

# The Emmanuel Epistle

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

## Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: “Coming Clean”

“Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust.” Discipleship is a daily walk of repentance. In worship we sing these words: “Create in me a clean heart O God & renew a right Spirit within me.” We petition God to wash us thoroughly and to make us clean. In Adam all die; so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

We lay our sins on Jesus the spotless Lamb of God. He bears them all, and frees us from the accursed load. We bring our guilt to Jesus, to wash our crimson stains. White in His blood most precious, till not a spot remains.

The Season of Lent begins with the imposition of Ashes and Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is one of 7 penitential psalms in the Book of Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, & 143). Recently, we heard the preaching of Jonah: “40 Days & Nineveh shall be reduced to ashes.” The last thing Jonah wanted for Nineveh was repentance and forgiveness. The Word of God was preached & the entire city repented. People, animals, and even the King put on sackcloth and ashes. God heard the sinner’s cry for mercy and God repented of the evil He intended to do to Nineveh.

In the Season of Lent, we confess with Jonah that



“salvation belongs to the LORD.” Deliverance is God’s business. As workers in the Vineyard, the Master gives grace to His servants, and asks, “Is your eye evil because I am good.” Our God is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger & abounding in steadfast love & repents of evil.”

“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

—*I John 1:8*

When someone has sinned, or done wrong, Mercy invites the sinner to fess up, to come clean, & to behold the gift of a new creation. “Against Thee only have I sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight.” King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David tried to cover up his sin. He plotted the murder of Uriah. Eventually, confronted by the LORD, through the lips of the Prophet Nathan, David owned his sin: “I have sinned against the

LORD.” Nathan spoke absolution to a repentant sinner: “The LORD has put away your sin. You shall not die.” The wages of sin is death. The innocent one—the child—pays the price for David’s sin.

St. John in his first epistle reminds us that “the blood of Jesus—God’s Son—cleanses us from all sin.” Claiming that we are not sinners makes God a liar. “If we say that we have not sinned, the TRUTH (Jesus) is not in us. We have an advocate with the Father. Jesus is the propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world.

King David, in Psalm 51, reminds us that confession and forgiveness is not *quid pro quo*. We have no right to have our sins forgiven. God’s steadfast love is our only hope! David pleads with God to wash him thoroughly—not a mild bathing, but a serious scrubbing. We need our sins blotted out. With hyssop our sins are purged & the Lamb’s blood protects us from the angel of death.

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**February 2018**  
**Newsletter**  
**Volume 6**  
**Issue 2**

### *Food For Thought:*

“The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands.”

—*Martin Luther*

### **INSIDE AND BACK PAGE NEWS**

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## **LENT BEGINS: February 14**

We return our Palm Fronds on Saturday, February 10 (Feast of Transfiguration) and reduce them to ashes for Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14). Our Midweek Worship Services during Lent will be held on Tuesdays at 6pm, preceded by a soup supper each week at 5pm. Lenten Worship will feature a Drama Series entitled, “Knock-Knock: Parables of Judgment” with Holden Evening Prayer. Our Soup Coordinator this year is Julie Steffenson. See the signup sheet if you are able to provide soup, bread, or milk on one of the Tuesdays. Thanks for practicing the disciplines of Lent during the 40 Days.

## **FAT TUESDAY Fundraiser**

Shrove Tuesday is a day of penitence, to clean the soul, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. On Tuesday, February 13, we will bring the Season of Epiphany to a close and prepare for the arrival of Lent with a Shrove Tuesday celebration. Pancakes, Sausages, and Pastries will be served at Pastor Dave and Julie’s House from 5-7pm. A freewill offering will be received for the purchase of acolyte robes. Emmanuel has received a \$250.00 Thrivent Action Team Grant in support of this Fundraiser. The French name for Fat Tuesday is *Mardi Gras*.

## **SEMAM 2018**

The South East Minnesota Area Christians, under the leadership of Larry Vomhof, are traveling to Rosenberg, TX in 2018 to offer hope & restoration in the name of Christ to those who suffered the devastation of Hurricane Harvey. The Mission Team will be gone from February 10-24. Please keep them in your prayers.

## **RED KETTLE**

Thanks to Lee Pearce and all of our Emmanuel Bell Ringers, who gave generously of their time & rang bells in support of the Salvation Army, for the glory of God. Our goal last year was 62 hours. We ended up logging 83 hours.

## **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.

Thanks for walking the Way of Jesus! **We received 63 Signed Covenants for 2018.**



## **The Legend of the Lenten Pretzel**

In AD 600, monks living in monasteries devoted much of their lives to Prayer and Bible Reading. Monks usually made and grew their own food. Tradition says that a monk took some leftover dough and shaped it into thin strips crossed into a looped twist to be like the folded arms of children in prayer. This treat was given to the children as they learned their prayers. The treat was called “*Pretiola*”, which means “little reward” in Latin; aka *Bracellae* (German). Soon it was known the world over as a pretzel. The simple shape of the pretzel, reminds us to pray every day. Some families place a pretzel on the dinner plate each night during the 40 Days of Lent. Jesus said, “When you pray.” He assumed that prayer will be a faith practice of the Church (Matthew 6). Lent is a time when God’s people remember what Jesus gave up for us – his body and blood – his life on the cross. Lent is a time when we think of what we can give up in honor of Jesus (a personal sacrifice). So enjoy those pretzels during Lent. Fold your arms and pray!

***“The Church is justified, not because her children do not sin, but because they do.”***

**— G.K. Chesterton**

—cont. from page 1

God passes over our sins and we are given a contrite heart and the joy of God's salvation. The LORD opens our lips and we declare God's praise. The Lenten Fast concludes, and commences, with the Easter Hallelujahs. The one who is forgiven much, forgives much, and teaches transgressors the way of the LORD. Confession is not only an individual matter, it is a communal responsibility. We are in bondage to sin and we cannot free ourselves. Sin for us is original and actual. Weekly, in worship, we confess our sins with humble & contrite hearts. Weekly, in worship, we hear the words of Jesus, "I forgive you all your sins." Weekly, in worship, we receive the real presence of Jesus—crucified and risen—for the forgiveness of our sins. "Softly & tenderly Jesus is calling; calling O Sinner come home." Disciples come clean!

In the Name of Jesus, I AM absolved and absolving, Pastor Dave

## WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR FEBRUARY

### **Saturday, February 3 - Epiphany V (6pm)**

Scripture Reader: Julie Engle

Prayers: Julie Steffenson

Ushers: Larry Vomhof & Darald Bothun

Acolyte: Mason Edwards

PIANIST: Karen Salz

Communion Assistant: Judy Caudill

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Leitha Bothun

### **Saturday, February 10 - Transfiguration (6pm)**

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce

Ushers: Arne Nelson & Bob Harms

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

PIANIST: MarJean Damerval

Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Samia Nelson & Marcia Harms

### **Ash Wednesday, February 14 - (6pm)**

Scripture Reader & Prayers & communion: Julie Steffenson

Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Brock Edwards

PIANIST: Karen Salz

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Mason Edwards

### **Saturday, February 17 - Lent I (6pm)**

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Jenna Serr

Ushers: Rich Sunde & Creig Anderson

Acolyte: Addison Siebenaler

PIANIST: Karen Salz

Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Jenna Serr

### **Tuesday, February 20 - Midweek Lenten Service (6pm)**

Scripture Reader: Leitha Bothun

Ushers: Rich Sunde & LeRoy Quam

PIANIST: Scott Schilbe

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Elijah Matzke

### **Saturday, February 24 - Lent II (6pm)**

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Matt Serr

Ushers: **PENDING**

Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

ORGANIST: Scott Schilbe

Communion Assistant: Judy Caudill

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Judy Pearce

### **Tuesday, February 27 - Midweek Lenten Service (6pm)**

Scripture Reader: Deb Vomhof

Ushers: Larry & Deb Vomhof

PIANIST: Scott Schilbe

Sound: Don Holtan

Acolyte: Emma Matzke

**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.

**Mega Kid's Camp 2018:** An amazing camp for kids, including Sports, Arts, Horse Training, Legos, & Adventure Games will be held in the summer of 2018 (Monday, July 16th - Thursday, July 19th, from 8:45am-Noon each day). This year's theme is "Team Spirit". Youth will learn how to be great teammates through both sports stories and Bible stories about Jesus and his team of disciples. Kids will discover what it means to put team first. Over 300 kids are expected to participate in this year's "Kids Camp". Watch future newsletters for more details.

**SATURDAY SCHOOL & G.I.F.T.:** Julie continues to teach the little ones Bible Stories. Pastor Dave is teaching youth in grades 3-8 about Creation and the Fall, using C.S. Lewis' book, "The

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### SAVE THE DATES!

*\*Fat Tuesday — Pancake Feed from 5-7pm at the Steffenson home (Feb. 13).*

*\* Ash Wednesday (Feb. 14) Lent begins—Imposition of Ashes!*

Magician's Nephew", from the Chronicles of Narnia. Youth meet in the Oasis basement. The Adults (G.I.F.T.) are reading Qureshi's book "Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus" & learning "The Truth about Islam" (Meeting in the Oasis Fellowship Hall).

### Men's Morning Bible Study

The men of Emmanuel are currently studying the Book of Acts and discussing weekly the gift of Witnessing in Daily Life. This study meets on Tuesday mornings at Oasis Church (8am) for conversation, coffee and treats.

### Must Read Book: Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus

If you are looking for a book to help you understand the truth about Islam and Muhammad, and how to share the Gospel effectively with Muslims, read this book by Nabeel Qureshi. Nabeel, a descendant of the tribe of Muhammad, and a devout follower of Islam, investigated Christianity, Jesus and the Bible and found each to be reliable and true. He did the same with Islam and the Quran and found both to be in error. Converting to Christianity was a costly path for Nabeel, but one that claimed his heart, set him free from sin & fear, and gave him eternal peace. Formerly an ambassador for Islam, Nabeel became an Ambassador for Jesus. In 2017, at the age of 34, he lost his battle with stomach cancer, but by faith in Jesus Christ received the promise of heaven.



## Back Page Stories

**Supermarket Saturday:** The next Channel One ministry opportunity is February 17, 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, February 7 & 21 at 1:00 pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

**Church Council Highlights - January 17:** Excellent giving in the month of December! Total income of

\$22,834.98, expenses of \$10,340.76, and a surplus of \$12,494.22. YTD budget surplus was \$4,872.25. This was our second year in a row *in the black*. Stewardship letter & year-end giving statements have been sent out. Pastor Dave gave a health update indicating that surveillance is the recommended choice for his prostate cancer. Lent is fast approaching: soup suppers and drama series this year. Also, a Fat Tuesday celebration to raise funds for acolyte robes. Two items will be discussed at this year's Annual Meeting: A church retreat and the launch of a Bldg. Fund. The church council moved that offerings given to Emmanuel need to be for church approved items & causes. 63 Discipleship Covenants (50 adults & 13 youth) were approved for 2018.

2017 goals were reviewed & 2018 goals were established. Thank you to Don Holtan for coordinating snow removal at Oasis Church on Mondays. The next Council Meeting will be on Friday, February 9th at 3pm.

**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 6: Thursday, February 8 ("Parenting").

**Women's Afternoon Bible Study Group:** Women are meeting on Thursdays at 1pm at Oasis Church to study the Book of Acts. Our final session will be on Thursday, Feb. 8 at 1pm (Acts 27-28 ... "To Rome Paul Must Go").