

***“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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“So, this is Christmas. And what have we done? Another year over. And a new one just begun.” The song “Happy Xmas (War Is Over),” written and recorded by John Lennon and Yoko Ono is one I always think about during Christmastide (the season in which we now find ourselves). This is Christmas. What we have been waiting and preparing and hoping for has come. Love has come to us! What now? What have we done, and what will we do with such a gift?

So often the big day arrives, and it feels as if it comes and goes, then gets neatly packed away with the garland, lights, and ornaments until next year, or perhaps swept up and discarded like the needles of a drying Christmas tree. All the sparkly stuff gets put away, and we begin to focus our attention on the challenges, struggles, responsibilities, and possibilities of the new year.

But Lennon and Ono’s song will not let us leave Christmas behind. Its lyrics look to a time when war is over, a time when no

one has to be afraid. This is Christmas. What have we done? What will we do? The days of hope and promise do not come to an end. The days of preparing our lives and our world for the one whose way reveals God's love and peace don't come to an end simply because we've undecked the halls.

"Happy Xmas (War is Over)" was written and released in 1971 during the era of the Vietnam War. It's a song which acknowledges that our present reality is not what we dream of, but this is Christmas, and as we begin the new year, we are called to live like we trust in the promise of Christmas – God is with us, right here in our troubled world, calling us to live differently, showing us the way, filling us with hope and love so that together with God we may build a world in which peace and joy might be experienced by all.

Another Christmas song written during the Vietnam War era, as a response not only to the war but to the race riots happening across the United States at the time, is "Someday at Christmas," recorded by Stevie Wonder and written by Ron Miller and Bryan Wells. It was released for the Christmas season of 1967. It, too, looks to a time when people might truly live the hope and promise of Christmas. Its lyrics include lines such as: "Someday at Christmas there'll be no wars when we have learned what Christmas is for." "When we have found what life's really worth, there'll be peace on earth." "Someday at Christmas we'll see a land with no hungry children; no empty hand." "One happy morning people will share a world where people care." And "Hate will be gone and love will prevail."

Simply because the 25<sup>th</sup> of December has come and gone, it doesn't mean Christmas is over. Rather it means Christmas has just begun. This is Christmas. Christmas is a beginning – a time of dreaming, a time of resolving to do and be different, a time of being reminded that God is with us so we don't have to be afraid to change. This is Christmas. What will we do?

There is a Christmas poem written by the preacher and civil rights activist Howard Thurman. The poem is called *The Work of Christmas*, and it goes like this:

*When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and the princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:*

*To find the lost, to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among people,  
to make music in the heart.*

This is Christmas. What should we do? For starters, we are called to really begin in earnest the work of Christmas that Howard Thurman outlines in his poem. May we live with eyes and ears, hearts and hands and actions mindful of the work of Christmas that is ours. Let us focus our attention on the work of Christmas that begins now – the work of mercy and compassion, justice and peace.

So this is Christmas. Love has come to us, to our weary and worried world. Let us live like we trust that it is so. Let us embark upon the year ahead with lives committed to engaging in the work of Christmas in the world the whole year through - until our dreams of “someday at Christmas” become *today* at Christmas.

Rev. Laura

New editions of ***These Days* daily devotional booklets** are available on the back table 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.

**From the Mission Committee:**

Thank you to everyone who helped support our pillow drive for Safe Harbor of Sheboygan County! We are glad and grateful to share that together we collected 55 pillows! Thanks to the time and skill of Vanessa Thieleke and Laurie Lorenz, we have enough lovingly handmade pillowcases for nearly all of the pillows! The pillowcases were decorated by members of Immanuel of all ages at two different workshops. The pillows and pillowcases were dedicated during our 7:00pm Christmas Eve worship service. They will soon be sent to Safe Harbor where they will be a token of comfort and care given to folks in our community who are away from home and scared. We hope to continue this project into the future, so please keep an eye out for further details about how you can continue to participate in this important ministry.

**SAVE THE DATE**—Immanuel's **annual chili supper** will be held on **Wednesday, February 20th**. There will be sign up sheets placed in the back of church for helping, and bars and cakes, when the date gets closer.

Everyone's help is greatly appreciated.

Thank you in advance, Julie Arnhoelter-Wolf

## **Annual Confirmation Pancake Breakfast and Dessert**

### **Auction**



Sunday, February 3, 2019

beginning at 8:45am in the Fellowship Hall

All-you-can-eat pancakes, sausage, fruit, and pastries for \$5 per person.

Bid on a variety of delectable desserts while you eat!

Proceeds from the Pancake Breakfast will go toward covering the cost of future youth retreats.

Proceeds from the Dessert Auction will benefit a mission project of the confirmands' choosing.

## **Field trip to the Islamic Society of Sheboygan County**

**Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup>**

The Confirmation classes will be making a visit, along with other area UCC Confirmation classes, to the Islamic Society of Sheboygan in Oostburg, WI. Parents, mentors, and anyone else from the congregation who has interest are welcome and encouraged to attend. **Please meet at church at 12:45pm. We will need some drivers.** If you can help or would like to come along, please speak with Rev. Laura.

## **81<sup>st</sup> Annual Scholarship Presentation Banquet of the United Church Men and Women**

On October 25<sup>th</sup> Dr. Rodney Thieleke, Tracy Kracht, Kristy Pahl, my wife Jane, and I attended this event at Lakeland University. The keynote speaker was Dr. David Black, President of Lakeland.

The purpose of this group is to provide financial scholarship to people of the area who are studying to become (or already are) trained leaders of the church. The scholarships are named in honor of people of our area who were active in this group or benefited from this group.

I list the scholarship recipients: The Rev. Beth Petzke, pastor of Grace UCC, Kohler, received the post seminary scholarship. Mr. Jacob Nault, a graduate of Lakeland University who is a first-year student at Eden Theological Seminary, received the seminary award. Ms. Nicole Herda, member of Grace UCC, Two Rivers, who is a student at Lakeland received the pre-seminary award.

In faith,  
Bill Kesting

## **Women's Fellowship Update**

A sincere thank you to Immanuel Congregation.  
Our Thanksgiving Food Collection was a huge success. This would

not be possible without the generosity of our church family.

Thank you also for your spirit of giving during the Christmas season. Our Christmas Mission Tree Collection was gratefully accepted by Sheboygan County Health and Human Services. Thanks to Laurie Lorenz for delivering the SUV full of donations!

Many volunteers offered their valuable time and talents in decorating the church for Christmas during the annual "Advent Event". Following a lunch of sloppy joes, hot dogs, salads and ice cream we got to work. An added activity this year was partnering with the Mission Committee to decorate pillowcases for Safe Harbor. Thank you to Vanessa Thieleke, Jill Thieleke, Kristi Pahl and Laurie Lorenz for your leadership.

Our Christmas monetary gift donations this year include:

1. \$100 to Mission Committee for purchase of materials for pillowcases
2. \$100 to Stars and Stripes Honor Flight
3. \$100 to What If? Foundation

The Women's Fellowship will be having a special meeting on Monday January 7 2019 at 6:30 at Elverta Reinemann's house to begin planning a special worship service in honor of Women's Sunday to be held in March. With the guidance and creativity of Rev. Laura it will be a service you won't want to miss. We will be looking for volunteers to be a part of this special service.

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Thieleke

## **Library News Update**

Have you ever looked for a book to share with your children about the wonderful messages from the Bible? The Church library has two books which might be helpful for you on this topic to help share these messages with our children.

Eldon Weisheit is the author of *To the Kid in the Pew : 60 Chapel Talks*. In this book, he has shared suggestions on how to illustrate these great and wonderful messages from the Bible. The author suggests you must always add your own faith and your own knowledge of the people to who you are speaking. The author asks you to not regard these children's sermons as loaves of bakery bread all wrapped and on the shelf ready for you to serve but you need to bake the message in the warmth of your own love for Christ and His people. You will have a fresh loaf ready to be served and the message will include that sweet smelling savor often mentioned in Scripture. May the Holy Spirit bless your efforts to communicate the joyful message of Christ the Savior. The call number of this book is 155.9 SHE.

Sylvanus Stall shares 43 short stories in his book titled *Five Minute Object Sermons to Children, Through Eye-gate and Ear-gate into the City of Child-soul*. The author seeks to attract the young through the presentation of the old truths of the Gospel in a manner interesting to them. The author secures their attention, teaching truths which are simple, creates impressions which are likely to be lasting and will win the heart for Christ and the right way of life. The author's object is to implant in the child's mind seeds of truth, love, nobleness and justice and all the virtues of life. You can locate this book with the call number 248 STA.

In an age of instant gratification and information overload, the author Tommy Tenney emphasizes that "we like things to come

quickly, easily, and cheaply." In the book, *The God Chasers: My Soul Follows Hard After Thee*, Tommy Tenney insists that humility before and intimacy with God are the secret facets to apprehending more of God's glory. One might ask what is a God chaser? A God Chaser is a person whose passion for God's presence presses him to chase the impossible in hopes in the uncatchable might catch him. A God chasers is an individual whose hunger exceeds his reach. A child chases a loving parent until, suddenly, the strong arms of the father enfold the chaser. If catching God is an impossible act, Tenney's passionate heart reveals that being caught by God is the hope--"you're chasing the impossible, knowing it's possible...the pursuer becomes the pursued." Paul put it this way: "I chase after that I may catch that which apprehended me: (Phil. 3:12)Job, David, Paul were God chasers. The passionate paths of God chasers can be traced across the pages of history from Moses the stutterer, David the singer, and Paul the itinerant preacher.

Tenney's writing is sure to birth a new generation of God chasers, anxious to be caught by God Himself. Add your name to the list. . . become a God chaser. Who knows? You might one whom He catches. You can locate this book with the call number 239 TEN.

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



## **Consistory Notes from November and December**

### **Minutes for November 12, 2018 Consistory Meeting**

#### Treasurer's report

- Motion made and seconded to approve treasurer's report

#### Pastor's report

- Rev. Laura is writing a skit to introduce the new recycling program to the congregation with the confirmation class
- December 16, 7pm, Christmas program moved from 6pm because of high school concert
  - Reception downstairs following program hosted by Christian Ed
- December 19, Caroling at Harvest Home, Meet at church at 5:30pm
- Annual UCC Christmas Fund envelopes are available
- Motion and second to give white gifts from Christmas Eve service to Ronald McDonald House
- E-mail received from Taylor Jahnke to be removed from membership--She has moved out of the area---E-mail has been sent to her confirming her request
  - Motion made and seconded to remove Taylor Jahnke from membership role
- Update on international book study with St. Peter UCC & Ralph Connor Memorial United Church of Canada
  - Continuing the program
    - 10-12 Canadians and 12 US participants
  - Thanksgiving eve service 7:00 pm Nov.21, 2018, No confirmation class
- Volunteer at Sheboygan Co. Food Bank 9:00 to 11:00am Sat. Dec. 1 and Dec. 8, and Tue. Dec. 11
  - Sign up at church
- Sat. Dec. 1 at noon after food bank consistory set up Christmas tree and outdoor nativity scene
- Sun. Dec.2 Advent event-- decorate church
  - Communion that morning

- Decorate after worship
- November 25 is Nancy Dreier's last service as organist
  - Fellowship after church
  - Consistory to bring cookies and bars

## Old business

- Aaron and Rod met with carpenter Jeremy Pieper concerning the repair of the frame work of the north door
  - Jeremy Pieper will complete the project early spring
- Parsonage and garage siding cleaning not yet done
  - Brett will lead crew in spring
- New lights in the bathrooms have been installed and a ballast replaced in fellowship hall. Thanks to Christopher Burgin
- Archiving of meeting minutes and records still being worked on
  - Jill keeps current notes and minutes in a folder on the computer
- Discussion and decisions on the state of the church woods
  - Rev. Laura wrote a proposal for formation of a wood care team at Immanuel and a letter of invitation for potential committee members
  - Motion made and seconded to accept the proposal for the formation of a woods care team and to bring the proposal before the congregation at the annual meeting

## New business

- Signs of mice in the kitchen
  - A trap was set
  - David Breisch will get more traps for kitchen
  - Additional traps for parsonage. Rev. Laura will monitor
- Jodi Voss will play organ once per month
  - Kim to talk to Jodi to schedule
- Talking about removing the church sign and replacing it with a new digital sign to be paid for by the memorial committee
  - New sign will be in different location due to right-of-way
  - Will look for congregational approval at annual meeting

- Organ tune up--Suggested by Tom Salzman in August-- Repair G# key which has problems
  - Motion and second to get organ tune up

#### Closed Session

- Motion and second to convene in open session

Date of next meeting December 10, 2018

- Dinner Meeting, 6pm, Parker John's Sheboygan
- Spouses are welcome

### **Minutes for December 10, 2018 consistory Meeting**

#### Treasurer's report

- Investments didn't do as well as past years. We have not met the level of profit needed to make special gifts at this point
- Treasurer's report motioned and seconded to accept

#### Pastor's report

- Christmas Eve services at 7pm and 11pm
  - Loose offering at Christmas services will be used as white gifts
- Woods committee is forming
  - 12 invited, 7 already accepted to on the committee
  - Committee formation will be approved at annual meeting
- Volunteer at Sheboygan Food Bank Dec. 11---9:00am to 11:00am
- Dec. 16 7:00pm Christmas program, no fellowship after
- Dec. 19 Caroling at Harvest Home Meet at church at 5:30pm
- Annual UCC Christmas Fund envelopes available in church
  - The fund financially helps retired pastors
- Thanksgiving eve offering to food bank
  - Motion made and seconded
- January 27, 3pm Trivia night sponsored by Mission committee to benefit Keep Wisconsin Warm fund
- January 6

- Present scholarships to students during worship
- Meeting about German trip
- Communion

## Old business

- Lighted outdoor church sign
  - According to county zoning, a lighted sign could not be installed at the existing location
  - Would need to determine a placement that meets zoning between the church and the parsonage
  - Bonnie will take that information back to the Memorial committee
- Organ players
  - Jodi Voss to play when Kim is not available in Dec. and 2nd Sunday of the month in the new year
  - Karen Bruinooge has expressed interest to help
    - Kim will need to work on schedule
- Organ tuned up by Tom Salzman in November
  - Bill received
- Conversation with Bruce Landwehr on church woods
  - He did remove fallen tree east of parsonage
  - Asked him not take any wood from the woods until after new woods committee has made decisions
- Any more vermin in the church or parsonage
  - Evidence of mice in couch in back Sunday School room
- Archiving of meeting minutes and records is still being worked on
  - File on the shared drive
  - Brett will send the last two years of notes to Jill
- Whatever happened to the German Partnership meeting slated for December?
  - Meeting scheduled for January 6

## New business

- Furnace # 1 malfunction and update on repair
  - Would furnace repair be under warrantee

- Neumann will be coming back tomorrow to try a new fix
- Need more keys
  - New organists need to get in to practice , get a key for Jody Voss. She was not able to get into church to practice on Saturday
  - Other things come up for the need of keys
  - Brett will get 5 extra keys made
    - Motion and second to have Brett make they keys
- From Mike Gottsacker, a new speaker for the basement is needed
  - Will cost around \$100
  - Mike will replace the speaker

### Closed Session

- Motion and second to go into closed session
- Motion and second to come out of closed session

Date of next meeting January 14, 2019



**Get Your THINK On!**



**Join us for an afternoon of Trivia  
Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm  
Immanuel United Church of Christ**

**The cost is \$7 per person.  
Beverages will be provided.  
Please bring a snack to share.**

**Door prizes will be awarded!**

Come with a team (no more than 8 people per team, please) or come by yourself and team-up with others when you arrive.

We look forward to a night of fun, facts, and fellowship.

Friends, family, and folks of all ages are welcome

Proceeds will go to support the

**Keep Wisconsin Warm Fund  
of Wisconsin Public Service,**

which is a nonprofit program that helps the elderly, disabled, and others with limited incomes to pay their heating bills.

This event is sponsored by the Immanuel UCC Mission Committee

## January 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 Senior Choir 7p	4	5
6	7	8 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group 9:30a	9 Confirmation Classes meet at Bethlehem UCC 6:00p	10 Senior Choir 7p	11	12
13	14 Visiting Day  Consistory Meeting 7p	15 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group 9:30a	16 Confirmation 7 <sup>th</sup> grade- 5:30p 8 <sup>th</sup> grade- NO CLASS	17 Senior Choir 7p	18	19
20 Sunday School JOY Choir Sings	21	22	23 Confirmation 7 <sup>th</sup> grade- 5:30p 8 <sup>th</sup> grade- 6:45p	24 Senior Choir 7p	25	26
27 9:30 worship  Annual Meeting  Trivia Event 3p	28	29 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group 9:30a	30 Confirmation 7 <sup>th</sup> grade- 5:30p 8 <sup>th</sup> grade- 6:45p	31 Senior Choir 7p		

## February 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Confirmation Pancake Breakfast and Dessert Auction 8:45a (takes place of Sunday School)	4 Women's Fellowship	5 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group 9:30a  Canada Book Study Session with St Peter's 7p @ Immanuel	6 Confirmation 7 <sup>th</sup> grade- 5:30p  8 <sup>th</sup> grade- 6:45p	7 Senior Choir 7p	8	9
10 Field Trip to Islamic Society. Meet at church at 12:45p	11 Visiting Day  Consistory 7p	12 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group 9:30a  Canada Book Study Session with St Peter's 7p @ Immanuel	13 Confirmation 7 <sup>th</sup> grade- 5:30p  8 <sup>th</sup> grade- 6:45p	14 Senior Choir 7p  <b><u>Newsletter articles DUE!!!</u></b>	15	16
17	18	19 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group 9:30a  Canada Book Study Session with St Peter's 7p @ Immanuel	20 ANNUAL CHILI SUPPER  Confirmation 7 <sup>th</sup> grade- 5:30p  8 <sup>th</sup> grade- 6:45p	21 Senior Choir 7p	22	23
24 Sunday school JOY Choir Sings	25	26 Daytime Fellowship and Study Group 9:30a	27 Confirmation 7 <sup>th</sup> grade- 5:30p  8 <sup>th</sup> grade- 6:45p	28 Senior Choir 7p		