

The Emmanuel Epistle

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: “No God, But One”

Jesus said, “I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by me.” In the Book of Acts, St. Luke reminds his readers that there is “salvation in no other name than the name of Jesus.” Jesus is not just one of many options. Jesus is the exclusive WAY to the Father. He is God’s decisive self-revelation.

The name of Jesus is not simply one of many names for God. St. Paul reminds us that the name of Jesus is the name above all names. The One who emptied Himself and became obedient unto death on a cross, has been highly exalted. At the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that “Jesus is Lord” to the glory of God the Father.

It’s the Season of Epiphany and God is manifesting His glory. In Christ Jesus, the LORD God Almighty reveals Himself as the only begotten Son of the Father from all eternity. Epiphany is a time for seeing and a season for enlightenment. God turns the LIGHT on and shows Himself to the nations! “Behold! I AM the Great I AM.”



Sitting on my shelf, for quite sometime now, is a book authored by Nabeel Qureshi, entitled, No God But One. I’m about halfway through this gold mine and I thought I would share some reflections with you. This book is not merely academic; it’s personal. Nabeel calls No God But One a “summary of fifteen years of research that wrenched my heart and transformed my life.” Nabeel was a devout Muslim who, by God’s grace, found his way to faith in Jesus. Praise God!

“The gospel is not just an answer that works; it is the only answer that will work.”

—Nabeel Qureshi

No God But One addresses two main questions: 1) What are the differences between Christianity and Islam? 2) Can we know whether Christianity or Islam is true? Christianity

and Islam are not two paths to the same God. They present radically different views of God and salvation and only one can be true. So who is God, Allah or Jesus? Nabeel concludes: “There is no God but one, and He is Father, Spirit, and Son. There is no God but one, and He is Jesus” A final question concludes Nabeel’s book: “Is it worth sacrificing everything for the TRUTH?” Accepting the TRUTH comes with a price. Leaving Islam can cost you everything.

Nabeel was indoctrinated in the teachings of Islam. At the age of five Nabeel recited the entire Quran. At the age of 22 (2005), he became a follower of Jesus. He no longer believed the *Shahada*, the Muslim proclamation that “there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger. Four years later, after graduating from Medical School, he left medicine to become an ambassador for Christianity & the Gospel.

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**February 2019
Newsletter
Volume 7
Issue 2**

Food For Thought:

“After thoroughly investigating the truth claims of Islam & Christianity, even while a Muslim, there was no avoiding the obvious truth: The evidence in favor of Christianity was far, far stronger than the evidence for Islam.”

—Nabeel Qureshi

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2019 DISCIPLESHIP COVENANTS

Membership at Emmanuel is an annual renewal. 64 Covenants were signed in 2018. We have 61 signed covenants for 2019. Sign up is open throughout the year! Each January, Emmanuel hosts a “Covenant Renewal Liturgy” in worship. Thanks for walking the walk with Jesus, & making Emmanuel your church home.

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, & live and give generously.

SEMAC MISSION TRIP

This year’s SEMAC mission work will be done in Wilmington, N.C. from **February 10-22**. Workers and Financial Support are welcomed! Pastor Dave will be joining the Vomhofs and offering his time and talents during the week of February 12-20. Please keep the ministry and holy work of SEMAC in your prayers! Contact Larry Vomhof for more information.

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 2 - Epiphany IV (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Darald Bothun
Ushers: Jim & Cabe Siebenaler
Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Saturday, February 9 - Epiphany V (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Julie Steffenson
Ushers: Tom & Joe Vomhof
Acolyte: Elijah Matske

Saturday, February 16 - Epiphany VI (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce
Ushers: Rich Sunde and Dave Carl
Acolyte: Addison Siebenaler

Saturday, February 23 - Epiphany VII (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Julie Steffenson
Ushers: Creig Anderson and Bob Harms
Acolyte: **PENDING**

NOTE: Julie Steffenson will take care of set up & Janet Sunde & friends will take care of the take down during the month. Pastor Dave will preach at all Worship Services, except February 16, when Pastor Tim Duesenberg will serve as our guest preacher. Note: Baptism of Bodhi Allen Konop on February 9.

LENT is on the Horizon!

Emmanuel is enjoying a long and *enlightening* Epiphany Season this year. The Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord will be on Saturday, March 2. Don’t forget to return your Palm fronds so that they can be burned down for ashes on Ash Wednesday (March 6). We plan on having soup suppers on Tuesday nights (5pm) during Lent, beginning on March 12. Our Lenten Series this year will be, “**Singing and Praying the Psalms**” with Holden Evening Prayer. Karen Salz will be our pianist each week. Members of Emmanuel will be invited to provide soups each week during Lent. Pastor Dave and Julie will host a Fat Tuesday celebration on March 5 at Oasis Church. An added discipline this year during Lent will be *M&M minis canisters*. Recipients of the sweet M&M’s will be invited to eat the candy before Lent begins, and then fill the empty canisters with coins or bills or checks during the 40 Days of Lent. **Easter is April 20** this year. Julie Edwards & her sister will be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt for youth during Saturday School on April 20.

PIANIST: MarJean Damerval

Communion Assistant: Katie Siebenaler
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Judy Caudill

PIANIST: Beth Daede

Communion Assistant: Judy Caudill
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Jean Wanek

PIANIST: Mary Ann Groven

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

PIANIST: Annette Engelmann

Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Samia Nelson and Marcia Harms

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Both religions, Christianity and Islam, teach that there is only one God. But the character and defining attributes of God in each religion is distinctively different. Why did God create humans? To share intimacy with them, or to test them. What does God think about people? Are they his children or his servants? How does God want us to live? Focusing on agape love, or sharia law? What does God tell us about the afterlife? To have joyful faith in his grace, or to anxiously anticipate unknown judgment? The Christian & Islamic view of God lend themselves to different answers.

Nabeel writes, “According to Islam, the way to paradise is sharia, a code of laws to follow that will please Allah and earn his favor. Sharia is literally translated ‘*the way*’. According to the Christian message, the gospel, the way to eternal life is Jesus. ... In Islam, sharia is the way, and in Christianity, Jesus is the way.” The way to life in one religion is a law, whereas in the other, it is a person; namely, the second person of the Trinity. Islam teaches that the fundamental problem of mankind is ignorance, and the remedy is sharia. Christianity teaches that the fundamental problem is sin, and the remedy is Jesus. In other words, God offers Himself in relationship, and that relationship leads to heart transformation. Allah is not inherently relational. Yahweh (LORD) is inherently relational (Matthew 22:37-38). The Quran rejects the relational aspects of God, saying that he is not a father (5.18) and not a son (112.3). The doctrine of the Trinity is “what makes God relational, [and] what makes his love eternal. It is how God can be in us through the Holy Spirit, while being over us as the Father, and suffering for us in the Son.”

Islam embraces the teaching of *tawhid*; i.e. Allah is absolutely one (monad). Muslims also believe in the eternity of the Quran—the Quran is the eternal Word of God; Allah’s knowledge or speech. Christianity, on the other hand, confesses the Trinity (three persons, one being) and believes that Jesus is the eternal Word of God (John 1:1-14). The Bible is the reason that Christians believe in the Trinity. The Quran is the reason Muslims deny it. Nabeel writes in his book, “The trinity that the Quran denies is actually tritheism, three gods: Allah, Jesus, and Mary.”

Muslims often say, “We respect Jesus, why can’t you respect Muhammad?” But what exactly do Muslims believe about Jesus? Islam teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin, was sinless, was a prophet, is Messiah, and will return again. Islam teaches that Jesus was the most amazing man that ever lived, except for Muhammad of course. Jesus cleansed lepers, healed the blind and even raised the dead. BUT Islam does not believe that Jesus is God; the Incarnate One; the atoning sacrifice for our sin! Christians believe that Jesus is Lord. He is God’s embodiment of selfless love, and saving grace. **And so we sing:** “Anthems be to Thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

Sadly, Nabeel Qureshi announced via Facebook on Aug. 30, 2016 that he had been diagnosed “with advanced stomach cancer,” the same day No God But One was published. Nabeel, at the age of 34, went home to be with Jesus on Sept. 16, 2017. Next month, I’ll be back with more insights from Nabeel’s book. Until then, let’s celebrate God’s Epiphany!

Confessing the TRUTH, Pastor Dave

“If truth doesn’t exist, then it would be true that truth doesn’t exist, and once again we arrive at truth. There is no alternative; truth must exist.”

—Nabeel Qureshi

“Would it be worth it to pick up my cross & be crucified next to Jesus? If He is not God, then, no. Lose everything I love to worship a false God? A million times over, no! But if He is God, then yes. Being forever bonded to my Lord by suffering alongside Him? A million times over, yes!”

—Nabeel Qureshi

Thrivent Choice Dollars & Action Team grants

Attention Thrivent Members - You may still have Thrivent Choice Dollars from 2018 that can be directed to Emmanuel, or new Choice Dollars for 2019! Directing them is as simple as making a telephone call. If you have your Thrivent I.D. number, get it out before you call. If not, you can still direct your dollars. **Call:** 1-800-THRIVENT (1-800-847-4836). At the prompt say: Thrivent Choice Dollars, and Thrivent will take it from there! **Questions?** Ask Julie Steffenson, our Thrivent Congregational Advocate. Also, it’s a new year, and that means that all Thrivent Members can be approved for 2 new Action Team grants! 3 Thrivent Action Team grants have already been approved for 2019: Pastor Dave (SEMAC Mission Trip); Karen Peterson (Fat Tuesday/Lenten Soup Suppers); & Julie Steffenson (Public Reading of the New Testament, Easter Monday).

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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Attn. Pastor Dave Steffenson

Contact Information:

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SAVE THE DATES!

“Baptism of Bodhi Allen Konop”

Saturday, February 9, 2019 (6pm)

“Fat Tuesday Pancake & Pastry Feed”

Tuesday, March 5, 2019
4:30-6:30pm (Oasis Church)

G.I.F.T. and Saturday School

“In old age they still bear fruit. They are always green and full of sap”—Psalm 92:14. In the months of February-May, G.I.F.T. will look at “Aging Well in our Walk with Jesus”.

Topics such as Funeral Planning and Evangelical Witness, Living Wills, Advance Directives, Exercise & Diet, Financial Planning, Down-sizing, Leaving a Lasting Legacy, Retirement Readiness, etc. will be discussed. Young children in Saturday School will continue to learn Bible Stories. The older youth will have a Confirmation Class on the Ten Commandments.

Food for Serious Thought!

Rev. John Piper, in his sermon, **“Doing Missions When Dying Is Gain”** writes, “Golgotha is not a suburb of Jerusalem. Let us go with him outside the gate and suffer with him and bear reproach” (Hebrews 13:13). Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim! St. Paul writes, “For me to live is Christ and to die is more CHRIST JESUS (gain)!” Amen!

Rochester Day of Prayer: May 2

THURSDAY EVENING, May 2: from 7:00-8:15pm

Theme: “Love One Another!” Christians in the Rochester area will Celebrate God’s Faithfulness. All Evening activities will be held at Autumn Ridge Church, located at 3611 Salem Road SW, Rochester.

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 2018. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, February 6 & 27 at 1:00pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this ministry.

Men’s Morning Bible Study: The men of Emmanuel Lutheran meet on Tuesday mornings (8am) at Oasis Church for Bible Study & fellowship. The men are currently studying the Psalms appointed for weekly worship. Join us each week for conversation and coffee!

Women’s Bible Study: The Women are concluding their five session study on Solomon and his “Song of Songs”. The final three session will be held at Oasis Church at 1pm on Thursdays, January 31 and February 7 & 28. The Women will take a break during Lent and return for a spring study on the Book of Esther (April 25-June 6): “Chosen for a Time Such as This!”

Church Council Highlights:

January 10, 2019: Income for December was \$17,146. Expenses for the month were \$7,774. Generous giving allowed Emmanuel to reap a third year in a row of budget surplus. Our Building Fund is nearing its goal of \$100,000. A portion of our Church Benevolences will be submitted in early February. Pastor Dave will be

on a day of continuing education on Feb. 4. He will also attend the SEMAC mission trip this year. Rev. Duesenberg will be our pulpit supply on Feb. 16. The IRS clergy mileage rate for 2019 is 58 cents per mile. Securing names for this year’s Annual Meeting election ballot remains a challenge. A budget of \$111,855 will be presented at the Annual Mtg. Pastor’s compensation will remain the same in 2019. 61 membership covenants were approved for 2019. Next Meeting: Feb. 5 (1pm).

Baptism: Bodhi Allen Konop, was born to Joe & Amber Konop on Dec. 8, 2018. Bodhi was welcomed into the Konop Household by his 2 big brothers Marek & Eddie. Bodhi will be baptized into God’s Kingdom on February 9. His sponsors are: Justin Musil and Brittany Schmidtke. Congratulations!