

A New Journey Lutheran Parish

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Ness Lutheran Church
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Gary Lutheran Church
PO Box 96
Gary, MN 56545

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JANUARY 2024



PARISH PRAYER LIST

Julian Affield and parents Gatlyn & Sara, Jessie Beckman, Shawn Bendickson, Jim Choc, Julius Dahl, Ron Dahl, Denise Halland, Diane Hamre, Vangie Hillstad, Jeremy Holmvik, Nathan Kearns, Rosie Keller, Cindy (Wastweet) Kiester, Ann (Wastweet) Kukowski, Kathy Lampton, Violet Lee, Donna Lisburg, Julia (Pantaleo) Madoll, Gwen Meyer, Randy Moen, Marilyn Natwick, Shiloh Ness, Gail Nephew, Keith Olson, Nick & April Ostenaar family, David Pinske, Franklyn Preisler, Susan Ruud, Todd Scheff, Anita Slater, Sharon Spaeth, Gina Tiokasin, and Mary Ann Wastweet.

■ *Thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of:*

- *Dolly Lee (Our Savior's) who passed away December 3*
- *Corky Syverson (Our Savior's) who passed away December 5*
- *Kenneth Hillstad (Ness) who passed away December 12*

■ *Welcome to Madison Wall, daughter of Bradley & Austyn Wall, who was baptized at Immanuel on December 10.*

Annual Congregational Meetings & Why They Matter

January not only marks a new calendar year, but is also when annual congregational meetings happen.

You may wonder, “why should I care?” or “what does this mean?” We are church **together**. We are a community of faith **together**. We come as individuals to gather **together** for worship and other church events to be fed and sent out to share God’s love and promises to all.

You should care because annual congregational meetings are an opportunity for all to learn about the ministry and mission of their church and the parish over the past year and the year to come. Business includes approving budgets (church and parish); electing council officers or members, and synod assembly representatives; and any other congregation specific items. All are welcomed to attend while confirmed church members are voting members.

Thank you to all who have and continue to serve on church and parish councils and all who support the work of the church in its many needed ways. It’s no secret that it’s hard to find people to fill the needed roles for a variety of reasons. Each church has roles

to be filled. Is that a gift you can share or may even consider? If you have questions about what that may mean, talk with a current council member or Pastor René.

There is also wonder and dreaming about new leadership models so the work of the church can continue to encourage new blood and for those who need to rest can do so. Ideas for this are welcomed!

Watch for annual reports to come. Your presence at your annual meeting would be a gift! Mark your calendars as all are encouraged and welcomed to attend their respective annual meeting:

- Gary: Sunday, January 14, following 10:30 worship
- Immanuel: Sunday, January 21, following 8:30 worship
- Ness: Sunday, January 21, following 10:30 worship
- Our Savior's: Sunday, January 28, following 10:30 worship, with Zoom option available. Contact Anita to receive the Zoom link.

Would love to see you there!

The Commissioning of Rachel Roggenbuck as a Synodically Authorized Minister (SAM) with ANJLP

This is good news of great joy for A New Journey Lutheran Parish and beyond! Last year Rachel completed the process to become a Synodically Authorized Minister (SAM) with ANJLP, expanding capacity and care for God's beloveds throughout the parish. She was appointed by the Northwestern Minnesota Synod bishop in mid-September, focusing on caring ministry and now having the authority to preside at the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion when leading worship. Commissioning happens following appointment by the bishop, providing an opportunity for public recognition and celebration of Rachel's growing call into ministry. We are blessed and thankful for the many ways Rachel shares her gifts with ANJLP and beyond!

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, February 4, at 10:00am** for a parish-wide worship at Immanuel for The Commissioning of Rachel Roggenbuck. Pastor Rebel Hurd, Director of Evangelical Mission with the NWMN Synod, will preside at the commissioning service. Watch for more details to come.

Sundal Announcement:

We, the people of Sundal Lutheran Church, would like to send a huge "Thank you" to A New Journey Lutheran Parish for continuing to support us in our ministry.

“Good Gossip”

We don't share the GOOD things we do as much as we share gossip, so each month we lift up some good ministry being done throughout the Parish.

This month, we would like to lift up the ministry done by and through all of the ladies in our parish and congregations. Each congregation has an amazingly gifted and generous group of ladies who work together for the Kingdom of God and their communities. We know about their talents organizing and serving food at ladies' aid suppers, fundraisers, yearly special dinners/events, and funerals. What we may not know are the little ways in which they serve: making sure there are treats and coffee before worship, cleaning the churches, decorating for each season, matching the altar paraments, and keeping communion supplies stocked, just to name a few. We see the beautiful quilts given to seniors and during baptisms, but what we don't see are the numerous quilts given to those in need in our area and around the world.

Even though we may not see all of the important ways the ladies serve with and for us, God does. Let us all share our gifts and work to serve God and our neighbors, in whatever ways we can, and let us thank those around us who are already doing that so well.

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR RENÉ L. MEHLBERG...

“What is Your Star Word for 2024?”

Dear Beloved Children of God:

I'm writing this on December 22 in the last days and hours of pre-Christmas chaos, knowing you will read it after. Hopefully you have had more than a moment to breathe in God's love that came down at Christmas as sweet little baby Jesus; have enjoyed time with family, friends, or chosen family; and took time to remember the real reason for the season, the birth of our Savior.

Thank you to all who answered the call in sharing “The Gifts of Advent.” You were asked what gifts you do or could share with your church, parish, and community by writing it down and putting it in the box representing our present to baby Jesus on Christmas Day. Well, good news! I did some peeking and every box has something in it! Thanks be to God! By sharing our gifts with one another is sharing God's love and promises, especially to those most in need as Jesus showed and taught are the gifts that make baby Jesus smile.

However, the work is not done. I encourage you to continue to think about the gifts, skills, and talents you have that could be shared as we continue to live into God's call of loving God by loving one another.

And, speaking of gifts, let us remember that Jesus did not receive the gifts from the Wise Men on the night of his birth, but almost two years later. We like to tell the story with the Wise Men coming on Christmas as it makes a better Christmas pageant. But that isn't how the story goes.

A star guided them to find Jesus and his family. Perhaps a star will guide you in 2024. During worship services prior to annual meetings, you will be given a star with a word on it. Star Words are picked randomly, guided by the Holy Spirit, a gift over which you have no control. You are encouraged to accept the word with an open heart to learn how the Spirit might be calling you to live into the word, and how the Spirit and that word may lead and guide you throughout 2024.

If you are unable to attend your annual meeting, especially snowbirds, and want to receive a Star Word, contact me and I'll send one to you.

Prayers for a blessed 2024!

Pastor René

A MESSAGE FROM KATIE DEMARAIS, SAM...

“So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.” ~ Luke 2:16-20

My hope for you this Christmas season and as we begin a New Year is that you experience it as a child, as a child hearing the Good News of Great Joy for the first time. Standing in the field with the shepherds in awe of the angels' glorious announcement. Kneeling with the sheep besides the manger, listening to the soft cooing of the newborn baby Jesus. Journeying with the wisemen as they search for this one for whom they have waited so long. I hope that you experience the 12 days of the season Christmas as a child, as that is what you are: a beloved Child of God. A Child whom God loves so much that Jesus came to earth, died and rose again so that we may spend eternity in the Glory of God. Oh, what wondrous news is this.

Your sibling in Christ,
Katie DeMarais, SAM

A MESSAGE FROM RACHEL ROGGENBUCK, SAM...

2024. It's the beginning of the year. We often use this time to restart good habits that fell by the wayside throughout the year. We are not perfect and the best intentions sometimes get sidetracked. That goes, too, for our involvement in church and maintaining a healthy faith life. It can be hard to fit in everything that pulls us this way and that way. We each go by many names (for instance, I am called Rachel, wife, mom, daughter, just to name a few). Perhaps the most important name is Child of God. One way to keep my faith strong is to spend time with this faith community. When I do that, not only am I sharing my own faith, but others share with me, making us both stronger. Like us, Jesus also has more than one name. Matthew 1:21-23 *"She will bear a Son, and you shall call His Name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."* All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His Name Immanuel."* --which means, God with us. Let's take that first, ancient name—Immanuel, "God with us." It tells us just who Jesus is, doesn't it? He is God Most High, come down from heaven—and why? To be with us. To be one of us—a human being, suffering the same griefs and troubles we do, walking our road beside us. Jesus is the proof that God understands us—not just intellectually, but through experience. He has been there. There is nothing of our sorrow that He has not carried all the way to the cross. But then there's the other Name—Jesus, "The Lord is salvation." Jesus is God come to be our Savior—the One who rescues us from the power of sin, death, and the devil. There is no evil so strong that He cannot conquer it and set His people free. If it costs Him His life—and it did—Jesus will rescue us and make us beloved, forgiven, cleansed children of God. Maybe it takes two names to carry all His wonderfulness! As you start this new year, remember You are a child of God and your faith will be stronger when you share it with others. The Worship Outside the Walls Team offered a Winter Edition of the Family Fun event in early December. While the turnout was lower than that of the summer edition, those who attended had a fantastic time! Games with candy canes, yummy food, and caroling from a horse-drawn wagon were the highlights from this time together. In January, we are offering a suncatcher class at Gary Lutheran on January 20th!! We will continue to offer activities regularly to spend this time together!

In peace,
Rachel Roggenbuck, SAM

Minutes - A New Journey Parish Council Meeting

(6:30 p.m. on December 11, 2023, at Immanuel Lutheran, Bejou, MN)

Council members present: Jim Steinmetz, Mary Preisler, Stacey Knudsen, Peggy Hanson, Wanda Stordahl and Teresa Werpy. Others: Katie DeMarais, Rachel Roggenbuck, Mike Nelson, Jill Nelson, Bonnie Werpy and Sue Gunderson.

Jim called the meeting to order and Katie led devotions and prayer.

Secretary's Report: Minutes of the November 20, 2023, meeting were distributed and reviewed. Motion by Wanda, second by Peggy and carried, to approve minutes of the November 20, 2023, meeting as presented.

Treasurer's Report: Reports were distributed by Jill and reviewed. A motion was made by Mary, seconded by Wanda and carried, to approve the treasurer's report as presented.

Staff Reports:

In Pastor René's absence, Katie reported that Pastor will be on vacation December 26 to January 3.

Rachel provided a summary of the Family Fun Event held at Immanuel and indicated that the parish will pay one-third of the cost (using grant funds) for the horse-drawn wagon ride used to sing Christmas carols around Bejou. She also reflected on the first baptism she conducted at Immanuel. Funds left over from purchase of the Blessing Boxes will be reviewed and a decision made what to do with those funds.

Katie reviewed the schedule for the upcoming annual meeting and reminded everyone to get in their reports for each congregation's annual report.

Old Business:

Rachel is researching and educating herself on Tithely so plans to have more information to present at the January parish council meeting.

New Business:

Stacey brought extra Christmas banners from Our Savior's that she offered to the other parish congregations.

Mike and Jill mentioned that the Gary council discussed the need to cut some items from Gary's 2024 budget in order to continue working within their financial means. Jim reviewed how Immanuel's fundraisers have helped Immanuel.

Mike thought his term on the parish council as a non-voting member was over the end of the year and thanked the council. The Parish council thanked Mike for his service.

Council members were reminded to select parish council reps at each annual meeting; and also that parish council officers will be elected at the February parish council meeting.

The next ANJLP Council meeting will be held Monday, January 15, at 6:30 p.m. at Immanuel. The meeting adjourned and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Sue Gunderson, Parish Secretary

News from Gary Lutheran...

Gary Lutheran Church November 26, 2023, Council Meeting Minutes

The Gary Lutheran Church council meeting was held following worship on Sunday, November 26, 2023 with Bonnie Werpy, Gene Werpy, Jill Nelson, Teresa Werpy, Peggy Hanson, Gene Hanson, Jenny Lien and Pr Rene in attendance.

Bonnie called the meeting to order. The amended agenda was approved upon motion by Teresa, second by Gene Hanson. Peggy read the secretary's report which was approved upon motion by Gene Werpy, second by Gene Hanson.

Treasurer's report: Jill read the resignation of Carrie Heisler as the treasurer and gave the treasurer's report. The general fund showed an ending balance of \$28,734.57 as of October 31. The Gary quilters closed their account and donated \$1700 to the congregation to be used towards updating the sound system. The treasurer's report was approved upon motion by Gene Hanson, second by Gene Werpy, motion carried.

Old Business: Gene Werpy removed the trees by the steps. Brock Nelson replaced the rope on the bell. Gene Werpy gave an update on the roof leaking issue which has been fixed. The fall dinner made about \$2300 which will be going towards the sound system and other technology needs. Thrivent donations were discussed. Peggy Hanson used her action team grant for the caramel rolls at the rummage sale, and Gene Werpy used his action team grant for the harvest lunch. Jill questioned a deposit that had been made from Thrivent labeled "Charitable Grant". Peggy Hanson will contact Thrivent to determine what this money is for. The furnace issues were discussed. We have been having issues because the moisture has been wrecking the panel. Getting a dehumidifier was discussed.

New Business: Teresa gave a parish update stating that the parish budget has been drafted with small changes from last year, and it was suggested to encourage any of several local Bible camps for students to attend.

The Fair Meadow Foundation is asking for donations from local churches to raise money so that they can be included in Giving Hearts Day. It was decided to take a second offering each Sunday for the month of December for this cause.

Parish staff has been working with the Liberty Copier company on new contracts for Gary and Immanuel which would cost the same or less than the current cost.

Treasurer appointment: Gene Hanson moved to appoint Jill Nelson as treasurer following Carrie's resignation, second by Teresa, motion carried.

It was decided to schedule the annual meeting for January 14th following 10:30 a.m. worship. Volunteers for the nominating committee are needed to fill positions on the council. A budget meeting will be held on December 10 at 9:30.

Peggy moved to adjourn the meeting, second by Gene Werpy, motion carried.

Jenny Lien, Secretary

Altar Guild, Usher/Greeters and Janitor Assignments:

- Gary Lutheran Church Ushers/Greeters, including any midweek services in their timeframe. (NOTE: Please check to make sure the red Christ Candle gets extinguished after each service.):
 - Jan. 7: Rhonda Bennefeld, and Jeff & Whitney Roske
 - Jan. 14-21: Richard & Karen Tadych
 - Jan. 28-Feb. 4: Gene & Peggy Hanson and Rick & Jenny Lien
- Gary Lutheran Altar Guild for January: Linda Engen and Kim Knutson

News from Our Savior's...

December 10, 2023, Council Meeting Summary

- Meeting called to order by Wanda Stordahl. Devotions by Pastor René Mehlberg.
- Council members present were Wanda Stordahl, Jane Aakhus, Stacey Knudson, Tanya Hamre, Gordie Ostenaar and Cindy Ostenaar. Others in attendance were Pastor René Mehlberg and David Stordahl.
- November 2023 meeting minutes approved.
- Financial report approved. 2024 Budget approved.

Old Business

- Did not receive capital credit payout for Garden Valley.
- Parsonage sale update. There's work still needing to be done there before selling it. Stacey will contact an appraiser.
- Discussed council members terms and ways to involve more people.

New Business

- Christmas Eve Service will be at 4:00 pm. Need ushers & greeters.
- Ladies aid groups will now combine into 2 groups.
- Council meetings will be hybrid with zoom during the winter months.
- Possible housing for the horse hearse in the cemetery building. Building needs some repairs, including an overhead door, before that can happen.
- Offering counters: Anita will work on getting a signup sheet made for this.
- Annual Meeting will be January 28, 2024, following the 10:30 worship with a Zoom option.
- Jan-March church will be in the basement and going back up March 31st for Easter.
- Pastor René Mehlberg read thank you for Pastor Rebel. Also discussed resources available for families in need in the area.

Meeting adjourned. Closed with Lord's Prayer.

News from Immanuel...

Summary of December 20, 2023, Immanuel Council Meeting

Council members present: Jim Steinmetz, Duane Gunderson, Peggy Gunderson, Mary Nell Preisler, Jon Large, Gloria Steinbrenner, Terry McCollum, and Delane Schaumburg. Also present: Pastor René Mehlberg, Katie DeMarais and Rachel Roggenbuck.

- Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were given and approved.

Staff Report:

- Family Fun Event was lots of fun.
- Sunday School has had no one attend. Still hope to have Sunday School once a month.
- Still need confirmation mentors.
- Thanks for all everyone does!
- Annual meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2024. Please get all reports to Sue Gunderson as soon as possible.
- Still looking at different copier machine contracts.
- Pastor René is on vacation after Christmas.
- Plans for Rachel to become SAM on February 4th at 10:00 service at Immanuel.

Old Business:

- Thanks to everyone who helped at lutefisk supper! Was a huge success. Weather was great.

New Business:

- Garden Valley was at church to check on internet service.

Additional Immanuel Info:

- Ladies' Aid supper on Wednesday, January 17, serving from 4-6:30 p.m. Meal cost is a free will offering. Servers are Gloria Steinbrenner, Joyce Bendickson and Rachel Roggenbuck. (Note: Confirmation at 6 p.m., worship service at 7 p.m. & Immanuel Council meeting at 8 p.m.)
- Thanks to all those--and there were many--who volunteered their time and efforts to make the lutefisk/meatball supper another success. The winners of the quilts raffled off that evening were Monica Winter and Barb Iverson.

Other Parish-wide Events:

Suncatcher Class:

All are welcome for an afternoon of fun, fellowship and creativity as we learn how to make suncatchers with Elizabeth Rockstad of Studio 4:13. The class will be held at Gary Lutheran Church at 2 pm on Saturday, January 20. If you are interested, please call or text Jenny Lien (218-556-1228) so we know how many materials we will need. The cost of the class will be \$20. All are welcome!



Family Playdate

We are going to continue indoors Family Playdates through the Winter. We'll read a Bible story and have crafts, snacks, & an indoor snowball fight.

Thursday, January 11

Come anytime between **4-6pm**
Hosted at Gary Lutheran Church
Open to ALL kiddos & their families



Youth Group

Open to all 6-12 Graders.
All are welcome. Bring a friend!
Come ice skating or sledding, have some pizza and snacks, & enjoy time together. Rides can be arranged from McIntosh, Bejou and/or Gary! Equipment is free & available there. Food will be provided!

Sunday, January 28 ~ 5:00-7:00pm
Fertile Ice Skating Rink & Sledding Hill
Fertile, MN

Ministers:	Members of the Congregations Pastor René Mehlberg (218) 308-7898 pastor.rene.mehlberg@gmail.com
Synodically Authorized Minister (SAM)	Katie DeMarais (218) 820-8287 or demarais.katie@gmail.com
SAM	Rachel Roggenbuck (701) 741-0976 or athomerachel@gmail.com
ANJLP Secretary:	Sue Gunderson (218) 280-8678 or immanuel@gvtel.com
Gary/Ness Sec.:	Julie Gevik (218) 280-3356 or garyrindaloffice@gmail.com
Our Savior's Secretary:	Anita Roy (218) 849-3791 or oursaviors@gvtel.com
Parish Website:	anewjourneyparish.org

JANUARY 2024 WORSHIP SCHEDULE (denotes Holy Communion)**

WORSHIP	IMMANUEL (Bejou)	OUR SAVIOR'S (McIntosh)	GARY	NESS	SUNDAL
Sunday, Jan. 7 (white)	8:30 am – Worship**	10:30 am – Worship**	9:30 am – Sunday School 10:30 am – Worship**	8:30 am – Worship	
Sunday, Dec. 14 (green)	8:30 am – Worship	10:30 am – Worship followed by Council Mtg	8:30 am – Worship followed by annual meeting 9:30 am – Sunday School		10:30 am – Worship**
Wed., Jan. 17 (green)	7:00 pm – Worship**				
Sunday, Jan. 21 (green)	8:30 am – Worship** followed by annual meeting	10:30 am – Worship**	8:30 am – Worship** 9:30 am – Sunday School	10:30 am – Worship** followed by annual meeting	
Sunday, Jan. 28 (green)	8:30 am – Worship	10:30 am – Worship followed by annual meeting	9:30 am – Sunday School 10:30 am – Worship		