Committees from other churches to support, learn, share, and perhaps gain new ideas from each other. One item was made clear in that there will be no staff changes. The meeting ended at 2 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Pastor Bill Kesting

**Scripture Readers**

Keep in mind that we can always use anyone’s talent to read scriptures on Sunday mornings. Sign-up sheet is on the table in back of church.

**Immanuel UCC Ice Cream Social 2024**

It's never too early to start thinking about summer, right?! Please mark your calendar for Tuesday, July 9, for our annual Brat Fry and Ice Cream Social. A committee is forming - would you consider joining it and helping out? "Many hands make light work!" Please see Kristy Pahl if interested. Thank you

**Mission Committee Newsletter**

The Misson Committee works to bring awareness to needs within the community through Misson Moments. This spring we have had guests from Meals on Wheels and Love Inc. come and talk about their work and how we can support them.

Laura’s Pantry continues to serve the community on Saturday mornings. So far this year we have provided food for 320 visitors. We appreciate the continued donations of Immanuel members and donations from other UCC congregations in the area. If you are interested in volunteering, please let us know. We welcome the help.

We would like to thank everyone who joined us for **U**nlimited **C**hex and **C**ake after church on April 14th. We hope you enjoyed the snacks and fellowship. Look for more events in the fall.

Submitted by Jen Marten

**Ushers Needed**

Also remember to sign up on the usher schedule that is located on the table in the back of church.

**Volunteer Helpers for Funerals**

There is a sign-up sheet near the east entrance for people to help and/or bring food when there is a funeral held here. Please consider signing up. Contact Karen Karsteadt with any questions. Thank you!

**Summer book study**

You are welcome to join members from several local UCC churches at a summer book club held outdoors at Our Shepherd UCC in Howards Grove. The book we will be reading is “Messy Spirituality: God’s Annoying Love for Imperfect People” by Mike Yaconelli. Kristy Pahl will be leading this informal group and we would love to have all from Immanuel join us. Plans are still developing but tentatively we will be meeting once per month for four months but stay tuned for more details.

*From the book’s back cover:*

*'I Guess I'm Not a Very Good Christian . . .'Do you feel like I don't pray enough, I don't read my Bible enough, I don't share my faith enough, I don't love God enough, I'm not committed enough, I'm not spiritual enough? Then this book is for you. Messy Spirituality was written for the silent majority of us who have been convinced that we just don't do Christianity right. We spend most of our lives worried about what we don't do instead of what we have done, focused on our imperfections instead of God's fondness for the imperfect. Why? Because we've been bombarded with books, tapes, talks, seminars, and movies convincing us that real Christianity is all about perfection. Michael Yaconelli dares to suggest that imperfection, unfinishedness, and messiness are, in fact, the earmarks of true Christianity; that real Christianity is messy, erratic, lopsided . . . and gloriously liberating. What if genuine faith begins with admitting we will never have our act completely together? Maybe messy disciples are exactly the kind of imperfect people Jesus came to earth for and whose company he actually enjoyed--and still enjoys. If you want to find Jesus today, look for him in the midst of burned-out believers, moral misfits, religious incompetents . . . men and women whose lives are, well, messy. Messy Spirituality is a strong antidote for the spiritual perfectionism in us all. Here are truths that can cut you loose from the tyranny of ought-to's and open your eyes to the deep spirituality of being loved, shortcomings and all, by the God who meets you and transforms you in the midst of a messy and unpredictable life.*

Vacation Bible School News



I have had families contact me regarding VBS dates and times as they plan their summer activities.  Please use this information as you plan and PLEASE share with those you think might be interested in joining our fun week of activities.

Theme: "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." Psalm 56:3

Our adventure will take place from July 22nd to the 26th, with closing service on July 28th.  You can attend the weekly events; Sunday is an option.  VBS is open to children and adults from 3 years old to 103-year-olds.  It runs from 9:00 to 12:00 daily.  There are daily Bible stories, songs, games, science, crafts, snacks and more.  Registration forms will be coming out in the next few months. Commitment fee is $10 per participant.

Lou the Lightening Bug has already arrived at Our Shepherd and is busy preparing for this fun week.

Looking forward to you joining us for this great week,

Counselor Sam (Miss Renae)

Agenda Consistory Meeting February 12, 2024

1. Call meeting to order Present: Rodney T, Mark T, Chris B, Jenny M, Keri K, Brett K, Ed P
2. Opening prayer
3. Welcome Jennifer Marten and Keri Koenig – Appoint vice president – Mark Thieleke (Senior Elder) and consistory secretary – Keri Koenig (First year Deacon
4. Review secretary’s minutes from last meeting (January 8, 2024) *motion made to accept and seconded*
5. Treasurer’s report – Submitted by phone and email by Joya Cox CPA

*-Question of scholarship disbursements? $1600 in fund-who gets paid out to – Joya has NOT RECEIVED info*

*-Does she have the chili supper money? Yes – Joya received funds-placed into general fund…will be placed into February reports*

*-Accounting software was updated at Joya Cox*

*-Annual budget – expenditures by month…more meaningful to do it by month*

*-Ok to keep sending Tracy K reports – Yes*

*-Rodney stopping tomorrow for some bills-also present new emails for Keri and Jenny, and take off Shawn M and Nicki S. for reports being sent out*

*-Enterprise the house-separate account for house? For renting? -add a class list report*

*-Need to process invoice-flag it for being the parsonage rental-*

*-can start anytime with rental-March 1, 2024*

*-Depreciate the roof – business operation-number over-all in different classes-29 year for roof;*

*-Pastor moves in-no longer depreciated*

*-One on parsonage, and one on church over vestibule…how to pay for both? Use the money we have in checking and make some minuses in other accounts-Joya stated not sure-some in cash some from investments*

*-money not to be moved out of General Fund??...Improvement Fund can be taken down for church roof-how to pay for Parsonage…take some out of other funds-then those funds can be replenished.*

*-Motion to accept it, seconded*

6. Pastor’s report-worship planning-Church events

a). Pastor’s schedule- March 3-Rev. Henning, March 10-Pam Hodgson, March 17-Pam Hodgson, March 24-TBD, March 31 Easter Sunday, Rev. Ernie Huntzinger, with communion

*-Talked with Bonnie- if Rev. Kesting, that would be fine-Rodney to ask Wm Kesting first.*

b). Ash Wednesday-February 14-Rev. Wm Kesting, with communion-Maundy Thursday-March 28-Rev. Ernie Huntzinger, with communion-we will not have services on Good Friday nor will we have and Easter Sunrise service

c). Our members have been invited to Our Shepherd UCC in Howards Grove and St. John UCC Schwarzwald for midweek Lenten services-we will not have Lenten services at our church-At Our Shepherd, Wednesdays between Ash Wednesday and Holy Week will begin at 6:30 pm with a pot luck meal followed by reflection-if attending and able, please bring a dish to pass-Lenten services at St. John begin at 6:30 pm.

*Our Shepherd starts on February 14th-5weeks-potluck bring something to pass-bible verse and generate some discussion*

*Bethel-wanting someone from Laura’s Pantry to come discuss some Wednesday-Jennifer M will reach out*

d). Palm Sunday March 24-Do we need to order Palms? Do we want to have a donkey walk for the U to church?

*Do we need to order Palms? Rodney will talk to Kathy*

*Donkey walk? Rodney will discuss with Knoener Family to see if they want to do the walk*

e). March-April newsletter due date-Should it include minutes from the annual meeting or a letter explaining the decisions made?

*Save minutes for next year*

*Brett will write up letter about parsonage-roofing and renting-submit to church email by the end of February*.

*f)*. Acknowledging and welcoming the baptism of Tat Justin Peterson, son of Tyler and Sarah Peterson on Feb. 4, 2024

*Motion pass; motion accepted*

1. *Old business*

a). From annual meeting, change to the constitution-new constitution needs to be printed with the revision accepted on Jan. 28, 2024-Need to work with Kathy Herwig for the easiest way to make the change

*Print up a dozen-last constitution revision was Jan.27, 2019*

b). From annual meeting, need to establish a “parsonage committee”-Also need to create a “parsonage” financial account as part of the treasurer’s report to keep track of income and expenses associated with the parsonage.

c). from annual meeting, need to proceed with replacement of the parsonage roof-Contact contractor(s)-Determine how to pay for it-Who will lead and be the contact person for the church?

*-Committee-Brett K, Nicki S, Keri K, and Ed Pahl*

*-50% down-Brett knows salesperson-need contract for approval process-only signature needed to get started on parsonage roof. 50%=$8930*

*-Motion to move 50% from Parking Lot fund-and pay back from rental; seconded-discussion-wants an acct to ship a negative-show as a loan…house shows a negative-Rodney will discuss with Joya*

*-Chris and Mark were against*

*-Chris believes it should not be taken from any fund-realizes it will get paid back. No maintenance fund ever here at this church – Rodney stated that improvement fund is like the maintenance fund – Chris states parsonage should have its own entity*

*-Jennifer stated that we need to take from a fund to start-we are doing this so we do not have to pay taxes on a loan.*

*Rodney will discuss with Joya-to use Parking Lot fund*

*Rental applicants are complete: ready to rent parsonage for March 1st.*

*-$1200/month-plus they will pay for electric bill and gas*

*-Renter has renter’s insurance*

*-Question: who is to clear out snow for driveway? Renter for parsonage driveway. Brett will talk with Arno or Brett will remove snow from road through parking lot to parsonage driveway.*

*-motion to rent out as early as March 1st (AS IS)-renter is AWARE of house conditions…Motion made and seconded*

*-Maintenance for water pump-need access to parsonage. Brett will be point of contact-need to reset pump/breaker-can show renter how to do it.*

*-Smoke alarms were new 2 years ago-need 9 volts…3 carbon dioxide (plug ins)-once on each level-2 fire extinguishers*

*-roofing contract signed and submitted for 1st 50% payment*

d). Report on how everything went with the chili supper and the confirmation pancake breakfast and dessert auction.

-$917 raised from pancake breakfast, youth chose to give to Laura’s Pantry

8. New business

a) Suggestion from Rev. Henning-Do we want to have communion every month or continue on as is the tradition? -Should include communion services in the church calendar for the benefit of pastor supply and our members

*-Communion-have it the first of the month-when we do not have one already for that month. Mark will look at calendar and add other dates.*

b). Should usher system be changed from head usher calling people every week to a calendar rotation system like the one being used for money counters? -If so, need someone to establish it

*-Putting calendar out in church for people to sign up for ushering*

9. Next meeting March 11, 2024

10. Adjourn with the Lord’s Prayer

Agenda Consistory Meeting March 11, 2024

1. Call meeting to order

2. Opening prayer

3. Review secretary’s minutes from last meeting (February 12, 2024)

4. Treasurer’s report-submitted by phone and email by Joya Cox CPA

Discussion of adding a class list which has been done on the church accounting platform all expenses and income associated with the Parsonage rental will be tracked separately within that call list…basically handled similarly to other accounts such as scholarship fund.

Motion made and seconded to treasurer’s report

5. Pastor’s report – Worship planning-Church April 14-Rev. Huntzinger, April 21- Rev. Huntzinger, April 28 -Pam Hodgson

b. March 10 Confirmand’s faith statements led by Pam

c. March 17 confirmation Sunday led by Pam-Rev. Kesting will assist-Need to expect visitors.

d. Palm Sunday March 24-Rev. Kesting preaching-distribution of palms-donkey walk needs to be decided. Donkey walk to be held Knoeners to be contacted for the use of the donkeys. Meet at Lakeland at 8:30 am. Light refreshments to follow; Rodney to notify Kathy to add to bulletin.

e. Maundy Thursday service 7:00 pm March 28 with communion-Rev. Huntzinger conducting service- Chris to turn on heat a 2 pm

f. March 31 Easter service with communion-Rev. Huntzinger conducting service-if enough Easter lilies have been ordered, the cross need to be brought to church and cleaned and set up- Saturday March 30th set up cross for lilies

g. Should Rev. Huntzinger be employed like he was before January? He is available and willing to do so – Should be have office hours every Wednesday afternoon as in the past? – Should he begin attending consistory meetings again? – consistory is all for Rev. Huntzinger to resume office hours per his want.

h. Should Rev. Huntzinger be paid by the church for preparing a service and mileage for a non-member’s funeral? – Even if family are members of the church? – as a non-member the church is not responsible for pastoral fee

I. Pam and Rev. Kesting to join to make congregation covenant of membership and Baptism

6. Old Business

a. Printing copies of the revised constitution has been done -Rod will distribute a copy to each consistory member.

b. Update on parsonage roof – the bill has been submitted – Progress on renters moving in – Have batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors been installed? – is the mound pump and system working ok after being unused for a period of time?

c. Update on monthly communion – Will have to let pastors know of the schedule if their service is involved

d. Anything new to report on repair of church vestibule roof. Tentative schedule for May 13, down payment 50% prior to start.

e. Some questions still exist on the usher calendar and eliminating the head usher – when should we begin having people sign up? – What if no one signs up for a Sunday? – sign up sheet to be in back of church to be provided looking for 12 week running schedule

7. New Business

a. as in the past years, coverage for Terrorist Acts from Acuity Insurance has been rejected.

b. Need to set date for outside church yard spring cleanup – April 20 8 am to be added to church bulletin.

8. Next meeting April 8, 2024

9. Adjourn with The Lord’s Prayer