

The Emmanuel Epistle

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: “The GIFT of Land”

And the GIFT goes on! It’s the Season of Christmas and God is preparing us for His COMING. Christmas is a season wherein gifts are given and received. The greatest gift of all is the Gift of Jesus. When we share Jesus with others, we are RE-GIFTING the GIFT of Salvation. As we think about gifts this season, let us be mindful of the gift of land.

In the Book of Psalms, we are reminded that “The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it” (Ps. 24:1). In the beginning the LORD God created the heavens and the earth. On Day 3, the LORD God said, “Let the dry land appear,” and it was so. From the earth, God created an earthling, commanding Adam to till the earth and keep it. After the fall, the LORD God said to Adam, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life... by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread... you are dust and to dust you shall return.” The land was, and is, always a gift from God, but it too weeps as it awaits the redemption of the sons and daughters of God. The Gift goes on, and on, for Jesus’ sake.

God made a covenant with Abraham and promised him



and his descendants the gift of land (Genesis 12:7). After the deliverance from Egyptian captivity, God’s people journeyed toward, and eventually entered, the Promised Land. The land was apportioned out to the twelve tribes of Israel. Over the years, the land has been occupied by many nations. But regardless of who presumed to own the land, or have title to it, it was/is always the LORD’s property; an entrusted gift to & for the blessing of His people.

*The heavenly land I see,
with peace and plenty
blest; a land of sacred
liberty, and endless rest.
There milk and honey
flow, and oil and wine
abound, and trees of life
forever grow with mercy
crowned.*

— HYMN: The God of Abraham Praise

Recently, I traveled out to the Pacific Northwest to see some beloved friends. During my visit, I toured the land recently purchased by Living Word Lutheran Church. Living Word has been renting space for the

past ten years and weekly worshipping about 100 people. But now they have title to five acres of land. The piece of property is amazing. It already has a church building on it. The only structure remaining to be built is the Sanctuary. For the time being, the congregation will worship in the Fellowship Hall. Living Word looked at this property about 2 years ago. The asking price then was \$870,000. Recently someone said, “You should take another look at this piece of property. They’ve lowered the price and made some nice improvements.” Living Word looked at the property, and voted to buy the land for \$575,000. Two members of the congregation have each given a gift of \$75,000 to lower the church mortgage. Living Word is excited about the plans God has for His people and His land. The land will be an instrument of grace for RE-GIFTING the GIFT of Jesus; He is Lord of all!

While in Tacoma, WA, several people asked me

—Continued on page 3...

**December 2019
Newsletter
Volume 7
Issue 12**

Food For Thought:

“Once in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world.”

— C.S. Lewis

INSIDE AND BACK PAGE NEWS

<i>Worship Servants December 2019</i>	2
<i>Discipleship Covenants</i>	2
<i>Advent Goodies</i>	3
<i>Congregation Meeting</i>	4
<i>Snow Removal</i>	4
<i>Christian Education</i>	5
<i>Bell Ringing—12 Days</i>	5
<i>Oscar Romero</i>	5
<i>Advent/Christmas Plans</i>	6
<i>Back Page Highlights Council Minutes</i>	6



red kettle volunteer

Bell Ringing

It's that time of the year again when servants of Christ are ringing bells and dropping dollars into red kettles in support of the holy work of the Salvation Army. This year's theme verse comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: *"Let your light shine before others, so they may SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS and give glory to your Father in heaven."* **Your donations** provide monthly groceries to the 500 people who visit the Salvation Army food pantry. **Your donations** offer 21,000 meals through the Salvation Army lunch program. **Your donations** provide compassion & hope, in the name of Jesus, and change the lives and lift the spirits of people in crisis. Thanks for sharing the

Christmas spirit & the love of Jesus by caring for those in need in Olmsted County.

"And the GIFT Goes On!"

2020 Membership Covenants!

Advent I begins on Saturday, November 30. Discipleship Covenants for 2020 will be available that night for servants of Emmanuel wishing to sign or renew their membership covenant for the new year. A Covenant Renewal Service will take place on January 18 at our Worship Service.

Emmanuel Nominating Committee!

Leitha Bothun, Julie Steffenson, & Lee Pearce are serving on the Nominating Committee. Pray about servant leadership opportunities that are available in 2020: Two church council positions, four people for the nominating committee, one member for the audit committee, and two people for the NALC Convocations.

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR DECEMBER

Saturday, December 7 - Advent II (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Jean Wanek
Ushers: Darald Bothun & Bob Harms
Acolyte: Nora Serr

Saturday, December 14 - Advent III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce
Ushers: Creig Anderson & Gavin Edwards
Acolyte: Mason Edwards

Saturday, December 21 - Advent IV "Children's Nativity" (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Matt Serr
Ushers: Bob Mulvihill & leRoy Quam
Acolyte: Nora Serr

Tuesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Julie Steffenson
Ushers: Larry & Deb Vomhof
Acolyte: **Pending**

Saturday, December 28 - Christmas I (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce
Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Darald Bothun
Acolyte: **Pending**

PIANIST: Mary Ann Groven
Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Jenna Serr

PIANIST: Karen Salz
Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Julie Edwards

PIANIST: MarJean Damerval
Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Deb Vomhof

PIANIST: MarJean Damerval
Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson
Sound: Don Holtan

PIANIST: Beth Daede
Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce
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 worship leader/preacher each week, except on December 28, when Pastor Waldemar Gies will be our pulpit supply. Greeter for the month of December: Heather Mikesh.

—Continued from page 1...

about Emmanuel Lutheran. I told them that our numbers are small, but God’s mission field is huge. I also told them that God is opening many ministry doors for us, including the opportunity to purchase 4.7 acres of land (Arne and Samia Nelson property) for \$75,000. Our friends in the Pacific Northwest are excited for us and praying for us. They know that our purchase of land will only increase our fruitfulness for the glory of God.

Why would God’s people want to purchase land in a time such as this, when church affiliation and worship attendance is rapidly declining? Dwight Zscheile, Luther Seminary, writes, “According to projections from the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation, the whole denomination 9ELCA) will have fewer than 67,000 members in 2050, and fewer than 16,000 people in worship on an average Sunday by 2041.”

A recent study from the Pew Research Center reveals shocking statistics. The question was asked: “What gives you meaning in life?” The number one response was family (69%), followed by career (34%), and then money (23%). Perhaps you’re wondering, “What about God?” Spirituality and faith fall fourth on the list of “sources of meaning” for Americans. Eyes are blind, ears are deaf, & hearts are hardened. People need the Lord and they don’t even realize it. Never has there been a more urgent and necessary time for BEING THE CHURCH, the bride of Jesus. The GIFT must go on! If Emmanuel votes to purchase land (December 14), it must not sit idle. The land is always a gift from the Lord, and so is every breath we receive. Both must be used for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for the forgiveness of sins.

Consider the 32 chapter of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a servant of God known as the “weeping prophet”. Pastor Calvin Miller (d. 2012) writes, “In September 588 B.C., Jeremiah cries, ‘See, the siege ramps are built up to take the city’ (Jeremiah 32:24). The holy city was encompassed with [Babylonian] soldiers. It would soon fall. The siege had gone on for a couple of years by this time, and the people were starving in the streets of Jerusalem. There was not enough water! There was not enough food! Typhus and death were reigning in the streets. There was a general mood of discouragement. About eleven months after this, in August of 587 B.C., Jerusalem finally fell and became the habitation of wolves & jackals — a city of tumbleweeds and stark, empty streets. At this time, the prophet Jeremiah, [in obedience to the LORD’s command] did an unthinkable thing. When all the citizens were discouraged and doom was imminent, Jeremiah took his last seventeen shekels and bought a piece of ground [from his cousin Hanamel]. He himself was a prisoner and couldn’t even go look at the land. He called his local real estate agent and said, ‘I want to buy this piece of ground.’ He bought this one lot, as if to say, ‘The promises of God always hold.’”

The purchase of land, in a time of doom and gloom, was an ensign & a testimony that hope in Christ always abounds because God’s faithfulness is forever. Christmas is on the horizon. Gifts will be given and received, but the greatest gift of all is Jesus. Emmanuel has \$101,000 in our Building Fund. The purchase of land is an investment in the future that God is giving us. May God grant us good courage and a fortified faith to use all the gifts that have been entrusted to us for His glory and His holy purposes! In Christ, the GIFT always goes on! Thanks be to God!

Re-Gifted and Re-Gifting, Pastor Dave



Advent Goodies — Hospitality Houses

Judy Pearce received a Thrivent Action Team grant in support of this year’s hospitality offerings to three local hospitality houses: The Transplant House, The Ronald McDonald House, and Hope Lodge. Plates of cookies and worship invites are being delivered weekly to these 3 locations. Thanks is offered to all servants of Emmanuel who are assisting Judy Pearce in this Christ-centered ministry of compassion and love. This year’s Advent and Christmas Theme is: “And the GIFT Goes On...and On...and On!” Jesus is the Ultimate Gift. Thanks for sharing the GIFT with others.

Food for Thought!

“Work for a cause,
not for applause.

Live life to express,
not to impress.

Don’t strive to make
your presence
noticed,

just make your
absence felt.”

— Anonymous

New Life Family Services

Emmanuel Lutheran was well-represented at this year's New Life Gala event (October 24). Present at the Emmanuel Table were Deb & Larry Vomhof, Cindy Lund, Judy Caudill, Jessica Brown, Matt & Jenna Serr, Dan & Mary Jo Grimsrud, and Pastor Dave & Julie Steffenson. Excellent testimonials were shared and the sanctity of life was celebrated. \$62,797 was RAISED FOR LIFE!

What's New at New Life?

1) The First Care Pregnancy Center has a new address (40 - 16th Street SE, Rochester, 55904). The new location means that New Life can serve clients more effectively. A Grand Opening Celebration was held on June 15th with members of Emmanuel in attendance.

2) New Life's parenting education program "Every Family" has been revamped. Did you know that last year, 9,910 women had abortions in Minnesota; 194 women in Olmsted County. Statistically, 60% of them already had children.

3) A new prenatal education program will soon be offered at New Life at no cost to the clients, and will be tailored to the clients' specific needs. This is the same curriculum taught at Mayo Clinic.

4) Two new staff have been added to New Life to better serve the Rochester Community.

Did you know that a gift of \$550 (\$46 per month) supports a woman throughout her entire pregnancy at New Life? This, by the way, is the cost of a first trimester abortion in Minnesota.

Thanks for supporting the holy work of New Life with your time, dollars and prayers.

SEMAC 2020—Emmanuel Ministry Partner

The location and date of the 2020 South East Minnesota Area Christians mission trip has been determined. Larry Vomhof and his crew will be serving with the NALC Disaster Response Team in **Dayton, Ohio during the weeks of Feb. 9-21.** Volunteers, prayers, and financial support are welcomed. SEMAC is making a difference.

Official Notice: Emmanuel Meeting

WHEN? On Saturday, December 14, 2019 following our evening worship.

WHAT? Presentation & formal vote to approve the purchase of 4.7 acres of church land from Arne & Samia Nelson for the asking price of \$75,000.

WHO? All Covenant Members of Emmanuel are voting members at Church Meetings.

Snow Removal at Oasis Church



As a part of our lease agreement, Emmanuel is required to remove snow from the Oasis sidewalks on Mondays throughout the winter months. Thanks is offered to Don Holtan who coordinated

this ministry during the past two years. This year, Joe and Larry Vomhof will be coordinating this task. If you are able to help with snow removal on Mondays, please contact either Larry or Joe. Thanks! Many hands make light work!

An Emmanuel Tradition Children's Nativity

Children of Emmanuel and their friends will present the story of our Lord's birth on Saturday night, December 21 at 6pm.

The GIFT of Christmas!

"All the Christmas presents in the world are worth nothing without the presence of Christ."
— David Jeremiah

Education Opportunities!

Saturday School (youth) & G.I.F.T.—Growing In Faith Together (Adults) meet each Saturday at the Oasis Church at 5pm. Youth, taught by Julie Steffenson, are learning Bible Stories. Adults are discussing the topic of “Congregational Renewal.” Thanks for making Christian education a priority in your household and in the Emmanuel family! There will be no Saturday School & G.I.F.T. on Dec. 28.

Women’s Study: The Women of Emmanuel will complete their Bible Study on the Prophet Isaiah in December. A six week study on Martin Luther’s Small Catechism will be held on Thursdays, Jan. 9, 16, 23, 30; and February 6 & 13 at 1pm.

Men’s Bible Study: The men of Emmanuel are engaged in an in-depth study of the Augsburg Confession. On June 25, 1530, the Lutheran Reformers presented a statement of faith to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, in the town of Augsburg, Germany. This statement of faith became known as the Augsburg Confession. It was penned by Luther’s dear friend Philip Melancthon. It is considered to be the bedrock & summary of what it means to be Lutheran. “The Augsburg Confession is a true confession of the Christian faith because Christ Himself is expressed in it.” This study meets weekly at Oasis Church (8am on Tuesday mornings). Please join us!

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS Bell Ringing Service — January 4, 2020

Emmanuel will have a special worship liturgy on Saturday night, January 4, 2020 in celebration of the Season of Christmas. Did you know that Christmas is a Church Season & not just a one day holiday? Did you know that the Keeping of the 12 Days is a Tradition that began in 567 AD, allowing God’s people more time to reflect upon the gift of the Incarnation & to celebrate God’s presence among us as Emmanuel? Bring a bell to worship with you on January 4 and help us celebrate the birth of Christ. Together we will keep the 12 Days & ring in the New Year 2020!

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES!

- 2020 Discipleship Covenants are available for signing on Advent I—November 30.
 - Congregational Meeting to approve the purchase of church land: December 14.
 - Annual Meeting & Potluck—Saturday, Jan. 18 at 3:30pm. A Covenant Renewal Service will take place at our Worship Service.
- SEMAC 2020—Dayton, Ohio: February 9-21.
- Public Reading of the entire New Testament at Oasis Church on Easter Monday, April 13.
- The church & community choir of Grafton, IA will be joining Emmanuel for worship, and offering several gifts of music on May 2.
 - Mega Kids Camp—July 20-23, 2020.
 - Lutheran Week: NALC Convocations—August 3-7, 2020 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania & August 2-6, 2021 in Corpus Christi, Texas.

The God We Hardly Knew

“No one can celebrate
a genuine Christmas
without being truly poor.
The self-sufficient, the proud,
those who, because they have
everything, look down on others,
those who have no need
even of God—for them there
will be no Christmas.
Only the poor, the hungry,
those who need someone
to come on their behalf,
will have that someone.
That someone is God.
Emmanuel. God-with-us.
Without poverty of spirit
there can be no abundance of God.”
by Óscar Romero

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

3819 - 18th Ave. NW,
Rochester, MN 55901
Attn. Pastor Dave Steffenson

Contact Information:

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



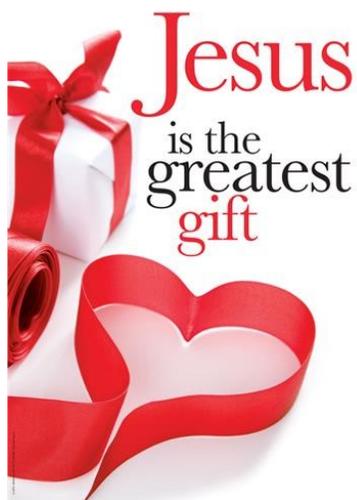
SAVE THE DATES!

Christmas Eve Worship

Tuesday, December 24 at 9pm

Bell Ringing Worship—12 Days of Christmas

Saturday, January 4, 2020 @ 6pm



2019 ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

**“AND the GIFT
GOES ON ... and ON
... and ON!”**

November 30: The GIFT of “War No More!”

December 7: The GIFT of “Hope!”

December 14: The GIFT of “Salvation”

December 21: The GIFT of “A Sign”

Children’s Nativity

Christmas Eve: Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2019 @ 9pm

Carols, Candlelight & Communion

Sermon: “The Ultimate GIFT: Jesus!”

December 28: The GIFT of “Steadfast Love”

January 4: Bell Ringing — 12 Days of Christmas

Back Page Stories

Madonna Towers Ministry:

Pastor Dave is leading worship & preaching at the Madonna Towers Skilled Care Chapel twice a month on Wednesdays in 2019. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this wonderful ministry to seniors of our community. Our next Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, December 4 & 18 at 1:00pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

Thrivent Choice Dollars: Don’t forget to go call Thrivent (1-800-847-4836) or go online to designate your Choice Dollars. By phone, when prompted, say, “Thrivent Choice”. They will ask for your full name and date of birth. Emmanuel has received

\$1,226.00 in Choice Dollars—Year-to-Date. Thank you!

Church Council Highlights:

November 11, 2019: Year to Date Budget Income is \$85,786, with expenses of \$92,771. Presently we have a budget shortfall of \$6,985. All of our 2019 Benevolences have been submitted. Pastor Dave will enjoy two weeks of vacation as 2019 comes to a close: November 13-19, & December 25-January 3. Advent and Christmas planning is complete, with this year’s theme being, “And the GIFT goes on, and on!” 2020 Discipleship Covenants will be distributed on Advent I—November 30. A Special Emmanuel Church Meeting will be held on Saturday, December 14 to vote on the purchase

of 4.7 acres of land from Arne & Samia Nelson, for the price of \$75,000. We are securing the services of the Ohly Law Office. Emmanuel will host this year’s Thanksgiving Eve Worship and Pie Social in the Madonna Towers Main Chapel. Nominating Committee Report: Don Wanek will serve on the Audit Committee. Deb Vomhof and Judy Caudill will be our NALC voting delegates for church convocations. Joe and Larry Vomhof will coordinate snow removal (Mondays) at Oasis this winter. Potential ministry opportunities were discussed: Emmanuel Hospitality House, and Sunday morning worship site. The 2020 Mission Plan Budget will be discussed at the December Meeting—Friday, December 13 at 4pm in the Oasis Church Library.