

# THE IMMANUEL MESSENGER

942 Grape Avenue, Fisher, IL 61843-8512



Immanuel Lutheran Church of Osman  
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod  
Reverend Jeffrey McPike, BCC

**August 2023**



## From Pastor McPike's Desk...

### Can an “Immigrant Church” survive without immigration?

*Last year, 2022, was the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Since that time, this column has been devoted to sharing the history of our church body. Today, we look not back, but ahead. What is our future?*

Founded as the *Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Kirche von Missouri, Ohio, und Anderen Staaten*, (The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other states) says it all, The LCMS is an immigrant church. From its roots in 1839 and the “Saxon Immigration”, through the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the LCMS was started by, and grew from a regular stream of immigrants from Germany. Along with this, families were larger, and children grew up, established their own families close to home and continued attending the same church. Immanuel Lutheran Church of Osman is a microcosm of this. Family origins are intertwined with origins of the congregation. As families scatter hither and yon the congregation finds itself in decline.

In the 35 years that I have been a pastor in the LCMS, the synod itself has declined. In 1988, we were a church body of 2.6 million. The most recent figure I have heard is around 1.8 million. A church body once fed primarily with large families staying close to home and immigration is finding itself shrinking because the main source of new members has all but dried up. One additional complication is the lack of denominational loyalty.

Immanuel Lutheran Church of Osman, and by extension, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, have grown or at least been sustained in these two ways over their history. One is growth from German immigration, and the other, large families staying close to home. German immigration has not been a thing since before WWII. Now, as we look at the size of our Sunday School and Youth Group, or lack thereof, it is painfully obvious that these modes of growing the church are no longer an option. As stated earlier, the LCMS, along with all other “main-line” churches, is in decline. Looking at our own church attendance and participation, we have to admit that we have the same problem. In the first years of my ministry, I was vacancy pastor for Zion Lutheran Church in Hoskins, Nebraska. That church was in significant decline even then and has now been closed for well over a decade. The building is gone, and all that remains is the cemetery. Sharon and I have a statue of Jesus standing next to our grand piano in our home in Philo. It was the center piece on the altar of St. John Lutheran Church in Howells, Nebraska when it was dedicated in 1911. That church closed in 1966, and the pastor who gave the statue to me obtained it shortly afterward. When Sharon and I

were in Nebraska for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church in Norfolk, we visited the site of St. John Church. All that remains is the driveway to what used to be a parking area on one side of the road and the cemetery on the other. Formerly thriving, vital churches, now simply a part of history.

Of course, many rural churches are closing. There is simply not the population in the country there used to be. Farming has gone from “family business” to “big business”. Yes, there are locally owned farms, but they must have multi-hundred to thousands of acres. The business of farming, the machinery necessary to make it happen, is big business. And, of course that means that where there were once family farms with large families on most quarter-sections, there are now small families spread by numerous sections. Already back in the late 1980s in Nebraska, I visited one of my church members who still lived on her farm. She never married, worked in Norfolk and her folks were dead and she had no siblings. As we stood on the porch of her homestead, she pointed to the various quarter sections where neighbors had once been. No homes were left. Only a tree or two in some cases; maybe a barn or other out-buildings on others. She was out there, alone.

Just like small churches, small towns are in decline. Osman was once a town, though never a large one. Now, a hand-full of homes and our church. And both are getting ever smaller.

So, if we cannot grow the church by waiting for folks to move here from Germany, and we cannot grow the church by having babies... what are we to do? We turn to the book of Acts.

When I was in the seminary (a long time ago, now), I took a class called “Evangelism in the Congregation”. Now, there is a word that scares us.... **Evangelism!** That means that you have to go out and talk about your faith. YIKES! A required paper for that class was to survey the book of Acts to determine how the church grew and how evangelism was done in the earliest days of the church. The conclusion? The church grew by *relationship*. Yes, that’s right. The Christian church grew because people talked about their faith with others that they knew - people you work with, your neighbors, your relatives, the person down the street, the family that you always see at the restaurant.

Of the communities where we have regular members, Fisher and Mahomet are probably growing more than the others. How can we establish relationships in those areas? Anyone who has had to move knows the uncertainty and uneasiness that comes from going to a different community. What if there was a way to welcome new members of the community to let them know that our church is here?

Evangelism, however, dare never be done by any congregation for self-serving reasons. “We do not have a Sunday School, so we need to reach out and grow our church or it will die.” That is a TERRIBLE reason! Evangelism is not “growing the church” as in “perpetuating the institution.” Evangelism is seeking to bring people to a faith-relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and providing them support in that endeavor. Just as in Baptism, standing behind the parents of the child are sponsors, and standing behind that group is the whole congregation, so Evangelism is not to grow the church, but to provide the way in which faith, spread through evangelism, might be grown, strengthened and nurtured.

Let’s face it. Our location is a challenge. Ask many people if they know where Osman is, and they have to have been here to be able to tell you our location. So, this is the challenge.

Can an immigrant church survive? I named two such churches near where I lived in Nebraska that answered that question “NO!” What will it be for the LCMS? What will it be for us? That is entirely up to each and every member.

## July 4<sup>th</sup> Church Float



The church float for the Bellflower July 4<sup>th</sup> parade was constructed at the Evergreen FS garage in Bellflower on Sunday, July 2nd. Fourteen members helped assemble a beautiful float depicting the freedoms of our country. The float received second place with the cash prize of \$30. A special thanks to Lee Whitehouse for securing a very convenient place to work. A special thanks to Steve Warsaw for the use of his trailer to build on and for driving the float in the parade. A special thanks to Jenna Clemmons and Addi Warsaw for riding the float and throwing the candy to all of the spectators.

### Thank You

To my loving church family: Thank you so much for the continued support starting with my spinal surgery and bone marrow transplant and continuing with many procedures to attempt to locate the source of my chest pain which still persists. You have been so thoughtful by sending cards, notes, and food from the Ladies Aid/LWML, and especially the prayers and positive words of comfort at church. Thanks also for Pastor McPike's visits during which time he served communion. I always remember that where there is kindness, there is You! Thanks again for your continued prayers! God's blessings to all, Deb Lammler

## **Church and Hall Roofing Project**



In September 2022 the Osman area was hit by a severe storm with high winds and hail. The church and hall were both inspected by the insurance adjuster and damage on both roofs was evident. During the winter months, three bids were collected for the roofing project. They were McCumsey Roofing of Farmer City, Popejoy Roofing of Farmer City, and Crown Roofing of Champaign. After looking at the total bids, the council narrowed it to two choices and at the congregational meeting in April 2023, the bid was awarded to Popejoy Roofing for \$49,480. The project was totally

covered by insurance with the exception of the \$2500 deductible. The roofing project started early morning on Monday, July 10<sup>th</sup> and was completed by late evening on Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>.

## **Ladies Aid/LWML Luncheon**

All Ladies Aid/LWML members and guests are invited to a ladies luncheon on August 10th, at Kickapoo Tea House in Downs. If you are interested in attending the luncheon, please sign up on the list on the back bulletin board. Please indicate on the list the number of guests that you are bringing so the reservation number can be called in a few days in advance, and then they will give us the exact reservation time.

## **Thank You**

Thank you to Terri and Dwight Hooker and Brenda Hendricks for visiting the shut-ins in July. There is a sign-up sheet on the back bulletin board for other volunteers to bring some cheer to our members who cannot attend church.

## **Ladies Aid/LWML**

Nine ladies met on July 13<sup>th</sup> for the Ladies Aid/LWML meeting at 7 PM in the fellowship hall. Before the meeting cake and ice cream which was provided by Annette Warsaw and Connie Warsaw was enjoyed by the group in celebration of Wilma Grussing's birthday. The group played "Happy Birthday" on the children's bells. After the meeting was called to order, the LWML song was sung and the LWML Pledge was said by the group. A devotion centered on "freedom" was read by Annette Warsaw. Connie Warsaw and Brenda Hendricks shared their experiences at the National LWML Convention in Milwaukee in June with the group via a PowerPoint presentation. Roll call was answered by a Bible verse on freedom. Marsha Warsaw read the minutes from the May meeting, and they were approved as read. The mites were collected. Connie Warsaw gave the treasurer's report which showed a balance of \$2651.57 after a very successful bake sale. The treasurer's report was approved. Correspondence was read from our adopted student and thank yous from the Arnita Zimmerman Family, the Alvin Hinrichs Family, and the Shirley Sprau Family for memorials were shared. Wilma Grussing reported on cards she had sent in the last two months. Terri Hooker reported we have completed ninety-seven quilts. Next quilting dates were announced as August 7th and August 9th.

In old business Brenda Hendricks thanked all the members who supported the adopted family since our last meeting. She thanked all who baked items for the July 4<sup>th</sup> Bellflower bake sale and to those who helped set up the tables and worked at the sale. The sale made a profit of \$614.50. Some of the leftover cookies were shared with the roofers who worked hard on the church and hall roof the week after the bake sale. She thanked all the ladies who donated gift cards to the ingathering at the national convention. They totaled \$210. There were also a few donations to the River Walk.

In new business a discussion was generated about the application for a Seminary Student. It was decided to support the same student, Nicholas Brusick, with a \$75 a month donation. The August luncheon was the next item of new business. The committee of Marsha Warsaw and Diana Zimmerman had composed a list of three choices for the location of the luncheon. The group decided on the Kickapoo Tea Room in Downs for the luncheon on August 10<sup>th</sup>. A nominating committee will be chosen to prepare the ballot for the election of officers which will be held at the November meeting.

The next meeting will be on September 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. Brenda Edwards will have topic, and Sue Van Wakeman and Deb Martin will serve refreshments.

## **Adult Confirmation Class**

There has been some interest in an adult Confirmation Class. If you are interested or know someone who is interested, please contact Pastor McPike.

## **Church Council Meeting**

The church council will meet on Wednesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 PM. This is a week later than usual due to a conflict with schedules.

## Operation Christmas Child Boxes

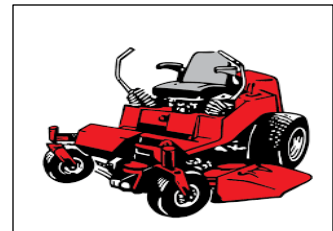
Once again, we will be packing shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child in November for children in poor countries across the world. Since school supplies are on sale NOW, this would be a good time to purchase needed items. We are in need of 21 glue sticks, 18 combs, 21 pencil sharpeners, 22 boxes crayons, pencils, 20 bars of soap, 24 boxes of markers (10-12 packs), 24 boxes colored pencils, 24 wash cloths. We usually pack 12 boxes for boys and 12 for girls so other small items can be added such as matchbox cars, bracelets, small hair bows or clips, etc. If you prefer to give a cash donation, we would be glad to buy items that are needed. We could not do this project without the help of the congregation. There will be a collection box on the back elder's pew. Two Thrivent Action Team cards will be used to buy larger items and to pay the \$9 postage fee for each box. If you would like to pack a box or have questions about what is acceptable, please see Terri Hooker or Connie Warsaw. Thanks so much for helping with this worthwhile project.

## Quilting

The ladies will quilt on Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup> at 8AM and Wednesday, August 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 PM. All ladies of the congregation are invited to attend. No experience needed!

## Possible August Lawn Mowers

The week of July 31 – August 5 – Bob Zimmerman  
The week of August 7 – August 12 – Don Warsaw  
The week of August 14 – August 19 – Roy Whitehouse  
The week of August 21 - 26 – Ken Whitehouse  
The week of August 28 – September 2 – Myron Zimmerman



The schedule this year lists the week that the volunteer needs to mow. It is recommended to mow on Thursday through Saturday of that week, so it looks nice for Sunday. If you have misplaced your schedule which was in the March newsletter, there is one on the back bulletin board. If you have any questions, contact trustee John Grussing.

## Church Picnic



**Mark your calendars now** for the church picnic on Sunday, August 13<sup>th</sup>! There will not be any meat prepared on grills, so it is a “total potluck”. The church service will be held in the fellowship hall due to work on the church front doors during that week. The potluck will follow the service in the fellowship hall. Drinks will be provided but please bring your own table service. Indoor and outdoor games will be planned for children as well as adults.



- 08-07 Sue VanWakeman
- 08-08 Linnea Warsaw
- 08-09 Annette Warsaw
- 08-18 Ashley Genzel
- 08-24 Pam Christians
- 08-25 Butch Sprau
- 08-26 Ross Warsaw
- 08-28 Sarah Ford
- 08-29 Jill Hardesty
- 08-29 John Lammle
- 08-29 Kari Genzel
- 08-30 Will Delaney



Sunday School children, Blaine Martin and Bella Ford, made a birthday card for Wilma Grussing who celebrated her 94<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 13<sup>th</sup>. They presented it to her after the worship service on July 9<sup>th</sup> after the congregation sang “Happy Birthday” to her.

## Statistics

Date	Worship Service	Bible Class	Sunday School
July 2	49	8	2
July 9	53	8	2
July 16	42	12	0
July 23	46	11	1

## Anniversaries

- 8-1-2020 Mackenzie and Chase Zimmerman
- 8-8-1981 Carolyn and Doug Majercin
- 8-8-1998 Cindy and Shane Zimmerman
- 8-25-2001 Tiffani and Brad Lutz
- 8-26-1967 Diana and Bob Zimmerman

## Back to School Prayer

Dear God, we pray for your blessing and favor over our teachers, our kids, and our schools. Please allow your face to shine on them, be gracious to them Lord. Fill them with your Spirit and light and give them peace in every circumstance. We know that every gift and blessing comes straight from your hand. We will not take it for granted. Remind us of your great love and care over all those we love. We thank you Lord that you work powerfully on our behalf, and we commit our ways to you. May each purpose and plan you have for our teachers succeed, flourish, and prosper in every way. In Jesus’ Name, Amen. (by Debbie McDaniel from www.crosswalk.com)