



September 2026 Newsletter



THE MESSENGER

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH – GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA



A Prayer for September

God of creation, as we step into the month of September, we thank you for the gift of a new season and new opportunities. We ask for your guidance, peace, and protection in every day ahead. Bless our homes with love and unity and fill our hearts with gratitude. Help us to walk in wisdom, speak with kindness, and act with grace. May this month bring fresh hope, renewed faith, and the courage to pursue all that is good. In Jesus' name, AMEN.



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As many of you have heard, I will be taking an extended leave from my duties and responsibilities at Immanuel in a couple of weeks. In this letter I hope to communicate at least three things to you:

1) the reasons why I am doing so; 2) address some of the rumors that are circulating regarding this event; 3) express my gratitude to you for this time away.

First: I began my call with you on October 1, 2021, just as Covid was winding down. We hit the ground running together in recovery of congregational life and establishing a “new normal” post-covid. Things were different, and we were learning together who and what church could be, and more importantly, what church would and should become. Over these last five years, I feel we have moved in a very positive direction. We have strengthened our ongoing outreach food ministries with new people participating. We have initiated new outreach ministries that are still in full operation, such as Kinard Manor, Campus Ministry, Community Day Camp, Arts and Music Camp, and Immanuel’s Children Homeless Ministry. I am deeply supportive of all five of these, as well as our two food ministries. As a result of this investment, I am well known in our surrounding community by neighbors who sometimes need a pastor.

We have been through several challenging staff changes: four different Organists, three different Music-Handbell-Choir directors, two parish administrators, and one Campus Ministry coordinator. We have had over 40 new members become part of the Immanuel Family, updated our Digital Ministry outreach and working to improve its quality, started a second service, once in the later morning that did not catch on, and now in the late afternoon on Sundays which has traction. We have moved our Worship time on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 9 a.m. to grow our Adult Sunday School Ministry (and it has!). We have begun and are continuing a weekly Bible Study.

We have re-established our ecumenical partnerships here in Greenwood and redefining how we share resources and work together. We are working with a few local charities and non-profits to help facilitate positive change in Greenwood. We are hosting new Community events, such as the Veterans Stand-Down, Lander Student Recitals, Organ Recitals, and recently, a Community Prayer Service. Also, we have made it together through a very destructive hurricane, and rebuilt, replaced, upgraded, and repaired our facility to be in even better condition than previously.

We have accomplished a lot for the ministry of Jesus Christ here in our little “fork-in-the-road” dot on the map. There are more that are not mentioned, and more still in the works. During this time, I have sought to continue my pastoral duties with you as pastor, preacher, teacher, counselor, visitor, and friend.

Truth be told, I am tired. And that, my dear friends, is why I have conferred with Mutual Ministry, the Council, and they with the Synod, because I do not feel that my call to serve Jesus here with you is over, but just beginning. And knowing myself, when I get tired, there are a few things about me that start to show forth that I do not like about me. When I am tired, my patience wears thin, my fuse is short, and I complain a lot. None of that is good for our ministry together. Because I am tired, I find myself not able to give additional physical, mental, and spiritual energy where it is necessary and needed. I hope you understand. If you have any questions or issues about me taking time away, please contact a member of our council and let them know.

Second: there are a few rumors about “why” I am doing this. I would like to dispel these right here. 1. I have **not** been fired. 2. I am **not** going to take this time and return in November and retire. 3. I am **not** leaving because I have been “run off” because there are a few members who do not agree with me about my theology or my practice of ministry. 4) I am **not** taking time to look for another congregation. And 5) I do **not** have a serious health problem that I am going for treatment, nor is Theresa. None of these have even a smattering of truth to them. They are just rumors and not true. I hope they are not mean-spirited but are just some people trying to understand why I will be away. Again, I hope you understand, I am just plain-old tired... physically, mentally, and spiritually.

And finally: I am very grateful for this opportunity to step back for a while to rest. I plan to return to my exercise regime, recover in my prayer relationship with the Lord, read a stack of books on my desk, think about other necessary things, and as such, spend time with my beloved Theresa. We may travel, or not. One thing I am going to attempt to do is turn my phone off for the entire time away... detox from it. I am certain that will be helpful and soul-healing.

The guidelines I have been given for these eight weeks include not communicating with the congregation, as that will draw me back into the daily rigors of our ministry together. If there are pastoral emergencies, we have two Lutheran pastors who are on call for such times. The only caveat I have carved out is that if there is a death in the congregation and the family would like me to preside at the funeral, I will do so. You are, after all, my flock!

My Leave begins on Monday, September 14. I will return on Monday, November 9 for full-time ministry among and with you! We have a slate of excellent preachers lined up, including a former Bishop and our new Bishop-Elect, a former pastor of Immanuel, and a pastor who is a “son of Immanuel”.

Again, thank you for this time away. I will be faithful to the goals of it. Faithful to the Lord. Faithful to myself and Theresa. And faithful to you.

Grateful to the Lord for You, always,
Pastor Chris



As September begins, Immanuel will begin celebrating 125 years of ministry. Although Immanuel's official 125th birthday will not be until September of 2027, this September we will begin our celebration. The celebration will kick off on September 13, with our 9 a.m. Worship followed by brunch at 10:15 a.m. catered by Howard's On Main in our Fellowship Center.

In September we will be inviting our former ministers along with our former members who are now ministers. Each month we will have a special emphasis on one of the ministries here at Immanuel. We hope that you will come on September 13, to begin our celebration. Please be sure to email Dr. Will for reservations.

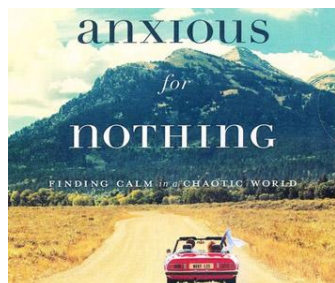
9/13 - catered brunch at 10:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Center
 9/27 - We welcome Pastor Nathan Gragg back to Immanuel

October - focus will be celebrating the Chancel Choir

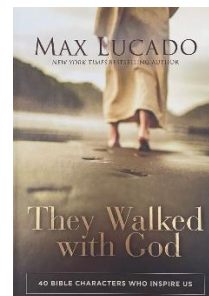
10/04 - We welcome Pastor Greg Brown, son of the congregation.
 10/11 - We welcome Bishop Elect Wade Roof to Immanuel followed by a potluck breakfast.
 10/22 - 7 p.m. Hymn Festival at the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection
 10/25 - Reformation Sunday, 2 p.m. Piano / Organ Recital by Dr. Douglas-Jayd Burn.
 *More information will be in the October Messenger.

November - focus will be celebrating the ministry of the Food Pantry
 December - focus will be the ministry of Immanuel's Children
 February - focus will be the ministry of WELCA

*Please contact John Kinard if your ministry group would like to reserve a month to celebrate your history and service.



In September the Adult Sunday School will be concluding the study on Lucado's book *In the Grip of Grace*. After the conclusion of this study, we will begin another Lucado book *Anxious for Nothing*. This book is centered around Philippians, which is the second lesson for most of the fall. We have ordered 25 books. If you would like a book, please email Dr. Will. Also, the weekly Bible study will



resume on September 15 at 1 p.m. This fall we will study, *They Walked With God*. This is a series of 40 characters in the Bible who have unique and powerful stories. The cost of the book is \$15. If you would like a copy, please email Dr. Will by September 9, so we can distribute books on Sunday, September 13.

CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MINUTES

from 8/02/2026

*These minutes are pending approval.

Attendance -Pastor Chris, J. Kinard. C. Monson, S. Kaufman, S. Frantz, D. Kinard, C. Christensen, ME Bowen, L. Hotchkiss, L. Smith

Absent - MA Stroup

Opening Prayer - J. Kinard

Minutes from June meeting - were approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report - C. Monson

Six months in over \$66K from last year, pd synod and are up to date and looking very good

Property- Security cameras are back in place and training is needed.

Repaired fire alarm system - was advised to consider updating at a cost of \$21K

Pew Cushions - possibly replace

First Aid Kits -need to update all.

125th Anniversary- September 13th kickoff

- Dr. Will will send out an email for sign up for meals
- Suggested in October an emphasis on the Choir past participants etc...
- February was suggested as a focus on WELCA
- Suggestion of making a puzzle in the shape of the church to commemorate our 125th
- Need to replenish the pews offering, prayer request etc... Lisa H. volunteered to do this

New Members - Vote taken to accept the following new members:

Vivian Ewert, Michelle Gaskins, and Alice and Walter Miller

Worship Committee - will meet in August.

Dr. Will's hours - will be 9 a.m.- 1 p.m. Tuesday – Friday, and he will continue to work remotely on Thursdays.

Church Pictorial Directory - Sue F. is going to meet with Will to see if she can help with a pictorial directory. Also, Sue F. suggested the church should provide meals for our elderly such as Klaus. May want to revisit care groups. Need to set up a date to cook and deliver meals. Sue K., Courtney C. Lianne S. and Sue F. volunteered to help.

Advent services - will be on Wednesdays during Advent.

PLAN FOR WHEN PASTOR IS ON LEAVE - Pastor Chris will be out Sept.14 - Nov. 9

Email or call Will, John K or Courtney C. with any people who are in need of pastoral care.
Do not call the Pastor.

- Request fill in Pastors give a two month report of hours.
- October 11th brunch with the Council and new Bishop following adult education class

Budget Items needed by October 4th - committees need to meet before then.

Pass along any items for council to discuss to John K.

***Next meeting Council will be discussing what each member can do in more detail.**

Closing Prayer

Respectfully Submitted,

Lianne Smith, Voting Member

NEXT MEETING SUNDAY, September 20, 11 a.m.



September Birthdays

9/2 Harriett Counts
 9/4 Lois Kuntz
 9/10 Katalin Bartz
 9/12 Clay Kobe
 9/14 JoAn Crowder, Lianne Smith
 9/15 Reed Monson
 9/16 Anne Haynes, David Krumwiede
 9/18 Mark Cooper
 9/20 Millie Amick

September Aniversarias

9/2 Richard and Glenda Powell
 9/3 Kevin and Diane Sponenberg
 9/5 Juan and Anna Luna
 9/30 David and Lianne Smith

SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

August 2026

	<u>9 a.m.</u>	<u>4:30 p.m.</u>
<u>8/2</u>	78	11
<u>8/9</u>	83	11
<u>8/16</u>	73	11
<u>8/23</u>	75	9
<u>8/30</u>	68	11

*The numbers for the 9 a.m. service include registered online viewers.



The Divas are going to Del Rio on September 10, at 6 p.m. Sign-up on the WELCA board or text JoAn Crowder at 864-942-9191. Let's just get out and have some fun!



Foothills Conference is on September 26, in Easley, South Carolina from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Any women interested in attending, please RSVP to Lianne Smith at 863-801-5854. Text or call by September 14. There will be a carpool.



Lutheran Men in Mission - will meet at the church on Saturday, September 12, at 9 a.m. Our guest and informal speaker will be Jim Morgan. He will be telling us about his experience at the age of nine witnessing the attack on Pearl Harbor along with his mother.



Please make sure you are registered to receive Immanuel's electronic communications and weekly newsletter by scanning the QR code. **Announcements for the Sunday bulletin and the weekly newsletter are due to Dr. Will by Wednesday each week at 10 a.m.**



Worship on Sundays - 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (Nave)
Coffee Time and Adult Christian Education on Sundays – 10 a.m.
(Old Fellowship Hall)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Immanuel Lutheran Church
501 East Creswell Avenue, Greenwood, SC 29646
864-223-0590, Church Web Site: www.ilcgreenwood.com
office@ilcgreenwood.com

Office Hours: Tuesday-Friday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

*Dr. Will works remotely on Thursdays.

* Closed on Mondays

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. Chris Christopher, Pastor
pastorchris.ilcgreenwood@gmail.com

Dr. Will Cleveland, D.M.A., Parish Administrator / Director of Music
will@ilcgreenwood.com

Juan Luna, Sexton
Sammy Hurley and Kristen Metts, Parish Custodians

John Kinard, Congregation President
jkinard29@yahoo.com

SERVING THE CHURCH IN GREATER CAPACITIES

The Rev. Yehiel Curry, Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Ginny Aebischer, Bishop, South Carolina Synod
The Rev. Wade Roof, Bishop-Elect, South Carolina Synod