

# Connections

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston Heights

Vol. 1, No. 3

February 2012

## An Epiphany Resurrection Story

In Epiphany, along with Christmas, Christians celebrate the truth that Jesus came into the world to give life: eternal life and new life. That was accomplished through His death and resurrection – which gives us the blessed hope of resurrection for our lives also. This hope of resurrection can be applied to the Church as well. Dr. Paul Borden teaches that just as a person has a life cycle, starting in birth and ending in death, so churches experience a similar cycle [See diagram on page 3]. The big difference, he says, is that while a person experiences resurrection after they die, a church can experience resurrection and new life cycles before they die. And this gives a lot of American churches hope. This principle of congregational life cycles and resurrection of ministry was presented at the January leaders meeting and generated quite a bit of positive discussion. It seemed appropriate to share with the whole Immanuel Lutheran family.



There are several keys according to Dr. Borden. First a church needs to understand where they are along the life cycle. When a church realizes it is on the down-side portion of the slope, it needs to take action with a sense of urgency. There may only be a two or three year window of opportunity for a church to make the systemic changes required to start a new life cycle. It may take another three years to solidify the systemic changes that have been introduced. The preparation for change and the change process can be accelerated with outside help from either a denomination or a consultant (*note: like an Intentional Interim Pastor*).

The second key is for the congregation to be aware of the processes that dominate at each point in the life cycle. The four processes identified are vision, relationships, ministries, and structure. In a new or growing church, vision must be dominant with relationships playing an important role. At this point formal ministries and structure must not obstruct. In the latter phases of the life cycle, formalized structure (boards, committees, established procedures) dominate, essentially suffocating the ministry of the church.

*continued on page 3*



## A Light to Lighten the Gentiles

January 6 was the celebration of the Epiphany of our Lord. It is the night the Magi met the Babe of Bethlehem and the Light unto the Gentiles. This was the sign that Salvation was to all people, Jews and Gentiles.

The words that follow are not all revealed in the Holy Scripture and I don't wish to debate what I write.

Who? What? Are they Magi or Wise Men? Scripture give us some information – they came from the east following a star that they saw the meaning of a King born among the Hebrew people. They, as was the custom, brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to a King. Excited about their find, they set out to meet the "King of the Jews."

Many legends have been told about "Los Reyes del Oriente." There were three, their names were Omar, Gasper, and Melchior (their names don't fit their homeland) and they traveled from India, China, and Turkey. The three met as they were all following the guiding star. But a problem arose as they neared the Jewish nation, the star no longer appeared. "Let us go to the palace of King Herod." King Herod welcomed the VIP's and soon found out that they were looking for the newborn "King of the Jews." King Herod was

disturbed, but never let it be known to the Magi. He called together the scribes who quickly quoted the prophet Micah that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of a new Jewish ruler. This meeting took place away from the Wise Men. Herod directed them to Bethlehem and that "he too would come and worship the Newborn King, return to me and tell me where."

The Magi now had more information as to where to go, but their joy was that the star appeared and led them to the house where they found Joseph, Mary, and the boy Jesus. Jesus was now about one or two years old, and that is why King Herod asked about when the Wise Men had seen the star.

The Magi worshiped the King and presented him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

We come to our King every Sunday to worship and praise our King and we also present Him our gifts. May our joy always be as the joy of the Magi until we see Him face to face, with Him in the heavenly mansions.

*~Pastor Perez*



Pastor Hagan (continued from page 1)

The third key is that for a church to be revitalized it is critical for a church to re-discover a sense of mission and vision, and to jettison much of its structure and formal ministries to allow those new and creative processes to take root and blossom into vibrant and growing ministry. The church that tries to hold on to that it is doing, or simply re-create what it has done is doomed to experience the last phases of the life cycle – death and closure of the church. It is estimated that 50 congregations are closing each week in America.

Note: Dr. Paul Borden is the author of the books *Hit the Bullseye* and a new book *Direct Hit*. He is also Executive Minister of Growing Healthy Churches (formerly American Baptist Churches of the West), which is an association

of American Baptist Churches in Northern California and Northern Nevada. Since the mid-1990s, this association went from only 36 of its 200+ congregations experiencing growth to now more than 170 growing congregations.

This, in essence, will be much of what we hope to be accomplishing this year. The Transitional Task Force will be evaluating our past history and where we are at now, what our community looks like and what its needs are, and then help us to move toward a new vision and a new era of vitality and exciting ministry. Out of that, we will develop a profile of what will be required for our called staff so that we can begin a process of discovering whom God would have us call. Resurrection is not only possible but to be expected, both for us as Christians and for His Church, as well.

~Pastor Hagan

## Life Cycle Of A Church





## Lent Prayer Vigil

Thursday, February 23, 2012  
2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Join us as we begin the Lent season, where we reflect on the saving sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. On Thursday, February 23, our sanctuary will be open for prayer and meditation. In addition to your own prayer intentions, a prayer guide will be made available to you to pray for members of our church family and others who have made special requests. Additional prayer request cards will be available in the narthex of the church. You can also make prayer requests through our website <http://immanuelhouston.org>.

You are welcome to spend a few minutes or as much time as you like in quiet contemplation. Childcare will be available in the church nursery. Please feel free to extend this invitation to your friends and family.

## More Opportunities for Prayer

Thanks to all our prayer chain members for the hours of prayers offered during the past year. If you would like to become a prayer team member, call the church office or fill out the sign-up form in the narthex. Everyone is welcome to join our prayer chain, you do not have to be an Immanuel member.

If you have family and/or friends serving in the military, consider adding them to our prayer list. If your serviceman/woman is already listed in the *News and Notes*, please provide the church office with the service members complete mailing address and we will let them know that Immanuel Lutheran Church is grateful for their service to their country and that we are pray for them.

~Kathy Angst and Winnie McNamara

## Lent Season Series

Our Lenten observances begin Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2012 and continue through the next six weeks, concluding on Good Friday. During those six weeks we will be having two special sermon series for our Wednesday evening and Sunday Morning Services.

Sunday Worship – 9:00am  
“The Heart of a Pastor”

### *Mediations on the Servant Passage of Isaiah*

Jesus describes himself as the “Good Shepherd”. In this series we will look at the wonderful servant passage through the Book of Isaiah and discover anew how they directly describe the sacrificial ministry of Jesus and what realistic expectations we can have of our pastors today.

Wednesday Evenings – 7:00pm  
“The Passion Story”


### *Fresh Insights to a Familiar Story*

We hear the story of our Lord’s passion each year, but I want to challenge you to discover new and deeper insights of this story. This in-depth Biblical study will help you make connections and meaning of the story of Jesus’ passion and death like you have never experienced before.

~Pastor Hagan

# Immanuel Lutheran Church & School

## February 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> Ladies Bible Study @10:00 am Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @2:00 pm & 5:30 pm Midweek Bible Class @7:00 pm Miertschin Hall	<b>2</b> Bingo @ 1:00 am	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b> Worship 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and Sunday School 10:17 am	<b>6</b> Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @ 2:00 pm & 5:30 pm Altar Guild Miertschin Hall @ 7 PM	<b>7</b> All Boards Meeting @ 7PM	<b>8</b> Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @2:00 pm & 5:30 pm Midweek Bible class @7:00 pm Miertschin Hall	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> Worship 9:00 am Adult Bible Class and Sunday School 10:17 am	<b>13</b> Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @2:00 pm & 5:30 pm Church Council @ 6 pm	 <b>14</b> Men's Breakfast @ AAA Rest @6:00 am Naomi @ 7 pm Miertschin Hall	<b>15</b> Ladies Bible Study Miertschin Hall @10:00 am Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @2:00 pm & 5:30 pm	<b>16</b> Hamburger Fry @11:00 am to 1:00 pm	<b>17</b> Parents Time Off @ 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> Worship 9:00 am w/Communion Adult Bible Class and SS 10:17 am Outreach Mtg @ 11:30 am	<b>20</b> President's Day OFFICES CLOSED No School No Day Care Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @ 2:00 pm & 5:30 pm	<b>21</b> Budget Meeting @ 7:00 pm	<b>22</b> Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @2:00 pm & 5:00 pm DINNER @ 6:00 pm (Chili) Ash Wednesday Worship @ 7:00 pm	<b>23</b> Prayer Vigil @ 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> Worship 9:00 am Adult Bible Class and SS 10:17 a.m. Social Sunday 11:30 am – 2 pm Mexican Casserole	<b>27</b> Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @ 2:00 pm & 5:30 pm	<b>28</b> Men's Breakfast @ AAA Restaurant @6:00 am	<b>29</b> Exercise Boot Camps (Gym) @2:00 pm & 5:00 pm Dinner @ 6:00 pm (Fried Fish) Worship @ 7:00 pm			

## More *Connections*!

In addition to or instead of receiving the *Connections* newsletter by US Mail, you can access the issues electronically.

As has been posted in "News and Notes" and in the first issue of *Connections*, you can go online and register your email to get an email notice or the actual issue when a new issue is posted on the website. This feature is not yet functional, so we will continue to US Mail all members until it is. At that point, those that have opted out will no longer receive a printed copy in the mail.

In addition, anyone, anywhere in the world, at any time, can go to the Immanuel church website <http://immanuelhouston.org> and see the current and previous issues, open them up and read them online, download/copy the issue to your own computer and/or print it out.

The two are not mutually exclusive, you can register your email *and* go online and see the issues. The back issues will be retained so that people can go back and see something in a previous issue at any time.

~Barbara Szalkowski

### *Birthdays . . .*

2 <sup>nd</sup> Shannon Zwernemann	17 <sup>th</sup> Barbara Spates
3 <sup>rd</sup> Michael Chandler	Cathleen Chevallier
4 <sup>th</sup> Norman Henderson	Joe Torres, Jr.
5 <sup>th</sup> Nicole Woods	19 <sup>th</sup> James Banda
6 <sup>th</sup> Michael Morrison	Matthew Ortiz
Sam Crosby	Lauren Whitefield
7 <sup>th</sup> Denise Rowell	23 <sup>rd</sup> Bob McFarland
Alan Froehlich	Christopher Emshoff
Cathy Swanstrom	25 <sup>th</sup> Valeria Dietrich
8 <sup>th</sup> Martha McFarland	Karen Evans
10 <sup>th</sup> Gladys Bishnow	Diane Schreiner
12 <sup>th</sup> Bill Eickemeyer	27 <sup>th</sup> Betty Puryear
13 <sup>th</sup> Marilyn Bakenhus	28 <sup>th</sup> Evelyn Marsh
16 <sup>th</sup> Tristan Pilato	29 <sup>th</sup> Mike Rivera



## Get Social!

The Social Committee has arranged for meals to be served before the midweek Lent services beginning Ash Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please join us for a time of fellowship and good food at 6:00pm before the service at 7:00pm.

We thank these groups for volunteering to provide meals:

Ash Wednesday, Feb 22  
Chili – the Social Committee

Wednesday, Feb 29  
Fried Fish – Elders

Also, our monthly Social Sunday will be Sunday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. Lunch will be served at 11:30am – Mexican Casserole, Pinto Beans, Dessert and Drink, followed by games and open gym to 2:00pm. We hope that everyone will come and enjoy the fellowship and/or physical activity and invite friends.

~Cathleen Chevallier

### *Anniversaries . . .*

Max & Daniel'e Bolen Jr.
8 years on the 14 <sup>th</sup>
Caroyne & Milton* Breithaupt
48 years on the 14 <sup>th</sup>
Henry & Valeria Dietrich
62 years on the 11 <sup>th</sup>
Alvin & Nora Froehlich
48 years on the 14 <sup>th</sup>
Daniel & Lena Waggoner
35 years on the 12 <sup>th</sup>

## What is Sunday School?

Sunday school is not just time for children after the church service. Sunday school should be for every member of the family no matter what the age.

Sunday school/Bible class is an arm of the church. It is a time for anyone to learn, study, have discussions or share their thoughts about the Word of God. In Deuteronomy 31:12 (NIV) "Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law."

All of our classes at Immanuel are designed to have the Word of God presented using age-appropriate material. The teachers and pastors take time to prepare material that is meaningful and encouraging while having fun and fellowship.

The whole family should spend time growing spiritually and learning the Word of God. Won't you consider starting the year off with Jesus? Bring a friend!

*~Cathleen Chevallier  
Sunday School Superintendent*



## Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has been looking at several potential projects in our facilities as reported in announcements by David at the end of last year. This is an update to what has been done so far.

1. Miertschin Hall roof - we have contacted several contractors to give us *budget* pricing and evaluation of the roof.
2. Church air conditioner – we have contacted our air conditioning contractor and a mechanical contractor for *budget* pricing.
3. Miertschin Hall – we have contacted 3 contractors for budget pricing for improvements to the the kitchen and enlarging/improving the restroom facilities in Miertschin Hall.

Anybody is welcome to come to the Board of Trustees meetings. Meetings are the first Tuesday of every month (starting times vary so be sure and call David Luker at 832-584-1721 for meeting time). You are welcome and encouraged to come and make comments and/or suggestions or just sit and listen to what the Trustees discuss.

*~Bill Eickemeyer & David Luker*

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Children in the Immanuel Early Childhood Center are having fun working with and learning on the new iPads that were introduced to the children after the first of the year. Our 18-month, two-year, and three-year classes are using the iPads with their teachers. Each Kindergarten and Pre-K student has his/her own iPad to learn on.

Mark your calendars for this year's ECE Spring Fundraiser to be held here at Immanuel on Saturday, March 10 from 3pm to 7pm. We will host a Western Chili Cook Off! More details to follow soon.

The Early Childhood Education Center would like to thank Laura Tilley, Ashley Zuelke, Julianna Meave, Rob Rollans, and Allison Hartley for referring families to our school in 2011. We appreciate your dedication to our school.

Since our best form of advertising and public relations is by word of mouth, we extend a thank you for referrals from our currently enrolled families in the form of a tuition deduction:

- MDO program – \$25.00\*
- Five day Early Childhood Education Program – \$400.00\*

\*Tuition credit will be applied May 1<sup>st</sup> or January 1<sup>st</sup>.

~Connie Meave



*Mother's Day Out Time with iPads*



*Pre-K time with iPads*



*Toddler time with iPads*



## Another New Connection at ECE!

Hannah (Toddler-2 Mother's Day Out) and her parents, Wendy and Ben Douglas, welcomed a baby girl on January 3, 2012. Kara Elise weighed in at 7.5 pounds. Congratulations!

~Winnie McNamara

## Scrapbook Class

Our first scrapbook class, taught by Winnie McNamara, was held on Saturday January 14<sup>th</sup>. All the participants agreed that it was a fun and relaxing day. Everyone completed a double-page spread for their scrapbooks as well as picked up tips on safe photo storage. Connie Meave was the winner of a 12x12" Creative Memories Photo/Scrapbook Album. We look forward to hosting another class in the very near future.

~Winnie McNamara



Scrapbook class members show off their work

## Outreach Meetings Resume

The next Outreach Meeting will be February 19, 2012 right after Bible Class/Sunday School (no lunch will be provided). Everyone is welcome. Even if you are not on a committee, you are still welcome to come and listen, ask questions, or make suggestions. All Outreach committee members please come. Please be sure at least one person from your committee comes to represent your committee. If you have any questions, please call David Luker at 832-584-1721.

~David Luker



Band Concert - Saturday, Feb. 25, 3:00pm

## Newsletter Staff

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Return Service Requested

To the Family of:

God with us, transforming and sending



Ash Wednesday February 22, 2012 Dinner 6:00pm Worship Service 7:00pm with Imposition of Ashes and Communion

Prayer Vigil Thursday February 23, 2012 2:00-7:00pm

Second Week of Lent Wednesday, February 29, 2012 Dinner 6:00pm Worship Service 7:00pm