

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship - The Catechisms”

Martin Luther completed two Catechisms in 1529. The Large Catechism was written for pastors and teachers. The Small Catechism was written for parents to use in the home for instructing their children in the core teachings of the Christian faith.

Confirmation instruction for me, required memorization of the Small Catechism. I learned how valuable this requirement was when I took a class on the Lutheran Confessions at Luther Seminary. Dr. James Nestingen was my teacher. He gave his class two weeks to memorize the entire Small Catechism, & all 28 Articles of the Augsburg Confession. I had four other classes at the time. Some students were overwhelmed by the assignment. My memorization had stayed with me all those years and saved the day for me.

The Small Catechism may be relatively brief in length, but there is nothing shallow about it’s depth, or small about its content. The older I get, the more I appreciate the treasures of Luther’s Catechisms.

This year during the Season of Lent, I will be doing a preaching/teaching series on Luther’s Catechisms. For some it will be a timely review. For others it will be



a first time exploration in a Gold Mine.

The Small Catechism was written in the aftermath of a Parish Visitation program. In the 1520’s, visitor teams conducted an assessment of congregational life in parts of Germany. The Teams returned with some distressing news. Problems encountered included: Widespread fornication by the preachers with their live-in cooks, disregard for the sacraments, drunkenness, biblical illiteracy, and contempt for God’s Word.

“I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly.” — Luther

Luther in the preface of his Small Catechism wrote: “The deplorable conditions which I recently encountered when I was a visitor constrained me to prepare this brief and simple catechism or statement of Christian teaching.

Good God, what wretchedness I beheld! The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are incompetent & unfitted for teaching. I therefore beg of you for God’s sake, my beloved brethren who are pastors and teachers, that you take the duties of your office seriously, that you have pity on the people who are entrusted to your care, and that you help me to teach the catechism to the people, especially those who are young. Let those who lack the qualifications to do better; at least take this booklet and these forms and read them to the people word for word in this manner, etc.”

Luther’s catechisms were rooted in a Law-Gospel dialectic. In March of 1529 Luther completed the Large Catechism, based on a sermon series he had been doing (“Ten Sermons on the Catechism” (1528), LW 51, 137-193). In May of the same year, Luther completed the Small Catechism.

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**February 2017
Newsletter
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Food For Thought:

“This much is certain: anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures.”

— Martin Luther, Preface to Large Catechism

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SAVE THE DATES!

- Sunday, January 29 (4pm): Emmanuel Annual Meeting and Potluck supper. Beverages and meat will be provided. Bring a side dish, salad, or a dessert to share.
- Saturday, February 25 (6pm): Emmanuel Lutheran “Fifth Anniversary” Celebration! The Transfiguration Worship Service will feature a combined choir, and gifts of music from “Gift of Grace” in Holmen, WI, and Emmanuel of Grafton, IA.
- Wednesday, March 1 Ash Wednesday (soup supper at 5pm and worship at 6pm)

“ROCK the RED KETTLE” - Update

Emmanuel Lutheran rang bells once again this year for the Salvation Army. Thanks is offered to Lee Pearce who spearheaded our effort, and to all the Emmanuel Bell Ringers! Collectively, we rang bells for 59 hours, exceeding our goal. Due to inclement weather, the Red Kettle Awards Celebration has been rescheduled for Wednesday, February 1 at 5pm.

LENTEN PLANS!

The Season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1 with soup supper at 5pm and worship at 6pm. We will be collecting last year’s Palm Fronds at the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord (Saturday, February 25), and burning them into ashes for our Ash Wednesday Worship. During the Season of Lent we will gather weekly on Tuesdays at 5pm for soup and worship at 6pm. A signup sheet will be posted in the Gathering Space for those willing to provide soup or bread for our weekly meals. Our liturgy each Tuesday will be Holden Evening Prayer. Our Sermon Series this year will be a look at Martin Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms, in commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of Luther’s Posting of the 95 Theses.

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.

Emmanuel Turns Five!

Happy Birthday Emmanuel! On Saturday, February 25 at 6p.m., members and ministry partners will gather at Oasis Church to commemorate five years of God’s goodness and grace to & through Emmanuel of Rochester. Seeds have been planted & watered. Faithful disciples, trusting in the promises of God, took a leap of faith five years ago. God has produced the growth & supplied the harvest. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Please join us as we celebrate and give thanks on February 25. You’ve played an important role in our growth and development as an NALC church plant mission congregation. You’ve supported us with your presence, prayers, encouragement, and tithes. Thank you for believing that IN CHRIST JESUS our best years are always ahead of us. If you are unable to be with us in person on February 25, please be with us in prayer!

It’s the Season of Epiphany! Our worship service on February 25 will celebrate Emmanuel’s Five-Year Anniversary and the Transfiguration of Our Lord. Traditionally, the Five-Year Anniversary is commemorated with “wood” - The Old Rugged Cross! Worship is at 6pm. Worship will include a mass choir singing of “Beautiful Savior” along with gifts of music from the choirs of Emmanuel of Grafton, IA, and Gift of Grace in Holmen, WI. Add your voice to the combined choir and join us as we praise, proclaim and practice Emmanuel – God with us – in daily life! Refreshments, coordinated by Judy Pearce, will be served before and after worship, mindful of those traveling from a distance. We hope you can join us for our God-given Celebration!

Saturday School & G.I.F.T.

Each week children are learning faith stories and acquiring faith stones in Saturday School (5:10pm), while adults are learning what it means to “Grow In Faith Together” (5:15PM). Faith Stones aid us in our exercise of Faith Webbing. Youth will have “Song Time” in Saturday School and sing in worship on the following dates: February 11, March 11, April 8, and May 13. Thanks to Julie & MarJean for coordinating Saturday School and Song Time!

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Luther considered the Catechisms and the Bondage of the Will to be his two greatest literary accomplishments. The sequence of the parts found in both Catechisms is crucial in Luther's thinking. James Nestingen writes, "First the Ten Commandments, followed by the Apostle's Creed, and then the Lord's Prayer and Sacraments. This sequence shows the movement from Law to Gospel, from God's demand to the Word of promise and new life that the Word engenders."

A fresh examination of Luther's two Catechisms during our Lenten Season will lead us to the admiring conviction which the authors of the Formula of Concord expressed nearly fifty years after the publication of the Catechisms: "They are 'the layman's Bible' and contain everything which Holy Scripture discusses at greater length and which a Christian must know for his salvation" (Epitome, Rule and Norm, 5). Luther approached the Catechisms daily in the manner of a nursing child, hungry for the pure spiritual milk of God's Word. Luther also advocated that a person "adopt one form of the Catechism, adhere to it and use it repeatedly year after year." "It is the duty of every head of a household to examine his children and servants at least once a week and ascertain what they have learned of it, and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it."

On the occasion of the 400th Anniversary of Luther's Catechisms, at the Norwegian Synod Convention, Mayville, North Dakota June 6-12, 1929, the following Eulogy was adopted: "Luther's Catechism is unlimited in scope, extending from the beginning to the end of time, from everlasting to everlasting. Its purpose is to serve as a guiding path from the cradle to the grave and, as a bridge, to span the abyss between time and a blessed eternity. In the soul's pursuit of happiness, temporal and eternal, it gives definite and trustworthy guidance. It is unsearchable as the deep sea, yet as sparkling clear as the North Star. What human mind can fathom its depths or fully understand the message it bears of the love of a crucified Savior? Yet it clearly and unerringly guides the storm-tossed mariner to safety in the arms of just such a Savior. The profoundest scholar finds it an inexhaustible store of information, yet it is a child's textbook. Have the sages and philosophers pondered any important question that it does not answer so that a child may know the truth? The bishop and the layman, the king and the subject, the parent and the child, the master and the servant, all alike may profitably use it as a textbook. All can learn from it, none can exhaust it. Not even the most learned theologian will comprehend it fully until, led by its teachings, he has crossed the bridge into the New Jerusalem. There he will behold, in sublime perfection, the beautiful conceptions which his childhood faith gained through his mother's loving instruction in the Catechism."

Keeping Company with the Catechisms, Pastor Dave

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR FEBRUARY - Liturgy: WOV Bread of Life

Saturday, February 4 - Epiphany V (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Matt Serr

Ushers: Jim Siebenaler & Addison

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Janet Sunde

Saturday, February 11 - Epiphany VI (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Darald Bothun

Ushers: Bob Harms & Creig Anderson

Acolyte: Cobe Siebenaler

Kid's Choir sings!

Communion Assistant: Leitha Bothun

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Marcia Harms

Saturday, February 18 - Epiphany VII (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce

Ushers: Matt Serr, Nora & Scarlett

Acolyte: Pending

Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce

Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan

Treats: Julie Steffenson

Saturday, February 25 - Transfiguration of Our Lord (6pm) - Emmanuel turns FIVE!

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Julie Steffenson

Communion Assistants: Julie Steffenson, Leslie Duesenberg & Pastor Tim Duesenberg

Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Rich Sunde & Lee Pearce

Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Sound: Don Holtan

Refreshments: Coordinator, Judy Pearce

NOTE: MarJean Damerval will be our pianist each week. Julie Steffenson will take care of set up, & Janet Sunde & friends will take care of the take down. Pastor Dave will be our preacher each week.

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Save the Dates!

**Lent Begins on Ash Wednesday,
March 1, 2017!*

**August 7-11, 2017 is the date of
the NALC Convocation in
Nashville, Tennessee!*

SEMAC

Larry Vomhof is leading a group of men and women to West Virginia (Greenbrier County in White Sulphur Springs) for two weeks of servant work (February 11-24). SEMAC (Southeastern Minnesota Area Christians) will combine their faith & talents, offering hope and restoration to people devastated by floods a few months ago. 23 people lost their lives. The distance to the appointed destination is about 950 miles one way (14+ hours of driving). Deb Vomhof and Deb Brown will be overseeing the food preparation. Emmanuel Lutheran supports this mission trip with our Benevolence dollars. Anyone wishing to participate can contact Larry Vomhof. Thanks for supporting this ministry with your tithes and prayers!

Men's Bible Study Breakfast

The Men of Emmanuel have completed their study of the last book of the Bible, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, and are now embarking on a narrative reading of the entire Bible. The NIV Once a-day Bible will be our resource throughout 2017. Some of the participants will choose to read the entire Bible in 2017. Others will be blessed with weekly nuggets and conversation. We meet on Tuesdays at 8am at Oasis Church. Participants are invited to take turns providing treats. Invite a friend. Be evangelical!

Thus far we have enjoyed fruitful conversations from the Book of Genesis & the Gospel of Matthew. In February we will be discussing the books of Exodus, Leviticus, & Mark.

Back Page Stories

Women's Bible Studies: The Afternoon Group has concluded its study on Revelation. A new study will begin after Easter (April 20-June 8) on Thursdays at 1pm at Oasis Church. The Evening Group continues its study on Revelation monthly at the home of Katie Siebenaler at 6:30pm. Next Session: Wednesday, Feb. 22.

Madonna Towers Ministry: Pastor Dave is leading worship & preaching at the Madonna Towers Skilled Care Chapel on the first and third Wednesdays of each month in 2017. Members of Emmanuel are invited to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. Our next

Worship Services will be on Wednesdays, February 1 & 8 at 1:00 pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

Church Council Highlights - January 11: 2016 year-end giving statements will be available by Jan. 14. The Audit Committee will review the financial records on Jan. 21. Emmanuel and Pastor Dave are now enrolled in the NALC Benefits 403 (b)9 Retirement Plan. Lent begins on March 1. Emphasis this year will be on Luther's Catechisms. Thanks to Lee and Judy Pearce for providing the meats for our Annual Meeting Potluck. Personal invites to Emmanuel's 5-Year Anniversary are being

mailed out. The Annual Report will be distributed by Jan. 21. Christmas Worship in 2017 will be December 23 at 6pm and Sunday, December 24 at 10pm. Red Kettle hours logged were 59 hours. The Nominating Committee is still seeking alternates for voting delegates. Council Installation will be on March 4. 58 Discipleship Covenants have been approved for 2017. Rushford Lutheran has decided to provide a partner gift in 2017 which will be designated for Pastor's Pension. We ended the year 2016 with a net budget surplus of \$9,548.37. Thanks be to God! Next Council Mtg. will follow the Annual Mtg.

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One ministry opportunity is February 18, 2016 (9 am—Noon).