

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

“Praising, Proclaiming and Practicing Emmanuel—God with us—in daily life!”

Pastor's Keyboard: “Discipleship - Christmas Presence”

“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That’s why we call it the present.” An angel proclaimed the Good News of Great Joy of the birth of Jesus: *“For unto you is born TODAY in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the LORD.”* Today is the PRESENT. On the cross Jesus promises the gift of Paradise (His Presence) to a repentant sinner; TODAY!

A song in the LBW contains these words: *“God Himself is present; Let us now adore Him, And with awe appear before Him! God is in His Temple; all within keep silence, Prostrate lie with deepest reverence. Him alone, God we own, Him our Lord and Savior; Praise His name forever!”* - #249.

We are God’s field; God’s building. St. Paul reminds us that we are portable temples of the “Holy, Holy, Holy”. We are filled with the righteousness of Jesus and commissioned to transport God’s love, the real presence of Christ, into an Advent world. The GIFT is for giving. The Real Presence is for sharing.

The word “Christmas” originates from a fifth century midnight Mass called the Christ Mass. *The Nativity* - the birth of Jesus - was celebrated in the “real presence” of Holy Communion as



December 24 gave way to December 25.

Herb Brokering, in his book *I Opener - 80 Parables* writes, “Once there was a family in charge of preparing for Holy Communion. They had it gift-wrapped. Everyone could hardly wait until it was opened. When they saw the bread and wine inside the box, they could hardly wait to eat it. It was Easter Sunday. It was the best Christmas they had ever had on Easter.”

“What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas...perhaps... means a little bit more!”
—Dr. Seuss

A teacher takes attendance in the classroom. The child replies, “present”. God invites us in this Advent Season, as we await the comings of our Lord, to be present and accounted for in the classroom of compassion. Sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the Cross of Christ forever, we wait, with awakened hearts, for the pregnant moment of Christmas to arrive.

“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled ’till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn’t before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn’t come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.” Or a whole lot more! JESUS!

Jesus, the Great I AM, is present in you, with you, and for you. He is the gift of real presence. In the busy days that lay ahead, don’t forget the real presence of God. We find the babe of Bethlehem gift wrapped not in boxes with bows under a tree, but in the swaddled clothes of faith & hope & love, lying in the manger of our regenerated hearts. The gift of God is in the Temple. You are the Temple of God. So is your Christian neighbor. All the earth keep silence! Sharing Real Presence, Pastor Dave

**December 2016
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Food For Thought:

“A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes - and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent.”

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer,
God is in the Manger

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SAVE THE DATES!

- **Christmas Worship:** Saturday, Dec. 24 (2pm) Christmas Eve Children's Service; and Sunday, Dec. 25 (10am) Christmas Day Service. Carols and Holy Communion will be offered at both Services of Worship.
- Saturday, **February 25, 2017**—Emmanuel Lutheran "Fifth Anniversary" Celebration!

"ROCK the RED KETTLE"

The Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign began on Saturday, November 19. Emmanuel Lutheran hosted two Kettles (\$250.00 each) and rang bells for 8 hours at the Rochester HyVee Circle Drive NW location. Special thanks to all of our bell ringers and our coordinator Lee Pearce! Last year, servants of Emmanuel rang bells for a total of 45 hours. This year our church goal is 58 hours, one hour for each Emmanuel member. Rick Warren says, "*The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time. The best time to love is now.*" Thanks for rocking the red kettle and ringing those Christmas bells!

The Ten Commandments Minnesota Style

1. Der's only one God, ya know.
2. Don't make that fish on your mantle an idol.
3. Cussing ain't Minnesota nice, ya know.
4. Go to church even when yur up nort at da cabin.
5. Honor yur folks.
6. Don't kill. Always catch and release.
7. There is only one Lena for every Ole. No cheatin' ... ya hear me!
8. If it ain't your lutefisk, don't take it.
9. Don't be bragging' about how much snow ya shoveled.
10. Keep your mind off your neighbor's hot dish.

Sympathies are extended to Bob Mulvihill and his family. Bob's father, Tom, died on November 23. May the promise of Christ's resurrection comfort all who grieve.

Saturday School & G.I.F.T.

Each week children are learning faith stories and acquiring faith stones in Saturday School (5:10pm), while adults are learning what it means to "Grow In Faith Together" (5:15PM). What's in your bag? David had 5 smooth stones in his bag, one of which he used to slay the giant Goliath. Faith Stones aid us in our exercise of Faith Webbing. Whose faith are you influencing? Who is influencing your walk with God. Walking wet with the sign of salvation upon us, we are polished arrows in our Savior's Quiver.

Youth will have a "Song Time" on December 10, and then offer a gift of music in worship. Youth will also once again reenact the Nativity Scene at our 2pm Christmas Eve Worship Service.

PRAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS

Each month, on the 15th day of the month, we pray for an area school. During the month of December we are praying for Byron Elementary School and delivering treats to the staff. Thanks for keeping students and their families, teachers, staff and administrators, in your prayers! This ministry is supported by an Action Team gift from Thrivent.

Minnesota Institute of Art!

In honor of the 500th Anniversary of Luther's posting of the 95 Theses (Oct. 31. 1517), a special exhibition is being offered, entitled: "**Martin Luther: Art and the Reformation**". 500 years ago, Luther took a stand that shook Europe & changed the world. Now you can see the story of Martin Luther & the Reformation brought to life through astonishing artworks and historical objects, traveling outside Germany for the first time ever. The Exhibition runs from October 30-January 15. **Call #612-871-3000 to reserve tickets.** Address: 2400 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN. Thrivent members attend free on Fridays and receive a 50% off discount with the following code: Thriventmia.

Marks of Discipleship

Signposts guide our way—Disciples seek to pray daily, worship weekly, grow spiritually, read & study Scripture on a regular basis, serve others, share the good news, & give generously.

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR DECEMBER - Liturgy: LBW

Saturday, December 3 - Advent II (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Larry Vomhof
Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Rich Sunde
Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Judy Pearce

Saturday, December 10 - Advent III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Sharon Matzke
Ushers: Matt Serr & Nora
Acolyte: Emma Matzke

Kid's Choir sings!

Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Jenna Serr

Saturday, December 17 - Advent IV (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Deb Vomhof
Ushers: Larry & Deb Vomhof
Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

Communion Assistant: Deb Vomhof
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Deb Vomhof

Saturday, December 24 (2pm) - Christmas Eve

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Darald Bothun
Ushers: Darald & Leitha Bothun
Acolyte: PENDING

Communion Assistant: Leitha Bothun
Sound: Don Holtan
Coffee & Treats: NONE

Sunday, December 25 - Christmas Day (10am)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Julie Steffenson
Ushers: PENDING
Acolyte: PENDING

Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson
Sound: Don Holtan
Coffee & Treats: NONE

Saturday, December 31 - New Year's Eve (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce
Ushers: PENDING
Acolyte: PENDING

Pulpit Supply: Rev. Waldemar Gies

Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: PENDING

NOTE: MarJean Damerval will be our pianist each week. Julie Steffenson will take care of set up, & Janet Sunde & friends will take care of the take down. Pastor Dave will be our preacher each week, except on December 31 when Rev. Waldemar Gies will serve as our pulpit supply. December 10: Kids Choir Sings!

OUT OF A FAR COUNTRY - by Christopher Yuan & Angela Yuan

If you're wondering how to speak the truth with grace, compassion and love, while addressing the issue of *holy sexuality*, I would recommend reading "Out of a Far Country, a gay son's journey to God, and a broken mother's search for hope." I had the privilege of meeting the Yuan's and listening to their story. I also purchased their book and read it while flying to Tacoma, Washington. Angela & her husband Leon lived in Chicago, where they enjoyed the benefits of wealth from Leon's dental practice. But their marriage & their home was bereft of faith and love. Both of their sons were studying to be dentists, following in their father's footsteps. The Yuan family was unchurched, embracing atheism.

Christopher, born in 1971, was the youngest of the two sons. He collected gay pornography and had his first homosexual encounter with an older man when he was only 16. While attending dental school in Louisville, Kentucky, Christopher was a student by day, and a bar tender/dancer in a gay bar by night. Living in a lifeless marriage and unable to cope with the shame of a homosexual son, Angela decided to travel to Louisville, say goodbye to Christopher, and commit suicide. Not seeking God, Angela was found by God. On the train, reading a booklet given to her by a Catholic priest, Angela heard the still, small voice of God saying, "You belong to me." Instead of taking her life, Angela told her son, "Christopher, I love you no matter what." He replied, "Whatever." Angela spent 6 weeks in Louisville &

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Save the Dates!

**Lent Begins on Ash Wednesday,
March 1, 2017!*

**August 7-11, 2017 is the date of
the NALC Convocation in
Nashville, Tennessee!*

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became a Christian. She returned home and made a prayer closet out of unused shower stall. She fasted every Monday, began worshiping and attending Bible Study Fellowship, and prayed, "Lord, do whatever it takes to save my son." Her husband, Leon soon gave his life to Christ also.

Meanwhile, Christopher was going from bad to worse. He was expelled from dental school with \$80,000 in loans, began dealing drugs as well as using them, & participated in "multiple" sexual encounters. The DEA arrested him in 1998. Facing 10 years-life in a federal prison, Christopher was sentenced to only 6 years, which was later reduced to 3 years. While in prison he read a Gideon Bible and came to faith in Jesus. He came to realize that God condemns the homosexual act, not the homosexual person. God says, "Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." "Sexuality doesn't define us. God alone defines us. There is only one thing we can't live without; i.e. Jesus."

Released from prison, Christopher returned home and saw a yellow ribbon around the pine tree in the front yard, along with 100 ribbons inside the house in the front foyer. He attended Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College & Bethel Seminary. Today, while battling AIDS, he & his mother travel & teach on the subject of "holy sexuality". Together, they testify that they are 2 redeemed prodigals, saved by the grace of God. I have an extra copy of this book if you're interested in reading it. You'll enjoy it!

Back Page Stories

Men's Bible Study Breakfast: A new study and a new location: Join us at Oasis Church each Tuesday at 8am for a Bible Study on Revelation and a continental breakfast. Participate in being Evangelical. Invite a friend.

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One ministry opportunity is December 17, 2016 (9 am—Noon).

Women's Bible Studies: The Afternoon & Evening Women's Bible Study groups are studying the Book of Revelation this fall! Next Sessions: Afternoon Study on Thursdays, Dec. 1 & 15 at 1pm. Lady Light at Katie's home on Wednesday, December 21 at 6:30pm.

Madonna Towers Ministry:

Pastor Dave is leading worship & preaching at the Madonna Towers Skilled Care Chapel on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, December 7 & 21 at 1:00 pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

Church Council Highlights -

November 3: Emmanuel planned on using \$15,000 from our Reserves. As of Nov. 1, we have used only \$5,732. Thanks for your generous giving! We are looking for someone to serve as our Head Usher. The

Nominating Committee is continuing their work. Two Thrivent Action Team gifts were received: one for Visitor/Welcome gifts, and one for Gage East Blessing Bags. Church Policy Statements regarding Marriage & Sexuality are being reviewed. First draft of our 2017 Mission Plan Budget was reviewed. Our Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 29 at 4pm, followed by a Potluck Supper. Thanksgiving Offering is designated for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

Plainview Community Choir:

Directed by Jan Fiskum is presenting "Glory In The Highest" at the Plainview High School on December 4, at 7:00 p.m. Darald Bothun will once again serve as the Narrator! A freewill offering will be received!