

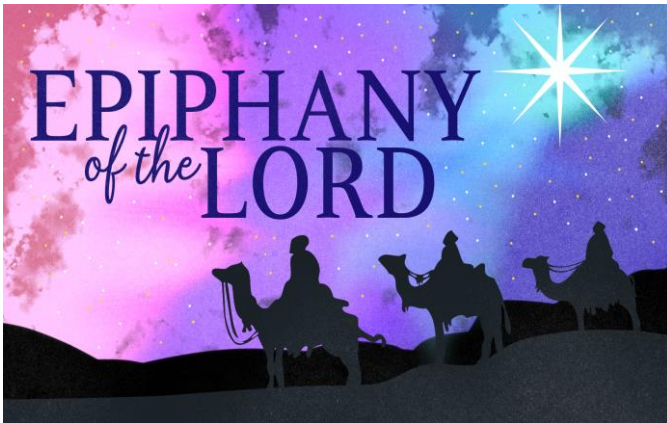
# ***Immanuel Highlights***

*Volume XXVI, Issue 1 January 2026*

*A monthly Publication  
for the Members and Friends of*

***Immanuel Lutheran Church***  
*251 Main Street  
Akron, Iowa 51001*

*A Church for All Seasons*



*Season of Epiphany*

***Jon Harris, Council President***

*Cell Phone*

*712.551.6543*

*E-Mail: jolifarms@premieronline.net*

***Sharon Frerichs, Administrative Assistant***

*Church Office 712.568.3338*

*Cell Phone: 712.551.6445*

*E-Mail: rfrerichs@premieronline.net*

***God's Enduring Grace***  
***1910-2026***

*"As members of the family of God, we proclaim  
God's grace through our worship, education,  
witness, service, and stewardship."*

## **A Message from Jon**

Each January 1st, we review the past year and anticipate with hope what the Lord has planned for us in the new one. This year is different as we now begin a search for our new Pastor. Like searching for that new car, will we kick the tires on that used model who is tried and true or test out that new model straight from the factory / Seminary. Only God knows and we need to be open to God's surprises. Psalm 32:8 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go. I will guide you with my eye."

We are in the process of securing an interim Pastor or pulpit supply. We hope to be able to meet all our congregations' needs one way or another but understand that some may not be possible for the time being, such as Saturday evening worship. We will keep you posted.

The Call committee has been organized; the correct paperwork has been filed with the Synod and a meeting with the Synod is planned for early January as we wait and pray for the direction and guidance our Lord will lead and give us. The road may be long and tortuous but like the tortoise and the hare – slow and steady wins the race.

I believe we have much to offer and that new to us engine is but a spark away from leading us into that new chapter God has planned for us. As my mother used to say, we are "One Great Family of God" here at Immanuel and I know that we will overcome any difficulties or trepidations that come our way. Jeremiah 33: 3 says "Call to me and I will answer you and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." We look and pray to the Lord as we wait for that plan to be revealed to us.

2025 -look back and thank Jesus,

2026 - look forward and trust Jesus.

As Pastor Flemr would say, "There's hope in that."

Jon Harris, Council President



In 2025 we decided at the end of the year to no longer continue this organization. We thank Lorna Easton for leading our Bible Study each month, to Carol Larson for serving as president, and Alyce Toben who served as treasurer for many years. Sharon Frerichs served as secretary for years and was elected as treasurer in January, 2025.



We extend our sympathy to the family and friends of David Scott Olson, who left his earthly home on Monday, December 8 at the age of 55 at UnityPoint Health-St. Luke's-Downtown in Sioux City, Iowa.

His funeral service was held Monday, December 15, 2025 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Akron, Iowa.. Expressions of sympathy may be expressed to the family through [www.rexwinkelfh.com](http://www.rexwinkelfh.com). In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred to the Akron Opera House.

### Special Notes

A gigantic thank you to Linda Nielsen and all her supporters for the Sunday School program on Sunday, December 14, as produced with imagination and creative ideas. We also thank the teachers, students, and parents for their cooperation!

All offerings must be received by December 31, 2025. If you need, please send your year-end offerings to the financial secretary, Bob Nielsen at P. O. Box 48, so it may be correctly recorded. Thanks.

January 2026

A big thank you to all of those who contributed to the Poinsettia Fund to enable us to purchase plants to decorate our sanctuary this holiday season.

If you come into the east entrance of Immanuel, you will notice a large box for new and used coats as well as other clothing items for individuals, to be given to the Gospel Mission. Thank you in advance for your support of this project!

### And a Caroling We Did Go!



Wednesday evening, December 17, 2025, approximately 50 choir members, confirmation students, and others rode on two hayracks and shared their musical talents with others from our church family. Following carolers were treated with pizza in the church fellowship hall.

Date	Lector	Communion Setup/Cleanup	Acolyte
January 4	Marlys Johnson	Randy/Marlys Johnson	Reese Harris
January 11	Mackenzie Johnson	NA	Emma Harris
January 18	Kim Swancutt	Alan/Marge Lucken	Sophia Choquette
January 25	Kayla Johnson	NA	Emma Jacobs
Ushers for January	Craig Wilken and Carter Wilken		



*We pray for the families nation-wide adjusting to drought, flooding, severe wind storms, humid temperatures, heavy rain, ice, snow or other conditions.*

*We pray for the family and friends of David Olson, who passed away Monday, December 8.  
We pray for the family and friends of Sharon Puhl, who passed away Tuesday, December 23  
We pray for the family and friends of Matt Kenny, who passed away Saturday, December 27 at his home.*

*Those who would like to be remembered in our prayers who are currently in long-term care or assisted living facilities include:*

Alta Johnson Betty Heyl  
Lawrence Maynard Beth Finzen  
Betty Klemme Sandy McMillan  
Jeff Kulvik Shirley Johnson  
Doris Brundeen

*We pray for those with health issues:*

Clarice Fodness Nystrup  
Don Von Hagel,  
brother of Charles Von Hagel  
Josh Myers Jan Skinner  
Connie Gebauer Clementson  
Heather Bader, sister of Josh Martinsen  
Tom Miller Kenny Larsen Susie Rozell  
Roger Nielsen Tony Nemesio

*We pray for our military and veterans,  
health care providers,  
rescue and emergency workers  
fire fighters, EMS, farmers, law enforcement  
officials, and teachers.*



5	Tatum Wilken	20	Hollie St. Pierre
6	Heather Morehead	21	Todd Swancutt
6	Taryn Wilken	22	Ronald Dreeszen
7	Robert Nielsen	23	Joyce Dreeszen
7	Landon Schuknecht	25	Tim Wilken
8	Kerri Edwards	26	Jeff Rozell
10	Venice Stowers	27	Katie Frerichs
14	Ronald Finzen	27	Douglas Olson
15	Alisha Knapp	28	Layla Rozell
17	Kim Swancutt	30	Jack Correia

## Noisy Offering

In November our noisy offering total was \$603.36 which gives a total of \$1,763.36 for the organization "Sleep in Heavenly Peace". "Sleep in Heavenly Peace" builds and distributes beds and bedding to children in need in the Siouxland Area. Thank you for your continued support!

## Souper Bowl of Caring

The annual Souper Bowl of Caring, youth-led worship service and soup contest/lunch will be Sunday, February 8, 2026. Stay tuned for more details.

## Lost and Found

These glasses as well as a pair of gloves have been found several weeks ago. If they are yours, they can be found in the church kitchen.





## JANUARY, 2026 LECTIONARIES

January 4	Jeremiah 3 1:7-14	Ephesians 1:3-14	John 1:1-18
January 11	Isaiah 42 :1-9	Acts 10: 34-43	Matthew 3: 13-17
January 18	Isaiah 49: 1-7	Corinthians 1: 1-9	John 1:29-42
January 25	Isaiah 9: 1-4	1 Corinthians 1:10-18	Matthew 4: 12-23

### Congregational Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 25, 2026, Following Worship

If you would like to serve on the Church Council,

be sure to notify Jon Harris of your intentions.



A big thank you to each of you who decorated all areas of our church on the “Hanging of the Greens”.

### Thank you, Joy Dirks

Joy was again busy this year making youth sized mittens for the Christmas Tree Festival and for a tree at the east entry of the church. Found in that location are 50 pairs of mittens which will be taken up to school. Attached to each mitten is the beautiful message shown below.



**Immanuel Lutheran Church**  
Church Council  
December 14, 2025, 11:07 a.m.

**Present:** Jon Harris, Pastor Alm, Matthew Knapp, Josh Martinsen, Heather Noll, Tim Philips, Tom Schroeder, Arica Schuknecht

**Absent:** Anne Brown, Heather Morehead

**Minutes of the November Meeting:** Motion made by Josh to approve the November minutes; seconded by Matthew. Motion approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Motion made by Tim to approve the November treasurer report; seconded by Heather. Motion approved.

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor noted that movers will be coming on December 29. Pastor went over a few items that he would like to leave behind. Jon has lined up Josh Groon to have a dumpster at the parsonage for Pastor to use as needed. Josh will be leading confirmation classes.

***Unfinished Business***

**Harvest Festival:** Offering from the Harvest Festival totaled \$41,345. What a blessing!

**Pastor's last day:** Pastor's last Sunday at Immanuel will be December 28, 2025, which is the lessons and carols service. We will have cake following our December 21, 2025, service to wish Pastor Alm the best in his new adventures!

***New Business***

**Caroling:** The annual caroling around Akron event will be held on Wednesday, December 17. We will meet at the church at 6:00 p.m. Join us for a fun evening!

**Christmas Eve service:** This will be held on Wednesday, December 24, at 9:00 p.m.

**Call Committee Process:** Jon has compiled the Ministry Site Profile, and it was reviewed by the council. Motion by Matthew and seconded by Tim to approve the Ministry Site Profile and submit it to the Synod. A follow-up meeting with

the Synod will be held in early January. A call committee of about 7 members is being formed.

**Interim Pastor:** The council met with a prospective Interim Pastor and will keep us updated on if they accept our offer.

***Items that may be brought before the Council***

**Garage Space:** Tim made a motion, seconded by Tom, to have Josh replace/update all of the lights in the kitchen area to LED lights. In return for his service, Josh will be able to use the garage space at the parsonage.

The next **Council meeting** will be a brief meeting on Sunday, December 21, following worship. During this meeting the council will vote to distribute our mission support for the end of the year.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Arica Schuknecht, Council Secretary

<b>FINANCIAL STATISTICS</b> November 2025	
First Week	\$ 979.00
Second Week	\$ 2,880.00
Third Week	\$ 850.00
Fourth Week, Harvest Festival	
Fifth Week	\$1515.00
Total	\$ 8,456.00
Needed Each Week	\$ 3,162.00
Currently	\$1,556.00
Difference	<b>\$-1,606.00</b>
Harvest Festival, 2025	\$41,345.00

**Immanuel Lutheran Church**  
Church Council  
December 21, 2025 11:30 a.m.

A special meeting was held to distribute the rest of our mission support for 2025.

Present: Jon Harris, Matthew Knapp, Josh Martinsen, Tim Philips, Arica Schuknecht

Absent: Pastor Alm, Anne Brown, Heather Morehead, Heather Noll, Tom Schroeder

**Mission Support:**

Josh made a motion, seconded by Matthew, to give the following as part of Immanuel's Mission Support. Motion approved.

\$1000 to the Wednesday morning youth Bible Study at The Spot  
\$1500 to Youth for Christ  
\$2000 to the Gospel Mission  
\$2000 to the Foodbank of Siouxland  
\$2000 to the Salvation Army

The next **Council meeting** will be held on Sunday, January 11, 2026, following worship.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer and adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Arica Schuknecht, Council Secretary

**Below is the beautiful tree found in the Fellowship Hall.**



November 2025, Attendance				
Saturday			Sunday	
November	1	9	2	73
	8	9	9	43
<i>Saturday Baptism</i>	15	32	16	73
	22	4	23	81
<i>Snow Storm</i>	29	0	30	37
<b>Total</b>		54		367
<b>Average</b>		14		74



**Special January Dates:**

**Sunday School Resumes**  
Sunday, January 4, 2026

**Annual Reports** are due Monday, January 12, 2026 as they will be distributed on Sunday, January 18.

**Church Board Meeting**  
Sunday, January 11, 2026, following worship

**Congregational Annual Meeting**  
Sunday, January 25, 2026, following worship



*The new year brings new beginnings. At LSI, we walk alongside Iowans for all sorts of beginnings. We walk alongside parents-to-be as they prepare for the birth of their child. We welcome immigrants and refugees as they begin their new lives in Iowa. We train parents looking to adopt a child and create a new beginning for their family.*

*This January, we offer Thomas's story of his new beginning.*

In 1996, Congolese civil war broke out in the present-day countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Republic of the Congo, forcing then two-year-old Thomas Mbuthu into exile in a refugee camp in neighboring Zambia. After growing up in a refugee camp, now 27-year-old Thomas applied to come to the United States.

When Thomas landed at the Des Moines airport in an entirely foreign land in a state called Iowa, LSI caseworker Patrick Karemera greeted him.

**"I said, 'Welcome! This is your new home now! I am your brother. This is a new life. Feel free and feel safe,'" shared Patrick, recounting his initial meeting with his client Thomas.**

Thomas thanked him, explaining he had not expected to see someone like Patrick welcome him – someone who looked like himself and

spoke his native languages of Lingala and Swahili.

"As a refugee, I wanted a better life. But I didn't know where I was going. 'What is going to happen to me?'" wondered Thomas aloud.

**"When Patrick came to me, I could see the future."**

Patrick is from the same country as Thomas, coming to America just a few years prior. He works as a caseworker to welcome refugees to Iowa and helps them resettle, pursue their goals, and navigate the challenges of an entirely foreign place.

"I immigrated here, like Thomas. It's rewarding to welcome somebody like me to come here to Iowa. This is my second home," said Patrick.

Patrick admires how courageous, open-minded, and curious Thomas is. He encourages his client to dream big and work hard to achieve his goals.

"Life is about helping each other," shared Patrick.

For more information, please contact Deb Whitford, LSI's Director of Philanthropy and Church Relations, at [Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org](mailto:Deborah.Whitford@LSIowa.org) or 563-676-2065.

*LSI is an affiliated social ministry partner of the Iowa congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and a member of LSA (Lutheran Services in America). We proudly serve people of all ages, abilities, religions, sexes, gender identities, national origins, ethnicities, races, and sexual orientations. Learn more at [LSIowa.org](http://LSIowa.org) and [facebook.com/LSI.iowa](https://facebook.com/LSI.iowa).*

**Your SUPPORT makes these stories possible...**

Do you know someone who...

- Struggles with mental health and needs support?
- Is a refugee or immigrant starting over in Iowa, building a new life?
- Is a young parent trying to give their child a better future?
- Has been adopted or grown up in foster care?
- Lives with a disability and could thrive with access to the right resources and care?

These are the people your generosity touches. Their lives are transformed through Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) — because of caring donors like you.

Let me introduce you to Heather, one of our long-time foster and adoptive parents.

*“Toby and I fostered for nearly 8 years, welcoming many children into our home before adopting three of our own. Through foster care, I’ve formed meaningful relationships with many families — I still get calls weekly to hear updates or just be a listening ear. I would do it all over again for every child we had the chance to help.*

*Foster care is so much more than being a substitute parent. It’s helping families heal, supporting them through trauma, and being a cheerleader when life has brought them to rock bottom.*

*Foster care completed our family when reunification wasn’t possible. I love these kids with every fiber of my being, and I am so blessed to be their mom. Foster care will always be in my heart.”*

Heather’s story is just one example of how LSI’s programs create lasting impact. Every day, LSI’s dedicated staff walk beside neighbors facing life’s hardest challenges offering compassion, stability, and hope when it’s needed most.

Take Brookie, who lives in Harmony House, one

of LSI’s group homes for individuals with disabilities. Her mom shared:

*“LSI supports Brookie emotionally and physically every day. The staff are caring, kind, and compassionate. With their support, Brookie lives as independently as possible in a safe and happy environment. She participates in Special Olympics, Strikers bowling, ice hockey, softball, work, community events, and family gatherings. LSI has enriched Brookie’s life and our family’s life in ways we cannot measure. It’s a huge comfort knowing she is cared for so wonderfully.”* Your generosity makes stories like Heather’s and Brookie’s possible. Because of you:

- A young mom finds her footing and gains hope for the future.
- A child finds a safe, nurturing home where they can thrive.
- A teen struggling with mental health knows they are not alone.
- A refugee begins a new life in Iowa with dignity and support.
- Individuals with disabilities experience full, meaningful lives in the community they call home.

And these are just a few examples. LSI programs touch thousands of lives across Iowa. Families are strengthened, children are supported, and adults facing challenges are empowered to live independently and with dignity.

Will you make a gift today to continue this life-changing work? Every dollar brings comfort, healing, and hope to someone who needs it most, someone right here in our Iowa communities.

Your compassion transforms lives, builds resilience, and spreads hope. Thank you for your faith in others, your generosity, and your partnership. Together, we are creating brighter futures, stronger families, and thriving communities — every single day.



**Immanuel Lutheran Church  
Usher Assignments for 2026**

January	Carter Wilken	Craig Wilken
February	Jeff Morehead	Trenton Morehead
March	Nick Mathistad	Lynn Johnson
April	Todd Swancutt	Matthew Swancutt
May	Matthew Knapp	Morgan Knapp
June	Ryan Schuknecht	Dave Compton
July	Bob Brown	Tim Philips
August	Loren Nielsen	Nancy Nielsen
September	Tim Wilken	Kelly Saathoff
October	Nathan Harris	Josh Martinsen
November	Bob Nielsen	Charles Von Hagel
December	Bob Frerichs	Shawn Frerichs

## Acolyte List

2026

Date		Acolytes
January	4	Oakley DeVos
	11	Ronald Finzen
	18	Case Harris
	25	Logan Jacobs
February	1	Emma Jacobs
	8	Ty Naslund
	15	Kenli Rozell
	22	Emelia DeVos
March	1	Sydney Edwards
	8	Cole St. Pierre
	15	Nora Mathistad
	22	Paige Nicholson
	29	Reese Harris
April	5	Layne Dumas
	12	Oakley DeVos
	19	Marcus Finzen
	26	Case Harris
May	3	Logan Jacobs
	10	Emma Jacobs
	17	Ty Naslund
	24	Kenli Rozell
	31	Emelia DeVos
June	4	Ushers
	14	Ushers
	21	Ushers

Date		Acolytes
July	5	Ushers
	12	Ushers
	19	Ushers
	24	Ushers
August	2	Ushers
	9	Ushers
	16	Ushers
	23	Ushers
	30	Ushers
September	6	Ushers
	13	Sydney Edwards
	20	Cole St. Pierre
	27	Nora Mathistad
October	4	Paige Nicholson
	11	Reese Harris
	18	Layne Dumas
	25	Oakley DeVos
November	1	Ty Naslund
	8	Kenli Rozell
	15	Ronald Finzen
	22	Case Harris
	29	Logan Jacobs
December	6	Emma Jacobs
	13	Ty Naslund
	20	Kenli Rozell

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
251 Main Street, Box 79  
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## WORSHIP – WINTER SCHEDULE

5:30 p.m. Saturday Worship with Holy Communion  
9:00 a.m. Sunday School  
10:15 a.m. Sunday Worship Service  
11:15 a.m. Coffee Fellowship



## Annual Souper Bowl of Caring Soup Contest

Mark your calendars for February 8, 2026 for the Souper Bowl of Caring when our youth lead the worship service and hold their annual soup contest. More information to come in January!



Christmas Eve, 2025, a great night to share the light with family and friends.



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