

Immanuel

Highlights

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*A monthly Publication
for the Members and Friends of*

Immanuel Lutheran Church
*251 Main Street
Akron, Iowa 51001*



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God's Enduring Grace
1910-2024

*"As members of the family of God, we proclaim
God's grace through our worship, education,
witness, service, and stewardship."*

Pastor's Message

Picture, if you will, an egg. Next, picture that egg in the palm of your hand. If you like, get an egg out of the refrigerator, and hold it in your palm as you read this article.

As you picture or look at this egg, you see that it has a shell. Its weight tells you that there is more to it than just the shell; inside the shell is the chicken embryo of yolk and egg white. We might say that the shell is the "form" of the egg—aside from minor differences such as color, chicken eggs basically look the same.

And we also know that chicken eggs, with few exceptions, contain one yolk and egg white. These we might think of as the "matter" of the egg, its inner content. So, all eggs have both form—the shell—and matter, the content or stuff inside the form.

You'd be hard pressed to find an egg that did not have a shell, and probably also a shell that did not have anything inside it. Those of you with farming backgrounds can tell me if the latter ever occurs. An egg thus has both form and matter, and when we talk about eggs, we imply both. Hold on to that idea for a moment.

Now imagine yourself—the egg resting in your palm—sitting in an airplane or onboard a ship. Now imagine either that the airplane is experiencing strong turbulence, or the ship is being tossed by waves in a storm. Imagine that it is so strong that you find yourself lurching around in your seat and grabbing on to whatever you can to steady yourself.

It's likely or at least possible that at some point and without intending to do so, your hand will close around the egg mid-lurch and crush it. Were that to happen, the egg would be destroyed, and its contents lost.

Now I invite you to draw an analogy in your mind between the egg and the Christian faith. There is the outward form which I will call "faith." Then there is the substance or stuff of that faith, its content or matter. I'll call that the "confession." So, when we think about Christian faith, we have two things which are inseparable. There is the

outward form, the act of believing and trusting in God. And then there is the matter, the content of that faith, which is summed up in the historic creeds of the church. Together the two form what we think of as the Christian faith.

You might notice that I haven't mentioned the church as a piece of that faith. That is intentional, and here is why.

In the late 4th—early 5th century of the Common Era, the faith was an egg in the hand of the Church, which was being tossed around by the waves of a storm.

This fledgling Christian faith, so tender and vulnerable, almost got crushed.

The storm was a theological one, and it raged between a bishop named Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis, better known today as Saint Augustine, and an obscure British monk by the name of Pelagius.

Now, lest you think this article is going to be a dry reflection on theology lacking any practical use or current relevance, allow me to bring it home for you.

Much of our belief system today about who God is, who we are, and the role that God and faith play in our lives stem from this theological debate between Augustine and Pelagius.

My guess is that you have probably never heard of Pelagius, and perhaps not even of Augustine until I wrote about him last month. And yet their battle shaped the egg of Christian faith and its confession in such a way that we would likely not recognize the egg had the battle never happened.

In fact—and this is a pretty bold statement to make—I think it might even be fair to say that if it weren't for Augustine and his contributions in this theological war of words, Western civilization would not be what it is today. The Christian faith, I believe, has been utterly instrumental in shaping the Western tradition. I don't think that's too strong a statement either.

What's more, this battle has never been fully resolved theologically. Augustine fought it with Pelagius; Luther fought it again with Erasmus of Rotterdam. It continues even today, and you

probably didn't even realize it was happening, or that it had happened at all. And yet it was and is hugely consequential.

If you have raised kids, are raising kids, or have kids who are raising their own kids, you have undoubtedly been concerned as to their spiritual development and growth in the Christian faith. I will assume that if you are or have ever been a regular churchgoer and have kids, you have wanted to see them learn and grow in Christian faith.

You send your kids to Sunday School, VBS, and Confirmation. You bring them to worship. All told, you want them to learn how to believe, how to be faithful, and what we believe as Christians. You want their egg of Christian faith—both the act of believing and the content of what is believed—to grow and develop and become an integral part of their lives. Right?

Our kids are swimming in a pool of assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values set by the surrounding culture. These beliefs, attitudes, values, and assumptions go largely unexamined and unchecked, and then seep into the rest of their worldview, including their spiritual and religious beliefs and attitudes.

This point became glaringly obvious to Josh and me during a recent confirmation class in which we asked the class if they could be sure they were going to heaven if they believed in Jesus. They were working on an open book quiz to conclude the section on the Apostles' Creed. The quiz included true or false questions such as "In order to get into heaven, we must earn the right." And "A person is saved by faith, not by completing a list of good deeds."

We were shocked that despite our repeated emphasis on grace and salvation as the free gift of God received through faith, most of the class still held to the view that they had to "earn" their way into heaven, and that faith alone was insufficient for salvation. As Josh and I discussed a bit after class, it's the culture we live in. It's the water they swim in day in and day out on their devices.

If you look at the major influences on youth today—social media primarily—you see influencers of all sorts pushing them to look better, do better, be better.

Popularity has always been a concern of youth, but whereas in the past, you had at most maybe a few hundred or even thousand other kids in the community among whom to be popular, it is now possible to find popularity—your number of followers on TikTok for instance—in the millions and on a world-wide stage. You can even make bank—and a lot of it—for being so popular.

Whatever their angle or shtick, the message is clear: to get what you want, you have to work for it, and work hard. And even then, it isn't guaranteed that you will get it. It's not easy becoming the next YouTube star.

This message comes packaged in an American culture centered on improvement, progress, upward mobility, "bigger is better," and ever-increasing prosperity. We live in a culture that is largely about getting more, having more, doing more. This is the culture of "Go west, young man!" There is always a brighter future, or so we believe, for which we'll have to wear shades. That is, if we work long and hard enough to get there.

So maybe it's no wonder that young people today assume that when it comes to things like God and salvation, it's another thing they must work towards. And like anyone setting out with hopes of becoming the next Mr. Beast or Addison Rae, they realize that at some level, despite all their hard work, they may still not get the desired prize.

We believe, of course, that faith is all that is needed for salvation, and that good works follow faith. We also believe that grace is free by definition and that God is all about grace, love, and mercy. We also believe that grace, the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, are given to us in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. And lastly, we believe that we need God's grace for our salvation, and that it is assured to us in faith.

But why? Why do we need God's grace? For what? To be saved, of course, but what do we need to be saved from? From our sin, naturally, but let's explore that a little. If grace is about the forgiveness of sin, which sins are forgiven? Those already committed or those we are going to commit next week, next year, or some other future time?

To go a little deeper: is sin an inevitable part of the human condition and if so, to what extent? Or could we avoid sinning, if we had, let's say, full and complete knowledge of right and wrong? Are human beings capable of living an entirely sinless life with sufficient and proper knowledge?

To go a bit deeper still: what is the nature of our fundamental human problem? Is it that we lack such full and complete knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil?

Or is the root problem not that we are ignorant of right and wrong, but that our will has been corrupted?

Do we sin because we don't know what is right, or because we want what is wrong? Is the root problem our ignorance of what is good or that we desire what is evil?

I will delve into various aspects of this battle in coming articles because it is perhaps the most relevant theological issue for 21st century Christians today. Yes, a war of words and ideas that happened 1600 years ago in the ancient Mediterranean world is utterly relevant and applicable today in 2024 America. I kid you not.

In my experience, the assumptions, attitudes, and root beliefs held not just by young people today but even by many adults, Christians included, often reveal a closer affinity to the Pelagian view than to that of Augustine. Augustine ultimately won the battle, but Pelagius and his ideas refuse to go away. To a certain extent the theological issues between them remain open and unresolved.

Well, so what? Why does it matter?

Josh told the class emphatically and rightly that there was nothing more important in their life than whether they believed their faith in Jesus was enough for their salvation. This debate between Augustine and Pelagius reveals how and why such faith is so vitally important.

My hope is that this theological exploration will lead you to examine some of your core beliefs about God, the nature of grace and free will in human salvation, why we need Jesus, and what we need Jesus for; that is, what he saves us from. My aim is not to challenge those beliefs but to explore their origins and implications for Christian faith today. The egg is still

fragile, and without careful attention amidst all the world's turbulence, it can still be crushed.

We know that we believe—the eggshell. My goal is to dig into the yolk: what we believe, why we believe it and what's at stake in those beliefs.

In a word: *everything*.

Pastor Eric+



Kitchen Servers at the “Souper Bowl of Caring” luncheon.



Soup Cookoff Judges: Katie Harris, Jim Easton, and Dawn Martinsen



Happy St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 2024

Noisy Offering

Noisy offering in the month of January was \$ 410.49, which has been designated for the coat project for the Sioux City Gospel Mission.

The February noisy offering will be used for the purchase items for the Mid-Sioux Opportunity Food Bank.



Sunday, March 10, 2024



Great crowd for a great lunch!



Congratulations to the Soup Cookoff Winners: First Place, Lisa Harris; Second Place: Arica Schuknecht; Third Place: Josh Martinsen

“Souper Bowl of Caring 2024”



What a Soup-er morning at Immanuel! Thanks to our junior high and high school youth for leading the church service, and the Sunday school kids for singing! Thanks also to our youth and parents for hosting the soup cook-off and to Lisa Harris for heading up the kitchen duties. We had seven official soup entries in the cook-off: Kent Johnson, Megan Noll, Alisha Knapp, Venice Stowers plus five other soups for our lunch from Linda Nielsen, Lorna Easton, Dawn and husband Nick Hale, Jan Van Meeteren.

Thank you also to our judges this year: Katie Harris, Dawn Martinsen, and Jim Easton. and to our emcee, Nathan Harris, with his trivia questions.

Congratulations to our soup contest winners!!

1. Lisa Harris
2. Arica Schuknecht
3. Josh Martinsen

Our Souper Bowl of Caring total from free will offering and soup entry fees was \$1,087.00 which will be donated to Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. for their food pantry.

Here are the 2024 voting results!

San Francisco 49'ers	\$616.00
Kansas City Chiefs	295.00
Just Want to Help	126.00
Soup Entry Fees	50.00

We also owe a big thank you to Jim Bundy and Michael Ford from Maynard's who donated the ham and buns for our sandwiches. Finally, thanks to our congregation for their generous support and to everyone who made soup, bars, provided needed supplies, or helped in any way. A huge thank you to Kathy Johnson, for all she does behind the scenes!



The Immanuel ELCW will be meeting on March 7, at 2:00 p.m., weather permitting.

Birthdays

1	Jonathon Wolthuizen	15	Sarah Schroeder
2	Sharyl Black	17	Kendra Olson
2	Tayvn Wilken	21	Beth Ross
3	Marcie Finzen	23	Michelle Finzen
3	Natalie Olson	25	Michael Finzen
4	Brody Knapp	28	Ainsley Naslund
5	Sue Bergman	31	Kathy Johnson
7	Sue Higman	31	Marlys Johnson
9	Kyle Schroeder	31	Matthew Knapp

Good Friday, March 29, 2024



FINANCIAL STATISTICS	
January, 2024	
First Week	\$ 111.00
Second Week	Worship Cancelled Because of weather
Third Week	\$ 900.00
Fourth Week	\$4,577.00
Fifth Week	NA
Total	\$5,588.00
Needed Each Week	\$3,127.00
Currently	\$1,397.00
Difference	\$ -1730.00

**Immanuel Lutheran Church
Church Council
February 18, 2024 11:24 a.m.**

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

Absent: Heather Noll

Minutes of the January Meeting: Motion made by Tom Schroeder to approve the minutes; seconded by Tim Philips. Motion Approved.

Treasurer's Report: Motion made Tom Schroeder to approve the treasurer's report; seconded by Heather Morehead. Motion Approved.

Pastor's Report: Pastor gave his report which included chapel at the Akron Care Center, care center visits, Spiritual Direction meeting on February 8, a Parish Visit from Rev. David Klappenbach on February 13, and the Ministerial Association meeting on February 14. Pastor informed the council that Lutheran Lakeside is looking for representatives for their upcoming annual meeting. Anne Brown is interested, and Pastor will send her the information.

Unfinished Business

Souper Bowl of Caring was a success, with \$1087 being raised for Mid Sioux Food Pantry. Thank you to Josh Martinsen, Lisa Nielsen, and our youth for putting on a great service!

New Business

Election of Council Members: The following council members were elected to the following positions:

President: Jon Harris, nominated by Tim Philips, 2nd by Josh Martinsen

Vice President: Josh Martinsen, nominated by Jon Harris, 2nd by Arica Schuknecht

Secretary: Arica Schuknecht, nominated by Heather Morehead, 2nd by Tom Schroeder

Property Items:

The chandelier on the west side of the sanctuary needs some electrical repair. Wilcox Electric will be looking at it. A portion of the stained-glass window in the balcony area has cracked and broke. Jon will talk to Vernon Thompson to see if he can repair it. There is also a window in the fellowship hall that is broke and that will be replaced this spring.

Items brought before the Council

It was suggested that we begin to post birthdays weekly again on our church FaceBook page. Heather Morehead will be tackling this project. Thank you, Heather!

The annual Baked Potato meal will be Sunday, March 17, following church.

The next **Council meeting** will be held Sunday, March 10, following worship.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Arica Schuknecht,
Council Secretary

Congratulations!

Newly elected church council members are Matthew Knapp, Heather Noll, and Anne Brown.

Installation of the council members was Sunday, February 18, 2024.

At the same time we thank Rhonda Johnson for her years of service!

March 31, 2024, Easter Sunday





March is National Professional Social Work Month

March is National Professional Social Work Month, a time to recognize social workers and thank them for all they do. At Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI), we are grateful for the many social workers who have dedicated their lives to serving our communities across the state!

At LSI, we believe every Iowan deserves the independence they need to thrive. LSI’s Host Homes is an innovative way LSI is serving adults with disabilities. Through this program, an individual moves from Supported Community Living into a private family home with a carefully selected mentor. This program is built entirely around an individual’s goals and interests, and LSI’s extensive matching process ensures the mentor and mentee are a great fit.

Take a moment to read the following story from a Host Homes mentee:

“My journey with LSI’s Host Homes started in early 2023. I’ve known my mentor for a few years while he provided hourly services to me. We learned about Host Homes and thought it would be a good fit for us. I moved into my mentor’s home where he helps me maintain a daily routine with schoolwork, household tasks, daily living skills, improving independence, and more.

I attend a college nearby and go to classes a few days a week. I am able to navigate the local bus system to access my community to attend classes and visit friends. My mentor is always available to transport me into the community as needed.

This summer, I went on a trip across the country with one of my classes. While on this trip, I was able to maintain my independence with limited support, but I knew my mentor would be available

by phone to assist me with my coping skills and problem solving. This trip was a big success for me knowing I had support only a phone call away.

I like LSI’s Host Homes Program because my mentor supports me in the way I want to be supported, assists me with some daily tasks I struggle with, and understands me.”

If you are interested in becoming a Host Homes mentor and helping a fellow Iowan achieve independence, please visit LSIowa.org/HostHomes for more information.

Our Mission: Lutheran Services in Iowa responds to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service. 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 and facebook.com/LSI.iowa.

Meet Our New Church Council, 2024



Vice President Josh Martinsen, President Jon Harris, Matthew Knapp, Tim Philips, Anne Brown, Heather Morehead, Secretary Arica Schuknecht, Pastor Alm, Tom Schroeder. Not pictured: Heather Noll

Immanuel Lutheran Church
2024 Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 28, 2024

Present: 35 members present

Meeting Called to Order: by President Jon Harris at 11:18 a.m.

Devotions: Led by Pastor Alm

Secretary's Report:

Approval of minutes from last year's annual meeting:

Motion made by Lorna Easton and seconded by Alan Lucken to approve last year's annual meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Bulletin of Reports: It was noted on the "Information About Members" page that baptized was Eli Harris (not Michael Harris). It was also suggested to next year add page #'s to the annual report.

Old Business:

The window project of replacing the west windows of the educational wing as well as the bathroom and fireside windows has been completed. Thank you to Tim Philips and Josh Martinsen for their work on the replacement of the windows. Thank you to Linda Nielsen for painting the trim and adding window treatments.

The church building paint project has been completed.

Thank you to Lisa Nielsen for maintaining the church website: www.akroniaimmanuel.org

Planning for 2024: There are no major plans at this time.

Jon also recapped the highlights of 2023 which included:

- February's Souper Bowl of Caring service and soup contest. Venice Stowers wins again.
- March's Potato bake with which \$435 was raised for the new windows.
- April's Easter Service and breakfast
- Dave and Kerry Jo Heeren along with Jill Schroeder and students completed the landscaping on the south and west corner of the church. Kim Swancutt also had a hand in the project.

- June, July and August we sang Hymn requests for our Hymn of the Day
- August VBS was back at Immanuel. Thanks to Immanuel team members Dawn Martinsen, Lisa Nielsen, Kathy Johnson and Victoria DeVos. As I stated last year, I know at times you have to wonder should I/can I keep doing this. It is such a great week of evangelism for the community youth I pray that God gives you the strength to continue his work.
- September brought us Rally Sunday followed by a picnic in the basement.
- October ham potluck. Thanks to the Knapp's and Saathoff's for providing the ham.
- Novembers Harvest Festival. A record \$34,750 was raised and for the first time in three years I had no wedding to keep me away.
- December brought 58 Christians together on a beautiful night rode around town spreading the good news in song. Our Sunday School program was also held during our church service. We enjoyed the program performed by the students.

To make a church more than just a building with 4 walls to praise God you need a congregation, a Family of God to come together and worship our Lord and support each other and work together. Many thanks to all of you who make up this congregation and to all whom silently assist in honoring our Father to make this building a Welcome place for all. Special thanks to Pastor, Sharon, Bob, Kathy, Jill, Bob and Linda and Lorna for handling all of the day to day and week to week details for us. Also, thanks to the Martinsen's, Nielsen's, and Schuknecht's for manning the computer/projector and Facebook broadcast of our services.

New Business:

Elections

Synod Assembly: This year the Synod Assembly will be held in Council Bluffs on April 19 and 20, 2024. We need 1 male, 1 female, 1 youth to represent Immanuel. If anyone is interested, please let Jon and Lorna know. The assembly begins 5 p.m. Friday and concludes 2:30 p.m. on Saturday. We will also announce this opportunity at church.

Auditor: Current members are Tom Schroeder, Marlys Johnson, and Katie Harris. Katie's term is complete, but she is willing to stay on. Marlys asked her name to be withdrawn. Margaret Correia made a motion to have Katie Harris continue in her role, seconded by Sharon Frerichs. Motion carried.

Nominating Committee: Jon thanked the current members for the dedication to our church: Josh Martinsen, Heather Noll, Rhonda Johnson, Matthew Knapp, Heather Morehead, Arica Schuknecht, Tim Philips, and Tom Schroeder

Three terms are up for Church Council members Matthew Knapp, Heather Noll, and Rhonda Johnson. Matthew Knapp and Heather Noll have volunteered to serve another term. Rhonda Johnson nominated Anne Brown to replace her on the council. Lisa Harris moved nominations cease, seconded by Kathy Johnson. The vote to have Matthew Knapp, Heather Noll, and Anne Brown serve on the church council was unanimous.

Proposed Budget: Thank you to Tom Schroeder for putting the proposed budget together. Discussion was held and it was noted giving's were good this year. Josh Martinsen made a motion to accept the budget as printed, seconded by Nathan Harris. Motion carried.

Property Items: It was noted that Pest Pros has come multiple times to both the church and the parsonage. It is important to keep the church clean and food sealed up and put away.

There are funds available for Bible camp as well as leadership camp for the youth. The youth is looking at going to the Ignite Youth Leadership in Des Moines in March. We encourage youth attend this retreat.

Bob Brown recommend we do some landscaping around trees and lawn where nothing grows. Bob will plan to meet with Ground Effects from Sioux Center and have them recommend some shrubs we can put under the trees, as well as get an estimate.

The next annual meeting will be Sunday, January 26, 2025, following worship.

Council Meeting Adjourned:

With no further business, President Jon Harris adjourned the meeting at 11:43 a.m.

Pastor Alm concluded the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arica Schuknecht, Council Secretary

A signup sheet has been put in the fellowship hall for the Baked Potato Bar Luncheon to be held Sunday, March 17, 2024, following worship.

Items needed include diced ham, sour cream, bacon bits, shredded cheddar cheese, salads, and bars. To those who do not enjoy baked potatoes, hot dogs and buns will also be available. Also, lemonade.

If you want Sharon to sign you up for something for you, just call her.



First Communion Date Set

First Communion for our 5th Grade students will be Thursday, March 28, which is Maundy Thursday.

Pastor Eric will meet with the students after school that afternoon for instruction and baking communion bread.

The students are Emelia DeVos, Sydney Edwards, Cole St. Pierre, Nora Mathistad, Reese Harris and Layne Dumas.



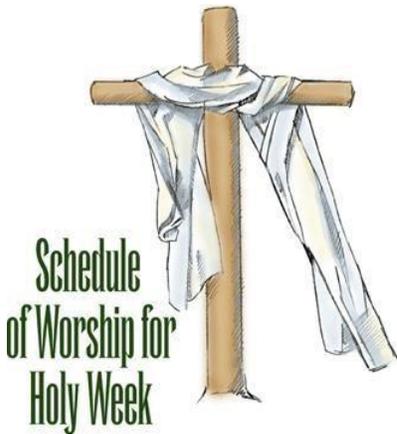


Those who would like to be remembered in our prayers who are currently in long-term care or assisted living facilities include:

- John Dirks Nadine Philips
- Janice Morehead Betty Klemme
- Sandy McMillan Irene Gabel
- Jeff Kulvik Shirley Johnson

We pray for those with health issues:

- Dave Rozell, Susie Rozell, Sherry Jo Wittkop
- Kelly Moffatt, son of Rosi and David Moffatt
- Rich Loughran, Brother-in-law of Margaret Correia
- Roger Nielsen, Mary Lucken



Thursday, March 28, 7 p.m. Maundy Thursday
Service with First Communion for Fifth Graders

Friday, March 29 **NO** Good Friday Service

March 30, 5:30 p.m. Easter Vigil

Sunday, March 31, 8 a.m. Easter Service

Sunday, March 31, 9 a.m. Easter Breakfast

Sunday, March 31 **No** Sunday School Easter Sunday!

Immanuel Sunday School Service Project

Immanuel Sunday school is collecting travel size deodorants for the Akron-Westfield School Nurse office. We need a total of 90 deodorants (45 boys and 45 girls).

Collection boxes can be found at both entrances to church.

Thank you!

It's Easter Lily Time!

If you wish to order an Easter lily, you can use the form below and send it, along with your check to Sharon Frerichs, P. O. Box 79, Akron, IA 51001. Or, if it is more convenient, put it in her mail slot outside of her office. The third option is to give it to her in person, or to Marge Lucken no later than Monday, March 25. Make your checks payable to Immanuel Altar Guild. If you have questions, you can phone the church office at 568-3338. If you prefer, contact Marge Lucken at 568-2709. Thanks!

ORDER FORM

We wish to help share the beauty of our cross and sanctuary on Easter Sunday by contributing to the Easter Lily Fund.

Attached you will find \$____. (\$10.00 for each plant.)

In Honor or in Memory of: (circle one)

Given by:

Please return this form to Sharon or Marge, along with your money by Monday, March 25, 2024. Make your checks payable to "Immanuel Altar Guild". Thank you!

