



The Image



"The MISSION of Immanuel is to glorify God, build the Christian Church, foster Christian fellowship and concern, and join in the worldwide work of winning souls for Christ."

From the Pastor's Desk – March 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Frankly, the last couple weeks have taken the wind out of my sails. A now former brother-in-office sits in prison accused of gravely serious crimes.¹ And the victims... People, youth, who place their innocent trust in the man that stands before them each week and speaks of and handles holy things, were betrayed by that same man. I suppose the only thing that is worse is when a parent—the stand-in for God in tender lives—abandons or abuses these youth. Sin has consequences—grave consequences. Sin leaves scars.

I pray for healing for those victims. Sadly, in my decades as a pastor in the Lord's Church, I've had to sit and pray with many survivors of abuse and victimization. Too many—would that the number were zero. Adults, hurt as children at the hand of neighbors, sit in pews in the same church as their abusers and carry the shame of those scars for decades. It is in those moments I'm thankful for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, for His blood that frees us from past hurts. I'll add this: if you, dear reader, are the perpetrator of such abuse, STOP IT! I may never learn what happens behind your closed doors. However, God knows. And He most certainly hears the cries of the oppressed, abused, and victimized. I think that most, if not all, of the children of our parish do not read these newsletters. So, I tell them this in person: they are under no obligation to lie and protect a person who is abusing them—whoever they may be. None! Manipulation is a sadly powerful tool in the hand of abusers.

I pray for the parents of those children. I can only begin to imagine their anger. If there is one institution on the face of this earth where people—and especially children—should be safe, it is the one holy Christian and Apostolic Church. It is a testament to the power of the Gospel that these families remain in the Church. Thanks be to God that Christ is victorious over the devil and the evil that lurks in human hearts. Yet how might a parent protect their children?² Perhaps my many years and exposure to the effect of sins like these have made me a

¹ Here are the letters, directed to the entire synod, published by Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison (the President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod) regarding this tragedy.

The first is dated January 29, 2026 and is accessed via this link:

https://reporter.lcms.org/2026/pastoral-response-from-president-harrison-regarding-reported-clergy-abuse-in-illinois/?_gl=1*n13ryt*_ga*MTk5NTg3MDMxNy4xNzY5ODM4MDg1*_ga_Z0184DBP2L*czE3NzA3ODc3NzMkbz MkZzAkdDE3NzA3ODc3NzMkajYwJGwwJGgw

The second is dated February 9, 2026 and is found here:

https://reporter.lcms.org/2026/update-on-mohr-roster-status/?_gl=1*13jn5zl*_ga*MTk5NTg3MDMxNy4xNzY5ODM4MDg1*_ga_Z0184DBP2L*czE3NzA3ODk1NzUkbzQkZzEkdDE3NzA3ODk2MTAkajI1JGwwJGgw

Both of these are also accessible from the LCMS.org home page.

If you are unable to access the internet, I am able to print you a copy.

² The Board of Education and I will work to organize a class that will help with this topic.

bit jaded, a bit cynical. So, acknowledging that, I say to you that trust is earned. Watch your kids. Pry into changes of behavior and suspicious activity. I will not be, and have not been, offended when parents inquire of their children about me. I spend a lot of time with our youth. I teach them, travel with them, counsel them, and enjoy youth group with them. And these hours spent are a delight. In those situations, trust is essential. Yet trust is still to be earned. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure their children are safe when left with others—no matter what their title may be. Happily, as you do this, you will find most people are trustworthy and want the best for our youth. But please, perform your due diligence. And that diligence must include not only pastors and church workers, but also school employees and the homes where your children are having sleepovers.³

I'm certain that over the next several months there will be much handwringing and finger pointing. We will discover there were signs. There always are. Yet many of these signs remain unnoticed until things have come to light. What's frightening and concerning to me is that the perpetrator was leading a double life. While background checks are important and useful, they are only useful in identifying *past* interactions with the legal system. Hence the importance of the above paragraph. I'll add this: If anything that is happening in your life at church (really, anywhere) is making you uncomfortable, or if being around certain people makes you uncomfortable, please bring it to my attention. I will investigate. And, unless legal action is warranted, I will keep these things confidential. I've told our youth these same things.

Sadly, churches often become targets of predators. We're at a bit of an advantage there since our church is small. Families and the community know each other. And our church community is rather stable. All this helps. Unfortunately, even—or especially—in a small community there is a tendency to sweep things under the rug. There are, perhaps, several reasons for this. I suspect the one that merits some consideration is the desire to protect the privacy of the victims. But what about when a pastor is involved?

First, we need to acknowledge that all pastors—just like everyone else—are sinners. That includes yours truly. But just like everyone else in the church, he is required to live a life of repentance. Sadly, not all do. Just like the people they serve. I've been thinking a lot about this. Scripture, which displays the full range of human folly, fallenness, and depravity, records the disastrous lives of many priests (pastors). What first came to my mind were the two sons of Eli. They were priests. This is how Scripture introduces us to them: "*Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD.*"⁴ These sons of Eli were greatly abusing their office. So much so that the Lord pronounced a harsh judgment on them. But why didn't those ancient saints, who were ministered to by these worthless priests, do anything about it? Perhaps they were politically and powerfully connected. Perhaps they were comfortable and desired a life of ease. The pastoral office does not offer these things—unless you're willing to never ruffle feathers. And we pastors learn that very quickly.

Proclaiming the truth is a risky thing. This is especially so in our day when people believe—truly believe as gospel truth—the imaginations of their own hearts. People do not like to have their little dead gods tumbled. They don't want to be told that what they believe as truth is a lie. Jeremiah comes to mind:

*O LORD, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; everyone mocks me. For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" say all my close friends, watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him."*⁵

³ Over the years I've had to help with several youth who were victimized at sleepovers. Parents, be sure you know everyone who is going to be there—including siblings and others living in the house.

⁴ 1 Samuel 2:12.

⁵ Jeremiah 20:7-10.

Jeremiah was tasked with speaking the truth of God's Word to a people—God's people. That burning described by Jeremiah, I would describe that as a pastor's conscience. We know what we need to say and how we need to say it. And we know if we do our epitaph will read something akin to "terror on every side." Note, it's Jeremiah's close friends that denounce him. Monikers applied to me include (but not limited to) "Bummer Man," "Gloomy," "Stuck in the past," and "Pastor doesn't make me feel happy." And, having our hearts broken many times, we pastors learn quickly that having close friends is not a wise decision. The choice is before us as pastors. Listen to the conscience and speak the full counsel of God or play it safe (which is often good for numbers, finances, acceptance, and everything else except for the peace which our screaming conscience withholds).

This leads me to a second thought. Scripture frequently notes that as the priests go, so go the people. But the reverse is also true. As go the people, so go the priests. People want to be told what they want to hear. And it's all too easy to satisfy that desire. St. Paul tells us this: "*For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*"⁶ There are always people in our churches who leave because they don't like what they hear. People change confessions like I change socks. And they do this not because they are convicted of the Truth. They do this because they want to be told what they want to hear (they want to be affirmed). They want to feel what they want to feel, to be accepted by a larger—albeit heterodox—crowd and all the trappings larger groups offer, and to be comfortable—to be accepted by the larger community. They find a church that teaches what they want to believe. So go the people, so go the priests. Ask yourself this: Have you ever criticized your confession (and pastor) because it's not growing the way *you* think it should, or because it doesn't offer a large youth group, coffee in church, contemporary music, or a hip, cool, handsome pastor? Have you failed to learn what confessions actually teach and lied to yourself that they all teach the same thing? So go the people, so go the priests.

My point with all this is that we *all* need to repent. We all have a hand in what has transpired in our district. We pastors need to repent of our lack of boldness in facing our own sin and sin of those around us. We must be willing to face the consequences for speaking the full council of God. We pastors need to listen to the admonishments and rebukes of our peers and ecclesiastical supervisors. We cannot be allowed to isolate ourselves. We must stop ignoring the sins of our parishioners and our doctrine because we want to look good in the record books. And the laity... They also must stop ignoring a fracturing of church and a fracturing of the Body of Christ for the sake of these same things. The laity cannot look at the church as a business and the pastor as the head of sales. They cannot ignore their sins or the sins of their leadership for the sake of numbers and a fat bottom line. (I've actually been told "we need to get family such-and-so back because they were big givers.") If the parish opts to view the church as a business and the Gospel as something to be packaged and sold, our churches will end up with fewer pastors—men devoted to prayer and the stewardship of the holy things—and more salesmen dressed in pastor's garb. I remind you also that if the church is regarded as a commodity to be sold, it is the culture that determines what sells. As a result, the church will reflect the culture. Those churches, while they might be full, will no longer be the salt and light. They will desire—demand—their pastors teach and speak in such a way so as not to drive the customer away.⁷ When a church thinks this way about herself and her pastors, what sort of men will seek such an office?

God has given you the authority to call a pastor. Call and pray for pastors who won't do what you want, but what the Lord would have them do. And be submissive to their teaching. Pray the Lord raises up men, and that the church would call men, who will tell you what you need to hear. I think this would go a long way to place men in our seminaries who understand what they are called, by God, to do. And I think it would help "weed out" the men who are looking for a comfortable, easy life.

⁶ 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

⁷ I will include a lengthy quote from the brilliant pastoral scholar, Eugene H. Peterson, at the end of this newsletter. He speaks of exactly this tragedy.

As I finish writing this, the calendar has ticked over to Ash Wednesday. Lent has begun. Lent is a penitential season—a season of repentance. We would all do well—pastors and all people—to examine our hearts. I pray we all would hear the Lord’s command—for the sake of our neighbors—to STOP IT.

And pray for me. That the wind would return to my sails.

In Christ’s most Holy Name!

Rev. L. A. Astrowski Jr., Pastor

P.S. What follows is a lengthy quote from Eugene H. Peterson in his book *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. Peterson wrote eloquently about the highs and lows of the pastoral office. Every year I am invited to spend a morning with pastors of mostly evangelical confessions at an ecumenical breakfast. While being very nice people (a good trait for a salesman), I find their conversations dripping with language of business and sales. Peterson was prophetic in his observations.

American pastors are abandoning their posts, left and right, and at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches and getting other jobs. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationery and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their calling. They have gone whoring after other gods. What they do with their time under the guise of pastoral ministry hasn’t the remotest connection with what the church’s pastors have done for most of twenty centuries. A few of us are angry about it. We are angry because we have been deserted. Most of my colleagues who defined ministry for me, examined, ordained, and then installed me as a pastor in a congregation, a short while later walked off and left me, having, they said, more urgent things to do. The people I thought I would be working with disappeared when the work started. Being a pastor is difficult work; we want the companionship and counsel of allies. It is bitterly disappointing to enter a room full of people whom you have every reason to expect share the quest and commitments of pastoral work and find within ten minutes that they most definitely do not. They talk of images and statistics. They drop names. They discuss influence and status. Matters of God and the soul and Scripture are not grist for their mills. The pastors of America have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches. They are preoccupied with shopkeeper’s concerns—how to keep the customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will lay out more money...

The biblical fact is that there are no successful churches. There are, instead, communities of sinners, gathered before God week after week in towns and villages all over the world. The Holy Spirit gathers them and does his work in them. In these communities of sinners, one of the sinners is called pastor and given a designated responsibility in the community. The pastor’s responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God. It is this responsibility that is being abandoned in spades.⁸

⁸ Peterson, Eugene H., *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*, (1987, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids), pp. 1-3, Kindle Edition.

LENTEN *Schedule*

Date:	Supper Host:	Supper Time:	Service Time:	
March 4	Titus Family	5:30 PM	6:30 PM	Lenten Midweek II
March 11	LWML	5:30 PM	6:30 PM	Lenten Midweek III
March 18	Vicki Bull & Mitch Bull	5:30 PM	6:30 PM	Lenten Midweek IV
March 25	Youth	5:30 PM	6:30 PM	Lenten Midweek V
March 29			9:00 AM	Palm Sunday Divine Service
April 2			6:30 PM	Holy (Maundy) Thursday Divine Service
April 3			12:00 PM 7:00 PM	Good Friday Chief Service Good Friday, Tenebrae
April 4			7:00 PM	The Vigil of Easter
April 5	Easter Breakfast Pot Luck	7:30 AM – 8:30 AM	6:30 AM 9:00 AM	Easter Sunday Sunrise The Resurrection of Our Lord

**PLEASE JOIN US
FOR A LIGHT SUPPER IN THE CAFETERIA
AT 5:30 PM EACH WEDNESDAY IN LENT (see table above) before the Midweek Service
AND
AN EASTER BREAKFAST POTLUCK AFTER THE SUNRISE SERVICE.
The breakfast potluck sign up sheet is on the table in the Narthex.**



NEW PHOTO DIRECTORY! Katherine Cobert of Cobert Photography will be taking photos of members after church on **March 1** and **March 15**. February 15's photos went very quickly, so even if you don't have a time slot reserved, please gather outside the library/Paul room and she will take your photo. If you prefer to sign up for a specific time, please call the church office. Thank you.



Reminder... each time you enter the hospital, be sure to say you are a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Rock Island so that the hospital can inform the church. *If you would like Pastor to know immediately, please have a family member or friend call the office and/or Pastor—otherwise we may not be aware of your hospitalization.* The hospitals do not regularly call the churches as they once did.

Please contact the office when someone is hospitalized or homebound. The church office phone number is **309-786-3391**; email address is officeimmanuelri@gmail.com.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES & BAPTISMS

We ask God for His blessing upon all our members, especially those who celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and baptisms this month



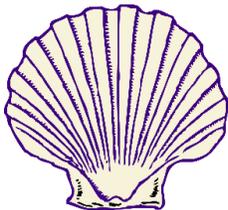
- 2 - Mick Esparza
Ruth Pugh
- 5 - Emily Hazen
- 7 - Bevy Eckardt (13)
- 9 - Corbin Ayers

- 10 - Jordan Stockwell
- 11 - Gretchen Gerard
Carrie Titus
- 14 - Bryan Cobert
Judy Klockau
- 15 - Hannah Allison
Melody Poole
- 16 - Alexander Miller (14)
- 17 - Alison Boisvert
Mayson Davis (8)

- Rachel Spragg
- 18 - Mona Meyer
Samantha Peterson
- 19 - AJ Cortez (12)
- 23 - Mikey Depaepe (8)
- 24 - Milo Boisvert (5)
Mikey Eckardt (9)
- 26 - Doug Campbell
- 29 - Rob Henke



- March 25, 1983 – Mick & Margi Esparza
- March 25, 2002 – Brett & Jennifer Long
- March 27, 2010 – Andrew & Amanda Ferguson



- Baptism Birthdays**
- 4 - Jassaniah Leeson
Daniel Triece
 - 7 - Ellen Campbell
 - 8 - Brandon Heriford
 - 11 - Kevin Mueller
 - 23 - Bevy Eckardt
Amanda Ferguson
 - 24 - Sherry Duburg
Shelley Moeller
Kathleen Peterson
 - 27 - Noah Muske
 - 30 - Emily Hazen

**NOTE – Birthdays, anniversaries and baptisms are listed according to our records. If you find a mistake or any missing information, please notify the office. Thank You.*

MEMBERSHIP AND DIRECTORY CHANGES / MEMORIALS - FEBRUARY REPORT:

Membership – Additions – none to report.
Deletions – none to report.

Memorials – To General Memorial, given in memory of Chris Shrake.

Thank You

My family and I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Pastor Astrowski for visiting my son during his short illness, and for officiating at the funeral. Your presence, prayers, and compassion meant more than words can express. Also, thanks to Christine Roth for playing the organ at the funeral. We are deeply grateful to our church family for the many thoughts, prayers, cards, and messages of comfort that carried us through a very difficult time. A special thank you to the church members that prepared salads and desserts and to those who served the luncheon following the funeral—your kindness and care were a true blessing to us.

- Pamela Shrake and the family of Christopher Shrake

From Paul Kasten: **Joyce Kasten**, widow of Immanuel's former Pastor the Rev. Horst Kasten, died at her home in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, on February 2. Mrs. Kasten was 97 years old. She is survived by 3 children: Karen Godecke of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Paul Kasten of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Philip Kasten off Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.



Thank you for your Support of Pregnancy Resources through the Baby Bottle Boomerang "Fill the Bottle 2026"

Please return bottles if you still have them. Thank you!



VBS - Save the Date!

VBS will be held June 29-July 3, 2026 with the theme: Teach Us To Pray.
More details to come!



Building Upkeep

Thank you to those who have signed up to clean a room/area monthly. We really appreciate the help. If you are interested, there are several areas that haven't been claimed yet. The sign-up sheet is on the table in the Narthex.



THE 2026 FLOWER CHART and **THE ETERNAL LIGHT CHART** are posted in the Narthex. The cost for Altar Flowers (two vases) is \$30.00 and for Eternal Light is \$10.00. If you sign up, please be sure to check the calendar periodically for the date(s) you signed to donate.



****PLEASE WRITE OUT ON THE FORM WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE PRINTED IN THE ANNOUNCEMENTS, OR EMAIL THE INFO TO OFFICEIMMANUELRI@GMAIL.COM. YOU CAN ALSO WRITE A NOTE AND LEAVE IT IN THE OFFERING PLATE FOR THE CHURCH OFFICE.**



Social Ministry would like to compile a list of people to contact for help in the kitchen for funeral luncheons. If you would be willing to help, please contact Tammy Robinson via email (ilcriacctg@gmail.com).

Another part of our Social Ministry includes helping support two Seminarian families. If you wish to help with their support, you can place your gift in an envelope with “**Seminarrians**” and your envelope number written on it, and place it in the offering plate or bring to the church office. These gifts will be recorded on your Financial Statement and checks will be sent to them quarterly.

Names and addresses if you wish to send a card of encouragement, etc.:

Josh Bieri – Vicarage appointment to
Faith Lutheran Church
1407 Main St
La Crosse, WI 54601

Josh Camp - 2nd year at CTSFW
Josh & Catherine Camp
7630 Coldsprings Blvd
Fort Wayne IN 46825

All adults and youth are invited to participate in any or all Bible studies offered at Immanuel. We are thankful we can gather around God’s Word. You are welcome to attend anytime.



- **Sunday Adult Bible class** – 10:30 am in the Luther Room.
- **Sunday School** – 10:30 am in Peter and Mark rooms.
- **Adult Bible Study** – Tuesday mornings at 9:30 am in Luther Room or on Zoom.
- **Intergenerational Studies** – Tuesdays at 6:00 pm online via Zoom.
- **For the older youth** – there is a Rock Island Circuit Youth Group. Watch for announcements on dates and times.



EASTER LILIES

The Chancel of our church will be decorated with lilies on Easter Sunday (April 5th)

We invite you to donate toward the cost of the lilies. Please fill out this slip and place it and your monetary donation in an envelope with “LILIES” written on it, along with your name, amount, and envelope number. Drop it in the offering plate at a service or mail it to the office by **March 30th**.

NAME _____

In Memory of _____

To give thanks to God _____

To celebrate the occasion of _____

Other _____



Items Needed:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Men’s Deodorant | 13-gal Trash bags | Toilet paper |
| Shampoo | 33 gal trash bags | Men’s disposable razors |
| Conditioner | 39 gal lawn & leaf trash bags | Napkins |

Please place items in the Christian Care box in the Narthex. Items will be taken to Christian Care.



March and April 2026 LWML CID Mission Grant #6 – Our Savior Lutheran School in Uganda – \$3,956

The Lutheran Church of Uganda is building Our Savior Lutheran School next to the Lutheran seminary in Magamaga so local children can attend a school not operated by Muslims. Three classrooms have been built so far. These funds would give support for student tuition, room, board, and building costs.

How can I help? Pray that God provides the opportunity for these children to learn about God and His love for them. Support this grant by donating to your church’s LWML group mite fund.

Remember – we continue to recycle aluminum cans.

There is a white barrel outside of the kitchen door – west side of the building. Please place your aluminum cans in the barrel and they will be taken to be recycled. The money is then used to purchase gas for the mower at the church. **Thank You.**



YOUTH GROUP UPCOMING EVENTS

Regular Youth Meetings at Immanuel Rock Island

- All Circuit youth are welcome to attend the regularly scheduled Youth Group meetings at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Rock Island.
- Meeting schedule - First hour: Pastor leads a Bible Study, Second hour: games and snacks.
- Future meeting dates will be shared via email at the beginning of each month for your reference and monthly planning.
- Higher Things in St. Louis June 23-26, 2026

Please pray that our Circuit Youth Group will continue to be a source of fellowship, fun and sharing God’s Word with our youth.

Join us for the 2026 Martin + Katie Conference at University Lutheran Church in Champaign, IL on Saturday, March 28, 2026. At this free conference, grow as Christmas men and women, meet new friends, get to know each other, and have fun. The Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Boyle and his wife, Nicole, will be our presenters. Rev. Dr. Boyle will teach about cultivating the pious Christian life as men and women. The conference is open to ages 18–30. Married or single are welcome. Registration is required, as capacity is limited. Please register no later than Friday, March 20th. Info and registration are available at <http://martinpluskatie.org>. *Plus:* Bonus activities are planned for Friday night, March 27, and Saturday night, March 28! All are invited to stay for Sunday Bible Class, Divine Service, and lunch on Palm Sunday, March 29.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

As a kid, I remember my Grandma and Grandpa Diepholz' home with extraordinary joy. Family fun. Great food. A legacy of faith. One of my lasting memories of that house was the table that sat between their twin beds. It contained a lamp, a Bible, a catechism and a hymnal. These were well-worn, as Grandpa read to Grandma every night before they went to sleep! What a treasure these tools of faith are! Let us spend some time this month in the hymnal to help us better understand our life as Christian stewards! To do this, we will use *LSB 785* "We Praise You, O God."

*We Praise You, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
In grateful devotion our tributes we bring.
We lay it before You, and kneel and adore You;
We bless Your holy name, glad praises we sing.*

Stewardship is an act of worship. It flows from the grace and mercy we have received in Jesus! Faithful stewardship can never start with us. Our sinful nature will make us and our desires the center of our worship. Our tributes, our giving and our serving only flow from how the Lord Jesus has given of Himself for our sake! When we have this in clear view, our knees bow and our praises flow freely! All this flows from the Name that has been placed on us in Holy Baptism!

*We worship You, God of our Fathers, we bless You;
Through trial and tempest our guide You have been.
When perils o'ertake us, You will not forsake us,
And with Your help, O Lord, our struggles we win.*

Our stewardship that flows from what God has done for us in Jesus Christ is rooted in history. Passed from one generation to the next, stewards of the Gospel connect God's provision in the past to His continued care in the present.

So often, the struggles we face are self-inflicted. While there are indeed perils that can shake us from outside of ourselves, we are more likely enduring the suffering that comes because of our own choices that are outside the Word and will of God! But even in these situations, the Lord who loves us will never forsake us. When we become selfish, self-serving and self-destructive, the Lord NEVER abandons! The Lord helps us to overcome the struggles in faith and win the victory the steward rejoices in!

*With voices united our praises we offer
And gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise.
With You, Lord, beside us, Your strong arm will guide us.
To You, our great redeemer, forever be praise!*

Stewardship is more than just an individual thing. There is a corporate nature to our steward life. We see this in the Divine Service. There, stewards of all ages, all economic strata and all languages are joined in the singular task of praise. This stewardship of praise flows from the altar to us, out into the world and then back to the altar! God's strong arm leads us in this stewardship 24/7. This makes stewardship, in all times and places, a matter of worship. We praise our Redeemer who has entrusted us with this great stewardship of the Gospel which forgives our sins, grants us new life and salvation. And this treasure we freely share for God's glory and the benefit of our neighbor!

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN... LUTHERAN WITNESS



It's that time again to order your Lutheran Witness. **The cost this year is \$23.50 for 11 issues. June/July are together.** If you would like to renew or start receiving a copy, please let the church office know by **April 15th**. You may write a check payable to *Immanuel Lutheran Church* and leave it in the offering plate, designating it for **Lutheran Witness** or mail it to the office. This subscription will start in July. Call 309-786-3391 or email officeimmanuelri@gmail.com if you have any questions.



News You Can Use

March 2026

"I do not do the good which I want; however, the evil which I do not want, this I practice" (Rom. 7:19). Our sinful nature, "dead in trespasses" (Eph. 2:5), was "buried with [Christ] through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). The death of Jesus took away the sin of the world, and for His sake God "forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers." But, like the ground squirrels in my church's cemetery, our sinful nature keeps trying to dig itself out of the grave. As a result, "I am a miserable human being. Who will rescue me from this body of death?" The entire New Testament answers, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24-25) God's Son came in human flesh, and "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). So, "if we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and righteous, that He would forgive us these sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). All of us need to recognize our wretchedness, confess our sins, hear what God's Son did "for us and for our salvation," and by the power of the Holy Spirit receive God's gracious pardon. Lent leads us to all that, and leads us to why we know it is all true: "Just as He is risen from the dead, lives, and reigns to all eternity, this is most certainly true."

CID President Mark Eddy

Pray For Our Central Illinois District Missions, supported by your church's Mission Dollars to the District. Please remember in your prayers Pastor Pablo Dominguez and Cristo Rey (Christ the King) Lutheran Church in East Moline, where the ministry is conducted almost entirely in Spanish, as well as St. John's Lutheran Church in Beardstown, where Pastor Dominguez travels twice a month to preach and teach in Spanish.

Notice and Explanation of District Leadership Changes

Elected at Convention

District President: Rev. Michael Mohr
1st Vice-President: Rev. Michael Burdick
2nd Vice-President: Rev. Mark Eddy

As of February 17, 2026

District President: Rev. Mark Eddy
1st Vice-President: Rev. Jason Braaten
2nd Vice-President: Rev. Karl Eckhoff

At the 61st Regular Convention of the Central Illinois District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod held July 13–15, 2025, the above were elected to serve three-year terms in their respective offices by the district voting delegates. Seven months later, the leadership of the district has changed significantly, and this change requires an explanation to our pastors, church workers, and congregations.

On Wednesday, January 28, 2026, District President Mohr was arrested on criminal charges by federal law enforcement. Prior to being held in custody, Mohr was given the opportunity to speak with First Vice-President Burdick and in keeping with district governance temporarily transferred the duties of district president. On Monday morning when the first special session of the Board of Directors met, Rev. Burdick notified the Board that in light of the anticipated duration and demands

of the office, he asked to resign from the position of First Vice-President. This resignation removed him from the Board of Directors and elevated Second Vice- President Eddy to First Vice-President and in turn, Acting District President.

With Rev. Burdick vacating his position, the Central IL District Bylaws (2.15(b)) state, "A vacancy in the First Vice-Presidency shall be filled by advancing the Second Vice-President. A vacancy in the Second Vice-Presidency shall then be filled by the President from the reserve list of nominations, that is from the nominees left after the previous election, according to the number of votes received..." Rev. Burdick represented the Eastern Region, so the second-place nominee at the convention for the Eastern Region was Rev. Jason Braaten of Immanuel – Tuscola. He was then appointed as Vice-President for that region by the Acting District President.

When Mohr resigned from his position and as a member of the LCMS roster, Acting District President Eddy succeeded Mohr as District President and vacated the office of First Vice-President. This resulted in Rev. Braaten serving as First Vice-President and a second appointment according to Bylaw 2.15(b) (cited above) of the third-place nominee for the Western Region, Rev. Karl Eckhoff of Christ - Peoria. This final succession and appointment were ratified by the Board of Directors on February 17, 2026, at a second special session of the Board.

While this situation required careful interpretation of our governing documents, the Board acted in accordance with district bylaws, in consultation with Synod and legal counsel. We thank all who have reached out to offer support and wisdom as well as to all who have granted patience as the Board worked through these processes. We remain committed to serving Christ and His Church faithfully in this district, and it is by grace alone that we serve our people and the congregations of the Central Illinois District.

2026 Youth Bible Bowl

Date: Sunday, March 22, 2026

Location: Camp CILCA

Topic: "The Gospel According to St. Matthew"

Those holding either a circuit Bible bowl, or with team(s) planning for the District Bible Bowl, please contact Trip Rodgers (trodgers@cidlcms.org) a.s.a.p. so we know how many to plan for. Thanks.

Dollars for Mission Online

Our first project for 2026 is support for *Hispanic Ministry in Beardstown, IL*. \$1800 will be collected to support travel costs for Rev. Pablo Dominguez. Reminder that online one-time and recurring donations can now be made at <https://www.aplos.com/aws/give/LCMSCentralIllinoisDistrict/D4M> or by using the QR code.



Executive Director Position Opening - LCMS District Church Extension Fund

Have you ever felt like your work could be more gratifying? That you're devoting all your time and effort to a business that doesn't match your values or that is constantly striving for new goals without meaning? That you could be devoting your skills to a better and higher cause?

If these questions give you pause, please give prayerful consideration to applying for the position of Executive Director of the Central Illinois District Church Extension Fund (CID-CEF), a stand-alone not-for-profit corporation located in Springfield, Illinois. This position will give new meaning to your work life as you devote your time and effort to the Mission of growing God's Kingdom by extending loans and grants to the churches, schools, and agencies that reside within the Central Illinois District.

You will have responsibility for the administration, management, and operations of the CID-CEF under the direction of their Board of Trustees, which are comprised of pastors, bankers, and lay people from the LCMS within the District. Your responsibilities will include all loaning functions, internal investment operations, external investment of funds, financial reporting, marketing, policy, legal, and insurance requirements, in accordance with sound business practices but with primary responsibility to the service and support of our churches and schools.

Qualifications for this position include a Bachelor's degree in Business, Accounting, or Finance, with six to ten years of progressive management experience in a related financial environment.

If you would like a new perspective on work and a more satisfying and fulfilling career where your efforts will benefit a higher cause, please contact Darin Gehrke at 217-883-1247 or Kevin Schultz at 217-341-8622 for a full job description and qualifications.

“I took my car to one place for an oil change, another for the brakes, and still another for a tune up. Yet my car just doesn’t seem to be running right, and no one is offering to step in to help me.”

That same scenario might be true about your Christian estate plan. You might be tempted to focus on one thing at a time, a will here, an insurance policy there, a conversation with the financial planner periodically and then the annual tax preparation. But do we think about how all those things are linked together? We need to, in order to have a comprehensive plan.

In a busy world, focused on quick productivity, we often miss the opportunity to weave the conversations of all our advisors together. In addition, inviting your pastor into these conversations, and your family, can bring a fullness otherwise missed. Your LCMS Foundation Gift Planning Counselor can help facilitate conversations in your circle of important people. Contact Scott Radden @ 618-977-4049 or scott.radden@lfnd.org.



Christ the King (Cristo Rey) Lutheran Church
1301-19th Street, East Moline, IL 61244
E-mail: cristorey-em@sbcglobal.net Ph. (309) 738-6124
Rev. Pablo G. Domínguez



MARCH 2026



Lent. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. On this day, as forgiven sinners, we receive ashes in the sign of a cross on our foreheads as the pastor says: *"for dust you are and to dust you will return."* (Genesis 3:19)

Do you ponder Jesus’ sacrifice and death during Lent? Jesus knew His mission to save the human race from their sins was drawing closer and closer. He can see the punishment, suffering, and death He will experience. It was not easy for Him, but He willingly obeyed His Heavenly Father. He spent time in meditation and prayer as He prepared for this imminent event.

Usually when we talk about death, people, even Christians, become frightened. It’s not easy when your doctor tells you bad news like “you have diabetes, cancer, heart disease, etc.” It’s not easy to assimilate. How long will I live? Will I suffer a lot? These are just a few questions that come into our minds. It is not easy for us to deal with the fact that someday we will leave this world. It takes time for reflection.

To us, as Christians, Lent is a time of spiritual preparation and prayer. In this season, we need to look, in a serious and respectful way, at the act of Christ’s sacrifice for us on the cross. We need to realize that it is our sins that nailed Him to the cross. It is a penitential season of the church year. He hangs there suffering on our behalf. And He does it all out of love for us miserable sinners. And we also ask God to help us accept our own inevitable death trusting that He will deliver our souls into His presence where we will await with hope our resurrection on the Last Day.

Realizing all that Jesus has done for us we can sing or say the words of this beautiful Lenten hymn:

Christ the life of all the living,
Christ the death of death our foe,
Christ Yourself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe

Through Your suffering, death and merit
Life eternal I inherit.

**Thousand, thousand thanks are due,
Dearest Jesus unto You. Amen and Amen!**

Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us! Lord have mercy upon us!

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” Galatians 5:1



Liberty. One day, Steve, a Lutheran pastor from Texas visited our church in Monterrey, Mexico. He didn't speak Spanish well, but he really worked hard on it. I invited him to eat delicious tacos with me in a famous restaurant there in Monterrey. It was Holy Week so there were not many people in the restaurant. While eating the last taco, as a joke, I asked him, “Do you know that the majority of Mexicans do not eat meat on Holy Friday?”. He smiled and with the fajita taco in his hand and ready to eat it, he said, “It is so good what Christ did. He gave me liberty.”

Christ's liberty is delicious! Right?

Choice Dollars. We are pleased to remind you that Christ the King Lutheran Church (Cristo Rey) is enrolled as a participating organization in Thrivent Choice which is a charitable grant program of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. You are able to direct your Choice Dollars to our Hispanic mission.



We continue to thank God for your faithful prayers and loving support of this Hispanic ministry!

MARCH 2026 MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE

Week of March 1, 2026 - 1 Peter 2:24

He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed.

Week of March 8, 2026 - 1 John 2:2

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Week of March 15, 2026 - Ephesians 2:4–5

God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved.

Week of March 22, 2026 - Romans 5:1

Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Week of March 29, 2026 - Romans 8:1

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Daily Readings for MARCH from the Lutheran Service Book, pages 299-304

Lent 2	Gen. 16:1-9, 15 - 17:22	Mark 6:1-13
Monday	Gen. 18:1-15 <i>Gen. 18:16-20:18</i>	Mark 6:14-34
Tuesday	Gen. 21:1-21	Mark 6:35-56
Wednesday	Gen. 22:1-19	Mark 7:1-23
Thursday	Gen. 24:1-31	Mark 7:24-37
Friday	Gen. 24:32-52, 61-67 <i>Gen. 25:1-26:35</i>	Mark 8:1-21
Saturday	Gen. 27:1-29	Mark 8:22-38
Lent 3	Gen. 27:30-45; 28:10-22	Mark 9:1-13
Monday	Gen. 29:1-30 <i>Gen. 29:31-34:31</i>	Mark 9:14-32
Tuesday	Gen. 35:1-29	Mark 9:33-50
Wednesday	Gen. 37:1-36	Mark 10:1-12
Thursday	Gen. 39:1-23	Mark 10:13-31
Friday	Gen. 40:1-23	Mark 10:32-52
Saturday	Gen. 41:1-27	Mark 11:1-19
Lent 4	Gen. 41:28-57	Mark 11:20-33
Monday	Gen. 42:1-34	Mark 12:1-12
Tuesday	Gen. 42:1-34, 38	Mark 12:1-12
Wednesday	Gen. 44:1-18, 32-34	Mark 12:28-44
Thursday	Gen. 45:1-20, 24-28	Mark 13:1-23
Friday	Gen. 47:1-31 <i>Gen. 48:1-49:28</i>	Mark 13:24-37
Saturday	Gen. 49:29-50:7, 14-26	Mark 14:1-11
Lent 5	Ex. 1:1-22	Mark 14:12-31
Monday	Ex. 2:1-22	Mark 14:32-52
Tuesday	Ex. 2:23-3:22	Mark 14:53-72
Wednesday	Ex. 4:1-18	Mark 15:1-15
Thursday	Ex. 4:19-31	Mark 15:16-32
Friday	Ex. 5:1-6:1	Mark 15:33-47
Saturday	Ex. 7:1-25	Mark 16:1-20

Holy Week

Palm Sunday	Ex. 8:1-32 <i>Psalms 118</i>	Heb. 1:1-14
Monday	Ex. 9:1-28 <i>Lam. 1:1-22</i>	Heb. 2:1-18
Tuesday	Ex. 9:29-10:20 <i>Lam. 2:1-22</i>	Heb. 3:1-19

Postpartum Doula Workshop

Support families during one of the most transformative times of their lives. This Postpartum Doula Training equips you with the skills, confidence, and certification pathway to provide compassionate, evidence-based care to new parents. Join us and become a vital part of the postpartum support team every family deserves.



What You'll Learn:

- ✓ Confidence to help families feel calm, capable, and connected
- ✓ Practical skills to support recovery, infant care, and early parenting
- ✓ In-depth knowledge of the postpartum doula role
- ✓ Best Business Practices
- ✓ ICEA Certification Process

Course Dates:



March 12-15, 2026 - All 3 days
In-Person - Davenport, Iowa

For more information Go To

Because the Little Things Matters



@babymatterseducation



www.babymatters.org

Debbie Young | debbie@BabyMatters.org | 720-456-9086

MARCH 2026

Immanuel Lutheran Church

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 7:15 Board of Elders 9 Worship w/HC 10:30 Bible Study/ Sunday School <i>Photos after church</i>	2 6 Book Club	3 7 Matins 9:30 Bible Study 6 Intergen. Bible Study	4 9-12 CHALK 5:30 Supper 6:30 Lenten Midweek Svc.	5 7 Youth Group Programming Bd	6	7
8 <i>Daylight Saving Time Begins</i> 9 Worship w/HC 10:30 Bible Study/ Sunday School	9 6 Book Club	10 7 Matins 9:30 Bible Study 6 Intergen. Bible Study	11 9-12 CHALK 5:30 Supper 6:30 Lenten Midweek Svc.	12	13	14
15 9 Worship w/HC 10:30 Bible Study/ Sunday School <i>Photos after church</i> 1 Bible Bowl @St. Matthew	16 6 Book Club	17 <i>POLLING PLACE</i> 7 Matins 9:30 Bible Study 6 Intergen. Bible Study	18 9-12 CHALK 5:30 Supper 6:30 Lenten Midweek Svc.	19 <i>Illinois March for Life</i>	20	21 4-9 Guzman - Cafeteria
22 9 Worship w/HC 10:30 Bible Study/ Sunday School	23 6 Book Club	24 7 Matins 9:30 Bible Study 6 Intergen. Bible Study	25 9-12 CHALK 5:30 Supper 6:30 Lenten Midweek Svc.	26 <i>THE IMAGE Item Submission Deadline</i>	27	28
29 PALM SUNDAY 9 Worship w/HC 10:30 Bible Study/ Sunday School	30 6 Book Club	31 7 Matins 9:30 Bible Study 6 Intergen. Bible Study				

Calendar is subject to change. Any changes will be listed in the weekly announcements.



THE IMAGE is the monthly newsletter published for members and friends of Immanuel Lutheran Church, 3300 24th St., Rock Island, Illinois. Immanuel is a member of The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod.

Sunday Schedule

Worship Service with Holy Communion at 9:00 AM

Bible Study at 10:30 AM – Sunday School at 10:30 AM

We invite you to join us for worship and Bible Study and the fellowship of Christians who share in the joy of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor: Rev. Leonard A. Astrowski, Jr.

Organists: Christine Roth and Katherine Cobert

Church Office Hours: Monday – Thursday, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Our Website: www.immanuelri.org

Church Office Phone: 309-786-3391

Pastor Astrowski's Phone: 989-326-0199

Email Addresses: Pastor Astrowski – pastrowski@gmail.com

Church Office – officeimmanuelri@gmail.com

Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Immanuel-Lutheran-Church-RockIsland-IL-LCMS-179175395513326/>

All Sunday services are “live” streamed on Facebook at 9 am Sundays and posted to the church’s YouTube channel at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWLcoXZtMq13HOqRo_uifqg/featured?view_as=subscriber.

Additionally, you can tune in to Pastor’s nightly devotion each evening at 9 pm “live” on Facebook or find it on the church’s YouTube page later.