

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship - I AM SURE!”

Now faith is! “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the confidence of things not seen.”

This is my story; and I’m sticking with it. Fanny Crosby, a blind hymn writer, composed these words in 1873: *“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”* This is my song...praising my Savior all the day long. — Hebrews 10:22.

Definitely! Not maybe, or quite likely, or perhaps. I am definitely, positively, undoubtedly, planning on spending eternity with Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. I AM Sure! How about You?

Disciples of Jesus live & die with a guaranteed promise of absolute certainty. “Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Absolutely nothing. Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we await a Savior.

St. Paul, writing to the Christians in Ephesus, reminds us that our inheritance has already been secured through the death



and resurrection of Jesus. In Him, we are chosen to be holy and blameless. In Him we are predestined for adoption. In Him, we have redemption. In Him, we have heard the Word of TRUTH, the Gospel of our Salvation. Believing in Him, we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory!

“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.”
- Martin Luther

Jesus Christ is not one of several options, or a truth among many truths. Jesus is THE Way and THE Truth and THE Life. No one comes to the Father, but by Him. Jesus is THE Good

Shepherd Who lays down His life for His sheep. No one can snatch a lamb from the Good Shepherd’s hand. In Him we have eternal security. On the cross Jesus says, “It is finished.” Mission accomplished. The One who sits on the throne says, “Write this down for these words are trustworthy & true.” And He said to me, “It is done.”

“Jesus lives! And now is death but the gate of life eternal; This shall calm my trembling breath when I pass its gloomy portal. Faith shall cry, as fails each sense: Jesus is my confidence!”

Benjamin Franklin said there were only two things certain in life: death and taxes. I would like to add a third. “In Christ” we are christened with an imperishable hope, & hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts.

“I AM” Assured, Pastor Dave

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Food For Thought:

“We are all called to be mothers of God, for God is always waiting to be born.”

— Meister Eckhart, medieval German mystic.

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PRAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS

Each month, on the 15th day of the month, we pray for an area school. During the month of January we are praying for Folwell Elementary School and delivering goodies as an expression of our love & gratitude. Thanks for keeping students and their families, teachers and administrators, in your prayers! This ministry is supported by an Action Team gift from Thrivent.

Marks of Discipleship—2016 Covenants

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. The 2016 Emmanuel Discipleship Covenants are available for signing. Remember, membership at Emmanuel is an annual renewal; a reinvestment. The best way to make disciples is by being a disciple. Thanks for getting caked in the dust of Rabbi Jesus. Thirty-five Covenants have already been signed. The Church Council will approve signed covenants at their January 12 meeting.

RING those BELLS?

“The bells of Christmas chime once more; the heavenly guest is at the door. He comes to earthly dwellings still, with new year gifts of peace, good will.”

Servants of Emmanuel had a great time ringing bells for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Christmas Appeal. Our goal was forty hours of bell ringing, AND WE EXCEEDED IT. Thanks for offering your time in service to Emmanuel. Compassion is a command of Christ & it is in the blood of his servants. We serve our Lord as we care for the needs of “the least of these” in our midst.

Christmas To-Do List

“When the song of the angels is stilled, When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and princes are home, The work of Christmas begins: To find the lost, To heal the broken, To feed the hungry, To release the prisoners, To rebuild the nations, To bring peace among brothers, To make music in the heart.” — Howard Thurman

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Bell Ringing Service - Jan. 2, 2016

Emmanuel will have a special worship liturgy on Saturday night, January 2 in celebration of the Season of Christmas. Did you know that Christmas is a Season & not just a day? Did you know that the Keeping of the 12 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? Bring a bell and help us ring in the New Year 2016!

SEMAC 2016

Larry Vomhof will be taking a crew of Christ-centered servants to Brookport-Unionville, IL in 2016. Participants will be offering compassion in the name of Jesus and restoration of hope to people devastated by natural disaster. SEMAC stands for *South East Minnesota Area Christians*. The two weeks of service will be **February 7-20, 2016**. Deb Vomhof and Judy Caudill will be serving as cooks. If you would like to participate (1 or 2 weeks) in this mission trip, or support it with an offering, contact Larry or Deb for more information. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 10. Perhaps you want to make this mission trip a part of your Lenten discipline and walk of Discipleship?

SATURDAY SCHOOL

We offer thanks to God to the children who blessed our Christmas Eve Worship with a reenactment of the Nativity Scene. There will be No Saturday school on December 26 & January 2. Saturday school will resume on January 9. We continue to meet each week at 5:10 p.m. in the Oasis Fellowship Hall. A special unit on the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed will be taught in 2016. Thanks for making Children and Christian Education a priority in your family life.

Pastor Dave is taking Monday as his weekly day off. Please call for emergencies only. Thanks for your partnership in ministry!

BABY NEWS!

In 1809, with Napoleon sweeping through Austria, the world was in such upheaval that nobody paid much attention in baby news. Yet, during that year, Abraham Lincoln, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Darwin, Alfred Tennyson, Edgar Allen Poe, and William Gladstone were born. Although attention was on an Austrian battlefield, “history was actually being shaped in the cradles of England and America”, writes Charles Swindoll. “Similarly, everyone thought taxation was the big news when Jesus was born. But a young Jewish woman cradled the biggest news of all: the birth of the Savior.” Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills and everywhere!

Worship Servants for 2016

Here’s a New Year's Resolution we can all participate in: Let’s make it our goal to have worship helpers for our Saturday Evening Worship Services always in place by the end of the previous month. Can we do it? Disciples say, “YES WE CAN!”

Madonna Towers Ministry Opportunity

In 2016, Pastor Dave will be leading worship and preaching at Madonna Towers on the first Wednesday of each month. Emmanuel members are invited and encouraged to participate in this ministry to seniors of our community. The first opportunity in the New Year will be on January 6 at 1:30pm. Join us as we celebrate the Feast of Epiphany.

C.S. Lewis: Mere Christianity “Lunatic, Liar, or Lord?”

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill

him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord & God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

“A Charlie Brown Christmas” 50th Anniversary - Jason Soroski

Did you watch “A Charlie Brown Christmas” this year? It’s 50-years-old. Did you notice when Linus, forever attached to his security blanket, drops his blanket? It happens twice in the show.

The first time happens when Linus shares *“what Christmas is all about,”* while reciting Luke 2. The specific moment he drops it is when he utters the words, **“fear not”**. It was intentional on the part of Charles Schultz. Schultz is reminding us that the birth of Jesus separates us from our fears. The birth of Jesus frees us from the habits we are unable (or unwilling) to break ourselves. The birth of Jesus allows us to simply drop the false security we have been grasping so tightly, & learn to trust and cling to Jesus instead.

The second occurrence takes place at the end of the show. After the epic, blanket-dropping recitation of Scripture given by Linus in response to Charlie Brown's quest for meaning, he picks the blanket back up. Why? Because faith is delicate. We too waver. We find ourselves relying upon our old securities instead of Jesus. The show ends with the Peanuts gang, gathered around the tree, singing *“Hark the Herald Angels Sing, Glory to the Newborn King,”* essentially an impromptu worship service. Linus parts with his blanket yet again. He lays it down for good at the base of that beautiful Christmas tree; i.e. the Old Rugged Cross. Linus lays his blanket down, & this time doesn't look back.

In the midst of fear and insecurity, this simple cartoon image from 1965 continues to live on as an inspiration for us to seek true peace and true security in the one place it has always been and can always still be found; i.e. In Christ Alone!

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SAVE THE DATE!

EASTER With Emmanuel!

Join us for the Season of Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 10, and concluding with the Resurrection of Jesus on the Eve of Easter, March 26.

Second Mile Gifts - Investing in God's Mission

With a projected Mission Plan Budget Deficit of \$24,000.00 for the year 2015, servants of Emmanuel were invited to consider a second mile investment into the future of our congregation. Members responded with generous giving, which is one of the marks of discipleship. Thank you for your gift. Thanks for believing that IN CHRIST our best years are always ahead of us.

Looking Ahead: Lent 2016

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016. We will have weekly soup suppers at 5pm & Holden Evening Prayer with a Sermon Series on FAITH PRACTICES at 6pm each week. Our Mid-Week Services will be held at Oasis Church on Tuesday Nights (February 16, 23, and March 1, 8, & 15).

Annual Meeting: Change of Date

This Year's Emmanuel Lutheran Church Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 31, 2016, at 4:00pm, followed by a potluck supper. It will be family friendly. Child Care will be provided. Meat and beverages will also be provided. Please bring a dish (salad, side dish or dessert) to share. A special highlight of this year's annual meeting will be a slide show featuring pictures from 2015.

Back Page Stories

Men's Bible Study Breakfast:

Weekly fellowship around God's Word at 8am Tuesdays at Charlie's (1408 2nd. St. SW). Join us in being Evangelical. Invite a friend.

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One opportunity is January 16, 2016 (9 am—Noon).

Women's Bible Studies: The Afternoon Study Group has ended its study on Fascinating Women of the Old Testament. They will resume in April and study Fascinating Women of the New Testament. The Evening Study Group is also studying Women of the Word. They will continue to meet monthly at the home of Kati Siebenaler. Session Three will be on "Sister Wives"—Rachel & Leah, on

Tuesday, January 19 at 6:30pm.

Council Highlights (Dec. 8): The Thanksgiving offering in support of the Pastor's Discretionary fund was \$375.00. Pastor Tim will be our pulpit supply on Dec. 26 while Pastor Dave is on vacation. The Emmanuel Roadmap was completed in preparation for the Dec. 12 Huddle. Research is being done regarding Emmanuel's Articles of Incorporation. A new lease will be signed with Oasis for 2016. A letter will be sent out to Emmanuel members from Lee Pearce inviting members to consider a second mile gift in support of our budget shortfall. Arne Nelson will be resigning at the end of the December. Thanks was offered for his faithful service during the past 4 years. Next Church

Council Meeting is Jan. 12 at 10am.

Nominating Committee: Is God calling you to serve in leadership at Emmanuel Lutheran? Opportunities exist: Church Council—Lee Pearce, Don Holtan and Katie Siebenaler have already said YES. Two positions (one year each) are still open, one being the Church Treasurer. Lee Pearce will be our Lay Voting Delegate at Church Convocations, but we still need two alternates. We also need two members for the Nominating Committee, with Leitha Bothun and Peg Holtan having already said YES. Larry Vomhof has agreed to serve a 3-year term on the Audit Committee.

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2016! May God grant you blessings and goodwill as you let your light shine to the praise of His glory!