

Immanuel Lutheran Swea City

January/February Newsletter



Thank you for the free 30 day trial of 2026. I'd like to cancel my subscription and return to the 2010 (or other year of your choice) version of the world please.

I don't know about you, but I have seen a number of posts on social media this first month of 2026 seeming to last forever. Honestly, I can't blame people for feeling that way. There is a nasty cold/flu/covid bug going around. Tensions are extremely high in Minneapolis and other major cities in Minnesota (having lived up there and still having lots of friends in that area, I'm admittedly extra concerned). Escalating international tensions after military action was taken in Venezuela. Healthcare costs rising substantially as well as the costs of just about everything else associated with the cost of living.

The news recently has been very overwhelming. Especially if you take any time at all to pursue different view points and do any research as to what is fact and what is clickbait and slant. And to top it all off, as my sister recently lamented to me on the phone, daily life insists on continuing to march forward. Meals still need to be cooked, jobs still need to be done, home repairs still need to be made, kids still need to get to school, day care, and various activities, and laundry still needs to get folded and put away.

So how do we find the hope needed to keep moving forward?

We look not to the chaos of this world, but to the author and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ (Hebrew 12:1-3). We remind ourselves that this is one moment of time and a small drop in the bucket of eternity (Eccl. 3:11; 2 Peter 3:8-9; James 4:14). We dive into Scripture asking God to remind us, once again, the bigger picture we can never fully see nor comprehend (1 Corinthians 13:12).

When we put our trust in the people and powers of this world, we will always be disappointed. No one is perfect. Everyone will fail us eventually. But when we put our trust in God alone, we will find him keeping his promises each and every time.

I will admit, I'm nervous about what tomorrow brings in many ways right now. I wish I could see the future and know how everything all plays out over the coming weeks, months, and even years. But more than that, I remind myself multiple times a day the very best thing I can do, is try my best to live the life God has called me to as I strive to love God with all my heart and love my neighbor as myself (Matthew 6:27-36).

In This Edition

- Annual Report Notice page 2
- Ash Wednesday Notice page 4
- Cereal Drive Highlights page 6
- Christmas Program Highlights page 7
- Council Summary page 2
- Holy Week Services page 8
- Lent Bible Study Details page 6
- Mighty Warriors page 5
- Mission of the Month page 3
- Pastor's Ponderings page 1
- Sunday School page 5
- Year End Giving page 4
- Youth Group page 5



Saturday, February 14th

Valentine's Day

Wednesday, February 18th

Ash Wednesday

Thursday, April 2nd

Holy Thursday

Friday, April 3rd

Good Friday

Sunday, April 5th

Easter Sunday

Camp Events

OPEN NOW

Summer Youth Camp Registration

February 13-15

Marriage Retreat

April 17-19

Spring Crafting Retreat



Council Meeting Highlights

December Highlights

Wednesday programs will be celebrating Christmas on Dec. 17th and then taking a break until the new year. Pastor Sara proposed seeing if we could take a congregational photo on Sunday, December 21st with the Sunday School program.

Cereal distribution days are coming up with the Swea City building being on Thursday Dec 18th and the Fenton building on Friday Dec. 19th. It is estimated that we will be distributing around 800 boxes of cereal.

Mission of the month for December is Operation Save our Soldiers and in January it will be the transplant house in Rochester, MN.

Year end reports need to be into the office by Jan. 3rd.

Officers for 2026 will be:

President—Paul Preston

Vice President—Bill Hampton

Treasurer—Rob Thompson

Secretary—Lynette Preston

Additionally, committee chairs were selected for 2026.

January Highlights

Pastor Sara will be doing a private family baptism of Evelyn Amundson, daughter of Ray and Erika Amundson on Saturday, Jan. 17th. She will be gone on Sunday, Jan. 18th and has arranged for Dr. Dave Jensen of Algona to preach with Lavon Kruse to lead the service.

Christian Education reported that the cereal drive and the Christmas program both went well and made for a busy December! Sunday school will be taking a break during the holidays and resume Jan. 4th.

The Mission of the Month for January is Gift of Life Transplant House in Rochester, MN with Beacon of Hope being chosen for February.

Interest money from the Parsonage Sale CD in 2025 came to \$3,370. It will be split evenly between the Little Al Foundation, Retrieving Freedom, and the Shayla Bee Foundation.

We continue to contact different insurance companies in pursuit of a better rate.

Becky Larson's resignation from the council was formally received as she has moved out of the Swea City area.

Special services coming up were agreed upon as follows:

Ash Wednesday—Feb 18th—6:30pm

Palm Sunday—March 29th—9:00am Service with Potluck afterwards

Maundy Thursday—April 2nd—6:30pm

Good Friday—April 3rd—6:30pm

Easter Sunday—April 5th—9:00am

2025
ANNUAL
REPORT

The 2025 Annual Report is now available for all members of

Immanuel Lutheran. If you have not received a copy and would like one, please let the church office know. The annual report is available in both electronic and printed form.

Mission Of The Month

December

Operation Save Our Soldiers

operationsaveoursoldiers.org

Operation Save Our Soldiers was formed after CEO Jeff Anderson discovered the power of *Brain-Based Healing* as a permanent healing modality and the effectiveness of the Warrior Retreats where veterans were finally receiving the help they needed to return to their lives and their families whole again. OPSOS later became established as a registered non-profit with the mission of ending "veteran suicide" and helping his fellow brothers- and sisters-in-arms get the help they need to overcome the negative effects of combat-related trauma.

Amount Raised: \$355.50

January

Gift of Life Transplant House

gift-of-life.org

Gift of Life Transplant House was founded in 1984 by the inspiration and determination of Ed Pompeian. A two-time kidney recipient, Ed recognized the need for affordable housing for individuals going through the transplant journey. From an eight - bedroom home established in 1984, Gift of Life Transplant House has grown to be the largest transplant hospitality house in the nation, with 84 guest rooms. Our commitment is to provide high quality, affordable accommodations to transplant patients and their caregivers in a home-like supportive environment.

Amount Raised: \$365.00

February

Beacon of Hope

Beaconofhopeshelter.com

Our mission is to reach out to men who are homeless, hungry and/or in need of hope by demonstrating the Grace of Christ through food, shelter, clothing and the Word of God.

The definition of homelessness is fairly simple; "*a person lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.*" People who are homeless need shelter, food, warmth and personal goods, and distributing these items is a part of the meaningful ministry Beacon of Hope.

Amount Raised: TBD

Why Mission of the Month?

If you have been wondering why we designate a different non-profit organization to donate towards each month, it is a fair question. I thought I would take a moment as we kick off 2026 to offer an explanation.

When Immanuel was a part of the ELCA, the synod office set a specific dollar amount each year to be sent to the synod for the purpose of supporting a number of ministries. This amount was generally based on our membership numbers and we, as an individual congregation, had little say in how it was distributed at the synod level. When we left the ELCA and joined LCMC, we became free to determine how we wanted to support other ministries. It was decided at that time to select a different ministry or mission each month and those who wanted to give towards it would be welcome to do so. This allows us, as a congregation, to give freely and cheerfully, not out of obligation to meet a specific target. Additionally, it allows us to give towards the specific ministries which we feel God has called us to support and which are inline with our constitution, bylaws, and beliefs.

If you know of a ministry that should be considered for the Mission of the Month, please contact DeMaris Fritzler or Rob Thompson who are currently serving on the Mission Board.

Year End Gifts

When the parsonage was sold, we committed to putting the funds in a special CD from which the interest earned each year would go towards a special year end gift to selected ministries. In 2025, that CD earned \$3370 in interest which will be divided amongst the following ministries.



The Little Al Foundation started because of Alan Andrew Dean Miller, also known as Little Al. Alan was born on July 23, 2004, but sadly passed away on Jan. 14, 2005 due to a congenital heart defect. Alan's parents had to leave their home in Iowa and go to Ann Arbor, MI so he could get the surgery he needed right after he was born.

While they were at the hospital, his parents met other families who were going through tough times. Often, these families had to be apart because one parent had to go back home to work. It began to weigh on their hearts to help find a way for families stay together when their kids needed medical care away from home. Motivated by this conviction, the Miller family came together to establish the Little Al Foundation, which now annually serves dozens of Iowa families with children in need of serious medical treatment away from home.



At Retrieving Freedom, our mission is simple yet life-changing: To change lives through the training and placement of Service Dogs for Veterans with disabilities and children with autism.

With training facilities located in Iowa and Missouri, our dogs undergo more than two years of personalized training to ensure they meet the unique needs of each individual they will serve. Our training is tailored to prepare each dog for the specific challenges and responsibilities of their future handler.

As an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International (ADI), Retrieving Freedom upholds the highest standards of care, ethics, and training practices. Our Service Dogs not only assist with daily tasks—they provide unmatched companionship, emotional support, and a renewed sense of freedom for the people they serve.



The Shayla Bee Fund is an organization with the following Mission Statement. **"To help, responsible, working class families with a child in medical crisis."**

In October 2006 nearly two years after Shayla's death, her life was an inspiration to help another family that had an 18 year old son with cancer. The Gilmore Family Support Rally was as much about showing the family how many people were praying for them as it was about helping out financially. Shayla's courage is a legacy that has again inspired her family and friends to help others through the Shayla Bee Fund.

You can check out the book of families helped in 2024 on the information kiosk outside of the sanctuary.

Ash Wednesday Service
February 18th
6:30 pm





CHILDREN'S Sunday School

We are diving back into our regular Sunday School program as we kick off 2026! Just a reminder that kids are dismissed after the children's message and generally goes until 5-10 minutes after the main service ends.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: To make our Sunday School program a success, we need volunteers! Pick a friend, grab a teen to be your assistant, and jump into the wonderfully unpredictable chaos that is working with kids! Materials provided. Contact Paul Preston or Janet Deim to let them know which Sunday's you are available!

Mighty Warriors Kids

When: Wednesdays -

After school for kids (grades 1-5)

We have been enjoying having the kids meet at Immanuel Lutheran after school on Wednesdays. With the added space, we have been able to divide the younger and older kids for lesson and game times, allowing both to be more tailored to their age groups. It still is our dream to find a volunteer who would take on lessons for Kindergarten students so we can add that grade level. Is that volunteer you?



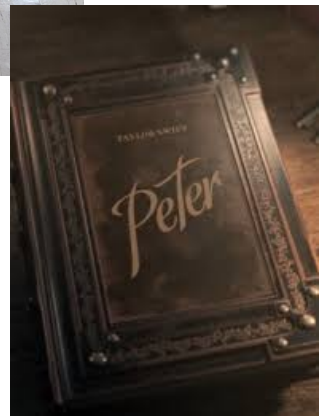
YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth in grades 6-12.
Meeting at Immanuel.
Gather on Wednesdays at 7:00pm for games and snacks, Bible study around 7:30 followed by more games and snacks.

Currently Studying: Peter

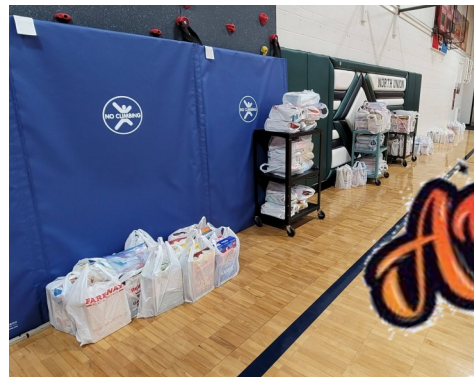
At the moment, we are diving into a 5 week study focusing on the Apostle Peter and what his life can teach us about dropping everything to follow Christ. Then during Lent, we will be looking at a study called "Quick Shots" which strives to give a quick overview to answer some of the most commonly asked questions about Christianity.

All teens are welcome! Enjoy some photos from our Christmas party featuring games that lead us through the Christmas story!





A HUGE THANKS to all who helped with the 2nd Annual Cereal Drive! We were able to send all students in grades PK-8 with 2 boxes of cereal to be sure all kids in our school district had something to eat over Christmas break. Thanks also to financial donors including: Sisters of Faith, Armstrong Locker, Phil Henriksen Insurance, Rustic Treasures, and the family of Marjorie Preston. We are working with the school to use extra funds to help pay lunch balances for those in need. WAY TO GO IMMANUEL!



Lenten Lunch and Bible Study

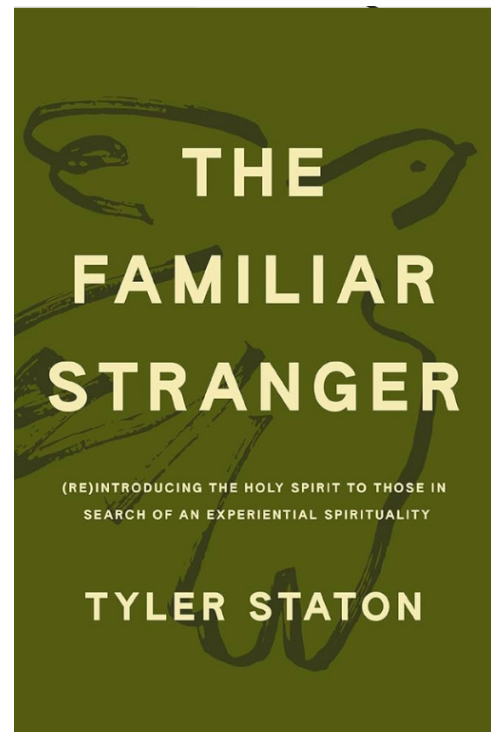
Wednesdays during Lent

11:30am

Join us for a light lunch and a study focusing on getting to know the Holy Spirit better.

We will start on Feb 25 and go through March 25th.

If you would be willing to donate a crock pot of soup on a particular Wednesday, please let Pastor Sara know!



Enjoy some highlights from our Sunday School program. Some of the world's most famous Superheroes got news of a new hero on the scene who has come to save the world from the enemy of sin. So off on an adventure they go to figure out who this new Superhero is and what they are all about!

A Super Christmas





Holy Week

Palm Sunday Service—Sunday March 29th

Palm Sunday Brunch to follow service

Holy Thursday Service—Thursday April 2nd @ 6:30pm

Good Friday Service—Friday April 3rd @6:30pm

Easter Sunday Service—Sunday April 5th @ 9am

Immanuel Lutheran Church
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The Immanuel Lutheran
Church Newsletter

TO:

