

# THE IMMANUEL MESSENGER



**FEBRUARY 2025**  
Volume 39, Issue 5



## From Your Pastor

What do Christians most identify as challenges in their life? That was the question a Christian podcast host put to a chaplain/counselor who speaks to people all over the country. His immediate response was “fear” and “bitterness.” The fears, he said, can be of anything. The bitterness is all about hanging on to hurts which come from others or because we feel mistreated or experience what we feel is an injustice.

Addressing the topic of bitterness, he then went on to recall Hebrews 12:15, “Make sure that . . . no root of bitterness springs up, causing trouble and by it, defiling many.” Roots grow, and bitterness can grow and spread through our thoughts, our attitudes, our words, and our actions. Not only ours, but that bitter root can spring up causing problems for other people.

When others hurt us—whether intentionally or unintentionally—we can become angry. Now, anger of itself is not a sin, but anger unchecked produces sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. If that were not bad enough, those sinful thoughts, words, and deeds also displace the watchfulness for loving thoughts, words, and deeds which our Lord Jesus wants us to have for others.

Another important Bible passage to remember in this consideration is Ephesians 4:26-27, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” The literal word for “opportunity” is “place.” Don’t give the devil a place to use as a base of operations to tempt you to all kinds of sin. The devil wants to take over our hearts. Don’t give him a place! Instead, we are directed as God’s dearly loved children in this way, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

God’s love for us is greater than anything we can image. The love of God for us was demonstrated in Jesus our Savior. Consider Jesus’ innocent suffering, death, and resurrection for your sins and the free forgiveness you have in Him for life now and forever, and allow Him to melt away your bitterness. Give Jesus that place in your heart so the devil can’t have a place from which to operate and embitter you.

Then, still considering the greatness of God’s love for you in Jesus, know also that such a great love can drive every fear from your heart and mind. That’s what God’s Word tells you, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). Give Jesus that place in your heart so the devil can’t have a place from which to operate and terrorize you.

What is fear all about? Fear comes because you believe “I can’t,” or “I won’t,” or “I’ll never,” handle whatever is in your life. You know what? You can’t handle it on your own! You were not created to handle it on your own. You were created by an all-powerful God. He created and He sustains the entire universe and countless galaxies. Nothing escapes His notice. He has all the details under control—including every detail and concern of your life. This all-powerful God is also the God of unfailing love for all those who turn to Him. God who has called you to Himself. He says, “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you” (Isaiah 54:10).

Receiving more and more of God’s love and goodness through His Word and worship allows Him to fill every place in our hearts! That’s a good place to be!

Your fellow-servant for Christ,

*Pastor Mahuken*



- February 1.....Karen Wood
- February 5.....Dave Friedrichsen  
Patrick McFarland  
Wayne Miller
- February 6.....Rex Bielenberg  
Steven Christiansen  
Arielle Pedersen  
Lydell Schoenfeld  
McKenzie Weiss
- February 9.....David Jepsen  
Kevin Streck
- February 10.....Michael Hatfield
- February 11.....Dennis Fredericks  
Lauri Schoenfeld
- February 12.....Bonnie Schroeder  
Camryn Schultz
- February 14.....Emily Kline  
Da'Leyah York
- February 15.....Rebecca Segebart
- February 16.....Kim Petersen
- February 17.....Deb Green
- February 18.....Ruth Reincke (99)
- February 19.....Craig Harm  
Carolyn Schroeder
- February 21.....Debbie Namanny  
Darcy Reimers
- February 22.....Eve Rohlf
- February 23.....Brody Morgan
- February 24.....Ruby Friedrichsen (97)  
Karsen Keim
- February 25.....Tanner Petersen
- February 27.....Abigail Friedrichsen  
Alexander Friedrichsen  
Dane Lee
- February 28.....Derrick Dimig  
Travis Friedrichsen  
Jason Hatcher

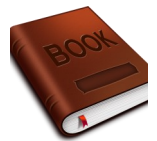
✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘

- Duane & Merry Jacoby .....February 2, 2013
- Dennis & Coleen Bruhn .....February 4, 1967
- Rick & Brandy Porter .....February 14, 1998
- Richard & Becky Hanlin .....February 16, 1973
- Roger & Lois Rothe .....February 16, 1991
- Tim & Cindy Stoppel.....February 17, 1996
- Gene & Marlys Haberberger .....February 26, 1977

Please notify the office of any omissions or corrections.

✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘

### From the Church Record Book



**Accession:** *“Welcome in the name of the Lord...”*  
**Marlene Schneider**, received by transfer from St. Paul, LCMS, Ida Grove, Iowa on December 1, 2024.

**Megan Reetz**, received by transfer from Our Savior, LCMS, Denison, Iowa on December 29, 2025.

**Gage Miller**, received by transfer from Zion, LCMS, Denison, Iowa on January 15, 2025.

**Marriages:** *“...and the two became one.”*  
**Kristin Hennings and Andrew Palmersheim** were married at Immanuel on January 11, 2025.

**Dismissals:** *“May God continue to bless you.”*  
**Dr. Sarah (Mahnken) Komer** was released to St. Peter, LCMS, Macomb, Michigan on December 1, 2024.

**Carol Otto, Elsie and Wynn** were released to Immanuel, LCMS, Terril, Iowa on December 1, 2024.

**Deaths:** *“I am the Resurrection...”*  
**Dayton “Doc” Schmidt**, age 101, died December 27, 2024, and was buried Jan. 3, 2025 in the Morgan Township Cemetery, Schleswig, Iowa.

✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘

### Soup & Sandwich Luncheon

On these cold winter days doesn't a hot bowl of soup sound good? Please join us for chili, potato or chicken noodle soup on Sunday, February 23. Serving will be from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.



We invite you to join us in the Fellowship Hall! Carry out and delivery are also available, please call the Church Office at 676-2235 and put in your request.

Invite your friends or family to join you. Your support of this outreach could be life-changing for God's people. Sponsored by the Mission Board.



**Jim & Jolene Whiteing are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary!!**  
**They, along with their family, invite you to join them on Sunday, February 16 from 2:00-4:00 pm at Mike's Bar & Grill in Schleswig for a come & go party.**

**THANK YOU S**

**Thank You** to everyone who remembered us with cards and/or gifts as we have celebrated our Savior's birth! We are richly blessed to be a part of our Immanuel family. We praise God for the many kindnesses He showers upon us through you. We pray He will continue to guide us and bless us as we continue together in the service of Jesus our Savior in 2025.

Pastor & Chris Mahnken and Pastor Kaiser

**Thank You** to our Altar Guild, our Mission Board and to the volunteers who put up the trees and ornaments for this past Advent and Christmas seasons! Your efforts have enriched our worship and assisted in mission and outreach efforts to help spread the Good News of Jesus our Savior and the joy His presence brings.

**Thank You** to all who helped with setting up and then helping to take down the staging of our Sunday School Christmas service.

On Saturday, December 14, 2024, the Sunday School children presented their Christmas service titled "Star of Love"

Afterwards, everyone was invited to a delicious soup supper served by the Board of Education.



**Immanuel Youth & Families**

Our families with students grades 5th-12th are encouraged to join us for these upcoming events. Please RSVP to the Church Office 712-676-2235 or Angela Korner 712-229-5460.

- February 2: 11:30 am-1:30 pm Bandage rolling & pizza
- February 22: 10:30 am Mercy Meals in Sioux City



**Church Office Secretary Position to Become Available**

Church Secretary

After serving our congregation faithfully as church secretary for over 12 years, Val Teut has decided to retire. She will continue to serve as we go through the process of hiring and training a person for her position.

We are now taking applications for the part-time position of church office secretary. Duties include: financial bookkeeping, attendance, purchasing agent, record keeping and other duties as required.

Applicants should be competent in the use of computers and various software programs (excel, bookkeeping software, payroll, etc).

Hours for this position include: Monday and Wednesday 8:30 a.m.-noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m.; and Tuesday 8:30 a.m.-noon.

Application forms may be picked up at the church office. Applications and resumes are due in the church office by Friday, February 28, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.



**Thank you Jolene!**

After faithfully serving as our church janitor for almost 30 years, Jolene Whiteing has resigned her position as of the end of January, 2025. Jolene has attended to a wide variety of tasks of which most of our members are not even aware. Unfortunately, janitorial service is one of those occupations which receives no notice if the work is done well.

Jolene has done her work well, and we thank God for her years of carefully attending to her tasks for us. Please also personally thank her when you have the opportunity. We pray our merciful Lord will continue to bless Jolene and her husband Jim in faith in Jesus our Savior and in every good work.



Immanuel LWML ended 2024 with a Brunch in place of our December meeting. An enjoyable time of food and fellowship was shared with many that have helped us at various times.

We especially remembered some of our Immanuel members at Christmas that are in care facilities and others by sending Christmas cards.

The Pastor’s Conference was held at Immanuel on January 14th. The LWML served coffee and donuts in the morning and a noon meal following the meeting.

Due to weather, our LWML did not have a meeting in January. We are scheduled to meet next on February 6 at 1:30 for a business meeting and to discuss plans for the coming year.

—Submitted by Donna Harm, Secretary



**Lutheran Church Extension Fund**

As we unveil this refreshed look, we are reaffirming our dedication to the core values and mission that have always guided us. At the same time, we are positioning ourselves for an even stronger, more dynamic future, equipped to better serve our investors, borrowers and partners. This rebrand is more than a visual change; it’s a celebration of who we are and where we’re headed—together in faith.

**LCEF All Access Accounts:** Great rates and full access to your funds, designed for your daily needs. An All Access Account with LCEF is an easy-access investment that builds over time with interest earned. With your All Access Account, you’ll maintain full control over your balances and enjoy convenient online access. Visit <https://lcef.org/all-access-account/> for more information.

From Your library . . .  
“Have we got a book for you!”



*Though None Go With Me*

by Jerrie B. Jenkins

This is the story of a special woman, strong in faith and that faith will be challenged throughout her life.

Elisabeth Grace LeRoy was born on the first day of the century to Dr. James and Vera LeRoy. Dr. LeRoy is the highly respected General Practitioner of Three Rivers, Michigan. Elisabeth’s mother dies shortly after child birth and Elisabeth is raised by her father and his widowed sister, Agatha.

Dr. LeRoy is very involved in the local Christ Church and takes his young daughter to meetings, Sunday School and Church. At a very young age Elisabeth comes to love everything about the Church. She even tries hard to convince her aunt to “look to the Lord” to change her bitterness after losing her husband and infant child.

While at a youth gathering in her teens, Elisabeth is so inspired by the guest speaker, she finds what her heart has been yearning for and promises to deepen her commitment and follow Christ, no matter the cost.

Elisabeth will be tested throughout her life to keep her promise; two World Wars, The Great Depression and many heartbreaking sorrows in her personal life.

I really enjoyed this book, the characters stories and a little history lesson along the way.

—Submitted by Elaine Teut



**Thrivent Choice Dollars for 2024 will be expiring soon!**

If you are a Thrivent member, you may direct Thrivent Choice dollars to our congregation, our preschool, Mission Central and other LCMS organizations.

Simply go to [www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice) or call the Denison office at 712-263-6785 for assistance before March 31.

**Immanuel Lutheran Church  
Voters' Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2025**

The meeting was called to order with 40 members present.

**I. Opening Devotion and Prayer**

Pastor Mahnken shared a set of inspirational verses with those attending. Those verses were from Isaiah Chapter 43 and were used for encouragement when the world makes us feel insignificant or down-trodden.

**II. Reading/Approval of Minutes and Agenda**

Minutes from October 21, 2024 Voters' meeting were shared. The minutes were approved as was the agenda for today's meeting.

**III. Reports of Officers and Boards**

**A. Elders (Curtis Korner)**

Curtis thanked Eric Schneider and Derick Bruhn for serving second terms as Elders. A planning meeting was held Jan 5. Attendance for 2024 was up slightly. Those that did not commune in 2024 were identified and the Elders will reach out to them.

**B. Trustees (Ryan Kragel)**

Ryan thanked the voting assembly for the prayers and support following his surgery and throughout the recovery process.

A new drinking fountain with a bottle filler will be installed in the preschool hallway. New flooring is being investigated in the education wing hallway and bathrooms. Project may be expanded to do some of the classrooms. An access ladder will be added. There may be an additional fee for sanding and smoothing of the floor. Some new outlets were installed. Loren Jepsen and Ryan Kragel are off of the board of trustees. Welcome to Zach Bielenberg and Bruce Paulsen as new trustees.

**C. Treasurer/Stewardship/Finance (Dick Fredericks)**

Immanuel is \$1,575.16 behind in the budget at the end of 2024.

**D. Education/Youth (Rachel Jacobson)**

Rachel welcomed Deb Green to the Education Board. A skating party is being organized. A high school Bible Study will be starting again soon. On February 2, there will be a bandage wrapping event. Youth will be participating in Mercy Meals and also helping out at the Gospel Mission.

**E. Preschool (No Report)**

**F. Mission/Fellowship (Judy Gierstorf)**

The Harvest Dinner served a little over 300 people. After expenses were paid, there were proceeds of \$2,251 to be used on various projects. There was a drive thru option where patrons could drive up and have their order filled without having to get out of the car. Thanks to Judy and the Mission Board for putting so much time into making the event a success!

The Advent Meal that the Mission Board served raised \$200 for various projects.

There will be a garage sale on May 29-31.

**G. Memorial Committee (Lodean Voss)**

Lodean reported that memorial funds will be used to help pay for the new water fountain/bottle filler. Also, new chairs are going to be put in the Fireside room and paid for with memorial donations.

**H. Pastor's Report (Pastor Mahnken)**

GROW IN LOVE AND LOVE IN SERVING was the theme of Pastor's message to the voters. Pastor shared membership statistics and encouraged us to support and encourage fellow members of Immanuel. Please pray for the youth of Immanuel that they may seek the Lord's wisdom.

**IV. Old Business**

**A. New Constitution**

Pastor has started reviewing the current Constitution. It will be drastically revised and a policy manual will be generated to streamline procedures at Immanuel.

**B. Welcoming New Board Members**

Zach Bielenberg and Bruce Paulsen were officially recognized as Trustees and Deb Green is now a member of the Education Board.

**C. Other?**

**V. New Business**

**A. Designate Use of Meal Receipts**

1. Soup Dinner
2. Lenten Suppers (March 5 is Ash Wednesday) Additional Lenten dates are March 12, 19, 26, April 2 and 9. Deb Green moved and Rachel Mentink seconded the motion to allow whoever serves the meal/dinner shall direct the use of the proceeds. The voters approved this unanimously.

**B. Request Home Mission Funds to Cover 2/3 of Registration for Okobojo Campers**

Last Year's Registration costs were:  
Cub Week 1-\$315 Cub Week 2-\$380 Jr. High Week-\$385 Youth Week-\$400  
Family Retreats also available, prices based on number attending. Visit <http://www.campokobojo.org/> for more info.

Dennis Gierstorf made a motion to approve these subsidies. Deb Green seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by the voters.

**C. District Convention**

1. Immanuel Member to Attend Circuit Forum with Pastor Mahnken (Date and Time TBD)  
Harry Riessen volunteered to attend this meeting and was approved by the voters to attend with Pastor.
2. Immanuel Member for our Delegate to the District Convention June 8-10 at Camp Okobojo.  
Leroy Hight volunteered and was approved by the voters to attend with Pastor.
3. Suggested Nomination for District Offices and Boards  
President: Pr. Paul Egger (St. John, Galva)  
1st Vice President: Pr. Jon Riggert (Trinity, Cherokee)  
2nd Vice President: Dave Lyons (St. Paul, Schaller)  
Treasurer: Scott Ernst (Redeemer, Sioux City)  
Secretary: Pr. Rich Merrill (St. John, Charter Oak)  
Ordained Minister at Large: Pr. Paul Kahldal (First English, Spencer)  
Commissioned Minister at Large: Sarah Popp (Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School)  
Lay Member at Large: Dave Bockelmann (St. John, Charter Oak) and Tracy Stetzel (St. John, Casey)  
Human Care: Pr. Tom Vanderbilt (Mt. Calvary, Indianola)  
Missions: Pr. Joshua Lowe (Trinity, Hawarden)  
Stewardship: Pr. Russ Senstad (Redeemer, Sioux City)  
Youth: Pr. Ryan Rohrig (St. Paul, Carroll)  
Christian Education: Pr. Ben Dose (Immanuel, Spirit Lake)

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to accept Pastor Mahnken's recommendations for the various offices and boards.

**D. Flooring in Education Unit**

Eric Schneider moved and Deb Green seconded to proceed with flooring in the Education Unit. The vote was unanimous.

**VI. Adjourn With Prayer (Pastor Mahnken)**

Pastor noted that Iowa District West is creating an Emergency Relief Fund to assist those dealing with the aftermath of the southern California wildfires. If you are interested in doing something financially, please contact Pastor Mahnken. Pastor then led us in a departing prayer.

~Submitted by Craig Bogatzke, Secretary

*"Everyone should be eager to advance the teaching and study of the Word for his own salvation and the glory of God."*

**Pastor Mahnken's Report  
Voters' Meeting—January 12, 2025**

We began 2024 with 623 baptized members and 514 communicant members on the books. In 2024 ten of our members died—Elaine Friedrichsen, Gaylord Boeck, Kathy Korner, Tom Bubke, Jim Aldag, Roger Chisholm, Guenter Detlefsen, Marlene Hight, Gloria Schmidt, and Doc Schmidt. We also had the funeral for Carson Baer, Grandson of Jerrie & Glenn Wigg. We have had five baptisms; one member added by affirmation of faith, and six transfers in. We have had two communicant members and another two children transferred to other LCMS congregations. Four members (2 communicants & 2 children) have asked to be released to join a non-Lutheran church. Two other baptized members have been released. We had eight baptized members who became communicant members by Jr. Confirmation. As of today we have 615 baptized members and 515 communicant members on our roll.

Our worship attendance average in 2024 was 148.7/Sunday—the highest average attendance we have had since Covid (2020). Our Christmas attendance was also the highest since Covid, but if you were with us for Christmas, you know that attendance varies greatly based upon extended family that returns “home for Christmas.”

We are thankful for all the time and effort expended by our Sunday School to provide for us a wonderful Sunday School Christmas Service on Saturday, December 14. We especially thank our Superintendents Laura Ernst and Kristin Hennings and Ryan Ernst for all his work on producing the various lighted stars which helped lead us through the service to Jesus, our Savior, the Light of the world and the Light for our lives.

You may remember, we had icy weather that weekend that prompted us to cancel our Sunday morning service. We put the cancelation early on KDSN radio in Denison and on our Immanuel Facebook site. We still had 21 people show up. Sometimes, deciding on whether to cancel or not is difficult. Some churches resolve the difficulty by simply canceling service and leaving the responsibility on the members. We want to be careful that we do not endanger anyone. We do the best we can to decide and to inform.

Last Sunday Zion in Denison extended a call to address their Pastoral vacancy. Please keep

Zion and Pr. Caleb Stoever in your prayers, that according to God's will he will accept Zion's call.

St. John in Kiron is now being served by their Special Ministry Vicar Shane Neumann. He is a member of St. John and is taking online classes from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis to become a Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP). An SMP is a man of a congregation who is trained and who then serves in that place. He cannot be called to be pastor anywhere else unless he furthers his education through the Seminary. The SMP approach is our LCMS latest refinement in how to better address our increasing number of congregations without a pastor.

Pastor Viggers of Trinity, Odebolt died early this past December. He had been the supervisor for Shane Neumann in Kiron. Now Pastor Trunkhill of Our Savior, Denison is Shane's supervisor. Pastor Trunkhill also serves Bethlehem, Dow City, is the vacancy pastor supervising Zion's vacancy, and is our Circuit Visitor, so he is really busy.

Finally, I ask that you please continue to pray the Lord would bless us with the working of His Holy Spirit through His Word—all of us, no matter what our age. Pray for your spouse, pray for your children and grandchildren, pray for one another as fellow members of Immanuel, and pray for those you know who do not have saving faith. Pray as St. Paul prays in Ephesians 3, that “[God] may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God” (vv. 16-19). Key in these verses is that we may “know the love of Christ.” In the Bible to know is more than what is in your head; it is also a part of your heart (faith) and your will—to put it into action. As one of the lines in a hymn today expressed, “Grow in love and love by serving” (LSB 922.3). If I say “I know Jesus” but it does not show in my life in worship and following Jesus in the way I live, then I don't know what I'm talking about! But if Christ lives in my heart by faith, as the verses I read encourage us to pray, then I am growing in loving Him and living for Him by loving those He brings into my life—and that includes praying for them that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith.

Thank you for your prayers.



Isn't it reassuring (and let's face it, exciting) when the Lord confirms something you've been learning? One of our daughters was telling me about a song she thought the preschoolers would enjoy. It's called The Deep Cries Out. It involves dancing, jumping, and shouting. You know, all the things that three and four year olds love to be given permission to do at school. She wasn't wrong. The children have been loving it! One of the lines in the song references stirrin' up deep deep wells. I had some idea in my mind what they were referencing but began to do a little searching. Ahh, intimacy with the Lord. The desire to "go deep" with the Lord and discover His heart and love.

Okay, hold that thought a moment. Now we'll flip over to what the morning students have been learning. Jacob and Esau. The twins who were born to Isaac and Rebecca. I sometimes will go and read the account in Scripture (versus the books I use for the children) and was intrigued when I discovered Isaac spent a lot of time digging wells. Yes, actual physical wells. I know. It maybe doesn't sound like much to you, but it's moments such as this when I know God is speaking something. I haven't dug into it enough yet to

expound, but the moral of this particular story, look how God uses preschool! It's a domino effect. What a blessing it was after we had worshiped together (via music) at the rug to turn around and tell the children that the Bible story they are learning had the father of the twins digging a lot of wells too. Please pray that the children will dig deep spiritual wells and that God will fill with His living water. The love of Jesus is a life changing and powerful gift. I pray these children will grow into adults who spend time in the Word, sit at the feet of Jesus, and allow Him to transform their lives.

As we look ahead to see what is coming, we are excited to see Grandparents' Day on the horizon. The students will be celebrating Valentine's Day with these special guests in attendance. The children continue to make gains in their academic skills and social skills. As we look ahead, we've got the prodigal son and Joseph coming up in our lessons. (Joseph, see, more wells!) Also, stay tuned. We have Family Night (I think it's in March) which will provide a special event for not only our preschool families but the church and community families as well.

Lastly, we are accepting registrations for next fall. If you know of anyone who is interested in preschool, we have limited space available. Please feel free to send them our direction.

Blessings,  
Mrs. Gustafson





Find out why over 1.5 million couples have attended FamilyLife's Weekend to Remember.

*Weekend to Remember* provides encouragement, hope, and practical tools to build and grow your relationship—no matter how many years you have been married.

Our congregation will pay the registration costs of any member couple attending a *Weekend to Remember* (those attending are responsible for their room and all other expenses). Local weekends coming up include:

- Omaha, NE: March 14-16, \$151/night-room.
- Des Moines, IA: April 4-6, \$132/night-room.
- Lincoln, NE: May 30-June 1, \$124/night-room.

Weekends are also available in Minneapolis and Branson. For more information visit <https://www.familylife.com/weekend-to-remember#where>.



**Updates from Camp Okoboji**

Upcoming Events:

April 26: Camp Okoboji Annual Meeting

Wants & needs for Camp Okoboji:

- \* Outdoor rocking chairs
- \* Gas grills
- \* Laundry soap, bleach and hand soap
- \* Queen size mattress pads
- \* New commercial grade vacuums, coffee pots, toasters, crock pots
- \* Thrivent Action Team Cards (contact Kellie Jones for potential projects; 712-337-3325)

Personnel Updates:

Summer staff is greatly needed! Please encourage youth within your congregation to consider serving as Summer Staff. Invite youth (at least 16 years of age) and college students to consider serving with us in 2025 for an unforgettable summer at the lake. Application profiles can be completed at NLOMA.org.

**REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR CAMP [campokoboji.org](http://campokoboji.org)**

- \* May 30-June 1 Kids' Kamp
- \* June 5-8 J.O.Y. Camp #1
- \* June 22-26 Cub Week #1
- \* June 29-July 4 July 4 Family Retreat
- \* July 6-12 Jr. High Week
- \* July 10-13 J.O.Y. Camp #2
- \* July 13-19 Cub Week #2
- \* July 20-26 Youth Week
- \* July 27-August 1 Family Retreat I
- \* August 3-8 Family Retreat II

**AFRICAN RADIO MINISTRIES—NEWS**

We celebrate God's work through you, the African Radio Ministries partners and the saints serving in God's vineyard in Africa.

**Ethiopia Kingdom Growth in 2024**

- \* New Converts: 856
- \* Confirmations: 577
- \* Baptisms: 333
- \* Callers: 1042
- \* Listening Groups: 48
- \* Bibles/Booklets Provided: 1420
- \* Visitations: 23

**Great is THY Faithfulness through every Tribulation.**

Rev. Mengistu is the Executive Director of WCEM, ARM's partner organization actively involved in ministry work in Ethiopia. He shares this powerful encouragement: "In 2 Cor., 11, we see Paul preaching the Gospel through many challenges, yet he remained steadfast in his calling, sharing the message with power, zeal, and unwavering courage. In Ethiopia, amidst political instability, many young people are armed and engaged in robbery, kidnapping, and killing, creating significant challenges for my visitation work for the Gospel. Traveling in the countryside, I often face sudden road closures, unexpected kidnappings, and the sounds of gunfire. These dangers threaten all of us on the journey, and many in the church hesitate to serve alongside me. Yet, in spite of these trials, the Gospel continues to be preached, and lives are transformed through salvation, baptism, teaching, and ordination. God hears our prayers and keeps us safe, for He who called me is faithful. Amen. All glory to Him!"

**Bonosha Bible School.** The Bonosha Bible School classroom has been completed and is now being used. Rev. Mengistu paid a visit to the school, where he was able to share essential textbooks and resources through your generous ARM donations. During his time there, staff, students, and visitors were able to pray over the blessings and challenges in life and ministry.

**Liberia Kingdom Growth in 2024**

- \* Callers: 499
- \* Confirmations: 116
- \* Baptisms: 605
- \* Church Plants: 19
- \* Listening Groups: 16
- \* Bibles/Small Catechisms Provided: 2200
- \* Visitations: 97

**Maryland County: Christmas Message Inspires a Prodigal.**

Mr. Allison listened to the ARM worship program for some time, but it was the Christmas message that truly touched his heart. He promptly called Rev. David Bardue to arrange a meeting. During their conversation, Mr. Allison opened up about his years of backsliding in faith. He sought prayer and expressed his remorse for not guiding his daughters in how to follow Jesus. Determined to change, he begged for help in how his family can become true followers of Jesus and active members of the Lutheran church.

Your partners in the harvest,  
~Missionary Linda Kurtz and John & Kathy Duitsman

Funds are needed and can be sent to:  
African Radio Ministries  
9811 W. Charleston Blvd. Ste. 2-209  
Las Vegas, Nevada, 89117





On a Mission  
to Support  
Christ's Mission!

Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, the Light that no darkness can overcome. This is the joyful message of Epiphany. Christmas is the giving of the Gift. Epiphany is the “unwrapping” of the Gift. Epiphany tells us who this Jesus is and what He came to do. This Jesus welcomes sinners into His presence—not reluctantly or begrudgingly, but eagerly and joyfully.

But, what if there were no Jesus? What if all you had was the black magic that they practice in East Africa. What if all you had was Vishnu—one of the false gods of the Hindus (they worship thousands of gods). What if all you had was Gautama Buddha—the false god of the Buddhists, or the Voodoo witch doctors that are all over Latin America. What if all you had was Allah, the false god of the Muslims—a god of anger and retribution. Without Jesus, all these followers of false gods live in doubt and fear, hopelessness and despair.

We have Jesus! And there is “now no condemnations for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). All the false religions and false gods of this world require that you sacrifice something for them, but Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross for you, so that you could be His forever. That’s the difference! That’s the difference between Jesus and every other “god” in the world. And that is why we tell other people about Jesus! He brings Light and Life to all.

Rev. Steve Schulz  
Pastoral Advisor & Assistant to the Director  
Mission Central  
steve.schulz@lcms.org

## ¡AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from *Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas*  
*Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake*  
Pastor Pedro Lopez

Greetings from your Hispanic Ministry. On this Epiphany Season, we are grateful for the continued blessings as we share the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are always thankful for all the volunteers who help out through our different programs.

This month we have had a break from ESL classes just focusing on our Sunday services, Bible studies, and sharing with church families.

We are happy to share that we will be having ESL at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Storm Lake. We ask for your prayers so that we meet new families that will hear God’s Word.

We will be posting schedules on our Facebook page, (Ministerios Hispanos Luteranos Iowa District West—LCMS). Please look us up and feel free to join us.

Please continue to pray for your Hispanic Ministry, for me, and for my family.

~ Rev. Pedro Lopez



On November 27, 2024, totally “out of the blue” strangers came and delivered a very special gift!

Many months ago, we received word from all of our dear missionaries stationed in the area of Asia and Taiwan, that they wanted to purchase a tree to be planted at Mission Central in loving memory of our dear Maxine Thies!

We waited and waited for the arrival of this memorial gift, and on this special day the tree arrived and was planted! A special memorial sign was placed near the tree that reads: “In loving memory of Maxine Thies.”

What a special gift from our Asia Region missionaries that will always be here to remind us of one of the greatest missionaries of all time!





## TIKTOK KNEW

by Rev. Jonathan Conner for Lutheran Family Service of Iowa  
 Posted on January 5, 2025; Reprinted by permission.  
<https://lutheranfamilyservice.org/2025/01/tiktok-knew/>

This should come as a surprise to no one, but TikTok knew. According to recent court filings by 14 attorneys generals, TikTok knew their platform was endangering and harming minors and they not only did nearly nothing to stop it, but actively pursued priorities that would make the situation worse. This adds to a growing mountain of evidence on the serious and lasting harms social media is inflicting on users, [1] especially children.

Last year the *Wall Street Journal* ran a series of disturbingly revealing articles on the harms Facebook and Instagram knew they were causing children, harms they did effectively nothing to mitigate. One article detailed results discovered through test accounts registered to fictitious children: *Instagram's system served jarring doses of salacious content to those test accounts, including risqué footage of children as well as overtly sexual adult videos...*

Findings detailed in other articles are too explicit to detail here, but Facebook and Instagram knew. They knew their product was destroying mental health, spiking depression and anxiety, and exacerbating young people's body issues. Taking real and effective action would have killed "engagement" and tanked revenue. So kids were sacrificed for profit.

### An Arms Race For Attention

In this most recent exposing of social media's deleterious effects on users, especially youth, leaked internal documents from TikTok executives and team members show that they saw themselves in an "arms race for attention" against other social media giants, one they could only win if they moved forward with their addiction-inducing algorithms and never-ending, rapid-fire videos. And that's what they did ... with precision. Documents reveal that they knew exactly how long it would take to get the average user "addicted to the platform:" 35 minutes. If they could keep users' attention for 35 minutes, they could induce addiction. And young people were prime targets. TikTok's research showed, "As expected, across most engagement metrics, the younger the user, the better the performance" because "Minors do not have executive function to control their screen time..." TikTok knew. They knew they were exploiting children.

And they knew what excessive screen time did to people, especially children: *Compulsive usage correlates with a slew of negative mental health effects like loss of analytical skills, memory formation, contextual thinking, conversational depth, and increased anxiety.*

How can this not move us to weep! And Tiktok knew! Further, according to their own documents, TikTok knew, *Compulsive usage also interferes with personal responsibilities like sufficient sleep, work/school responsibilities, and connecting with loved ones.*

This is utterly devastating and TikTok knew. One executive offered this: *I think we need to be cognizant of what [the app] might mean for other opportunities. And when I say other opportunities, I literally mean sleep, and eating, and moving around the room, and looking at someone in the eyes.*

TikTok knew its platform actively interfered with sleeping, eating, moving around the room, even looking at someone in the eye! How can we not read this and ache in our soul?

**(continued on the next page)**

## Down To 107 Minutes Per Day

In public, TikTok touted its screen-time reminder, the nudge the platform was to offer users after they had exceeded a certain amount of continuous usage, but internal documents show that these were more about providing a useful “talking point” that would improve “public trust in the TikTok platform via media coverage” and not about actually reducing screen-time. In reality, the tools resulted in a paltry 1.5 minute drop in usage (from teens using for 108.5 minutes per day to 107)! What meaningful difference would anyone expect from 1.5 minutes less in front of their platform? Internal communication, in fact, showed that their goal was “not to reduce the time spent” on its platform but to “contribute to DAU [daily active users] and retention” of users.

If that meant destroying a child’s perception of reality, so be it. If that meant interfering with sleep, school, and meaningful, three-dimensional connection with family, so be it. If that meant robbing a child from the ability to look another human in the eye, robbing them from the deep, emotional bond such eye contact produces, so be it. They were in an arms race for users’ attention. The goal was to win even if it mean children (and all of society) lost. TikTok knew.

## Body Issues Abound

And TikTok knew its “beauty filters” were destroying young people’s mental health and self-perception. These beauty filters alter facial features, raising cheekbones, strengthening jawlines, enlarging lips and eyes, reducing waist sizes and marks of age. Besides being a lie, these filters propagate a narrow and arbitrarily chosen perception of what counts as beautiful, a definition only a fraction of a percent of real people meet. The app’s algorithms go so far as prioritize its definition of beautiful people, ensuring they are viewed more often than those it deems not attractive. How could this not distort users’ perception of their selves and of reality? How could this not leave users feeling perpetually inadequate and insufficient? How could this not exacerbate body issues? TikTok knew.

## Illicit Leaks

TikTok also knew that its content moderation, which it touts in public, was a sham. TikTok’s documents refer to its substantial “leakage” rates. This refers to the rates at which illicit (i.e. sinful and evil) images “leak” through the defense systems that are supposed to protect users. Documents show the following leakage rates:

- 71% of “Normalization of Pedophilia”
- 33% of “Minor Sexual Solicitation”
- 13% of “Minor Physical Abuse” (physical abuse of minors)
- 36% of “Leading minors off platform” (i.e., to illicit content off the TikTok platform)
- 50% of “Glorification of Minor Sexual Assault”
- 100% of “Fetishizing Minors.”

For every 100 videos trying to normalize pedophilia, 35 got through the content filters! For every 100 videos featuring a minor being sexually solicited, 33 got through! But we’re not dealing in hundreds; we’re dealing in millions! This is unconscionable. And TikTok knew. They knew all of it. They still know all of it.

Documents also show that they knew underage streamers were receiving digital currency on their app in exchange for stripping. In fact, these documents show “a high” number of these incidences. In fact, in one month TikTok documents show that one million “gifts” were sent to kids for such illicit purposes. TikTok knew.

**(continued on the next page)**

If they knew all of this and took no meaningful action to protect children (or adults), do we really think anything will move them to do it? Surely not. Social media companies don't care about your kids. And they don't care about you. To them, you and your children are users. What they care about is producing the most addictive drug possible to keep their users hooked and dependent. They've duped us long enough. It's time for us to take control. It's time for us to rescue our kids. It's time for us to break free.

### **Armed With What We Know, We Must Take Action**

I'll offer a few suggestions. You can decide how serious you want to get. I'll warn you up front, though, this won't be easy. You shouldn't expect it to be.

#### **DELAY, DELAY, DELAY!**

Delay giving your children a smartphone as long as possible. Every year you wait is one more year their brains have to mature, one more year they gain an identity apart from social media, one more year they have to develop executive function, emotional regulation, and a realistic assessment of reality, one more year they have to develop a robust and active imagination, one more year they have to look people in the eye, one more year they have to form meaningful, embodied, three-dimensional relationships.

#### **CONSIDER A PHONE THAT BLOCKS ALL SOCIAL MEDIA**

Pinwheel and Gabb offer smartphones that block social media. My family has recently purchased a Pinwheel phone. It's a smartphone that allows a suite of approved apps (including Life360 and Spotify), blocks all social media, has no internet browser, and allows only approved individuals to text our child (and copies all conversation to our parent portal). It's not as easy to setup as a normal smartphone and it requires an added subscription expense, but it allows us to moderate what content our child has access to and who has access to our child. We all spend money on a lot of things for our kids. This is one I'm happy to spend money on.

#### **PRIORITIZE UN-PIXELATED, THREE-DIMENSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Review all the things TikTok (and all social media) steals from children (and adults) (meaningful connections with loved ones built on eye contact, the formation of analytical skills, contextual thinking, deep, in-person conversations, etc.) and give yourself to these things with gusto. Eat meals together as a family (if you're single, find meaningful, in-person gatherings, especially ones centered around food). Read books. Read books with others. Talk about them. Get outside and enjoy creation. Play sports. Learn an instrument. Go to a concert. Acquire a new skill or hobby. Intentionally engage in at least one meaningful un-pixelated (i.e. no individualized screen involved) three-dimensional activity per week. In-person worship, fellowship, and Bible study is a great place to start! You can build from there.

The stakes are high for our kids and for us. TikTok knows. And now you know too. In fact, now we know. And we can work together. This is not a time for finger pointing or blaming. We've all been suckered. They've got a supercomputer pointed at our brains (and our children's brains)! It's not a fair fight. But now that we know better, we can do better *together*. Let us together work for a better future for our children and for our future.

[1] *The fact that people using social media are called users should be eye-opening. The thing drug dealers know about their product is that the more addictive it is, the greater their profit potential. To be clear, the problem isn't a company earning a profit; the problem is the company designing a product to be addictive so as to profit off its victims.*

If you'd like to talk or if you would like Lutheran Family Service to present on this topic to your group or congregation, we have counselors and speakers available. Contact us today for scheduling.

For God so loVed the world  
thAt He gave His  
onLy  
begottEn  
SoN,  
thaT whoever  
believes  
iNHim should not perish  
but havE everlasting life.

*John 3:16 NKJV*





# FEBRUARY 2025

Immanuel Lutheran Church,  
Schleswig, Iowa



Love is patient,  
Love is kind.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4

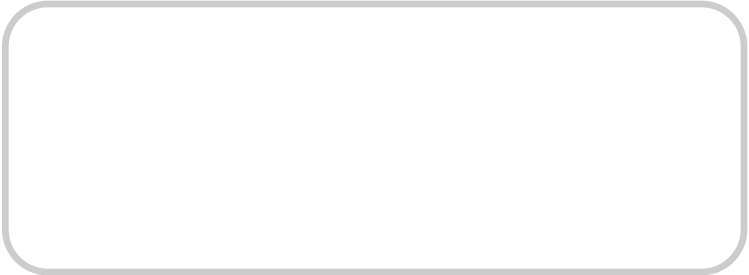
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat																																										
<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Preschool</b> Mon., Tues., Thurs.: 8 a.m.—3 p.m. Wed.: 11:45 a.m.—3 p.m.</p> <p><b>Confirmation</b> 5th &amp; 6th grade: 3:30 p.m.—5:15 p.m. 7th &amp; 8th grade: 6:15 p.m.—8:00 p.m.</p> </div>						1																																										
<p><b>2 Groundhog Day</b> 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS &amp; BC 11:30 Youth &amp; Families Event (Bandage rolling and pizza lunch) 5 p.m. Young Adults Study</p>	<p><b>3</b> Preschool  6:30 p.m. Bible Study w/Pastor Schulz</p>	<p><b>4</b> Preschool</p>	<p><b>5</b> 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation</p>	<p><b>6</b> Preschool 1:30 LWML 6:30 p.m. Bible Study</p>	<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>8</b>  4 p.m. Worship w/HC</p>																																										
<p><b>9 Transfiguration Sunday</b> 9 a.m. Worship 10:15 SS &amp; BC 11:30 Elders' Meeting 8 am-12:30 pm School Omelet Fundraiser @ Community Bldg.</p>	<p><b>10</b> Preschool</p>	<p><b>11</b> Preschool  8:30 Pastors' Conference 5:30 Board of Ed Meeting</p>	<p><b>12</b> 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation</p>	<p><b>13</b> Preschool  6:30 p.m. Bible Study</p>	<p><b>14 Valentine's Day</b> </p>	<p><b>15</b>  4 p.m. Worship w/HC</p>																																										
<p><b>16</b> 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS &amp; BC</p>	<p><b>17 President's Day</b> No Preschool 6:30 p.m. Bible Study w/Pastor Schulz </p>	<p><b>18</b> No Preschool  <i>Messenger</i> Deadline for March issue </p>	<p><b>19</b> 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool 5th/6th Confirmation at normal time 6 p.m. Confirmation Prayer Team Event</p>	<p><b>20</b> Preschool 9 a.m. Quilting 6:30 pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>22</b> 10:30 a.m. Youth &amp; Families at Mercy Meals  4 p.m. Worship w/HC</p>																																										
<p><b>23</b> 9 a.m. Worship 10:15 SS &amp; BC  11 a.m.-1 p.m. Immanuel Soup Luncheon </p>	<p><b>24</b> Preschool</p>	<p><b>25</b> Preschool</p>	<p><b>26</b> 6:30 Bible Study 8:45 a.m. Newsletter assemblage p.m. Preschool Confirmation</p>	<p><b>27</b> Preschool 9 a.m. Quilting 6:30 p.m. Bible Study</p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p>March S M T W T F S <table border="1" style="font-size: small;"> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td></tr> <tr><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td></tr> <tr><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table></p>							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					
						1																																										
2	3	4	5	6	7	8																																										
9	10	11	12	13	14	15																																										
16	17	18	19	20	21	22																																										
23	24	25	26	27	28	29																																										
30	31																																															

**IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
501 Glad St. PO Box 27 Schleswig, Iowa 51461

Non Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Schleswig, Iowa  
Permit No. 19

Change Service  
Requested

**TO EVERYONE IN THE HOME OF:**



**THE IMMANUEL MESSENGER**

**IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
501 Glad St. PO Box 27 Schleswig, Iowa 51461  
Office: 712-676-2235

Saturday Worship at 4 p.m. w/HC  
Sunday Worship at 9 a.m. HC on first & third Sundays  
Sunday School and Bible Classes at 10:15 a.m.

+++++

E-mail: [immansch@iowatelecom.net](mailto:immansch@iowatelecom.net)  
or: [markey@iowatelecom.net](mailto:markey@iowatelecom.net)  
Website: [www.immanuelschleswig.com](http://www.immanuelschleswig.com)  
"Like" us on Facebook  
Pastor: Merle F. Mahnken—  
Home Ph.: 712-676-2242 Cell Ph.: 712-269-6364  
Assisting Pastor: Kurt Kaiser  
Cell Ph.: 712-269-8452

Office: Amanda Bruhn and Valerie Teut  
Preschool: Leslie Gustafson

Snow Removal and Lawn Care:  
Ryan Jepsen; 712-790-1603  
Loren and Janice Jepsen



**OUR MISSION  
STATEMENT:**  
*"Together in Christ,  
we grow through the  
Word and  
Sacraments, serving  
our Lord and  
sharing His saving  
grace with all  
people."*