

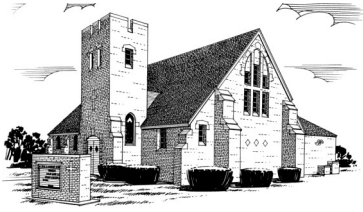
THE IMMANUEL MESSENGER

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IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF OSMAN The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Reverend Jeffrey McPike, BCC



**"Cast all your anxiety on Him
because He cares for you."
1 Peter 5:7 NV**

January 2021

From the desk of Pastor McPike...

What a blessing we have that Pastor Ehlers regularly shares God's word with us from the pulpit. Since he's recovering from heart surgery right now, I asked him to share God's word this month in print through a pastor's column. We are thankful to Pastor Ehlers for all that he does for us at Osman.

~Pastor McPike

From Pastor Ehlers...

ENTERING A NEW YEAR

James chapter four, verses 13-15: "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"

Soon the year **2020** will be history. No doubt some people are saying, "Good riddance!" *TIME* magazine called it "the worst year ever." That may be a stretch but not far from it. It was the year of the pandemic and all the hardship it brought to so many lives throughout the world. It was the year our presidential election was enveloped in controversy. On a more personal note, perhaps some heartache came to you and your family.

But no matter what happened in the world or in our personal lives, we Christians have much for which to be **thankful**. Our Heavenly Father kept His promise to give us grace and strength to meet every situation. **Jesus** is still our Savior. His **love** embraces us.

As one year now gives way to another, it is only natural that we reflect on our lives and lay our plans for

2021. Notice what I said: lay **our** plans. But there is another who has plans, namely, God. What shall it be:

MY PLANS OR GOD'S PLANS?

What about our plans?

To be sure, many of our plans are pleasing to God. For example, our plans include providing the basic necessities of life for ourselves and our family. Our plans include helping those who are down and out.

On the other hand, some of our plans, though not wrong in themselves, are focused mainly on **self**. These plans are often based on advertising which holds before our eyes the things we supposedly cannot live without. These plans are often based on peer pressure which influences us to think that we must have certain experiences in order to be fulfilled and happy.

To us comes the warning of our text: "Now listen you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

James calls upon us to be realistic about our lives. How fleeting and fragile life can be! Jesus once told the story of the rich fool who did not consider that his life would be required of him that very night.

In summary, it is not wrong to make plans. In fact, it is good stewardship to make plans. But in doing so, we are to keep in mind that whereas man proposes, it is God who disposes. James puts it this way: "Instead you ought to say, 'If it is the **Lord's will**, we will live and do this or that.'"

But right here is the big question. **What is the Lord's will?** Obviously we do not know His exact will in every situation. Should I sell my house and move? Should I buy stocks? Should I change jobs? Should I propose marriage? I could go on and on. There is no definite answer in the Bible to such questions.

Even though we do not know God's will in every situation, there are many things we do know about His will. For example: We know that God wills our salvation. He wills that we come to know Jesus as our Savior and that we put our trust in Him. In *John 6* Jesus puts it this way: "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Already from eternity God had our salvation in mind. Then, in the fullness of time, He "sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

On that first Christmas, Jesus came to be our Savior, to suffer and die for our sins, to conquer death and the devil, to make it possible for you and me to be sons and daughters of the heavenly Father, living under His forgiving love in Christ Jesus.

What else do we know about God's will? We know that God wants us to love Him with our heart, soul and mind. We know that God wants us to live according to the Ten Commandments, to love others as we love ourselves, to support the destitute, to encourage and uphold those who are going through difficult times. And we know that God wants us to be faithful husbands and wives, parents and children.

Furthermore, we know that God wants us to share our faith by being His witnesses in word and deed. We know that God wants us to use our gifts in the local congregation.

Therefore, as we enter the New Year 2021 our first priority as children of the Heavenly Father is that His will be done in our lives.

Beyond that, making plans and dreaming dreams are not wrong, but let us proceed with humility. In the words of our text from James, "*If it is the Lord's will*, we will live and do this or that."

Here is the hard part. There will be times when our plans do not materialize. Christians get sick. Christians lose their jobs. Christians have unexpected expenses. Christians experience difficulties in marriage and disappointments with parents and children. Christians grieve at the death of loved ones and dear friends.

In order for God to accomplish His plans, He directs our lives in ways that sometimes puzzle and frustrate us. He allows our faith to be tested, and we ask, "God, what are You doing in my life? You are not playing the game the way I think it should be played."

Here is the good news. Though we do not understand God's ways, He brings us through such difficult times. He knows everything that is going on in our lives. He knows about the depression which

sometimes follows Christmas and is further aggravated by the winter blues. He wants us to cast our care on Him and cling to His love and promises.

What about the year 2021? Will there be significant progress in bringing the pandemic to an end? Will we get closer to living in a peaceful world? And most important, are you wondering what challenges you will face in your personal life? As we look to the unknown days and months of the year ahead, it is quite understandable for us to be anxious and fearful.

A few years ago there was a popular movie called *The Bear*. In one of the final scenes, a grizzly cub is being threatened by a mountain lion. There seems to be no hope for this little cub. In one desperate measure, the cub rears up on its hind legs and gives out a growl. To our surprise, the mountain lion retreats. In the next scene we discover why. Behind the cub is its mother, giving her warning to the lion. In the protective shadow of the cub's mom, no enemy could threaten it.

In the year 2021 will you always remember that your Heavenly Father is with you and will never leave you or forsake you? Will you always take to heart the words of St. Paul: "If God be for us, who can be against us"? May He strengthen your faith and enable you to do that.

It is my prayer that God will bless your plans in 2021, bless them according to His will. May He grant you and your family health and happiness. May He continue to uphold you as you face certain problems in your life. And in His time may He deliver you.

Have a blessed New Year,
Pastor Ehlers

Thanks!

Pastor Ehlers wishes to thank all who offered special prayers for him during his recent surgery and recovery (still continuing). Thanks to all who expressed their concern and care in various ways. Because of my age and the nature of the surgery, recovery has been slow. But God is good and I continue to improve. I sure do miss the Christian brothers and sisters at Immanuel.

Pastor Ehlers

"Benefit" Planned

The Stewardship Committee is pleased to inform all members that there are some funds available since COVID prevented a second benefit supper in 2020. The Stewardship Committee has found a benefit recipient for this money. The money will be given to Richard Ringer of Fisher who has been recently diagnosed with ALS. Rich and his wife, Rae, transferred into our congregation in late 2018 after moving to Fisher. The money will be used to help his family with expenses for his care at home. If the members of the congregation would like to add to this benefit amount, you can leave your donations in the box on the table in the back of the church near the offering plate. Please make your checks payable to Immanuel Lutheran Church of Osman. You also can give your donations to Dwight and Terri Hooker or Brenda Hendricks. Please donate by January 9th. It is a "benefit" without the "benefit" of our usual delicious food and great fellowship, but it will "benefit" someone in need.

A New Year's Prayer

As a new year begins, We come to You and ask for Your blessings. We pray that you would give us joy to fill our days, peace to fill our hearts, and love to fill our lives. Thank You for the plans You have for us in this New Year. We wait in anticipation to see all You will do! Thanking God for you and praying your new year is blessed in every way. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope, and a future." Amen
Jeremiah 29:11

Thank You!

A special thank-you to Pastor McPike and Alicia and Nick Haggin for providing our church with a taped service each week when we couldn't worship in person. We see your dedication in so many ways and we're so very thankful!!

Thanks!

Thanks to everyone who served on the Altar Guild this year. Without your dedication, we wouldn't be prepared for communion, funerals, and other festival Sundays. A new Altar Guild list is posted on the bulletin board. Anyone may sign up, and instruction will be given when needed. Let Debbie Lammle know if there are any questions.

Quilting Dates

The ladies will be tying quilts for Lutheran World Relief on January 4th and January 6th at 8AM in the fellowship hall. No experience needed! All ladies of the congregation are invited.

Altar Flowers

Please sign-up on the bulletin board if you would like to donate altar flowers in memory of a special person or occasion or pay for the eternal flame candle for a specific month. There is also an Altar Guild sign-up if you would like to help prepare the altar for Sunday morning services. Please know that your assistance is very much appreciated!

Christmas Decorations

Christmas decorations will be taken down after the church service on Sunday, January 3rd. Anyone is invited to help!

Annual Voter's Meeting

The Annual Voter's meeting will be on Sunday, January 24, 2021.

JANUARY 2021

Please help us keep everyone safe by calling Rick (309-830-8531) or Jill (217-841-3487) to indicate your desire to attend church the upcoming Sunday.

While "reservations" for church may sound really counter to Christ's example of being welcoming, it is currently an unfortunate part of the way this nasty virus has turned our world upside-down.

Thank you for doing your part to keep us all safe!

Osman's Upcoming Events

Due to the COVID-19 Virus guidelines, all these activities will be pending the decisions made by the Church Council and Pastor McPike.

Tentative Upcoming Events

January 24, 2021 - Annual Voter's Meeting
2021 - Centennial Celebration

Statistics

Date	Worship	Sunday School	Conf	Adult Class
11/15	40	0	0	0
11/22	?	0	0	0
11/29	44	0	0	0
12/06	40	0	0	0
12/13	41	0	0	0
12/20	55	0	0	0
12/27		0	0	0

January Birthdays

02 - Joey Haggin
05 - Sara Kunde
10 - Brad Lutz
14 - Rebecca Gercken
18 - Anne Amdor
19 - Hannah Duncan
21 - Megan Bidner
23 - Bryce Martin
27 - Matthew Burgess

January Anniversaries

Christie and Leonard Delaney..... 01-07-1995