

## **Heritage Committee Report** **Introduction to the Report**

This report is part of the developmental task of the congregation which the congregation committed itself to undertake in June of 2016.

Why bother with exploring our heritage? In Psalm 105 and 106 the Lord called upon the Israelites to remember the greatness of His loving deeds and depths of their sinful behavior. The Lord's call was not for the Israelites alone but for His people throughout history including our own time.

Though we may not be bound by our past, we are profoundly shaped by it. The past can hinder the future or fuel a new future. We can look to the past for clues to the future. We can look for the characteristic problems the congregation has experienced in previous times. What might the congregation want to affirm or change?

The better the congregation works at this developmental task of coming to terms with its heritage, the more likely it will be to free itself to go on building a new future, the more likely to be able to use the strengths of the past, the more likely to get some perspective and power over characteristic weaknesses and the more likely to choose an appropriate pastor for a new life together.

Failure to engage in this task will likely leave a number of booby traps for the future. Unresolved anger and bitterness may pop up in unexpected places (and often in relationship to the new pastor); or there may be a variety of attempts to make the parish under the new pastor just like, or the opposite of what it was before; or members may bury their heads in the sand acting as if the congregation's history is totally irrelevant for the present or future.

Aware of the significance of this project a group of members were selected to help facilitate congregational involvement. The members of the Heritage Committee are: Bob Hedrich, Karen Barby, Rita Boltezar and Marj Hedrich, Shirley Masnyk and Intentional Interim Pastor Robert Mohns.

The first task was to help the congregational members to create an emotional history of the congregation covering the time periods in which present day members have lived. It is an emotional history, in that its intention is to allow people to reflect upon the significant events in their life and the life of the congregation and express their feelings. Once the members had created their emotional history they were given opportunities to reflect upon it. These reflections were recorded and formed the basis upon which the work of the next stage of the Heritage Committee would take place.

Based upon the input of the members the Heritage Committee has spent time digging through the history of the congregation to find out what could be discovered. They not only took into consideration the congregational history but the wider cultural context of each decade and the Lutheran Church's context in each decade. The value of this exploration was to understand how events outside of the church influenced and shaped what was taking shape within the church. This report contains their observations.

The purpose of this document is to help the congregation to engage in more focused ways upon their heritage. With that goal in mind this report has been written to reflect the common themes which ran through the emotional history of the congregation. We have termed this process as "looking at our history through focused lens."

The topic of this project is vast and the potential ways in which our shared heritage could be approached are virtually infinite. The committee members need the reader to be aware that they are in no way claiming to capture every significant event experienced by the membership, nor do they claim to fully understand the significance or impact our collective heritage has made. It has however been a humbling privilege to try to trace God's gracious activity among us.

The report is written in such a way so as to invite the reader to wander down the corridor

of its heritage and to view things and events through particular lens. At the end of each section the committee members summarized their reflections and learnings and the questions that have arisen. The hope is to engage members in doing the same, to encourage discussion on their reflections and learnings and questions as well.

The congregational responses will be collected and shared with the congregation. Collaborating together we will come to some conclusions about the strengths of the congregation that are helpful for our future, understand our characteristic weaknesses, identify potential pitfalls that might become barriers to moving into our new reality of ministry.

With this introduction in mind the Heritage Committee invites you to read, reflect and respond. The best approach to this is to gather other members together from diverse perspectives to discuss and reflect and learn from one another. We ask that as you do that please record the significant points that arose from your reflections and discussions.

To help you get engaged begin with these questions in mind,

“Our history says to me that....”

“Our history says to me that our emerging needs are...”

“Our history leaves me with questions about....”

“What does our history mean about my commitment to be involved in the new ministry of the congregation?”

The Heritage Committee would like to thank the members of the congregation who participated in creating the emotional time line. We recognize that not everyone was able to do that. We encourage your participation in the next step. We pray that this report will stimulate good dialogue, greater understanding and help the congregation move forward into its future. Enjoy the journey down history lane!

### Our Heritage....Reflections of the past...looking to our future

#### **Our heritage -**

*thru the lens of...* CONFLICT

***Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.***

***For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 1 Peter 3: 8-11***

2017 marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation. Luther and other reformers called for the correction of certain abuses in the church at large, and a return to a theology and church practice more clearly grounded in Scripture. This was rejected by the Roman Catholic authorities of the day, and hence the Lutheran church was formed.

Our congregations prehistory is one of immigration due to world conflict. Not only was the church a religious body, conducting worship services and starting a Christian School, it was highly important as a cultural group. ( The School started between 1900-1910 and had an enrolment of 14 children).

The separation from Missouri synod to Lutheran Church Canada and the split to Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (1980's) ...are other examples where conflict was present.

There are conflicts with regard to biblical interpretations. eg. access to Holy Communion; role of women in the Church, their right to vote.

Conflicts with regards to Church emphasis and/or vision also happen. eg. Community Outreach; Global Mission.

Conflicts have arisen as Pastors have come and gone. Some have been helpful...some have created it. There has been blame. A Pastoral time line is included as an appendix of this document.

Conflict is a normal part of life. It can be productive, healthy, 'good' or unproductive, unhealthy or 'bad.' Avoiding conflict has not been helpful. Tendency to shy away from conflict can wreak havoc. Believing problems will sort themselves out doesn't usually work. Significant conflict has resulted in the departure of several members. It is important that we be more forthright about our feelings, even if this brings us into conflict with one another. Conflict can be respectful and in essence helps us be more honest with other people, and ourselves. How we deal with conflict is important. Having open respectful dialogue is important. The goal of conflict is peace; not to win or lose. God is a God of peace.

#### **Questions for consideration:**

How do YOU deal with conflict?

How should conflict within the family of Immanuel be handled?

How have YOU been involved in the process of peace?

*thru the lens of ...* DEVELOPMENT OF OUR IDENTITY

***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Jesus Christ to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2: 8-10***

Immanuel has a rich history based on Word and Sacrament. Initially both English and German Services were offered. Currently there are 2 Services – a traditional worship service and a contemporary worship service. Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are celebrated regularly. We value these traditions and rituals, however our involvement in them has ebbed and waned over the years.

Bible Study over the years remains an important aspect of our Christian life. In addition to the books in the Bible, other studies have included Bethel, Divine Drama, Cross ways, Shepherds Assistants, Masters Plan, and Cottage Studies.

Other educational programs have included Confirmation, Vacation Bible School, Sunday School and most recently the establishment of Little Lambs preschool. Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) and Teacher Effectiveness Training (TET) were offered.

Further, Cradle Roll, and moms and tots, have ministered to young families. Opportunities for youth, young adults and couples have been available. eg. Youth Group, bowling nights, and marriage enrichment retreats.

Home and hospital visitation has been valued and encouraged along with Personal Ministry. We reach out to members who are in need of meals through the food train. Stephen Ministry was implemented for a short time.

Immanuel has a long history of Music particularly during Worship. We have had a choir, however this has been sporadic or, composed for special occasions.

There is a strong, loyal committed core membership in our congregation ....no matter what. However, each of us need to acknowledge our personal responsibilities.

Immanuel has a long history of being builders....and taking risks!

### **Questions for consideration:**

What is the purpose and goal of bible study/our ministry programs?

How relevant are our bible studies/ministry programs to you? Other members?

How do our programs help you understand our identity at Immanuel?

How do you see your future involvement in Immanuel?

*thru the lens of ...MISSION, VISION, DIRECTION*

***Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.***

***Matthew 28: 19-20***

For many years the congregation focused its mission upon gathering up German speaking immigrants in the southern Alberta area. The church offered a place where the German language and custom were practised. It was a place where immigrants were offered something familiar to them in a new land. It helped them make the transition to their new context. We

worked to reach out to our neighbours, our Community and members of our church family. Numerous events over the years have given us a place to bring our families, friends and unchurched. Some examples include our annual Turkey dinner and silent auction, and our annual Ladies salad supper with guest speakers talking about 'Mission work. 'Bring a friend to Sunday school and church...friendship Sundays also occur annually. The Lethbridge soup kitchen provided a place where many members prepared meals for the homeless every month. There was also Christmas carolling at the hospital and to "shut ins."

Parish Planning Council established the Board of Evangelism which has evolved into the current Board of Outreach.

But our focus on community outreach has waxed and waned over time, one reason being Pastoral priorities. We have supported Global Missions. Some examples include our work in Nicaragua, Puerto Penasco, CLWR, and the Lutheran hour. Our annual pie auction raises significant funds for Puerto Penasco. We have also supported local Missions. Some examples include our donations to Harbour House, Streets Alive, Interfaith Food bank, U of L hampers, and Bibles for Missions. Of note is the fact that our congregation was involved in the start-up of Habitat for Humanity in Lethbridge.

The organization continues to have an office in our facility. The former Braille centre compiled books for the blind, and our current quilting group donates quilts to various community agencies, and most recently to the victims of the Ft McMurray fire. Our bridge group, which has existed for more than 10 years, provides a safe place for newcomers and the unchurched to join in Christian fellowship.

Our move to the West side in 2005 was seen as a positive step in terms of being rooted in a growing Community. The construction of the building brought many members together within Immanuel, and from the community. It solidified congregational relationships. The Little Lambs preschool (started in 2008) has experienced success and continues to grow.

### **Questions for consideration:**

So what ARE we responding to?

Are you stagnant as a disciple of Christ? Or are you motivated and growing?

Is Immanuel "going and making disciples...teaching them...?"

*thru the lens of ...OUR CHRISTIAN CULTURE (beliefs, customs; ways of thinking, behaving, working)*

***Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.  
Philippians 1:27***

#### 1. Worship

With Prayer and Thanksgiving, Scripture and the Word, we strive as Gods people to grow in love and turn our hearts to the Lord.

#### 2. Nurturing our Faith

By recognizing our reliance on God and our relationships with one another. Learning and growing in faith through worship, bible study, personal reflection and meditation, and application of this to our daily Christian lives. We also have a library. Distribution of literature like *Portals of Prayer* and *the Canadian Lutheran* are some examples.

3. Caring for Each Other

Our church family is built on relationships, primarily within our congregation. We struggle in looking outward and incorporating new people into our family.

4. Strength of Family – Multi-generational families are part of our core of membership. Children of immigrants are now leaders of our current congregation. Our Sunday School has sponsored family events. There have been family picnics and hot dog lunches.

5. Fun and Fellowship – Activities have included golf tournaments, camping weekends, Christmas talent/variety shows, concerts, bridge, quilting. Weekly coffee fellowship following Worship is well attended and provides a forum for conversation, and a welcoming atmosphere for visitors and new members. Unfortunately, this has also provided an opportunity for gossip.

6. Participation and involvement – Members are involved in various aspects related to Worship Services and general running of the church. Greeters, ushers, communion assistants, sound, power point, lectors, musicians....are a few examples of volunteers needed for Worship. Tellers, bookkeepers, staff, parish planning council, altar guild, food train, prayer chain, fellowship committee, bible study leaders, global mission volunteers, office helpers, librarians, teachers, nursery helpers.... are a few examples of the requirements of 'running the church'. On the down side, a relatively low percentage of our congregation are represented in the opportunities listed.

7. Lay leadership

There has been a culture of strong leadership. There has been a culture of weak leadership. Nevertheless, volunteers have given countless hours for the good of Immanuel. It is essential that leadership gain the respect of the people. Good leadership attracts more good leadership! Passion is needed.

**Questions for consideration:**

What is missing from our Church Culture?

What is important to keep in order to keep moving forward?

To what extent is our Church Culture one of Outreach?

To what extent is our church culture Pastor focused? Individual/church family focused?

Would inverting our structure to *grassroots participation* (vs. top down) be more effective? 'Bottom up consensus?'

**Concluding Thought:**

Our Mission statement -

***'We Want to See Jesus Lifted High'***

What does that mean for you?

**Appendix 1 Pastoral Time Line:**

1899 – Rev. Emil Eberhardt visited the Lethbridge area

1906-1909 – Rev Herman Wehmeyer

1910 – Student F. Zehe served for 5 months

1911-1913 Rev. O.A. Groth

1914-1919 Rev. H.J. Elling

1920-1923 Rev E.H. Krieger

1923-1929 Rev. M. Cohrs (1928-1929 had Vicar Schmidt assisting)

1929-1932 Rev. W. Trinklein

1931-1956 Rev. V. Eichenlaub

1957-1966 Rev. John Ohlinger

1966-1973 Rev. Walter Schoepp

1969 Evelyn Klaus

1970-1972 Elizabeth Walker

1974-1979 Rev. Paul Koester

1978 -1983 Eleanor Sander (shared position with church at Claresholm)

1980- 1988 Rev. Ron Mayan

1985-1995 Rev. Michael Colbeck (co-Pastor 1985-1988)

1989-1998 Paul Schoepp (DCE)

1996-2011 Rev. Richard Brown

1999-2000 Erin Nast DPS Intern

2000-2005 Anna Marie Schwartz DPS

2005 Vicar James Avery

2006 Vicar Glenn Worcester

2007 Rev. Jamie Waring (co Pastor)

2009- 2015 Rev. Nathan Fuehrer (co Pastor 2009-2010)

2012 – present Katherine Canfield, Parish Coordinator

2016-2017 Rev. Robert Mohns (Intentional Interim Pastor)

## **Appendix 2**

### Written Comments Received from Heritage Committee Survey Questions

Question #1 What does our history mean to you?

Question #2 What needs do you see emerging from your understanding of our history?

Question #1 Responses What does our history mean to you?

We need to learn from our history and look for God's hand keeping us close.

Our history is (a) grounding in our Faith as a starting point. If we do not learn from our history we are bound to repeat our mistakes.

Represents the events (that) shared ideas, practices and expectations.

Understanding the history people tell will tell you how they understand the present. Possibly it will tell you what happened.

We are a family with all the challenges family brings. God remains faithful.

Our history tells us that despite problems, missing people, our congregation is still here and strong.

That the church is constant...we are a family under God.

I have been a member for just a few months. I have been an occasional visitor for a number of years, ever since the brick church on 6<sup>th</sup> avenue. Pastor Brown is the one most familiar to us.

Locating on the west side was an issue for those who were reluctant to drive.

Friendship and fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Its where we began a history of post war immigrants – a community getting use to a new country.

We have been around a long time. We have a solid core of members who try to do outreach and service.

Our church story from the 1950's to 2016. Ebbs and flow from current members to the future. It provides us with a legacy.

My grandparents were German and belonged to the Lutheran Church in the early days in the 1900's.

Question # 2 Responses What needs do you see emerging from your understanding of our history?

When we drift away from our centre purpose – God and his word and sacraments we lose our focus and have trouble and divisions.

We need to learn to make room for many different personalities, opinions, and preferences.

A reminder that we can overcome difficulty if we stick together, follow the Lord's guidance.

We need fellowship and outreach to continue.

The need to continue fellowship, to praise and lift each other and God up.

That we are no longer post war. Now we are post Christian era – a society that believes God is passé. We compete with materialism.

Continued outreach and service to community.

Relationship between pastor and congregation extremely important.

### **Appendix 3**

#### A record of the verbal responses captured from congregational members at the Heritage Event October 2016

Part 1 A summary of the verbal Reflections from the period 2010- 2106 of Immanuel

#### **Negative Events**

The congregational members experienced many personal losses (deaths) -31 personal losses (denoted by black crosses). One respondent included his being denied holy communion as personal loss.

There were 10 respondents who recognized times of significant congregational losses (denoted by black clouds)

Some noted the retirement of Pastor Brown as a congregational loss. Others noted the ministry of Pastor Nathan

#### **Positive Events noted:**

There were 15 personal positive events recorded – a 25th anniversary was identified. 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the congregation was a congregational positive experience. The congregational involvement in the Puerto Penasco mission trips were also mentioned in specific.

9 births and one baptism noted and four marriages. 26 new members joined, 7 junior confirmations were noted.

In congregational reflections (please note this is an emotional history)

#### **Positive:**

- The building of the new church building on the west side

- The establishment of a preschool

- Fundraising

- Change of focus – emphasis of looking outward

- Significant change of church culture

- People identified positively with Pastor Brown's statement "We are the Light to the World."

- God has kept us strong

- We have strong leadership

- Growth of youth

- Positive experience with vicars and DCE's

- We learned to deal with controversy – would not allow controversy to divide

#### **Negative reflections:**

- Move was controversial

- We experience core member losses (x3 comments)

- Controversy with Pastor Waring

- General change happened (x2 comments)

Controversy between Pastors

Beginning of division and division increased

Controversy between council and Pastor

Despondency

Depression

Suspicion among members

Clustering and "silo-ing" of members a concern

Connections are diminishing between members? With Community?

#### **Other things of note:**

We need to identify generational needs

There was an expression of concern for succession planning, in particular what are we passing along?

The need to build intergeneration bridges

Connections are still important

Noted that it takes 7 relationship in an organization for a member to be sustained.

Noted that the church today is different from what we knew it to be in the past.

An example was given between the builder generation of our past and the new generation who appear disengaged and are looking to the church to provide services to them.

There were a couple of comments recognizing that Immanuel is a mature congregation and that it is an aging congregation.