

IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Connecting people with God and other people to make a difference!



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Ministers: *Members and Friends of the Congregation*

Pastor: *The Rev. Norbert F. Hahn, Ph.D.*

CHRISTMAS 2021 *and* JANUARY 2022

FROM Pastor Hahn

My dear Immanuel church family,

Someone observed: “Christmas is really a competition between Jesus and Santa, between the spiritual call to generosity towards the needy and the commercial lure to please oneself and one’s loved ones. Christmas is also a competition between the promise of God with us and the lure of nostalgia.”

A former colleague of mine would begin each year’s Christmas Eve sermon with a series of word images that would tickle his listener’s feelings and senses. He would evoke the smell of Christmas cookies, the sights of real candles on real Christmas trees, the sounds of beloved Christmas tunes, the feel of the hay in baby Jesus’ manger, and more. The audience loved it, especially the folks that only worship on Christmas.

Then, one year, he suddenly stopped. When asked for the reason, he replied that a spiritually mature person whose opinion he valued, had pointed something important out to him. Namely, that he was overdoing it with nostalgia at the expense of memory; that by evoking the nostalgic feelings in his hearers, they would be less receptive to the spiritual profundity of Christmas.

[Note: Wikipedia defines “nostalgia” as: “a sentimentality for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.”]



With the emergence of the new Omicron strain of the Coronavirus, the death of 800,000 fellow U.S. Americans, and the rising number of infections and hospitalizations, people can be forgiven for wanting to be nostalgic. Lyn and I, too, feel the pull of nostalgia.

However, I am unwilling to surrender to nostalgia. There is a deeper truth that I refuse to let be crowded out or minimized.

Martin Luther’s wonderful Christmas hymn, “From Heaven Above” (“Vom Himmel hoch”) captures this deeper truth in 15 verses. (Eleven in the English version.) Verse eight, I believe, is central:

*Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
through whom this sinful world is blest!
You turned not from our needs away;
how can our thanks such love repay?*

It is too bad that Christmas comes at the end of the secular year. To a lot of people, Christmas, therefore, feels like an endpoint. It’s done and over with. Time to move on.

For you and me, for Christians, however, it is the starting point. The Christian year is barely five weeks old (having started on the First Sunday in Advent), and Christmas is the beginning, the starting point of a new year. With Christ having been born in our hearts anew, with Christ with us amidst all challenges, we launch into another year of, to paraphrase Luther’s hymn, “repaying God’s love with acts of gratitude.”

Christmas blessings and all the best for 2022!

Christmas Worship

Christmas Eve (Friday 12/24):

11:00 AM Family Service
Indoor Only—Fellowship Hall

2:00 PM German Service*

4:00 PM English Service*

6:00 PM German Service*

8:00 PM English Service*

***Indoor (in Sanctuary) and Remote**

Christmas Day (Saturday 12/25):

10:15 AM English Service
Indoor (in Sanctuary) and Remote

Christmas Sunday (12/26):

9:19 AM English Service

Remote Only

10:15 AM German Service

Indoor (in Sanctuary) Only

11:11 AM German Service

Remote Only

***Indoor services are by
confirmed reservation only***

Services will be accessible via internet and
telephone, unless otherwise noted.



Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Beloved in Christ,

I bring you greetings for a blessed Christmas and a safe New Year. As we approach our second pandemic holiday, you are in my prayers.

Sadly, a week before Christmas, we are seeing a COVID surge that rivals the one we saw last December and January. Case counts are approach last winter's peak, *even though many more people are vaccinated*. Positive test rates are where they were during the April surge. And the trends are moving sharply upwards. We are seeing the effects of the airborne transmission of the virus in our communities.

(continued)

In most of our area, the rate of positive tests and/or the percentage of ICU capacity filled is near or at the levels that the ecumenical consultation on worship (in which the ELCA participates) **recommends considering alternatives to indoor gatherings**. I wholeheartedly second that recommendation.

I encourage you to do everything that you can to ensure the safety of your people if they gather in person.

The most basic precaution is that **anyone who feels sick should stay home** – even if you are a rostered minister or a worship leader. I pray that you are continuing to **share your service in sacred cyberspace** for those who cannot attend in person.

If you are gathering indoors, everyone attending should **wear a mask**. The same is true if you gather outdoors if you are singing. Please **maintain physical distancing** between groups that are not of the same household.

If it's possible, in-person attendees should be **fully vaccinated, including with a third dose** if eligible. Research shows that people, especially the elderly, who have only one or two doses are more vulnerable to breakthrough infections, in addition to the risks to those who are not vaccinated.

Beyond vaccines and masks, it is very important to **have as much fresh air exchange as possible** in your gathering space. You can improve ventilation by *opening windows* or *gathering outdoors*. Yes, I know it is cold, but without proper ventilation the virus can be suspended in the air for a long time.

It is also advised to **limit occupancy of your indoor spaces to 25-50% of capacity** set by your fire marshal. I know some churches have scheduled multiple Christmas services to reduce attendance at each one. Leave time between services. The virus spreads because people breathe the same air.

I know you are tired of this ongoing need to monitor the virus and maintain safety. I know I am. Yet we are called to work for the safety of our worshippers as well as our communities.

I join you in prayer that this pandemic draws to a close across the globe. For now, I remind you to stay vigilant and keep safety paramount in your concerns.

In the name of Christ,

Patricia A. Davenport

The Rev. Patricia A. Davenport
Bishop
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America





IN CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY



Condolences to the family and friends of Ruth Heilemann, who passed away on December 5. Ruth was the sister-in-law of Nancy Heilemann, and her late husband, Bill. Please keep Ruth's family and friends in your prayers.

Condolences to Al Mezger, who mourns the passing of his good friend, Carol. Please keep Al and Carol's friends in your prayers

Condolences to the family and friends of Dorothy Strange, a long time member of the Immanuel church family, who joined The Church Triumphant on December 7. Please keep the family and friends of Dorothy in your prayers.

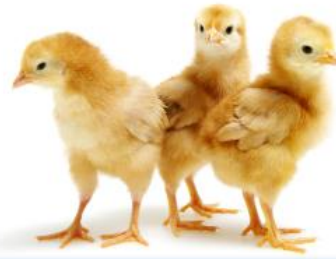
Give an “ELCA Good Gift”!

Ends January 6, 2022 (Epiphany Day)

For \$10—

Chicks:

Help a family spread their wings. When chicks grow up to become chickens, their eggs not only provide an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals — they can also help start a small business and generate a steady source of income.



Fill a Backpack Full of food for Children:

More than 18 million children in the US depend on school-meal programs to stay well-nourished and ready to learn. This gift helps children maintain the same level of nutrition over the weekend and when school is not in session.

Ways to order Good Gifts:

- Complete an order form and return it with your check to Immanuel. Please enclose a check for your order total.
- Go online to www.ImmanuelPhilly.org
- Send an e-mail to the church office (office@immanuelphilly.org)
- Call the church office at 215-464-1540

For \$20—

Honeybees:

Support farmers and healthy honeybee colonies with this buzz-worthy gift. Honeybees provide honey to eat, beeswax that allows a farmer to start a small business selling their products, and a boost to crop growth by pollinating plants everywhere they go.



Feed 10 people at a soup kitchen:

Millions of Americans struggle to get enough to eat. Whether people are looking for refuge from the streets or a little extra help to get by, a warm meal and a seat at the table can go a long way.



For \$30—

Water Filter:

When safe drinking water just isn't available—especially in times following natural disasters or emergencies—a simple, ceramic water filter is a lifesaver. Capable of purifying water without electricity or chemicals.

Pig:

This gift is a source of natural fertilizer that helps crops grow tall and strong, and can also be sold at the market for extra income when it's needed.

For \$50—

Goat:

Goats can go where other animals can't, surviving in some of the world's most challenging terrain and unreliable climates. Fresh milk from a goat provides daily nutrition for children and their families.



On Sunday, December 5th Immanuel's campus became a Christmas Wonderland with lights, illuminated blow ups, a live nativity and music! Trees were wrapped in lights and the blow ups were scattered around campus. As the 40+ cars entered the luminary lined driveway, checking in at the welcome area, they were made aware of the radio station playing Christmas music and the sights they would see.



The three games geared toward the children (or adults) were enjoyed from the safety of their car. As they wound around the parking lot, they saw the story of Jesus' birth with costumed actors. The highlight for all were the live animals at the Nativity. Our Angel (Sylvia Hansen) and Inn Keeper (Pastor Hahn) were the human stars of the event. Our prayers were answered with almost perfect weather.



Each car was provided with a "One Night in Bethlehem" book, candy cane and a small holiday decoration as they departed. These items were made possible with a grant from Thrivent.

This event would not have been possible if it weren't for the time and effort that many volunteers provided. A heartfelt thank you to all who volunteered and those who came to visit. The audience is just as important as the volunteers!



We thank you for your generous donations to the local food bank. 281 food items were collected as well as \$65.00 in monetary donations. Thank you for your support!

Thank you to **Matt and Christel Birgel, Stew and Christine Blankenhorn, Eric and Sylvia Hansen, and Pastor and Lyn Hahn** for serving as the Decorating Team. They enhanced Immanuel's nave with wreaths and the tree for the celebration of Christ's birth.

Facing challenges in the procurement and installation of a traditional huge "live" tree, the Congregation Council opted for a beautiful, high quality, "non-live" tree. Arriving in several pieces, the team was able to assemble it by using the balcony in a creative way. After fluffing it and affixing the star, the tree was moved to its location at the front of the nave.

Thank you to Lyn and Pastor Hahn for also decorating the fellowship hall with a tree and other decorations for the family-oriented service on Christmas Eve.



**Thank
You**



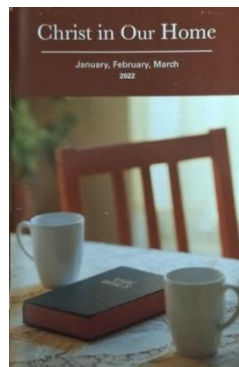
Thank you to **Wetzel and Son Funeral Home** in Rockledge and Willow Grove for the donation of the 2022 calendars. There are still a few left at the Immanuel church campus.

Book Discussion Group

Wednesdays at 7:00 PM on Zoom
Starting January 12

"The Great Spiritual Migration:
How the World's Largest Religion is
Seeking a Better Way to Be Christian"
by Brian McLaren

For details, contact Jim Clements.



Christ in Our Home

Discussing Daily Devotions

Fridays at 2:00 PM on Zoom
Starting January 21

Contact Pastor Hahn for log-in information.

JANUARY 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
PLEASE NOTE: Most Worship Services and meetings are remote and will be held/broadcast LIVE through ZOOM. (Online and telephone) Exceptions are in RED or BLUE						1 New Year's Day
2 Second Sunday of Christmas 9:19 AM English Service 11:11 AM German Service	3	4	5	6 Epiphany of Our Lord	7	8 9:30 AM Immanuel German School
9 Baptism of Our Lord 9:19 AM English Service 10:15 AM INDOOR German Service 11:11 AM German Service 6:30 PM Evening Service Newsletter Deadline	10	11 1:30 PM Member Care Team 7:00 PM Finance Tam	12 7:00 PM Book Discussion Group	13 9:30 AM Lower Bucks Conference	14	15 9:30 AM Immanuel German School
16 Second Sunday after Epiphany 9:19 AM English Service 10:15 AM INDOOR English Service 11:11 AM German Service	17 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	18	19 7:00 PM Book Discussion Group	20 9:30 AM Deans Mtg.	21 2:00 PM Christ in Our Home	22 9:30 AM Immanuel German School
23 Third Sunday after Epiphany 9:19 AM English Service 10:15 AM INDOOR German Service 11:11 AM German Service 6:30 PM Evening Service	24 7:00 PM Congregation Council	25	26 7:00 PM Book Discussion Group	27	28 2:00 PM Christ in Our Home	29 9:30 AM Immanuel German School
30 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany 9:19 AM English Service 10:15 AM INDOOR English Service 11:11 AM German Service	31					