

The Emmanuel Epistle!

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: An Overflowing Cup”

In His Sermon on Mission (Matthew 10), Jesus ends His Sermon with these powerful and promising words: “*And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward*” (10:42).

What does your cup look like? Perception often shapes or creates reality. A pessimist looks at their cup & sees that it is half-empty. Scarcity Thinking. An optimist looks at their cup and sees that it is half-full. Abundance Thinking.

A disciple of Jesus looks at their cup and sees endless opportunities & eternal possibilities. In the words of David (Psalm 23): “*The LORD is my Shepherd. He anoints my head with oil. My cup overflows.*” Goodness & mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. We will dwell in the House of the LORD forever. In Christ Jesus, IN THE LORD, we have nothing less than an overflowing cup. PTL!

Holding the Passover Bread, Jesus gave thanks & spoke these words: “Take and eat; this is my body.” Holding the Passover Cup, Jesus said, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the



covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28). In Bread and Wine, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Jesus gives us Himself, as saving grace & everlasting pardon. Jesus IS an overflowing cup of eternal goodness and mercy *for you!*

“The cup of water giv’n for you, still holds the freshness of your grace; yet long these multitudes to view the strong compassion in your face.”
— Frank M. North

It is the Season of Advent and we are waiting in hope for the coming of Jesus. As I reflect on the Gift that has been given to us, & the Gift that awaits us, I am mindful of the INCARNATION (The WORD Made Flesh). We are recipients of an overflowing cup. What might we do with this Cup of Blessing?

Recently, members of

Emmanuel completed a “Building for the Future” survey. A summary of the responses was presented on Saturday, November 21, following worship. The Implementation Team met on Nov. 22 and discussed the survey results. [See page 4 of this newsletter for words from Judy Pearce.](#)

I’ll share a few thoughts with you as well. It’s the Season of Advent. We find ourselves living in the END TIMES, waiting for the coming of Jesus. How is it that one waits well for the Advent of our God? What will discipleship look like as we wait for the Day of the LORD? Interim Ethics matter. Buried talents benefit no one. Play it safe or take a chance for heaven’s sake? St. Paul tells us that we have the *Mind of Christ*. But God’s people are not all of one mind. For some, the cup is going empty. For others the cup is filling up. What does the cup look like in your world? Is it overflowing?

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**December 2020
Newsletter
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Food For Thought:

“Faith sings of an overflowing cup. “My cup” is tied to “my Shepherd.” You cannot separate the cup that overflows from the hand that pours.”

— H.B. Charles Jr.

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Christmas Keepsake Ornament

Each year, Emmanuel celebrates the Season of Christmas with a commemorative ornament. This year's Theme is "The WORD Made Flesh". We celebrate the Incarnation as we remember God's coming down to us in a "baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger". One ornament per household.

Emmanuel Nominating Committee

Contact Lee Pearce, Julie Steffenson, Heather Mikesch, & Leitha Bothun if you are looking for ways to serve Christ and his Church. *There are many ways to use your gifts for the glory of God.*

Judy Caudill & Deb Vomhof have offered to serve another term on Council and also to serve as our Emmanuel voting delegates in 2021. Bob Mulvihill has agreed to serve another term on the Audit Committee. The 4 Nominating Committee members have agreed to serve again in 2021.

Holiday Cookies

Plates of store-bought holiday cookies are being shared with area Hospitality Houses during the Season of Advent! Those wishing to help with this distribution of Christ-centered love may contact Judy Pearce. Judy received a Thrivent Action Team grant in support of this ministry.

Men's Bible Study (In-Person)

The men of Emmanuel Lutheran are currently meeting on Tuesday mornings at 8:30am via email & studying the Scripture Readings for the upcoming weekend. Let Pastor Dave know if you would like the study notes emailed to you. We will have two in-person studies during the month of December: Wednesdays, **Dec. 9 & 23 at 11am.** Location: Oasis Church worship space. We will physically distance & wear masks. Bring a Bible and heart eager to receive God's Word.

WORSHIP PLANS FOR December 2020 — 6pm

A special liturgy has been written for the Season of Advent to coincide with our Christmas theme: "**The WORD Made Flesh**". As our Community & Country continues to monitor COVID-19, we will adjust our worship services accordingly. We will continue to exercise caution & care, compassion & faithfulness as we gather for in-person worship. We will offer the **Lord's Supper on December 12 & 25**. As Pastor Steffenson continues to undergo chemo treatment for pancreatic cancer, Rev. Tim Duesenberg and Rev. Waldemar Gies are both available, should the need arise, to step in and help with pastoral services.

Emmanuel will continue to offer online worship opportunities via the Emmanuel Facebook page and the Emmanuel Church Website. Thanks for worshipping with us in person (6pm) and virtually online.

Saturday, Nov. 28—Advent I: MarJean Damerval will be our Worship Pianist. Advent Liturgy.

Saturday, Dec. 5—Advent II: Mary Ann Groven will be our Worship Pianist. Advent Liturgy with the celebration of the Feast of St. Nicholas.

Saturday, Dec. 12—Advent III: MarJean Damerval will be our Worship Pianist. Advent Liturgy with **Holy Communion** served following worship.

Saturday, Dec. 19—Advent IV: Karen Salz will be our Worship Pianist. Advent Liturgy with the Children's Nativity done in a virtual manner due to COVID-19.

Thursday, December 24—NO Christmas Eve Service this year!

Friday, December 25—Christmas Day Worship: MarJean Damerval will be our Worship Pianist. We will celebrate the Incarnation with **Holy Communion** served following worship.

Saturday, Dec. 26—Twelve Days of Christmas Liturgy with Bell Ringing and Lighting of Candles. MarJean Damerval will be our Worship Pianist.

Saturday, January 2, 2021—Christmas II: Karen Salz will be our Worship Pianist. Rev. Waldemar Gies will serve as pulpit supply. Pastor Steffenson is on Vacation from Dec. 27, 2020-Jan. 3, 2021.

Thanks to Don Holtan for recording our Services and to Julie Steffenson & Peg Holtan for their help.

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We live in a time when our country and its churches & families are divided; we have differences of opinion morally, theologically, and politically. Even a small congregation like Emmanuel has its share of differing perspectives, thoughts, and opinions. Our “Building for the Future” survey reveals that not everyone at Emmanuel sees the cup with the same set of eyes. So what shall we focus on? Our differing opinions & perspectives? Or our collective ideas & our shared Mind of Christ? The survey reveals some important truths. For example, we ALL want to be IN STEP with God and we ALL want to be on the LORD’S PAGE. The WORD of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Worship at Emmanuel is Christ-centered and faithful to the Scriptures. Membership is more than a name on a list; it is active and intentional discipleship. Members of Emmanuel know that we have a Mission Statement and are determined to have it guide our ministries and lives. “*Sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are praising (worship), proclaiming (evangelism) and practicing (discipleship) Emmanuel—God With Us—in daily life.*” In other words, our common denominator is the Great Commission (Matthew 28). In January, we will begin each of our worship services with the recitation of our Emmanuel Mission Statement. Faith produces fruit. Words become actions.

When it comes to breaking ground and building a church structure, some members of Emmanuel are chomping at the bit and others are cautious. But ALL of us are always prayerful and hopeful. We know that, given our current mission field, building for the glory of God and the salvation of His people is of primary importance and urgency. Hence we are looking at a multi-purpose structure that is expandable and flexible for a variety of ministry uses; a structure that will have worship space for 90-140 people, an office for the pastor, and is fiscally responsible (financially doable).

When it comes to financing a church structure, we ALL want to be good stewards of our God-given resources. We ALL want to enter into the Joy of our Master. None of us wants to stand before our Lord and have Him ask us, “Why did you bury what I gave you when my people were lost & perishing?” The clock is ticking. Opportunity is knocking at the Door. Servants of Emmanuel know that God always provides the resources for His desired purposes. Emmanuel may be small in size and aging, but that would be all the more reason for boldness and courageous faith. Look what Jesus did with Twelve Disciples. Remember, THE CUP is not half-empty or half-full. It is, IN THE LORD, overflowing. It’s not about “brick-and-mortar;” it is about the Kingdom of God. While a few of our members would like us to have no debt, most of our members are comfortable with reasonable debt and a serviceable mortgage. Perhaps we’ll launch a Building for the Future” Pledge Drive in 2021. For sure, we will have ample opportunities for inviting others to join Emmanuel!

I am so grateful for the prayers and the honest feedback that members of Emmanuel have given during the past three years of our “Building for the Future” campaign (launched in Jan. 2018). God has blessed us with a budget surplus for the past 4 years. 2020 looks promising as well. We have almost \$100,000 in our Building Fund and 4.9 acres of church land (no debt; tax exempt). The only indebtedness we bear is to Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who paid our debt in full on the cross.

We face many challenges in the days ahead, but we will trust in the steadfast love of the LORD. We ALL have received the Mind of Christ (Philippians 2). God will give us clarity even when we are not all simultaneously on the same page or of the same opinion. The Great Commission will guide us. The surveys reveal not only our differences of opinion & ideas, but more importantly our deeply imbedded and shared faith convictions. Jesus is Lord, and we are here to serve Him. Interest rates are low. Money in the Building Fund was given to be used, not just stored away. It is the Season of Advent. How is it that we wait well for the coming of our Lord. Take a look at your God-given Cup. What do you see?

An Overflowing Cup, Pastor Dave

From our house to yours ... Merry Christmas!

The March of Faith, by Inez Steen (1939). This book (the Story of the Christian Church) was shared with me by a friend. Though it is dated, it also offers a timeless TRUTH; namely, the Great Commission is the mandate from Jesus to his beloved church. It is *our marching orders*. “Go! Make disciples! Baptize and teach!” Church spires were intended to be like fingers pointing to heaven—helping to lift people’s thoughts to heavenly and eternal things.” One thing captured my attention from page one to page 214—Jesus’ promise: “Lo, I AM with you always to the close of the age.” When God’s people faced adversity, challenge, persecution and death, they did not despair or fear. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they sacrificed all things, even their lives, for the sake of the Gospel.

Building for the Future — “Implementation Team Report”

The Emmanuel Lutheran Church **Implementation Team** has been charged with the responsibility of developing the ‘next step’ in Emmanuel’s plan for building our own worship facility on the five acres we now own off 75th Street NW and 18th Avenue NW. The Team is comprised of Don Wanek, Don Holtan, Larry Vomhof and Judy Pearce, with Pastor David Steffenson as an ex-officio member. The Team now has conducted two meetings; on November 1st and 22nd.

We urge Emmanuel members to share your ideas with the Team. We began exploring results of the recent survey you completed at our November 22nd meeting, examining the results to develop a sound foundation of your ideas and support. The Team is focused on two core pillars for our work: First, be in God’s will and His plan, and second, to ensure that all ideas are heard.

Emmanuel is a congregation of varied backgrounds and experiences, & the Team must explore these valuable resources if we are to be successful. Some say that Emmanuel is small, maybe too small to be looking at a building project. I’d remind you that Jesus had a ‘small’ team, too. He started with twelve men of extremely varied histories that He molded into the most effective Christian evangelism team the world has ever seen! Team-work! Two words, two essential elements for our future.

The **Implementation Team** will be expanding its makeup by asking two additional people to serve with the primary Team members, Larry, Don, Don and Judy. Four plus two, plus two, plus two, plus two. Twelve! What a coincidence! Emmanuel’s members have a host of resources in our histories, either from our vocations or hobbies, and many still have contacts with community leaders. This will tap a veritable treasure trove of assets to help in our future planning. So, please prayerfully consider participating in our joint efforts if a Team member contacts you. Of course, you don’t have to wait. Call me (Judy Pearce, Chairperson) if you are willing to assist the Team.

The majority of survey responses cited “Christ-centered worship and faithfulness of the scriptures” as the most important mission at Emmanuel Lutheran Church. We give thanks to God for making that our conviction and to our pastor for being a faithful shepherd and servant to meet that commission.

The Emmanuel **Implementation Team** solicits your ideas and your helping hands. Most importantly, we ask for your prayers to ensure that we are all in God’s plan for our future.

A Servant of Emmanuel, Judy

SEMAC since 1998

Larry Vomhof visited with Mary Bates (NALC Disaster Response Coordinator) about the 2021 SEMAC winter work trip. Mary suggested that SEMAC travel to Florida. On Sept. 11, 2020 Hurricane Sally made landfall at Pensacola, Florida as a Category 2 hurricane, damaging an NALC church (St. Paul Lutheran), the pastor’s home, and over 30 homes of members of the congregation. Volunteers, emergency relief supplies, & prayers were there immediately & continue as rebuilding takes place in Pensacola. **The SEMAC 2021 Work Trip will be February 7-19 in Pensacola. Contact Larry for more information.**



**South East Minnesota Area Christians
Many Churches. Just one Lord.**

“Children’s Nativity” — Dec. 19, 2020



A few years ago, Emmanuel began a Christmas Tradition. The children of our congregation and their friends treat us each year to a “retelling of the birth of our Savior Jesus.” Dressed in costumes, the little ones present the Nativity Story and become proclaimers of God’s Saving WORD. COVID-19 has forced us to adjust our plans this year. We will still have a Children’s Nativity on Saturday, Dec. 19,

but it will be a *virtual retelling* of the birth of Jesus. Here is what I need you to do. If you have children or grandchildren who would like to play a role in God’s Christmas story, then give Pastor Dave a call or send him an email. Once a decision is made as which part the child will play, then you need to get creative. Maybe Dad and his son will dress up like sheep, or like shepherds. Maybe three brothers will dress up like the 3 Wise Men or 3 Kings.

Maybe 2 or 3 sisters will dress up like angels. You get the idea. We need a cow, a donkey, a cat, a dog, etc. Once you’ve made a costume, then snap some pictures and send them to Pastor Dave. It’s going to be a *collage of pictures* which will be presented on the BIG SCREEN in the front of the worship space as the Nativity Story is told on December 19. Interested???

Prayer: The March of Faith (p. 214)

“For the sake of our precious Savior, Jesus, wilt Thou increase our faith and our prayer life so that we may strive to do Thy will & keep close to our heavenly Guide who has given the strengthening, comforting promise: ‘Lo I am with you always.’ Amen.”

2021 Membership Covenants!

Advent begins on Saturday, Nov. 28. The 2021 Emmanuel Discipleship Covenants will be available that night for servants of Emmanuel wishing to sign or renew their membership covenant for the new year. A Covenant Renewal Service will take place on January 23, 2021 at our 6pm Worship Service. Membership at Emmanuel is an annual renewal; a yearly commitment to walk as a disciple of Jesus. *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.* Those signing an Emmanuel Discipleship Covenant may have membership in another church as well. Questions? Contact Pastor Dave!

Children’s Ministry

Worship Bags are available for kids each week.

We hope children enjoy these resources during worship. Kids are asked to take the bags home with them. We look forward to the time when we can resume in-person Saturday School with our little ones. Until then, we will provide resources for our children and Pastor Dave will continue to post **Children’s Messages** on our Emmanuel Website and Facebook Page.



Snow Removal this Winter!

The Larry Vomhof family is coordinating this year’s snow removal for Emmanuel at the Oasis Church.

Emmanuel is responsible for clearing the sidewalks (snow removal) on Mondays throughout the winter. If you are able to help with this task, please contact Larry Vomhof. Thanks!

Thrivent Choice Dollars

If you have Thrivent Products don’t forget to designate your Choice Dollars. Go online at www.thrivent.org or call #1-800-847-4836 to designate your choice dollars. Emmanuel has received \$2,260.00 in Choice Dollars this year.

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!

Christmas Day Worship

Friday, December 25 (10am)

*Join us for Christmas Day Worship as
we celebrate the Incarnation!*

Saturday, Jan. 30, 2021: Annual Mtg.

John Huss (1369-1415) - The March of Faith, p. 59

Born in Bohemia, John Huss became John Wycliff's greatest disciple. In the city of Prague, John Huss preached against the vices and immoralities of his day. He was like a finger pointing heavenward. Huss was burned at the stake in 1415, with Wycliffe's manuscript Bibles used as kindling for the fire. Huss spoke these words: "God is my witness that the great purpose of my preaching & writing was to convert men from sin. In the truth of that Gospel ... I now joyfully die."

Looking Ahead! Plans for Epiphany

- Pastor Steffenson on Vacation from December 27, 2020-January 3, 2021. Pulpit Supply (Jan. 2) is Pastor Gies.
- A Special Liturgy will be used during the Season of Epiphany. We offer thanks to Mary Ann Groven who will serve as our primary worship pianist this winter. Karen Salz will be offering her gifts once a month.
- Tuesday, January 5, 2021: Epiphany Celebration and Burning of the Greens on the Church Land (Brush Pile Burning, weather permitting). Alternate date would be Saturday, February 13 —Feast of the Transfiguration!
- Saturday, January 16, 2021: Sanctity of Human Life.
- Saturday, January 23, 2021: Annual Covenant Renewal Service celebrating the gift of Membership at Emmanuel Lutheran, and Discipleship in the name of Jesus.

Back Page Stories

Church Council Highlights:

November 9, 2020—Zoom Mtg.

Budget Income for the month of Oct. was \$9,064.32 and expenses were \$8,884.64. Payment of remaining Benevolences were approved. Pastor will be on vacation from Nov. 26-Dec. 3 with Dallas Groten serving as pulpit supply on Nov. 28. There will be no Christmas Eve worship at Emmanuel. But there will be a Christmas Day Service at 10am. Everything is set for Thanksgiving Eve worship—H.C. and pie will be distributed. MarJean will not be available to serve as a worship pianist during the months of Jan.-April, 2021. Mary Ann Groven will serve as our primary worship pianist and Karen Salz will

fill in once a month. Judy Pearce has been selected as chairperson of the Implementation Team. Church Survey feedback was discussed. An Information Sharing time will be held on Dec. 21 following worship. The player piano has been re-gifted to Jason Beyer, and Insurance on the piano has been removed. The Audit Committee will review our Insurance needs for 2021. \$500 will be moved from our Budget into Designated Savings for 2021 Advertising. 2021 Discipleship Membership Covenants will be available beginning on Nov. 28. Given the challenges of COVID-19, Emmanuel will be looking at some worship options for the Children's Nativity, and the Season of Lent. Budget planning for 2021 is progressing well. The next Council

Meeting will be: December 7 at 1pm.

Madonna Towers Ministry: Our bi-monthly worship services in the Skilled Care Chapel of Madonna Towers is currently suspended until further notice due to COVID-19.

THANKS!

Pastor Dave & Julie offer thanks to the members & many friends of Emmanuel for all of their kind thoughts, cards, fervent prayers & acts of love during these days of living with pancreatic cancer. God loves you and so do we!

Acts 4:31—The Church Prayed!

"And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, & they were all filled with the Holy Spirit & continued to speak the Word of God with boldness."