

Immanuel Lutheran Church
229 Eleventh Avenue West
Grinnell, Iowa 50112

April 2021 Newsletter

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

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LET US KNOW...

If you have a change of address, have a loved one ill or hospitalized, have a new baby, would like a pastoral visit, or if you would like a special prayer during the prayers of the church on Sunday, please contact Pastor Koeppe or the church office.

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Office: 641-236-6691

Pastor's Email: koepj@hotmail.com

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All services are live streamed on our Facebook and YouTube pages:

(search for Rev. Dr. Joel Koeppe)

<https://www.facebook.com/ImmanuelGrinnell/>

<https://www.youtube.com>

Where

To

Find

Us

Podcast Links

(search for Immanuel Grinnell)

Anchor: <https://anchor.fm/ImmanuelGrinnell>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com>

Google: <https://www.google.com/podcasts>

Pocketcast: <https://pca.st/jkhh18k8>

RadioPublic: <https://radiopublic.com>

Apple: <https://podcasts.apple.com>

All links are available on our Church Website:

www.immanuelgrinnell.org

“Death and Resurrection Proclamations”



From the Pastor

Holy Week and the Season of Easter puts death and resurrection on the radars of many people. With the extra sermons that are written for Holy Week, I struggled with what else to say in a newsletter article; then it hit me. What is an important set of readings that are not heard much anymore, but are really important to know? For your edification and reflection, I share with you a section from the Agenda for The Lutheran Hymnal (the old TLH hymnal). This section is known as The Sentences, and is no longer part of the funeral rite in LSB (our current hymnal).

In LSB, these thoughts are summarized with the remembrance of baptism, and are to be preached in the sermon.

I pray you enjoy these words, and reflect upon them with baptism firmly in mind:

Man who is born of woman Is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue. (Job 14:1-2) Indeed, You have made my days as hand breadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. (Ps. 39:5)

Thus says the Lord: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19) St. Paul says: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” (Rom. 5:19)

O Lord, have mercy upon us sinners, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Cor. 5:10)

But Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. He says: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. He was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. On the last day, our Lord Jesus “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

And St. John says: “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as Christ is pure” (1 John 3:3). In what do we hope? We hope in these “exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:4)

And so, let us seek now, in the day of salvation, the one thing needful, which shall not be taken away from us. Let us fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on to eternal life, to which we are also called. May we be found in constant readiness for the final summons, ever waiting for our Lord and purifying our souls in obeying the truth through His Spirit, that, through His power resting upon us, we may overcome the world and be counted worthy at last to reign with Him eternally in heaven.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

Let us pray:

O God of grace and mercy, we give thanks for Your loving kindness shown to all Your servants, who, having finished their course of faith, now rest from their labors. Grant that, like Your saints, we may be faithful unto death and receive the crown of eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+

Rev. Dr. Joel G. Koepp

President's Piece for Peace

Rev. Dr. Brian S. Saunders

District President

As we entered into this Lenten Season I made a visit to one of our congregations. It was the First Sunday of Lent where the 3-year series Gospel lesson included Jesus baptism and His temptations in the wilderness. It was a very well-crafted sermon that included contributions from all three readings of the day. The sermon began with a call to repentance (rightly so for Lent). He expounded on the meaning of repentance in the Greek language "metanoia" which means "a change of mind." He had excellent application of that phrase and applied it well to the lives of his members. The sermon was well-balanced with condemning Law and rescuing Gospel. The Gospel was so sweet because it didn't have any conditions on it. He presented the full power of the Gospel (God for us in Christ Jesus) which was needed since the Law informed me I had no power in myself to make any change of any kind toward God. It had to be the work of Jesus to accomplish this and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to effect this change in me.

The Third Article of the Apostles Creed is a good review for us during this Lententide. Especially the explanation of Martin Luther on the Third Article which says, **"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel;"** That is uniquely Lutheran coming from the pen of Luther himself.

From my many years of teaching on the collegiate level I found that the many denominations from which the students came (if they came from any) had a firm agreement on the First and Second Articles of the Creed. It was when we got to the Third Article that those from a Roman and those from a Reformed background could not and would not agree to the explanation quoted above. For them repentance, the change of mind, was an inherent quality in them by which they could exercise their will and change their own minds about God. Along with that was the definition of faith that included their decision to believe in Jesus. For most of them the Sacraments were not a means by which God transcended space and time to touch the unholy and make them holy. The Sacraments were an act of man toward God to demonstrate the decision they have made, the change of mind they made for themselves.

That is a very anthropocentric understanding of repentance. It is also completely rebuffed by Holy Scripture. I Corinthians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:1 make it very clear that man, by nature, cannot believe in Jesus. We are dead in our trespasses and sins. Dead means dead, unable to move or do anything toward God. In fact, natural man is at enmity with God. The only decision an unregenerate man can make is that he wishes to be lord of his own life, he doesn't need another.

This is why the Gospel is so sweet. The change of mind is not only sadness and shame over sinfulness, it is also a full trust in Christ Jesus and His merits for forgiveness and salvation. The Gospel is what the Holy Spirit uses to call us, gather us, and enlighten us as to who Jesus is (II Thess. 2:14, Ro. 10:17, Eph. 1:13). It is the means by which the Holy Spirit creates the faith that believes the promises of God in Christ. Faith is granted as a gift, not a merit or reward. The Gospel creates the faith that apprehends the promises the Gospel gives.

Luther explains this simply and with clarity. One either is drawn to this teaching or rejects it. This explanation was not found in any of the other catechisms we studied. It is uniquely Lutheran and more importantly it is biblically true. God be praised for this Third Article of the Apostles Creed. Devote on it, study it, lean on it during this Lententide. God be with you all in your preaching and teaching this season of reflection and repentance.



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter article – April 2021

Our Father in heaven sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. His atoning sacrifice is the first fruits of all the dead, a pleasing aroma to His Father, so that His perfect life and death count for all who believe in Him. He claimed us as His own children in Holy Baptism. He sustains and strengthens our faith with His Holy Word and His Body and Blood.

As new creatures, who have put on Christ, we bear good fruit. We do the good works prepared for us, which He makes known to us in His Word. By faith then, trusting in the Word of God, we do what he says because He does not lie and always keeps His promises. For “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

And so the Lord promises: “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine” (Prov. 3:9-10). How do we honor the Lord with the wealth that God has given us in His generosity? By giving generously to those whom the Lord has called us to love and support your family, your society, and your church. And His promise is that, in so doing, you will never lack.

A common counterpoint is: “But that’s from the Old Testament!” Our Lord Jesus Himself gives us similar promises in the New Testament. He says, at the conclusion of the parable of the talents: “For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance” (Matt. 25:29).

And then at the end of the parable of the dishonest manager, he says: “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Luke 16:10–13).

And in His sermon on the mount, he says: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:19–21).



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We have become conditioned against these promises because of their misuse by the peddlers of the prosperity gospel – the guys on TV who say you get rich by putting God in your debt. And thus, we miss out on the fact that God does reward temporal faithfulness in temporal matters with temporal blessings. It's no quid pro quo. It's all from God's grace and His fatherly divine goodness and mercy. But those Bible passages do in fact say what they say! It's not the Old Testament's problem. It's ours. It is almost as if we have become so jaded against this that we think it a virtue to be stingy with our offerings.

But our Father in heaven still loves to bless those who bless others. He loves to give to those who give freely and generously. In fact, he challenges us to challenge Him: “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need” (Mal. 3:10).

And so, while we don't give so that we would get, we do receive from the Lord in order to give, and He will bless your giving with more receiving. As St. Paul wrote in Rom. 8:32: “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”



Spring Confirmation Retreat - April 30-May 1

The Confirmation Retreat takes place each year in October at Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca in Solon, IA. Rescheduled from October 2020, a Spring Confirmation Retreat will be held over April 30—May 1, 2021 at Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca. This year, Pastor Zachary Voss from St. John Lutheran Church in Homestead will leading our study on Confession/Office of the Keys.

How many in the pew on Sunday morning really reads or takes to heart the depth and implication of the confession they just made before God and one another? How many take advantage of or know first-hand the priceless value of individual confession/absolution with one's own pastor? Who stops to take a look at how confession and the Office of the Keys flow into each other and is to be a natural rhythm for the baptized child of God? We will be diving into these things at this spring's confirmation retreat!



We will be taking a look at the 5th chief part of Luther's Small Catechism: Confession which flows into the Office of the Keys and seeing how this part of Luther's Catechism is a great treasure for the baptized children of God. Come and join us as we continue to sit and learn as daily pupils of the Catechism!

Registration will be available soon at www.lcmside.org/confretreat/. We are looking forward to our first youth event since the beginning of the pandemic and we expect it to be a great experience for our youth!



Camp Presentations

Would you like to know more about Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca? Camp Director Daniel Sanchez is available to speak to congregations and groups about Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca's mission, facilities, and programs. Call 319-848-4187 to schedule a speaker!



THRIVENT CHOICE

In 2020, Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca received nearly \$9,000 in Thrivent Choice contributions! Thank you donors for making this program a success for Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca. Will you help make 2021 an even better year in Thrivent Choice giving?

Go to <https://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice/> or call 800-THRIVENT (800-847-4836) and state "Thrivent Choice" to designate your choice dollars for Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca today. Thank you for making Thrivent Choice a valuable stream of revenue for Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca!



Needs List

Lawn Tractor; Paper Towels; Toilet Paper; First Class Postage Stamps; Batteries: 9v, AA, AAA; Cleaning Supplies: window cleaner, all-purpose cleaner. Please see our web site for a complete list: www.campiodiseca.org.

Important Dates

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, these retreats are subject to change, postpone, or cancel.

March 29

First Registration Discount Deadline

April 30-May 1

IDE Spring Confirmation Retreat

May 3

Second Registration Discount Deadline

May 3-4

IDE Spring Workers' Conference

June 17

First Day of Summer Camp

August 3-6

Higher Things Confirmation Camp

2021 Camp Summer Staff

Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca is looking for college-aged young adults to make a difference in the lives of children. We still need fill out our staff with a few more counselors and support staff. The opportunity to serve at a camp awaits. Go to www.nloma.org to start your summer service profile today!

Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca also needs Junior Counselors (JC's) to assist the summer program. Applicants should be at least 15 years old. JCs spend the week with a cabin group enjoying the many camp activities and serving as a positive role model and motivator for younger campers while helping the cabin counselors supervise younger campers. It's a great experience for only \$100 per week. Please contact Camp Director, Daniel Sanchez by emailing director@iodiseca.org for more information or to receive an application.



Dear Pastor Koepp & Immanuel Lutheran Church,

We are extremely grateful for your donation of 34.8 pounds to the Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc. (MICA) Poweshiek County Emergency Food Pantry. With your support and assistance, we were able to provide food and other items to 85 households throughout Poweshiek County during the month of February, 2021. Total weight distributed was 3,718 pounds!

Thank you also for your 3/1/2021 donation of \$342.00 to the Poweshiek County Family Development Center! As you know, the need in our communities is great, and it's only with your help that MICA can provide its vital services to so many struggling families. THANK YOU!

Last month we featured the Head Start program at MICA. This month we want to share information about another wonderful program: Family Development and Self-Sufficiency. Also known as FaDSS, this program provides a wealth of support and assistance to Iowa families who are working to re-enter the labor market.

- FaDSS provides in-home support with family development specialists who help their families work through barricades as they work toward success.
- Assessment tools and goal setting are two important areas as families work toward gainful employment, furthering education, and physical and mental health.

Christy, Nikki, and Emily are Family Development staff members here in the Poweshiek County office who work diligently to help their families become successful.

We truly appreciate your contribution because every donation helps MICA fulfill its missions: Helping People. Changing Lives. Building Communities.

Sincerely,

Mindy Clayton
Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc.

Setting the Hook!

Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias),² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick.³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples.⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.⁷ Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages^[a] to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up,⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." John 6:1-9 NIV

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you needed to plan a party or event that was larger than your immediate family? Maybe it was your wedding reception or the District teacher's conference. You send out invitations and request rsvp's just to be sure you are totally prepared. You cover every detail with the caterer to make sure everyone will have a place at the table and plenty to eat. You want no surprises, disappointments, or embarrassments.

Having had a mother who could somehow find enough food for supper for an extra 2 or 3 unannounced guests, I can appreciate what took place on this grassy hill where Jesus performs one of His greatest miracles. Mom could go to the pantry and the freezer and put a meal together. However, we know from what John writes that there were no Hy-Vee's or Chic-Fil-A's in Jesus' day.

Put yourself in the sandals of the Master Teacher as you read John's record of what happened in chapter 6. First off, your classroom size pales in comparison to what Jesus was working with that day. At least 15,000+! Lesson plans? No doubt, Jesus was prepared and knew precisely what He was going to say and do. Objective(s) – check! Materials needed – that's a problem. Procedure – ask the disciples. Assessment – plenty to eat and leftovers. Reflection – time to go to the mountainside by Himself. Jesus, of course, knew the outcome, but His teacher aides, the disciples, proved less than stellar. They acted more like the Keystone cops when faced with the question *"Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"* That doesn't deter Jesus for He uses this question to "set the hook" to pull them into His lesson plan which would eventually turn into a miraculous meal.

Let's take a look at this classroom on the mountainside and see how Jesus hooks the disciples into accomplishing his objective. John tells us thousands of people were there to see and hear this "Jesus" who was doing miraculous signs – talk about classroom management! Despite all the distractions that were no doubt taking place, the Master Teacher draws in the disciples to teach them more about Himself with the anticipatory question to Philip, *"Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?"* The "hook" has been set for we are told Jesus did this to test him because He already knew the outcome. The same cannot be said for the disciples for they are convinced there is nothing they can do but put pressure on Jesus to send the crowds home. They can't possibly imagine how this is going to get done.

This teachable moment for Jesus with His disciples is one of many. Sometimes they get it. Sometimes they don't. You would think that after being at the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples would have had this miracle forever imprinted in their memory bank. Well, they don't! We read in Matthew and Mark's account of the feeding of the 4,000 the same thing happened. *"But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" (Mark 8:4)* The Master Teacher uses opportunities such as these to prepare the disciples for the ministry they would carry on after His resurrection and ascension.

Don't we do that with our students, too? Our toolkit is filled with many creative and imaginative ways to "set the hook" as we try to get our students to engage and internalize our lessons. For example, we might engage them immediately with a question or a joke. We walk amongst our students. We use props. Most importantly, we base our teaching on Scripture. Sometimes we need to be as direct as Jesus. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes, we just have to get in their faces and tell them this is how it is. No matter the lesson or outcome, we strive to be like the Master Teacher. Oh, to be able to observe Jesus up close and in person for the three years He was teaching!

Setting the Hook!

What can we learn from the teaching model provided for us in John 6? That's what I'd like for you to consider for the next few moments. I've come across six ideas for you to think about as His co-workers in our IDE classrooms. Maybe you're already doing them. Maybe it's something you hadn't considered before. Maybe it will reaffirm that what you're doing is just where you're supposed to be doing. Maybe you will disagree, but at the very least I hope and pray these ideas will lead you to deeper thinking about who you are and Who's you are so that your students see in you the same compassion Jesus demonstrated in John 6.

Jesus commands us to do more than we are (humanly) able, because He enables us to do what He commands. Jesus didn't let the disciples off the hook, but lays the responsibility for feeding the 5,000+ at their feet. What they aren't able to do on their own, they accomplish by the power of Christ. Surprise - they end up with a surplus! Jesus gives us tasks to do that we don't have the strength to do ourselves because He gives us the strength to carry them out.

The magnitude of the task should not be used as our excuse for not attempting it, especially when the task is the Lord's commands. When someone asks you to do something that will take you "out of your box", what is your response? Let's look at the everyday tasks we do and those that challenge us as opportunities to share the Gospel.

Wonder of wonders, God has chosen to multiply and expand our puny efforts and contributions, so as to accomplish His will. God uses us a "clay pots" to do His will. Even our failures are used by God to bring about His purposes.

Those who God uses to minister to the needs of this crowd are also those who gain the most by serving others. We're not talking about "giving in order to get." As we serve and give of ourselves in service to others, we find that God abundantly cares for our own needs. Consider the young boy who brought enough food for himself. He ends up with all that he could eat which is more than he would have gotten in the first place. And the disciples, who though they had nothing to serve ended up with baskets!

The disciples are inclined to limit their ministry to what they have seen and done before. "We've never done it that way before." Sometimes it is best to do it the same way. The disciples thought the only way to feed the crowd was to go to the local bakery and fish market. Jesus had a better way. He delights in doing the unexpected, so that His wisdom and grace are displayed through His handling of impossible situations. When you're faced with a challenge, be careful not to limit the ways God can minister through you.

Our Lord cares about and takes care of our needs. Our Lord cares, and He cares well for our needs. He cares so much He went to the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Trust Him who died, rose, and lives on high to care for all of your needs today and every day.

Jan Doellinger
Assistant to the President, Schools

A Word on the Equality Act

To the Pastors, Called Workers and Members
of the 6,000 Congregations of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The words of the apostle Peter apply to us now:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. (1 Peter 1:3–8)

The church's task is not political. It is the proclamation of the Gospel of free salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus for all (1 Cor. 1:23; John 18:36). "The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered" (AC VII 1).¹

God rules His church by His infallible Word, the Holy Scriptures (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:15–16). God rules the state by His eternal law, reason and reasonable laws for the common welfare. "Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God" (AC XVI 1; see Rom. 13:1–7). The church should not meddle in government affairs, especially in matters upon which the Word of God is silent. It is also wrong when governments act against God's eternal law, reason and the basic civil rights of all people. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrines this truth. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Throughout history, governments have acted unjustly — sometimes in the name of race, atheism, communism, religion and even Christianity — and curtailed or denied the rights of conscience and the free exercise of religion. And governments continue to do so. Our Lutheran and biblical confession is that "it is necessary for Christians to be obedient to their rulers and laws. The only exception is when they are commanded to sin. Then they ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)" (AC XVI 6–7; see 1 Peter 2:13–14).

St. Paul made use of his legal right as a Roman citizen (“I appeal to Caesar” Acts 25:11). “Christ’s kingdom allows us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it allows us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, and air” (Ap XVI 54). Our Lutheran Confessions commend the seeking of public remedy for injustice. “Public remedy, made through the office of the public official, is not condemned, but is commanded and is God’s work, according to Paul (Romans 13)” (Ap XVI 59). Our God-given right to act as citizens is very important, especially now.

The Equality Act is before Congress.² It sounds innocent. All Americans should enjoy equality and the protections of the U.S. Constitution. But in elevating sexual orientation to a protected class, the Equality Act will bring sweeping changes to current laws, to the great detriment of the religious and constitutional freedoms of biblically faithful churches, institutions, Christian schools and individuals.

Jesus referred to Genesis 2:24, when He stated:

“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matt. 19:4–6)

In fact, those churches and institutions that are bound by the Word of God to the truth of marriage between a man and a woman, and that sex outside of that institution is contrary to the word of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament (1 Cor. 7:2), could be punished for simply standing on our consistent, ancient Christian beliefs. The Equality Act effectively outlaws the words of Christ, the sublime doctrine of Creation, the First Article of the Creed, and our “free exercise of religion” based upon the Bible and Apostles’ Creed. The biblical teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman is to be labeled forever a mere “sex-based stereotype.”³

The Equality Act expands the definition of “public accommodation” and puts an ultimatum to individuals, religious non-profits, food banks, schools, charities, adoption agencies and others: “Change your faith-based practices or face government punishment.”⁴

Religious schools (K-12 and universities) are a prime target of the Equality Act, which will make it difficult to maintain standards for admission and codes of Christian conduct for students, faculty and staff.⁵ The Equality Act will forbid college students from using federal tuition assistance at schools that maintain standards of conduct on the basis of the Bible regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sex-specific facilities and female-only spaces could be eliminated. Biological males will have the right to participate in female sports, unjustly denying female athletes at our schools a fair competition and the due rewards of accomplishment.⁶

The Equality Act will eliminate the significant protections of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, passed by Congress and signed into law in 1993.⁷ This law has provided strong protections for “free exercise of religion” in the face of overzealous officials.

The Equality Act contains no conscience protections for medical staff who choose not to perform abortions, even if they have religious objections. Because of its broad definition of “health” services, the Equality Act threatens the Hyde Amendment, which limits public funding for abortion. It also threatens Christian hospitals with elimination of funding for not performing “health” services, including abortion or genital mutilation.

The Equality Act was recently passed by the House and is currently pending in the Senate. The margin is razor thin. If it does not become law now, we can be assured that it will be pressed again. We encourage all LCMS people to:

1. Treat all people with kindness and respect (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” Mark 12:31), while holding firmly to “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).
2. Become informed about the Equality Act and the issues of gender dysphoria. (See “Additional Resources” below.)
3. Consider your role as Christian citizens and make your voice known to your elected officials, particularly in the U.S. House (house.gov/representatives) and Senate (senate.gov/senators/index.htm).
4. Pray for our officials, government and the church in these challenging days.

Martin Luther once said, “Christ dwells only in sinners.” We recognize ourselves as sinners constantly in need of Christ’s forgiveness. We recognize the truth of the apostle Peter’s words, “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God” (1 Peter 4:17). We know that Jesus’ opponents grumbled against Him by saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). This comforting verse applies to us sinners, and we welcome all others to join us at the feet of Jesus, the sole Savior of all (John 3:16). As Christians, we believe that God has created all people, and all are infinitely valuable and accountable to Him. As Christian citizens, we recognize and demand basic God-given civil rights for all people, even as we insist on the First Amendment rights of Christians.

No matter the course of this or any legislation, Christ will sustain His church. Our hope is not in laws, Congress or courts. Our hope is Christ. “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:8–9, 13–17)

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison

President

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Additional resources regarding the Equality Act:

- Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty
- Statement from the LCMS Minnesota South District
- Statement from the LCMS Wyoming District
- LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations — Gender Identity Disorder and Gender Dysphoria in Christian Perspective
- Alliance Defending Freedom — The True Impact of the “Equality Act”
- Heritage Foundation — 11 Myths About H.R. 5, the Equality Act of 2021

Endnotes

1 Citations from the Augsburg Confession (AC) and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Ap) are from Paul T. McCain et al., eds., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005). [Return to statement](#)

2 [congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5/text](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5/text). [Return to statement](#)

3 Equality Act, Section. 2, Findings and Purpose: (1) Discrimination can occur on the basis of the sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ...as well as because of sex-based stereotypes. [Return to statement](#)

4 adfflegal.org/blog/president-biden-has-promised-pass-equality-act-heres-how-threatens-your-freedoms. See the Equality Act, Section. 2, Findings and Purpose: (11) Individuals who are LGBTQ, or are perceived to be LGBTQ, have been subjected to a history... of discrimination on the bases of sexual orientation and gender identity by both private sector and Federal, State, and local government actors, including in employment, housing, and public accommodations, and in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance.... An explicit and comprehensive national solution is needed to address this discrimination.” [Return to statement](#)

5 LCMS schools serve many who in some way identify with the LGBTQ community. However, our schools have standards of conduct and the expectation of respect for our biblical teachings. [Return to statement](#)

6 Section 1101. Definitions and Rules. “(b)(2) (with respect to gender identity) an individual shall not be denied access to a shared facility, including a restroom, a locker room, and a dressing room, that is in accordance with the individual’s gender identity.” [Return to statement](#)

7 Section 1107. Claims. “The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 2000bb et seq.) shall not provide a claim concerning, or a defense to a claim under, a covered title, or provide a basis for challenging the application or enforcement of a covered title.” [Return to statement](#)

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Monthly Meeting of the Church Council
Sunday, January 10th, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Church Council was held on January 10th, at 8:00 AM. Present: Pastor Koepp, Steve Haase, Joel McDonough, Chris Christinson, Kevin Schultz, Markie Koepp, and Kathy Stanek. President Steve Haase called the meeting to order and Pastor Koepp opened with prayer. Minutes from the December council meeting were presented approval. With 2 corrections Joel motioned to approve and Chris 2nd. Motion carried.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND BOARDS

Board of Elders: Joel McDonough

- No issues to discuss. Everything is good at this time.

Treasurer's Report: Chris Christinson

- Written reports attached. All bills have been paid and the current balances are reflected.
- No concerns at this time.

Board of Trustees: Kevin Schultz

- Discussing with contractor when siding repair will be completed.

Board of Evangelism: Pastor Koepp

- Reviewing missions to sponsor in 2021

Board of Education: Markie Koepp

- The Christmas program was a big success.
- Danielle McDonough will be joining the Board of Education.

Board of Stewardship: Keith Thorpe

- Year-end giving reports completed and being sent out to members.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Koepp

- Pastor's report provided listing official acts and Pastoral Duties including.
- Visited Carmen outside the window at Windsor Manor and provided spiritual guidance. Susan was not available and did not attend.

Unfinished Business:

- Chris completed the 2021 budget and provided a copy to the council. With no changes it will be presented to members at the January 17th, 2021 voters meeting for approval.

New Business: None

With no other business to discuss Steve adjourned the meeting. Pastor closed the meeting with prayer.

Voters Meeting: January 17th, 2021 - 10:30 AM

Council Meeting: February 14th, 2021 - 8:00 AM

Submitted by:

Kathy Stanek
Church Council Secretary

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH Monthly Meeting of the Church Council February 14th, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Church Council was held on February 14th, at 8:00 AM. Present: Pastor Koepp, Steve Haase, Chris Christinson, Kevin Schultz, Dianne Schultz, Pam Sittig, and Kathy Stanek. President Steve Haase called the meeting to order and Pastor Koepp opened with prayer. Minutes from the January 10th, 2021 council meeting were presented for approval. Chris motioned to approve and Pam 2nd. Motion carried.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND BOARDS

Board of Elders: Steve Haase

- Reviewed secretary duties.
- Received information from Pastor regarding Lenten services and dates.

Treasurer's Report: Chris Christinson

- Written reports attached. All bills have been paid and the current balances are reflected.
- Submitted PCP forgiveness paperwork.

Board of Trustees: Kevin Schultz

- A concern was addressed about a crack on the wall in the fellowship hall. Kevin reported it has always been there and they are discussing painting both the Sanctuary and fellowship hall.
- Installing new weather strip around the door going outside from the Sunday school wing.
- Steve caulked and repainted the front double doors.

Board of Evangelism: Pastor Koeppe

- Exploring social distance activities to celebrate church members getting back together once the weather warms up.
- Requested the Sunday school students to make handmade cards to be included in visitor, mother's Day, Easter, and shut-in baskets.

Board of Education: Pastor Koeppe

- Sunday school education classes are going great.

Board of Stewardship: Pam Sittig

- Diane Schultz joined the board.
- Pam questioned if there had ever been a Stewardship Audit. Steve will look into it.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Koeppe

- Providing spiritual leadership to members of Immanuel church, preparing weekly sermons, preaching and conducting worship services. Leading Confirmation and Bible Study classes.
- Counseling/home visits, attending board meetings, visiting sick/shut-ins as allowed and providing Communion to those who cannot attend Sunday Divine service.

Unfinished Business: None**New Business:** None

With no other business to discuss Steve thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting. Pastor closed the meeting with prayer.

Next Council Meeting: March 14th, 2021 - 8:00 AM.

Submitted by:

Kathy Stanek
Church Council Secretary

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday, March 28 • 9:00am

Monday, March 29 • Noon Prayer Service

Tuesday, March 30 • Noon Prayer Service

Wednesday, March 31 • Noon Prayer Service

Holy Thursday w/ Holy Communion, April 1 • 6:30pm

“His Blood Be On Us And Our Children!”

Good Friday Chief Service w/ Holy Communion, April 2 • 6:30pm

“He Saved Others: He Cannot Save Himself!”

Holy Saturday, April 3 • Noon Prayer Service

Holy Saturday: Easter Vigil w/ Holy Communion, April 3 • 6:30pm

The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Dawn

with Holy Communion

Sunday, April 4 • 6:30am

The Resurrection of Our Lord: Easter Day

with Holy Communion

Sunday, April 4 • 9:00am

2021 Immanuel Officers & Board Members

President

Steve Haase

Vice President

Joel McDonough

Secretary

Kathy Stanek

Treasurer

Chris Christinson

Elders

Joel McDonough

Steve Haase

Darlo Kelting

Ken Mergen

Trustees

Kevin Schultz

Ben Loudon

Melissa Mintle

Board of Education

Sherry Baker

Danielle McDonough

Markie Koepp

Board of Stewardship

Keith Thorpe

Pamela Sittig

Diane Schultz

Board of Evangelism & Missions

June Routier

Dianna Kelting

Pam Haase

LWML President

Pam Haase

LWML Treasurer

June Routier

LWML Secretary

Pam Haase

LWML Christian Life

Denise Cadwell

Organist

Pam Haase

Esther Huedepohl

Pianist

Sophia Loudon

Church Secretary

Amber Carnine

Sunday School Opening

Pastor Koepp

Altar Guild

Helen Thorpe

June Routier

Danielle McDonough

Pam Haase

Pam Sittig

Esther Huedepohl (Backup)

