

Wilson-Immanuel Lutheran Parish
401 310th Street
Wilson WI 54027
Address Service Requested

Mission Statement

Wilson - Immanuel Lutheran Parish serves to provide all people the opportunity to become disciples of Jesus Christ, encourage faith and obedience to Christ and, through diverse opportunities for evangelism, serve God's people in our communities, nation, and throughout the world.

December 2020 Newsletter
Wilson-Immanuel Lutheran Parish



Wilson - Immanuel Lutheran Parish
401 310th Street, Wilson, WI 54027
Phone: 715-772-3150
Office Email: wiluth@wwt.net
Web Site: wilsonimmanuel.org
Pastor: Rev. Bob Dahm
Pastor Email: PastorBob@wwt.net



The CRISIS of CHRISTMAS¹

Dear Members and Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

Christmas 2020 will occur while we are living through of a series of crises. Here's the list: the pandemic, economic losses, protests against racial injustices, an ongoing climate crisis, and a divided country following a contentious presidential election. I'm not going to lie, it's been stressful for me, and I imagine it has been for you, too. As

Christians, we have been moving through these crisis-filled days with the expectation that God is present and God's promises are true. We move forward with hope.

The two Chinese characters for the word "crisis," 危机, have often been translated as "danger" and "opportunity." Others say that a better translation is "danger" and "change point." What dangers do you see as your congregation moves toward celebrating the Birth of our Savior – Christmas - in a totally new way? What "opportunities" or "change points" do you see that could propel your church forward in a positive way into God's future?

Mary experienced a theological crisis when the angel Gabriel revealed to her God's plan to enter this world by the baby in her womb. Mary's body was the center of a theological crisis² - much like the theological crisis caused by a virus that has invaded the bodies of our loved ones, and the theological crisis of abused and broken black and brown bodies, and the theological crisis experienced in the misuse of this planet on which all bodies live. Where is God in the crisis? What does this mean?

In a crisis, God comes to us. John 1:1,14 *In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and lived among us.* Jesus is God, divine *and* human. God took up residence and moved into our neighborhood. God goes where God's people go and is who the people are.³ This is the theological promise of John's gospel. God is present with us in our times of crisis and suffering. This is the foundation of Luther's theology of the cross.

God is revealed through the crisis of Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' untimely birth in a Bethlehem barn. God is revealed in the crucifixion; through the body of Jesus, hanging on a cross. God is revealed through the risen body of Jesus on Easter Morning.

No matter how different Christmas is for you this year, no matter what crisis arises, God is there, present as promised, in the WORD made flesh. May the story of Jesus' birth bring you much needed joy and hope this holiday season and may the presence of God comfort you in the new year.

AMEN

Rev. Laurie M. Olson

¹ Photo credit: Design by Artist Paul Johnson for the 2019 Concordia College Christmas Concert Mural

² Thank you to Dr. Karoline Lewis for her thought provoking presentation to NWSWI on 11/7/2020 that inspired this article.

³ Dr. Karoline Lewis, Working Preacher.org, Dec. 2016

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

December 2020 – Seasons of Advent and Christmas

“The Advent season is by nature countercultural; . . . [it] requires care so the calls to repentance and the demands for justice can be heard. Care is also required so they don’t become another set of ‘shoulds’, burdening the hearer with yet one more thing to do when they are already pressured by full calendars, long to-do-lists, and overwhelming expectations. Rather, in the way of the gospel, the call and the demand [are] . . . invitations to enter into the life of God, who is about to change everything in the gift of Christmas.” (Sundays and Seasons. Year B 2021)

Sunday, November 29 – Advent 1

- ❖ Color: Blue
- ❖ ELW Setting: Setting I
- ❖ Readings: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9
- ❖ Holy Gospel: Mark 13:24-37: Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

Sunday, December 6 – Advent 2

- ❖ Color: Blue
- ❖ ELW Setting: Setting I with Holy Communion
- ❖ Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a
- ❖ Holy Gospel: Mark 1:1-8: The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.

Sunday, December 13 – Advent 3

- ❖ Color: Blue
- ❖ ELW Setting: Setting I
- ❖ Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
- ❖ Holy Gospel: John 1:26-38: John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

Sunday, December 20 – Advent 4

- ❖ Color: Blue
- ❖ ELW Setting: Setting I with Holy Communion
- ❖ Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27
- ❖ Holy Gospel: Luke 1:26-38: In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

“At Christmas God Breaks into our world in the form of a baby; the Word becomes flesh, shining with brilliance, dwelling among us, and illuminating our lives.” (Sundays and Seasons. Year B 2021)

Thursday, December 24 – Christmas Eve

- ❖ Color: White
- ❖ ELW Setting: Setting I with Holy Communion
- ❖ Readings: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14
- ❖ Holy Gospel: Luke 2:1-20: God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

Thursday, December 27 – Christmas 1

- ❖ Color: White
- ❖ ELW Setting: Setting I
- ❖ Readings: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7
- ❖ Holy Gospel: Luke 2:22-40: Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

When I began serving this parish full-time six years ago, I didn't have the slightest notion I would be presiding at worship by sitting in front of a video camera and posting the recording on line. Nor did I suspect there would come a time when my primary means of providing one-on-one pastoral care would be by phone, Zoom would be the way we would do confirmation programs, or did I have any idea what a Zoom meeting was, that baptisms would be for the immediate family only, and funeral services would only include family members gathered at graveside. Yet, that's exactly where we've been at this last eight months. It's hard for all of us to be in that place.

With the recent announcement of multiple vaccines there's reason to be hopeful that, in the months to come, all this will begin to turn around. It may be some time before we get back to "Full Normal" (actually, there's parts of "normal" I'd just as soon we left behind), but it's encouraging to begin seeing a light beyond our face masks and steamed up eye glasses.

On top of all that, here comes Christmas. What are we going to do for Christmas? A recent letter from Bishop Laurie put it this way.

"This is difficult. I'll cut to the chase. Research indicates that three of the most dangerous places to be during a pandemic are inside a building filled with people who don't live in your house like: 1. Bars and restaurants 2. Gyms and work out facilities 3. CHURCHES!

This is a crisis. The hospitals are filling up. Medical workers are overworked and getting sick themselves. University of Wisconsin in Eau Claire, River Falls, and Stout will be entirely online after Thanksgiving. Elementary and High schools are making tough decisions to go online after so many teachers and students have tested positive. Pastors have started to report to me that members of their churches have died from COVID-19. At least three pastors in our synod have tested positive for COVID. My 27-year-old daughter who works in health care tested positive last week. This is real.

Here is the strongly worded recommendation from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. *November 11, 2020 Update: Given the current state of COVID spread in Wisconsin and Governor Evers' Executive Order 94, we recommend that churches abstain from gathering in physical spaces, indoors OR outdoors, at this time. We know this will impact community celebrations and holiday services in the weeks to come, and offer this recommendation in the firm belief that it will help protect the life and health of congregants and community.*

I will echo this recommendation. I recommend that you plan all online virtual worship services for the season of Advent and Christmas."

As hard as it is put those words to paper, it is reality. At this writing, plans for Christmas Eve worship are still in the works, but our goal will be to make it, even if a virtual reality, a joyful celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior. Keep an eye on your email. As plans come together, we'll certainly share them with you.

Peace be with you. Pr. Bob

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PARISH NEWS

Holy Communion: It's getting a little cold out there 🌨️, especially on the windy hills that serve as the locations of our church buildings, and time for us to re-think Outdoor Communion. Until we can figure out another way of doing it, we will serve it one more time in December, the 6th, from 9:00 to 9:30 a.m. at Immanuel, and from 10:30 to 11:00 a.m. at Wilson. After that, watch your email for updates.

Mid-Week Advent Worship: Each week during Advent I will be sending you a link to an on-line mid-week Advent video worship service produced by Bishop Laurie and the synod staff. Each service is about 15 minutes in length, and even includes a weekly lighting of the Advent candle. The first one will be sent for use on Wednesday, December 1.

Advent Devotional: Each year we have made Advent devotionals available at church, to be picked up a few weeks before the season. Since we can't do that this year, a devotional produced by Luther Seminary in St. Paul was recently emailed to the parish. If you know of someone who does not have email and would like a copy of the devotional, please let Pastor Bob know (pastorbob@wwt.net) so a copy can be sent by mail.

Vanco (GivePlus) Online Program: The Vanco GivePlus Online Giving Program is now available to both Wilson and Immanuel members. GivePlus allows you to set up weekly and special offerings, as well as special one-time donations. Contributions may be made to the General, Benevolence, Memorial, or Building Funds. Contributions to the Memorial and Building Funds may be designated for specific projects. MasterCard, Visa, and Discover are accepted. You can also contribute using your financial institution's debit card, checking or savings account. Visit our Web site at www.wilsonimmanuel.org and click the "Give Online" link in the menu bar near the top of the Home page. You can also download the GivePlus app for Apple or Android smartphones.

Food Pantry Support: Please remember the area food pantries supported by the parish congregations. Wilson contributes to five food shelves during the year, one each month, including Baldwin, Elmwood, Glenwood City, Spring Valley, and Woodville. Immanuel supports the food shelves at Clear Lake and Glenwood City. More people are seeking help from food pantries than ever before, so your contributions are especially welcomed. Don't forget to include items like paper products and personal care supplies. Bring your donations when you come for Outdoor Communion, or drop them off at church during the week. Thank you for your continuing support of your neighbors in need.

God's Work. Our Hands. Due to the COVID outbreak and our subsequent inability to undertake in-person activities, the parish councils decided this year's God's Work Our Hands involvement would be by participation in the ELCA Good Gifts Program. You responded with your contributions, which resulted in the purchase of gifts that will make a difference in the lives of people here and around the world.

Contributions from Immanuel, totaling \$230, purchased two goats, two flocks of chicks, 2 roosters, a piglet, and 2 colonies of honeybees. At Wilson contributions of \$300 purchased 2 goats, 4 flocks of chicks, 4 roosters, 2 piglets, and 2 colonies of honeybees. Thanks to all of you for your generosity in support of your neighbor in need.

WILSON NEWS

Wilson WELCA: WELCA meetings are cancelled until further notice.

Wilson Council: The next regular meeting is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. Thursday, December 10. All members of the church are welcome to attend.

November 12, 2020 Council Meeting Highlights: The November meeting was cancelled due to COVID concerns and a lack of pressing business.

Thank You: “Wilson Lutheran Church, with sincere appreciation and warmest thanks for your recent donation. Thanks so much for your recent gift of 78 pounds of groceries so greatly needed. Elmwood Food Pantry”.

Tuesday Community Supper: The Tuesday Community Supper is served the first Tuesday of every month at Gethsemane Lutheran Church, 1350 Florence Street, Baldwin, Wisconsin, 54002. This is a free meal open to anyone in the community. Area churches, businesses and organizations take turns preparing and serving good nutritious food every month.

Members of First Reformed Church will be handing out bag suppers from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. on December 1st in the Gethsemane parking lot. Drive through to pick up a grab and go beef stew, bun and dessert.

WILSON LUTERAN CHURCH 2020 USHER SCHEDULE		
December	Roger and Barb Kronholm	4 Sundays & Christmas Eve
COMMUNION SERVERS		
December	Gary Peterson	4 Sundays & Christmas Eve
ALTAR CARE SCHEDULE		
December	Roger and Barb Kronholm	4 Sundays & Christmas Eve
Please arrange for another person if you are unable to serve as scheduled.		

IMMANUEL NEWS

Immanuel Luther Church Council Meeting Minutes: The November meeting was cancelled due to COVID concerns and a lack of business.

Good News! Lynee’ Cassellius reports the birth of another grandson, Zaylan Gage, born to Adam and Bri Cassellius on October 31st. Zaylan came into the world at 6lbs. 11oz. Big brothers Zandyn and Zylar (Zaylan is “Z3”) were excited to welcome him to the family. Grandma can’t wait to have the whole bunch playing in the backyard.

Austin Buhr Mailing Address: Anyone wishing to send a card or letter to Austin Buhr during his deployment may do so, after December 1, at the address below. Letters from home are so important to our service men and women. I know Austin would be happy to hear from you.

SPC Buhr, Austin
203rd ICTC
Camp Buehring, APO AE 09330

Assisting with Worship at Immanuel

Month	Altar Care	Usher	Cleaning	Sundays
December	Gin DeBoer and Family	Gin DeBoer and Family	Gin DeBoer and Family	4 Sundays & Christmas Eve
Please arrange for another person if you are unable to serve as scheduled. Please check the sign-up sheets on the bulletin board and help as you are able.				

Thank You to Jan Anderson for your donation to the Rhea DeBoer Family. It was applied to the congregation's God's Work, Our Hands project, and used to purchase additional chicks and a piglet through the ELCA's Good Gifts Program.



Chicks

Help a family spread their wings. When chicks grow up to become chickens, their eggs not only provide an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals — they can also help start a small business and generate a steady source of income.



Piglet

This little piggy couldn't be a bigger lifesaver. This gift is a source of natural fertilizer that helps crops grow tall and strong, and can also be sold at the market for extra income when it's needed.

PARISH BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES – DECEMBER 2020

Birthdays				Anniversaries	
Wilson		Immanuel		Wilson	
Dec 2	Trenton Faber	Dec 1	Matthew Main	Dec 4	Sandy & Terry Thorsen
Dec 5	Dalton Faber	Dec 1	Verdell Voeltz		
Dec 5	Arlan Hague	Dec 3	Joe Swanepoel	Immanuel	
Dec 15	Gary Peterson	Dec 5	Jodi Voeltz	Dec 1	Nathan & Janette Marlett
Dec 15	Curt Gregg	Dec 5	Lauren Cassellius	Dec 5	Devin & Brandee Swenby
Dec 19	Barbara Knopps	Dec 8	Barb Voeltz	Dec 16	Roger & Joyce Ohman
Dec 20	Kent Butler	Dec 10	Vera Steinberger		
Dec 20	Nicole Spielman	Dec 10	Samantha Phillipps		
Dec 21	Dave Powers	Dec 11	Rick Steinberger		
Dec 21	Braden Gregg	Dec 12	Gail Voeltz		
Dec 30	Joni Finder	Dec 14	Joshua Melstrom		
Dec 30	Bradyn Lamb	Dec 16	Michael Mortenson		
Dec 31	DeeAnn Rambo	Dec 17	Elijah Eggert		
		Dec 17	Vickie Haglund		
		Dec 17	Christopher Main		
		Dec 20	Henry Tellijohn		
		Dec 22	Andrew Blaser		
		Dec 26	Laura Briesemeister		
		Dec 1	Matthew Main		

Biscuits

"A visiting pastor attended a men's breakfast in the middle of a rural farming area of the country. The group had asked an older farmer, decked out in bib overalls, to say grace for the morning breakfast.

'Lord, I hate buttermilk', the farmer began. The visiting pastor opened one eye to glance at the farmer and wonder where this was going.

The farmer loudly proclaimed, 'Lord, I hate lard.' Now the pastor was growing concerned.

Without missing a beat, the farmer continued, 'And Lord, you know I don't much care for raw white flour'. The pastor once again opened an eye to glance around the room and saw that he wasn't the only one feeling uncomfortable.

Then the farmer added, 'But Lord, when you mix them all together and bake them, I do love warm fresh biscuits. So Lord, when things come up that we don't like, when life gets hard, when we don't understand what you're saying to us, help us to just relax and wait until you are done mixing. It will probably be even better than biscuits. Amen.'

Within that prayer is great wisdom for all when it comes to dealing with complicated situations like we are experiencing in the world today. Stay strong, my friends, because our LORD is mixing several things we don't really care for, but something even better is going to come when HE is done with it."

(Thanks to LaVon Cassellius for sharing this story.)



Revised Common Lectionary
Daily Readings – Year B
December 2020

Date	Day	Psalm	First Reading	Second Reading	Gospel
1	Tuesday	Psalm 79	Micah 4:6-13	Revelation 18:1-10	
2	Wednesday	Psalm 79	Micah 5:1-5a		Luke 21: 34-38
3	Thursday	Psalm 85:1-2; 8-13	Hosea 6:1-6	1 Thessalonians 1:2-10	
4	Friday	Psalm 85:1-2; 8-13	Jeremiah 1:4-10	Acts 11:19-26	
5	Saturday	Psalm 85:1-2; 8-13	Ezekiel 36:24-28		Mark 11:27-33
6	Sunday	Psalm 85:1-2; 8-13	Isaiah 40:1-11	2 Peter 3:8-15a	Mark 1:1-8
7	Monday	Psalm 27	Isaiah 26:7-15	Acts 2:37-42	
8	Tuesday	Psalm 27	Isaiah 4:2-6	Acts 11:1-18	
9	Wednesday	Psalm 27	Malachi 2:10-3:1		Luke 1:5-17
10	Thursday	Psalm 126	Habakkuk 2:1-5	Philippians 3:7-11	
11	Friday	Psalm 126	Habakkuk 3:2-6	Philippians 3:12-16	
12	Saturday	Psalm 126	Habakkuk 3:13-19		Matthew 21:28-32
13	Sunday	Psalm 126	Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	John 1:6-8; 19-28
14	Monday	Psalm 125	1 Kings 18:1-18	Ephesians 6:10-17	
15	Tuesday	Psalm 125	2 Kings 2:9-22	Acts 3:17-4:4	
16	Wednesday	Psalm 125	Malachi 3:16-4:6		Mark 9:9-13
17	Thursday	Psalm 89:1-4; 19-26	2 Samuel 6:1-11	Hebrews 1:1-4	
18	Friday	Psalm 89:1-4; 19-26	2 Samuel 6:12-19	Hebrews 1:5-14	
19	Saturday	Psalm 89:1-4; 19-26	Judges 13:2-24		John 7:40-52
20	Sunday	Psalm 89:1-4; 19-26	2 Samuel 7:1-11; 16	Romans 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38
21	Monday	Luke 1:46b-55	1 Samuel 1:1-18	Hebrews 9:1-14	
22	Tuesday	Psalm 96	Zephaniah 3:8-13	Romans 10:5-13	
23	Wednesday	Psalm 96	Zephaniah 3:14-20	Romans 13:11-14	
24	Thursday Christmas Eve	Psalm 96	Isaiah 9:2-7	Titus 2:11-14	Luke 2:1-20
25	Friday Christmas Day	Psalm 97	Isaiah 62:6-12	Titus 3:4-7	Luke 2:1-20
26	Saturday	Psalm 148	Jeremiah 26:1-9, 12-15	Acts 6:8-15, 7:51-60	
27	Sunday	Psalm 148	Isaiah 61:10-62:3	Galatians 4:4-7	Luke 2:22-40
28	Monday	Psalm 148	Jeremiah 31:15-17		Matthew 2:13-18
29	Tuesday	Psalm 148	Isaiah 49:5-15		Matthew 12:46-50
30	Wednesday	Psalm 148	Proverbs 9:1-12	2 Peter 3:8-13	
31	Thursday	Psalm 148	1 Kings 3:5-14		John 8:12-19

**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Prayer Ventures
December 2020**

1 *World AIDS Day* Pray for compassion, understanding and healing for individuals, families and communities worldwide that are living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. Give thanks for the dedicated service and skill of doctors, pastors, public officials, health care educators, care providers and researchers who treat the infected, bring hope to the discouraged and weary, and respond to the disease's spiritual, physical, emotional and social impacts.

2 The Spirit is at work in times of anticipation and yearning, reminding us of God's promises and activity, helping us stay calm and patient, and redirecting our attention from ourselves to our neighbors in need — nearby and around the world.

3 Give thanks for the new ELCA social message "Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy." Pray that it will help us understand how government is a gift from God but can also be abused and misused. Ask the Spirit to guide us as we prayerfully reflect on how we can view civic engagement as Lutherans.

4 What do you anticipate and watch for during this season of Advent? Pray for what you yearn and hope for, and give thanks that God is faithful to God's promises, especially through the gift of life to the world through Jesus Christ.

5 As we are immersed in the joy, festivities and busyness of Advent and Christmas, pause to pray for our global neighbors who have suffered through devastating natural disasters and need our support, generosity and assistance. Pray particularly for the many nations that have experienced drought and for those impacted by the earthquake in Turkey and Greece, Typhoon Goni hitting the Philippines and multiple hurricanes impacting Mexico, the Caribbean region and the United States.

6 Pray that the Spirit will give us a measure of John the Baptist's boldness, commitment, humility and resolve as we share the good news of Jesus Christ and the promise of God's love and mercy with everyone we encounter or approach throughout our baptismal journey.

7 Give thanks for caregivers, staff and nurses in senior communities, nursing homes, rehabilitation hospitals, and memory-care and assisted-living facilities. Ask God to grant them strength, wisdom, skill and a spirit of hope and joy as they go about their difficult and often tiring work.

8 Pray for patience, caution and concern for our neighbor during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic; pray that the Spirit and our siblings in Christ will help us cope with and adjust to the implications of the pandemic for this season in which we are accustomed to gathering in person for meals, celebrations, worship, family gatherings and community events.

9 Pray that God will help us lead lives of holiness, godliness, peace and active engagement with the world as disciples of Christ who wait patiently for the day of the Lord.

10 This has been, and continues to be, a very difficult year of coping with and recovering from natural disasters across our country and around the world. Pray that the presence and hope of God will be evident where there is despair, grief and uncertainty over how to begin rebuilding and healing. Pray that neighbors, communities and nations will work together to provide assistance, resources and relief workers where the needs are most critical.

11 Ask for God's forgiveness and take to heart God's word of love, peace, healing and guidance that restores our faith and spirit as children of God.

12 Give thanks for the church traditions that remind us of God's actions throughout history and inspire our faith, generosity and commitment to serve our neighbors in need. Pray that we will carry these meaningful traditions forward and create new rites and traditions that inspire and strengthen all generations in today's changing contexts.

13 Pray that we might passionately witness to the light of Jesus Christ and boldly invite others to believe and to be baptized into the body of Christ and the community of all believers.

14 ELCA Good Gifts provide an opportunity for you to support the ministries and programs — domestic and global — that mean the most to you and the people you love. Give thanks that our church believes God is calling us into the world together and that, through our generosity and love, we can make a difference.

15 What do our gifts mean, and what impact do they have? Pray for thoughtfulness when we buy gifts, for awareness of who we include and exclude, and for mindfulness of how the money we spend during this time of thanksgiving might fulfill God's loving, merciful and generous promises.

16 *Los Posadas* This traditional celebration, popular in Mexico and observed by some ELCA congregations, uses lighted paths and processions to follow Mary and Joseph's journey through Bethlehem in search of lodging. Pray that our recollection of Mary and Joseph's experience might prompt us to welcome strangers, immigrants and neighbors in need.

17 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Pray that we will support and encourage each other in these good works and disciplines that keep our spirits, minds and bodies healthy and whole.

18 Pray that, in anticipation of Christmas, we will invite others into the joy of our meals, celebrations, community events and faith. Pray that the Spirit will move us to reach out with acts of love, hope, inclusion and good news to people who are alone, incarcerated or homeless.

19 "The Lord has done great things for us." Rejoice, laugh and shout with joy!

20 Pray that we will be receptive to angels and divine beings sent by God to guide us and bring us good news, as the angel Gabriel did to Mary and Elizabeth. Pray that we will hear God's assurance that "nothing will be impossible with God" and that our response will echo Mary's: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

21 *Winter solstice* On this day with the least amount of daylight, observed as the beginning of winter, pray that we will be drawn to the eternal light of Christ born into the world — a gift for all people and all generations that illuminates God's redemptive love for us and God's desire and intent for how we might live together.

22 Remember in prayer the approximately 26 million refugees, immigrants and asylum-seekers around the world and at our borders, awaiting entry into safe, welcoming countries and communities so that they can rebuild their lives without threats of conflict, persecution, violence or economic crisis. Pray for their safety, that their spiritual, physical and emotional needs will be met, that they will find caring advocates, and that their faith and hope will be strengthened and sustained by siblings in Christ and our faith communities.

23 With prayerful sighs of relief and expressions of gratitude, give thanks for God's covenant to grant humankind love, forgiveness, new life and redemption through the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

24 Remember and give thanks for the people in your life who taught you the nativity story and recounted the promise God made to us and fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

25 *Christmas Day* Give praise and thanks for God's boundless love, mercy and grace, revealed to the world and all humanity through the light of Jesus Christ — son of God, son of humanity; our source of truth, salvation, new life and wholeness.

26 *Beginning of Kwanzaa* Kwanzaa is a weeklong celebration of African culture and traditions that stresses family, community and shared principles. Give thanks for the rich and meaningful traditions, celebrations and practices of our African American siblings and the global African community.

27 Pray for the Spirit to help us understand and have faith in Jesus as the son of God, born to walk among us, live through our daily struggles and needs, teach us God's ways and word, and restore our relationships with God, one another and creation.

28 Pray that we will carry forward the story and significance of Jesus and their implications for our daily actions, relationships and decisions as loved and reclaimed children of God. Ask the Spirit to guide us in responding to God's call to proclaim the gospel, make peace, work for justice, propagate hope and serve our neighbors in need — without partiality, foot-dragging, embarrassment or expectation of reward or credit.

29 Let our prayers, creation and all living things give glory and honor to God, our creator, sustainer, guiding light and redeemer.

30 Pray that the light, celebration and blessings of community we experience as followers of Christ will continue far beyond the Christmas holidays and permeate our daily lives as we participate in God's life-giving work and witness in the world.

31 *New Year's Eve* A new year can offer hope and enthusiasm for starting anew, or it can bring fear and despair stirred by our human weaknesses and failures. Ask God to help us achieve our new endeavors and resolutions and reground ourselves in God's grace, forgiveness and newness when we fall short of our expectations and goals. Ask the Spirit to help us encourage, assist and surround with grace people who stumble or whose confidence is unsteady.

DECEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 6:00 p.m. Immanuel 7 th and 8 th Grade Zoom Confirmation	3 5:30 p.m. Leighna Maree Sloan Family Baptism at Immanuel	4	5
6 9:00 Outdoor Communion at Immanuel 10:30 Outdoor Communion at Wilson	7 Pastor's Sabbath	8 7:00 p.m. Council Meeting at Immanuel	9 6:00 p.m. Wilson 7 th and 8 th Grade Zoom Confirmation	10 12:30 p.m. Council Meeting at Wilson	11	12
13	14 Pastor's Sabbath	15	16	17	18	19
20 Newsletter Deadline	21 Pastor's Sabbath	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Service Plans are Pending. Watch for Announcements	25 Merry Christmas 	26
27	28 Pastor's Sabbath	29	30 6:00 p.m. Immanuel 7 th and 8 th Grade Zoom Confirmation	31 New Year Eve	January 1 2021 	January 2