

— IMMANUEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH —

# The First Thirty Years

1989-2019



# Scots' Form in the Suburbs

by Mark Noll

## THE SEDENTARY PRESBYTERIANS

awoke, arose, and filed to tables spread with white, to humble bits that showed how God almighty had decided to embrace humanity, and why these clean, well-fed, well-dressed suburbanites might need his grace.

The pious cruel, the petty gossipers and callous climbers on the make, the wives with icy tongues and husbands with their hearts of stone, the ones who battle drink and do not always win, the power lawyers mute before this awful bar of mercy, boys uncertain of themselves and girls not sure of where they fit, the poor and rich hemmed in alike by cash, physicians waiting to be healed, two women side by side—the one with unrequited longing for a child, the other terrified by signs within of life, the saintly weary weary in pursuit of good, the academics (soft and cosseted) who posture over words, the travelers coming home from chasing wealth or power or wantonness, the mothers choked by dual duties, parents nearly crushed by children died or lost, and some with cancer-ridden bodies, some with spikes of pain in chest or back or knee or mind or heart. They come, O Christ, they come to you.

They came, they sat, they listened to the words, “for you my body broken.” Then they ate and turned away—the spent unspent, the dead recalled, a hint of color on the psychic cheek—from tables groaning under weight of tiny cups and little crumbs of bread.

# Welcome to the Immanuel 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Chapbook

**THIRTY YEARS SOMEHOW CAN TAKE A LONG TIME**—a whole generation!—and also can flash by in a blur. About that long ago, I sat in a lecture by Jim Plueddemann, during which he casually tossed off one of his *bon mots* that became sort of a motto to live by for me: “There is no greater joy in life than witnessing the maturation of someone you care about.”

Those thoughtful and thought-provoking words played constantly through my decade of youth ministry, and subsequent high school Sunday School teaching and college student group leader volunteering at Immanuel, watching (and hopefully helping, on occasion) other people’s children grow up. **There was, and is, tremendous joy in witnessing that maturation**—and no doubt there are plenty of folks still at Immanuel who watched *me* grow up a bit, with perhaps some joy coloring their great relief. And perhaps some are *still* waiting on me.

Immanuel too has matured in thirty years. Hundreds, thousands, of people in our congregation have joined in Communion, through myriad weddings and celebrations, Advents and Pentecosts, baptisms and Easters. We have laid hands on new elders and new pastors, welcomed new members, and bid farewell to those moving on. We have raised our hands together in promise to families that we would assist them with the covenant rearing of “our” children. We have bowed our heads at funerals for dear friends, in paradoxical confident hope we will see them again. I am not sure we have yet matured enough to figure out exactly when to clap in the service without supervision, but then most 30-year-olds still have *some* growing to do.

**It has been a pleasure and a joy** to receive for this chapbook all the thoughtful contributions from authors, artists, musicians, photographers, poets, and others representing just a small taste of the amazing cross-section of gifts in our congregation. We hope you enjoy perusing it as much as we have enjoyed assembling it. There are poignant missing pieces: Sanna Baker’s children’s book, *Who’s A Friend of the Water-Spurting Whale*; Dave Oliphant’s jaunty song “God Bless You, Garbage-man”; sermons by Mateen Ellass; David LaPlaca’s amazing crafted art (not to mention mouth-watering hand-decorated cookies)—these contributions and so many others helped shape our congregation. But there was no way to include everything we wanted in this little time capsule, so **if you know of something befitting in which the church might take joy, I suppose we can start saving them up for our 40<sup>th</sup>.**

Special thanks to Sue Lundin, who designed the celebratory 30-year graphic (including as an element Alva Steffler’s original Celtic knot church logo), and to Ellen Rising Morris, who laid out this little volume. And thanks for thirty years of maturation together—a great joy indeed.

In Him,

**Vince Morris**, ACCIDENTAL EDITOR



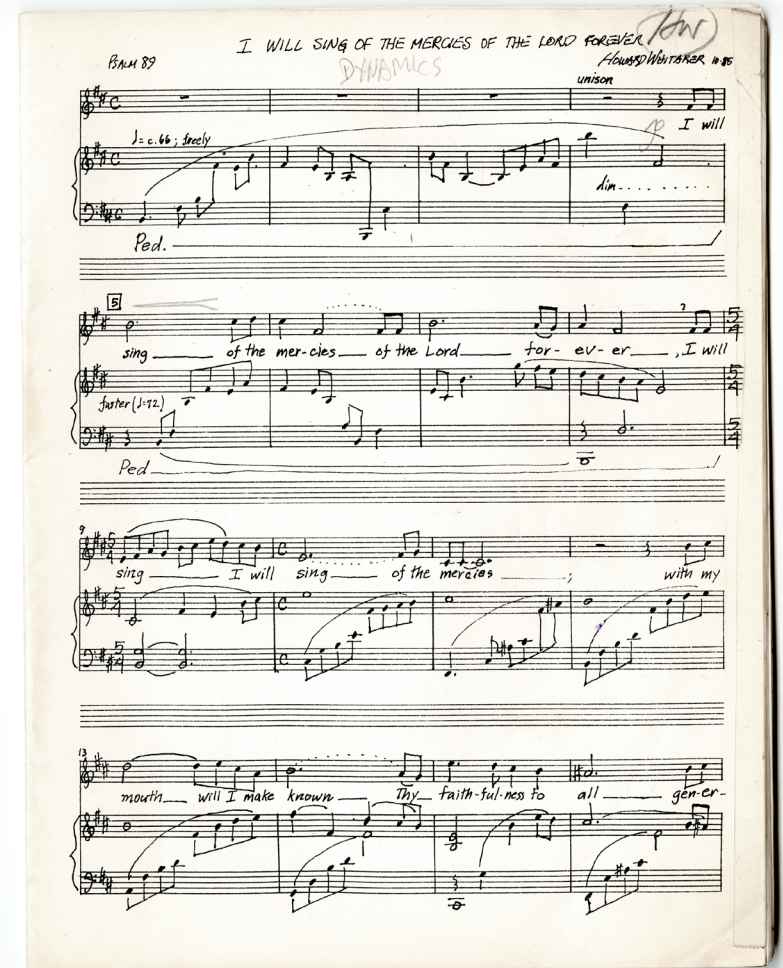
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## I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord Forever

by Howard Whitaker



First page of the original hand-written score of a choral composition, based on Psalm 89, that was the first piece written for the church by Howie Whitaker, our first choir director.

# Bible Jottings Revisited

by Carolyn Nystrom

*I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:20-21

**LATELY MY DEVOTIONAL PRACTICE** has been a sloooooow crawl through the New Testament. It started during my husband Roger's illness with Alzheimer's dementia, which over a period of three years slowly sapped his brain. At night, just before falling asleep, I would read to him a single paragraph from the New Testament. Even after Roger's death in early 2018, I've continued that practice: reading aloud a single paragraph and then turning out the light—though I (and perhaps a nearby cat) am the only audience. My Bible is old, with frayed pages, dog ears, penciled notes spanning decades. Somewhere in Philippians I recently came upon a margin jotting: "Bob H. 6-8-'99." I startled at its flashback-remembered context: our beloved pastor of many years, Bob Harvey, who had baptized our children, officiated both of our daughter's weddings, then a couple years later had then conducted the funeral (through tears) of our newly pregnant Sheri after her tragic car wreck on Route 64. Now our pastor himself was dying of cancer. Bob told our congregation through the words of his ancient friend the apostle Paul as he wrote to the church he had founded: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain," from Paul's first chapter of his letter to the Philippians.

The meat of Paul's statement is a simple ten words strung together: For-me-to-live-is-Christ-and-to-die-is-gain. Simple in text. Extremely complex in content. How can we vibrant, action-loving, brain-enriched, forward-planning humans look at death: heart-stopping, lungs-collapsed death? As gain! We aren't made that way! Or are we? Paul's self-argument goes on. He speaks of "fruitful labor for me" and his pleasure in witnessing "your progress and joy in the faith," the effects of his presence among these previous unbelievers, and expecting that "your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me." Paul was not in this life-ministry alone—and neither are we. God gives us life and breath. And company. And purpose! We may not always see that purpose; we may even have to dig around a while to find it. (Perhaps hidden under

the clutter of my desk. Nope: that's just the electric bill. But I digress.) Our God is a purpose-full God. Whether the task before us is mundane or gigantic or cosmic, God created us with purpose.

Some of that purpose is to enjoy him. Many evenings I walk slowly my neighborhood. About a quarter mile away at the top of a hill, I watch the sun go down over housetops planted in what used to be miles of fields. Sometimes I see a blaze of sunset filling the sky. Sometimes the sky expanse is just gloomy mist. (I can thank God for either—or both.) I might chat with a neighbor. Our neighborhood hosted sixty some children when we moved here—with our own children. Now we are mostly widows, a widower or two, a few grandmas with grandchildren moved in. A home-based business here and there—like my own. How might I walk my neighborhood at sunset as if "for me to live is Christ"?

How can I both confront and find comfort in my current setting while looking forward to God's new heaven and a new earth?

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## Advent Candles

by Susan Price

Angel, prophet, shepherd, holy family:  
four pillars mark our weeks of waiting.  
Two other candles flank the altar,  
for God above and God with us below.  
In side windows, cool white tapers stand  
with brave flames challenging the sun.

On Christmas eve, another flame I'll bring  
to the Christ child's table, behind cupped hand:  
pledging less-than-perfect self to celebrating  
life renewed by Hope made human.  
Walking with careful steps and slow,  
I'll free my joy-lit soul to run—  
no, fly—to meet the perfect, living Light.

Rejoice! Rejoice and sing this holy night.



# The Others

by David Malone

*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

**IGREW UP ON THE EAST SIDE OF CLEVELAND, OHIO.** Like many larger cities, Cleveland had a diverse population who mostly lived in enclaves and pockets around the city. The Polish were in Parma, Czechs and other Slavs lived near East 55<sup>th</sup> St, and large numbers of Jewish families lived in Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights.

There were dozens of synagogues throughout this area. During an early college religion course, I needed to visit different houses of worship. Since I had a Jewish co-worker at the pizzeria where I worked, I took advantage of this relationship to go to temple with him. I found out from Hillel the time and expected attire for visiting his Orthodox temple, bringing along my two brothers that Shabbat afternoon. As we sat near the back of the sanctuary, which was segregated by gender with a screen down the middle of the room, the service began with singing. The large Torah scroll was taken from its ark and paraded down the aisle as the congregation sang praises to God. As the Torah made its way to the rear of the sanctuary, the man carrying the scroll was about to grant the honor of chanting special blessings, and started to pass the scroll on to my red-headed brother. Hillel, recognizing that the Torah was to be handed to him, exclaimed rather loudly, "He's not a Jew!" It was painfully made clear that we were gentiles—outsiders.

As God's redemptive history unfolded through Eden to Ur, and as Abraham was called forth to a land he knew not and promised an unseen progeny, God elected a people and called a nation. There was Israel and everyone else. The nations. *The Other*. A very clear binary was established between Jews and Gentiles. Yet Yahweh called Israel to be a light to the nations (*goyim*). They were to be, as the prophet Isaiah reminded them, to be "a light for the Gentiles, that [God's] salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). However, Israel was concerned more for themselves and maintaining their own purity and safety.

In a letter written a dozen years after his visit, the apostle Paul reminds the Philippian believers, many of whom were Jews of the diaspora, of God's original vision for his people. God's salvation was not to simply result in a reward, but in a response. God's people were not elected for a life of segregation but for a life of service—sharing God's redemptive love to the world. Israel was to use their chosen place to bring the good news of God's mercy to their neighbors.

Paul tells the Church that if they have "any encouragement" or "any tenderness and compassion," flowing from their union with Jesus, then they are to be like him. Jesus challenged the religious leadership that sought to maintain the purity laws down to their tithes of mint and dill (Matthew 23:23), those who questioned who was their neighbor—wanting to distance themselves from the unclean. This is the religion that humanity creates, not one that has a "common sharing in the Spirit." The true religion of Christ is one of humility. Christ renounced his divine nature (*kenosis*), taking on the form of a servant. He humbled himself, and Paul tells the Philippian believers, and us, "in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

"The others." The gospel of Jesus Christ is about the others. It is about those on the margins. The outsiders. The nations. The apostle James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). Over the course of the last several decades groups advancing views of ethnic superiority and heightened nationalism have grown—sadly, even within the Church of Jesus Christ. Catholic and Protestant churches helped to make the 1994 Rwandan genocide possible by giving moral sanction to the killing. American Christians created many church-affiliated private schools to escape efforts at bringing equity to educational opportunities, or in a post-9/11 world have promoted ideals at odds with the Gospel. Christians too easily seek their own purity and protection.

The struggle to keep the Christian life focused on the outsider was a struggle in the early church as well. Jesus focused his parables and healing upon the outsider. The Gospels detail situations where mainstream religious leaders are challenged and outsiders are embraced. Jesus heals the Canaanite woman's daughter and centurion's servant. He makes Samaritans—those despised by the Jews—the focal point of true neighborliness and full worship. Jesus engaged the outcasts until he was arrested and crucified. The Acts of the Apostles highlights Peter's struggle as God opened his eyes to what was clean and unclean and the struggle of how to incorporate outsiders.

God's people in every time have found it difficult to move beyond self-interest. Thankfully, John the Revelator recounts that the nations surround God's throne. The Holy Spirit will move God's people to accomplish His will. The words in Philippians focus on Christ's humility, that we are to emulate. The question will be whether God's people will fight His will or will experience the joy of their salvation, as they look not to their own interests but to those of the others. May the Spirit give us the grace to be obedient.

# Feasting in the House of Zion

by Ann Fackler

*I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.*

PSALM 57:9–10

IT HAS NOW BEEN TWENTY-ONE YEARS since I called Immanuel Presbyterian Church my church home, but its influence still remains in my heart and its people still in my prayers. The spiritual journey for many of us has been hard and long, but I pray all of Bob Harvey's sermons have left a deep impression on our souls and not been wasted. My closet is still filled with many of his tapes, which I hope to listen to when I reach my 90s and I'm sitting in a nursing home.

How do I celebrate IPC's influence on my life? Bob Harvey and Paul Heidebrecht always pointed us toward Jesus, the Alpha and Omega of the Word. To me it was more than just a story, it was a living truth, a relationship I could hold on to for each day. Little did I know at the time how important that would be for my future spiritual journey. At the same time I saw the Word fleshed out in the lives of the imperfect members of IPC. You were like family to us as we reared our three sons, Jon, Ben, and Ted, building life lessons into their lives for which we are eternally grateful.

I want to close with a song and a verse which have been meaningful to me over the years: Psalm 57:9–10 reads, "I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; I will sing of you among the peoples. For great is your LOVE, reaching to the heavens; your FAITHFULNESS reaches to the skies." When all seemed hopeless and lost, I could cling to God's love and faithfulness and know He would not let me or mine go.

There are so many songs that have been meaningful over the years, but this one which we sang last Sunday is a good one.

## We Will Feast in the House of Zion

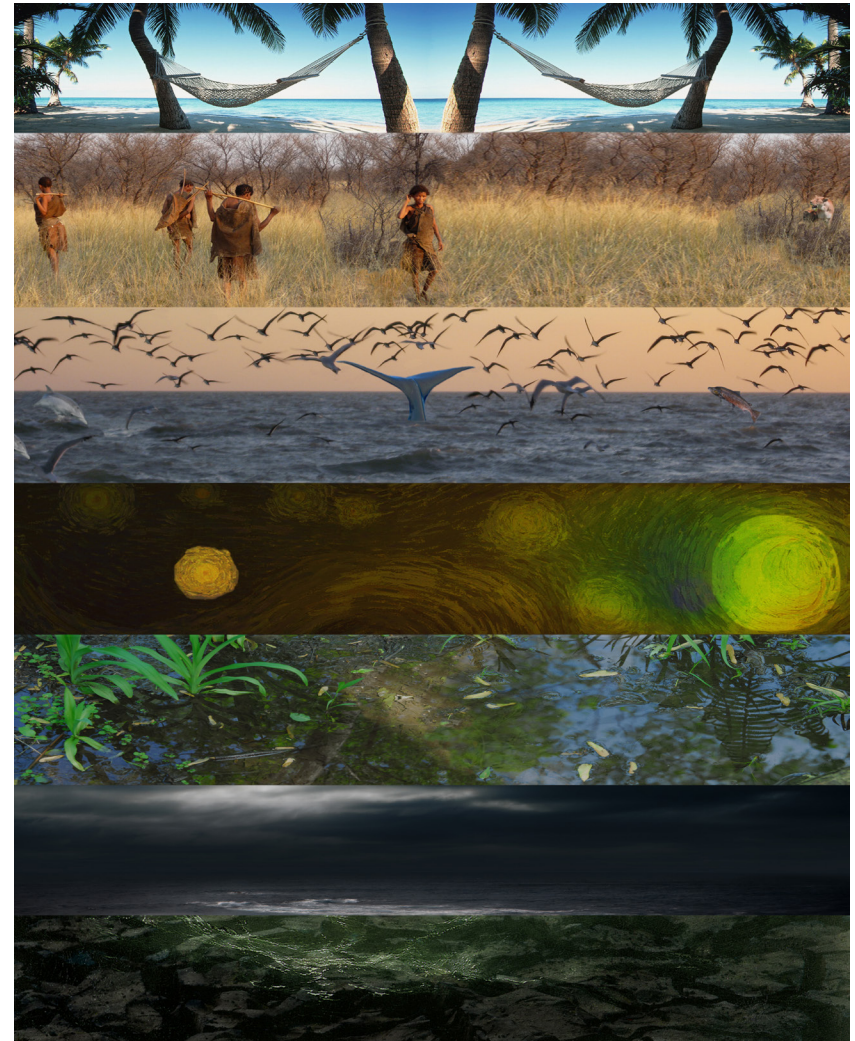
**Chorus:** We will feast in the house of Zion. We will sing with our hearts restored.  
He has done great things. We will say together: We will feast and weep no more.

1. We will not be burned by the fire, he is the Lord our God. We are not consumed by the flood, upheld, protected, gathered up.
2. In the dark of night before the dawn, my soul be not afraid, for the promised morning. O how long, O God of Jacob, be my strength.
3. Every vow we've broken and betrayed, you are the faithful one, and from the garden to the grave, bind us together, bring shalom.

"We Will Feast in the House of Zion" Sandra McCracken & Joshua Moore | Copyright 2015 Drink Your Tea Music (ASCAP)

# The Great Love—Creation, 2012

by John Walford



"This is one of a series of pieces commissioned for a special project ['Glimpses of Grace' that I made especially for use at Immanuel] on the essence of Christian belief, as broadly and historically understood. Other works in the series can be seen in the set, 'Humanity & Our Creator: A Christian Perspective,' at this link: [www.flickr.com/photos/walford/sets/72157628988426955/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/walford/sets/72157628988426955/)

"This is an attempt to convey something of the Genesis narrative of the six days of Creation, topped off by the seventh day, set aside as a day of rest, and hence the pattern for the seven-day week, respected in most of the world."—JW

## Where I Used to Go to Church (and Still Do)

by Vince Morris

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-9

**THE CREW OF A SHIP SAILING PAST A REMOTE ISLAND** spots a man waving to them from the beach, who turns out to be a castaway who had been stranded there for many years. As the crew rescues him and brings him on board, they notice three huts on the island and ask if there are others also in need of rescue. "No," the man says, "that first hut on the right is my house, and the one on the far left is my church building—I felt it was important to attend church even while stranded alone on the island." "But what about the hut in the middle?" the crew asked. The castaway made a face. "That's where I *used* to go to church."

Most theological jokes have a limited currency. They are only funny to a certain type of person, with perhaps too much training to actually be helpful, and also a cynically warped sense of humor. (Q: Why did John Calvin preach predestination? A: He *had* to.) When some people jokingly refer to their own version of the "thorn in the flesh" as mentioned in the passage above, mostly they just mean something—or someone—irritating at the moment. Theologians speculate that Paul's "thorn" could have been a physical affliction, perhaps eye trouble—note Paul's blindness after his conversion on the Road to Damascus, and his comment in a later epistle, "See with what large letters I am writing to you in my own hand" from Galatians 6:11. But we don't really know. It wasn't small, or a joking matter—it was to be endured, and, because it manifested Christ's work, to be celebrated, paradoxically.

I admit I find quite humorous one of the lines of Immanuel's original mission statement, the "Who We Seek to Be" as it used to be printed on our bulletins. We are committed to "Joyful Worship," "Spirited Mission," "Loving Service," "Transformative Learning"—and, best of all, "Resolute Fellowship." Sometimes fellowship in that little hut for church is filled with weakness, failure, sin, and desperate need for grace. The only thing we can do to be in communion with one another is to be *resolute* about it! Certainly we have not been perfect or even very good at practicing our faith nor our fellowship at times. Very fortunately, Christ's grace is indeed sufficient for us,

and his power is perfected in our weakness. We have for thirty years been committed to one another, to the joys and sorrows, marryings and burials, of our little corner of the Great Cloud of Witnesses, struggling along with our thorns and hardships, celebrations and Communion, experiencing surpassing revelations and overwhelming sadnesses, losses and joys.

May God continue to grant us both enthusiasm and joy, endurance for our thorns and humility to bear them, a sense of humor to enjoy the jokes (unintentional or not), and the resolution to continue our fellowship together and with Him, for another thirty years and until we too join that Cloud.

## Of Tears (A Song for My Church)

by Kent Richter

Greybeard love I've watched your withered hand on sacred bread,  
The unfirm footstep altar-bound, the bowed and frosted head.  
And I have dared imagine days when you shall walk no more,  
But pass ahead afloat our tears through heaven's open door.  
And I have cried to know that I shall have to bear that day,  
And sing our love in tears of pain when you have passed away.

Gentle child on parent hand awakening to surprise,  
Held up to view these mysteries with wide and open eyes—  
Oh, I've imagined days when you shall see the grey on me  
And weep the day I pass away while knowing I am free.  
And I have smiled to think what tears might sing that I have gone  
And whisper gentle pains of love when I have wandered on.

The birth of two, the death of one, the life of more and more,  
The salt of tears in bread we tear and in the wine we pour;  
Delight of generations and the pain of weary loss,  
A union past imagining united in the cross.  
And I have sighed to know that love begets the tears of pain,  
And love outlives the blessed grief when we shall love again.



# The Healing of the World

by Bill Koechling

*Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed;  
Save me and I will be saved,  
For You are my praise.*

JEREMIAH 17:14

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO I CAME UPON an old unprocessed roll of film in my long-dormant darkroom. Since my photographer-son, Jesse, was visiting at Christmas I thought he'd like to take the film home to New York and process it in his darkroom. He's always loved the mysteries in found photos, especially their ability to evoke questions about time, story, and memory. Perhaps these latent images would tell a tale.

Jesse processed the film and scanned each one. When he described the images to me I realized that these were photos I had shot twenty years previously in the woods and fields around Fermilab not far from Immanuel. They included several photos of our two daughters among the trees and some photos of fields. A photo of a restored prairie caught my eye. The daytime shot appears to have many bright stars in the sky. Though likely caused by fungus after twenty years of sitting in my basement darkroom, the effect on the film seemed more empyrean than fungal. Bright stars over a newly-restored prairie made me immediately think of a friend.

A few days after that roll of film was discovered, Paul Heidebrecht passed away. Among many of Paul's labors were his years spent restoring that same prairie I had photographed at Fermilab. He once described to me the necessity of learning all the insects, animals, and plants there in order to fully understand his work. This was one of many ways Paul helped to "colonize earth with the life of heaven." At Immanuel and in dealing with his friends he took seriously Christ's call to live as a renewed human being in anticipation of a new creation.

It is a glimpse of Paul and of what the healing of the world might look like that I see in this image.



*"Earth's crammed with heaven . . .  
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes."*

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

# A Pilgrim Song

by Jim and Carol Plueddemann

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage . . .  
they go from strength to strength  
until each appears before God in Zion.*

PSALM 84:5, 7

**GOD HAS USED IMMANUEL, THIS FAITH FAMILY WE LOVE,** to be a place of blessing for us, helping us to go from *strength to strength* in our pilgrim journey.

Having worshiped in this church since college days, we stayed closely connected during our thirteen years in Nigeria and were welcomed back in 1980. We took joy in participating in the life of the church by teaching the junior boys' Sunday School class, singing in the choir, and being a part of most of the church's committees. Having prayerfully studied the role of lay people and women in Scripture for several years, we joined together as a congregation in forming the new Immanuel 30 years ago. Jim was an elder when that momentous decision was made.

Who can forget those first years at College of DuPage where we stumbled our way forward, sometimes feeling homeless and uncertain about our future? Yet we all grew deeper in our walk of faith and were steadied by the teaching, preaching and music that we experienced week by week. Carol was surprised and sobered by her call (along with Carolyn Nystrom) to be the first women elders. What a privilege to join our brothers in Christ on Session in ministering to this wonderful congregation. Serving communion together was humbling and deeply meaningful.

After thirteen years of teaching at Wheaton College for Jim and editing at Harold Shaw Publishers for Carol, God called us back into missions in 1993 to serve in leadership of SIM (Serving In Mission). We had been nourished and prepared for this daunting responsibility largely through the worship and teaching at Immanuel, along with the faithful support of our small group. The hymn "Lift High the Cross" . . . *till all adore his sacred name* was a strong affirmation of our call.

During those ten rich years of mission leadership, God took us to 56 countries and sustained us at every turn. These were significant years in mission history as SIM changed to be an agency facilitating missions "from everywhere to everywhere." Today the International Director is a Nigerian and the missionary teams represent over 60 nationalities.

In 2003, our pilgrimage continued as Jim took a teaching position at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Carol was again completely surprised by Immanuel's call to be Minister of Congregational Life. The ten years she served this church were challenging and blessed beyond measure.

Throughout our life journey, God has taken us through some deep *valleys of weeping*, and our Immanuel family has often helped us to make these valleys a *place of springs* and blessing (Psalm 84:6). *Strength to strength* often feels like complete weakness, a place where only God's perfect strength carries us through.

How good it has been to journey with Immanuel brothers and sisters, seeking to be pilgrims who make a difference here, while our hearts are set on heaven.

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## Cold Dawn at the Shelter (FOR ALVA STEFFLER)

by Mark Noll

**FOR SEVERAL YEARS,** Bethel and then Immanuel volunteers helped out once a month at the PADS overnight shelter. This poem is about an early morning at the shelter, which was then at the Benedictine convent on Maple and Yackley in Lisle.

Last Christmastide the angel came at six  
fifteen. While volunteers began to poke  
the guests awake, collect the mats, and fix  
the coffee for the breakfast line, the smoke  
rose from first cigarettes, and one large man  
groaned off the floor, breath harsh, a map of beet-  
red lines high on his cheeks—he strains but can  
not bend enough to reach his feet.

The angel teaches art design, his hair  
is gray, he's fifty odd. Straightway he goes  
down on his knees, does not recoil from hot  
dry skin, begins to tug one of a pair  
of stained white socks around those death-puffed toes  
and nonchalantly smiles and says "fear not."

# Yet We Can Pray

by Harold Myra

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

JAMES 5:16

**CHANGE THESE PAST THIRTY YEARS HAS ACCELERATED** so rapidly for all of us that we wonder and worry about what's coming next. Families are broken. On our screens the raw realities of the world's suffering invade our lives with vivid, heart-breaking scenes, making us feel helpless to do anything about it.

Yet we can pray.

Pray? Does it really affect anything? Scripture tells us "effectual prayer avails much." Yet we look around us, and we wonder what that really means.

Sometimes we get a glimpse...

At Immanuel our prayer group often prayed for Richie, my foster brother in prison for life since age 17. My family's church in Pennsylvania faithfully visited and prayed for him—for the nearly half-century of his imprisonment. Richie had repented of his sins and developed a vibrant faith, leading Bible studies and sharing hope with other prisoners.

About a decade ago while in prison, Richie was doing genealogical research and corresponded with a nurse in Germany named Bianka. They found they shared a strong faith and their correspondence developed into romance. Bianka eventually married Richie in prison. Ten years passed, and after 46 years, Richie was released on parole.

Recently Jeanette and I went to O'Hare to welcome Richie and Bianka for a visit. As we waited in the baggage area, a couple walked by with big, bold letters on their sweatshirts: "Hubby... and Wifey." We smiled, and then I recognized Richie. The instant hugs and their easy sense of humor began our first visit since he was released.

Two days before, our Pennsylvania church had held a double celebration. A much older man who had visited Richie in prison for decades told him he could live with him when he was released. He and his wife were in their mid-nineties and about to celebrate their 75<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

The church did it up right: a combined anniversary celebration and ten-year-delayed wedding reception for Richie and Bianka. After the festivities they drove a decorated car around the church, cans noisily bumping along behind, with their church friends cheering them on.

Below is a photo of the two happy couples. Another photo I have shows the eight men and women who formed Richie's re-entry team and who made sure he got a job, driver's license, and all the support he would need. Prayer, patience, persistence, hope and celebration... the faithfulness of our churches bring glimpses of God at work in a tragic world.





# Because I Hold You in My Heart

by Julia LaPlaca

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-7

**THIS PAST FEBRUARY, MARTHA MEAD SENT ME A CARD** on Valentine's Day. It wasn't a sentimental letter but a cheerful, rambly, newsy note. She related how Bible study was canceled due to icy weather and how (because her eyesight was fading) she started listening to the Narnia audiobooks. She was surprised at her own eagerness to hear the stories, familiar as they were.

I still have Martha's notes and many others from my Immanuel family. The personal quality of physical, handwritten letters makes it difficult for me to throw them away. Every letter represents a person's time and energy—the effort to look up an address and sit down to organize thoughts into writing. The script betrays a bit of the writer's personality. A couple of words in Martha's neat, cursive sentences had been re-written over white-out. A note next to the correction explains that her eyes “really do play tricks on her these days.” Finally, there is the message itself. With every reading, I'm touched that Martha signed her letter “your loving friend” and that she wanted to share a bit of herself and her life with me. Letters like these are paradoxes; they are renewable gifts, ready to be re-read, but they are also the mementos of an individual's one-time gesture of kindness.

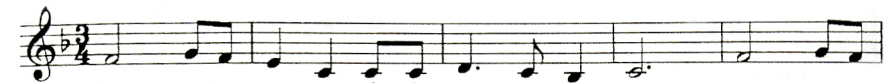
It seems right that the bulk of the wisdom that has guided the formation of the Church is couched within letters. Of course, Paul and the other epistle-writers intended their messages to have a widespread readership, but their messages were still directed to specific, cherished audiences. It can be confusing when we have to interpret a quarrel or friendship two millennia after the fact, but I've always enjoyed the warmth of Paul's salutations and personal asides. The church is grounded in real, human relationships between people bound together by their shared relationship with Jesus Christ. We partake in his grace and perpetuate that grace together.

I experienced God's grace through relationships at Immanuel. Sunday School teachers and youth group leaders made space to explore the tough questions that interested me. Invitations to play music on Sunday (despite the wrong notes), inquiries about school, advice for navigating life as a young professional, and the continued letters of encouragement—these all demonstrated that my church family wanted to be a part of the “good work” of my spiritual and personal development.

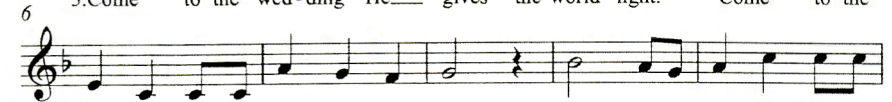
At the Anglican church I now attend, there is a prayer for dying and dead. I'm often reminded of people at Immanuel, “partners in the gospel,” who were important to me. This week, I will think of my loving friend Martha, whose funeral is also this Sunday. These days, my memories of Immanuel have been prompting me to question how I can care for the people God has placed in my life. What questions can I ask younger people to show that I care? How can I extend grace in personal way? Who needs to receive a letter?

## Come to the Wedding

Andrew T. Le Peau



1. Come to the wed-ding. O— come to the feast. Come to the  
2. Come to the wed-ding Each na - tion and race. Come to the  
3. Come to the wed-ding. All things are made new. Come to the  
4. Come to the wed-ding. See New Hea - ven and Earth. Come to the  
5. Come to the wed-ding He— gives the world light. Come to the



wed-ding from the great - est to least. Come to the wed-ding, say-ing  
wed-ding. He's pre-pared you a place. Come to the wed-ding. For the  
wed-ding. See his bread's here for you. Come to the wed-ding. He will  
wed-ding. It's cre - a - tion's new birth. Come to the wed-ding. Now he  
wed-ding For there is no more night. Come to the wed-ding. He is



"Just as I am." Come to the wed-ding. It's the feast of the Lamb.  
bride-groom a - waits. Come to the wed-ding. He has o - pen'd the gates.  
dry e - v'ry tear. Come to the wed-ding. Now the best wine is here.  
dwells where we are. Come to the wed-ding. He's the Bright Morn-ing Star.  
God's great "I AM." Come to the wed-ding. It's the feast of the Lamb.

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## “This is... for you”

by Mark Noll

**FOR A COMMUNION SERVICE** at the College of DuPage toward the end of 1998, Roger Lundin was the elder assigned to bring the elements to those who could not navigate the stairs and come to the auditorium stage. One of the individuals this tall, imposing, and patient elder served that day was Harold Myra's father, who had only a few months to live.

Thick weight of years pressed down the old man's head  
as to his wheel chair the other bent,  
those arms a bridge of flesh, extending bread  
with tender care and cup—a Protestant  
viaticum brought to the nearly dead—

and whispered, while the old man gummed the bread  
and trembling shook the cup, of body spent,  
of blood poured out, of life passed to the dead,  
thin bridge of words become a filament  
of hope to crown the old one's sinking head.

Weeks later and the old, old man is dead,  
but others take his turn at sacrament  
and sing the ageless words of “sacred head”  
and marvel at such heavy traffic sent  
upon such slender bridge as wine and bread.

## Blest Be the Tie

by Mark Noll

**ALMOST TWENTY YEARS LATER**, on the Sunday after Roger's funeral, John Zimmerman played his own arrangement of “Blest Be the Tie that Binds” at some point in the service, as those seated in the balcony looked down to where Roger's imposing frame had taken its place for so many years on the right side of the sanctuary.

When we asunder part  
It hurts like holy hell.  
The sudden fracture of the heart  
Wounds more than words can tell.

To see him stone cold dead  
It gives us inward pain.  
Yet what is worse, to think ahead  
And not see him again.

But if we know in part  
And tears don't mask the cross,  
We then may still be joined in heart  
Despite this crushing loss.

If we can struggle on,  
Borne by Another's pain,  
We too may know as we are known  
And hope to meet again.

*In Memoriam, Roger Lundin (1949–2015)*

# On Being a Christian and the City of God

by Doug Penney

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ... and I heard a voice saying, See, the home of God is among mortals ... he will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

REVELATION 21:2-4

πόλις		city, the polis
πολίτης		citizen
πολίτευμα		citizenship
πολιτεύομαι		to live as a citizen

**PART OF THE APPEAL OF STUDYING GREEK AND LATIN** is making etymological connections either with English words or by discovering associations among the new vocabulary you're learning. The shared elements in the words listed above stand out even if you can't read them. Such connections help in memorization, but ultimately etymology doesn't determine meaning. Words derive their meaning from context and how they are used regardless of their distant history. Meaning changes over time. Etymology is simply a clue to that circuitous history, not a reliable guide to meaning. Even so, occasionally a relationship between words can provoke a useful insight. The words above help us trace such a line of thinking through the Bible.

## πόλις | city

In the ancient world, people thought of themselves as belonging to a city, more than to a country. National unity was not a default position and sometimes not even an available option. For a parallel, think how during the Civil War, many were loyal to their state more than to the nation. The ancient city functioned as a state—issued coins, made laws and treaties, conducted foreign trade, forged its reputation, etc. The city and its dependent villages (“daughters” in biblical speak) were a unit, economically, culturally and politically. (See “poli-” in that word.) In Aristotle's famous quote, poorly rendered, “Man is a political animal,” he means that humanity needs community. Ideally, the city is that community.

## πολίτης | citizen

Citizens contribute to the governance and economic vitality of the city. The prodigal son hires himself to a citizen (Luke 15:15) who is providing employment, albeit meager, to locals with no way to support themselves. It's trickle-down economics

with a very little trickle. That was the role of citizenry, to provide for the public good through generosity (sponsorship of the arts and festivals), economic investment and employment. In this system, a free person (non-slave) could be very poor if not a member of an estate. The prodigal may have been materially not much better off than a servant/slave. The difference was that, unlike a slave, the younger brother would not be pursued, captured and tortured when he chose to run.

## πολίτευμα | citizenship

Along with citizenship comes shared customs and obligations. The city's reputation rests on the behavior of its members. At his trial, Socrates warns the citizens of Athens that if they execute him, the reputation of their beloved city will forever bear a blemish. Jesus labels Jerusalem “the city that kills her prophets” (Luke 13:34). Paul imagines the gospel as our home city. We are its ambassadors (Ephesians 6:20). Its reputation lies in our hands.

## πολιτεύομαι | to live as a citizen

We are to live as citizens worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:27). Since we live by faith, as did Abraham, we look forward eagerly to a city whose foundation has been laid by a builder and architect who is God (Hebrews 11:10). Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). which the Bible frequently asks us to imagine as a city.

What does it all mean? That the old song “This World Is Not My Home” has it right. We are committed to living as responsible citizens of a far-off country to which we belong and for which we long, but have never visited. Our deportment is to be guided not by customs learned from our experience here in a fallen world, rather by those of a land foreign to this world, a land that is the way this world was meant to be before it was ruined.

We are basically homesick for the community of heaven, eager for the celebration at the end, to sit at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matthew 8:11) and all the rest of the cloud of witnesses who lived their lives here by faith and hope, which is another name for waiting.

Living as a Christian now is practice for then—and while we wait, practicing the foreign customs of heaven makes this world a better place.



# A Great Cloud

by Phyllis Le Peau

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.*

HEBREWS 12:1-2

**PAUL HEIDEBRECHT HAD ENERGY IN HIS VOICE** as we discussed the talk that I was to give to our Presbytery on evangelism. That was my last conversation with Paul. He died a few weeks later on my birthday.

My last conversation with Roger Lundin was filled with his expressions of love and joy, so like him. Weeks later he was dead.

Over thirty years ago Andy and I visited Bob and Joan Harvey before they left town after his retirement. All four of us, in tears, knew that this was our final good-bye with Bob. Many others from our community have died over these last three decades: Joe and Alan and Dee and Claudia and Randy and Dave and Ruth, to name just a few. As I think about them my thoughts and emotions travel in many directions.

In this journey I have been comforted by the words from Hebrews 12:1, *We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses!*

These friends and family members are now part of this cloud, cheering us on in our faith. I am so grateful that one of Immanuel's signature practices, the Scots' Form of communion, always brings this truth to my mind. We gather at the table as a community to eat Jesus' body and drink his blood in remembrance of him who died and rose. Holding hands across the aisle we then sing, "When we've been there ten thousand years... We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."

As a cloud of witnesses on earth we wait, even as that "great cloud of witnesses" wait in Heaven. Yet in hope we know we will be complete with them.

What is even more remarkable is that they won't be complete until we join them. Right before Hebrews talks about us being surrounded by this great cloud, the writer says this about them: "All of them pleased God because of their faith! But still they died without being given what had been promised. This was because God had something better in store for us. And he did not want them to reach the goal of their faith without us" (Hebrews 11:39-40 CEV).

Those who are commended for their faith and those who have gone before us will only be made complete *together with us!* We are one body with Christ, here and in heaven. And we are encouraged by them to run the race with perseverance, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

# God Moves in a Mysterious Way: AN ARRANGEMENT OF DUNDEE

by John D. Zimmerman

**I ATTENDED BETHEL PRESBYTERIAN**, the precursor to Immanuel, long ago when we met in the house on Union Street in Wheaton. Most morning services then ended with a benediction consisting of the first two verses of "Now Blessed Be the Lord Our God" sung to the tune "Dundee" from the Scottish Psalter of 1615. It seemed appropriate to compose an arrangement of this tune for Immanuel Presbyterian's thirtieth anniversary, but I had in mind the words to William Cowper's "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" (number 128 in our Trinity Hymnal). In keeping with mystery, this arrangement is composed largely of various combinations of the original tune, its contrapuntal inversion (upside-down) and its augmentation (twice as slow). But the listener need not know any of this to enjoy the result.

The composition is playable on a keyboard or by various combinations of instruments. You can hear it via the following link as a reed instrument version produced by a computer synthesizer.

<https://soundcloud.com/user-397942491-492181654/god-moves-in-a-mysterious-way-john-d-zimmerman/s-GtHGM>

That composition was followed by a simpler, jollier jig, "Gigue in D Major," in the old contrapuntal style. You can hear a computer-synthesized version of this happy anniversary music at

<https://soundcloud.com/user-397942491-492181654/gigue-in-d-major-john-d-zimmerman/s-6bCl6>

(Computers being what they are, if these links don't work for you, please contact me at [zimmermanMusic@hotmail.com](mailto:zimmermanMusic@hotmail.com) for access to the compositions.)

# A Journey with God

by Karl Dortzbach

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

GENESIS 22:6-8

**MOST TRIPS, SHORT OR LONG**, start with at least a few known elements. Usually we know where we are going, and why, *before* we take the trip. If you like to plan, you might add details like what you will take, who will go with you, what you will do along the way, and how long the trip will take.

We went on a vacation once, but had not decided where we would go—the mountains or the coast? We couldn't decide if we would go for a week or a few days. We had no idea where we would stay or if we needed to bring food. We discussed our conundrum as we started the journey. We ultimately came to a fork in the interstate and still couldn't decide, so we pulled into the triangle where the exit left the road and there chose our path! The coast it was!

In Genesis 22, we read that Abraham and Isaac went on a journey. Everything was there ... sort of. The purpose was to worship and offer a sacrifice to God. So there was the fire and the knife and the wood, but—oops! No Sacrifice. God had told Abraham to go ... and He would show where. Abraham assured Isaac that since God said to sacrifice, He would provide the sacrifice. Surely the men accompanying the father-son expedition recognized missing elements. They however remained behind for the intimate finale of Abraham and Isaac with God. God did direct to the place. When there was no other lamb, Abraham concluded that the strange message to sacrifice Isaac was correct, and he poised his knife above him when the cry of the substitute lamb was heard. God *did* provide a way. His promise to keep Isaac as the son of covenant was maintained, and Abraham's unnerving willingness to obey was made clear in the moment.

The journey of faith for all of us parallels that of Abraham and Isaac. We remember many years ago when God moved in the hearts of some of his people to strike out and create a new place of worship. For years Immanuel traveled the journey of being housed in the temporary tents of a community college. During those, and subsequent

years, Immanuel accompanied us in our unknown journey to the places God directed us to serve Him. We, as a part of the wider community of Immanuel, had to learn to lean on the Provider and Keeper of Covenant. More than once along the path it seemed that the promise could not endure, yet God always provided a way.

Some important lessons emerge from the story of a journey with God. First is that our journey is with God. Others may be along, but primarily our ears must hear His voice, He is the One directing! Second is that the journey of faith is never isolated and alone—even when we feel that the sacrifice being made by one party is greater than the sacrifice of another. (Imagine what Isaac was thinking until the sound of the lamb was heard!) Third is that the journey of faith doesn't end with us, it ends with a loving and present Mediator of a new covenant. The Lamb of God provides for us the fullness of life and the ability to fully worship. We rejoice in our journey of faith with the people of Immanuel—He has always been with us!

## Maundy Thursday, 2003

by Susan Price

I.  
Tables clothed in white. Empty chairs.  
Wine of life, bread of heaven  
standing ready—who would dare  
sit, but for the invitation given?

Come, taste and see—  
eat with new-baptized eyes.  
Come, drink and be  
welcomed to a paradise  
for this world and all others.  
Come, join your sisters and brothers.  
This bread, like manna, feeds our souls.  
These pressed grapes connect us to a vine  
through which the living water flows.

II.  
Warm water spills from lifted pitcher;  
Cleansing pours like love over tired feet:  
Why does brokenness leave me richer?

O servant Love, help me see.

# What Splendid Friends They Make

by Bev Burch

*Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.  
I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;  
I have no good apart from you."  
As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,  
in whom is all my delight.*

PSALM 16:1-3 ESV

**WE ALL HAVE THOSE DAYS.** Sometimes we feel we can hardly take another step, hanging on to a shred of faith, needing reinforcements. David had a lot of those days as he was hunted by murderous enemies while waiting for the throne God had promised him. Psalm 16, a psalm that starts as a desperate plea for protection and ends with the hope of resurrection, was written on one of those days. Overwhelmed by the threat of enemies in pursuit, David claimed the Lord as his refuge, and the Lord's people as his source of joy and encouragement, rejecting the company and support of those who chase after other gods (v. 4).

Eugene Peterson, in *The Message*, charmingly paraphrases David's words in verse 3 to say, "And these God-chosen lives all around—what splendid friends they make!"

When we seek the Lord's protection, how often we find that His strength is given through His people!

When our family first arrived at Immanuel, just a few years after its inception, we were strangers seeking refuge from a disheartening church situation. We were emotionally and spiritually spent. Almost as soon as we walked in the door of Immanuel's College of DuPage meeting place, we started feeling revived. In the worship services we drank in the truths of the gospel of God's love; and in the congregation, life-giving friendships were offered to us as we gradually began to meet people.

Spent as we were, we didn't have a lot of energy to pursue friendships at first. What I remember is those who extended kindness *to us*.

Of the many small and large acts of friendship offered to us over the years, one memory is particularly dear. Awhile back, Immanuel's Pioneer Clubs program made bookmarks, each with the photo and name of one of the children, and asked volunteers from the congregation to choose one and commit to pray for that child for the year. The bookmark with our then-eight-year-old daughter's photo was chosen by an older woman whom I knew only slightly. A friendship formed as she would

inquire from time to time how our daughter was doing. If that had been the end of it, it would have been a treasured gift. But it wasn't the end! This friend continued to pray for our daughter year after year, writing specific prayers on the back of the bookmark. At our daughter's high school graduation, she returned the bookmark to our family, with ten years' worth of prayers recorded. A gift of loving encouragement beyond measure!

These "splendid friends" are given not just for social enjoyment but to bolster our commitment to Christ. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us to reach out to each other *every day* to help safeguard each other's faith (Hebrews 3:13). May we continue the Immanuel tradition of offering each other the strengthening encouragement of our friendship.

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## The Apostle Paul Takes His Leave of the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17-37)

by Mark Noll

Of course they wept on wind-swept shore, with fears  
for days to come, yet tears could not efface  
the gift of patient love from two full years  
of holding forth the gospel of God's grace.

They clung to him, who'd pulled them from the thrall  
of Artemis, who in their narrow place  
of darkened self had heard his gentle call  
and looked to God and felt a word of grace.

So worn and weak his tiny retinue  
appeared, so forlorn on the sea, so frail,  
so far from any lasting resting place,  
and yet they turned with hope because they knew  
the hand that drove the wind to fill the sail  
was marked by scars and moved alone by grace.

*To Bob and JoAnn Harvey  
on the occasion of their retirement from  
Immanuel Presbyterian Church (May 30, 1999)*



# The Good Life

by April Carlson

*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

JOHN 10:10

*I will arise and go to Jesus,  
He will embrace me in his arms.  
In the arms of my dear Savior,  
Oh, there are ten thousand charms.*

**FOR FIVE OR MORE YEARS MY HUSBAND, BOB CARLSON,** and I taught the senior high Sunday school class at Immanuel Presbyterian. Our teaching credentials were limited to: sales (Bob) and me: (social work)—informal educations at best. What we brought to those Sunday mornings was a modicum of experience and a crazy love of adolescents and young adults. Bob in particular brought his zany sense of humor and off-beat one-liners. Knowing our limitations with curriculum and lesson plans, we sought the expertise of Peter and Virginia Vagt, an Immanuel husband-and-wife team with educational experience to spare.

In our meetings with Peter and Virginia we brainstormed an overarching theme, a mission statement, so to speak, that would guide our thinking and our teaching each Sunday. That theme was “The Good Life,” meaning being a Christ follower and living in obedience to Him results in a “good life” regardless of earthly circumstances. As a social worker in a large suburban high school I was familiar with the Monday morning fallout of poor, or even disastrous weekend decisions . . . choices fraught with sorrows, and deceptions, with groundings and regrets. I often thought of the “charms” of being true to the Savior in my own life, versus times when I wandered, often willfully. As a team we endeavored to incorporate the theme into the curriculum and to instill the concept that Jesus is a charming, delightful Savior.

But we were busy people, Peter and Virginia, Bob and I. Often on a Sunday morning just as the worship service was starting, Virginia would pass me the lesson for the morning, a well-crafted two page outline complete with a topic and a scripture for me to peruse and then slide on to Bob surreptitiously before the sermon began. This “flying by the seat of our pants” preparation was all we had time for that morning and about which we felt slightly guilty. Never mind; if we weren’t able to fully digest the prepared lesson we would find an additional activity to fill the hour.

What we did know is that kids need a safe place to be heard and to be accepted and to be understood. We knew that developmentally our students were struggling to discover who they were in the world, what they would do with their lives in the future and how to fit in socially. We decided to spend the last 15 minutes of each Sunday school hour with what we called “Prayer and Share.” It wasn’t long before “prayer and share” became what the students wanted most, a time, in a confidential and benign atmosphere to tell their sorrows and their joys, to be prayed for, by fellow students and by us, their teachers. There was one caveat, Bob and I had to share honestly our needs as well. We needed to be prayed for as much as they did. I am remembering being near tears often as these dear Immanuel teenagers trusted us and one another with their stories, their requests. And then how they sweetly prayed for us as well.

As I write this memory, Bob has been in heaven three and a half years. He is in the “arms of His dear Savior.” He is experiencing the “thousand charms,” THE GOOD LIFE in a way we only access on a limited basis here on earth. Somehow I believe that as I write he is one of the great cloud of witnesses remembering along with me “The Good Life” lessons we learned as teachers of those beautiful kids . . . students who were willing to entrust us with their hopes and dreams.

## One Moth

by Wyatt Anderson

There is one animal that confuses me the most,  
plainly arrayed and soft tongued  
flitting about in its own humble way.  
This odd and bumbling creature  
careening through life, recklessly pursuing death by fire.  
As if tranced, it follows until ash  
Why it is not more like its cousin, the Butterfly, I haven't an idea  
Much more sensible and beautiful too, I might add  
But perhaps this moth knows something that I don't:  
Maybe it knows something beautiful  
and will stop at nothing in order to commune.  
maybe this moth pursues the flame with good cause,  
being made one and transformed into something more  
Being part of the living flame  
but then again, no, I do not trust the moth,  
What is beautiful enough to follow unto death?

# Incarnation Cross, OR GENERATIONS WAITED FOR WHAT WE LOOK BACK AND CELEBRATE, 2007

by John Walford



"Dedicated to two, long-time, good friends, Alva Steffler and Sue Lundin, both artist/designers, and both of whom have encouraged me to produce works in this genre, for use in our church, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Warrenville, Illinois."—JW

## Outside to Inside

by Priscilla Heidebrecht

*The news traveled fast and in no time the leaders and friends back in Jerusalem heard about it—heard that the non-Jewish “outsiders” were now “in.” When Peter got back to Jerusalem, some of his old associates, concerned about circumcision, called him on the carpet: “What do you think you’re doing rubbing shoulders with that crowd, eating what is prohibited and ruining our good name?”*

ACTS 11:1–3 THE MESSAGE

**WHAT IS THE BACK STORY OF THIS SELECTION FROM ACTS?** Cornelius, a Gentile, had recently been led by God to invite Peter to visit him and tell him about his God. Peter—also led by God in a trance—went to Cornelius and ended up eating with him, and then watched as God affirmed that these non-Jews (outsiders!) were to be part of this new Church. Other Jews back in Jerusalem were astounded and confused! How could Jews dare associate with Gentiles?

Earlier at Pentecost, God had demonstrated his desire to bring Jews of different languages and nationalities into the Church; but a completely different culture? The unclean Gentiles! That was too much!

Immanuel has its roots in Wheaton, then Glen Ellyn, and now Warrenville. These places represent different kinds of people and cultures. There was talk early on about whether the Wheaton culture would be able to welcome the different Warrenville culture. Wheaton was white collar. Warrenville, blue.

Revelation 7:9 shows God's eternal intentions in a heavenly scene: “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.” The church needs diversity to function as God intends. My family has been enriched, and I have learned much about Scripture, through interactions with peoples of different countries and cultures. They bring rich ways of doing life and ways of experiencing God.

Fortunately, the apostle Paul was able to convince the Jews in Jerusalem that Gentiles were to be included: “When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, ‘So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life’” (Acts 11:18). What different culture groups could God be calling us to? What other cultures might we show hospitality to and be enriched by their understanding and knowledge of God?

# Thanksgiving and Teaching

by Dan Treier

*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

COLOSSIANS 3:15–16 ESV

## MANY OF US APPRECIATE IMMANUEL'S EXCELLENCE IN WORSHIP MUSIC.

Colossians 3 helps to support Immanuel's distinctive approach, connecting music with two priorities that are otherwise easy to separate: thanksgiving and teaching.

*Thanksgiving:* Colossians 3:15 emphasizes our call to peace as one body before it concludes with a call to be thankful. Then verse 16 makes “let the word of Christ dwell” parallel to “let the peace of Christ rule”; this “word” is the core gospel message, focused on Jesus. Verse 16 joins the end of verse 15 in calling for thankfulness: Gratitude for salvation in Christ should fill our life together as God's people, flowing into gratitude for each other and peace with each other.

Immanuel's music promotes this gratitude. We not only praise who God is; we express thanksgiving for what God has done—in salvation history, in our church community, and in our own lives. Immanuel's music focuses our gratitude on the gospel, rather than experiences or feelings that come and go. Yet, like the Psalms themselves, biblical music addresses the full range of human experiences and feelings in a God-oriented way.

Thus, *teaching:* As the gospel dwells in our community, spiritual songs emerge from our gratitude. Then, in turn, these songs help the gospel to dwell in us more deeply. Music helps us to teach the faith—remembering God's mighty acts and reinforcing our bonds with each other.

Remembering God's mighty acts is crucial for the surprising connection in Colossians 3 between thanksgiving and teaching. Like the Psalms, which we sometimes sing directly, Immanuel's other hymns focus on celebrating God's work in Christ. These mighty acts reveal who God is and reassure us as we wait in hope for the fulfillment of all that God has promised.

Our music remembers Christ's work in harmony with the Christian year. We hear Scripture lessons and sing carols that anticipate Christ's Advent. Repeating particular songs aligns our lives with rhythms of God's saving work. So, at Easter, we sing

“Lift High the Cross” in the joyful light of Christ's resurrection. On Reformation Sunday, we sing “A Mighty Fortress,” reaffirming our Protestant reliance on the grace of Christ alone throughout “ordinary time.”

Reinforcing our communal bonds is another way in which music teaches the faith and enhances our thanksgiving. Colossians emphasizes that singing relates us to each other, and gratitude promotes peace. Immanuel's music appreciates the fullness of God's work in the church. Traditional hymns teach the faith while making us thankful for the Spirit's gifts through time. Newer and international songs can teach the faith while helping us appreciate that the Spirit's work is not just deep but wide.

Just as the peace of Christ and the gospel go together, so do thanksgiving and teaching—with the help of our singing, as we remember God's mighty acts and reinforce our bonds with each other.

## The Cathedral

by Wyatt Anderson

As I walk amid the forest,  
I hear proclaimed that God is glorious,  
For from every bough  
That alights above  
Comes forth praises for our Creator and King.  
The gnarled Oaks chant, both deep and old  
They tell repeatedly of the constancy which enfolds.  
The young Maples exclaim with reckless abandon  
Of God's thoughtful care, substance, and provision  
The Redbuds and Dogwoods sing softly and sweetly  
Exploring the depths of His gentility and beauty.  
The sturdy Catalpa trumpets forth a melody:  
Oh Glory, Glory, Glory!  
The disheveled Sycamore canters on,  
Singing the songs of short-coming and dawn.  
May all the trees sing, each their own part,  
To praise the Maker in full.  
May their praises as they ring, graft upon our heart  
As we learn to respond to the Maker's call.



# He's Got This

by Katherine Anderson

*"And we know that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."*

ROMANS 8:28

## THINGS WERE NOT GOING AS PLANNED.

Sam was about to be late for his first day of class this year at College of DuPage, and to make matters worse, I missed the entrance to the parking lot. While we were stopped at a traffic light in front of his building, Sam hopped out of the car.

"I've got this, Mom," he yelled, as the light turned green and the drivers behind me honked impatiently. I did the only thing I could do. I let him go on his own to find his classroom. (For those of you who don't know, Sam is 20 years old, and has Down syndrome.) I wish I could say I had complete faith he would find his way, but truth be told, I parked the car and went in to check that he had found the right classroom. I peeked in to see him chatting away with other students.

As I sat down to write this, I realized that in the midst of life's stressful situations, my trust in God has too often been like my trust in Sam. I don't always trust that He's "got this." I find too often that my prayers are not for His will to be done, but for what I think would be best.

Looking back over the last 30 years at Immanuel, however, I can now see how God has been teaching us all along about His faithfulness and the beauty of His plans.

Like every one of you, we've faced, and still face, any number of unknowns. For instance, people often ask us now whether we think Sam will continue to live with us or on his own. It's taken me awhile, but I'm learning to be OK with not knowing the answer to this question and others about the future—in part because of the many ways we've seen the loving kindness of the Father working His good will.

We did not imagine when Sam was learning to read, for instance, that Priscilla Witte would volunteer her time to tutor Sam in reading once a week one summer. Or when Sam began high school, that Ken Wolgemuth would offer to mentor him, in addition to teaching his Sunday school classes with others like Jim Plueddemann, John Economides, Vince Morris, and Jeff Wisdom. Or when Sam was a senior in

high school, that Priscilla Heidebrecht would call on Sam to speak in front of the youth group and others about what it means to be a leader.

We certainly could not have imagined when Annie Kendrick began babysitting for Wyatt 22 years ago, that her daughter Anna would one day become the youth group leader and Sunday school teacher. Anna and Scott not only welcomed Sam to participate fully in youth group, but also to go on youth retreats, and even on a missions trip to Mexico, where he was able to encourage the grandmother of a baby with Down syndrome. Through all of those mentioned (and so many more), we've seen Sam's skills develop, his faith grow, and even seen God using Sam for His glory.

As a result, on this 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, what I want most to do is to thank you for being people through whom God has demonstrated that He has more than "got this." I also hope to encourage us all (myself included) to rest with confidence in the unknown—and in the unimaginable goodness of His plans.

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## Leaves

by Mark Noll

He was at home, their friend, among the leaves  
of White Oak (acorns falling for a good  
next year), the down of Eastern Cottonwood,  
and—most—the Maple flaming in the breeze.

Yet also always, turning leaf by leaf,  
he read and journaled, wrote and read some more  
of politics, peace, Canada, the poor,  
God's word—his mind required no relief.

For him the leaves are down, the trees are sere,  
the books are closed, the pages stilled. But we?  
we long for leaves of healing, strain to hear  
leaves rustle, spilling words about a tree  
of life—because we saw our brother leave  
too soon, now hope for grace with hope to grieve.

*In memoriam, Paul Heidebrecht (1950–2018)*

# Confession and Assurance

by Amy Black Treier

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 JOHN 1:9

**I GREW UP IN A CHURCH TRADITION** that did not place emphasis on corporate confession. We were taught that we should confess our sins individually to God, but this was a private matter and one that was rarely discussed.

When I began attending more liturgical churches as a young adult, much of the liturgy was new to me, including setting aside time specifically for corporate confession. At first, the practice was uncomfortable and a bit jarring. Over time, however, I have come to appreciate it as an essential part of corporate worship. Each Sunday I come to Immanuel with grateful anticipation of what we call the “time of renewal by God’s grace,” knowing I need to come before God and admit my shortcomings. When I visit other churches when out of town, I now notice the absence of this time to quietly confess my sins to God.

In our current cultural and technological moment, we seem to have almost limitless outlets to express concerns, frustrations, complaints, and even outrage. Yet almost all these expressions point outward at other people and practices that we think are getting in our way. To use Jesus’ metaphor for this problem: We are very quick to see the specks in eyes all around us, but we rarely notice the log in our own eye.

Prayers of confession offer a much-needed antidote to our culture of pride and blame. They reorient our hearts and minds away from the focus on others and point us to our own shortcomings, forcing us to deal with the ugliness and sin in our thoughts, words, and deeds. In individual confession, we acknowledge our personal sins, admitting specific things we have done and have failed to do that fall short of God’s glory. In corporate confession, we identify with the failures of our communities, acknowledging collective sin and structural evil and our part in it. As we confess, we confront the ugliness of sin and its destructive force in and around us.

But the beauty of confession is that we are never left wallowing in our sin and sorrow. In Immanuel’s order of worship, prayers of confession are always followed by reassurance of God’s pardon. We come to God in genuine sorrow for our sins, we are reminded once again of the power of his grace, and we rise in confidence of our restored fellowship with God as forgiven sinners.

I am grateful to be a part of a worshipping community that starts each service with a call to confession and an assurance of God’s pardon. This essential Christian practice reminds us of our dependence on God, points us to God’s holiness, and renews us for our weekly tasks. May we grow in gratitude as we are renewed by God’s grace.

Lead

## Immanuel Living with Us

Children's Song for Advent

by Eric M. Durbin

Lead

♩ = 45

A D/A A E/A A D/A A E A Bm7

Oh, oh, oh, oh,

1. Won - der - ful, Couns - e - lor,  
2. Might - y Mes - si - ah, Cre  
3. Shep - herd and Fath - er who  
4. Our Lord and Sav - ior who

5 A/C# D A D A E A Bm7

fills us with won - der and awe,  
a - tor of Heav - en and Earth,  
car - ries the lambs in His arms,  
gives us for - give - ness com - plete,

An - swers our prayers with  
Pow - er - ful Sheild and De -  
Hold - ing us close, when we're  
Per - fect and ho - ly, His

9 A/C# D E D/E A

treas - ures of wis - dom for all who call His name. Oh, Im -  
fend - er, He rules as our worth - y King of Kings.  
hurt or need heal - ing from harm, He nev - er leaves.  
pun - ish - ment brings us the peace to trust in Him.

12 E D/A A E D A

man - u - el liv - ing with us, God Him - self for us is born, Our Mes -

16 E D/A A Bm7 Bm7/E

si - ah come to save us, The Liv - ing Word, clear - ly heard ev - er -

20 A D/A A E/A A D/A A E/A A A (sus4) A rit.

more. oh, oh, oh, oh

# One Generation to Another

by Annie Rose

“One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.”

PSALM 145:4

**WHEN I REFLECT ON THE ELEVEN YEARS I WAS BLESSED** to spend at Immanuel, this verse comes to mind. Immanuel is a special place where the generations encourage one another and recount the mighty deeds of the Lord.

I had not been at Immanuel long before a new friend invited me to sit in on Children & Worship one Sunday. She talked with such passion about how it delighted her to worship alongside the little ones that I took the next opportunity to go downstairs and see for myself. I remember being shocked that preschoolers could sit so attentively as a Bible story was told quietly and methodically by the storyteller! The next part of the children’s “service” thrilled me: the children were invited to voice their “wonderings” about the story they had just seen and heard. I was amazed at the depth and sincerity of these little ones’ insights about God. Tears filled my eyes at the wonder I felt at their faith.

As time went on, I eventually became an elder at Immanuel and spent hours in meetings with older siblings in the faith. Presbytery meetings brought opportunities for fellowship on road trips and over meals with brothers and sisters old enough to be my grandparents. What blessed me immensely was the humble and gracious way these mentors of mine related to me as a young adult. Never did I feel that my comments were unwelcome or that I didn’t have a place at the table (literally and figuratively!). Over the years, I came to have soul friends who were 40–50 years older than I. What a gift! They patiently listened to my thoughts and reflections on life and faith and generously shared with me the treasure they had gained from years of walking with Jesus.

Many churches speak about the importance of intergenerational ministry, but at Immanuel it is an everyday reality. The brothers and sisters who worship together, pray together, and study the Bible together represent every generation, and every generation is valued in its contribution to the great chorus of praise to the Lord. I praise him for the wondrous works he has done in and through the saints at Immanuel Presbyterian Church!

# Seeing More Clearly

by Susanna Smoak

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

**I DISCOVERED TWO NEW WORDS RECENTLY THAT MADE ME HAPPY:**

*presbyopes* and *presbyopia*. I came across them while shopping for new glasses on the Zenni website. Many of you *presbyopes* already know this word; it is the technical term for people who wear bifocals or progressive lenses. That’s us, Immanuel!

But what got me more excited was the term *presbyopia*, meaning, again according to reliable Zenni sources, “trying to see as old men do.” (Oh, you blessed Greek scholars. You probably already know this word and have been using it for years.) If you are like me, you might not remember ever hearing the word before. Isn’t it fantastic?

Immanuel has always been full of elders—my own, dear elders, who I realize now were quite youthful when I was a child. But even then, we embraced the mature points of view, honoring the older perspectives, “seeing as old men do” in matters both spiritual and humorous. There were the brainy jokes, the sensible dress; beloved hymns of centuries past and spirituals that stirred just enough emotion to allow a sigh or a nod; open hearts toward children and warmth toward younger parents.

Overseas, in lands where microphones were pressed firmly to the lower lip to lead worship from the front (oh horror!) and decibel levels communicated the breadth and depth of the love of God, I yearned for Immanuel, full of my dear old reasonable and self-effacing *presbyopes*. In comparison, most other churches all seemed so myopic, but I couldn’t deny the immanence of God there either, worshiped in Spirit and truth, with a passion that brought color to my face. Now that I’m back after so many years, it’s tempting to feel that Immanuel is so mindful of the transcendent that we’re all hyperopic. I’ve been hearing repeatedly that “prayer changes us.” But doesn’t God hear us too? And hasn’t He promised to move mountains when we pray in faith?

After I had a dramatic spiritual experience as a 19-year-old, my father listened sagely to my enthusiasm and advised me to “learn from my paternal grandmother,” a live-wire who chose to sacrifice her influence so as not to divide the church. She chose to do as the apostle Paul exhorted: “Let all that you do be done in love.”

I see you, dear Immanuel *presbyopes*, sometimes from a distance, but now up close. I’m learning to see as old men do. To embrace the transcendence as well as the immanence of our amazing God-with-us. As you do.



## Foreigners

by Priscilla Witte

*Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

EPHESIANS 2:12-13

**WHEN MY FAMILY BEGAN ATTENDING IMMANUEL IN 1992**, the congregation was without a permanent home. Every Sunday, a crew of many arrived at the College of DuPage Arts Center to set up for worship. I was the nursery coordinator for a time, and had many moments of panic about the lack of safety measures in place. This was especially evident when a toddler actually ignited a burner in the kitchenette connected to the room used for the nursery. Judy Bryson and I extinguished the flames in record time and took the children for a walk through the halls until Sunday School was over. In addition to having serious safety issues, it was not beautiful. We had to drag big bins of toys and supplies from the closet each Sunday and try to make a conference room look inviting to small children. It was hard work, and far from ideal. You don't have complete control over spaces that are not your own.

Since then, my family has endured challenges related to being without permanent homes; living in kind friends' basements between jobs, moving to new cities, renting rooms on the other side of the world in a mud and bamboo house with no running water. These situations remind us that we are not truly home.

It's good to be stretched outside our comfort zones. We learn best to trust God when life isn't comfortable. The Israelites were commanded to not mistreat or oppress aliens, for they were also foreigners in Egypt (Exodus 22:21). Jesus himself was an alien and a sojourner. We are reminded that we are not really home yet. Our citizenship is in Heaven, but we are not forgotten as strangers in a foreign land during our temporary residence. The passage in Ephesians reminds us how far we were from Christ before salvation, but now we have been brought near to him through his blood. We realize that no matter how far we are from family and friends, we are loved and protected by our Savior now.

Moving to our new building in Warrenville was a great celebration. We are blessed to have our own beautiful space to worship God. But we realize that we are still strangers in the land. The true celebration will be when we are reunited with our precious Savior in eternity.

## Christ's Rule in Glory, 2012—With Whale

by John Walford



The whale is included because Christ said, when asked for a sign, that there would be no sign other than the sign of Jonah—thus an OT prefiguration of his resurrection.—JW

# A Prayer for Immanuel from Ephesians

by Phyllis Le Peau

## FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

We come to you as a community of your people with joy and hope—a community which has together worshiped you for thirty years. We celebrate the years of your love and faithfulness. You have been kind, gracious, forgiving, a true comforter, a wonderful counselor, a good shepherd.

As a community we love you and worship you.

At times it seems incredible that you hear us when we pray. That you know us by name. That you call to us as a community and that we hear your voice. We have experienced many years of you listening to our prayers and the joy of hearing your voice.

Help us as a church to always listen closely.

We humbly bow our knees before you Father. *You* are the one from whom every family in heaven and earth takes its name. Please help us to continue to grow as a family that honors you.

Please grant us, your body, strength in our inner being with power through the Spirit.

May we be rooted and grounded in love as you dwell in our hearts through faith. This is your love for us, which surpasses all that we can know or understand.

May that love that we have experienced from you be poured out abundantly back to you, to each other, and to your broken, needy world.

We pray together that you will give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we can know you better and better in the years to come.

Throughout our years many in our community have suffered deeply. In the midst of our loss and suffering please enlighten our eyes that we may know the hope of our calling, the riches of our glorious inheritance and the incomparably great power that is in us who believe.

Please *renew us and revive us* as we ponder the truth that someday there will be a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more tears and sorrow and death. Where you, God, will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Help us to know and experience this power of your resurrection in our lives, witness and ministry.

That power which is able to accomplish more than we can even ask or think or imagine.

Oh God our help in ages past,  
*You are*  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter in the storm blast  
And our eternal home.

To you, Jesus, be glory in the church and to all generations.

Forever and ever,

*Amen.*



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*Immanuel is affiliated with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC).*