

IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Organist: Karen Cain

Pastor: Rev. Dana Schindler

March 14, 2021

Fourth Sunday in Lent

“Extending God’s love with the work of our hands and hearts...”

WELCOME

Welcome to worship today at Immanuel United Church of Christ in Hamel, IL. We are pleased that you have chosen to worship with us today. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here!

Please leave a comment to let us know you are here. Also note any joys and concerns you may have and feel free to greet each other in Christian love.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Music used is covered under our CCLI livestreaming license # 4012842.

Today for our service, you will need your worship guide.

CONFIRMATION There will be no confirmation today.

BOOK STUDY Join us on Zoom Thursday @ 7 pm as we continue our discussion on Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 ways to keep yours alive by Thom Rainer. Join us as we consider how to help our church survive and thrive through difficult times. If you haven’t gotten a book yet, you can order through Amazon, either hard cover or Kindle versions. We will be discussing chapters 11 & 12.

DEACONESS NURSE MINISTRY OFFERING We will be doing a Noisy Coin Collection for Deaconess Ministries during Lent. Please save up your coins to contribute to this wonderful group that provides mental, physical and spiritual health related services, education and advocacy to create communities of wholistic wellness.

CHICKEN DINNER will be held on March 21st. The work schedule/assignments are out. Please check to make sure you are signed up as wish.

We request ALL workers to come at 1 pm on March 14th for set up.

CONNECTION POINT will be hosting an Easter themed scavenger hunt March 28th starting at 1pm! Details are outlined in the newsletter sent out last week. Please RSVP by March 21st!

EASTER LILY ORDERS Cost is \$9.00 Make checks payable to Immanuel UCC. Contact Barb to order or a signup sheet will be at church.

WHY I LOVE MY CHURCH FAMILY We have had several volunteers who have filmed a clip for our worship service to talk about this. We need more volunteers. This is a great way to let visitors know our best qualities and to remind those of us who have

been here for a while of things we may have overlooked or taken for granted. Please let Pastor Dana know if you are willing to do this.

PICTURES PLEASE! We request that all members send in a picture of you and your family for our 150th directory. Just take one with your phone if you don't have one to send in. Please also send your most current contact information. It will take time to assemble, so please send as soon as possible (no later than June 1st) to the office e-mail, officeiucc@gomadison.com, or rrklenke@schuetzfarms.com, or text it to 618-910-8999.

THE BREAD OF LIFE FOOD PANTRY in Hamel is open on Mondays from 9:00am till 10:30am. All who need assistance are welcome.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Canned Fruits	Coffee	Pancake mix
Syrup	Laundry detergent	Sugar
Flour	Raman Noodles	Cooking Oil
Hamburger helper	BBQ Sauce	Salad Dressing
Cake Mix	Mashed Potatoes	Toilet paper
Baked beans	Chili	Rice

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

to help with youth activities—see Barb
to help with FaithQuest—see Andrea or Jamie

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Ruth: officeiucc@gomadison.com
Pastor Dana: pastoriucc@gomadison.com

CONCERNS

Maria S.	Harry S.	Lillie H.
Kathie R.	Hope S.	Carole G.
Tomiko J.	Wayne S.	Sherri R.
Rose O.	Roger W.	Kathleen L.
Michelle L.	Kristy K.	Dorothy D.
Jane B.	Mary Ann C.	Jake G.
Diane B.	Frank H.	Diane O.
Luella L.	Students/School Personnel	
Hitz Home workers and residents	Those affected by storms	
Our country as we deal with pandemic		
Our Church Council	Pastor Dana, as she leads	

PRELUDE*Karen Cain***POINT TO PONDER**

“Thank you’ is the best prayer that anyone could say. I say that one a lot. Thank you expresses extreme gratitude, humility, understanding.” — Alice Walker

CALL TO WORSHIP

Beloved in Christ, we come this day to celebrate God’s love that surrounds us through our challenges, that bids us to trust. No matter what struggles we experience, we can trust God’s presence and care to embrace us. Amen.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

God of providence, we give thanks for this day and for all you have provided. Draw us closer that we may understand your loving care for us and be truly grateful. Show us the wonder of your grace and power that we may understand true humility. Open our hearts and minds that we may understand the messages that you have for us to hear this day. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Lift High the Cross

#198 (NCH)

Refrain:

**Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim;
Let all adore that sacred name.**

**Come, Christians, follow where our Savior trod,
the Lamb victorious, Christ, the Son of God. [Refrain]**

**Each newborn servant of the Crucified
bears on the brow the seal of Christ who died. [Refrain]**

**O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
your death has brought us life eternally. [Refrain]**

**Set up your throne, that earth's despair may cease,
beneath the shadow of its healing peace. [Refrain]**

**So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory. [Refrain]**

FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

Have you ever been on a long trip with your family? I remember as a child, going to visit my favorite great aunt. She was really more like a grandmother. I was always SO excited when my mom told me we were going. We always stayed for a week because

it was a long trip. It seemed like forever. And soon after we began, my two brothers
and I would start:
Are we there yet?
Can we stop for a snack?
He's touching me!
Make her stop singing!

My mom was pretty good at ignoring most of that, but not my dad. He would yell at us
to knock it off and all would be quiet for a while.

When he had heard all of the complaining he could stand, he would say those words:
"I WILL TURN THIS CAR AROUND!"

In our scripture today, we will be talking about the Israelites who were walking through
the desert to the Promised Land. They were complainers too.

When began to complain about God, who was helping them, God sent snakes that bit
some of them. After they said they were sorry, God told them how they could be
healed from the snake bites.

How might their lives have been different if they had just been thankful that God had
helped them escape from a bad situation and had provided them with food and water
when they needed it? How would OUR lives be different if we were just thankful for
what God gives us?

Everyone has to go through hard times. But we know that God is with us, helping us to
get through those times. So that is something to be thankful for.

PRAYER: Gracious God, remind us to be thankful when times are good and help us
to see good things when times are hard. Thank you for always being with us. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Karen Cain

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Numbers 21:4–9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of
Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God
and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the
wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food."
Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people,
so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by
speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the
serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses,
"Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look
at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and
whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and
live.

Psalm 107:1–3, 17–22

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress; he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

SERMON

When the Going Gets Tough

Rev. Dana Schindler

The Israelites are on a journey. They have been delivered from slavery of the Egyptians and are now walking in the wilderness, on their way to the promised land. Life was hard in Egypt and they were overjoyed to leave.

But now?

Now they have become whiny and ungrateful:

There's no water!

The food stinks!

We're tired!

Do you know where you're going?

The scripture doesn't say so, but I'm guessing someone said "Are we there yet?" These folks had been complaining for quite a while. They complained about the water, so God showed Moses how to make it better and how to find it when they needed it.

When they had complained about the lack of food, God sent manna.

When they complained that there was no meat, God sent birds for them to eat.

And once again, they are complaining against Moses and against God.

God heard all of this and sent snakes—poisonous snakes.

Many died and those remaining got the message. They confessed their sin and begged Moses to pray to the Lord and ask for forgiveness for them.

And so God told Moses to make a serpent of bronze and put it on a pole. The people who were bitten could look at it and be healed. Looking at the bronze serpent was to remind them of God and God's healing power.

Did the Israelites want to leave Egypt? Of course!

Was their prayer answered? Yes!

Were they happy? No!

They asked for change, change happened, but it wasn't perfect. Sure, there was food, but they didn't like it. It wasn't what they were used to. All of a sudden, living in captivity

didn't look so bad because it was what they were used to. They didn't want to do the hard work required to make life better. They just wanted it to BE better. NOW!

Our psalm offers great advice: let the redeemed of God say so. Knock off the whining and realize that God is with you, providing what you need. But recognize that in life, the going often gets tough.

Have you seen the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*? In this movie, Andy is convicted of murder. Prison life was no fairy tale and Andy suffered from its harsh realities, perhaps more than most, due to his quiet nature. But he maintained his hopeful nature despite his suffering.

During his sentence, he made friends with Red, also convicted of a murder committed as a "dumb kid," in his words.

The joke of the inmates is that they are all innocent, but when the other inmates discover that Andy truly IS innocent, they are amazed at how he had maintained hope and even worked to help other inmates. His friend Red, finds redemption in Andy's example, taking on the suffering of prison anyway, seeing life within and beyond it, and living fully, and freely, even in his captivity, and can still seize the opportunity for freedom.

As we journey through Lent, we are reminded of the life of Christ.

What was Christ guilty of?

Christ came to tell people that the rules they had always followed had not served them well, that all of the people they had rejected were also God's beloved children, and that the most important things were to love God and to love each other as Christ loved them.

He asked them to change. He told them to reject all of the ideas of division and superiority. He told them to embrace all other people. He told them to redeem others from their suffering.

And this was so disturbing that he was tried and convicted as a political prisoner and put to death.

As much as we would like to blame "them" for this crucifixion, we, too, are guilty. We too, reject the changes Christ taught about. We too, prefer not to change our biases so that we can love others as Christ loves us.

And all too often, we find ourselves in times where the going is tough and begin our whining instead of remembering how our suffering is redeemed.

Just like Christ, we don't get to the joy of Easter without going through the pain of Good Friday.

As we look with longing toward the joy of resurrection, let's not forget that the journey is important. Let's not forget that when the going gets tough, we are called to work to make things better, not just long for the good old days, which, frankly, had problems of

their own. And let's not forget The One who has redeemed us and continues to redeem us throughout our tough times. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God of Comfort of Challenge, like the Israelites we come this day, full of complaints and dissatisfaction. Nothing is ever enough; we to see your blessing at work in our day to day lives. Forgive us and challenge us to consider the bigger picture of oppression, injustice, and inequality around us. Forgive us when we close our eyes for fear of what you might show us. Lift up loving and compassionate leaders to open our eyes until we see what you see in our world. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Change My Heart, O God
Change my heart O God
Make it ever true
 Change my heart O God
May I be like You
You are the potter
I am the clay
Mold me and make me
This is what I pray
 Change my heart O God
Make it ever true
 Change my heart O God
May I be like You

GIVING OUR GIFTS

As we continue our worship let us remember how God has provided for our needs. Let us give our gifts of time, talent, and treasure with grateful hearts as we are led, remembering that our gifts support the ministries and mission of this church. Offerings may be placed in the offering plates outside the sanctuary or mailed to Immanuel United Church of Christ at 5838 Staunton Road, Edwardsville, IL 62025. Please help us to meet our financial responsibilities and continue our ministries in this community.

DOXOLOGY

God is So Good
God is so good, God is so good,
God is so good, he's so good to me.

2056 (TFWS)

I praise God's name, I praise God's name,
I praise God's name, he's so good to me.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Holy One, we are so blessed. We are blessed by your presence and your love. We are blessed by the meeting of our needs. We are blessed. Thank you, thank you, thank you. We have more than we need and far more than we deserve. Help us, we pray, to see the needs of others in this world filled with hurt. Help us to see, truly see, the needs of those who are not like us: those who have different needs for reasons we've never considered, reasons that simply don't affect us. Enable us, we pray, to see new solutions to old problems and to be willing to see those solutions through. Remind us that our actions and inactions carry consequences and help us to deal with them faithfully.

We offer special prayers for those we have named on our prayer list and for others whose names are in our hearts. Meet their needs as only you can and help us to meet the needs we can. Help our leaders to do what is right in your eyes, that we may live in peace. Make us uncomfortable enough to answer your call to work for justice for all people. All these things we pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray saying: **Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

224 (NCH)

**When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.**

**See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.**

BENEDICTION

As we leave this time of worship, let us remember the One who died for us and lives within us, helping us to weather all of life's tough times.

And let us be truly thankful!

And now, until we meet again, may each one be held safely
in the palm of God's hand.

POSTLUDE