



# Immanuel Messenger

Immanuel Lutheran Church

122 East 88<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10128

1863-2013, and onwards!

Eighty-eighth Street and Lexington Avenue, Manhattan

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February 2013

*A Word from the Pastor*

**The Inaugural Celebration  
of Our 150th Year**

**Transfiguration Sunday, February 10, 2013**

Guest Preacher: Rev. Thomas Nelson Green



Interim Pastor, 1968-70

Dear Members and Friends of Immanuel Lutheran Church,  
Our days of celebration are soon to begin. Rev. Thomas Nelson Green, father-in-the-Lord to many of us in the Lutheran Church, will be the preacher for our inaugural celebration of our 150th year. That will be this Transfiguration Sunday, February 10th.

The precise date of our founding was February 11, 1863, also Transfiguration Sunday. I love to think of our Transfiguration painting high above our reredos as a kind of salute to our founding liturgy, as well as to an important festival of the church year.

Pastor Green is eager to be with us for our anniversary celebration. We have been blessed by his presence and preaching in recent years, including our last two Good Friday liturgies.

Besides preaching for our anniversary, Rev. Green has agreed to reminisce with us about the days of his interim ministry. They were hard days, according to the usual notions of a flourishing church. The congregation had lost many members, in large part because of demographic shifts from the working class German immigrant population of Yorkville who had founded our congregation to the more expensive, high-rise Upper East Side we know these days. Pastor Robert Wiltenburg had resigned, and if I understand the story right, our congregation went through many disappointments in trying to find a new pastor. A long string of clergy offered the call to Immanuel declined that call, until that good day when Pastor Raymond Schulze accepted the call.

Then, on top of the disappointment of the repeated refusals of call, two physical calamities happened to our church: our immense plaster ceiling collapsed, and wind or lightning hit our cross high atop our steeple, and bent it downwards. Ann Siemer told me that that bent-down cross was like an arrow in the heart of the people. That's not an easy thing to repair, our cross at the tiptop of our steeple.

During those interim days between Pastor Wiltenburg and Pastor Schulze, Pastor Green kept our congregation faithful, peaceful, and hopeful. Indeed, looking back on those days, Pastor Green thinks they were good days—days when it was evident to everyone that we live by the grace of God at all times, and days when the congregation rallied around to keep our church going.

In the archives of our church, there is a pastoral letter from Pastor Green about that “day of unhappy memory” - June 19, 1969 - when our ceiling collapsed. I am reprinting that letter here, along with one of the striking photographs of the ceiling collapse by our former Music Director Charles Schramm.

Pastor Green's parish letter is dated September 16, 1969 (next page):

# *Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church*



88TH STREET AND LEXINGTON AVENUE · NEW YORK 28, N.Y.

*Church Office:* 122 EAST 88TH STREET  
TELEPHONE: ATWATER 9-8128

June 23, 1969

My Dear Parishioner,

Even though most of our parishioners have received some information concerning the damage suffered by our beloved church building, it is only fitting that all members be given a full and accurate account of what has happened.

On Thursday morning, June 19th, sometime between 8:30 and 10:30 A.M., the entire east half (Park Avenue side) of the nave ceiling—plaster, lath, and supporting timbers—broke loose and crashed to the floor. As the ceiling fell it tore away a large section of the balcony rail, destroyed the pews and altar rail on the east side, and severely damaged the pulpit. The great altar, statues, and organ were not directly effected by the falling ceiling, but they were covered with a tremendous amount of plaster dust. It must be made quite clear that the upper level of the church is completely restricted until the other half of the ceiling can be removed.

On Friday the entire church building was thoroughly inspected by Mr. Muggler, an engineer who graciously offered his services to the congregation, and by Mr. Lawrence Clarke, Chief Inspector for the Building Department of New York City. Both men agreed that no structural damage has been done. The foundation, the roof, the walls (interior and exterior), and the floor are completely sound. The hung plaster ceiling was not a part of the basic structure but a decorative addition. Mr. Clarke compared the ceiling with a man's coat. Removing the coat may be uncomfortable and unsightly, but it does not damage the body. The falling ceiling may damage the church furnishings, but it has not weakened or impaired the structure.

In addition to the representative of the Building Department, the Fire Department has also been helpful and cooperative. It is the Fire Department which controls blasting within the city limits, and all blasting has been suspended for the present.

It is our belief that this accident was caused in large measure by tremors resulting from the blasting being done on the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 86th Street in connection with the erection of the new Gimbel Brothers Department Store. Such a belief, however, is not the same as convincing legal proof. Establishing proof is a long, involved and technical matter, requiring the services of a competent attorney and other experts. You can be assured that your Board of Trustees is doing everything possible to protect the legal and material interests of the congregation.



Where will our congregation gather for worship in the coming weeks? We have been assured that the lower level of the church is safe. However, since there is still a danger that the second half of the ceiling may collapse and the resulting noise and dust could cause panic among our worshipers, it seems advisable that for the present our services be held in another location.

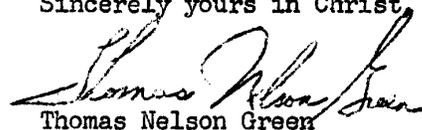
The Pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel, 230 East 90th Street, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, has graciously offered the members of Immanuel the use of the lower church for as long as we shall need it. The lower church is completely furnished, it has an organ, and it is air conditioned. Thus, this seems to be the best and most convenient location for our services. The entrance to the lower church is in front of the building, between the double stairs leading into the main church.

We are particularly grateful for the use of Our Lady of Good Counsel, since we shall be able to maintain our regular schedule of services throughout the summer months, that is at 8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 A.M.

We sincerely trust that our members will maintain their admirable loyalty to Immanuel Church during this difficult period. We suggest that this loyalty can best be shown through their support, through their regular attendance, through their prayers, and through their contributions. Past difficulties and challenges have always brought out the very best in our members, and we pray that this will be true also in the present.

With warm personal regards, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

  
Thomas Nelson Green  
Interim Pastor

TNG/acs

[Back to Pastor Fryer:]

God bless Our Lady of Good Counsel Church for providing shelter for our congregation throughout the summer of the ceiling collapse. I feel gratitude to that church all these years later, though I wasn't even here back in 1969.

We are planning anniversary celebrations throughout this coming year. In fact, another one is immediately upon us: Valentine's Sunday, February 17. I write about that next.

Meanwhile, this first celebration of our 150th anniversary stirs me with gratitude for our past and hope for our future, and I sure hope you can attend. God be with you always.

In Christ,



Pastor Gregory P. Fryer

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# Valentine's Sunday

Sunday, February 17, 2013

Inviting Back *Everyone* Married at Immanuel

As weekends approach, my wife, Carol, and I often go through a little conversation, almost like a dance. She asks me, "What are you going to preach about this Sunday?" And I answer, "Love, sweet love." Well, this coming Valentine's Sunday I really mean it!

Valentine's Day itself is on a Thursday this year, so February 17 is the closest Sunday to that happy day. Plus the preceding Sunday is our first official 150th anniversary Sunday here at Immanuel. So, let's go with February 17 for our Valentine's celebration.

We mean to have celebrations throughout much of this year, but this one – Valentine's Sunday – has especially caught my heart. This is the Sunday when I am inviting back to Immanuel all the couples I have married over the years and all the couples who were married here, over, say, the last century or so. (That ought to get most of them.) I mean to preach about love, sweet love during the sermon, and I plan to give a Coffee Hour lecture afterwards on "The Love Story of Martin and Katie," which I think will be fun.

It would do my soul good to see you again—if not for Valentine's Sunday, then sometime, or lots of times, during this, our 150th anniversary year.

God be with you this year and always. Give us a call (212-289-8128) or send me an email if you can so we will know to expect you: [gpfryer@gmail.com](mailto:gpfryer@gmail.com). If you forget to do this, come anyway!

Pastor Fryer

## Voters' Assembly

Sunday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>

The Voters' Assembly will meet on Sunday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, after the Liturgy. At this annual meeting we hear reflections and reports on the year just gone by, including year-end reports from the Pastor and Treasurer, as well as reports from the Trustees, Deacons, Council and Endowment Committee. This is the meeting at which we elect our leaders for the coming year. If you would like to become an official member of the Voters' Assembly, please mention your desire to Pastor Fryer, who will present your name to the Assembly. Our Constitution gives this rule: *The Voters' Assembly shall consist only of such members who have reached the age of eighteen, who are diligent in worship, regularly partake of the Lord's Supper and live a life in conformity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## Shrove Tuesday

Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, is Shrove Tuesday, and Immanuel will hold its annual Pancake and Sausage Supper for fun and fellowship. We like to direct receipts from this annual supper to our Sunday School, especially Vacation Bible School. Swing with David Buddin on the piano, Gaku Takanashi on bass, Ray Roberts on the drums, Al Quirong on tenor sax and vocalist Vi Quirong. The music will start at 6:00 p.m. and go until 7:00 p.m.

The doors of the church hall will be open from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Please use the Lexington Avenue entrance. The price for the meal is \$5 for adults and \$2 for children, or whatever you can afford. If you can't make it to the supper, contributions are certainly welcome. Please make your check out to Immanuel with a notation on the memo line that it is for the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper.

## Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 – Liturgies at 12:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.



We will have two liturgies again this year – one at 12:15 p.m. and one at 6:30 p.m. Each of these liturgies has its own blessing. The noontime service is a spoken liturgy and is nice because of the presence of neighborhood people who slip away during their lunch hours for our brief liturgy. The evening liturgy is the main traditional parish liturgy with Choir.

The Immanuel Choir is planning special music for our Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 pm. The choir will sing William Byrd's complete *Mass for Five Voices*, one of the most famous Renaissance polyphonic mass settings, for this service in the place of our regular congregational mass

setting. Byrd's exquisite a cappella mass will provide a serene and meditative aspect to our service, highlighting the beginning of our penitential season of Lent.

## Upcoming ARTEK Concert

Thursday, February 28 at 8:00 p.m.

Potpourri: Music for Guitar and Fortepiano

As part of ARTEK's Art of the Early Keyboard Series featuring historical keyboard instruments and guest artists, ARTEK presents a concert entitled "Potpourri" at Immanuel Church featuring Daniel Swenberg on early romantic guitar and mandolino, and Gwendolyn Toth, Director of ARTEK, on fortepiano. They will present an unusual program on historical instruments of rarely heard early nineteenth-century music for piano/guitar and piano/mandolino. The concert will take place on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, at 8:00 pm.

Concerts in salons in the early 19th century were private entertainment for the middle and upper classes. Virtuoso performers would be engaged to perform a wide selection of their works. ARTEK's concert will evoke the spirit of one of these Biedermeier period salons, with a variety of small, engaging chamber works for piano and plucked instruments. The nineteenth-century versions of piano, guitar, and mandolins were far more similar in tone and volume to each other than today's modern counterparts. Mr. Swenberg will be performing an 8-string Biedermeier guitar after Ries (c.1840) by Bernhard Kresse 2012; and a 6-string Biedermeier guitar after Stauffer (c.1820) by Michael Schreiner 2007; and a 6-course Mandolino milanese after Presbler (c.1780) by Günter Mark 2011. Ms. Toth will perform on an original antique Viennese style piano from the late eighteenth-century, thought to be made by Karl Benedict of Graz, Austria.

Tickets for this concert are normally \$25, but 100 free tickets are available to Immanuel Church members. Tickets can be obtained from parish secretary Karen Rombey at the church office, or after services on the next few Sundays.