

Immanuel United Church of Christ

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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED



IMMANUEL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
DECEMBER 2025 Newsletter

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FROM OUR PASTOR

An approach to reading your Bible, as we seek God's word to breath into you.

I was asked recently to share some of the ways to study the Bible. Here is the first one. I have added some notes here and there, hopefully to help beginners. I would suggest to have a journal or note pad dedicated for this experience. Don't worry if it feels weird the first time, it did for me about 40 years ago but you may also experience something profound. I was also asked to provide bible passages they are below also. My last offering is to think about the culture and social structure of the time, the simplicity of the people, think about what they might be like, what does their voice sound like from the words you read and how they interact with each other.

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.

If you would like to begin preparation for Advent this year you can read the following scriptures for the advent story each week: Luke 1:26-38, Mathew 1:19-25, Luke 2:1-8, Luke 2:8-20, Matthew 2:1-15. Blessings on your reading and encountering God's Word.

Reflection Piece

Another offering from my COP group to reflect upon. "Liminal" means 1) occupying a position at, or on both sides of a boundary or threshold; 2) relating to a transitional or initial stage of the process. In the case of the boundary between the earthly space and the heavenly places, I hope you enjoy it.

A Liminal Lingerer - A Prayer David Long-Higgins

O Love, (God)

Grant me the gift

Of liminal lingering

Between summer's green

And fall's necessary turn

Toward earth's embrace.

Form there a pause

Of gratitude for all

That has gone before

Even as necessary change

Begs a new chapter

Not yet fully formed.

Ready in me a release

Of all I clutch in fear

Of what is unknown

And form in me a faith

Trusting Your promises

To never leave me alone.

Help me remember

The gift of new creation

You make possible

Through my consent

To Your loving call

To trust-fall into You.

But for now,

Let it be enough

For me to savor

The liminal pause

You reveal in every leaf

Bearing its beauty

In liminal lingering.

Cultivating Generous Congregations Newsletter note

Cultivating Generous Congregations is the name of the class Sheila Sieger from the Stewardship committee and I have been taking since October. "Generosity is grounded in a profound understanding that we are all in this together...It is only in fruitful alliances with others that we can do great things." David Heenan and Warren Bennis This is the opening statement to our study guide. It is followed by: What is generosity? Have you ever thought about that for yourself? How would you define it? C. Smith offered this definition: Generosity is the virtue of giving things to others freely and abundantly. It is a learned character trait that involves the attitude and action entailing both the inclination and actual practice of giving liberally. It is not haphazard behavior but a base orientation to life. What generosity gives can vary: money, time, attention and encouragement and more but is always intends to enhance the true well-being of the receiver. Like all virtues, generosity is in people's genuine enlighten self-interest to learn and practice.

From yet another perspective, John Wesley offers four questions. "When you spend money on yourself, ask yourself four questions: Am I acting in good Character? Am I obeying God's word? Can I offer this expense as a sacrifice to God? Will this expenditure reward me in the life to come?"

Also, good reflection is found in these questions: How much is enough? Enough of what? (money, baseball cards, days off, friends). Enough for whom? (me, my family, my friends, America, the world) Enough for when?

What are your thoughts? How have you concluded to give what you give to support the church in its mission to the world around it? What do you think about how we are living out this mission to the world around us in Darlington, the county, state, country, world?

Steeple Fund Progress

We keep making good progress with the steeple fund. We are over \$12,000. We have done so well so far. The sacrifices you make to support the steeple repair and continue to support the larger budget are impressive and appreciated. I wanted to share the steeple pictures with folks who receive our newsletter in case you are not connected with our Facebook page. I have the good fortune of being able to see the repaired steeple from my study and kitchen. It looks great! Thank you for your generosity in giving to the Steeple Fund

Pastor Dana Caldwell



CHURCH COUNCIL

The Church Council met on November 19, 2025. Members present at the meeting were: Phil Risseuw, Kerry Black, Jordan Hinderman, Pam Hardt, Fritz Hirsbrunner, Sheila Siegler, Nancy Slama, Dave Sutherland, Connie Ubersox and Pastor Dana Caldwell.

Review and Repair of Agenda – remove search committee report from the agenda.

Approval of Minutes – Motion made by Dave to accept October minutes as submitted, second by Sheila, all in favor, motion carried.

Reports:

Financial Report - Motion to accept the report as submitted was made by Phil, second by Connie, all in favor, motion passed.

Pastor Report- leadership retreat is Feb. 7th 8am-11am. All committee members or other leaders are invited, any interested church members are welcome to attend as well. Cultivating generosity update from webinar series will be given as well. Thanksgiving service – pastor discussed where the idea for this came from and did discuss with the Lutheran church. Interest in this between churches is low. No Thanksgiving service will be held this year and Dana will work with other pastors in town toward planning one for next year. Dana questioned why we haven't gotten expenses vs profit report for pie day. Discussed minutes published in the newsletter as submitted, Nancy will publish these minutes as submitted going forward. Senior member visits are still being scheduled and pastor is trying to get into a routine as communicating with our seniors and shut-ins can be challenging.

President Report – a message was left on church phone regarding AED. Discussion was had to get information on this and training. Nancy will work on getting info for us.

Christian Education Committee - kids are working on their Christmas program. Confirmation class continues.

Building & Grounds Committee – nothing new at this time.

Mission Team – nothing new at this time.

Stewardship Committee – focus on cookie walk, messages all month during services in November,

EF&G Committee - cards were sent to the 80 plus folks, Christmas greetings to go out soon.

Endowment Committee – planning a meeting in early December 1st at 1:30 pm. Thrivent representative will be present.

Finance Committee Report - Nov. 11th meeting held, discussed and approved organist and secretary salaries and made those recommendations to this committee. Nancy is declining any raise. Fritz made a motion to raise the organist salary by 5 percent, second by Phil, all in favor, motion carried. Requesting a balance sheet and income/expense statement presented to the church council from Thrift, Mission Team, Women's Guild Fritz, second by Nancy, all in favor motion passed. Budget was submitted to council members prior to the meeting and discussed. Motion was made by Sheila to table approving the submitted budget for 2026, second by Kerry, all in favor, motion carried.

Pastor-Parish Committee - Nov. 11th meeting was held. Dana's willingness to be active all areas of the church. Short term goals were discussed. The pastor's chair in the sanctuary is not comfortable. She is directed to Main Furniture for chair replacement. Pastor needs help from EF&G connecting with members, Nancy will relay the message to this committee. Expectations – call agreement updated and will be signed by Dana.

Search Committee – Removed.

Women's Guild - 84 people served, 3 veterans, \$1,541 from chili supper and bake sale raised \$893, for a total of \$2,434.00 before expenses.

Worship Committee -Working on Christmas service which will be held at 5pm.

Old Business

Thrift Store Update – finishing painting, one floor is being stripped currently, we received \$5000 from our grant and an anonymous donor of ceiling tile replaced.

RBS Shirts – 35 shirts ordered. The site is now closed.

Church Basement Windows – Estimates – tabled.

Steeple Fund Raiser – Update. \$11,000 is approximate at this time. Discussed other ways to raise the needed monies. Nancy and pastor will get together to work on a FB notice.

Floor Estimate – Thrift Store & Sunday School Room – already approved.

New Business

Thanksgiving Eve Service – not at this time, see above.

Christmas Gifts – discussed past gifts and amounts. Jordan made a motion to give \$25.00 Chamber bucks to Sunday School teachers, Brandi, Connie, Janette, Betsy, Cindy and Nancy. Pastor will receive a \$200 gift, second by Kerry, all in favor, motion passed.

Christmas Eve Service – 5pm

Donna Wood's car – leave in parking lot or remove it. Sheila contacted Donna and did hear back that she is working on getting it moved. The council has decided the car needs to be removed prior to December 1st. Sheila will relay the message to Donna.

Checking Account for Thrift Store – Kerry made a motion to appoint Connie as Thrift Store treasurer, Sheila second, all in favor, motion carried, Dave made a motion to give permission for the Thrift Store treasurer to open a checking account and signatures will be required by the treasurer or church council president, Fritz second, all in favor, motion carried.

Credit Card for Women's Guild – Deb suggests we get a credit card for the Women's Guild to make purchases easier. Jordan made a motion giving the Women's guild treasurer permission to apply for a credit card account for the Women's Guild, Kerry second, all in favor, motion carried.

Outside Church Wall Cross – tabled.

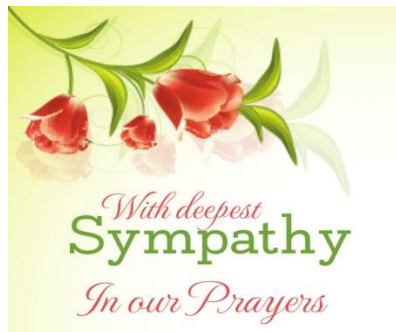
Exhibit case – Council is requesting a quote. Sheila will relay the message to Jeanette.

The next Council meeting will be Wednesday, December 10, 2024 at 6:15 p.m.



OUR SYMPATHIES

Our sympathies go out to the family of Mark Ruf who passed away on November 8, 2025. Our hearts go out to Mark's family and friends. We send you warm thoughts and our deepest sympathy. Mark will affectionately remembered and truly missed by all who knew him. May God be with you during this time and bring you peace.



OUR SYMPATHIES

Our sympathies go out to the family of Orvin Siegenthaler who passed away on November 8, 2025. Our hearts go out to the family and friends of Orvin. Words are never enough at a time like this. Our sympathy and warmest thoughts are with you. Orvin will be lovingly remembered and truly missed by all who knew him. May God grant you peace.



“ ...the **Glory** of God
shone around them...
Luke 2:9 ”

Be the Light

For over one hundred years, **The Christmas Fund** has provided direct financial assistance to the healers in all our lives: retired and active UCC ministers, church workers, and their families. You are part of the community of **The Christmas Fund**, whether you donate at Christmastime, benefit directly from our grant or leadership programs, or simply believe in our mission to help secure the financial foundation of those engaged in the life of the church.

Please consider donating to ensure more healers receive the loving support of the Church in their moment of deepest need. **The Christmas Fund was here for them.** And regardless of whom you are or what brought you to the United Church of Christ, **The Christmas Fund is here for you.**

Your gift is more than just a testament to your belief in the values of the United Church of Christ, it is a critical lifeline for those who depend on our grant programs for care and support.

Information will be included in the bulletins through December and envelopes are in the pews (or just write The Christmas Fund on your check or church envelope). Thank you for considering a gift to this very important fund.



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WOMEN'S GUILD

I would like to thank everyone who helped in anyway with the Chili Supper/Bake Sale. We made approximately \$2,100 after expenses, that money will be put in the Women's Guild checking account for our obligations and expenses for 2026.

A reminder that the Women's Guild Christmas Party will be December 10th at noon. Please bring a dish to pass for the potluck. Also bring a \$5-\$10 gift for a gift exchange if you would like to participate.

Thank you
Debbie Loken
Guild President



**Wishing all of you a happy, healthy
and safe Christmas season.
Merry Christmas!**



THANK YOU

A huge thank you goes out to all who reached out to us at the time of Orvin's passing. Thank you for your prayers, concern, kind words and the food brought to the house. A special thank you to the three angels who made sure Joan had enough food ready for when all the kids arrived. All these acts of kindness did not go unnoticed and were greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Ruth Siegenthaler,
Debi & Mark Celebre family
Joan & Ron Blaser family



CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Grace Lutheran Church has invited Immanuel to join them on December 14, 2025 for Christmas caroling. We will be caroling at the Manor and Sienna Crest. Please meet at the Grace Lutheran Church at 2 p.m. in the Grace fellowship hall in the lower level of the church. All are welcome to join us. Come and help us spread the holiday cheer.



MISSION TEAM REPORT

Blessings to the church and our membership. It says in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." This bible verse is on teamwork. It is so important for us to remember that words of encouragement can go so much farther than we anticipate. Early on during the pie day planning I was having my usual panic and worry session. During this time, I was talking to longtime mission team member Linda Colbeck. As I was telling Linda everything that was worrying me this year, she made the simple statement of "pie day will happen, and it all will go as it should. It will be fine." After talking to her she put my mind at ease by taking the time to counsel me. I appreciated her comments, and it was a lesson I think for all of us to be supportive and uplifting to each other.

It has been a busy couple of months for the mission team as we completed our annual apple pie day. Once again, we sold seven hundred apple pies and the help we received from our church family was fantastic. I counted at one time over fifty people helping us complete this large task. A special thank you to all who purchased pies, helped make pies, and hopefully are eating apple pies during our 2025 Holiday season. We really could not do it without all of you.

Since pie day has concluded we were able to make an account of expenses and receipts. The total cost of materials for pie day was \$3,734.05. The total amount of money brought in by pie

day was \$8,852. Now if you are doing the math (700 pies X \$12/each = \$8,400) you know we took in more than the pies were worth. We did get extra donations as we do every year and ended up with \$452.00 above the pie cost. Taking out expenses and adding the gain from apple pie day to our mission check book, we are at \$11,710.96 as of 11/26/25.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving and are looking forward to a wonderful Holiday season. Blessings to our mission members and blessings to our church.

Jared and Ann Reuter / Scott and Tara Glendenning



REMINDER

Just a reminder the Wednesday Bible Study group will meet on December 10th and 17th only this month. The group will take a two week break and will resume again on January 7, 2026.



SUNDAY SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The kids have been working hard on the Christmas Program—learning songs and reading parts. Also, we have done a craft for Christmas. So just a reminder that the Children's Christmas Program will be Sunday, December 14th during the church service. Please join us for cake and ice cream in the fellowship hall after the service.



CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

The Christmas Eve evening service at Immanuel will be at 5:00 p.m. Please come and join in the celebration of the birth of Jesus.



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.

Financial Update

Monthly Financial Information

	October	Budget	Year to Date 2025	Year to Date Budget
Contributions/Other Revenue	\$16,032	\$ 7,112	\$ 110,197	\$ 75,065
Expenses *	<u>\$19,577</u>	<u>\$ 3,639</u>	<u>\$ 237,525</u>	<u>\$ 54,073</u>
Net Gain/(Loss)	\$(3,544)	\$ 3,473	\$(127,328)	\$ 20,992

- 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 \$10,650 paid out. YTD figures include \$21,669 receipts and \$23,473 related expenses.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 3 – No Bible Study

Dec. 10 – Women's Guild Christmas Party with a potluck at noon. Optional gift exchange. If you want to participate, the gift should be between \$5 and \$10.

Bible Study at 4:00 p.m.

Church Council Meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Dec. 13 – Cookie Walk from 9 am to noon

Dec. 14 – Sunday School Christmas Program during worship

Dec. 17 – Bible Study at 4:00 p.m.

Dec. 21 – No Sunday School

Christmas Fund offering will be collected

Dec. 22 – Deadline for January newsletter articles

Dec. 24 – No Bible Study

Christmas Eve Service at 5:00 p.m.

Dec. 25 – Merry Christmas!!

Dec. 28 – No Sunday School & No Coffee Hour

Dec. 31 – No Bible Study

Jan. 4 – No Sunday School & No Coffee Hour

Jan. 11 – Sunday School resumes

COOKIE/BAR WALK

The IUCC Stewardship Committee is hosting a Cookie/Bar Walk on December 13 from 9 am to Noon to raise funds for the Steeple Repair. We are asking you to bring at least four dozen cookies or 2 pans of uncut bars. Please bring to Fellowship Hall by 1 pm on Friday, December 12. The doors will be open by 7 am for drop off. We need everyone's help to make this a successful event so If you are unable to make cookies/bars, feel free to give a monetary donation to help with the expenses of advertising and packaging. Thanking you in advance for your generous support!





DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 ST	Diane Ritchie
2 nd	Chuck Gratz
7 th	Janette Steger
9 th	Kerry Black
10 th	Maddox Reilly
12 th	Ron Blaser
13 th	Cindy Pluemer
17 th	Jaci Kammes
22 nd	Gage Ruf
24 th	Suzanne Marx
25 th	Carol Glendenning Gary Paynter
28 th	Eric Stauffacher
29 th	Anthony Buss Ardith Kundert
30 th	Mary Leahy



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

11 th	Travis & Nicole Lewin
12 th	Ron & Carol Johnson
31 st	Sara & John Gleason Jay & Peggy Lancaster

DECEMBER USHERS/GREETERS

7	Randy & Debbie Loken
14	Travis & Nicole Lewin Family
21	Scott & Tara Glendenning Family
24	Roy & Pam Hardt
28	Dave & Marjean Sutherland



DECEMBER LITURGISTS

7	Pastor Dana
14	Sunday School Program
21	Jordan Hinderman
24	Christmas Eve—Nancy Slama
28	Joan Blaser



DECEMBER COFFEE HOUR

7	Connie Ubersox
14	Birthday Party for Jesus
21	Betsy Ellefson
28	No coffee hour
Jan. 4	No coffee hour
Coffee hour will resume on January 11th	



Deadline for the January newsletter articles is **December 22, 2025.**