



GABRIEL'S GAZETTE

DECEMBER 2023



Praying the Catechism: Holy Baptism

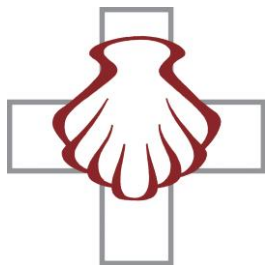


*"Loving, Sharing, Serving
Jesus with you."*

Immanuel Lutheran Church
1237 E. Coolspring Ave.
Michigan City, IN 46360
(219) 872-4419

Email:
[immanuel Lutheran1237@
gmail.com](mailto:immanuel Lutheran1237@gmail.com)

Website:
www.immanuelmc.com



This season is a great time to remember your baptism. Of course, it is good to remember your baptism every day, but during Christmas we remember that Christ's birth is our new birth. As the hymn, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," says, "born to give us second birth." God becomes man so that man would be made new, in His likeness and image. In baptism, the Old Adam, our sinful flesh, is put to death and the Holy Spirit produces faith in us so that we would live for God and not for ourselves.

In the Small Catechism, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism has four parts. The first part explains what baptism is, that it "is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word." That means Baptism is no mere symbol, but a working of salvation for us and in us. The second part describes that salvation which Baptism gives. The third part explains how Baptism can give that salvation, that it is the powerful word of God received by faith. And the fourth part teaches how Baptism is a continual working of that salvation in us.

Now let's see how a person might this Christmas use the Catechism's instruction on Baptism in prayer, using Luther's fourfold method.

Instruction: At the Lord's Word through the angel Gabriel, the Virgin Mary conceived in her womb the Son of God in human flesh. The same creating, blessing, sanctifying Word has been spoken over me in my baptism. Jesus was born to battle sin, death, and the devil by His perfect life, suffering, and innocent death. Baptism brings this salvation to me, working forgiveness of sins, rescuing from death and the devil, and giving eternal salvation. He died so that my sinful flesh would die

and He rose so that the new man would rise in me "to live before God in righteousness and purity forever." Jesus became like me, born of a woman in human flesh, so that I would become like Him, bearing His image, filled with His Spirit, and following His teaching. Baptism gives this to me. My new birth binds me forever with the One who was born to save me.

Thanksgiving: I thank God that He left His throne above and became man, taking on the weakness of mortal flesh, so that I would put on His righteousness, blessedness, and innocence in Baptism. I thank God that I have this sign and seal for my added confidence. Baptism is my assurance that I am saved, even when I face the threat of death or temptations of the devil and world. Because of this gift, I know that I rise each day forgiven and free. I am blessed with daily resurrections from sin as God forgives me and sanctifies me by His Spirit. These resurrections will continue until baptism has completed its work and I am made perfect at the resurrection of the dead. Thanks be to God!

Confession: I know that I have not always lived according to that new life to which God has called me. Christmas often brings with it anxiety, depression, covetousness, greed, and worldly pleasures which distract from the joyful celebration of Christ's birth. God's Word, I have not honored and obeyed as I should. The Sacrament of the Altar is overshadowed by all the other kinds of foods and feasting, even though it is a meal shared with heaven for my eternal salvation. In summary, I have let the Old Adam have its way instead of living joyfully according to the New Man. Lord, have mercy upon me!

(continued on page 2)

Praying the Catechism: Holy Baptism

(continued from page 1)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, let this Christmas be for me a glad celebration of Your Son's birth. He was born to give me second birth! Let my baptism work in me a joy to comfort me when I am depressed, especially when I remember the loss of those whom I love. Let it give my heart peace when I am anxious. Help me remember the greatest gift this Christmas is the one which Christ has worked in my heart. He has accomplished my salvation. I have nothing to do this month that is nearly as important as that. Nor can anything happen to me which takes away what Jesus has done. Please also help Your grace given in my baptism to be shared generously with others this Christmas. Help me to show forth your love and light to all who are in need. Amen!

Pastor



2024 Offering Envelopes

The 2024 offering envelopes are out and ready for pickup! There are a few ways you can get your envelopes:

1. Pick them up when you come to worship;
2. Pick them up during the week;
3. Have a family member pick them up for you;
4. Call the office and we will mail them to you.

We tried our best to make sure that everyone who would need a box of envelopes received one. If we did not assign you a box and you would like one, please call the office and we will make sure you receive them right away. Please do not use these envelopes until 2024. And for the first month, please write your last name on the back of the envelope for us. Thanks for your help!

Come one and all!

"Soup & Song"
Christmas Caroling
to our shut-ins
& older members.
Sunday, Dec. 10



Meet at church at **3:30 p.m.** When we are finished caroling, we will have soup and cocoa back at the church. A sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board.



Advent Midweek Services
Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.
Dec. 6 & 15

Come for supper at 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 20

6:30 p.m. Sunday School Christmas Service

Christmas Week Services



Saturday, December 23

6:00 p.m. Holden Evening Prayer

Sunday, December 24

10:00 a.m. Worship Service with Communion

6:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols Service

11:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
with Communion

Monday, December 25

9:00 a.m. Christmas Day Service
with Communion

Saturday, December 30

6:00 p.m. Worship Service with Communion
& Installation of 2024 Officers

Sunday, December 31

10:00 a.m. Worship Service with Communion
& Installation of 2024 Officers

6:00 p.m. New Year's Eve Service
with Communion

VOTE



**CONGREGATIONAL QUARTERLY
VOTERS MEETING**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12

7:00 PM

This is an important voters meeting for all members. We will be electing new officers for 2024 and voting upon the budget for the coming year.

FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE...

The Measure of Our Generosity

If you open up the Small Catechism, you'll find a shortened version of the Third Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." But if you look up the list of the Ten Commandments in Exodus, you'll find the full version:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Ex. 20:8-11)

Why did Luther shorten this commandment for the Small Catechism? Was it so that the kids wouldn't have so much to memorize? No, it was because Luther knew that all the details of the Third Commandment were part of the "shadow" of the Old Testament (Col. 2:16). Or as St. Paul puts it, there is "letter" in the Old Testament law and "spirit" (2 Cor. 3:6). The details of not working on Saturday were fulfilled by Christ. That part of the Sabbath regulation no longer applies. But the spirit of the law does remain: We need to dedicate sufficient time each week to hearing God's Word and giving it honor and

respect. Or as Luther sums it up in the Small Catechism's explanation to the Third Commandment: "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."

The same sort of analysis applies to our giving. In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to give a tenth of their income to the Levites so that those men could dedicate their lives to serving in God's house, teaching the people, conducting worship, etc. In the New Testament, there is a rigid requirement listed about handing in your tax forms to church to make sure you've given enough. But the mandate to have a full-time ministry, which is the spirit of that law concerning tithing to the Levites, is right there in 1 Corinthians 9:14: "The Lord has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel."

The New Testament church's job is significantly larger than the job of Old Testament Israel. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to all nations. There was only the temple to maintain in the Old Testament, but we have churches, schools, universities and seminaries, plus missionaries everywhere. So you tell me: Can we really undertake the work of the ministry if our giving doesn't even measure up to Old Testament levels of generosity?



- LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter Article / December 2023



BARKER MANSION CHRISTMAS TREE TOUR

Everyone is welcome to join us on **Tuesday, Dec. 12**, for a tour of Barker Mansion and its beautiful Christmas trees. We will meet at Barker Mansion at 10:50 a.m. for an 11:00 a.m. tour. The tour should last 75-90 minutes and costs \$10 per person (if we get 15 or more people the cost will be \$7.00 per person.) The first floor of the mansion is handicap accessible, the lower is accessible by two chair lifts; however, the second and third floors are not handicap accessible. Please see the flyer on the bulletin board for more information about the tour. **Be sure to sign up before November 30.** We may go to lunch afterward.



The Assimilation committee will be having a *Parents' Night Out* on **December 8, 6:30-10:00 p.m.** If you would like us to babysit while you go Christmas shopping, or have a date night, please sign-up on the sheet on the bulletin board. There is no cost; however, a donation would be appreciated. For more information, see Lori Dobkins, Janet Solum, or Vickie Thompson.



Shepherds & Lambs

The Sunday School Newsletter

December 2023

Advent is almost here, with Christmas just around the corner! Sunday School students are busy getting ready. To prepare, we will be searching for Mary and Joseph as they travel to Bethlehem. Each family will receive a Mary and Joseph statue. Each day the parents will hide them someplace and the children will look for them in the morning. The families will color a manger scene that will await the Holy Family! Baby Jesus will appear on Christmas morning! WHERE ARE MARY AND JOSEPH????



STAR OF LOVE will be presented on December 20 at 6:30 p.m. as the children share the wonderful birth of our Savior with song and recitation.



PRACTICE – Dec. 9, 10 a.m.-12 noon
& PARTY AND LUNCH 12 noon-2 p.m.

PRACTICE – Dec 16, 10 a.m.-12 noon

SERVICE – Dec. 20 – Be there at 5:45 p.m.

Our students get treat bags after the service. If you can help, see the list of items on the hallway bulletin board. Thank you!



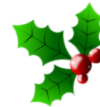
PLEASE NOTE

Sunday School will NOT meet on December 24th or 31st.
Classes will resume on January 7th.

Our Samaritan's Purse OPERATION SHOE BOX was successful thanks to many. We packed 51 boxes! Thanks to all who helped in any way! We're going to make this Christmas a happier one for a lot of children!



A REAL BIG, BIG, THANK YOU to Deb Topolski, Peggy Elser, and the Sunday School staff for taking over for me the past 3 months of my illnesses!! I appreciate their willingness to jump in!!!



Lynette Johnston-Martin
Sunday School Superintendent



I think that we shall always see, God's gifts upon our Christmas tree.

You cannot touch them with your hand, yet they are there at your command. There's love and faith and hope renewed, there's laughter for a happy mood. There's gratitude for each new day; a time to think, a time to pray.

The Christ has come with holy light to shine and make your pathway bright. All these are yours if you can see God's

gifts upon your Christmas tree.





Christmas season concerts . . .

MICHIGAN CITY COMMUNITY CHORUS

You are invited to the Michigan City Community Chorus' Christmas Concert on **Saturday, Dec. 9, at 4:00 p.m.** in Fellowship Hall.



Handel's "Messiah"

Michigan City Messiah will present its annual performance of G. F. Handel's timeless masterpiece, "The Messiah," on **Saturday, December 16 @ 7:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 17 @ 3:00 p.m.** The concert will be held at the Holdcraft Performing Arts Center, 1200 Spring Street, Michigan City. As always, the concerts are free and require no advance ticket reservations.

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12-14-2012

I THINK YOUR LIGHTS MIGHT BE TOO BRIGHT THIS YEAR



PLEASE NOTE: There will not be a January edition of *Gabriel's Gazette*. Watch your Mailboxes and weekly bulletin for information about January activities.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

- Tuesday, Jan. 2 – Deadline for submitting news for the February Gazette
- Tuesday, Jan. 2 – First Council Meeting of the New Year
- Saturday, Jan. 6 – Epiphany Service
- Sunday, Jan. 7 – Epiphany Service