

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

July 5
Elders

July 12
Church Council



NEWSLETTER

The Forgiving Father and His Two Prodigal Sons

These verses begin one of the best known and most beloved of Jesus' parables. It is commonly called the parable of the prodigal son. It's really the parable of the prodigal sons. For both sons are in their own way prodigal and lost.

But first we consider the father and this youngest son. Do you see that in this parable God has left himself open to some considerable criticism? We might just shake our heads and say, "What a softy and how naive that father is! He is way too generous at the beginning of the story and even more unreasonably generous at the end of it!"

Thankfully, God is not interested in our criticism. For as we are always in these parables; they always capture us as we are and God as he is toward us. And what can we say of him and of ourselves in summary? We are always and in every way unworthy! But God is always extravagant in his generosity! Thank God for it! Were it otherwise, our lives would be miserable indeed, and we would all be lost.

Consider the particular aspects of our unworthiness and God's generosity as it is displayed in this parable. Consider first the youngest son. What an ungrateful wretch! What a lot of nerve! What disrespect, even contempt, he shows toward his father! Just look at him: He would inherit a part of the estate when his father died, even though the bulk of it would go by custom to the oldest son. It's clear that the father loved this boy and would not have left him in the lurch in his will. But that's not good enough for the son. He just can't wait for his father to die. He can't wait to get out of the house and away from the father's love, providence, and protection. He knows what he wants, and he wants it now.

With what heartache the father must have listened to his son's request, his son's demand even. Were it up to us, we might well have advised the father to say to the son, "You ungrateful wretch! You just can't wait for me to die! This is how you repay your father for all that he has already done for you! Get out! I will give you now what you deserve—nothing! And as for my will, don't expect any more than what you deserve in that either—the same nothing!"

But that's not what happens. Instead, the father takes what belonged to him, what he had worked hard to acquire, what he had wanted to increase still more for the benefit of his sons; he takes from it and hands it over to his son. What a foolish father, we might say. He surely should have expected that any son who would make such a demand would not know how to use wisely whatever he might receive.

And just so, the story takes a turn that surprises no one. The son leaves and squanders every bit of his father's hard-earned wealth. Like the fool he is, the son expects that his money will last forever. If he is capable of thinking ahead at all, he may imagine that even if his money runs out, he will have already "bought" friends who will take care of him. And so merrily on his way he goes. All of the sinful "pleasures" that his father kept him from he now wallows in. No guilt disturbs his sleep. No homesickness troubles him. Any thinking at all is precluded by plans for the next party.

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."

~1 Luke 15:11-13

We have much to consider in this whole parable. But where are we in this first part of the parable? Anyone who is taking the trouble to read these words may say within himself, "Well, to be sure, I'm not perfect. But I've never acted like that son! Or, if I ever did act like him, that was a long time ago when I was young and foolish; happily I'm past all that now."

If, however, we think about this younger son a bit longer, we might well discover that we are never really all that far away from him. He, after all, wants what he considers to be his right. He wants to do what pleases him with what another owns. He wants "freedom" from hard labor and from restraints that get in the way of having his own way. Luther reminds us in his explanation to the First Article of the Apostles' Creed that everything we have comes from God. Whether we are thinking of life itself, of health and wealth, of family and friends, of time, or of good weather and good government—these all are gifts from God. More than that, our status as God's children, his protection, his forgiveness, and the promise of life eternal—those are priceless treasures given freely to each of us in the Word and sacraments. And those treasures aren't cheap; they cost the Father a great deal; they cost him his Son!

Who hasn't thought of these gifts at times as though they were all ours by right to do with as we please? "It's my life and my time; don't tell me how to spend it. It's my money and my ability to earn it; don't tell me that it all belongs first and foremost, yes, and still to God—I don't want to hear that! And as for friends and family, well, it's about time they appreciated me for all that I have done for them. Truth be told, they're at least as lucky to have me as I am to have them." And as for those most important gifts, the spiritual blessings in Word and sacraments, what can we say of them? That they are ours to enjoy is certainly true. But that they are ours to share both with those we know and in union with the church with the whole world—that privilege isn't always uppermost in our minds. Yes, and then there's this: To the extent that we take God's gifts to body and soul for granted, we soon come to think that we deserve them—just like this youngest son thought.

But look at the Father's love. As already noted, he is extravagantly generous. He freely gives, yes, we might say, squanders his gifts on us. And he does that even though in countless ways he is repaid with the ingratitude of a "gimme" attitude from us. His constant generosity is all the more amazing when we consider that just such an attitude he has had to put up with since the time of Adam and Eve; we would think that God would have learned by now that his love and his generosity is to such a great extent all but wasted on us!

Oh, how amazing the love of God is! It is as though he has learned nothing from our ingratitude! He still, as Jesus reminds us, causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike (Matthew 5:45). He is content even to wait for a full understanding and appropriate thanksgiving from us until heaven. And that heaven too he will give as a gift altogether underserved by us but so expensively bought for us by his Son. (Adapted for use at Immanuel, from Daniel Deutschlander, *On Giving Advice to God*, pp.119-121)

Season of Pentecost Divine Service

Themes:

In July (and the first two Sundays in August) the overall theme of our services is: **What Makes Christians Different**

The Bible says Christians are different. Christians are people who believe in Jesus as their Savior. But they often look the same as those who do not believe in Jesus. How are Christians different? The answer is often something internal, attitudes or perspectives that come only from the work of the Holy Spirit in Word and sacrament. Ultimately, Christians are people who run to Christ for forgiveness because they have failed to live perfect lives. As we receive the mercy of Christ, it moves us to strive with all our being to do all the things that Jesus says Christians do, things that make Christians different.

July Worship:

- July 5th – Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – Christians Find Rest in Jesus
 - We need rest. Without rest, we suffer. Studies show that with too little rest, people experience fatigue and physical imbalances that result in decreased attention, poor decisions, and even speech impairment. People who take no breaks during the workday have lower productivity than those who

take periodic breaks. Christians know they need more than sleep or breaks, more than physical rest. We need spiritual rest. The only place to find that type of rest is Jesus. Jesus provides more than a pause in work or enjoyable recreation. Jesus provides the removal of our sins, the cleansing of our guilty consciences, and a gentle new yoke of discipleship in the freedom of the gospel. In Jesus, Christians find rest right now from burdens and battles, and eventually eternal rest in heaven.

- July 12th – Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – Christians Are Planted by the Word
 - Planting seed by hand can be extraordinary. In your hand, the seed looks lifeless and insignificant. You put the seed into the soil, and suddenly, all by itself, the seed germinates and sprouts and reaches to the sun. Except when it doesn't! Plant multiple seeds, and often only some will grow. The Bible describes Christians as planted by the Word. Why do some people grow in faith, and not others? What makes Christians different? The Bible describes the supernatural process by which God calls people to faith through the gospel. He promises that his Word always accomplishes his purpose. It is powerful all on its own, without our help. As we grow in faith, we give God thanks for the miracle of his work in our lives.

- July 19th – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost – Christians Live as Wheat among Weeds
 - The wheat that grows in the Middle East is a variety that looks much like wild grass or weeds. It is difficult to tell wheat and weeds apart until shortly before harvest time, when the wheat stalks develop a head containing the kernels of grain. Pulling the weeds out of a wheat field could lead to accidentally pulling up a fair amount of wheat. People need to wait for the harvest to separate wheat from weeds. Jesus uses that image to illustrate life this side of heaven. What makes Christians different? They are wheat planted by the Lord. Unbelieving evildoers are pictured as weeds. We might want God to take care of evil now, pulling up all the weeds. But he tells us to wait for the harvest of judgment day. So we live as wheat among weeds, being faithful, fruitful, and mindful of the coming harvest.
- July 26th – Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – Christians Seek Spiritual Wealth
 - What do you consider your life's top priorities? Many people start with family and friends. Financial security and health follow closely. Reputation and recreation make the cut. How about faith? Is it the top priority? What if other priorities must be sacrificed to keep faith the top priority? The Bible helps Christians keep worldly wealth in perspective. It can buy the things of this world, things that rust and decay, but there is something more valuable. True wealth is spiritual wealth. It can be found only in God and his eternal blessings for us in Christ.

Thursday Services

If your summer plans take you away for the weekend, remember that there is a service on Thursday evenings. The Thursday services will be the same as the Sunday that follows.

Called to Eternal Glory

The Lord called the soul of Dennis Krueger to himself in paradise on Saturday, June 13th. Dennis' Christian Funeral was held at Immanuel on Saturday, June 20th. May Jesus comfort those who mourn with his promise of everlasting life for all who believe.

Community Meal

We will be hosting a community meal on Wednesday, July 8th, from 11:30-1:30. We are looking for some volunteers to help with the following: a total of 13 dozen cookies; setup; serving; and cleanup. There is a signup sheet in the Narthex. Thank you for your help!

Semi-annual Meeting

Our semi-annual meeting will be held on Sunday, July 19th after Bible class.

A Prayer for Independence Day

Almighty God, we acknowledge with thanks that all we have and enjoy is a gift from your gracious hand. We come before you today in heartfelt appreciation for our nation and its people. We thank you for enabling us to worship you in freedom and to serve you without fear.

You have enriched us with the bounties of farm and factory, the beauty of forest and mountain, and the marvels of medicine and science. For all these blessings, we praise and glorify you.

Look with favor upon our nation and preserve our cherished liberties. Enable our leaders to govern with wisdom, honesty, courage, and justice. Protect those who serve in the armed forces and those who maintain peace and safety in our communities. Give us willingness to obey our nation's laws and to work for the common good.

Keep our financial institutions secure and our economy strong. Bless our fields that they may produce abundant harvests. Guard us from calamities of nature and accident and spare our land from the ravages of disease and epidemic. Teach us not to worry but to cast all our cares on you.

Strengthen the homes of our nation. By your Spirit lead husbands and wives to love each other, parents to nurture their children, young adults to assume responsibility, and children to show respect. Lead the citizens of our land to honor the useful foundations of society.

Care for those who are sick or have been injured. Calm those who are disappointed and depressed. [Especially bless... *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Provide guidance to those who care for people in trouble or in need. Lead us to provide help when we can and to pray at all times.

To you, O Lord, we bring our thanks and our requests. Hear our prayers for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Summer Schedule

Service time on Sundays remain the same. A short family Bible class will be held after treats and coffee. Thursday evening services will be held at 7:00 p.m. and is the same as the Sunday that follows it.

Christian Life Ministries Baby Bottle Fundraiser

Thank you to all who help support Christian Life Ministries. Watch the bulletin for the total amount that was given.

Lawn Mowing

A sign-up sheet for the lawn mowing is posted in the narthex. Please consider helping out. If you have any questions about using the lawn mower or getting into the shed, please speak with Jim Buffington or Matt Sindelir.

Church Council Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2026

Members Present: Justin Kannas, Pastor Engel, Jim Buffington, Martin Fabrizius, Kent Larson, Matt Sindelir, Michael Ziebell

Meeting was opened with the Lord's Prayer.
The meeting was called to order by Chairman Fabrizius at 11:30 a.m.

Agenda: The agenda was approved with 2 added items under New Business

- a. Birthdays & Anniversaries on church calendar
- b. House for sale west of church

Secretary's Report: Minutes for the April 12, 2026 meeting were approved as submitted.

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees

Elders Report:

- Ascension Day – May 14th at 7:00 p.m.
- Thursday Divine Services begin on May 21st.
- Sumer schedule begins May 24th.
- Elders continue to discuss physical and spiritual needs of congregation members.

Trustees Report:

- No update on the partition between the fellowship hall and youth room.
- New toilet being installed in downstairs bathroom in Sunday school area.
- Sunday school room furnace not working – trustees will investigate.
- Outside church grounds cleanup is complete.

Financial Secretary's Report: A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the report.

Treasurer's Report: A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the report. It was noted that a \$5,000 gift currently shown in the general fund needs to be moved to the Specially Designated Funds for Education Room TV and Drinking Fountain.

Pastor's Report:

- Olivia Vacancy – All three congregations voted on April 19th to merge together, with services held in Renville starting February 2027. However, the Olivia congregation will need to re-vote May 17th due to a voting issue.
- Aaron Butenhoff will serve as Immanuel's delegate to the Minnesota District Convention on June 9th and 10th in New Ulm.
- A request to ushers to save two pews in the back on the right for those desiring to take communion from the pew.

New Business:

- Birthdays and Anniversaries on church calendar – consensus to move forward with Women of Immanuel placing birthdays and anniversaries on calendar for all desiring it.
- House for sale west of church – consensus to not pursue purchase of the property, as there doesn't appear to be any short or mid term need for the property.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- June 14, 2026 after Bible class – Council
- July 12, 2026 after Bible class – Council
- July 19, 2026 after Bible class – Semi-annual Voter's Meeting

The meeting was adjourned. Pastor closed with the Blessing.

Respectfully Submitted,
Justin Kannas, Secretary pro-tempore

FINANCIAL REPORT					
January 1st through May 31st, 2026					
GENERAL FUND					
January 1st				May 31st	
Balance	Contributions	Expenditures		Balance	
\$ 57,257	\$ 94,855	\$ 95,731		\$ 56,381	
WELS CONGREGATIONAL MISSION OFFERING		MLC - CONGREGATIONAL PARTNER GRANT		LUTHERAN INSTITUTIONAL MINISTRY ASSOCIATION (LIMA)	
2026 Commitment	Year to Date Contributions	2026 Commitment	Year to Date Contributions	2026 Commitment	Year to Date Contributions
\$ 34,000	\$ 15,121	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,495	\$ 2,200	\$ 866
Average Monthly Commitment	YTD Average Monthly Contributions	Average Monthly Commitment	YTD Average Monthly Contributions	Average Monthly Commitment	YTD Average Monthly Contributions
\$ 2,833	\$ 3,024	\$ 133.33	299	\$ 183	\$ 173

QR Code for Online Giving



Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
1816 5th Street SW
Willmar, MN 56201



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