

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
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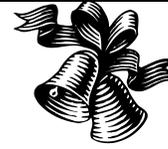
Ministry Staff

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

Immanuel's Church Council

President: Fred Cogan
Vice President: Kristi Hollenbeck
Council Secretary: Allyson Kahn
Financial Secretary: Sharon Reynolds
Treasurer: Laura Nielsen
Trustees: Noah Cisneros, Jim Hansen, Karl Nielsen,
Deacons: Carol Bennetts, Gina Cogan,
John Jensen, Barbara Petersen & Cindy Tews
Women's Ministry President: Victoria Salwasser

Return Service Requested



The Immanuel Chimes
February Edition 2021

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
A Mission of the North American Lutheran Church
5955 South Elm Avenue
Fresno (Easton), California 93706
Church Telephone (559) 237-7909
Email: immanueleaston@sbcglobal.net
Email/Pastor: ptmarie96@gmail.com
Email/Youth Minister: jaywood66@yahoo.com

WORSHIP SCHEDULE SUNDAYS

9:00AM Sunday School for all ages
via Zoom

10:00AM Online Worship

11:30AM Outdoors at Immanuel
Service of the Word & Communion

WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

7:00-8:00PM 6TH -12TH GRADES Refuge Via Zoom

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER SCHEDULE

7:00PM Congregational Prayer Gathering via Zoom on
Second Thursday of each Month

From Our Pastor

Our Daily Rituals—Time In Between

During this time of pandemic, our council meetings happen over Zoom. Not much has changed. We pray for members of the congregation who are celebrating birthdays, we have devotions, we handle the business of the church. Then we conclude with the Lord's Prayer. Now normally the Lord's Prayer is recited in unison, so that the people of God are raising their voices to him in one strong declaration of thanksgiving and petition, but this month the Lord's Prayer sounded a little different. With the lag on our zoom call and the audio troubles that technology inevitably bring, we sounded a bit more disjointed. We were saying the same prayer, but we were saying it at different times, and while I listened to different voices offer the familiar words with unfamiliar timing, I was struck by the reality that in the midst of this chaos, even this chaotic expression of our faith, the words of the gospel still rang out clear and true. What a perfect metaphor for the moment we're living in.

My articles in the Chimes have been focused on the daily rituals of our lives, those opportunities we're given daily to reexamine how we live and refocus our minds and hearts on the Lord. We've talked about baptism and breakfast and morning prayer, and it was already my goal this month to talk about the "in-between times." You know, those moments of our life where we're caught up in the humdrum. The moments in the car, where we're in-between our home and work. The moments in the grocery line where we're in-between shopping and checking out. The moments throughout the week in-between leaving church and coming back. Of course, lately it's felt like we're in one big in-between moment. We're all trudging along in this moment between the beginning of the pandemic and the moment when it will, finally, come to an end. These are the moments where our minds wander, we get lost in thought or caught up in day dreaming, and when these moments pile up or drag on, it can become easy to get trapped within them and begin to feel separated from our family, ourselves, and even our God. We let our own thoughts and busyness consume these moments because it's hard to be intentional about using these moments for anything else.

For that exact reason, the apostle Paul urges us in 1 Thessalonians to "rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances." This is a verse we often think of in either the brightest or darkest moments of our lives, in the middle of the dramatically happy or the devastatingly sad, but for Paul, this wasn't just a recommendation for the peaks and valleys of life, this was about the in-between time. Paul

Prayer Focus For The Week

Week of 2-7-2021 Focus on the gift of communion.

Psalms 34:8 NIV.

"Taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him".

Week of 2-14-2021 Focus on love.

1 John 4:19 NIV.

"We love because He first loved us".

Week of 2-21-2021 Focus on persevering.

Job 19:25,26 NIV.

"I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth, and after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God".

Week of 2-28-2021 Focus on our amazing God.

Exodus 15:11 NIV.

"Who among the gods is like you LORD? Who is like - majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

Prayers for Our Church

Prayers of the church

For Christ's Church: *Eternal God, we thank You for Your Church through which the gospel of Jesus Christ has been manifest in every age.*

Members and their families serving in the military: Erica Botello, Joey Brewer, Henry Clark, Michael Hansen, Caleb Hathaway, Scott Linger, Matt Ward, & Matthew Tigchelaar.

Those unable to travel about: Olga Hansen, Gail Hansen, Marilyn Iversen, Art & Marian Olesen, Howard Nielsen, Phyllis Petersen, & Lois Rasmussen.

Those in need of healing: Marilyn Bell, Sandy Britter, Paul Brown, Luanne Byrd, Eli Cisneros, Gaye Cissel, Geoff Cooper, Pastor Gary Gould, Gail Hansen, Dennis Haugh, Al & Judy Hooper, Florence Johnston, Gil Nagel, Don Nielsen, Glenn & Marilyn Nielsen, Phyllis Petersen, Christie & Don Pettitt, Virginia Pilegard, Lois Rasmussen, Aslak Syse, Timm Trickett, Joe Wozniczka, Joni Zingarelli & Kris Zingarelli

For people dealing with loneliness and depression caused by these pandemic precautions. For those battling the Coronavirus and the health care providers tending to those in need.



Fresno Mission Needs Our Help!

I want to start out by saying “Thank You” for partnering with us in the past. With your help, we were able to serve so many in the Fresno Mission’s Community Care, Family Center and Rescue the Children. 2020 was a very different year, but we are planning some exciting things in 2021. One of those things is the Longest Line of Socks. We are attempting to beat the Guinness World Record of 3.82 miles. Our goal is 4 miles. To put this in perspective, we will need approximately 45,000 pairs of adult socks. Sounds like quite a feat, right? You can help us get there!

Backstory on why we are taking this on. We have experienced so many in need. As we attempt this, we will be able to share our story. Afterward, we will have thousands of pairs of socks to share with the Central Valley and maybe even the state. We will all be working together towards filling the need in our community and beyond.

Lisa Nishimoto
Director of Events, Fresno Mission

Immanuel will help the mission with their goal to beat the Guinness World Record for the longest line of socks! We are hosting a sock drive from now through October 1st. For now, **we are collecting only adult size socks, crew or tube styles** of brand new socks, any color. We all know the importance of warm dry socks especially in this wet, cold, winter weather. We have a while to collect, but let’s not procrastinate. We will have a bin in the social hall and office for your donations. To beat the record, the socks must be pinned on a four mile clothes line. Lots of volunteers will be needed for this project too. This will take place in November, so stay tuned for your chance to be a part of breaking a Guinness World Record!

Easton Community Clean Up Day

Believe it or not, spring is on its way! Let’s gather outdoors and clean up our community on March 6th from 9:00-Noon. If you are interested in helping walk through town to pick up litter or drive around town cleaning graffiti, we have supplies for you! Remember to bring your mask and good walking shoes as well as your own water. Please call the church office if you would like to get outside and help your community get ready for spring.

viewed life as being the time in between Christ’s resurrection and the moment where we would all join Christ in eternal life, and he emphasized the importance of staying awake as we wait. Paul urges us to live out our faith always because he understood that the chaos of daily life can easily drown out our faithfulness to Christ if we are not intentional about our relationship to the Lord.

And as a result, those in-between times, where we’re flitting from task to task, but we’re stalled by travel, waiting, or pandemic procedure become the perfect opportunities for us to practice our faith. Sing your favorite hymns in your car, loudly, boldly, even if you’re off key. Pray as you stand in line, for the teenager scanning your groceries, for your neighbor who needs you, for all that burdens and delights your soul. Rejoice as you wait for the world to open back up around you for the opportunity we’ve had to pause. Rejoice because we have a life in the church worth longing for while we wait. Rejoice for the knowledge that when we pray together now, no matter how chaotic and disjointed we may feel or sound, we are praying together to the one true God, who hears us, answers us, and dwells alongside us, not just on Sundays, not just in church, but in every moment in between.

Blessings,
Pastor Taylor

From Our Youth Director about Refuge!

Hello Immanuel,

We have resumed Refuge over Zoom for 2021. We are meeting on Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. Bring a fun attitude as we continue to use our technology for staying in community with one another. Something different this year is that our leaders will stay online after we are done meeting in case students need to talk or ask questions.

PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU WANT TO JOIN AND YOU ARE NOT ON OUR REMIND LIST. WE WILL GET YOU THE INFO.

Love you all,
Jacob Wood, Youth Director at Immanuel
(559) 259-0746
jaywood66@yahoo.com

Pastor's Announcements for February!



Bits FROM Bethel

Ash and Dash

This Ash Wednesday, February 17th, we will be offering an online service beginning at 7:00 pm. During this service, you are invited to make the sign of the cross on the forehead of yourself or your family members as a reminder of mortality. If you would also like to have the imposition of ashes, we will be offering a drive-through service on the 17th from 5:30-6:30 where you can receive ashes. Pastor Taylor will wear a mask for the imposition, and you are asked to do so as well.

We need your soup recipes for the Lenten Soup Suppers!

This Lent, we will be offering an online service to honor COVID-19 precautions, but we want to ensure that we are still celebrating the sense of community that our soup suppers create. If you have a soup recipe you'd like to share with the congregation, please send, call, or email the church office with the recipe. We will send out two recipes during each of the five weeks of Lent so we can all enjoy eating the same meal together as we worship.

Second Sunday Prayer

Second Sunday Prayer will take place on Thursday, February 11th, at 7:00 pm. The Zoom link will be sent out that week. Please join us in our prayers!

Now Offering Text Alerts

Do you forget to check your email when you get home? Do events sometimes slip your mind? Is texting your preferred way of communication? Good news! Immanuel is now offering text alerts for church events. We will send out a brief text reminder about church events an hour before they begin. Church prayer requests and weekly schedules will still be offered through email. If you'd like to sign up for event reminders, please email or text Pastor Taylor your name and cell number.

Her email is ptmarie96@gmail.com and her cell number is (803)767-5128.

Chimes Deadline

Please submit all **articles for the March Chimes by February 17th**. It is appreciated if they are e-mailed to our secretary at: immanualeaston@sbcglobal.net. You can also put them in the office secretary's box located in the church entryway.

Christmas was certainly different last year at Bethel Lutheran Home. The season started out with an outdoor tree lighting ceremony. Bethel has never looked so festive! Due to the fact that a few staff and residents tested positive for COVID 19, all residents were quarantined in their rooms (yellow zone) at Christmas. The staff worked hard to make Christmas a celebration for them. All residents received a beautiful warm blanket as a gift, an appreciated gift from several people and churches. Santa and his entourage of elves caroled from outside the windows. The 'Quality of Life' department enabled many residents to communicate with family through FaceTime or tablet calls. The good news is that all staff and residents have tested negative for COVID 19 the next two weeks, so the Bethel Lutheran Home is now in green zone. Visitation, with restrictions, can resume. We were blessed to stay that way until January 15 when we were scheduled to receive the vaccine. Let us pray together for health and blessings in 2021.

Sincerely,
Shikha Patteson, Administrator

Thanks to the people who decorated Christmas Trees for the residents of Bethel Lutheran Home. Since the residents were confined to their rooms at Christmas due to COVID 19 restrictions, this was the best year ever to have a decorated tree in each room to spread Christmas cheer for the pandemic year. Thanks for making life a little easier for others during these difficult times.



Laurel Jacobsen

News Notes

Congratulations to John Jensen for becoming a grandfather again! His son and daughter-in-law welcomed Hanna Elizabeth Jensen late January 25, 2021 weighing in at 6 pounds, 9 ounces. She was welcomed by her 3-year-old brother, Samuel, and father and mother, Jonathan and Heather Jensen. She is the 6th great-grandchild to Carl and Betty Jensen.

Marie Salwasser celebrated her 80th birthday with her girls on a quick trip to Las Vegas in January. She took her daughter, Patty, and daughter-in-law, Victoria, as well as her granddaughters, Katie, Kendall, Audra and Alejandra away to celebrate and ring in her next decade. Everyone had a great time!

We have a lawyer in the church! January was an exciting month for Luke Stempniak! He found out he passed the bar exam on January 8th and he was hired by Griswold and LaSalle Law Firm in Hanford on January 15th. He was sworn into the bar on January 22nd and started work on January 25th! Congratulations Luke!

Church Council

The 2021 church council members are: President, Fred Cogan; Vice President, Kristi Hollenbeck; Corresponding Secretary, Allyson Kahn; Financial Secretary, Sharon Reynolds; Treasurer, Laura Nielsen; Deacons, Carol Bennetts, Gina Cogan, John Jensen, Barbara Petersen and Cindy Tews. Jacob Wood will serve at Sunday School Superintendent and currently, Victoria Salwasser will serve as Women's Ministry President. Pastor Taylor is also a member of council. Victoria Salwasser, office secretary, sits at the council meeting as a non-voting member as a liaison for council business and to assist Pastor Taylor. Special thanks is sent out to Pat Griffin and Marcia Hollenbeck for serving as Financial Secretary and Vice President for two terms. Thank you for your time and commitment to God by serving as a leader for your church family.

If you are curious about the job descriptions for church council members or would like information about how you could serve your church, please call the church office.



Outdoor Church
Come sunshine, fog or rain, outdoor church services with communion continue at Immanuel every Sunday morning at 11:30 a.m.

Love One Another

Word Search

Love One another

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12 (NIV)

Based on John 15:9-17 (NIV)



G Q R J N I L D R Z G F U R G
 C O M M A N D D I M Y T E Z I
 G F S Y J F W J O K H N Y O J
 Q W F L F R U I T W S C P M I
 C H M E R B W Q J F N R U P O
 T L D R I K O B U S I N E S S
 Q X S X E J U O E R N L A Y R
 O A P R N E N B A I F L I S R
 M J L B D I O E D K R V T E T
 L A F O S A B Y M Z N N T V F
 M D S A V V Y K N R A A U E E
 Z H T T T E P W L V E L S F F
 Y M N P E H H A R R P O I V Q
 F F G P B R E E G Z H L H R I
 R E M A I N S R V C E C D S A

FRIENDS	OBEY	LOVE	FRUIT
DOWN	BUSINESS	BEAR	MASTER
LAY	FATHER	LIFE	REMAIN
SERVANTS	GREATER	COMMAND	CHOSE

Smiles from the Bible:

Q. What kind of man was Boaz before he married?

A.

Ruthless.

Q. What do they call pastors in Germany?

A. German Shepherds.

Journey

So I've been reminded in the last couple of weeks about the importance of communicating with each other. I think in this day and age, communicating is underrated. I think a lot of people figure that reaching out isn't that important. Maybe some of that has to do with the internet. The various platforms of social media are clogged with all sorts of, for the most part, nonsense. I, for one, have really backed off of Facebook in particular. I may only look at it once or twice a week and sometimes that's too much. When I start to see someone expressing their thoughts in a negative way, that's usually where I drop them. I just don't need it. It affects my psyche. Leaves me feeling disappointed.

I distinctly remember a truck driver coming into my office at the creamery 15 or more years ago. We got around to the internet, it was new back then. He said the internet was the tool of the devil and would cause the downfall of society. It stuck in my head for a long while. At first I thought he was just another guy who had a few bolts that had been over torqued. Now I'm not so sure. It's gotten to be a kind of a hit and run accident kind of place. Little or no accountability for what is said. Maybe that's what appeals to some. Don't get me wrong, I know it's here to stay. It does have a huge potential for good. It is used for a vast amount of good, especially now during the pandemic. Zoom Sunday School. On-line worship service. E-mail prayer chain. 2nd week Zoom prayer time. E-mail Bible study. Zoom council meetings. During these times, these are all necessary. Frankly, I don't know what we would be doing without it.

I think I can speak for most of us when I say I'll sure be glad when these all become unnecessary. I miss seeing your faces like crazy.

Let me get back on the freeway here. Communicating one-on-one is so important. Honestly, it's the way God intended it to be. I hope the virus doesn't go on so long that we forget how to be around each other. Or, that we get used to not being in church. And so we must put forth every effort to stay in contact with each other. I facilitate an e-mail Bible study; you are ALL welcome to join. Pastor Taylor does a Zoom Sunday School; you are ALL welcome to join. We provide an on-line worship service, please tune in and what could be easier than telling a friend to tune in as well. There is an in-person worship service at 11:30 for the hearty. The Peak will be coming back soon and you'll have another opportunity to share that with your friends. All of these are great, but! Call someone, especially those in facilities. Send a text or an email to someone you miss seeing. Send a card. It's those one-on-one things that make the most difference not only to them but to you as well. Jesus was a one-on-one kind of guy. It's that personal contact that we all crave. As someone who lives alone I can tell you that there

Flexibility: While rural and village congregations may not be known for flexibility and nimbleness, they are. Smaller churches can respond more quickly to adapt and re-tool to changing situations in the communities that they serve. These advantages and others show why the small and rural congregation is the "backbone" of the Christian Church in America.

Realizing their value and importance in sharing faith, the Mission Office of the North American Lutheran Church, specifically the NALC Renewal Team, has developed an online course entitled, "Small and Rural Church Ministry." This comprehensive learning module is structured with the following components:

- Struggles
- Importance of Relationships
- Gift of Aging and Intergenerational Ministry
- Discipleship
- Equipping
- Outreach and Evangelism
- Attitudes

Technology and Digital Ministry.

The course is easy to use and is recommended for pastors, church members, leadership teams, and others interested in strengthening small and rural ministry. We urge you to consider embarking on this continuing education journey and participating in an affirming teaching on ministry in towns and rural areas. This course is free to all NALC Members. To access this course or for more information, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SmallAndRuralChurch>

While some may see the small town and rural church in a spiral of decline, clinging to former days, we see it with a "future of hope." God is still using these congregations to build relationships, serve, and make disciples for Christ. As these congregations continue to be the "bread and butter" and majority of the NALC, let them be strengthened and renewed to witness Jesus.

From Pastor Brad Hales:

We are excited for you to be able to join this course that the NALC Renewal Team has structured. We know that a large percentage of congregations are small or rural. These congregations are the backbone of the Body of Christ and give us a future of hope.

Note from Victoria:

This is an online course with different types of segments that you read. Some have little videos to click on and listen. The course may be done at your own pace and each segment has spots where you can leave a comment. I have not done the course yet. I hope to go through it soon. If you would like to go through it with me, give me a call and we can schedule a time to work through it together. This course is free for a limited time for NALC members or friends.

The Small And Rural Church

A Future Of Hope

Published on the nalcnetwork.com January 13, 2021 by Jennifer Brockman

Whether located in towns, the farmlands, or out in the prairie, the North American Lutheran Church's mainstay is small and rural congregations. While other faith communities look for ways to close and minimize these churches, the NALC values these parishes as they continue to seek avenues to enhance ministry and make disciples for Jesus. Like all other congregations, small and rural missions face both challenges and opportunities.

Small and rural churches deal with dwindling memberships, aging parishioners, lack of finances, older buildings, conflict, fewer resources, and memories of the past. While these challenges are real, they cannot thwart the resilience of these parishes and the opportunities. Too often in the church, we are asking the wrong question. Instead of asking, "What do we need to "bring in" to do ministry, we should be asking, "What has God already blessed us with to do ministry?" The Holy Spirit continues to provide the small and rural church with the talents and abilities of its people to make Christ known in their communities.

Sadly, many small and rural churches feel "less than" their larger counterparts. This is due to a lack of programming, size, and staff. The worst thing that a congregation can do is compare itself with another. Every church is different and has a unique opportunity to share Christ and his saving love. Specifically, what are some of the advantages of a small and rural congregation?

Relationships: In towns and villages, relationships are paramount. It is in these personal relationships where neighbors help others, and Christ can be shared. A smaller church is a natural place for these bonds to be nurtured and deepened. These relationships assist in developing and maturing discipleship. Aging - While many might conclude that an "aging church is a dying church," they are missing the mark. While a majority of small and rural churches have older members, this should be recognized as an asset. Ministry and evangelistic efforts can be centered around this age group. Also, bringing older adults, teens, and younger children together in intergenerational ministry can enhance discipleship growth.

Participation: If a smaller congregation is going to prosper, then many will have to be involved in ministry. This is the beauty of this size church. The talents of the members are needed for service, outreach, and keep the parish going.

are some pretty lonely days. To those of us in that group we need to motivate ourselves to reach out to others. So if you are in the "club," put forth the effort. When you are done reading this, call someone. Text. E-mail. Whatever it takes.

As you've seen, I've been on a kick of ending with a verse from a song that I think ties in with what I've said. Written by Ashford and Simpson and sung by Dianna Ross:

Reach out and touch somebody's hand
Make this world a better place, if you can.
Reach out and touch somebody's hand
Make this world a better place, if you can.

Take a little time out of your busy day
To give encouragement
To someone who's lost the way.
Or would I be talking to a stone, if I asked you
To share a problem that's not your own.
We can change things if we start giving.
Why don't you....

Have a great day. Just because we are distanced doesn't mean we have to be isolated. Reach out and touch somebody.

I love you, John

Thank You Immanuel

Betty and Carl Jensen would like to thank everyone for your prayers, calls and cards during the loss of mom's sister Margie Zingarelli. Each contact was healing and appreciated. A special thank you to Pastor Taylor for her attention and contacts during this loss.

Thank you, John.

Dear Immanuel Lutheran Church, Thank you so much for the monetary support for our Children's Clothes Closet Christmas Star Tree event held on December 16th. With your generous donation, we were able to distribute toys to 550 children. What a joy and blessing to be able to give so many children a gift. We appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity.

Sincerely,
Linda Stout and Kim Davis, Easton Presbyterian Star Tree Coordinators

Women's Ministry

Every now and then I find a book and it is as though Jesus calls me to have people read it and discuss it. It has happened again and I have nine books to give to people who would like to discuss it. If more than nine people respond, I'll order more books.

The book is **Not A Fan**. It is written by Kyle Idleman. He is a teaching pastor at Southeast Christian Church. The premise of the book is that Jesus is not looking for fans or admirers. This book challenges you to consider what it really means to call yourself a Christian.

The plan is to meet outdoors at Immanuel on Wednesday afternoons at 3:00 p.m. starting February 3rd. We will sit outside, bring your own chair and beverage. The meeting will be about an hour each week and reading schedules are listed below and subject to change according to how discussion progresses. If this is not a good time to meet, please contact me and we may have two groups.

Books are available now and they are first-come, first-served. The books are in the church office along with a reading schedule.

Keep reading!
Nancy Newsom

BOOK STUDY READING GUIDE READ THE LISTED PAGES FOR DISCUSSION AT OUR MEETING DATES

PROLOGUE, CHAPTER 1 AND 2	FEB. 3
CHAPTERS 3 – 7	FEB. 10
CHAPTERS 8 – 11	FEB. 17
CHAPTERS 12 – 15	FEB. 24

Birthdays

3-Isaac Orozco Sr.
6-Tommy William Tarlton, Jr
7-Kurt Wolfe
12-Kobe Bell
13-Melissa Tarlton
14-Tomas Perez
17-Nicolas Orozco
18-Laura Wolfe
20-Elijah Terrones
27-Rich Kahn
28- Madison Gifford
-- John Reynolds

Wedding Anniversaries

07 Jared & Kailie Allerd (7)
13-Betty Moore & Bruce McElhoe (11)
22-Brad & Ericka Gardner (24)

Baptismal Birthdays

4-Mike Nielsen
7-Emily Ewing
7-Taylor Ewing
9-Robert Hollenbeck
10-Dan Lindsey
Matthew Lindsey

Remember When...

Gathering friends:

This photograph of Phyllis Petersen & Carol Cox was taken at a Fellowship Luncheon a few years ago. Phyllis Petersen is recovering from a broken leg at Orchard Post Acute 4840 E. Tulare Rm. 116 Fresno, CA 93727 She would love cards of encouragement.

In Celebration of Our Members



11-Noah Cisneros
14-Marie Salwasser
18- Peter Gutierrez
Michael Pilegard
19- Ellen Nielsen
- Catrina Johnson
26-Jon Marthedal
- Susan Stiltz



Laurel's Journey

LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Some of my frustrations during the pandemic have been my inability to travel and the restrictions on socializing. But..... on second thought.....in the past nine months, I have been to beautiful Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; Sitka, Alaska; China before the Japanese takeover; Mongolia; Switzerland; Germany during World War II; and many more interesting places. I have met new friends of all ages who have had a positive influence on my spiritual growth. Many of my new friends have deepened my understanding and awareness of the struggles of others. As a Christian, I have gained empathy and tolerance for those whose lives are different than mine.

I have been able to practice social distancing and haven't jeopardized my health while on my journeys. Better yet, it hasn't cost me one penny. It all began at the well-equipped and organized Immanuel Lutheran Church library. I encourage you to 'travel' and meet some of my friends (some fictional, some real!) in our library.

Thanks to our librarian, Carol Bennetts, for helping me experience 'adventure' during this COVID 19 pandemic.

Some of the books I read are:

Eve's Daughters by Lynn Austin

Alaskan Quest Series by Tracie Peterson

Jade Bracelet by Wilma Wall

The Englisher by Beverly Lewis

The Perfect Life by Robin Hatcher

The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris

I enjoy reading, I hope you will too,
Laurel Jacobsen

Immanuel's Library

Teen's Guide to Face-to-Face Connections in a Screen-to-screen world This is the title of a new book by Jonathan & Alysa McKee, available in the Library. Its subtitle is "40 Tips to Meaningful Communication" and I'm hoping someone will check it out as it seems to have some great things to think about in our current screen-dominated world. In case it's checked out and you wish to at least get some highlights, the first 10 of the 40 tips are as follows:



1. Conversation is far more enjoyable when everyone just puts their phones in their pockets.
2. Too much screen time is making us socially stupid.
3. More isn't always better.
4. Sometimes the people who love us the most are the people we ignored all day.
5. Empathy is the gateway to deeper friendships.
6. When social media begins hijacking our lives, it's probably time for a break.
7. Disappearing posts tend to reappear.
8. Many of us think we're safer hiding behind our masks, but it's only a matter of time before we're exposed.
9. People underestimate how dangerous screens can become when they distract us from the people we care about.
10. Second-level questions motivate people to put their phones away.

Each short chapter explains how the tip (or realization) came to be, and each takes about 5 to 6 minutes to read.

Thanks for reading!
Carol Bennetts

Ministry Partner Ellen Nielsen

May the Lord bless you and your family with greater Peace and Hope in 2021!

Typically, this month I would be frantically finishing up preparations and travel plans for our annual Winter Conference along with the rest of our Cru staff.... Though as it has in many other ways, this year looks a bit different.

Since setting up our normal six locations with THOUSANDS of college students gathering in hotel ballrooms across the nation wasn't a possibility in this season.... Our National Winter Conference Planning Team had to get a bit more creative.

“2020 has been unlike anything we've ever experienced and the same will be true for our Winter Conference: new and different, unique, unlike anything we've ever experienced.”

After months of brainstorming and planning, they now have a full virtual conference planned. The dates have been pushed back to February 5th and 6th so that an interactive digital conference platform could be found to handle thousands of participants logging in from multiple time zones to participate in worship, seminars, evangelism training, breakout groups and main sessions. And instead of gathering by regions, we're encouraging students to gather in small groups with their: roommates, Bible study, classmates, church group, whatever their campus and state will allow.

Your prayers and partnership are making a difference in the lives of people all over the world. I am so grateful to have you a part of my life and ministry.

Your sister in Christ,
Ellen Nielsen



Mission Updates

From our retired Missionary Jan Kersgaard

Friends at Immanuel,

What a year we have had! How good it is to know the God who IS. Grace and Peace to you from him who is and was, and who is to come....and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” Revelations 1:4-5.

January and February were spent in Pakistan. There was a new class of nine midwifery students. I was able to begin their basic anatomy/physiology. It was wonderful seeing staff that had been there since the eighties and had been students of ours. I enjoyed meeting old friends. Children have grown up, married, and have had children of their own. Five staff children have been through nursing education and have returned to work at the hospital. Three of them were born in my presence. It was a joy and challenge to be back. Management changes, staff changes. Security was very tight. Thank you for your gift that allowed me to go and continue the mission process through my retirement.

I arrived home March 3rd and everything shut down in Oregon on March 12th. Like everyone else, I stuck to myself for three months. I walked daily and took on-line courses and read. I continued to volunteer at the local food bank with modified changes. With spring classes canceled, I looked forward to teaching summer classes in the evenings, Tuesday—Thursday. We had smaller classes, wore masks and did a lot of end-of-class disinfectant chores.

The end of September, I spent time in Minnesota and Illinois with fellow missionaries, one who worked in Kenya and one who worked with me in Tank for 20 years. Through Zoom, we gathered for mission meetings and prayers. I substituted only for the fall classes and resumed teaching part-time on January 5th. I have begun volunteering again at a Pregnancy Center auditing charts. I visit my brother once a month and enjoy weekly “coffee with friends” fellowship at my church. Fridays I meet on Zoom and pray with mission friends. I am also doing a “Philosophy and Religion” class through Hillsdale College.

I hope you are all well and finding ways to stay socially connected while physically distancing. I hope I can visit Immanuel sometime this year when it is safe to travel. I enjoy keeping in touch with you all.

Have a blessed and safe 2021,
Jan Kersgaard