



# GABRIEL'S GAZETTE

## JUNE 2025



*"Loving, Sharing, Serving  
Jesus with you."*

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
1237 E. Coolspring Ave.  
Michigan City, IN 46360  
(219) 872-4419

Email:  
[immanuel Lutheran1237@  
gmail.com](mailto:immanuel Lutheran1237@gmail.com)

Website:  
[www.immanuelmc.com](http://www.immanuelmc.com)



## Membership: What is it and why it matters?

As we reach out to inactive members and there is conversation over why we should keep or release members, it seems clear to me that there are common misconceptions about what membership is and why it matters.

What is membership?

To be a member of a congregation is to join a local gathering of Christians for the purpose of receiving Christ's gifts of Word and Sacrament, praying together, serving the body of Christ, and giving witness to the truth, as it says in Acts 2:42ff, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." And, "They had everything in common" and gave to "everyone who had need."

One joins a congregation that teaches the pure, unadulterated doctrine of God's Word and administers the Sacraments according to Christ's command and promise, as Christ said in Matthew 28, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing...and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Having found such a congregation, one confesses and adheres to what that congregation teaches. Within this congregation we grow together in faith and holiness of life. We learn to serve our Christian brothers and sisters, giving to those who have need, praying for one another, and correcting, rebuking, encouraging, and forgiving with God's Word. As it says in 1 Corinthians 12, one member can't say to another, "I have no need of you." We love and are loved as members of Christ's body.

To be a member of a congregation does NOT give salvation. We are redeemed members of the body of Christ by faith alone. There are many on congregational

membership lists who will not be saved on the Last Day because they did not have faith. As Christ says in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." However, to obtain this saving faith, Christ has given to His church the ministry of Word and Sacrament. By this ministry we are preserved in faith till the Last Day.

Membership is NOT about being a part of a social club with some perks like baptisms, weddings, funerals, and fellowship hall rental. Certainly, there are benefits which we enjoy within this life together, but it flows from the fellowship that is made and preserved as we receive Christ's gifts.

Membership is NOT kept by just paying your dues. This isn't a country club. We appreciate people's monetary gifts, but this does not keep a person in membership. Giving is a part of membership. Christ expects generosity of His members toward His church, but this isn't a fellowship made by giving. It is made by Christ who baptized you into His body and gathered you by His Spirit.

Why does membership matter?

Because you matter to Christ and His body. Christ wants you to abide in Him (John 15) and not to cut yourselves off from His Word. And the body of Christ needs your love and wants you with them. Consider this: a person who doesn't go to church because they have no money to give for an offering is depriving the church an opportunity to practice Christian charity. A middle-aged man who doesn't feel like he needs church is depriving a young boy who goes to church with his single mom an opportunity to have a Christian fatherly role model. A young person who is too

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busy with sports to be active in her congregation is depriving an older member of someone who might help him with yard work or of the grandchild he never had or serve the church in ways that he is physically incapable of doing. Also, you might find yourself one day lonely or in need when you go through a tragedy or illness or loss. If you have established a relationship with the church, you will never go without.

Why do we release members?

We reach out to inactive members because we love them and know that no one who keeps himself from God's Word for long can survive spiritually. In all that we do, we hope that members will return. But sometimes, to teach people what it means to be a member and their need for Christ, we release someone. Releasing someone acknowledges what that person has already done. He has separated himself from Christ's body. To leave someone comfortably in peril is uncaring and hateful. And we hope that our action will wake up some members to realize the importance of returning to active participation in the church. Christ gave the church the proclamation of the law to bring repentance and a desire for God's grace (See Matthew 18). And we are praying and waiting for them to return with open arms, just as God our Father does (Luke 15).

*Pastor*

## JUNE YOUTH ACTIVITY



### **Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> Lucky Game Night!**

Join us for our first teen room event!

We will bless the teen room and have pizza and games. We will also have a brief training for anyone interested in helping us livestream our services. This activity is for confirmed youth or 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Come on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 5-8 p.m.



*Congregational*  
**MEETING**

## **Immanuel's next QUARTERLY VOTERS' MEETING**

**will be on  
TUESDAY, JUNE 10<sup>th</sup>  
at 7:00 PM**

**All members are encouraged to attend.**



## **WORSHIP SERVICE IN THE PARK 2025**

**Sunday, June 29, at 10:00 a.m.**

We will be having an in-the-park worship service with communion, followed by our church picnic, at:

**Creek Ridge County Park, located at  
7943 W. 400 N. in Michigan City.**

The service is set for 10:00 a.m.,  
with a picnic at 12 Noon.

There is plenty of space for us to spread out while still enjoying worship and fellowship with each other, so bring your lawn chairs.

We will have burgers and hot dogs on the grill along with a potluck of picnic items. Please bring a salad or dessert to share, your own drinks, and table service.



Creek Ridge County Park is **very accessible** with a flat terrain and plenty of parking.

This park service will be our Sunday service, so there will **NOT** be a service at the church that day. There will also be a worship service with communion on Saturday evening at 6:00 p.m. at the church.

This event is being hosted by Tim & Lori Dobkins and Sarah Bohac. Watch the weekly bulletin for any additional information, or contact the church office.



# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

## JUNE 23-27

### 8:30-11:30 a.m.

For children ages 4-11 (or just finished 5<sup>th</sup> grade)

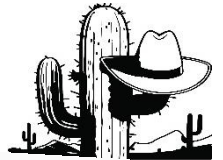
There's no greater joy than to praise the name of the Lord all day long. But how can your kids do that if they don't know who Jesus is or what he's done for them? Here at *Wonder Junction*, we travel through the Old West while marveling at Jesus' birth, childhood, ministry, death and resurrection, and coming return.

So, grab your bandana and dust off your boots! We are headed west to *Wonder Junction* where kids will discover the wonder of who Jesus is.

### Register Today!

Pick up a registration form in the Gathering Place or register online at [immanuelmc.com](http://immanuelmc.com) and click on the VBS box. One form is needed for EACH child.

There will be a **VBS Closing Program on Friday, June 27, at 6:30 p.m.**  
You are all invited to come see what we have been learning all week!



### VBS SUPPLIES NEEDS LIST – CAN YOU HELP?

***Please visit the VBS table to see what items are needed.***

Donated items can be placed in the box under the VBS table. For more information, contact a Parish Education member: Peggy Elser, Chris Glick, Lisa Knoll, or Lynette Johnston-Martin. You can also choose to sponsor a child. We do not charge a fee for children to attend Immanuel's VBS, but our program cost is approximately \$20 per child.



Vacation Bible School is an outreach ministry of Immanuel to share God's Word with the children in our community so we can lead them to Jesus and strengthen their faith. So, it is important that we all reach out and share our program information with family, friends, and neighbors. Please pick up flyers at our VBS table in the Gathering Place to pass on to others that might be interested.

Thank you, and please keep our VBS ministry in your prayers!





## Shepherds & Lambs

### The Sunday School Newsletter June 2025

#### **HAPPY FATHER'S DAY TO OUR DADS AND GRANDPAS!!!**

What is a Dad? He's a Mr. Fix It, perhaps a sports coach, someone to teach you to ride a bike or drive a car, someone to lift you high in the air, someone to read you a night-time story, someone to play monsters with, someone to sneak Mom's freshly baked cookies with, someone to hug when you need one, or **JUST BE THERE FOR YOU!!!** AHAI! BUT what about a Dad who takes you to Sunday School and goes to church with you, prays that night-time prayer with you, prays that night-time prayer **FOR** you, shows by example how a Godly Dad should be, takes an active interest in developing good traits of loving, caring, honesty, helpfulness, gratitude, patience and God-pleasing attributes of all kinds. Many Bible Dads were good and some not so much! God has given Dads the responsibility to raise children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." Many times, Grandpas will be there to fill in as a father-figure role, which is equally as important. We ask God to bless you fathers and grandfathers as you take on this role of leading your children to Jesus. **BLESS YOU ALL!**



**This summer we will have the theme of SERVING WITH JOY,** learning about different people in the Bible and how they served God in various ways.

After Sunday School each week, ask your child who served God and in what way. The students each receive a student leaflet recapping the lesson for the day. Discuss the lesson with them asking them questions. Say! You may even learn something new yourself!!



**HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!  
ENJOY THE SUMMER WONDERS GOD HAS GIVEN US!!**

*Lynette Johnston-Martin.*  
Sunday School Superintendent

#### **OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD**

Throughout 2025, we will be gathering items for the Samaritan's Purse, Operation Christmas Child boxes. Each month, we will focus on collecting a different type of item for these boxes. A collection box is in the Gathering Place.

In June we will collect  
"Put A Penny In It" items like:

- wallets
- purses
- coin purse
- keyrings



Each item must fit inside a shoebox. For more information, please see Kelli Kalvaitis or contact the office.



#### **PLEASE NOTE:**

There will **NOT** be a newsletter in July or August. The next regular issue of *Gabriel's Gazette*, the September issue, will be mailed out at the end of August. The deadline to submit your articles will be **Monday, August 4.**







## Rooted in Christ, Growing in Stewardship

The heartland is now awash in various hues of green. The doldrums of winter give way to the colors of spring. Now, the promise of spring gives way to the growth of summer. Fields are planted and sprouted. Gardens are planted.

Flowers adorn the beds of neighborhood homes and roadside ditches. Green is the shade of life!

Green growth is also the hue of the faithful steward. The seed of faith planted in human hearts in the waters of Holy Baptism grows as it is nurtured in the Word proclaimed and ingested in the Holy Supper. This faith does indeed save. But our stewardship of the Gospel is also designed to bear fruit for God's glory and the benefit of our neighbor.

To consider this, let us look at the hymn, "Fruitful Trees, the Spirits Sowing" (LSB 691). It is very much a stewardship hymn!

*Fruitful trees, the Spirit's sowing, May we ripen and increase, Fruit to life eternal growing, rich in love and joy and peace.*

- The tree of faith is not planted in us by us. It is the Spirit's work! We do not claim the title "steward." Rather, we are created for it (Gen. 1:26-28).
- He is the One who makes it grow in us. The fruits of the Spirit are borne out because we, by grace through faith, are connected to the vine that is Jesus (John 15).

*Laden branches freely bearing Gifts the Giver loves to bless; Here is fruit that grows by sharing, Patience, kindness, gentleness.*

- Our stewardship is NOT about what we do. It is about what the Holy Spirit does in and through us. That is the fruit that we bear. His fruit for His purposes.
- But that fruit is lived out through us. The world sees the fruit of our stewardship of the Gospel in lives lived connected to Word and Sacrament.

*Rooted deep in Christ our Master, Christ our pattern and our goal, Teach us, as the years fly faster, Goodness, faith, and self-control.*

- Stewards have been created and redeemed to reflect the image of Jesus in the world. He is the pattern. We reflect to others around us the Light of the Gospel He has shone on us.
- This reflection comes when Christ's goodness flows from us to others.

*Fruitful trees, the Spirit's tending, May we grow till harvests cease; Till we taste, in life unending, Heaven's love and joy and peace.*

- Just as the Spirit has created us for stewardship of the Gospel, so also does He cause our faithfulness! He calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies and KEEPS us in this faithful stewardship of the Gospel.
- The ultimate goal of our faithful stewardship is eternity. For us. For our neighbor. All worked out by the Spirit.

Green is the color of the world right now. It is also the color of our stewardship and it is growing in us as we are connected to the vine, Jesus! God grant our growth in Him!

**- LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter Article  
June 2025**



## SUMMER IS HERE!

In the midst of summer enjoyment, be sure to make time for the regular Sabbath rest; that is, whatever else you may be planning, include worship in those plans. We are always in need of God's grace and forgiveness, given to us in Word and Sacrament – don't allow summer activities to pull you away from that!

If you are traveling, you can still find time for worship. A little research can help you find a congregation to visit. You may contact our church office for direction to a Lutheran congregation to worship with during your journeys. Or, if you have internet access, you can look up a congregation at [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org). When camping, visit the worship service in the campground; when visiting relatives, attend their church for the weekend; and, if you have friends or relatives visiting you, come here and bring your guests.

So, as you go about your summer activities, don't forget to include worship as a top priority!

