



The Gleaner

Immanuel Lutheran Church

December 2024

The Gleaner is a publication of:

Immanuel Lutheran Church

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Office Hours:

Monday-Friday 9am-3pm

The office will be closed

December 24-26 & Dec. 31-Jan 2

Pastor: Dana Hendershot

Layout and Editing:

Andrea Redmond

Immanuel has an online church directory. Visit our website and check it out!

Contact the office for your username and password.

Mission

Joyfully Christian.

Humbly Serving.

Boldly Loving.



Sunday, Dec. 1- First Sunday of Advent

Worship service 10am

Advent Bible Study 11:30am

Sunday, Dec. 8- Second Sunday of Advent

Worship service 10am

Advent Bible Study 11:30am

Sunday, Dec. 15- Third Sunday of Advent

Children's Christmas Program 10am

Youth Bake Sale following

Advent Bible Study 11:30am

Tuesday, December 17

Blue Christmas service 7pm

Sunday, Dec. 22- Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lessons & Carols service 10am

Advent Bible Study 11:30am

Tuesday, Dec. 24- Christmas Eve

Candlelight service 7pm

****Advent Devotionals are available in the narthex****

A letter from Pr. Dana....

Friends in Christ,

Last year during Advent, I was watching from afar, worn out after 6 rounds of chemo. I remember making a joke about writing a post during Advent while waiting for my results. But I never did. The waiting was simply too overwhelming. I was barely functioning, let alone writing. The fear that I might have to endure more rounds just to survive was terrifying.

I was supposed to learn the results 'officially' on December 27, but I'll never forget seeing them posted to MyChart, an app where you can read your medical results, around 3 P.M. on Christmas Eve: No Evidence Detected! That evening at worship, sitting with my big sister in the back pew, I reverted to being the annoying little sister— poking, tickling, and being silly. We ended up laughing uncontrollably. Others looked at us, but for me, it wasn't irreverent laughter; it was a laughter of relief and gratitude. In that pew with my sister, I felt like a kid with her whole life ahead of her again. I was living an advent in my own life.

Just a few weeks ago, I was back in that same sanctuary, worshipping in the back pew to celebrate Rev. David Sprang's retirement. I joined voices from across the synod to honor David as he begins a new advent in his life.

What are you watching and waiting for? It might be something as daunting as medical results or as joyful as the start of retirement. Mary, the mother of Jesus, experienced both joy and fear in her waiting. This Advent, I pray that you embrace whatever advent is unfolding in your life. And if it happens to be dark and frightening, remember:

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1: 5)

In hopeful expectation,
Pastor Dana Hendershot

**Pastor Dana will be on
vacation from
Dec. 26, 2024 - Jan. 3, 2025**



Strategic Planning at Immanuel

Worship with a Twist and Strategic Planning

Worship with a Twist on November 17 was truly an awesome event that was filled with the Holy Spirit. I know, we as Lutherans, don't talk about the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit was with us and at work throughout the planning process and the actual event. This was truly an organic event where each part led to another part. We wanted to do Strategic Planning, realized Advent and Christmas were almost upon us and then in the New Year many of our Snowbirds would be gone. We wanted as many people as possible to participate so we came up with the idea to do the groups on a Sunday (with follow up in December for those who could not attend on the 17th). As we talked, we realized we might have guests who might not be interested in the Brainstorming groups so we planned a worship experience for them. Karen Graef said we will have young people here for the Choir and Chimes, so let's give them an opportunity to plan and dream. Thomas said what about the people who worship at home; this resulted in the plan to broadcast one of the groups with Thomas passing on the questions and comments. Someone asked what about the Campus Ministry which resulted in Josh and Rachel Nelson leading a group for them.

Somewhere in the planning process, the idea of the trees came up. A huge thank you to Beth Mundwiler for making all the leaves. Sarah Gilbert and I spent an hour at Max and Emily's spread out on two tables, sorting, counting and packing the leaves. Of course we were laughing the entire time.

And then our wonderful facilitators and scribes answered our call to be involved. They spent a morning in training, led the brainstorming groups and some will even come back on December 8 to do it all again.

Throughout all of this, Rachel Nelson kept us on track, she and Pastor Dana refined the questions, and she also conducted the training for facilitators and scribes.

I talked to a lot of people who are members of other churches. They were filled with joy when I shared the sequence, a perfect flow from the Word, to visioning and dreaming and returning for prayers and Holy Communion. A joyful way to spend a Sunday worship service in which we all came together to do God's will. I will never forget singing "Lift High the Cross" as we entered the Church. The Holy Spirit was reminding us of our past at the same time leading us to our future.

The council is grateful to all the scribes and facilitators for your willingness to lead us in this process! If you missed the 17th, we will do follow-up brainstorming groups on Sunday, December 8 before and after worship. If you have to miss that too, there will be trees in the Narthex with questions and leaves. You can fill out your comments at any time before December 8. The strategic planning team will analyze the results of the brainstorming session. We will look for threads and in the New Year we will bring those insights back to the congregation. This is a lot of data to process so we will need time to analyze it. We hope to have something to share with the congregation by March 2025 at the latest. We are excited to see what the Spirit is up to here at Immanuel!

Blue Christmas Service

Thursday, December 17 - 7:00 PM

This special worship service is for anyone who finds the holiday season emotionally challenging. We invite you to join us for a service designed to provide comfort, hope and a safe space for reflection.



Celebrate the light of the World

A Beginner's Guide to Advent

Pastor Dana will lead an Advent study following worship services throughout December.

Professor Amy-Jill Levine will guide us through a thoughtful exploration of the history and significance of Christ's birth. This four-session series examines the biblical stories surrounding Christmas with fresh insights.

Sessions include:

1. The Meaning of Memory
2. The Promise of Potential
3. The Journey to Joy
4. The Gift of the Gentiles

*Childcare can be arranged. Speak with Pastor Dana

Ministry with Each Other



Christmas
Carol Fundraiser

Support the youth of Immanuel Lutheran Church and spread holiday cheer!
Pay \$50 and the youth will sing 3 Christmas carols to your friends/family.
Limited to Isabella County only.

Friday, December 20, 2024 from 4-7pm
Sunday, December 22, 2024 from 1-4pm
Monday, December 23, 2024 from 4-7pm

Call or text Amy Powell to make your reservation!
989-948-3626

The poster features a light blue background with white snowflakes. At the top, the word "Christmas" is written in a red cursive font, flanked by two holly leaves with red berries. Below it, "Carol Fundraiser" is written in a large, bold, green sans-serif font. The text below describes the event's purpose, pricing, and dates. At the bottom, there is an illustration of four children in winter clothing singing from green books, with two decorated Christmas trees on either side.



Poinsettia Order forms

If you would like to order a poinsettia for our Christmas Eve service, order forms are available in the narthex. Please turn your order form and payment into the office no later than Sunday, Dec. 15th.

Ministry with Each Other



- 1 Kathy Wyman
- 6 John Lorand
- 8 Annette Foster
- 10 Lorraine Tubbs
- 12 Ruth Magnell
Amelia Gaken
- 16 Luke Douglas
Laney Douglas
- 18 Syd Smith
- 20 Carter Hoffman
- 21 Diane Clise
- 22 Chuck McCollom
Sandy Warriner
Billie Plouff
- 23 Emma Muniz
- 27 Kip Ferguson



On Sunday, December 8th, we will be decorating the church for Christmas following our worship service.

All are welcome and encouraged to come help out!!

Ministry with Community & World



I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for the time, effort, and kindness each of you showed during our week of hosting the rotating homeless shelter. Your willingness to give your time and donate food made a real difference for those we served, and your thoughtful, personal touches added so much warmth and care to every meal and interaction.

Thanks to your generosity, we were able to provide a welcoming and comforting space, filled with meals made with love and served with compassion. Your efforts are truly appreciated, and they reflect the spirit of our church community beautifully.

I would like to especially thank Steve Podolsky for being there every evening to supervise the kitchen; Karen Graef for helping with a number of the hard-to-fill shifts; John and Judy Emmons for cleaning the bathrooms every day; and to Sarah and Roger Gilbert for picking up a last minute shift on Saturday night.

I'm excited to share that our next opportunity to volunteer is scheduled for February 2-9, when I hope we are able to serve in their newly renovated facility. I look forward to another opportunity to come together to serve our neighbors in need.

Thank you once again for all that you do!

With gratitude,
Nicole Ferguson
ICRH-Immanuel Coordinator

The Care Store

is always in need of household items!
When you buy one for your home,
consider buying one for
someone in need. Place these items
on the shelf in the hallway by the
office and we'll get them delivered to
those who need them.

Christmas Outreach

On December 13 & 14
Christmas Outreach will hold their
Distribution dates at
Morey Courts
to almost 600 families in need.

Volunteers for escorting are still
needed on these dates.

Please visit their Facebook page
Christmas Outreach of Isabella
County
if you are able to come help out!

Business Ministry

Contributing Stocks or Bonds

To contribute capital gain property such as stocks or bonds to the church, per IRS Publication 526 you can deduct the Fair Market Value of the asset on your personal tax returns - not the basis in the asset. Immanuel has a brokerage account to facilitate the transfer of these assets directly. If you are interested, please contact the church for information or assistance.

Tax Break for Contributions –people over 70 years-old

If you are over 72 did you know that you can give directly from your retirement account to Immanuel Lutheran Church and pay no taxes on the gift? Due to the tax changes that include a higher standard deduction and the elimination of the personal exemption, you may receive the best tax benefit if you donate directly from your retirement account.

Financial Monthly Report- YTD as of 10/31/24

Spending Plan: \$388,029
Actual Expenditures: \$30,367
Giving to Date: \$26,897

The Immanuel Church Council
has voted to name our memorial garden
“The Robert E. Hoffman Memorial Garden”
in honor of the countless hours of love and
care that Bob put into the beautiful grounds
at Immanuel.

Community Input: Praises and Pinches

To be a healthy, faithful community, Immanuel needs to be open with what we expect in all areas of life. If there is anything in our community life that brings joy or causes concern, please share any feelings and questions. Thank you for taking the time to communicate ways we are doing well in our ministry at Immanuel and the areas that need attention. Your Mutual Ministry Team needs your feedback. If you would like a personal response to your “praise” or “pinch,” please be sure to sign this form at the bottom.

To discuss a concern directly with the Mutual Ministry Team or one of the Team members, please indicate below.

Praises: _____

Pinches: _____

Desired Outcome: _____

Is it OK to publish in Gleaner? ___Yes ___No (Name must be posted if you wish for this to appear in Gleaner.)

A specific question I would like answered: _____

Name _____