



SEPTEMBER 2026



IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

631 Grand Street, Allegan Michigan



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Izzy Horwath – Sept. 1

Ethan Burnside - Sept. 2

Maren VanMelle – Sept. 9

Donna Moeller – Sept 13

Shelley Busfield – Sept. 15

Norma McDonald – Sept. 18

Craig VanMelle - Sept. 19

Hudson Vance – Sept. 22

Chloe Compton – Sept. 26

Sandra Rankin – Sept. 26

Lisa Sandor – Sept. 28

Ursala Armourillo – Sept. 29



WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS FOR SEPTEMBER

September 6

Reader - Jennifer Vance
Assistant - Jim Horwath
Counters - Joyce Davis & Nancy Brauer
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

September 13

Reader - Michele Radke
Assistant - Linda Scott
Counters - Joyce Davis & Jim Combs
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

September 20

Reader - Sharon Aksamit
Assistant - Mike Aksamit
Counters - Laura Compton & Sharon Aksamit
Greeters - Jim & Marie Combs

September 27

Reader: - Karen Acosta
Assistant: - Mike Fusillo
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, September 2026: Things I Wish Jesus Hadn't Said, Part III

“You always have the poor with you”

- Jesus, John 12:8

I once heard an excellent speech / sermon entitled “Ten Reasons I Wish Jesus Didn't Say This”; lucky for you, I will not repeat those ten reasons here (it took her an hour to get through her list of reasons, so I don't have time or space.¹) But my three favorite² were

1. People become cynical about folks who are poor: “I can't do anything about poverty / to alleviate people's suffering because Jesus said ...”

2. People use it as an excuse not to help folks who are poor or hungry

Obviously, these two are related, and one can lead to the other. But context matters, as Jesus feeds hungry people (John 6), provides when provisions run out (John 2), talks to outcasts (John 4), and defends even the guilty (John 8). So it is clear that Jesus cares about people on the outside.

But the third reason I remember, and number one on the presenter's list: it's true.

¹ And I don't remember all ten (or most of what she said) and I don't know where the handout from the lecture is...



² The three I remember were

You can say that people can't get ahead or can't catch a break, and for some, that's true. You can say that people are lazy or stupid or want to mooch off the system, and for some, that's true. You can say that people are mentally ill or addicted or don't know any other way, and for some that's true.

But I don't care where you place the blame (again, they're all probably true for certain individuals and to greater or lesser extents), it's still a terrible truth: we will always have the poor with us.

And yes, context matters: Judas Iscariot was attacking a woman who had poured costly perfume on Jesus' feet. Judas said that the money she spent on the perfume could have been given to the poor (though John tells us that Judas was stealing from their common purse). Jesus defended the woman with these words.

And those words are still true for us today, even outside that conversation.

But Jesus isn't being fatalistic: Jesus is being realistic. He's also not being prescriptive: he's being descriptive. He's not telling us to keep people poor. He's not telling us to ignore people who are poor. Jesus isn't throwing up his hands in surrender – he's just describing reality.

If anything, Jesus is telling us NOT to use the plight of other people as an excuse or as a cover for our sin. Indeed, if some did not hoard, all would have enough...

And I still don't like that Jesus said these words, because they point out both my lack of love for Jesus and our lack of love for our neighbors.

SDG,

Pr. Chris

Notes from Pastor Chris:

On Retiring from the Army, Part V: On the Hatch Act

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- Isaiah 55:8-9

As an officer in the United States Army Reserve, I have to be careful what I say about politics, politicians, and our current political realities (or my perceptions of our current political realities). Because most people know I'm in the Army, I'm a representative of the Army, whether I like it or not.

But all that changes on 01 January 2027.³ Technically, once I'm retired, the Hatch Act will no longer apply.⁴ I will be much freer to say what I think and feel.

But I won't.

Obviously, I have political opinions, but my political opinions don't need to be in my sermons.

Because I believe that Jesus lived, taught, died, was raised, and ascended 2,000 years before our modern economic and political ways of thinking (and also because he's God, see Isaiah 55 above), so he does not think like we do. Also, if your Jesus thinks like you, sounds like you, behaves like you, and votes like you, you're not worshipping Jesus – you're worshipping you. (See the First Commandment.)

Also, I believe that Jesus unites and I think politics divide.

Finally, I believe that sermons should be about Jesus, not about politics or politicians. If I "preach with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other" then I'm not doing justice to Scripture, to God, or to you (because I'm probably more preaching the news than the Bible at that point).

I may, from time to time, express theologically-grounded opinions in writing on somewhat less controversial topics, like why you should vote (the vocation of

³ In spite of what you think you may have seen in the news.

⁴ Or at least, it will apply very differently; I'm already an insignificant nobody, and I'm technically already allowed to say basically anything I want in a sermon or Bible study, so what little of this law will apply to me will be functionally irrelevant

citizenship) or why I don't think public schools are the place for religious education. But you're always welcome to

I do have two caveats, however:

1. I'm promising to stay away from politics as long as the politicians don't seriously distort my religion. If they do, I may just feel compelled to respond, as one of my calls to the congregation is to interpret Scripture and our history/theology/tradition for our lives today.
2. If we wind up mass-murdering people in actual gas chambers, I will pray for the strength to preach against them (or anything so heinous).

Laughlin Pulpit Swap: On Sunday, 5 September, Pastor Rachel Laughlin will preach here at Immanuel and I will preach at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Portage.

Next Ice Cream Social: 20 September, after worship, we will have another ice cream social. We will take another free will offering to send the kids to the ELCA National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis.

Sunday School restarts on Sunday, 20 September for both children (9:15am) and adults (11:15am).

Pet Blessing on Sunday, 27 September, at 3pm, we will have a blessing for your pets and pet lovers. I will bless any pet as long as I don't get bit (so I bless from a distance).

Backpack Thank You:

Middle school principal Laura Feffer sent this note on the evening of Monday, 17 August:

Please, please pass on our gratitude to the church.

The backpacks and case-its were such a hit.....they are almost gone!!

Your support means so much,
Laura

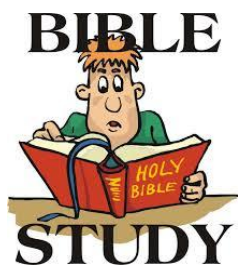


UPCOMING EVENTS

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. 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. This was first instituted in 2019 by Bill and Jessie Cronkhite while Pastor Ward served as our interim Pastor. It has continued to grow over the years. If you know of a veteran, *please invite them to join our group*. This is a great way for our Veterans to have fellowship and discuss shared experiences.



GOD'S GARDEN: *Please take a moment when you pull up to the church to appreciate the beautiful landscaping.* We have a dedicated



group that meets on the First and Third Tuesday of every month. They tend to limit the work time to about **One Hour** each day. If you are able, please join us as many hands make the work load light.

BIBLE AND BREW + DINNER NITE OUT: Since both of these events occur during Fair week during September, we **WILL NOT** be meeting for either of these events this month. We are proud to have so many members of our congregation working and volunteering all week at the County Fair. However, they are not able to attend both. We will resume in October.

THE CHURCH COUNCIL will meet at 6:30pm on Monday September 21st 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 September 28th at 1pm in the



Fellowship Hall. For this month we will be reading *The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold*. 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**.

MISSING KEYS? A rather large key ring with several keys was found near the bench on the path between the church and Grand Ravine Senior Housing. One key appears to be a car key so someone really needs them. If they belong to you, or if you know who they do belong to, please call the office at Grand Ravine (269)673-7155.



BACKPACK MINISTRY: Another amazing year for our Backpack Ministry!

You all provided backpacks full of supplies for 50 elementary and 50 middle school students. What a blessing.



The planning starts in the spring and doesn't end until we deliver them to the schools. Special shoutout to Pastor, the Missions and Outreach team, and everyone else for helping every step of the way.

And the good news is, we even have some money remaining in the account to help us get a head start on next year!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed in any way. It truly takes many hands to pull this ministry together. What a wonderful example of our church family coming together to make a difference in the lives of local students who are in need.

With a grateful heart,
Sharon Aksamit

CHURCH CALENDAR: We have an amazing web page that was originally created by our own Pat Jones and is maintained by Ken Kingsbury. The link is <https://immanuallutheranallegan.org>. Check it out. Today I will draw your attention to the *Ministries* Page.



Here you can find a wealth of information. The Sunday Service on Youtube, The service slides, Bulletins for 8 weeks, Newsletters for last year and this year, Book Group choices, and the Immanuel Activities Guide. This is upgraded every week, so check it out to find out what is going on in our congregation.

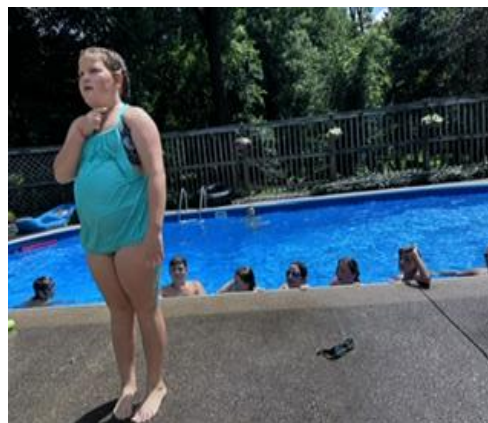
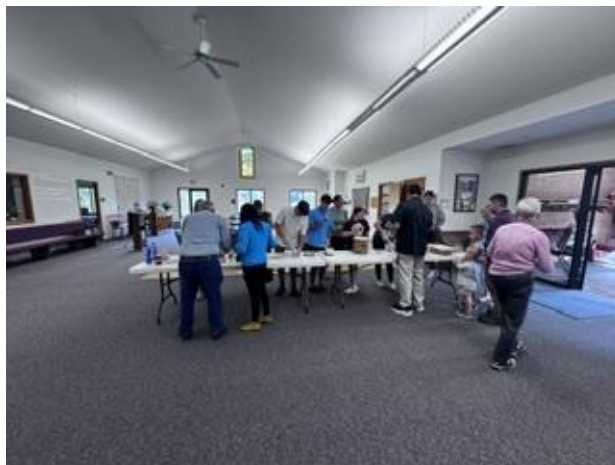
YOUTH CAMP We had a total number of six young people that attended Church camp this year. Four in the group were members of Immanuel and the other two were close friends. Those attending from Immanuel were Izzy Horwath, Emma Horwath, Carter Vance, and Willow Goodyke. Your



Ice Cream Social

participation in the special Youth Events (like the Ice Cream Social) helps by offsetting some of the cost for this event and will help some of our Youth to attend the National ELCA Youth Conference in Minneapolis next year. Thank you for your support.

We will be having another **ICE CREAM SOCIAL** after the worship service on Sunday September 13th. Yummmm!



PULPIT SWAP: On Sunday September 6th Pastor Chris will swap with his wife, Pastor Rachel. So, we will be blessed to have Pastor Rachel Laughlin from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Portage leading us in worship here at Immanuel while Pastor Chris will be leading worship at Prince of Peace.



FAIR PARADE: The parade will be held on **Monday, September 14**, and we'd love for you to join us!



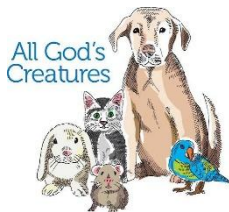
We need one or two volunteers to help secure the banner on Pastor's truck before the parade begins (5:15pm at the line up). We also need as many adults and children as possible to walk in the parade or ride in the back of the pickup truck to hand out candy along the route (6:00pm at the line up, parade starts at 6:30pm).

If you're able to help, please sign up on the sheet located on the round table. We hope you'll join us as we represent our church in this fun community event!

ALLEGAN COUNTY FAIR begins on Friday September 11th and will end on Saturday September 19th. This is considered one of the best County Fairs in the state of Michigan with something for everyone. Since I will be volunteering daily at the Historical Village from 1pm to 5pm, the church office will close a bit early each day to allow me time to get to my post.

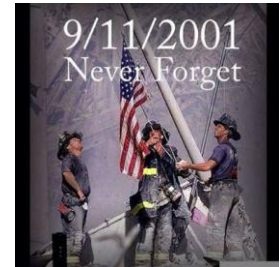


BLESSING OF THE PETS will occur on Sunday September 27th. Please watch your bulletin for the exact time. This has become an annual event whereby we recognize that all animals are included because they are God's creatures too. So please bring your pets for the blessing. Just make sure that you take all necessary precautions to protect your pet and the people that will be present.



SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ADULT STUDY GROUP will resume at their regular hours on Sunday September 20th.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 terrorist groups brutally attacked the United States and changed our culture forever more. Most of us today will never forget the horrifying images on our television screens of the Twin Towers in New York City engulfed in flames until they came crashing down. Unlike Pearl Harbor which we recognized immediately as an act of war by one country, 9-11 was an act of terror for the sake of terror committed by extremist from more than one country. *We shall never forget!*



WOMEN'S RETREAT: Hope Lutheran Church is sponsoring a three day Fall Women's Retreat in Dewitt, Michigan November 10-12. This is a great time to think, pray, and reflect on who we are and where we are in our relationship to God. A time to talk and share, away from the demands of our busy everyday lives. If you are interested there are brochures on the Round Table.



CHURCH COUNCIL:

ILC meeting minutes 7/27/26

1. Call to order & prayer at 6:30
2. Attendance: Rick absent
3. 6/15/26 Minutes reviewed and accepted.
4. Treasurers Report: Trevor - No longer having debits in the old accounts. Having credits still from thrivent grant GR. Just need to figure out who it's from before closing that account. Need to finalize what we need to do to finish the account set up for the new accounts. New accounts are a little over \$10,000. World hunger gift, everything but the blessing box has been paid out. Total available funds just shy of \$9,800. We need to write reimbursement checks for the families of kids going to church camp. Trevor recommends making a Thrivent withdrawal of \$10,000 to take care of synod regifting, church camp reimbursement, and upcoming cc payments (backpacks). Check if the amounts \$186.98 and



\$38.37 go to backpacks or not. In the second quarter we exceeded our goal and we're off to a good start for the 3rd quarter.

5. Noisy Offering: Meri Audit - Mike Aksamit & Jim Combs
6. Pastors Report: P. Chris - We got a donation to cover the amazon prime account, so we are now back to free shipping. P. Chris has not been good about taking his vacation, but once he retires from the army he will be better about it and promises to plan way in advance. Pastor Foster will be here on the 9th. P. Chris will miss the council meetings in October and November. We are packing backpacks August 16 and will deliver them August 17. The Laughlin Pulpit Swap will be September 6th.
7. Committee Reports:
 - a. Worship & Music: Shelley - nothing different, holding steady all floating in the pond
 - b. Education: Ursula - nothing different, planning pool date for august. P Chris needs to find the curriculum for the school year and sunday school will start the week after the fair September 20.
 - c. Mission & Outreach: Sharon - not too much. Working on backpacks has been going well and we have plenty of funds for a few more things to purchase. Need to figure out how and who do we need to get temp license for vet luncheon, P. Chris will call or get on the website to find out.
 - d. Faith Community Nurse: MaryAnn - same old same old
 - e. Property: Mike - Mike was absent all June so Jim and Sharon worked in his absence. We got a quote from north shore pest control because terminex isn't to our standards anymore. North shore is more expensive than terminex, but the feeling is that north shore is worth it. Motion to start north shore is passed and Mike will cancel the old terminex. We now have a draining schedule for the water heater, so Mike is wanting to reallocate the saved money from that to do some tree removal in the cemetery, so no loved ones get squished. We have a quote from ax man enterprises inc for \$2500.

8. Old business

- a. Youth gathering - Discounted registration opens oct 21 ends Nov 11, priority registration \$525 per head, dates June 28-July 2, 3 children will go (Grady, Carter, Izzy)
- b. Camp is paid for
- c. Immanuel rental policy/administrators is tabled to next month

9. New business

- a. P. Chris will be back for the all committee meeting but not bible study and there will not be a committee potluck. That meeting is 8/3/26 @6pm

Next meeting 8/17/26 @ 6:30

Adjourned with Lord's prayer at 7:16pm

