

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ²it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

³Strengthen the weak hands
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;
⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert;
⁷the burning sand shall become a pool
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God’s people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalm 146:5-10

or Luke 1:46b-55

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10

Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until
the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the
precious crop from the earth, being patient with
it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸You
also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for
the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹Brothers and sis-
ters, do not grumble against one another, so that
you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing
at the doors! ¹⁰As an example of suffering and pa-
tience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who
spoke in the name of the Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was
doing, he sent word by his disciples ³and said to
him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we
to wait for another?” ⁴Jesus answered them, “Go
and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵the blind
receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a
skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead
are raised, and the poor have good news brought
to them. ⁶And blessed is anyone who takes no of-
fense at me.”

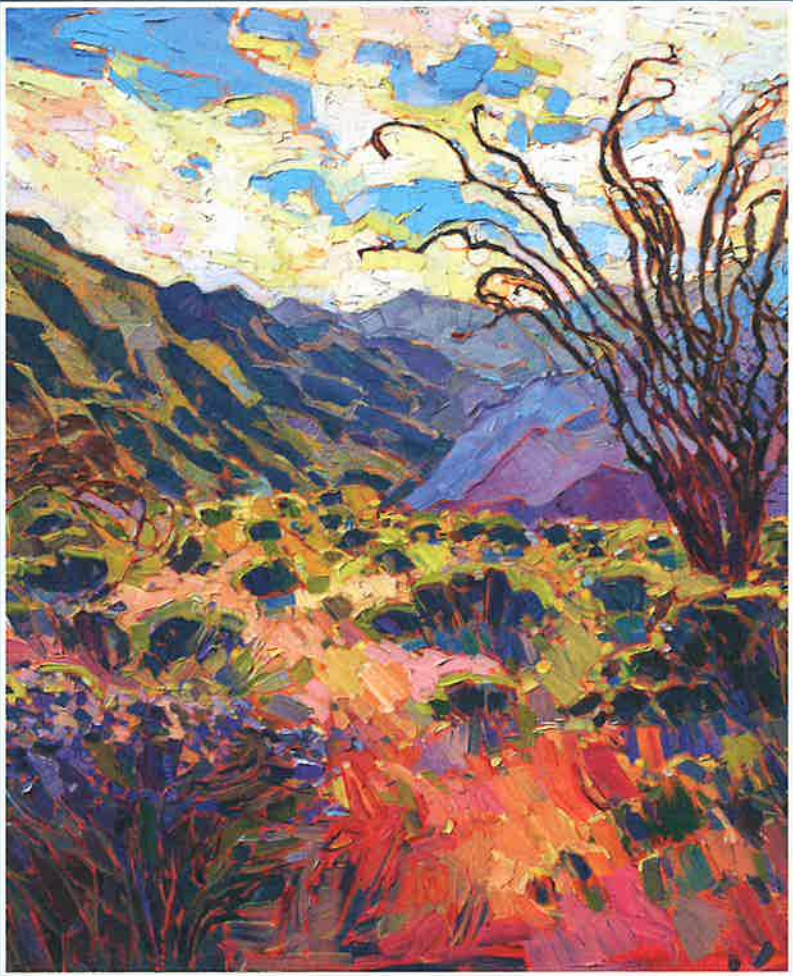
⁷As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the
crowds about John: “What did you go out into the
wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?
⁸What, then, did you go out to see? Someone
dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft
robes are in royal palaces. ⁹What, then, did you
go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more
than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is
written,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹“Truly I tell you, among those born of women
no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist,
yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater
than he.”

The desert shall
rejoice and
blossom

ISAIAH 35:1



Next Sunday’s Readings: Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25.

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Our mission is to invite people to know Jesus Christ so that we may all share God's love.

Welcome to Worship at Immanuel - We are delighted to have everyone worshipping with us today. Please extend a warm welcome to those around you.

Prayer before Worship: Heavenly Father, as we prepare and wait for the blessing of Christmas, your Son Jesus Christ, give us patience, mercy, grace, and love for ourselves, and for those around us. In your Holy name, Amen.

Prayer Requests: We welcome requests of prayers for our members, friends and families throughout our communities and beyond. Anyone is welcome to leave a note on the desk in the office or contact the pastor. **There is also a prayer box with cards to use on the table under the mailboxes for prayer requests.**

Offering envelopes are located and available on the table in the entry.
Please designate how you would like to have your offering used if for anything other than general funds.

The Lord's Supper, (offered on the 1st Sunday of the month) the Eucharist, or Holy Communion is a means of God's grace whereby the real presence of Christ is offered. ***If you would rather receive a blessing instead of Holy Communion, please come forward and cross your arms to your shoulders as indication of wanting a blessing. All are welcome at the Lord's table.***

We have Children's Bulletins for those who wish to enhance the worship experience for the kids. They can be found each week on the table with the regular Sunday Bulletins.

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Newsletter, bulletin, and member information or changes may be sent to
ckwilson1983@gmail.com or immanuelcolfax@hotmail.com

This Week at Immanuel 9:00 am - Worship 10:00 am - Sunday School

Sunday, December 14, 2025

WORSHIP LEADER: ELI PETERSEN

Lay Readers: Suzie Kukuck, Angie Kratochvil,
Louann Harms

Greeters: Alan & Sabrina Petersen

Ushers/Acolytes: Phil & Angie Kratochvil

Communion: na

Organist: Kimberly Petersen

Sunday, December 21, 2025

WORSHIP LEADER: ELI PETERSEN

Lay Reader: Tiffany Myers

Greeters: Eli & Katelyn Petersen

Ushers/Acolytes: Harlan Brucker, Rylee Kukuck

Communion: na

Organist: Cindy Wilson

Please include the following people in our prayers:

Lois Barker, Cheryl Poppe, Jeannie Weber, Bob & Nancy Lasser, Cindy Harris, Rebecca Casson, Kris Barnett, Betty Petersen.

Announcements

Thank you to Sabrina Petersen and Joyce Miller, our master decorators, who have adorned our worship space for many years and continue to share their talents, bringing awe and wonder to our church seasons.

Thank you to everyone who has "stepped up" to support the new shoe project for the children at school, and to those who are purchasing gifts or donating money for gifts. In a season of giving, it warms our hearts to witness our fellow church family members making the Holidays a little brighter for those who struggle to meet the needs of their families.

The Sunday School Christmas Service will be next Sunday, December 21st at 9:00 am. Please invite your family and friends to join us in celebrating the coming Christ Child through the story and songs shared by our children. Refreshments will be served following the service.

The children will also have a practice day on Saturday, December 20th at 9 am.

Please join us for The Christmas Eve Service on Wednesday, December 24th at 4:30 pm, with Marcia Buchs leading worship.

On Sunday, December 28th, Pastor Ed Hudelson will be joining us for worship.

Gibson Area Music Foundation invites you to *Christmas Sanctuary* Sunday, Dec. 28 at 5 pm, Gibson City United Methodist Church. This vespers service will offer candlelight, beautiful music, scripture & prayer in sacred space. As the year draws to a close, may we seek hope & harmony, love & Light in the gift of Emmanuel.
A time of cookie fellowship will follow hosted by Gibson area pastors.

LWR Quilts - There is a box in the parish hall of pre-cut packages of quilt squares that can be sewn into quilt tops. These will help us prepare for quilting next year. Please use 1/2" seam, a tight/short stitch, and do not make a cross pattern.

We are back to knotting quilt tops! We will be meeting on Tuesdays, January 13 and 27th from 1:00-3:30 p.m. We would love to have some new faces join us! It's easy and the company is great! 😊 Please let Dee Winterland know if you plan to attend so if we need to cancel due to weather or illness, she can let you know in advance.

Third Sunday of Advent - Hanging of the Greens



December 14, 2025

Today we will shift our focus slightly from the selected Lectionary readings and message. Many congregations conduct special services early in Advent to recall the meaning of Christmas decorations and display them for the season. We have not done this at Immanuel since 1998. During our service today we will reflect on traditions past, cherish current tradition, and look forward to our next generations carrying these traditions into the future.

PRELUDE
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gathering

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**Please stand in body or spirit as you are able.*

*CALL TO WORSHIP

All may make the sign of the cross in remembrance of baptism as the worship leader begins -

L: Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.
Lift up your eyes and see.

C: Sing and rejoice. For I shall come and dwell in the midst of you, says the Lord.

L: It is time to wake from sleep for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

C: The night is far gone, the day is at hand; let us put on the armor of light.

GATHERING SONG

As With Gladness, Men of Old

ELW 302

*As with gladness, men of old did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led by thee.*

*In the heav'nly country bright need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;
There forever may we sing alleluias to our king.*

L: Let us pray. Loving Father, who has brought us again to the glad season in which we celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, open our hearts that we may joyfully welcome him to reign over us. Open our lips that we may proclaim with uplifted hearts "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

C: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

THE MEANING OF THE SERVICE

Over 2000 years ago, a group of sleepy shepherds were watching over their sheep on a star-brightened hillside in Palestine. It was a still, uneventful night. Suddenly the darkness was filled with a strange light. The stillness was broken by angel voices singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to humans." So began this beautiful and meaningful religious festival – Christmas.

Christmas begins with Advent, the season through which we are now traveling. The season of Advent - of going toward the birth of Christ, and of Christmas - the time of God's physical entry into our world, both have a long history. Like a great cathedral, these seasons and their customs have developed over the centuries. Old customs and observances are refined, renewed, and sometimes replaced as new ones are added. Some of our customs have pagan or non-Christian origins but have been "converted" as their meanings have been redefined. Their significance is not what they may once have meant, but what they mean for us today.

During Advent our church building begins to wear its Christmas apparel. Our evergreen trees stand proudly by the altar. Garlands drape the communion rail, the walls, and the windows. Wreaths hang gracefully and candles await their chance to sparkle like stars in the sky. Today the lights will shine for us as we continue to anticipate the Christ Child.

We prepare for the birth of the King, just as we would make ready for a banquet with a royal host – by dressing in our best. We are aware that, although it isn't Christmas yet, it will be here soon, very soon. Through our service today we will highlight the decorations we display - the symbols of the season. We will also dedicate these symbols and ourselves to the glory of God and His Son.

The Advent Wreath

Scripture Reading

Jeremiah 23:5-6

⁵ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."



Background

Those of you who are married, touch your wedding band. See how it is a circle with no ending, no beginning. In a similar way, the Advent wreath is a symbol of endless love and faithfulness. It is a symbol of God's marriage to his people – we who are the church. On each of the four Sundays during Advent, one of the four Advent candles is lighted. Out of darkness the light shines, pointing us in hope to the One who is light for our darkness.

*At this time, the choir will lead the congregation
in the lighting of the Advent Wreath Candles.*

Love's Pure Light – Candle Lighting Ceremony

Immanuel Choir with Congregational Singing and Responsive Litany



LITANY FOR ADVENT

L: In this season of Advent, we celebrate with joyful hearts.

C: Christ is our light and the source of our joy.

L: We count our blessings, and give thanks for God's goodness and grace.

C: Christ is our light and the source of our joy.

L: We strive to search for the good in neighbors near and far.

C: Christ is our light and the source of our joy.

L: We remember that God has promised us full and joyful lives.

C: Christ is our light and the source of our joy.

L: This morning we light three candles – the candles of hope, peace, and today, joy. This candle reminds us that we have reason to be joyful, even in the midst of strife. We remember that the angel proclaimed Christ's birth as "Good news of great joy, to all people." We celebrate today with joyful hearts and commit ourselves to spreading that joy to the world around us.

L: Gracious God, as we continue our Advent journey we ask that you open our eyes to the beauty and goodness around us, and fill our hearts with grateful joy. Remind us that Christ is our light, and the source of all joy, and that we are here to serve you and to spread that joy to others.

C: Amen.

The Chancel Decorations

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:9-10

When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Background

The bright, blood-red poinsettia has become the most popular of all Christmas flowers. Its tropical red leaves are not blossoms. The flowers are the small, yellow clusters at the center of the red leaves. Dr. Joel R. Poinsett of Mexico first discovered the poinsettia in 1828. A Mexican legend says that when blood fell on earth from the broken heart of a young



girl, a poinsettia grew from each drop. We are then reminded of the blood the Christmas infant came to shed for us. The plant's star-shaped formation of red leaves reminds us of the star which came to shine at Bethlehem.

Hymn

Cold December Flies Away

ELW 299

The Sanctuary Greens



Scripture Reading

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Great will be his authority, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Background

Christmas greens also had their origin in pagan cultures. Their use was brought to us by those who saw in them a deeper, richer meaning for the church. As you look around our sanctuary and fellowship hall, you will see the variety of different evergreens placed in our worship space. The laurel and bay symbolize victory and triumph. Yew and cypress point to eternal life. Mistletoe symbolizes peace, and Christians see the prickly leaves and red berries of the holly as symbols of the crown of thorns and of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. We do not celebrate the Christmas season without tying it to the events of Holy Week. The birth of the infant in Bethlehem was followed by the death of the man Jesus in Jerusalem.

Hymn

People, Look East

ELW 248

The Christmas Tree

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:11-12

¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Background

An old German legend tells about English Bishop Saint Boniface, missionary to Scandinavia in the 8th Century. The people, led by pagan Druid priests, gathered in the forest under a great oak tree to offer (human) sacrifices, as was their custom.

Bishop Boniface, shocked by such brutality, courageously cut down the tree, known as Odin's Oak. As it fell a young fir tree appeared where the oak had stood. Boniface, familiar with the practice of taking evergreens into homes, proclaimed the fir tree holy, saying it was a symbol of endless life because the needles were always green. "Take up the fir tree," he directed, "and carry it to the chieftains' hall. You shall go no more into the forest to keep your feasts with secret rites of shame. You shall keep them at home with laughter and songs and rites of love, gathered round the fir tree to rejoice on the birth night of the Christ." The tree signifies peace, and as an evergreen it also symbolizes immortality; with its top pointing upwards, it additionally indicates heaven, the dwelling place of God.

Martin Luther is believed to have first used the fir tree in his home. He wandered out one Christmas Eve and became entranced with the wonder and beauty of the starry sky. Looking up, he thought of the Savior who came down from heaven, bringing salvation to people. When he returned home, he set up a tree for his children and decorated it with candles to represent the gracious heavens from which the little Lord Jesus had been sent.

Pastor Harry Schwan, a young clergyman from Germany, created quite an uproar on Christmas Eve, 1851, in Zion Church, Cleveland, Ohio. That night he brought a lighted Christmas tree into the church building. His act was declared "sacrilegious," "plain idolatry," and "a groveling before shrubs." He was told that decent citizens would not tolerate such pagan practices. After a long and weary search, he found that there was good precedent among Christians for such a custom. He is credited with having begun the custom of bringing trees into church buildings, just as we have ours here in the worship area.

In Isaiah we read, "The glory of Lebanon shall come to you: the fir, the pine, and box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary."

Hymn

O Little Town of Bethlehem

ELW 279



The Chrismon

Today we learned about the pink Advent candle of Joy, the poinsettia and greens, and the Christmas tree with candles. These are all symbols of Christmas and God's gifts for us. We have more symbols of the season. . .

The special ornaments we use on our Christmas Tree are called Chrismons. In 1957 – a long time ago – Frances Spencer decided the Christmas tree needed something extra to tell the story of Christ, so she made Chrismon ornaments, which means Christ Monograms. They were white and gold. She shared her patterns with many churches all around. Each Christmon is a symbol of Jesus and the gifts He has given to us. The dove is a symbol of peace. The star is a symbol of guidance, the heart is a symbol of love, and the cross is a symbol of sacrifice.

We have been busy decorating the church to celebrate Jesus' birth, but we have one more thing to do, and I need your help, please. Can you help me decorate the tree in the parish hall? *(Each child is given a Chrismon to place on the tree with the help of parent, if necessary. The children return to the front of the church.)*

Prayer: Jesus, help us to become symbols of you, that we may spread your word, love, and joy to others. Amen.

The Lighting of the Tree

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 9:2

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.

John 1:1-5, 9

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.



Background

The lights on our tree are white. They are a reminder of the pure and unselfish love of God, who gave his only Son for our salvation. Just as the snow falls on everyone and everything, making no distinction among land or buildings, or roads, in the same way the lights remind us of the grace of God and his unlimited love for all his creation.

Hymn

Away in a Manger

ELW 277

The Christmas Bells

Scripture Reading

Psalm 150

Hallelujah! Praise God in the holy temple; praise God in the mighty firmament.

Praise God for mighty acts; praise God for exceeding greatness.

Praise God with trumpet sound; praise God with lyre and harp.

Praise God with tambourine and dance; praise God with strings and pipe.

Praise God with resounding cymbals; praise God with loud clanging cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!

Background

Bells have been used throughout the centuries to call people to worship or to bring them news. Good news and bad news have been heralded by bells. When heirs to royalty were born in European countries, bells would peal. When wars were over, bells would celebrate. Bells ring when Christians die. They ring to call us to God's house. Today bells ring to call us to remember the birth which is soon to be celebrated among us – that of the king's heir, our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a legend of a great cathedral whose bells suddenly refused to ring. No one could tell why they would no longer chime. Eventually a messenger appeared to the people, announcing that God had decided not to let the beautiful bells sound until the gifts of his people were once more satisfactory. On Christmas Eve the citizens of the town brought the most expensive gifts they had, and in a long procession through the church, laid them on the altar.



But the bells did not ring. Finally, the king of the realm made the long walk down the center aisle of the cathedral, laid his crown on the altar, and stepped back, awaiting the sound of the bells. But there was only silence.

When the Christmas Eve service had ended and people sorrowfully began to leave, one small boy, a beggar's son, who had only one small piece of silver with which he had planned to buy bread for his family, crept up to the altar, laid his small coin there, and knelt to pray. Suddenly the bells pealed in joy as they never had before.

May the bells we hear this season call to mind the great gift that changed the history of the world – the gift to us of God's own Son.

GATHERING OUR GIFTS AND OFFERINGS

Ringings of the Bells

Carol of the Bells

Children and others are invited to ring bells as desired to celebrate the gifts.

OFFERING PRAYER *Please stand as you are able*

L: Let us pray... Loving God,

C: Through the gift of your Son, we can feel the depth of your goodness and the enormity of your mercy. Bless the gifts we bring that they may be a symbol of our love and gratitude for your never-ending forgiveness and grace. Amen.

*LORD'S PRAYER

L: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

*BLESSING

L: May God who comes among us, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness, and good news to share today and always. **C: Amen.**

*HYMN

Joy to the World

ELW 267

*DISMISSAL

L: Go in peace. Share the good news. **C: Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

