

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



Immanuel United Church of Christ

“Following God through Jesus in work & word”

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Immanuel United Church of Christ

Plymouth, Wisconsin



Pastor's Article

Love Your Neighbor *With* Your Neighbor

Pictured here (all related to Laura's Pantry):



1. The ladies from Bethlehem UCC who volunteer with us once a month.
2. A regular batch of food to be distributed.
3. The Thanksgiving meal bags which were distributed in addition to the regular batches of food.



4. A sampling of the miscellaneous goods we receive that folks are free to take (these are odd items that don't go in the regular batches of food).
5. (*next page*) The cereal that was donated by the Howards Grove school kids.
6. That same cereal filling up our elevator.



One of the main foci we've had here at Immanuel in my first year as your pastor has been restarting programming following both the



near five year interim without a settled pastor and the COVID-19 shutdown. And we're making good progress on that on a number of fronts.

The first main front has been the activities that Immanuel kept going (with a few interruptions) through those times. Three in particular come to mind: the Christmas pageants, the Chili Supper, and the Ice Cream Social. These fellowship programs, in addition to Sunday worship of course, have helped to serve the Church by keeping folks in connection and community with each other.



A newer front that emerged out of COVID was Laura's Pantry. As you can see from the photos here in this article, Laura's Pantry moves a *ton* of food out and makes it available to needy members of the community. One distinguishing characteristic of our pantry is that we follow the apostolic example of, "distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need," (Acts 2:45, ESV).

The sad truth is that many pantries and other groups don't do this. Sometimes the reasons are logistical (each county having its own food bank, for example) while others are pure prejudice (the St.

Peter's pantry in Kiel tried to reach out to other local Churches to see about pooling their resources and the common response was that those congregations were willing to help their own members, but not anyone else). Immanuel UCC and Laura's Pantry stand as exemplars of pure Christian charity in that regard.

Related to but reaching beyond this are our cooperative efforts with other area Churches. You can see from the first picture that a group of ladies from Bethlehem regularly helps out at Laura's pantry; in addition to which folks like Diane Weiland from St. John's and Rev. Diane Cayemberg of Bethel bring donations in fairly regularly. Our Shepherd has also brought donations of their own and the combined efforts of our VBS kids this year got us so much peanut butter our shelves started bowing. But these aren't our only inter-congregational endeavors. We have the inter-congregational Mission Trip which is heading out again to Appalachian Kentucky in March, we have the RCF fellowship whose main ministry of the youth volleyball league was a great success in 2025, and the RCCC activities which are ongoing and will continue as our shared mid-week Lenten services resume in February.

Looking out into the wider community we have been blessed to be supported by such groups as the Howards Grove schools and the kid's gifts of cereal (see the lattermost pictures) as well as donatables Carol Knoener brought in for the bank. Some of our other attempts at cooperating with the wider community (like our outreach to Lakeland) have been less fruitful, but on the whole we are an active member of the wider Sheboygan Country community.

Finally, internal to our own congregation we have developed an adult Sunday School class which has been attended by a good percentage of our regular in-person worshipping members.

From all this I hope you can see that we are still a living Church with much love and support to share with our neighbors and the world. That said, there is more we can do.

On area of special interest is reaching out to younger folks - kids and youths. Here, though, we have two obstacles to overcome.

The first is the problem of networking and scheduling. When I was in high school (class of 2007) we had one pen-and-paper assignment notebook/day planner. Our high schoolers now manage their schedules through an interconnected series of apps. Not one app - *multiple apps*. And between school, sports, other extra-curricular activities, and work those apps fill up *fast*. Neither Immanuel nor our wider UCC connections have a way to easily break into the systems of those apps.

The second is the problem of content. Given that our kids are so busy the Church cannot count on just having a generic fun activity and expect much of a response from our youths. If they want to play games or watch a movie with friends they can do that at their homes; putting a movie into a Church building won't appeal to them very much.

So what do we do? We take the lessons we've learned from our programming that is working - Laura's Pantry, fellowship programs, RCF, RCCC, etc. - and put them to work for our youth. We need to look beyond our walls and our own internal ways of doing things and meet the kids *where they are*. And this is entirely Biblical: the Lord Jesus didn't say, "build a fancy building and wait for the world to come to you," he said, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation," (Mark 16:15, ESV). While we cannot break into the world of apps we can cooperate with them. One obvious example is the *God and X* program for Scouting. I'm more than happy to go out to any Scouting troop (or similar group like 4H) and teach this sort of program there. Not only does this sort of approach allow us to integrate with the young folks' schedules, but it brings solid Christian lessons into their lives - it overcomes both obstacles.

But to do this sort of thing I need your help. I need to know if there are Scout troops or the like out there, I need connections to the Scout leaders, I need to know the denominational affiliation of the kids (I'd be happy to teach any of the Christian curricula to the kids - UCC or otherwise), I need your connections to the wider community.

And remember - while we would love to see more young folks in the Church on Sunday mornings that is a secondary goal, not the primary one. Our primary goal is to introduce them to the love of the Father made manifest in Jesus Christ and available to them through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If we can communicate that to them - whether in a Scout troop or something else - we will have fulfilled our mission and ministry.



So please, in this new year let us work together to apply the lessons we've learned about loving our neighbors *together with* our neighbors and apply it to bringing the Gospel of Christ and the love of God to the young people in our community - even if the form that takes isn't what we're used to seeing. Amen.

*(Scout is Reverent, Norman Rockwell, 1939 - please note that the Scout is a youth, worshipping with an older man, with a younger adult woman and a small child behind them - Christianity involves everyone **together**).*

From the Congregation President: Annual Meeting

By: President Rodney Thieleke

Dear Members of Immanuel.

The Annual meeting of the congregation is scheduled for Sunday January 25, 2026. As in the past years, church on that Sunday will begin at 9:30 am with the meeting to follow. Please know that a quorum of 25 members needs to be in attendance in order to carry out the church business. Candidates for elder and deacon are still being sought to complete the consistory. Please consider volunteering. Also, all committee members will remain the same as 2025 unless a member of the consistory is notified. Please plan to attend the meeting to make your voice heard and to help plan for the future of our beloved church.

Rodney Thieleke
Congregation President



Laura's Pantry

By: Elder Jen Marten



As we come to the end of 2025, we pause to reflect on the important work being done to support members of our community who are experiencing food insecurity. Throughout the year, Laura's Pantry has served an average of 25 visitors each week, with that number increasing this fall. Rising food costs, inflation, reduced work hours for some, and the recent government shutdown, particularly its impact on families who rely on food assistance programs, have created uncertainty for many in our community.

In the midst of this uncertainty, we have been deeply humbled by the continued generosity and support from you, the members of Immanuel, as well as our neighboring churches and community organizations. Your compassion makes a meaningful difference.





We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has donated food, financial support, and time. Laura's Pantry truly could not exist without you. We are also especially grateful for our partnership with the Sheboygan County Food Bank, which enables us to offer not only shelf-stable items, but also meat, cheese, and fresh produce. In addition, we would like to thank the following community members who have generously shared their time and resources: Bethlehem UCC, Saron UCC, Our Shepherd UCC, Bethel UCC, Rural Church Fellowship, Keith and Diane Weiland, National Exchange Bank and Trust, Howards Grove High School and Middle School, and Northview Elementary.

Because of this collective generosity, we are able to offer a hand up to those in need in our community.



Rural Church Christmas Caroling

By: Shari Ver Straate

On, Saturday, December 13th, a few brave souls ventured out to Elkhart Lake in the below zero weather. Members from Bethel, Immanuel, St. John's and Our Shepherd shared carols and cookies with residents of The Bay Assisted Living Facility. Many of the residents came to their doors and sang along as we walked down the halls singing songs of the season.



Consistory Minutes - October

Call meeting to order

- Rodney T 7:00

Opening prayer

- Rev. Cornell

Review secretary's minutes from last meeting (September 8, 2025)

- Motion by: Gene M
- 2nd by: Brett K
- Passed

Treasurer's report

- Submitted by email and phone by Joya Cox accountant
- Time to start thinking about the next budget and spending plan
- Review of salaries
- A bill for conference dues received and will be submitted to Joya based on 215 members at \$5.00/member--OCWM contribution pledge for 2026 suggested at \$4244.34
- Motion by: Jen M
- 2nd by: Gene M
- Passed

Pastor's report –Worship planning –Church events

- Sunday November 2—Communion? Yes
- Christmas Pageant 3rd of 4th Sunday of Advent. Donna Bauer in charge
- Anything to add concerning Sunday School? --Subject matter being discussed—Concerns about attendance
Going pretty well. Those going are pretty high on it.
- United Church Men and Women banquet and scholarship to be held at Ebenezer UCC on October 30, 2025—Dinner at 6:30, program at 7:30--\$20.00/ticket—Sing-a-long Workshop event on October 31 at Lakeland Bradley Auditorium beginning at

9:00 am with Dr. Christopher Grundy of Eden Seminary—All are invited—A mission moment will be held during our church service on Sunday October 19 (Rodney is presenting this) to explain the events and invite the congregation

- Mission Committee to present Unlimited Apple Cider and Caramel of fellowship following worship on October 19
- Relationship with Lakeland update—Contributions to Thanksgiving meal for students remaining on campus for the Holiday—Timetable and logistics to be worked out. 1 student interested in preaching trial sermon at Immanuel Rev Julie gave a contact in the Music dept. Still looking into students helping with Laura's Pantry.
- Results of Rural Church Fellowship High School Planning Team—Any participants from Immanuel? --Any chance this will become an active group? The 1st meeting was at Saron. No Immanuel kids were present. Students were pretty interested. A follow-up meeting will be happening soon.
- RCCC planning progressing—Thanksgiving eve service being planned –To be held at Bethel UCC on November 26 at 6:30 pm—Also, RCCC planning for Christmas caroling to be held at several nursing homes on a Saturday afternoon in mid-December depending on the number of participants and location cooperation—Perhaps an invitation to offer transportation to Lakeland students (use Lakeland shuttle) remaining on campus to Bethel for Thanksgiving Eve service? ---Also, awareness of the RCCC article in the UCC Wisconsin Conference newsletter
- Newsletter articles will be due later this month
- Remove Rev. Wm. and Jane Kesting from membership and transfer to Our Shepherd UCC in Howards Grove, as well as their daughter Maria
 - Motion: Keith R

- 2nd by: Jen M.
- Passed
- Remove Kathy Herwig from membership
 - Motion for termination of membership: Keith R
 - 2nd by: Gene M
 - Passed
- Brett K motioned to let Rev Cornell to sign expense sheets in absence of a church secretary.
 - 2nd by: Ed P
 - Passed
- Password for church e-mail not found. Will search on the old church computer to see if it can be found.

Old business

- Update on possible roof replacement—If nothing new, will probably let the insurance agent know of our discussions and possibility of non-renewal of insurance. Should be good for 5-8 years. 3 opinions were obtained from different roofers saying the roof is still good.
- Brett K will look into new insurance.
- Vestibule window repair update - Jen M going to Abel and Rodney T to Musil for updates.
- Pursuit of a new church office computer—Progress on purchase—Spending limit of \$1000.00 had been set at last meeting
 - \$754 for new computer from Costco.
 - New computer comes with Extended warranty, free tech support and computer protection
- Interactive doorbell purchase and installation hic-ups—Need motion to authorize recurring cost of internet connection Having problems with doorbell finding signals. Ed getting a new modem.

- Anything new on Immanuel UCC website retention of “UCC Everywhere” or establishment of a new platform - No update until the new computer is set up. Working on setup of updated YouTube for online viewing of church service. The YouTube page will eventually be set through the church web page.
- Conversion of archived sermons from tape cassettes to digital format and retained on new computer—Necessary equipment purchased and available?The last 3 years of data will be on the new computer.Rest of data information will be on external hard drive
- The elevator has been inspected, the renewal fee paid to the state authority and the certificate displayed in the elevator equipment room—In case anyone doesn’t know where that is, see the sign on the door—Thank you to Keri for that—Bill for the inspection by Atis Elevator Inspection Company should be sent to the church, separate from the renewal fee.
- Tom Salzman, the organ fix-it man, visited the church on September 25 to repair the broken “expression pedal” on the organ—Telephone consultation resulted in removing an electronic component and sending it for examination and, hopefully, repair, to The Peterson Company—The organ is still functional—Cost is undetermined at this time. Will get a bill for Tom Sazman for his work. Vibration in the organ and it may be from blower bearings and will be looked into.
- So far, no one has come forward as a volunteer to replace the president—Please keep the transition in mind and ask any good candidate to please consider it. Put announcements in bulletin and newsletter for secretary, president, and deacon & elder

New business

- A suggestion has been made to look into replacing the old, outdated printer for the church office—Because of the computer

replacement, now would be an ideal time to bring the equipment up to date—Several estimates may need to be obtained for purchase, for lease or for lease to purchase options. Right now we own copier and have a repair contract, Rev Cornell will ask for quote for new copier. They will look into options for Leasing, owning, or leasing to own.

- Rev. Cornell question about parsonage heating—Need service? Rev Cornell will replace bottom floor batteries in thermos. Upstairs is working fine.
- It's the time of the year to start thinking of replacements for the elder and deacon and possibly other positions—Please keep in mind and approach potential candidates. Put announcements in bulletin and newsletter for secretary, president, and deacon & elder
- Southwest church door having hard time closing and locking. The door is warped. Ed will look at the door.
- Boilers for heat will be put back on (Ed)

Motion needed to meet in closed session - 8:35

- Motion: Ed P
- 2nd: Gene M
- Passed

Next meeting November 10, 2025

Close with The Lord's Prayer.

- Adjourned at: 8:45
- Motion: Brett K
- 2nd: Gene M
- passed

Consistory Minutes - November

Call meeting to order

- 7:00 by Rodney T.

Opening prayer

- By Rev Cornell.

Review secretary's minutes from last meeting (October 13,2025)

- Motion by: Gene M
- 2nd by: Brett K
- Passed

Treasurer's report

- Submitted by email and phone by Joya Cox accountant—Any discussion on budget and spending plan for next year? -- Adjustments needed to be made? --Any increase in wages for any paid personnel?
- Motion by: Brett K
- 2nd by: Gene M
- Passed.
- Plan on Baird \$100 more fees
- Pulpit Supply could be less in new budget
- May need to hold tight on pay raise next year
- By holding expenditures could mean a raise for others.

Pastor's report—Worship planning—Church events

- Communion on first Sunday in Advent, November 30, 2025— Also, Advent Event with church decorating following church service—Lunch provided, if so by whom? Lunch will be served by Brett & Keri K (Subs & Chips)
- Consistory to set up Christmas tree prior to Nov. 30, set up Nativity scene and bring out decorations from closet—Need to set date and time Nov. 29 @ 8:00 am

- RCCC to offer Thanksgiving eve service at Bethel UCC at 6:30 pm on Nov. 26, 2025—Christmas caroling sign up under way for nursing home visits on a Saturday afternoon in mid-December by joint members of RCCC. Should bring a pie if going. Will also finalize caroling
- Lakeland Students will be available for special music
- Contributions to Lakeland's Thanksgiving meal for students remaining on campus apparently not needed—Rev. Cornell will give update
- Anything to report on Rural Church Fellowship High School Planning Team? --Anyone from Immanuel showing interest? No interest so far
- Congregational Christmas play to be presented with the direction of Donna Bauer—Will be during church on Sunday December 21.
- Dec 14 Ben will do special music.
- Dec 7 mission moment
- Christmas Eve service 6:30
- Renewal form for Rev. Cornell's license has been completed and sent to the conference office. Rodney filled it out and mailed it

Old business

- Received word from Circle Insurance that Acuity will not renew church building insurance unless the roof is newer than 15 years—Because of this the replacement of the roof is tied to our current insurance—If workman's comp and parsonage insurance is also affected is not known –Discussion on Brett's research and site inspection shared with the consistory by email—Insurance will lapse in April 2026 Brett - Lary Clinton representing Light Well who sells for Brother Hood insurance. Will give estimates soon.

- Vestibule window update—Jennifer visited Abler Glass and received several suggestions of people to contact—Thank you Jennifer. Rodney has the names Jennifer gave. Over all Nothing new
- New computer has been purchased and delivered—Rev. Cornell has been working with it to get things on-line and working—Anything to share on the progress? --Could include progress of transfer of cassettes of archived sermons to digital format—Could also include anything new on Immanuel UCC website? Rev to try to transfer Microsoft Office from old to new computer. Most part the new computer is all set up.
- Printer is hooked up
- Rev Cornell is getting quotes for new copier/printer
- The organ has been repaired, and the expression pedal is now functioning normally—The repaired part was under warranty—A bill of about \$545.00 was paid to Tom Salzman for time and travel. New part needed was covered under warranty
- Anything new on possible replacement of the printer? -- Depending on costs, the congregation may need to approve the deal

New business

- Fire extinguishers were inspected and found to be in order—A bill of \$73.00 to Andre Fire Equipment will be submitted

Need to adjourn to closed session

- Brett K motion to go into closed session
- Gene M second.
- Passed

Next meeting December 8, 2025

- In the past, the consistory has met for an end of year or Christmas social dinner—A date, place, and time would need to be determined—Consistory members and guests would be invited with everyone paying their own way—A discussion will be held.
- Log Cabin for Dinner Dec 1. @ 6:00 Pay your own way.

Close with The Lord's Prayer

- Motion to adjourn: Keri K
- 2nd. Gene M
- Passed.



General Announcements

Prayer Shawls - An Expression of Love & Support



Every week in worship we have an opportunity to share our joys and concerns with our Church family. But sometimes words and prayers, while helpful, are not enough - we need something tangible. If you or someone you know is in need of a tangible expression of God and the Church's love, please see either Rev. Sean or Kristy Pahl about a prayer shawl. We have a goodly supply of them and they are free for the asking. And please know that whatever you are or may in the future be going through, God and the Church love you.

New Immanuel Secretary Hired



The Consistory has hired Deacon Keri Koenig as the new Immanuel Church Secretary. Mrs. Koenig will begin her ministry in the new year. Thank you Mrs. Koenig for serving our Church in this way!

Chili Supper Dates



- **Sunday, January 11th:** Product Donation Due Date - please see poster in the rear of the Church for info. on what products are needed. If you have any questions please contact Nicki Schumacher.
- **Wednesday, January 14th:** Planning meeting at 6:00 PM.
- **Sunday, January 25th:** Financial Contribution Due Date.
- **Tuesday, January 27th:** Chili Cooking Day.
- **Wednesday, January 28th:** Chili Supper Day from 4:00-6:00 _M.
- **Thursday, January 29th:** Snow-Day for Chili Supper.

All-Church Meeting



The **All-Church Meeting** will be held on **Sunday January 25th** following worship.

Reports for the information packet are due in to Rev. Sean by **Sunday January 4th.**

Meal for the Warming Center



Immanuel UCC is planning to cook and serve a **meal for the Warming Center on Tuesday, February 17th.** Please see the signup sheets at the back of the Sanctuary to sign up and please see Elder Jen Marten if you have any questions.

January

2026

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	29	30	31			

December						
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	29	30	31			

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	28	29	30	31	1	2
						No Laura's Pantry
9:00 AM - Adult Sunday School	4	5	6	7	8	9
10:00 AM - Worship						9:00-11:00 AM - Laura's Pantry
6:00 PM - RCF Meeting @ Bethlehem UCC						
Annual Meeting Reports Due						
9:00 AM - Adult Sunday School	11	12	13	14	15	16
10:00 AM - Worship						9:00-11:00 AM - Laura's Pantry
6:00 PM - Adult Mission Trip Meeting @ Bethlehem UCC						
Chili Supper - Product Donation Due Date	18	19	20	21	22	23
9:00 AM - Adult Sunday School						9:00-11:00 AM - Laura's Pantry
10:00 AM - Worship	25	26	27	28	29	30
No Adult Sunday School		Chili Supper - Cooking & Prep. Day	4:00-6:00 PM - Chili Supper	4:00-6:00 PM - Chili Supper (Snow Day)		9:00-11:00 AM - Laura's Pantry
9:30 AM - Worship						
10:30 AM - All Church Meeting						
Chili Supper - Financial Donation Due Date						

