

# Immanuel United Church of Christ

339 E. Louisa St.  
P.O. Box 87  
Darlington, WI 53530

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED



IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
March 2021 Newsletter  
Interim Pastor Brad Brookins  
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# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**IMMANUEL**



Dear Friends,

The COVID Pandemic we are currently navigating is the worst public health emergency the world has faced in over 100 years. The costs of dealing with this emergency—costs to our economy, our social relationships, our children’s education and our own personal well-being have been enormously high. This is especially true for the more than 27 million of our neighbors who have been sickened by the virus and the more than 490,000 who have died. Nothing about this situation has been easy. We are all bearing its burden.

Since the decision was made last November to close our building to in person meetings, your Church Council has been in continual conversation about when we can safely re-open. The Council members want to be back in church on Sunday mornings. But our best judgment, as of our last meeting on February 10, is that this is not the time to return to in person worship in the sanctuary.

Please know that this difficult decision was made prayerfully and after much discussion. Our first goal, and our first responsibility, is to keep everyone safe, and especially to guard the health of our most vulnerable members. Some will feel we are being overly cautious, and that may be true. But if we are wrong, at least no one will fall sick because of this decision. On the other hand, opening too soon could lead to the loss of someone we love. That cost we deem is too high to risk.

Re-opening the church is a recurring agenda item at each month’s meeting of your Church Council. We are following and evaluating the guidelines laid out in the document recently offered by the Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC): “Returning to Church 2.0” (This document is available on our church website). The key marker in this document for when it will be *safest* for us to return to in-person

worship is Wisconsin's COVID vaccination rate, which we hope will also result in very low transmission rates of the COVID virus.

Even though the building is closed our Church remains very active with a good participation from our members. Our Zoom and Facebook live offerings have been well received. We extended our fellowship to 30 minutes prior to church to allow time to meet and greet each other. We have been able to add Tuesday night Bible Study and Wednesday Evening Prayer with positive feedback. Council meetings have successfully met monthly. Strategic planning has also started with the focus on the future of Immanuel.

Someone once asked Jesus, "What is the greatest commandment?" His answer was quick and to the point: "Love God with all your heart and *love your neighbor as yourself.*" The Council has taken the second half of this commandment as our fundamental guide for navigating the pandemic. The love Jesus calls for doesn't always come easy; and it isn't free. Sometimes it is downright inconvenient. But, Jesus says, it is always, always the right thing to do.

We ask you all to hold the Council members in your prayers as we endeavor to make the best decisions we can. We will communicate to you any developments or changes as they arise and we welcome your comment and feedback as we move through this difficult time together.

In Trust,

Immanuel UCC Church Council



## CHURCH COUNCIL

Immanuel United Church of Christ Council meeting was held on February 10, 2021. Members Present: Roy Berrey, JoAnn Geissbuhler, Fritz Hirsbrunner, Brandi Ruf-Wepking, Sheila Siegler, Jean Stauffacher, Dave Sutherland, Matt Ubersox,

Randy Ubersox, and Pastor Brad Brookins.

Absent: Roy Hardt

**Guest Speaker:** Marjean Sutherland discussed using an online payment system in Churchtrac for offerings called Stripe. Each member can set up their own account, dollar amount and fund designation. Discussed the charges associated with use of this system and felt the charges are minimal. The Council approved offering this service to members. Marjean will get the system set up by April. Information will be shared in the April newsletter to church members.

**Approval of Minutes:** Jean made a motion to accept the three meeting's minutes of the last month. Roy Berrey second the motion. Carried.

### Reports:

**Financial** – Fritz mentioned he liked the look of the new overview of accounts provided by Betsy Wiegel. The overview shares detail information on each church fund. It was

recommended this be part of each monthly financial statement and included in the annual report. Financial Report was approved as presented.

**Pastor** – Pastor received request for baptism. Will advise member will wait until reopen or have ceremony be outside once weather is nice enough to be outside. Ash Wednesday service will be by Zoom @6:30 p.m. Discussed prayer requests and possible getting a prayer chain set up. Pastor will talk to Janice Ruf of EF&G to see if they would work on getting this organized.

**President** – Lanterns were delivered to Mary Leahy in memory of Alan Leahy, Marion Ruef in memory of Harold Ruef and Janice Schadewalt funeral. JoAnn reached out to Deb Loken to ask if Guild would be interested in the cost. This will be discussed when they return to having meetings. Discussion on the wording within the by-laws and suggested by-laws needed further review with possible changes before next annual meeting.

**Christian Education** – Sunday School will resume on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> with a Zoom meeting for children and parents with lesson. Lessons will be twice a month with at home lessons on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday and zoom lessons on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday.

**Building and Grounds** – Randy Loken is working with Ruf Electric on a start date.

**Mission Team** – 4 spots left. Jared will check with confirmation to see if interested. Mission Trip is July 31-Aug 7. The cost in the past has been \$100.00 per person. Only 12 members can attend and our church will be the only church at the mission to minimize numbers due to Covid-19. Jared is setting up a zoom meeting in the near future.

**EF&G** – Janice Ruf is now the lead. Betty will remain as a member and help Janice get started.

**Pastor/Parish** – discussed having regular meetings, Roy Berrey will schedule.

**Women's Guild** – No meetings due to COVID.

**Strategic Planning** – Fritz gave an update of first meeting with 17 members attending. Value Statements completed.

#### **Old Business:**

**Church reopening** - Discussed feedback from a few members questioning why we are not open yet. Council decided it still was not safe to reopen right now. JoAnn and Pastor will work on an update statement from the Council for an email to congregation.

**Church key list** – Sheila is working on this and will start making calls to those who are on the list but have not reached out after newsletter request.

**Committee Liaisons** – Mission Team, Jean Stauffacher  
Stewardship - Dave Sutherland, Sheila Siegler  
EF&G – Jean Stauffacher  
Women's Guild – Brandi Ruf-Wepking

**New Business:**

**Evaluation Process** – Secretary, Organist, Pastor, Janitor. No formal process was identified. Fritz volunteered to rewrite and submit to Council at next meeting. Item tabled until next meeting.

**Job Descriptions** – Not all roles carried out by members have a job description. JoAnn will reach out to those that do not and share with council at next meeting.

Next Meeting will be March 17, 2021 at 6:15 p.m. via Zoom.

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**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME**

**Starts on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Please remember to turn your clocks ahead 1 hour.**

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Thank you to all my wonderful friends. I have been thrilled at all the phone calls and Get Well cards. I did get the COVID-19! I don't know of anyone who had it before me, or after me. I have stayed home. I always wore the mask. But I am finally starting to improve. Thanks for sticking with me. God Bless each of you.

*Betty Williams*

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### **MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS ONLINE?**

If you pay bills online through your bank, you can send contributions to the church that way, too.

The church's address is:

Immanuel United Church of Christ  
339 East Louisa Street  
P.O. Box 87  
Darlington, WI 53530.

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### **PASTORAL CARE**

If you know of any church member that would appreciate a pastoral visit, please let Janice Ruf know and she will follow up with the contact, or contact Pastor Brad Brookins at 608-669-2926.

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### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- Mar. 2** – Adult Bible Study at 6:00 p.m.
  - Mar. 3** – Wednesday Prayer time at 6:30 p.m.  
Confirmation at 7:30 p.m.
  - Mar. 9** - Adult Bible Study at 6:00 p.m.
  - Mar. 10** – Wednesday Prayer time at 6:30 p.m.  
Confirmation at 7:30 p.m.
  - Mar. 14** – Daylight savings time begins. Turn your clocks ahead 1 hour
  - Mar. 16** - Adult Bible Study at 6:00 p.m.
  - Mar. 17** – Church Council Meeting at 6:15 p.m. via Zoom  
Confirmation at 7:30 p.m.
  - Mar. 22** – Deadline for April newsletter articles
  - Mar. 23** – Adult Bible Study at 6:00 p.m.
  - Mar. 24** - Wednesday Prayer time at 6:30 p.m.  
Confirmation at 7:30 p.m.
  - Mar. 28** – Palm Sunday
  - Mar. 30** – Adult Bible Study at 6:00 p.m.
  - Mar. 31** - Wednesday Prayer time at 6:30 p.m.  
Confirmation at 7:30 p.m.
  - Apr. 2** – Good Friday
  - Apr. 4** – Easter Sunday
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## **MEALS ON WHEELS**

It is Immanuel's turn to deliver Meals on Wheels for the month of March. We are looking for people to help deliver meals in March. If you can help, please contact Diane Ritchie at [ritchied@darlington.k12.wi.us](mailto:ritchied@darlington.k12.wi.us) or by phone at 608-776-4842.



**MARCH  
BIRTHDAYS**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Ashley Buss  
Colton Ruf
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Tara Glendenning
- 4<sup>th</sup> Phil Risseuw
- 5<sup>th</sup> Sheila Siegler
- 6<sup>th</sup> Larry Milestone  
Keith Siegenthaler
- 8<sup>th</sup> Carol Johnson  
Hudson Hinderman
- 10<sup>th</sup> Roy Hardt
- 11<sup>th</sup> Joanne Merriam
- 12<sup>th</sup> Jada Glendenning  
Wendy Leahy  
Alan Ruf
- 15<sup>th</sup> Connie Ubersox
- 21<sup>st</sup> Kevin Leahy
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Stacy Kammes
- 26<sup>th</sup> Christine Ubersox
- 28<sup>th</sup> Brandi Ruf-Wepking
- 31<sup>st</sup> Kinsley Buss



**Liturgists**  
**MARCH LITURGISTS**

- 7<sup>th</sup> Janice Ruf
- 14<sup>th</sup> Janice Ruf
- 21<sup>st</sup> Sheila Siegler
- 28<sup>th</sup> The Sutherlands



Deadline for the April newsletter articles is **March 22, 2021.**



**MARCH ANNIVERSARIES**

- 8<sup>th</sup> David & Christine Ubersox
- 15<sup>th</sup> Heidi & Gary Rear
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Stacy & Matt Kammes
- 29<sup>th</sup> Suzanne & Brian Marx