

Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church

1816 5th Street SW
 Willmar, MN 56201
 Pastor Craig A. Engel

Office:
 (320) 235-5996

Parsonage:
 (320) 235-6728

Cell Number
 (320) 444-7641

Office Hours:
 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Tuesday-Thursday

Website:
www.willmarwels.net

Emails:
 pastor@willmarwels.net
 secretary@willmarwels.net

UPCOMING DATES

February 1
 Elders

February 8
 Church Council

February 11
 Women of Immanuel

February 18
 Ash Wednesday



NEWSLETTER

Lent Meditation: Up To Jerusalem

So it begins: the solemn and holy season of Lent. And look at how it begins. Only One is eager for it to start. Only One has his heart set on all that will happen in Lent. Only One leads the way.

Jesus is the center of Lent. Who doesn't know that? But we are not absent from it. Quite the contrary is the case. As far as we are concerned, Lent is all about Jesus. But as far as Jesus is concerned, Lent is all about us.

See how it all begins: Jesus is on his last journey to Jerusalem. It is perhaps just a day before Palm Sunday. The procession of pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover has by this time grown to crowds of thousands. Everyone knows where Jesus is in that procession. Everyone knows that opposition to him has reached a fever pitch. It is no secret that the leaders of the Jews want to be rid of him. They have done everything they could to discredit him with the people, and they have failed. They have done everything they could to trick him into saying something that was either heretical or that could brand him a traitor to the Roman government, and they have failed. But no one is under any illusion that they have given up. In all of their efforts Jesus has shown them to be hypocrites and sinners. They will have none of that—there is certainly no repentance, no fleeing to Jesus for mercy. No, instead their hatred is only further inflamed.

Jesus knew it full well that day, as the procession drew near to Jerusalem. And he knew how it would end. In the verses immediately following he took the Twelve aside and spelled it all out for them again as he had before. He spelled it out in all its gruesome and ultimately glorious detail: betrayal, condemnation, mockery, spitting, flogging, and then execution and—three days later—resurrection!

See how it begins: Jesus is determined. Jesus leads the procession. Jesus can scarcely wait for it to begin and end. For to him it is all about us. He has no need to suffer for crimes. He committed none—no, not one. But for this hour he has come down from heaven so that he might suffer the torments of hell, for us, for us, for us. And he does it all so willingly. The sinners in desperate need of his saving work do not drive him on, do not push and shove him and insist, "Hurry up Lord! Get it all done for us! We can do none of it ourselves! So go, go quickly and accomplish the work of our salvation!"

No, the disciples are astonished that he is marching with such determination into that first Holy Week. And the rest of those following behind—they are afraid of what will happen. Just what is it that they are afraid of? No doubt some were afraid out of love for Jesus. But there were no doubt also many who were afraid of what would happen to them. Would there be a roundup of any and all who had anything to do with Jesus? After all, the authorities had already issued the order that anyone connected with Jesus or following him should be excommunicated from the synagogue (John 9:22). Or would there be some sort of riot, an uprising that perhaps Jesus or his disciples might lead (so little did many understand him!)? That would end in a bloodbath at the edge of Roman swords; for they were ever ready to end the least disturbance with a sword.

And so Lent begins for us. As we relive with the disciples and the crowds that first Lent, we too are astonished. How can it be that God is so eager for our salvation? How can it be that the Father does not spare his only begotten Son in whom he was always well pleased? How can it be that the Son does not balk when he considers the cost in the agony of his soul and the torment for his body? How can it be that the Holy Spirit is in full agreement with

the love of the Father and the eagerness of the Son for our salvation, so eager that the Spirit will preserve the message and instill in it faith-creating power?

So as Lent begins—these dread and most blessed 40 days—we fix our eyes on Jesus, astonished every step of the way up to the cross. And our hearts are divided; our souls are ripped in two, like the curtain in the temple. A part cries out in love to Jesus: "Don't do it! I can't bear it to see you thus_ tormented. A glance at the cross pierces my heart and tears at my soul. Don't do it!" And then the other part of heart and soul cries out in like anguish: "Go, Lord Jesus! Go into suffering unequaled. Endure the shame, the spitting, the mockery, the false judgment, the hatred, the abuse, yes, the torments of the cross, even the unspeakable agony of being abandoned by your Father! Go, go quickly, and accomplish everything that I need for my salvation. For if you shrink from it, if you are unwilling to do it, then I am lost, lost forever. If you leave even the smallest shred of the work for me to do, then hell is my future and my present life a cruel wasted time in hell's waiting room. So then go, Lord Jesus, into Lent. Do it for me, even for me."

And so the soul is torn in two (Matthew 27:51) like the curtain in the temple that separated God and man. Separated they were and separated they would forever remain if Jesus would not go (and go willingly) to do for us all what none of us could do in the least for himself; and certainly we would not do anything even close to what he accomplished during Lent for someone else, even if we could. With the curtain torn and the soul ripped in two, we go through Lent. We await his anguished cries from the cross. And we long for its end in . . . resurrection! For there the torn soul at last will find its peace and rest. For there the victory of Christ for us will be confirmed. For there the soul is healed at last by the assurance that because he lives, we too shall live and live most blessedly forever with him in the heaven his cross has won for us.

Behold, he goes up to Jerusalem where all will be fulfilled. Behold, we follow with deepening anguish at what we caused and at the sight of what we should suffer. Behold, we will not leave him until he relieves us by the cry, "It is finished!" and the assurance that his resurrection gives, the assurance that what was all about him is all about us.

(Daniel Deutschlander, *On Giving Advice to God*, pp.139-141)

Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting was held on Sunday, January 18th. Some highlights from the meeting include: 1) Our 2026 WELS mission offering commitment was set at \$34,000; 2) The 2026 budget was adopted; 3) Three men were elected to serve on the Church Council: Todd Marxhausen (financial secretary), Aaron Buttenhoff (elder), Scott Claussen (secretary); 4) Funds from the Bailey Estate were approved to be distributed to: WELS Home and World Missions; Luther Preparatory School; Immanuel for paraments and vestments.

Thank You

We extend our thanks to the men who have faithfully served two terms on the Church Council: Jay Remmle and Tom Jurgenson; and Aaron Buttenhoff for serving one term.

Transfiguration Day

On February 15th, we celebrate the Day of Christ's Transfiguration and with it, the season of Epiphany ends. During this whole season of Epiphany, God has been revealing himself to us in the person, work, and words of Jesus. Transfiguration Day gives a glimpse of God's glory. Scripture describes God's glory as being brighter than the sun. Moreover, one component of God's glory is his holiness. Being holy doesn't just mean God loves good; he also hates evil with burning intensity. And we sin every day. No wonder the Lord once told Moses, "No one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). Sinners would die of fear if they saw God in all his holy glory.

So, how then can we possibly know God? How can we draw near to him without dying of terror? In our final epiphany moment of this season, God explains. God hides his glory in order to reveal himself. To carry out his good and glorious work of salvation, Jesus hid his glory and went to the

cross. To allow sinners to stare at his glory without fear or harm, God hides it in the gospel. In the gospel, we see the glory of Christ's love, power, and salvation. The reality is that when God's glory is hidden, it is most on display. The theme for February 15th is: Jesus is the Son of God in Glory.

Epiphany Worship in February

This year, the theme for our Epiphany service is: **Identity Revealed.** "Epiphany" comes from a Greek word that means "reveal." It is the season when you see Jesus begin his public ministry, revealing the reason the Son of God came to earth. During the final Sundays of Epiphany, you will come to understand that when the true identity of Jesus is revealed, you realize your own true identity as well.

- February 1st – Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – Jesus Calls You Blessed
- February 8th – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany -- Jesus Calls You Salt and Light
- February 15th – Transfiguration of Our Lord – Jesus Is the Son of God in Glory

The Season of Lent

The word Lent comes from an old English word for spring: "lengthen," when the days grow longer. For over 1400 years the Church has set aside the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter as a time of repentance and renewal. The season of Lent originated as a period of fasting in preparation for Christ's resurrection. It was also a period of intensified instruction for those preparing to be baptized. This period has long been associated with forty days, though it was not until around 600 A.D. that the beginning of those forty days was set to the seventh Wednesday before Easter (Ash Wednesday). Sundays have never been counted as part of the forty days of Lent. Thus, they are labeled *Sundays in Lent* rather than *Sundays of Lent*. One of the church fathers

referred to the Sundays in Lent as “inns and havens, for those to rest in who have taken upon them the course of fasting in this holy time of Lent, that they may refresh their bodies a little from the labors of fasting.” While worship during Lent is solemn and muted, the gospel remains the central focus as we prepare our hearts for Easter.

The theme for our Sundays in Lent this year is: Exactly What I Need. We recognize the phrase “I didn't know I needed that” as a common expression of surprise and realization. It suggests that something, whether it's a piece of information, a lesson learned, or a newfound understanding, has come to light and is now recognized as being essential or valuable, even if it wasn't previously apparent. Lent is the season of the Church Year when I recognize my greatest needs. During Lent, I realize that in Christ all my greatest needs are met. God knows what I need even when I don't have any idea. The Holy Spirit makes it clear, week after week, that if I lack Christ, I have nothing. But if I have Christ, I have exactly what I need.

- February 22nd – Lent 1 – Exactly What I Need: A Champion
- March 1st – Lent 2 – Exactly What I Need: Faith
- March 8th – Lent 3 – Exactly What I Need: Water
- March 15th – Lent 4 – Exactly What I Need: Sight
- March 22nd – Lent 5 – Exactly What I Need: Life

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, reminding us of our mortality and calling us to repent. The ancient practice of imposing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful is what gives Ash Wednesday its name. The church father Tertullian (c. A.D. 160-215) writes of the practice as a public expression of repentance and of our human frailty that stands in need of Christ. Ashes can remind us forcefully of our need for redeeming grace as they recall words from the rite of Christian burial, “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” We will hold a Divine Service on Ash Wednesday beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Midweek Services

The theme of our Midweek Lenten Services this year is: *It Is Finished*. Each service begins at 7:00 p.m. In our midweek services we will explore the prophecies of Zechariah, offering an enriching look at our Savior, particularly as Zechariah's prophecies relate to the events of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. Following Ash Wednesday, the remaining five midweek services will review the three articles of the Apostles' Creed. It is a long-standing practice in the Lutheran church to use the time in Lent to review parts of the catechism.

The weekly sub-themes are as follows:

- February 18th – Ash Wednesday – Return to Me
- February 25th – Midweek 2 – What's He Worth To You?
 - Week 2 matches up with the Second Article, Part 2 (beginning with the words “He has redeemed me”). The Zechariah prophecy mentions the silver paid to Judas. The explanation to the article mentions that it was the holy, precious blood of Jesus that redeemed us, not gold or silver.
- March 4th – Midweek 3 – Scattered Sheep
 - Week 3 matches up with the Second Article, Part 1 (beginning with the words, “I believe that Jesus Christ”). The Zechariah prophecy mentions the covenant name of the LORD three times. The explanation to the article mentions that Jesus is my Lord.
- March 11th – Midweek 4 – The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth
 - Week 4 matches up with the First Article. The Zechariah prophecy mentions the Lord doing good for his people, and the people responding in service and obedience. The explanation to the article follows the same pattern.
- March 18th – Midweek 5 – The Kingly Priest
 - Week 5 matches up with the Second Article, Part 3 (beginning with the words, “All this he did”). The Zechariah prophecy describes the priest on the throne. The explanation to the article has us living under him in his kingdom.
- March 25th – Midweek 6 – Look at the One Who Was Pierced
 - Week 6 matches up with the Third Article. The Zechariah prophecy includes the Lord's promise to pour out the Spirit of grace. The explanation to the article expands on what it means to have the Holy Spirit poured out on us.

Chili Supper

There will be a chili supper before the Ash Wednesday service on February 18th. It will start at 5:30 p.m.

Soup Suppers

Soup suppers will precede the Wednesday Lenten services and will start at 6:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday Schedule

This year, our Easter Sunday Schedule will be: 8:00 a.m. Divine Service; 9:00 a.m. Easter Breakfast.

Summer Bible and Music Academy

We have received the disappointing news that Martin Luther College was unable to assign a student to Immanuel to lead our Bible and Music Academy this summer. Alternate plans for someone to find someone to lead our efforts are being researched.

Bible Readings for 2026

One year of a three-year plan to read through the Bible is available in the Narthex. The schedule is worked so that you don't have to start with year one. The Spirit will bless your time in the Word!

Winter Weather and Worship:

Please be reminded that we will hold our regularly scheduled services for those who are able to make it to church. If conditions are poor enough, we may cancel Sunday School, Bible classes and other activities but we will always hold our services. Check Operation Snowdesk for cancellations. Please use your sound judgment to determine whether or not you should travel to and from church in hazardous conditions.

Church Council Meeting Minutes

December 14, 2025

Members Present: Martin Martin Fabrizius, Jim Buffington, Michael Ziebell, Aaron Buttenhoff, Matt Sindelir, Kent Larson, Pastor, Jay Remmele

MMSP = Motion Made, Seconded, Passed

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 11:40 a.m.

Opened with the Lord's Prayer.

Agenda: MMSP to accept the agenda as presented.

Secretary's Report: MMSP to accept the November 9, 2025 council minutes as presented.

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees:

Chairman's Report: Met with Pastor and had a very constructive meeting.

Elders Report:

- MMSP to release Jonah Fabrizius from membership.
- MMSP to transfer out Sara Tweten to St. John's, Renville.
- The new Bibles are here and are being used.
 - MMSP to let members take any of the old Bibles as they would like and then recycle the remaining old Bibles.
 - MMS (not passed) to use the leftover funds (from the Bailey estate that were designated for purchasing new Bibles) to supplement the 2026 Bailey estate gift.
 - After discussion the motion and second were withdrawn.
- There was discussion on our capability to record and broadcast services, especially special services and children's services. In the past there were services recorded. Currently we do not believe any services are being recorded.

Trustees Report:

Trustees will look into options to replace the accordion style partition in the basement. They are looking for one that will fit the existing track if possible to make installation easier.

- The trustees have found a handicap remote door opener that should be easy to install. Matt will get it purchased and installed.

Financial Secretary's Report: MMSP to accept the Financial Secretary's report as presented.

Treasurer's Report: MMSP to accept the Treasurer's report as presented.

Planned Giving: No report.

AV Committee: No report.

Pastor's Report:

- Pastor will order new pew registers that are the same as the current ones as options are limited.
- Olivia Vacancy: There will be a meeting on Tuesday, December 16 to start the process of determining if they will have a tri-parish or consolidate parishes.

Old Business and Action Committees:

Church Operation Manual: Will be distributed to council members after the annual meeting.

Budget Committee: MMSP to approve the budget proposal and submit it to the congregation for approval.

Called Worker Compensation Committee: The numbers were presented and discussed and approved as part of the budget.

Nomination Committee:

- Aaron has talked to two candidates for Financial Secretary.
- Aaron has talked to one candidate for Recording Secretary.
- Aaron is willing to serve a second term as Elder.
- More candidates are welcome to be nominated from the floor at the voters' meeting.
- There was discussion on current term limits and if they should or could be extended so willing parties could continue to serve. Any changes would require changing the by-laws.

Updates in Narthex: Martin will follow up with Ross on the water cooler.

New Business:

Appoint Planned Giving Committee Members: MMSP to appoint Michel Ziebell to the Planned Giving Committee.

Parsonage allowance: Immanuel Church Council adopts the following:

- Parsonage allowance for 2026 (Under the provision of Sec. 107 of the Internal Revenue code of 1986 as amended, the minister of the Gospel listed below may have a portion of their compensation designated as parsonage allowance. The amount indicated shall be the designated parsonage allowance for the year 2026. Should any worker listed be provided with a house, he shall have rent-free use of the house for the year 2026. Pastor Craig A. Engel - \$12,000. Fair market value of the parsonage will be set at \$1,000/month.)

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- January 11, 2026 at 11:30 am council meeting
- January 18, 2026 after potluck; voters' meeting
- February 8, 2026 at 11:30 am council meeting

MMSP to close the meeting at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully, Jay Remmele, Recording Secretary

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

But God demonstrates his own

for us in this:
While we were still sinners,
Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 NIV