

**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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**FEBRUARY 2025**



***PRAYER LIST:*** *Mindy Aguilar, Jessie Beckman, Shawn Bendickson, Ron Dahl, Jayden Gensburger, Stephanie Gilbertson, Eric Grieve, Denise Halland, Diane Hamre, Jesse Hickman, Rosie Keller, Mae Knowles, Jesse Koch, Mark Larson, Violet Lee, Donna Lisburg, Julia (Pantaleo) Madoll, Gwen Meyer, Shaun Moritz, Roger Narum, Keith Olson, Lois Ostenaar, Franklyn Preisler, Susan Ruud, Anita Slater, Lily Thronson, Todd Tranby, Shirley Valen, Delores Warmsbecker, and Tiffany Winter. We pray for these individuals, along with their family and friends.*

**RESIGNATION ANNOUNCEMENT:** It is with regret that the ANJLP parish council accepted Pastor Rene's resignation effective February 28, 2025. She will be the next ordained minister at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Menomonie, WI. Her last Sunday will be February 16, her last worship February 19, and her last work day February 20. *A Parish-wide Open House Send-Off at Immanuel will be Wednesday, February 19, at 5:30-7pm followed by worship at 7pm.*

**PARISH TREASURER:** We announced in the last newsletter that Jill Nelson was planning to conclude her service as Parish Treasurer as of December 31, 2024. We are happy to announce that she has had a change of heart and will continue those duties through the end of 2025.

**SUNDAL LUTHERAN CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT:** Following the decision of A New Journey's parish council to stop providing contracted pulpit supply services to Sundal Lutheran Church at the end of 2024, Sundal Lutheran Church offered a call to Katie DeMarais. Katie will serve Sundal Lutheran Church as a very part-time SAM (Synod Authorized Minister), beginning January 1, 2025. This call is to provide worship leadership, pastoral care, and pastoral acts only to and with Sundal Lutheran Church and its members. Because of our long history of ministry together before and during A New Journey's formation, both in terms of Sundal and Katie, we will all work together to maintain boundaries while also sharing in ministry. This may include Sundal still purchasing services from Gary Lutheran and the parish (such as newsletter, bulletins, or office support). Because of the intricacies of membership and intermingled families, Katie will strive to work with A New Journey staff to decide what types of pastoral care/acts fall

within her call and which fall within the purview of A New Journey. As always, this is God's work, and we are God's hands, feet, and voices in this world together.

NOTE: Sundal will have worship on February 16 at 10:30am.

### **General Follow-up from Annual Congregational Meetings**

While the core of God's work isn't about the business of the church, it's necessary in the society we live in. Annual meetings are an opportunity to look back and learn, while also casting a future vision. They aren't always easy or fun, especially when changes and challenges are on the horizon.

Thank-you to:

- the 2024 church leaders for leading and guiding their church throughout the year.
- all who completed church and parish reports. Special shout-out to treasurers and financial secretaries pulling together the many numbers from throughout the year.
- Julie, Sue, and Anita - the church secretaries for compiling and copying reports.
- Thank-you to Immanuel for copier use for the Gary and Ness reports.
- all who showed up and participated in your church's annual meetings that were held. Thank-you, again!

If you weren't able to attend your annual meeting, copies of annual reports are available at each church. Feel free to reach out to a church council member or someone who was there to find out what you missed.

**\*\*\*\*\* YOUTH NEWS in the YOUTH CORNER! \*\*\*\*\***

### **Confirmation Wraps Up in February**

*Before Pastor René leaves at the end of February, confirmation will wrap up for the year. This year was spent learning about the Lutheran faith. February 12 will be the last night of instruction.*

*On Sunday, February 16, Emily Tadych and Tenley Olson will confirm their faith at Gary Lutheran's 10:30am service. All are invited to attend in support and celebration.*

# **“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.*

We have a number of **Thrivent Members** who help extend the church budget or fund special projects through Thrivent Action Team Grants. Grants are \$250 and most members receive 2 per year. Grants have been used for quilting, church/community dinners, caring card ministry, kitchen or office supplies, youth programming. Thank-you to Thrivent members who have applied and received these grants. If you are a Thrivent member who hasn't used these grants, talk with your church leadership to see what might be possible.

Another way Thrivent supports local churches is through Thrivent Choice Dollars. It's that time of year to make sure those eligible direct their dollars to the congregation or parish.

Choice Dollars designated during the calendar year can be directed until March 31 of the following year. You can direct dollars online or by phone:

## Online

1. Visit **Thrivent.com/thriventchoice**
2. Click on the the section that says “Direct Choice Dollars”
3. Click on the link that says “Direct Choice Dollars”
4. Log into your Thivent Account
5. Follow the prompts to complete the request.

## By Phone

1. Call 800-847-4836 and when prompted say, “Thrivent Choice”
2. Press 1 to direct Choice Dollars or 2 to hear Thrivent Choice program Terms and Conditions. (If prompted, say or enter your phone number and date of birth.)
3. A representative will work with you to direct Choice Dollars.

You can always contact your local Thrivent representative with any questions. Thank-you to Thrivent and our Thrivent members for helping us live out our mission!

## ***MESSAGE FROM PARISH PRESIDENT JIM STEINMETZ...***

Parish Members,

I thought I would put word out there, that in the wake of Pr. René's resignation, although this loss will provide challenges for our future, we will survive and eventually thrive!

The parish council met twice since this news was released, and I feel that we (the parish) have accepted this challenge to move forward and pray for direction from the Holy Spirit. I am a true believer that as one door closes another one opens.

We have been in contact with the Synod office and Pr. Genelle Netland is our contact there for the next steps. She is already in process of finding at the minimum some pulpit supply and pastoral assistance as we use the remainder of our parish agreement to all take a deep dive into what we want and what we are willing to do to move forward. (This step was planned to happen this year regardless.) Pr. Genelle has requested to have us (the parish) communicate with her through either myself as Parish President or my wife, Sue as Call Committee Chair, not to give the impression that your individual concerns are not important but to be mindful of Pr. Genelle's time and how she can steward that time most efficiently and effectively. There is an opportunity to talk to her in person on February 10<sup>th</sup>. She will be attending the next Parish Council meeting and would be open to questions you may have. Please feel free to come on the 10<sup>th</sup>. I have heard that there are some of you that have concerns. That is great. That means you are invested in the future, you want to know and hopefully you would want to be part of the next step.

We will be having an open house celebration for Pr. René on her final Worship Service with us on Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> from 5-6:30pm before Wednesday Worship at Immanuel at 7pm. Please come celebrate all the great contributions Pr. René has shared in her time here.

In closing, I want you all to know that I believe we can be successful as a parish as we come together to share God's love with all we encounter. The mission we have become as part of this "A New Journey Lutheran Parish" is very important to me and I hope to all of you. Let's dig in and find a way to make this work!

God's Peace

Jim Steinmetz, Parish President

Contact Info for Questions or Concerns:

Jim Cell 218-766-6125

Sue Cell 218-766-8708

Email: [sweet-dairyair@live.com](mailto:sweet-dairyair@live.com)

## ***MESSAGE FROM PASTOR RENÉ L. MEHLBERG...***

Dear Beloved Children of God:

As many of you are already aware, on Monday, January 6, 2025 I resigned my call with ANJLP effective February 28, 2025. I begin as the ordained minister at First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC) in Menomonie, WI on March 1, 2025. I will be hours closer to family and long-time friends.

The Holy Spirit is wild and wily as you never know how, when, or where it may take you. Just as my call to ANJLP wasn't one I sought out, but found me; it happened once again. After I learned about this church and their call, the Spirit kept pushing me to follow. Note: the ELCA and UCC have an ecumenical agreement honoring one another's ordinations.

The Holy Spirit can be like the wind in the movie "Mary Poppins." Like Mary Poppins, you come in, work hard, love even harder, and then suddenly, unexpectedly, and for some (many?) tearfully take your leave. For me, I'm going where the Spirit is calling me next. And the lives touched, including mine, are forever changed.

I will hold in deep prayer all throughout ANJLP as the future unfolds as you continue sharing God's love and promises in your churches, throughout your communities and this mission field. It has been a great honor and an incredible privilege to work beside and with all of you in ministry for Christ; to get to know you and the people and places you call home.

Continue holding onto Jeremiah 29:11, which has been a guiding verse for ANJLP:

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

The Lord's plans are not always our plans, which you well know. And yet, God's plans are for good and with hope. Hold onto hope and hold onto God, who is and will always be Emmanuel, God with us.

My prayers are with you always~  
Pastor René

## ***A MESSAGE FROM RACHEL ROGGENBUCK, SAM...***

*Romans 12:12-13 “<sup>12</sup>Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.  
<sup>13</sup>Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”*

One of my friends, who also happens to be a pastor, shared with her Facebook community that she purchased a new planner. Her intent is to stay focused, organized, faithful, and centered for the year ahead. She asked for help: in sharing a Bible verse, a favorite passage of a religious text, or a favorite spiritual or contemplative quote. She plans to write it in one week of her planner and use it as a center point for that week. She is also committing time to praying for those who participate in her request. To be honest, I don’t usually participate in requests like this, not that there is anything wrong with them, I simply don’t take the time. This time, I was called to share the bible passage above from Romans.

As we entered 2025 full of hope for our future as a parish that is growing together as a parish and individually as a church, we discovered that our pastor/mission developer is feeling called to serve elsewhere. While it is hard to be patient to wait - wait for anything - we live in a world of instant gratification and when things take even a fraction of a moment longer than we think it should we wonder what’s wrong. Often nothing is, we just need to be patient. Patient to do the work that we have been called to do.

As we impatiently wait, let us be faithful in our prayer lives. Faithful in our servant lives and faithful as we show up to serve others. It’s what we do best. Loving others, showing them that God is at work in and through You! There is hope for a bright future for your church and our parish. We must do the work, have hope, be patient, faithful in prayer and watch for those in need. You have the ability to share the love and promises of Jesus with everyone you meet.

Your Sister in Christ,  
Rachel Roggenbuck, SAM

***Minutes - A New Journey Parish Special Parish Council Meeting***

(6:30 p.m. on January 6, 2025, at Immanuel Lutheran, Bejou, MN)

Council members present: Jimmy Steinmetz, Teresa Werpy, Karen Carlsrud, Mary Preisler, Jill Nelson, Marilyn Graff and Kristi Skeie. Others attending: Pastor René Mehlberg, Rachel Roggenbuck, Bonnie Werpy, Susie Steinmetz and Sue Gunderson.

Jim called the meeting to order and Pastor René led devotions.

Pastor René went on to read her letter of resignation effective February 28, 2025. She has accepted a call and will be the next ordained minister at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Menomonie, WI. Her last Sunday will be February 16, her last worship is February 19, and her last work day will be February 20. A motion was made by Mary, seconded by Marilyn, and carried to accept Pastor René’s resignation with regret.

As a member of the Call Committee, Susie reported that the Synod has been notified and the email from the Synod was read. Their representative, Pastor Genelle Netland, Associate to the Bishop, will be at Immanuel on February 10 to do an exit interview with Pastor René and then meet with the Parish Council to guide us through October 31, 2025, which is the end of our Parish Agreement.

It was suggested that a parish open house send-off for Pastor René be held at Immanuel on Wednesday, February 19, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. followed by worship.

Pastor René indicated that before she leaves, she plans to complete Confirmation with the two 8<sup>th</sup> grade Confirmation students.

Discussion was held on ways to communicate Pastor René’s departure with the members. Jimmy also noted that current plans are to pay rent for the “parsonage” through March 15, 2025, as the renter has given us some leeway on the one-year contract.

A motion was made by Mary, seconded by Teresa, and carried to adjourn. The meeting closed with the Lord’s Prayer.

Sue Gunderson, Parish Secretary

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***Minutes - A New Journey Parish Council Meeting***

(6:30 p.m. on January 13, 2025, at Immanuel Lutheran, Bejou, MN)

Council members present: Teresa Werpy, Mary Preisler, Stacey Knudson, Kristi Skeie, Mike Hagy and Jim Steinmetz. Also present: Bonnie Werpy, Rachel Roggenbuck, Pr. René Mehlberg and Sue Steinmetz (to record minutes).

Jim Steinmetz called the meeting to order at 6:30pm and Pr. René led devotions.



Secretary's report was distributed. Mary made a motion to approve, second by Kristi. Motion passed. Treasurer's report was distributed. Teresa made a motion to accept, second by Mary. Motion passed.

#### Old Business:

- Rachel requested a contact for each congregation in case of last minute changes to scheduled events or services. They were assigned as follows: Gary Lutheran Church = Bonnie Werpy; Ness Lutheran = Karen Carlsrud; Our Savior's = Anita Roy; Immanuel = Rachel Roggenbuck.
- Mary commented that she feels that the Parish Council has a better understanding of each other compared to where we started.
- Bonnie announced that she sees some positive forward direction out of Gary financially. For example, a year ago Gary reported a deficit of \$24,000 and after hard budget decisions and a fundraising raffle they are reporting ending the year with a positive balance of \$18,000.
- Our Savior's reported that the Hugo's coupon book campaign is going well, also.
- Jim mentioned Immanuel fundraisers were very successful again this year.

#### New Business:

- Sue read Katie's announcement about serving Sundal as a very part-time SAM.
- Pr. René is trying to end well, by finishing up all commitments with youth, confirmation, and release time, etc. She also noted that "good enough" may be all that is completed.
- Rachel has touched bases with 2 of the 3 nursing facilities that Pr. René served to possibly serve in that capacity. Also, we discussed her taking left over bulletins with for those visited or attending.
- Rachel is planning to put together community events. Possibilities are: Gary = getting together at Who's Place/Legion; McIntosh = maybe candle making project; Bejou = something at the Community Center/Lean To.
- Ladies' night this month is at Peachy's in Bejou. Still looking into considering new options for the 3<sup>rd</sup> month in sequence.

#### Other business:

- Mary thanked Parish Secretary for sending the bulletin each week. It means a lot since they are bound to worshipping at home at this time.

The next Parish Council meeting will be held February 10 at 6:30pm at Immanuel. Note that Pr. Genelle from the Synod Office will be at that meeting and has extended an invitation to anyone from the parish that has concerns to come and be heard at that time.

With there being no other business to address, Teresa made a motion to adjourn, second by Mike. Meeting adjourned. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Minutes by Sue Steinmetz

## *News from Our Savior's...*

### **December 22, 2024, Our Savior's Council Meeting Highlights**

- Council members present were Wanda Stordahl & Dave Stordahl, Jane Aakhus, Stacey Knudson and Tanya Hamre. Others in attendance were Anita Roy and SAM Rachel Roggenbuck.
- November minutes approved.
- Financial report was approved as presented.
- Old Business included: setting greeters and ushers for Christmas Eve service; update of parsonage sale; and approval of finishing hearse restoration.
- New Business included: plans for taking down Christmas decorations, January 26 annual meeting date; and no plans for a January council meeting
- Rachel reported she's trying to scheduled visits. Also going to look into doing a community event day/night in January. A suggestion was made to see if Katherine Howard could come do something.

### **Additional Our Savior's Information**

- Our Savior's continues to sell Hugo's Supermarket coupon books as a fundraiser. The coupon book cost is \$10.00 each and can be used at any of the Hugo's stores. If you are interested in purchasing a book, please contact Anita Roy at 218-563-3495 or 218-849-3791.

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## *News from Gary Lutheran...*

### **Follow-up from Gary's Annual Meeting**

Council leadership for 2025: Bonnie Werpy, President; Lori Thronson, Vice President; Peggy Hanson, Secretary; Jill Nelson, Treasurer; Meryln & Gwen Meyer, Financial Secretaries. Trustees: Joe Heisler, Teresa Werpy; Deacons: Gene Hanson, Stacy Gunderson, Karen Tadych. ANJLP Parish Council Reps will be shared between: Bonnie Werpy, Jill Nelson & Teresa Werpy.

**Compassion Child Fundraiser:** Gary Lutheran Church has been sponsoring Angel Ghana through Compassion International since 2015. To continue this sponsorship ministry, we are holding a Valentine's Day party on Friday, February 14, from 5:30-9:30pm at Gary Lutheran Church. Additional info is provided at the end of this newsletter.

## **Gary 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.
  - Feb. 2 (8:30am): Kelly & Kristi Engen
  - Feb. 9 (8:30am-no communion) & 16 (10:30am): Kurt & Shawn Halvorson
  - Feb. 23 (10:30am-no communion): Richard & Karen Tadych
- Gary Lutheran Altar Guild for February: Shawn Halvorson

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## ***News from Immanuel...***

### **December 18, 2024, Immanuel Council Meeting Highlights**

Council members present: Jimmy Steinmetz, Mary Preisler, Terry McCollum, Rachel Roggenbuck, Becky Olson, Delane Schaumburg, Gloria Steinbrenner and Peggy Gunderson. Also present was Pastor René Mehlberg.

- Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were provided and approved. It was noted that we cleared \$4,744.73 from the lutefisk supper.
- Staff reports included the schedule for Christmas services, scheduling visits, and continued learning.
- Old Business included no parish worship on December 29; annual reports to Sue by January 10; and annual meeting on January 19.
- New Business: Rachel is checking on price of speakers.

### **January 15, 2025, Immanuel Council Meeting Highlights**

Council members present: Jimmy Steinmetz, Terry McCollum, Rachel Roggenbuck, Becky Olson, Delane Schaumburg, Gloria Steinbrenner, Peggy Gunderson, Joyce Bendickson, Duane Gunderson, Cindy Large, Jon Large and Mary Preisler (by Zoom). Also present was Pastor René Mehlberg.

Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were provided and approved. Immanuel's 2025 budget was also approved.

### **Staff Report:**

- Pastor René's last work day will be February 20. She is working on finishing things up.
- Rachel is working on scheduling community events, nursing home visits, taking classes.

Old Business:

- Rachel still researching new speakers.
- Pastor René's exit interview will be held at Immanuel on February 10 at 5 pm with Synod representative.
- There will be a Parish-wide Send Off for Pastor René at Immanuel on Wednesday, February 19, from 5:30-7pm followed by 7pm worship.
- Immanuel's annual meeting will be Sunday, January 19, following 8:30am worship.

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**Additional Immanuel Info:**

- All are welcome and encouraged to attend the Send-Off for Pastor René on Wednesday, February 19, from 5:30-7:00 p.m.
- Also on Wednesday, February 19, is Ladies' Aid supper with free will offering. Servers are Peggy Gunderson, Delane Schaumburg and Melissa Bendickson.
- Immanuel Council will meet following 7pm worship on Wednesday, February 19.

*Wednesday*  
**Night Worship**  
*hosted at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bejou*

Wednesday, February 19  
 Ladies Aid Supper served from 4:00-6:30pm  
 Pr. Rene Send-Off 5:30-7pm  
 Worship at 7:00pm  
 ILC Council Mtg 8:00pm

YOU are welcome at Wednesday Night Worship:  
 The Word proclaimed! Music sang! Fellowship shared!

*Church Ladies' Night Out*



All ladies are welcome!  
 Bring a friend!  
 Each month we will gather at a local restaurant for food, fellowship, and fun!

**Tuesday, February 25~ 6:30p**  
**Erickson's Smokehouse,**  
**Fertile**

**Kids' Valentine's Day Party @ Church**  
 (Which really means: Grown-ups Night Out)  
**Friday, Feb. 14: 5:30-9:30pm**

Want a date night with your Valentine or just a quiet night at home? Bring your kiddos (any age) to Gary Lutheran Church anytime between 5:30-9:30pm. We'll have pizza, movies, games, crafts, and fun! RSVP is required so we have enough food and help. Care provided by adult volunteers & teen helpers. Cost: free will offering to fundraise for our Compassion Child Ministry.

RSVP: Katie DeMarais 218-820-8287

<b>Ministers:</b>	<b>Members of the Congregations</b> <b>Pastor René Mehlberg (218) 308-7898 through Feb. 2025</b> <a href="mailto:pastor.rene.mehlberg@gmail.com">pastor.rene.mehlberg@gmail.com</a>
<b>Synodically Authorized Minister (SAM)</b>	<b>Rachel Roggenbuck (701) 741-0976 or</b> <a href="mailto:athomerachel@gmail.com">athomerachel@gmail.com</a>
<b>ANJLP Secretary:</b>	<b>Sue Gunderson (218) 280-8678 or</b> <a href="mailto:immanuel@gvtel.com">immanuel@gvtel.com</a>
<b>Gary/Ness Sec.:</b>	<b>Julie Gevik (218) 280-3356 or</b> <a href="mailto:garyrindaloffice@gmail.com">garyrindaloffice@gmail.com</a>
<b>Our Savior's Secretary:</b>	<b>Anita Roy (218) 849-3791 or</b> <a href="mailto:oursaviors@gvtel.com">oursaviors@gvtel.com</a>
<b>Parish Website:</b>	<b><a href="http://anewjourneyparish.org">anewjourneyparish.org</a></b>
<b>Find Us Online:</b>	<b><a href="https://linktr.ee/anewjourneyparish">linktr.ee/anewjourneyparish</a></b>

**FEBRUARY 2025 WORSHIP SCHEDULE (\*\* denotes Holy Communion)**

<b>WORSHIP</b>	<b>IMMANUEL</b>	<b>OUR SAVIOR'S</b>	<b>GARY</b>	<b>NESS</b>	<b>SUNDAL</b>
<b>Sunday, Feb. 2</b> (green)	8:30am-Worship** (RR)	10:30am-Worship** (RR)	8:30am—Worship** (PR) 9:30am-Sunday School	10:30am— Worship** (PR) followed by annual mtg; potluck meal; & Pr. René send-off	
<b>Sunday, Feb. 9</b> (green)	8:30am—Worship (RR)	10:30am—Worship (PR) followed by Farewell Send-off for Pastor René	8:30am—Worship (PR) 9:30am-Sunday School		
<b>Sunday, Feb. 16</b> (green)	8:30 am – Worship** (PR)	10:30am—Worship** (RR)	9:30am-Sunday School 10:30am-Worship ** (PR) with Confirmation Service	8:30am – Worship (RR)	10:30am-Worship** (KD)
<b>Wed., Feb. 19</b> (green)	4-6:30pm-Supper 5:30-7pm-Pr. René Send-Off Reception 7pm-Worship** followed by Council Meeting				
<b>Sunday, Feb. 23</b> (green)	8:30am—Worship	10:30am—Worship	9:30am-Sunday School 10:30am-Worship		

***Note: Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, March 5, with no service times yet set.***