



MAY 2026



IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

631 Grand Street, Allegan Michigan



MAY BIRTHDAYS

Lincoln Vance - May 1

Bill Cronkhite - May 4

Donna Preisler - May 7

Marie Combs - May 8

Mike Fusillo - May 17

Betty Howard - May 18

Nancy Brauer - May 27





Dan & Dawn Doornhaag - May 5
Pr Chris & Pr Rachel Laughlin - May 23
Trevor & Mallory Horwath - May 26
Mike & Sue Zeiler - May 27
Denny & Meri Gorr - May 29



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS FOR MAY

May 3

- Reader - Jennifer Vance
- Assistant - Dinna Preisler
- Counters - Laura Compton & Nancy Brauer
- Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

MAY 10

- Reader - Bernie Lenau
- Assistant - Jim Horwath
- Counters - Joyce Davis & Sharon Aksamit
- Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

May 17

- Reader - Michele Radke
- Assistant - Mike Fusillo
- Counters - Laura Compton & Mike Aksamit
- Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

May 24

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

May 31

- Reader: - Karen Acosta
- Assistant: - Mike Acosta
- Counters: - Joyce Davis & Laura Compton
- 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, May 2026: God's Perfect Will for My (or Your) Life

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. – Jeremiah 29:11

Oh yes, I'm going there. 😊 Stay with me until the end, and I promise to avoid the technicalities of “the difference between *praescientia* and *praedestinatio*, that is, between God's foreknowledge and his eternal election.” 😊 (FC, XI, Ep, AF1, BoC 2000, p517)

First, nowhere in Scripture are told that God has “a perfect plan for your life.”

“But what about Jeremiah 29:11?” you ask? Context matters, so let's read the whole paragraph (Jeremiah 29:10-14):

For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

The “you” is always plural here; this isn't about Jeremiah, you, or me – this is about the ancient Israelites. Their home has been destroyed, the center of their religion (the place where they believe God lives) has been smashed, and they need to hear a word from the LORD.

Generally, yes, I believe that God wants what is good for us and does not want for us what harms us. I generally believe that God hears our prayers and does not abandon us. But if you read the whole paragraph closely, that's not what God is saying here...

Now, do I believe that God's will is part of our lives? Yes, I do. I believe that God has laid out his will for humanity in the Ten Commandments, and the words of Jesus, like when he quotes Leviticus 19 “love your neighbor as yourself.” I believe that we diverge from God's will for our lives anytime we fail to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44 and following) and anytime we fail to give to everyone who asks of us (Luke 6:30 and the larger paragraph).

But has God chosen my perfect black cleric for Sunday morning's worship? No. Does God care whether I have oatmeal or eggs for breakfast? I don't think so (1 Corinthians 10:31). Does God want me to wear a t-shirt on Saturday that carries an offensive message? Also, no, but whether it's from the John Ball Zoo or the Binder Park Zoo is probably of no consequence for God.

As I have said before, I am hesitant to speak for the Almighty and pronounce that this or that specific thing or event is from God's hand or by God's design, because I have not received any special revelation. Or, put differently "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet" (Amos 7:14 – and yes, I recognize the irony [again]).

There is, of course, one exception, one way in which God did have a perfect plan: Jesus was crucified and raised "...according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God..." (Peter's speech at Pentecost, Acts 2:23). Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was God's perfect plan.

Does God have a desire for you and for us and our lives, together and separately? Yes. God wants what is best for us, so he has told us how he wants us to live. But has God planned out every aspect of your life, including what color shirt you must wear tomorrow? No. God's only perfect plan was Jesus coming to earth to be one of us and die for us.

SDG,

Pr. Chris

Notes from Pastor:

ARMY RETIREMENT

As I announced in worship, I have received my "Notification of Eligibility for Retired Pay at Non-Regular Retirement (20-year Letter)." So, as I think of elements of how that will impact me and/or Immanuel, and/or as people ask me questions, I will answer them following each monthly newsletter article. Let me start with this:

I have no idea how long it will take the Army to publish my retirement orders, but I suspect it will be some time over the summer. The more interesting question is when they take effect.

I have requested to retire on 31 December 2026, but the Army could retire me anytime they see fit. I *really* don't want to retire before 01 October, because that's when I hit three years as a lieutenant colonel, and retiring before then might mean I retire as a major. But honestly, the difference between 30 November 2026 and 31 January 2027 is an extra week of pay, so I'm not going to fight too hard.

But I'm not retired yet... 😊

ARMY DUTY

I've got an online Army class currently scheduled for 12-14 May. This means that while I will be in the area (and may even be in the office), I may be unavailable as I will be on orders to take this online class. If the class is cancelled, I will let you know.

1 PETER will be our Second Reading (Epistle Reading) for the Sundays in Easter (through Sunday, 17 May). On one of those Sundays, I will preach on 1 Peter, and since it's only five chapters long, I encourage you to read it. Don't understand it? That's OK – read it anyway. It'll help with the sermon that Sunday. 😊

YOUTH FUNDRAISER BREAKFAST

Our final youth fundraiser of the academic year will be a breakfast on Saturday, 2 May, from 9-11am. The menu will include pancakes, fruit, sausage, monkey bread, juice, coffee, and milk. Free will offering.

SYNOD ASSEMBLY is 15-16 May at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Portage, and Mike and Karen Acosta will be our voting members. We've never had this format in our synod, I am relieved not to have to travel for synod assembly this year!

BACCALAUREATE

The Baccalaureate Committee (comprised of high school students, primarily from the graduating class) has asked Immanuel to provide cookies for a cookie reception after the ceremony again this year. The Baccalaureate will be at the High School on Sunday, 17 May, at 3pm. If you are willing to provide cookies, please bring them to Immanuel before noon that day.

A NEW WORSHIP SERVICE!

Jesus walked on earth for 40 days after the resurrection (Easter); then he **ascended** into heaven. We will have a worship service to celebrate the **Ascension** on Thursday, 14 May, at 6pm. It will be similar in format to our worship service celebrating the Annunciation on Wednesday, 25 March, though it will be a bit longer. 😊

PENTECOST is 24 May (you are encouraged, **but not required**, to wear red!) and Trinity Sunday is 31 May.

PRAYER LIST (as of 5 April):

Donna Moeller added Gail Brindley, her neighbor, Marie Combs added the friends and family of Mary Miller, a friend who died, I added Sam, the brother of one of my Soldiers who's deployed ISO Operation: Epic Fury, Meri Gorr added Barbara, Laura Compton added Linda and Vicki, Maryann added Jeff, Sandy Foster (Pr. Jim Foster's wife) fell and broke her ankle and elbow, Dennis is Dawn Doornhaag's brother (he has prostate cancer), Lynda is Lori's sister, Chris Brown is Sally Stiver's son-in-law, Pat Sweeris attends our Bible study, Dinner Night Out, and Bible & Brew and is having leg issues, Sarah is the wife of a Soldier (whose cancer has returned), Louis Gasper is the husband of Ken Kingbury's cousin who has bladder cancer, Nicole Pearson is a friend of mine from college who is both pregnant and has cancer, Kathy was added by Maryann Fusillo, Nicole Radke is Michele Radke's daughter-in-law, Mike is Laura Compton's neighbor with Alzheimer's (and Lisa is his wife), and the rest are members.

A BIG THANK YOU:

It takes a lot of people to make Lent, Holy Week, and Easter a success, so I would like to thank Ken, Ken, Lori, Joyce, Mom, Shelley, the praise team, the choir, Mike Aksamit, Norma, Jim, and everyone who showed up to and made food for the midweek services.

CHAIRS ON TABLES:

If you were in the building – specifically, the fellowship hall – on a Thursday or Friday in 2023 or 2024, you probably noticed that the tables and chairs were not in their Sunday morning places; Zumba used to move the tables and chairs on Wednesday and put them back on Saturday. Because Zumba is not using our building at the moment, the folks in Bible study may put the chairs on the tables to make it easier for Norma to clean the floor.

CAMP SPONSORSHIP

We have (at least) 5 children going to camp this year! At our April meeting, council voted that parents would pay for half of each child’s week and that the congregation would pay the other half. A week of camp costs \$500 per child. If you would like to sponsor a child going to camp, please designate that gift (in the plate or online) for “camp.”



Immanuel Lutheran Church Council Meeting 3/16/26



1. Meeting called to order 6:31, Trevor led prayer
2. Council - everyone here except P.Chris (out at Chaplain training)
3. Meeting minutes 2/16/26, accepted.
4. Treasurers report - Trevor - The Thrivent account is down \$17,000 for the withdrawal for the last sign payment. The ACFCU is up \$15000 roughly, which is up roughly \$4,000 overall from last year and paying off mortgage. Our goal is about 60\$ short of weekly goal for the month. The accounts payable and QuickBooks are all looking good, just shy of \$4,200 that came out of general fund for the sign. Income 2% down and expenses 2%up, so about even.
5. Pastors report - April 6-11, P.Chris on vacation with no Sundays missed. August 7-14 P.Jim Foster will sub in for Sunday Aug. 9. First Communion is April 12, confirmation is June 14, camp is Aug 2-7. Some confusion about the "visits & meetings," thinking we need to be extra thorough about tracking meetings.
6. Noisy offering - Everything's good.
7. Committee reports
 - a. Worship and music - We still have 12 loaves for communion, and some items from the sacristy have new containers and labels. P. Chris has ordered lilies,16 in total, he will pick them up.
 - b. Education - Ursula - Attendance is up and down, some days flying by the seat of our pants but it's moving along fine whether there is one kid or a full class.
 - c. Mission & outreach - The Grand Ravine brunch is March 24. \$300 of the grant money is going to the middle school and grand ravine and the last \$200 is going to the blessing box.
 - d. Faith community nurse - She will be checking the AED soon. Maryann met with the new care committee.
 - e. Property - The dishwasher replacement committee will meet March 16, it could be \$5000-\$7500 for a replacement and would need to decide if we go chemical or do heat (if we go heat we would need to get a new water heater). A pro for the heat is that it would get rid of more stains. We don't see a need to change the policy because the deductible would be the same. The men's bathroom has gotten a makeover and looks great.
8. Motion to accept all reports, passed and accepted.
9. Old business
 - a. Youth gathering - July MN - Reservations open in Nov. and we would need to know who's all going before paying (as of now 6 total going, 5 are paying (covering Reagan's cost)). The committee feels youth funds shouldn't be touched for this and we are thinking a bus is going to be rented (no plane, so cost should be less).
 - b. Camp payments are tabled until next month when we can figure out cost per kid.
 - c. First communion April 12 - a cake has been ordered from Harding's.

10. New business

- a. John West - He wants to use the fellowship hall on Wednesdays after bible study to play music. He plays bluegrass/folk-ish type music, not sure when it would start, but we're going to give it a try.

Meeting adjourned at 7:31



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. If you are willing, please join us for three hours on Tuesday mornings.



Bible Study Group meets every Wednesday at 10am in the Study Room. We discuss the Bible Readings for the upcoming Sunday Worship Service. If you would like to be placed on the email list to receive an advance copy of the readings, please contact the church office. We always have a lively and interesting discussion and we encourage you to join us if you are able.

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

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.



GOD'S GARDEN: This group will meet on the First and Third Tuesday of every month. Now that the weather has changed, we will work again on the church landscaping and the church cemetery grounds. We plan to limit our work time to about *One Hour* each day. Please join us if you are able as many hands make the work load light.



BIBLE AND BREW will meet on Monday May 11th 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 May 18th in the Adult Bible Study Room. If anyone has a report to be presented at the council meeting, please send it to the church office before Noon and we will print copies for you. Anyone is welcome to attend the council meeting, especially if you have something that they need to know about.

BOOK GROUP will meet on Monday May 18th at 1pm in the Fellowship Hall. This month we will read and discuss both *Your Life Book Group* by Will Schwalbe and *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi. We always choose the next month's reading at each gathering so join us and share your favorite book. You will also find all the selections, including those for last year, on our church web page under *Ministries*.



DINNER NITE OUT: For May we will meet at 5:30pm on Saturday the 16th. At the time of this printing, we do not have a host for the evening so we hope someone will sign up soon. There is a signup sheet on the Round Table for anyone willing to sponsor the dinner for future months. All that is required is for you to choose the restaurant, make a reservation, and give a final count to the restaurant the week before the date. This is an excellent way for others to enjoy your favorite restaurant.



CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATE: Please make the following changes to your directory for Denny and Meri Gorr:

- Delete home phone (269-673-4193)
- Add Cell Phone for Denny of 269-355-3244



For any updates be sure to contact Pam Kraai at (616)566-8300 or pawbk22@gmail.com.

THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to our Lenten collection for the middle school's Tiger's Closet. The many wonderful donations were delivered to Principal Laura Feffer, who was truly delighted and deeply appreciative. Thank you for supporting those in need – your kindness makes a difference.

DEAR IMMANUEL FRIENDS; Thank you so much for your prayers, cards and meals the past month. Your kindness and support is truly a blessing. I hope to be up and about by mid May.
God's peace to you all, Sandy Foster

DEAR CHURCH FAMILY; What a blessing you are to us! We were just overcome with the quick response and love shown to my husband, Jim and my Dad (from Jeremy) on Easter Sunday. This is an Easter day to remember for sure! We are so grateful for our church family. Heartful Thanks from the Combs Family.

MEMORIAL DAY MAY 25TH is a federal holiday in the United States for mourning the U.S. military personnel who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces. It is observed on the last Monday of May. It is also considered to be the unofficial beginning of summer. The Property Committee and God's Garden Group will be placing flags by the graves of all veterans in our church cemetery. We will again host a Memorial Day luncheon at Immanuel this year! A simple meal: cold cuts, bread, etc. It will be after the ceremony in town. 😊



QUARTERLY ALL COMMITTEE MEETING will be held on Monday the 4th of May beginning with a light dinner at 6pm followed by our committee discussions. *Everyone* is invited and encouraged to attend. You may participate in the committee of your choice.

YOUTH FUNDRAISER BREAKFAST: Our final youth fundraiser of the



academic year will be a breakfast on Saturday May 2nd from 9-11am. The menu will include pancakes, eggs, fruit, sausage, monkey bread, juice, coffee, and milk. Free will offering will help support our Youth Ministry.

RUMMAGE SALE: Our annual rummage sale will take place on Friday, May 15, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. All proceeds will support our backpack ministry.

Donations of clean, usable items will be accepted starting May 1st. Please leave your items in the corner by the piano in our main fellowship hall to help keep everything organized. Please do not block the door, as that is a fire exit in an emergency.



Volunteers are needed to set up the sale on Thursday , May 14 at 11 AM. We also need help packing up items on Saturday, May 16, beginning at 10:00 AM. To volunteer, the sign-up sheet is on the round table. Any questions can be directed to Michele Radke.

Thank you for your support!

BACCALAUREATE COOKIES: The Baccalaureate Committee (comprised of high school students, primarily from the graduating class) has asked



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Mother's Day is a celebration honoring the mother of the family or individual, as well as motherhood, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society. It is celebrated on different days in many parts of the world, most commonly in March or May. It complements similar celebrations honoring family members, such as Father's Day, Sibling's Day, and Grandparent's Day. Countries around the world have a multi-century history of a day to celebrate mothers.



WHITECAPS GAME: Spring has finally arrived and we look forward to what has become our annual gathering to see the game. Bill Cronkhite has reserved several great seats for the game on August 15th and there is a sign up sheet on the Round Table. The cost is \$16 per person due by August 1st. This is always a fun event.





The University of Michigan Transplant Center is pleased to invite you to a kidney transplant educational program on living donation. The program includes information on ways to help you or your loved one find a potential living kidney donor. We hope you will be able to join us for this session. The program is open to patients, families, friends, or anyone interested in learning more about living donation.

*Facts and Myths of Living Donation and How
to Find a Living Donor*

Program will include “Explore Living Donation” video, patient and donor stories, and a panel of transplant experts.

Wednesday, May 6, 2026
6:15-8:00 p.m.
Virtual

Registration is required.

Please go to <https://michmed.org/w4jjk> to register.

For questions, please contact:
transplantoutreach@med.umich.edu or (734) 936-7093