

## Our Church

Immanuel Lutheran Church is nestled in Tilden, Nebraska, a town of 1,000. Baptized membership is around 550 people, and more than half of the membership is 30 years of age and younger. The history of our congregation is one of missions, where we believe that our Lord has called us to reach out to the whole world with His precious Gospel.



## Our Plan

While our congregation already supports missionaries, sends missionaries from our own congregation, and started a daycare within our own facility, *Ablaze!* and ***Fan into Flame*** offered another opportunity to share God's grace with His precious people.

Our congregation had begun discussing the LCMS mission movement *Ablaze!* in 2007 through Bible studies and at voters' meetings. When we found out the Nebraska District would be participating in ***Fan into Flame*** in 2008, we viewed a video provided by the Nebraska District Office that helped increase our awareness of the campaign.

Our congregational appeal began in earnest with the Mission Board, Stewardship Board, and the Church Council meeting to make plans on how to implement our appeal. Our timeline and a goal of \$21,000 (10% of budget) was set. This goal seemed a staggering amount to expect from our members, since meeting our local needs can be a challenge.

Our group opted for small cottage visits over a period of 5-6 weeks, during which time members of the committee visited with congregation members in small groups. Letters given to us in the provided appeal materials were revised to fit our congregation's needs and were sent to congregation households informing them of our appeal plan and inviting them to a small group.

Once we started our appeal, bulletin announcements about the ***Fan into Flame*** campaign were made each week. They highlighted the local, district, national, and international mission opportunities and goals. Monthly newsletters also carried information on ***Fan into Flame*** and what this meant for our congregation. The members met regularly to keep things moving and on schedule.

Pastor Awe tied ***Fan into Flame*** and *Ablaze!* into his sermons as often as possible, and ***Fan into Flame*** video clips were shown at the beginning and end of services for several weeks. Presentations were made following services and information folders were handed out. Pastor Awe was personally involved by visiting with members as opportunities arose.

We set a Commitment Weekend for May 29-June 1 following the end of our cottage meetings. Pledge cards were distributed as worshipers came into the sanctuary. During the service a presentation was made and the cards were completed and returned, giving congregation members an opportunity to pledge their support for this mission endeavor.

## Our Results

Committee members were encouraged to make an early commitment, and we praise God for the generosity of our early givers. Their love of the Lord and commitment to spreading the Gospel was revealed in their commitments.

On Commitment Weekend, our congregation members were invited to bring forward the pledge they prayerfully considered. Through God's blessings, the pledges received **doubled our goal** with a total commitment of more than \$47,000 as of August 2008.

## Immanuel's Mission

The Committee chose our Little Lambs Daycare and Preschool for our local use of the mission funds. The funds that come back to Immanuel will be used for scholarships for the daycare and preschool, which is a tremendously successful mission project of Immanuel Lutheran Church.

We are thankful for this opportunity to spread the Gospel of Jesus through missionaries, new schools and churches, and other ways the funds will be used toward that goal.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

*Ablaze!*, as well as ***Fan into Flame***, were "programs" that I personally saw coming from The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as something that showed they were FINALLY listening to us! I was amazed at how flexible ***Fan into Flame*** was. It allows for every pastor and congregation to participate at the level that works and is comfortable for each of them. I praise God for the opportunity of our entire Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod to be able to join together in reaching out to God's people throughout the entire world with the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ!

This is why I personally decided to become involved. I see this as a wonderful way to effectively share the precious message of Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and God. I have a deep love for missions and a passion for reaching out to anyone and everyone with the Gospel. And it really is exciting to see a church body come together with that very same purpose and mission. ***Fan into Flame*** is a unique way for us to do that.

I wanted to have my congregation not just join in, but also be leaders and examples of what people of God can do by allowing the Holy Spirit to work within His Church. Immanuel Lutheran Church, Tilden, is made up of a wonderful group of people who have a true love for missions at every level. Many members here find someone who does not know about Jesus as their Christ, and they pray for them and establish personal relationships. They support local, district, national, and international mission projects. And through it all, even though it can be tough for them financially, spiritually they are fed and see the true joy of their faith. Thus they continue to want to support mission work.

If I can encourage and help anyone through this experience, I strongly implore all churches to be a part of the "Body of Christ" and come together by thinking outside of themselves, totally trusting that Jesus Christ is indeed Lord of His Church and trusting that He alone blesses and provides. Be a part of mission work at every level. Join with the "Body of Christ" in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod through some level of *Ablaze!* and ***Fan into Flame***. It is a truly unique way to connect with each other by reaching out to the world with the positive message that Jesus really did die on the cross for their sins and that He really does love them. And through it, you and your congregation will be blessed!

Pastor Michael Awe  
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Tilden, Nebraska