



Immanuel News

The newsletter of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Greeley, Colorado

February 2026

I'm writing this in mid-January when I heard we have set a record for lack of snow. I am praying that by the time you read this there will have been substantial snowfall in our mountains and enough for Wisdom and I to play in down here, and to get us out of the record books. Coming from California, I am familiar with how important the snowpack is for our water supply, especially for those of us here on the semi-arid high plains.

Even now I have been cautioned to water my trees (especially the three fruit trees we planted this Fall) once or twice a month to keep the roots from drying out until the snow or rain comes to replenish all the soil. Water in winter? It makes sense to me as I and my family struggle with the lack of moisture in the air: dry eyes, dry skin, dry nose, dry throat, dry hands, dry eyebrows and hair follicles and cuticles and...

So, I'm praying, to God, that snows will come and replenish the earth and renew the promise of new growth and life in the Spring and Summer ahead and relieve the threats of fire and drought – and dry skin.

Mid-January means I am in the midst of the church's Epiphany season. We celebrated Jesus' birth, where God arrives, *"not only as a human being,"* our Bishop Meghan Aelabouni writes, *"but a child: a vulnerable, fragile, beautiful baby who depends on others for his very survival. Jesus' life, in the beginning as in the end, is placed in the hands of humanity: not so that we can prove our worthiness to God by doing the right thing, but to show that even when we don't – when we squander the gift of divine love and crush the gift of human life – we ourselves are in the hands of a God who turns fear into love, despair into hope, and death into life."* (Bishop's Christmas letter)

Now, mid-January to mid-February, in the Epiphany season of the church year, we focus on how Jesus is revealed as God's incarnation, God's presence in human form. We remember the Magi, wise scholars, who traveled far to give honor to Jesus because they saw in the sky God's message of Jesus' birth. We celebrated Jesus' baptism and saw the Holy Spirit like a dove descend on him and the words from heaven, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased." We visit once more the shore of the Sea of Galilee to see and hear Jesus call the first disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, and we walk up the mountain to hear Jesus' revealing, instructive sermon to the crowds, and disciples who are following him. Finally, we will share with Peter, James and John a vision of the 'otherness' that dwells in Jesus as he is transfigured before us, and, again, heavenly words, "This my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him." (Matthew 1: 1-8)

Yet we do not cling very long to this "mountain top" experience. Almost immediately, in three days, we come down from the mountain and continue our journey into the next cycle of our church year, the Easter cycle. The first season of this cycle is Lent, and the beginning of Lent is Ash Wednesday, February 18. We remind ourselves on Ash Wednesday of our frailty and our continued need for God's grace for life as we recite the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," and receive an ashen cross on our foreheads.

The 40 days of Lent (Sundays are excluded from the counting) mark a time we turn our attention to fasting, prayer, and alms-giving - activities meant to quiet our minds, still our hearts, and allow us to draw near to God and the way of life God gives us in Jesus, the way of compassion.

A quick word about 'fasting'. It is a spiritual practice to help draw closer to God by **removing** distractions and "things" that separate us from God and prevent us from walking the way of Jesus, the way of compassion. It is not about disordered eating patterns. In fact, it doesn't need to involve food or eating at all. One can fast from social media, electronics or shopping, to name a few examples.

It also can be a season of disciplined **additions**: prayer (remember we need snow, but also peace), works of love, self-examination, looking for ways that God is active in our day, setting aside 10 minutes of silence to simply listen for God's presence, and so on. Whatever gets us closer to God and the way of compassion.

It is important stuff. Bishop Aelabouni says it well in her year-beginning letter to the church:

"As we enter a new year, I find myself pondering what it means to choose that other way [the way of Jesus], especially when the way of the world has brought devastation: in the Holy Land where people in Gaza are still dying months after a so-called ceasefire; in Venezuela, whose people face an uncertain future and hope for a better one; in U.S. Communities where ICE agents have detained, disappeared, or killed our neighbors – including legal residents and citizens; in leaders like Herod who choose the way of power and revel in cruelty; in my own sin, when fear or anger or self-righteousness lead me astray.

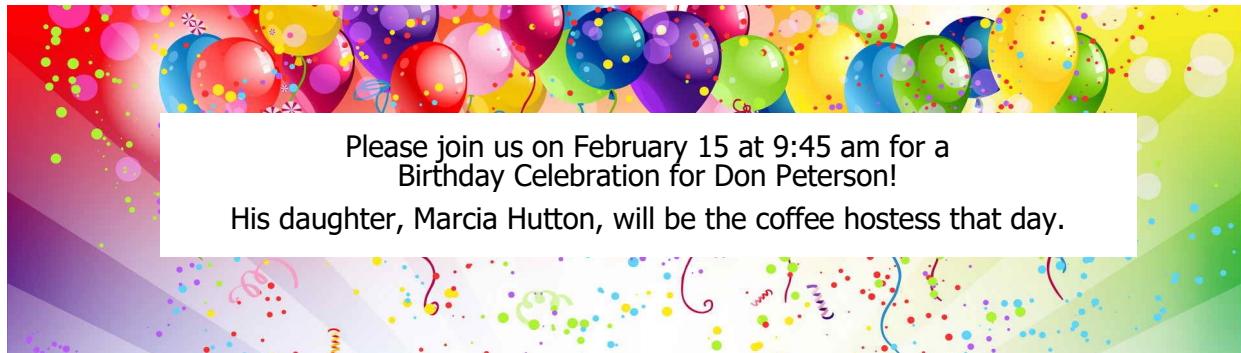
We are called to a different road: the way of Jesus. And we are reminded that when we can't, or won't, choose that path, Jesus finds us on the way regardless: to draw us back to the way of the Gospel and to community and belonging; to give us new life in the promise of resurrection; and to lead us – not by shame or force, but by grace – to abundant life in Christ, as the Holy Spirit works to bring hope and healing to the world God so loves."

Walking, Pastor Embree

WORSHIP

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

February 1—*Fourth Sunday after Epiphany*
February 8—*Fifth Sunday after Epiphany*
February 15—*Transfiguration of Our Lord*
February 18—*Ash Wednesday*
February 22—*First Sunday in Lent*



Time of Transition and the Call process

Pastor William “Bill” Embree continues to serve as a Bridge Pastor.

On Sunday, January 18, the Call Committee met in person with a potential TEEM candidate. TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) is an alternative way to call a pastor. This candidate would be attending seminary online (with occasional in person visits to the seminary), while serving as our pastor.

While the Call Committee continues to deliberate and discuss the interview and prayerfully consider this candidate, we are working to schedule another meeting with our Rocky Mountain Synod liaison, Pastor Sara Wirth to discuss questions we might have about the process of calling a TEEM candidate and discuss our sense of how well this candidate might suit our congregation.

Blessings, Immanuel Council

YOUTH & FAITH FORMATION

Bible Study

Adult Sunday Bible Study group
is using the Luther Seminary series "God Pause."
We meet at 9:15 am in the Library (room next to kitchen).

If you would like to receive the emailed study,
please contact Paula Powell at ppowell76@gmail.com



Youth Ministry
Youth Ministry

FIRST SUNDAY YOUTH GROUP

Sunday, February 1st

SCHEDULE:

- 9:00am – Snacks Together in Annex Youth Room
- 9:15am – 5th Grade & Younger (Youth Room)
- 9:15am – Middle School & High School (Annex - Upstairs)
- 10:00am – Back Together for Fun & Games in Youth Room

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE! Sign up to help with Youth Group!

We need two (2) volunteers each month to sign up to help with the young group for First Sundays Youth Group, February, March and May. If you are available or have questions, please contact the office (970) 352-3003 or Julie Elmquist (970) 371-2734. Resources are available for lessons!

GIVING & SERVICE

Free Little Red Barn Pantry

Please consider bringing shelf-stable, non-perishable food items to place in the barn each Sunday so our pantry will stay stocked and continue to be a blessing for our neighbors in need! Please just make sure your donations are not past their expiration date.

Travel-sized shampoo & conditioner, toothbrushes, and bars of soap are also appreciated.



Let's work together to FILL THE BARN!

LUTHERAN EPISCOPAL CAMPUS MINISTRY

Support Campus Ministry: Bring a Meal to Sunday Dinner Church

Support campus ministry and students in Greeley for the spring semester by signing up to bring a meal for our Sunday evening Dinner Church gatherings. These meals are a weekly anchor in our community, and students look forward each week to eating together. Your help providing the food for these meals makes this time together possible. Thank you! Find more details and open dates on our Meal Train page:

<https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/ynk9ey/updates/lm0dw6>

If you are able, please plan to eat with us!



PRAYER & CARE

Always Say A Prayer Team



The Prayer Team is here for you. If you have a request, you can fill out a prayer card and leave it in the box at the back of the church or contact anyone on the prayer team or call the church office with your request. We are keeping you all in prayer, especially during this time of transition.

Roma Arithson Connie Deines
Sharrol Bernahl Diane Filipe
Janet Willis

ANNUAL MEETING ELECTION RESULTS

Council			
Candidate	Term Length	Term Expire	
Janet Crespin	2-year-term	Jan. 2028	1
Katy Sickles	1-year-term	Jan. 2027	2

With these shorter-term lengths we are hoping to fill positions which will be followed by 3-year-terms. The plan is to have people serving in staggered terms which will allow for normal rotation of council members.

Nominating Committee			
	3-year-term	Jan. 2029	1

Audit Committee			
	3-year-term	Jan. 2029	1

Synod Representative – Male			
Stan Elmquist	2-year-term	Jan. 2028	1

EFTF			
Amy Herold	3-year-term	Jan. 2029	1

CONGREGATIONAL INFORMATION

Audio/Visual (AV) Committee

An audio/visual (AV) committee was formed to determine how best to leverage the grant our congregation received. Committee members include: Pete Budde, Matt Denman, Stan Elmquist, John Larson, and Lelyn Larson.

To date, the committee has met twice to outline several goals of the project, including:

- Leverage the existing AV equipment we already have
- Improve sound quality of live stream and recorded services
- Display select visual content to the entire congregation in the sanctuary
- Explore range of solutions potentially including mounted cameras, mics, and TV monitors/screens in the sanctuary
- Eliminate waste in printing (hardcopy) materials, e.g., bulletins
- Potentially replace existing speakers (more aesthetic and subtle)
- Add presentation capabilities in the Fellowship Hall

There is progress on receiving bids from a number of vendors to meet the above requirements. All estimates will consider the recurring maintenance & staffing costs in final proposals. Next step, after the holiday season, is to summarize options and present them to the congregation for consideration.

Please reach out to Pete Budde if you have any questions in the interim.

CHURCH COUNCIL



NAME	COMMITTEE
Budde, Cindy	Secretary
Clausen, Cheryl	
Crespin, Janet	
Elmquist, Julie	President
Johnson, John	
Larson, John	Vice President
Sickles, Katy	

EFTF –Endowment Foundation Trust Fund

The Endowment Foundation Trust Fund (EFTF) uses interest earned on the donations in the trust fund to support special needs and work of the church that is not covered by the church budget. If you have a special need in mind, please submit a request for fund disbursement. The EFTF Committee considers requests quarterly. Please see an EFTF Committee member if you have questions or pick up a request form from the EFTF mailbox in the church office.

Committee members: Janet Crespin, Amy Herold, Elaine Holbrook, Janet Johnson

GIA Clothing Bank



Several Greeley-area churches sponsor and help operate the Greeley Interfaith Assn. Clothing Bank, located at 228 N. 9th Ave., Greeley.

The hours open are 10:00 a.m.– 2:00 p.m., Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.

The Clothing Bank accepts gently used items of clothing and sells them to the public at a reasonable cost. Proceeds of the sales cover operating expenses and then go toward community scholarships and grants.

Volunteers are always needed. Volunteers sort clothing, price the clothes, place on the racks, and check out customers at the cash register. Volunteers also receive a discount for clothing purchases when they work.

See Julie Elmquist, Cindy Thompson, Brenda Turnwall or Katy Sickles for more information. Love to see you there.

CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

Council Highlights

- Fisher Landscaping has been retained to fix displaced patio pavers
- Giving Tree Mission collected \$150.00 for the Weld Food Bank and 234 lbs of clothing for Serve 6.8
- Council members will be installed during worship on 2/1/26

Please join us for our next meeting on
Tuesday, February 10th @ 6:30 p.m.

Tied in Faith...
Will meet on Tuesday, February 3,
Thursday, February 19 &
Saturday, February 28



Women of the ELCA

Our logo—with the cross, water and a white lily—identifies women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as children of God; baptized, forgiven, adopted into God's family, full of grace and hope in eternal life. It is a reminder of the growth, beauty, and vitality that rises out of that life-giving baptismal water. It is also a reminder of the mission of the church to "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).



FE BR U ARY

2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:00 am-Youth Group 9:15 am-Bible Study 10:00 am-Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am-Holy Communion	2 Common Sense Kleaning—Annex 3 9:00 am—Tied in Faith	4	5	6	7	
8 9:15 am-Bible Study 10:00 am-Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am-Holy Communion 11:30 am-Prayer Team	9 Common Sense Kleaning—Church 9:30 am—2:00 pm—ILC at GIA Clothing Bank	10 6:30 pm—Council Meeting	11	12	13	14
15 9:15 am-Bible Study 9:45 am-Birthday Coffee for Don Peterson 10:30 am-Holy Communion	16 Common Sense Kleaning—Annex President's Day Church Offices Closed	17	18 Ash Wednesday Service 7:00 pm	19	20	21
22 First Sunday in Lent 9:15 am-Bible Study 10:00 am-Coffee Fellowship 10:30 am-Holy Communion	23 Common Sense Kleaning—Church 9:30 am—2:00 pm—ILC at GIA Clothing Bank	24	25 Mid-week Lenten Service 6:00 pm followed by Soup Supper	26	27	28 9:00 am—Tied in Faith

Thanks to our Volunteers!

February 2026

February 1:	
Greeter:	Vera Sylvester
Ushers:	Ron & Cindy Thompson
Assisting Minister:	Julie Elmquist
Lector:	Luke Larson, Jack Larson
Communion Setup:	Cindy Thompson
Communion Ass't:	Marvin Deines
Tellers:	Marvin & Connie Deines
February 8:	
Greeter:	Vera Sylvester
Ushers:	Matt & Molly Ward
Assisting Minister:	Julie Elmquist
Lector:	Molly Ward
Communion Setup:	Molly Ward
Tellers:	Vera Sylvester, Brenda Turnwall
February 15:	
Greeter:	Julie Elmquist
Ushers:	John Johnson & Sally Stewart
Assisting Minister:	Cindy Budde
Lector:	Pete Budde
Communion Setup:	Sue Morse
Tellers:	Linda Sample, Janet Johnson
February 22:	
Greeter:	Julie Elmquist
Ushers:	Katy Sickles, Juan Cruz
Assisting Minister:	Janet Willis
Lector:	Janessa Padilla
Communion Setup:	Linda Cruz
Tellers:	Janet Crespin

CONTACT INFORMATION

Bridge Pastor:	Pastor Bill Embree	
Secretary:	Denise Pollard Stricker	970-352-3003
Office Hours:	M —Th 9:00 am to 12:00 pm Offices closed on Fridays	
Executive Council:		
President:	Julie Elmquist	
Vice President:	John Johnson	
Secretary:	Cindy Budde	
Treasurer:	Connie Deines	
Financial Secretary:	Bob Morse	