

History of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Crosby

In 1911, Samuel E. Johnson, a student pastor, arrived from Illinois to serve the new Salem Lutheran Church in Deerwood. He soon learned of two new mining towns, Crosby and Cuyuna, and decided to visit these towns to learn how many Lutheran families he could find. In July of that year, the Swedish Lutheran Ladies Aid was organized with 13 charter members. Retired Pastor Swante Anderson arrived in Crosby to formally organize a congregation and in October 1912, the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Emmanuel congregation was formed. Hjalmar Swanson became its first Pastor. His salary was \$175.00/year.

The congregation purchased a lot from George H. Crosby on 2nd St. NW and Hwy 6. At this time, Lutheran services were being held in the Presbyterian church, but a decision was made to build a basement so regular services could be held. The basement was started in the fall and was finished in time for the Yule Otta service on Christmas morning 1913. In 1919, the first parsonage was built for \$4,160.59. A debt of \$2,933 was paid off by the Ladies Aid. In 1924, the congregation began using English services rather than Swedish and as the Sunday School and congregation grew, the little basement church became too small. A building fund was set up and on November 1, 1936, the upper structure was completed.

In 1953, a building program was started to raise funds for a new church. Lots were purchased on 4th St. SW. On August 13, 1961, ground-breaking services were held and the building committee and the members of Immanuel went into high gear. In July 8, 1962, dedication services were held for the original church building. The Russell Magnusen home on the south side of Serpent Lake was purchased for the parsonage for \$23,000 in 1963. In 1967, a Schlicker Pipe organ was installed with Dorothy Marshall as organist, a job she would hold for over 20 years. In 1976, the mortgage on the original church building was burned. The stained-glass windows were completed and dedicated. In 1991, the Long-Range Planning Committee recommended purchasing the adjoining west property, the Alexander home. The original church served the congregation's ministries for over 4 decades housing weekly church services, Sunday school classes, youth groups, confirmation lessons, both adult and children's choirs, and many other events.

In 2006, after raising funds through the "Growing Space for Grace" campaign, Immanuel decided to add on to the church. Groundbreaking was in June of 2006 with the construction beginning later that summer. While the construction was taking place, the congregation worshiped in the high school auditorium. The building addition was completed and dedicated in June of 2007 with the bell tower being built at the southeast corner of the church. In 2018, the mortgage on the 2006 addition to Immanuel was burned. In 2025, Immanuel purchased an adjoining east property, the Kehl home, which is now called Immanuel East.

Pastoral History

Through the years, Immanuel have been served by many pastors and their families, all of whom have contributed to the strength and growth of our congregation.

Ministers of Immanuel:

1912-13 Swante Anderson	1942-47 Arnold Thoren
1913-17 Hjalmar Swanson	1947-62 William Ofelt
1918-21 J.W. Swanbeck	1963-68 Ray Johnson
1921-24 J.E. Erlander	1969-75 Daniel Buendorf
1924-25 Arnold Thoren	1976-86 Colin Kivi
1928-29 Clarence Anderson	1987-97 James Almquist
1929-32 Student David Carlson	1997-99 Dennis Peterson
1932-34 Clifford Boren	1999-25 Paul Mattson
1937-42 George Ostergren	2025-Present Ian Hewitson

Mission Statement: To welcome all people to GATHER in worship to GROW in God's Word and grace and to GO forward in faith and serve others in Jesus' name.

Vision Statement: A vibrant, diverse and healthy community of faith where lives are changed by God's love, given in Jesus Christ; Where people of all ages are invited and challenged to become followers of Jesus Christ in their daily lives; Where real people experience healing, help, hope and harmony.

Immanuel's Partnerships with the Synods

In the 1988 merger of the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church combined into the new Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Our congregation is associated with a new synod called the North-East Synod of Minnesota. Through much discussion and prayer, in 2010 Immanuel voted to leave the ELCA and joined LCMC and NALC. Immanuel Lutheran is a member of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC).

Immanuel's Ministries

We are very proud of the wonderful array of ministries bringing the Word of God to people here and abroad. Here is a current list of the many robust ministries of which our congregation is involved.

Outreach Ministries

The Cuyuna Lakes Lunch Bunch provides nutritious meals for area youth during the summer.

The Malawi Orphan Care Project (MOCP) works in partnership with local leaders in Malawi to help orphans in Malawi and their caregivers.

The Cuyuna Range Food Shelf distributes food on the second and third Wednesdays of each month from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. The area food shelf has been serving an average of 200 families each month.

The Good Samaritan Fund is a mission ministry that benefits people in our area who are in need. A small team evaluates each need and determines the gifting of donated funds.

Residents Encounter Christ is a two-day weekend retreat, to provide an opportunity for the incarcerated (i.e. jail, prison or juvenile facility) to personally encounter Jesus Christ within themselves.

The Right Path is a Christ-centered and a biblically based 12 step ministry for those in recovery of any kind.

The Quilters Ministry gather twice a month to assemble quilts that are also donated to individuals and organizations in need.

Music Ministries

Churchyard: Gospel Bluegrass Band performing 1st Sunday of each month. Churchyard is best known for high quality harmony vocals backing solid lead singing featuring nearly everyone in the band.

The handbell choir is made up of people of all ages who enjoy playing handbells. This group provides special music occasionally during worship.

The Men's Chorus is for all men who enjoy singing. The group provides special music occasionally for worship.

Milestone Ministries

Baptism is God's welcome into the family of God, celebrating God's grace being showered upon this new child of God.

Third Grade Bibles are presented to children when they are in third grade. This is a gift to guide them in their faith journey.

First Communion. Welcome to the Lord's Table! Fifth grade students, following instruction with a "family" member, receive the celebration of their 1st Communion.

Confirmation. A three-year program of experiential learning beginning in the seventh grade.

Blessings of Graduates. For those graduating from high school. Parents and students bless one another.

Family Ministries

Youth group meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month and is open to all students' grades 7-12. Each night a meal is served.

Sunday School. All students' preschool through 6th grade are welcome at Sunday School.

Women's Ministries

Women's Luncheons are planned special events that provide Immanuel's women opportunities to meet for unique fellowship.

Christmas Bazaar was held on November 8th. It was a very successful event again this year. There was a raffle with 7 great prizes, beautiful craft items, a bake sale, confections, live music, a children's shopping room, and locally made sweet rolls and coffee for a break in the shopping.

Men's Ministries

Men's Den provides opportunities for Immanuel's men to meet weekly for fellowship.

Properties Ministry provides opportunities to be part of a team that maintains the church properties.

Prayer Ministries

Prayer Requests. If you have a prayer need, please share with us and we will pray for you. If you have a prayer of thanksgiving, we will rejoice with you.

The Dream Team Intercessors pray specifically for the needs of our pastor and his family.

The Prayer Chain is communicated via email. The prayers are generated from the bulletin Friendship cards, email and phone calls.

The Prayer Responsibility Team assignments go out to member's church mailboxes at the beginning of each month. Each month a different church ministry rotates through each box. These prayers are for the at home prayer support of Immanuel's ministries.

Prayer Shawl Ministry: A Prayer Shawl is meant to be given to anyone who has had surgery, been diagnosed with an illness, lost a loved one or is dealing with hardship. Prayers are said while the shawl is being made, that recipients may feel comfort and love as they wrap themselves in it.

Demographics of Immanuel's Congregation

There have been many changes in the demographics of the church and the surrounding area over the years. Early history showed larger families, some multiple generations, attending. Currently, there are smaller families but some of the extended families have remained. Historically, there have been times when there have been many children participating in confirmation, youth group, Sunday school and attending weekly services. Currently there are few. Currently, the average age of active members is 58.

Congregation statistics for 394 active members:		
Ages	Count	Percentage
4 - 12	22	6%
13 - 18	32	8%
19 - 30	31	8%
31 - 40	27	7%
41 - 50	28	7%
51 - 60	23	6%
61 - 70	52	13%
71 - 80	92	23%
81 - 101	87	22%
Average age: 57.95		

Locations of family members' homes:	
Crosby	77
Deerwood	62
Ironton	33
Aitkin	11
Emily	4
Brainerd / Baxter	11
Other	10
Total 208 families	

Surrounding area

Historically, iron mining began on the Cuyuna Range in 1911 and continued until 1984. After mining peaked in 1953, the district began to focus on non-iron-mining activities in order to remain economically viable. In 1993, the CCSRA bill was approved and signed into law by Governor Arne Carlson.

Once the site of a bustling mining operation, the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area is one of Minnesota's best mountain bike trail systems. It's 70 miles of single track, 16 pristine mine lakes, and 25 miles of natural shoreline make it a favorite destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts, including cyclists, paddlers, and anglers. This has led to many new campgrounds, cabins, bike shops, new places to eat and shop, as well as an increase in traffic.

The Cuyuna Regional Medical Center (CRMC), A major healthcare provider in Crosby, offers comprehensive medical services, including hospital care and clinics. The Crosby-Ironton School District (ISD 182) is the local public school district serving the area. Other notable employers and businesses with a strong presence in the immediate Crosby-Deerwood area include Super One Foods (retail/grocery), Graphic Packaging International (manufacturing), and various hospitality/tourism-related businesses, particularly those supporting the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. Brainerd, the Crow Wing County seat and the largest town in the area, is located 15 miles to the west and offers additional places to eat, shop, and find services.

**The following is a chronological listing and photos put together by Marian
Segersten that cover Immanuel's History 1911 - 2026**

- 1911 Samuel E. Johnson, a student pastor, arrived from Illinois to serve the new Salem Lutheran Church in Deerwood. He soon learned of two new mining towns, Crosby and Cuyuna and decided to visit these towns to learn how many Lutheran families he could find. In July of that year the Swedish Lutheran Ladies Aid was organized with 13 charter members.
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- 1919 A parsonage was built for \$4,160.59. A debt of \$2,933 was paid off by the Ladies Aid.
- 1924 The congregation began using English services rather than Swedish and as the Sunday School and congregation grew, the little basement church became too small. A building fund was set up and on November 1, 1936, the upper structure was completed.
- 1953 A building program was started to raise funds for a new church. Lots were purchased on 4th St. SW. On August 13, 1961, ground-breaking services were held and the building committee and the members of Immanuel went into high gear. Dedication services were held on July 8, 1962.
- 1963 The Russell Magnusen home on the south side of Serpent Lake was purchased for the parsonage for \$23,000.
- 1967 A Schlicker Pipe organ was installed with Dorothy Marshall as organist, a job she would hold for over 20 years.
- 1969 A women's quilting group began meeting twice a month to make quilts for Lutheran World Relief and that group continues to this day.
- 1972 The 60th anniversary of Immanuel - Dr. Hjalmar Swanson, Immanuel's first full-time pastor spoke and an anniversary book was published.
- 1974 A church cookbook was published (3000 copies at \$3.00)
- 1976 Mortgage burning. Stained glass windows completed and dedicated.
- 1982 70th anniversary celebrated - Pastor Buendorf and family returned for celebration. Started involvement with Community Food Shelf.
- 1987 25th anniversary of church building (July) and 75th anniversary of Immanuel (Nov.) with special worship services, brunch and catered dinner - Theme: "Remembering the Past, We Embrace the Future." New bell installed.

- 1988 Merger of Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church and Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church into the new Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Our congregation associated with a new synod called the North East Synod of Minnesota.
- 1991 Long Range Planning Committee recommended purchasing the Alexander property.
- 1992 The 80th anniversary was celebrated with special services and dinner. First Wild Game Feed held.
- 1993 The Alfred and Beatrice Anderson Scholarship Fund established.
- 1996 First Women's Retreat with Salem at Ruttger's Lodge, Grand Rapids.
- 1997 A new confirmation program began with Salem - FaithINKubators. Immanuel's 85th anniversary was celebrated. The Parish Nurse program started. A new Telecare Ministry was started to reach out to homebound members.
- 1998 The Puppet Ministry began. Lay Communion Ministry was developed to deliver communion to homebound.
- 1999 A new Mission Statement adopted - "Gather - Grow - Go". Started serving a meal at the Brainerd Area Soup Kitchen once a month.
- 2000 Men's Den started. Eight youth and Pastor Paul went to "Gathering 2000" in St. Louis. "Wing and a Prayer" band and singing group started. Intercessory Prayer Ministry started with Wednesday morning prayer group and home prayer participants. First Annual Fish Fry by Men's Den. Tape Ministry began.
- 2001 Alpha Course offered. Good Samaritan Ministry began.
- 2002 Cookbook for 90th anniversary
- 2004 Churchyard, a bluegrass band formed and began playing for worship services and other events
- 2006 After raising funds through the "Growing Space for Grace" campaign Immanuel decided to add on to the church. Groundbreaking was in June of 2006 and construction began later that summer. While the construction was taking place, the congregation worshiped in the high school auditorium. 2007 The bell tower was built at the southeast corner of the church.
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- 2009 The youth center was built with mostly ILC volunteers after it was plumbed, framed up, and wired by local tradesfolk. Dick Gunter was the organizer and ILC volunteers took over doing the inside room framing, sheet rocking, painting, siding, etc. More than likely, the board and current volunteers have little idea how that project came about because of the efforts of ILC.
- 2010 Through much discussion and prayer Immanuel voted to leave the ELCA and joined LCMC and NALC.
- 2011 The Hallelujah Handbell choir was dedicated and began providing special music for worship services. After reading the book "A Hole in the Gospel" Immanuel became involved with the Malawi Orphan Care Project (MOCP) in Malawi Africa. New Pathways Ministry of sheltering the homeless was started and ran for five years.

- 2012 Paul and Jill Mattson, Lisa Meyers and Shannon Lundgren were the first members of Immanuel to take part in a mission trip to Malawi. Immanuel members have participated in five mission trips to Malawi since then. Immanuel's 100 birthday was celebrated with an open house.
- 2013 A new altar built by Merlin and Dan Beseman was dedicated.
- 2015 The first Manna For Malawi event was held at the Woodtick Inn in Cuyuna featuring the band Gravel Roads.
- 2016 The Immanuel youth group (CREW) traveled to Colorado on a mission trip.
- 2018 The mortgage on the 2006 addition to Immanuel was burned.
- 2024 The Path of Hope, a special place to walk and hope and pray, was completed in 2024 between Immanuel and the high school.
- 2025 Pastor Paul Mattson retired in May of 2025 after 27 years at Immanuel.
- 2025 Immanuel purchased the Don and JoAnn Kehl property which is now called Immanuel East.

1936-
1962



1962-
2007



2007-Present

