

GRACEVINE

January 2017



IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Pastor Ann Sundberg

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Where God is with us as we grow in faith!

Pastor's Message

Happy New Year! Last year I was certified to be a spiritual director by Seeking the Spirit Within, a ministry of the Nebraska Synod. The best definition I can find for what spiritual directors do is this: a spiritual director walks alongside another person in their faith journey and together they look for what God is doing in that person's life. One of my resolutions for this coming year is to teach some of what I learned.

As part of my training, I was introduced to many different ways to pray. Prayer is more than simply making a list of things we are grateful for or people who are suffering in some way. Prayer enables us to listen for God's voice in our lives. Prayer enables us to visualize what God would have us see. In the coming 12 months of this column, I'll discuss some different ways of praying and invite you to try them.

January: Silence

Some people call this centering prayer, or sitting meditation, or contemplation. Spending time alone in silence before God is one of the oldest prayer practices. Our culture does not take kindly to silence and we have found many ways to distract ourselves.

Centering prayer is grounded in relationship with God through Christ and is a practice to nurture that relationship.

Finding 15 or 20 minutes of time in your day to be silent with God might not be easy. So try this: The next time you are driving somewhere, turn off the radio and silence your phone. Tell God that you would like to use this time to just be quiet, in prayer. Then notice what happens. Maybe there are thoughts or feelings that arise. Maybe you notice that you are distracted in some way. Whatever it is, that's fine – simply noticing is enough. When you notice these things, simply let them go and return to God's presence. Some people find it helpful to have a word or phrase to return to, such as "Jesus" or "Shalom" (peace). When you arrive at your destination, thank God for the time you had together.

The point of silence and solitude is to simply "be" with God. There is no other agenda. Trying this practice regularly, you may find that you seek out other times for silence in your day or week. You may begin to set aside a specific regular time to sit silently with God. You may begin to notice God's presence at other times of the day, not just when you are silent.

Our lives have so many distractions. The work of silent prayer requires that we begin to gently say "no" to the endless stream of thoughts and feelings that make up our lives. And when we do so, we begin to learn to listen for the voice of God.



Congregational Meeting Announcement

Please make plans to attend the annual meeting of the congregation which will take place on Sunday, January 29, following worship. We will gather to conduct the business of our mission center: to elect lay leadership, to approve a mission-focused budget, to review the reports from this past year and to consider what lies ahead for us in 2017.

Council Meeting Minutes: December 1, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church Council convened with Pastor Ann Sundberg, Robyn Baquet, Sharon Thurlow, Yvonne Moody, Laurie Schmidt, Karleen Gramberg, Barb Landen and Karen Rupp in attendance. Absent were Denise James, Chelsea Holt, and Julie Duncan.

Pastor Ann lead us in prayer.

The minutes were approved as amended with a motion by Yvonne Moody and seconded by Karen Rupp. The financial report was approved with a motion by Laurie Schmidt and second by Karleen Gramberg.

Congregational meeting will be January 29. The following positions are open this year: youth, building and grounds, fellowship and worship.

Budget committee will be meeting as will the election committee.

December 3 will be the Advent Choir at the Mormon Church at 3PM. December 11 is the Hanging of the Greens immediately following service and the last campus ministry dinner will be later that evening. December 18th is Immanuel's Annual Christmas program at 5 PM. December 21 will be caroling preceded by a chili supper. Christmas Eve service is at 5:30 PM. Christmas day service is at 9AM.

Pastor Ann served as keynote speaker at the Oxfam Hunger banquet at Chadron State on Nov 14, 2016. She met with the planning team for Seeking the Spirit Within. She also participates in worship at Prairie Pines and Crestview. Pastor Ann also leads the Adult Bible Study on a weekly basis.

Building and Grounds: Furnace Filters were changed.

Education: Wednesday school is going well.

Evangelism: No report

Fellowship: Fall Feast was a success.

Social: Closer Home is December 19. The Shepard's Pantry served 34 adults and 13 children in November.

Stewardship: Thanks to Laurie Schmidt for her sharing of her journey. Please be sure you return pledge cards.

Worship: During Advent families with small children will be asked to participate with lighting the advent candles.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Thurlow
Church council secretary

Stewardship

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy New Year! As we enter a new calendar year many of us make resolutions, determined to make new beginnings...to continue or increase good habits and behaviors, eliminate or decrease bad habits or behaviors. We might take time to reflect and meditate...to take a personal inventory of our assets and liabilities – in all areas of our lives, not just our financials, our spiritual lives as well as our secular lives.

I've been reading *Stewardshift* by Bob Sitze and recommend we use this resource for another book study to help further expand our understanding of our stewardship identity. The author offers some new perspectives on scriptural grounding of our stewardship theology and then encourages drawing on our secular experiences to expand our understanding and practice of our personal and corporate stewardship. I share some excerpts from Chapter 6:

“In Scripture – God’s inspired word – God opens the window on timeless wisdom. In one sense that wisdom is confined to specific contexts – of time, geography, or personality. At the same time the Bible can float free of contexts – offering knowledge that applies across a broad range of circumstances...

As you search for God’s wisdom, you can find basic precepts by which you can strengthen your identity as a steward. As you come upon God’s truths in Scripture, your work is to interpret its meaning – in general and for all time – as well as its applicability to your life.”

The author asserts that God’s revelation continues through other means – not only the natural world but also in human enterprises – in both sacred and secular realms.

This resource serves as a complement to our “Living Lutheran” study by our council, supplementing the process of identifying congregational purpose and identity, drawing on our individual strengths/assets to define our congregational identity and purpose. Let us move forward into new beginnings, building on our strengths and assets.

Our identity and practice will work to fulfill the mandate “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind...and love your neighbor as yourself.”

I’ll provide more details about obtaining the book and discussion opportunities in a weekly bulletin and hope you’ll join in reading about and discussing some new perspectives on scripture interpretation and stewardship practices.

Coming soon we’ll have an opportunity to hear about funeral planning and prayer in motion through Tai Chi. Again, thank you for all you do. If you would like to help on the Stewardship Committee – just speak to Karen Rupp, Jeanine Mohr or Pastor Ann,

Peace and Blessings, Karen Rupp, Stewardship Chair



FROM THE MAILBAG:



Dear Immanuel Family and Friends,

I am excited to share with you an opportunity that God has laid on my heart this past spring. I am going to be a part of a mission's trip with New Hope Church of Timber Lake, SD. Early this next year in February of 2017 a group of 19 of us will be going on a mission trip to Belize, Central America, through Praying Pelican Missions.

As part of the group from New Hope Church, we will be ministering in Hattieville, Belize and partnering with a local church (Hattieville Baptist Church) to provide the love of Christ with people beyond my everyday interactions. As a group, we plan on touching the lives of every age group by visiting an orphanage and a local elementary school, holding a three day vacation Bible school, speaking at adult and youth services, and providing food and beds for the local community. The community of Hattieville was first established as a refugee camp after Hurricane Hattie came through the country in 1961. The community is still hard hit by the lack of jobs and the amount of substance abuse that is present.

I am thrilled for this opportunity God has presented me with and I am writing you to ask you two questions. First, would you pray for me and my group as we plan, prepare, and serve this community. And second, would you consider supporting me financially. The total cost of the trip is \$1800 and each team member is responsible for raising most of their own expenses.

If you would like to partner with me financially as I prepare to go to Belize, you can send a tax deductible donation. Please send the check to me, but make it out to New Hope Church. I will then make sure it gets deposited in my New Hope Church mission's account.

I thank you for your support both prayerfully and financially and I look forward to sharing my experiences with you when I return.

In Christ,

Shannon Shuck
New Hope Church Belize Mission Trip Team Member

Dear Immanuel Lutheran Church:

As a student at the Iliff School of Theology, like so many other worthwhile accomplishments, comes with a cost. Receiving a theological education at a school like Iliff costs upwards of approximately \$30,000 each year including tuition, books, travel and insurance expenses. While I have received some financial aid in the form of grants and scholarships, the remaining balance not covered is paid for through student loans. While it does help pay my education, having a student loan debt can become very burdensome especially after graduation and well into my years of ministry. Here is where you as an individual or group can help. I am eligible to receive up to \$4000 in matching scholarship funds from any outside sources I am able to solicit funding. This includes church groups and organizations and individuals. This means I have the potential to receive up to \$8000 additional funds for financial aid. If you would like to help contribute to my seminary education here is how you can help. Any contributions must be sent directly to:

Iliff School of Theology Office of Financial Aid
2323 E. Iliff Ave
Denver, CO 80210

Please write checks or money orders payable to the Iliff School of Theology. Be sure in the memo line to include my name: Tony Serbousek. Contributions are not tax deductible. Once received, I will be notified of any contributions. Please be aware too that the school will not accept anonymous donations. Once received by the Financial Aid Office, the money will be placed into my student account as well as the matching amount. So if you contribute \$50, that amount plus another \$50 from Iliff School of Theology will be placed in my account for a total of \$100. Any amount you contribute is appreciated. Even if it is only \$10 or \$15, remember that amount is doubled. If you have any questions for me, please feel free to call me at 308 615 9016 or by email at tserbousek@iliff.edu. I am extremely grateful for all of your support in the past and will be appreciative of any future support you give whether through financial contribution, or prayer as I complete my seminary education. Thank you and God's Peace to all of you!

Tony Serbousek

Church Happenings:

Thank You for the Christmas Program!

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Christmas program such a joyful and memorable event. Many hands helped make the program come together, and we thank all who helped with rehearsals, sets, costumes, gift bags, music, set up, dinner, and clean-up. Thank you to the families for bringing children and grandchildren to rehearsals.



Altar Flowers

A big Thank You to those of you who have furnished altar flowers this past year. They are very much appreciated, and many people comment on how pretty they look. Remember that you may take them home after the service and enjoy them there too. When they have lost their beauty, return the vase to the church kitchen and it will find its way back to the floral shop. The New Leaf is our default shop, but you can choose to order someplace else or bring your own. We do make the list up for several months at a time and that makes it easier for me and for the floral shop. The new chart will be going up soon so please sign up early if there is a date that has significance for you. I will begin to post the orders with the other altar care notes so that it will be easier if questions come up with our altar care people. If the arrangement does not need to be picked up, I will note that on the list. E-mail is the best way for me to contact you and I appreciate those who get back to me in a timely manner. Thank you again and enjoy the arrangements at church and again in your home.

~Junice Dagen

Treasurer's Report: December 2016

Beginning balance November 30, 2016		\$ (7,114.84)
Income	Weekly Offering	\$ 7,227.01
	Donation	\$ 10,000.00
	MIF	\$.16
	Thrivent	\$ 146.00
	Interest	\$.07
Total Income		\$ 17,373.24
Expenses		\$ 11,330.18
Ending balance as of December 31, 2016		\$ (1,071.78)

Worship Attendance

Date	Sunday Service
December 4	52
December 11	54
December 18	50
December 24	98
December 25	Cancelled due to blizzard

Social Ministry:



Thank you!

We were blessed with many food donations in December. The Middle School and Primary School donated many bags and boxes of food for our Pantry, along with many other organizations in our community. Our Pantry is full and ready to serve those in need. Shepherd's Pantry served 32 adults and 22 children in December. We served 9 people at Closer to Home. Thank you for all your support this past year. May we continue to do God's work and serve many others in the New Year. ~ Barb Landen
(Middle School teachers and students pictured)

Immanuel Lutheran
747 Ann Street
Chadron, NE 69337

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 – Amy Jones

Important contact information-

Nebraska Synod Website:

www.nebraskasynod.org, phone number
402-896-5311

ELCA Church wide Website, www.elca.org,
Phone number 800-638-3522