

# The Immanuel *Light* Abridged

MARCH 30, 2020

## *For the Living of These Days*



In his novel *The Plague*, published in 1947, Camus described many human reactions to plague. In the story, a literal plague besets the French Algerian city of Oran. Metaphorically the plague is the Nazi occupation of France. Camus was a member of the French Resistance.

Camus believed the human being flourished by living with dignity in the face of absurdity. The world does not provide a system of meaning. Human beings aspire for meaning. “What’s true of all the evils in the world is true of plague as well,” he wrote. “It helps men and women to rise above themselves.”

In the winter of 1918, one of history’s most lethal influenza virus’ descended upon the globe. Death was no stranger to the world. Trenches crisscrossed Europe as World War I raged. Writer John Barry’s seminal book *The Great Influenza* tells the story of the devastating pandemic. It killed more people in twenty-four weeks than AIDS killed in twenty-four years. Despite such macabre statistics, his story remains one of triumph amidst tragedy.

Two of the story’s unlikely heroes were a Kansas City physician and his wife. Most of Ralph Marshall Ward’s medical practice involved “treating railroad workers injured in accidents.”<sup>1</sup> Dealing with so much human agony deprived him of the joy of practicing medicine. Dr. Ward and his wife decided change was in order. He abandoned his medical practice in Kansas City for a small ranch near San Benito, Texas. On the drive south they made a pact to never mention his time as a physician.

In October 1918 influenza reached him. Some cowboys on the ranch got ill; he treated them. In time, their ranch became a makeshift field hospital. From south of the border the people came. Some came on mules, but most on foot. “Women carrying babies and men carrying women,” the Wards remembered. They later told their granddaughter that it was like the hospital scene in *Gone With the Wind*. The Wards did what they could. They boiled water, and used all their resources to feed and treat the people who had come with nothing. He had

gone back to being a doctor.

“Crises do not make all people rise above themselves, but they lead us to make us discover ourselves,” writes Barry.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, some discovered a less inspiring humanity in the winter of 1918. Some fomented terror, citing Germany was responsible for the virus. The fear unleashed by the virus was inevitable. It was the lies told by people in positions of leadership that eroded public trust and put the population at grave risk. Barry concludes, “The fear, not the disease, threatened to break the society apart.”<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, this was a story of triumph amidst tragedy. This was so largely because ordinary men and women rose above themselves and joined the Wards in the fight against the invasion of the influenza virus. They did their jobs. Many physicians, nurses and scientists paid the ultimate price. Others worked to keep the supply chain intact. Their sacrifice was not in vain. Plans for international cooperation on health took shape. Virologists expanded human understanding of how viruses function and replicate. Lastly, the value of public trust endured.

Distorting the situation is not the way forward. Naming the fear that besets us is; it enables us to attack the threat directly. Ultimately, this will be a story of triumph amidst tragedy because ordinary men and women rise above themselves.

By God’s grace, the courage for the living of these days awaits us. People of faith let us pray. Pray for all at the frontlines of the fight. Pray for all working to supply those in the fight with what they need to do their work. Pray for all who suffer with the virus and all who grieve loved ones lost. Pray for each other. For God has said, “Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with victorious right hand.”<sup>4</sup>

—Steven

<sup>1</sup> Barry, John M. *The Great Influenza*. P.342.

<sup>2</sup> Barry, John M. *Ibid*. P.461.

<sup>3</sup> Barry John. *Ibid*. P.461.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 41.10.



## ZOOMING YOUTH!

Last week our youth group had a ZOOM meeting with our new Minister of Youth, Andrew Tonks. There's more than one way to still stay in touch!

## WE WILL FLOWER THE CROSS!

Plans are being made now to set up the flower cross in front of the Sanctuary for those who want to bring flowers. Details next week!



## KEEP THE DRINK TABS!

Weeks ago a cute IBC rep delivered LOTS of drink tabs to the Ronald McDonald House. Since we are all at home, let's make sure we keep collecting them for a future delivery!

## Financially Speaking (Through March 2020)

YTD

Fiscal Year Income  
\$458,233.81

YTD

Fiscal Year Expense  
\$394,514.87

Net income:  
\$63,718.94

## Prayer List

- Sympathy is extended to **Al Brown** on the death of his mother, Clara Copeland
- **Steve Tate**, recuperating from back surgery
- **Jim Hawkins**
- **Bram Neil**, son of Laddie Neil



## Immanuel Baptist Church

The mission of Immanuel Baptist Church is to share the good news of Jesus Christ, to deepen our love for God and others, to fully engage our neighbor, and to wholeheartedly serve those on the margins of society.

*God is calling Immanuel Baptist Church to practice the radical, compassionate discipleship taught by Jesus Christ.*

### Pastor

Steven Meriwether  
smeriwether@ibcnashville.org

### Minister of Music

Caroline Talbert  
kimreycb@gmail.com

### Minister of Youth

Andrew Tonks  
atonks@ibcnashville.org

### Organist

Richard Shadinger  
richard.shadinger@belmont.edu

### Music Associate

Marilyn Shadinger  
mwshadinger@comcast.net

### Secretary/Editor

Deborah Maxwell  
dmaxwell@ibcnashville.org

### Financial Secretary

Jenny Dean  
jdean@ibcnashville.org

### Secretary

Ann Conn  
aconn@ibcnashville.org

### Parents' Day Out Director

Becky Atkinson  
kentuckyfan80@comcast.net

### Pastor Emeritus

David George

### Minister of Music Emeritus

Beryl Vick