

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “An Epistle of Christ”

St. Paul writes: “Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God.” - II Corinthians 3:3

An epistle is a letter, hand written, human sent, imprinted with the love of Jesus. Servants of Emmanuel are God’s love letters snail-mailed and emailed, twittered and texted, to a world of lost sinners. In Christ we are ministers of reconciliation, letter-carriers of the Heavenly Postmaster, God making His appeal through us: “Be reconciled!” We are ambassadors for Christ. This is our testimony: “God made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” Luther called this good trade a “Happy Exchange”. Thank you Jesus.

St. Paul doesn’t mean that we are literally pieces of paper penciled with the love of God. But we are most certainly living letters, illustrating God’s redemption in our words and deeds, in daily life. “Our life is a Bible for some folks to read. I wonder just what they are reading in me?”

Recently, I was asked to



write two reference letters for two young men. One is a high school senior hoping to get early admittance and a leadership scholarship at his university of choice. The other young man needed a letter of support due to a difficult situation. Both young men, ages 17-20, needed a letter of recommendation, a character reference. I chose my words carefully, hoping to impact the ears and heart of the recipients with the good-

Love Letters! That’s what we are...in Christ Jesus.

ness and grace of God.

St. Paul’s apostleship is being questioned in Corinth, so he pulls out his letters of recommendation. In the file, Paul finds letters written by the congregation he established. The Corinthians are in fact Paul’s best evidence of a credible ministry. Changed lives are the clearest testimony that the Gos-

pel is true. The proof is in the pudding. They will know we are Christians by our love.

We are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the Cross of Christ forever. We are praising, proclaiming and practicing Emmanuel in daily life. The U.S. Postal Service isn’t the only mail carrier with a FOREVER stamp!

We are epistles of Christ; witness wear for Jesus. So get your pen and paper out, start drafting your Advent Christmas letters and get them in the mail. Remember, the best reference letter is an evangelical witness. **“Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day of the Lord appearing.” - Hebrews 10:24f.**

Julie and I hope to see you in worship on Dec. 24 at 6 pm as we celebrate the Incarnation. Merry Christmas!

**December 2013
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Food For Thought:

“The Son of God did not want to be seen and found in heaven. Therefore He descended into this humility and came to us in our flesh, laid Himself into the womb of His mother and into the manger and went to the cross. This is the ladder that He placed on earth so that we might ascend to God on it. This is the way you must take.”

***Martin Luther—1543
Lecture on Isaiah 9:6***

INSIDE AND BACK PAGE NEWS

<i>Channel One Benefit</i>	2
<i>Salvation Army Bell Ringers</i>	2
<i>12 Days of Christmas</i>	2
<i>Getting To Know You</i>	3
<i>Simply Giving</i>	4
<i>King Cakes</i>	4
<i>“Back Page Stories”</i>	4

Dessert Benefit Concert: “The Music of Christmas”

Oasis Church (1815—38th Street N.W. Rochester) is hosting a Dessert Benefit Concert in support of Channel One, Supermarket Saturday. **Date:** Sunday, December 8 at 6:30 pm. The “Music of Christmas” is featuring the Crossroads Chorale and Brassworks. Enjoy a wonderful Advent Musical Presentation that is sure to prepare your heart for the Season of Christmas. Reservations are required and seating is limited. **Call Jenny at #289-8596**, or sign up on the Oasis Bulletin Board. Admission is free, but tickets are required. Non-perishable food items may be brought to Oasis the night of the concert. A freewill offering will also

be received. 100% of the gifts will support Supermarket Saturday.

* **What is Supermarket Saturday?** Oasis Church serves as a satellite distribution point for the Channel One Food Shelf. Several members of Emmanuel have assisted with this ministry outreach. 45-60 families are provided with groceries and other household goods, and served a hot meal, each month. Due to recent cuts in funding and donations, Channel One has reduced the amount of food they send to Oasis for distribution. Thanks for sharing the spirit of Christmas and helping Oasis to replenish their shelves.

Bell Ringing—Kettle Offerings

Lee Pearce is coordinating Emmanuel’s Bell-Ringing effort in support of the Salvation Army Kettle Collection. Enjoy the comforts of indoor bell ringing and the joy of sharing God’s love, while ringing bells with a friend and collecting offerings in support of Christ-centered compassion. We recommended that volunteers sign up for at least 30 minutes and that two people serve together. The Salvation Army will have a special sign indicating that we are Servants of Emmanuel. Contact Lee if you would like to serve!

Dates:

Wednesday, December 4 from 3-4 pm at Shopko North (37th Street & Highway 63).

Saturday, December 14 from 9-11 am at Shopko North (37th Street & Highway 63).

Wednesday, December 18 from 1-3 pm at Hobby Lobby (near Oasis Church, 37th and 41st Streets NW).

Friday, December 20 from 6-7 p.m. at Hy-Vee (near Oasis Church, 37th Street NW).

Twelve Days of Christmas

“The Bells of Christmas chime once more, the heavenly guest is at the door.” - LBW #62

Bring your bells to church and help us ring in the New Year while sounding the good news that “Christ is born to save”.

Emmanuel Lutheran will have a special worship liturgy on Saturday night, January 4 in celebration of the Season of Christmas. Did you know that Christmas is a Season and not just a day? Did you know that the Keeping of the Twelve 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? Some start counting the days on December 25, while others begin on December 26 and run through Epiphany (January 6). So we have a dozen or perhaps a baker’s dozen of DAYS to celebrate the Incarnation.

“Come, Jesus, glorious heavenly guest, & keep your Christmas in our breast.” - LBW #62

GETTING TO KNOW YOU: Don & Peg Holtan



**“Day by day
Day by day
Oh Dear Lord
Three things I pray
To see thee more clearly
Love thee more dearly
Follow thee more nearly
Day by day”**

At Pastor Dave’s installation, Peg and Don provided a musical offering from the Lutheran Hymnal “With One Voice.” The song they sang was entitled, “Day by Day”. The words above are from the musical “Godspell”. Both songs share the same title. The words of each song are different, but both are a reflection of a day by day walk with Christ. After corresponding with Peg and Don and hearing their life’s story, it soon became evident that the words from both of these songs are a melodic testimony to their life.

To see thee more clearly...Don and Peg had similar beginnings. Both attended school in a one-room school house--Peg in Birchwood, Wisconsin, and Don in the Hayfield-Kasson area. Peg’s family moved to Rochester when she was 11 years old. In 1961 when they were sophomores in high school, a mutual friend introduced them; and in 1963 only 5 weeks after graduation, they eloped and were

married on July 3rd, 1963. They celebrated their first day of marriage at Chatfield Western Days; and 50 years later there were still fireworks as they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. During their engagement, this very young couple had a desire to see their God *more clearly*. Neither of their families had attended church on a regular basis. But even at a young age, they knew God had to be the foundation of their relationship. Although Don had been confirmed at St. John’s Lutheran Church, they jointly took adult confirmation classes at his church and Peg joined his faith commitment through confirmation. Statistically, the success of teenage marriages is quite low. However, Peg and Don had the spiritual maturity to seek God first and accordingly, He has blessed them with clarity of vision so they could always “see thee more clearly.”

Love thee more dearly...In August of 1966 their first daughter Patricia was born; followed by Beverly in August of 1969; and then their son Donnie in July 1971. In 1977 their family moved to Pine Island, MN. During these busy family years, Don and Peg worked in Rochester at various jobs—Don at Waters Corp. and IBM; and Peg at Rochester Medical Co., Rochester State Hospital, State Farm Insurance, Real Estate sales, and Mayo Clinic. In 1970, a year before their son was born, Don’s brother drafted him to play in his 4 piece band. Peg joined the band in 1983 and while still working full time and raising a family, they played up to 110 gigs each year. Both of them retired from regular jobs in 2002 and the band played its final tune in 2008. However, not all events in Peg and Don’s life were

filled with joy-filled music. When their son was in his late 30s, he was diagnosed with brain cancer and passed away in December of 2010. As Peg said, “Donnie’s death left gaping holes in our hearts.” In our grief, we turn to our Father for comfort. He loves us more dearly than we can comprehend and this truth became their strength as they walked through this dark valley in their life, putting one foot in front of another, day by day.

Follow thee more nearly...There is a saying that people will know you as a follower of Christ, not by what you say, but by what you do. This is evident with Peg and Don. Before Pastor Dave was called, we had visiting pastors. One Saturday evening, Pastor Chris Brekke stood before us, and before he even began to give his message he turned to Peg and Don and said, “I don’t know your names, but I know your faces. You were at the Hayfield nursing home when I was visiting one of my church members. Your music brings such a joy to the residents.” Our gifts in life are often our assignments. Peg and Don are faithful servants with their gifts of music. As a couple, they reflect over their life with gratitude for God’s blessings, and are appreciative of the life they led and lead—*day by day*. Today they enjoy spending time with their children and 8 grandkids, family and friends, playing music together, attending concerts, plays, and traveling. Like most of us, Peg and Don remembered the teaching of their youth, and when the ELCA veered off the Biblical path, they attended multiple churches until they discovered Emmanuel. Their prayer for Emmanuel is that our church family will grow in numbers, in faith, in outreach and in God’s service.

**By Carol Olson
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SAVE THE DATE!

Emmanuel Annual Meeting:

Saturday, January 25, 2014

7 pm Following 6 pm Worship

SIMPLY GIVING

Several members have asked about EFT's (Electronic Funds Transfers) in support of regular giving to the mission of Emmanuel. Council President, Kari Richards, is researching this offering opportunity. Simply Giving, administered by VANCO, charges a \$.50 setup fee per person and a \$.20 transaction fee per gift. A voided check gets the process going. Contact Kari for more information.

Feast of Epiphany—January 6

The Feast of Epiphany is observed on January 6. It celebrates the meeting of the three Magi (Kings) with the baby Jesus. In the New Orleans area Epiphany is known as King's Day, the beginning of Mardi Gras. King Cakes have become part of the celebration symbolizing the finding of the baby Jesus. King cakes are oval-shaped celebrating the unity of all Christians and decorated with the carnival colors of green, yellow and purple; some bakers add red to symbolize the life of Jesus. King Cake Season ends on Fat (Shrove) Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday.

Pastor Dave and Julie are hosting an **Epiphany Party** at their home on Sunday Night, January 5 (5pm). A potluck of favorite soups and breads will be served with King Cake for dessert. The Epiphany story of the arrival of the Magi (Matthew 2) will be read along with the singing of some favorite Epiphany Songs (We Three Kings of Orient Are; As With Gladness Men of Old; Bright and Glorious Is the Sky; The First Noel; and It Came Upon A Midnight Clear). A signup sheet will be posted during Advent inviting the participation of all Servants of Emmanuel.

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!

Women's Book and DVD Bible Study: Calling all busy women!

Kari Richards is leading a study on the Book of Proverbs, entitled "Simplify Your Life". Margaret Quam is hosting this study in her home (304- 15th Ave. S.W.). Twelve women are participating. The next gathering is on Monday, December 2 @ 1 pm.

Super Market Saturday: The next Channel One opportunity is December 21 (9 am-Noon). Let's share the heart of Emmanuel (Christmas Presence) by car-

ing for the needs of our neighbors.

Benefactors and Patrons: Pastor Dave now has an in-home office, out of which he does much of his pastoral work. Special thanks to Arne and LeRoy for helping to transport the file cabinets and desk to Pastor Dave's home!

WOV Introduced: We hope you enjoyed the change of pace as we used the Bread of Life Liturgy for 4 Saturdays in November.

Thanksgiving Offering: Thanks for your generosity on Thanksgiving Eve. Delicious pie was enjoyed by all, and the offering received was designated for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, assisting people in need.

Post-Bulletin Ad: Contact Larry Vomhof if you would like to help fund an Emmanuel Ad in the local Newspaper.

Christmas Eve Offering: Gifts

received this Christmas will support the North American Lutheran Church Seminary. An anonymous donor has pledged a matching gift of \$1500.00, so please give generously! Prayerfully consider your second-mile gift to Emmanuel in support of Seminary Education & the training of our future pastors. Designate your checks or offering envelopes "Christmas Gift".

ESV: We have dedicated our new Pulpit Bible and we are encouraging worshippers of Emmanuel to bring their Bibles with them to worship each week. We have a special discounted price on ESV (English Standard Version) Study Bibles for members wishing to purchase their own copy of this version of the Bible. Call Pastor Steffenson for more information and price quotes.