

The Emmanuel Epistle

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: Christmas and Calvary”

As we leave one year (2019) and enter a new year (2020), we celebrate the gift of the 12 Days! Merry Christmas to you and yours! Ring those bells!

St. Matthew announces the advent of our God: “An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.’”

Reflecting on these holy days of wonder and expectation, I recall these words from one of my favorite Christmas Carols, What Child is This: “*Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, the cross be borne for me, for you. Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary.*” The baby born in Bethlehem is Emmanuel, which means “God with us!” The child wrapped in swaddling clothes & lying in a manger is Jesus, which means “God saves!” The sign, posted by Pilate on the Place of the Skull, proclaims the Truth: “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews!” In a stable our King is born. On a cross our



King is enthroned. “*So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh, come peasant, king to own Him; the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone Him.*”

“Joy to the World, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King.” To be sure, the days of Christmas are days of good news and great joy, but they are also days of agony, sorrow and sadness. Herod orders the execution of infants and Rachel is heard in Ramah weeping for her children because they are no more.

“Glory to God in highest heaven, who unto man His Son hath given; while angels sing with tender mirth, a glad new year to all the earth.”

—Martin Luther

Recently, a friend of mine celebrated the wedding of his daughter on a Saturday,

welcoming into the family a son-in-law. The next day, on his birthday, he grieved the passing of his mother. Though his mother was 89 and cradled in the arms of her Savior Jesus, nevertheless, sorrow has filled my dear friend’s heart. Now I find myself praying daily for my dear friend’s wife who was diagnosed with cancer, underwent surgery and will soon begin chemo.

Perhaps you read about the sorrow that visited a family in South Carolina on Thanksgiving Day. Colton Williams, nine-years-old, a fourth grader, was out hunting rabbits with his father & a friend. Tragedy struck when Colton was accidentally shot and killed by his father. How does one recover from such a loss? Thanksgiving and Christmas will never be the same again. Colton’s dad, with tear-stained eyes, said, “There are good days, and there are bad days. Today is a bad day. But there will be good days to come.”

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Newsletter
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Food For Thought:

“We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it.”

—Madeleine L’Engle

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TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Bell Ringing Service - January 4, 2020

Emmanuel will have a special worship liturgy on Saturday night, January 4, 2019 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, the purpose of which was to allow God's people more time to reflect upon the gift of the Incarnation and to celebrate God's presence among us as Emmanuel? Bring a bell and help us celebrate the birth of Christ, & ring in the New Year 2020!

Year-End Gifts & Offerings

Members wishing to give a year-end contribution to the 2019 Emmanuel Budget, or a Designated Gift, will need to do so by Saturday, December 28. Thanks for your attention to this matter.

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.

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR JANUARY 2020

Saturday, January 4– Belling Ringing Worship (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce & Julie Steffenson
Ushers: Rich Sunde & Matt Serr
Acolyte: Nora Serr

Saturday, January 11 - Baptism of Our Lord (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Deb Vomhof
Ushers: Larry Vomhof & Joe Vomhof
Acolyte: Mason Edwards

Saturday, January 18 - Epiphany II (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Heather Mikesh
Ushers: Arne Nelson & Bob Harms
Acolyte: Nora Serr

Saturday, January 25 - Epiphany III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Vicky Mulvihill
Ushers: Creig Anderson & Edwards family
Acolyte: Gavin Edwards

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. Our Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday, January 18 at 3:30pm; followed by a potluck supper at 4:45pm and worship at 6pm.

2020 DISCIPLESHIP COVENANTS

Membership at Emmanuel is an annual renewal. . Presently, we have 45 signed covenants for 2020. Thanks for walking the walk with Jesus, & making Emmanuel your church home. Covenant Deadline: January 10, 2020.

EMMANUEL ANNUAL MEETING

SAVE the DATE! Saturday, January 18!

Meeting at 3:30pm—Oasis Church

Potluck Supper at 4:45pm

Worship at 6pm

Covenant members of Emmanuel will meet to celebrate the gifts & blessings of 2019, to receive reports, to approve the mission plan budget for 2020, and to conduct elections.

Women's Bible Study

Six Sessions on Martin Luther's Small Catechism. Weekly on Thursday afternoons at 1pm in the Oasis Church Fellowship Hall. Dates: January 9, 16, 23, 30; and February 6 & 13.

PIANIST: MarJean Damerval
Communion Assistant: Julie Steffenson
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Julie Steffenson

PIANIST: Annette Engelmann
Communion Assistant: Judy Caudill
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Judy Pearce

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

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

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Colton's grandpa added, "We struggle forward praying for the pain to ease. This is hard. We are thankful to God for the 9 years we had with him, though. He was the brightest light in our lives. God has Colton in his arms." The family is steeped in the faith of Jesus. Colton was recently baptized. Three lives were saved by Colton's donated kidneys and liver. In everything God works for good.

"You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Our Heavenly Father knows what it is like to lose a son so that others might be saved. In the midst of tears and heartache, we rejoice and give thanks to God for the saving gift of Jesus. God is with us! Always and forever! "Raise, raise the song on high! The virgin sings her lullaby. Joy! Joy! For Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!" Jesus was born that we no more may die; born to raise each child of earth; born to give us second birth. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing: "Glory to the newborn King." Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!

Christened with Christmas and Calvary, Pastor Dave

"No other God I have but Thee; Born in a manger, Died on a Tree."

—*Martin Luther*

SYMPATHIES are extended...

Prayers and condolences are offered to Dick Stanley and his family in the loss of his wife Nancy. Nancy died at St. Mary's hospital on December 18, 2019. Nancy's funeral was held at Emmanuel Lutheran on Monday, December 23, with burial at the Oronoco Cemetery.

Prayers and condolences are also offered to Julie Steffenson and her family in the loss of her father, Don Boelter. A Memorial Service will be held at Incarnation Lutheran Church, Shoreview, MN on Monday morning, January 20.

CHRISTMAS THANKS!

Pastor Dave and Julie wish to thank the members of Emmanuel Lutheran for the cards & gifts received this Christmas. The gifts received are a thoughtful expression of the love Emmanuel shares with their pastor and his wife as they labor together in service to Christ their Lord. THANKS!

Gerhard Frost quote!

"Of all the facts I daily live with there's none more comforting than this; If I have two rooms, one dark, the other light, and I open the door between them, the dark room becomes lighter without the light one becoming darker. I know this is no headline, but it is a marvelous foot note; and comforts me in that."

Saturday School and G.I.F.T.

During the month of January, Julie will meet with the little ones and teach them Bible Stories. Pastor Dave will continue to lead the Adult G.I.F.T. class as they search the Scriptures and learn about "Congregational Renewal". All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

SEMAC MISSION TRIP

This year's SEMAC mission work will be done in Dayton, Ohio from **February 9-21**. Workers and Financial Support are welcomed! An Organization Meeting will be held on Friday, January 10 (7pm) at the home of Larry and Deb Vomhof. Contact Larry Vomhof for more information.

Pastor Dave will be participating in this Mission Trip from February 11-19.

Looking Ahead: LENT

Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 26.

We will be using the Holden Evening Prayer Liturgy. We will enjoy homemade soup each Tuesday night at 5pm. Set up and entrance to the Oasis Building will be at 4:30pm. Worship will be at 6pm. Our Theme this year is: "**Faith Stories**". Members and Friends of Emmanuel will be sharing their faith journeys & stories with us. Gary Melin and Julie Steffenson have already agreed to be being lay story-tellers. Three more volunteers are needed. Contact Pastor Dave to sign up or to receive more information. We are also looking for a Lenten SOUPervisor this year to coordinate our weekly soup suppers.

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!

“Annual Meeting”

Saturday, January 18 at 3:30pm
Potluck at 4:45pm

Ash Wednesday

February 26, 2020

Nominating Committee

Is God calling you to serve in leadership at Emmanuel?
Opportunities: Church Council, Audit Committee, Voting Delegates, or Nominating Committee. Special thanks to Don Holtan and Barb Steffenson who have consented to serve another two-year term on Council. Thanks also to Don Wanek who has agreed to serve on the Audit Committee. Thanks also to Deb Vomhof & Judy Caudill who have agreed to be our Voting Members at the NALC & Iowa Mission District Convocations. We still need four people to serve on the 2020 Emmanuel Nominating Committee.

December 14th Congregational Meeting!

We've got CHURCH LAND!

On December 14, following worship, 38 members of Emmanuel attended a special congregational meeting to consider the purchase of church land. A presentation was given, time was provided for questions and comments, and a vote was taken. The resolution passed with 30 yeses and 7 no's. Emmanuel is now the proud owner of 4.9 acres of prime real estate for the price of \$75,000. Much thanks is offered to Arne and Samia Nelson for giving us the opportunity to purchase this piece of land. Paper were signed on Friday, December 27. 2020 is going to be an exciting year in the life of God's beloved Emmanuel. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

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 2020. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, January 8 & 22 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 the Oasis Church for Bible Study & fellowship. The men are currently studying the Augsburg Confession (1530). Join us each week for conversation, rolls and coffee!

Church Council Highlights:

December 13: Budget Income for November was \$12,771.68. Budget Expenses were \$10,101.85. We're hoping for a good December offering to help us end the year in the black. YTD shortfall is \$4,315.19, thanks to a generous gift of \$5,000 from Rushford Lutheran Church. YTD Thrivent Choice Dollars: \$1,330. Discipleship covenants for 2020 need to be signed & submitted by January 10. Pastor's designated housing allowance was approved for 2020 (\$20,000). Don Holtan shared the content of his Land Presentation with the Council. A formal resolution for the Dec. 14 congregational meeting was reviewed & approved. The 2020 Church Mission Plan Budget was discussed. A few concerns were

expressed regarding the new lease Oasis Church is asking us to sign. Submissions for the Annual Report need to be turned into Pastor by Jan. 8. A 2019 Discipleship Covenant was approved for the Patzke family. The next Council Meeting will take place on Friday, January 10 at 3:45pm.

GIFT Received: A baby grand piano has been donated to Emmanuel by Vern & Bridget Westbrook. The appraised value of this gift is \$8,000-\$10,000. Thanks is offered to the Westbrooks for their generous donation.

Worship Pianist! Beginning in February, MarJean Damerval will once again serve as our primary worship pianist. MarJean will generally play 3 times each month, with other pianists filling in as needed. Thanks is offered to all of our worship pianists.