



March 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

ELCA Presiding Bishop Visits Immanuel

Bishop Yehiel Curry, the presiding bishop of the ELCA, came to Immanuel Lutheran on Thursday, February 26th to use the Immanuel cemetery and sanctuary as the setting for his Easter message. That message, which will be aired during Holy Week, will be broadcast via social media outlets and the ELCA website.

Bishop Curry was elected last summer at the triennial ELCA Churchwide Assembly. Previously the bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the ELCA, Curry was installed as the ELCA Presiding Bishop in October, succeeding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton as the fifth bishop in the history of the ELCA.

The ELCA media team arrived early, setting lights and cameras in the sanctuary to record the Bishop's message. But when Bishop Curry arrived later in the morning, the crew spent most of its time utilizing a drone and an on-ground video camera to shoot footage in the cemetery that will introduce the video.

The gospel trio that the bishop's office invited to be part of the video arrived just on time for lunch. Lunch was provided by Immanuel for Bishop Curry as well as the four media and communication personnel accompanying him, the gospel trio, special guests from our Northern Illinois Synod Bishop Stacie Fidler and DEM Josh Ebener, Pastor Elise Rothfusz from St. John's Lutheran in Mendota, and Immanuel members Pastor Jeff Schlesinger and council members Brad Ehlers (president) and Carol Kern, and Immanuel secretary Debbie Rebholz. A big thank you to Sarah Pfeifer, Mary Ellen Schroeder, and Connie Williams who coordinated and served the meal. A special shout out also to Bob & LuAnn Kromm for responding to Pastor Jeff's last-minute, panicked request to provide treats for people as they arrived.

During lunch, Immanuel presented Bishop Curry with a quilt from our WELCA, Pastor Jeff promising the bishop that "...as you begin your term as bishop you will be wrapped in our prayers just as we wrap you in this quilt." A tee-shirt which was made through the ministry at Bishop Curry's former congregation was then presented to Pastor Jeff in appreciation of Immanuel's hospitality

and partnership in ministry. "I want you to know," Bishop Curry said as he addressed those at lunch, "our coming here was not by accident. We want our congregations in the rural areas to know that you not only have a voice in the ELCA, but you have a seat at the table as we go forth in mission."

The afternoon was spent in the sanctuary filming Curry's Easter reflection integrated with the music of the trio which emerges right from his words. The media team, which were the first to arrive, stayed afterwards to get additional drone footage of the church and property, much of which will be made available to Immanuel for their use.

"It will be interesting to see what the final video looks like," said Pastor Jeff. "So many aspects of the Church were blended today: rural and urban ministries, people of varied backgrounds and colors. I'm already formulating thoughts on how today's experience might be incorporated into my own Easter Message."



ELCA Bishop Yehiel Curry being filmed at Immanuel. See page 2 for more photos of the day.

Lent & Holy Week 2026

Wednesdays During Lent

12:00 p.m. – Matthew over Lunch

Maundy Thursday

April 2, 2026

7:00 p.m. – Immanuel Lutheran

Good Friday

April 3, 2026

11 a.m. – 3 p.m. – Drop in Communion @ Immanuel
HOILP Good Friday Devotion Video

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



PJ makes sure he gets a selfie to send to his colleagues, friends, and family



Sarah Pfeifer wraps Bishop Curry in one of WELCA's quilts.



A meal was provided complete with Ziggy's chicken and some of our homemade sides and desserts



PJ is presented with a tee-shirt which says "Straight Outta Compton"

ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry

Visits Immanuel to film his Easter Message



Bishop says to those gathered for lunch, "You have a seat at the table."



The Bishop's Easter message will begin with a contemplative walk in the cemetery and conclude with his words leading into singing the Easter proclamation - "ALLELUIA!"



Bingo Blitz 2026

The third annual Bingo Blitz took place at Immanuel on February 21st and a good time was had by all. Though gold medals weren't awarded, people won a variety of prizes: some of them edible, some of them whimsical, some of them decorative, some of them stress relieving, and some very practical.

The youth took turns calling numbers while the participants fretted over their bingo cards seeking that vertical, horizontal, or diagonal line that allowed them to shout the term of victory: BINGO!

Various bingo games were played such as four corners, postage stamp, cross, and full card. But the most popular was probably bingo blitz, when play was continued on cards even after the first bingo was achieved. The result was three, four, and even five bingos achieved on each call.

One bingo blitz, which resulted in a large number of winners, was followed by a "losers round." The only participants in this round were those who had not yet achieved a bingo. There weren't many in this round after the bingo blitz, but both the current pastor and a former pastor who were present found themselves competing in the losers round.

In addition to bingo, plenty of food was consumed including sloppy joes, hot dogs, chips, and cookies.

But the most important part of the event is that **mounds of food were and \$211 was collected for the NICE food pantry.**

A special thanks to the confirmation and high school youth who conducted the event and to all the participants who donated food and money to help those in need.



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
3/26/26	Easter Season Readings	Easter Songs
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

Council Highlights – February 19, 2026

- The balance in the General Treasury on January 31, 2026 was \$1,786.93 for a net loss of (\$4,603.53) for the month.
- Bishop Yehiel Curry is planning to come to Immanuel on February 26 to film his Easter message here.
- Eric Rebholz has volunteered to be the LYO leader.
- The budgeted amount for insurance for 2026 was \$19,000.00. The actual premium has since been received and it's \$19,780.00.
- The council approved the updated Gift & Memorial List, as presented by the Memorial Team.

Annual Meeting Highlights - January 25, 2026

- It was approved to move the remaining \$22,820.73 of farm income from 2025 to the AMDEX account to be used for operating expenses.
- It was also approved to fully close out the New Building Fund and move that money to the AMDEX account to help the projected 2026 shortfall.
- The approved 2026 Northern Illinois Synod commitment is \$20,000.00 with a maximum of \$18,000.00 being paid from the Farm Account.
- The second congregational vote was taken regarding extend council term limits to a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms. The majority voted in favor.
- Jill Hoelzer and Andy Kromm were elected as new council members.

Church Office Hours

Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Church office: 815-539-6567

email: immanuelutherancompton@live.com

Immanuel General Treasury – January 2026

	Month	YTD
Receipts for January	\$14,595.50	
Expenses for January	\$19,199.03	
Receipts YTD		\$14,595.50
Expenses YTD		\$19,199.03
Net/(Loss)	(\$4,603.53)	(\$4,603.53)

Weekly need for budget: \$4611.00

January average weekly offering: \$3217.00

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

Respectfully submitted – Harlan G. Eames

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 if interested.
- Quilting continues. Check weekly announcements for dates.

First News

Council Highlights - January 18, 2026

- The 2026 budget was reviewed and prepared for presentation to the congregation at the February 8 annual meeting.
- The need for Microsoft Office Suite software for the church computer was discussed. This will be researched soon; a purchase is needed.
- Plans for the January 25 brunch at Immanuel were finalized.
- Benevolence for January/February 2026 was changed to Heather Galbreath. March/April will go to Lee Lions Club.

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!

N.I.C.E. Center Update

Food/Miscellaneous Items: Spaghetti O's, Hamburger Helper, boxed potatoes (scalloped, no mashed), ramen noodles, things to fill Easter baskets.

Heart of Illinois Lutheran Parish

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

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

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
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WORSHIP SCHEDULE

**March 1 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**

**March 8 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**

**March 15 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**

**March 22 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**

**March 29 – Immanuel (8:30)
First (10:30)**

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You can also check us out on Facebook!