



# Immanuel Messenger

## Immanuel Lutheran Church

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

88<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue, Manhattan

[www.immanuelnyc.org](http://www.immanuelnyc.org)

[www.facebook.com/ImmanuelLutheranChurchNYC/](https://www.facebook.com/ImmanuelLutheranChurchNYC/)

Rev. Gregory P. Fryer, Pastor (212) 289-8128, church phone  
Email: [gpfryer@gmail.com](mailto:gpfryer@gmail.com) (212) 828-3665, church fax

Rev. M. Caleb Douglas, Assistant Pastor  
Email: [calebdouglas@gmail.com](mailto:calebdouglas@gmail.com)

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June/July 2019

*A Word from Pastor Fryer*

## Some Reflections on the Pastor's Booth



**D**ear Members and Friends of Immanuel Lutheran Church,

The editor for *The Atlantic Vine* asked me to write an article reflecting on the Pastor's Booth. *The Atlantic Vine* is the online newsletter for the Atlantic Mission District of the NALC. Its address is <https://www.atlantic-nalc.org/news-and-events-calendar/quarterly-newsletter/>. I thought that maybe you would like to see the article too, before it comes out.

New Yorkers are endlessly fascinating to me. Indeed, humanity is endlessly fascinating to me. I was young once, and now I am old. So I have experienced many of the stages of life that those passing by are going through. I like each one of the passersby. I try to imagine what they are going through. I love to see children skipping by. I love elderly folks pushing their walkers, hurrying to get across the street before the light changes. I remember being fit and strong, like many of the people I see. I remember my times in the hospital, recovering, trying to regain strength, like many of the people I see. I wonder about the jobs of the passersby. Do they have a good boss? Do they feel up to their responsibilities or do they feel overmatched? I wonder about their homes and families. I wonder about those who have lost their heart to somebody, or would like to because they are lonely. Even if the passersby do not sit down at my booth, still I am grateful for each one and softly say, "God bless you" to them.

It is quite a responsibility to sit at the Pastor's Booth. As I walk toward church in the morning, I often say a prayer for the Pastor's Booth that day, asking our heavenly Father for grace and faith and truth to minister to people that day. I ask to listen well and then to answer well. I ask to win souls to Jesus.

Pastor Caleb Douglas and I sit at the Pastor's Booth on Tuesday and Saturday mornings, from 10:30 AM - noon. We have learned not to sit together at the booth, because we tend to talk theology and passersby then pass on by, too polite to interrupt us. So, I sit there for half the time and then Caleb takes over. He is very good at the Pastor's Booth. I have complete confidence in his ministry to the people at the booth. Caleb is set to leave us soon here at Immanuel to head off for doctoral studies at Marquette University. I count this a blessing for the NALC and for the wider church, that Caleb should serve as a theologian. But we are going to miss him. The people at the Pastor's Booth are going to miss him. Glad to say, Pastor Carol Fryer, my wife, will be joining the staff of our church, carrying on for Caleb. Carol is going to be great at the booth too.

So, New Yorkers walk by with a sense of strength and confidence, but some of them sit down at my booth and burst into tears. That is why I have a box of tissues for them. City people are like all of humanity: we have hopes and dreams, sorrows and setbacks and fears. Pastor Caleb and I wear clerical collars. People know what to expect from us. They know that our job is to give encouragement and guidance to people by

speaking of Jesus. That is what we try to do, as helpfully as we can.

And I figure I can pray for anyone. Christians, atheists, Jews, Muslims, all kinds of people sit down at my booth. I have learned to welcome each one and to take delight in them. That is one important transformation coming from this ministry: I have learned not to be intimidated by atheists and folks who are not Lutheran. Somehow, the Pastor's Booth helps clarify things: I am making myself available to people so that they can tell me what is on their hearts, so that I can speak of Jesus to them and pray for them.

I have been Pastor of this congregation for twenty-seven years now. But it is easier to meet people if I simply sit on the sidewalk. This booth is about availability.

I have been sitting at the Pastor's Booth for two years now. The longer I sit at the booth, the more I find my answers to be scaling themselves down so that I only want to talk of Jesus. "Jesus is everything," I say to people. "Fill your heart with Jesus," I urge people. "Fill your heart with Jesus and then calmly face the events of the day."

It is a solemn thing to sit at the booth. There have been times when I have been haunted by conversations at the booth. I have wondered whether I said the right thing. I have prayed most earnestly that the Lord would accept these conversations and bring good out of them — good for the people involved and good for his kingdom.

Well, that is a good prayer for each of us. At the end of the day, we can offer what we've done to the Lord, in the name of Jesus. We can ask that our heavenly Father repair our mistakes, turn them around, and use them for the upbuilding of his kingdom. No matter what our work, we can work with confidence knowing that with our God nothing is impossible, and ever our humble work can be useful to him, to whom belongs the glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

In Christ,

*Gregory Fryer*

Pastor Gregory P. Fryer

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## Courtyard BBQ

We're having a cookout in our courtyard on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, to celebrate the start of summer and to informally say "Hail and Farewell" to Pastor Caleb, Lynnae and the boys. Please try to attend that day and by all means bring a friend if you can. Your side dishes/salads/desserts would also be most welcome. Please let Barbara Chomko or Karen know what you might bring (or use the sign-up sheet in the undercroft).

# Farewell Sunday for Pastor Caleb and Lynnae and the boys: July 14



(A photo from the day of Pastor Caleb's ordination,  
February 10, 2019)

[A note from Pastor Fryer:] Please join us if at all possible for the farewell Sunday for Pastor Caleb and Lynnae, Elias, Nathaniel, and Joel. Caleb plans to preach for us one last time, and we mean to pray the

prayers of Farewell and Godspeed for them. They will be off for Milwaukee, Wisconsin then for the start of Caleb's five years of doctoral study in theology.

Lynnae and Caleb both have the gift of theology. Carol and I have been around enough theologians during our careers to recognize the gift of theology in others. Lynnae and Caleb both have that gift. It encourages me a whole lot about the future to think of Caleb and Lynnae.

I do not want to brag overmuch, but it does seem to me that our congregation has been graced by a remarkable number of significant clergy during my lifetime. Some of them have served as pastors here at Immanuel; some have preached for us more than once, so that they feel like friends of our congregation. I am thinking of clergy who have served at Immanuel, especially Pastor Raymond Schulze, Pastor David Lotz, and Pastor Leonard Klein. But also I am thinking of theologians and clergy who have graced our pulpit and chancel. I am proud to think, then, of Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, Rev. Dr. Charles Trexler, Rev. Dr. Thomas Nelson Green, and theologians Robert W. Jenson and David S. Yeago. And there are other important theologians who have preached for us, including Gilbert Meilaender and George Lindbeck.

Altogether, a good number of ministers who have helped shaped Christ's church on earth for the good are associated with our congregation, Immanuel Lutheran Church.

And now Lynnae and Caleb are joining that list. God willing, the years will flow onwards for each of us, with their mixture of gladness and sorrow, all upheld in the good hands of our God. And as those years flow onward, I believe we will be proud to say that we know Caleb and Lynnae Douglas and their sons Elias, Nathaniel, and Joel.

So, plan to join us if you can for their Farewell Sunday, this July 14.

## A Golden Anniversary



We wish a very Happy Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary to Stephen and Jean Fischer! They were married on July 5th, 1969.



Interestingly, their wedding was to take place at Immanuel, but it did not. It had to be moved on rather short notice to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Parkchester. Rev. Carl Weidmann, of blessed memory, married them.

Barely two weeks before, on June 19th, our Immanuel Lutheran Church had suffered what's gone down in our history as "The Great Collapse." Nearby blasting for the construction of a Gimbel's Department Store on 86<sup>th</sup> St. caused half of the then vaulted plaster ceiling to crumble and fall. The extent of the damage is well illustrated in the photo below by Charles Schramm, Jr.



By the mercy of God, there was no wedding taking place on that day; indeed, the sanctuary was safely

closed up and empty, so there was no one at all there to be hurt. Our congregation of that day attended to the challenging job of recovery and renovation, and, by the grace of God, thrives still today, so that we may now rejoice in Stephen and Jean's wonderful anniversary.

(End)