

# ***Immanuel***

## ***Highlights***

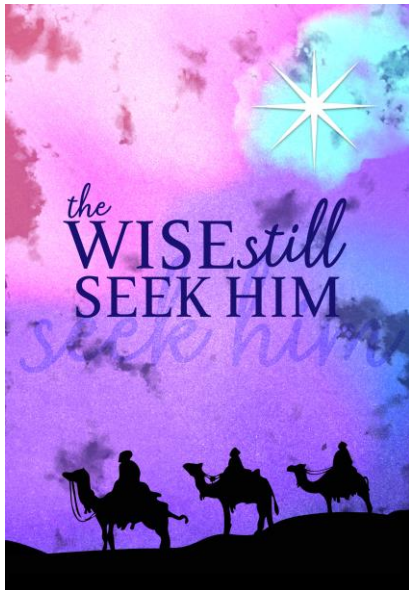
*Volume XXVIII, Issue 12*

*December 2024*

*A monthly Publication  
for the Members and Friends of*

***Immanuel Lutheran Church***

*251 Main Street  
Akron, Iowa 51001*



### ***Advent***

*A Church for All Seasons*

*Rev. Eric C. Alm, STS*

*Cell: 712.541.5035*

*E-Mail: [pastoralalm@gmail.com](mailto:pastoralalm@gmail.com)*

***Sharon Frerichs, Administrative  
Assistant***

*Church Office 712.568-3338*

*Cell Phone: 712.551.6445*

*E-Mail: [rfrerichs@premieronline.net](mailto:rfrerichs@premieronline.net)*

***God's Enduring Grace  
1910-2024***

## **Pastor's Message**

“We have met the enemy, and he is us.”

So read the punchline of Pogo, a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century political satire comic strip by cartoonist Walt Kelly, which he coined for use on a poster for the first Earth Day on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1970. He reprised that same cartoon a year later in one created for the second Earth Day. Both were intended to support anti-pollution efforts of the time. Hence, the posters.

Kelly was riffing on a remark made by Master Commandant Oliver Perry to Major General William Henry Harrison after the US Navy had just defeated British forces in the Battle of Lake Erie. Kelly's rephrasing of this quote between the US military leaders made the point that we humans tend to create a lot of our own problems.

The bite of this rephrased punchline is, of course, its truth.

We humans do often create many of our own problems. For instance, how many human friendships have ended over a rift that erupted when one party said or did something that hurt the other, and then either failed to or even outright refused to make amends? I can think of one of my own boyhood friendships that ended in exactly this way. Because neither of us made those amends, or even tried to.

Any rift or schism is deeply damaging. Once formed, there's typically no going back. You can't uncross the Delaware, or the Tiber for that matter. Paul Revere couldn't put his shouts of warning back in his mouth any more than Bostonians could (but wouldn't) pull the tea out of the harbor or unsay the words “no taxation without representation.” Once that cat is out of the bag, it's not going back in. At that point, whatever comes, good or bad, you're all in.

Schisms often lead to lines being drawn quickly, sometimes hastily, and often becoming hard and fast in very short time. The damage doesn't take long. We meet the enemy and find out he is us but typically too late. The humor of that cartoon lay in its assertion that the existence of pollution indicated it was already too late. The forest floor was already littered with trash. The reality is, rifts and schisms, whatever their origin may be, are deeply damaging. They damage the entire

group and each of the parties involved. Without reconciliation, rifts leave behind deep hurt and anger. Those feelings don't go away easily, or at all.

Sometimes they linger and are passed on to subsequent generations. There is a reason that Paul counsels the Ephesian church "not to let the sun go down on their anger" (Eph 4:26). Be angry, he advises them, but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and make no room for the devil, he tells them.

Paul knew of what he spoke. His successful ministry in Ephesus led to a near riot when one of the local artisans, a silversmith named Demetrius, rallied his fellow artisans and tradesmen to oppose Paul. Paul's effectiveness had meant people were no longer purchasing the magical trinkets they were in the business of crafting. They were losing profits and Demetrius made sure to let them know it was all Paul's fault.

This was some of the context from which Paul wrote to Corinth about the centrality of love, the cross, resurrection, the church's need for its weakest and most vulnerable members, and the equality they share together in Christ.

The table of the Lord's Supper was the most significant place where they ought to share in the feast equally, yet they were not due to selfishness and infighting. Some of his sharpest words in the letter are in regard to this very behavior. The Ephesian riot must have lingered long in his heart.

We don't know exactly how things in Corinth went south, just that they did. It seems that after Apollos came through and spent some time in the city teaching and preaching about Jesus, those who believed in Paul's legitimacy as an apostle and followed his teaching came into conflict with other believers who insisted Apollos was their true teacher. This schism of loyalties cast a sourness over the church.

Perhaps it was an early cause of some of the other behaviors for which Paul takes them to task. Even his right to do that, however, was likely in dispute. He seems to have offended some of them by claiming equal rank as the Jerusalem apostles, Jesus's chosen 12 (1 Cor 9:1-2) and commending himself and his own behavior as their model to imitate (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1). And then there was the matter of Apollos and his own ministry among them.

While in Ephesus, Paul had received word from "Chloe's people" (1 Cor 1:11) that the people in Corinth were in fisticuffs with one another over whose teaching was correct, and whose legitimacy as an apostle was to be trusted. Apollos must have been trying to undo some of what Paul had taught. Maybe more than some.

The fractious, hostile, difficult, and conflict-riven church in Corinth would hold on to its fractiousness, hostility, and conflict. Sometime in the last few decades of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the church in Rome would write its own letter to Corinth.

This letter, known commonly as 1 Clement, utilizes 1 Corinthians as well as Genesis, Psalms, and likely Romans, Hebrews, as well as pieces of oral tradition and possibly even words of Jesus, preserved in other forms than those in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The letter was also widely known and accepted as Scripture among many early Christians. Some of the earliest versions of the Bible even included it within the New Testament writings. Corinth had more to teach the church about good discipleship.

And that's what the letter is ultimately about.

Clement begins the letter recounting the Corinthians' "most excellent and steadfast faith," their welcoming and generous hospitality, their countless good works towards others, their humility and selflessness and collective contentment with all God had provided them. He lays it on thick. So thick, in fact, that set against Paul's letters to the same community several decades before, I have to wonder how much they actually were these things or whether Clement is using the age-old rhetorical device of flattering his audience before dropping the hammer on them.

And drop the hammer he does.

"All glory and growth were given to you," he writes, "and then that which was written was fulfilled." He then quotes Deut. 32:15: 'My beloved ate and drank and was enlarged and grew fat and kicked.' Schism has erupted among them (or perhaps it never fully went away), which Clement attributes to their self-satisfied prosperity. Corinth was sick with affluenza.

The outcome, Clement goes on to describe, was "jealousy and envy, strife and sedition, persecution and anarchy, war and captivity." People were "stirred up":

those without honor against the honored, those of no repute against the highly reputed, the foolish against the wise, and the young against the old.

Sounds like Corinth hadn't changed much. They were as rowdy and at each other's throat as much in Clement's day as they were in Paul's.

We can get rough outlines of what some of the fights might have been about, but nothing as specific as Paul's words about virgins, food sacrificed to idols, abuses of the Lord's Supper, and even the funds he's been hard at work collecting to take to the Jerusalem apostles.

Clement's words to the Corinthians are beautiful, wise, and encouraging. We have far less detail to go on than in Paul's letters, but it seems that a group of young men—had apparently incited a revolt against church leadership. They were the “beloved” who had “grown fat and kicked.” These young bucks were kicking and kicking hard.

The result was a reprise of the divisiveness, rancor, and selfish behavior Corinth was known for. Many years before, “Chloe's people” had come to Paul for help as their church spiraled out of control; now it was happening again.

Sincere humility is the beginning of the solution, says Clement, citing the example of the Lord Himself, who obviously did not sin and embodied such humility perfectly. But David, despite being a man after God's own heart, nevertheless transgressed and sinned mightily. He needed to find his way back to the path. Psalm 51, which Clement quotes at length, is David's way of seeking reconciliation with God.

We ought to learn from his and other examples from Scripture, Clement asserts. He continues, “Seeing, then, that we have a share in many and glorious deeds, let us hasten on to the goal of peace, which has been handed down to us from the beginning; let us fix our eyes upon the Father and Maker of the whole world and hold fast to his magnificent and excellent gifts and benefits of peace. Let us observe him with our mind and let us look with the eyes of the soul on his patient will. Let us note how free from anger he is toward all his creation.”

Nature lives and moves by the Lord's direction, he explains, and all in it coexists in fruitful, abundant harmony, according to God's purpose and design. “Even the smallest living things come together in

harmony and peace,” he notes. And they do so because the great Creator and Master of the universe ordered them such for the benefit of all who find refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Seeking peace and harmony with others isn't just to make life more pleasant. It also fulfills God's will for us. God's ultimate will for us is, of course, that we share eternity with him. We may share in that eternity by “keeping our minds fixed on God through faith, seeking out those things that are well-pleasing and acceptable to him; if we accomplish those things that are in harmony with his faultless will, and follow the way of truth...”

Schism is not the Christian way, Clement chides. Love unites us, he says, echoing Paul. It does not divide. “There is nothing coarse, nothing arrogant in love,” he says. “Love knows nothing of schisms, love leads no rebellions, love does everything in harmony. In love all the elect of God were made perfect; without love nothing is pleasing to God.”

“So then, for whatever sins we have committed and whatever we have done through any of the tricks of the adversary, let us ask that we may be forgiven. For those who walk in fear and love prefer that they themselves, rather than their neighbors, should fall into suffering, and they would rather bring condemnation upon themselves than upon the harmony that has been so nobly and righteously handed down to us.” Such harmony is born of “faith, repentance, genuine love, self-control, sobriety, and patience.”

“We have written enough to you, brothers, about the things that pertain to our religion and are particularly helpful for a virtuous life, at least for those who wish to guide their steps in holiness and righteousness,” Clement concludes.

While much more lies within this letter, I hope this introduction has perhaps sparked your interest and perhaps even a desire to read the letter yourself.



It's a rare human, after all, that makes it through life without ever encountering disunity, disharmony, animosity, and people who are led by anything and everything but love. And sometimes upon deep self-reflection and self-scrutiny, we may realize we have been far more complicit in the troubles and conflicts of our lives than we care to think.

If that's ever been you, you might pick up this ancient letter and listen for what God has to say. I guarantee you will find it enriching.

Pastor Eric+

You will notice that an envelope for your special Christmas offering can be found in your newsletter. If you receive it electronically, there are more available on top of the organ. If you are writing a check, be sure to indicate that it for the Christmas or your regular offering. Thank you!

### **Happy Birthday to Members of our Church Family**

Help wish Irene Gabel a happy 94<sup>th</sup> birthday which was November 30, 2024 by sending her a card to:

**Irene Gabel**  
Akron Care Center  
991 Highway 3  
Akron, Iowa 51001

Beth Finzen will be turning 99<sup>th</sup> years young on December 23, 2024. If you would like to send her a card, her address is:

**Beth Finzen**  
Akron Care Center  
991 Highway 3  
Akron, Iowa 51001

John Dirks turned 91 on November 21, 2024. Help him celebrate by sending him a card to:

**John Dirks**  
Akron Care Center  
991 Highway 3  
Akron, Iowa 51001



We extend our deepest sympathy to Margaret Correia and her family on the death of Rich Loughran, her brother-in-law.

*Those who would like to be remembered in our prayers who are currently in long-term care or assisted living facilities include:*

Alta Johnson Betty Heyl John Dirks  
Lawrence Maynard LaVon Maynard  
Beth Finzen Janice Morehead  
Nadine Philips Betty Klemme  
Sandy McMillan Irene Gabel  
Jeff Kulvik Shirley Johnson

*We pray for those with health issues:*

Jerry Lias Tom Miller  
Tony Nemesio Duane Madden  
Jan Skinner Wanda Philips  
Suzie Rozell  
Sherry Jo Wittkop,  
Student at Le Mars Gehlen  
Roger Nielsen

*We pray for our troops and their families protecting our country at home as well as abroad.*

In addition, we pray for the safety of our Akron EMS members who so willingly assist not only our Akron area residents, but nearby cities.

### **Worship Assistants Needed**

If you are interested in assisting with worship as Communion Cleanup/Setup, Readers, Communion Assistants, Ushers, Choir Members, or Fellowship, please let Sharon know.



Immanuel ELCW will be meeting Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Bring your November/December, 2024 *Gather* magazine and a Christmas goodie to share during Bible Study.



**“NOISY OFFERING”**

Our noisy offering for September - November had a total of \$710.00 for Operation Christmas Child to pay shipping for our Christmas shoebox gifts. Seventy-one boxes were delivered to the collection point on Monday, November 18, 2024, along with a check of \$710.00 for postage.

Thank you to Bob and Linda Nielsen and Bob and Sharon Frerichs for loading and delivering these and to everyone who assembled Shoebox gifts or contributed to noisy offering.

Thank you for supporting this project in so many different ways! Our Immanuel family is awesome!

**A Caroling We Will Go**

We will once again be caroling around town to share the Christmas spirit on Sunday, December 15. We will meet at the church at 6 p.m.

All are welcome to join is!

**All are welcome!**

**CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**

Sunday School Christmas program Sunday, December 22, at 10:15 a.m. during our morning worship service. It will be followed by coffee fellowship provided by the Sunday School teachers.

No Sunday school December 29, 2024. We will resume Sunday, January 5, 2025. Thank you! Happy holidays!

**Sunday School Activities**

Sunday School students are making ornaments to help decorate the tree we have at the Opera House for the Akron Hometown Christmas. We also have hand knit mittens made by Joy Dirks again this year. Thank you, Joy!

**Advent Season is here, beginning Sunday, December 1, 2024**



**FINANCIAL STATISTICS**

October, 2024

First Week	\$ 1,800.00
Second Week	\$1,456.00
Third Week	\$5,781.00
Fourth Week	\$ 2,379.00
Fifth Week	NA
Total	\$ 11,416.00
Needed Each Week	\$2,355.77
Currently	\$2,854.00
Difference	\$ 498.23

**Immanuel Lutheran Church  
Church Council  
November 17, 2024 11:15 a.m.**

Present: Jon Harris, Josh Martinsen, Heather Noll, Pastor Alm, Matthew Knapp, Tim Philips, Tom Schroeder, Arica Schuknecht

Absent: Heather Morehead, Anne Brown

Minutes of the October Meeting: Motion made by Josh to approve the minutes; seconded by Matthew. Motion approved.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made Tom to approve the treasurer's report; seconded by Tim. Motion approved.

Pastor's Report: Pastor gave his report which included care center visits on Thursday mornings and an Akron Ministerial Association meeting on October 7.

***Unfinished Business***

**Harvest Festival:** The annual Harvest Festival will be held on Sunday, November 24. There will be a potluck dinner following worship. Please bring a favorite dish to share.

**Hanging of the Greens:** This will be held on Sunday, November 24 at 6:00 p.m. All are welcome to come decorate the church for the season!

***New Business***

**Community Christmas Program:** This will be held on Sunday, December 1, 2:00 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran. All are welcome to attend.

**Christmas Caroling around town:** We will once again be caroling around town to share the Christmas spirit. This will be held on Sunday, December 15. We will meet at the church at 6 p.m. All are welcome!

**Church Updates:** Thank you to Tim Philips for replacing the handles on the front doors to the church. There are also new autumn banners on the east and west walls.

**Memorial Ideas:** The family of Richard Dirks made a memorial donation to the church. Possible ideas for their memorial donation would be a new cabinet to have in the sanctuary to hold sermon notes and noisy offering buckets. Another idea would be a cabinet for the computer and sound system in the balcony. If anyone from the congregation has an idea, please let Jon know.

The following was given as part of Immanuel's Mission Support:

- \$500 to the Christmas for the Needy program, assisting the local Friendship & Service Club in their efforts to help A-W families and students that are in need this Christmas season. These funds will go to either gift cards to local businesses or toys for children. Motion made by Josh, seconded by Heather. Motion approved.

The next **Council meeting** will be held Sunday, December 15, following worship.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Arica Schuknecht, Council Secretary





**Merry Christmas from LSI!**

**A note from Renee Hardman, President and CEO of Lutheran Services in Iowa:**

Dear friends,

I hope this finds you safe and warm. As I am closing in on my first year as President and CEO at LSI, I am filled with gratitude for our generous donors, dedicated staff members, and kind supporters. Thanks to caring people like you, LSI had another incredible year serving our neighbors. Your donations ensured young parents had access to resources and support. Your in-kind items provided comforting beds for immigrants and refugees to rest upon. Your prayers lifted the spirits of our LSI team members and those we serve. As we enjoy this holiday season, I want to thank you for supporting LSI.

If you would like to serve more neighbors in need, please give at [LSIowa.org/donate](http://LSIowa.org/donate).

Eternally Grateful, Renee

For more information, please contact Deb Whitford, LSI’s Director of Philanthropy and Church Relations, at [Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org](mailto:Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org) or 563-676-2065.

*LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at [LSIowa.org](http://LSIowa.org) and [facebook.com/LSI.iowa](https://facebook.com/LSI.iowa).*

**Dedication of 2024 Saints**

On Sunday, November 3, 2024 we remembered the following who have left their families and friends since the last All Saints Day: Dave Rozell, John Lucken, Doug Carlson, and Mary Lucken. You will notice that there was a candle on the altar for each individual we honored. Families were invited to take the candles home with them.



**Advent Season is here, beginning Sunday, December 1, 2024**



DECEMBER LECTIONARIES			
December 1	Jeremiah 33: 14-16	1 Thessalonians 3:9-13	Luke 21:25-36
December 8	Malachi 3:1-14	Philippians 1: 3-11	Luke 3:1-6
December 15	Zephaniah 3: 14-20	Philippians 4: 4-7	Luke 3:7-18
December 22	Micah 5:2-5a	Hebrews 10: 5-10	Luke 1:39-55
December 24 Christmas Eve	Isaiah 9:2-7	Titus 2:11-14	Luke 2:1-20
December 29	1 Samuel 2: 18-20, 26	Colossians 3:12-17	Luke 2:41-52

## Prayer Partners

Some of the Immanuel Lutheran Sunday School students and teachers are shown working on their prayer partner project during Sunday morning Sunday School. Pictured left to right are Ady Edwards, Oakley DeVos, Lisa Harris, and Sydney Edwards. Along with a card, photograph and a letter, the children made friendship bracelets to give to their prayer partners.



## November 24, 2024 Harvest Festival

Thank you to each of you who so generously contributed to the special Harvest Festival offering. Our total as of Sunday, November 24, is \$33,180. Alleluiah! We met our goal, but your contributions are still welcome.

As you can tell by all the smiles, a delicious potluck dinner was served to 54 individuals following worship.



A big thank you to Alan and Marge Lucken for their decorating skills! Did you know they grow all the pumpkins and gourds for both church and Scarecrow Festival?





### OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Students pictured with the 71 boxes sent to Operation Christmas Child boxes are: Front Row (left to right): Ronnie Finzen, Adelynn Edwards, Aubrey Jacobs, Landon Jacobs, Marcus Finzen. Second Row: Haylee Jacobs, Macy Morehead, Case Harris, Delaney Naslund, Max Rozell, Will Rozell, Third Row: Emma Jacobs, Kenli Rozell, Sydney Edwards, Nora Mathistad, Ty Naslund, Reese Harris, Camden Jacobs. A big thank you to all who filled the boxes or gave Noisey Offering for the postage.

Worship Assistants			
Date	Reader	Communion Setup/Cleanup	Acolyte
December 1	Tom Schroeder	Bob/Sharon Frerichs	Cole St. Pierre
December 8	Nancy Nielsen	NA	Morgan Knapp
December 15	Jay Dirks	Kathy Johnson	Gavin Kulvik
December 22	Sunday School Christmas Program	NA	Sydney Edwards
December 24	Brody Knapp Madeline Noll	Bob/Sharon Frerichs	Ushers
December 29	Christina Compton	NA	Nora Mathistad
December Ushers: Bob Frerichs and Kelly Saathoff			



### It is time to think about contributing to the Poinsettia fund for Advent.

Forms can be found on top of the organ. This year we are requesting \$5.00 for the fund, and as many poinsettias as needed will be purchased.

Questions?

Ask Marge Lucken or Sharon Frerichs.

Deadline to contribute to the fund will be Friday, December 13, 2024. If you receive your church newsletter electronically, there are special Christmas offering envelopes on top of the organ at church.

## December Birthdays



2	Michael Brown	14	Lisa Harris
3	James Black	16	Harold Higman
4	Missy Saathoff	16	Rhonda Johnson
5	Marjorie Lucken	23	Beth Finzen
5	Carter Wilken	23	Nicholas Rollins
8	Tyler Rozell	23	Michael Harris
11	Morgan Knapp	23	Anya Alm
13	Hailey Wilken	28	Michael Swancutt
13	Pastor Eric	30	Beckie Wahlberg



## Thankful Trees Project

Another great Sunday School project, done by students in Anne Brown's class with their thankful trees project. Pictured: Xandyr and Landon Jacobs, Delaney Naslund, Max Rozell, and Haylee Jacobs.

## Hanging of the Greens

The church was decorated the church for the Christmas season on Sunday, November 24, at 6:00 p.m. Individuals of all ages were welcomed to decorate the church for the season!



Those who decorated for the Advent season pictured above are: Front Row: Kathy Johnson, Dawn Martinsen, Lisa Harris, Jon Harris, Bob Frerichs. Back Row: Tom Schroeder, Josh Martinsen. Thank you for a job well done!



**Tuesday, December 24, 2024 at 9:00 p.m.**  
Holy Communion will be served.

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
 251 Main Street, Box 79  
 Akron, IA 51001

**“Gather and Grow with Us!”**

**WORSHIP WINTER SCHEDULE**

- 5:30 p.m. Saturday Worship with Holy Communion
- 9:00 a.m. Sunday School
- 10:15 a.m. Sunday Worship Service
- 11:15 a.m. Coffee Fellowship following Worship



**2024**



Pastor’s Message..... 1-4  
 Worship Assistants Needed, Christmas Offering, Special Birthdays, Prayer Chain.....4  
 ELCW, “Noisy Offering”, Thankful Tree Project, A Caroling We Will Go, Christmas Program, Sunday School Activities, Financial Statistics .....5  
 Church Council Minutes .....6  
 LSI Article, Dedication of 2024 Saints, December Lectionaries ..7  
 Prayer Partners, Harvest Festival .....8  
 Operation Christmas Child Boxes, Worship Assistants, Poinsettia Fund .....9  
 December Birthdays, A Caroling We Will Go, Hanging of the Greens .....10  
 December Calendar .....11



**December 24, 9:00 p.m.**

