

GABRIEL'S GAZETTE

APRIL 2020



IMPORTANT NOTICE: ALL CHURCH ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE BECAUSE OF THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC. PLEASE SEE OUR WEBSITE, FACEBOOK PAGE, CHECK YOUR EMAIL, OR CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION.



*"Loving, Sharing, Serving
Jesus with you."*

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LENT
Pray + Fast + Give

A New Fast

There are some Lenten seasons in which we need to afflict ourselves with fasting and some in which the world and devil do it for us. This is one of the latter times. The devil has torn us from our daily routines, work, social gatherings, sports, schools, and even worship together. He has tanked our economy, ruined our plans, and threatens us with misery and death. This is our fast.

What does the devil want in all of this? He wants to tear us away from Christ and keep us from loving our neighbor. In other words, he wants us to join with his miserable existence. He wants social distancing to turn into paralyzed fear that keeps me from helping those in need. He wants to disrupt church services so that we forget God's Word when we need it the most. He wants us to fear financial fallout, disease, and death more than God, who alone numbers our days and guards our souls. But we Christians won't fall for that, will we?

After all, we know that Satan is defeated. The cross of Jesus Christ crushed the head of that snake long ago. He is chained to hell and can only pester us for a little while longer. We have Christ, who calls sinners righteous, makes the lame walk and the sick well, who casts out demons and raises the dead. We are redeemed by Jesus Christ, purchased and won by His blood, which means we are victors with Christ over sin and every disease and affliction of the body. St. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh."

In Jesus' kingdom, God turns evil into good, so that the devil's work has the opposite effect on us! Fasting, for the Christian, is a good thing. It takes our minds off of the desires of the flesh and focuses on what really matters. We remember that we are mortal, weak, and sinful creatures in need of God's salvation. And when tribulations come from the world, they especially increase our prayers and devotion to God's Word. They give us new ways to show God's love to our neighbor. Trials under God are painful, but they work for the good of God's kingdom.

How are we to respond to this epidemic?

First, pray even more. Pray for yourselves, the sick, all medical and emergency personnel, and our government. Pray for teachers and students, for small business owners, Immanuel, and others who might be especially affected. Ask your neighbors if they would like you to pray for them. Remember, even Jesus said that prayer drives out the devil (Mark 9:29).

(continued on pg.2)

A New Fast *(continued from pg.1)*

Secondly, if the devil wants you away from the Gospel, go to it more. Come to the Divine Service if you can or watch our services at home (alco-tv, Wednesdays and Fridays at 6 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m.; accesslaportecounty.org, search "Immanuel"). Read the Scriptures aloud with your families and remember Jesus' promise: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23)

Thirdly, love your neighbor. That means that you do your best to keep from spreading the disease. Listen to CDC guidelines and the advice of medical professionals. Additionally, do not neglect your neighbor if he or she is in need. Think about those around you who might be forgotten and not have someone to check in on them. Serve where God has called you, regardless of the cost to you. Christ has this promise for you, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

Lastly, give to your church. The devil would like more than anything for Immanuel to suffer a great loss in tithes and offerings so that we have to turn away the poor or halt other services. Increase your giving, if you can, to offset the losses we will face with a reduction in worship attendance.

May the peace of Jesus Christ guard and keep you from all evil and strengthen you to life everlasting!

Pastor

IMMANUEL HAS A NEW YOUTUBE CHANNEL!



Go to youtube.com and search "Immanuel's Friends" to find videos of services, sermons, teaching for catechism, and other reflections.

During this time when we are cancelling services and activities, offerings we receive will significantly decrease.



Please consider dropping off your church offerings or sending them electronically. If you would like to have that set up for you, email the church at immanuellutheran1237@gmail.com. And consider giving extra, if you are able, to help us through this time.

SCHEDULE FOR HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES



PALM/PASSION WEEKEND

No worship services, but from 9-10 a.m. on Sunday, April 5, you can drive thru Immanuel's parking lot to receive a palm branch in celebration of Palm Sunday.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Thursday, April 9, Worship at 7:00 PM

GOOD FRIDAY

Friday, April 10, Worship at 7:00 PM

EASTER VIGIL

Saturday, April 11, Vigil of Easter Service at 6:00 PM

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

- EASTER DAY

Sunday, April 12

Sunrise Service at 6:30 AM

Easter Festival Service at 10:00 AM



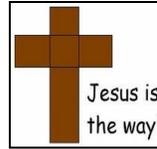
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Shepherds & Lambs

The Sunday School Newsletter

April 2020



The children have been counting down to Easter with a daily sticker activity.

Did you notice the large Alleluia banner displayed in the Gathering Place before the start of Lent? Each of our Sunday School children has their name on the branches of the banner. We buried the banner as a symbol of our sins being buried in Christ. We will display it again on Easter Sunday.

Hallelujah, or Alleluia, in ancient times meant a "call to praise the Lord." As children of God, we have so many reasons to shout Alleluia! Have your family concentrate on things that we praise the Lord for. We stop to think about all that our God is and what he has created. Alleluia! We consider our gracious heavenly Father who refused to abandon us in our sin. Alleluia! We see that the Son of God leaves His heavenly throne to be born in a lowly stable. Jesus our Savior has come! Alleluia! Our Savior willingly suffers and dies on the cross that should have been our own. We remember this was part of God's plan for salvation. It's complete - the Lord is risen! Alleluia! Easter is God's and our victory over death.

Involve the whole family. Starting Easter Sunday, and through the rest of April, make Alleluia the "word of the month" for your family! Look for ways to Praise the Lord, and then shout Alleluia!! Christ prepares a place in heaven for you and for me and all believers! We cannot help but SHOUT, ALLELUIA!!!

Six students had Perfect Attendance in February.



Thanks go out to Deb Topolski who has filled in as our music director and opening leader this winter. Also a big thank you to Peggy Elser for overseeing the whole "works". Of course our staff of teachers, Chelsea Romero, Kelli Kalvaitis and miscellaneous others were GREAT as we all continue making our Sunday School the most effective as we can in sharing the love of God to our children.

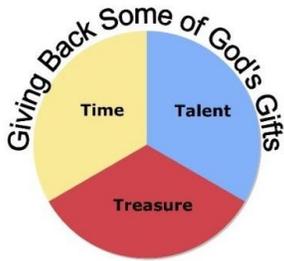
We wish you a blessed Easter, always remembering what a remarkable plan God had for our salvation through Jesus Christ. ALLELUIA!!

Lynette Johnston-Martin
Superintendent

YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED WHEN SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES ARE ABLE TO BE RESUMED.
CHECK OUT PASTOR'S CHILDREN'S SERMONS ON YOUTUBE "IMMANUEL FRIENDS".

Kim & Jason by Jason W. Kotecki



FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE . . .

On the topic of stewardship, one of the most common questions a person might ask is *not* whether a Christian should give to their church. Everyone knows this. Of course, Christians should give to their church.

The most common question: "How much should I give?" But what they really mean is this: "Should Christians give a tithe of their income to their local congregation?" So, let's look at why you should or should not tithe.

Following are some reasons often offered for why Christians *shouldn't* give a tithe to their church.

Some say you shouldn't tithe because it isn't expressly commanded in the New Testament. Lacking that command, there is no "Thus saith the Lord" and no "should" for giving a tithe to your congregation.

Others say that Christians give to their congregation in ways much broader than money. They give of their time and their talents, and these, together with treasures (money), add up to more than a tithe.

Still others say they give of their treasures to other things besides their congregation, and they want to support those things alongside their church.

And there are those who think Christians shouldn't tithe because of fear. If they tithe, they are afraid their gift will be misused, and they are afraid they won't have enough to get the things they use, want, or need.

Following are some reasons for why Christians *should* give a tithe to their church.

Even though the New Testament doesn't specifically command Christians to give a tithe, the Old Testament people were commanded to tithe and did. On top of this, St. Paul often describes the giving Christians are to do in similar terms as a tithe: a regular and generous proportion of the first fruits of their income (1 Cor. 6:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:7-23; 2 Cor. 9:2-7).

But here's another way to think about it. What was the point of the tithe in the Old Testament? Where did it go? The reason for the Old Testament tithe was to support the full ministry of the Levites. They were not given any land because they had no time to farm; their full-time job was the ministry.

What does it say in the New Testament? "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14). This is the verse that Luther put in the *Small Catechism's* Table

of Duties to cover what Christians owe to the support of the ministry.

It seems clear from both the Old and the New Testaments that the tithe is the goal of Christians in their giving. But what if we're not there yet? How should we handle this? What are we to do?

Let's answer this by asking a different question about something entirely different. What would you say to your adult children who only attended church quarterly or once a month? There, is after all, no passage in the New Testament that requires Christians to go to church weekly. Hebrews 10:25 is the closest we have, and it states simply for Christians to not neglect gathering together. Even though there is no passage that commands Christians to gather weekly, that is the implicit expectation throughout the Old and New Testaments. It is the goal.

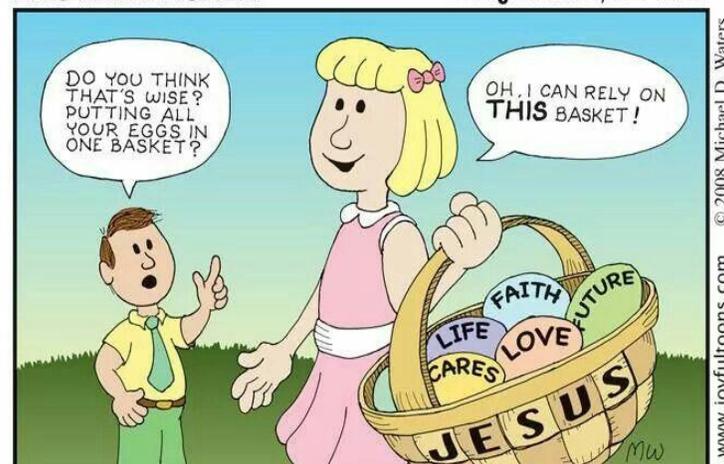
So, what would you say to that son or daughter? I'd expect that conversation would be something like this: "I'm glad you're still going to church. It is a wonderful blessing to hear God's promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation, and to receive His gifts in the Word and the Sacraments. But you can do better, and it will only be a blessing to you. There is a better way, and I'd really like you to try to attain it."

This same conversation is how we should approach the topic of the tithe. It's not specifically commanded in the New Testament, but it sure seems like the implicit expectation of both the Old and New Testaments. So, the church is ecstatic that you're giving when you're giving in all these ways – time, talents, and treasures.

- LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter, April 2020

EASTER BASKET

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

- 2 TIMOTHY 1:12 NIV

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There will be a **VBS General Information Meeting on Thurs., May 7, 6:30 p.m.**, for all those interested in finding out where their time and talents can best be used to assist Immanuel's Vacation Bible School ministry – during the planning stages, during VBS week, or during the follow-up time after it's over.

Whether it's just to find out what's going on or to become a part of this important ministry – come check it out! The meeting will be less than an hour long.



IMMANUEL'S VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

JULY 6 -10

RAINFOREST EXPLORERS: JESUS LEADS THE WAY

It's easy to get lost. That's why we need Jesus!

The rainforest is a wild place. To make it through this unknown world safely, kids need a guide who can keep them on the right path. At *Rainforest Explorers*, learn how Jesus is our ultimate guide in the rainforest and throughout our lives. We might feel lost, but He'll show us the way. He'll never leave us!

Registration will begin in May for children ages 4-11 (or just finished 5th grade).



PLEASE NOTE: The deadline to submit items for the *May Gazette* is Monday, April 6.

