

**IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**747 Ann Street – Chadron, NE 69337**

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**Pastor Ann Sundberg**

**Cell: (919) 475-9754**

**Where God is with us as we grow in faith!**

**GRACEVINE**

**September 2016**

 Pastor’s Message

Over the course of the past few months, the Congregation Council has been reading through a book called *Renewing Your Congregation* by Rev. Dave Daubert, a Lutheran pastor in Elgin, IL. There are a couple of sheets of butcher paper hanging in the fellowship hall with some of the topics we have discussed:

* + What is God’s dream for our congregation? What things have happened over the course of our congregation’s history that have contributed to God’s dream?
	+ What is God doing in this community? How can we be a part of that work?
	+ If God has God’s way with our congregation for five years, what do you see in our future?
	+ Complete this sentence in 12 words or less: “God’s purpose for our congregation is…

 Note that I’m not talking about “our” dreams, “our” way or “our” purpose. We are talking about **God’s** dream, **God’s** way, **God’s** purpose. In order to discern what **God’s** will is for **God’s** community of faith here on the corner of 8th and Ann Streets in Chadron, NE, it’s important to be listening for **God’s** voice. It’s important to learn to look for **God’s** activity all around us.

 We like to think that we are a welcoming community. We like to think that we are nice people. But a family that recently began to attend worship and bring their children to Wednesday School has received unsigned, harassing letters from someone who claims to speak for “our church.”

 First of all, this is not “our church.” This is Christ’s church. In Christ’s church, there is no place for anonymous communication. If you cannot own your words, if you cannot speak them aloud or sign your name to them, you should think very hard about whether they ought to be spoken or written in the first place. In Christ’s church, we speak to each other, not about each other. In Christ’s church, we work out our differences with each other in fellowship and in community.

 Secondly, I believe that the person who wrote these letters is reading this message right now. So, I expect to hear from you. I pray that God will put it in your heart to make yourself known to me. I do not intend to shame you. We need to talk because we need to work on reconciliation with the family you have criticized. There are healthy ways of dealing with disagreement and conflict.

 Prayer and Bible study are ways to listen for God’s word to us. Why don’t you write down your own answers to the questions posed above and bring them to me. On Saturday, October 15, the Council will host a retreat at Camp Norwesca and we will grapple with these and other questions. Everyone in the congregation is invited to participate.

 What is God doing in your life? Where do you see God at work?

**Council President’s Message**

We, your council, have been contemplating our church’s mission. What is God calling us as a congregation to do? Together we have been reading and studying *Living Lutheran: Renewing your Congregation* by Dave Daubert. Soon we will be participating in a council retreat led by Bishop’s Assistant Steve Meysing to further explore and determine what God is calling us to do. Anyone and everyone is welcome to join us on Saturday, October 15th!

I have heard and we have discussed that our congregation’s mission is to FEED THE HUNGRY. Right now we do that in many ways – through our Shepherd’s Pantry, our college Move-In Day lunch, our college dinners, our participation in providing the meal monthly to Closer to Home, our Wednesday night dinners and our Fall Feast (Harvest Dinner), to mention a few. As many say – we Lutherans are good at feeding people! (Probably because many of us love food! ☺) These are wonderful ministries and ones to be proud of!

As your congregational leader, I must share though how frustrating it is to hear “our congregational mission is to feed the hungry”. Because that is not what I see. Our congregation is not feeding people… a *few* people in our congregation are. Our Shepherd’s Panty is looking bare – and most of the donations received come from people outside of our congregation. It is a challenge to recruit people to provide food for any our dinners – often times, it is the same few people that consistently sign up, provide and serve. I understand other commitments and responsibilities – we all have them. If you are waiting to be specifically asked to participate, don’t! Volunteer! This is our congregation, our service to offer. As Pastor Ann so eloquently preached this past Sunday, ALL are welcome – you don’t need a special invitation to provide food, sign up to help or provide support.

Whatever God is calling us to do, it takes ALL of us, not just a few! As we discern God’s mission for our congregation, I pray that you join us in whatever way you can, knowing you are specially invited to participate ALL the time!

**Robyn Baquet**

**Wednesday School and Confirmation News**

We are excited to begin another year of youth education and have a new teacher joining those returning:  Trista Shell will assist Staci Larsen with the preschool & kindergarteners. Chelsea Holt and Lisa Briggs will continue to lead the older learners with Bev Stitt continuing to assist with the confirmands.  Parents will again team up and prepare meals for the Wednesday schoolers and there will be opportunities for others to volunteer for special occasions and activities.  We would like to have an accompanist to help lead music for our opening and extra helpers during December for pageant practice!  Please let Pastor Ann or me know if you would like to share in bringing learning to the next generation. Wednesday school and confirmation class will begin Wednesday, September 7th at 5:30 p.m. The schedule will be:

\*Wednesday School- 5:30 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.

\*Supper- 6:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

\*Confirmation Class- 6:45 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

Yvonne Moody

**Campus Ministry**

For the 6th year in a-row, Immanuel served lunch on Move-In Day to new students and their families. We served a total of 95 people. This has become a tradition both here of Immanuel and on the campus. Thank you to everyone who helped cook, serve, clean up and hand out Flyers!

College students are back on campus.  Would you be able to serve a meal Sept. 18, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, or Dec. 11?  The menu is optional, but your choice needs to feed about a dozen.  A group, a partnership, or an individual could be active in this community building opportunity.  Also, in December we'll prepare study sacks for the students.  Please call Laurie and leave a message on her answering machine (308-432-5143) or sign-up on the kitchen door selecting the date that will work into your schedule.

Laurie Schmidt

**Social Ministry**

We Served 95 meals for the college student move in day. Thank you to all who helped prepares and serve that meal. 25 Meals were served at closer to home on August 22nd. Thank you to everyone who helped served that meal. Shepherds Pantry helped feed 39 adults and 25 children this month. Thank you for the food donations to support our food pantry.

Barb Landen

**Did You Know…**

**Once every three years our denomination gathers for a national meeting? Pam Anderson attended as a voting member. Here are her impressions:**

**Education and the 2016 Churchwide Assembly by Pam Anderson**

I recently got home from the ELCA Churchwide Assembly and wanted to tell you some of my experiences that week. As I wrestled with how to organize my thoughts, a phrase I heard at the Assembly kept running through my head: “The Holy Spirit, She will teach you!” And, boy, she sure did! I learned a lot that week. Let me tell you about some of those lessons.

* I learned that our church is big and diverse. The ELCA is comprised of 3.7 million members in more than 9,300 congregations spread among all 50 states and the Caribbean. I met African Americans, Hispanics, Southeast Asian Americans, and 2 ladies from the Virgin Islands. They don’t look like you and me, they don’t talk like we do, but they are ELCA Lutheran, and proud of it!
* It was an education to see the dedication of almost 1,000 Voting Members from 65 Synods of the church, who sat in business meetings, worship or workshops from 8 am until 6 or 8 pm, from Monday through Friday, and also Saturday morning.
* The Spirit taught me that worship with 2,000 Lutherans is, indeed, Holy. The music was amazing – as much in its variety as in its volume and quality. We were intentionally diverse in our worship: we sang songs from several different cultures, as well as what you and I would call “regular” songs from America and Europe. The preaching was inspired: and also intentionally diverse.
* I learned that we belong to a church that is working hard to address difficult questions and issues: how can we best assist migrant minors as they negotiate the courts and immigration system?; should money in the pension fund for clergy be invested in oil and gas companies?; how do we encourage our leaders to work toward some sort of peace in Israel and Palestine?; can we work with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters to affirm what we agree on, and keep talking to reach an understanding on the issues where we still differ?; what should our church look like in 20 years? I am proud to be a part of a church that is willing to address difficult questions!
* Through the course of the week, I was educated about the many, small ways that I am both privileged and racist. I now have a better sense of whole populations of people who are different from me, and people to whom I would like to feel superior. I was taught (again) that God loves and cares for all people, rich and poor alike; people of all colors; and even people with a work ethic different from mine. There are people in this world who cannot “Just pick themselves up by their bootstraps,” and, yes, God loves them, too! A part of this education was the realization that it is not only the help that you give to someone that is important, but the WAY that you offer that help is also important. It is better to ‘walk alongside’ someone than to ‘throw money at them.’ The relationship is as important as the help.
* I learned that we belong to a church that we can all be proud of! We heard reports from ELCA Disaster Response, and the ELCA Hunger Initiative, both a part of our church, both helping people in need at home and around the world. Through the church, you help to dig a well in an African village, you help serve lunch in a soup kitchen in Detroit, you rebuild lives after a tornado or flood, you visit the sick, and those in prison. Together, we do a lot of good in the world! Thank you!

During that week at the Churchwide Assembly, “The Holy Spirit, She did teach me!” I began to feel that I am overlooking some important aspects of Church and service: missing the mark somehow and that I can’t possibly do all that needs to be done. So, I ask myself (and the Spirit), “What should I be doing more, differently, better?”

And the Holy Spirit led me to the book of Micah; chapter 6: beginning with verse 6 “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly gives a whole new meaning to Lifelong Learning!

**Report from the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly**

Gathering under the theme “Freed and Renewed in Christ,” nearly 1,000 voting members - including 24 from the Nebraska Synod - met in New Orleans Aug. 8-13 for the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Full days included worship, legislative action, reports from Churchwide officers and units, updates on ministries, workshops, Bible study, fellowship and more.

Among more than three dozen legislative actions, the Churchwide Assembly:

* Overwhelmingly affirmed the “Declaration on the Way,” a document noting 32 principles of agreement between Roman Catholics and Lutherans. The document is commended as a study resource as Catho­lics and Lutherans strive toward sharing Communion and ministry.
* Adopted strategies toward greater diversity within the ELCA (whose minority members represent only 6 percent of its membership) through intentional outreach and raising awareness of both overt and subtle racism in the U.S.
* Adopted the AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) strategy for addressing the complex issue of minors fleeing violence in Central America.
* Elected William B. “Bill” Horne II of Florida to a six-year term as vice president of the ELCA.
* Adopted annual budgets for the next three years of approximately $64 million annually for ELCA ministries and $25 million for World Hunger.
* Affirmed efforts to support veterans and their families, military chaplains and all affected by war.
* Adopted strategies for positive investment aimed at supporting peace in Israel and Palestine and reduced energy usage and reliance on fossil fuels.

Bishop Brian Mass

**Stewardship**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We’ve been busy this summer and now we move into fall looking forward to more activities. I share with you some of the highlights of our recent activities.

Tricia Thayer, Social Services at Chadron Hospital shared with us during coffee hour following Sunday worship about Living Wills and DNR…how we can take steps by completing the appropriate forms to appoint a designee to speak for us and assure our wishes are followed for health care decisions when we become unable to speak for ourselves. If you’ve completed the forms they can be notarized at the hospital and copies provided for distribution to key providers.

I shared with the congregation about my personal story in moving into a discipline of tithing…designating a percentage of income and giving that as first fruits – not left overs. Instead of giving back to God, through my offering at church a token amount if it were left over after expenses, the gift to God would come out our resources FIRST. A mind shift for me. A challenge and some concern…what if there wasn’t enough left for expenses. So, I began to tithe…a percentage of our income. And amazingly we always had enough. Sometimes I had to rethink some choices…make better choices and do less impulsive buying of things not really needed. I developed a better sense of generosity and caring/sharing. At first I was hesitant – what it? What if there wasn’t enough for our needs of daily living. But I took the leap and started faithfully tithing…and have never lacked enough. (some close calls, but always our needs have been met. Stewardship is a broad encompassing component of our ministries, a broad encompassing component of our lives. Each choice we make – which item(s)to purchase, which brands we use, whether to recycle and how, how much of our resources of time and talents and financial assets to share, even which candidates we support…reflect how we demonstrate how we attempt to live out “Love the Lord your God with all your soul, and with all your mind’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.”

 Some of us read *Enough* by Adam Hamilton and met for discussion. Consensus: this book is a good stewardship resource with soundly theologically grounded concepts and practical suggestions for life application. We moved through the common cultural difficulties of credit-itis and affluenza to cultivating contentment and being defined by generosity.

A big thank you goes out to Stephanie Cogdill, who participated in the book read and discussion. Stephanie previously attended a program with Dave Ramsey whose concepts are reflected also in *Enough* and she shared with the congregation her personal experience in using Dave Ramsey’splan for living on a cash based budget and avoiding the use of credit. Stephanie also shared her favorite passage from *Enough*: “Which ‘Tent’ Will you Live In? Discon-**tent** -ment or con-**tent-**ment? You and you alone determine which “tent” will be yours…choosing contentment means we look to God as our Source, giving thanks for what we have. It means we ask God to give us the right perspective on money and possessions and to change our hearts each day. It means we decide to live simpler lives, wasting less and conserving more. And it means we give more generously …When we do these things, we are reclaiming the joy of contentment and simplicity.” (pp72,73)

Think about using paper instead of Styrofoam.

Try to recycle…. even compost.

Think about choosing spray instead of aerosol.

Think about choosing ecofriendly soaps and detergents,

Think about investing yourselves in the ministry/mission of the congregation (more to come about that in future issues)

Thank you all for all you do!

Peace and Blessings, Karen Rupp, Stewardship Chair

**God’s Work Our Hands Sunday, September 11, 2016**

September 11th is God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday. It so happens to coincide with the 15 year anniversary of 9/11. What a great opportunity for us to pay tribute to those who put their lives on the line for us every day. So this year, in addition to doing some work for our congregational members, we will also be finding a way to say thank you or provide support to our first responders. If you have some suggestions on what we can do to honor them, please let Robyn or Pastor Ann know. Plan on joining us following worship on Sunday, September 11th for doing God’s Work, with Our Hands!

Robyn Baquet

**Request Worksheet**

If you would like to have work done in your home or know of a congregation member who is need of assistance in their homes, please fill out this request and place it in the offering plate or return it to the church office. Please make known what service you or those you are asking on behalf of are in need of so we can prepare to help by bringing all necessary tools, etc.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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If you know of someone who may need help, please give their name(s) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Treasurer’s Report**

**August 2016**

**Treasurer’s Report**

**August 2016**

Beginning balance July 31, 2016 $ (4,538.73)

Income Weekly Offering $ 6,934.27

 Thrivent $ 576.00

 Shepard’s Pantry $ 100.00

 MIF Interest $ .17

Total Income $ 7,610.44

Expenses $ 8,993.47

Ending balance as of August 31, 2016 $ (5,921.76)

Worship Attendance

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Sunday Service** |
| August 7 | **40** |
| August 14 | **68** |
| August 21 | **50** |
| August 28 | **54** |

***Other Staff –***

Financial Secretary – Lorrie Bauer

Custodian – Michelle Haynes

Church Secretary – Mckailie Carnahan-Kuhns

*Important contact information-*

Nebraska Synod Website:

[www.nebraskasynod.org](http://www.nebraskasynod.org), phone number

402-896-5311

ELCA Church wide Website, [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org),

Phone number 800-638-3522

COUNCIL MEMBERS

President - Robyn Baquet

Vice-President - Denise James

Secretary - Sharon Thurlow

Treasurer – Chelsea Holt

Building & Grounds -

Education - Yvonne Moody

Evangelism - Laurie Schmidt

Fellowship - Karleen Gramberg

Social Ministry - Barb Landen

Stewardship - Karen Rupp

Worship - Julie Duncan

Youth/Young Adult - True Thorne

Pastor - Ann Sundberg

***Other Staff -***

Financial Secretary - Lorrie Bauer

Custodian - Michelle Haynes

Church Secretary - Whitney Tewahade

*Important contact information:*

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Immanuel Lutheran Church

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