

Immanuel United Church of Christ

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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED



IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FEBRUARY 2026 Newsletter

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FROM OUR PASTOR

February Newsletter

If you have not RSVPed to the Leadership meeting Saturday, February 7th 8-11 a.m., please RSVP via email, text or call Dana.I.caldwell@gmail.com, 919-523-8187 as soon as possible

Leadership Commissioning. The Council, the committee chairs and all committee members will be commissioned during the February 8th church service at 10am

Ash Wednesday Service is 6 p.m. Wednesday, February 18

Lenten Wednesday Services will run from Wednesday February 25-Wednesday March 25th. A light meal will be served at 5 p.m. in the fellowship hall and the service will be at 6 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

The **Installation of Rev Dana Caldwell** to Immanuel UCC of Darlington WI will be held February 22, 2026. Church is at 10 a.m., Potluck at 11 a.m. and at 1 p.m. the Installation service will take place.

Palm Sunday is Sunday March 29th

The **Maundy Thursday service** will be at 6 p.m. at the UMC church and led by Rev Han Lee on Thursday, April 2nd.

The **Good Friday service** will be at 6 p.m. at Immanuel UCC and led by Rev Dana Caldwell on Friday, April 3rd.

Easter is Sunday, April 5th.

Lent, a new tradition?

Lent is usually framed as the season of sacrifice, denying one's self often. Traditionally, we are taught to fast or give something up. Usually what we give up while something we may struggle with during Lent being tempted to cheat, we don't really grow spiritually from the experience. Our choices may include Chocolate, your favorite drink, Facebook, and the practice becomes about discipline and denial then spiritual growth, leaning and depending on Jesus more. Plus, the idea behind Lent is giving it up entirely-not just for Lent. An alternative to giving something up is to take something on, to add something to your life that helps you grow and continue that practice beyond the season of Lent. Something like reading the Bible for 15 minutes a day, journaling, time in prayer, or readings related to spiritual growth. You can also take on some sort of service during Lent, which may include visiting the elderly, becoming a reader or usher if you have not before- the possibilities are many. I will be interested in hearing about what you decide.

Origins and History of Lent

The history of Lent dates back to the early Christian church, with roots extending all the way to the 4th century. Initially, Lent was seen as a time for new converts to prepare for baptism during the Easter Vigil. Over time, however, it evolved into a universal practice for all Christians, reflecting the importance of repentance and renewal in the faith. The 40-day duration is significant, mirroring Jesus's 40 days of fasting in the desert, as described in the Gospels. This parallel serves to emphasize themes of sacrifice, temptation, and spiritual fortitude, encouraging Christians to engage deeply with their faith.

The word "Lent" itself derives from the Old English word "lencten," meaning "spring," which reflects the season of renewal and rebirth. As nature begins to awaken from winter's slumber, so too do Christians prepare for the celebration of new life in Easter. The season offers a striking contrast to the joyous celebration of Easter, serving as a stark reminder of the path of suffering and sacrifice that preceded the resurrection.

The Importance of Lent in spiritual growth

Lent serves as a crucial time of spiritual growth and introspection for Christians. By engaging in a structured reflection of their lives, aligning their hearts more closely with the teachings of Jesus. This journey of self-examination often reveals areas needing improvement, inviting individuals to confront weaknesses, biases, or distractions that may impede their faith journey.

Moreover, Lent beckons Christians to remember their dependence on God's grace. The practice of fasting, in particular, reminds us of our material needs and spiritual hunger, inviting an acknowledgment that true sustenance comes from God alone. By reorienting their focus during this season, believers can experience a transformative renewal of faith, allowing them to enter into the joyous celebration of Easter with a more profound understanding of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection.

Bible Read During Lent

Matthew 21-28, then Mark 11-16, Luke 21-22 and John 11-20. If you plan on reading 5 chapters a week you should have the time to read all the chapters listed above before Holy Week. I would suggest noting on what stories within the chapters and what order they appear in each book. Also, what is emphasized as each author approaches Jesus death. You may come up with some questions and if you do, feel free to share with me and I will share what I can with you.

This is your suggested reading for January, February and March. We will approach another topic and set of readings after Easter.

I am wondering how the reading is going. Are you using the Lectio Divina? Is there a particular part that you have found helpful? Blessings as you read God's Word.

Pastor Dana Caldwell



CHURCH COUNCIL

The January Church Council meeting was held on January 14, 2026. Members Present: Phil Risseuw, Kerry Black, Jordan Hinderman, Pam Hardt, Fritz Hirsbrunner, Sheila Siegler, Nancy Slama, Dave Sutherland, Connie Ubersox, Pastor Dana Caldwell

Marjean Sutherland– sound system update and proposal explained. Last updated 12 yrs ago. This is the whole sound system in church except for pastor's microphone. If anything happens to the system, we will be without sound including FB, there are no replacement parts available due to the age of the system. Marjean presented a proposal for a new system. The Council will discuss. When asked how urgent this is, the answer is as long as it works.

Approval of Minutes – Motion was made by Pam, to accept the December meeting minutes as presented, second by Sheila, all in favor, motion carried.

Reports

Financial Report- motion was made by Fritz, to accept the financial statement for December as submitted, second by Phil, all in favor, motion carried.

Pastor Report – visits by phone continue. Community clergy met only Pastor Kate of Grace Lutheran Church and Pastor Dana participated. Pastor Kate is no longer at the Lutheran church. Dana will continue to explore and see if there is a group going forward. Leadership training, Dana is hoping for a good turn-out. Feb. 8th leaders will be recognized during service. Lenten service with meal, eat at 5 p.m. services to follow at 6 p.m. beginning Feb. 25th. Feb. 22nd is Pastor Dana's installation at 1 p.m. A motion to have the church pay for food for the Lenten meals each week keeping the menu to sandwiches, chips or cheese and crackers, dessert, with food purchased from Avon by Sheila, Pam second, all in favor, motion carried. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday will be held here as well at 6 p.m.

President Report – Thank you notes reviewed. A motion to continue Chamber membership was made by Jordy, second by Connie, all in favor, motion carried. Rental agreements discussed; Nancy will sign. Fritz made a motion to purchase a new microphone for pastor, second by Dave, all in favor, motion carried. TV from fellowship hall, suggested putting out to congregation see if we can sell it. Pam made a motion to sell for \$100 OBO, second by Fritz, all in favor, motion carried.

Christian Education Committee – Nothing new at this time.

Building and Grounds Committee – Nothing new at this time.

Mission Team – Next fundraiser is in April during city-wide garage sale.

Stewardship Committee – Next meeting April.

EF & G Committee – Nothing new at this time.

Endowment Committee – Fritz gave an update.

Finance Committee Report – Nothing new at this time.

Pastor-Parish Committee – meeting yesterday, meeting went well. Microphone problem continues. Fritz made a motion that if pastor's microphone has more glitches, we will purchase another at a cost not to exceed \$100, Dave second, all in favor, motion carried. Discussed the hearing issue and those speaking need to be on a microphone and close to their mouth with clear, slow speech. Folks are frustrated when they cannot hear or understand what is being said. Next meeting on the 27th of this month.

Woman's Guild – 14 present, 4 guests. Luncheon by Deb Loken, Betsy Ellefson, and Mary Geissbuhler. Formal meeting held, next meeting March 11th.

Worship Committee – Nothing new at this time.

Old Business

Thrift Store Update – Window Estimates -Renewal by Anderson & Tri State Custom Window bids to council for review. Sheila made a motion to approve replacing the Window's with Tri-State windows, Jordy second, all in favor, motion carried.

Outside Church Wall Cross – discussed the feasibility and cost, at this time we will table this and bring up again next year. Phil moved to table the outside cross discussion, second by Dave, all in favor, motion carried.

Donation for School Lunches – update from Connie and Jordan after research. This issue has been fixed at the school. It was felt since State and Federal monies support this program, we would not take any action at this time.

Defibrillator Update – training list is out for sign-up.

Nomination Committee – Nominees – Steve Siegler, LeeAnne Ruef, and Jordan Hinderman are the nominees.

New Business

Steeple Fundraiser – How long do we want to have it? Nancy will put an article in the newsletter with an end date in March.

Evaluations – Who will do them in March. Secretary and organist are the positions that are due. Tabled until next month.

The next Council meeting will be February 11, 2026 at 6:15 p.m.

ANNUAL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 1, 2026



Because of the terrible cold on January 25th, the Annual Meeting was moved to February 1st after the worship service. A potluck will follow the meeting. Anyone wishing to participate in the potluck, please bring a dish to pass.



STEEPLE CONTRIBUTIONS

What a blessing! Thanks to your generosity, approximately \$16,000 has been raised toward the steeple repairs, leaving just \$11,000 to reach our goal of \$27,140. We invite you to prayerfully consider making a contribution—whether for the first time or again—to help us complete this effort. Contributions will be accepted through the end of February, after which Immanuel’s Council will consider the project complete. Thank you once again for your generous support!

WOMEN’S GUILD

The Women’s Guild met on January 12th, which is new for the guild. It was decided last year that we would go to quarterly meetings. Months we will have meetings with a lunch will be January, March, May and September. At our meeting we discussed the upcoming Lenten services with a lite lunch and also the tv that was removed from the fellowship hall. This tv was purchased by the guild back in 2017 and we would like the tv to be given to the Sunday school.



We have received many donations towards the janitors salary and would like to thank everyone for their generosity.

Our next meeting is March 11th at noon with lunch. We will be having a program, it will be the Forensics kids which is always so enjoyable. A meeting will follow.

Debbie Loken



PASTORAL CARE

If you know of any church member that would appreciate a pastoral visit, please let Pastor Dana Caldwell know and she will follow up with the contact. You can contact Pastor Caldwell at the church by calling 608-776-4110. The quickest way to contact Pastor Caldwell is by calling her cell phone at 919-523-8187, or by emailing her at dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com.



Monthly Financial Information

	December 2025	Budget	Year to Date 2025	Year to Date Budget
Contributions/Other Revenue	\$60,822	\$ 9,713	\$ 196,221	\$ 92,840
Expenses *	<u>\$47,280</u>	<u>\$ 4,664</u>	<u>\$ 316,101</u>	<u>\$ 316,101</u>
Net Gain/(Loss)	\$13,542	\$ 5,049	\$(119,880)	\$(223,261)

- Window Restoration payments paid out of the General Fund (\$110,606)
 - New AV equipment and bell tower control unit paid out of the General Fund (\$11,170)
 - \$60,000 withdrawn from General Fund and invested in a CD
 - YTD Receipts reflect additional \$7,000 from Blankenhorn Trust
 - Steeple Repair expenses (\$27,140)
 - Transfers from other accounts to cover Window Restoration payments and Steeple Repair (\$68,410)
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Feb. 1 – Annual Meeting after worship with potluck
Sunday School kids sing during worship**

Feb. 4 – Bible Study at 4:30 p.m.

Feb. 7 – Church Leadership meeting in the fellowship hall from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. to plan for 2026

Feb. 8 – Commissioning of Committee Members during worship

Feb. 11 – Bible Study at 4:30 p.m.

Church Council Meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Feb. 18 – Ash Wednesday Service at 6 p.m.

No Wednesday Night Bible Study during Lent

Feb. 22 – Installation of Pastor Dana with potluck after worship & Installation service at 1 p.m.

Feb. 23 – Deadline for March newsletter articles

Feb. 25 – Lenten Service at Immanuel with light meal at 5 p.m. & service at 6 p.m.

Mar. 4 – Lenten Service at Immanuel with light meal at 5 p.m. & service at 6 p.m.



NO WEDNESDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY DURING LENT

There will not be Wednesday night Bible study from February 18th thru March 25th because of Lenten services. Wednesday night Bible study will resume on April 1st at 4:30 p.m.



INSTALLATION OF PASTOR DANA CALDWELL

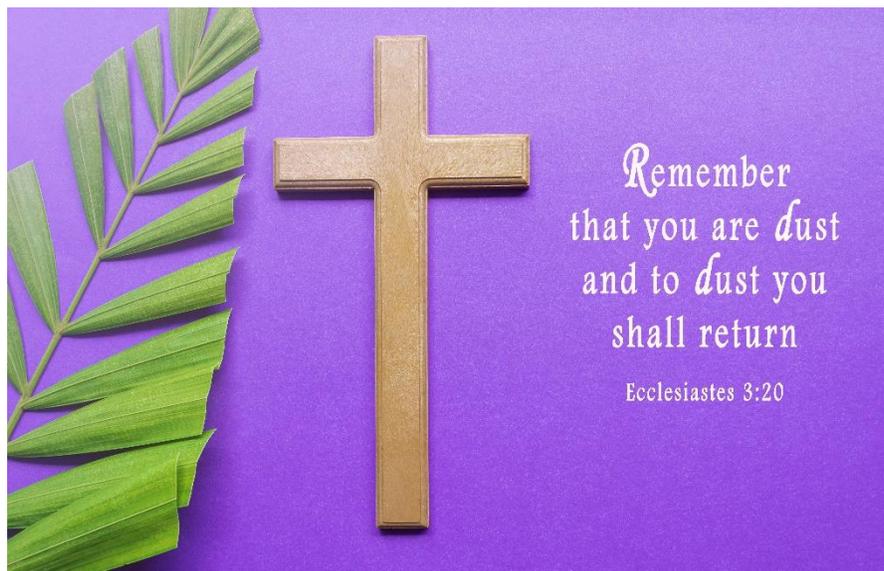
On Sunday, February 22, 2026, we will joyfully install Pastor Dana as Immanuel's Pastor. Please join us for a full day of fellowship and celebration as we mark this special occasion.

Rachel Baumann from the Wisconsin Conference, along with other Conference staff and friends of Dana, will be with us to celebrate Pastor Dana's calling to Immanuel.

Schedule for the day:

- **10:00 AM** – Worship
- **11:00 AM** – Potluck (chicken will be provided; please bring a side or dessert to share)
- **1:00 PM** – Installation Ceremony
- **2:00 PM** – Celebration with cake

We hope you can join us for this meaningful and joyful day!



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



- 4th Phil Risseuw
- 6th Nicole Lewin
- 10th Tanya Ubersox
Don Rolli
Stu Soper
- 13th Rinley Ruf
- 14th Heidi Rear
- 15th Dean Monson
- 17th Taylor Reuter
- 20th Matt Ubersox
- 21st Jerry Hancock
Michael Kendall
JoAnn Geissbuhler
- 22nd Linda Connolly
Chuck Keister
- 24th Deana Soper
- 27th Dustin Wepking
- 28th Travis Lewin

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES



- 8th Cindy & Paul Pluemer
- 14th Christa & Dean Jenson



FEBRUARY COFFEE HOUR

- 1st **Annual Meeting - No coffee hour**
- 8th Connie Ubersox
- 15th Nancy Slama
- 22nd Debbie Loken
- March 1st – Betsy Ellefson



Deadline for the March newsletter articles is **February 23, 2026.**



FEBRUARY USHERS/GREETERS

- 1st Randy & Connie Ubersox
- 8th Sara & John Gleason Family
- 15th Jordan & Angie Hinderman Family
- 22nd Jean Stauffacher Family
- March 1st – Gary & Nikki Martin Family



FEBRUARY LITURGISTS

- 1st Pam Hardt
- 8th Debbie Loken
- 15th Brandi Ruf Wepking
- 22nd Janice Ruf
- March 1st – Reuter Family