



The EXPRESSION–December 2023

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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I am particularly fond of Advent. The four-week period that precedes the celebration of Christmas, beginning on December 13 and ending on December 24 this year.

I like the darkness, the quietness, and the reflective nature of Advent. I enjoy the progression of candle lighting on the Advent wreath. I love the hymns - "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You" and "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" and "On Jordon's Banks the Baptist's Cry". I am fed by the themes of hope and preparation.

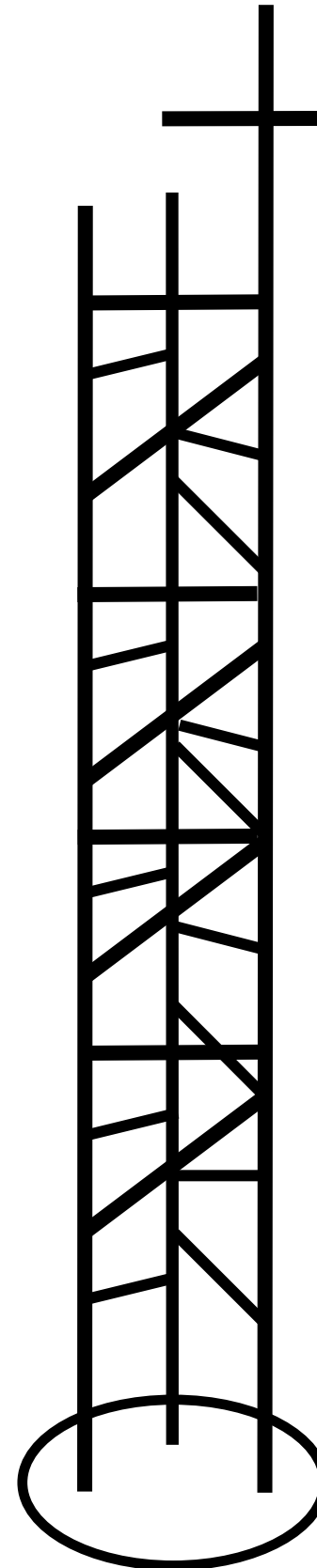
I happen to think that truly observing Advent is the perfect antidote to the devastation of Christmas. While I am particularly fond of Advent I am equally appalled at what has happened to Christmas. This religious holiday - that in the church begins on December 24 and ends on January 5 - has become a cultural event that is far removed from what it is intended to be. Christmas is now a time for vacations, for parties, for spending when its reason for existing is to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in worship. Why do people who do not believe in Jesus celebrate Christmas? Afterall, those of us who are not Muslims do not celebrate Ramadan and those of us who are not of the Jewish faith do not celebrate Hanukah.

Pick up any newspaper, the articles in the business section focus on whether or not the economy will be saved by Christmas, since many retailers make 50 percent of their profits at this time. This year there were Christmas advertisements on TV before Halloween acknowledging that it was early to mention Christmas shopping, but that people should get a head start on their spending. I literally shouted out loud, "Stop the madness", when I came out a local grocery store before Halloween to voices singing, "Hark The Herald Angels Sing."

Do I feel strongly about this? Yes, I do. It's up to Christians to reclaim our religious holiday. It's up to the church to set an example by slowing down, by observing the beauty of Advent that builds and builds until we arrive at Christmas Eve and the great celebration of our Lord's birth that continues for 12 more days. Shouldn't the church be overflowing on December 31? That's the first Sunday of Christmas and should be one of the most celebrative days of the year.

Focusing on spiritual matters during Advent is the gift we have to give to the world, along with the greatest gift, the Bethlehem babe, Jesus our Lord. May you each be blessed during this time of preparing for his arrival.

Pastor King





IMMANUEL LUTHERAN SCHOOL

As we start this advent season, I hope that you are filled with joy for all of the songs that we are blessed to sing this year. If you sit in the front section of church you have the pleasure of hearing all the voice join together in song. It truly is beautiful to hear. When I look back on my adult years of life and the season of Christmas, I think what I looked the most forward to was spending time with family and the music. I hope that your season is filled with music and the love of family as well.

I never realized what a large role music has played in my life and my faith life until recently while playing for chapel and this thought crossed my mind....What if my parents hadn't encouraged me so many times to stick with playing the piano? I grew up in a small town and it was hard to find a piano teacher at times.

We drove on Saturday mornings 25 minutes one way for a period of time to take lessons. What if my parents didn't want to invest in my lessons and spend the money, time, and energy on that. Well, God knew and encouraged them, I am sure, because He had a plan for my life and knew I would need that skill someday. I am not sure that without the encouragement of my family that I would have stuck with the lessons. Family is such a positive influence on a person, so find time this year to encourage someone in your family who might need it. You can help them be whom God wants them to be, maybe without even knowing the part you are playing, but you are a piece of God's plan for them.

I pray that you can "Come" as often as possible to the Lord's house with your family this advent and Christmas season. I pray that while you are hear you can "Sing for JOY to the LORD" and let your praises be heard by all around you. God is good, He is "the Rock of our Salvation" and we should share that with all around us that we love and know that our encouragement can be a true blessings to many.

The day school children are preparing many songs to be sung this season for the Senior Center, Rotary Club, Church choir concert, and our Christmas Service(December 21st @ 6:30) to name a few. We hope that you can join us at some of these and enjoy their songs. December is a busy month around the school, so if you have time and want to volunteer with something let us know. And if you are busy like us, please pray that we are able to enjoy some fun mixed in with our academics. – Mrs. King

Youth Group

The youth group would like to give a special "thank you" to those who were able to come to our Thanksgiving Pie Fellowship last week. It's always exciting when we must set up additional tables to accommodate everyone! Thank you to all the youth who helped and parents who provided pies as well. During our most recent Bible study, we talked about the importance of being thankful, not only when times are good, but also thankful in times of hardship and feeling thankful for the everyday things we often take for granted. We quickly realized we all have much to be thankful foremost importantly a loving God who is always there for us. Looking ahead to December, we will host our Donut Fellowship on December 10th and then are planning a fun progressive Christmas meal event for the youth. We look forward to having some special time with the youth during this busy time of year.

Merry Christmas from Immanuel Youth Group! - Michelle and Jeana



Youth Group Pie Fellowship

Immanuel Lutheran Sunday School

As we approach Advent, we reflect on all we have to be thankful for as we prepare for the greatest of all blessings.

In November we focused on prayer & thankfulness. The children were asked as we went around the room what they were thankful for...The majority answered...My family!

P.R.A.Y.

P-Praise & Thank God for all your blessings.

R-Repent from the sins committed.

A-Ask for continued blessings & all you need.

Y-Yield to God - stop & think of him what are wants & what are needs...what can you do for God?

The Sunday School designed the Christmas tree for Meet Me Under The Mistletoe this year. The 3rd - 8th graders made the glittering bulbs! Be sure to check it out in the park.

We are preparing for the Christmas Program...kids are working hard on parts & learning songs. We know they will do a great job presenting " Symbols of Salvation ", so please joins us December 17th at 9:30.

Blessings,

Tyler and Julie Kranz



The Lutheran Hour - December 2023

December 3

"Before They Call"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

SOS and Mayday are distress signals that cry out for rescue. So is "Lord, have mercy!"

(Isaiah 64:4)

December 10

"A-T Walker"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

A wilderness can be scary, but if someone is with you who knows the way out, you're not really lost.

(Isaiah 40:3)

December 15

"Empty Boxes - A Christmas Special from Lutheran Hour Ministries"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Jason Broge

December 17

"Life After Landing"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

What happens when a passenger suddenly has to be the pilot? Dr. Michael Zeigler talks about the power of words to save.

(Isaiah 61:1-2)

December 24

"Community and Conversation"

Lutheran Hour Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler

(John 1:1)

December 31

"Of Entrances and Exits"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. John Nunes
(Luke 2:27-28)

