

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: The Journey with Jesus”

I just returned from a journey. I flew to Charleston, South Carolina for a Theological Conference and the North American Lutheran Church Convocation. My journey had a beginning and an ending. While some chose to drive, I chose to fly. One’s mode of travel varies as one trips from place to place. Take-off was delayed on my journey; twice. I almost missed my connecting flight. I traveled from Rochester to Minneapolis by car, and then by plane from Minneapolis to Kansas City, to Chicago, to Charleston. Someone else did the driving and flying for me. I was a passenger; entrusted into the care of another. If I had missed my flight along the way, Southwest Airlines assured me that they had a seat reserved for me on another airplane. I would detour through Nashville and arrive in Charleston about an hour later than planned, which meant that I would miss my scheduled shuttle to the hotel. Traveling is sometimes



fun, and often times filled with uncertainty and angst. So tell me about your travels and trips. Work or pleasure? An adventure or a nightmare? Don’t get anxious. Remember, it’s just a journey, or not.

A favorite hymn contains these words: *“The church from you, dear Master, received the gift divine; and still that Light is lifted o’er all the earth to shine. It is the chart and compass that, all life’s voyage through, mid mists and rocks and quick-sands, still guides O Christ to you.”*

“Jesus is both The Journey and The Destination”

By the grace of God, each of us is on “the” journey... with Jesus. The Word of God is our chart & compass. Heaven & earth will pass away, but God’s Word remains forever. Scripture is a lamp unto our feet & a light unto our path. The Father guaran-

tees our beginning & our ending—our takeoff & our arrival—in the Name of the One who is the Alpha & the Omega. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit & marked with the cross of Christ forever.

Luther writes, “Were they to take our house, goods, honor, child or spouse; though life be wrenched away, they cannot win the day. The Kingdom is ours forever.” Disciples participate in a Kingdom that IS.

Some people say that the journey is the destination. True or false? I suppose the answer depends on who is one’s Tour Guide on the way, and what map one is following. GPS and Garmin aren’t God. Who is doing the driving on your journey, and is it actually “your” journey? Not all roads lead to the same destination, unless of course a destination is nothing more than an individual trek of self-enlightenment and personal discovery.

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**August 2014
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Food For Thought:

“The number one cause of atheism is Christians. Those who proclaim God with their mouths and deny Him with their lifestyles is what an unbelieving world finds simply unbelievable.

— Karl Rahner

INSIDE AND BACK PAGE NEWS

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I worry when a person posts on You-Tube or Face-Book that he/she has been on a journey and has arrived at “a place of new understanding”. Is understanding and TRUTH relative and pliable, always new, always changing; subject to each individual, autonomous self-understanding? Or, is TRUTH objective and eternal; more than an intellectual idea or a changing cognitive insight?

What if God’s response to Pilate’s question, posed to Jesus, actually closes Pandora’s Box and seals TRUTH for all times? What if TRUTH is actually a person; the second person of the Trinity? If Jesus is the WAY and the TRUTH and the LIFE (and He is), then the destination (communion with the Triune God) is the journey. God is our Home (Psalm 90).

Notice the emphasis on the definite article “the”. In Charleston, S.C. we traveled one night to the coast for an NALC BBQ Dinner. On the way I noticed a hotel and said, “There’s the Clarion Inn.” The driver corrected me: “A Clarion.” I stand corrected. The driver was correct. I stayed at a Clarion Inn in Charleston, but the one I saw on the way to the Coast was another Clarion. The definite article “the” makes all the difference. The word, “the” isn’t required in the Greek Language. When it is included, the intent is to provide specificity.

Jesus is not one of many paths, ways and truths. He is “the” only, exclusive journey to the Father. Jesus is “the” Journey and “the” destination, for “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. AND the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the One who loved me, and gave Himself for me”—Galatians 2:20.

Jesus is the destination: “Beloved we are God’s children right now. It does not yet appear what we shall be (sin clouds our sight), but we know with certainty, that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Christ purifies themselves as He is pure”—I John 3:1ff.

Jesus isn’t one of many options. He is the Door, the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus is I AM and we are not. So watch your “journey language”. A disciple is on “the” journey with Jesus. A disciple goes where Jesus goes. Caked in the dust of Rabbi Jesus, we proclaim and practice the living Word of Christ. Enjoy the destination, for life with Jesus is “the” journey.

Emmanuel Picnic—August 3

On Sunday, August 3, Servants of Emmanuel are gathering at the home of Larry & Deb Vomhof (11530 Hwy 52 S.E. Chatfield) for a church picnic. Come anytime after 11:30 a.m. We’ll eat at 12:00 Noon. Vomhof’s are graciously providing hamburgers, brats, hotdogs, along with the fixings. Bring a dish and chips to share. Coffee and Lemonade will also be provided. Deb & Larry have a pool, so bring your swimsuits. Enjoy a relaxing afternoon of games, fellowship & fun.

DIRECTIONS: From Oasis Church travel south on Hwy 52 approximately 20 miles. Vomhof’s place is located about 6 miles from Marion, between the two county road 7’s. Watch for the balloons.

TENTATIVE PLANS FOR FALL & WINTER

- *Saturday School—Christian Education for all ages on Saturdays prior to Worship*
- *Potluck Bible Study on the Book of Revelation*
- *View and Discuss DVD—“God Is Not Dead”*
- *September Liturgy: Revised Holden Evening Prayer with ReClaim Hymnal as our Song-book*
- *Confirmation Class—The Magician’s Nephew*
- *Women’s Bible Study—I Corinthians*
- *Parents Night Out—Investing in Marriage*
- *Ministry Event with the Nestingen’s and St. Paul Lutheran Fellowship*

DID YOU KNOW?

- *The NALC has 384 congregations and 137,000 baptized members.*
- *The 2015 NALC Convocation will be held in Dallas, TX during the second week of August.*

Mid-Year Mission Plan Review

Vision for Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota – Church Council & Pastor

Emmanuel Lutheran's mission is to praise, proclaim and practice "God with us" in daily life. We seek to be faithful to the Great Commission, to make disciples and be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our first goal is to establish and build a core group of evangelical disciples by September of 2014. Emmanuel currently has 37 signed discipleship covenants for 2014, 28 worshipping households, and an average worship attendance of 35 people each Saturday night. We are worshipping 75-125% of our membership.

Our second goal is to call a missional pastor to partner with us in growing God's Church in the Rochester area. After 18 months of existence as a mission congregation, we issued a call to our first resident pastor, Rev. David Steffenson. Pastor Steffenson has been shepherding our mission congregation and equipping the saints since August of 2013. We are experiencing community & establishing Christ-centered, faith-based traditions.

Our third goal is to establish and grow our congregational presence in the Rochester Community. We are broadcasting the Gospel, establishing our DNA, and making visible Emmanuel (God with us) in our community. Advertising in the Post-Bulletin, pastoral messages in "The Pulpit", a solid Website with weekly sermons, and other broadcasting tools are enhancing our community presence. Pastor Steffenson has also been intentional in communicating with, and visiting, our patrons, benefactors, and supporting congregations. Disciples are being equipped for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ through Bible studies for men and women, confirmation classes for children, weekly worship, and printed materials. Three liturgies are being used in our weekly celebration of Word and Sacrament. Worship is Christ-centered and family friendly.

Our fourth goal is to become financially self-sufficient by September of 2016. This includes a ten percent first fruits benevolence; a competitive compensation package for our pastor; sufficient income to meet our operational ministry costs; and a worshipping community of at least 150-200

people (Signed Discipleship Covenants). We are praying for the gift of land (15 acres for our church site), at which point we will launch a building campaign, soliciting the generous gifts of committed Servants of Emmanuel. We will need at least 3-5 large monetary gifts to launch a building fund. To become financially self-supporting, Emmanuel will need to triple or quadruple in size, while maintaining and growing our current generous stewardship level.

Our fifth goal is to help launch, resource and support a new church plant in Minnesota; giving \$5,000-\$10,000 per year in financial support. Our Big Dream is to dedicate our own Church Building (an outpost for the Great Commission) by September of 2018. We have measureable goals, big dreams, and a generous God who supplies all of our needs.

Thanks for your partnership in the Gospel. Pray that God's Kingdom will grow in the hearts of Emmanuel People and in the mission field of Rochester, MN.

The TRUTH Project— A production of Focus on the Family: Emmanuel Lutheran and Oasis Church are co-hosting a 13 week DVD-based group study designed to equip believers with a comprehensive Biblical Worldview for engaging our world with the good news of Jesus Christ. This Study is being held on Sunday mornings at Oasis Church. Remaining Dates: **August 3, 10, & 24;** and **September 7, 14, 21, & 28.** Weekly format will be as follows: 10:30 a.m.—Coffee and Fellowship; 10:50 a.m.—DVD Segment; 11:50 a.m.—Discussion; 12:20 p.m.—Closing & Prayer; 12:30 p.m.—Departure. Child Care is provided. Please join us!

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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SAVE THE DATE!

OASIS WOMEN'S RETREAT on
Friday-Saturday, September 12-13,
at Camp Victory

"Remembering the Sabbath Day"

Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Martin Luther writes, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect God's Word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it."

Pastor Ron Winslow, LCMC pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Ottawa Lake, MI. writes, "Over 30 years ago, churches were attended by 26% Christians on any given Sunday. Today Barna states that number has dropped to 17.5%. A few years ago, the U. S. was declared the fourth largest mission field. We need to stop this decline to avoid following the European Nations decline of 3-5% of churches occupied on any given Sunday.

Are you are wondering what the **AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE** is at Emmanuel Lutheran? We have 37 members. On any given Saturday night we worship between 30-50 people. That means we are worshipping at 81-135%. WOW! Disciples always want to be in a church where worshipers exceed membership; where regular worship is a discipleship priority.

The Book of Hebrews exhorts the Body of Christ: "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together (worship) as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near"—10:24-25.

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 August 16 (9 am—Noon). Let's share the heart of Emmanuel by caring for the needs of our neighbors.

Women's Bible Study: Pastor Dave & Julie are leading a nine session Bible Study on the Discipleship Parables of Jesus. Women are meeting at Oasis Church, twice a month, on Mondays from 1:00-2:30 p.m. We are studying the Parable of the Invitations (Luke 14:7-14) on July 28, the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) on August 11, and the Para-

ble of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-13) on August 25. Please join us. Bring a friend.

Oasis Women's Retreat: "Loved Beyond Measure"

The Women of Oasis Church have invited the women of Emmanuel Lutheran to join them at Camp Victory for their annual Women's Retreat on Friday (5:30 pm)--Saturday (3 pm), September 12-13. Cost is \$55.00 which includes three meals and overnight lodging; or come only on Saturday (\$30.00).

Council Highlights (July 15):

Emmanuel received certification of inclusion in the Federal Income Tax Exemption granted to the NALC. The Jim Nestingen DVD series (Lutheran Theology) has been received and will be used this Fall. An Emmanuel Huddle will take place on Saturday, July 26 following worship, with a light meal (complements of Judy Pearce).

ReClaim hymnals have been purchased and will be used in September. Church Council will generally meet on the second Tuesday of each month.

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.

Housing Request: Pastor Fred Morck (Cell: 218-371-5647); frederick.morck@ecunet.org, may need to move from Potsdam Parsonage (507) 876-2585 to Rochester. If you know of someone with a house or an apartment to rent within a walk or short drive of Oasis Church, please contact Pastor Fred.