

FEBRUARY 2026



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IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA
631 Grand Street, Allegan Michigan



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Pr. Chris Laughlin - February 1
Emily Ottinger - February 1
Jim Horwath - February 2
Westen VanMelle - February 6
Scarlet Burnett - February 9
Emma Horwath - February 15
Jennifer Vance - February 15





FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Dick & Pat Jones - February 16



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS FOR FEBRUARY

February 1

Reader - Donna Preisler
Assistant - Jim Horwath
Counters - Joyce Davis & Nancy Brauer
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

February 8

Reader - Jennifer Vance
Assistant - Donna Preisler
Counters - Joyce Davis & Mike Aksamit
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

February 15

Reader - Michele Radke
Assistant - Mike Fusillo
Counters - Joyce Davis & Sharon Aksamit
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

February 22

Reader: - Sharon Aksamit
Assistant: - Mike Aksamit
Counters: - Joyce Davis & Jim Combs
Greeters: - Jim & Marie Combs

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS: We really appreciate everyone that serves during our worship service and *would love to have more people involved*. If you would like to serve as a reader, worship assistant, counter, or greeter, please talk to Pastor Chris or Ken Kingsbury. We can be reached in the office Monday through Thursday from 9 am to 1pm.





Pastor's Page, February 2026: Things That Jesus Didn't Say and Aren't in the Bible:

“God Won't Give You More Than You Can Handle”

Every once in a while, I hear this quoted like it's from the mouth of Jesus himself: “God Won't Give You More Than You Can Handle.” This is actually a misquote of 1 Corinthians 10:13:

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

But don't they mean the same thing? No. (If they did, I wouldn't be writing this page, would I? 😊)

While “tested” and “tempted” are the same word in the New Testament, “tested” and “handle” are not. You don't have to give in to temptation, but it might still break you physically or mentally. You might pass a test, but you might still die. While that's a bit extreme, think of the martyrs: they were tested, and they didn't deny Jesus, but the lions and the gridiron were still more than they could handle.

Sometimes, what doesn't kill you really does make you stronger. And sometimes, what doesn't kill you weakens you.

Less dramatically, I endured my internship, but there were nights when I cried myself to sleep; similarly, I endured the end of my last call, but I still needed melatonin to get to sleep (I weened myself off it, but it took me six months).

“Handle” is a very subjective word, and God doesn't promise not to give us more than we can handle. What can we handle? In May of 2018, I watched a small female trainee ruck march with 50 pounds on her back for eight kilometers (approximately 5 miles) through the night on a sprained ankle because she *really* wanted to graduate basic training on time. What could she “handle”? (And was it a good idea?)

But this example is a good one because that whole company of trainees was “tough as nails” – they “had heart.” Together, they gutted out one challenge after another. Together, they encouraged each other. And almost all of them graduated on time – together. Because in Paul's above words, those pronouns are **plural** – “youse guys” or “y'uns” or “all y'all” (depending on

where you grew up in our country). We don't get through this life as Christians alone – God gives us each other.

You might get more than you can handle – physically, mentally, or emotionally. No promises there. But we will not be tested beyond the strength God gives us to endure together.

SDG,

Pr. Chris

Notes:

Our confirmands will host a lunch fundraiser of Soup and Salad on Sunday, 22 February, after worship.

First Communion Class is nearly complete! We have one more lesson – bread baking! We will complete that lesson on Tuesday, 9 February, after Vets Coffee. Our students – Shephard, Lincoln, and Lily – will receive their First Communion on Sunday, 12 April.

The parents and children have chosen to return to camp, and they've chosen the week of August 2 – 7. Camp costs approximately \$500 per camper per week, and currently we have 6 children registered (with potentially more on the way). While our campers will continue to raise money, the main thrust of our fundraising will go toward the ELCA National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis next year (how much will that cost? Good question. I have no idea.) Thus, a council member has recommended that we offer to the congregation to sponsor individual campers. You do not have to give the full amount – any amount helps. Just label your envelope or online giving “camp.”

It feels like we just got through Christmas (I started writing this from the airplane on Sunday, 11 January 😊), but it's already time to start thinking about Lent!

- Shrove Tuesday is 17 Tuesday, and we'll have a pancake supper from 5-7pm. Menu will include pancakes, sausage, fruit, pączki, milk, and orange juice.
- Ash Wednesday is 18 February, and we'll offer worship with the imposition of ashes at 1pm and 6pm.
- Our first midweek supper and worship will be Thursday, 26 February! I've been asked to provide more depth to the midweek worship service, so we'll be working our way through at least part of the Passion Narrative (Matthew 26-27). Why? Because even during Holy Week there is too much to cover and not enough time in which to cover it, and there's a LOT happening in those two chapters.
- We will split our Lenten offering between backpack ministry and the blessing box.

In December and January, two checks were found that been written in August and May (respectively). After a conversation in council, we request:

When you have money for Immanuel, or when someone gives you money for Immanuel, please put that money into the offering plate. That way, it gets counted when and where the counters expect.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Quilting Group meets every Tuesday in the Quilting Room at 9am. Immanuel has been known over the years for our support and



participation in the quilting ministry. These quilts are sent all over the world through Lutheran World Relief, including some for the homeless here in the United States. Donna Moeller has almost singlehandedly kept this mission going of late and

would greatly appreciate having others come and join her for three hours on Tuesday mornings. Donna says these quilts are very simple to make and she can quickly help anyone learn. Last year we donated around 240 quilts to LWR which is about four every Tuesday.

Bible Study Group meets every Wednesday at 10am in the Study Room. We discuss the Bible Readings for the upcoming Sunday Worship Service. Since Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve both fall on Wednesday this year, there will NOT be Bible Study on those dates

Praise Team Practice meets every Wednesday at 4pm. Watch the Bulletin and the church web page for changes during the holidays.

ALL COMMITTEE MEETING will be Monday February 2nd beginning 6pm with a pot luck meal. After the meal we break up into groups for discussion of current needs and issues. The groups are 1) Worship & Music, 2) Education & Youth, 3) Property & Cemetery, 4) Finance & Stewardship, and 5) Mission & Outreach. This is a great way to learn more about what is going on at Immanuel and we encourage you to come and pick which group you would like to sit in on.

COFFEE FOR VETS meets on the *second Tuesday* of every month in the Fellowship Hall at 9am for coffee, cinnamon rolls, and fellowship. If you know of a veteran, please invite them to join our group. This is a great way for them to have fellowship and discuss shared experiences.



Zumba meets in the Fellowship Hall every Wednesday at 6pm and every Saturday at 10am, unless there is a conflict with a church function.

BIBLE AND BREW will meet on Monday January 12th at 5:30pm at the Trestle Stop in Hamilton. This is a great time to get to know one another better over a good meal and the individual discussion of interesting questions. Please come and join us. The signup sheet is on the Round Table.



THE CHURCH COUNCIL will meet at 6:30pm on Monday January 19th in the Adult Bible Study Room. This will be our first meeting with new officers and members.

BOOK GROUP will meet on Monday January 26th at 1pm in the Fellowship Hall. This month we will read and discuss *The Ugly Cry* by Danielle Henderson. We always choose the next month's reading at each gathering so join us and share your favorite book.



COUNTERS, READERS, & WORSHIP ASSISTANTS are needed. We really enjoy having our laity participate in the service and the financial accountability of our church. But we really need more volunteers; *especially counters*. Please consider volunteering and let Ken Kingsbury in the office know.



YOUTH SOUP & SALAD FUNDRAISER: will be held directly after the worship service on February 22nd. Our young people are planning to attend camp again this year plus the national Youth Conference in 2027. These funds will help them in this ministry.



TIGER'S CLOSET COLLECTION . . . throughout the season of Lent (Ash Wednesday through Palm Sunday), we will collect items for students at L.E. White Middle School. Check out the explanation below and the wish list of items from their principal, Laura Feffer. When you are out shopping, pick up an item or two to toss in the baskets near our church entrance. Thank you for your support to show our students a little bit of love!



At our school, we believe that every student deserves to walk through our doors with dignity, hope, and the tools they need to succeed – not just academically, but as whole, healthy individuals. But for too many of our students and their families, that foundation is missing.

That's why the Tiger's Closet was created.

Housed within our school, the Tiger's Closet is more than a storage room – it's a lifeline. It provides free access to essential hygiene products, clothing, school supplies, and other basic items for students and families who are facing hardship. Some children walk in with shoes that don't fit, wearing the same clothes for days. Others quietly struggle with not having deodorant, shampoo, or even a backpack to carry their books. These are not just inconveniences – they are barriers to learning, confidence, and well-being.

*Each day, we see the difference a small act of kindness can make. A warm coat on a freezing morning. A fresh pair of socks. A notebook for class. The Tiger's Closet offers these small, but powerful reminders that someone cares. **Laura feffer.***

WISH LIST FOR TIGERS STORE

- Deodorant (male and Female)
- Lotion
- Chapstick
- Brush and comb
- Menstrual Products
- Girls pants and jeans and sweatshirts; especially for taller girls
- Sweats and jeans for boys
- New socks and underwear for boys and girls
- Athletic shoes for boys and girls
- Binders
- Mechanical pencils and lead

- Snacks (Granola bars, fruit snacks, bags of chips, peanut butter crackers, etc.)
- Few non perishable foods
- Bottled water
- Inexpensive water bottles
- Inexpensive earbuds/headphones

ASH WEDNESDAY'S history traces back to ancient Jewish traditions of mourning with ashes, adopted by early Christians as a sign of penitence for the start of Lent, a 40-day period before Easter, becoming formalized by the 6th-8th centuries with Pope Gregory I establishing it as the first day of Lent and the practice of marking foreheads with ashes (made from the previous year's Palm Sunday palms) to symbolize mortality, sin, and renewal in Christ. It marked the beginning of public penance for sinners and preparation for baptism for catechumens, evolving into a universal observance for all Christians for spiritual renewal.



GROUNDHOG DAY: celebrated on February 2nd, is a tradition where a groundhog emerges from its burrow to predict the coming of spring, rooted in German folklore and Candlemas Day customs, famously featuring Punxsutawney Phil in Pennsylvania. If Phil sees his shadow, six more weeks of winter are predicted; if not, an early spring is expected.

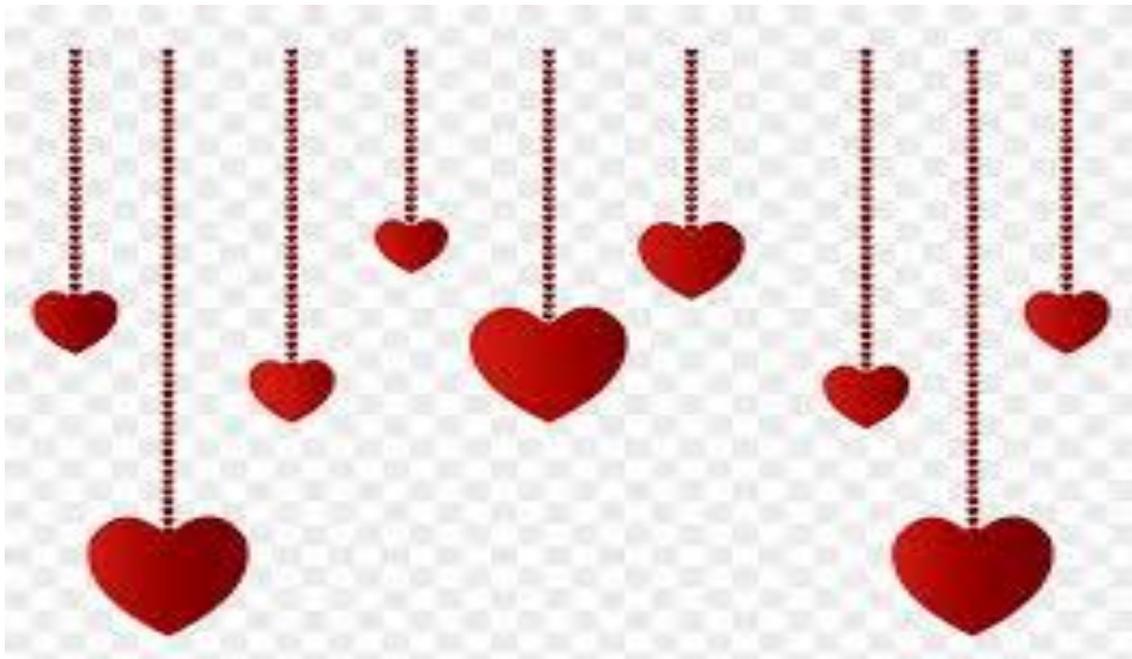
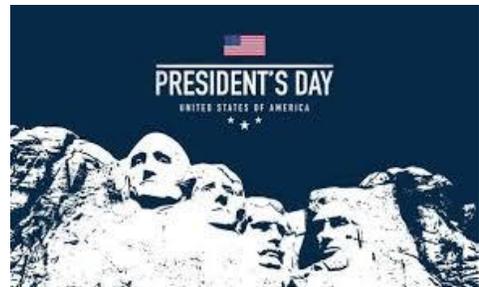


VALENTINE DAY: celebrated annually on February 14th, is a significant cultural holiday for romance and love, rooted in the Christian feast day honoring Saint Valentine, a martyr from ancient Rome, with traditions evolving from Roman festivals like Lupercalia and incorporating medieval poetry, now involving exchanging cards, flowers, chocolates, and gifts. Saint Valentine legends



connect the day to a Roman priest martyred around 270 AD for secretly marrying soldiers, defying Emperor Claudius II who forbade marriage for young men. Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare romanticized the day, associating it with birds mating and human love, popularizing it in Britain and Europe.

PRESIDENT'S DAY: officially **Washington's Birthday** at the federal governmental level, is a holiday in the United States celebrated on the third Monday of February. It is often celebrated to honor all those who served as Presidents of the United States and, since 1879, has been the federal holiday honoring Founding Father George Washington, who led the Continental Army to victory in the American Revolutionary War, presided at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and served as the first U.S. president from 1789 to 1797. The Mount Rushmore Memorial in South Dakota, portrays the images of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt



Immanuel Lutheran Church Council Minutes

December 15, 2025

1. Meeting called to order at 6:14 p.m. Council lead in prayer by Pastor Chris. Sandie Horwath welcomed Mike Acosta and Ursula Armourillo to the meeting.
2. Council attendance – All members were present except for the Recording Secretary, Linda Scott
3. Review of November Council Minutes. Sharon Aksamit motioned to accept Minutes as corrected and seconded by Pastor Chris. Motion passed.
4. Treasurer's Report – Due to the presentation at the Annual Congregational Meeting, Trevor gave a one-page year-over-year summary of the last four years. From 2022 to 2025, there has been an increase of income of \$40,930.93 (47.6%). While in the same time period, expenses have increased \$39,203.96 (38.6%). In 2018, income (loose, online, Sunday envelopes) totaled \$61,040.35. In 2024 income was \$111,845.73. This is an increase of \$50,805.38 or 83.2%. Pastor Chris noted that attendance has increased from an average of 37 people in 2022 to an average of 57 people for 2025. From 2022 to 2025, estimated budgeted losses amounted to \$80,978.24. Actual losses for that time period were only \$23,095.22. This caused a \$57,883.02 change to our profit.
5. Pastor's Report – August 2-7, 2026 was the week selected for the children to go to camp. Pastor Chris may be unexpectedly unavailable later this month, as Pastor Rachel's grandfather is not expected to make it to the New Year. Council installation is set for January 4, 2026. The QR code is necessary to have in the Newsletter. Pastor Chris mentioned that he will be using the Church's credit card for certain expenses rather than submitting an expense report, as this will make it easier on the Treasurer, which Trevor Horwath agreed. Pastor Chris requested retirement from the Army for December 31, 2026. Pastor Foster will be officiating Worship on February 1, as Pastor Chris has an Army obligation.
6. Committee Reports –
 - a. Worship & Music – The choir has been practicing during the Advent season every Sunday at 9:15 a.m. The Praise Band bids Linda Havens a farewell as she has moved to be closer to family. The Praise Band welcomes Craig Melland in joining the band playing the guitar. With Advent Season here, the Sacristy team is getting decorations ready for the Christmas Eve service. Hudson Vance was asked to light the Advent candles; he likes having the numbers there to light in correct sequence. Carter Vance volunteered to do some readings and is doing an excellent job. The new gluten free bread is now being used. Sacristy team will look into a more cost-effective way to make the bread. There are now two matching plants at the corners of the altar to avoid individuals from stumbling in that area.

- b. Education – The children have been making Christmas ornaments for the homebased members. Extra ones made will be placed on the trees in the Church. Last Sunday School for December will be on the 21st and start back up on January 11. The children will be singing The Little Drummer Boy at the Christmas Eve service. Adult Sunday school will be held December 21 and not resume again until January 18.
- c. Mission & Outreach – Thrivent cards will be used to purchase gloves and hats for the two families. Sharon Aksamit reached out to Laura Feffer, Principal of the Middle School, to help with their Tiger Closet. Information about this will be published in the January Newsletter. Personal care items are needed. De-greening of the church is after worship on January 4.
- d. Faith Community Nurse – The new battery for the AED has been purchased and installed. The handrail in the women’s bathroom has been reattached. Communion was brought to Sandy Rankin. She has not been able to visit Dottie or Ken because Dottie is not allowed to have visitors at this time. She has helped with the Sunday School ornament project, showing the children pictures and talking about each person who is homebound. She ran the November book club meeting. Narcan is now on site. This needs to be published so all members are aware of where it is if needed.
- e. Property – The digital sign was discussed at the Annual Congregational Meeting. The individuals who will have access to change the sign are Pastor Chris, the Council President, the Secretary and one youth. Council will defer to Pat Jones regarding graphics for the sign. The furnace or thermostat is not working properly for Pastor Chris’s office and the bathroom. Jim Horwath is meeting with the furnace people on December 16 to determine the problem.

Motion to accept the Treasurer’s report and all Committee Reports was made by Brad vanMelle, seconded by Laura Compton. Motion carried.

7. Old Business –

- a. The initial First Communion meeting for Lily, Lincoln and Shephard was held in December.

8. New Business

- a. Council installation is January 4. Michael Acosta will take the position for Property, and Ursula Armourillo will take the position for Christian Education.

Next meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn made by Pastor Chris, seconded by Trevor Horwath. Motion carried.

Meeting closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Compton

OUR NEW DIGITAL SIGN AT NIGHT

