

Immanuel Lutheran Church



1002 Powell Avenue

Erie PA 16505

814-833-4062

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Grace & Peace from the Pastor's Desk

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.” Romans 12:6-8

Every Christmas I think of my Great Aunt Erna and Uncle George. They were a huge part of my life growing up. They lived upstairs of my mother's parents and I spent a lot of time there. They were always present at our birthdays and came every Christmas morning with Sarah Lee coffee cake for breakfast, along with bacon, eggs and toast of course.

As a young adult I always wanted to buy them a meaningful Christmas present, one I thought they would appreciate and use. I was busy with my life and hadn't spent as much time with them as I did in my younger days, but I always remembered them having a jigsaw puzzle on the table ready to sit and work on whenever the moment arose. When I was in a bookstore I saw a beautiful jigsaw puzzle, it was a winter country village scene with thick pieces, some of which were cut into recognizable shapes such as an umbrella and a candy cane. I thought that would be the perfect present for my great aunt and uncle. They unwrapped it Christmas morning and thanked me gratefully.

Fast forward many years. My grandparents, Aunt Erna, and Uncle George had all passed away and the attic of the house was being emptied. Imagine my surprise when my cousin handed me the puzzle, still in its shrink-wrapped box. They had graciously accepted the gift I thought was perfect for them but never used it. I have to admit my feelings were hurt.

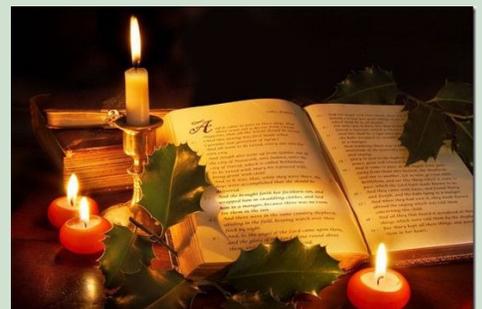
This caused me to think about the gifts that God has given us, the ones mentioned in the passages from Romans, and perhaps other gifts and talents. Have we been given these gifts, only to store them away in a dusty place in our mind, never to be used? God gave us these gifts, each selected for our individual purpose, but have we ignored them? If I felt that badly, imagine how God must feel when we don't use our God given gifts. May we be aware of the gifts that God has blessed us with and use them to spread the kingdom of God.

As always I am available for you, please do not hesitate to call, text, email, or visit me, I'd love to hear from you. 724-557-2386 is my cell, 814-833-4062 is the church office (I'm there Tuesday afternoons and Thursdays from 9:30a.m. – 2p.m.) My e-mail address is pastorkaren.immanuel@gmail.com. If I don't answer please leave a message and I will return your call.

I pray you have a blessed Christmas season. Please be aware that we have determined there will be only one Christmas Eve service this year at 7:30p.m.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Karen





**DECEMBER 7,
2025**

**FOLLOWING WORSHIP
THERE WILL BE A
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING.**



**DECEMBER
24TH**

7:30 PM

THERE IS ONLY

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE AT
IMMANUEL LUTHERAN THIS YEAR. PLEASE
JOIN US AT 7:30 ON CHRISTMAS EVE FOR
WORSHIP. EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

*Worship &
Music*



**Christmas Eve
Worship Service**

Please note that this year we will only be having one Christmas Eve Worship.

PLEASE join us at **7:30** Christmas Eve as we celebrate the birth of Jesus



Please join your Immanuel Family for coffee hour the first Sunday of each month following worship. Grab a cup of coffee and a treat and mingle with everyone! Enjoy some conversation, laughs and share some smiles!

EVERYONE is WELCOME!!!!



If you forgot or weren't aware, the first Sunday of each month is Quarter Sunday! Grab a handful of quarters and drop them in the collection plate!

**Sunday Morning
Worship 9:30
AM**

Choir Practice is every Thursday at noon.



**THERE WILL BE NO MONTHLY
FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH IN THE
MONTH OF DECEMBER.**



PLEASE

JOIN US

beginning Thursday, December 4th for Advent Bible Study.

We are going to be studying

“Who Needs Christmas?”

We meet on Thursday mornings at 11 am.

See Pastor Karen if you would like to join and get your book. **EVERYONE** is welcome!



We collected instant mashed potatoes for the West Millcreek Food Pantry for their Thanksgiving Food Drive. What an AWESOME job we did! We collected 72 packages / boxes! THANK YOU!!!!



Through December 24th we will be collecting for the Erie City Mission. We will be collecting:

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------|------------|
| ** Gloves | ** Mittens | ** Shampoo |
| ** Body Wash | ** Deodorant | ** Razors |
| ** Shaving Cream | ** Tampons | ** Pads |

Please place items in the blue box in the hallway.

Immanuel Lutheran FOG & Social Ministry

Community Sloppy Joe Dinner 6-7 PM



We are trying something new to help support our community as many of our community members face food insecurities.

We will be hosting a sloppy joe dinner on December 4th in the Leubin—McCray Hall.

We will be putting notices in the Blessing Box to announce the dinner.

We are looking for volunteers to assist with preparing the meal, as well as serving.

The meat & buns are being purchased with excess Thrivenet money from the Holy Trinity Dinner .

We are asking for donations of sides (ie; mac & cheese, pasta salad, potato salad, jello). We also would like to present cookies and other goodies and would love to have all of the amazing bakers to whip up sweet treats!

Let's ALL join together to help our neighbors in need., and show them what caring hearts we have.

There is a sign up sheet on the bulletin board. If you have any questions, please reach out to Cindy Eckman or Debbie Madurski.





We are accepting orders for poinsettias this year to decorate the church for our Christmas Eve Worship services. The cost is \$8.50 each.

We are also accepting donations for Erie Meals-On-Wheels to help the elderly and disabled within our community to receive meals. Please consider donating to those less fortunate.

HOLIDAY POINSETTIA AND HUNGER APPEAL

I would like to give _____ flowers for the Special Offering for Christmas at \$8.50 each.
\$ _____ is enclosed.

In honor of _____

In memory of _____

Given by _____

Instead of flowers I would like to give _____ for the Special Offering for Christmas to go towards Erie Meals-On-Wheels.
\$ _____ is enclosed.

In honor of _____

In memory of _____

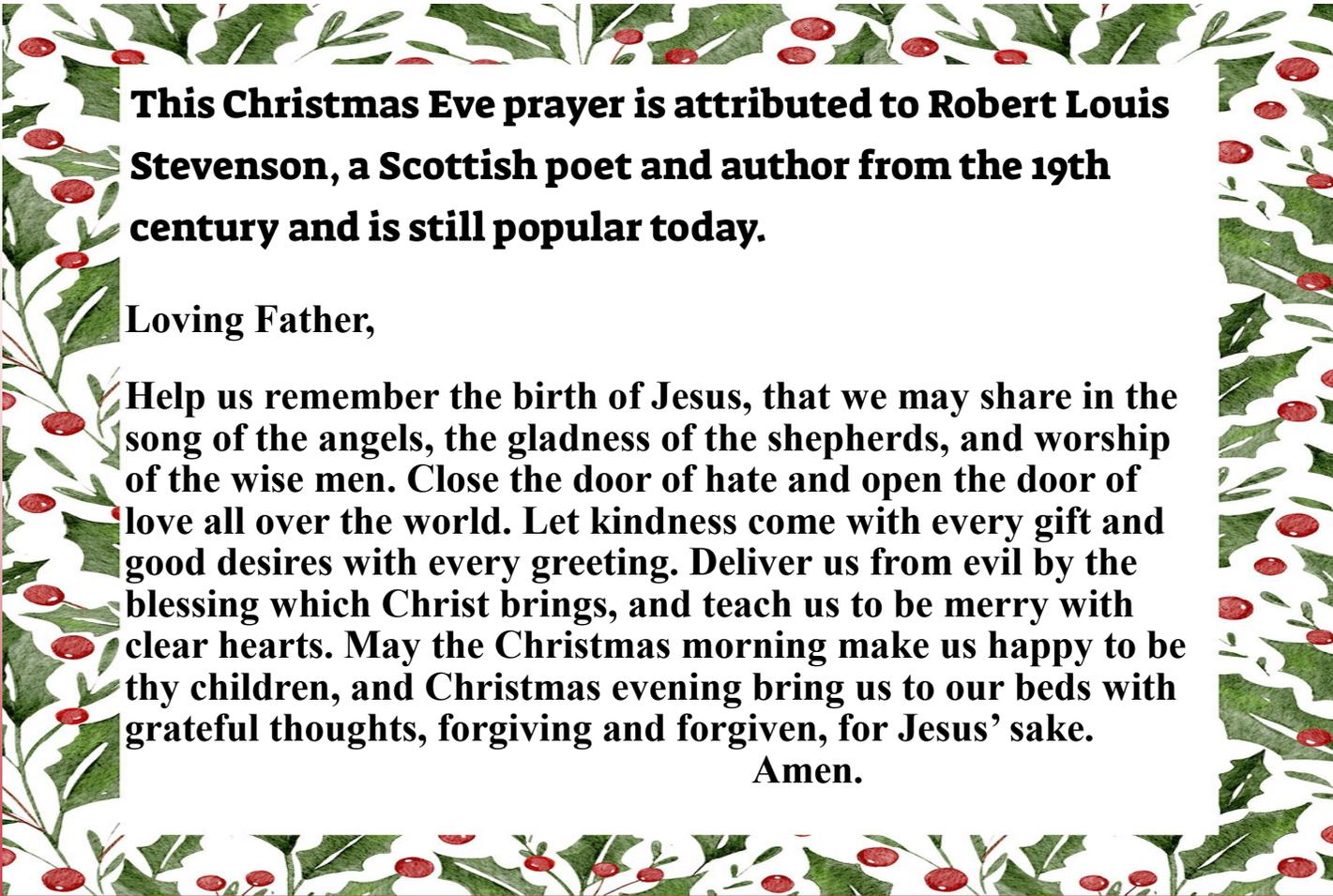
Given by _____

PLACE FORM & DONATION IN THE OFFERING PLATE OR SEND TO THE CHURCH OFFICE BY DECEMBER 15^h.



Mitten Trees

On November 16th the Mitten Trees were put up as we began our collection for mittens, scarves and hats for the children at Bethesda. Don't forget to bring your donation in and place it on either the tree in the Narthex or the one in the



This Christmas Eve prayer is attributed to Robert Louis Stevenson, a Scottish poet and author from the 19th century and is still popular today.

Loving Father,

Help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and worship of the wise men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.



Cranberry Christmas Cake

Cake? Cake seems so simplistic for a holiday feast, but I promise you this cake is fit for a King! If you haven't tried it, do yourself a favor : bake one and give it a big taste! Be sure to at least try it while fresh cranberries are in the grocery store!

The trick to making this cake memorable is replacing the powdered sugar with a nice thick, rich cream cheese frosting and garnishing with sugared cranberries on top.

INGREDIENTS

- ◇ 3 large eggs (at room temp)
- ◇ 2 C sugar
- ◇ 3/4 C unsalted butter
- ◇ 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ◇ 1 tsp almond extract
- ◇ 2 C all purpose flour
- ◇ 12 ounces fresh cranberries
- ◇ Powdered sugar for garnish



Preheat your oven to 350 degrees

Spray a 9X13 pan with non-stick cooking spray

Beat the eggs, & sugar together until light and fluffy

(the mixture should form peaks when you lift the mixer from the bowl)

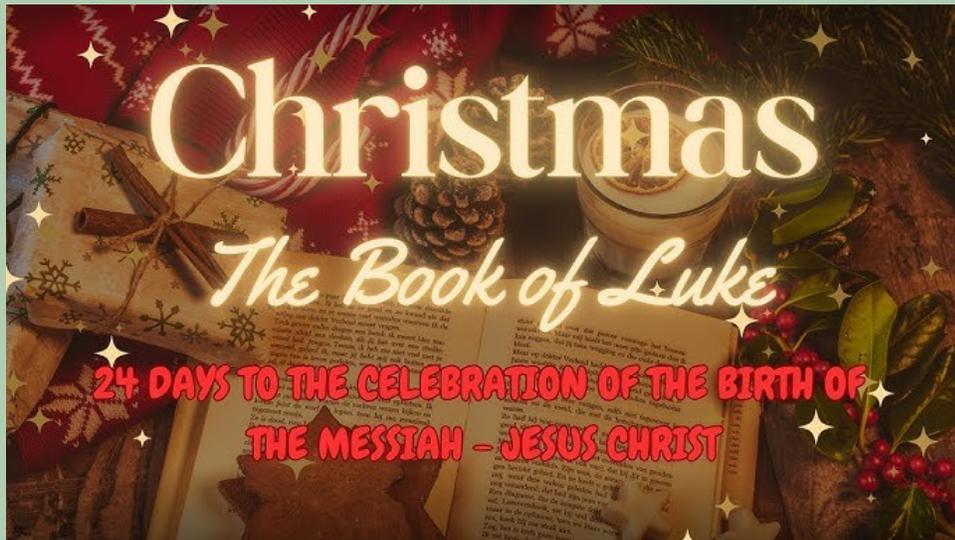
Add in butter, almond & vanilla extract to the egg mixture and beat for 2 minutes

Slowly add in the flour—mix just until combined

Sir in the cranberries

Bake your pan of deliciousness at 350 fr 40-50 minutes

Let the cake cool completely and find your favorite recipe for frosting and pile on the frosting! Enjoy with a cup of coffee or a tall ice cold glass of milk!



It is never too late in our lives to begin new traditions. The newest tradition for Christmas is to read one chapter of the Book of Luke beginning on December 1st.

By reading one chapter a day, it allows you to complete the entire Gospel by Christmas Eve, giving you a deeper understanding of Jesus's life and the real reason we celebrate the season. This tradition gives us a way of focusing on the "who and why" of Christmas beyond the commercial aspects of the holiday season.

As you finish your chapter, sit and take a few moments to reflect on what you have just read.

Reading the entire Gospel of Luke will provides you the full account of Jesus's life, his ministry and sacrifice, not just his birth.

This is a tradition with meaning and is a tradition to share with family and friends. If you make it a tradition in your life then it will carry on for generations. What better tradition is there?

This tradition can help you enter the Christmas season with a stronger sense of purpose and of joy.

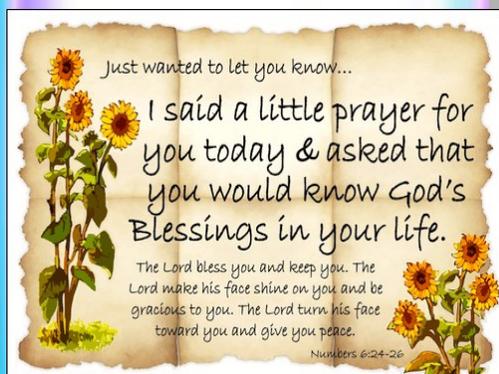
Please remember the members of Immanuel who are “shut in,” or having some health challenges and cannot make it to service, you may want to offer them a ride, give them a friendly call, send them a card. Maybe just stop to share a moment of your time.

The current Shut-In Mailing List is available in the office.



If you are sick or in the hospital, please notify the church office.

If you would like home communion or a copy of our newsletter, please contact the office.



KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

Denise Arnold
Vince Belinski—Diane’s Nephew
Karen Byrd
Rev. Bill Cox
Chick Crosby (Sally Leubin’s brother)
Janice Kreger
MaryAnn Long and Russ Long
Penney Maloney
The Botwright family
Connie Cooper
Jim and Lorraine Hornaman
Rich Hornaman
Kyle Husted
Carol Ketchel
Diane McGranor
Brenda Matson
Katie Coughlin-Palotas– Wally Coughlin’s niece
Carole Rickrode
Bob Roemer
Joel Whickham—Mary Hauser’s brother
Leslie Woodruff—Carole Rickrode’s Granddaughter
Logan Wrisley —Brenda Matson’s son
All of our members & friends who are grieving;
Who are in nursing homes;
All who are ill at home
We pray for those in the military.
Pray for the homeless & those who are hungry.



The Soldier's Night Before Christmas

Originally entitled: Merry Christmas, My Friend

Though often attributed to others, this poem was originally written in 1986 by Marine Corporal, James M. Schmidt who was stationed in Washington, D.C.

~~Submitted by Miss Janice Kreeger~~

Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone, In a one bedroom house made of plaster & stone.

I had come down the chimney, with presents to give and to see just who in this home did live

As I looked all about, a strange sight I did see, no tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.
No stocking by the fire, just boots filled with sand. On the wall hung pictures of a far distant land.

With medals and badges, awards of all kind, a sobering thought soon came to my mind. For this house was different, unlike any I'd seen. This was the home of a U.S. Marine.

I'd heard stories about them, I had to see more, so I walked down the hall and pushed open the door. And there he lay sleeping, silent, alone, Curled up on the floor in his one-bedroom home.

He seemed so gentle, his face so serene, Not how I pictured a U.S. Marine. Was this the hero, of whom I'd just read? Curled up in his poncho, a floor for his bed?

His head was clean-shaven, his weathered face tan. I soon understood, this was more than a man. For I realized the families that I saw that night, owed their lives to these men, who were willing to fight.

Soon around the Nation, the children would play, And grown-ups would celebrate on a bright Christmas day. They all enjoyed freedom, each month and all year, because of Marines like this one lying here.

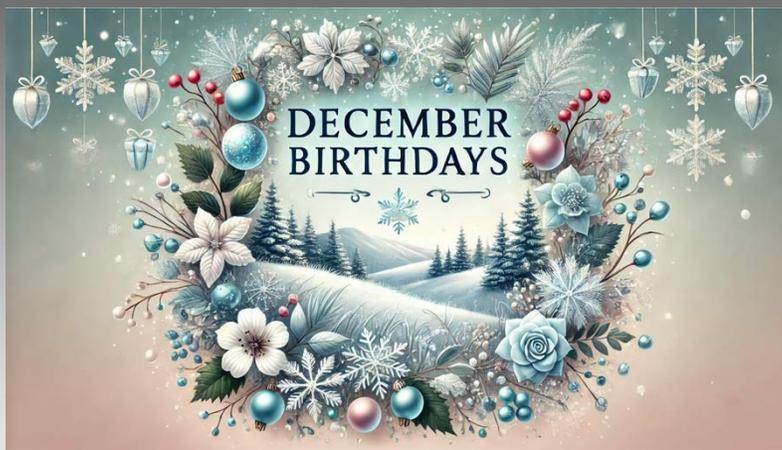
I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone, on a cold Christmas Eve, in a land far from home. Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye. I dropped to my knees and I started to cry.

He must have awoken, for I heard a rough voice, "Santa, don't cry, this life is my choice I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more. My life is my God, my country, my Corps." With that he rolled over, drifted off into sleep, I couldn't control it, I continued to weep.

I watched him for hours, so silent and still. I noticed he shivered from the cold night's chill. So I took off my jacket, the one made of red, and covered this Marine from his toes to his head. Then I put on his T-shirt of scarlet and gold, with an eagle, globe and anchor emblazoned so bold. And although it barely fit me, I began to swell with pride, and for one shining moment, I was Marine Corps deep inside.

I didn't want to leave him so quiet in the night, this guardian of honor so willing to fight. But half asleep he rolled over, and in a voice clean and pure, said "Carry on, Santa, it's Christmas Day, all secure." One look at my watch and I knew he was right,
Merry Christmas my friend, Semper Fi and goodnight.

December Celebrations of Life and Love



- 12/15 Rebecca Griffin Bureau
- 12/10 Brenda Matson
- 12/22 Tim Botwright
- 12/25 **Jesus**

The Legend of the Candy Cane

Look at the candy cane.
What do you see?
Stripes that are red like
the blood shed for me.
White is for my Savior
who's sinless and pure.
"J" is for Jesus, my Lord,
that's for sure!
Turn it around and
a staff you will see.
Jesus, my sheperd,
was born for me!

author unknown



Capital Campaign - Boiler:

Funds for the boiler campaign currently show \$35,642.38 toward our goal of \$58,803.

Pennies for Poverty collection is an ongoing effort in support of the Women of the ELCA – donations welcome in the Donation Center canister.



LITTLE FREE PANTRY AT IMMANUEL

IF IN NEED – TAKE SOMETHING

IF YOU CAN SHARE - LEAVE SOMETHING

Feel free to bring items to church office & we will make sure they get in the pantry for you.



December Worship Calendar

Date	Presider	Assistant	Lector
12/07/2025 9:30 AM	Pastor Kostur	Anita Byrne	Bob Dorler
12/14/2025 9:30 AM	Pastor Kostur	Debbie Redditt	Bob Dorler
12/21/2025 9:30AM	Pastor Kostur		Brenda Matson
12/24/2025 7:30 PM	Pastor Kostur		Brenda Matson
12/28/2025 9:30 AM	Pastor Kostur	5 READERS: Bob Dorler, Joe Byrne, Brenda Matson	



Counters: Kim Lee & Cindy Geddes
Altar Guild: Penny Maloney, Sue Pfeiffer & Sally Leubin

Let Heaven and Nature SING!

The story of Christmas Hymns

Christmas hymns have been a cherished part of the holiday season for as long as Christmas has been celebrated! The earliest known Christmas hymn, “Jesus, Light of All Nations,” was composed by St. Hilary of Poitiers in 336AD — just 23 years after Constantine legalized Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

For many centuries, Christmas songs were primarily hymns used in religious services, focusing on the sacred aspects of the holiday. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that a shift began to occur. St. Francis of Assisi played a monumental part in the transformation by creating the first nativity scene, which inspired greater religious devotion among the general public.. This new approach to celebrating Christmas helped to popularize Christmas carols, which were initially derived from the hymns sung by monks.

By the 15th and 16th centuries, carols were being sung not only in church but also in homes and in public spaces, becoming a vibrant part of community celebrations. Many of today's carols like “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” and “O Come, All Ye Faithful” have their roots in the history of Christian lives.

Today, Christmas hymns and carols continue to resonate with people around the world, serving as a reminder of the holiday's spiritual significance while also bringing communities together in celebration and song. The enduring legacy of these hymns not only reflect the deep-rooted traditions of the holiday but also showcases the development of music as a means of worship and joy throughout the centuries.

“The First Noel” - the word “Noel” comes from the Latin verb “nasci” meaning “To be born,” and eventually made its way to French as a term for Christmas. It is believed the melody of this song has been around since the 1200s. In the 1800s Davies Gilbert added the lyrics and it was published in 1823. The song tells the story from Luke 2 where angels announce the birth of the Savior to shepherds, who later follow the same star as the wise men to bring Him gifts.

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing” - One of over 6,000 hymns written by Wesley, “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing” was included in his 1739 Methodist hymnal. While the original opening line was “Hark, How All the Welkin Rings,” where “welkin” referred to “the vault of heaven,” it was evangelist George Whitefield who made the pivotal change to “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” a line that has become iconic.

The spiritual significance of this hymn is deeply rooted in Scripture. It celebrates the angelic announcement of Christ's birth, echoing Luke 2:10-14, where the angel proclaims to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid; I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” The hymn captures the joy and hope of this divine message, emphasizing the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation.

The hymn further highlights the titles given to Jesus, such as “the Prince of Peace” and “the Son of Righteousness,” drawing from Isaiah 9:6, which proclaims, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Today, “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing” remains a beloved staple of Christmas worship, uniting people in a shared expression of faith, joy, and the profound truth of the Incarnation.

“Joy to the World” - is an unexpected Christmas classic, focusing more on Christ’s second coming than His birth. This beloved hymn is rooted in Psalm 98 rather than the nativity story and resulted from the collaboration of several key figures. Isaac Watts, an English poet and clergyman, paraphrased Psalm 98 in his 1719 work, *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, with the hymn’s title taken from the second part of his paraphrase. Watts believed the psalms should direct readers to the New Testament, emphasizing joy and praise.

The third stanza, which addresses redemption and references Genesis 3:17, departs from the psalm and reflects Watts’ Reformed theological perspective on humanity’s sin.

The tune we know today draws inspiration from the works of George Frederic Handel, with parts of his *Messiah* adapted for the hymn. Although Watts and Handel never collaborated, the opening lines of “Lift up your heads” and “Comfort ye” were repurposed to fit the joyful text.

Finally, Boston music educator Lowell Mason played a crucial role in bringing the hymn to American audiences. In 1836, he published an arrangement of Handel’s melodies, naming it “Antioch.” This version became the primary tune for “Joy to the World,” although it remains less known in Britain.

The hymn’s “fuging tune” style adds a lively feel, enhancing its celebratory nature. Ultimately, “Joy to the World” is a favorite Christmas hymn, blending an Old Testament psalm with musical elements from England and America, celebrating the joy and hope of Christ’s promise.

“Little Town of Bethlehem” - Inspired by his visit to Bethlehem, Phillips Brooks wrote this song in the mid-to-late 1800s. The prophecy of Jesus’ birth in this small village dates back over 700 years, as seen in Micah 5:2: “But you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, of the clans of Judah, are no poor relation—From your people will come a Ruler who will be the shepherd of My people, Israel, Whose origins date back to the distant past, to the ancient days.”

“But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.”

As the song unfolds, it emphasizes the significance of the fulfilled prophecy surrounding Christ’s birth. Beyond the humble village of Bethlehem, long after He ascended to be with His Father, souls continue to find freedom in what began in that small place.

Christmas hymns hold a special place in our hearts, uniting us in worship and joy during this sacred season.

Reference: <https://angela.org/christmas-hymns/>



2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Quilters 9:30 am Flagship City Chorus 7 pm	AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Tops 9:30 am AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Community Sloppy Joe Dinner	AA 7 pm Game Night 6 pm	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Worship 9:30 Quarter Sunday Congregational Meeting Coffee Hour	Quilters 9:30 am Flagship City Chorus 7 pm	AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Tops 9:30 am AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Bible Study 11 am Choir 12 pm	AA 7 pm Game Night 6 pm	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Worship 9:30 am	Poinsettia Orders Due! Quilters 9:30 am Flagship City Chorus 7 pm	AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Tops 9:30 am AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Bible Study 11 am Choir 12 pm	AA 7 pm Game Night 6 pm	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Worship 9:30 am	Quilters 9:30 am Flagship City Chorus 7 pm	AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Christmas Eve Tops 9:30 am Worship 7:30 PM AA Mtg 7:30 pm	HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS	AA 7 pm Game Night 6 pm	
28	28	29	30	31		
Worship 9:30 am	Quilters 9:30 am Flagship City Chorus 7 pm	AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Tops 9:30 am AA Mtg 7:30 pm	Bible Study 11 am Choir 12 pm		

THE SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS

The star was the heavenly sign of promise long ago. God promised a savior for the world and the star was a sign of the fulfillment of that promise. The countless shining stars at night—one for each man—now show the burning hope of all mankind.

Red is the first color of Christmas. It was first used by the faithful people to remind them of the blood which was shed for all the people by the Savior. Christ gave His life and shed his blood that every man might have God's gift of Eternal Life. Red is deep, intense, vivid—it is the greatest color of all. It is the symbol of God.

The pure green color of the stately fir tree remains green all year round. This depicts the everlasting hope of mankind. Green is the youthful, hopeful, abundant color of nature. All the needles point heavenward—symbols of Man's returning thought toward heaven. The great green tree has been man's best friend. It has sheltered him, warned him, made beauty for him.

The lost sheep are found by the sound of the bell. It should ring for man to return to the fold—it means guidance and return, it further signifies that all are precious in the eyes of the Lord.

A bow is placed on a present to remind us of the spirit of the brotherhood of man. We should remember that the bow is tied as men should be tied, all of us together, with the bonds of good will toward each other. Good will is forever the message of the bow.

The candy can represents the shepherd's crook. The crook of the staff helps bring back the strayed sheep to the flock. The candy can represents the helping hand we should show at Christmas time. The candy cane is the symbol that we are our brothers' keepers.

The wreath symbolizes the eternal nature of love; it never ceases, stops or ends. It is one continuous round of affection. The wreath does double duty. It is made of many things and in many colors. It should remind us of all the things of Christmas.

Immanuel

Church Office 814-833-4062

Office Hours

8:30—12:30 Monday—Thursday

Staff

Pastor Karen Kostur 814-833-4062

or Cell#: 724-557-2386

Pastor's Office Hours – Tuesday 1:00-3:00

Thursday, 9:30am-2:00pm

Church Caretaker: Wally Coughlin

Organist/Music Director: Allan Slovenkay

Admin. Ofc.: Brenda Matson

Sunday School

Coord: Anita Byrne & Janice
Kreger

Teachers: Anita Byrne & Pastor
Kostur & Brenda Durst

2025 Congregation & Church Council Officers

Pres: Rick Kuntz 814-572-3719

VP: Joe Byrne 814-397-7319

Sec.: Brenda Durst 814-873-0451

Fin. Sec.: Debbie Redditt 814-449-1855

Treasurer: Bill Redditt 814-833-9756

Church Council Committees

We invite all members of Immanuel to join any of these committees and/or offer your gifts where you can – many hands make light work!!

Council usually meets the 2nd Sunday of the month

Fellowship, Outreach & Growth

Council liaisons: Sally Leubin

COFFEE HOUR 1ST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

ONGOING COLLECTION FOR LITTLE FREE PANTRY

Finance

Council liaison: Zack Middaugh

ANNUAL Budget

Property

Council liaison: Rick Kuntz

Committee Chair: Debbie Redditt

FACILITY MAINTENANCE

RENTAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

ONGOING BOILER CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Stewardship

Council liaison: Dave Mays

Social Ministry Committee

Committee chair: Debbie Madurski

Council Liaison: Brenda Durst

Worship & Music

Liaison to Worship: Joe Byrne

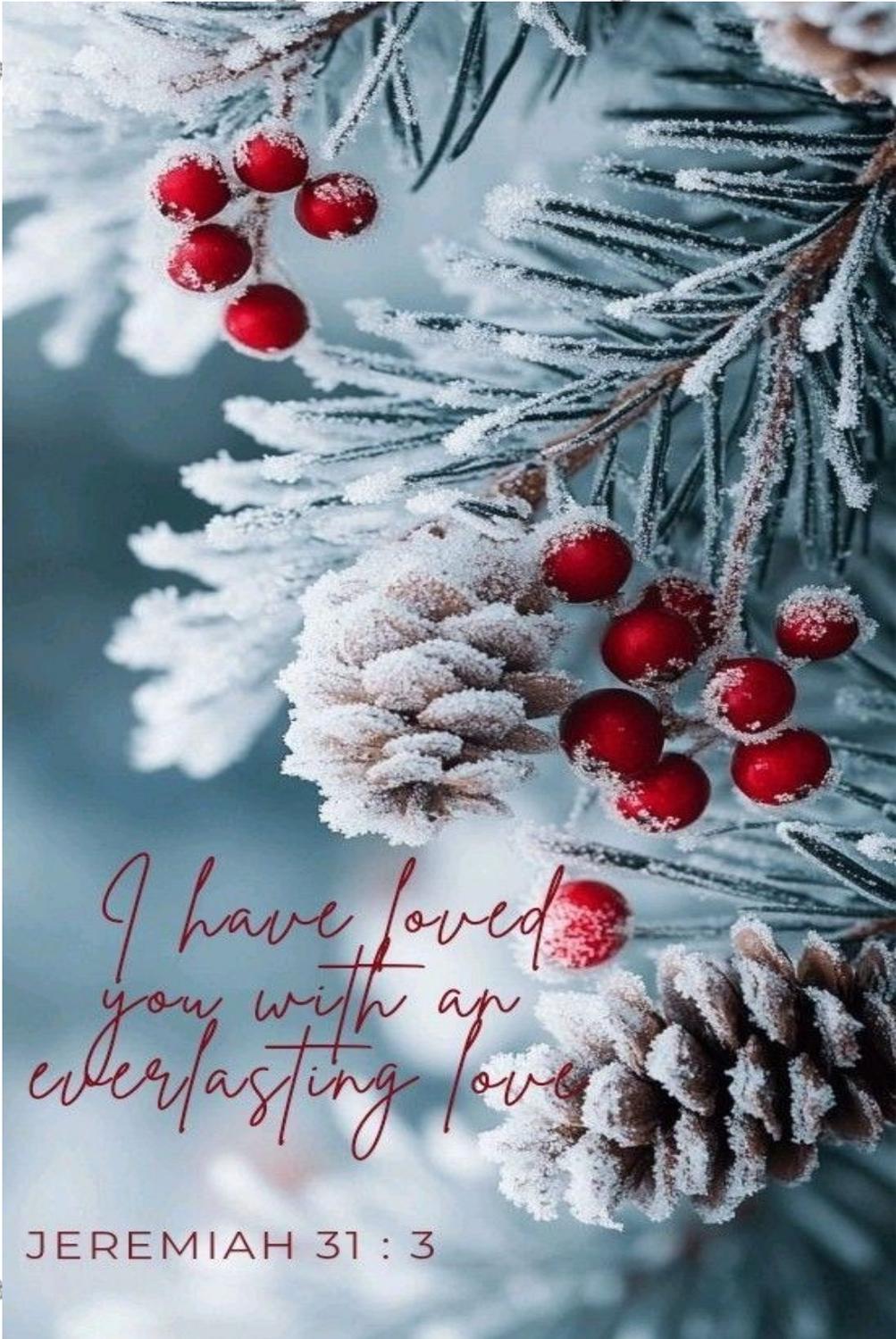
Christian Education

Council liaison: Mary Hauser

Check out our website and "FRIEND" us on [Facebook](#)

Did you miss church? Need to keep updated and want easy access to the church calendar, newsletter or annual report?

Check out our website <http://www.ilc-erie.org/>



*I have loved
you with an
everlasting love*

JEREMIAH 31 : 3