

Immanuel Church Building Association

# Save Immanuel

A Journey Through the Restoration of Immanuel Church



Immanuel Church, Barrett, MN

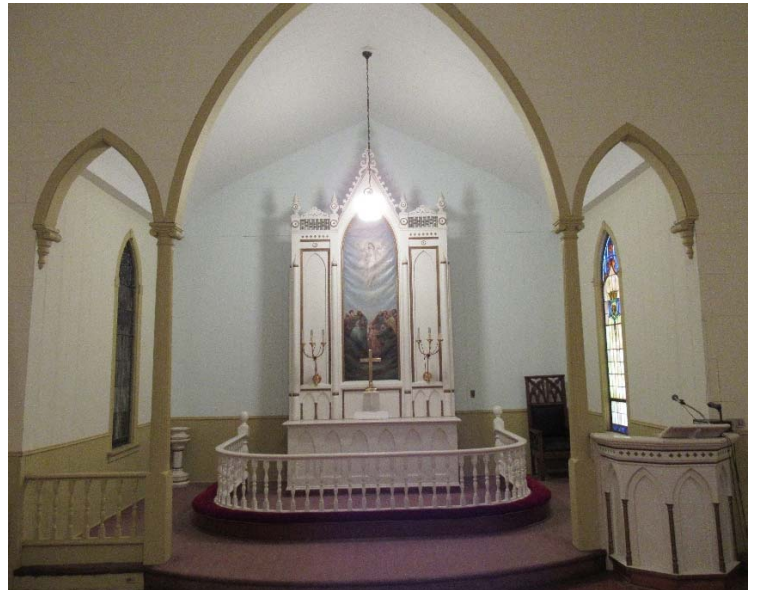


A Queen on the Prairie

Linda Ray  
5-15-2020

# SAVE IMMANUEL

In 1872 twenty-two Norwegian emigrant pioneer farmers living in Lien Township founded the Immanuel Lutheran congregation, and decided to each pay pledges, known as "subscriptions," to raise funds to build a church. The members were all farmers who had come to America with little or nothing. Many lived in dugouts while establishing their farms. They met for services in their homes for many years and first bought a farm and built a home for the pastor. Construction of this rural church began in 1883 on land donated by Ole Lien, before the towns of Barrett and Elbow Lake were founded, and it took until 1898 to complete the interior and to build its furnishings. It was dedicated in 1899. The basement was dug in 1928 to provide a meeting space for use by Luther League youth group, Ladies Aid, Sunday School, and to host dinners as well as wedding and funeral gatherings. Norwegian was spoken for services until 1939. The steeple was rebuilt in 1941 after lightning destroyed the original, the stained-glass windows were added later. The church closed in 1998, and has since then it has been used for gospel sing-alongs, funerals, weddings, family reunions, historical cemetery walks, an annual service each first Sunday in August, and was the movie set for a scene in the *Redeemer's Song* movie "He Leadeth Me" in 2003. In its heyday, the church was filled with numerous families and was a vibrant part of the community.



It had no active congregation; therefore, the cemetery association became the owners of the church, but could not spend any of the funds from that treasury toward the building. An informal committee of concerned former members and others with family ties raised funds by holding 3 or 4 gospel sing-alongs each summer to take up a collection to place into a building treasury to pay for electricity, insurance, and maintenance. They did this for over twenty years.



Bonnie Leraas, Linda Leraas Ray, Karen Block, and Byron Bartz members of the Leraas Family Singers that lead Gospel Sing-alongs are all great grandchildren of charter member Ole Leraas. Ole built the altar and communion railing.



With the church not being heated during the winter, through the years, Minnesota's harsh climate took its toll on the foundation. It heaved with the frost and each year it cracked a bit more. Last year, we were told that the building would not last another year. It was time to take action, so a building association was formed, and it now rents the building from the cemetery board and is responsible for the care of the church. It was decided they needed to raise awareness of the situation and ask for donations for the restoration.

### SPRING 2019



Five fundraiser events were held this past year, featuring local talent at the Open Mic in June, Christmas in July, and in February 2020 a "Frozen Celebration" based on the Disney movie. Those events featured Nordic food and boutique items, and the Immanuel mugs being offered for sale. A Movie in the Park in August and a September Dance were enjoyed by many. News of the campaign was spread from word of mouth, local newspapers, and on Facebook, and the group raised over \$40,000 in the first two months. The initial campaign included a fund drive, with the "token" thank you being a set of book marks featuring pictures five of Immanuel's stained-glass windows on one side of each marker, and a history of the church on the back. Linda Leraas Ray printed them up on card stock on a home computer to save costs, and Karen Block sent out sets of 5 to former members all over the country! Over \$50,00 has been raised.



## Save Immanuel



*Pride of the Prairie*

Please help us save this 1898 historical building. The basement is old and about to collapse and we are told by experts it will not last another winter! The structure will temporarily be moved very soon, a new foundation built, and then it will be placed back on a new foundation in its

original site. The cost will be significant, and we need your help, please!

**Make checks payable to:**

**"Immanuel Building Fund"**

**Send to:** Karen Block, 17783 St Highway 54,  
Barrett, MN 56311-1195

With a donation of \$20 you will receive a Commemorative Book Mark with a photo of one of [Immanuel's Stained Glass Window](#) to leave your "mark" on Barrett History!

For \$100 you will receive a Commemorative Set of 5 different Book Marks to "mark" your place in Barrett History!





# (Songfest-Open Mic) Sangfest!






**Wednesday, June 19, 2019**  
**from 5-7 P.M. at the**  
**Barrett Community Center**

*"Kick Off" 115th Annual Old Settlers  
with a night of fun! Immanuel Church  
Restoration Fundraiser*



**LIVE MUSIC!**  
• **Fun and Food!** • **Stille Aukstjon (Silent Auction)**  
• **Norske Concessions:**

*Enjoy a Pølse med Lompe  
(Hot Dog in a Norwegian Wrap)  
Nordic Vaffer med Jordbær og Crème  
(Waffles with Strawberries and Cream)  
Kaffe og Sitronade (Coffee and Lemonade)*

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Former Nashville recording artist Orlo Thompson sang several songs for the Open Mic. His great grandfather was a charter member of Immanuel.



JUNE 19, 2019 MIDSOMMER CELEBRATION





Lynette, Marc and Kaitlyn Moen were among many who sang a few songs. We made Norwegian food for the concessions, including Nordic Waffles, *Pølse med Lompe*, and *tilslorrede bondepiker*, Fancy Farm Girls, a delicious apple dessert!



A beautiful original watercolor was donated by Becki Hesedahl of Oregon for a raffle.

We also sold raffle tickets for a beautiful collage of photos of Immanuel Church through the years donated by Glenn Jorenby, great grandson of an early member.

He also donated a framed print of his "Immanuel at Sunset" photo. This photo was also made into post cards and sold with his permission.



Glenn also used several archival photos and his originals to create an Immanuel coffee mug that were sold to local folks as well as those across the country.





# Smorgasbord & Storytelling!

**Saturday, July 27, 2019**

**5:30-6:30 p.m. Dinner**

(Meatballs, lefse, flatbread, Scandinavian desserts & more)

**7:00 p.m. Storyteller Pati Kachel**

**at the Barrett Community Center**

ADV. TICKETS (by July 25) FOR DINNER & PROGRAM: \$20 -BUY AT STAR BANK-BARRETT, OR SEE KAREN BLOCK, BONNIE LERAAS, or E-MAIL linda@murray.net. \$25 at the DOOR

**'Christmas in July?'**

(Kids 12 & Under-\$10)

**'Ya Sure, You Betcha!'**

Pati Kachel is a professional traveling storyteller with The Parable Fund. Over the past 32 years, Pati has written and produced over thirty original story programs on a variety of topics that are near and dear to her heart. She'll share a collection of stories honoring her Norwegian Lutheran heritage.

*You will love it!*

**ALSO: 'Jul Butikk' - Christmas Boutique**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Saturday, September 7**  
Dance to the music of  
**'The Star Chiefs' at the**  
**Barrett Pavilion.**  
Dinner and Dancing -  
**Watch for details!**

Save Immanuel



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Professional Storyteller Pati Kachel was our guest speaker and many members of the community made their wonderful homemade Nordic specialties! Handmade ornaments were created and the boutique was a hit!



Homemade Norwegian flatbrød, waffles, rømmegrøt, grape crem, fruktsuppe (fruit soup), krum kake, almond cake, spritz, as well as Lefse from Rohr's Bakery and cheeses, sliced meats. Delicious Scandinavian meatballs were lovingly made by four of the ladies and enjoyed by all!



**JULY 27, 2019**



AUGUST 21, 2019

Immanuel Fundraiser  
**Movie in  
the Park!**

**"He Leadeth Me"**  
by Redeemer's Song Ministries,  
Fergus Falls. Producer Sarah Larson  
will discuss making the movie  
featuring Immanuel Church scene.

**WEDNESDAY,  
AUGUST 21, 2019**  
**POWERS PARK - BARRETT, MN**  
*in case of rain - at Peace Church*

**7:30 p.m.:**  
**Games, Prizes,**  
**Popcorn, Beverages**  
**8:30 p.m.:**  
**Movie - Bring your  
own lawn chair**

Everyone  
Welcome!  
Free will  
donation

Grant County Herald



The attendance was light, but those who did turn out enjoyed a great evening with a talk by Diane Ehlers, one of the actresses in the film, games and great movie-theater-made popcorn, candy and hot chocolate (free with the purchase of a mug) as well as door prizes! Scenes from the movie featuring Immanuel Church were near the end of the movie.

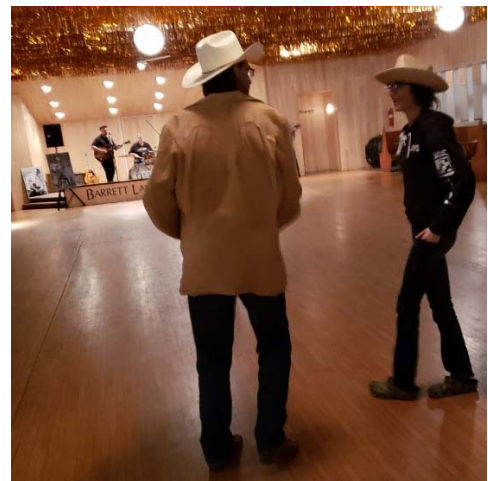






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“The Star Chiefs” from the metro area are the best! They performed amazing rockabilly music at the Barrett Lakeside Pavilion, perfect to dance to! Tony Baker’s Johnny Cash is spot on! This time we featured Southern fare including Memphis style pulled pork with barbeque sauce, and made from scratch cole slaw, mac and cheese and bread pudding. Yum! Everyone had a blast!



SEPTEMBER 7, 2019





We had raised enough funds to at least have the building shored up with cribbing and metal beams. This was done on December 3, 2019 by Neil Anderson Building Movers. Neil had grown up in the Kensington area and had attended high school in Barrett at WCA, and was excited to be a part of this restoration. The committee breathed a sigh of relief, as another harsh Minnesota winter was ready to set in. It looked like Immanuel could be saved!

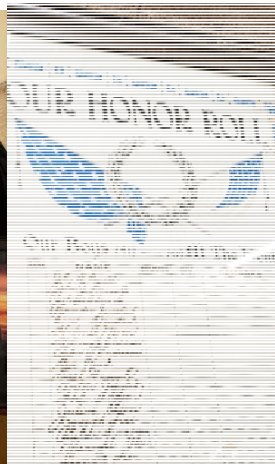
DECEMBER 3, 2019







In November Bonnie Leraas and Linda Leraas Ray placed a display in the Grant County Museum in Elbow Lake. Of all of these churches built in the county in the 1800s or early 1900s, only a few remain. Most were torn down or burned in accidental fires. Immanuel is one of the few remaining.





## MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR EXTRA DAY!

\*\*\*LEAP on of Over to the Barrett Community Center for a\*\*\*

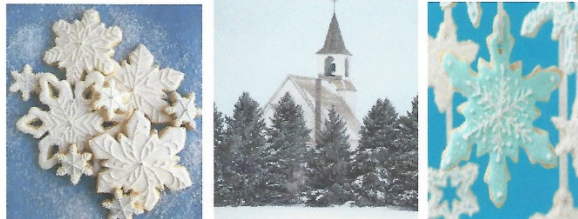
# FROZEN CELEBRATION!

Saturday, February 29 from Noon – 2pm

Everyone Welcome \* Fun, Food and Family!

Kids, wear your **"FROZEN"** costumes and win a prize!

\$5 per person (3 & under free) includes Lunch, Games & Prizes!



Olaf's Large "No-Two-Alike" Snowflake Cookies \$1 \* Photo Booth (\$1 per family) \* Frozen Souvenirs for Sale

LEARN HOW TO WRITE YOUR NAME IN RUNIC \* "DO YOU WANNA BUILD A SNOWMAN?"

### Tickets at the Door Lunch Includes

Kristoff's Classic Swedish Meatballs \* Elsa's Jello Ice Cubes \* "Olaf's Nose" Carrot Sticks  
Sven's Små Pylser med Lompe (Mini Hot Dogs with Lefse)  
Hans' Nordic Waffles with Whipped Cream and Anna's Lingonberries  
"No-Two-Alike" Snowflake Cookies \* Aurora Borealis Punch \* Melted Olaf Ice Cream \* Kaffe

## COME CELEBRATE YOUR NORDIC ROOTS!

Proceeds to Benefit "Save Immanuel" Building Fund, Barrett, MN

Details regarding weather cancellation or to volunteer, call Linda at 612-281-5227

Our "Frozen Celebration" was well attended. Many of the children came in costume as their favorite "Frozen" character, and all enjoyed bacon wrapped mini hotdogs, blue punch and jello "ice cubes," Olaf nose carrot sticks, Nordic waffles, ice cream & snowflake cookies!



FEBRUARY 29, 2020





Some of the committee that made this event happen are Judy Olson, Faith Rudnitski, Karen Block, Bonnie Leraas, Kaitlyn Moen and Linda Leraas Ray. Kaitlyn was our Elsa and is the great, great granddaughter of Ole Leraas, a charter member of Immanuel. Kaitlyn helped decorate for this event and for the Christmas in July fundraiser. The committee had as much fun as the children!



By spring we believed that enough money had been raised to hire a contractor to build a new foundation. Anderson Movers were to excavate the old foundation as soon as the ground was warm enough. They started the removal on April 7, but ran into too much frost. They were able to dig an opening into the church on the south side, remove the old back basement entrance and the old chimney. The north side was too frozen, so they resumed their task on May 4 with much success. John C. Bosek Masonry Construction was hired to pour new footings and build the new foundation walls. He began the work on Monday, May 11. He will replace the two north and south long walls first, then Anderson will remove the east wall, and the new wall will go in. The west wall under the bell tower will not be removed due to a large amount of weight, and a new wall will be



constructed in front of the old badly cracked one. We are so pleased with the work done so far, and so thankful that Leon Johnson is volunteering to be our general contractor. His family has been a part of Immanuel for many generations, and he serves as an active member of the cemetery board.

APRIL 7, 2020



The photos above were taken on April 7 by Linda Leraas Ray who headed up the fundraising efforts. A few problems had to be dealt with including a hole in the corner left by the removal of the chimney, and another is a concern about one of the interior columns on the decorative arcade in the front of the church. It loosened from its fastener, and is leaning precariously. It is hoped that once the foundation walls are built, it will return to its upright position. It is not a load-bearing structure, but we worry about the altar painting be destroyed.



MAY 11, 2020



Pouring the footings for the foundation. The concrete was hand wheeled to the forms, and skillfully leveled by concrete expert John Bosek from Garfield. Good weather was on our side.





MAY 14, 2020



These photos by Leon Johnson were taken on another beautiful spring day. The new wall is being placed in front of the bellfry tower wall. Once the north and south side walls and the bell tower wall is up, the east wall will be removed through a temporary opening that will be walled up last. Much work remains for this project to be complete. Drain tile will be placed around the building and a plan is underway to lay a drain tile line to take water from the building to the culvert near the road. Numerous loads of fill will be brought in and the empty gravel truck will take the piles of old foundation concrete off site. Many volunteers will be needed to clean up the debris, and level off the soil, spread out top soil if need be, and plant new grass, all while social distancing and wearing masks.

We had hoped to sponsor more fundraising events this spring, but due to the Covid 19 virus, we will have to plan those into the future. It will take many more funds to maintain the building. We plan to do other repairs and clean and paint the interior of the building. Our hope is to have this structure placed on the National Registry of Historic Places so grant money is available to help with the needs of the structure.

We are grateful for all who have donated both money and time for all of our fundraisers to date. We are also grateful to Kent Marshall for his help with drawing up the lease agreement, and to so many others who have gone above and beyond in their love and concern for this wonderful "Queen on the Prairie." The list is long.

We greatly desire to carry on the legacy of this church, at least for part time use for weddings, funerals, baptisms, family reunions, fundraisers and concerts. The acoustics are outstanding, and we hope they will be enjoyed for many years to come.