



IMMANUEL SPEAKS

JANUARY 2026

Dear Friends in Christ,

An author by the name of Robert Gallagher once said, “Change is inevitable — except from a vending machine.” Change is one of the constants of life. As we close one year and begin another we have all experienced change in one way or another. For good or for ill all of us have been affected by change this past year. We can also be sure that as 2026 begins, the new year will bring more change to our lives in one way or another.

My friends, what will the new year bring for the world, for you, and for me? Time will only tell. However, as a people of faith I believe there is one thing we can know for certain about the new year. We can be certain of God’s love for us. We hear these words from the prophet Isaiah, **“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you” (Isaiah 54:10).**

These were words spoken to the people of Israel as they began their return from exile. And believe me these people knew change. These words were spoken to a people who had been taken from all that they had known. They had been torn from family members, their homeland, the temple, and forced to live in a foreign country. Sitting by the rivers of Babylon the people would weep at what was lost. Sitting by the rivers of Babylon the people of Israel looked towards an uncertain future. Talk about change!!!

And yet even though their world was thrown upside down by change; God reminded them that God was with them. God reminded the people that God’s love and covenant with them could not be broken. The people of Israel who had been taken into exile would return to the Promised Land and rebuild the city, temple, and their lives. God would remain faithful to the promises that God had made!

In the same way my friends God continues to speak this message to us. As the years roll by and change occurs, the promise we have is this, “God’s steadfast love will endure forever”. We turn to the cross and see God’s great love for us as Christ took upon himself our sin and our death. We turn to the empty tomb and see that God has conquered death, assuring us that as Jesus lives so shall we.

When we gather to worship we turn to the baptismal font where through water and God’s word we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. We are claimed as one of God’s beloved children! We come to the table and are strengthened and nourished as we receive Christ’s own body and blood given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sin. We see the face of Jesus in our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ who are there to laugh and cry with us. We see the face of Jesus in our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ who are there to help bear our burdens. No matter what change occurs as Christians we have a sure and certain hope that our God is Emmanuel, God with us now, always, and forever!

My friends, what will 2026 bring to your lives and mine? We cannot say for certain. However, one thing we can be sure of, and it is this, “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.”

Happy New Year, *Pastor Joel*

Pastor's Report to Council (November 10, 2025 to December 14th, 2025) Rev. Joel Gueningsman
December 14, 2025

1. Pastoral Acts

- 44 pastoral visits
- 1 Wedding (Dec. 13th): Andrew & Lillian Vanderpol
- 1 baptism (Dec. 14th): Aurora Zetah

2. Worship

- Clara City Care center
 - Nov. 5th, Dec. 3rd
- Thanksgiving Eve worship Nov. 26th
- Christmas Schedule: SS Christmas program Dec. 21st @ 9am; Christmas Eve Dec. 24th @ 5pm; Christmas Day Dec. 25th @ 9am.

3. Education/Youth

- Sunday School
 - Christmas program practice is underway; program on Dec. 21st @ 9am. Followed by Happy Birthday Jesus party by the Sunday school.
 - No Sunday school Dec. 28th & January 4th
- Confirmation/Youth
 - Confirmation party for Dec. 17th will be rescheduled to later in the year.
 - No Confirmation Dec. 24th & Dec. 31st. Will return Jan. 7th.

4. Mission & Outreach

- community meal
- Collecting meal items for thanksgiving and Christmas dinner; if you know of someone who needs a meal basket contact the office.
- WELCA purchasing and delivering gifts for shut-ins
- Christmas Day community meal at Immanuel

5. Continuing Education/Pastoral Self-Care

- faith+lead courses

Immanuel Lutheran Church Council

Meeting Minutes December 14, 2025

PRESENT: Kat Schwitters, Glen Miller, Randy Grussing, Laurie Dieken, Lucas Doesken, Terry Noble, Derek Rand

ABSENT: Gabby Rognile, Cheryl Colby

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Derek Rand

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Report from the November 2nd meeting reviewed. Motion made by Lucas D. to accept secretary's report; seconded by Glen M. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Discussion of changes needed from last meeting due to the passage of MN State Law for paid family leave for 2026 . Generalized discussion of overall and necessary changes in 2026 budget primarily due to generalized increases in insurance and benefits, utilities, and yearly fees. Motion made by Terry to accept revised budget as presented; seconded by Randy G; motion carried.

NOTE: APPROXIMATELY \$65,000 NEEDED to make 2025 budget.

PASTOR'S REPORT: December has been busy with twice monthly services at the Care Center. Home visitation and wedding. Confirmands have gained insight into Luther's life and historical context and now shifting focus to Luther's Catechism.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Randy will check to on billing for cemetery building/labor. Will bring info on status to next meeting. This is regard to the building of the columbarium (structure for reverential placement of funeral urns).

OLD BUSINESS: Ceiling in the parsonage: Will be deferred until summer of 2026. Gabe will still do it and is on his calendar. Locks still not installed. Rod has been reminded.

CD will come due at the end of the week; will be placed in Savings; Kat and Pastor Joel will complete paperwork; funds will be placed in Portico as previously approved for Pastor Joel's HERC and Retirement catch-up.

NEW BUSINESS: Derek confirmed with Brandea, Kathy or Darcie that there would be no raises for 2026.

MONEY COUNTERS FOR JANUARY: Lucas & Laurie

BELL SYSTEM: Lightning struck current system and is no longer functional. Janet Forstrom will be coordinating the donation for a new system to replace it. Will be controlled by an app which she can control. New system will also have a surge protection system. Bells will ring at 8-12-3-6. Can program for hymns. She will control remotely, as she has been.

Motion made by Glen M.; seconded by Terry N to take \$1500 from the budgeted Synod 2025 budget and give to Ridgewater Synod Ministry. Motion carried.

Derek will contact Nominating Committee members.

Church Annual meeting was set for Sunday February 1, 2026 following church service.

Next meeting: 1/11/2026 at 10:00 am.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion made to adjourn by Randy G; seconded by Glen M.; motion carried.

INFORMATION ON IMMANUEL'S FINANCES AS OF NOVEMBER 2025

General Fund Budget: \$253,930
General Fund Income Needed AS 11/30/25: \$73,416

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WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR JANUARY 2026

Sunday, January 4:	PowerPoint/Acolyte:	Austen Olson
	Lay Reader:	Laine Rieger
	Altar Guild:	Ann Hovda
Sunday, January 11:	PowerPoint/Acolyte:	Karly Bratsch
	Lay Reader:	Cindy Meyer
	Altar Guild:	Kathy Speiser
Sunday, January 18:	PowerPoint/Acolyte:	Addison McNeil
	Lay Reader:	Michele Shubert
	Altar Guild:	Sara Sabe
Sunday, January 25:	PowerPoint/Acolyte:	Kresson Bratsch
	Lay Reader:	Duane Dieken
	Altar Guild:	Ken & Jan Beyerl

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OPEN RADIO BROADCASTS FOR 2026

Listed below are the open radio broadcasts for the year 2026. If you would like to sponsor a radio broadcast, please contact the church office at 847-2138, stop in the church office, or talk to Kathy Speiser or Pastor Joel. The cost for each broadcast is \$110.00. Thank you to everyone who supported this outreach of Immanuel.

January 11, 18	February 1, 8, 22	March 1, 8, 15, 29
April 5, 12, 26	May 10, 24, 31	June 14, 21, 28
July 5, 12, 26	August 2, 9, 23, 30	September 13, 20, 27
October 11, 18, 25	November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	December 6, 13, 20, 27

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QUILTING

Quilting will meet every Tuesday, in the winter months, weather permitting,.

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TRIBE MEMBERSHIP FOR FEBRUARY 2026

Below we have printed the Tribe Membership for February 2026. The chairperson will be calling or texting you in the near future, asking you to serve Immanuel in some small way. Start thinking today what you can volunteer to help with...oh, and please say yes. If everyone takes a job, the needs list will be filled. Thank you so much!

Judah Tribe

Jim Kluver
Rhodney and Cindy Wilkens
Dean and Judy Gosseling – Tribe Leaders
Dave and Ann Hovda
Robbie and Rachelle Dirksen Family
Pam and Peyton Schlager
Jon Kruger Family
Beth Goeman

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THANK YOU!!

Thank you for thinking of Immanuel this past year with your monetary donations, gifts of time and talent, and in any way you have helped us out! We really appreciate ALL YOUR GIFTS! We are so blessed to be a part of this wonderful church family!

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ATTENTION COMMITTEES!!

END OF YEAR REPORTS ARE DUE IN OFFICE, JANUARY 9, 2026

It hardly seems possible, but it is once again the end of another year! Our Annual Congregational Meeting in February needs an annual report from each committee, and an annual financial report. Please turn them into the church office by **January 9, 2026**, this gives us time to put them together into a report and ready for distribution at the meeting. Thank you in advance.

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IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026, 10:00 A.M.

Immanuel Lutheran Church will have their annual meeting on Sunday, February 1st, after the 9:00 a.m. worship service. We will gather in the sanctuary.

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2026 OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2026 Offering Envelopes are out and in the elevator room. Please pick yours up, and if you can deliver to friends or family it would be greatly appreciated.

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LENTEN SUPPERS FOR 2026

Lent is right around the corner, and we will again be having Lenter Suppers. If you, or a group or committee would like to put on a meal, these are the Wednesday or Thursday nights that are available.

Ash Wednesday, February 18 – Pastor Joel and Friends
Wednesday, February 25
Wednesday, March 4
Wednesday, March 11
Wednesday, March 18
Wednesday, March 25
Maundy Thursday, April 2

You can call the church office at 847-2138, talk to Pastor Joel or Kathy Speiser, to let us know what Lenten supper night you would be willing to prepare and serve the supper. Also, when the date gets closer, please let us know the menu.

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FEBRUARY COMMUNITY MEAL

FEBRAURY 1, 2026, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

The February Community Meal will be on Sunday, February 1st from 5:00-6:00 p.m. The menu is still being planned. We will be serving in the Fellowship Hall and also to go meals in the alleyway. The meal is free and everyone is welcome. Please let us know how many meals you will need by signing up on Immanuel's Facebook page.

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This Photo by Unknown

January

2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 9:00 Worship/Communion 10:00 Fellowship Hour/No Sunday School 5:00 Community Meal	5	6 1:00 Quilting	7 6:00 Confirmation Supper 6:30 Confirmation	8	9 Annual Meeting Reports Due in Office	10
11 9:00 Worship/Communion 10:00 Sunday School/	12	13 1:00 Quilting	14 No confirmation	15	16	17
18 9:00 Worship/Communion 10:00 Sunday School/ Fellowship Hour	19 1:30 Joy Bible Study	20 1:00 Quilting	21 6:00 Confirmation Supper 6:30 Confirmation	22	23	24
25 9:00 Worship/Communion 10:00 Sunday School/Fellowsh ip Hour	26	27 1:00 Quilting	28 6:00 Confirmation Supper 6:30 Confirmation	29	30	31