

***“Following God through Jesus
in work and word.”***

IMMANUEL MESSENGER

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**IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
(EVANGELICAL & REFORMED)**

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The famed Swiss Reformed theologian, Karl Barth, is often quoted as having said that our task is to “do theology with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.” So, let’s. After all, the Bible has been in the news lately, as it was recently used by Attorney General Jeff Sessions in comments he addressed to his “church friends.”¹

Before we get to the Bible, here’s the background. In May of 2018 Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a “zero-tolerance” border policy which called for the detention and criminal prosecution of every adult who enters the United States unlawfully.² Sessions stated: ““If you cross this border unlawfully, then we will prosecute you,” and “If you are smuggling a child then we will prosecute you, and that child will be separated from you.”³

As a result of this policy, the Department of Homeland Security reported that during April and May of 2018 as many as

¹ Tal Kopan for CNN, June 14, 2018: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/14/politics/jeff-sessions-immigration-policy-defense-biblical/index.html>

² Colleen Long for TIME June 14, 2018: <http://time.com/5312987/jeff-sessions-separating-immigrant-families/>

³ Aric Jenkins for TIME, May 7, 2018: <http://time.com/5268572/jeff-sessions-illegal-border-separated/>

2,000 immigrant children had been separated from their parents at the U.S. – Mexico border and sent to child detention centers.⁴ Since then, an additional 300 children have been separated from their families.⁵ In many cases, these child detention centers house hundreds of children who “wait in a series of cages created by metal fencing.”⁶ In short, those in power have “intentionally turned the machinery of the state on some of the world’s most vulnerable humans.”⁷

As one would expect, as news of these family separations first broke, there was a public outcry. The outcry, in large part, began coming from voices across every denomination of the church, criticizing the policy of family separation as cruel, immoral, and unconscionable.

While addressing a crowd in Fort Wayne, Indiana on June 14th the Attorney General made a point to respond to the criticism of his “church friends,” stating “the concerns raised by our church friends about separating families” are “not fair or logical.”⁸ In his speech, Sessions went on to use the Bible to defend the administration’s policy of separating children from their families at the United States-Mexico border. He chose to cite Romans 13:1-7, which begins with “let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for...those authorities that exist have been instituted by God” (vs. 1). It was Sessions’ way of suggesting that his “church friends” should quiet their dissent and submit to the authority of the state. Later that same day, White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee-Sanders affirmed the administration’s enforcement of this particular policy as “biblical.”⁹

⁴Brian Naylor for NPR.org, June 16 2018: <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/16/620451012/dhs-nearly-2-000-children-separated-from-adults-at-border-in-six-weeks>

⁵ Kevin Sieff for The Washington Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/the-chaotic-effort-to-reunite-immigrant-parents-with-their-separated-kids/2018/06/21/325cceb2-7563-11e8-bda1-18e53a448a14_story.html?utm_term=.9277d2372116

⁶ Nomaan Merchant for the Associated Press June 18, 2018: <https://www.apnews.com/9794de32d39d4c6f89fbefaea3780769>

⁷ Molly Ball for TIME: <http://time.com/5318253/donald-trump-border-crisis-continues/>

⁸ Tal Kopan for CNN, June 14, 2018: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/14/politics/jeff-sessions-immigration-policy-defense-biblical/index.html>

⁹ Ben Jacobs for The Guardian June 15, 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jun/14/sarah-sanders-bible-trump-immigration-border-policy>

Since the comments were addressed specifically to “church friends,” I feel compelled to respond, especially when it comes to folks in power hiding behind Romans 13:1-7 as justification for persecuting families who are fleeing for their lives and who have come to the border seeking protection from danger with a desperate cry for mercy.

Romans 13:1-7 is a text often cited by those wanting to silence political dissent. Historically it was used by those who opposed the American Revolution. It has been used to justify slavery and Nazism.¹⁰ It was used to defend the separation of Native American children from their families. It was used to justify the separation of enslaved children from their families. It was used during the Second World War to rationalize the detention of Japanese-American families in internment camps.¹¹

Anytime Romans 13:1-7 is cited as justification for squelching political dissent, anytime it is used in defense of odious policies, we must become immediately suspicious. After all, invoking the name of God to justify policies that ignore what Jesus calls “the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith” (Matt. 23:23) is the very definition of taking the Lord’s name in vain.

Beyond the tragic ways in which Romans 13:1-7 has been used throughout history, there is a consensus among mainline biblical scholars that Romans 13:1-7 may in fact not be authentically Pauline, but rather a later addition to the letter. If you take a look, you’ll see that the removal of 13:1-7 from the text of Romans leaves a smooth flow across 12:9-21 – 13:8-10. Furthermore, the content of 13:1-7 is wholly uncharacteristic of Paul’s thought elsewhere. Let’s not forget that Paul was repeatedly imprisoned for “acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus” (Acts 17:8). If nothing else, we must at least be mindful of what comes

¹⁰ The Quaker Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) June 15, 2018: fcnl.org

¹¹ National Officers of the United Church of Christ “UCC Leaders: Keep Families Together,” June 15, 2018:

http://www.ucc.org/news_ucc_leaders_keep_families_together_06152018?utm_campaign=ucc_jun15_18&utm_medium=email&utm_source=unitedchurchofchrist

right before Romans 13. In chapter 12 Paul suggests that one of the marks of a true Christian is that they “extend hospitality to strangers” (Romans 12:13).

Thankfully, people of faith refused to be silenced by the Attorney General’s citation of Romans 13:1-7. The outcry over the family separation policy has continued in earnest. It reminds me of the Palm Sunday story as told in the gospel of Luke. As the throng of disciples are singing a refrain of “peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven,” the authorities tell Jesus: “Teacher, order your disciples to stop;” the powers-that-be will not approve of such singing (19:38-39). But Jesus responds: “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.” The voice of the church in the world today, calling for justice, mercy, and peace cannot and will not be silenced for the sake of good order. What’s more, when that voice is persistent, it is powerful, and it is effective. When the church is relentless in its proclamation of the gospel’s call to “love your neighbor,” things can and do change.

Case in point, under the pressure of the relentless outcry from the Church universal, an Executive Order was signed on June 20th, calling for an end to the policy of family separation.¹² It was something like the story Jesus tells about the widow who cried out for justice with such persistence that even the unjust judge, who had “no fear of God and no respect for anyone,” caved and granted her plea (Luke 18:1-8). Or, if you like, it’s reminiscent of Pharaoh finally giving-in to Moses and the Hebrew people’s cry for freedom and justice (Exodus 12).

But we must not stop there. As of today, the Executive Order contains no provision for reuniting those families who have already been separated.¹³ And the practice moving forward will be to indefinitely detain entire families who have come seeking mercy and safety. Effectively jailing families together is not a solution that can be acceptable to we who call ourselves

¹² Molly Ball for TIME: <http://time.com/5318253/donald-trump-border-crisis-continues/>

¹³ Tal Kopan for CNN: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/20/politics/trump-family-separation-executive-order/index.html>

Christians. Our voice is still needed, and we, the church of Jesus, must stand at the ready to call those in power to account for how the vulnerable are treated.

So, while the policy moving forward continues to get sorted out, let's remind ourselves that scripture has lots to say about foreigners, strangers, asylum-seekers, and the dispossessed. The scriptural voices on the topic of how we should treat and receive strangers, foreigners, refugees, and immigrants (regardless of where they are from), speak a message that is straightforward and uncompromising. That message is a clear call to extend hospitality to the stranger and to love our neighbors...all of them...not just in word, but also in deed, "for the Lord your God...loves the strangers" (Deuteronomy 10:18-19).

When the law is received by God's people in the wilderness, the treatment of strangers or aliens is outlined repeatedly and with great detail. The people of God are instructed to apply the same laws and standards to foreigners as they do to themselves; to go so far as to treat foreigners as citizens, extending the same love to strangers as they would to themselves (Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 19:33-34, 24:22; Numbers 9:14, 15:15-16; Ezekiel 47:21-22).

And let's not forget that Jesus himself started out his life as a migrant, immigrating to Egypt because his life and the lives of others were in danger due to a repressive leader (Matthew 2:13-16). Jesus began his ministry by outlining how he understood his mission: to "bring good news to the poor...release to the captives...sight to the blind...to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:16-21). He spoke repeatedly about the place of honor that children in particular occupy within the realm of God. It is this mission and vision that we as the church, called to be the body of Christ in the world, are charged with continuing.

If we want to search beyond scripture to our own historic German Reformed tradition, we need look no further than the much beloved Heidelberg Catechism. The questions regarding the sixth commandment (thou shalt not kill) suggest that keeping

that commandment requires more than simply not killing another. Question 107 asks: “Is it enough that we do not kill our neighbor?” The answer is a resounding no: “God requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to show patience, peace, gentleness, mercy, and kindness toward our neighbor, to prevent harm to our neighbor as much as we can.” Our historic tradition values actively caring for others and doing our part to ensure that harm does not come to them.

Lastly, our denomination, the United Church of Christ, has put out a statement strongly condemning “the dismantling of families, the criminalization of the quest for freedom, and the caging of those whose only crime is to seek shelter from harm.” Further, the UCC has declared that “how we treat those who seek shelter in our midst is a direct reflection of how we treat God.”¹⁴

There’s no way around it. The message is consistent, and the call is resounding. Followers of Jesus are challenged to receive outsiders, immigrants, strangers, and refugees with understanding and hospitality; with mercy and welcome; with compassion, open hearts, and open doors; with the humility to remember that the stranger among us just may be Jesus himself (Matt. 25).

We have learned over the last couple of weeks that when the church rises up and speaks out with a united voice, its witness can indeed change things for the better. As followers of Jesus, our motivation is not fear; rather we are moved by an uncompromising love of neighbor and by the perfect love of God which casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

It has been said that “all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing.”¹⁵ Through the days ahead, I hope we, you and I, will be bold enough to be found standing

¹⁴ National Officers of the United Church of Christ “UCC Leaders: Keep Families Together,” June 15, 2018:

http://www.ucc.org/news_ucc_leaders_keep_families_together_06152018?utm_campaign=ucc_jun15_18&utm_medium=email&utm_source=unitedchurchofchrist

¹⁵ Has been attributed to both Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill

alongside the vulnerable, aligning with the lowly, defending the weak, and using our voices to call the powerful to accountability.

For the families who cry out for mercy,
Rev. Laura

Copies of the new edition of the ***These Days* daily devotional booklets** are available on the tables near both sanctuary entrances for anyone who would like to take one home with them. Please note there are a limited number of large print booklets in addition to the regular print. The large print booklets are available near the east entrance.

Summer Scripture Readers: At the back of the sanctuary you will find a sign-up sheet for scripture readers during worship on Sunday mornings this summer. Please consider serving as one of our readers. **All are welcome to participate!**

Summer Special Music: Do you play an instrument or sing? Are you willing to share your gift with God and the congregation? Please consider offering special music some Sunday this summer. **All ages and abilities are welcome!** You will find a sign-up sheet situated at the rear of the sanctuary.

From the Mission Committee Last month we had representatives from Safe Harbor of Sheboygan County offer a Moment for Mission during worship. They shared a need at their facility for blankets, pillows, and snacks for children (granola bars, fruit snacks, individually wrapped cheese and cracker packs, etc.).

The Immanuel UCC Mission Committee is challenging the congregation to collect 100 items for Safe Harbor now through July 15th. If we are successful, the Mission Committee will reward the congregation with an **outdoor movie night on Sunday, July 29th at 7:30p.m.** If 150 items are collected, the

Mission Committee will provide popcorn. If we collect 400 items, the Mission Committee will provide root beer floats!

A bin for these items is labeled and situated on the east side of the sanctuary. Thank you in advance for your participation and generosity!

The United Church of Christ offers a variety of exciting **Summer Camp opportunities at Pilgrim Center and Moon Beach for youth, families, and adults!** Information about this summer's offerings, registration materials, and scholarship applications are located on the table near the east entrance to the sanctuary.

SAVE THE DATE: Immanuel is off to the races! On **Saturday, July 28th** Immanuel UCC will be serving concessions at the stock car races. Meet at the Sheboygan County Fairgrounds in Plymouth at 4:15pm. We will need a total of 36 volunteers to help that evening, and in return we will receive \$1200 for our church. A sign-up sheet for volunteers is on the table at the back of the sanctuary.



Our Annual outdoor service and celebration of **Rural Life Sunday will be Sunday, July 29th**. Please invite family and friends to join us for our 9:00a.m. service out on the church lawn under the canopy of trees!

Vacation Bible School! Immanuel UCC Board of Christian Education will again offer an exciting Vacation Bible School experience for the children of our church. VBS will be held from **5:30-7:30p.m. Sunday, July 29th through Thursday, August 2nd**. We plan to take a field trip on Wednesday to Harvest Home to play Bingo with the residents there. Each evening will include a meal, Bible story, craft, and game. Youth and adult volunteers will be needed to help prepare and serve the meal and to facilitate the day's lesson and activities. If you are available to help, please speak to a member of the Christian Education Committee (Nicki Schumacher, Kim Bassuener, Brandon Rooker, Christopher

Burgin, Liz Depies, Angie Kuester, Trina Theobald, or Rev. Laura).

Delegate Report from the Wisconsin Conference UCC Annual Meeting

I begin by thanking you, my fellow members of Immanuel, for allowing me to be one of your delegates to the Annual Meeting 2018 of the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ. I share the following highlights of this event.

First of all, I was there because I needed to renew my Boundary Training. This training occurred Thursday evening and Friday morning. All pastors have to experience this training every four years. Pastor Laura was also in attendance.

When the regular meeting began, the usual reports were shared. For instance, these were the 2017 Financial Report, the 2019 budget presentation, and the Nominating Committee. What I believe is important for us is the following: The Rev. Franz Rigert was reelected as our Conference Minister for another 4 year term; we finished the year of 2017 with a positive balance; the 2019 Budget was approved; and most importantly, we are to study as a congregation a resolution For The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.

A workshop that I attended was "3 Great Loves" which means love of neighbor, love children, and love of creation. Our national church wants us to share how we show our love in these ways so that we are known as people who follow our Savior.

The Rev. Dr. Karl Kuhn of Lakeland University led an inspired Bible study on Mark chapter 4. The keynote speaker and worship leader was the Rev. Traci Blackmon, Executive Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries of our United Church of Christ. Her main point was that we as church members are to continue working for justice in our nation and world.

Respectfully submitted,
The Reverend William Kesting

Ice Cream Social and Brat Fry

Immanuel's 14th Annual Outdoor Ice Cream Social & Brat Fry will be held on Tuesday, July 17th. A sign-up sheet for volunteering to serve (two shift times) is located on the east side table at the rear of the sanctuary. There is also a sign-up sheet for cake donations on the same table. You may also make a monetary donation to help defray the cost of supplies. Donations can be placed in an envelope marked "Ice Cream Social" and placed in the Sunday offering plate or can be given to Wayne or Nancy Dreier. Proceeds will go to Improvement Fund. Thank you.

Vacation Bible School: Volunteers are needed for Vacation Bible School. The dates are July 29 to August 2, 2018. If interested please contact Keith Rooker at 920.946.2753 or kjrooker@gmail.com

Update from our sponsored girl Lakshmi at the Family Village Farm in India from a March 2018 letter.

In a letter from Anita G. Paul the sponsorship coordinator, we were told that God with his divine providence is meeting the needs of the organization and with His divine presence protecting all the residents. The children, mothers and elders are keeping well. There have been many significant developments at the Home such as a New Play area for the Nursery as well as older children and a New Library at the Home Campus. They are grateful to us for our love, prayers and financial support which enables them to continue this challenging mission in transforming lives adhering to mission and the vision of their founder Dr. Pauline King.

They tell us Laksmi is keeping well and has written her Tamil exam for the fourth time. She is a responsible young lady and will turn 18 this August 2018. She is encouraged by our cards and letters and loves the photo's and wants us to send more. They thank us for playing a major role in the upbringing and life of Laksmi and are sure it will definitely have a positive impact on her life.

So thank you all the members of Immanuel for your contributions to the jar on Sunday mornings with your announcements and sharing. A young woman in a far away country has had an improved youth because of your generosity.

Laurie Lorenz, contact person with our sponsored children in India and Bethlehem.

Women's Fellowship:

May 6th was the date for the annual "Women's Event". About fourteen of us gathered at "Parker John's" restaurant on the riverfront in Sheboygan. Food and fellowship was enjoyed by all. Thank you to Laurie Lorenz for organizing the event this year.

After a summer hiatus the Women's Fellowship will resume meeting on Monday September 10th at 6:30. We will be looking ahead to our service projects for fall.

Membership in the Women's Fellowship is encouraged and open to all women of Immanuel. Our focus is service to the church and the community. Meetings are held the first Monday of the month in February, April, May, October, November and the second Monday in September. Special event months are March (Women's Sunday) and December(Advent Event),therefore, no regular scheduled meetings will be held.

The months of January, June, July and August will have no meeting. All meetings are held in the back Sunday School room and begin at 6:30 P.M..

Please consider this opportunity in service to Immanuel.

Respectfully submitted by, Chris Thieleke

Library News

“Today is a new day. Fill it with more love and wisdom, more happiness and strength.”

The 150 Most Important Bible Verses, in a handy, easy-to-read format on a collection of Bible verses written by Thomas Nelson Gift Books. This book will encourage readers wherever they are in life. Verses especially for men, women, teens, and leaders have been selected from tens of thousands for their power to transform the mind, soul, heart, and body. Readers will experience God's presence like never before with these priceless truths, and live with joy knowing that what is most important to God can also be most important to them.

Reading the Bible from cover to cover can seem like a daunting task. After all, the Bible is a big book that doesn't read like an ordinary book. That's because the Bible is anything but ordinary. **It's a love letter from God to the world.** Instead of having a beginning, a middle and an end, the Bible tells an ongoing story, one in which you play an important part.

The *The 150 Most Important Bible Verses* is designed to help you get better acquainted with God and his worlds one step at a time. Each brief chapter focuses on a bite-size portion of the Bible. You can discover more about the cultural, historical and scriptural context of the verse, as well as gain insight into the

verse underlying themes and life-changing truth. You will also find ideas on how to apply what you learn to how you live.

No verse in the Bible can stand alone without the support of every word God has provided. You'll get an overview of what the Bible has to say. It will help you better know where to turn when you need to hear what God Says about a specific topic. May this book help you know more about the Bible and its author in a deeper and more relevant way. You can locate this book with the call number 220.6 THE.

No Church Is an Island is a book about the power of a Savior and the power of congregations. The Savior is Jesus Christ, the same regardless of the name or denomination of your church. The congregations whose stories are told here have come to know a new vitality as they have reached out to others beyond their membership. The source of the congregation's power is Jesus Christ. The channels of Christ's power are men and women, young and old, who expand the boundaries of the congregation to include all who are in need. These stories and reflections are recorded to encourage the faith and strengthen the determination of other persons and congregations who will come to use the power of Jesus Christ to increase their love and service to those around them.

The author David King describes how a variety of churches are being revitalized by extending their ministries to meet the special needs and problems of their communities. His findings are a source of hope and inspiration for other churches seeking to infuse new strength and purpose into their ministries. There is no one way to use power. Each congregation has done its own thing. Circumstances are different in each place, styles of ministry are different;

methods of spreading Christ's word are different. But the sense that what is being done is a ministry of Jesus Christ is the same. You can locate this book with the call number 259 KIN.

You are encouraged to use the library, the only request is that you sign the card in the back of the book and place the card in the file box. There is no time limit for returning the book. Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions about any of the books in the Church Library you can contact Karen Karsteadt or Vanessa Thieleke.

Submitted by Vanessa Thieleke



July 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group- 9:30a	4 Independence Day	5	6	7 Wedding at Church
8	9 Visiting Team Consistory Meeting 7p	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 Ice Cream Social 3-7p	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group- 9:30a	25	26	27	28 Wedding at Church Concession Stand at Plymouth Races

29	30	31				
Outdoor Service	Vacation Bible School 5:30 to 7:30	Vacation Bible School 5:30 to 7:30				
Vacation Bible School- 5:30-7:30p						
Movie night- 7:30p						

August 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Vacation Bible School 5:30 to 7:30	2 Vacation Bible School 5:30 to 7:30	3	4
5	6	7 Rural Church Fellowship Meeting- Our Shepherd UCC 6:30p	8	9	10	11
12	13 Visiting Team Consistory Meeting 7p	14 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group- 9:30a	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	