



The Gleaner

Immanuel Lutheran Church

June/July 2025

The Gleaner is a publication of:

Immanuel Lutheran Church

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Contact the office for your username and password.

Mission

Joyfully Christian.

Humbly Serving.

Boldly Loving.



***DONATIONS CAN BE DROPPED OFF IN THE
FELLOWSHIP HALL BETWEEN JUNE 2 AT 4PM
AND JUNE 5 AT NOON!!!***

***~ALL PROCEEDS WILL GO TOWARD THE YOUTH
MISSION TRIP TO ASHBY, MN
LATER THIS MONTH~***



A letter from Pastor Dana...

Friends in Christ,

This is the sermon I preached on May 25, 2025, following the bishop election. It was a holiday weekend, so attendance was light. You're welcome to read it here or listen to it online. As always, I said more in the moment than what's written on this page:

Here I am, Lord. Send me.

Many of us sing that song, and it moves our hearts. We've all had those moments—holy moments—when we knew we were being sent by God. We said “yes,” not knowing how it would all unfold. And then, later, the pieces start falling into place. We look back and realize that God was there the whole time—gently, lovingly, arranging each part, even when we couldn't see the bigger picture.

It's a gift when those pieces fall into place.

I know many of you had the wind knocked out of you this past week. Honestly, I'm still catching my breath too. For those who may not know, we had a bishop election in our synod on Monday and Tuesday. These happen every six years.

Back in 2019, people started asking if I would remain open to nomination. I said no. But over the past six years, the nudges didn't stop. The conversations kept coming. And for about two years now, colleagues—some of whom I deeply admire—kept encouraging me to remain open.

So I did some serious soul-searching. And that journey included cancer—where, at first, I was more than happy to say, “Not possible.” But then I got better. And the Spirit's nudges didn't stop. I found myself doing the deep, internal work of aligning how I see myself with what others were reflecting back to me:

“Please, step up and lead.”

On Sunday night, 37 people were nominated.

The tallies were:

Bishop Craig Satterlee – 62

Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas – 46

Rev. Dana Hendershot – 38

Rev. Julie Bailey – 24

And then 30+ others followed.

Let me be clear—I never wanted to leave Immanuel. I even cried on Easter wondering if it was my last one with you. But I did feel called to step out in faith and say, “Here I am, Lord.” To listen. To see what the Spirit might be doing.

And let me tell you—it was a ride. (One I hope I never have to take again!)

Five-minute speeches. Q&As. Two nights with only about three hours of sleep each. I knew, as a woman stepping into a role historically held by men, I'd need to put in three times the effort. And you know me—I gave them everything. I poured my soul—and the Spirit's gift of words—into that room.

Pr. Dana- continued...

When I made it to the top two, I knew that Julie would become our Bishop-Elect. And a wave of calm washed over me. I could stand firm on the shore again. I had remained open, and I was at peace—grateful I wouldn't be stepping into the bishop's role, but also so proud I had answered the call to step up.

I believe it mattered that I was part of this process. For the Synod. For me. I had something to say (surprise, surprise!), and I think people heard it. Even those who didn't vote for me came up and offered such gracious, heartfelt words.

But the moments that will stay with me forever?

The young people who came to me with tears in their eyes saying, "Is this really possible?"
"You give us hope."

After something like this, it's easy to fall into the trap of second-guessing: "If only I had worn this... If only I hadn't said that... I lost momentum when..."

But here's what I know—just a few days out—I gave them me. I tried to reflect Christ the best I could. And I don't have any "if onlys."

I'm proud I did it.

And I'm humbled to have been lifted up by my colleagues.

In today's Gospel from John, Jesus promises us the gift of the Holy Spirit. And as I sat with the text this week (John 14:23–29), what stood out is this beautiful truth: There's always more than one way.

The message is both Jesus *and* the Father.

There is both peace *and* trouble.

There is fear *and* reassurance.

There is the leaving *and* the returning.

There is the before *and* the after.

This is the holy rhythm of faith: the *both/and*.

That's good Lutheran theology:

Christ is both human and divine.

We are both saint and sinner.

The cross is both the place of death *and* the very source of life.

And I believe—truly—the Holy Spirit is speaking.

Sometimes in a whisper.

Sometimes in a gentle nudge.

And sometimes in a holy shout that takes our breath away.

My prayer is that we keep listening.

Because if we dare to follow—even when the path is winding, even when it leads somewhere unexpected—God is still weaving something greater.

Pr. Dana- continued...

Even in the losses.
Even in the waiting.
Even in the moments we didn't choose.

So, Church—may we stay open.
Open to transformation.
Open to discovering a better way than we imagined.
Open to God's unfolding story.
Open to holy surprises.
Open to trusting that the Spirit is already at work in the cracks and corners of our lives.

“Here I am, Lord.”
May that be more than a lyric we sing.
May it be a life we live.

In Christ,
Pastor Dana Hendershot



Pastor Dana's Out of the Office Summer Schedule

June 17-20 Stony Lake Lutheran Camp

June 30-July 7- vacation (Pr. John Soyster will be presiding on July 6!)

Synod Assembly

The 2025 Synod Assembly was thrilling, challenging, emotional and exhausting. Ted Tuma, Alana Piatek Jimenez and Pastor Dana attended as voting members for Immanuel. I attended the Assembly as a voting member of Synod Council. In addition, Rachel Nelson and Dan Eversole were members of the Election Committee. Beth Mundwiler set up the display tables and played percussion in several music sessions. Sherry Pulverente covered the Campus Ministry display and helped at the breakout sessions at Immanuel.

This was an important assembly because it was a bishop election. For many synods, the bishop election is essentially determined in just two rounds of voting but our Synod always goes through five rounds of ballots before declaring a winner. Pastor Dana was nominated and steadily advanced to the final ballot. We are very proud of her for placing second in a hard-fought process. Our new bishop is Julie Schneider Thomas, our first woman bishop. She will be installed on September 13 and will serve for six years.

An interesting note to the election is that two military chaplains: Chris Laughlin who is Pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Allegan and Chaplain in the Army Reserve and John Shipman who is Pastor at St. Paul in Allegan and retired Chaplain in the Air Force Reserve. They brought a very interesting perspective on the concepts of teamwork and cooperation!

Other business took place during the assembly. Approximately 20 Synods are working on a statement about the Indian Boarding Schools which will be sent to the Churchwide Assembly to consider when they meet in late July. We approved our Synod's statement and it will be sent to Churchwide.

We also approved new compensation guidelines for Rostered Ministers which our churches may use to determine salaries for their pastors and deacons. Vice President Sandy Schlesinger and the Synod Council have worked very hard to develop compensation guidelines that make us competitive with the five other Synods in our region. We believe this helps us attract and keep pastors and deacons to our Synod. We also approved the 2026-2027 budget.

It felt like old home week because several former Immanuel members attended Synod Assembly including Pastor Andreis Tisch who was our interim pastor in the 1990's and is now retired from Messiah Lutheran Church in Bay City, Pastor Martha Hartman Stuart who served as Assistant Pastor at Immanuel and is currently hospice chaplain in the Alpena area. Pastor Stuart provided pastoral support for the bishop nominees and also provided pastoral support for many of the attendees. Pastor David Sprang kicked off every session with announcements and corny jokes! I think most of us remember the Whately family. Bridgit is newly ordained and serving at Peace Lutheran Church at Sparta. Beth Whately also attended to help Bridgit coordinate the final worship service. It was good to see these familiar faces.

~Linda Wicander

Ministry with Each Other

Lenten Almsgiving

Lutheran Disaster Response: California Wild Fires

You gave a total of \$1688, and our Mission Endowment agreed to match our almsgiving up to \$2,000! So, we'll be giving out a total of \$3,376! Alleluia. Thanks be to God!

Sunday Helpers needed!!

Each Sunday, we need volunteers to serve in the following capacities:
Altar Guild, Assisting Minister, Coffee Host, Greeters & Ushers.

Please sign up by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/?go=c.SignUpSearch&eid=08C6C8DCF5C8F6630C&cs=09CBBAD98FC58B167B0A640F5BC09BCDFDB5>

April Job Fair at Immanuel

On April 24, Immanuel hosted its' 2nd Annual Job Fair for the community!

Attending this Job Fair were 12 different employers from the area and approximately 100 prospective employees.

Thanks to all who planned and participated!



5	Teddy Gibbs
6	Jocelyn Strandskov
8	Dana Mielke
9	John Emmons
11	Rose Prasad
	Dave Simon
12	Lily Piatek-Jimenez
13	Jana Gibbs
16	Lori Kreiner
19	Kathy Gatten
23	Isabel Goodrich
26	Andrea Redmond
29	Dorothy Fetting
	Sue Knight



1	Susan Stendel
14	Nancy Simon
	Val Austin
15	Aaron Smith
	Reed Wicander
20	Linda Wicander
22	Penny Endres
23	Chris Brown
25	Karen Graef
26	Matt Couch
27	Dennis Marshall
28	Dave Keilitz

Ministry with Each Other

Stewardship Update

Our Stewardship Team—Dave Keilitz, Diane Thomas, Ted Tuma, and Pastor Dana Hendershot—will be sending a letter to congregation members and regular attenders in June. Throughout the month, we'll offer several opportunities to learn more about our congregation's finances, ask questions, and dream together about what's possible.

We'll share openly about where we stand financially, give thanks for your incredible generosity, and invite you to prayerfully consider how you might grow in your giving.

As Paul reminds us in Romans, *"We are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another"* (Romans 12:5).

We give not because we must, but because we belong to each other—and through our generosity, we become part of something greater than ourselves.

Together, we embody God's grace in our community and beyond.

Thomas Strandskov Farewell

It is with a sad heart and a hopeful spirit that we prepare to say farewell to Thomas Strandskov, who plans to move to Colorado in mid-July. Please watch for more information about our time of sending and celebration. Until then, be sure to soak in all his goodness while he's still with us!

As for what comes next: the Personnel Team and Church Council will begin discerning a long-term plan once we have a clearer understanding of our financial position following the stewardship campaign. In the meantime, we are grateful to welcome Thomas Ferguson (tech), Cadence Schuette (youth), and Abbie Powell (children/nursery), who will share in Thomas's responsibilities. All three are already being trained and will be ready to step into leadership!



**Please pray for our Youth and Youth Leaders
as they travel this summer:**

June 15-20 to Stony Lake Lutheran Camp

June 21-28 Mission Trip to Ashby, MN

Have fun and Be Safe!!!

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 73 years-old

If you are over 73 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 April 2025

Spending Plan 2024-2025:
\$388,029

Actual Expenditures:
\$230,016

Giving To Date
\$229,267



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 _____

Ministry with the Community & World

ISABELLA COUNTY RESTORATION HOUSE

2025 Summer Services



The ICRH Board of Directors has carefully reviewed our budget, general operating expenses, and multiple service options to determine how we can best meet the needs of the homeless in our community this summer. For the past two years, we have opened the day shelter for a few hours during the day for our guests during the summer. We did not have the capacity to provide overnight services even though their basic need is a safe place to sleep for the night.

SOLUTION

Since ICRH now has a permanent facility that is zoned for residential use, we will change our summer hours from daytime to overnight. Our operating budget at this time will not accommodate providing services 24 hours a day at this time.

Beginning April 20th, at 9:00 am for our registered guests the shelter will be open from 7:00 pm through 9:00 am. All guests must leave the shelter from 9:00 am until 7:00 pm. Our registered guests will be able to utilize the laundry and shower facilities, work with the case manager, and have a locker to store their personal belongings.

We appreciate your support and patience as we continue to transition into permanent shelter services and develop our plan to provide shelter 24 hours a day all year in the future.

SUMMER SERVICES

- Beginning April 20th through September
- Safe, overnight shelter
- Shower and laundry facilities
- Case management service
- Storage for personal belongings
- Please Note: no meals will be provided by ICRH during the summer



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989-400-4126
WWW.ICRHOUSE.ORG

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MINUTES MARCH 20, 2025

Present: Dan Digmann, Pastor Dana, Mark Strandskov, Staci Couch, Sarah Gilbert, Rachael Nelson, Rose Prasad, Gabe Goodrich, Diane Thomas

Absent: Linda Wicander, Dianna House

Meeting Called to Order by Dan Digmann, serving as Council President, at 6:00.

Rose Prasad led devotions, followed by five minutes of positive talk.

February meeting minutes were approved as corrected. Caden Schuette was added as a new member.

Rachael Nelson moved and Rose Prasad seconded the approval.

Reports were accepted as submitted.

Financial reports:

our income was down in February but rebounded in March. This was partially due to the sale of some gifted shares of stock. Additional shares of stock have been gifted to Immanuel and after discussion, it was decided to postpone sale of these shares. Motion made by Gabe Goodrich and seconded by Staci Couch. Motion passed.

Steve and Jan Podolsky also reported that the money market account interest rate has been adjusted from 5.25% to 4.25%.

Financial report approved as submitted, with many thanks to Steve and Jan for their consistent, faithful hard work.

Old Business:

Refurbishing of bathrooms continues.

Strategic planning process continues. In June, there will be discussions about the integration of traditional and contemporary music in the worship services. There will also be continued discussions on ideas generated during congregational discussions.

The revised/updated mission statement is still in the process of review. No further progress on that.

New Business:

Annual meeting is scheduled for Sunday, September 21st following the worship service.

Requests for reports have been sent to committees.

Council continues to look for a person to become the Council vice president, beginning in September.

Move to adjourn made by Mark Strandskov, seconded by Diane Thomas. Meeting adjourned at 6:60 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sarah Gilbert, serving as secretary.