



April 2026



First Lutheran Church
240 W. Hardanger Gate
Lee, IL 60530
815.824.2356

The Parish Voice

A Newsletter of Heart of Illinois Lutheran Parish

Immanuel Lutheran Church
398 Church Road
Compton, IL 61318
815.539.6567

It is Holy Time at HOILP and Throughout the Church Universal

You are probably receiving this newsletter during Holy Week. This, of course, is the most sacred time of the year for Christians. Beginning with the fanfare of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we follow Jesus' ascension not to a throne, but to the cross.

The Holy Week experience started at HOILP yesterday as we began our Palm/Passion Sunday service with fanfare and concluded with hearing the full passion narrative. If you did not get a chance to join us in person, make sure you check out the worship video. Twenty-one members of HOILP provided a moving presentation of the events of Jesus' final week before crucifixion. You can find it on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@hoilp.

Each week in worship, as part of the communion liturgy, I recite the words, "In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread..." Well, Maundy Thursday is that night in which he was betrayed and with churches across the globe, we will gather for worship that evening with two key elements as part of the service: sharing in the Lord's Supper and the symbolic stripping of the altar. That will take place at Immanuel at 7 p.m. on Thursday with the worship video being released simultaneously for those unable to gather with us in person.

As we don't make communion part of our worship videos, it will be made available Friday during the day for those unable to join us on Thursday evening. On Good Friday, there will be drop-in communion at Immanuel. Just stop anytime between 11 am and 3 pm, and Pastor Jeff will be there to celebrate communion with you.

In addition, a devotional video will be available on Good Friday that has been created in collaboration with other pastoral leaders in the area. You're encouraged to watch that at your convenience on Friday or Saturday.

Of course, all of this leads up to our Easter celebration this coming Sunday. The HOILP Easter morning schedule has become quite familiar – worship then breakfast at Immanuel, breakfast then worship at Easter. Thus far, Pastor Jeff has been the only one who goes to both breakfasts, but his annual

Holy Week 2026

Maundy Thursday

April 2, 2026

7:00 p.m. – Immanuel Lutheran

worship video will go live via YouTube simultaneously

Good Friday

April 3, 2026

HOILP Good Friday Devotion Video

will go live early morning hours so you can watch it anytime

11 a.m. – 3 p.m. – Drop in Communion @ Immanuel

Easter Sunday

April 5, 2026

7:30 a.m. Sunrise Worship @ Immanuel

8:30 a.m. Easter Breakfast @ Immanuel

9:30 a.m. Easter Breakfast @ First

10:30 a.m. Easter Worship @ First

ELCA Bishop Yehiel Curry - Easter Message

filmed at Immanuel

March 31, 2026

Available via @ www.elca.org & www.youtube.com/@elca

invitation for people to join him at both remains open.

We have a special addition to our Easter festivities this year. Recall last month there was a big writeup regarding ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry's visit to Immanuel to record his Easter message. Well, don't forget to make that part of your Easter this year. That video is scheduled to be made public on Tuesday and will be available at both the ELCA website and YouTube channel. Pastor Jeff suggests that clips of it may be shared on Easter morning as well.



ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry filming his Easter Message at Immanuel.

Jeff's Jottings: April Showers of Easter Flowers

Many of you have provided lilies and/or tulips to decorate the chancels of Immanuel and First on Easter Sunday. Thank you in advance to all who have done that this year. There is nothing like coming in Easter morning and seeing all the fresh flowers and colors adorning our worship space.

Flowers have long been a symbol of Easter. And it makes complete sense, especially for perennials. For they lie dormant all winter, as if dead. Then come spring, which of course is right around Easter, they bloom with new life. Resurrection!

The picture at the right is one I took many years ago – maybe over twenty years ago now. But it still remains one of the favorite ones I've captured all time. It shows the crocus that sprung forth each year in our yard in Princeton. When Alex was little, once they spotted the crocus, they would come inside shouting, "Mommy, the pretty purple flowers are back! The pretty purple flowers are back!" I doubt that it is pure coincidence that to this day, purple is their favorite color. These crocus were always a sign of spring, of new life, of resurrection to our family.

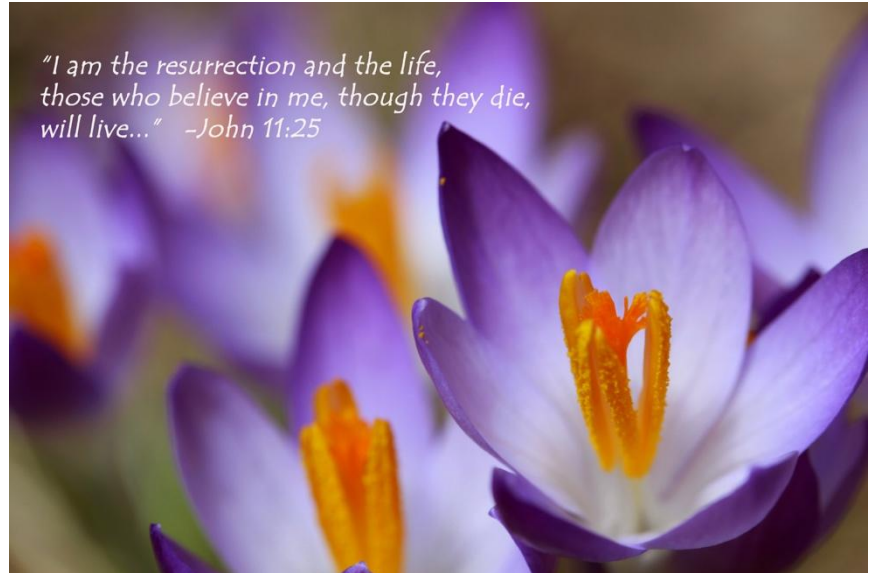
This picture was also one of the very first to which I attached a scripture passage and shared as part of a sermon. I think I shared the story of these flowers and handed out prints of this picture on Easter Sunday at HOILP some years ago. In fact, you may see stacks of this image sitting around at church. Feel free to grab one, take it home and put it up on your fridge. Let it remind you of the new life we receive in Christ's resurrection.

But I got to thinking – I'm not the only one who has pictures of flowers. Many of you do as well. We can't help but grab our cameras (or our phones) and snap a



picture of the incredible colors and designs God has built into Creation. As I thought about that, I hatched one of my crazy ideas. I'm calling it "PJ's April Shower of Easter Flowers."

Here's how it works. If you have a good shot or two (or three, four, or five) of flowers, I invite you to make two prints of that picture. One of them is to



be given away (I'll say more about that in a second) and one is to be posted at church.

On Sundays April 12, 19, and 26, bring those photos with you to worship. You will be posting one of them up on our designated April Shower of Easter Flowers display area. At Immanuel, that will be the windows on the southside of my office. At First, the location is still to be determined. (BTW – this will be news to Debbie at Immanuel and Kristen at First as they read this newsletter, so yeah, my plans aren't fully worked out just yet. ☹️) It will be interesting to see how many different colors and types of flowers we come up with.

So, what about the one to be given away. Well, the final two weeks of April I will be away on vacation (looking for flowers and other things to take capture with my camera). I tell you this not so that you have reason not to come to church – but rather the opposite. I'm hoping more of you show up than if I were here. On those two Sundays, Pastor Kathy Burkheimer will be leading worship and preaching in my absence. She knows nothing about my scheme. As you are leaving worship on those days, I'd like you to tell her "Happy Easter!" and hand her your second print – a visual image of the resurrection.

So is this a crazy idea? Perhaps. But it is just something that formed in your pastor's wild brain to remind everyone that the good news of Easter is all around us.

See you in church on Sunday!

PJ

Worship

Reading on the Road 2

Last summer we used videos of people reading the scripture lessons from all over the world. We invited people to let us know when they were going to be traveling near or far, sent them with a scripture lesson or two, and had them use their phone to read the lesson somewhere “on the road.”



That was a popular addition to our worship so we will be doing that again this year. But in order to take advantage of the winter trips you all take, we are introducing it much earlier. If you are able to help with this project, just sign up at church or call the Immanuel office.

We already have a set of lessons heading to New Zealand. But you need not be traveling somewhere so far away or as exotic. Reading from somewhere nearby like Starved Rock State Park, Navy Pier in Chicago, or among the rolling hills outside Galena, IL would be just as effective. As PJ says, “Down the road’ counts as ‘on the road.’ Either way, we are reminded that the word of God goes with us wherever we may be.”

LENT & EASTER NOISY OFFERING AT IMMANUEL

It's back! Help change the world with your change.
Designated to ELCA World Hunger.

2026 4th Thursday Filming

Please consider joining us as we record footage for our video worship services. We gather monthly to record the liturgy and readings for the upcoming month/season. This has proved to be an efficient and enjoyable way to provide this valuable ministry.

Date	Readers	Singers
April	Do Not Meet	Do Not Meet
5/21/26	Summer 1 Liturgy & Readings	Summer 1 Liturgy & Songs
6/25/26	Summer 2 Liturgy & Readings	Summer 2 Liturgy & Songs
7/23/26	Season of Creation Liturgy & Readings	Season of Creation Liturgy & Songs
8/27/26	Autumn Liturgy & Readings	Autumn Liturgy & Songs
9/16 & 9/17	Advent Liturgy & Readings	Advent Liturgy & Songs
10/22/26	Christmas Liturgy & Readings	Christmas Liturgy & Songs
12/3/26	Epiphany Liturgy & Readings	Epiphany Liturgy & Songs

Sunday Fellowship

Please consider providing simple little treats for fellowship time following worship at Immanuel or before worship at First. Sign up today!

2026 Worship Team Schedule

- January 8, 2026 ✓
- February 5, 2026 ✓
- March 5, 2026 ✓
- April 9, 2026 – *if needed*
 - May 7, 2026
 - June 4, 2026
- July 2, 2026 – *if necessary*
 - August 6, 2026
 - September 3, 2026
 - October 1, 2026
 - November 5, 2026
- December 3, 2026 - *if necessary*

Ways to Share HOILP Worship

- Share our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@hoilp
 - Ask people to subscribe to YouTube channel
 - Share and like the weekly Facebook post to worship
 - Forward weekly email about worship to others.
- And most importantly...*
- Invite people to worship with you on Sunday morning

Don't forget to **Share the Link to the HOILP Video service each week.** The simple click of the share button on FaceBook or posting the link to your other social media is a great way to share the gospel with our friends and neighbors.

Immanuel News

The Uplift & Outreach Team Reboot

The Uplift & Outreach Team (formerly committee) was approved by the Immanuel Lutheran council at the March meeting. Jill Hoelzer, council sponsor, is seeking new team members who are interested in creating activities dedicated to reaching out to the community and providing uplifting experiences for our congregation members. The team's first Outreach project will be to rebrand the church's website and social media presence in the community, hoping to make it more modern and accessible to our congregation and those outside the church. We will consider how new community members learn about Immanuel Lutheran and how we might better reach out to them. The team will then bring their suggestion to the council before executing change. The team's second project will be to brainstorm and plan a new uplifting activity of their design for our congregation to happen this year. If you would like to be a part of this new team, speak with Jill at church or come to our first introductory meeting after church on Sunday, April 26, where we will decide when we would like to meet again, who will bring snacks when we do and will brainstorm new ideas for our first Uplift project.

Council Highlights – March 19, 2026

- The General Treasury ending balance on February 28, 2026 was \$1,912.82. There was a net loss of the month of (\$5,874.11).
- \$6,000.00 was transferred from the AMDEX Account to the General Treasury in February to pay operating expenses. An insurance premium of \$5,365.47 was paid in February.
- The New Building Fund CD will be cashed in the week of March 22 and the money will be deposited in the AMDEX Account.
- Pastor Jeff hosted a meeting with pastors of several Lutheran churches in the area on March 19 to discuss shared ministry. The next meeting is scheduled for May 5.
- Jill Hoelzer volunteered to initiate restarting the Uplift & Outreach Team.

Immanuel General Treasury – February 2026

	Month	YTD
Receipts for February	\$14,857.33	
Expenses for February	\$20,731.44	
Receipts YTD		\$29,452.83
Expenses YTD		\$39,930.47
Net/(Loss)	(\$5,874.11)	(\$10,477.64)

Weekly need for budget: \$4611.00

February average weekly offering: \$3180.00

Let's keep up the good work! Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully submitted – Harlan G. Eames

Northern Illinois Synod Assembly

June 12-13, 2026 at Augustana College

We The 130+ congregations of the Northern Illinois Synod (ELCA) gather annually to do the work of the larger Church. Each congregation gets to send at least one female and one male voting member plus their pastor/rostered leader. We are still in need of a male voting member as well as alternates. The deadline to register is May 12. Contact any council member or Pastor Jeff if you are able and interested.

In-Kind Offering for Synod Assembly

This year, the Synod Assembly In-Kind Offering will support the vital work of **Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI)**. LSSI served over 62,000 people last year alone! They provide critical programs for Illinois residents each year, including:

- foster care,
- mental health services,
- alcohol and drug treatment,
- affordable senior housing,
- services for people with developmental disabilities,
- home care for seniors,
- and services that help families who have been impacted by incarceration.

Congregations are invited to participate by donating \$25 gift cards from grocery stores, gas stations, and restaurants which are brought to Synod Assembly. Your generosity directly equips this life-changing work. The following stores have locations in NIS which LSSI staff and clients use most frequently:

Retail/Grocery: Walmart, Target, Amazon, Walgreens, CVS, Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Aldi, Hy-Vee, Jewel-Osco

Gas Stations: Casey's General Store, Shell, Mobil, BP

Restaurants: McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, Wendy's, Culver's

If you would like to contribute to this in-kind offering, please give the gift cards to Debbie or deposit them in the box in her office by June 7 to be taken to the Synod Assembly.

Church Office Hours

Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Church office: 815-539-6567

email: immanuelutherancompton@live.com

First News

Council Highlights - March 15, 2026

- The tentative date for the Lee Community service is July 5. Council is working out the details/logistics.
- Microsoft Office Suite software for the church computer was approved for purchase.
- Renting to current parsonage tenants for an additional year was approved.
- There are no attendees from First for the 2026 Synod Assembly.
- Evaluated church lot mowing expense and decided to keep current contract as is.
- Benevolence for May/June will go to Gideons International.
- Next meeting will be held on Sunday, May 3, due to conflict with the original May 17 date.

Please remember that the **BENEVOLENCE BOX** is located at the back of the church sanctuary. Check the display next to the box to see which organization, family, or individual is the current recipient. Donations are collected over a two-month period and then given to the designated recipient. A new recipient is then chosen for the next two-month period. Ask any council member if you have questions and thank you for your support and generosity!

First Lutheran Members – please remember that your invited and welcome to be part of the recording for our worship videos. We'd love to see you at 4th Week Filming.

WELCA

From the President's Desk – Sarah Pfeifer

- **LWR Personal Care Kits:** light-medium weight dark color bath towels, 4-5 oz. size bar of bath soap. Place items in LWR tote in room next to the office. **Thank you!**
- **WELCA Spring Retreat**, "Raising Our Voices: Proclaiming the Gospel When the World is Loud", Program & Worship led by Pr. Laurie Hensley, Bethany ELCA, Woodhull, IL, Saturday, April 25, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at LOMC, Oregon, IL. Cost: \$30.00 per person. Scholarships available. Registration deadline is April 1st. Contact Sarah Pfeifer.
- Quilting continues. Check weekly announcements for dates.

N.I.C.E. Center Update

Food/Miscellaneous Items: Saltines, canned fruit, canned pork & beans or baked beans, chili.

HOILP Lily & Tulip Donations

Dwight & Margaret Frick – IMO loved ones
Mary Ellen Schroeder – To all my family dwelling with Jesus
Sarah Pfeifer – IMO loved ones
Roger & Carol Kern – IMO loved ones
Donna Ganz-Bauer – IMO loved ones
Connie Williams – IMO loved ones
Holly Phalen – IMO my mother
Karen Sterchi – IMO Tim Walzer
Pastor Jeff & Theresa Schlesinger – IMO loved ones
John & Jill Hoelzer – IMO Marilyn Hoelzer
Sarah Goetz – To the Glory of God
Minor Avery – IMO loved ones
Neal Rogers Family – IMO loved ones
Kirk & Kathy Ross and family – IMO Tom & Janet Derrico & Darwin & Margaret Ross
Tom & Kim Menzel – IMO loved ones
Rosina Bittner – To the Glory of God IMO loved ones
Bryan & Kristen Edecker – IMO Ed & Joan Benner
Simpson Family – IMO Cheryl Simpson
IMO loved ones
Mike Davis – IMO loved ones
Jim & Chris Johnson – IMO Frank & Alvina Johnson
Alex Johnson – IMO Mary Ellen Prestegaard
Dave & Janell Koroscik – IMO loved ones
Rita Thompson – IMO loved ones

In total, 6 lilies and 15 tulips were donated at Immanuel and 4 lilies and 12 tulips at First.

Thanks to all who helped adorn our Easter chancel!

Heart of Illinois Lutheran Parish

**Immanuel Lutheran Church
398 Church Rd. – Compton, IL 61318**

(First Lutheran – 240 Hardanger Gate – Lee, IL 60530)

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WORSHIP SCHEDULE

**April 5 – Immanuel (7:30) (Easter)
First (10:30) (Easter)**
**April 12 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**
**April 19 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**
**April 26 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**

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Pastor Jeff Schlesinger
(Cell) 815/878-4503
E-mail: photo.pastor1965@gmail.com

You can also check us out on Facebook!