

Because our congregation was so generous in their giving to the fall bazaar, (we made over \$7,400!) the W/ELCA was able to do our mission work as we have in previous years.

Osseo Food Pantry
Strum Food Pantry
Whitehall Food Pantry
Osseo Ministerial Ass'n
Ruby's Pantry given to UCC Church for coupons
Western Dairyland
ELCA Good Gifts
Heifer International
New Horizons
Trempealeau County Health Care Center
Strum Schools for Christmas from the Heart
OF Schools for Christmas
Whitehall Schools for RIF
Whitehall Schools for Christmas
Alzheimer Ass'n

\$4,600 has been donated amongst these organizations.

If you have any questions about our missions, contact Becky, Jan, Stephanie, or Barb.

thrivent®

Thrivent Action Teams
Don't forget – Thrivent Members!
2020 Action Teams are available until the end of December! For eligible members you may have \$250 to use as seed money for a project to serve the community.
(A list of suggested covid-friendly activities is at the end).



Check out the table of various items in the church basement. They have all been donated and are looking for a new home!

Lines from LaVerneOh happy day, Christmas is on the way. I love Christmas. I wish everyone would be that happy every day. It's nice to be able to get together with your families and laugh and talk and eat, Ha! And especially to watch the grandchildren. Perhaps, our gatherings will be smaller because of the virus, but we can still have a great day. Every day when you get up say to yourself, "This day is going to be great and I am going to try to please God today and every day. God loves me and I love Him, so maybe it's time, that I am thankful for all His blessings I shall pray a lot and I shall give Him thanks and I shall be kind to everyone I meet. I am His servant and I shall try my best. I shall not seek my own will, as I know, I can do nothing without God. I know the things I have are only loaned to me while I am here. We came with nothing and shall return with nothing." There is victory in Jesus. If God is for us, who can be against us?

P.S. Have a great Christmas. Wonderful things can happen as long as we believe. Love to all.

Your Lay Minister,
LaVerne

Upcoming Worship services



Continue to watch the church Facebook group and your email for details.

**8:30 am join us for in-person worship OR join us from your car in the parking lot via channel 87.9 FM*

**10:30 am livestreamed services from Strum (and is recorded so it can be viewed at a later time) <http://www.immanuel-strum.com/livestream.html>*

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Teachers and students have been meeting from 9:20-10:05 in their classrooms with masks.

Unfortunately, at this time, they are not singing.



Council Notes

Elk Creek Lutheran Church Council Meeting -- September 1, 2020

The meeting was called to order by President Keith Nelson at 7:30 PM. Members present were: Pastor Valerian Ahles, Tom Johnson, Rhonda Koval, Anson McCune, Keith Nelson, Lindsey Nelson, Lori Nelson, Becky Rongstad, and Stephanie Rumstick.

Devotions and Prayer -- Pastor began by reading Ephesian 4 : 25-32 and also shared the words of Abraham Lincoln, ““My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right.” He added that what is important is how we take care of each other during these trying times.

Secretary's Report -- Corrections to the Secretary's Report included:

- Masks will be available and the wearing is strongly encouraged [not required]
- If someone ... tests positive for COVID-19 ... church services ... would need to be shut down for 2 [not 2 or 3] weeks
- Nathan Rongstad is unable [not unwilling] to commit to doing the snow plowing.

Stephanie made a motion to approve the amended Secretary's Report; Rhonda seconded; motion passed.

Treasurer's Report -- was presented by Keith with information provided by Haukeness Financial Service.

Becky made a motion to approve; Lori seconded; motion passed.

Elk Creek Lutheran Church Accounts

- General Checking Account - \$14,331.26
- General Savings Account - \$38,520.62
- CD 4145 - \$10,269.85
- Building Fund Checking - \$24,140.21
- Memorial Fund - \$3,541.97

WE WELCOME EVERYONE TO
COFFEE HOUR WEDNESDAYS
AT 10 AM IN THE CHURCH
BASEMENT. JOIN US FOR
COFFEE AND CHATS!

Joint Parish Financial Accounts

Assets	Elk Creek	Immanuel	Total
Beginning Balance -	\$9,351.70	\$13,202.69	\$22,554.39
Payments -	\$2,989.17	\$4,483.75	\$7,472.92
Liabilities & Equity -	\$6,362.53	\$8,718.94	\$15,081.47
Ending Balance -	\$6,362.53	\$8,718.94	\$15,081.47

Pastor's Report --

Pastor conducted 2 indoor worship services and 2 were cancelled due to COVID-19, and 4 live stream services. He attended 4 Coffee Fellowships at the church on Wednesday mornings and participated in 5 Zoom Dairyland Conference Pastor's Text Study Meetings and 3 Synod Zoom Meetings. Pastor provided Holy Communion during home visits to 5 people before the COVID surge. Pastor delivered 19 Daily Devotions on Facebook and had phone visits with 20 family units and left messages for 5 more. He met with the Confirmation students for 3 classes and rescheduled the students who will have their First Communion during the November 8th church service. He conducted private baptismal services for Emma Mae Nelson on Oct. 11 and Hank Dale Holmen on Oct. 24 and indicated that the baptisms would be celebrated with the singing of "Welcome to the Family" when it is safe for larger groups to assemble. Pastor indicated that in-person services would resume on October 8 and that a "God's Work, Our Hands" project is being planned at Barb Hammer's house on Nov. 14. The Youth Group has expressed an interest in being able to help that morning. He noted that the Joint Council Meeting will be on November 17 at Immanuel and that he will be on vacation from Nov. 24 - 30. A supply pastor will be needed on Nov. 27. Pastor asked whether or not a Thanksgiving Eve service would be held at Elk Creek this year. Pastor Ahles can be reached at [cell] 533-0939 or [parsonage] 694-2427.

WELCA Report -- Becky reported that additional donations for the **Bazaar** had pushed the total profits to over \$7,400.00. Everyone agreed that it had been a great success. Stephanie noted that the "God's Work, Our Hands" **Food Distribution** was very well received. More than 20 people donated soups, casseroles, vegetables, bread, and desserts to more than 35 people who were very appreciative. The Council offered a big "Thank You" to Stephanie for organizing this and to everyone who helped make this project a success. Stephanie also indicated that Tammy Danenberg had provided the name of a family which Ashley's Angels had been unable to cover and that a Thrivent Grant was being used to make that family's **Christmas** happier. She noted that it would be possible to use any remaining **Thrivent Grants** to provide food, etc. to help make the holidays happier for other area families and urged members of the Congregation with unused grants to contact her.

Choir -- No report

Memorial Committee -- No report

Youth Group -- No report

Sunday School -- No report

Janitor -- No report

Office Staff -- No report

Joint Parish Council Report -- x

Old Business --

A. **Carpet** update -- Becky indicated that she had contacted Howard's again and he was unable to provide the selected carpet. Lori said she had spoken to a representative from Wall to Wall Carpeting which had provided the sample which had been chosen. On Nov. 5, someone from the company would visit the church and take the necessary measurements to provide an estimate.

B. **Church Services / Sunday School** -

Keith indicated that Pastor had contacted him with regard to posting the guidelines for attending in-person church services. A discussion of the Guidelines as printed in the Secretary's Report from the October Meeting followed. "Requiring" versus "strongly encouraging" the wearing of masks was discussed, as well as the need to close the church building down for 2 weeks following confirmation of a positive case. Topics including the vulnerability and fear of people attending services, the efficiency of masks, the surge of COVID within the community, the need to take necessary precautions to make people feel safe, the desire for and risks of singing during services, and all of the other unknown elements of the virus was discussed. Anson proposed that the Guidelines be amended to state that we strongly recommend that everyone wear a mask that if someone who has attended a church service



tests positive for COVID-19, then the Pastor and congregation should be notified and church services and Sunday School would need to be shut down for 1 week. Rhonda seconded and the motion passed. Lindsey said that she and Kellen have purchased and donated a radio transmitter to the church. This will allow people who do not feel comfortable entering the church to stay in their cars and listen to the service from in the parking lot. It would also allow for a church service to be conducted at Elk Creek by the Pastor and Becky even if the building was closed due to a positive COVID case. Hopefully it will be set up so that it can be used during the November 8 service. Several Council members asked that the physical barriers (streamers and tape) within the sanctuary be removed because they are unnecessary and the painters' tape could be damaging the finish on the pews. The Guidelines will be included in the Newsletter and on the Church website. Pastor will post them in the church.

C. Room Dividers/ Curtains -- tabled

- D. **Printer / Copier** -- Keith said Crystal Johnson wanted to use up the current supply of toner, etc. before purchasing a new piece of equipment.
- E. **Lights in Council Room** -- Jim Odness will be handling this.
- F. **Tuck Pointing** - Jurowski's team has finished the Tuck Pointing on Nov. 3; however due to the weather they said that the Louvers will not be painted until the spring. Keith will speak to them about possibly finishing the task now since the weather has improved dramatically.
- G. **Riverland Energy-Loss Audit** review (Insulation bids and Bat Houses) -- Tabled.
- H. **On-line Giving** - Lindsey said using Tithely.com had worked well and was easy to do and use. She will help Financial Secretary Stephanie to learn how to access the information. When the church's website is updated, a link can be placed on it to make on-line giving easy to do. Lindsey will finish setting this up. Lori made a motion to give Lindsey the authority to set up the link on the website; Anson second; the motion passed.
- I. **God's Work Our Hands** - Becky indicated Nathan Rongstad has provided the equipment and has begun helping with the tree and brush removal at Barbara Hammer's house. Jan said the Youth Group had expressed a desire to help with this project. Saturday, Nov. 14 is the date set for this project.
- J. **Snow Plowing** - It was noted that Cedric Anderson had spoken to Dave Lyngen about the Town of Hale plowing the church and parsonage. Concern was expressed about possible damage to the recently paved parking lot due to the Town's heavy equipment. A Saturday night snowfall might also be a problem. Anson offered to talk to Dave Lyngen and to other service providers.

New Business --

- A. **Monthly Bills** to pay
- Equity -- Workmen's Comp.
 - Custodian
 - Checks -- Stephanie will call in an order for additional checks.
- B. **Thanksgiving Eve Service** - After discussion, Lindsey proposed that Elk Creek have a Thanksgiving Eve Service at 7 pm on Wednesday, November 23. Tom seconded and the motion passed. Unfortunately, the Choir will be unable to sing and food can not be served.
- C. **Website** - It was noted that the Church's website is out-of-date and some information is wrong. Lindsey will ask Brandi Berg to work with Lori Nelson to work on the Website.
- D. **Correspondence** - A Thank You note from Feed My People for the monetary donations was read.
- E. **2021 Preliminary Budget** -- Council members examined the 2020 Budget line by line and identified several proposed changes.
- F. **Pastor's salary** - Pastor's compensation was discussed. A recommendation was made which will be forwarded to the Joint Council.

Next Meeting -- The next Council meeting will be on December 1 at 7 pm.

Adjournment -- Tom made a motion to adjourn; Anson seconded; motion passed. The meeting was closed at 10:16 with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by Lori Nelson, Recording Secretary

COVID-19 Guidelines for Elk Creek Lutheran Church

- We strongly recommend that everyone wear a mask.
- Hand sanitizer will be readily available
- There will be no passing of the offering plates or communion supplies
- Singing is allowed if masks are worn.

- E. If someone who has attended a church service tests positive for COVID-19, then the Pastor and congregation should be notified and Church services and Sunday School will be shut down for 1 week.
- F. A radio transmitter in the church will allow people who do not feel comfortable entering the church to stay in their cars and listen to the service from in the parking lot.
- G. Services will continue to be live streamed from Immanuel Lutheran Church.



God's Love Incarnate/Born for Our Time

Once again, the Advent/Christmas season is upon us. Only this time, our preparations and celebrations will have to be done in the middle of Covid-19 still having its way around the world. There is disappointment from not being able to do the usual Concerts, Sunday School Pageants, Caroling, Christmas parties and family gatherings, and so on. There is tremendous grief from loss of loved ones; more than 250,000 families in this country alone, missing family members at their celebrations because of Covid-19. Besides this, many people are laid-off from work or let go because there is no work to be done. Other essential workers of hospitals, clinics, and emergency staff are stressed out to the breaking point because of Covid-19. It is a depressing and anxiety filled time. Still, Jesus comes among us in Word and Sacrament to be **“Emmanuel”**- God with us.

When we look at the Gospels that tell the story of the birth of Jesus, there is plenty of disappointment and anxiety as well. ---**Matthew** tells the story from Joseph's perspective who finds out his engagement to Mary is in jeopardy, because she is pregnant with a child that is not his. He attempts to dismiss her quietly, but an angel of the Lord in a dream tells him to not be afraid to take Mary as his wife who has conceived a child from the Holy Spirit and is to be named, Jesus. Later, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus become refugees fleeing from Herod and his soldiers scouring the countryside to kill any child born under two years old. ---**Luke** tells the story of the birth of Jesus that we have all come to love and adore. Yet, this version has its own trials and anxieties as well. Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit who comes upon her with the power of the Most High. She spends the next 3 months with her relative Elizabeth away from the scandal of being pregnant out of wedlock. When she returns to Joseph a decree goes out from the Emperor Augustus for all people to be registered in their home towns. Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem, find no room at the inn, and end up in a stable with no one to help with the birth of Jesus except for Joseph and a few animals. There was no mid-wife, no mother, or aunts, or sisters of Mary, or a familiar place and community to help her. Still, Jesus is born into troubled and anxious times. God's love Incarnate!

Therefore, in our Advent/Christmas season of disappointing, anxious, stressful and depressing times dealing with Covid-19, know that God still comes to be with us, to live in us by the Holy Spirit who comes in Word and Sacrament. Just as Jesus was born into the world over two thousand years ago, he will be born again in us, full of truth and grace.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (Jn. 1:14)

Council Meeting is Tuesday, December 1 at 7 p.m. !



Thrivent presents.....19 Covid-19 Safe Action Team ideas *(read through these to spark ideas of your own!)*

- 1. Sew to save lives** – As COVID-19 cases increase, hospitals are experiencing a shortage of protective gear. Facilities around the country are asking volunteers to sew face masks for health care workers. Find tutorials and step-by-step instructions online. Recruit volunteers in your community, use the seed money to purchase supplies and rally your team to sew for medical professionals and first responders on the front lines. Be sure to check with facilities in your community for any specific needs or instructions.
- 2. Box up sustenance** – Create meal kits for the sick, elderly or families in need. Shop online or in person. Include staples and a personalized note to brighten spirits. Volunteers can purchase kit items, pack boxes and deliver meal kits to local food pantries.
- 3. Become a virtual host** – While we can't be face-to-face don't miss your opportunity to connect. Send out invitations for a virtual Bible study, support group, (share prayers and encouragement), charades game night, book club or coffee hour. These activities will ensure a memorable connection - even from a distance.
- 4. Social distancing doesn't mean self-isolation** – Send notes and messages, it can be as simple as a message in chalk on a driveway, a sign in your window or a letter across the globe. Seed money can purchase postage or mailing supplies to send notes to friends and family, or to a local veteran's home to brighten someone's day. Other ideas include buying chalk for your neighborhood to keep in contact and share messages on sidewalks and driveways.
- 5. Show you care with personal care items** – Emergency shelters are struggling to provide toiletries and other essentials for people experiencing homelessness. Organize a small group of volunteers to shop and deliver supplies to local shelters to keep their clients safe and healthy. Please be sure to only organize volunteers virtually and follow all CDC guidelines. Contact your local shelter for a list of specific items needed. Seed money can buy supplies.
- 6. Encourage literacy with free little libraries** – Daily reading is crucial for students to learn while at home. Build a free little library in your neighborhood. Ask neighbors to drop off books to share. Seed money can be used to purchase materials to build the library. A variation on this idea is to do a pop-up food pantry as well.
- 7. Create activity kits for kids** – Help keep kids busy during their time at home. Seed money can be used to purchase markers and coloring books, math activity books, fun crafts or STEM projects to keep kids learning and engaged while out of school.
- 8. No-Sew Fleece Blankets** – Seed Money: Purchase fleece to prepare easy-to-assemble blankets. How: Pick up the materials from the member that purchases the material (no contact) and return the finished blankets to a central location. Member could then distribute these blankets to an organization.

9. **Care Kit Assembly** – Seed Money: Purchase hygiene items from Amazon or CVS. How: Member and their family or group would assemble items, then drop them off to non-profit that serves the homeless.
10. **Help the Helpers Gift Baskets** – Seed Money: Purchase items to make spa gift baskets (or similar item) How: Assemble items into gift baskets and drop them off to non-profit workers who have been working overtime to care for their clients during this season of crisis.
11. **Operation Gratitude** – building care kits for deployed soldiers, partnering with churches to have a month of ‘bring your items’ and then if they choose they can have a packing party to build care kits to send to OG. An Action Team builds a donation station, and if the church doesn’t want to have a party they can send items home with families to build the kits at home.
12. **Virtual dance parties for non-profits with kids** – Down Syndrome Association, child care, etc. and having a 1 hour ‘dance party’ where we dance, interview some of the leaders and teachers the kids haven’t seen in a while, play some trivia.
13. **Operation Exercise** – Purchase sidewalk Chalk and material to make encouraging signs for families in neighborhood to draw exercise circuits using sidewalk chalk for those families who only get out for a neighborhood walk (Hopscotch, 4 square (leave ball), long-jump...
14. **School supply drive** – Partner with a local non-profit or a national organization to fill backpacks with school supplies, hygiene items or shoe boxes from the comfort and safety of participant’s own home. Order bulk supplies and ask participants to pick up do-it-yourself kits to fill of 10-12 backpacks during designated days and times. Participants can post on social media and drop-off completed projects at local drop off locations.
15. **“Give me some space” virtual race** - Host a virtual race and make a difference in the lives of others – even from a distance. Select a non-profit partner and a month timeframe. Join others in a 5K, 10K or half marathon – completed at once or throughout the entire month. Run, walk, swim, bike or whatever you want! In lieu of paying a race registration fee, suggest a recommended donation amount be contributed to the selected non-profit partner. Use your seed money funding to purchase finisher medals and to mail them to all participants at the conclusion of the month.
16. **Virtual facility tour** - Share the mission and vision of a non-profit partner by inviting their executive director or board members to speak on a virtual event. Use a tablet to conduct a Zoom tour of their facilities or program space. As the tour progresses, highlight needs for donated items like kitchen supplies, clothing, bedding, or craft materials. At the conclusion of the event, ask attendees to purchase some of the needed items. The non-profit could consider creating an Amazon wish list or Target registry. Use your seed money funding to purchase wish list items that were not fulfilled.
17. **Wellness Speaking Webinar** - Address all domains of wellness – spiritual, mental, relational, physical and financial – in a series of educational webinars. Leverage local influencers and leaders to be the keynote speaker. Use our Thrivent proprietary workshops which are approved for fraternal funding. Consider partnering with a non-profit that works with financial insecurity to raise awareness and funds for their cause. Use your seed money funding to pay for speaker fees and to promote the event series in the local community on social media, email marketing, postcards or with partner organizations supporters.
18. **Virtual VBS** – Use seed money to purchase supplies needed to host a virtual Vacation Bible School led on Zoom. Craft supplies, lesson materials, snacks can be dropped off or mailed to individual homes.
19. **Supplies for animal shelters** – Connect with a local animal shelter and use seed money to purchase items to meet their needs and encourage your community to do the same.