

# The Emmanuel Epistle!

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

## Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship: The Sanctity of Life”

As we begin a new year, we remember that the Gift of Christmas is revealed and manifested during the holy days of Epiphany. *“Oh Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.”*

We also remember that Jesus was born to die. *“O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief & shame weighed down, now scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown! O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was thine! Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.”*

The question is sometimes asked, “Is nothing sacred anymore?” The word sacred means “holy, unblemished, divine.” Each year, during the month of January, God’s people celebrate the **SOHL** (Sanctity Of Human Life).

Indeed there is ONE who is sacred and holy & divine. In Holy Baptism, this ONE places His sacred name on us: We are baptized in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit.” Promises are fulfilled: “You shall be holy for I the LORD your God am holy!” As God resides in us, with His image & Incarnation, we become holy too!



Lutherans For Life observe the Sanctity of Human Life each January; actually, each day! This year’s theme, based on I Corinthians 12:22 is, *“From Invisible to Indispensable!”* “St. Paul writes, “On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable ....”

*“God only has one ‘natural’ child. He adopted all the rest. (Galatians 4:4-5.)”*

— Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb

Do you know how valuable & important you are to God? God chose you for adoption into His family before your mother and father even met. God knit you together in your mother’s womb. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. You are no accident to God. In Christ, before the foundation of the world, you were destined for grace and for heaven.

Baptized, we are members

of the Body of Christ. Our sufferings are shared. Our successes are shared. Our accolades are shared. What the world discards as useless, God values as absolutely priceless.

Is nothing sacred anymore? Good question. The answer is that God and His people are sacred. In Leviticus 11:45, the LORD reminds us that deliverance makes us holy: “For I Am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I Am Holy.” The divine requirement is a sacred promise! You and I, from conception to death, are a sacred trust of God.

St. Peter, quoting Leviticus 11:45 writes *“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”* (I Peter 1:14-16).

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## Food For Thought:

*“I believe that God made me ... and defends me ... and all out of fatherly, divine goodness & mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank & praise, to serve & obey Him.”—Martin Luther*

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### Holiday Cookies—Thrivent Action Team

Plates of store-bought holiday cookies were delivered to the Ronald McDonald House & the 2 Transplant Houses in Rochester during the days of Advent. **Thanks** to Judy Pearce for organizing this ministry opportunity, and to those who delivered compassion, hope, & a taste of Christmas.

### THANKS!

From: Ronald McDonald House, Rochester, MN.  
 “Dear Emmanuel Members, you invited us to save the postage and not send a thank you, but we couldn’t help ourselves, as the yummy cookies brought so many smiles to the faces of our children and their families. We wish you could see and feel the love in your gift of cookies. Thank you! Happy Holidays! —Ronald McDonald House Staff

### 2020 — Year-End Gifts & Offerings

**Thank you** for your faithful support of the mission of Emmanuel in 2020! Giving Statements will be distributed in January as required by the IRS for tax purposes.

### Men’s Bible Study (In-Person) - 2021

The men of Emmanuel Lutheran are currently meeting on Tuesday mornings at 8:30am via email & studying the Scripture Lessons 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 months of January & February: **Wednesdays, Jan. 13 & 20; & Feb. 10 & 24. at 11am.** Location: Oasis Church worship space. We will physically distance & wear masks. Bring a Bible & heart eager to hear God’s Word.

### ANNUAL MEETING — January 30, 2021

We’ll have an abbreviated Worship Service on Saturday, January 30, and begin our Annual Meeting around 6:45pm. Our Meeting will be short and sweet. The Annual Report will be distributed one week prior to our Meeting.

Covenant members of Emmanuel will meet to celebrate the gifts & blessings of 2020, to receive reports, to approve the Mission Plan Budget for 2021, and to conduct elections. Save the Date!

### WORSHIP PLANS FOR January 2021 — 6pm

A special liturgy has been written for the Season of Epiphany 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 January 23, 2021.**

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, 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.

**Saturday, Jan. 9—Epiphany I—Baptism of Our Lord:** Mary Ann Groven, Worship Pianist.

**Saturday, Jan. 16—Epiphany II—National Sanctity of Life:** Mary Ann Groven, Worship Pianist.

**Saturday, Jan. 23—Epiphany III—Covenant Renewal Service:** Mary Ann Groven, Worship Pianist. **Holy Communion** served following worship.

**Saturday, Jan. 30—Epiphany IV—Annual Meeting:** Karen Salz, Worship Pianist. We will have an abbreviated worship service (40 minutes) with a short Annual Meeting following Worship.

**Saturday, February 6—Epiphany V:** Mary Ann Groven, Worship Pianist.

**Saturday, February 13—Transfiguration of our Lord (bring Palm Fronds):** Mary Ann Groven, Worship Pianist.

**Thanks** to Don Holtan for recording our Services and to Julie Steffenson, Peg Holtan, Lee and Judy Pearce, and Larry & Deb Vomhof for assisting with worship; setup, takedown and sanitization.

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Peter then adds these promising words: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (I Peter 2:9-10). We are holy & sacred people, not because of our good works, accomplishments and efforts, but solely because of God’s say-so & our alien righteousness in Christ Jesus! We are justified & sanctified!

In 2013, Pope Francis wrote, “Every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, bears the face of the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world’s rejection. And every elderly person...even if he is ill or at the end of his days, bears the face of Christ. They cannot be discarded, as the ‘culture of waste’ suggests!” Pope Francis adds, “A pregnant woman isn’t carrying a toothbrush in her belly, or a tumor....We are in the presence of a human being....Unfortunately, what is thrown away is not only food and dispensable objects, but often human beings themselves, who are discarded as ‘unnecessary.’”

God has an intimate knowledge of each person, even before they are born: “*You created every part of me; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother’s womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there – you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began*” (Psalm 139:13-16). All lives matters to God, for no life exists apart from God’s will & grace. “Your body belongs to the Almighty Father who made it. Your body belongs to the Incarnate Son who redeemed it. Your body belongs to the Holy Spirit who calls it His Temple & Treasure.” “This is My body,” says our Lord Jesus Christ. “This is My beloved son & My beloved daughter,” says the Lord our God.

Dear friends in Christ, on the basis of God’s WORD alone, God’s say-so alone, this is the irrefutable TRUTH: “This life, embryo or aged, dying or differently abled, is God’s sacred gift, and our privilege & responsibility. If we don’t speak on behalf of those who are dismissed, devalued and discarded, who will? On January 13, 1984, President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation designating January 22 as the first National Sanctity of Life Day. On Saturday night, January 16, 2021, Emmanuel Lutheran Church will celebrate and proclaim the Sanctity Of Human Life (**SOHL**)! I hope you will join me in offering thanks and praise to God for His blessing of holiness upon His creation. Yes, life is sacred!

Sanctified by the Grace of God, Pastor Dave

### **SOHL Month—January 2021 Sanctity Of Human Life**

Join us in honoring life this January! Historically, **Sanctity of Human Life (SOHL)** Sunday is a day that churches across the nation set aside to celebrate and recognize the value of all human life.

This year, **SOHL** will be observed nationally on Sunday, January 17, 2021. Emmanuel Lutheran will celebrate **SOHL** with a special Service of Worship on **Saturday, January 16, 2021**. Emmanuel will celebrate **SOHL** by providing compassion & Christ-centered support to women, their unborn children & families who need life-affirming hope, help, & care.

At New Life Family Services in Rochester, MN, a gift of \$550 will carry a woman & her unborn child from conception through birth & beyond. In 2020, Emmanuel raised \$2,200, which provided pregnancy care for four mothers & their babies.

### **Virtual Baby Shower—Jan. 16-17 New Life Family Services**

Emmanuel Lutheran is hosting a virtual baby shower benefiting the young mothers who visit New Life Family Services on the weekend of January 16-17. Baby shower gifts (see suggested items on **page 5**) may be dropped off any time on Saturday, January 16 from 4-6pm. Those who drop off a gift, will receive a **Game Card and a store-bought dessert**. The Game Card will give directions for the Virtual Shower which will take place on Sunday, January 17, from 3-4pm. We’ll play a couple of games & give out some prizes. It’s going to be a Lot of fun. The best news is that we will celebrate life and invest in the care of those who come to New Life.

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”*

— Jeremiah 1:5

## “From Invisible to Indispensable” [www.lutheransforlife.org](http://www.lutheransforlife.org)

- Abortion acts like some persons are invisible. Assisted suicide treats some persons as invisible.
- It says they don't have enough size or adequate skills to matter. It says they don't have the right circumstances to matter. It tempts us to use death as a solution. It tells us we shouldn't have to look at them anymore.
- If our unborn neighbor or the elderly one seems invisible, if the persons with disabilities feel invisible, doesn't anyone wonder why? Their ages don't make them invisible. Their appearances don't make their humanity invisible. Their inabilities don't make their sanctity invisible. Pretty and popular are just comparisons. Productive & profitable are only perceptions. None of these can impart humanity, & none of them can deprive someone of it.
- Humanity comes from what we are & not from what we do. And just because it sometimes goes unnoticed doesn't mean it's absent. No person's preciousness depends on us detecting it. It isn't that the worth and purpose of the least of these are so little we cannot calculate them. It's that human worth and purpose are too great for us to comprehend.
- It's not just her body, her choice. It's not just his problem, his fault. Your body belongs to the Almighty Father who made it. Their body belongs to the Incarnate Son who redeemed it. Each body belongs to the Holy Spirit who calls it His temple and treasure. This is My body, says the Savior Jesus Christ. This is My beloved son & My beloved daughter, says the Lord our God. This life, embryo or aged, dying or disabled, is your privilege and my responsibility.
- Humanity isn't made up of individuals, but of indispensables. We are connected. We are community. We are one body. We need each other & have each other. None lives to himself alone, & none dies to himself alone. If one member suffers, all suffer together. We can do this, and we will rejoice!

## Building for the Future “Implementation Team”

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 75<sup>th</sup> Street NW and 18<sup>th</sup> 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 met on November 1 & 22, and December 13. The **next meeting** will be on **January 10 @ 5pm.**

### 2021 DISCIPLESHIP COVENANTS

Membership at Emmanuel is an annual renewal. . Presently, we have 51 signed covenants for 2021. Thanks for walking the walk with Jesus, & making Emmanuel your church home. Covenant Deadline: January 8, 2021. A Covenant Renewal Liturgy will be celebrated during our 6pm Worship Service on January 23. Marks of Discipleship are Signposts that 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, & live and give generously. Those signing an Emmanuel Discipleship Covenant may have membership in another church as well.

Questions? Contact Pastor Dave!

### Emmanuel Nominating Committee

Contact Lee Pearce, Julie Steffenson, Heather Mikesh, & 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 four Nominating Committee members have agreed to serve again in 2021.

### Thrivent Choice Dollars

If you have Thrivent Products don't forget to designate your Choice Dollars. Go online at [www.thrivent.org](http://www.thrivent.org) or call #1-800-847-4836. Emmanuel has received \$2,304.00 in Thrivent Choice Dollars in 2020. Thank You!



### Epiphany “Burning of the Greens”

Weather permitting, we plan on celebrating the journey of the Magi (Three Kings Day) on Wednesday, January 6. We will gather on the Emmanuel Church land at 1pm for a short worship service. Participants are invited to bring their Christmas tree or a bough from their tree to the Service for the burning of the greens. The Fire (Light) reminds us that the Wise Men followed a star to Bethlehem, where they found Jesus and worshiped him. Jesus received three gifts from the Magi: Gold (King), Frankincense (Priest), and Myrrh (Suffering Servant). As King of kings, and High Priest, Jesus offered the atoning sacrifice of Himself. Through His innocent suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus saves us from our sin! We will also plan on burning some of the brush pile on our church land; weather permitting!

### Looking Ahead—LENT 2021

Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 17. Tentatively, we plan on having worship at 6pm on Feb. 17. The Imposition of Ashes and the Lord’s Supper will be offered with “physical distancing care”. We will not be hosting mid-week soup suppers and services as we have done in the past. Instead, I will be preparing & posting a mid-week message with music on our Emmanuel Face Book Page and Website. **Our Lenten Theme this year** is “*Real Presence in Unexpected Places!*” In the Season of Lent, as we walk with Jesus to the cross, we will see how God reveals Himself continually in unexpected places & unexpected ways. Marked with the cross of Christ, God opens our eyes to behold His Real Presence, His saving grace, in the flesh of a crucified and risen Savior. We can expect the unexpected, because God is with us, in us, for us and working through us! Real Presence!

### Children’s Ministry

**Worship Bags** are available for kids each week. We hope children enjoy these resources during worship. Youth 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.

### THANKS!

- To ALL who participated in this year’s virtual Children’s Christmas Nativity! Thanks Kids!
- To Larry Vomhof, coordinating this year’s snow removal on Mondays at Oasis Church!
- To Don Holtan, for all the faithful worship work he performs weekly, putting our Services up on the Oasis Screen; especially during Advent & Christmas!
- To the members and friends of Emmanuel who faithfully support God’s holy work in and through their time, talents and treasures.

### CHRISTMAS THANKS!

Pastor Dave and Julie wish to thank the members of Emmanuel Lutheran for the cards & gifts received this Christmas. The gifts received are a thoughtful expression of the love Emmanuel shares with their pastor and his wife as they labor together in service to Christ their Lord. THANKS!

### Happy New Year 2021

“Glory to God in highest heaven,  
Who unto man His Son hath given;  
While angels sing with tender mirth,  
A glad new year to all the earth.”  
— Martin Luther

### Virtual Baby Shower—Jan. 16-17 New Life Family Services

The following new items are **suggested shower gifts**: Diapers, Wipes, Formula (Similac or Enfamil), Convertible car seats, Pack N Play, High Chairs, Bouncy Seats, Umbrella Strollers, High Back Booster Seats, & Potty Chairs. Also: Gift Cards to Amazon, Target, or Walmart; Baby Safety items (baby gates, outlet plugs, etc.); Books (all ages); Receiving blankets, crib sheets, and bedding (no bumpers); and "gently used" clothing for newborn-7T & maternity clothing. Thanks for keeping New Life in your prayers!

*“And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”—Luke 1:41.*

## Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

3819 - 18th Ave. NW,  
Rochester, MN 55901  
Attn. Pastor Dave Steffenson

### Contact Information:

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507-206-3048 (Home)  
pastordavesteffenson@gmail.com



### SAVE THE DATES!

#### *Baby Shower for New Life*

Saturday/Sunday, Jan. 16-17, 2021!

**Saturday, Jan. 30, 2021: Annual Mtg.**

### 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.
- Wednesday, January 6, 2021: Epiphany Celebration and Burning of the Greens on the Church Land (Brush Pile Burning, weather permitting) at 1pm. 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, & Discipleship in the name of Jesus. Holy Communion. Annual Reports distributed!
- Saturday, January 30 — Abbreviated Worship Service. **Annual Meeting** following worship!
- Saturday, February 13, 2021—Feast of Transfiguration (Bring Palm Fronds from last year)
- Ash Wednesday: February 17 at 6pm. Imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion.
- Lenten Theme: “Real Presence in Unexpected Places”

## Back Page Stories

### Church Council Highlights:

#### **December 7, 2020—Zoom Mtg.**

Budget Income for the month of November was \$7,911.10; expenses were \$8,944.00. The Thanksgiving offering in support of the Pastor’s Discretionary Fund was \$230.00. The Audit Committee will do a year-end review of our church finances on Jan. 9. Pastor Steffenson’s designated housing was approved for 2021. A Children’s Nativity will be done this year as a virtual offering. Christmas Worship will take place on Christmas Day at 10am. Pastor Dave will be on vacation from December 27-January 3. Pastor Gies will serve as our pulpit supply on Jan. 2. The Implementation Team will meet on January 10.

Membership enrollment for 2021 has begun. The council continues to work on the Mission Plan Budget for 2021. It will be finalized at the Jan. 8 Council Meeting. The council is also looking at goals for 2021. The Annual Meeting will follow an abbreviated worship service on Jan. 30. The meeting will be kept short to accommodate the attendance of those with young children. The deadline for Annual Report items is Jan. 15. The Annual Report will be distributed to church members on Jan. 23. A “Burning of the Greens,” will take place on our church land on January 6, weather permitting. The next council meeting will take place on Friday, January 8, 2021.

**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.”