# Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church



# September 2025

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# Rev. John Kuziej - Interim Pastor

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Member of the ELCA Churchwide elca.org & the Northern Great Lakes Synod nglsynod.org





Visit us on our Website @ Immanuelrhinelander.org

"Inspired by God's grace to love and serve all"

# Message from Interim Pastor John Kuziej

Not long ago we heard Jesus in the gospel lesson talk about the weather. He heard people say rain is on the way because of thick clouds in the west. Or he heard people say the day is going to be a scorcher because of a brisk south wind. We like to talk about the weather too; it is a topic of small talk that begins a conversation. If storms are predicted by the weatherman on TV, we keep an eye on the sky. With our smart phones in hand, we can check storm tracking radar. But Jesus was not engaging in small talk. He told the crowds, "You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

The words of Scripture can be like a splash of cold water in the face. Jesus called his hearers hypocrites, does this mean us? To be a hypocrite is to hear the word of God but then not understand its direction for life, love of God and love for neighbor. Earlier in the Gospel of Luke Jesus was teaching the people when he received a message that his mother and siblings wanted to see him. Jesus said, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it." Jesus was never influenced by flattery. Faith was not about saying or singing nice words about Jesus. Faith needs a firm foundation. Jesus said if you hear my words and act on them, you are like a wise builder who built his house on rock. When the flood waters would rise, the house would stand. But someone who hears the word and does not act is like a man who built a house on ground with no foundation. When the flood waters come, great was the ruin of that house. Or think of Jesus' parable of the farmer planting seed. Only seed that fell on good soil would result in a bumper crop. Jesus compared the seed on the good soil to those who hear the word of God and hold it fast in an "honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience endurance."

When Jesus spoke of interpreting the present time, it is a wake-up call to understand the urgency of the word and will of God and to live by it. When Jesus used the word 'time' he meant every day is opportunity to make a difference by the practice of mercy. One of our favorite parables is the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan did not pass by a robbery victim on the road but bandaged his wounds and took him to an inn. The Samaritan displayed patient endurance by not abandoning the victim. He provided money for his care, and promised to not abandon him. The Samaritan was an example of mercy. Jesus ended the story by telling us, "Go and do likewise".

As we listen to the news, we can understand why Jesus wept. Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem because the religious leadership did not understand the things that make for peace, and they did not understand the time of God's gracious invitation. The church of Jesus Christ weeps over the starvation caused by war in Gaza and the Sudan. The church of Jesus Christ weeps when undocumented

immigrants are rounded up and labeled criminals and detained in cages. The church of Jesus Christ weeps when leadership smirks and calls detention "alligator Alcatraz". The church of Jesus Christ weeps when the homeless are swept off the streets like dirt and denied any semblance of humanity. I imagine Jesus still weeps when the church, his beloved redeemed people, get sidetracked and neglect justice and the love of God.

To interpret the present is to understand the grace of our Lord Jesus' visitation. We like to sing, "He came from heaven to earth, to show the way." His way was to make peace through the blood of his cross. May we be sure we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. God is not against us, but for us so we may faithfully be a force of love and mercy in our communities. To serve the Lord requires patient endurance. We still deal with the opposition of the world, the devil, and our own sinful flesh. We must listen to warnings from Jesus who said, "Beware of every kind of greed, for the meaning of life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are reminded that we are children of God and loved beyond measure. The Holy Spirit brings to mind the teachings of Jesus and our purpose: to share the love of God. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Thessalonians, "encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repay evil for evil but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, do not despise the words of the prophets, give thanks in all circumstances, do not quench the Spirit."

When Immanuel has a service at Friendly Village, it takes place in the dining room. I smiled when a staff person told a resident or two that they are coming not to dine, but to have church. I thought they are coming to dine. They are coming to feast on the Word of God and receive Jesus in Holy Communion. The Psalmist wrote, "Taste and see that the Lord is good, happy are they who take refuge in him."

Jesus calls us to interpret the present time. He is not calling us to make social, political, or economic analysis. He is calling us to listen to his word and act on it, to be merciful. Jesus works tirelessly to bless us to be a blessing as the Scripture says, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and he will do this." (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

# OCTOBER IS PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

Looking ahead to October, consider ways you can bless Pastor John and recognize his hard work, dedication, and sacrifices that he makes in serving our community of faith as our Interim Pastor.

# THE POWER OF PRAYER

## Does prayer work? YES

Do you get what you want through prayer? God provides you with the answer that you need.

The power of prayer increases with the number and frequency of prayer.

# How to pray:

Open your mind to prayer.

Pray from the heart with conviction and sincerity.

Prayers can be formal or informal.

Pray through music.

Pray using the Psalms.

# What to pray for:

Pray for the people in the church.

Pray for openness, enlightenment, and acceptance of God's plan.

Pray for the courage to step up and move forward, thinking outside the box, taking a risk, trying something new.

Pray for the guidance and wisdom and courage to follow the path that God has shown.

## When to pray:

Pray at meal times, thanking God for the blessings bestowed on you.

Pray during a break in daily activities as you clear your mind.

Pray in the morning or evening before or after bedtime.

### Where is the congregation of Immanuel Lutheran Church headed?

Pray for Pastor John and the ministry of Immanuel Lutheran.

Pray to God that the mind and spirit of a pastor will be opened to a call from this church.

Together our prayers will provide the strength and desire to continue God's work through our ministry.

Clip and post on a bulletin board or on the refrigerator

WILL YOU MAKE A COMMITTMENT TO PRAY FOR THE RIGHT PASTOR TO CARRY ON THE WORK OF OUR CHURCH? TOGETHER OUR VOICE AND ENERGY WILL BRING A PASTOR TO US.

	Yes I will pray daily that a pastor will listen to the Holy Spirit and come to our churchtwice dailythree time a day
name	date

# Thank You for Serving

Thank you to everyone who helped with or came to our Outdoor Worship Service and Picnic. Whether you brought food, helped with worship, or came to worship with our church family, we appreciate you being there.

Thank you to all the members of Immanuel who continue to use their gifts and talents to further the kingdom of God. (Especially those who work behind the scenes!)



Our deepest condolences to the family of Glenn Johnson.

Please keep his wife, Percy, and family in your prayers. Cards of condolence may be sent to:

Priscilla (Percy) Johnson, 6270 Oak Run Rd, Rhinelander.



# **Pastoral Visits**

Immanuel Lutheran Church has welcomed Pastor John Kuziej as our Administrative Interim Pastor. He is happy to schedule visits with home-bound individuals and is also available for hospital visits. Please feel free to contact him if you have these needs. He has office hours at Immanuel available by appointment.

# **Newsletter Available Electronically**

If you would rather read the newsletter electronically, you can access a copy on our website @ immanuelrhinelander.org/newsletter

OFFICE HOURS
Tuesday &
Thursday
9:00 am-NOON



THE TUESDAY MORNING CREW MEETS EVERY TUESDAY
MORNING TO PERFORM ODD JOBS NEEDED TO MAINTAIN
OUR CHURCH. PLEASE REACH OUT TO JOHN PLAUTZ IF
YOU ARE ABLE TO HELP! 715-367-3762
jeplautz@hotmail.com

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

During the first weekend of June, our Synod Council met in retreat to be further equipped for their leadership role. During this time, I presented a proposal for a Sabbatical. I am grateful that the Council approved my proposal, and I share with you what that means for Synod leadership and staff moving forward.

- I will be on Sabbatical from October 15, 2025 January 14, 2026, with the option of an additional month to be taken consecutively or at a future date.
- During that time, I will take a pause from social media, emails, phone calls, texts, etc. Pastor Sharolyn Swenson will respond to any needs or inquiries and will have the support of Synod staff and other bishops should there be questions that she cannot answer.
- For several weeks during this time, my husband and I will travel through Cambodia and Vietnam and then visit our former foreign exchange student in Thailand.

As I shared with your Synod Council, overall, the nature of this work is often reactionary, meaning that I am responding to the demands of the moment. There is little time or spirit left to consider the bigger picture, the longer view, or a compelling vision. COVID and the rapidly changing Church has narrowed the vision of so many to the most faithful next step. I am hopeful that stepping back from the day to day demands - of letters and emails, crisis and conflict management, deadlines and details - will give more clarity and focus to the leadership I can offer the Northern Great Lakes Synod.

# My sabbatical goals include:

- To return to Synod work with new energy; spiritually refreshed and strengthened for the challenges ahead.
- To be open to learning, seeing, and doing without specific goals or expectations.
- To allow space for creativity, discernment, and rest.

While I am sad to miss Fall events and plans, I am grateful for this gift of time away. Be assured that Pastor Sharolyn Swenson, will be more than ready to respond as needed.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Katherine Finegan

# **GOD'S HOPE HOLDS US**

July 18, 2025

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope (Zechariah 9:12).

One of Jesus' resurrection appearances is told in Luke. Two who had followed Jesus were on their way to Emmaus. It was the first Easter, but they didn't know that. What the two did know, and what life had taught them, was that death was final. Their Teacher and Lord was dead. Everything they had seen and felt and experienced was ended. The vision Jesus had shown them—complete, unconditional love; healed bodies and healed relationships; new life more glorious and harmonious than Eden; the redemption of the world, the whole world, all of creation—all of it was gone.



It's a wonder that these two could pull themselves together enough to go for a walk. Many of us have experienced deep loss. I remember leaving the hospital after my father died and being bewildered that the sun was still shining, that people were going about their lives, that the world was still turning. In that moment, my world had stopped. It must have been that way for the two on the road to Emmaus. In their grief they didn't even recognize Jesus. They said, "But we had hoped ..." (Luke 24:21).

The week before Holy Week, I was in Jerusalem and the West Bank on a solidarity visit to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. The impact of the war between Israel and Hamas has been devastating. Gaza is almost completely destroyed. On Palm Sunday, the last operating hospital in Gaza was bombed. The situation in the West Bank is also dire. Tourism is a major industry in the Old City of Jerusalem, for Bethlehem and many other holy sites in Palestine. That part of the economy has come to a standstill.

Many Palestinian Christians are emigrating because they can't see a future for themselves or their children. The pressure on Arab Christianity, once a vibrant part of the Holy Land (Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian pastor, points out that the ancestors of today's Arab Christians may have been Jesus' babysitters), is intolerable. Settler violence against Palestinians is a reality. When asked what he hoped to be doing in 10 years, one high school boy we met said, "Being alive." Some people we spoke with said they no longer had hope.

Our true hope lies not in our effort but in the infinite and intimate love of God in Christ.

There are many other places in our world and in our country that experience the same hopelessness. War, fires, earthquakes, droughts, floods, disease, corruption, isolation and political changes all contribute to a feeling of helplessness. This eats away at hope. When we were younger, we had hopes and dreams for our future, for the world's future. It's a cliché, but the possibilities did seem endless. We made plans and set goals. Like the two on the road to Emmaus, "We had hoped."

It is just at this point that Jesus spoke to the two on the road and opened up the Scriptures. What's more, he sat down to dinner with them and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. Their hope had not been realized because their hope—our hope—is too limited to know the scope and completeness of God's hope.

God's hope for the world breathed into the creation. God's hope for God's people holds us through all our rebellions and pride. God's hope for our future is only possible in God's hope. And when we can no longer hope, God's hope holds us.

There is nothing in creation that can guarantee that our life and our future will work out exactly how we want. No matter how much we plan and struggle, there is no way that we can manage all the variables that life throws at us. That's the bad news. But it is also the good news. Our true hope lies not in our effort but in the infinite and intimate love of God in Christ.

"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).



Baptized: Jayden Scott Foley Parents: Angel and Jason Foley

Sponsor: Ryan Foley



Baptized: Wesley David James Brady Sponsors: Angel Randolph, Gavin Denis Parents: Gabriella Denis and Ian Brady



Baptized: Baylor Richard Grahn Parents: Sean & Allison Grahn



We had three baptisms in August.
We welcome Jayden, Baylor and
Wesley into the Body of Christ and into the
mission we share: join us in giving thanks
and praise to God and bearing God's
creative and redeeming Word to all the
world.





OUTDOOR
WORSHIP & PICNIC
AUGUST 17, 2025
HODAG PARK













# Helping To Build A Hunger-Free Community



Thank you to our August Food Pantry crew for sharing the love of Christ through serving! Volunteering is a great way to show the love of Christ to those in our community. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Darlene Machtan. Immanuel volunteers the 2nd Saturday of each month from 8:45 am—11:30 am.



IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH NO COUNCIL MEETING/MINUTES FOR JULY 2025

# **EQUITY CHALLENGE**

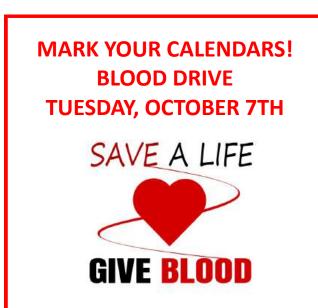
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Matthew 5:7

In "Even God Cannot Hear us Here", Rumeysa Ozturk tells what she witnessed in an ICE women's corporate for profit prison in March of this year. After being snatched by a cadre of masked people in black and hurtled into an unmarked car, shuttled, shackled, to numerous places, she was incarcerated in south Louisiana 24 hours later. <a href="vanityfair.com">vanityfair.com</a>. No food or water was offered during this part of her nightmare. Curiously, she, a Muslim, uses the word 'witness', to tell the story of her detention and the mercy and compassion other detainees showered upon her. Witness is the same word Jesus used in calling us to tell the story of our faith, telling us to be merciful.

In a too bright cell were many women, some lying on the cold floor, others sitting on hard benches, all desperately in need of food and water. After two nights without sleep and little food, Rumeysa was processed, then sent to a small cell housing 23 other women who greeted her warmly. This is her "home" for the next 45 days. Her "essentials" bag contained 2 sets of clothing, a small shampoo bottle, a comb, a thin blanket and sheet, toothpaste, a cheap toothbrush, and a handbook——in Spanish!

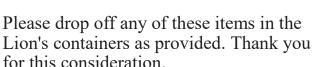
Women from Honduras, Iran, Afghanistan, Columbia and other places welcomed her to prison life with cookies, tea, and advice about ordering food, food that did not always appear. Of her experience, Rumeysa says "I found myself immersed daily in the love, beauty, resilience, and compassion of these women. We found ourselves trapped in our individual nightmares, but we found comfort and relief in one another, and we shared the burden and pain by listening to each other." This, even though there was no common language. The cell became "...a therapy space, beauty salon, hairstyling center, Pilates studio, medical center, massage room, an interfaith temple, and an art studio...all without any tools or resources." One woman was a singer with a million followers, another waited two days for emergency medical help. All came to the United States to escape violence, poverty, war and oppression in their native countries. What they found were those same things here. Is this mercy?

Submitted by Susan Anderson



# Donate your old eyeglasses, sunglasses and more!

Immanuel has decided to do an eyeglasses, sunglasses, cellphone, hearing aids and tablets ministry.



Any questions please contact Dianne Syms.

# Did You Know?...

Well, here it is, September already. Every September the Synod encourages each congregation to reach out to their communities and serve. The initiative is known as "God's Work, Our Hands." Some years it has been difficult to find a way to truly reach out and do community service. Many times we have relied on our youth to help members of the congregation with yard work. Last year we served an extra meal to residents of Frederick Place.

This year the Stewardship Committee and Council are asking our members to do "God's Work, Our Hands" by helping the Food Pantry with their Harvest Hoedown event on Saturday, September 27th. I have been in conversation with Courtney and she welcomes our service. Some of the areas that we could be of help include:

Baking items for their bake sale Welcome tent Treat tent (popcorn and cotton candy) Help with the Pumpkin Patch Make lemonade Ticket sales for raffles

The event is from 11 am to 4 pm at Pioneer Park. Courtney has suggested that she can provide us with sign-up sheets to staff the different areas in shifts. And she would love to have as many people involved as we can provide. Members of the Lions Club and Women's Club will also be participating.

So, mark your calendars for a fun event to help out the Food Pantry with fundraising. More information will be available as Saturday, September 27th approaches. Let's show our community that Immanuel can show up and do God's Work with Our Hands!

....This is Stewardship!

By JoAnne Barrix



# **First Communion Classes**

Pastor John is planning to conduct classes for First Communion instruction. These classes are geared for children of grades 1-3. If you have a child in this age group interested in learning about communion, please contact Pastor John.

# **Answer the Call**

There will be a special collection on Sunday, September 14th for Answer the Call. All funds collected will be sent to the Synod to help seminarians with costs associated with seminary classes. We should not let the expense of the education keep people from answering the call. The Northern Great Lakes Synod is a leader in assisting with education for people that are called to work in the church.

# NATH is committed to ending and preventing homelessness. This corporation exists to provide safe housing and basic needs to families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness.

# **NATH MEALS**

Our ministry groups have been providing the monthly NATH (Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing) meals and this has been working well.

Please consider signing your group up to provide a meal in 2025!

To volunteer, please sign-up on the sheet in the narthex or you can call Sue Larsen at 715-362-2544.

Thank you for your cooperation in this ministry!

# **NAMI Northern Lakes**

NAMI Northern Lakes is a group of Northwoods volunteers that provides support, education and advocacy in Forest, Vilas and Oneida Counties, on behalf of individuals and families affected by mental illness. All NAMI programs are free. Donations are welcome.

Don't suffer in silence. We can help each other, with compassion and knowledge.

24/7 Free Crisis Counselors
Text "HOPELINE" to 741741

A Kind Voice 1-800-876-2399 10 am to 11 pm every day. Iris Place 1-920-815-3217 24/7

Mental Health Crisis Line

Warm Line 1-414-777-4729 7 pm to 11 pm Wed.-Mon.

Solstice Warm Line 1-608-244-5077 24/7



# September 2025

Immanuel Lutheran Church 715-362-5910 21 W Timber Drive, Rhinelander

			T			
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<b>7:00 pm</b> AA & AlAnon	OFFICE CLOSED  10:00 am PASTOR JOHN Grace Lodge Nursing Home Service	1:00 pm— 3:00 pm Quilting  10:00 am WELCA Bible Study (normally the 2nd Wednesday of the month)	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON	8:45—10:45 am Closed Support Group 7:00 pm AA	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9:00 am Worship Communion Worship Leader:	<b>7:00 pm</b> AA & AlAnon	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON 10:00 am PASTOR JOHN Milestone Nursing Home	1:00 pm— 3:00 pm Quilting	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON	8:45—10:45 am Closed Support Group <b>7:00 pm</b> AA	8:45 am— 11:30 am Food Pantry  5:00 pm—9:00 pm
Rev. John Kuziej		Service 5pm Stewardship Meeting	Council Meeting	Articles Due!!!		AA BIG GROUP MEETING (or next Saturday)
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<b>9:00 am</b> <b>Worship</b> Worship Leader: Rev. John Kuziej	<b>7:00 pm</b> AA & AlAnon	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON  10:00 am PASTOR JOHN Friendly Village Nursing Home Service  6:00 pm Women's Bible Study & Dinner Call Sheree for location 715-360-3176	1:00 pm— 3:00 pm Quilting	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON	8:45—10:45 am Closed Support Group <b>7:00 pm</b> AA	5:00 pm—9:00 pm AA BIG GROUP MEETING
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9:00 am Worship Communion Worship Leader: Rev. John Kuziej	<b>7:00 pm</b> AA & Al-Anon	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON  10:00 am PASTOR JOHN Rennes Nursing Home Service	1:00 pm— 3:00 pm Quilting 4:30 pm Meal @ Frederick Place	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON	8:45—10:45 am Closed Support Group <b>7:00 pm</b> AA	THE TUESDAY MORNING CREW MEET: EVERY TUESDAY TO DO ODD JOBS NEEDED TO MAINTAIN OUR CHURCH PLEASE REACH OUT TO JOHN PLAUTZ IF YOU ARE ABLE TO HELP! 715-367-3762 jeplautz@hotmail.com
28	29	30				
9:00 am Worship	<b>7:00 pm</b> AA & AlAnon	OFFICE HOURS 9:00 am—NOON				
Worship Leader: Rev. Paul Heykes						

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

July 2025

### **GENERAL FUND:**

Beginning Balance \$86,623.07 Offerings \$12,857.03

\$1,102.60 is moved to Building Fund

Expenses on report (\$ 9,331.38) **Ending Balance** \$90,148.72

### **BENEVOLENCE:**

July Offering \$ 1,234.29

(Plus \$397.01 to Lutheran Disaster Fund)

2025 Pledge \$19,000.00

YTD Remittance (adj. by \$20) \$14,166.64

### **BUILDING FUND:**

Beginning Balance \$21,918.71

(adj. by \$20)

Offering \$ 1,102.60

Expenses \$ 550.00

Ending Balance \$22,471.31

The INCOME exceeded the EXPENSES by \$3,525.65 this month.

CD=\$60,000.00 (Now at \$63,187.92)

RENEWED IN JULY for 13 months.

# May Your Day Be Special!

If you were omitted or listed in error, please contact the church office at 715-362-5910.

Thank you!



9/1	David Dart	9/24	Otto Schoeneck
9/6	Sheree Kral	9/24	Jessica Scholtes
9/8	John Plautz	9/25	Roxine Zunker
9/9	Johanna Dellenbach	9/26	Elizabeth Eades
9/9	Peggy Johnson	9/26	Bill Anderson
9/17	Alex Fortier	9/27	Darlene Machtan
9/19	Buddy Meek	9/28	Jeffery Parsons
9/20	Kari Britton	9/28	Scott Scholtes
9/22	Greg Hargraves	9/29	Romelle Ewert
9/24	Linda Gary	9/30	Heather Morrison
		9/30	Mike Piasecki



9/2	Tina & Jerry Schmitz
9/6	Kari & Eric Britton
9/7	Terry & MJ Strong
9/8	Dianne & Michael Syms
9/19	Sheree & Bryan Kral
9/22	Jean & Quentin Milz
9/19	Kristine & John Mladucky
9/28	Joseph & Stephanie Patrone

### **IMMANUEL'S MESSENGER**

21 West Timber Drive Rhinelander, WI 54501

**Electronic Service Requested** 

NON-PROFIT ORG. U.S. POSTAGE **PAID** 

Rhinelander, WI

# Join us for in-person worship Sundays at 9:00 am or join online. All Are Welcome!

1) Through YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYfWH9caWNuzOxf9T9JgecQ (or search Immanuel Rhinelander) on YouTube.

2) Through our website:

www.immanuelrhinelander.org/worship (you'll also find the bulletin and lessons here).

3) Through our phone app.

Just click on the "worship" button at the bottom of the screen.

The live stream will begin at about 8:55 a.m.