



January 1 – December 31, 2020

The year in review.

Dedication

When I began this photo journal, I expected it to be a recording of a joyous year, filled with lots of activities to celebrate our 85th year. Within three months, the whole world was plunged deep into a pandemic of the Coronavirus or COVID-19.

All activities that required us to be together were put on hold. Church became an online service only. Later it would evolve into a parking lot, drive-through communion service. By June, we were given permission to slowly begin reopening. Many, however, being more cautious, still worshipped at home.

This journal is dedicated to the Rev. Dr. Lynette Crase, our beloved Pastor Lyn; to Mike Epting, whose technology skills allowed us to stay connected through video and Zoom; the office and Emanuel Day Care staff who continued to work; and to the Emanuel family who learned to go with the flow and adapt, and who realized from the beginning that the church was never closed.

Thank you to everyone who contributed photos: Pat Smith, Kathleen Reuter, Elaine Jxcot, Marsha Waggoner and Mike Epting, to mention a few.

A very special thank you to Kathleen Reuter who served as the editor of this document.

By

Suzanne Wilke



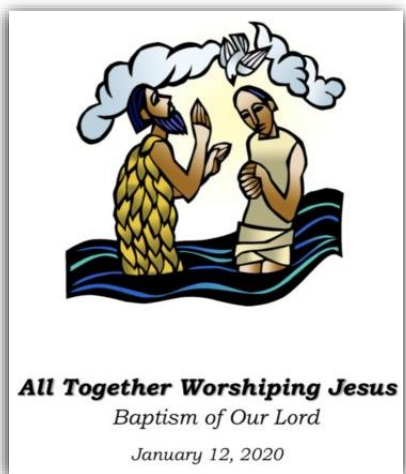
January

The January Echoes looks back at the events of December and forward to an exciting new year, our 85th. We expect each copy of The Echoes to be filled with all of the celebratory events that are planned for this year.

The year begins with the Epiphany of our Lord. At this service we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our Day Care.



Our Day Care director, Laura Marquez, has been with this ministry almost since the beginning. So has Elena Wilson, one of our teachers. A reception honoring the Day Care is held after church.



This Sunday, we have our annual meeting. We pass an amended constitution, approve a budget and elect a Council. Fanney Bjargardottir and Josh Hollinger join Elaine Ixcot, Bob Reuter, Pat Smith, Dennis

Strand, Martha Strand, Janice Watkins and Suzanne Wilke.

After several planning meetings, we get ready for our first anniversary event. On Saturday, January 18, we gather at the church to set up and prepare for the luncheon.



The tables are set up. Marti and Paula have created a very pleasing scene. The view from the stairs is beautiful.

Then our resident artists enhance the cake decorations.



The cooking team puts together a potato salad for tomorrow's luncheon and slices the rolls for the tri-tip sandwiches.



Meanwhile, outside, the yard crew spruces up the campus.



The day begins with the arrival of the new baptismal font. The bowl is a memorial gift to the congregation, and the frame has been built from wood that is from the pews removed to make room for the font. Skip has done a beautiful job. Jack

and Skip carry the bowl in and put it in the entryway to the sanctuary. Then it is filled with water. It will be dedicated in a few weeks.





The service begins with a call to worship.

Kathi is the Cantor; Jennaca and Suzanne read the lessons from Isaiah and 1 Corinthians.



Pastor reads the gospel from John. She is joined by Barbara and Emma to celebrate the communion liturgy.



Finally, the Council is installed.





After the service, we move into Luther Hall to continue our celebration with a luncheon and Open Mike. Members of the congregation share stories from the past.

Pat has put together a colorful bulletin board. We will post some of the pictures from today's celebration.

I'm happy that I am here to help celebrate 85 years of ministry in Modesto



I remember growing up at Emanuel



I still call him Bobby.

Whenever a phone rings in church, I say, "Hi, Mom."

Everyone knows Sue dyes her hair!





Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 26, 2020

The Third Sunday after Epiphany is birthday Sunday. We delayed it a week because of the celebration last Sunday. Mary Lou and Aaron are honored.

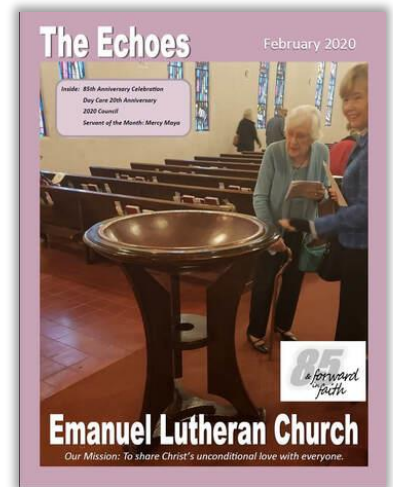


Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

February 2, 2020

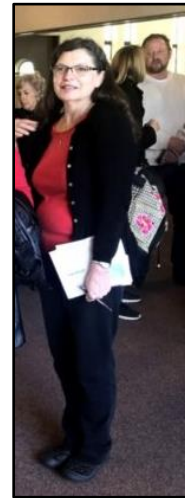
February

The February Echoes looks back at the events of the month.



February, and we are still in the season of Epiphany, but in

Modesto, it is Super Bowl Sunday. Forty-niner fans wear red. We know that God loves both teams, but the Niners are his favorite.





Pastor says she hopes as many people wear red for Reformation Sunday.

Susan McCready places a rose on the altar to announce the birth of her first grandchild, a little boy named Beau.



On the fifth Sunday after Epiphany, our Bishop, the Rev. Mark Holmerud, comes to visit and to preach. He tells us that we are light and we are salt.



Jack and Ethan are ushers in training.



The Baptismal Font is dedicated.



Jeri used to go to Bishop Mark's church in Stockton.



After church we have a wonderful luncheon to honor

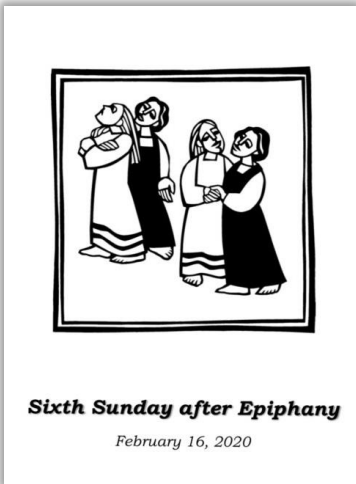


Bishop Mark who will retire this spring. The room is beautifully set up, and the food is delicious.



The Care Cupboard donated turkeys, stuffing and gravy. The Fellowship Committee prepared the food. The congregation brings side dishes and desserts to share and everyone enjoys visiting and eating together.

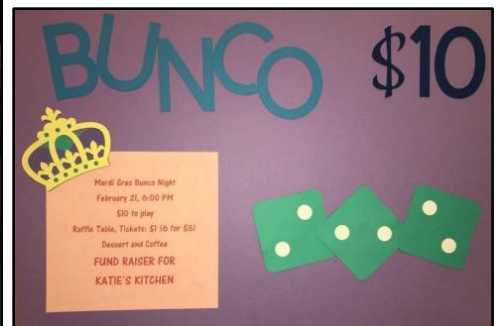




The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany is Birthday Sunday. All February birthdays are honored with a special prayer and a cake.



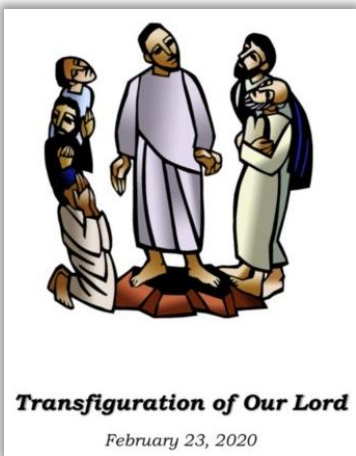
On February 21, Katie's Kitchen hosts a Bunco Party in order to raise money in support of this ministry. It is a huge success, and everyone has a wonderful time.



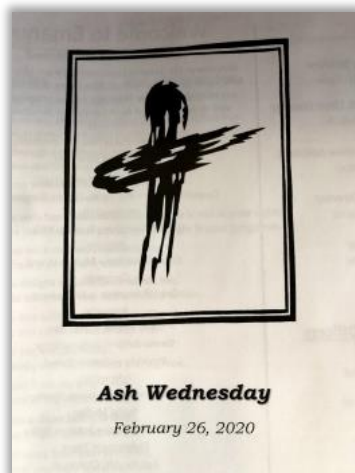


Bunco is a big hit, even with those who have never played it. Prizes are given for most buncos, most wins, most losses and the last bunco.

We have the opportunity to buy tickets for the drawings. Each person can choose which prizes they want to win.



The seventh Sunday after Epiphany, we celebrate the Transfiguration of our Lord. Pastor asks us if we have ever had an encounter with God that took our breath away.



On Ash Wednesday, we have two services, one at noon and one at 7:00 P.M. Pastor reminds us that this is the most solemn day of the church year. We receive the ashes on our foreheads and Holy Communion, and we are encouraged to ponder our mortality. In a few weeks, we will realize what a prophetic statement this is.



Lent brings the purple paraments to the altar.



“Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.”



This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.”



March

The March Echoes reminds us of Bishop Mark's visit.



On the first Sunday in Lent, we initiate the new font by celebrating the Baptism of Lorenzo Quinn Lopez.



“I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”



Lorenzo is told to let his light shine and to light his Baptismal candle each year on the anniversary of this day.

Parents and godparents help celebrate the day.



Lorenzo's family and friends.



March 4 is the first Lenten midweek soup supper and Vesper service. The Piecemakers have quilts there for us to tie.





Pastor asks us to reflect on the words of Psalm 121, to consider how this brings us comfort. We pass the peace at the end of the service before going home.

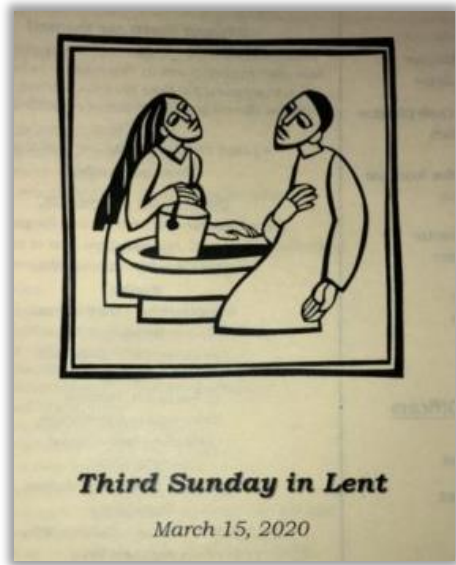


The second Sunday in Lent reminds us that we are people of the light who do not like the darkness. We are reminded of the story of Nikodemus, who came to Jesus in the night. The mobile of the Cranes is back with a new touch. It has become a double mobile.



On March 15, the spread of Covid from the Coronavirus has sadly caused Pastor Lyn to announce that all activities at church are suspended until further notice.

Pastor Lyn's sermon is recorded and offered online. She talks about the Israelites in the Desert of Sin, shortly after Moses has led them out of Egypt. She reassures us that God said, "I will go before you." Her message is that God is with us during this crisis. We are not alone. Thank you, Pastor Lyn.



Sadly, we never got to use this bulletin. Instead, this notice went up on all the doors.



The fourth Sunday in Lent and we “do church” via the Internet. Several people caught the mistake with the date. Pastor assures us that God is with us during this time. We need to walk with hope in our hearts. Psalm 23 tells us that if we have God with us, we don’t need anything else.

Posts from Emanuel Lutheran Church reached 317 people and had 189 engagements this week.

We are still the church. Nothing can change that.

On Tuesday, Mike sets up Text Study via Zoom. It is wonderful “seeing” each other and sharing what is going on with us and studying God’s Word together.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 1 hr · 🌐

We invite you to pray the Lord's Prayer alongside Christians around the world at noon your local time today.

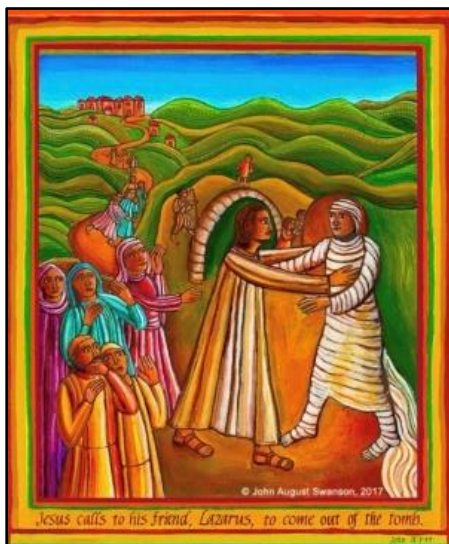
The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power
 and the glory are yours,
 now and forever. Amen.

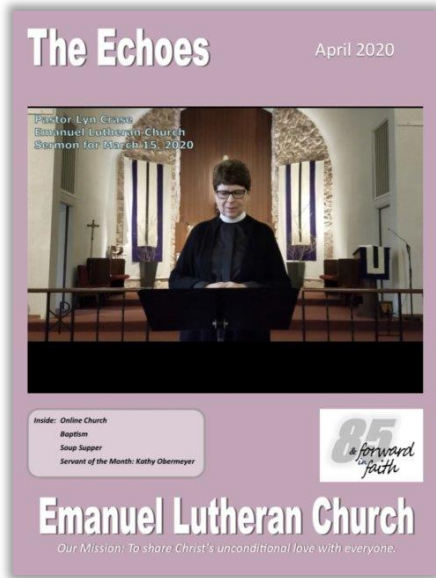
On Wednesday, March 25, 2020, we are invited to join in world prayer at noon. This means that there will be 24 hours of prayer world-wide today.



The fifth Sunday in Lent is here already. Today's sermon tells us the story of Lazarus. The key verse is: "This illness does not lead to death." Pastor talks about the fact that our current situation is forcing us to think about death, not a popular topic, but



she reminds us that this incident gave the authorities the final excuse to execute Jesus. Without Good Friday, there would be no Easter. Death does not disconnect us from God. She encourages us to stay connected with each other during our quarantine time. But she also reminds us that nothing will ever be the same.



April

The April Echoes reflects the new “normal” which isn’t normal at all. Most likely, we are told in Pastor’s message, we will not be back in church before May. How strange it will be to have Palm Sunday alone, at home. No procession in, no waving palm branches. Communion will be a “drive-through” in the parking lot. Holy Week will be via the Internet. Even for Easter Sunday, church will be in our kitchens or family rooms. No need for Easter bonnets this year. And yet, we are assured, the church will not die.

The week of March 30 – April 5, brings some more drastic measures to our lives. We receive an even stricter mandate from the Governor to stay home. Pastor has to cancel “drive-through” Communion” because even that is not safe. Palm Sunday is celebrated in isolation. We are encouraged to place greenery on our doors to represent the palm branches that we cannot use in the Procession we are not having. Several members do just that.

Marsha, Brian and Lori, Pat and Jack, Jeri, Suzanne, and Garry and Susan show their Palm Sunday spirit.



Pastor reads the Passion story according to Matthew. She reminds us that even though life seems to be handing us lemons, we will make sunshiny lemonade. This morning we have the joy of hearing Barbara's music, too.



Palm Sunday April 5, 2020
Emanuel Lutheran Church
Modesto, CA

Church may not look the same as last year, but it is still church. Pastor has encouraged us to watch the video at 10:00 so that we feel that we are together. We even have a bulletin that Paula has sent out to everyone so that we can participate in the liturgy.



Communion at home is now possible.

Later, several get together via Zoom to share how we are doing. We are told that Holy Week services, as well as Easter service, will be online.



Maundy Thursday service has been recorded and is available online. Pastor suggests that we watch it at 7:00, so that we are all together while apart.

The bulletin has been emailed to each of us so that we can follow the service. It begins with Barbara playing “Come to Dark Gethsemane.”



The entrance hymn is “Now We Join in Celebration.”

Pastor leads us in a confession of our sins and assures us that because of God’s great love for us, we are forgiven.



Suzanne reads the scripture. Exodus tells how to celebrate a Seder meal at Passover. Psalm 116 praises God for all his many blessings. 1Corinthians commands us to remember Christ in the receiving the bread and wine, which represents his body and blood.



Pastor reads the Gospel from John where Jesus washes the feet of the disciples and then charges them to follow his example and love and serve others.

Then she blesses our hands so that we might more fully serve the Lord.



Pastor’s sermon message reminds us that being together on Maundy Thursday to share communion together is a big deal. We might be physically apart, but we are together in heart and spirit. Because we believe in the presence of Jesus in the bread and wine, we are tonight in total communion. God does not live in the church building but is with us wherever we are. What matters is that our hearts are with each other and with Jesus. We then begin the Great Thanksgiving.



We do communion at home, in our kitchens, living rooms or even bedrooms. We serve ourselves or each other. We rejoice because we believe.



Suzanne reads Psalm 22 which begins with the familiar words: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?



The service ends with Paula singing the haunting words of "Were You There?"



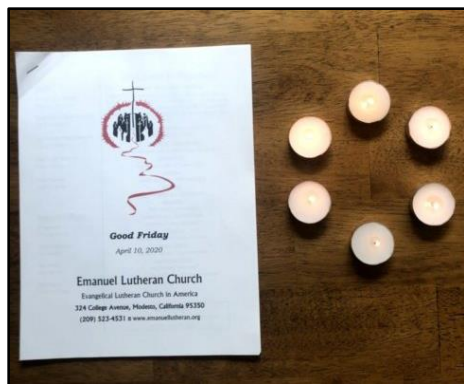
Good Friday service is at 3:00 P.M. in our homes. Pastor reads the Passion story according to John.



Between each segment of the story, we sing a verse of “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded.” Pastor’s message reminds us that the Passion story begins in a garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus goes to pray and is subsequently arrested. It ends in a garden where he is laid in the tomb. There is betrayal in the first garden and forgiveness in the second. In between the gardens, there is fire, a charcoal fire that has been built for warmth. Later there will be a fire where Jesus cooks fish for his disciples on the shore of Lake Galilee. After the message, we sing “Beneath the Cross of Jesus.” We pray for the church, our community and our world, prayers so needed at this time during the pandemic. We end with the Lord’s Prayer.



Pastor tells us, “Behold the life-giving cross, on which was hung the Savior of the whole world.” We end with responding, “By your holy cross, you redeemed the world.”

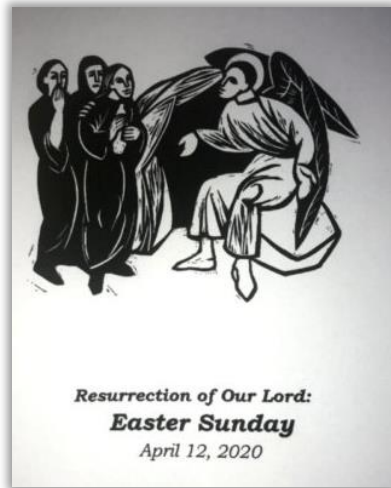


The prayer vigil begins in our individual homes.

Easter Sunday and, like the tomb, the church is empty. It doesn’t look like this.

There is no flower cross out in front as in previous years.





We celebrate the service in our homes. Some of us even dress up.

But the service, which can be viewed on YouTube, begins with the glorious music of “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today,” played as only Barbara can do.

Pastor welcomes us with, “Christ is risen!” And in our homes, we respond, “He is risen indeed! Alleluia!”

We begin in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The sermon was recorded at a time when everyone hoped it wouldn’t be needed, that we would be together in church.

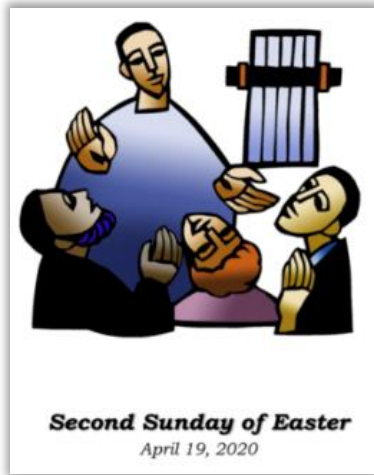
Pastor compares our grieving the situations that the Coronavirus has created to the grief Mary and the disciples were feeling that first Easter morn. Loss changes us, but God wins over death, evil, everything. Mary is told to announce the good news to the disciples. Joy is mixed with other emotions. For us, the question is, “What’s next after this is over?” Will the church be full or will we continue to let other things distract us? Traditionally, the Sunday after Easter has the lowest attendance of the year. This year, ironically, Easter attendance in the church is zero. Whatever happens, God reigns now and forever.

Even though the church was empty, through social media the number of people who “attended” a Holy Week service was astounding.



580 ▲372%
People Reached

This week Leah Circle has its first Zoom meeting. Sadly, some of the ladies do not have the technology to join us. On a happier note, Mary, who now lives in Carmel Valley, is able to “attend.”



It's the second Sunday after Easter, and we are still under “stay at home” orders. Pastor begins the service in the rose garden from where the gospel is read. The sermon is given in front of the Memorial Wall. The gospel tells the story of Thomas who does not believe until he sees. In the sermon, Pastor shows us that three times in this story, Jesus says, “Peace be with you.” He does

not get angry with Thomas for doubting. Doubt is a necessary element of faith. Pastor challenges us with the question, “What is faith based on?” Earlier in the week she had asked this same question of the Text Study group. Some answers had been on acts of love or of seeing God at work. Pastor tells us that the importance of faith is not so much about believing but about



the difference it makes in our lives. Faith comes from hearing. Words matter! She ends with reminding us of what Peter says in his first epistle: God is keeping careful watch over us and the future.



Finally, Pastor moves inside to celebrate communion.



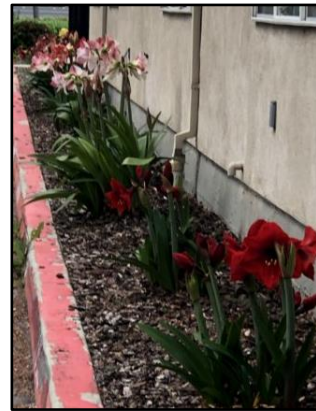
The Sanctuary Arts Team has made the chancel beautiful even though we can only enjoy it virtually.

We worship at home at our own altars. Pastor offers the prayers and consecrates the elements for communion. We are invited to pause the video and commune at home.

“This is the body of Christ, broken and given for me. This is the blood of Christ, shed for me.”



We have the opportunity to sing three hymns during the service. Thank you, Barbara.

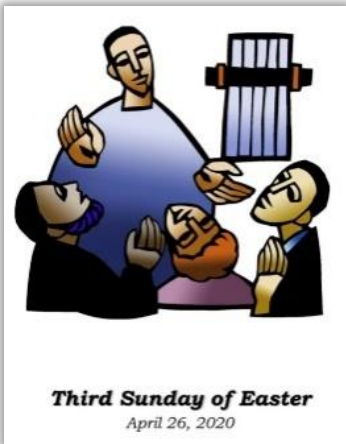


It is definitely spring! The roses are in full bloom, thanks to Tom who takes such good care of them. The amaryllis are also blooming.



Our first virtual Council meeting is held at 10:30 A.M. President Dennis conducts the meeting. Later, we have virtual coffee fellowship. It's rare to catch our technology guru in front of the camera. Great job, Mike!





Third Sunday of Easter
April 26, 2020

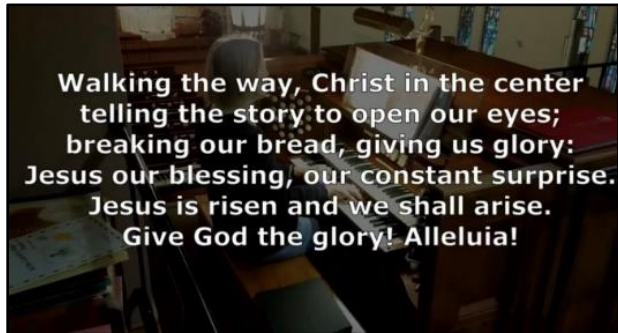
It's the third Sunday of Easter, and we still worship at home. We do get to see images of the sanctuary as Barbara plays the prelude.



Prelude: Partita on "At the Lamb's High Feast"
Organist Barbara Vukich



Pastor Lyn Crase



Walking the way, Christ in the center
telling the story to open our eyes;
breaking our bread, giving us glory:
Jesus our blessing, our constant surprise.
Jesus is risen and we shall arise.
Give God the glory! Alleluia!

Pastor greets us from the courtyard, and we sing the opening hymn. Mike has included the words on the video. Great job, Mike!



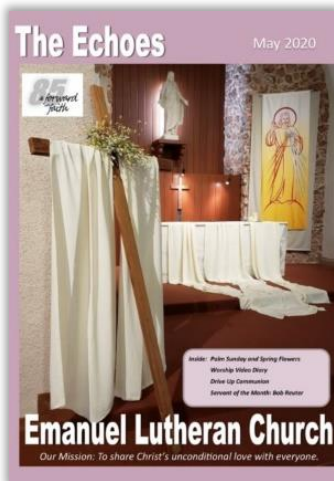
Then Pastor reads the gospel and delivers the sermon. Today's scripture and sermon are based on the Road to Emmaus story. She says that she is reminded of the Willie Nelson song, "On the Road Again." We and the church, like the disciples in the scripture, are on the road. She indicates that the first part of their journey is slow and sad. The crucifixion has destroyed all their hope. After their encounter with the risen Christ, their journey back to Jerusalem to proclaim the good news is quite different. They hurried, probably ran, back to tell the disciples that they had seen Jesus. The resurrection has restored their hope. For most of us the road we travel every day is familiar, maybe even boring or, at least, uneventful. Sometimes our expectations of Jesus keep us from seeing Jesus. The disciples received a new vision of how God was going to work in the world. We, too, are going to be changed by the current situation. God may operate in ways we don't expect, but he is always with us.



As we sing the sermon hymn, Pastor moves inside to do the communion liturgy. At the appropriate place, we are encouraged to stop the video and commune at home or drive to the church parking lot between 9:30 – 10:30 to receive communion from Pastor.



Parking lot Communion is a first for Emanuel, but how wonderful that we are able to do this.



May

It is May and The Echoes has articles about online services, spring flowers blooming on the campus, and our first ever drive-through communion.



The fourth Sunday of Easter comes, and we are still in stay-at-home status. Our online service is getting more creative, and we are having, not only parking lot communion, but this morning we also have prayers included. The online service begins with Barbara playing the prelude. Pastor welcomes us and does opening liturgy from the font.

The sermon is based on the reading from Acts which tells about the

early church. This particular scripture talks about baptism, and the promises we

make at that time for our children. First, we promise to bring the child to worship, to fellowship together.

To partake of Holy Communion is second. Next, we

promise to teach the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer. To put the Holy Scriptures into the hands of the child is fourth. Fifth, we promise to nurture faith and to pray. To proclaim Christ in word and deed is sixth, and finally, we promise to work for peace and justice throughout the world. In confirmation we renew these promises made for us and become responsible adults in the eyes of the church.



Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 3, 2020
Emanuel Lutheran Church
Modesto, CA



After the communion liturgy, we are encouraged to meet in the parking lot at 9:30. Here we will have morning prayer and communion. Stay in your car! How wonderful it is to see each other as we call greetings from car to car. This is almost fun!

The parking lot looks more cheerful with so many cars.



Pastor leads prayer from the entrance. Then she blesses the bread and wine, and we begin to drive forward to receive the body and blood of our Lord and Savior.





After we commune, we return home where we can watch the end of the service, receive the final blessing and sing the last hymn.



Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 10, 2020

It is Mother's Day and the fifth Sunday of Easter. We are still sheltered in place, so the service is online, but with the perk of parking lot liturgy and drive-through communion. The sermon reminds us that Jesus has promised that God's house is big enough for all his children. Pastor tells us that Jesus is not talking about a place but a relationship with God. In the parking lot, we read Psalm 31 together. In order to share the peace, we wave at each other from our car windows.



Mike takes pictures for next week's video postlude.

Pastor greets everyone and sanctifies the bread and wine. We line up in our cars to receive communion.





The online service features Barbara on the organ and Kathleen reading the scriptures, and, of course, Pastor Lyn doing the liturgy, prayers and the sermon.



While the postlude is played, Mike inserts pictures from Text Study and Thursday morning Bible Study.



This week we try a The Wired Word Bible study on Zoom. The topic is very apropos for the current times.



The View From Pandemic Lockdown:
Stuck in an 'Everlasting Present'

The attendance is small, but the discussion is intense.



It's the sixth Sunday of Easter, and we are still under social distancing restrictions. Part of the service is online. Barbara plays the prelude and Pastor welcomes us at the baptismal font.



We sing the opening hymn. This week Suzanne reads the scripture, after which Pastor reads the Gospel according to John and gives the sermon.



In the sermon, Pastor talks about what we've missed out on by not having church during the pandemic. One thing is taking a collection for InterFaith Ministries on the fourth Sunday. Her letter this week has reminded us of their needs which have grown exponentially during this time. We are encouraged to bring nonperishable goods to the church which will then be taken to the Inter-Faith Ministries facility. Because Katie's Kitchen has been closed since the middle of March and is unlikely to start up again before January, Katie's Krew agreed to donate all of their food supply. It is bagged and ready to go.



We are sad to have to put this vital ministry on hold, but at least our food will reach people in need.

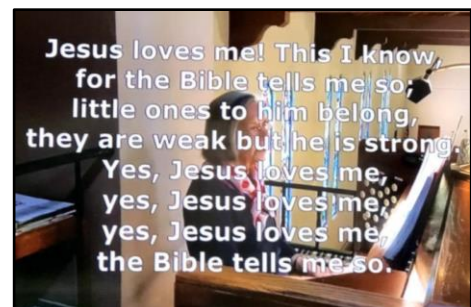
Pastor also reminds us that we have not celebrated birthday Sunday, with cake, since February. There have been no healing prayers with the anointing of oil during communion every second Sunday.

Pastor shares with us that other religious groups are also missing out on regular practices. For example, the Muslims are in the middle of Ramadan. They should be gathering together for daily prayers but cannot this year.

Pastor says there is no longer the "craziness" of Sunday morning, trying to get everything ready. Her sermon is recorded on Thursday in an empty church. Parking lot church helps a little to alleviate this feeling of emptiness, but it's not the same.

Pastor tells us that she knows we are all grieving some of these losses. We miss being able to fellowship together. We miss the hugs and handshakes. Everything has become a challenge. But Pastor reminds us, Jesus said not to be afraid. We have the Holy Spirit to help us deal with all this. God is never far off. He resides with us and in us. He loves all his creation.

Following the sermon, we sing the words to the beloved hymn "Jesus Loves Me." Then Pastor blesses the bread and wine for communion which we may do at home or in the parking lot.





At 9:30, we gather in the parking lot for morning prayers.



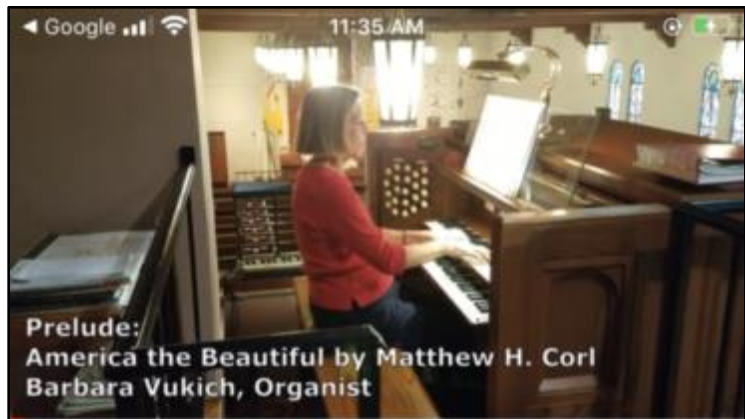
We read together Psalm 66 and hear the Gospel from John. We share the peace by waving from our open windows and sing the first verse of “Jesus Loves Me.” Pastor again blesses the bread and wine for the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

We drive forward to receive the body and blood of Christ in the form of a “to go” kit. We are grateful for the ingenuity of the church to have such a thing available. It is very moving to receive this from Pastor in person.



Ascension of Our Lord
May 24, 2020

Ascension/Memorial Day Sunday, and we are still having church in the parking lot and online. As Barbara plays the prelude, Mike has inserted pictures from around our beautiful country to serve as a background. How many can you identify?







Opening Hymn:
Crown Him with Many Crowns

We sing the opening hymn.

Online, Pastor welcomes us from the courtyard. Susan reads the first and second lessons, and Pastor reads the Gospel.



Pastor Lyn Crase

We move inside for the sermon which is on prayer during the pandemic. Many people claim that they have prayed for an end to the pandemic. Prayer was also important to Jesus. Jesus prayed to establish a relationship between himself and the Father. Pastor reminds us that prayer, more than making a difference to God, changes us. We want things to be improved when we pray. Pastor also reminds us that prayer is nothing more than a conversation with God, who is our best friend. Prayer, sometimes, is one word: "Help!" or "Thanks." or "Wow!" These words are prayers and they work. Any word that expresses deep need is prayer, and God uses those times to change us. She also reminds us that the Holy Spirit lives in us and we in the Holy Spirit. It's a relationship that is nourished by communication which is our prayers. God provides us the ability and strength to do his work with the help of the Holy Spirit. This is another reason prayer is important. We are called to pray about everything and everyone. Pastor says she hopes when this pandemic is over and things are back to "normal," that the habit of praying mightily will continue.





We sing the sermon hymn, "Beautiful Savior." Then Pastor blesses the bread and wine. We may commune at home or in the parking lot at 9:30 on Sunday.

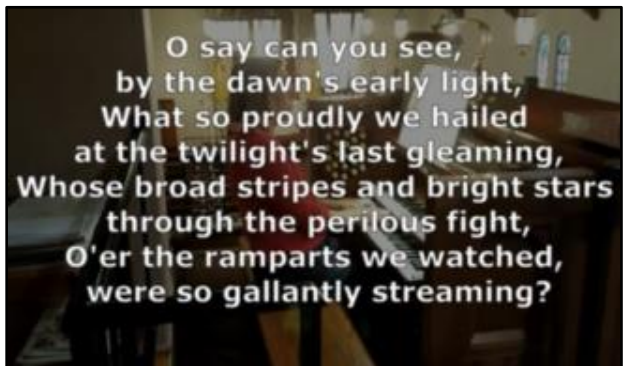
This Sunday morning, we are allowed to sit in lawn chairs, maintaining social distancing and



wearing masks. David brought his guitar so that we can have some music to sing to. We cannot use hymnals, so we sing familiar songs, "He's Got the Whole World in his Hands" and "This Little Light of Mine." Morning prayer is followed by communion, either by walking up or driving up.



Online, as Barbara plays "America, the Beautiful," Mike inserts pictures of the Council members. We end online with singing "The Star-Spangled Banner."



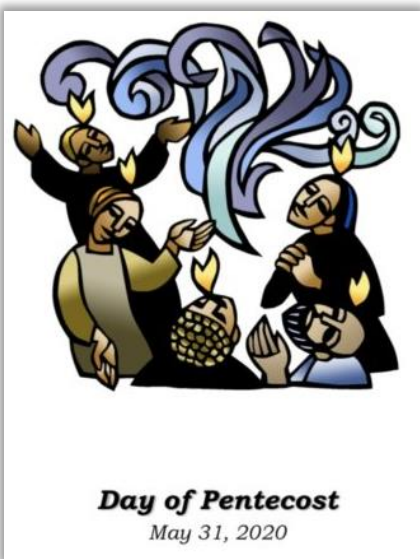


Marsha offers some good advice that we should all heed.

“Wash your hands and say your prayers,

Because germs and Jesus are everywhere!”

This week, the city finally took out the big tree on the Stoddard side of the church.



May 31 is Pentecost. There are three options for worship this morning. We can watch the service online, providing our own communion bread and wine. Or we can have prayer and



communion in the parking lot, sitting in our car or in a lawn chair. The third option is to worship in Luther Hall.



Prelude: Come, O Come, Thou Spirit of
Composed By G. Winston Cassier
Barbara Vukich, Organist

The online service begins with a prelude by Barbara. While we listen, Mike has inserted pictures of the quilts being blessed today that have been placed over the backs of the pews.



Pastor Lyn greets us at the font.



Paula reads the first and second lessons from Acts and 1 Corinthians.



Pastor Lyn's sermon for Pentecost Sunday is based on the Gospel of John and the story in Acts that talks about the disciples receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. She suggests that all of us have had feelings that something more is about to happen. It might be something positive or something negative. It's that feeling of the unknown that causes anxiety. But



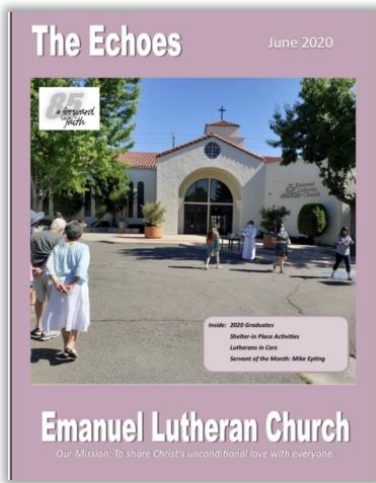
wondering what is going to happen can get in the way of living in the here and now and in thinking about the future. Pastor reminds us that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit caused quite a stir in Jerusalem. A violent wind and tongues of fire, followed by the ability to speak in foreign languages! No wonder the onlookers accused them of being drunk on cheap wine. Pastor says she wonders what non-churchgoers think of our parking lot service.

One important element of this story, according to Pastor Lyn, is that Jesus says, "Peace be with you," two times. The first time was to calm them. The second was attached to their commission, which was to tell the world who Jesus is. The answer to "What's next?" for them was to spread the love of God through forgiving the sins of others.

The answer to "What's next?" for us is to reveal the identity of Jesus to the world. We have the Holy Spirit to calm us and refocus us. We have everything that we need. We sing the sermon hymn, and Pastor blesses the quilts.



Pastor blesses the bread and wine. We commune at home or in the parking lot. The service ends with a blessing.



June The June Echoes is filled with pictures and information. There is an encouraging message from Pastor reminding us that the church is not a building but anywhere we gather. The parking lot. On Zoom. We get a list of our graduates, including some pictures.



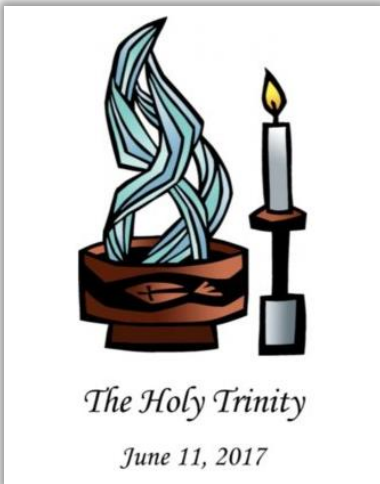
*Adam Wilke Ph.D.
Music Education
Boston University*



*Vanessa Wilke BA,
Psychology CSU
San Francisco*



*Alora Skustad
Gregori High School*



Trinity Sunday service begins online with a prelude based on the popular hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy." Pastor greets us from the baptismal font. Josh gives a temple talk on using the giving app. Our opening hymn is "Holy, Holy, Holy," and Pat reads the scriptures from Genesis and 2 Corinthians.



Pastor reads the gospel according to Matthew. In her sermon she begins by telling us that we will explore who God is and who we are. She reminds us that this Sunday begins that part of the church year that will last until Advent. The liturgical color is green and it is called Ordinary Time. She indicates the irony of the situation in the world today which is anything but ordinary. This is a time for growth and maturing in our faith. The important thing to remember from today's scripture is that God is creator (father), God is the Word (Jesus) and God is breath (spirit). Even though the word Trinity is not used in the Bible, there are many references to it, beginning in the creation story in Genesis 1. God's first action was to speak: And God said.

Much of God's creation is told to procreate: vegetation, animals, people. Pastor highlights the verse that says all people were created in the image of God, equal in

his eyes. Creation is a great gift and a great responsibility to care for it. We are to care for it and each other.

In Matthew we are told that the eleven disciples went to the mountain as directed by Jesus. There they worshipped him, but some doubted. We ask how these two, worship and doubt, can co-exist?

These are all things to ponder during ordinary times.



Pastor gives a special blessing to Jim and Paula who are moving to the Sacramento area. We will miss them!

The online service continues with prayers, communion, the blessing and a hymn.





In the parking lot this morning there are prayers, songs led by David, and communion.



The service inside also features a brief service with a message and communion.



Also available online is a sermon given by the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA, the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton. She spoke on the necessity to support equality and justice for all. She said that until we share the pain of injustice shown to black and brown people, it will not be safe to be black or brown in America, and we will not be open to the relationship God wants us to have with his creation.



Leah Circle has its monthly meeting via Zoom. We are studying the Apostles Creed. This month we dealt with believing in the forgiveness of sins.



We are still under some restrictions for church services. That means three options for worshipping: online in our homes, in the parking lot or in Luther Hall. Masks and social distancing are still required for the parking lot and Luther Hall.

Online, Barbara plays the prelude.



Pastor greets us from the font and Kathleen reads the scriptures.



Pastor reads the gospel and delivers her message.

Pastor explains that in the Old Testament lesson, God tells the Israelites that if they obey his commandments, he will make them a holy people. He will use them to be a



blessing to all the world. In the New Testament lesson, Jesus calls his disciples and tells them to go out and do as he did. Go; do. There is no more “if”, just do. She reminds us that the disciples were not experts when they started. They learned as they went along. In fact, they were life-long learners. Pastor tells us that we are co-workers with God. We may make mistakes, but we’ll learn as we go

along, too. We might ask, “What can I do to make a difference?” We can start by sharing the spirit of peace. It might make all the difference in the world to someone. We can use our suffering, which forms character, and that character gives us hope. Hope does not disappoint. We need to tell others, always with the spirit of peace.

We sing the hymn of the day, pray and commune.

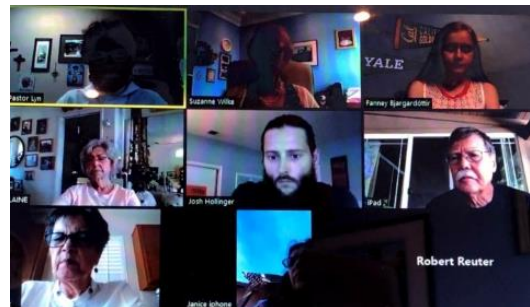




Then Pastor blesses us and Barbara plays the closing hymn and the postlude. Another Sunday service is complete.



At 10:30, the Council meets via Zoom to do the church business. And at noon, we have a short fellowship time.



The pandemic continues. It is the third Sunday after Pentecost, and we continue with creative church. Online Mike experiments with two cameras. We are so lucky to have him and his talent.

As for the past four months, there is a service online with the invitation to worship at home.

Barbara plays the prelude. Pastor greets us from Luther Hall and reminds us that this space was the original worship place when the church was founded 85 years ago.

We get to sing “Lift High the Cross” for the opening hymn. Marilyn reads the lessons from Jeremiah and Romans. Pastor reads the gospel and delivers the sermon.



The message today is about the cost of discipleship. Jesus tells his disciples that there will be much danger when they go out to tell others about Christ, but he assures them that the Holy Spirit will be with them. Jesus wants us to know that the risks to us for discipleship are great, but so is the reward. In the Old Testament lesson found in Jeremiah, we hear that the prophet Jeremiah laments about how hard it is to preach God’s word and suffer the mocking of others. But Jeremiah also says that he cannot stop telling others about God, whom he loves. Jeremiah sees God as the only source of hope. Sometimes the faithful suffer because of their piety. Jesus is honest with his disciples about the risks. He tells them that they will be hated and punished and may even die. But Jesus tells them not to be afraid. Fear is a powerful force.



Freedom from fear, with God at our side, is an even more powerful force. In fear, we get angry with God when we suffer from disease or violence. We can yell at God, so long as we continue to trust in God. We should review the verses, three in all, that tell us not to be afraid. Then we should do as Jesus said. Stand up for him; he will stand up for us. We may be mocked by others for being faithful, but if we forget about ourselves and focus on Jesus, we will have both ourselves and Jesus. We need to love others as God loved us. When we act with love, others will see God's love through us.

The sermon hymn is "Children of the Heavenly Father." It's so neat that Mike has figured out a way to add the words to the video. This week, we can also sing the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we can pause the video to commune. The service ends with the blessing and the closing hymn.



Those who worship in the parking lot also receive communion.





Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
June 28, 2020



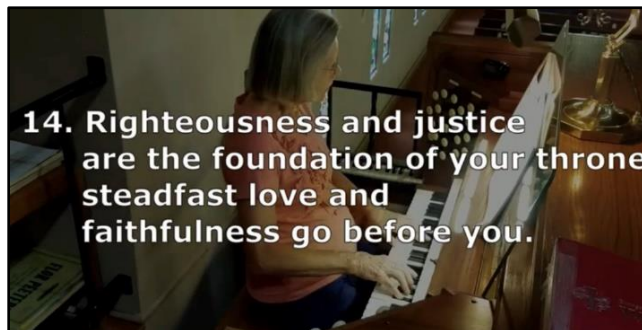
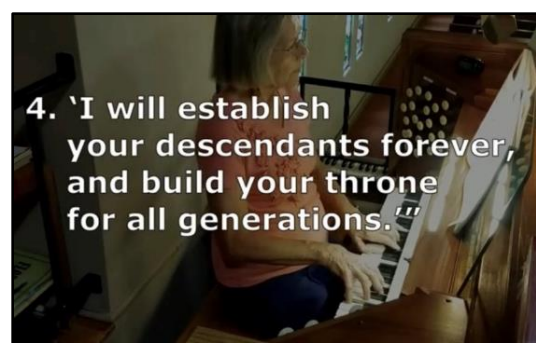
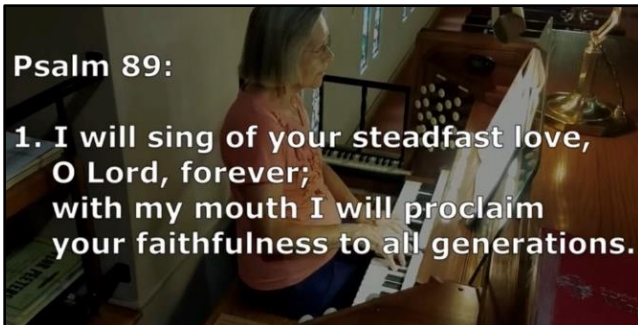
Fourth Sunday After Pentecost
June 28, 2020
Emanuel Lutheran Church

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, and still the pandemic rages through our city, state and world. Again, we worship at home, in the parking lot or in well-spaced Luther Hall.



If you worship at home, and if your altar has a kitty under it, sometimes bad things can happen.

Barbara plays the prelude. Mike has come up with a new and exciting way to enhance the service. He imposes the Psalm for today on the video of Barbara's prelude.





Pastor greets us with a warm welcome from the “usual” place, or what was the usual place before the pandemic began to ravage our city, state and world. She remarks that it seems strange to be welcoming us in an empty church, but, nonetheless, she assures us that we are welcome. We sing the opening hymn, and ask for and receive forgiveness for our sins. The lessons from Jeremiah and Romans are read by Suzanne.



For the Gospel from Matthew, Pastor uses The Message. The NRSV uses the word welcome saying anyone who welcomes Christ, also welcomes God. The Message uses the word accepts instead of welcomes. Pastor felt there is a significant difference between those two words. The Gospel goes

on to say that even giving a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty is a good place to start. Pastor asks us to think about how we can “give a cup of water” during a pandemic. She assures us that Emanuel is a very welcoming church, but the goal is to go beyond welcoming to accepting, and beyond accepting to including. She reminds us that just because we’re in the middle of a pandemic, God’s not letting us off the hook.



The hymn of the day is sung and then we pray. Pastor blesses the bread and wine. The closing hymn is the last two verses of "All Are Welcome."



**Stanislaus County
INTERFAITH
COUNCIL**

**Annual Prayer "Supper" Event:
"Why Pray?"**

Sunday, June 28th, 2- 4 pm

This year, at this time of physical distancing, you are invited to join us on-line with Zoom for the screening of a brand new locally produced video featuring many younger people explaining why they pray or meditate in the many spiritual communities represented in our region. We'll break into discussion groups to further explore what these teens and young adults have to teach us.

In the afternoon, a Zoom hosted Interfaith Council Prayer "Supper" is held. Of course, there is no supper since this is a virtual gathering. We watch a video that features young people from various spiritual communities explain why prayer is important to them. We are then divided into chat rooms

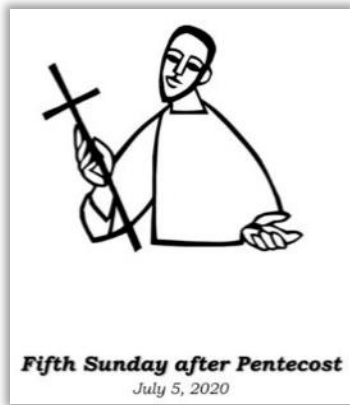
with 4-5 people to discuss the film. One of the things we notice is how much in common we have rather than our differences. It doesn't matter whether we are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist, or even just spiritual, all feel the importance of connecting to a higher power, loving one's fellow humans and not being judgmental. This was truly an inspirational event.





July

The Echoes features a picture of David leading the singing at the parking lot service. We learn that had we been able to have a regular church service in June, we would have honored our Day Care Director, Laura Marquez, with a special blessing and a reception with a cake. As it is, we have to be content with honoring her in the Echoes.



It's the 4th of July weekend, and we are still in the middle of the pandemic. In fact, people testing positive for the Covid virus is on the rise in Stanislaus County, in California and in the USA. During a normal year, there

would be a large group of people at church, wearing red, white and blue. Barbara would have received a rousing round of applause for playing patriotic music. As it is this year, we do that in our homes or in the parking lot. Barbara begins with "The Stars and Stripes Forever." When she finishes, she tells us to join in singing "The Star-Spangled Banner."





Pastor greets us from the courtyard; our opening hymn is “America the Beautiful.”

Pat reads the scripture lessons from Zechariah and Romans.



The Gospel and sermon are also given in the courtyard. Pastor introduces the sermon with a story of how her sons were taught about teamwork when they played football in school. She reminds us that our burdens are not as heavy when we can share them. Jesus tells us that even life itself does not have to be lived alone when we are part of his team.

Pastor gives us a little background for the setting of today’s Gospel story. She says that Jesus had been talking about the cost of discipleship. Then he went about sharing the good news. Now John, the Baptist, currently in prison, hearing about this, sends his disciples to find out if Jesus is the one that they have been waiting for. Jesus answers that question by comparing himself to a quote from Isaiah about spreading the good news, healing the sick and releasing the captives.

The main theme of today’s message is that Jesus does not want us to go through life alone. We can be yoked with him and each other as apprentices, in training to be more

like him. Pastor tells us to listen to the words of the hymn of the day. Jesus knows what it's like to be abandoned, and he does not want that for us. We are in a reciprocal relationship with him and each other. That is the good news.

Then we're back with Barbara to sing that hymn.

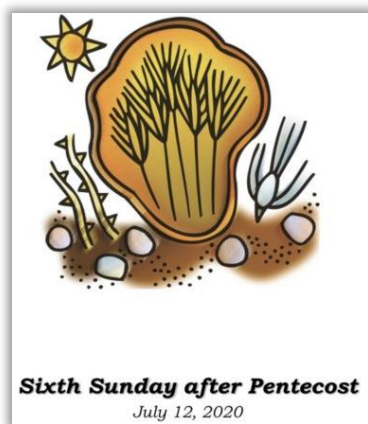
Pastor moves inside to the Sanctuary to bless the bread and wine for communion. Here we have the Creed, prayers and communion liturgy. Holy Communion is also available at the parking lot service.

"This is the body of Christ, broken and given for you. This is the blood of Christ, shed for you."

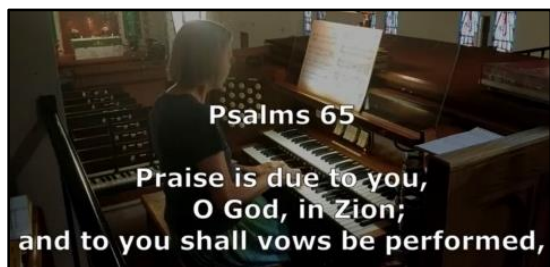
We sing the closing hymn and receive the final blessing.



During the week the Piecemakers met a representative from the Modesto Police Department who picked up the quilts that were dedicated several weeks ago.



The middle of July, and we are still being ravaged world-wide by the horrific virus. We have the same three options for worshipping: home, parking lot, and Luther Hall.



As Barbara plays the prelude, we see the words of Psalm 65. Pastor Lyn welcomes us from the Font.



We sing the opening hymn and Marilyn reads the lessons from Isaiah and Romans.



The Gospel is from Matthew and tells the Parable of the Sower. Pastor begins the sermon by asking about story tellers. She tells about her Uncle Henry who was the keeper of the stories of her family. She reminds us that stories are important. They are a way of keeping connected, always important, especially during this time of pandemic. It is important to hear all kinds of stories: good ones, funny ones, sad or even bad ones. God's stories are always true. We are challenged to share our God stories. Bible stories lead us into faith and teach us about how God works. She says that as we have grown older, these stories take on different layers of meaning. Pastor tells us that Jesus's stories can be simple or complex, funny or angry, but they are always meant to teach us and push us to grow in understanding. Stories, as opposed to just the facts, help us to focus and keep us interested. The disciples questioned why Jesus told stories. They wanted the fast track to answers. Jesus replies that he told stories to create readiness and to nudge the people toward insight. Learning is achieved by constantly building on what we already know. Experience is built on experience. Jesus asks us to think; he doesn't spoon feed us all the answers. We have to choose to come to him. We have to truly listen, to see beyond the surface. Faith stories, told over and over again, become better with each telling. They will plant more seeds in others. They will not go out empty, but will nurture others in their faith.

The sermon ends, and we sing the hymn of the day. This is followed by the prayers, the Creed and then Holy Communion.

All too soon, we sing the sending hymn and receive the blessing to end the service.



It is the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, and nothing has changed. We remain in a world where we are expected to wear masks and remain socially distant from one another. But in spite of all this, the church persists. We continue to worship as we can, whether at home, online, or in safe services at the church.





The service begins, as always, with Barbara playing the Prelude. Mike has come up with a new and interesting touch. He includes some helpful information while Barbara plays.

Today's Lessons:
Isaiah 44:6-8
We can trust in God
Psalm 86:8-17
...abounding in
steadfast love...
Romans 8:12-25
God will liberate us
Matthew 13:24-43
Parable about
good and evil



Pastor greets us from the original font, and we sing the entrance hymn. This is followed with the confession of sins and the prayer of the day.



The lessons are read by Lois from Isaiah and Romans.

This week we tried something different with the Psalm. In the past weeks, we have been encouraged to read it on our own. This week, during Zoom Text Study, we read it in parts.



Finally, the Gospel, according to Matthew is read, and we hear Pastor's message for today. Once again, we hear some stories that Jesus told. Pastor tells us in the sermon that it was a whole day of storytelling. The focus is again on planting. In this parable, we learn that the farmer planted good seed, but during the night, his enemy came and sowed weeds in with the good seed. In the morning, the workers offer to pull the weeds, but the farmer, fearing damage to the wheat, says to let them grow together. When the harvest comes, they can be sorted out. Pastor explains that one person's weed may not be a weed to another. This is especially true of God. We need to be careful whom or what we judge to be weeds. We sing the hymn of the day, followed by the prayers. Holy Communion is celebrated, and the service ends with the Sending Hymn.



It is the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, the last Sunday in July. We are tempted to cry out, "How long, o Lord?" for we are still



worshipping under pandemic conditions: at home online, the parking lot or Luther Hall. But we persist. The church goes on, getting more creative each week in the ways we reach out to our congregation and our community. Church begins in the usual way: The Prelude from Barbara and a greeting and announcements from Pastor. Then the opening hymn is followed by the prayer for forgiveness, and the sign of the cross assures us that we have it. Next, we pray together the

prayer of the day.



The lessons from 1 Kings and Romans are read by Susan.

The Psalm read by the Text Study group. Thank you, Mike for your astute technology.



The Gospel is followed by the sermon. This week, again, Jesus is telling stories as we continue in Matthew. He is using the stories to teach his disciples about the kingdom of heaven. This is going to involve patient waiting and careful discernment, which can be achieved by intentional listening. Patient waiting, which is always hard, is even harder in the middle of a pandemic. No matter how good we may think we are at being

patient, everyone, according to Pastor, has a breaking point where we cry out, "How long, o Lord? How long?" Pastor remarks that all waiting, even for something good, can cause a certain amount of anxiety. Even knowing that "This, too, shall pass," or "It will be okay in the end," may not make the interim of waiting any easier. Pastor recommends taking a deep breath when we are anxious. Breathe in the Spirit of God, because we are promised when we don't even know how or what to pray for, God's Spirit is right beside us, turning our sighs, too deep for words, into prayers. In his stories, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to several different things, all common, ordinary things, to show us how accessible the kingdom is. We are promised that absolutely nothing can separate us from Christ because Jesus loves us. Our assignment this week is to repeat, "Jesus loves me; this I know." ten times and do this three times per day. This is everything. Following the sermon, Barbara plays the Hymn of the Day.

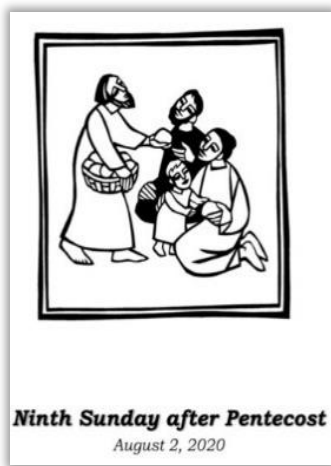
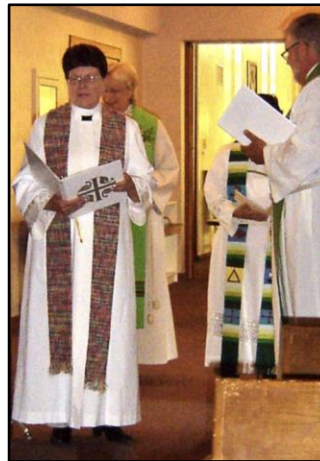
The service continues with the celebration of Holy Communion, whether at home or in person. Pastor blesses the bread and the wine, and we receive the body and blood of Christ.

The service ends with the blessing that again reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus. We sing the Sending Hymn and Barbara ends with the Postlude.



August

The first Sunday in August marks Pastor Lyn's 5th anniversary with Emanuel. The Echoes reminds us of how lucky we have been the last five years to have shared a ministry with her. Here are some pictures from her installation and reception.



This is Pastor Lyn's 5th anniversary. We should be celebrating with a tribute from the Council President, a reception with flowers and a cake as we have in past years, but, of course, this year is different. Mike has included pictures from the last five years in the video service as Barbara plays the prelude.

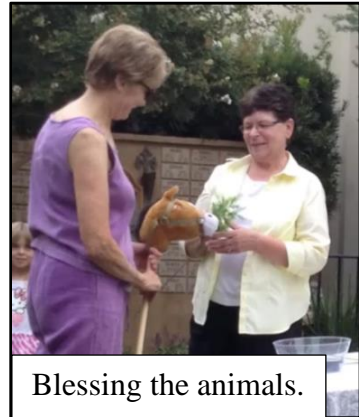




Super Bowl Sunday, the year the Broncos played.



A Lenten Service.



Blessing the animals.



An Advent drama.



With Bishop Elizabeth Eaton.



First Communion.



When the Prelude ends, Pastor greets us and thanks us for five years of shared ministry. She expresses thanks to the congregation for the flowers she received this week at her house. We sing the Entrance Hymn and then confess our sins. We are assured of our forgiveness.

Kathleen reads the lessons, and Pat and Sue read the Psalm.



Pastor reads the Gospel, the story of feeding the 5,000, and delivers the message. She begins by remembering her childhood when she was told to clean her plate because there were starving children in India. She observes that most of us have never really had a problem with not having enough to eat. Scarcity, she says, is not our problem. Abundance, or how we perceive abundance, is. Pastor tells us that all the lessons this week deal with abundance. God is in the business of giving abundantly, not only in this life, but in the one to come.

The feeding of the 5,000 is a good example of abundance versus scarcity. We, who have abundance, are able to share with those who do not. That is a good thing. But, Pastor says, we need to examine the scripture a little more deeply to see where we really are in the story. That is how we learn, who God is and who we are. This story begins shortly after Herod has killed John, the Baptist. Jesus is worn out. He had been teaching and healing,



and now, feeding the people. He is tired physically. Now the news of John's death takes an emotional toll on him. He needs to go away, to be by himself for just a little while. Some of us may be experiencing physical and emotional weariness right now because of the pandemic. We need to learn to balance all of our different responsibilities while dealing with a deadly virus. We need to learn to care for ourselves as well as others. We have family responsibilities and work responsibilities. We may be the one who spends too much time being fed, or we may be the one who spends too much time feeding others. Whatever our situation, Jesus will meet us there. If we are ill, he will heal us. Do we have addictions? Jesus can set us free. Are we disciples? Jesus will challenge us. Jesus is always concerned with our well-being, but not with our comfort. All that Jesus did, we are called to do. Yes, even in a pandemic. The Hymn of the Day is followed by prayers and then Holy Communion, the blessing and the Sending Hymn.



FOOD for FAITH

Bring your non-perishable food items in a plastic trash bag on the first Sunday of every month to Parking Lot Church.

Help families through InterFaith Ministries.

During Parking Lot church, the congregation has the opportunity to give food to Inter-Faith Ministries. The Outreach Committee has organized a monthly collection entitled Food for Faith. This month Mike and Rose transport the donations from the church to the Inter Faith facility. The Outreach Committee also shared food from the Care Cupboard since it will be at least six months before that can be opened again.

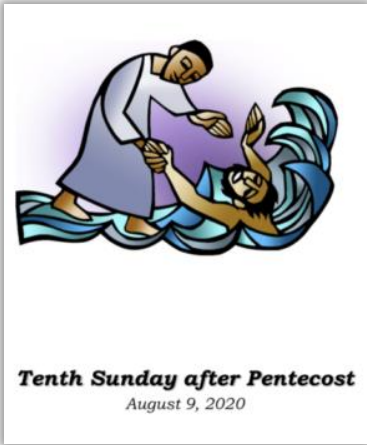


Also, this month we recognize and honor two of our office staff who have worked tirelessly to keep the church thriving. Paula Braxton is our Administrative Assistant, and Maria Ojeda is our Bookkeeper. They both have responsibilities with the church and the Day Care. We are so fortunate to have these two women on our team!





Skip installed the new half pews, made from the originals, but shortened to leave room around the new font.



This Sunday, August 9, Barbara opens the service with the Prelude. During this, Mike inserts more photos honoring Pastor's fifth anniversary.





Pastor greets us from the courtyard. Then we sing the opening hymn. The confession begins “In the name of the Father...” Suzanne reads lessons from 1 Kings and Romans inside the church, and the Psalm, read by Dan, is recorded during Zoom Text Study.



The Gospel according to Matthew is read by Pastor, and then we hear her message. Today’s Gospel deals with Jesus walking on the water. It begins with the disciples being instructed to go without delay by boat to the other side of the lake. Almost immediately, it seems, a storm comes up. Now we have a background for faith to be tested. We often feel as if we are rushing around, now more through Zoom than in person as before. Jesus, too, had full days when he probably felt as if the demands on him were interminable. So, in this story, we see that Jesus needs to send the disciples and the crowd on their way so he could withdraw to a quiet place and renew his spirit. Pastor wonders why the rush? Why hurry the disciples on a boat instead of having a relaxing dinner first? Pastor suggests that is because the next ministry was to be with the Gentiles. Because the Jews and the Gentiles did not get along, Jesus had to go back and forth between the two to minister to both. Pastor explains that there have been other lake crossings. There seems to be a pattern here. They get in a boat; a storm comes up, and faith becomes an issue. Pastor says that she doesn’t see Jesus as rushing away from the crowds, but instead, she sees him going to where he can hear God in the sheer silence, as Elijah did in the Old Testament lesson. According to Pastor, listening for God in sheer silence can almost be scary. In the story of Jesus walking on the water and telling Peter to come ahead, we traditionally think of Peter, first successful, and then looking down or losing faith, and sinking. She says that one commentator suggests that Peter not only lost faith, but that he needed proof of Jesus’s presence. As with all of us, our faith is a

mixture of courage and fear, of doubt and belief. The message here is not about sinking because of a lack of faith, but rather that if we have faith, we can believe in spite of all that surrounds us, that Jesus is with us through the storms. When Jesus mentions our “little faith,” he is not criticizing, but he is describing the reality of the situation. Over the centuries, the church has been represented by the image of a boat on the storm-tossed sea. The sea represents chaos, something we can relate to right now in the midst of a pandemic. It’s okay to admit to having little faith as long as we are listening to God’s word and learning as we go along. We just keep on, during the storm, doing as Jesus would do.



The sermon is followed by the Hymn of the Day. Then, of course, comes the prayers and the blessing of the bread and wine for Holy Communion. At home we pause the video here to partake of the bread and wine.



The service ends with the Sending Hymn and Postlude.

Parking Lot Church is alive and well.



Text Study continues to meet on Zoom, as does Council and several Bible Studies. Everyone is welcome to attend, even Luci, the cat.



August 16, and like an Old Testament prophet, we find ourselves crying, “How much longer, Lord, are we to endure this calamity?” And the reply seems to be, “Patience, my child.”

Those of us who worship at home get ready for the service.



Barbara begins the online service with the customary prelude. Pastor greets us from the customary front of the church, and we sing the customary opening hymn. Yet, there is nothing customary about life at this time.



We begin “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Our sins are forgiven with the words of assurance and the sign of the cross.

Pat reads the lessons from Isaiah and Romans, and Suzanne reads the Psalm.



Finally, the Gospel according to Matthew is read, and we hear Pastor's message.

The message is based on Jesus's encounter with a Canaanite woman, a person considered outside the people he had come to save. We could use this story to look at persistence or a story about faith. Perhaps it is about the role of women in the first century. It might even be about insiders versus outsiders. But, Pastor says, it is the idea of silence that is most appealing to her right now in this time of isolation, where some are living in way too much silence. She reminds us that we have been praying for an end to the pandemic for most of this year, and that, perhaps, it may seem that God is way too silent on answering those prayers. But she says that it is often necessary to have silence in order to hear God, and that maybe God needs silence to process what we are saying. She reminds us that all good relationships require listening to each other. God can use silence to get our attention. God can use silence to halt our futile attempts to control him. Silence, true silence, is difficult to achieve because of all the technology that we have today. It's hard to turn off those devices because we don't want to miss out on anything. Jesus relied on silence to communicate with God. He often withdrew from the crowds and even from the disciples. Sometimes, Jesus simply did not reply. The Canaanite woman was most likely used to the silent treatment. When she first calls out to Jesus, he makes absolutely no response. He completely ignores her, but she is determined not to be ignored again. She gets his attention when she calls out again. In the silence she loses all self-interest and simply says, "Help me." When we let go, God, who has been



listening, will answer our prayers. Maybe not the way we want, but always the way we need.

When the sermon ends, we sing the hymn of the day, we pray and celebrate Holy Communion, whether at home, the parking lot or Luther Hall.



Holy Communion is followed by the sending hymn and then the postlude.

It is such a thrill each Sunday to be in the loft, virtually of course, with Barbara and watch as her fingers fly over the keys.



I'm sure many of us look forward to a time when we are all together again for the coffee fellowship, back in Luther Hall, and not coffee for one on the patio.



How much more are we to endure? Not only is the pandemic still out of control, but now wildfires are raging throughout California. The smoke is so thick that the air quality does not permit Parking Lot Church. Pastor also canceled the outdoor concert that had been planned for Friday night.

So, this week it's online church only. Thank God for technology. As bad as all this is, it's made a little more bearable because of technology. The service begins with the prelude and Pastor's greeting, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." We make the sign of the cross.



The opening hymn is followed by the confession and the reading of the lessons from Isaiah and Romans by Chuck and the Psalm by Marsha.



The Gospel according to Matthew tells of Peter answering the question: "Who do you say that I am?" He responds, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." For this, he is rewarded with the promise that the church will be built on him and that he is given the keys of the kingdom.



Pastor begins the sermon by observing that people watching can sometimes discern something about that person's occupation or hobby, but it rarely gives the whole story as to who that person is. In today's lesson we learned that Peter, a loud-mouthed, roughneck fisherman, answers a crucial question correctly. Yet, even then, he only partially gets it right. He needs to look further to get it completely right. Peter has been paying attention. He has seen many miracles performed, and he is able to confess, "Truly, you are the Son of the living God." This is the orthodox answer. Peter knows this, but we will see next week that Peter may know who Jesus is, but he does not understand what the Messiah is to do. He is thinking in terms of power and expects Jesus to be a warrior king, but Jesus's power is in the form of sacrificial love. This is not yet understood by Peter and the other disciples. Pastor asks us if we were to go out into the neighborhood and ask if they know what Emanuel Lutheran stands for, would we be able to confess who we believe Jesus to be if we got a confrontational response. When Jesus asks Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" he is in a location where trade routes, a center of worship for pagan gods and the power of the Roman empire intersect. This was a dangerous territory for a dangerous question. Pastor asks us to reflect on our Mission Statement: To share Christ's unconditional love with everyone. She asks us to think how we can do that right now in this pandemic time. Our Vision Statement basically says that we are to minister to our changing community in challenging cultural times. We are to joyfully follow the Holy Spirit in service to others. She reminds us that just as Peter was far from perfect, we, too, also imperfect, can also move the church forward even during a pandemic.



Following the sermon, we sing the hymn of the day and then pray. We receive Holy Communion and the blessing. The sending hymn and the postlude conclude our morning service.



13th Sunday after Pentecost
August 30, 2020

The last Sunday of August is clear enough from smoke that we can return to having three services: parking lot, Luther Hall and living room, online.



The online service begins with the prelude, followed by Pastor's greeting, the opening hymn and the confession. Notice the addition of the shell to the font. This will allow water to be in the font without doing damage to the copper.



Following the confession, the lessons from Jeremiah and Romans are read by David and the Psalm by Mike. Pastor reads the Gospel, according to Matthew.



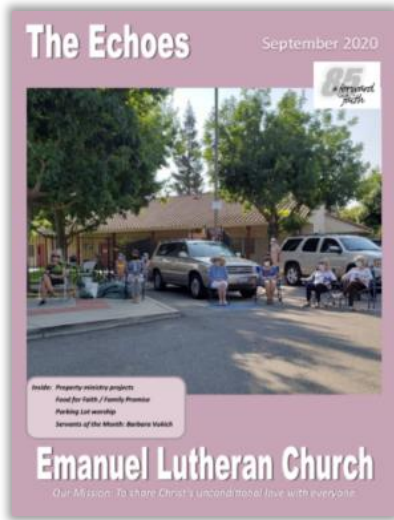
Pastor's message begins with talking about "doubling down" on something. Sometimes extra effort is required. She mentions that we might need strong hands to complete the task. Then she tells us to look at our hands, to take a long look. She asks if our vocation or hobbies could be discerned from looking at our hands. She says her sons compared her hands to Farm Grandma's hands because they looked strong. She liked that comparison because she likes being strong. Pastor reminds us of last week's gospel lesson where Peter correctly identified Jesus as the Son of the Living God. She says that would be a correct answer on a quiz, but Peter did not understand what that was to mean. In this week's lesson, the disciples are told that Jesus must go to Jerusalem where he will be arrested, suffer greatly, be crucified and be raised on the third day. Peter cannot



*accept this and scolds this "Son of the Living God"! Pastor wonders if Peter grasped Jesus's shoulder to shake him a little bit. Jesus tells Peter to quit being an obstacle. In the words of *The Message*, Jesus says that he, not Peter, is in control, that he is in the driver's seat. Jesus gives the disciples hope by telling them that only through this action, his death and resurrection, can they be given the gift of sacrificial love.*

Pastor remarks that we learned in Romans that we are to love, care for each other, put others ahead of ourselves. Jesus's hands were strong, and from these hands love is born. Pastor reminds us that in two weeks it will be God's Work, Our Hands Sunday. Hands will be blessed on that Sunday. She tells us to look at our hands again and come up with a project that we can do for someone else.

The service continues with the hymn of the day, the prayers, Holy Communion, the blessing and the sending hymn. The service ends with the postlude.



September

Another month begins, and still we are under strict requirements to wear face masks and observe social distancing. Still the fires are burning throughout California. Hurricanes are ravaging the east coast. But the church continues to live and thrive. In two weeks, we will have God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, and Pastor has challenged us to come up with a project that we can do.

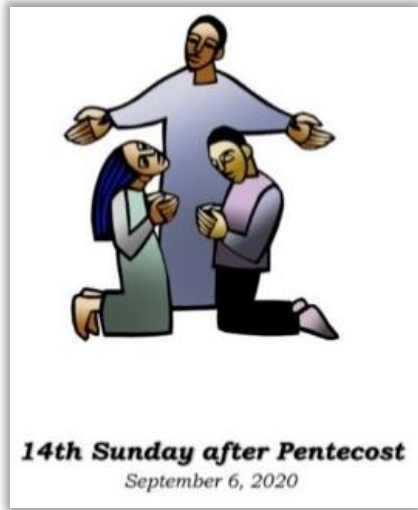
The servant of the month for September is our wonderful organist, Barbara Vukich. She has continued to provide music for the online service and the Luther Hall service. She is planning to use a keyboard to provide music for the parking lot service while David is gone.



The Property Ministry Committee is working on bringing the parking lot up to code for handicap ramps. As part of this project, we had the storm drainage system cleaned.



Some of the little boys at Day Care “helped” the men who fixed the sprinkler leak by cheering them on.



The 6th is the first Sunday in September. Our options for worship continue to be online in your home, in the parking lot or in Luther Hall.

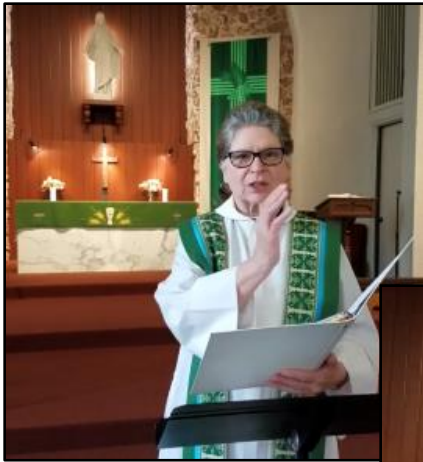


The online worship service begins with the prelude as usual. Mike includes a photo of the WELCA board meeting from last week.

WELCA is not really able to plan much for the rest of the year. It will depend on how the pandemic develops.



After the prelude, Pastor greets us, and we sing the opening hymn.



We confess our sins and receive forgiveness in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is followed by the lessons from Ezekiel and Romans, read by Alora, and the Psalm, read by Dan.



The Gospel according to Matthew and the sermon are next. Pastor begins by asking if we expect the church to be a perfect place. She explains that the Gospel lesson shows that Jesus did not expect the church to be perfect. He knew that the people who populate churches would not always get along.

This might range from simple disagreements all the way to criminal behavior against one another. Sin has always been the human dilemma. Even Peter went from being the “rock,” the foundation of the church, to “Satan” when he tried to tell Jesus what could and could not happen. Today’s lesson has often been used for church discipline in the past, but Pastor believes it is also a formula for restoration of relationships. Pastor reminds us that it is getting darker earlier each day. She says she would prefer to have more hours of light, but change is the natural order of things. She shares the idea that darkness is not only a physical thing, but currently, it is also cultural with violence happening all over the world. Natural disasters also abound. Chaos seems to be the norm. This seems a harsh lesson, but we need to look below the surface where we will find grace in reconciliation and forgiveness, and maybe even light. Jesus ironically tells his followers not to hang out with tax

collectors and sinners. Yet, these are very people that he himself gravitates toward. In today's church, the members seem to think that the problems that arise are problems for the leaders, the pastors. The rest of us can ignore the problems. But, Pastor says, we all will be held accountable. We, imperfect people as we are, have been called to be bearers of light, reconciliation and forgiveness. Pastor reminds us that we are a "priesthood of believers." We are called to be priests to one another. She says that the most important part of this lesson is that because we have been forgiven, we cannot refuse forgiveness to anyone. We are commanded to do this as part of his command to love. Withholding forgiveness is more damaging to us than to the person who has offended us. It might take a long time, but it is necessary for us to forgive to be completely healthy. In offering forgiveness, we become light bearers. Whereas this lesson can be used as a model for the church in dealing with conflicts, we should not miss the most important message, that Jesus forgives and welcomes all sinners. We must never give up showing others the forgiving Jesus. Pastor recalls the song, "Let There Be Peace on Earth." She hopes we will look up the lyrics and think about what we can do. Pastor



challenges us this week to offer forgiveness, to be a light and to let God do the rest.

The sermon is followed by the hymn of the day. We continue the service with the Creed and prayers, Holy Communion and the blessing. Then finally, the sending hymn and the postlude conclude the service.

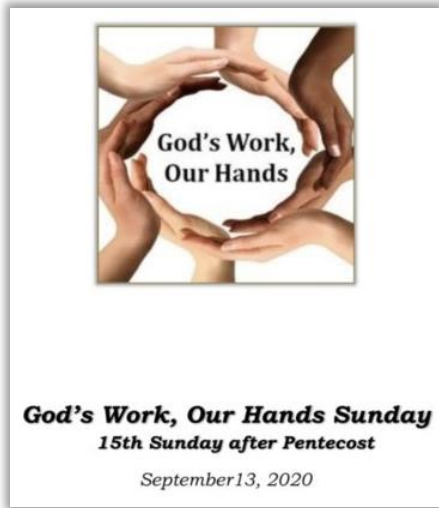


In parking lot church, Food for Faith donations are accepted by Elaine and Jeri, our volunteer this month, who was even willing to make a house call.





Susan and Barbara add their donations to Jeri's car. On Tuesday, Jeri delivers the food to Inter-Faith Ministries.



It is September 13, and nothing has changed. Some weeks it seems as if progress is being made on controlling the Covid virus, only to have it roar back with a vengeance. Therefore, we continue to have church safely online, in the parking lot or Luther Hall.



It is God's Work, Our Hands Sunday, so the emphasis is on outreach.

Barbara opens the online service with the Prelude. The greeting and singing the Opening Hymn come next. In anticipation of the blessing of hands, there is olive oil on the home altar.





Today, we begin thinking about Stewardship. The theme this year will be Forward Anew. In a temple talk, Peter tells us what this means to him. The service continues with the confession. We are assured that we receive forgiveness for our sins by the sign of the cross.



Susan reads the lessons from Genesis and Romans this morning, and Pat reads the Psalm.



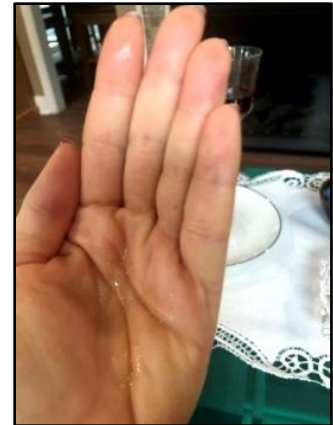
Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew where we hear the hard lesson that we are expected to forgive multiple times. She explains that no ministry can exist unless we realize that we are forgiven and can offer that same forgiveness to others. In the Gospel we meet the servant who owed his master a huge sum of money. Pastor says that in today's currency it would be the equivalent of 4.5 billion dollars. There would be no way, realistically, for the servant to repay that debt, so he threw himself on the mercy of his master. The master not only spared his servant from going to prison, but actually wiped out the debt completely. She says that it is tempting to think of the merciful king as representing God, but that is not true because when the king hears that his servant refuses to forgive his friend a much smaller debt, he takes back his forgiveness, and God never does that. Pastor admits that sometimes it's almost impossible to forgive. She suggests that we may have to say to someone, "I forgive you today, and I'm going to have to keep forgiving you every



day for a while. That is grace. Pastor reminds us that in the Lord's Prayer we pray, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." She tells us that Paul in Romans says to love from the very center of our being and forgive, no matter how hard. We need to remember how big is the debt of our sins that God has forgiven. We cannot repay God. We can only accept his forgiveness and pass it on. We can only glimpse the depth of God's love when we look at his forgiveness of our sins. Surely if we can be forgiven, we can then forgive others. God means it when he says, "I forgive you." We are called to say the same and mean it, too.

After the sermon, Pastor Lyn offers up a blessing of our hands. If times were normal, she would take oil and mark our hands with a cross. She instructs us to make the sign of the cross on each of our palms.

We sing the hymn of the day, and then we share the prayers and Holy Communion. This is the body of Christ, broken and given for you. This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

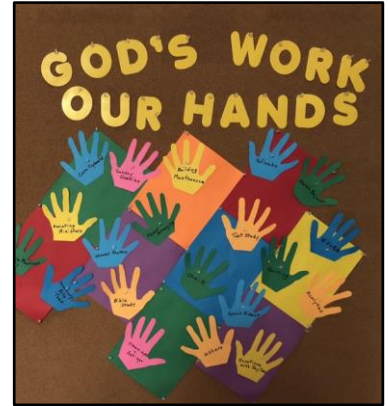
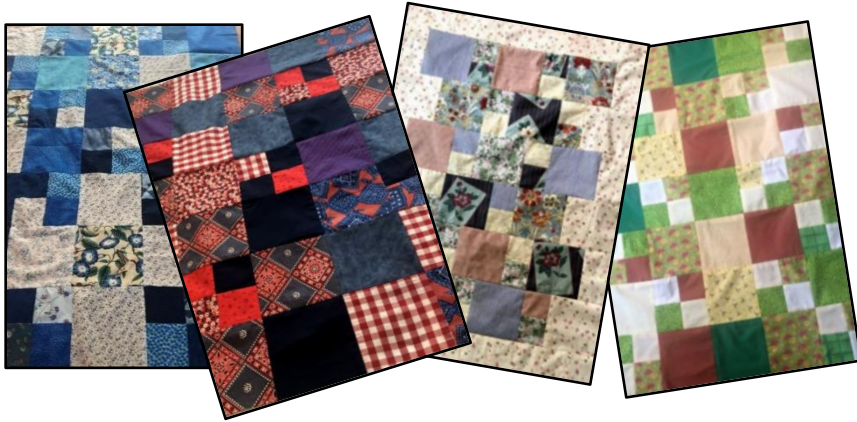


The blessing and the sending hymn, followed by the postlude, concludes the online service.



God's Work, Our Hands challenges us to do service in our community. This is not easy during a pandemic, but several of the Emanuel congregation have found ways to serve.

Suzanne made these quilt tops. These will be sandwiched, tied and bound before going to the Modesto Police Department.



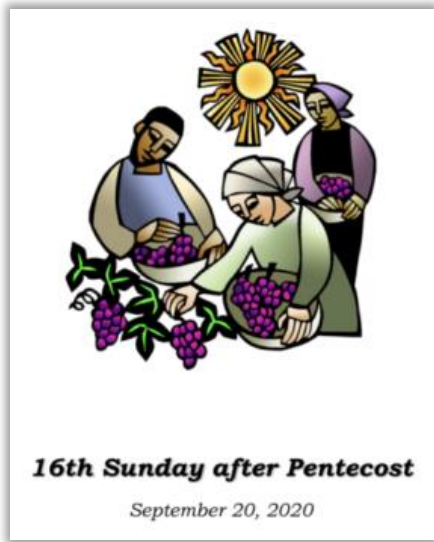
Marsha and Debbie cleaned house for Joyce.



Jeri and Elaine take a load of school supplies over to Family Promise.



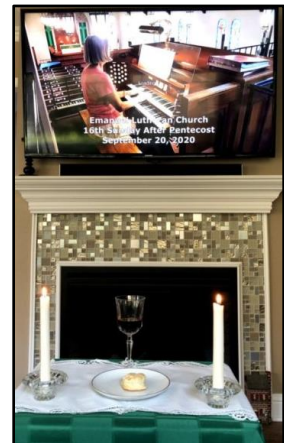
Elaine and her grandchildren took dinner to some of our local fire fighters.



It is September 20, and nothing seems to have changed, but the church goes on in spite of the chaos the world throws at us. Once again, church is online, viewed at home, in the parking lot or in Luther Hall.



Pastor Lyn greets us from the front of the sanctuary.



David speaks about renewal and a second chance to get things right. He talks about setting goals and objectives. David says that confessing our sins is the first step in facing our shortcomings and working on improvement or renewal.

Barbara plays the opening hymn and Pastor leads us in the confession of sins.



We are forgiven in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Kathleen reads the first and second lessons from Jonah and Philippians. Dan reads the Psalm.

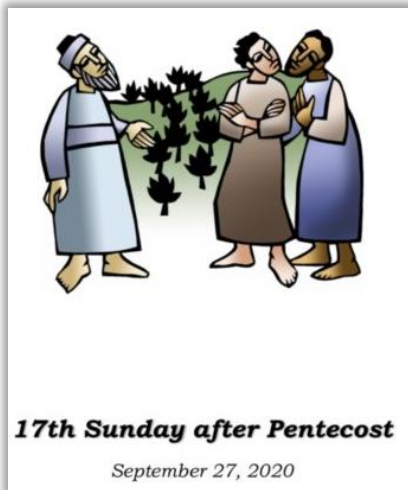


The Gospel according to Matthew tells of workers who are all paid the same amount regardless of the amount of time they spent in the vineyard. It just didn't seem fair to those who had toiled all day. Jonah, too, was concerned with fairness or the lack thereof. He was very upset with God for forgiving the Ninevites. Jonah felt it made him look bad when his predictions of disaster failed to materialize. Sometimes, those of us who have been Christians all our lives believe that entitles us to special treatment, but God claims the right to be generous with all. If we don't like that, we could end up at the bottom of the heap. Those who claim special privilege will find out that the reward is the same for all. Pastor says that God gathers all the parts of who he wants us to be. That may take a lifetime, or it may be at the very end of our lives. God operates

out of an economy of love, freely given, with no strings attached. His mercy and salvation are for everyone. The workers, hired at the end of the day, receive a full day's wage. The Ninevites are shown mercy when they repent. God's question is based on the fact that everything and everyone belongs to him: "Can't I do what I want with what is mine? Are you envious because I am generous?" The Psalmist says that God is merciful, slow to anger and abounds in steadfast love. The Psalmist also says that God is good to all; his compassion is over all that he has made. The first verse gives us comfort. The second verse is for everyone, even our enemies.

We sing the hymn of the day, pray and receive Holy Communion. The blessing, the sending hymn and the postlude conclude the service.

When we share living room church with a friend and have to practice social distancing, the altar looks like this.



It is the last Sunday in September, and there is no change in our situation. The Covid virus is still ravaging the state, country and world. Wildfires are beyond control throughout California, decimating our forests. The good news is that the church goes on, whether it is at home online, in the parking lot or in Luther Hall.



The online service begins with the prelude, followed by Pastor's greeting.



The temple talk this morning is delivered by Mike who remarks that he is usually on the other side of the camera, but at Josh Hollinger's request, he has stepped to the front.

We sing the opening hymn, say the confession and receive forgiveness in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then we hear the lessons from Ezekiel and Philipians and the Psalm read by Chuck and Suzanne.



The Gospel, according to Matthew, tells us about the Pharisees trying to question Jesus about his authority. Pastor begins the sermon with a reminder that the gospel lessons from the last few weeks have been about forgiveness. She says she is reminded of a sign she saw that said: What part of No don't you understand? She says she can picture Jesus holding a sign that says: What part of forgiveness don't you understand? Today's lesson explores the realm of church authority versus God's authority. Pastor

suggests that it's often difficult to tell the difference between the two. In this lesson, Jesus is challenged by the church leaders asking him by what authority he teaches.

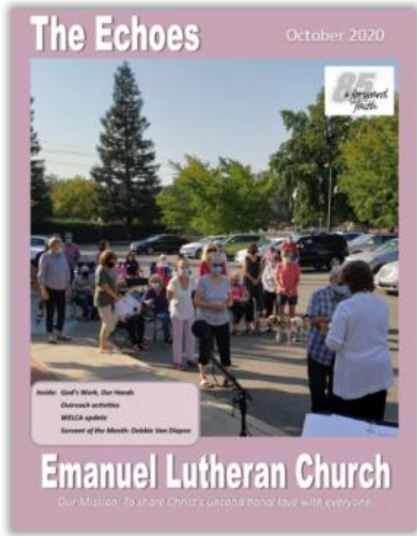
He responds by asking them by what authority did John baptize. He assures them that he will answer their question if they answer his. The Pharisees are caught in their own trap, knowing that whatever they say will cause problems with the people. Pastor asks us how we determine what comes from God and what comes from humans who assume they speak for God. Change usually challenges some aspect of human authority. Sometimes we speak as if we had the same kind of authority as God. The church is often guilty of this. We need to recognize that God's authority supersedes the church's authority as well as individual authority. In this story the religious leaders have been outraged by Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his cleansing the temple of money changers and his healing the sick. Jesus is trying to teach the church leaders about authority, something they had forgotten. For Jesus, authority is connected to an act, not a person. Sometimes the church has tried to make the Bible unchangeable, but Pastor explains that the Bible is the living word speaking to a living people. Too often we get comfortable with what we have learned, and we don't want to learn anything more. We don't want to change. Evidence that there is a better way is ignored. God continually invites us to clean house, to get a new heart and a new spirit. God wants us to care for what he cares for. We need to revive our commitment to Jesus and to God's authority in our lives.



We sing the hymn of the day, share prayers and Holy Communion.

The service ends with the blessing and the sending hymn.





October

The Echoes brings us a report on what's been going on at Emanuel.

We learn that the quilters have kept busy.



Also, apparently, there was a Pumpkin Fairy that left anonymous gifts on quite a few doorsteps.



2019-2020 EDDIE AWARD WINNERS

GREGORI HIGH SCHOOL



Alora S.

Alora represents the best of Gregori. She has amazing leadership skills, and epitomizes respect, responsibility, and kindness. Alora always comes to school with excitement, positivity and school spirit. She is genuine to who she is and has a confidence not seen in students her age. Alora is successful in school and athletics, but what truly makes her a standout is her character.

We also learned about an award that one of our young people earned. Congratulations, Alora!



We have reached the first Sunday in October. There are rumors that the governor will soon approve limited indoor services. With the weather getting cooler, this is welcome news for some. The virtual service will also continue for those who are not ready to worship as a group. This Sunday, we have the usual three opportunities for worship: online, parking lot and Luther Hall.



Online, our service begins with the prelude, followed by Pastor's greeting. The opening hymn is sung, and then we confess our sins and receive forgiveness. We are assured of this by the sign of the cross.

Pat and Dan read the Scriptures from Isaiah, Philipians and the Psalms for this morning's service.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew, and then we hear her message. Pastor calls attention to the beautiful fall adornments to the chancel. Pastor mentions the Stewardship emphasis: Forward Anew. The theme is renewal. The church has had to be creative during this time of pandemic. Pastor suggests that sometimes it's felt more like survival than renewal. Today's lesson is another hard one. Jesus has told the church leaders who questioned his authority that the kingdom will be taken away from them. In this parable of the vineyard, we learn that the



vineyard represents the kingdom of God. She believes that the tenants are all believers including all of us. We have been called to produce the fruits of the kingdom. That means that the vineyard could be our churches, our homes, our schools, our workplaces, wherever we find ourselves. Pastor says that she was struck by the verse that says the kingdom will

be taken away and given to those who produce fruit. Pastor mentions that the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is known as the “faith” chapter. It summarizes many events in the history of the Israelites that happened because of faith. They did not always see the results of their faith. We, too, may never see the fruits of our labors. Sometimes we act as if we should be special. Some get so involved in what they can do that God gets left out of the picture. These people may attend church, but they have no real relationship with God. The term the church uses for them is “functional atheists.” A healthy church exhibits a faith that is lived out with fire, commitment and enthusiasm. This kind of church will experience ministry success. A functional atheist measures success in numbers and record keeping. Healthy churches measure success by changed lives, by faith deepened and putting commitment to God’s plan first. The problem with working very hard for the church happens when we begin to think that working hard for the church is the ultimate goal and that the church belongs to us. This is a trap to be avoided. This story in Matthew is a reminder that God calls all people to live out their purpose given to them by God. As Lutherans, we know that we have been saved by grace through faith, but Matthew tells us that there is something more expected of us. We are expected to produce fruit, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved. By faith, we believe that God has created everything. We see his ongoing creation by faith. We anticipate the future by faith.



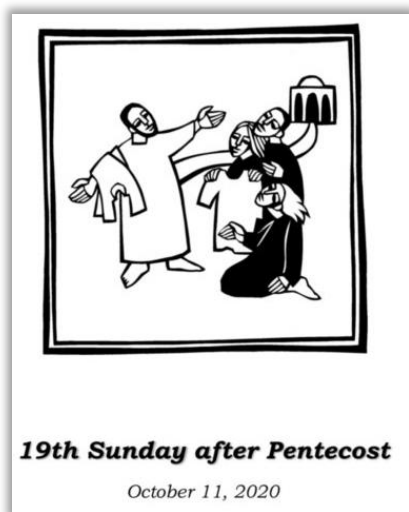
Sometimes, a living room service has an unexpected visitor, but all are welcome. Luci is a big fan of Pastor Lyn’s sermons.

We sing the hymn of the day, pray and commune. We receive the blessing and sing the sending hymn. Finally, the postlude is played and the service ends.



If you invite a friend to attend church with you, but you must remain socially distant, the altar must reflect this.

On the first Thursday of every month, Leah Circle continues meeting on Zoom. The best part about this is that former member Mary, who has moved away, can be a part of the Circle again.



October 11, we meet as is the new normal, online, in the parking lot and in Luther Hall. But still the church persists. We begin with the prelude and then with a greeting from Pastor.



The temple talk this morning is given by Fanney who tells us of her faith journey which had included renewing, rebooting and refreshing. We learn from her the importance of inviting others to church. She is at Emanuel today because several families along her way invited her to go to church with them.



The service continues with the singing of the opening hymn. We confess our sins in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and we receive forgiveness with the sign of the cross.

Suzanne reads the lessons from Isaiah and Philippians; Mike reads the Psalm.



Again, our Gospel lesson is another difficult parable from Matthew. As Pastor says in her sermon, it is her least favorite parable because it is a message that is uncomfortable. Various commentators even advise not to try and interpret it, but Pastor wonders, then, why it has been included in the lectionary? She suggests that it's not a bad thing to squirm a bit when the words are harsh. Pastor feels that the wedding garment might represent full



commitment to Christ, perhaps representing a baptismal garment. The king has the uninvited guest thrown out. This could be a warning that to follow Jesus, one must be "all in." Today, we are going to view this parable as an allegory. The church in

Matthew's day was basically Jewish people trying to figure out how to include Gentiles. Perhaps the harsh words of this parable were meant to get the attention of thickheaded church members. Pastor also sees grace in this parable because Jesus teaches, warns, reproaches and forgives. This is grace. She reminds us of some of the parables from the past few Sundays. This parable highlights that the invitation to salvation is not to be taken lightly. God expects more than just attending church. It is God who pursues us, always extending that invitation to join him at the banquet. It is he who clothes us, robes us in salvation. Grace is freely given, freely received. God never gives up on us. But we do have free will. If we don't want to accept the invitation, we can come up with a myriad of lame excuses. The invited guests in this parable do not honor the invitation to the feast, even though it comes from the King. They do not show him any respect. The king wanted his banquet hall full. We want our churches full. Right now, during the pandemic, this can't happen. It can't be used as a measuring stick for a healthy congregation, probably not for some time in the future. The measurement going forward will be our commitment and our service. God continues to invite us into a relationship with him and others. We are the slaves in this parable. We are sent out to invite others to worship, not to add to the numbers, but to proclaim the good news and to deepen our relationship with Jesus. It is our duty to present God's relentless invitation to a world changed forever in 2020. Pastor suggests that going out and gathering others is a joyful task.

We sing the hymn of the day, pray and partake of Holy Communion.

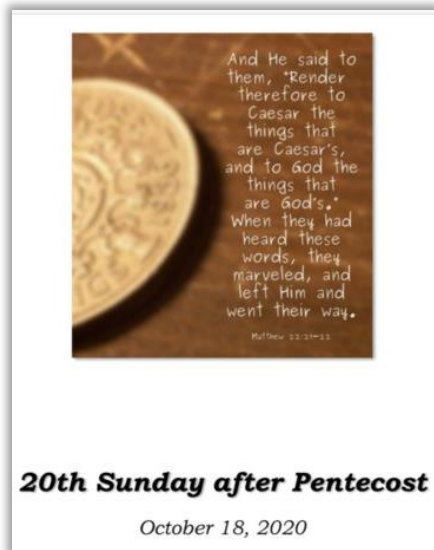


*“Again, after supper,
he took the cup...”*

*The blessing, sending
hymn and the
postlude conclude the service.*

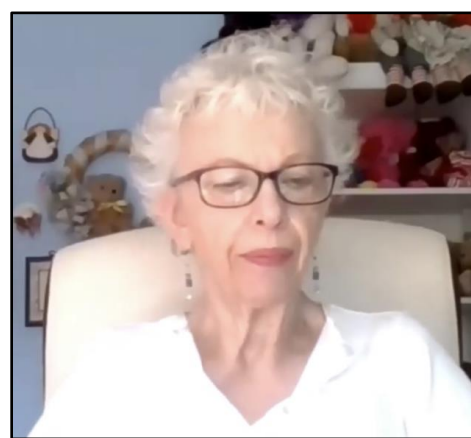


When you worship at home and a demon invades YouTube on your big screen TV, you just have to be resourceful.



It is the 20th Sunday after Pentecost, October 18. The good news is that Stanislaus County seems to be making progress in our fight against the Coronavirus. It appears that we will be able to hold services in the Sanctuary by at least the first of November. This service will be recorded and posted online for those who are not ready to worship in a group setting.

The online service begins, as always, with the Prelude, Pastor's greeting and the Entrance Hymn. We confess our sins, confident of God's forgiveness. Mike reads the lessons from Isaiah and 1 Thessalonians, and Suzanne read Psalm 96.



The Gospel according to Matthew is the familiar story of the Pharisees trying to entrap Jesus by asking him if it were lawful to pay taxes. They knew if he says that it isn't, Rome would step in and deal with him. If he says that it is, the people will

be angered, and his popularity would slip. Either way they would win. Of course, Jesus, after discerning that the Emperor's image is on the coins, answers with the clever phrase, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. In her sermon, Pastor reminds us that this story is much more than about paying taxes. It is about who and what has final authority in the life of a Christian. Life for first century Jews was very different from our lives in the 21st century. Taxes were important to the rulers because it kept them in power. It was part of their ultimate authority. This personal tax in Bible times was about a day's wage levied once a year. That might not seem like much, but it was difficult for them. Taxes reminded them that their land was occupied by a foreign power. Then the taxes could only be paid with money that bore the likeness of the emperor and proclaimed him to be divine. This was blasphemous for the Jews. Every time the Jews used Roman money, they were reminded that they were under the authority of a pagan government. The Pharisees were amazed that Jesus outwitted them. That made them even more determined to have him eliminated. One interesting thing, Pastor noted, was the fact that Jesus has to ask for a coin. He does not have one. He could not be accused of carrying around anything with a false god on it. He tricks the Pharisees into producing a coin, exposing their hypocrisy, because they do have the idolatrous symbols on their person. God's message to us is that there is no other God beside him. He calls us to do his mission work as he called Cyrus, the emperor of Persia to serve as the one who rescued of the Israelites from Babylon in the Old Testament lesson. Paul wrote that we know we have been called to serve God because he sent his Holy Spirit to empower us. Through the spirit we are able to reflect the image of God to others, to show Jesus as the love of God. This will offer hope to the world and show others that being under the authority of God frees us to serve others joyfully.



The service continues with the hymn of the day, prayers and Holy Communion. Finally, we are blessed so that we may go and serve. We sing the closing hymn and Barbara concludes the service with the postlude.



Because the parking lot is scheduled to be paved on Saturday, Pastor announces that the Reformation service will be held inside the Sanctuary at 9:00 A.M. It will be a prayer and communion service, similar to the parking lot service. Regular worship will resume at 9:30, inside the Sanctuary, beginning November 1.



Can it really be Reformation Sunday already? But at least, for many, there is once again worship inside the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary Arts Team has adorned the Chancel in the appropriate red.

The service which includes the Confirmation of Addison is prerecorded on Thursday as usual. Mike also records the live service and posts it on YouTube as well.



The home altar is set up with red paraments, and of course, even at a living room service, many of us wear red.



The online service begins with the prelude, Pastor's greeting and singing "A Mighty Fortress."



The scripture lessons were recorded earlier in the week by Pat, Dan and Marsha.



Today is Addison's Confirmation. Sadly, we are not able to witness it in person. Only Addison's immediate family is allowed to be there. Hopefully, many of the congregation sent her cards to remember this day.

Addison reads her Bible verse and her statement of faith.

Addison chose Joshua 1:9 for her confirmation verse: Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Addison gives credit to her Grandma Patsy for the inspiration in choosing this verse. She says she knows life is not always easy, but no matter how difficult times may be, she knows that God is always with her. She says when her relationships with family and friends are not going right, she may feel sad and discouraged, but when she remembers that Jesus is always with her, it lifts her spirits. She knows God has a plan for her. Her strength comes from God and helps her navigate this modern world. She tells us that the pandemic has caused extra hardships because of the isolation it enforces. Remembering that she is never really alone has made all the difference. No matter where she is, no matter what the circumstances, she knows that she is not alone and having Jesus for her friend gives her the strength that she needs.



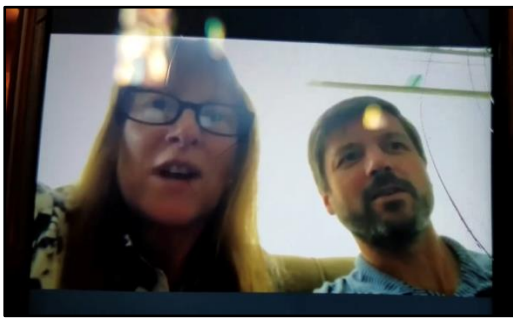
Pastor gives a brief homily in place of a sermon. Pastor reminds us that the Reformation texts are always the same. She says that these scriptures go very well with Addison's faith paper. She states that they also go well with the Affirmation of Faith or Confirmation. This is the day that we reaffirm the promises made at our baptism. Not only the confirmand does this, but we, the congregation, should do that, too. God promises to never leave us. We promise to continue in God's word. Knowing Christ gives us freedom.

Confirmation students choose a Bible verse and then write a paper explaining what Jesus means to them. Pastor commends the wonderful job that Addison did. Pastor asks if we remember our confirmation verse or do we even have one. Pastor remembers her verse from Deuteronomy. Pastor



challenges us to spend some time pondering our confirmation verse, or if we never experienced confirmation, to choose a verse and write our own faith paper. We are always making promises to God to do better, but often times life interferes. This is why it is good to have the celebration of confirmation to remind us to keep those promises.

The Hymn of the Day is the beautiful "Amazing Grace."



Addison's godparents virtually present her for confirmation.

Then Pastor begins the Confirmation liturgy in which she asks Addison to profess her faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin and confess the faith of the

church. All present say the Creed in three parts in response to the questions: Do you believe...? Addison is asked to promise to continue being faithful all her life. The congregation is asked if we will continue to





support her. Her family responds for all of us that we will with God's help.

The liturgy continues as Addison kneels; Pastor lays her hand on Addison's head and blesses her. Pastor then assures her that she is confirmed, an adult in the eyes of the church with all the privileges and responsibilities that this entails. She is told to "Go in peace."

We pray as the service continues, share the peace as we are able and then we begin the communion liturgy.

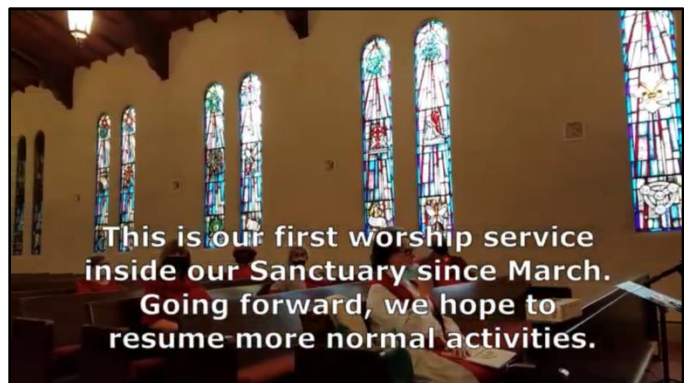


The body and blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ given and shed for you.



The service concludes with the blessing, the sending hymn and the postlude.

This morning there was a live service in the Sanctuary as well as the online service. Masks were required and social distancing was enforced, but for many it was a truly joyous occasion to be able to worship together again. Mike was able to video tape it and post it on YouTube. From this Sunday on, pandemic willing, a live service will be recorded and posted online sometime Sunday afternoon or evening. Here are some pictures from that service.

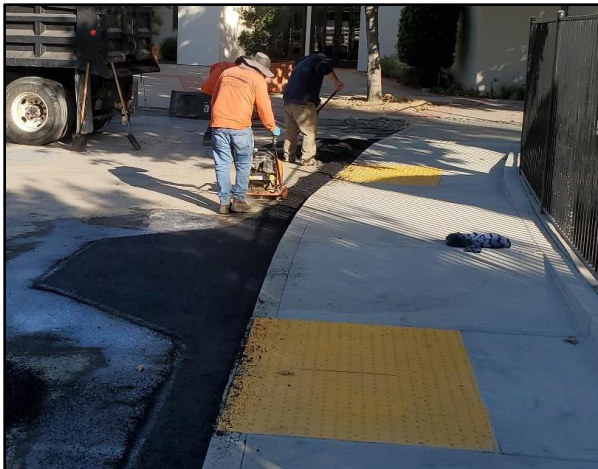




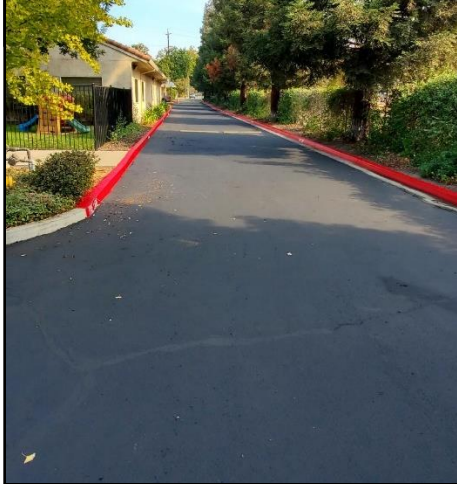
After collecting goodies for Halloween, the Outreach Ministry assemble all the DIY Halloween Party Kits for Family Promise. The congregation also donates over \$200 in gift cards for fast food.



This week the parking lot project is finally completed. First, preliminary work is done. Then the liquid tar is poured.



Then the tar is spread out over the surface to give it a fresh new look.



Finally, the striping is done.



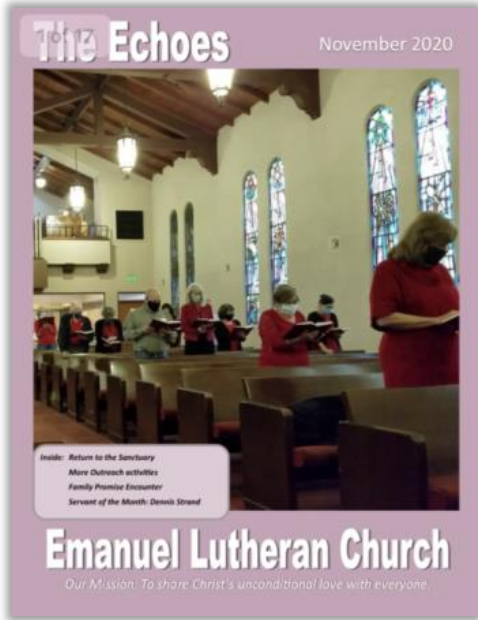
Now our parking lot is compliant with city regulations, and it's beautiful. Thank you, Dennis and the Property Ministry Committee.



Our Day Care children may not have the regular Halloween this year, but they had a good time at the facility. Both teachers and students got into the spirit by decorating doors, wearing costumes, playing games like Pin the Tail on the Cat, and getting candy.







November

We are still in the midst of the pandemic, but we have managed to make it to the Red Tier, a less restrictive guideline. Pastor feels comfortable moving the church service inside, with protocol in place, of course.

The Echoes keeps us informed about what is going on with the Emanuel family.

Circles are still meeting, some virtually, some in person.



Rebecca Circle enjoys an outdoor meeting.



Leah Circle meets on Zoom. This allows former member Mary to join us from her home in Carmel Valley.

Walnuts are gathered at Dave's and Kristine's. The proceeds from the sale of walnuts will help support Alora's project and help the Piecemakers to pay for postage to mail their quilts when necessary.





November 1 is All Saints Sunday. We remember those who have passed since this Sunday last year: Rev. Bonnie Bell, Rev Ralph Herman, Wanda Paulsen and Brian Wyatt. We also remember friends and relatives of members.



The altar is ready for the All Saints service. The church is as filled as possible.

Kathleen and Pat read the Scripture lessons from Revelations and 1 John and Psalm 34.



The Gospel from Matthew is the familiar and beloved Beatitudes. Pastor begins her sermon with reminding everyone what All Saints Sunday is about. She feels it is appropriate that the lessons are about praise because that is what the saints are doing today, praising God. She tells us that we had the Beatitudes for the Scripture lesson back in March. At that time, she suggested that we replace the word “blessed” with “unenviable”. Today she wants us to consider using the word “honorable”.



Pastor says that honorable can bring us to a state of humbleness and praise before



God. The crowds have followed Jesus up on the mount. Jesus wants to teach his disciples as much as possible so they can be on their own, but he also wants the people to hear the teaching, too. Pastor says when we are at the end of our rope, we need to take the focus off ourselves, take a breath, look around us. God will be there to catch us if we let go. He will put us on solid ground. The less we try to

control the circumstances, the more God can. Pastor encourages us to praise God every chance we can. It is the inevitable consequence of letting go and letting God. One day, we will join the crowd of saints around the throne of God and spend eternity singing praises. Until then, we should go out and sing and praise God everywhere.



Pastor lights candles for the four members of Emanuel who passed away this past year.

The bread and wine are consecrated and the congregation communes.



The congregation has the opportunity to light candles for loved ones after they commune.

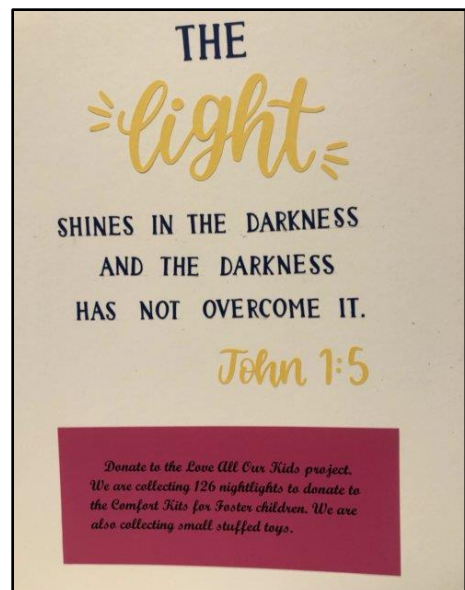


Those who worship at home are able to view the video of this service on Monday morning. Some may have lit candles in memory of their loved ones, too.

On Monday, the Outreach Ministry committee decides to support a local group called Love All Our Kids. This organization supplies foster children with kits that contain items to make the transition to a foster home a little easier. Emanuel



has committed to giving nightlights and stuffed toys. These will be collected for the next couple of weeks.



During the week, Dave brings his truck with the cherry picker and cleans all the gutters before the rainy season begins.



November 8, is WELCA Sunday. The Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America bring their thank offerings to share.

This Sunday, for those at home, there is only the Gospel, the sermon and Holy Communion.



Pastor reads the Gospel from Matthew about the virgins who are waiting for the bride groom to come. When he does come, half are able to light their lamps to go out to meet him because they wisely brought extra oil. The other half had to go buy more oil because they had not planned ahead. In doing this, they get left out completely. She then delivers the message.

Pastor begins with informing us that we are two weeks away from the end of the church year.

The lessons will be centered on the coming of Jesus, both as a baby and the second coming at the end of the world.

The two main questions we need to think about are first: When will Christ return? The answer, according to Pastor is – No one knows. The second question: What shall we do while we wait? Pastor supposes the obvious answer, based on the Gospel today is to get ready. The problem is how do we know when we're ready enough? Another thought might be to wonder what the oil represents.

According to Luther, the oil represents faith. Some modern commentators suggest that oil represents good works. This poses the problem that we believe that we are saved by grace not works. Pastor's favorite preacher/author says that perhaps the oil represents the fuel that makes the light of our baptism shine brightly. Pastor says the most important thing to nourish is our relationship with God. She says that the relationship we have with God goes through many stages, deepening as we get older. But wherever we are in our relationship with God, he never gives up on us. God never abandons his children. We must wonder if we have enough fuel to keep on shining in our communities, to continue through the pandemic, to reestablish things post pandemic. We need to let our light shine this week, so that God, not us, is glorified.

Following the online sermon, Mike has attached the communion liturgy so that those who worship at home may share that experience with those who worship in church.





24th Sunday after Pentecost

November 15, 2020



Pastor continues to have a service inside the sanctuary. Kathleen is the reader for this morning. She reads from Zephaniah and 1 Thessalonians and Psalm 90.

The online video includes Pastor's greeting and the announcements.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew which tells the parable of the three servants who are entrusted with five, three and one talents to invest while their master is on a journey. Upon his return, the master is pleased with the two servants who have doubled the amount that they were given. He is angered with the servant who buried his one talent, fearing to lose what was given him.

In her sermon, Pastor says that this lesson is often used during Stewardship. She says that this year, what caught her attention was the element of time management. She said we need to look at time in regard to our relationship with God. She says that the Gospel tells us about a man who leaves for an extended journey. He plans to return. He entrusts his servants with a certain amount of money. He gives this money



without any instructions. Pastor wonders why he doesn't seem to need any of these resources on his trip. Pastor says that in addition to the parable dealing with the money that is left with the servants, it's also about all the time that they have. Pastor reminds us that time is an issue right now during the pandemic. We might have too much time or not enough time. Unproductive time seems to be a

problem for all of us. Pastor reminds us that time for God is different than time for us. God is interested in both quality and quantity where time is concerned. No matter what we do, it's time that we spend with God that is the most important. We can spend our time bemoaning our circumstances or use that time to find ways to connect with other.

Again, Mike is able to attach a prerecorded Communion service from earlier this fall. It is important so that those of us who worship at home may partake of the body and blood of our Savior.



The Piecemakers continue to make quilts for the Love All Our Kids project.



We pick up projects from the Piecemaker's tables and take them home to complete.



These quilts will help some child be less scared as he transitions into Foster care.



Christ the King Sunday sees two indoor services. This is so that the number of people attending at one time can be kept to a minimum. Online, the greeting, Gospel and sermon are available. In addition, Mike has posted a previously recorded communion service.

The Gospel from Matthew tells the story of Jesus comparing himself to a king who moves

among his subjects. He commends those who have fed, clothed and helped him. When they ask when did this happen, he says that whenever they helped anyone, they had helped him. Likewise, he chastises those who have not helped him. When they ask when did this happen, he responds that whenever they had ignored those in need, they had ignored him.

In her sermon, Pastor says that surprises can be good or bad. She said that she was unpleasantly surprised this week when her email was hacked.

Pastor says this week's Gospel lesson is often called "The Great Judgment" but it could easily be called "The Great Surprise." The teaching this week is more about visible grace than judgment. When Jesus occupies our hearts, he brings all of the needs of humanity with him. Pastor says that today's lesson is another difficult text from Matthew and that, frankly, she is glad to be done with Matthew for the next two years. The lesson talks about separating the sheep from the goats, and no one wants to be a goat. One of the difficulties of this text is that it seems to say that works are necessary to be blessed by God, but she explains that the interesting thing about the works in this lesson is that those who do them don't even realize that they've



done anything good. Caring, for them, is such a natural thing that they don't even realize that they have done something extraordinary. The sad part is that the "goats" don't realize that they've done anything wrong.

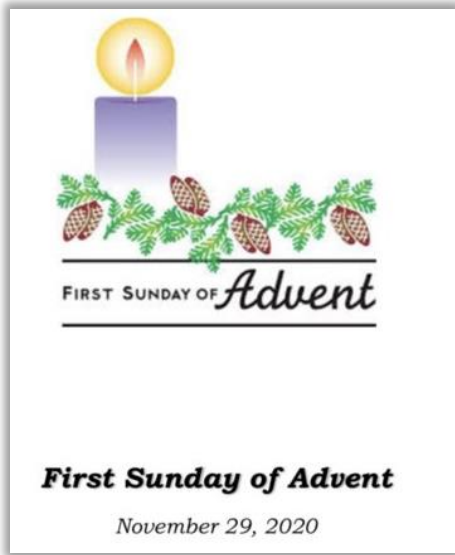
Pastor indicates that many of us, if told by a friend that we have done something that they really appreciate, or that we have made a huge impact on their lives, wouldn't have a clue as to what we had done. On the other hand, we might think we are doing a great job and not realize we have let someone down.

We are called to do lots of good works, but not to keep score. Good works should just flow from us as part of our nature. Pastor asks us to consider what all this has to do with Christ the King Sunday. She reminds us that we have only one king and that he is always with us. The expression "the kingdom of heaven" does not refer to heaven but to accepting God's rule in our lives now. We live in a troubled world, but not hopeless; we live in a broken world, but not lost. Pastor suggests that we use the holidays as a way to give away some of God's grace and not keep score.



While those in the sanctuary receive communion there, those at home can watch a previously recorded service consecrating the bread and wine.





Happy New Year! The church year begins with Advent, and we are at the first Sunday of that season. There are still two services each Sunday in the Sanctuary. Our tech guru Mike is having to quarantine due to possible exposure to the Covid virus. Thankfully, Brett is on hand to record the sermon. The new recording of the liturgy for Holy Communion will have to wait a week.



The altar is dressed in the blue paraments. These were given 16 years ago as a memorial for Dorothy Anderson.

Living Room Church may also be dressed in blue for Advent. Pastor lights the first wreath candle, the Hope candle.



At home, we may also have an Advent wreath.





Kathleen reads the lessons from Isaiah, Psalm 80 and from 1 Corinthians. Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark, which tells of the end times, and she delivers the sermon.

Pastor's message begins with a story of a little girl who wanted to know what a "lert" was. The Pastor had said it was important to be "alert," so she wanted to know how to be a "lert," too. The Hope candle brings us to the three ways to be in Advent: awake, aware and alert. As Christians, we realize that God was real, present and active in the past, is real, present and active right now and will be real, present and active in the future. We begin Advent aware of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection, awake to Christ's presence in our lives now and alert to the coming day when all things will be made new. Along with this are three activities to keep hope alive: waiting, watching and working. Many of us wonder why God doesn't fix all the things that are wrong with this world. Pastor says that question really needs to be, "Why haven't you done something?" "Why haven't I done more to fix the mess? What am I waiting for?" We are not supposed to stand around waiting for Christ's return. We need to be working to make a difference. We need to watch out for those people or things that tempt us to sin. We mustn't be deceived into thinking it's okay because everyone else is doing it. We know that only Jesus's words are the ones we should listen to. Our best defense is a good relationship with Jesus. A good activity is to sit down in a quiet place, place your hand on the Bible and listen for Jesus to talk to you. Part of our job is to proclaim Christ to others. It is our work along with serving -others. Pastor reminds us that there will always be chaos and catastrophe. That is a good reason to be watchful and aware. We are called to keep working until the end. We may not know when the end is coming, but we do know who is coming.



Pastor blesses the 31 quilts that the Piecemakers finished for the Love All Our Kids project. There is also a good showing for the other part of the project: nightlights, stuffed toys, flashlights and games. These will be delivered this week. We hope this will help a child through a scary time.



The Echoes December 2020

Inside: Parking lot completion
Outreach activities
Ready for rain, clean gutters
Servant of the Month: Elaine Isert

Emanuel Lutheran Church
Our Mission: To share Christ's unconditional love with everyone.

December

The Echoes reminds us of the activities of the past month. We remain involved in community affairs in spite of the pandemic.



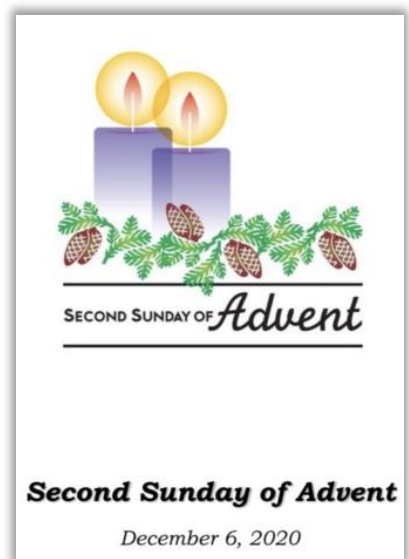
Paula and Arie were our liaisons to InterFaith, delivering our donations of food.

Because the Care Cupboard is currently closed, the Outreach Ministry decided to donate turkeys and other foods for a Thanksgiving meal to several of our Day Care families. Katie's Kitchen donated a \$30 gift card to Winco to help this project. Lisa and Susan volunteered to do some of the shopping.



Elaine Foxot, the chair of the Outreach Ministry, is our well-deserving Servant of the Month. Thanks to her leadership, outreach is alive and well at Emanuel.

The second Sunday in Advent finds us back in the Purple Tier for Covid. Pastor feels that because we have two services, those attending are able to spread out enough to be safe.





The second candle is the Love candle. It is lit by Pastor. Pastor reminds us of an old hymn that says, "Love came at Christmas time."

The lessons are read by Kathleen (early service) and Dan (late service).

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark.



The message today is about love being born at Christmas time. These words come from a poem by Christina Rossetti. Pastor says that since the scripture lessons this week came from ancient poets, it seems appropriate to quote another poet. Today's lessons also have to do with building a pathway meant to call us to a deeper preparation.

Pastor quotes another poet, Mary Oliver, for today's question: "What are you going to do with your wild and precious life?" Pastor recently read an article about Oliver, saying she is a poet for Corona times. Pastor feels that this question connects to John the Baptist's "Repent" and Isaiah's "Prepare the way of the Lord." According to Oliver's poem, "Wild Geese," you don't have to be good all the time or walk through the desert, repenting. Pastor states that this might seem to be the opposite to what John the Baptist is saying. In her experience, Pastor has found that people either ignore repenting or spend all their time repenting, convinced they will never be good enough. According to Oliver, we only need to love what we love. Pastor reminds us that what we love is God who is love. Love, at Christmas, came in the form of the baby Jesus. Because we believe that God loved us enough to become human and to die for us, walking through the wilderness becomes manageable. Our

trip through the wilderness, which is a metaphor for life, has a purpose: to prepare the way for the Lord, to prepare the way for love.

John the Baptist was frustrated with the way the people were behaving. His response was to yell out, "Repent!" John embodies all that is old: threats and dangers. Jesus embodies all that is new: love and grace. The original question was What are you going to do with your wild and precious life? Pastor tells us that the path that we prepare is not so that we will have an easier life, but to prepare a path for us to walk with Jesus. The obstacles that we remove make it easier to get closer to Jesus and to help others to come closer, too. We need to decrease all that is negative and increase that which is positive.



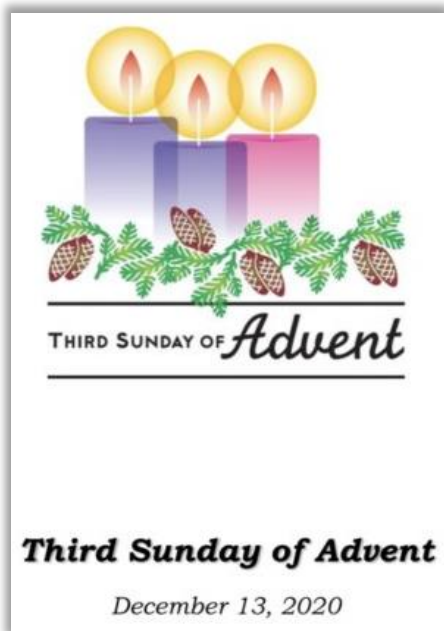
Pastor reminds us that when God is through with us, he will take us home. Until then we have work to do. It is our job to bring others to God by the example of our walk with Jesus.

This week Mike recorded the communion liturgy and consecration of the elements, so that those at home have an appropriate Communion service.

The bread and wine are blessed for those in church and for those of us at home.



The service ends with the blessing as Pastor makes the sign of the cross. We continue to do the best we can under the circumstances. We find hope in our belief that love was born at Christmas time.



The third Sunday of Advent is here. Pastor lights the Joy candle. Chuck reads the lessons.



Those who feel safe worshipping in the sanctuary are able to have a full service. For those who feel safer worshipping at home, Pastor records the Gospel and her sermon in her office. This is then linked to the communion liturgy for Advent.



We light our own Advent wreath, set up our own altar, as we sit back and rejoice that we have technology.



The Gospel today is the story of John the Baptist. He confesses that he is not the prophet nor the Messiah. He claims only to be a voice crying out that the Lord is coming.

Pastor begins the sermon talking about all the different kinds of medicine we might take: blood pressure, heart disease, depression or the flu vaccine. Hopefully, soon we will have a vaccine for the Covid virus. Medicines can help rescue us from our human frailties. Pastor says that she's thankful we have medicines to help us, but she indicates that "rescue" during Advent has another dimension.

We are told in 1 Thessalonians to "Rejoice always." This is the other theme in Advent today: joy from rescue. Joy is felt in anticipation of the Jesus's birth. He is the only one who rescues us from sin and death, the only one who brings a smile to body, spirit and soul, the only one who makes us whole and holy. Pastor says that right now we could use some joy. Everywhere we look there are joy robbers. She says that commercials try to tell us that if we have the right medicine or the right new car

or gadget, then we will feel the joy of the season. Pastor suggests we put the happy face mask away and think about the joy we get from true deliverance or rescue from



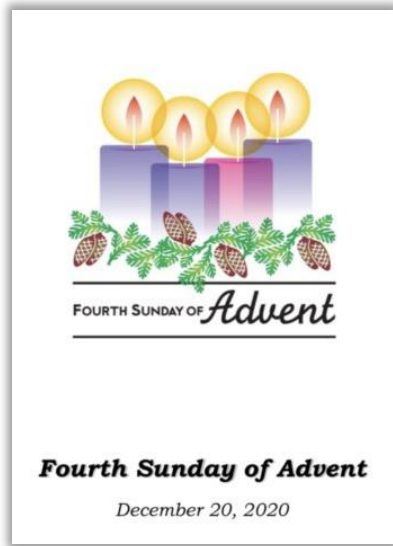
our Savior born on Christmas. Isaiah tells the Israelites who have just come out of exile that life is still going to be hard, but to put on party clothes and go out in the streets with a song of joy. Pastor says that's good, but this year not possible: no caroling, no silver bells on the corners.

Last week, John the Baptist told us to repent and clear a path for the Lord. In other words, get rid of the clutter that blocks the way to our hearts. We need to make it easier for Jesus to show us the way and to help us show others the way. This week we learn who John is and his purpose and who Jesus is and his purpose. In John's Gospel, John the Baptist is a sign pointing to Jesus, but Jesus is also a sign pointing to God. The Jewish leaders question John and he serves as a witness to the light of Christ. Pastor wonders how effective we would be if we were called to be a witness to our faith. Would we use the favorite Lutheran disclaimer: "They will know we are Christians by our love."?

Pastor reminds us of the practice of a Jubilee year when all debts were cancelled and prisoners were set free. This brought about the joy of deliverance. Pastor then reminds us that we don't have to wait for a Jubilee year. God delivers us every minute of every day. This is how we can "rejoice always." Our path will likely not be straight, but more like a spiral, but Jesus walks with us. That path will lead to the heart of God. We can put away our smiley face on a stick and rely on God. He will put us together, body, soul and spirit. He will give us the words to witness to others. He will show us how to rejoice always.



*On Wednesday, we have the fourth and final virtual Advent session using the book *Incarnation* by Adam Hamilton. We have enjoyed being able to do this since evening services were not possible this year.*



The fourth Sunday in Advent has arrived, only a few days left until Christmas. What a year this has been. There are still two services for those who feel safe to worship in the Sanctuary and Pastor's sermon and communion liturgy online for those who do not.



The altar is beautiful. The fourth candle, the Peace candle, is lit.



At home, we also light the fourth candle.





Chuck reads the lessons. Pastor reads the Gospel from Luke. If we worship from home, we may listen to her sermon, prerecorded from her office.

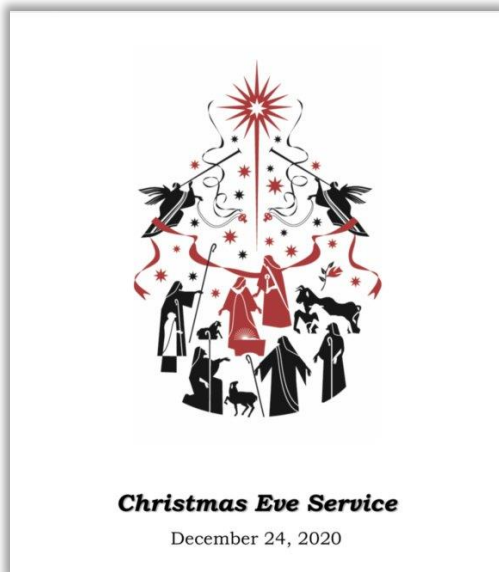


Pastor says her goal is to keep the message today simple. She says that she asked the Text Study group to come up with one word to define the Annunciation.

Their words included miraculous, faithful, mystery, fulfillment, incredible, perplexing and accepting. A phrase from the gospel that caught the attention of Dan was an "obedience of faith." Pastor liked that phrase, too. Pastor states that all these words fittingly describe the event that took place between the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, and that this connects to the Peace candle. The peace of Advent is not so much the absence of conflict or war in the world, but what God intends peace to be, a way that leads to understanding how God operates. It is one that passes all human understanding, but is perfectly understandable in a miraculous, mysterious, incredible, perplexing, fulfilling way. A better word for that peace is "Shalom." It is defined as a state of fullness and perfection. It is an overflowing of an inner and outer joy and peaceful serenity. It causes us to be in harmony with all creation. Offering shalom to someone is to wish them to be filled with a complete and perfect state of mind and well-being. When shalom (and also with you) is offered back, a blessing occurs. True shalom leads to an acceptance of faith which naturally leads to an obedience of faith. This is why Mary was able to say yes to the angel. She was curious, but she was not afraid. If God willed it, she would do it. Mary found favor with God, not because she was without sin, but because he knew she was grounded in the faith she had been given and would do as he said. God favored the world by

becoming human in the form of Jesus. He went even further and died for us in the person of Jesus. What more can he do?

There is a link to the communion liturgy for those of us at home. We can receive the body and blood of our Lord and Savior in our living rooms as well as in the Sanctuary.



Christmas Eve services are at 5:00 and 7:00. Pastor's sermon is also posted on line. During the week, she distributed communion packages to anyone who requested one. The Christ candle is lit and Chrismons are added to the tree.





The lessons are read including the Gospel of Luke telling of the birth of Jesus and the reaction of the shepherds.

Christmas Eve is here at last, and it's quite different this year. Pastor says that this sermon is recorded in her office at home. She indicates that she realizes that it does not look anything like the Sanctuary will look on Christmas Eve. She says that wherever we worship this night that she wishes for the peace of God to be in our

hearts and in our minds. Pastor reminds us that Christmas, this year, may look different, but the Christmas story is exactly the same as always. That is good news! She hopes that perhaps this Christmas will be received with greater clarity. Pastor indicated that there were plenty of "bells and whistles" that first Christmas: twinkling stars, a bright moon, a convergence of planets, trees that clapped their hands and mountains that broke into singing. Of course, there was the angel chorus that surprised both the shepherds and sheep. Pastor wonders why the shepherds were the first to hear the story. Why not those with more influence? Pastor says that we need to remember that Jesus, the great Shepherd, came into the world for everyone, regular, ordinary people as well as kings. The baby was God's gift to all people. Pastor says to picture the sheep being guarded by the "night shift," many just boys armed with staffs or sling shots. She wonders what the sheep must have thought when suddenly an angel showed up. Maybe they began to praise God in sheep language. The shepherds were terrorized, but the angel said not to be afraid. God knew that the shepherds would pay attention and would be good evangelists, telling everyone what they had seen and heard. Pastor says that no matter what mistakes we have made, the baby is for us, for her, for everyone, for all creation. Pastor says that she reread some of Martin Luther's Christmas sermons. He said whatever job God gives us, we should do to the best of our ability. He said better to be a shepherd given the job of tell everyone about Jesus than to be a saint or a king. Pastor indicates that whatever our fears are this year of the pandemic, Jesus can handle it. He can free us from all our fears. He was born for the whole world. Jesus belongs to all of us. And we belong to him. We are called to be joyful wherever we worship tonight. We need to repeat the sounding joy, the wonders of his love. Repeat! Repeat! Repeat!



*As candles are lit,
Barbara plays
magnificently the
beautiful hymn. All sing
the familiar words:*

*Silent night, holy night.
All is calm. All is bright.*

Of course, all of those who worship at home miss this, but we are able to hear Pastor's sermon online. She also distributed communion packets to all who requested them earlier in the week.



It is the first Sunday of Christmas and the last Sunday of 2020. As is our tradition, this is a service of lessons and carols.



Pastor give a brief message which is later posted online. The gospel today tells of the time that Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple for the rights of purification. Here we hear the testimonies of Simeon and of Anna. Both had been promised by God that they would live to see the Messiah.

Pastor reminds us that we heard the birth story on Christmas Eve, the one with the shepherds. She tells us that we know very little about Jesus as a child. Normally at this service, there would not be a message, but Pastor says that she would like to give us some things to think about between now and Epiphany.

The gospel story today emphasizes the fact that Jesus was Jewish and was taught to obey the laws of Moses. In this lesson, we see a religious ritual. Pastor says that many religious rituals seem to have been left behind. She asks if we can remember a favorite religious ritual.

Pastor also indicates that Luke, the writer of today's Gospel, liked to use parallel examples. The first is the practice of circumcision when a male child was eight days old and the presentation of that child to the temple when he was 40 days old. Both were forms of purification. A second example is the use of senses: hearing and seeing. The shepherds heard and then saw. Both Simeon and Anna recognized Jesus as the Messiah when they saw him. Pastor says that the what she finds interesting is that the shepherds saw and then believed. Simeon and Anna believed and then saw.

Pastor says that Simeon's song is often used in compline or the liturgy used before going to bed. She asks what we see when we are ready to go to sleep. Do we see work undone: dirty clothes on the floor, a sink full of dishes, piles of paper work? Pastor says that Martin Luther would say that ordinary things help us to see God's salvation. In communion we see God's salvation in bread and wine, two ordinary things. The shepherds, Simeon and Anna saw salvation in the face of a tiny baby.



Pastor asks us where we are in our belief. Have we seen enough to believe or are we still waiting to see more? Have we seen enough to believe and tell others like the shepherds did? Pastor asks us to ponder on the differences between the shepherds' story and Anna's story. The shepherds were new to belief; Anna had believed her whole life. Pastor challenges us to look with new eyes this week at the story.

Epilogue

This has certainly been a strange year, not at all what we expected it to be. We are fortunate at Emanuel that few of our members caught the Covid virus, and no one who did has died from it. We look forward to the new vaccine that has been developed being available to all of us. We all want to feel safe enough to return to worshipping in the Sanctuary. Most of us realize that we will never return to the normal that we were used to. Many of us have learned that what we once considered a necessity is no longer important. We have learned to Zoom, order groceries online, have coffee together via the phone. I truly hope that we have learned to treasure relationships and to stay connected, whether with family or friends. In many ways this year has been a blessing. We have learned that the church is not just a building. It might be a parking lot or a computer screen. A visit from the Pastor might take place from the end of the sidewalk. Outreach can continue, even if the work is done by individuals, alone in their homes. I have been amazed at the sense of humor that the world has maintained in spite of all the changes forced upon us. I used to say, "Nothing scares me. I used to teach junior high." From now on I'll say, "Nothing scares me. I survived 2020."

