

THE EMMANUEL EPISTLE

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

Pastor’s Keyboard: “Discipleship—Communion Practices”

What informs our practices? Why do we do what we do in worship? Is it a matter of history & tradition – we’ve always done it this way? Or does Scripture and theology inform our practices? This month I will be reflecting on some Communion practices.

Lutherans are a people of Word and Sacrament. There was a time when churches celebrated Communion infrequently; perhaps quarterly or monthly. Worshipers would ask, “Is this a Communion Sunday?” Over the years some worshipers came to believe that a Communion Sunday simply meant “twice church” (a longer Worship Service). But in truth, Worship without Communion, could also be construed as “half church” (Worship Lite).

How often? When asked about the frequency of Communion, Martin Luther replied, “Those who claim to be Christian should prepare themselves to receive this blessed sacrament frequently. ... Indeed, the very words, ‘as often as



you do it,’ imply that we should do it often.” (Large Catechism).

In the early church, disciples of Jesus broke bread daily with glad & generous hearts; hence the tradition of Daily Mass in the Roman Catholic Church. How often? Some may protest, “If we do it too often then it won’t be special anymore.” To which a theologian replied, “That’s why I only kiss my wife once a month; to keep it special.”

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes a child in My name, welcomes Me.” - Luke 9:46-48

Every Service of Worship doesn’t need to include Communion, but if we only have one Service each week, then why wouldn’t we offer the Lord’s Supper? I remember my first Christmas in Little Falls,

MN. I was serving as a Co-Pastor at First Lutheran Church. I was asked to preach, which meant that I put the bulletin together. I planned a Communion Service. Can one celebrate Christmas without the Christ Mass? My colleague in ministry quickly informed me that First Lutheran didn’t do Communion at Christmas. “You’re kidding me,” I said. He informed me, “We can’t have Communion, because we don’t have the space or the time for it.” I said, “Well maybe we need to add another Service or change the worship times if large crowds or time constraints are dictating our Communion practices?” What age? When it comes to receiving the Lord’s Supper, what age is most appropriate? When I got confirmed in ninth grade, I received my first Communion.

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Food For Thought:

“We do not want...a church that will move with the world. We want a church that will move the world.”

G.K. Chesterton

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Later the church changed its practices & decided that fifth grade would be a good age for First Communion. Why fifth grade? One of the reasons given was this: "Psychologists say that children begin thinking abstractly at grade five."

When God gave me children, I started to see Communion in a different light. Physically speaking, my children ate & drank before they fully understood what they were consuming. Eating & education went hand in hand (Luke 24 – The Emmaus Story). If Communion, like baptism, is a means of grace, bestowed apart from my deserving or work's righteousness, then maybe infant communion was the better practice. The Coptic and Orthodox churches practice infant Communion. Luther, making reference to the faith of John the Baptist, while in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41), reminds us that faith is a gift from God, not a human work. It cannot be shown that children don't have faith. Let the children come!

My son, Joshua, was almost 4 and he wanted to offer the table prayer at lunch. Joshua prayed, "Dear God, thank you for the birds that sing. Thank you for my sandbox. Thank you for our food. Thank you for everything." He paused and added, "And please don't let Jesus die again." I tried not to laugh. I asked my son, "Why did you ask God not to let Jesus die again?" Joshua looked at me like I was a moron and said, "Because Jesus is my best friend." My two-year-old Rachel grabbed her mother's face one Sunday and interrupted her conversation with these words, "Mom, Jesus Supper today?" Luther assumed that Children had faith and would receive the Lord's Supper.

In the Large Catechism Luther writes, "It is the duty of every head of the household to teach or have taught to his children the things they ought to know. Since they are baptized and received into the Christian church, they should also enjoy this fellowship of the sacrament so that they may serve us and be useful. For they must all help us to believe, to love, to pray, and to fight the devil."

Jesus was forever taking children up into his arms and blessing them. "Let the children come to me; and do not hinder them," Jesus said, "for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Matthew 10:13-16). The faith of a child, like that of an adult, is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Meal of Redemption is not an offering of hospitality

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THE FORTY DAYS OF LENT

Special Thanks Julie Steffenson our provider of Soup and Bread on Ash Wednesday. The meal was so popular, that by request we are offering simple suppers of bread and soup each Wednesday during the Season of Lent. Soup will be served from 5:00-5:45 p.m. each week, followed by Holden Evening Prayer (Revised Edition) and a sermon series on Baptism: Water Stories from the Bible. Thanks to Pastor Fred Morck preaching on March 4 & Pastor Jack Miller preaching on 25.

Soup Hostesses:

February 18—Julie Steffenson

February 25—Jenna Serr & Janet Sunde

March 4—Deb Vomhof & Judy Caudill

March 11—Judy Pearce & Leitha Bothun

March 18—Samia Nelson & Marcia Harms

March 25—Open & Available

Holy Week Worship Offerings:

Eve of Palm Sunday—Sat, March 28 @ 6 p.m. - Distribution of Palm Fronds

Maundy Thursday—April 2 @ 6 p.m. - Foot Washing and Holy Communion

Good Friday—April 3 at 12:00 Noon - Bidding Prayer and Passion Reading

Eve of Easter Sunday—Sat, April 4 @ 6 p.m. - Celebrating the Resurrection

SATURDAY SCHOOL

Youth continue to meet each Saturday at 5:10pm for Christian Education under the direction of Julie Steffenson.

During the Season of Lent (February 21 & 28, and March 7, 14, 21, & 28) youth are learning about the gift of Holy Baptism & making keepsake Baptismal Banners. We hope you can join us!

2015 Minnesota Food Share March Campaign

Be a hero. Fight Hunger. This March, Channel One Supplement Food shelf is challenging businesses, faith communities, schools, and other organizations to "Be a Hero and Fight Hunger." The goal for 2015 is to raise \$225,000 & 225,000 pounds of food during the month of March. Emmanuel Gifts of food & money will go directly to support our ministry partnership with Oasis Church and Supermarket Saturday.

EMMANUEL WINTER FUN DAY!

Fun and fellowship was had by all on Sunday, February 15 from 1-3 p.m. at Oxbow Park, Byron, MN. Special thanks to Pastor Fred Morck, & Darald and Leitha Bothun for planning this event.

REAL PRESENCE - Often

St. Paul writes: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you

drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Corinthians 11:23-26, ESV).

EMMANUEL BULLETIN BOARD SPACE!

Did you notice that Oasis Church has given Emmanuel Lutheran some bulletin board space? We are indeed very grateful. The bulletin board is located near the Oasis Church nursery. Take a look at our postings when you come to worship each week. We'll use this space to help keep members of Emmanuel in the communication loop.

THANK YOU!

Our new baptismal stand is completed and was used for the first time on Wednesday night, February 25. We offer thanks to LeRoy & Margaret Quam for donating this gift to Emmanuel. The baptismal stand is designed with eight sides, corresponding to the eight people delivered on Noah's Ark. The eight sides also remind us that we are people of the eighth day. Sunday is the Lord's Day; the first day of the week (AKA the promised third day, Easter). In Christ, Sunday is the eighth day for the baptized; the first day of the new creation for us. The day begins at sundown (6pm) the evening before. Let's not get our days confused.

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, and give generously.

THRIVENT!

Did you know that Thrivent gives away \$50 million in Choice Dollars each year. In 2014, churches received \$34.9 million dollars of this total distribution. Emmanuel Lutheran received \$4,187. Also in 2014, 315 Thrivent Action Teams were approved for S.E. MN, gifting our area with \$78,750 in ministry seed money. For more information visit www.Thrivent.com.

Save the Date: Emmanuel will host its first **Mother-Daughter Brunch** on Sat, May 2, 2015 (10:30am-12:30pm). Judy Pearce and friends are organizing this event for mothers and daughters. The Speaker will be LeeAnn Knutson (Faith Like a Teapot Ministry). Gifts of music will be offered by the "Teapot Singers". Seating is limited. "Invitations" will be available beginning March 28. Emmanuel received a Thrivent Action Team gift of \$250.00 in support of this ministry opportunity.

Emmanuel Lutheran of Rochester, Minnesota

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Pastor Dave is taking Mondays as his weekly day off. Please call for emergencies only. Thanks!

SAVE THE DATE!

*Saturday, April 18, 2015 (6pm)
Emmanuel Lutheran Choir,
Grafton, IA will perform an Easter
Cantata at Emmanuel of Rochester.*

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for all people regardless of their beliefs. Nor should the baptized be excommunicated from the Family Meal. It is a Passover Meal.

What informs our practices? The Word of God of course. But not all practices are uniform throughout Christendom, and not all practices are matters of salvation. How do we decide what is essential & what is optional? When it comes to the particularities of Holy Communion what is non-negotiable? Must we all take the cup & drink from it? Is intinction, or individual glasses allowed? What about the bread? Should it be unleavened as it was at the Passover Meal? What about those who are gluten intolerant? What about the wine? Is grape juice allowed?

On the one hand we know that Coke & Pizza, or Chocolate Chip Cookies & Milk are not the Lord's Supper. But how picky must we be when it comes to Communion? What about sensitivity to those who are recovering alcoholics, or pregnant, or allergic to alcohol? In 1869 a Methodist pastor and dentist by the name of Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch developed non-alcoholic wine (Welch's Concord Grape Juice) for Communion. Some Roman Catholics are permitted to use mustum (fresh juice from grapes or juice preserved by suspending its fermentation).

Martin Luther offers this advice regarding "both kinds" in the Sacrament of Holy Communion: "Only the bread and wine must be used in eating and drinking." One kind is enough, but both kinds should be given to all people. "Not because one kind is insufficient, since indeed the desire of faith is alone sufficient, as St. Augustine says, 'Why do you prepare stomach and teeth? Only believe, & you have already partaken of the Sacrament.'" Luther referred to this as "spiritual in-taking". The Lord's Supper is for the Lord's People on the Lord's Day. Jesus makes us worthy!

Real Presence in Remembrance of Jesus, Pastor Dave Steffenson

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.

Super Market Saturday: The next Channel One opportunity is March 21, 2015 (9 am—Noon). Easter hams will be distributed. Donations are welcomed.

Women's Bible Study: Our next study will begin after Easter.

Council Highlights (Feb. 10):

YTD Thrivent Choice Dollars: \$274. Audit Committee Report was received. Darald Bothun was appointed as chair of the Audit Committee. Peg

Holtan was appointed to Nominating Committee; one additional appointment pending. Constitutional items were reviewed. Church property inventory is underway. Election of Council Officers will take place at the March 10 Council Mtg.

Liturgies: During Lent we will use LBW Setting II on Saturday evenings and Holden Evening Prayer (revised edition) on Wednesday evenings.

Sympathies: Emmanuel Lutheran had its first funeral on Thursday, February 19. A dear friend & beloved member of our congregation, Sharon Fae Hart, fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith. She has received the crown of righteousness which the Lord, our righteous judge awards to all who

love Him. May God comfort the family and friends of Sharon with the blessed assurance of resurrection unto eternal life. It's Lent for us, but Easter already for Sharon. Special thanks to all of the Emmanuel Servants who helped with Sharon's Memorial Service.

MOVIE: The Drop Box—One box ... 600 babies. Pastor Lee Jong-rak built a drop box to save unwanted babies in South Korea. Unfortunately, it is used much too often. To date, this little compartment has received more than 600 children who would have been otherwise abandoned and left to die. This movie will be showing for 3 days only (March 3-5) in Rochester at Hollywood Twelve Theaters (2171 Superior Drive NW).