

THE IMMANUEL MESSENGER



DECEMBER 2025-JANUARY 2026

Volume 40, Issue 4



From Your Pastor

Christmas decorations, Christmas concerts, Christmas shopping specials, Christmas music—we can't escape it—our attention is driven to focus upon Christmas, which, as I print this article is one month away. But wait! (Such an irritating and revolting word!) We follow a different calendar. Yes, certainly Christmas is a month away, but first The Church Year Calendar blesses us with the gift of Advent.

Advent is a four-week season that focuses on coming. In fact, the word “Advent” means coming. Particularly, the four weeks before Christmas are used as a time dedicated to the thoughtful, prayerful, preparation to celebrate Jesus’ first coming in His birth, a season which also has in longer focus Jesus’ second coming at the end of time.

The Church Year then, and the season of Advent particularly, refuses to rush. Just the opposite—Advent calls us to wait! Advent calls us to watch, to prepare, to long, to hope. Advent directs us to slow down that our hearts and minds may prayerfully and repentantly reflect on why Jesus had to come in the first place: “to save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

We live in a time that has nearly erased the word *wait* from our vocabulary. Packages we order arrive very quickly. People living in close proximity to Amazon distribution centers may even receive their package the same day! Answers appear instantly on our screens with a tap or swipe. We are being trained to expect immediacy—and so, we are negatively conditioned to grow anxious, frustrated, or even despairing when our desires are not met on demand. And then comes Advent. Not only is wait not erased, but **WAIT** is written in big, bold, letters.

Please note: it is the world around us that is driving us to hurry; it is the Word of the Lord that calls us to wait. This tension brings Advent’s riches into clear focus: the story of God’s people has always been one of waiting—not passive waiting, but faithful, watchful, hope-anchored, waiting. God’s Old Testament people waited for centuries upon centuries for the promised Savior to arrive. Zechariah and Elizabeth (and countless generations) waited for answered prayer. Mary waited in

expectation as she conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and the promised Child within her grew. And now we wait for Christ to return, even as we confess that He has already come and comes to us daily through His Word and comes to us through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Throughout the changing seasons of life we are called to wait upon the Lord and the fulfilling of His promises.

But it is hard. Waiting clearly reveals we are not in control. It surfaces anxiety, restlessness, and the aching guilt of unfinished things. It is good that the Holy Spirit calls to us in this reflective waiting to turn from our sins, or we will just keep hurrying on our way pretending everything is O.K., when it is not, for we are often rushing away from our Savior rather than toward Him.

Allow the Holy Spirit to do this work to draw You to the One who came to be our Savior, to meet us with His forgiving grace and every gift for our deep waits for healing, for reconciliation, for clarity, for stability, for answers to prayers long prayed. In Advent God is calling us from the pressure to “fix it now” and redirecting our gaze to the God who comes precisely to those who wait in hope. His timing is perfect. He is never forced by the speed of our world. God is patient with us. Advent is our reminder that waiting is not failure, it is a formation as we wait upon our Lord, who always delivers for our saving good.

Join us for our midweek Advent worship! Allow these weeks of Advent to slow you down, deepen your longing for Christ’s daily coming for you, and anchor you again the promise that Christ has come, Christ is coming, and Christ will come again.

I am indebted to an article from Lutheran Family Service written by The Rev. Nathan Grewe for church workers for the direction and some of the content in this article. Please join me in the humble, holy, goodness of waiting upon the Lord! Psalm 27:14.

Your fellow servant for Jesus,

Pastor Mahnken

Poinsettia Tree

If you would like to donate a poinsettia for our memorial poinsettia "tree", please call the Church Office 676-2235. Let us know if it is being donated in memory of someone.



The church will be purchasing all poinsettias in order to keep them identical. Cost is \$12 each.

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ANGEL TREE DONATIONS



This year our Angel Tree will be in support of the Sioux City Gospel Mission.

Their primary needs are blankets, quilts, hats, mittens, sweatshirts, socks, boots, underwear (new) and the following food items: canned vegetables and fruits, soups, canned tuna or chicken, coffee and pasta.

Please take an angel from the Christmas tree in the Narthex to help brighten someone's Christmas, thank you!

Our congregation will support TAP (Temporary Aid Program) Through the month of December

Many necessities can't be purchased with Food Stamps such as paper towels, toilet paper, soap, disposable diapers, shampoo and laundry detergent.

At this time TAP is particularly in need of: sugar, flour, soups, crackers, cooking oil, tuna, ketchup, canned tomatoes, tomato juice, macaroni, spaghetti and spaghetti sauce, hamburger helper, tuna helper, complete pancake mix and syrup, laundry soup, dish soap, toilet paper, diapers and personal hygiene products. Please be very sure that the items you donate have good expiration dates as often TAP has received items that have already expired and that makes more work for them as they can't put them out on the shelves.

Cash donations are also very helpful as they enable us to buy in quantity and take advantage of sales.

Donations can be sent to: TAP, PO Box 121, Denison, IA 51442. TAP is located at 210 South 25th Street, just north of El Rey Mexican Grill. It is open and staffed by volunteers Monday and Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

There will be a donation box in the church Narthex through the month.



Please remember these members at Christmas:

Gracewell: Ruth Reincke and Delores Sonksen

Heritage Heights (Eventide apts.): Donna Koch

Silveridge: Janet Beeck, Janice Gierstorf, Don Namanny

Shut-ins at Home: Lillie Petersen and Carolyn Schroeder



IOWA LUTHERAN SCHOOL
TUITION ORGANIZATION
"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me...'"

ILSTO would love to award more financial assistance but we need your help to do so. There certainly is a great need in our LCMS schools so families can continue to send their children to Unity Ridge and Iowa Lutheran Elementary/Secondary School across the state.

As you begin thoughts of end of year giving, RMD distributions, and other tax planning, please consider a donation to the Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization. Your donation can be cash, RMD, appreciated stock, or even grain. The 75% Iowa tax credit is the largest tax credit in Iowa and there are also added tax benefits to C-Corporations if that includes you or someone you know. For more information about ILSTO go online to www.iowalutheransto.com or call Dewey Torkelson at 712-260-2991.



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To be included in your giving statements for 2025, gifts must be received in the Church Office by December 29, 2025.



Lowell & Julie Teut	December 7, 1984
Larry & Judy Jensen (50th)	December 12, 1975
Gerard & Mindi McKibbin	December 14, 2006
Doug & Stephanie Prussing	December 18, 2021
Matthew & Christine Wunschel	December 23, 1988
Gene & Lori Kragel	December 25, 1978
Jacob & Abby Macumber	December 30, 2017

Please notify the office of any omissions or corrections.



Wednesday Advent Worship

*This year our Midweek Advent Worship
will begin with caroling at 5:30 p.m.
Worship will begin at 5:45 p.m.*

Supper will be served following worship at 6:30 p.m.

December 3, 5:45 p.m.

“The Song of Zechariah” Luke 1:67-80

December 10, 5:45 p.m.

“The Song of Elizabeth” Luke 1:39-45

December 17, 5:45 p.m.

“The Song of Mary” Luke 1:46-56

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Worship

Candlelight Christmas Eve Worship
4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

“The Song of Angels—Peace” Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Day Worship
9 a.m.

“The Song of Angels—Hope” Luke 2:1-20

Our Christmas Day offering will go to Immanuel's Home Mission Fund.



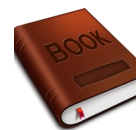


A decorative graphic for the January Anniversaries section. It features a blue ribbon tied in a bow at the top, forming a frame. Inside the frame, the words "January Anniversaries" are written in a blue, cursive script. Below the text are two overlapping gold hearts. The top heart contains a snowflake icon, and the bottom heart contains a palm tree icon.

Please notify the office of any omissions or corrections.

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From the Church Record Book



Baptized: *“Let the little children come unto Me....”*

Nora Lynn Schroeder, daughter of Caleb and Emily Schroeder, was baptized on November 30, 2025.

Marriages: “...and the two became one.”

Austin Freese and Jordyn Fredericks were married at Immanuel on November 8, 2025.

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Sunday School Christmas Service

Sunday, December 14, 9 a.m.

"To Us a Child Is Born"

Please mark your calendar to join us for this special worship opportunity, and plan to enjoy Sunday brunch together following the service.

The Sunday School is sponsoring the Christmas tree in the north Narthex. Please bring new or gently used toys to be given to area children. The last day to bring them will be Sunday, December 14.



ALL children will have practice Saturday, Dec. 13 from 9:00—12:00 a.m. Pizza will be served following this final dress rehearsal. We look forward to seeing everyone!

~ THE LWML
INVITES ALL LADIES ~



We held our regular meeting on November 6th. We decided to have a Christmas Brunch in December for the women of our congregation. They have given so much in many different ways to benefit our church and we thought a time of food and fellowship would be enjoyable.

With the success of the Calf Show dinner, we are able to set aside \$3,000 to be used when needed for a church project.

As we have done previously, it was decided to donate to a seminary student. With the growing shortage of pastors, we are happy to be able to help Jonathan Schulz, son of Pastor Steve and Sue Schulz. He is in his first year at the seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

We are also making donations locally to Crossroads, LFS and TAP to help those who are in need of their services at a difficult time in their life.

We continue to support District and National Missions with our Mites each month. Also, visits were made to Immanuel members in care facilities.

—Submitted by Donna Harm, Secretary



A Walk Through Bethlehem
Wednesday, December 17, from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

All are welcome to come experience the sights,
sounds, and smells of Bethlehem.

Faith Bible Church
305 Sioux Street
Mapleton, IA

From Your library . . .
“Have we got a book for you!”



Deep in the Heart
By Gilbert Morris PhD

For those of you who like western novels, we have a rather large inventory of this genre written by Gilbert Morris PhD. Mr. Morris has written over 180 novels and his ability to write about fictional characters and American history is amazing. As a former pastor and college professor, his ability to keep his readers attention is well worth experiencing.

Book I of the Lonestar Legacy entitled “Deep in the Heart” is the story of the Hardins, a family that came to Texas and how they fought for the land they had come to love. The Hardin family includes Jerusalem Ann who is willing to take whatever life dishes out in order to make a life for her family, Clay who finds himself protecting another man’s family, Jake, Bowie, and Julie, who would rather be free than respectable.

“Deep in the Heart” is the story of Comanches and fiestas, hunting parties and courting parties, of battles, massacres, and beautiful calm nights. It’s an unforgettable story of faith, love, and loyalty.

Be sure to read the entire series—Book II entitled “The Yellow Rose” is the continuing story of the Hardin family.

The library has been given many Christian books over the past few months and we appreciate your generosity. If we can use them and they are not duplicates, they are whisked onto our shelves. The latest donation given has been several “Chicken Soup for the Soul” books and they will soon be available for your use, among them are some just in time for the upcoming Christmas season.

—Submitted by Karen Wood

I know I have mentioned a few times about our selection of DVD’s but here’s another thought—even though there’s a lot of movie channels available like HBO, Starz, Tubi, or Prime, it’s pretty difficult to find Christian movies, Biblical movies, and even Christian, thought provoking, factual movies. If you still have a DVD player, think about a “movie night” and check out our movie selection in both libraries.



It's almost Thanksgiving and the preschool is busy making pilgrims, the Mayflower, and Native Americans. Yet, I know that by the time you are reading this, Christmas will be in full swing. The children have been practicing their Christmas songs in preparation for their December 4 program, and we will be celebrating the holidays for the next several weeks.

It's interesting to head into Christmas as an adult. While I love gift giving, decorating, and being with my family, it's worth the time to step back and see Christmas in lieu of creation, Easter, Pentecost and eternal life with Jesus. Apart, each of these holds significance in the life of a believer. Yet it is fun to view them from the perspective of the whole. If we go back to the beginning, Adam and Eve had this incredible life of intimacy with God. Can you imagine the Garden of Eden? It would have been amazing. The physical beauty in and of itself would have been stunning, but a life that had never been touched by sin is a "wow moment" worth taking a moment to reflect upon. How God loved (and still loves) His children! He loves us so much that He put a plan in place to restore intimacy with us.

Fast forward to Christmas. Imagine those wise men when they saw the star. They'd heard about the coming of the Christ child for years and here it was! The shepherds in the field when the sky filled with angels.

Mary and Joseph as they witnessed the birth of the Savior. Jesus had been born! The Restorer was now physically on earth! Jesus grows. He lives. He is crucified. He rises. He leaves earth to return to heaven yet sends us His Helper. We now have the Holy Spirit living inside of us. Just wow! It's all a piece of the whole, isn't it? It's all woven together and drawing us to a relationship with Him. We celebrate the coming of Christ knowing the incredible gift God is giving. We live with the anticipation of eternity some day. It's hard for my heart to even absorb it all. Yet I share it because it's amazing! It's beautiful! It's a gift of love from the Trinity to each of us. We are loved so very deeply.

I know this isn't a typical newsletter for me. However, as I sat down at the computer this seems to be what is spilling out this month. It is my prayer for you (and the children) that we spend time this Christmas embracing all God has given us. He has loved us from the moment He made us and will continue too until the moment He calls us home. I pray that this Christmas, you will enjoy Him. May you take time to sit at His feet and enjoy just being with Him. It will be well worth your time! I know I'm typing this in November, but from myself and John, we wish you an incredibly loved Christmas season.

Blessings,
Mrs. Gustafson





Joy and peace to you,
dearly loved members of our
Mission Central family.

As these special seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas approach, we rejoice in God's wonderful gift of salvation through Jesus! We also thank God for YOU and the work He has accomplished through you.

Because you have helped to send and support missionaries, last Christmas Eve 120 people on a beach in the Cayman Islands heard the true meaning of Christmas; and a 77-year-old man in Belize was invited to church for the very first time in his life; and unchurched people in Panama learned of Jesus in Vacation Bible School; and 54 ostracized albino children no longer live in a Tanzanian government institution with 500 others, but in a family-like group setting where they experience the love of Christ. Also, 100 participants from all over Cambodia (a nation that is only 2% Christian) received and studied their very own Bibles at our first ever national youth gathering there. Pray for these youth to be powerful witnesses to their Buddhist families. And more than 2,000 middle school students in Chiayi, Taiwan were taught Bible stories at Concordia Middle School. Only 1% of these students are Christian when they enroll, but over 10% are Christian when they graduate. One day these very children will celebrate with us around the throne of Jesus.

As we listen to these and other stories of our missionaries, we realize that there is a worldwide famine of God's truth. In some places, Christianity is completely unknown. In others, it is violently suppressed or mixed with pagan religions practices. In many, God's truth is distorted by false prophets adding requirements to God's forgiveness, or denying clear counter-cultural teachings of Scripture, or even preaching a fabricated gospel of earthly riches. Friends, we have the truth of God's Word and through your generosity our missionaries are proclaiming that truth—all over the world! As we send you this **one and only** annual mailing, we are deeply grateful to God for you in helping to make this vital work possible!

We, too, are thankful for your past support, and should the Lord provide the means and desire to send an additional gift this year for the work of the Gospel, enclosed is an opportunity for you to prayerfully consider. Be assured that **100%** of your gift will go to support our mission efforts to spread the Good News about Jesus!

Please make all checks payable to:

Mission Central
40718 Highway E16
Mapleton, IA 51034.

If you have any questions, please call 712-882-1029 or email us: gary.thies@lcms.org
OR steve.schulz@lcms.org



What's happening at Camp Okoboji?!

Sent by Adam Hengeveld, Executive Director

Giving Tuesday: December 1 and 2 will be your opportunity to include Camp Okoboji in your giving plans! Camp Okoboji is blessed to announce our Giving Tuesday Campaign will be a Matching Fundraiser! On December 1 and 2, your donation—cash, check, or credit card—will be matched, \$1 for every \$2 raised up to \$10,000! Gifts marked "Giving Tuesday" or "Matching Campaign" but received on days other than December 1 and 2 will be acceptable to be included for the match. To learn more, please contact the Camp Office at 712-337-3325. Make your gift online at campokoboji.org.

Retirement Announcement: After 10 years of faithful and joy-filled service, our wonderful Reservationist, Joy Wolfram, has announced her retirement on December 31, 2025. We are deeply grateful for her dedication, her caring spirit, and the way she has made every guest feel welcome at Camp Okoboji. As we celebrate Joy and wish her well in this next chapter, we invite you to join us in a Retirement Card Shower in her honor. Please consider sending Joy a card or note of appreciation:

Camp Okoboji
Attn: Joy Wolfram
1531 Edgewood Dr.
Milford, IA 51351

Personnel: We are actively recruiting our 2026 Summer Staff! Please encourage youth (at least 16 years of age) and college students to consider serving with us. Those interested in serving at Camp Okoboji, or any LCMS camp in 2026 should complete a NLOMA profile. That is the first step in being considered for a summer position. Visit NLOMA.org for the profile link. We are also looking for part-time cleaning assistants to help us through the off-season. Please contact Kellie at 712-337-3325!

Volunteers: THANKS to volunteers and groups who give so generously of their time and talents in serving Camp Okoboji. A big "THANKS" goes out to the annual mailing volunteers who spent the day helping us get out 6,000 appeal letters.



On November 1, Immanuel's Youth and families, packed meals at Mercy Meals of Siouxland. During the 10:30 am shift, 73 boxes + 32 bags for a total of 15,960 meals were packaged. These meals will be sent to the Orphan Grain Train/Norfolk for shipment. Thank you for all those who attended to help serve the hungry with food and to share the Gospel message of Jesus.





Ordination Anniversaries

We share with the leadership of our congregations the names and ordination dates of Iowa District West pastors who will celebrate "milestone" ordination anniversaries 2026.

Rev. Merle Mahnken—35 years—6/23/1991

MISSION CENTRAL

LCMS Mission Advancement
40718 County Highway E-16
Mapleton, Iowa 51034



[Pictured below left] What a joy and blessing it was to have our nine newest missionaries visit us on October 14. They enjoyed a full tour of our campus and learned about Mission Central's role in raising mission awareness in support of our missionaries all over the world. They are pictured (left to right) in our Ministry Center: Kaelin Peralta, Kenya; Rev. Jeff & Deaconess Gina Teeple, Germany; Dan and Marie Lowitz, Dominican Republic; Rev. Michael and Shanna Hageman, Tanzania; Sean & Hanna McHugh, Romania; and Gary, serving Jesus at Mission Central. We rejoice that our Lord is sending more workers into His harvest fields, so please keep these new missionaries in your daily prayers.



[Pictured above right] On October 31, Reformation Day, Kim Buelmann, from Leipzig, Germany, came to give us an update on how the Lord Jesus is using her gifts and abilities to reach out to the Persian-speaking immigrants to Germany from the Middle East. Kim can speak the Farsi language (as well as German) and is able to touch the hearts of the people in this land of darkness. It was truly a special day.



Weekend to Remember
by FamilyLife

Immanuel's Home Mission Fund will pay the registration cost for any Immanuel couple to attend the 2026 *Weekend to Remember* marriage conference. Hotel stay and transportation at your own expense.

- * Omaha, NE: March 13-15 at Hilton \$159/night—(price good until February 27)
- * Des Moines, IA: March 27-29 at Marriott Downtown \$149/night—(price good until March 13)
- * Lincoln, NE: May 15-17 at The Cornhusker Hotel \$129/night—(price good until April 24)

Weekends also available in Minneapolis and Branson.

Please find more information at:

<https://www.familylife.com/weekend-to-remember#where>

¡AMIGOS EN CRISTO and GRACIA!

News from *Las Iglesias Evangélicas Luteranas*
Amigos en Cristo in Denison and Gracia in Storm Lake
Pastor Pedro Lopez

Warmest greetings in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that the mercy and grace of God overflow you with all kinds of blessings.

Here we are again this month and approaching the Christmas season. We are reaching out and seeking people that want to hear the word of God: by means of the English, music and Bible studies around IDW. We ask the Lord to allow us to meet new people and not only help them by teaching them English, but for them to hear the word of God that we share through this program so that they can join our congregation at any of our sites. Our schedule continues to be the same for praise, prayer, bible study and for the Sunday worship services.

Our newest ESL class in Deloit has been a blessing to our volunteers, teachers and students. We have class every Monday and Wednesday from 6:30-8:30 pm. We are planning the closing session for the end of November; this becomes a great opportunity to meet the rest of the family of our students. They invite lots of people for a night of celebration and community, and many get to hear the Word of God in our last day of class and get to know more about our churches and ministry.

At St. Paul-Carroll our ESL class will finish on November 25; another opportunity to celebrate and share the message of Jesus and invite families of our students to church. We continue to have our Saturday Praise, Prayer and Bible study in the evenings.

At St. Paul-Hartley, we will finish our ESL class on November 24. We have them on Mondays and Thursdays here. We would like to thank Pastor Nixel, his wife Heather, and volunteers who run this without me on Mondays since I am at Faith-Deloit, at the same time.

At St. John-Storm Lake, we continue helping with the swaddling clothes program they offer every second Saturday of the month. They are doing such a great job with that, and we are so glad to participate as this gives us an opportunity to meet new Spanish speaking people and invite them to our church.

Prayer Requests:

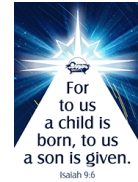
- * Our current ministries at Grace and St. John-Storm Lake, St. Paul-Carroll, St. Paul-Hartley, Amigos en Cristo-Denison, Faith-Early and Faith-Deloit.
- * For Guillermo Ledezma of Springfield, VA. I was the guest preacher Sunday the 16th there as he was ordained and installed as the new Pastor for Iglesia Luterana "Nueva Vida", the church we develop and chartered before coming here to IDW.
- * For me and my wife that the Lord continues to bless us and give us what we need to continue His work.

Bendiciones,
Pastor Lopez



DECEMBER 2025

Immanuel Lutheran Church,
Schleswig, Iowa



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Preschool	2 Preschool	3 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation 5:45 p.m. Midweek Advent Worship 6:30 p.m. Midweek Advent Meal	4 Preschool 10:00 a.m. LWML 6:00 p.m. Preschool program No Bible Study	5	6 Santa Claus Day & Craft Fair 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
7 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS & BC	8 Preschool	9 Preschool 8:30 am Pastors' Conference at Midway/Anthon 6:30 p.m. Library potluck	10 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation 5:45 p.m. Midweek Advent Worship 6:30 p.m. Midweek Advent Meal	11 Preschool 9 a.m. Quilting 6:30 p.m. Bible Study	12	13 9 a.m.—12 p.m. Sunday School program practice ALL kids 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
14 9 a.m. Sunday School Christmas Service followed by brunch 	15 Preschool	16 Preschool	17 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation 5:45 p.m. Midweek Advent Worship 6:30 p.m. Advent Meal & Confirmation Prayer Team	18 Preschool 6:30 p.m. Bible Study	19	20 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
21 Winter Begins 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS & BC 	22 Preschool	23 Preschool	24 Christmas Eve No Bible Study No Preschool No Confirmation 4 p.m. Candlelight Worship w/HC 8 p.m. Candlelight Worship w/HC	25 Christmas Day No Preschool No Bible Study 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 	26	27 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
28 9 a.m. Worship 10:15 SS & BC	29 No Preschool Last day for offerings to be included in 2025	30 No Preschool	31 New Year's Eve No Bible Study No Preschool No Confirmation 5 p.m. Worship w/HC 	Preschool Mon., Tues., Thurs.: 8 a.m.—3 p.m. Wed.: 11:45 a.m.—3 p.m. Confirmation: Wednesday's 5th & 6th grade: 3:30 p.m.—5:15 p.m. 7th & 8th grade: 6:15 p.m.—8:00 p.m.		



JANUARY 2026

Immanuel Lutheran Church,
Schleswig, Iowa



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Preschool Mon., Tues., Thurs.: 8 a.m.—3 p.m. Wed.: 11:45 a.m.—3 p.m. Confirmation: Wednesday's 5th & 6th grade: 3:30 p.m.—5:15 p.m. 7th & 8th grade: 6:15 p.m.—8:00 p.m. February S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28				1 New Year's Day No Preschool No Bible Study 	2 1:30 LWML	3 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
4 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS & BC 11:30 a.m. Elders' Planning Meeting	5 Preschool 6:30 p.m. Council Meeting	6 Epiphany Preschool 5 p.m. Board of Ed Planning Meeting 	7 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation	8 Preschool 9 a.m. Quilting No Bible Study	9	10 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
11 9 a.m. Worship 10:15 SS & Voters' Meeting	12 Preschool	13 Preschool 8:30 Pastors' Conference at St. John, Kiron	14 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation	15 Preschool 6:30 p.m. Bible Study	16	17 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
18 9 a.m. Worship w/HC 10:15 SS & BC	19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Preschool	20 Preschool <i>Messenger</i> Deadline for February issue 	21 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool Confirmation	22 Preschool 9 a.m. Quilting 6:30 p.m. Bible Study	23	24 4 p.m. Worship w/HC
25 9 a.m. Worship 10:15 SS & BC	26 Preschool	27 Preschool	28 6:30 Bible Study p.m. Preschool 8:45 a.m. Newsletter Assemblage Confirmation	29 Preschool 6:30 p.m. Bible Study	30	31 4 p.m. Worship w/HC

LEAVING BEHIND A LEGACY OF LOVE

by Wanda Pritzel, LISW,
Lutheran Family Service

For the first time, my family is experiencing what I'm certain many of you have already gone through: my mother, Esther Schlesselman, died just before Christmas at age 88 following a valiant 2 ½ year battle with cancer. Mom lived out her quiet, confident faith until her last breath – with a beautiful long life and a peaceful passing into heaven that my sisters and I were blessed to intimately share. We are so sad as we grieve, yet confident in God's promise to her—to us—of the sure and certain hope of eternal life with Him through Jesus who conquered death.

My mom made it easy. We now have things to do to settle her estate, including distributing important family keepsakes. But no conflict. Mom wouldn't want us to fuss or struggle. In death as in life, she made everything easy for us. She had her funeral planned with each hymn selected. She had names taped to the back of special glass dishes and books. And she had all our family pictures sorted into three boxes, one for each of her daughters. But most importantly, she had written a statement of her faith which, along with her will, leaves a testimony to us of what was most important to her in life. She wanted her family to be reminded one last time of the source of the love that holds us together as a family: our faith in God through Jesus. I'm so thankful that God chose her to be my mom.

What are you leaving behind? As you're reading this today, I invite you to take my perspective as a grieving child and consider my mom's example in your own life. Do you have a will? Have you written a statement of your faith that will bring comfort and blessing to your family when God calls you home? What will they find that can direct and comfort them as they figure out how to go on in life without you?

I'm now doing this for my family and encouraging you to do the same. We at Lutheran Family Service are here to help you through this process, if needed. First, if you could use some guidance in thinking through things before putting them in writing or in preparing for conversations with your family, please call us. If you have concerns about your relationship with family members, friends, or God that still need resolution on this side of eternity, please call us. If you're seeking how to organize and communicate your plan to distribute the resources God has given you to steward, we can help with that, too. We can provide ideas for ways to structure your will so that the family, church, and ministries you love are all blessed through your planning. What a good feeling it will be to have all that taken care of for those you love.

Tomorrow isn't guaranteed. Do these things today while you can. Don't put them off until it's too late. It may seem hard, but you're not alone. And like me today, I know those you love will be ever so grateful when the day comes for them to face life without you.

To talk with an LFS member about end of life, family relationships, or estate planning, call Wanda Pritzel at 515-570-2310 or email wpritzel@lutheranfamilyservice.org.

Your partnership allows Lutheran Family Service to walk with those experiencing difficult times, enabling us to help:

- Babies find loving, Christian homes
- Keep marriages, families, and individuals healthy and well
- Women facing surprise pregnancy choose life for their unborn child
- Support LCMS Church Workers and their families
- And so much more!



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Website: www.immanuel Schleswig.com
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Pastor: Merle F. Mahnken
Home Ph.: 712-676-2242 Cell Ph.: 712-269-6364
Assisting Pastor: Kurt Kaiser
Cell Ph.: 712-269-8452

Office: Amanda Bruhn, Jodi Lorenzen and Valerie Teut
Preschool: Leslie Gustafson
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**OUR MISSION
STATEMENT:**
*"Together in Christ,
we grow through the
Word and
Sacraments, serving
our Lord and
sharing His saving
grace with all
people."*