

Immanuel Lutheran Church
5955 S. Elm Ave.
Fresno, CA 93706



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Youth Director: Jacob Wood
Women's Ministry President: Victoria Salwasser

Return Service Requested

The Immanuel Chimes June 2020



VIEW THIS NEWSLETTER ONLINE AT:

ImmanuelEaston.Com

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
A Mission of the North American Lutheran Church
5955 South Elm Avenue
Fresno, (Easton) California 93706
Church Phone Number (559) 237-7909

Church Office Email immanueleaston@sbcglobal.net
Pastor John's Email: johnsaethre47@gmail.com
Youth Director's Email: jaywood66@yahoo.com

Worship Online Sundays at 10:30AM

Fellowship as much as you can by calling a friend!

Youth: Wednesday Evenings on Zoom 6:00-8:00 PM

From our Pastor

WHEN GOD THROWS YOU A CURVEBALL

Often you hear the expression that “Life throws you a curve ball.” But truth be told, “life” isn't in control, God is. In some instances God is standing on the mound throwing the pitch. In others, He is the catcher calling the pitch. But no matter His role: direct or permissive, both are His will.

It's easy to accept God's will when we get good news like: a pay raise or promotion; a remission of cancer; or a friend who sticks with you during a tough time in your life.

But no one wants to talk about the hard things God brings into our lives. Yet He did send His only Son to die a painful criminal's death when He never did anything wrong. He did allow Job to lose all of his material wealth, and every one of this children in the same day. Can you imagine *that* curveball thrown at you?

Recently, the whole world has been thrown a curveball, shaking our very foundations with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our mobility has been affected by sheltering in place. Our employment has been affected as the economy has slowed to a snail's pace. Our lifestyle has been rocked as we wear masks and employ social distancing. I miss baseball and sports of any kind – watching old games is not cutting it.

But curveballs don't make God swing and miss. God isn't sitting in His throne saying, “Well, isn't that a bummer, what should I do now?” God knew that His Son would die. God knew that Job would lose everything. The hard stuff doesn't make God unloving or uncaring, it makes Him God. He knows, but He grieves along with us. Remember that Jesus wept with those who wept over the death of Lazarus (John 11:35) God doesn't leave us comfortless and He does not allow the curveballs to throw us off our game, or make us give up.

God has many reasons for allowing the curveballs and I don't have all the answers that He does, but from my own experience with curveballs, I can give you some tips to help you when they come your way:



Immanuel's Library!

If you're one of those people “sheltering at home” but can get to church for a few minutes, don't forget that we have a library stocked with great books and DVD's for you and your kids or grandkids to enjoy while you're home!

The library has been updated from Mother's Day to Father's Day! There are many wonderful books in the library to read. Please contact Victoria via church phone or cell phone if you would like to visit the church library.

Stay well (mentally, spiritually, and physically), and I hope to see you soon!

Carol Bennetts

Immanuel News Notes

Aaliyah Bell is part of the Clovis East Choir and they normally sing at the Clovis East Graduation Ceremony. Since they have had virtual classes their choir director has created wonderful performances of the students singing in the safety of their own homes. Type in the link: <https://youtu.be/cU0oeT-TpKg> and watch their performance! The first song is a tribute to the graduating seniors in choir. See if you can find Aaliyah. The second song is part of their choir class. It's great entertainment. Enjoy! Here is something positive that has come out of the pandemic. Most of us would have never got to see these choir performances. Thank you Aaliyah for joining the choir, thank you to her mom, Andrea for sharing the link with us and thank you to the Clovis East choir director who took the time and energy to share the student's wonderful talent.

Congratulations to Nancy Newsom! She is retiring from teaching after 39 years. She has taught 6 different grade levels at 3 different schools. Her labor of love has been challenging and rewarding. Thank you Nancy for sharing your gift of teaching with the future of our world.

In Celebration of Our Members

June 2020

Birthdays

2-Barbara Shamoon
3-Dennis Wynn
-Joseph Orozco
12-David Terrones
13-Linda Wozniczka
Phil Tews
Garrett Caglia
17-Diane Mehrten
18-Lee Terkelsen
19-Jennifer Cisneros
24-Andrew Severin
25-Debbie Goff



Wedding Anniversaries

3-Scott Rowley & Sharon Andreasen (25)
18-Laurel Jacobsen & Randy McFarland (21)
19-Shane & Sue Johnson (27)
21-Aaron & Terra Harding (6)
26-Fred & Gina Cogan (28)
28- Kurt & Laura Wolfe (6)

Baptismal Birthdays

2-Bobby Bell
Randy McFarland
3-Kendal Anderson
5-Verna Koslan
10-Florence Johnston
11-Kristi Hollenbeck
12-Bonnie Terkelsen
17-Emerson Linger
22-Lois Rasmussen
25-Elizabeth Petersen
29-Gaye Cissel
30-Mim Gould



PRAY FIRST. It may seem counter-intuitive. You may be tempted to complain. Job praised God when he lost everything. *Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground in worship. He said, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord has taken it away. Praise the name of the Lord!"* Job 1:20-21 NLT

Job grieved and then He praised God. Job knew that everything and everyone in his life was only on loan from God. It didn't belong to him, he was just a steward of it. By praising God first, you invoke the very powers of heaven to come to your aid.

KEEP THE ANCHOR ROPE TIGHT. When you take a boat on the water and drop the anchor, you pull the anchor rope tight to keep the boat from drifting. The same is true when the curveballs come our way. The closer we stay to God, the more grounded we will be. Trials have a way of bringing us to our knees and either turning towards or away from God.

TRUST HIS HEART. You may not understand God's ways, but you can trust His heart. God is not out to destroy you or punish you. God is looking to draw you (and others) to Himself. Sometimes that means allowing wonderful things into our lives, and sometimes that means allowing horrible things into our lives.

God allowing bad things into your life are no an indication of His love for you. You can trust God's heart, always. God does not have ill-will or malice towards any of His children, only undying love and faithfulness. Abounding grace and mercy.

In those darkest times, when the curveball is flying fast towards you, whisper the words, "I trust You, God." Trust and belief in God's goodness brings strength and calm to you heart when you don't understand what God is doing.

May God bring clarity to our souls as we discern His goodness even in the midst of this pandemic.

Pastor John

Missing your birthday or anniversary on this page? Please notify Victoria at immanueleaston@sbcglobal.net or by phone at 237-7909 and we will add you in.

WE ARE CLOSE TO GATHERING AGAIN

It's no secret that our greatest desire as members of Immanuel is to worship together again. I know we're all praying about the right time to do this, and at the time of this publication I still can't give a definitive answer.

I've sought advice and counsel from our leaders, and from what has transpired in our state and county. As of this publication, our county has not peaked yet in numbers of infected with coronavirus. Some churches have opened up with strict precautions. I'm inclined to hold off until late June.

I know another great desire is to have holy communion. We celebrated it once on Easter Sunday, but this was before Bishop Dan Selbo came out with more definitive information. While not mandating churches to cease communion practices, he did make a suggestion: *With a significant majority of our Commission on Theology & Doctrine, along with the majority of the Christian community throughout the world, not able to find sufficient biblical support for a distance approach to Holy Communion, I request that the current distance-Communion moratorium remain in effect throughout the NALC.*

He also said, *Even an abstinence from the Sacrament and a more intentional and direct communication of the promises and forgiveness given to us by Jesus in His Word are faithful approaches to the ministry with which we have been entrusted, given the novel pandemic we now face. I trust our pastors to be faithful in the ways they choose to honor this request.*

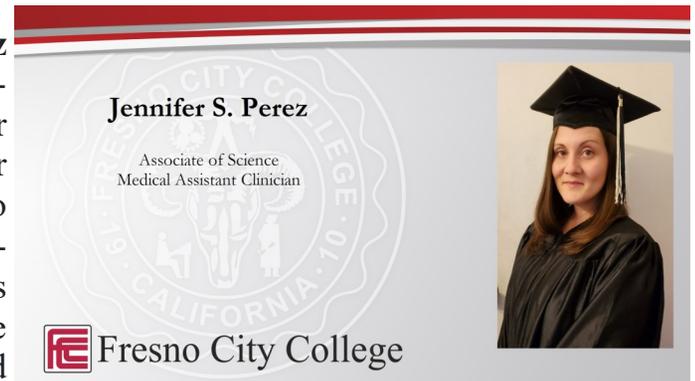
As I said, I'm taking our approach to ministry at Immanuel day-by-day since the coronavirus has a mind of its own. Caution is in the wind these days. I appreciate your patience during this difficult time. We will be worshiping together soon. Please be ready to adhere to strict guidelines when the time comes.

God will get us through this!
Pastor

Immanuel Graduates in 2020

Jennifer Perez is excited to finally have her degree. Her next step is to take the California State Boards to become state certified and then get a job.

She completed her degree while raising 4 great kids and through the course of her education they moved twice. She is amazing! Congratulations Jennifer!

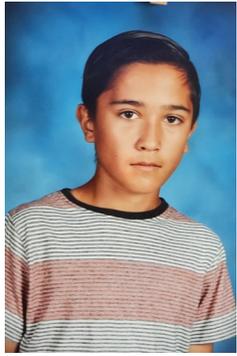


Emily Ewing graduated from Fresno State majoring in business/entrepreneurship and will continue working her way up through the food industry. Good Luck Emily!

Congratulations to LTJG **Michael Hansen** who received his wings of gold in a COVID-19 modified ceremony May 8, 2020 and is now a Naval Aviator. Mike and his wife Olivia will soon be moving to San Diego where he will be stationed on North Island and begin training in the MH-60 Romeo helicopter. Thanks be to God, and may He continue to watch over him as he serves our Country.



Immanuel Graduates in 2020



Joseph Perez graduates from American Union and is excited to start high school and continue playing soccer. He would like to pursue biblical studies and sports when he finishes high school. His family is very proud of him and are excited to see what his future holds for him.

Jacob Caglia is being promoted from 8th grade to High school. He will attend Kingsburg High. He is looking forward to taking Ag Mechanics and Ag science classes. He is excited to start school, and a little nervous how it will look in our current pandemic. We are very proud of the young man he has become and we can't wait to see the fun things he will do in high school.



Emilee Goff being promoted from Computech Middle School to Edison High School. While attending Computech she was an ambassador for the school, she especially enjoyed giving tours to the incoming 6th grade students. She is most definitely looking forward to the new experiences high school offers and furthering her academic career.



Christian Johnson graduates from Washington Union while in high school he played basketball and baseball all 4 years and was a member of the Criminal Justice Institute and the AVID programs. He plans to attend Clovis Community College in the fall majoring in criminology. Congratulations Christian!



From our Council President

Brothers and sisters of Immanuel Lutheran,

Greetings to you all. I hope you are healthy, happy, and helping those in need during these trying times. The purpose for writing is to keep you informed of recent developments that affect our congregation.

On May 26, 2020, the Fresno County Department of public Health released guidelines for Faith Based Organizations to resume in person services with stipulations. In response to these released guidelines, our council met May 28, 2020, at a special meeting to discuss the possibility of reopening our doors for all services. The singular yardstick to measure our preparedness was safety for ALL congregants. This meeting lasted for approximately 2.5 hours in which a variety of points were made and discussed regarding the need to reopen our church home in a safe and timely fashion. The end result being our council did not feel it was safe at this time to reopen, and thus unanimously voted to continue our current course of action, which is to offer online services only, for the next several weeks. With continuously changing information, we hope to be better informed to make a more confident decision that church can resume safely in the near future.

You may hear of other churches deciding to open at this time. While we respect each organization's need to act, we felt our best course of action was to exercise a bit of prudence and patience to wait a little bit longer. This decision will be re-evaluated at the regularly scheduled church council meeting on June 16th. On behalf of our council, I thank you for your continued support of our church family and every member in it. We are all in this together.

Love is a verb,
Fred

News Notes

Immanuel Grants Scholarships to WUHS students! Every year Immanuel gives a \$500.00 Christian College Scholarship to a senior attending a Christian College as part of our budgeted benevolence for the year. Most Christian colleges offer a church match program where the student receives a matching amount up to \$500.00 from their university if they receive a scholarship from a church. This year the award went to **Savannah Dias**, she will be attending Fresno Pacific University in August.

Breaking Grounds Café awarded a \$500.00 scholarship to Ashley Perez who not only attended but volunteered at Breaking Grounds Café. She was also one of the speakers at our Social Hall Fund Raising Dinner. The team that works with Breaking Grounds Café would like to thank the Women's Ministry board for their donation of \$500.00 for the scholarship this year. The Breaking Grounds ministry is ran by volunteers and designated donations. We ran short of funds and short of time to serve due to the Pandemic which closed the school right after we stocked up for the spring semester. The next school year will be different and currently the fall semester does not include late start staff development days. This means there would be no time to have a Breaking Grounds Café in the fall. Mr. Sherron, the high school principal, will keep us posted on the fall schedule and how we can help. We hope and pray this ministry will continue to be a safe place for students in the future. Provisions and procedures on how we run the Breaking Grounds may change as dictated by the tribulations of the pandemic. Thank you all for your generous donations to this ministry. We are accomplishing amazing things and hope to continue. Please remember this ministry in your prayers. We may be serving in a different capacity next school year but we hope to continue to serve. Please pray we can keep this ministry alive and well.

Llewellyn Ostergard says farewell to Immanuel as her home church. She is moving back to North Carolina in June where she will live closer to her sisters and brothers. She has enjoyed Immanuel and always felt very welcome here. She appreciates all the love and kindness shown to her during the time the Bud was sick and after his passing. She has enjoyed Immanuel and made some beautiful friendships and will miss all of the church activities and worship time together. Her cell phone number will remain the same. Immanuel will miss Llewellyn's kind, loving, servant heart and wishes her joy and safe travels.

Women's Ministry

What a wonderful time we had on May 20th for our Big Hat Day on Zoom! Some of us had a few technical difficulties but for the most part we had a great time. It was great to see faces and hear voices together.

Kristi Hollenbeck led the Acrostic Discussion on HATS! We talked about H- what hats you wear the most, A- what activities you have done during quarantine, T- what you are thankful for, and S- what service projects have you done during this pandemic.



Marcia Hollenbeck talked about the trials and tribulations of wearing too many hats and the problems it causes keeping us from our closeness to our one true God. It is easy to misplace our identity in a world of doom and gloom during the pandemic. We are all consumed by emotions, some fearful, our lives have changed a lot in 2020, but the straight-shooting words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33 is where He tells us not to worry: *“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

I hope these words from Matthew 6:33 calm your soul like they do mine. The hustle and bustle is not so much what life is like for everyone now. Some people are busier than ever before working like crazy, without their house of worship to use as a temple for solitude and peace. The stillness of sheltering, the fear of un-sheltering, the unknown as to if we may have the virus and not know it or who else may have the virus lurking among us. Must we wear a steaming hot mask? If we don't wear a mask are we at risk of getting the corona virus? The dilemmas are real, please use God as your Savior. My hope is where ever you are, you find peace through prayer and scriptures. I like to be specific and bold in my prayers. I pray that peace will come among all who seek it and all who need it.

This Summer the Women's ministry is taking a break from gathering together for our monthly dinners and devotions. If you have thoughts or ideas of creative ways we could get together virtually this summer please give me a call. I'm drawing a big blank in that area, gatherings and parties are my favorite things. We shouldn't do that now. I need creative minds to help me through this. Please call me. To all of you I miss you more than you know. Praying for your health, Victoria

Family Camp 2020

Pandemic Style

Family camp was reserved for **Wednesday June 24– Wednesday June—30** at Loggers Flat Group Campground in the Sequoia National Forrest. At the time of print, Friday, May 29th, all of the Group Campgrounds will be closed for the summer in the Sequoia National Park. There are other camp grounds open but all group campgrounds are closed. Avid campers can try to go, just a reservation for all of us together at Logger Flat won't happen this year.

We are very disappointed and I had plans to revise our potlucks by continuing to eat at the same time but just not potluck/share side dishes. (I know, total bummer, but I thought it would be safer). When we gathered we would just try to space out 6 feet apart. We could space our campsites and sanitize our shared faucets after each use. I thought we could learn to Pantomime instead of singing camp songs and basically, in my vision, we would have had a perfectly sanitized campground, one the California Department of Public Health would be proud of. That won't be the case this year but how about next year? We can do this all next summer if we can get another reservation! We have to try again, unfortunately they won't just let us transfer our reservation from this year to next year.

We like to camp during the end of June through early July. **Would you be willing to help us reserve the date for next year?** It's tricky to reserve the space because the dates are in high demand, we need quick internet and faithful folks to give it a try. The more folks we have trying for our dates the more chances we have for getting it. Since 1988, we have worked with another family and book the two weeks maximum allowed. They take one week and we take one week. If you are interested in helping with that task and you like to check websites on a computer please call the church office at: 237-7909. Reservations for next summer must be done this summer starting in June. We need helpers with fast internet connections and early risers. It must be done by 7:00AM in the morning. Please call me at the church office or my cell phone and let me know if you are able to help us reserve the Logger Flat Group Campground in the Sequoia National Forest by logging on to Reservation.gov. I can give you more details if you are going to try to help.

Missing you all and praying everyone is well,
Victoria Salwasser

Prayer Focus for the week

Week of 6-1-2020. Focus our prayers for comfort during this time of pandemic.

Psalms 23 NIV. "The LORD is my Shepard, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul! He guides me along the right paths for his name sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever".

Week of 6-8-2020. Let's focus on all graduates especially in this year of pandemic.

Proverbs 8: 10-11. NIV. "Choose my instruction Instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her".

Week of 6-15-2020. Let's focus on God's steadfast love.

Psalms 118:1. NIV. "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, his love endures forever".

Week of 6-22-2020. Let's focus on those fathers and other men who told us about Jesus.

Psalms 71:18. NIV. "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come".

Week of 6-29-2020. Let's focus on our calling to declare God's praises.

1 Peter 2:9. NIV. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light".

Journey

Corona Virus, again.

Yep, we're still talking about it.

We like to think about how invincible we are. We are the smartest, most technologically advanced people the world has ever known. We're geniuses! Throw any problem at us and we'll dissect it, analyze it, digest it and spit out the solution like nobody's business. Aren't we clever.

However, a little microscopic virus has infected five and half million people worldwide with close to three hundred and fifty thousand dead. Maybe we are a little more vulnerable than we think. The medical experts that I've listened to still don't have a consensus as to how this is spread. Is it water droplets orally, is it contact, is it, fill in the blank. The economic damage is worldwide as well. The world has been devastated, financially. I've suffered my financial losses as well. We're in for a long road to recovery. Maybe a better way to say it is, it's going to take some time and adjustments to get to the point that our "new" normal seems normal for us. Okay, enough of Debbie Downer.

So here is what I want to say this time around. Pray. Pray and then pray some more. And when you're done praying, pray again. Our only hope in all this and maybe on a cosmic level, the reason for all this is that we need to turn back to God. We need to accept that we are totally helpless without God. In my mind, there is no point to life without God. He has the answers. He IS the answer! Remember our 40 Days series? Realize he is God, and you are not. He is the path out of this. To me the greatest display of faith is service to others. No greater love has a person than they lay down their lives for others. That's why we feel so deeply about Memorial Day. All those, dads and moms, our aunts and uncles, our grandparents and friends, who said, I'll give up my freedom to insure yours. That's a real God thing. Some didn't come back, some came back broken and damaged, some came back and just faded away. God bless them all!

Pandemic is another war, but a war none the less. We see those who go out there day after day caring for those who are infected. There are those who go to work to make supplies for the medical personnel and for us too. Those who risk it to make food available for us. Those who have made masks at their sewing machines. Those who have called and checked on others. Those who have come up with new ways to celebrate weddings, birthdays, graduations and life. The lists of those sacrificing goes on and on.

My plea to you this month is this. First of all pray. Thank God for those who do the things listed above. Pray for those who have lost loved ones. Pray for a sense of sacrificial love for each other.

As we start the unsheltered process think first of those you come in contact with. Know that there is a lot of fear for some. Be willing to bend, adjust and compromise. Be willing to love those who are unwilling to compromise.

As always, God is the answer. To quote Metallica, "nothing else matters".

I love you all. See you in church when the time is right for you. John.

From our Council President

Greetings brothers and sisters of Immanuel!

I hope this article finds you and yours well and perhaps a touch bored, but very healthy indeed! My how the world has changed in such a short time. There isn't one direction we can point that has not been affected by anything COVID-19. Here we are, nearly three months into this pandemic and my hope is that we all have found our place of solace and understanding about the truly important things in our lives. Gina and I have practically seen our weekends come to a grinding halt when previously Sunday was about our only day to slow down. Blessing. I have been reading the Bible in a year, and so far I have managed to stay on track through today. If I'm being completely honest, a few weeks back I was squarely in the middle of the Psalms, which of course are amazing, but page after page, and things got a little more difficult to stay on track. Mike Nielsen, perhaps this is a future topic for our Sunday School class? :) Gina started her garden project and things are really coming along quite well. Tomatoes and squash are coming fast.

Family. Home. The word. A fun project or two. Helping out where and when we can. These are the things that have occupied our time. Missing you all, missing our church home, and a chance to pray together are all certainly on our minds every day, too. That said, we all have made it this far. While the world seems to be unfolding from this period of quarantine, our job is to be mindful of keeping ourselves, and each other, healthy and COVID-FREE. Exercise caution, keep your masks handy, and know that a little prudence never hurt any of us. Pray for our world to heal.

Love is a verb,
Fred