



The Emmanuel Epistle

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

Pastor's Keyboard: "Discipleship: Christmas Hospitality"

"Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." It's the Season of Christmas, all 12 Days. God creates space for us to contemplate the Incarnation (*In the Flesh*) as we entertain and show hospitality to family and friends during these holy days of Christmas.

Some people think that Joseph & his very pregnant wife, Mary, traveled to Bethlehem because Caesar Augustus ordered a census. But those who know God's WORD, know better. Caesar is not in control of history; God is in control! Promises and Prophesies are being fulfilled (Micah 5:2). Those who wait in hope are harvesting the fruit of God's faithfulness. "In the fullness of time, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons"—Galatians 4:5. We are recipients of Divine Hospitality.

Recently, while thinking about hospitality, I came across this story: Wally was big for his age--7 years old. Everyone wondered what role the teacher would give him in the annual Christmas pageant. Especially considering the fact that Wally was also a slow learner. Perhaps he could pull the curtain. To everyone's



surprise the teacher gave Wally the role of the innkeeper. The boy of course was delighted. All he had to learn was just one line: "There is no room in the inn." Wally had that down in no time.

Then came the night for the program. The parents took their places. Every seat in the auditorium was filled. The children entered singing "Oh come all ye faithful". The lights dimmed. A hush moved over the audience. The

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—Romans 15:7

curtain opened on Scene One. Mary and Joseph entered the stage and walked up to the inn. "Please sir, my wife is going to have a baby. Could we have a room for the night?" Wally was ready for his line. He had rehearsed it all night. He began, "There is..." and he hesitated. He started over

again. "There is..." and again his mind went completely blank. Everyone was embarrassed for him, but poor Wally just didn't know what to do. Joseph thought he would improvise and started walking away toward the stable on stage left. Seeing him walking away, Wally in desperation called out: "Look, there's plenty of room at my house, just come on home with me."

Christmas is a good time for us to ponder & practice hospitality. "You're welcome!" It's an expression of good manners when someone says, "Thank you!" "You're welcome!" It's also an indication that someone is wanted and valued. If we are welcome, then someone is glad that we are here. Our presence or appearance is not an unwanted intrusion, but rather a cherished gift. "Good to see you! Make yourself at home. My home is your home."

In the Bible, hospitality is an expected code of conduct. In the Book of Hebrews (13:2), we are
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**January 2018
Newsletter
Volume 6
Issue 1**

Food For Thought:

"Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place."

—Henry Nouwen

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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 2017 Nominating Committee has finished their work. A slate of candidates will be presented at our Annual Meeting. Nominations include: Lee Pearce and Don Holtan for Council; Julie Steffenson for our NALC Delegate; and Jenna Serr & Julie Edwards as our alternates. Bob Mulvihill for the Audit Committee. Jenna Serr, Julie Edwards, Samia Nelson, and Sharon Matzke for the Nominating Committee. Nominations will also be received from the floor of our Annual Meeting (Saturday, January 27 at 3:30pm.). Thanks to Jean Wanek, Deb Brown, Jenna Serr, and Julie Edwards for their faithful work on the Nominating Committee.

Delivering Holiday Care & Hospitality!

A word of thanks from Judy Pearce: "Many thanks to all who participated in delivering the cookies to the **Hospitality Houses** (Ronald McDonald House, Gift of Life Transplant House, and The American Cancer Society Hope Lodge). Don & Peg Holtan get an extra thanks for delivering 4 weeks in a row. Hats off to Pastor Dave for the beautiful invitations that we gave out."

"For all who participated in the collection for **Roman Mulvihill** (deployed in the Middle East), Vicky Mulvihill just let me know that Roman received his first of 3 packages on December 22. What a joy and blessing this has been for all of us!" 39 pounds of Christmas Love! Thanks!

RED KETTLE update

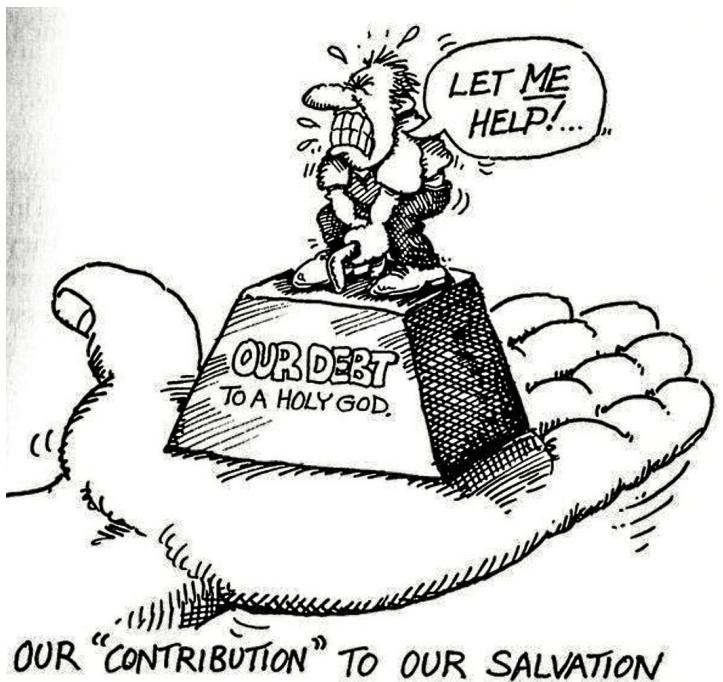
Thanks to Lee Pearce and all of our Emmanuel Bell Ringers, who gave generously of their time & rang bells in support of the Salvation Army, for the glory of God. Our goal this year was 62 hours. We ended up logging more than 80 hours. Praise God.

Mark Smeby

What a treat it was hosting Mark Smeby on Dec. 9. A freewill offering of \$511.00 was received in support of Mark's musical and prison ministry. Young and old alike enjoyed Mark's selections of music, all of which proclaimed the hope we have in Jesus. Thanks to Karen Peterson for securing a Thrivent Action Team grant in support of this ministry opportunity. Thanks also to everyone who helped with refreshments, the merchandise tables, setup, and takedown.

LENT BEGINS: Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14

We are planning on featuring a Drama Series and Holden Evening Prayer this year for Lent! The Drama Series is entitled "**Knock-Knock—Parables of Judgment**". We will also continue our tradition of Lenten Soup Suppers. Worship will be on Tuesday nights. If you're interested in helping with the Lenten dramas give Pastor Dave a call. We are need of 6-8 actors.



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/give generously. Thanks for walking the Way of Jesus! **We've received 51 Covenants for 2018 thus far.**



—Continued from page 1...

reminded that angels are often entertained unaware when hospitality is given to a stranger. Hebrews is no doubt referencing the story of Abraham & Sarah entertaining three guest in Genesis 18. The guests are referred to as God, men, and angels. Abraham commissions Sarah to prepare a feast for their unexpected guests. People often say that when they extend hospitality to others, they always get more than they give. Abraham and Sarah receive more than they give; the promise of a baby in old age. With God all things are possible. The story begins with hospitality and a birth announcement. The story ends with the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah. Some folks falsely assume that Sodom's error was inhospitality, but truth be told, inhospitality was the least of Sodom's offenses. Idolatry and sexual immorality were Sodom's big sins! Lot welcomed two angels into his home, because he knew the wickedness of the city and its people.

Jesus, the Great Physician spoke often about hospitality. Would-be followers were reminded that foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. Don't follow Jesus expecting 5 Star Accommodations or the red carpet treatment. When Jesus sent his disciples out into the mission field, he prepared them for rejection. Some will receive you and some won't. Be satisfied with what God provides. "Whoever welcomes you," Jesus said, "Welcomes me and the One who sent me." Those who give a cup of cold water to a little one who bears the name of Jesus, will not lose their reward. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells the familiar story of the Sheep and the Goats. On the last Day, the King will separate the righteous from the wicked. "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." The sheep and goats are both unaware of the kindness offered or withheld. The Good Shepherd doesn't have amnesia. As we do it, or don't do it, to the least of these our brothers and sisters in the faith, so we offer it to, or withhold it from, Jesus.

The Rev. John Piper reminds us that "the ultimate act of hospitality was when Jesus Christ died for sinners to make everyone who believes a member of the household of God. We are no longer strangers and sojourners. We have come home to God. Everybody who trusts in Jesus finds a home in God.... When we practice hospitality, we experience the refreshing joy of becoming conduits of God's hospitality rather than being self-decaying cul-de-sacs. The joy of receiving God's hospitality decays and dies if it doesn't flourish in our own hospitality to others." God makes room in the Inn for us so that we can do the same for others. We love because God first loved us!

Hospitality is the holy work of God's people. While reading **II and III John** recently, I discovered that not all hospitality is the same. We are called to open our hearts and homes to ambassadors for Christ (III John), but we are commanded to keep the door closed and locked when it comes to false teachers (II John). Some people have ill intent. False teachers love to infiltrate the ranks of the church and lead believers astray. Don't tolerate it! If a Child of God invites a deceiver into their midst, they have welcomed the antichrist, and by default have gotten in bed with the wicked one. So when it comes to hospitality, believers must use a little discretion and common sense. Real "radical hospitality" demands it! Hospitality is more than just putting out a church sign that says, "All are welcome here!" You're Welcome!

Sharing Christmas Hospitality, Pastor Dave

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR JANUARY

Saturday, January 6 - Baptism of Our Lord (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Vicky Mulvihill
Ushers: Bob Mulvihill & Darald Bothun
Acolyte: Emma Matzke

Saturday, January 13 - Epiphany II (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Julie Steffenson
Ushers: Matt Serr & Edwards Family
Acolyte: Mason Edwards

Saturday, January 20 - Epiphany III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce
Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Rich Sunde
Acolyte: Elijah Matzke

Saturday, January 27 - Epiphany IV (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Debbie Vomhof
Ushers: Larry Vomhof & Cabe Siebenaler
Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

ORGANIST: Scott Schilbe

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

PIANIST: Karen Salz

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

PIANIST: Karen Salz

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

ORGANIST: Scott Schilbe

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

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. **Covenant Renewal & Annual Meeting on January 27!**

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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SAVE THE DATE!

***Annual Meeting**

Saturday, January 27, 2018

3:30pm — Meeting

4:45pm — Supper

6pm — Worship

Narnia Movie & Acolyte Training

Youth in grades 3-10 are serving Emmanuel as candle lighters during worship. Pastor Dave will be hosting an Acolyte Training Session on Sunday, January 14 at 3pm.

The afternoon will begin with a viewing of the movie, “*The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe*” in the home of Pastor Dave & Julie. Youth will enjoy pizza and Turkish Delight, & then discuss the role of an acolyte. Parents can pick their youth up at 6:30pm. We are hoping to receive a Thrivent Action Team Grant in 2018 for the purchase of acolyte robes for use by our youth in worship.

Men's Morning Bible Study

Some men of Emmanuel read through the entire Bible in 2017. In 2018, we will be focusing our studies on a couple of key books of the Bible. We'll begin with the Book of Acts and discuss weekly the gift of Witnessing in Daily Life. Men will continue to meet on Tuesday mornings at Oasis Church (8am) for conversation, coffee and treats.

SATURDAY SCHOOL & G.I.F.T.

During the month of January, Julie will be teaching the little ones Bible Stories about Epiphany. Pastor Dave will be teaching youth in grades 3-8 about Creation and the Fall, using C.S. Lewis' book, “The Magician’s Nephew”— from the Chronicles of Narnia. Youth will meet in the Oasis basement. The Adults (G.I.F.T.) will meet in the Oasis Fellowship Hall & discuss “The Truth about Islam”.



Back Page Stories

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One ministry opportunity is January 20, 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, January 3 & 17 at 1:00 pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

Church Council Highlights - Dec. 7: YTD Budgeted income of \$92,342 and Budgeted expenses of

\$97,599, producing a shortfall of \$5,257. Year end benevolences are being distributed to SEMAC, the Morgans, & Samaritan’s Purse. The year end audit will take place on Saturday, Jan. 20 following worship. Pastor’s Housing allowance for 2018 was designated at \$18,000. Thanksgiving offering of \$340 in support of the Oasis Supermarket Saturday. Pastor will be on vacation Dec. 26-29, & 31. Pastor’s MRI is scheduled for Jan. 2. Church Insurance review is pending. A Building Fund will be launched at the Annual Meeting (Jan. 27). Safety & Security matters are being discussed. 2018 Mission Plan Budget will be finalized at the Jan. Council Meeting (Wed, Jan. 17 at 7pm—Holtan home). Goals for 2017 were reviewed. Church Members are

encouraged to make year-end gifts by Dec. 25. Bell Ringing Worship (12 Days of Xmas) will be on Dec. 30.

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 5: Thursday, January 18.

Women's Afternoon Bible Study

Group: Women are meeting on Thursdays at 1pm at Oasis Church to study the Book of Acts. Our Next Sessions will be: January 4 (Paul’s 3rd Missionary Journey; Acts 19-20); January 11 (Paul’s Arrest & Trial; Acts 21-24); & January 25 (Paul’s Defense before Festus & Agrippa; Acts 25-26).