

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship - Be It Resolved”

Merry Christmas! Happy New Year 2017! Because Jesus is Lord, therefore be it resolved that we worship and serve Him from this time forth and forevermore.

January 1 is a time when many people make New Year’s Resolutions. Some are kept and many are broken. Some begin with good resolve, while others are simply a pipe dream.

A number of years ago, I served on a Church Body Resolutions Committee. Our job was to edit & polish the submitted resolutions, & if desired, to make recommendations for voting yes or no on the proposals. I learned a lot about resolutions during my time of service.

The WHEREAS statements summarize the problem, issue, history or context of the proposal. The THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED statement is the punchline. It is the action being taken; when and by whom. The intent of a well-written resolution is to persuade and to promote buy-in & action.

A few years ago, while serving as pastor in the State of Washington, I joined about 125 other church members in a complete reading of the Bible. If you have never read the entire Bible from beginning to end, Genesis to Revelation, all 66 books and 1189



Chapters, I encourage you to do so. It’s worth the resolve.

Martin Luther read the entire Bible at least twice each year. He also sang the entire Psalter each month during the daily hours of prayer. Luther had a phenomenal memory. By Luther’s own account, he states that he had much of Scripture memorized, “I had then already read and taught the sacred Scriptures most diligently privately and publicly for seven years, so that I knew them nearly all by memory.”

“For some years now, I have read through the Bible twice every year. If you picture the Bible to be a mighty tree and every word a little branch, I have shaken every one of these branches because I wanted to know what it was and what it meant.” (LW 54:165).

A group of men that gather at Panera each Wednesday morning are resolving to read the entire Bible in

2017. Another group of men will be reading and discussing the Bible each Tuesday morning when they gather at Oasis Church for Bible Study. Participants are receiving a copy of the NIV Once a-day Bible as a resource for this journey.

In January, our journey begins with the Book of Genesis and the Gospel of Matthew. Both texts boldly proclaim the Triune Name of God, the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Daily readings will also include verses from Psalms and Proverbs. Luther writes, “The Psalter promises Christ’s death and resurrection so clearly and pictures His Kingdom and the condition & nature of all Christendom that it might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the Bible.”

The Word becomes flesh and dwells among us full of grace and truth. Therefore be it resolved that followers of Jesus, caked in His holy dust, read and study the Bible daily.

— In Christ, Pastor Dave

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Food For Thought:

“Let the man who would hear God speak, read Holy Scriptures.” “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me.”

— Martin Luther

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SAVE THE DATES!

- Sunday, January 29, 2017 (4pm): Emmanuel Annual Meeting and Potluck supper. Beverages and meat will be provided. Bring a side dish or a dessert to share. Childcare will be provided.
- Saturday, February 25, 2017 (6pm): Emmanuel Lutheran “Fifth Anniversary” Celebration! The Transfiguration Worship Service will feature a combined choir with participants from Gift of Grace in Holmen, WI and Emmanuel of Grafton, IA.

“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! Emmanuel also supported the Red Kettle fundraiser with benevolence dollars of \$500.00. Last year Servants of Emmanuel rang for 45 hours. Our goal this year was 58 hours, one for each of our members. As of the printing of this newsletter, Emmanuel has already logged 54 hours.

January 6 is the Feast of the Epiphany!

In the early church, the birth of Jesus was celebrated on January 6. January 6 marks the arrival of the Three Kings, AKA the Magi. The Wise Men were a group of distinguished foreigners who visited Jesus after his birth, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold for a King (Royalty). Frankincense for a Priest (Worship God). And Myrrh for a Suffering Servant (Burial). During the Season of Christmas (Twelve Days long) gifts are given and received. Judy Pearce reminds of “Eight Gifts that Do Not Cost a Cent”: The gift of listening. The gift of affection. The gift of laughter. The gift of a written note. The gift of a compliment. The gift of a favor. The gift of solitude. And the gift of a cheerful deposition. God loves and so God gives. God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so we too give.

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.

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: January 21, February 11, March 11, April 8, and May 13. Thanks to Julie and MarJean for coordinating Saturday School and Song Time! Thanks also to the youth of our congregation who reenacted the Nativity Scene at our 2pm Christmas Eve Worship Service.

PRAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS

During the past two years, Emmanuel has been praying for the staff, students & families of our area schools. Each month a different school was selected and treats were delivered to the Staff Lounge as a token of our love and appreciation. Two Thrivent Action Team Gifts supported this ministry. Though we will not formally be continuing this ministry in 2017, we encourage members of Emmanuel to continue keeping area schools, teachers and kids in their prayers.

Emmanuel: Gifts for Visitors

Thanks to Don Holtan who recently received a Thrivent Action Team Gift of \$250.00 and used it to purchase Coffee Mugs with out Emmanuel logo on them. Visitors will receive a mug filled with treasures of appreciation. In the New Year 2017, each Thrivent member can apply for, and receive, two Thrivent Action Team Gifts. Visit with Julie Steffenson if you need more information.

Minnesota Institute of Art!

There is still time to visit the Martin Luther: “Art and the Reformation” exhibit at the MN Institute of Art. This exhibit is in honor the 500th Anniversary of Luther’s posting of the 95 Theses (Oct. 31. 1517). The Exhibit runs until January 15. **Call #612-871-3000 to reserve tickets.** Address: 2400 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN. Thrivent members attend free on Fridays and receive a 50% off discount on other days with the following code: Thriventmia. The exhibit is now open on Mondays also.

WORSHIP SERVANTS FOR JANUARY - Liturgy: WOV Bread of Life

Saturday, January 7 - Baptism of Our Lord (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Don Holtan
Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Elijah Matzke; Rich Sunde
Acolyte: Emma Matzke

Communion Assistant: Emma Matzke
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Judy Caudill

Saturday, January 14 - Epiphany II (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Jenna Serr
Ushers: Brock Edwards, Mason & Gavin
Acolyte: Elijah Matzke

guest pianist: Karen Salz

Communion Assistant: Jenna Serr
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Julie Edwards

Saturday, January 21 - Epiphany III (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Larry Vomhof
Ushers: Jim Siebenaler, Cabe, Ava & Addison
Acolyte: Cabe Siebenaler

Kid's Choir sings!

Communion Assistant: Katie Siebenaler
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Katie Siebenaler

Saturday, January 28 - Epiphany IV (6pm)

Scripture Reader & Prayers: Lee Pearce
Ushers: LeRoy Quam & Rich Sunde
Acolyte: Ava Siebenaler

Communion Assistant: Lee Pearce
Sound & Coffee: Don & Peg Holtan
Treats: Judy Pearce

NOTE: MarJean Damerval will be our pianist each week, except on January 14 when Karen Salz will be playing. 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. On January 21 the Kids Choir will sing!

“Making the Invisible Visible” - by Rev. Chris Brekke (Guest Contributor)

We know that many invisible things are very powerful: electricity, air, gravity, phobias, determination, ideas. Invisible does not mean impotent. One powerful idea, in written form, that has profoundly shaped our Western civilization, is the Bible. The Word of Christ and the principles of his Way have had far more impact on our world than any army that ever marched or any invention ever developed. Yet now here in the 21st century, the Good Book doesn't have much visibility. Though it continues to top bestseller lists, survey data shows widespread ignorance about its content.

NY Times journalist Kenneth Briggs says “while it [i.e. the Bible] is everywhere in America - an average of several per household - and a standard item in libraries and courthouses, it often goes unnoticed and unread. It has become invisible; everywhere but nowhere.” Some say “who needs it?” Even its devotees acknowledge that it is not the hot page-turner of the month.

While popular authors come and go, the Bible remains the source of God's truth and humanity's hope in every language and on every continent. There is no book like it: written over a period of 1600 years, by over 40 different authors, in both an Eastern and a Western language, with 66 books ranging from history to poetry to proverbs to mystery. It deals with our deepest questions and inspires our highest ideals and announces our brightest future. Scripture delivers God to me! It stretches my boundaries, it opens up divine dialog, it questions my comfort, it announces grace & truth, it guides my journey, it calls me forward.

We Christ-followers call it the Word of God, the carrier of Christ, and the instrument of the Holy Spirit. Though it is ancient, and foreign, and not scientific nor entertainment, it stands alone in importance. If you want a message of hope that comes from outside our cacophony of competing voices, give this book that has inspired folks from Abe Lincoln to Mother Teresa a shot. It need not be invisible. As to where to start in this large library of little books, maybe try Psalms or Luke and see what you think. Better yet, find a few others to read it with, for mutual encouragement. You'll benefit by its visibility.

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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!*

Visitation Ministry at Madonna Towers

The Pastoral Care Visitor Program is a ministry for anyone seeking to serve the elderly through a bonding friendship and sharing of life and faith stories. Such sharing seeks to improve the quality of life for residents of the Madonna Living Community who have little or no family or other visitors in their life. It is also a gift to the visitor! The lay Pastoral Care Visitors generally meet weekly with the residents in the Madonna skilled nursing unit. Generally, the visits last about 20-30 minutes. Each Pastoral Care Visitor will be assigned to 1 resident of the skilled nursing unit. This ministry opportunity includes an orientation session as well as an annual enrichment session. If you are interested in attending an informational meeting, and discussing the possibility of becoming a Pastoral Care Visitor at Madonna Towers, please call Diane Solheid-Miller (Spiritual Care Director) a call at #507-206-2225.

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 will now embark on a narrative reading of the entire Bible. The NIV Once a-day Bible will be the resource for this year long study. Some of the participants will choose to read the entire Bible in 2017. Others will be blessed with weekly nuggets and conversation. We'll meet on Tuesdays at 8am at Oasis Church. Participants will take turns providing treats. Invite a friend. Be evangelical!

Back Page Stories

Women's Bible Studies: The Afternoon & Evening Women's Bible Study groups are continuing to study the Book of Revelation! Afternoon gals will wrap up their study by early February. Next Sessions: Thursdays, January 5 & 19 at 1pm. The evening group, Lady Light, will continue to study Revelation through May, and meet monthly at Katie's home. Next Session: Wednesday, January 18 at 6:30pm.

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, January 4 & 18 at 1:00 pm. Give Lee Pearce a call if you would like to help with this wonderful ministry.

Church Council Highlights - Dec. 7: Our Thanksgiving Offering in support of the Pastor's Discretionary Fund was \$540.00. In our 2016 Budget, Emmanuel planned on using \$15,000 from our Reserves. As of Dec. 1, we have used only \$7,154.23. We are anticipating a strong giving month in December as 2016 comes to a close. Thanks for your generous giving! Larry Vomhof has consented

to serve as our Head Usher. Pastor Gies will serve as pulpit supply on December 31. A letter will be sent to the Minkota Mission District indicating that Emmanuel plans on being affiliated only with the Iowa Mission District in 2017. Church Policy Statements regarding Marriage & Sexuality were approved and will appear in the Annual Report. Pastor Dave will be attending the NALC Pastors' Conference in February. Pastor Dave is encouraging members to read through the Bible in 2017. Our Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 29 at 4pm, followed by a Potluck meal.

Supermarket Saturday: The next Channel One ministry opportunity is January 21, 2016 (9 am—Noon).