

The Emmanuel Epistle

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

Pastor's Keyboard: "Discipleship: HOPE FLOATS"

Hope floats. Hope gives buoyancy to those who are drowning in sin and despair. I admit that I'm not much of a swimmer, but I can float.

I love buoyancy. The breath of God keeps me from sinking. I thank God everyday for the gift of hope. St. Paul reminds us that hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5). Hope Floats.

St. Peter reminds us that God has given us a living hope and bestowed upon us an eternal inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading; kept in heaven for those who are justified by faith in Jesus (I Peter 1).

"Baptism NOW saves you!" Not my words, but rather the words of St. Peter in his homily on Holy Baptism. The basis of our hope is the love of God—the Gift of Jesus. God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. God's love for us is God's grace for us.

St. Peter, in Titus 3, writes, "God saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, whom God poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that



being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy." Hope floats.

Let's be clear: Hope is not wishful thinking; nor is it wishing upon a star. It's not a matter of speculating on possibilities. Hope is not *perhaps*. Hope is not breaking a wishbone and getting the bigger half and a better deal. Hope, real & authentic hope, is the gift of Jesus, crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sins.

"But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

—Isaiah 40:29-31

Isaiah announced hope to despairing exiles: "The LORD gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired & weary, and young men stumble and

fall; *but those who hope in the LORD* will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Hoping in the LORD does not produce disappointment.

Advent is the beginning of a new church year. Advent means "Coming". We wait for the promised coming of our Lord Jesus. We wait with hope. We float with hope. We sow and reap with hope. We believe and obey with hope. Hope in Jesus does not disappoint us. Hope floats and so do we...by the grace of God.

On December 9 we will have an ambassador of hope, Mark Smeby, joining us in worship. Mark is a recording star from Nashville. More importantly, Mark is a Christ-follower. Spread the word and bring a friend to worship on Dec. 9. On Sunday, Dec. 10, I have been invited to preach at St. John's of Vilmar, Iowa. I will also be baptizing a little baby named Bransen. Needless to say, I will be preaching on Hope!

—Continued on page 3

December 2017
Newsletter
Volume 5
Issue 12

Food For Thought:

"All which happens through the whole world happens through hope. No husbandman would sow a grain of corn if he did not hope it would spring up and bring forth the ear; how much more we are helped on by hope in the eternal life."

—Martin Luther

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2017 Emmanuel Church Directory

Thanks to Deb Vomhof, Julie Steffenson and Leitha Bothun for assembling our brand new Church Picture Directory. Pastor Steffenson has also included an historical summary of our church. Great Pictures! Get your copy today!

SEMAC 2018

The South East Minnesota Area Christians, under the leadership of Larry Vomhof, are traveling to Texas in 2018 to offer hope and restoration in the name of Christ to those who suffered the devastation of Hurricane Harvey. The two weeks that have been chosen for mission work in Texas are February 10-24. If you are interested in being a part of this mission team, or wish to support their efforts, please visit with Larry Vomhof.

Nominating Committee

The Emmanuel Lutheran Nominating Committee is prayerfully searching for servant leaders for our congregation. If God is calling you to a position of leadership at Emmanuel, please give a member of the Nominating Committee a phone call (Deb Brown, Jean Wanek, Jenna Serr, & Julie Edwards).

Delivering Holiday Care

Judy Pearce is coordinating a Thrivent Action Team project that will begin during the last week of November. The project will involve taking trays of purchased cookies to the following healthcare hospitality houses: *Gift of Life Transplant House, The American Cancer Society Hope Lodge, and Ronald McDonald House*. We will also be leaving postcards publicizing and inviting visitors who are looking for a place to worship during their stay in Rochester to come to Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

Please let Judy Pearce know if you would like to help deliver cookies and invites on the following Thursdays: Nov, 30 & Dec. 7 at 2:30pm; and Dec. 14 & 21 at 1pm. Also, please let Judy know if you are available to help provide transportation for our guests to Emmanuel Lutheran Church for worship.

RED KETTLE

There's still time to ring those bells and offer hope to those who will visit the Salvation Army in the days and months ahead. Emmanuel's goal this year is 62 hours. If you have already been ringing bells, thank you! If you're still looking for an chance to serve, contact Lee Pearce ASAP.



The ADVENT of Our LORD

Worship: Saturdays at 6pm — “JESUS: The Gift of Hope”

Dec. 2: Hope Waits

Dec. 9: Hope Floats — with Guest Musician Mark Smeby

Dec. 16: Hope Sows & Reaps

Dec. 23: Hope Believes & Obeys — with Children's Nativity

Dec. 30: Bell Ringing Worship — 12 Days of Christmas

Christmas Eve: Sunday, Dec. 24, 2017 @ 9pm

Carols, Candlelight & Holy Communion with Trumpet, Pipe Organ, Flute, Clarinet & Violin





—Pastor's Keyboard...Continued from page 1

In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther writes about baptismal hope: "Therefore, if you live in repentance, you walk in Baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it. For therein are given grace, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong. Therefore our Baptism abides forever; and even though some one should fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access thereto, that we may again subdue the old man. But we need not again be sprinkled with water; for though we were put under the water a hundred times, it would nevertheless be only one Baptism, although the operation and signification continue and remain. Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, that we repeat and practice what we began before, but abandoned. This I say lest we fall into the opinion in which we were for a long time, imagining that our Baptism is something past, which we can no longer use after we have fallen again into sin. ... What a great, excellent thing Baptism is, which delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin, and then daily strengthens the new man, and is and remains ever efficacious until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory. For this reason let every one esteem his Baptism as *a daily dress in which he is to walk [and float] constantly*, that he may ever be found in the faith and its fruits, that he suppress the old man and grow up in the new. For if we would be Christians, we must practice the work whereby we are Christians. But if any one fall away from it, let him again come into it. For just as Christ, the Mercy-seat does not recede from us or forbid us to come to Him again, even though we sin, so all His treasure and gifts also remain. If, therefore we have once in Baptism obtained forgiveness of sin, it will remain every day, as long as we live, that is, as long as we carry the old man about our neck."

Luther reminds us that Baptism is our floatation device. In Christ, hope always floats. If it does not float, it is not hope, and it is not baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Wear your hope well, and stay afloat!

Forever and Always Hoping, Pastor Dave

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR DECEMBER—Special Advent Liturgy

Saturday, December 2 - Advent I (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Brock Edwards

Ushers: Brock Edwards & family

Acolyte; Mason Edwards

Saturday, December 9 - Advent II (6pm)

GUEST MUSICIAN Mark Smeby, an ambassador of Hope

Scripture Reader: Julie Steffenson

Ushers: Rich Sunde & LeRoy Quam

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Treats: Julie Steffenson, Peg Holtan, Jean Wanek, & Judy Pearce

Saturday, December 16 - Advent III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Jean Wanek

Ushers: Arne Nelson & Bob Harms

Acolyte: Cobe Siebenaler

Saturday, December 23 - Advent IV (6pm)

Children's Nativity

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Darald Bothun

Ushers: Matt Serr & Family

Acolyte: Emma Matzke

Sunday, December 24 - Christmas Eve (9pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce

Ushers: Larry & Deb Vomhof

Acolyte: Elijah Matzke

Saturday, December 30 - Bell Ringing 12 Days of Christmas (6pm)

Scripture Readers: Jenna Serr & Julie Steffenson

Usher: Bob Mulvihill & Creig Anderson

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

PIANIST: Karen Salz

Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Jean Wanek

ORGANIST: Rev. Scott Schilbe

NO COMMUNION

Sound: Don Holtan

Coffee: Judy Pearce

ORGANIST: Rev. Scott Schilbe

Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Deb Vomhof & Judy Caudill

PIANIST: MarJean Damerval

Communion Assistant: Leitha Bothun

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Jenna Serr

ORGANIST: Rev. Scott Schilbe

Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce

Sound: Don Holtan

No Coffee & No Treats

PIANIST: P.J. Stohlmann

Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Judy Pearce

NOTE: 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. Watch for instrumentalists on Christmas Eve.

Autumn Ridge Marriage Conference

Three couples from Emmanuel attended a Marriage Conference at Autumn Ridge on the weekend of October 27-28. What follows are some highlights, takeaways, and nuggets that participants would like to share with their Emmanuel church family. Investing in Christian marriage and family always pays rich dividends.

Michelle & Dean Paxson write: “Thank you so much for the gift of the “Secrets of Lifelong Romance” seminar with speakers Dr. Greg and Ellen Smalley. The speakers were genuine, funny, and steeped in the scripture. They were ready to tell us why Holy Matrimony is so important to us as part of God's plan for us. The first evening the speakers surprised us by challenging the way we communicate with each other. They stated there's 4 types of communication that are key in a marriage: small talk, administrative (running the house & budget), conflict (successfully working through it), and deep meaningful talk. They asked us to estimate how much of our conversations are based on the first three types and we felt the majority of our talk time is administrative with a bit of small talk now and then. We weren't sure what makes up "deep, meaningful" talk so it was hard to rate. We were shocked to hear that long term successful marriages need 10 minutes a day of the deep, meaningful talk. Only 10 minutes? That evening we went out to dinner with Matt, Jenna, Brock and Julie and had a wonderful conversation on what that meant to us. For example, when Dean and I talk about our faith to each other, we think that counts. Day two the Smalley's expounded on how to improve and enrich our conversations, so that we will cleave to each other and truly become one. Dr. Smalley stated that when we are one in Holy Matrimony, we are a powerful force, so much stronger than each individual alone. This is most certainly true. We feel blessed to have attended. Thank you so much.

Julie & Brock Edwards write: We were very blessed for the opportunity to attend this conference and would like to convey our sincerest gratitude to the anonymous donor of the scholarship! Brock and I were so grateful that it worked out so well in the end and we had such a wonderful time with Matt & Jenna and also getting to know Michelle and Dean! How

refreshing it was to spend this time devoted purely to thinking about and learning about ways to enrich our marriage with Christ at the centerfold, while keeping the "allure" of one another alive. I learned ways to be a better wife, like being cognizant of my husband's tendency to dream and appreciating it rather than squashing it with pragmatic intentions. I was encouraged by the fact that although a healthy marriage will always require work and attention, it is the small stuff that really counts and keeps us connected! A mere 10 minutes a day of life-giving conversation statistically stacks spouses in favor of a successful marriage. We realize this is easy to do if we as a couple are intentional about it. Being playful, praying together, reminiscing, laughing together and talking about feelings and dreams are all examples of life-giving conversation. Though the life that we as a couple build together might consist mainly of small talk, administrative meetings and conflict (because it is life, after all) we learned that it does not take much to keep connected to one another. Ten minutes is not very long to devote to God's plan for a Holy Matrimony. Brock & I agreed that for us, being playful and laughing together is very important and we make a point to schedule time for us to do this together. We also feel that our relationship with God and discovering Emmanuel Lutheran has been instrumental in the health of our marriage & family. No marriage is without troubles but the Lord keeps us close and provides resources and tools--many of which are simple but require intention--to enrich our lives, strengthen our bond together and undoubtedly create a bigger barrier for Satan to enter our lives. We are very grateful and blessed to have been a part of this marriage event!

Jenna & Matt write: We are so thankful to have been able to attend the "Secrets to a Life Long Romance" marriage retreat. The information and practical tips that were shared by the Smalley's reminded us that in order to have a great marriage, we must spend time intentionally investing in our relationship on a daily basis. We often become so busy with work, family, and daily routines, that we forget to spend time pursuing our spouse and dreaming together. The Smalley's reminded us that

—Cont. on page 5...

Women's Evening Bible Study Group:

"Lady Light" is looking at "Holy Christian Marriage & Family" thru the lens of Scripture & the lives of Martin Luther and his wife Katie. Women are meeting at the home of Katie Siebenaler once a month at 6:30pm (sixty minutes). Session 4: Wednesday, December 14.

Women's Afternoon Bible Study Group:

Women are meeting on Thursdays at 1pm at Oasis Church to study the Book of Acts. Next Sessions will be: Nov. 30--Controversy and the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15); Dec. 7--Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 16-18).

SATURDAY SCHOOL & G.I.F.T.

During the month of December all youth will meet with Julie in the Oasis basement, discussing Advent and Christmas stories from the Bible. Youth will also prepare for the Nativity Presentation on Saturday, December 23 (6pm worship). The Adults (G.I.F.T.) will meet in the Oasis Fellowship Hall and discuss our theme for the Season: "Jesus: The Gift of Hope!"

Discipleship Covenants for 2018 are available for signing. Membership at Emmanuel is an annual renewal. 62 Covenants were signed in 2017. Thanks for walking the walk with Jesus and making Emmanuel your church home.

—*Marriage...Cont. from page 4...*

some days we might not be the perfect spouse, but that just as God washes away our sins and makes us white as snow, we also have a new opportunity each day to strengthen our marriage through simple steps. We were encouraged to set a positive tone for our day by kissing our spouse goodbye in the morning and intentionally reconnecting with them upon our return. The Smalley's also encouraged couples to spend those last precious moments together before going to bed in meaningful conversations that focus on things we appreciate about our spouse and things we may be struggling with that our spouse could offer up in prayer. We left the retreat feeling refreshed in our faith, reconnected with one another, and ready to share ideas with others on the type of marriage that God desires for us to have and the easy things that we can do to bring us closer together. An upcoming event that we are looking forward to attending is a

"Staying in Love Weekend" at the Elizabeth Lodge. These marriage retreats are offered one weekend a month by Autumn Ridge Church and provide couples an opportunity to be pampered and spend time focusing on enriching & strengthening their marriage. The price is very affordable. Thank-you again to our Emmanuel family who support & encourage us through scholarships to events like this one and through your daily prayer for our marriage and family.

FINAL THOUGHT: Invest in Holy Christian Marriage! The dividends are immeasurable. Your children and grandchildren will thank you for giving them a legacy and an example to follow!

EXPERIENCE CHRISTMAS HOPE



WITH
MARK SMEBY

SATURDAY WORSHIP

SPECIAL GUEST

Dec 9th - 6:00pm

Emmanuel Lutheran

1815 38th St NW Roch

WWW.LIVEHOPENOW.COM

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

1815—38th Street NW
Rochester, MN 55901
Attn. Pastor Dave Steffenson

Contact Information:
253-302-9845 (Mobile)
507-206-3048 (Home)
pastordavesteffenson@gmail.com



SAVE THE DATE!

***Annual Meeting**

Saturday, January 27, 2018

3:30pm — Meeting

4:45pm — Supper

6pm — Worship

Reformation Sunday Prayer Walk: Thanks to everyone who participated in our fifth annual prayer walk and potluck on Reformation Sunday. Special thanks to Dick and Nancy Stanley for hosting our potluck at their residence (The Homestead of Rochester, Community Room). A great time was had by all.

Military Care Package: Our beloved **Roman Mulvihill** (son of Vicky & Bob) is currently deployed in the Middle East. We pray for his safety and offer thanks for his service to God and Country. Emmanuel Lutheran is assembling a *Care Package* to send to him. Members are invited to bring some of the following items to church on Saturday nights: *Baby Wipes, Baby Powder, Lip Balm, Laundry Pods, Sunscreen, Bug Spray, Powdered Water Flavored Packets, PB Crackers, Cheese Crackers, Pretzels, Oreos, Life Savers, Dried Fruit, Snack Size Cereal, Gummies, Swedish Fish, Jolly Ranches, or Pop tarts*. Judy Pearce is taking care of assembling the items and sending them overseas. Mailing time takes 25-40 business days. Thanks for keeping Roman in your hearts and prayers!

Pastor Steffenson - Health Update: During Pastor Dave's fall physical, it was discovered that he has stage one prostate cancer. Though cancer is always a serious matter, we dare not give it more than its due. Cancer cannot define us or defeat us. The faith of Jesus is what makes us more than conquerors. Please keep Pastor Dave in your prayers as he has an MRI on January 2. Early detection is a good thing. Pastor Dave plans on having surgery in early June, allowing the slower pace of summer for recovery.

Back Page Stories

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One ministry opportunity is December 16, 2017 (9 am—Noon).

Madonna Towers Ministry: Pastor Dave is leading worship & preaching at the Madonna Towers Skilled Care Chapel twice a month on Wednesdays in 2017. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, December 6 & 20 at 1:00 pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

Church Council Highlights - November 9: YTD receipts from Thrivent Choice dollars is: \$695. The

IRS matter has finally been resolved. Mission Plan Budgeting for 2018 is progressing nicely. YTD expenses have exceeded income by only \$1,463. We offer thanks to the entire Emmanuel family for generous living and giving! Madonna Towers has asked Pastor and Emmanuel to continue providing worship twice each month in 2018. Worship Pianists are in place through April of 2018. Pastor will be on vacation December 26-29. The new church picture directory will be distributed around the end of November. Emmanuel is responsible for snow removal on the Oasis sidewalks on Mondays this winter. A guest musician, Mark Smeby, will join us for worship on December 9. Worship on Dec. 23 will feature the presentation of the Nativity by our

Children. Christmas Eve worship will be at 9pm with carols, candlelight, Communion, and lots of instrumental music. Darald Bothun is coordinating a once-a-month Young Men's Bible Study. The next council meeting will be on Thursday, December 7 at 10am.

"Hope" by Emily Dickinson

'Hope' is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops—at all
And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm
I've heard it in the chilliest land
And on the strangest Sea
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb—of Me.