

# THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

## Pastor's Keyboard: "Discipleship: Church-Lite"

St. Paul writes, "Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit"—Ephesians 5:18. Are you on a diet? Do you need to lose weight? Conscious of calories or worried about intoxication?

Remember this commercial? "Tastes Great! Less Filling!" Which is it? Miller Lite is for the calorie & taste conscious beer consumer. Apparently you don't have to compromise taste and quality when you select the beer with less calories; aka "near beer".

This month we are reflecting on Church-Lite also known as Church 2.0. The metaphor comes from the Beer Industry. Low-alcoholic brews dates back to at least Medieval Europe, where it served as a less risky alternative to water (often polluted by feces and parasites) and less expensive than the full strength brews used at festivities. In the more modern forms, the temperance movements and general regard of certain tasks like driving being unsuitable when intoxicated led to the develop-



ment of beers which could be drunk without intoxicating effects. Some people worry, however, that Lite Beer is "watered-down" beer and not the real thing. What might watered-down, low-calorie, Christianity-Lite look like? Doing Church instead of Being Church? A local pastor from Africa recently shared the following incident from his visit with a dental hygienist: While she cleaned his teeth they talked about God. He asked her which church she worshipped at. She replied, "I'm Lutheran, but I don't do church in the summer." This African pastor was taken aback. Not wanting to be critical of me, he politely asked, "Is that what all Lutherans do? Take the summer off as vacation from God?"

### ***"Church-Lite: Tastes Great? Less Filling!"***

— His observation is unfortunately all too true. We

assume that clergy and laity will be away from home sometime during the summer, but why is it that we've grown accustomed to giving ourselves or our parishioners a summer pass from church? Church-Lite!

In the Movie, "**God's Not Dead**," Josh's girlfriend, Kara, encourages her boyfriend to play it safe & not commit academic suicide by debating his Philosophy Professor. Kara asks, "Who is the most important person in your life; me or Professor Radisson? Choose!" Josh replies, "What if it's God?" Which leads to an all-important question for you & me: "Where does God sit in your car/life? Behind the steering wheel? In the passenger seat, backseat, or trunk?" I think I figured out why people are attracted to Church-Lite. If church is reduced (watered-down) to membership, i.e. a list with my name on it, then I am a consumer with

*Continued on page 2...*

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### ***Food For Thought:***

*"Only a real risk tests the reality of a belief."*

— C.S. Lewis

*Quoted in the Movie,  
"God's Not Dead"*

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

**FALL HAPPENINGS** 2

**CHANNEL ONE** 2  
*Hunger Action Month*

**OPEN COMMUNION** 3  
*"For all the Baptized"*

**IN THE WORKS** 4

**FIELD TRIP** 4  
**OPPORTUNITY**

**Council Highlights &** 4  
**Back Page Stories**

continued from page 2...

entitlement. I am a volunteer who decides when I'm in (when it's convenient & low cost) & when I'm out. Programs are attractive because they have entry and exit points with low commitment and *me* in control.

Discipleship on the other hand is an all-in proposition; lifelong—death and resurrection; God in control. In the words of Jesus, “Assume the position, Peter. Whoever would be my disciple **MUST** deny themselves, take up their cross daily & follow me. Whoever would save their life will lose it. Whoever loses their life for my sake will save it. Whoever is ashamed of me in this sinful & adulterous generation, of that one will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory”—Matthew 16. Church-Lite is an oxymoron. Maybe its time for us to read Bonhoeffer's “Cost of Discipleship” again, or Matthew 16.

— Pastor Dave Steffenson

## Channel One

### September is Hunger Action Month

Thanks to your partnership last year, Channel One Regional Food Bank was able to distribute nearly 10 million pounds of food to over 100,000 people. 3,700 Olmsted County families visited the Channel One Supplemental Food Shelf every month.

Join our September Hunger Action Month campaign to take action on the issue of hunger and to raise funds to provide enough food for 400,000 meals. For each dollar donated to Channel One, we can provide enough food for 5 meals. Your support of this campaign will continue to change the lives of those in need in our community.

## PLANS FOR FALL

- **Confirmation for youth (grades 4-9).** Class will be held on Thursday Nights from 6:45-8 p.m. Youth will view *“The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe”* DVD and read C.S. Lewis' Prequel—*“The Magician's Nephew”*. Class will be held on **September 4, 11, 18, and 25; October 2, 9, and 23; and November 6, 13 and 20.** We've learned the story of Redemption. Now we'll learn about Creation and Fall.
- **Women's Bible Study—I Corinthians.** Women of Emmanuel Lutheran & Oasis Baptist will be gathering on Wednesday afternoons (1:00-2:30 p.m.), twice each month, for a 21st Century look at St. Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth. Paul stayed in Corinth for 18 months, and established the Church during his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:23), approximately 50-52 A.D. The Church in Corinth had its share of problems. Instead of living as resurrection people and infiltrating the culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the church was accommodating itself to culture and swallowing paganism hook, line, and sinker. Written in Ephesus around 55 A.D., Paul could have been addressing the Church in the USA in the year 2014. Save the Dates: **Sept. 10 & 24; Oct. 8 & 22; Nov. 5 & 19; Dec. 3 & 17.**
- **Worship Liturgies:** During the Month of September we will be using the Revised Edition of *Holden Evening Prayer* with the *ReClaim* Hymnal. During the months of October and December we will be using LBW Setting II. During the month of November we will be using *With One Voice* Bread of Life.
- **Saturday School—Christian Education for all ages on Saturdays prior to Worship.** Rally Day is Saturday, September 20. We'll meet at Oasis Church at 4:50 p.m. for singing. A Bible Lesson will be offered at 5 p.m. A light meal (kid friendly) will be offered at 5:30 p.m.
- **Matinee: “God's Not Dead”.** Sharon Hart is hosting a showing of the DVD “God 's Not Dead” on Sunday, **September 28 (2:00-5:00 p.m.)** at the *Gramercy Coop*. Refreshments will be served. Discussion will be enjoyed. Pastor Dave has a discussion guide available for those wishing to prep themselves.
- **Prayer Walk Potluck—Reformation Sunday, October 26.** Meet at Oasis Church at 2:45 p.m. Prayer Walk begins at 3 p.m. Potluck at Gramercy from 4:30-6:00 p.m.
- **Thanksgiving Eve Worship & Pie Social.** Wednesday, November 26 at 6 p.m. **Christmas Eve Worship—Dec. 24 at 6 p.m. Twelve Days of Christmas Bell Ringing Worship—Jan. 3, 2015.**

## OPEN COMMUNION

Pastor Dave writes: Some congregations practice “Open Communion”. Others practice Closed or Close Communion.” Who is welcome at the Table of our Lord? Who is invited to receive the body and blood Jesus Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. Good Question. My son-in-law once asked me, “So I read the Bible and come to church each week, but I can’t receive Communion because I’m not baptized?” My response: “That’s correct. However if you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior and read the Bible, why would you NOT want to be baptized and yet WANT to come to Communion?”

The Lord’s Supper is for the Lord’s people on the Lord’s Day. What qualifies us? The meal of forgiveness is *for sinners*. Jesus and His invitation qualifies us sinners. Scripture tells us that Jesus gave the Sacrament to His *disciples*, during the Last Supper. In the Great Commission, Jesus tells us that disciples are *made* by baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Disciples are baptized believers who are taught to keep the commandments of Jesus. Holy Communion is a family meal and baptism makes us family.

A dear friend from my first congregation, Donna Swenson, asked me to baptize her. She was in her fifties and was raised Unitarian. She had been receiving Communion, worshipping regularly and even served on Church Council. I didn’t know that Donna wasn’t baptized. She asked me to baptize her right before I left for a new Call. Why? Fear of Hell? Insurance Policy? No! Because Donna read the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and realized that Jesus was bap-

tized to fulfill all righteousness. He also gave the Great Commission as His farewell command. “Jesus is my Lord and Savior,” Donna said. “If he commands me to be baptized, why would I not obey Him?”

Many people are reducing the Lord’s Supper to a meal of hospitality. The ELCA is launching into a new study on “Eucharistic Hospitality”. The following article was written by Rev. Tom Renquist, a retired pastor of the ELCA. Pastor Tom submitted this article to The Lutheran’s “My View” column, which they declined to publish. I wonder why?

Here’s the article: It appears that there is an ill-conceived ELCA trend toward inviting the unbaptized to the Eucharist, a practice quite different from the nearly 2,000-year-old tradition of the church. In the early church the unbaptized were actually dismissed from the worship service before the Eucharist was celebrated. Advocates of the new practice claim it is a hospitality issue. But, since the Eucharist is something much more than just hospitality room hors d’oeuvres, wouldn’t it be more hospitable to invite the unbaptized visitor to lunch after worship?

There doesn’t seem to be a biblical precedent for the new practice:

- The Old Testament Passover meal, a forerunner of the Eucharist, was open to the stranger, but only after he was circumcised (circumcision being similar to baptism, both of them rites of belonging). [Exodus 12:43-49]
- Yes, Judas is present for the Last Supper, but don’t we assume that he was called to be a disciple in the same way that the others were

[Matthew 4:18-22]? That Judas was a sinner does not disqualify him from the Eucharist (thank goodness for us!); in fact, Luther reminds us that it is our sin which qualifies us for the Eucharist.

- Yes, Jesus did have that wonderful practice of radical hospitality of eating with sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors; but those were all simply meals, not a sharing of the Eucharist.
- One of Jesus’ “hard” stories, The Parable of the Wedding Feast, has the king inviting both the bad and the good to the wedding banquet, but the one who refused to put on the wedding garment (baptism?) was dismissed. (Mt. 22:11-14)

In our culture all sorts of limits are proscribed for various activities without being labeled inhospitable: non-citizens are not allowed to vote; sex in marriage is limited to spouses.

In the parish I served before my retirement, we included this invitation in every Sunday bulletin: “All baptized Christians are invited to receive this meal, trusting in Jesus’ promise to be present with love and forgiveness. Younger children who have not yet shared in the meal and have not yet been prepared for their First Communion are invited to come forward for a blessing. For those who do not share our faith in Christ Jesus, we are glad that you are here; while we cannot admit you to Holy Communion, we ask you to offer your prayers for the peace and unity of the human family.”

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### SAVE THE DATE!

**PRAYER WALK and POTLUCK**  
*Sunday, October 26 from 3-6 pm*

## "Meyer Gladiolus & St. John's Second Sunday"

FIELD TRIP OPPORTUNITY : Contact Pastor Fred Morck (frederick.morck@ecunet.org) if you would like to participate in a gladiolus field trip on Sunday, Sept. 14 at 4:30 p.m. Meet at Immanuel Lutheran Church of Potsdam (four miles east from Hwy 63 on 247). Drive north 1 mile, & 1/2 mile east to the farm of John & Barb Meyer. Weather permitting, their 4 acres of hundreds of varieties of prize winning gladiolus will still be blooming well. Following our time in the fields, we will travel to St. John's Lutheran of Hammond for an evening potluck at 6 p.m.—"Second Sunday", which includes singing, prayer, & devotions led by Pastor Jack Miller & family.

### IN THE WORKS

- *Parents Night Out—Investing in Marriage!*
- *Bell Ringing—Salvation Army!*
- *2015 Discipleship Covenants—December signing!*
- *Ministry Event with St. Paul Lutheran Fellowship and the Nestings!*
- *January 2015—Confirmation Class on Communion and Potluck Bible Study on Revelation.*

**FYI—Pastor Dave will be taking Mondays as his weekly day off. Please call for emergencies only.**

## Back Page Stories

### Men's Bible Study Breakfast:

Weekly fellowship around God's Word at 8 am Tuesdays at Charlie's (1408 2nd. St. SW). Join us in being Evangelical. Invite a friend. Share the Good News!

**Super Market Saturday:** The next Channel One opportunity is September 20 (9 am—Noon). Let's share the heart of Emmanuel by caring for the needs of our neighbors.

**Women's Bible Study:** Our study on The Discipleship Parables of Jesus has ended. Thanks to all participants. Our new study on I Corinthians begins on Wednesday, September 10 at 1 p.m. See page 2 of this Newsletter.

### Council Highlights (August 12):

The Emmanuel Lutheran Church Mission Budget projected to use \$24,000

from our reserves during the calendar year 2014. At the end of July we have used only \$4,613. Yay God! Emmanuel received \$55 in Thrivent Choice Dollars. Kari Richards is visiting with prospective families regarding Saturday School this fall (4:50-5:45 p.m.), including music, lesson, & a light meal—cross-generational learning. Our next Emmanuel Huddle is Saturday, Sept. 27 during the coffee hour—budget input for Mission Plan 2015 and distribution of Emmanuel Constitution and Bylaw revisions. Congregational Viewing of the DVD "God Is Not Dead" (Sunday, September 28 @ 2 pm) and our Second Annual Potluck (following our Reformation Sunday—October 26—Prayer Walk) at Sharon Hart's place (Gramercy). Judy Pearce suggested having a Mother-Daughter Luncheon in May of 2015. ReClaim Hymnals have been picked up (Thanks Mulvi-

hills!) and will be used with revised Holden Evening Prayer Liturgy in September.

**Please keep Jim & Diane Wagner** (International Church of Vilnius in Lithuania) **and St. Paul Lutheran Fellowship** (Twin Cities Church Plant), in your prayers.

**Baptismal Festival:** Emmanuel Lutheran will be celebrating the baptism of Scarlett Serr on September 6. Anyone else desiring Baptism should contact Pastor Steffenson.

**Special Offerings:** Our designated offering for Thanksgiving will be the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. The designated offering for Christmas will be the NALC Seminary.

**NOTICE:** Special Congregational Meeting on Saturday, Sept. 27 at 7:30 p.m. to ratify the NALC Constitutional Amendment approving the Annual NALC Convocation change.