

# Immanuel United Church of Christ

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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED



IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
JANUARY 2026 Newsletter

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## FROM OUR PASTOR

### Cultivating Generosity Note

The Traditional and Emerging Paradigms of giving to churches. I grew up with the traditional paradigm, but I also have attended many different churches of my life and in the last 30 years many churches are changing the way they look at congregational giving. The National Study of Congregations Economic Practices (NSCEP) provides in depth information about how American religious organizations receive and spend their money. Good news is that more congregations are growing than declining in number. 39% of Congregations reported a greater number of regular adults participating in 2017. The NSCEP also found that 81 percent of giving comes from individuals via “passing the plate”, 21% via mobile devices. 49% of congregations are making an annual stewardship campaign.

#### Traditional

Moral Obligation  
Theology of duty to give  
Institution Centered  
Institutions are trusted  
Institutions are autonomous  
Fundraising is raising money  
Giving is a contribution  
The gift as an end to philanthropy  
Budgets are needs driven  
Financial focus is insular  
Income sources are limited  
Different from business

#### Emerging

Donor cultivation  
Theology of grace  
Donor centered  
Institutional trust must be earned  
Donors are collaborative partners  
Fundraising is nurturing generosity  
Giving is creating change  
The gift as a means to philanthropy  
Giving is value driven  
Financial focus is global  
Income sources are diverse  
Embraces business principles and practices.

#### Reflection Questions:

Do you think Immanuel is more like the traditional model or the emerging model in ways of looking at giving?

Do you read things about the Emerging Paradigm that you agree we should move toward?

What parts of the Traditional Paradigm should we not lose sight of?

How might we leverage the historic presence of this church in town to reach people outside the church to encourage attendance and/or donations?

Many Charitable Organizations use the Emerging Paradigm. I heard one such commercial refer to their donors as their Support Team. What could we learn from the mailings we receive from other organizations to which we donate? Are they a large enough organization to also have TV commercials or radio commercials? What Language do they use?

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**All Leadership – PLEASE MARK your CALENDARS on Saturday The 7<sup>th</sup> of February** for our New Annual Leadership Meeting. More details to follow but likely 8:00 to 11, All council, committee chairs and members are invited to attend. We will all read through the bylaws and see if they need

updating and make a plan. We will be revisiting our mission vision and direction. People on new or now returning to roles will have a chance to adjust to any changes- and the committees will have time to Dream Big for our future. Also note our 2026 Leadership will be commissioned on Sunday, February, 8<sup>th</sup> during the service.

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### **Bible Reading for January, February, March**

Lent comes early this year, beginning with Ash Wednesday, February 18. I would suggest reading each of the Gospels accounts of Jesus entry into Jerusalem. We tend to smash all the different accounts into one account that actually does not allow us have a close reading of what the Gospel actually has to say through the 4 different voices of the Gospel writers.

#### **Read**

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.

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### **The Steps of Lectio Divina**

- Choose a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray.
- Place yourself in a quiet environment. Calm your anxieties and thoughts, and acknowledge God's presence
- Offer a prayer to the Holy Spirit for inspiration and guidance: "Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and mind to listen to your Word."

1. Lectio: Read the text slowly and prayerfully, constantly listening for that word that God has prepared for you. You may want to re-read the same text multiple times to help quiet yourself interiorly and focus on God's voice. Listen and receive the Word that God speaks to you. (Read the passage like a newspaper- try to answer the who, what, where, when, why and how.)

2. Meditatio: (2 read it again and see what words/phrases catch your attention- ones that are new to you, ones that have meaning for you, ones that strike you) When a word or phrase strikes you, stop and rest with it. (write it down in a dedicated journal or pad of paper) Repeat the word or phrase to yourself. Allow it to speak to you in a personal way by pondering the word in your heart, reflecting on what it means to you. Memorize it and repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your thoughts, hopes, memories, and desires. (maybe even google it or if using Biblegateway.com look it up)

3. Oratio: Now pray. Pray about what God has shown you and ask for insight about what action you are to take or is God saying something to and for you. Prayer is your response to God's word. It begins your dialogue with God that comes from your heart. Formulate a prayer, as a response to God. What do you want to say to the Lord in response to the Word spoken to you? Enter into this loving conversation with God.

4. Contemplatio: Rest in God's presence and receive His transforming embrace. Sit still with God,

realizing that in this deep and profound relationship, words are not necessary. Be content and at peace with a wordless, quiet rest in God, which brings joy to the heart. Remember that contemplation is not your action or doing, rather it is allowing God to act in you. Think about how people felt about what they had experienced.

## Reflection

“Every new season asks for a new version of you. Growth will require you to release the old, old habits, old stories, and sometimes old identities. Letting go is not losing yourself it is becoming who you were meant to be” Source “Your Beautiful Life” Facebook

I came across this quote, and I thought about all the different places I have been or found myself. How each season of my life, personally, spiritually, professionally, and locationally have drawn me into further growth. Sometimes that growth has been challenging and uncomfortable along with adventurous and filled with hope. Some seasons included sadness. Think about where you find yourself in life these days- where are you in your marriage journey, your parenting journey, or your career journey? How have you evolved in other areas of your life: hobbies, accomplishments etc.? How have you experienced and embraced the growth or change that each stage as required of you?

How does our reflection change as we consider the journey we make with Christ? The ministry and service Jesus has called us to, then, and now, in this new season? For me Christ has called me to transform in maturity and understanding of God’s Holy Word, of people and how much God loves them. God has taught me to pray and to worship in many ways. How about your Journey with Christ?

What if we think about Immanuel? What might we as individuals or groups need to let go of and what do we need to newly embrace to pass along the legacy of this lovely church to the next generation?

As we are transformed in Christ, called to be a part of Immanuel together I pray we never cling to tightly to the gifts we have been given, or to the growth and wisdom we are called upon to release and share with one another as we plan for the future of this outpost Christ has place on the corner of Ohio and Louisa!

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## Office Hours

Tuesdays will be 10 am to 3 pm. I will always be available per phone or text 919-523-8187 and email [dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com](mailto:dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com) and we can set a time outside office hours to meet if your schedule does not allow you to meet within office hours.

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## Sundays Before the Service.

Please be aware that I -Pastor Dana, will be very focused on greeting people as I am able and thinking about the service or confirmation class during the Sunday School hour. If you have anything you want me to remember after the service, there will be sticky notes available on my desk for your use to drop me a note and I will respond on Monday. If the information is more urgent please feel free to text me @ 919-523-8187 or email me [dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com](mailto:dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com) and I will respond as quickly as I can after the service, later that day or Monday.

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## In Case of an Emergency

If there is an emergency, and someone has to go to the hospital or a Doctors appointment that is concerning, or other family emergency or a change in health status. Please be sure to let me know or instruct a family member to let me know via phone call or text at 919-523-8187. So that I am aware and able to be present as soon as possible if my presence would be helpful to you or your loved ones. It might be good to add me as a contact in your phone.

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## Visitation

If you have information about your loved one you would like me to know before I go to visit them the first time or for any follow up visits, please feel free to speak with me *after* a service, via an appointment, via phone or text or dropping by during office hours. It might be a good idea to add me as a contact in your phone. Pastor Dana Caldwell, 919-523-8187, and/or [dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com](mailto:dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com) .

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## CHURCH COUNCIL

The December Church Council meeting was held on December 10, 2025. Members Present: Phil Risseuw, Kerry Black, Pam Hardt, Fritz Hirsbrunner, Sheila Siegler, Nancy Slama, Dave Sutherland, Connie Ubersox, Pastor Dana Caldwell, absent: Jordan Hinderman.

The Agenda was revised to add the Annual Meeting. The November Minutes were approved as submitted. The Financial Report was approved as submitted.

## Reports

**Pastor Report** – discussed installation of Pastor Dana, date of Feb.22 was selected. Connie made a motion to have potluck and then installation service of Pastor on Feb 22, 2026, Kerry second the motion, all in favor, motion carried. Pastor discussed visits to those members over 80. Pastor is concerned about missing anyone hospitalized or in need of a visit and how she will know when someone is in need. Visits are going well but back issues have curtailed them a bit.

**President Report** – Christmas card received from Darlington Police dept. HCE has bldg. use request for April 2026. December 27<sup>th</sup> the Harts have a bldg. use request. AED -motion to purchase made by Fritz with price not to exceed 1800.00, Kerry second, all in favor, motion carried. Window construction has begun.

**Christian Education Committee** – Christmas program on this Sunday. Confirmation continues.

**Building and Grounds Committee** – bells are not working in steeple, Phil will contact the bell folks to take a look. Chair behind pulpit, Deb will look into this for Pastor. Pastor is questioning removing a row of pews to allow for handicapped folks. Discussed how this could be done.

**Mission Team** – nothing at this time

**Stewardship Committee** – Cookie walk Saturday with proceeds to go to the steeple repair.

**EF & G Committee** – nothing new.

**Endowment Committee** – meeting on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, Thivent rep present as well. 7.1% return in first quarter of 2025 on investments. Lafayette food pantry will receive the 2025 interest proceeds and will paid out in 2026.

**Finance Committee Report** – nothing new at this time.

**Pastor-Parish Committee** – Pastor signed current contract. Discussion about what is going good and what needs work. Discussed ecumenical involvement in the community with most of the work falls to Dana.

**Woman's Guild** – Christmas part today with a good turnout and great food. Gift exchange and door prizes were enjoyed by all. Connie reviewed the financial report for guild.

**Worship Committee** – committee meeting this last Tuesday, discussed working on things for future services so they are ahead and prepared. Pastor meets again with city ecumenical group on Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Old Business**

**2026 Budget** – Fritz made a motion of accept the 2026 budget as submitted, Connie second, all in favor, motion carried.

**Thrift Store Update** – grant was approved for 5,000.00, work continues to progress in the store area.

**Outside Church Wall Cross** – this should be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting.

**Donation for School Lunches** – it was raised that kids in financially stressed households eat PB&J sandwiches which causes teasing. Suggest Dana discuss with ecumenical group that possibly all churches might work on this problem together.

#### **New Business**

**Defibrillator** – discussed above.

**Nomination committee** – Kerry advised they are still working on a slate.

**Review Committees List** – Judy Huntington added to Worship committee, Kerry added to Pastor Parish, Fritz will renew his tenure for Pastor Parish committee

**Annual meeting** – will be held January 25, 2026. January 12<sup>th</sup> is deadline for annual report info from committees.

The next Council meeting will be January 14, 2026 at 6:15 p.m.

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### **ANNUAL MEETING ON JANUARY 25, 2026**

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 25<sup>th</sup> after the worship service. A potluck will follow the meeting. Anyone wishing to participate in the potluck should bring a dish to pass.

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#### **THANK YOU!**

An awesome group of volunteers represented Immanuel UCC and rang the Salvation Army Bells at Piggly Wiggly. A huge thank you goes out to Tana Risseuw, Brody & Brooks Hinderman, Pam Hardt, and the Jared Reuter Family. They did an amazing job as the bucket was full when it was returned to the bank.

Also, thanks to those that volunteered but did not get to do it because of the snowstorm: The Lewin Family, Betsy Ellefson, and Nancy McCarten.

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## BINGO

Thank you to Debbie Loken, Sheila Siegler, and Randy and Connie Ubersox for helping assist the residents play Bingo on December 17<sup>th</sup>. The residents always have a fun time!



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to All!  
Kate Black

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## THANK YOU!

I would like to give a huge THANK YOU to everyone who has graciously volunteered to be the Liturgist for this past year. Because of you my job of organizing the liturgists is made very simple. Thank you goes out to the following people:

Judy Huntington  
Debbie Loken  
Kerry Black  
Nancy Slama  
Sunday School  
Brandi Ruf Wepking  
Sara Gleason  
Janice Ruf  
Jared Reuter  
Nancy McCarten

Sheiler Siegler  
Donna Wilkins  
Pam Hardt  
Fritz Hirsbrunner  
Dante Glendenning  
Dave Sutherland  
Marjean Sutherland  
Jaci Kammes  
Jordan Hinderman  
Ann Reuter

Thank you all very much!

Joan Blaser

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## WOMEN'S GUILD

There will be a Women's Guild meeting on January 14<sup>th</sup> at 12:00. Lunch will be provided and a meeting will follow. It was decided to start having a meeting in January since we have not had a meeting since September. If the weather is bad that day, the meeting will be rescheduled for a later date.





## Monthly Financial Information

	<b>November 2025</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Year to Date 2025</b>	<b>Year to Date Budget</b>
Contributions/Other Revenue	\$31,585	\$ 8,062	\$ 135,399	\$ 52,272
Expenses *	<u>\$37,763</u>	<u>\$ 4,184</u>	<u>\$ 268,905</u>	<u>\$ 210,647</u>
Net Gain/(Loss)	\$ (6,178)	\$ 3,878	\$(133,506)	\$(158,375)

- The down payment for the window restoration project was paid out of the General Fund (\$73,504)
- 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
- Monthly Receipts include \$9,650 received from insurance company for storm damage and expenses include \$10, 535 paid out. YTD figures include \$21,669 receipts and \$23,473 related expenses

## **ANNUAL REPORT ARTICLES**

The Annual Meeting date is January 25, 2026 after the worship service. Please have Annual Report articles to Nancy Slama by January 12, 2026, as the Annual Report needs to be done by January 17, 2026. The Annual Report will be attached to the website so the congregation has time to review it before the meeting. There will be paper copies of the Annual Report on the Fellowship Hall table on January 18, 2025 for anyone who does not have access to the church website. You can contact Nancy Slama at 608-482-2859 or [quinn.nancy@ymail.com](mailto:quinn.nancy@ymail.com) by January 16, 2025 to have a copy of the Annual Report mailed to you.



## **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](mailto:dana.l.caldwell@gmail.com).





### **THANK YOU!**

The Stewardship committee would like to thank everyone who brought cookies or bars to our first Cookie Walk. We were totally amazed at the amount of cookie donations for this event. A special thank you goes out to our volunteer workers who were Cindy Pluemer, Betsy Ellefson, Connie Ubersox and Tara Glendenning.

After all was done our profit was \$2,102.00, which will all be donated towards the steeple repair. This would not have been possible without the whole congregation helping in some way. If you donated cookies or bars, bought cookies or bars or donated money to our event it was all greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Janice Ruf, Marjean Sutherland, Sheila Siegler, Joan Blaser



**Have a healthy, prosperous  
& happy 2026  
everyone!**

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Jan. 4 – No Sunday School, Confirmation & No Coffee Hour**

**Jan. 7 – Bible Study at 4:30 p.m.**

**Jan. 11 – Sunday School resumes**

**Jan. 12 – ANNUAL MEETINGS REPORTS DUE**

**Jan. 14 – Women's Guild meeting at noon**

Bible Study at 4:30 p.m.

Church Council Meeting at 6:15 p.m.

**Jan. 21 – Bible Study at 4:30 p.m.**

**Jan. 25 – Annual Meeting after worship with potluck**

**Jan. 26 – Deadline for February newsletter articles**

**Jan. 28 – 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. 22 – Installation of Pastor Dana with potluck after worship & Installation at 2 p.m.**

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**Let all that I am praise the Lord.....verses from Psalm 101**

Let all that I am praise the Lord;

with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name

Let all that I am praise the Lord;

may I never forget the good things he does for me.

He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.

He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies.

He fills my life with good things.

My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly.

The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

The Lord has made the heavens his throne; from there he rules over everything.

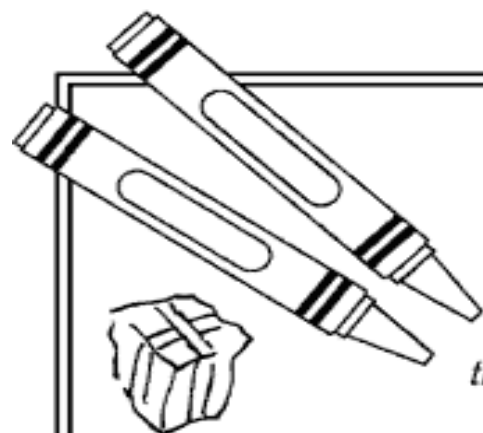
Praise the Lord, you angels, you mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands.

Yes, praise the Lord, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will!

Praise the Lord, everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom.

Let all that I am praise the Lord.

Amen.



# Just for KIDS

## Psalm 107:1

Fill in the blanks with words that match the descriptions. Transfer the letters to the boxes below.  
Read the verse from Psalms.

Shape that symbolizes "love" \_\_\_\_\_

31 15 7 18 5

Part of a stove used for baking \_\_\_\_\_

12 3 24 39

Color made by red and yellow \_\_\_\_\_

28 42 7 8 27 37

A present \_\_\_\_\_

1 32 20 11

Something a girl wears \_\_\_\_\_

19 22 43 44 33

Something you open to go into a room \_\_\_\_\_

40 29 17 47

Opposite of soft (sound) \_\_\_\_\_

34 17 41 30

To take a long walk \_\_\_\_\_

14 2 9 38

A high body temperature \_\_\_\_\_

45 50 49 48 42

Equipment used to build or fix things \_\_\_\_\_

13 35 21 16 26

Edge of the sea \_\_\_\_\_

10 23 46 51 4

Home for a bee \_\_\_\_\_

6 25 36 4

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	32	33		34	35
36	37		38	39	40	41	42	43
44		45	46	47	48	49	50	51

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

2<sup>nd</sup> Ann Reuter  
 3<sup>rd</sup> June Hancock  
 Elizabeth Reuter  
 7<sup>th</sup> Lisa Reilly  
 8<sup>th</sup> Richard Ubersox  
 10<sup>th</sup> Judy Huntington  
 12<sup>th</sup> Harlow Johnson  
 13<sup>th</sup> John Gleason  
 14<sup>th</sup> Janie Gleason  
 15<sup>th</sup> McKenzie Reuter  
 18<sup>th</sup> Mary Geissbuhler  
 19<sup>th</sup> Virginia Douglas  
 Mayvn Johnson  
 28<sup>th</sup> Nikki Martin  
 31<sup>st</sup> Ayden Ubersox



## JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

7<sup>th</sup> Phil & Tana  
 Risseuw



## JANUARY COFFEE HOUR

4 **No coffee hour**  
 11 Joan Blaser  
 18 Judy Huntington  
 25 Annual Meeting – No coffee hour  
 Feb. 1 -



Deadline for the  
 February newsletter  
 articles is  
**January 26, 2026.**

## JANUARY LITURGISTS

4 Fritz  
 Hirsbrunner  
 11 Joan Blaser  
 18 Judy Huntington  
 25 Reuter Family  
 Feb. 1 – Pam Hardt



## JANUARY USHERS/GREETERS

4 Ed & Betsy Wiegel  
 11 Steve & Sheila Siegler  
 18 Ashley & Tony Buss Family  
 25 Randy & Judy Huntington  
 Feb. 1 – Jordan & Angie Hinderman Family

