

# THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

## Pastor’s Keyboard: “STANDARD, from a Signpost Perspective!”

Servants of Emmanuel, It’s 2014 and we have officially launched our new paradigm for congregational membership. We have received 36 signed membership covenants for 2014. In the months ahead, I will be offering food for thought regarding the seven “marks of discipleship”. This month, I begin by providing a word of clarification regarding our membership covenant.

One is not a more devoted follower of Jesus Christ, or a superior Christian, just because he or she signs an Emmanuel membership covenant; nor is one securing self-righteousness by following the marks of discipleship. Our righteousness is always *an alien righteousness*, rooted in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. God is the author of an everlasting covenant; by the stripes of Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, we are healed! This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The marks of discip-



ship are a delight, not a duty; signposts, not a standard; a navigational system, not a measuring stick. A standard is a level of quality or excellence accepted as norm by which actual attainments are judged. In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul reminds us that peace and mercy are upon the Israel of God, all who are in step with the standard (canon/rule) of “cross and new creation” (6:16).

**“a navigational system, not a measuring stick”**

In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, our Lord raises the expectation bar, rather than lowering or burying it. God doesn’t lower or eliminate His standards; He fulfills them, and us. The marks of discipleship are signposts for people of the Way on the Way with Jesus. The marks don’t

save us, but they do guide our journey, provide us with spiritual information, and keep us on the straight and narrow Way.

During a recent conversation, a friend told me that he hadn’t signed a membership covenant because he didn’t think he could measure up and meet the standard. I told him that the marks of discipleship are not a matter of works righteousness or human achievement. There’s a difference between a standard, which rules us, and a signpost, which provides direction for travelers.

“Suppose you’re traveling,” I said, “and your wife’s stomach starts to growl.” What do you do? Look for a standard to measure the extent of your wife’s hunger, or a signpost telling you the location of nearby food options?” If someone

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### Food For Thought:

*“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michaelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’” [Soli Deo Gloria!]*

—Martin Luther King Jr.

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needs to use the bathroom, do you look for a standard, or a rest area? Signposts guide our travels and inform our decision making. Signposts tell us how far we've traveled, inform us about roadside construction, detours, speed limits, and traffic congestion, and tell us how far we've yet to go until we reach our desired destination. Signposts aid our travels, if we pay attention to them. The marks of discipleship don't save us, but they do aid us in our walk with Jesus.

Will the standard of discipleship scare some people away? Perhaps. Bonhoeffer reminds us that "salvation is free, but discipleship will cost us our lives". One thing is for sure: the old way of defining and measuring active membership, as one recordable communion and offering during the past 12-24 months, is a meaningless & ineffective standard. If we do what we've always done, then we'll get what we've always gotten; i.e. insatiable consumers with no appetite for following Jesus. We've got nothing to lose by paying attention to a new standard (cross and new creation), except our lives; which of course have already been lost and found in the washing of regeneration and renewal (Galatians 2:20). Remember, the marks of discipleship

are signposts for travelers, not standards for measuring our growth in grace.

Martin Luther writes, "No one can be good and do good unless God's grace first makes him good; and no one becomes good by works, but good works are done by him who is good. Just as the fruits do not make the tree, but the tree bears the fruit...Therefore all works, no matter how good they are and how pretty they look, are in vain if they do not flow from grace." So it is with the marks of discipleship. Praying, Scripture reading, worship, spiritual growth, serving others, sharing the good news, and generous giving don't/won't make us good or better or holier than thou. But the marks do, and will, aid us on our journey with Jesus. The marks are the fruits of our redemption, not the requirements for attainment of salvation and peace with God.

So don't worry about how you are measuring up. The Holy Spirit is in charge of your sanctification. Grace is a God-given standard for you. Pay attention to the signposts on the Way, and the journey with Jesus will be God-pleasing. Marked with the cross of Christ, forever, we die and rise daily. Peace and mercy to those who are in step with this standard.

## Got Questions? WHAT IS CANDLEMAS?

### The 40TH DAY OF CHRISTMAS IS THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD!

February 2 is known as Groundhog's Day in the secular world. But in the church, it is the purification of Mary, the presentation of Jesus (Luke 2:22ff), and the blessing of candles with the singing of the *Nunc Dimittis & Lumen ad revelationem*—(Luke 2:32).

Joseph and Mary were Law-abiding, obedient keepers of Torah (Leviticus 12). The birth of a male child rendered the mother unclean for 40 days. The birth of a female child rendered the mother unclean for 80 days. Luke tells us, quoting Exodus 13:2,12, that Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem because every first-born child was to be dedicated/consecrated to the Lord. The firstborn male must be redeemed! Because Joseph and Mary are poor, they offer two turtledoves/pigeons at the presentation of Jesus. Simeon and Anna have been waiting for the consolation of Israel, the redemption of Jerusalem! When Jesus arrives, Simeon is ready to depart in peace because he has seen the Lord's Salvation.

Candlemas Day was also the day when some cultures predicted weather patterns. Farmers believed that the remainder of winter would be the opposite of whatever the weather was like on Candlemas Day. An old English song goes: "If Candlemas be fair and bright, Come winter, have another flight; If Candlemas bring clouds and rain, Go winter, and come not again." Thus if the sun cast a shadow on Candlemas Day, more winter was on the way; if there was no shadow, winter was thought to be ending soon. This practice led to the folklore behind "Groundhog's Day," Feb. 2.

It's Epiphany! Let your Light shine before others that they may see your good works & glorify the Father!

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU: Gloria Wiebusch



A response to reminiscing about the “good ol’ days” is often contingent on the listener’s age. You might hear, “Oh, yes, I do remember,” or if a “tween”, you may simply see a roll of the eyes & hear the mumbled response, “Whatever.”

I am no “tween” and there were certainly no mumbled responses when I visited with Gloria Wiebusch who currently lives in a north St. Paul suburb. When I hung up the phone, I smiled as I reflected on our visit. Although we shared some laughs and stories of yesteryear, I realized this woman lives very much in the present, always on the go. She possesses a particular flare for joy and gratitude which permeated our conversation. When I caught up with her, she just had arrived home in time to catch the end of the Vikings game & informed me that she would be flying to New York and New Jersey for a holiday visit with one of her daughters.

Gloria grew up in Iowa, and although their family often moved because of her Father’s job in sales, her fond memories evolve around the summers she spent with her grandparents on their farm near Manchester, Iowa. Modernization had taken the country by storm in the 1920s with running water in the homes, toilets, electricity, radios, stoves, and irons. However, the 1930s found many of these amenities still missing in rural America. We shared many of the same memories of her grandparents and my

aunts & uncles who pumped water from a hand pump at the sink, and heated it on the wood cook stove; and the outdoor privy had not yet been replaced by indoor plumbing.

In 1949 Gloria enrolled in the Kahler School of Nursing in Rochester. The original one new wing of the building still stands & is part of the Methodist/Mayo Hospital Complex. When Gloria was in nursing school, she said that there was a real shortage of young men in Rochester because of the Korean War conflict. So in order to generate some social life, her classmate, Connie, made some plans with her husband to bring some of his classmen from Winona State College over to Rochester to meet some of his wife’s single friends. Connie’s husband had a young man picked out for Gloria, but it soon became apparent that one of the other fellows, Fred Wiebusch, had an exclusive eye for Gloria. When Fred passed away in 2008, he & Gloria had shared 55 years of marriage and raised 3 lovely daughters, Suzanne, Wendy & Tammy.

In 2002 Fred completed a 44-year career at 3M & Hennepin County in the Twin Cities. Fred had struggled with many health issues over the years, so the decision was made to move to Rochester to be closer to the Mayo Clinic. Gloria & Fred came from diverse church backgrounds. Gloria was more ecumenical, worshiping in Congregational, Baptist, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches. Fred came from a Lutheran Wisconsin Synod traditional background. He liked singing the great hymns of the church. When they arrived in Rochester, they explored the church climate of the ELCA and found it lacking. They attended various Word Alone activities in SE Minnesota and were involved in trying to start gatherings in the Rochester. The turning point in their search was when Gloria saw a notice in the Rochester newspaper about a Bible study which ultimately became the pre-

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decessor for Emmanuel Lutheran Church. “Even though I knew that eventually I would be moving back to the Twin Cities to be closer to my daughter, I was on the initial steering committee,” says Gloria, “& the founding of Emmanuel Lutheran Church was a joyful answer to many prayers.”

Besides modernization, one of the other things that emerged from the 1920s was a book by Emily Post entitled, “Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics, and at Home.” Perhaps, Gloria never read this book, but early on in her life, she knew the value of a written note. One of the gifts God gave to Gloria was writing. While she lived in Rochester, & attended Emmanuel Lutheran Church, everyone who worshiped at Emmanuel received a written note from her—acknowledging their presence and encouraging them to come again. These notes were indeed the very foundational bricks of our church.

In closing our visit, Gloria reflected on her life and said that one of her greatest joys was seeing her family make Jesus a part of their lives—grandparents, aunts & uncles and her children. Her daughter Wendy & husband, Joel Berthelsen jointly serve an NALC church in Texas. Gloria continues to pray for an NALC congregation to be organized in the Twin Cities, & she continues to pray for & financially support Emmanuel.

There have been a multitude of changes in the world since Gloria was growing up in rural Iowa, but as we hum the music and words to one of Fred and Gloria’s favorite hymns, we hear the foundational truths of their Christian faith as reflected in the last stanza of the hymn, Faith of Our Fathers:

**Faith of our fathers, holy faith!  
We will be true to thee till death.**

**Faith of our fathers, we will love  
Both friend and foe in all our strife;  
And preach Thee, too, as love knows how  
By kindly words and virtuous life.**

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### SAVE THE DATE!

#### Shrove (Fat) Tuesday:

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

*Pancake & Pastry Feed*

## “Evangelism: Walk Across the Room”

On Saturday, Jan. 18, Pastor Fred Morck introduced Servants of Emmanuel to The Divine Plan, a witnessing tool for sharing our faith with others. Sharing the Gospel is one of the 7 marks of discipleship. We hope you have been praying for the opportunity to share your faith with others, and practicing using this 8-frame resource. Copies of The Divine Plan are available upon request. If you have access to a computer you may want to visit You-Tube or google, “Crossways: The Divine Plan with Dr. Harry Wendt”.

The Gospel in Miniature (Sola Publishing) by Rev. Robert Fossberg is another valuable witnessing tool. Based on John 3:16. Written from a Lutheran faith perspective, this booklet gives some practical advice on how believers can engage in the task of one-to-one evangelism (II Cor. 5:20—We are ambassadors for Christ).

An excellent read is Bill Hybel’s book, Just Walk Across the Room. Pray, and when the Holy Spirit opens a door, step out of your circle of comfort, & offer the gift of eternity to a lost soul. The average distance across most rooms is 20 feet; just 10 steps!

## 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 & DVD Bible

**Study:** “Simplify Your Life”, a Women’s Study based on the Book of Proverbs is being enjoyed by 12 women. Margaret Quam is hosting this study in her home (304– 15th Ave. S.W.). Next gatherings: Mondays, Jan 27 & Feb. 10, 24 @ 1 pm.

**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, & give generously. Signposts are not measuring sticks or report cards!

**MEMBERSHIP 2014:** The following 36 Servants of Emmanuel have enrolled for membership and signed a discipleship covenant for the year ahead: Darald & Leitha Bothun, Judy Caudill, Dave, Rachel, and Michael Carl, Ardis Christen, MarJean Damerval, Don & Peg Holtan, Joe & Amber Konop, Mike & Kalo Lockerby, Jack Miller, Fred Morck, Vicky Mulvihill, Arne Nelson, Dave & Carol Olson, Lee & Judy Pearce, LeRoy & Margaret Quam, Kari and Ian Richards, David and Julie Steffenson, Rich & Janet Sunde, Larry & Deb Vomhof, and Matthew, Megan, Anna, and James Wagner.

**Christmas Eve Offering:** Gifts received on Christmas Eve in support the North American Lutheran Church Seminary exceeded our goal of \$3,000.00. Thanks for helping to support Seminary Education & the training of our future NALC pastors. \$4,593 was sent to the NALS.

### NALC House Church—Twin

**Cities:** Dr. Jim Nestingen & his wife Carolyn are launching a new NALC House Church in the Twin Cities in partnership with Pastor Steve King (Maple Lake Church) & Pastor Challa Barro (Ethiopian Church). Worshipers are meeting weekly for Bible Study at 5 pm on Sundays at the Nestingen house (2216 Ferris Lane, Roseville, MN). The topic of study is: “Who Is Jesus?” If you have friends or relatives in the Twin Cities area, let them know about this new House Church. Prayers are welcome!!

**Benefactors and Patrons:** Special thanks to the Bakke family for the gift of 20 copies of the Reclaim Hymnal. We are still in need of 20 more copies of this hymnal.

**Super Market Saturday:** The next Channel One opportunity is Feb. 15 (9 am-Noon). Let’s share the heart of Emmanuel (Real Presence) by caring for the needs of our neighbors.