

IMMNAUEL SPEAKS
JULY 2026



Beloved, every year on the Fourth of July, we celebrate freedom and independence. We remember those who fought for liberty and give thanks for the opportunities that freedom provides. Yet as Christians, it is worth asking: What does freedom really mean?

In our culture, freedom is often understood as radical independence—the ability to do whatever we want, whenever we want, without interference from others. Freedom becomes self-determination, personal choice, and individual autonomy. The highest good is often seen as being accountable to no one but ourselves.

But the Apostle Paul offers a very different understanding of freedom in Romans 6:12-23. Earlier in the chapter, Paul proclaims the good news that through baptism we have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection. We have been buried with Christ and raised to new life. Sin and death no longer have the final word over us. In Christ, we have been set free. Yet Paul is careful to explain what this freedom does not mean. We have not been freed to serve ourselves. We have not been liberated for self-indulgence or selfish pursuits. Christian freedom is not a license to do whatever we please.

Paul uses a striking and even uncomfortable metaphor. We are no longer slaves to sin, but "slaves of righteousness." While modern ears may recoil at the language of slavery, Paul's point is clear: everyone serves something. The question is not whether we will belong to someone or something, but to whom we will belong. Through Christ, we have been freed from the powers that destroy life and bound instead to the God who gives life.

This understanding of freedom stands in contrast to the modern ideal of complete independence. The Christian life recognizes that we are deeply connected to one another. We live not as isolated individuals but as members of Christ's body. Our lives are woven together with the lives of our neighbors.

Martin Luther captured this beautifully when he wrote that a Christian is "a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none" and at the same time "a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." In Christ, freedom and service are not opposites. They belong together. The freedom Christ gives is the freedom to love, to serve, and to care for others—especially those whom Jesus calls "the least of these." We are freed from the endless task of proving ourselves before God so that we may give ourselves away in love for our neighbors.

Beloved, as we celebrate our nation's independence this July, may we also give thanks for the greater freedom that Christ has won for us. It is a freedom not rooted in radical individualism, but in faithful interdependence—a freedom that binds us together in love, service, and mutual care. Through baptism, we are free indeed: free to belong to Christ and free to serve our neighbor.

In Christ,

Pastor Joel

May 17, 2026

1. Pastoral Acts

- 24 pastoral visits
- 2 baptisms (April 26th): Natasha Nicole Koenen & Melina Marlys Koenen
- 2 weddings: (April 25th) Nicole Kruger & Nicholas Rosin; (May 9th) Evan Shubert & Madyson Elliott

2. Worship

- Clara City Care center
 - April 22nd & May 6th
- Mother's Day May 10th. Flowers order for the women of the congregation. Reception following worship: Carmel rolls, scrambled eggs & a flower project/gift for women.
- May 17th graduate recognition. God's blessings and congrats to Breanna Dirksen, Sam Miller, & Peyton Schlagel on your graduation! Reception to follow worship.

3. Education/Youth

- Sunday School
 - Singing in church on Mother's Day, May 10th. Last day of Sunday School May 17th.
 - VBS scheduled for Sunday June 14th to Wednesday June 17th. Sign up to attend or volunteer using a QR code or on the church's Facebook page.
- Confirmation/Youth
 - Completed the sacraments and our church history/catechism year on April 15th
 - 7th-12th grade outing to ropes course in Henderson & the big candy store on June 24th. Cost is \$65, youth fund will cover the rest. Text or call Trista or Rachel if interested.

4. Mission & Outreach

- community meal May 3rd: Pasture a plenty hotdogs, coleslaw, chips, and cake.
- Blessing box: donations always appreciated. Normally fill it 1 to 2 times per week.
- Met with Paul Hanson, Director of Development at Green Lake about capital campaign.

5. Continuing Education/Pastoral Self-Care

- Powers & Boundaries workshop May 5th.
- Continuing ed May 14th in St. Cloud
- Vacation Sunday May 10th (Gary will lead) & May 24th (Addisyn will lead)
- Synod Assembly June 5th-6th

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MAY 17, 2026

PRESENT: Derek Rand; Lucas Doesken; Carissa Pederson; Laurie Dieken; Glen Miller; Pastor Joel

ABSENT: Laine Reiger; Gabby Rognlie; Kat Schwitters (Treasurer); Terry Noble

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: By Derek Rand

PRESENTATION: Paul Anderson from Waters Edge Ministries (formerly Green Lake Bible Camp) reviewed their recent name change and rebranding. Identified specific monetary goals for the camps (total of 3 camps) for remodeling and upgrades to all camps. Offered to come and speak to our congregation and requesting donations for their Phase 2 in their operations to complete all remodeling and upgrades.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Reviewed by all. Motion made to accept by Carissa; seconded by Glen; motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Reviewed by all. Kat provided summaries of actions and payments. Motion made by Laurie to accept; seconded by Lucas; motion carried.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Another busy month with visitations. Pastor Joel attended two continuing ed workshops.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: The trip to the winery was well attended and everyone seemed to enjoy the outing.

OLD BUSINESS: No work to be done on the ceiling at the parsonage at this time.

NEW BUSINESS: Keith Johnson will put in the three door locks in the parsonage. Discussed sponsoring the God's Work Our Hands this year as it was not done last year. Will need more discussion and possibly move to school or Community Center to encourage additional volunteers.

NEXT MEETING: June 21st at 10 am

ADJOURNMENT: Motion made by Glen to adjourn; seconded by Lucas; motion carried.

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY

Sunday, July 5	PowerPoint/Acolyte: Lay Reader: Altar Guild:	Austen Olson Duane Dieken Ken & Jan Beyerl
Sunday, July 12	PowerPoint/Acolyte: Lay Reader: Altar Guild:	Karly Bratsch Beth Gaebe Nancy Gosseling
Sunday, July 19	PowerPoint/Acolyte: Lay Reader: Altar Guild:	Addison McNeil Judi Boike Michele Shubert
Sunday, July 26	PowerPoint/Acolyte: Lay Reader: Altar Guild:	Kresson Bratsch Ken Beyerl Judy Gosseling

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TRIBE UP FOR AUGUST 2026
JUDAH TRIBE

Below we have printed the Tribe membership for August 2026. The chairperson will be calling or texting you in the near future, asking you to help serve Immanuel in some way. Start thinking about what you can volunteer to help with. If everyone takes one job, the “needs” list will be filled.

- Corrie and Kathy Swenson – Tribe Leaders
- Larry and Jane Niemeyer
- Gary and Cindy Meyer
- Curt Knapper
- Keith Harms
- Steve Sunderland
- Duane and Michele Shubert
- Ken and Jan Beyerl
- Austin and Amber Hilbrands

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NO COMMUNITY MEAL THE MONTH OF JULY

There will not be a Community Meal the month of July. A dance and Ice Cream Social will be held at the Clara City Care Center on Sunday, July 12th instead.

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OPEN RADIO BROADCASTS FOR 2026

We have many radio broadcasts open for sponsorship in 2026. If you would like to sponsor any of these, please contact the church office at 847-2138, or talk to Pastor Joel or Kathy. The cost is \$110.00 for each broadcast. Thank you for continuing to support this ministry outreach. The following Sundays are available:

July 5, 12, 26	October 25
August 9	November 1, 15
September 13, 20	December 13, 20, 27

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TREASURER NOTES FOR 2026

2025 General Fund Budget:	\$253,150.00
2025 General Fund Income Needed as of 4/20/26:	\$175,059.00

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**IMMANUEL WILL STOP COLLECTING PLASTIC
AS OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2026**

Thank you all for donating your plastic to our collection to receive the 2 benches we now have outside of the church. Unfortunately, the NexTrex company program has changed, and we no longer are able to receive such terrific rewards. I have continued to collect and will do so until September 1st. I believe all recycling is important – cans, steel, cardboard, glass, plastic containers, plastic bags, etc – not just for rewards, but to protect what God has given us, our children, and grandchildren to enjoy. I hope you will continue to collect and turn in all recyclables. Thank you again for your participation. LuAnn Kruger



IMMANUEL SPONSORED ICE CREAM SOCIAL AND DANCE
SUNDAY, JULY 12, 2026

We will be sponsoring an Ice Cream Social and Dance at the Clara City Care Center on Sunday, July 12th starting at 2:00 p.m. “Custom Made”, a band that plays 60’s and 70’s music will be playing. Ice cream floats and sundaes and lemonade will be served. The music will be from 2:00-4:00 p.m. and ice cream will be served during that time. Everyone is welcome! **Many volunteers are needed to put on this event! If you can help, please talk to LuAnn Kruger, Pastor Joel or call Kathy at the church office at 847-2138.** If you like ice cream floats and sundaes, and good music, please come and enjoy the afternoon!

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LOOKING TO STREAMLINE YOUR LIVING SPACE?
WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2026 2:00 P.M.

The women of Immanuel will meet on Wednesday, July 22nd from 2:00-3:30 p.m. **We will have a guest speaker on downsizing and decluttering.** Join us and hear about important organizing tips while exploring how streaming your things can help you feel happier, less stressed and more productive. We’ll explore: how to start your decluttering and organizing journey, practical tips on organizing and decluttering, and how better organization can positively impact your daily life. All ages are welcome! Come and bring your friends!



July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 Happy 4 th of July!!
5 9:00 Worship/ Communion	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 9:00 Worship/ Communion 2:00 CCCC Dance/Ice Cream Social	13 6:00 Church Council Meeting	14	15	16	17	18
19 9:00 Worship/ Communion	20	21	22 2:00 Coffee for Gals	23	24	25
26 9:00 Worship/ Communion	27	28	29	30	31	

