

## The Messenger – January 2026



Grace and peace

First, thanks for the cards and gifts for our wedding anniversary and Christmas. Thank you for your prayers, intentions, for healing. My six-week post op visit was positive and healing is progressing well. Kathy will be having a knee replacement done on Thursday January 15. Please hold her in your prayers, and send healing energy for both the surgery and recovery.

We have entered into this new calendar year during heart of winter. So many folks set new intentions at the beginning of a new year. I read somewhere recently that this may be incongruous with the season of winter. Winter is nature's time to rest and rejuvenate after harvest and before spring. Many animals hibernate or have migrated. Others are surviving on stored resources. Plants are waiting for the return of spring. I think there is some wisdom in sharing nature's rhythm. You might consider spending a bit more time in meditation, prayer, reading, doing some art work, whatever practices that assist you in being reflective. This is time for being more than doing.

Liturgically it is also a time to deepen the awareness of the presence or appearance of God. The Sundays after epiphany tell stories through scripture and song of the identity and mission of this child in the manger. This season of the church year helps folks to deepen into both an awareness of Christ and their own mission. We will be hearing the story of the epiphany in both services on Sunday 11. The gospel readings assigned for January 18 and 25 are witnesses to core work of Jesus, and the calls of disciples. The ReFresh Service's themes including welcome, and our call in these times. We will deepen our awareness of Christ's work, and our identity during this month.

We will be gathering for our annual meeting on Sunday January 25. We will have the usual agenda items of reviewing reports, elections, and the adoption of the budget. These are important items. The most important business will be the presentation of recommended actions from our teams. Team reports will be reviewed by the Church Council at the meeting on January 20. Since this is so close to our annual meeting the executive committee has chosen to share these reports with everyone as soon as they have been received on January 15. You will be receiving a packet either by email or in the mail along with a letter from myself and Karen Van Howe, our Council President. This journey we are on is difficult for it is a journey in which we create the way by walking it,

I invite you to prayer and practices that will deepen you and us into our identity individually and collectively.

Epiphany and Winter blessings

Pastor Frank

**Please mark your calendars for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation January 25<sup>th</sup> following the 10:30am worship service. We will need a quorum of member for voting.**

**We will be following up with the Task Teams that were created at our last Potluck in November 2025 for their reports regarding their recommendations for our building.**

### **Happening at Emmanuel**

**Yoga With Claudette Pirrello, Mondays at 5:00 pm**

**Cardio Drumming With Beth Campisi Mondays at Emmanuel,  
4:00 – 5:00pm**

**Spiritual Journeys on Tuesdays, 9:30-11:30 am on Zoom**

**Silent meditation practice in the Benson Room at Emmanuel.**

*Thursdays from 5:30 – 6:00pm – All are welcome.*

*Enter by parking lot entrance. Questions or text Sara 815-742-0581.*

Emmanuel Lutheran Church Pantry— Fridays 9:30-11:30 am

### Wednesday Bible Study

A person can join the Bible Study with a cell phone or land line if no access to internet. To join by a land line or cell phone, dial one of the numbers below and then enter the meeting id and passcode when prompted.

1 309 205 3325 US or +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Meeting ID: 893 5688 8344    Passcode: 11999

### Reconciling in Christ (RIC) 13 Years

In January of 2013, Emmanuel's members voted unanimously at the "Annual Meeting of the Congregation" to become an RIC member, adding this to our long-time philosophy of "radical hospitality". This designates this congregation as "open and accepting to all who come, regardless of socio-economic status, race, sexual orientation, gender, identity, gender expression, or spiritual path", as stated in Emmanuel's welcome statement.

The people who come as visitors and those who eventually stay feel the acceptance and love of Christ that Emmanuel has to give.



(Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

All female members of the ELCA are considered a part of WELCA and are invited to join us on the third Thursday of each month, except July and August at 9:30 am at Emmanuel.

**Next WELCA gathering is January 15<sup>th</sup>, 9:30am.**

The commitment of WELCA is to grow spiritually by praying, studying the Bible, and maturing in faith. As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to growth in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

## Emmanuel Food Pantry

The Food Pantry would like to thank everyone who donated food or money to the pantry, donated to the CROP Walk, attended the Mayor's Hunger Luncheon, helped on delivery days, volunteered on Fridays, or said a prayer for the pantry and/or our neighbors who needed our services during the year of 2025. It is all so appreciated. At the start of 2026, the need is still great!

## **Birthdays in January**

1/5 Nickee Aldana  
1/6 Julaine Loftquist-Birch  
1/7 Augustus Koch  
1/8 Alden Butler  
1/13 Erick Vazquez  
1/14 Kristi Ream Hoerres  
1/16 Lucille Dunphey  
1/17 Lisa Novak  
Jennifer Olson

1/19 Brynn Fleming  
Anthony Jardine  
1/20 Kristie Heath White  
Lazarus Torres  
1/22 Craig Campbell  
1/24 Kathryn Schulz  
1/24 Netha Morgan  
1/31 Dan Goldberg

**Lucille Dunphey** will be 108-year-old on Friday, January 16<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to send her a card, her address is; 508 Roosevelt Road, B205, Machesney Park, IL 61115

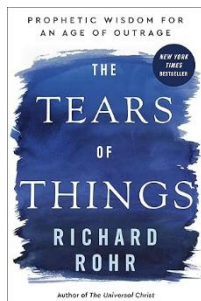


## In Our Prayers

Allison, Jonathan, Julaine, Ray, Donna, Jim, Ellie, Wanie, Bob, Barb, Kathy,

Norm, Jennie, Judy, Shannon, Mike, Matthew, Tom, Sophie, Vince, Todd, Bina,

Jeff, Deborah, Peg, Karen & Jerry, Nathaniel & Hannah, Tim Geoppo, Mary Jo, Dr. Abu, Emi, Isaiah, Manny, Leeza, Louis, Barbie, Janine, Mike, Wade, Cindy, Billy



## Spiritual Journeys

We will be starting a new book soon, "The Tears of Things; Prophetic Wisdom for an age of Outrage," by Richard Rohr. We will be starting the book either January 20 or 27, depending on

the ongoing discussion of the current Book. You can find the book where you purchase your reading materials.

### **Winnebago County Forest Preserves Interest Hikes**

Come hike for an hour in Winnebago Counties Forest preserves.

Text Holly if you want to join the hikes:

815-543-1191. Meet at the Forest preserve entrances unless otherwise instructed.



**Saturday, January 17th  
10:00am**

**Rock Cut State Park  
7223 West Lane Rd**

**Loves Park, IL 61111, Meet at concessions**

**Wednesday, January 28th 10:00am**

**Severson Dells®**

8786 Montague Road, Rockford, IL

Link to Descriptions of all 44 Forest Preserves

<https://www.winnebagoforest.org/items>

All hikes begin at 10:00 a.m. Dress for the weather!



At the Breathe Meditation Service, we gather for one hour to enter a sacred time -- the "thin place" between the worlds -- and Breathe. We listen to sacred scriptures and poetry from many traditions, we chant, and we sit in silence as we open ourselves to the Great Mystery.

Breathe is 5:00 pm on the second Saturday of each month  
September through May.

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**Our next Breathe Meditation Service is January 10th  
5:00 - 6:00pm at Emmanuel. Enter by the north parking lot  
entrance.**

**Bus Trip to Milwaukee and the Black Holocaust Museum**

Coach USA Van Galder Tour and Travel Bus Tour,  
Included will be a “step-on Guide”, Sherman Phoenix Market  
Place, Lunch at a Black-owned restaurant, plus other stops  
involving civil rights in Milwaukee, and a stop for dessert.

Date: February 9, 2026

Main Focus: Black Holocaust Museum, Milwaukee, WI

Contact: Josie Peebles, 815-962-1076 for details.

Cost: \$180.00

Van Galder phone # 1-800-747-7407

**Upcoming Northern IL Synod Events**

Congregational Resourcing Event 2026 (CRE)

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Sauk Valley College

Dixon, IL

Synod Assembly 2026

Friday & Saturday, June 12 to 13, 2026

Augustana College

Rock Island, IL

**“Thresholds”**

The current Art Show will continue until January 27<sup>th</sup>, when the  
artists will start picking up their works.

The opening for the next Art Show, “Love is...” will be Friday,  
February 6<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 to 8:30 pm. Please join us to enjoy the  
amazing art, meet the artists, and have an evening of  
entertainment and friends.

Coming Soon!

Arts at Emmanuel A@E  
invites you to participate in the art exhibit

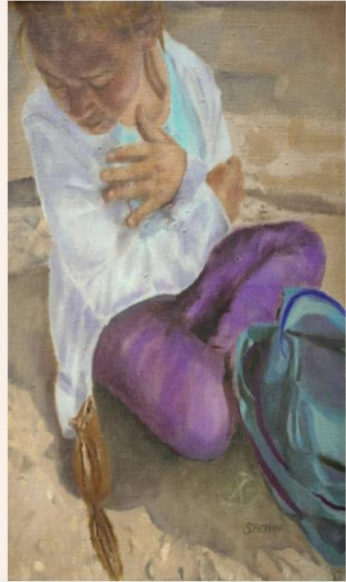
# Love is ...

Feb 2026—Apr 2026

Opening Reception in the Gallery at Emmanuel

Friday, February 6, 5:00-8:30 pm

920 Third Ave. Rockford



I Know This Much Is True Artist: S. Berman

## Calling all Artists

Arts at Emmanuel invites artists to explore the concept *Love is*, and express their interpretation through art. Artists are encouraged to pull from collective wisdom, entering into imagination what this concept inspires.

- To have your name included on promotional materials, your commitment is needed by January 1, 2026.

Art due: Wednesday, Feb 4 drop off 10:00am-12:00pm

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 920 Third Ave. Rockford

Enter at church office north door (off alley, near parking lot.)

If you need to drop off work earlier in the week, please contact the office to make appt 815-963-4815.

If you would like to exhibit, contact Susan Hurley-Whitacre  
at 708-845-7207 or [susanhurley2010@gmail.com](mailto:susanhurley2010@gmail.com).



**Silent meditation practice in the Benson Room at Emmanuel.**

***Thursdays from 5:30 – 6:00pm – All are welcome.***

***Enter by parking lot entrance.***

***Questions or text Sara 815-742-0581.***

### **Habitat for Humanity**

### **Students Building a Neighborhood**

This year, students from East, Guilford, and Jefferson High Schools completed three Habitat homes, marking an important milestone: thirty homes now stand in the Holiday Drive neighborhood. What was once empty land has transformed into a vibrant community where families can grow and thrive.

Executive Director Keri Asevedo reflects on the transformation: “Now when I drive through, I recognize families and children playing. This is a community that love built.”

Students participating in the construction learned every aspect of building a home, from framing and drywall to electrical wiring and finishes. As Malachi Cannon of East High School shared, “We really built this from the ground up. It’s super fulfilling.” Christopher Brown of Guilford High School added, “I can fix things at home now because of what I learned here.” Each home is tailored to the needs of the families who will live there, providing a foundation for lasting stability.





### **Faith Community Nurse Notes**

ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) New Year's resolutions focus on spiritual growth, connecting with God's word, serving others, and living out faith in daily life, moving beyond typical self-

improvement goals to deeper transformation, emphasizing hope in God's molding power rather than just willpower for personal change. Common themes include reading Scripture, prayer, generosity, acts of mercy (like helping neighbors), and finding God in everyday blessings (Luther's "daily bread").

### ***Spiritual & Faith-Based Resolutions***

- **Deepen Faith:** Take time for God's Word, meditate on Scripture, or pray for others.
- **Worship:** Commit to worship or find new ways to connect with the sacred.
- **Serve:** Perform corporal works of mercy, help neighbors, or practice generosity.
- **Live Out Vocation:** See daily tasks and blessings (work, family, health) as opportunities for faith, a concept Luther called "daily bread".

### ***Practical & Life-Oriented Resolutions***

- **Be Present:** Live in the moment and appreciate life's sweet and bitter experiences as God shapes you.
- **Connect:** Spend more time with family and friends.
- **Learn:** Develop new skills or learn something new.
- **Stewardship:** Manage finances better, reflecting Luther's broader view of daily bread.

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## ***The ELCA Perspective***

- **Transformation, Not Perfection:** Resolutions are viewed as part of God's ongoing work of molding and renewing you, not just relying on personal will.
- **Hope in God:** Ultimately, hope rests in God, who fulfills promises, rather than solely in human effort.

## ***How to Approach Them (Inspired by ELCA themes)***

- **Start Small:** Pick one or two achievable goals, like a daily prayer reminder.
- **Connect to Scripture:** Use Bible verses about new beginnings or transformation as inspiration.
- **Be Merciful:** Look for opportunities to be kind and generous to strangers and loved ones.

**Happy New Year!**

**May God bless you in 2026!**



### **Rockford Choral Union**

*On behalf of the RCU Board, please accept our sincere and heartfelt thanks for all of your help with and support for this year's Messiah performances. We are truly grateful for all of your efforts! We absolutely cannot thank all of you enough for everything that you did to make this year's Messiah possible.*

Sue Gilbaugh

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