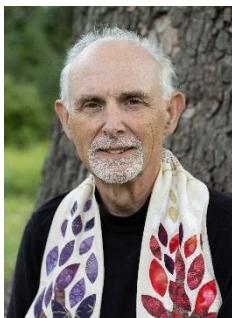


The Messenger – February 2026



Beloved Ones

February is upon us. The final official month of winter. I am writing this as we continue to experience temperatures hovering a little below and above 0. I wonder what the weeks of February will bring both in nature and in the unfolding of our lives. I offer these three February reflections.

First, I share a deep sense of gratitude with and for you. I am grateful for being with you on this difficult challenging journey to a new day in the life of Emmanuel. I think our annual meeting went well, though I do apologize to those who attend on Zoom. [So far, we have not been able to anticipate and resolve all the glitches in the technology.] I felt our conversation together was rich. I look forward to further conversations as we follow up on our teams' suggestion. We have taken the first step toward greater sustainability. There will be much work happening beginning this month. The Council and I will keep all of you informed. We are in this together in the Spirit, I want to offer several special ceremonies or services beginning this month. The first ceremony I want to offer is a celebration of gratitude and grief to this physical home of Emmanuel. We will gather and move through the building beginning and ending in the sanctuary. Please watch for further information about day and time.

Second, there are several festivals at the very beginning of February which are related to the coming of spring. Imbolc is a Gaelic festival on February 1 which celebrates the very early spring. The name seems to refer to the lambing season. It is also called St Brigid's Day. There is Christian festival known as

Candlemas which commemorates Mary's presentation in the Temple. However, many Candlemas folk celebrations are about the coming of spring. Here in the US, we have Groundhog's Day on February 2 which is also an early spring festival. Groundhogs' Day is rooted in northern European folklore of determining the beginning of spring. Though spring seems far off right now we can begin to look for signs of the renewal of life in early spring. We might ask ourselves what is stirring around us and within us. Third, February is the month of love and of lent. Valentine's Day will be celebrated on Feb 14th, and Lent begins four days later. I am curious have how these two themes might be woven together in our reflections as well as our lives. Romantic love is the primary focus of Valentine's Day. However, we can deepen and broaden the celebration of love to include friendship, and self-giving care. We can take time to read a variety of poems about love including Paul's poem in 1 Corinthians 13. Lent can remind us to put our love for God, humans, and the more than humans into action. Lent can remind us that all our relationships are touched by our mortality, and by self-centeredness. Love is at the heart of all that is. Love is present in joy and in grief. Love embraces romantic partners, family, friends, strangers, and even enemies. How will we embody love in the coming weeks?

Winter Blessings with hints of spring

Pastor Frank

Emmanuel's Congregational Annual Meeting

Emmanuel's Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, January 25th.

New members are:

Church Council: Dena Rasmussen and Kelli Luebke;

2026 Nominating Committee: Holly Blair-Cascio and Sally Susan;

Audit Committee: Gary Peterson;

Lay Voting Members for 2026 Northern IL Synod Assembly:

Holly Blair-Cascio and Alex Johnson.

We want to thank all the members who have completed their service for the various committees:

Church Council: Holly Blair-Cascio, Sally Susan

Nominating Committee: Jack Ream, Dean Rasmussen

Audit Committee: Dan Vorsanger

Lay Voting Members for 2025 Northern Illinois Synod

Assembly:

Taj Guzzardo, Bobbie Walter

We also discussed the results of the three Task Teams that were organized after the last congregational potluck. The results had been sent out by mail and email prior to the meeting and a representative of each team presented the main options their team had found. But the main focus of the discussion was that the church has 1-2 years left of funds to keep the church building functioning if nothing else goes wrong with it.

The Congregation Council had made a motion which was presented to the attending church members in person and on zoom which stated; *The Congregational Council recommends that we proceed with the sale of the building with the hope of finding a buyer that will allow us to lease portions of the building, especially while looking for a new location.* Paper ballots were passed out with the above statement and member voted. Pastor Frank sent a e-ballot to the members on zoom. The results were to see the building, 42 to 0. It was a very difficult, heart-breaking decision that had to be made. We also discussed other issues to proceed into the future.

If anyone did not get a copy of the reports of the three Task Teams and/or the minutes from the Annual Congregational Meeting and would like them, you may contact Karen Van Howe @ 815-519-9937 or kvanhowe@comcast.net or Kathlyn Wright in the church office during office hours, 815-963-4815 or emmanuelchurch07@gmail.com.

Happening at Emmanuel

Yoga With Claudette Pirrello, Mondays at 5:00 pm

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

Wednesday Bible Study on ZOOM

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

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

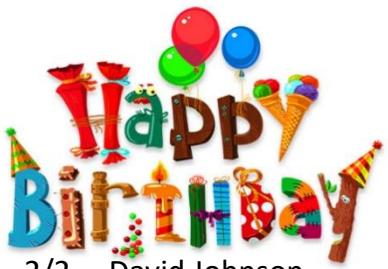


(Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

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 February 19th , 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.



February

2/2	David Johnson	2/19	Lynn Laney
2/2	David Lippert	2/19	Karen Swenson
2/4	Frida Aldana	2/20	Kenny Douglas
2/6	Cameron Sandon	2/20	Aksel Koch
2/9	Penelope Johnson	2/24	Kaia Anderson
2/13	Dena Rasmussen	2/24	Leonard Walter
2/14	Andrew Backman	2/25	Marcia Terrill
2/15	Charles England	2/27	Kathryn Ekwall
2/16	Nash Anderson	2/28	Eric Anderson
2/17	Noah Ekwall		

In Our Prayers

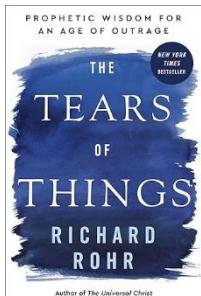


Allison, Jonathan, Julaine, Ray, Donna, Jim, Ellie, Wanie, Bob, Barb, Kathy, David

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 February 3rd , “The Tears of Things; Prophetic Wisdom for an age of Outrage,” by Richard Rohr. You can find the book where you purchase your reading materials. You can find more information about the book on Amazon.



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.



**Wednesday, Feb 11th 10:00am
Blackhawk Springs Forest
Preserve
5360 Mulford Road entrance
Cherry Valley, IL 61016**

**Saturday, February 28th 10:00am
Sugar River Forest Preserve
10127 Forest Preserve Road,
Durand, IL 61024
Meet at shelter on top of hill**

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!



Just Breathe In-Between is on the opposite months as Breathe. Christyn Rittenhouse is the moderator and will lead us through conversation and meditation.

This month Breathe In-Between is on Saturday, February 14th at 5:00 pm in the Benson Room.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is February 18 this year. Watch for scheduling information in the bulletins.

2026 Midtown Midweek Lenten at Noon Conversations With Jesus

February 25th at Calvary Lutheran Church
Exercise Class led by our Faith Community Nurses
11:00 to 11:45 am, in Emmanuel's Library
Service to follow at Noon in Emmanuel's Chapel.
Pastor Mike Thomas preaching

March 4th at Salem Lutheran Church
Exercise Class led by our Faith Community Nurses
11:00 to 11:45 am, in the Fireside Room
Service to follow at Noon in Salem's Sanctuary
Pastor Chuck Olson preaching

March 11th at Zion Lutheran Church
Exercise Class led by our Faith Community Nurses
11:00 to 11:45 am, in the Fellowship Hall
Service to follow at Noon in Zion's Sanctuary
Pastor Frank Langhoff preaching

March 18th at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Exercise Class led by our Faith Community Nurses
11:00 to 11:45 am, in Emmanuel's Library
Service to follow at Noon in Emmanuel's Sanctuary
Pastor Leslie Aska preaching

March 25th at First Lutheran Church
Exercise Class led by our Faith Community Nurses
11:00 to 11:45 am, in Friendship Hall
Service to follow at Noon in First Lutheran's Sanctuary
Pastor Bill Dahlberg preaching

Upcoming Northern IL Synod Events

Congregational Resourcing Event 2026 (CRE)

Saturday, March 7, 2026
Sauk Valley College
Dixon, IL

Synod Assembly2026

Friday & Saturday, June 12 to 13, 2006
Augustana College
Rock Island, IL

Women's Interfaith Potluck

All women are invited to attend the interfaith potlucks, which start at 6:00 p.m. Please bring a dish to pass. Plates, silverware, and beverages will be provided, but you are always welcome to bring your own plate and silverware if you wish. Please join us

Monday, February 23, 2026, at the Bah'ai Center, 1650 N. Alpine, Rockford. Judy Moe will talk about her friendships and experiences with a Bah'ai community in Kenya.



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.

Faith Community Nurse Notes



The American Heart Association has developed a program called, *Life's Essential 8* to give us helpful information to keep us healthy. The 8 points are:

Eat Better- whole foods, plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, nuts seeds, healthy oils.

Be More Active- commit to 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity weekly. Kids should have 60 minutes every day...

Manage Blood Sugar- most of the food we eat is turned into glucose (blood sugar) that our bodies use as energy...High levels of blood sugar can damage your heart, kidneys, eyes, and nerves...

Manage Weight- achieving and maintaining a healthy weight has many benefits.

Body Mass Index (BMI)...is a useful gauge. Optimal BMI for most adults ranges from 18.5- less than 25. You can calculate it online or consult a health care professional.

Control Cholesterol- high levels of non-HDL, or bad, cholesterol can lead to heart disease. Your healthcare professional can consider non-HDL cholesterol as the preferred number to monitor, rather than total cholesterol...without fasting beforehand...

Manage Blood Pressure- keeping your blood pressure within acceptable ranges can keep you healthier longer...optimally less than 120/80 mm Hg. High blood pressure is defined as 130-



139 systolic pressure (top number) or 80-89 diastolic pressure (bottom number).

Quit Tobacco-use of inhaled nicotine delivery products (cigarettes, e-cigs, vaping) is the leading cause of preventable death in the US...

Get Healthy Sleep- getting a good night's sleep every night is vital to cardiovascular health. Adults should aim for an average of 7-9 hrs, children and babies need more...Too much or too little sleep is associated with heart disease...

Happy Heart Health Month! For more information, go to www.heart.org

Art Opening, Friday, February 6, 5:00 to 8:30 pm

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

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.



Emmanuel Lutheran Church

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Rockford, IL 61110

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Pastor Frank Langhoff

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