

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
5955 South Elm Avenue
Fresno, California 93706

Ministry Staff

Pastor: Rev. Taylor Stempniak
Youth Director: Jacob Wood
Office Secretary/Chimes Editor:
Victoria Salwasser
Organist: Laurel Jacobsen

Immanuel's Church Council

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Vice President: Marcia Hollenbeck
Council Secretary: Allyson Kahn
Financial Secretary: Pat Griffin
Treasurer: Laura Nielsen
Trustees: Noah Cisneros, Jim Hansen, Karl Nielsen,
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John Jensen, Barbara Petersen & Cindy Tews,
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The Immanuel Chimes
DECEMBER 2020

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
A Mission of the North American Lutheran Church
5955 South Elm Avenue
Fresno (Easton), California 93706

WORSHIP SCHEDULE SUNDAYS

9:00AM Sunday School for all ages
10:00AM Worship & Communion

WEDNESDAYS

6TH -12TH GRADES "Refuge" 6:30-8:00pm

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Church Telephone (559) 237-7909

Email: immanueleaston@sbcglobal.net

Email/Pastor: ptmarie96@gmail.com

Email/Youth Minister: jaywood66@yahoo.com



*This Year, we will have
two Christmas Eve Services,*

one at 10:30AM & one at 10:30PM.

*We will not gather for worship
on Christmas Morning.*

Christmas Apart

The other day, I had a tearful phone call with my mom where we both decided it would be unsafe for Luke and me to return home for Christmas this year. This decision didn't come lightly. Few people love Christmas as much as my mom does. It's a time of family and giving and good cheer. Our house is decorated with Christmas décor my brothers and I cobbled together as children: reindeers made with toilet paper rolls, pompoms, and sequins, cinnamon cookie cutter ornaments, quite a few embarrassing ornaments with my snaggle tooth kindergarten smile in the middle. Every year we converge at my grandma's house. My family, my aunt, my cousins, and my grandparents on both sides of the family. There's laughter, there's bickering, there's good food, there's small personal, intimate traditions, and I find myself so overwhelmed by the idea of missing out on that for the first time ever.

But I've paused to consider the first Christmas, where Mary and Joseph had traveled far away from their family while Mary was swollen with child. They can't even find a room in the Inn, but they rest in the stable where they welcome their new baby—our Lord—into the world. When we talk about this moment, we often focus on the miracle of Christ's birth or the novelty of welcoming a baby while surrounded by farm animals. However, in a season where many of us find ourselves separated from our loved ones in some capacity, I'm struck by the immense loneliness that these parents must have grappled with. Mary's mother was not there to hold her hand as she went through labor. Joseph's father wasn't there to congratulate his son. There were no aunts and uncles to coo over the baby and pinch his rosy cheeks. In one of the biggest moments in their lives, in one of the biggest moments in the history of the world, Mary and Joseph found themselves alone. At least at first.

But soon there were shepherds at their door, come to see the boy king who lay in a manger. Soon there was a drummer boy, rapping on his drum a song of celebration. Soon the wise men were carrying gifts from afar. Soon there was a community of support and celebration surrounding these parents, pulled there by Christ. As Luke and I prepare for holidays apart from our families, as each of us adjusts to the world of COVID, and as Immanuel adjusts to the indoor-outdoor worship hokey pokey we've been doing the past few months, it is important for us to focus on this small community, found in a stable and pulled there by Christ. We are all shepherds and wise men and worshippers on a jour-

Prayer Focus For the Week

Week of 12-7-2020.

Focus on the faith that heals.

Acts 3:16 NIV.

“By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.”

Week of 12-14-2020.

Focus on Jesus overcoming this world.

John 16:33 NIV.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Week of 12-21-2020.

Focus on God loving us so much he sent his son.

John 3:16 NIV.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Week of 12-28-2020.

Focus on hope for our future.

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV.

“For I know the plans I have for you” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Prayers Of Our Church

Members and their families serving in the military: Joey Brewer, Henry Clark, Michael Hansen, Caleb Hathaway, Scott Linger, & Matthew Tigchelaar. Please keep our friends and family safe from harms way as they give of their precious time on Earth for our freedom and safety.

Those unable to travel about: Connie Bennetts, Olga Hansen, Marilyn Iversen, Marguerite Johnson, Art & Marian Olesen, Phyllis Petersen, Howard Nielsen & Lois Rasmussen. Please keep our loved ones in your prayers for peace and comfort as they are not able to move about as they once were.

Those in need of healing: Marilyn Bell, Sandy Britter, Luanne Byrd, Gaye Cissel, Geoff Cooper, Pastor Gary Gould, Jenny Lee Hodges, Judy Hooper, Florence Johnston, Sam Navaro, Glenn & Marilyn Nielsen, The Perez Family, Christie Pettitt, Chuck Phillips, Sr., Virginia Pilegard, Timm Trickett, Joe Wozniczka & Joni & Margie Zingarelli.

Please keep our members and friends in your prayers for strength and healing.

For those who have lost their belongings to the fires in California. For Fire Fighters and other Emergency Responders who are battling the fires and the trauma. For protection to all who suffer from the bad air.

For people dealing with loneliness and depression caused by the pandemic precautions. For those battling the Coronavirus.

ney to find Jesus, and if we're seeking out Jesus, we should be seeking out his family too. The church isn't a building; the church is the family of God that worships our Lord, King of Kings, who was born in a manger in Bethlehem. As we continue to live in a world of stress and chaos, let us gather around this manger together, in person, outdoors, over zoom, through phone calls, and the millions of other ways that we can reach out and surround each other with community and love, knowing that when Christ is at our center, then love, peace, and support abound.

Warm Christmas Blessings,
Pastor Taylor

NALC Disaster Relief Report

Partners in mission at Immanuel, I wanted to give you an update on what we have accomplished. Last week, we donated 30 nativity sets to Sierra Lutheran to be handed out to people in need there. We would love to collect even more to be handed out in Orville, California where 1100 homes were lost. They will be gathering early December for a town Christmas tree event, and we would like to be able to give the families a little Christmas to give them some hope. Places like Dollar General and Hobby Lobby have had very inexpensive nativity decorations and nativity ornaments.

We collected 100 Bibles so far. They will also be given out in Orville as well as other areas in California as needed. We continue to collect them in a box in the narthex.

Finally, 28 boxes of blankets that were brought from our national storage area were handed out in Orville. Many of these families were impoverished, and most do not have insurance to replace their homes. Therefore, many are bringing in travel trailers and they get cold. If you have extra blankets you would like to share, great. If you want to buy some (maybe on black Friday sales), great. We need to collect more to hand out now as well as to replace those that were used so we are prepared for the next disaster.

Thanks for all of your help. Any and all donations can be left in the Bible box in the narthex or in their own box or bag labeled NALC Disaster Relief or with my name.

Let's continue to keep up the great work!
Marcia

In Celebration of Our Members

Birthdays

1-Michelle Hollenbeck
4-Joseph T. Perez
5- Allyson Kahn
-Michael Pilegard
8-Emilee Goff
10-Deanna Dunbar
12-Christian Jensen
- Brittney Gardner
13-Emily Ewing
15-Danell Dickey
17-Fred Johnson
20-Cindy Slaton
21-Virginia Pilegard
-Aaliyah Bell
-Isaac Orozco Jr.
24-Ellen Nielsen
25-Donna Ewing
28-Mike Nielsen
-Jacob Wood
29-Julius Perez
-Stacy Avedisian
30-Shelbi Clarkson
-Stephanie Hollenbeck
31-Debby Saethre



Baptismal Birthdays

1-Sandi Peterson
Marcia Hollenbeck
Timmy Pilegard
Sharon Reynolds
4-Brenna Severin
Andrew Severin
Stephanie Clarkson
David Clarkson
6-Mark Salwasser
7-Serena Bell
-Kobe Bell
11-Aaliyah Bell
12-Sarah Pilegard
15-Isaac Orozco, Jr.
18-Jim Hansen
19-Scott Hollenbeck
20-Fred Cogan
22-Amy Hansen
Ericka Gardner
25-Joan Lindsey
Gina Cogan



Wedding Anniversaries

16-Tim & Debbie Pilegard (31)
23-Darel & Diane Mehrten (59)
30-Jon & Sandy Marthedal (42)
-Gary & Mim Gould (53)

Fall Colors at Immanuel



Here comes 2021!

Contribution Envelopes for 2021

If you would like to continue receiving contribution envelopes please call the church office. We have them ready for 2021 but now is when we order them for 2022. If you would like to discontinue envelopes let us know and we will not order you envelopes for 2022. Many online donors may not want their envelopes anymore so please let us know.

Family Camp 2021

We have the dates, mark your new calendars and let's plan to spend some time in the great outdoors! July 5-11, 2021. Come when you can and leave when you must. Help us introduce Pastor and Luke to Loggers Flat and the beautiful Sequoia National Forrest. Let's convince Lee to planna hike for us! Let's dream big and plan our camping vacation at Loggers Flat today by mark our new calendars now.

January 2021 Chimes Deadline Wednesday-December 16th

*Unto Us
a Child is Born*



*The Bible is
the cradle
wherein Christ
is laid.*

Martin Luther

Women's Ministry

The Women's ministry donated \$500.00 to the Easton Presbyterian Star Tree Ministry this year. The church will host a drive through Christmas Gift Give Away to the children in our community who would not have a gift this year at Christmas time. Thank you to everyone who has supported the Women's Ministry fundraising endeavors.



News Notes

Congratulations to DAREL & DIANE MEHRTEN on their 59th anniversary December 23rd. Happy 42nd Anniversary to JON & SANDY MARTHEDAL on December 30th and 53rd Anniversary to Pastor Gary & Mim Gould.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SYD & ANDREA NEWSOM! They were married on November 17th! Please continue to pray for them as the work through the process of rebuilding their home after the Santa Cruz fires destroyed their home in August.

Christmas Shopping ?

The Danish Historical Society sells miscellaneous gift items and home décor with an emphasis on Danish-themed items. Please call Lucille Dennis for a catalog at 261-1646 or email her at

Annual Reports for 2020 Due on January 11th, 2021

The following committees are asked to turn in a brief recap (this year, many of the reports will be brief) of the year's activities to share with our members in our annual report. Please submit your report to the church office or email to: immanueleaston@sbcglobal.net by January 11th,

Breaking Grounds Café
Blood Drive-Bleed & Feed
Call Committee
Care Bears
Caruthers Fair/Pull Pork Sandwich
Congregational President
Deacons
Fellowship Luncheon Report
Financial Secretary
Grace in Action-All Classes

Men's Bible Study
Nominating Committee
Quilters
Treasurer
Trustees
Women's Ministry President
Women's Ministry Treasurer
Youth Minister

Journey

This has been the stupidest year ever. And I mean ever!

It just seems good or just all-right news has been so sparse. Wouldn't it be nice to turn on the news and see a story of a dog who got lost on a family vacation 200 miles away and somehow found his way home? Wouldn't it be nice to see a picture of a butterfly perched on a kitten's nose? Wouldn't you like to hear that the 49ers were all healthy and winning? Wouldn't you like to hear the fires have all burned out and that the air was just something you breathed and not something you can't see through? Wouldn't it be nice if all the Covid-19 doctors and nurses could all take a month off because there were no new virus cases? Wouldn't it be nice to have a day with no murders? Wouldn't it be nice if there were no DUI's to report? Wouldn't it be nice to have a cure for cancer or better yet, no cancer at all?

Maybe it's just me or maybe it's not. I find myself caught up in this negative vortex. I find myself just waiting or expecting to hear the next bad thing. Before long, all the good is gone. I'm convicted by that. It's absolutely not what Jesus intended for me. It's not what he intends me to be doing. He expects better from me. Not because I'm better than anybody else. It's because I carry the mark of Jesus on my forehead, given to me at my baptism. I will never be perfect or even close to it. But that doesn't excuse me in any way, shape or form from trying to be better. We've been looking at the Holy Spirit in our on-line class. It's been fascinating. I've never really thought much about the Spirit. This last year has been an eye opener. Praying with the call committee and then beginning 2nd Sunday prayer time. The Spirit revealed itself to us. We were aware of the Spirit's presence so that when a few seconds into our first Zoom with Pastor Taylor, we knew we had been lead there.

Anyway, I can't really change any of the chaos that is going on in our world and country. I can only change how I react to it. I can, by the Spirit's power, choose, to the best of my ability, to respond in love and kindness. Instead of insisting on "What about me?" I can begin to say "What about y'all?"

Fitting in with that, I was reminded of a Rascal's song from 1968:

It's a beautiful mornin'
I think I'll go outside for a while,
And just smile.
Just take in some clean fresh air, boy
Ain't no sense in staying inside

If the weather's fine and you got the time,
It's your chance to wake up and plan
Another brand new day.

This year, this time of year, please remember how isolated we can feel. In a season when we should be surrounded by friends and family, there is going to be a group who feels the solitude a bit more. The holidays can be a time when those who have lost loved ones can feel so very alone. It's a time when we can struggle more than usual. With this year's shelter in place and quarantine guide lines, the circle of those who suffer is going to be bigger. Reach out to someone who is in need of hearing from another human. A card, a plate of touch-free cookies, an email, a text message, a phone call. Let someone know you are thinking of them. The reward will be great for them and the reward for you will be greater. You'll feel the spirit moving in you.

If the load is especially heavy, please, please, PLEASE call me or Pastor Taylor or Victoria. We'll share the load. And if it's even greater, we'll get you some crisis phone numbers. You are NOT alone! God loves you. I love you, Pastor Taylor loves you, your church family loves you. We'll get through this together. I promise.

Love,
John.

Sunday School Class Via Email

Starting December 27th we will begin our next on line Bible study. The next study is titled "**Meeting Jesus**". There will be a study guide available in the church entryway. You can pick one up there.

Here's how it works: Every morning I will email a discussion point or question relevant to that weeks' lesson. You can choose to respond to that question by clicking the "reply all" icon. You can respond to each question or simply read any of the class members comments. There are no wrong answers. You can respond at any time that day or throughout the week. There will be prayer suggestions each day for your individual prayer times. You can add your prayers to the list.

While the study is important the real benefit is a chance to stay connected to your church family. I hope you will join us. Simply email me your email address and you will be enrolled.

John Jensen
deaconofbutter@yahoo.com

Zoo Lights 2020

Bored out of your gourd? Try the Zoo! Go to FresnoChaffeeZoo.org and pre-purchase your tickets and time frame. Due to pandemic, limited visitors are allowed in the park at the same time.

Nov 27 – 29, Dec 4 – 6, Dec 11 – 16, Dec 18 – 23 and Dec 26 – 30
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (pre-purchase your tickets online)

For this annual event, the entire Zoo is transformed into a magical winter wonderland, fully decorated and strung with miles of holiday lights! Enjoy live entertainment, festive treats and beverages for both adults and children, holographic glasses for purchase and free socially distant photos with Santa Claus.

Live Performance Schedule:

November 28: Jubilation
November 29: Holiday Jazz
December 4: Holiday Jazz
December 5: Jubilation
December 11: Holiday Mariachi
December 12: Holiday Jazz
December 14: Patrick Contreras, Violin on Fire
December 20: Jubilation

Theme Nights:

December 5: Valley PBS Family Circle Night with Daniel Tiger available for socially distant photos.
December 13: Toys for Tots Drive (free holographic glasses with toy donation, 1 per person).
December 15: Valley PBS Family Circle Night with Daniel Tiger available for socially distant photos.
December 16: Valley PBS Family Circle Night with Daniel Tiger available for socially distant photos.
December 18: Karaoke
December 20: National Ugly Sweater Day (10% off reusable cup for guests wearing an ugly holiday sweater).
December 22: College Discount Day (\$2 off non-member admission rate with valid college student ID).
December 28: Karaoke

Santa will be available at ZooLights through December 23.

All health and safety rules and guidelines will be followed including mask policy, social distancing and limited capacity. Pre-purchase tickets to reserve your entry time. The capacity for this event is limited. ZooLights tickets will be date specific and cannot be exchanged for a different date.

Attention Thrivent Members

Thrivent offers 2 opportunities for Grant Dollars to each member each year. That's \$500.00, \$250.00 per grant, to go towards raising money for organizations in need. If you are a Thrivent Member and you are interested in retrieving your Grant Dollars for a fund raiser through our church please call the church office and we will guide you through the process. We could team up and use our grant dollars to fully fund another take out dinner fundraiser and all sales could be put towards the ministry we are raising funds for. If you haven't used your grant dollars for 2020 it's not too late. We can request the funds now and plan the fundraiser in January. We have volunteers ready to plan our next drive through dinner for the mission or another organization or even a new ministry to start at Immanuel! Wasn't it great not to have to cook dinner on October 24th? Think how we could help the NALC Disaster Response Team and other organizations in need of help during this pandemic. Call the church office today at 237-7909.

Central California Blood Center 2021 Russ Dunbar Memorial Blood Drives

January 10

March 14

May 16

July 18

September 19

November 21

Mark these dates on your new calendars!

Blood is needed to help those who can't help themselves. The need is great.

Sympathy Love and Prayers for the Family of Phyllis Sullivan

Phyllis was born on Oct. 13, 1929 to Herman Carlock Tieman and Myrtle Stover Tieman in Danville, IL and passed away in Fresno, CA on November 13, 2020.

After graduation in 1947 from Paxton Community High School in Paxton, IL, Phyllis attended St. Anthony's School of Nursing in Rockford, IL. She graduated in 1950 and worked as a registered nurse at Paxton Community Hospital, and later at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. In 1951, she traveled with 3 of her friends to Fresno, CA where she took a nursing position at Fresno County General Hospital. She met Ronal Leon Sullivan at a local dance and they were married on June 6, 1952. Son Larry was born in 1954 and daughter Pamela in 1956.

Phyllis continued to work at Valley Medical Center (formerly Fresno County General Hospital) until her retirement in 1986 as Associate Director of Nursing. She and Leon enjoyed many hobbies together such as traveling, lawn bowling, gardening and playing cards, as well as their involvement in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5057. Leon passed away in March 2009, and in January 2017 Phyllis moved to the Paintbrush Assisted Living Center where she made many new friends. She continued her involvement in the VFW Auxiliary and pinochle club, enjoyed local theater and attending church services at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Easton.

Phyllis was preceded in death by her parents, younger brother Dean and by husband Leon. She is survived by her son Larry (Nancy), and daughter Pamela (Dennis), stepdaughter Patricia, 5 grandchildren, 2 step grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren and 4 step-great-grandchildren.

"This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it, the process is not yet finished, but it is going on, this is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified."

— Martin Luther



There is much to be thankful for at Bethel Lutheran Home in Selma. We are still COVID-19 free and our residents can now have visits with their families in our park in front of Bethel Home. Thanks to the Bethel Guild, our residents now have new electric beds. Bethel Home is also expanding. Bethel Home recently purchased Selma Physical Therapy which is adjacent to our property. We will now be able to offer services to the community as well as our residents at both the Home and The Village. We are also thankful for the churches and community organizations and businesses that have already made donations to make Christmas at Bethel in 2020 very *“merry and bright.”*

The Bethel Lutheran Home Board of Directors is very excited about how God is blessing Bethel. We do, however, need additional board members. If you are interested in being involved in this rewarding ministry, give the board president, Phil Benner, a call at 559-259-7780.

Youth News!

Merry Christmas Immanuel!

Hello Immanuel,

Refuge has been meeting outside of Grace Hall since October and it has been successful and safe! It has been great to have community among our young people again, from a social distance of course. We are currently meeting on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m. This month, we will be moving to the parking lot behind the sanctuary, and we will be purchasing an outdoor heater.

We will not be meeting on the following dates: December 23 and 30 and January 6th. This is due to the Christmas and New Year’s season.

If you would like to get your students out of the house one evening a week, please let me know (559-259-0746) and I will add you on Remind so that you are informed about our meeting details.

- Jacob, Youth Director at Immanuel

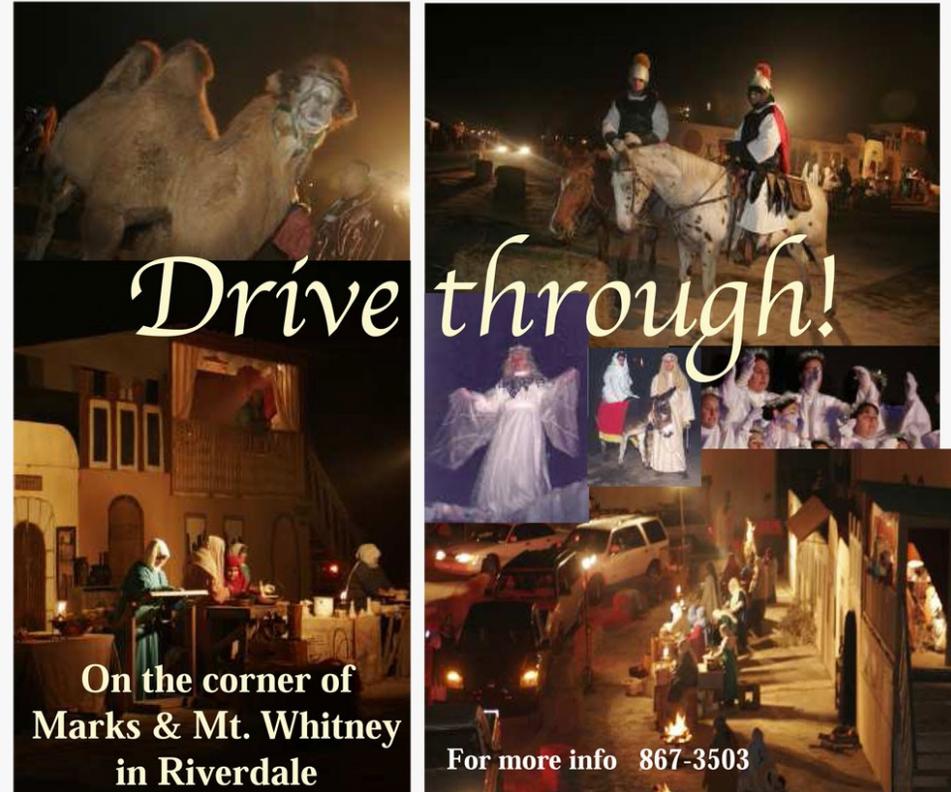
Riverdale Assembly Of God Church Invites Us To:

December 22, 23, 24, and 25th
6:00 - 9:00 pm

The Living Nativity

WWW.RIVERDALEASSEMBLYOFGOD.ORG

THE VALLEY’S PREMIER OUTDOOR CHRISTMAS PRODUCTION



On the corner of
Marks & Mt. Whitney
in Riverdale

For more info 867-3503