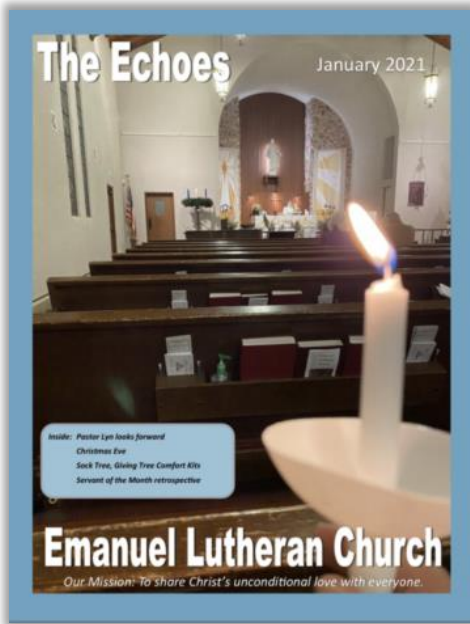


*The Year in Review*  
*January 1-December 31, 2021*  
*Forward Anew*

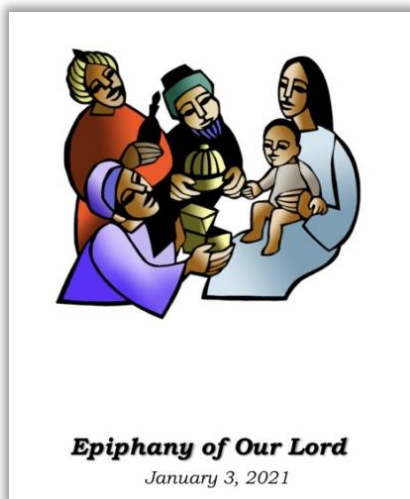


*Emanuel Lutheran Church*



## January

*In the Echoes we read about the activities of the past month. Rather than a Servant of the Month, there is a reminder of all the servants for the past year.*



*We are still in the midst of the pandemic. The situation is still critical. While there are services in the sanctuary, many still worship at home. Sadly, there is currently no communion online, but there is Pastor's sermon.*

*Today's Gospel tells the story of the visit of the Magi, outsiders from the East. In her sermon Pastor indicates that the most important part of this story is that after these Magi, outsiders, not Jews, had followed the star, gotten lost and had to check in with King Herod, found the baby Jesus and left their gifts, they went a different way home. It's this different way that caught her attention. They didn't just avoid returning with directions to King Herod, but they were most likely changed forever. She believes they returned to their own land with the exciting news that they had seen the son of God. She says that when we realize*



*that we have seen the son of God, we will be changed, too. We will be compelled to tell our story like the Magi.*

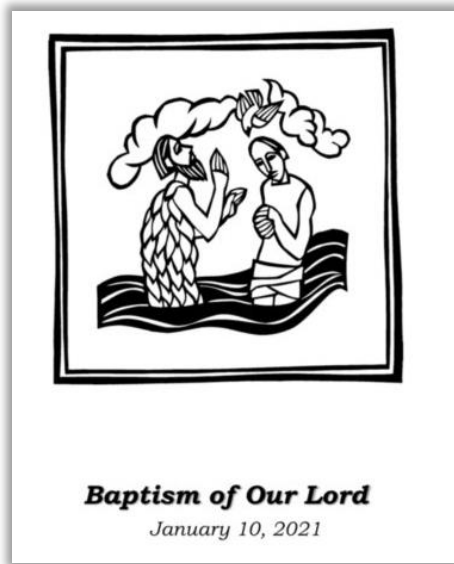
*This Sunday was also saw donations for Food for Faith.*



*Monday, January 4, the Outreach Ministry meet and come up with two new projects. Whereas quilting will be an ongoing project, we are now going to add new or gently used stuffed toys to our donations to the Modesto Police Department with each quilt. Suzanne is asked to make a box that will be put in the Narthex, beginning January 10, for these donations. Of course, Luci is called upon to inspect the finished product.*



*The second project is to collect gifts for Valentine Gift Bags that will be donated to Family Promise. Again, Suzanne is asked to create a donation box for these items. It will be put in the Narthex beginning January 17.*



*January 10, we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. Nothing has changed yet, but we look forward with great hope that the vaccine that is now being offered will soon be available for all of us. In the meantime, we worship in small services in the sanctuary or listen to Pastor's sermon in our homes.*

*Chuck reads the lessons for the inside service.*

*In the Gospel we learn that John's baptism was one of repentance. He also predicts the coming of the Messiah who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. In the sermon, Pastor shares that*



*we are all familiar with how the Bible begins. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." She says, however, that a more accurate translation of the Hebrew would be "When God began to create the heaven and the earth." She relates that when this happened, there*



*was already something. God made life out of what already existed. He transformed chaos so that life could exist.*

*God spoke and made order out of chaos. There is tremendous power in God's voice. Chaos is no match for the power that comes to us through baptism. Jesus was baptized for the sake of our salvation. He is publicly infused with the Holy Spirit. We see his faith so that we will know that we are given the faith of Jesus.*

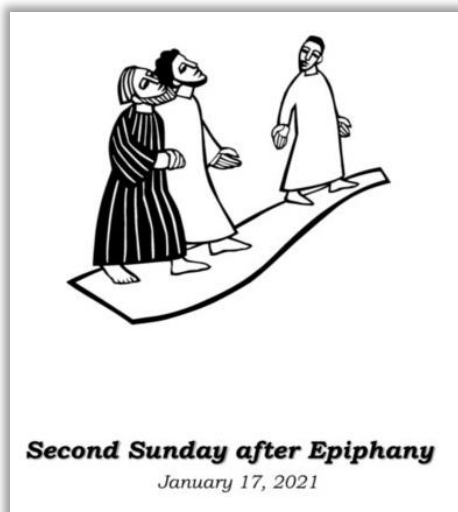


*God takes chaos and turns it into a place where all life can thrive. We do not need to fear chaos; we are baptized.*

*Lydia Circle/Monday Bible Study continues to meet safely. This week they surprised Barbara with a party for her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.*



*Leah Circle prefers to use Zoom for their meetings.*



*The middle of January and most of us are still staying home, but for those who are comfortable with an indoor service, there are services at 9:30 and 10:30.*



*The altar paraments change to green.*

*Kathleen reads the lessons at the early service.*



*Pastor records the Gospel and her sermon for Mike to post online for those who worship at home. Today's Gospel according to John is the story of the calling of Phillip and Nathanael. When Phillip tells Nathanael that he has met the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, Nathanael asks, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" This causes Jesus to greet him by saying that Nathanael is an Israelite without deceit. Nathanael asks him, "Where did you get to know me?"*

*Pastor begins the sermon by reminding us that all the lessons today were about being called by God. God called Samuel three times before he's given the correct response by Eli. The fourth time God calls him, he responds. God doesn't give up on calling us. Pastor says that there is no getting away from God. We are reminded by the Psalm that God has authority over our whole life. When Jesus tells*

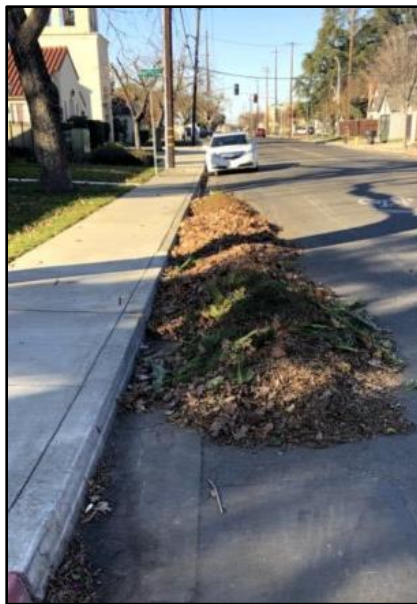


*Nathanael that he was someone who was honest, Nathanael wonders how Jesus knows him. Jesus responds that he saw him sitting under a fig tree.*

*Jesus asks of us: Do you know me because of what you've heard or what you've seen me do? Will you follow my example? "Sitting under a fig tree" was a Jewish expression meaning someone who was doing some deep thinking. Pastor suggests that we might want to do some pondering about what we can do to serve God.*



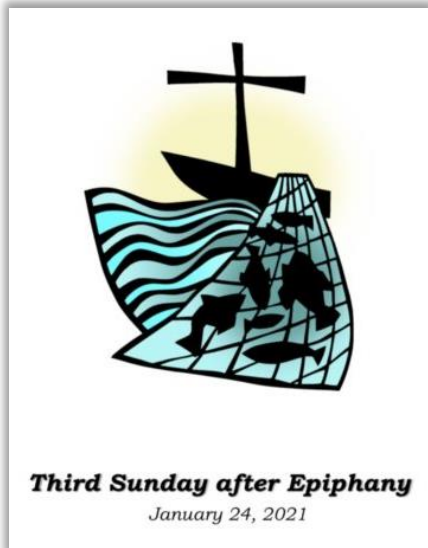
*Donations are coming in for the Modesto Police Department and Family Promise.*



*Dennis has almost every leaf raked up and in the street for pick up. Tom has pruned the rose garden insuring that there will be roses all spring and summer.*



*This week Rebecca Circle met via Zoom for the first time.*



*We are almost to the end of January. There are still two services offered in the sanctuary and Pastor's sermon online. The Gospel today is from Mark and tells of the calling of Peter and Andrew, James and John. Pastor begins by remembering a poem by Robert Browning that begins*

*Grow old with me;  
The best is yet to be.*

*It makes her think of Jesus saying, "Follow me; the best is yet to be." She remarks on how much that "Follow me." changed the lives of those disciples. She assures us that if we follow Jesus, it will change our lives, too. She also wonders if those disciples had any idea of the cost of discipleship. She tells us that Scripture is in real time. There is no time to waste.*

*According to Pastor, repenting and believing is an ongoing activity. It isn't something we only do once. Repenting is an acknowledgement of "I can't." It's not a matter of telling God, "I'm sorry. I'll do better." We cannot do better by ourselves. Only God can help us be better.*





*Repenting changes our attitude from certitude to trust.*

*Pastor contrasts the reluctance of Jonah from the Old Testament lesson to do God's will with the way the disciples responded, immediately leaving their nets behind to follow Jesus. Pastor informs us that the word "follow" literally means "to come behind." All else in our lives must come after Jesus. We may think of this as a sacrifice. Sacrifice, Pastor says, is giving up something valuable for something even more valuable. Being caught in God's net is being caught in love. This will mean a new life.*

*Pastor suggests that we need to invite others in a way that shows how excited we to serve God.*

*The Sanctuary Arts Committee has ordered two sets of new banners. The green ones are given by Dennis and Marti in memory of Marty's brother. The white ones are given by Pat and Jack in memory of their grandson Carson. These will be dedicated soon.*



*The congregation gets to see them on Sunday, January 31.*



**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**  
January 31, 2021

*Thank you, Pastor and Mike, for making Pastor's sermons available online for those still waiting for safer times. Many of the older members are beginning to get Covid vaccinations. Hopefully, we will all feel safe to return to inside services.*

*The Gospel today is from Mark. Jesus enters a Synagogue on the Sabbath and teaches with authority. This astounds all who hear him. He is interrupted by an unclean spirit calling out to him. Jesus immediately bids the spirit to leave the*

*man. This further astounds those who are present.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by quoting a familiar phrase: No good deed goes unpunished. She says that no one knows for sure who originated this statement. What it means is that sometimes an act of kindness can backfire. For example, Jesus's good deeds eventually lead to his death. Pastor reminds us that physical and spiritual darkness are in constant battle against the light. Evil and good are always engaged in battle. She acknowledges that there are lots of things trying to pull us into the darkness. We must constantly be on guard. Moses warned the ancient Israelites against false prophets. We, too, can be confronted with false prophets.*

*Today's Gospel story is one of restoration. We see good versus evil; holy versus unholy. Pastor states that Mark's Gospel is short and to the point. He often uses interruptions in his narrative. Jesus is interrupted by the unclean spirit. Pastor wonders what an unholy spirit was doing in the temple. Was he a regular? Did he not look different from the others? Did the ushers fail to do their job? Pastor says that in Bible times what would now be a treatable disease such as epilepsy might have seemed like the person was controlled by an unclean spirit. She indicates that*



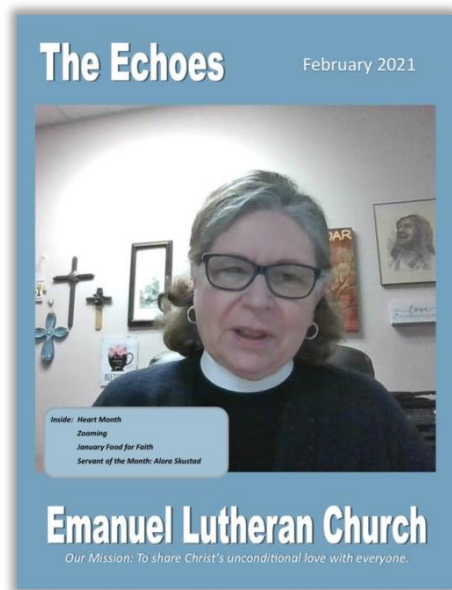
Pastor Lyn Crase

*Jesus was never afraid to get up close and in the face of an unholy spirit. He wasn't afraid to deal with it.*

*She reminds us that Jesus had the power to heal those demons then, and he has the power to heal them now.*

*Pastor challenges us to think how we would react to someone who might come into Emanuel to worship, someone who doesn't look like us or dress like us.*

*Pastor assures us that evil cannot stand in the presence of good. It may put up a vigorous fight, but it cannot win. She reminds us, as the psalmist says, to stand in awe of the Lord because that is the beginning of wisdom.*



## *February*


*The February Echoes reminds us all that Emanuel is alive and well in spite of the pandemic.*

*The Servant of the Month is Alora. Alora is one of our young adult members who has been an active outreach minister for several years. In addition to her "Bags of Love," gifts for children who are cancer victims, she also "adopted" a family with five children and helped make their Christmas special. She also made cookies for the nurses and first responders at Doctors Hospital, and made port pillows and heating packs for oncology patients.*





*Thank you, Alora.*



**Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**  
February 7, 2021

*It is the first Sunday in February. The Emanuel family has been donating so that the Outreach Ministry can deliver Valentine gift bags to the Family Promise guests. Good job, Emanuel!*





*The Gospel for this Sunday is from Mark. Pastor reads that everywhere Jesus goes, he is sought out to heal, and he does. He also seeks out a deserted place to pray. It isn't long before the disciples find him. Jesus tells them that they need to go to other villages so he can heal more people and*

*spread the good news of God's kingdom.*

*Pastor says she has never celebrated Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday in a wild and joyous style. Now, Lent is only 10 days away. Pastor can understand why we might be tempted to do some joyous celebrating on Mardi Gras since this whole past year has seemed like one long Lenten season.*

*In the Gospel story last week, we learned that Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath. The religious leaders were scandalized. Jesus didn't worry who he scandalized if he helped someone. This week, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law. It is still the same Sabbath. Pastor indicates that neither of these healings seems to have depended on the faith of the one healed. The faith is on the part of Jesus. Pastor reminds us that it's not our job to save the world, just to tell others about Jesus.*

*Pastor also reminds us that the scriptures indicate that Jesus healed many, but not all. We have no idea why.*

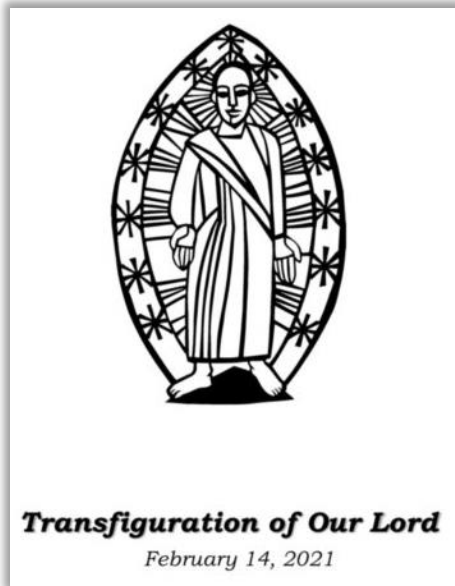
*The second part of the Gospel talks about Jesus going alone to a dark and deserted place to pray. Pastor acknowledges that many of us may feel we are sometimes in a dark place, both physically and emotionally. She reminds us that whenever we feel confronted by dark places, Jesus has already been there and conquered them. Jesus even went as far as entering hell to shatter the darkness.*

*Jesus came to love, heal and restore. We are called to do the same.*



*We continue to collect Quilt Buddies that will be donated with the children's quilts to the Modesto Police Department.*

*The Piecemakers held their first virtual meeting to decide the direction they wanted to take this year. The emphasis will be on children's quilts for the MPD.*



*February 14, is the Transfiguration of Our Lord Sunday. The altar is dressed in white, and the new white banners, donated by Pat and Jack in memory of their grandson Carson, are dedicated.*



*At the early service, Marsha reads the lessons and the psalm. At late service, Matthew and Rebeca join Grandma Lois to read the lessons.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel and her sermon from her office, and Mike posts it online as soon as he can. The Gospel, according to Mark, is the familiar story of the Transfiguration. Jesus has taken Peter, James and John with him to the mountain. There the disciples see Jesus, now wearing clothes whiter than bleach could possibly make them and with his face shining, meeting with Moses and Elijah. Not knowing what else to say, Peter offers to build three shelters, one for each. They are amazed when they hear the voice of God telling them that Jesus is his son and that they need to listen to him.*

*Pastor begins her sermon with the words of a once-popular folk song that said “the times they are a-changing.” She assures us that times have been changing since the beginning of time. They changed for Elisha when he crossed the*



*Jordan River with Elijah and watched him disappear in a fiery chariot. They changed for the disciples when they saw Jesus transfigured. They have changed for us during this pandemic. The question is what are we to do when the times are changing? Pastor says the answer is the same one given to the disciples on the mountain: “Listen to Jesus.”*

*Pastor tells us that listening is an art. We believe that faith comes through listening. Sometimes we need to listen to the silence. How can we listen? How can we hear each other? Pastor says it's with the eyes and ears of faith. Our job is to listen and then let our light shine for the world to see the glory of God.*

*The Outreach Ministry's new project is to provide Easter gift bags for Family Promise. The congregation has the opportunity to donate to this endeavor.*

*After the late service, the Council meets virtually. We all agree to keep our same offices and/or ministry assignments for the coming year.*



*Ash Wednesday arrives on February 17. Whereas there is no service for the imposition of ashes, Pastor does provide a small bag with ashes and a devotion to go with it. We can make the sign of the cross on our*

*foreheads at home. There will be no soup suppers, no special projects, no evening service on Wednesdays this year. In just a couple of weeks we will mark one year of restrictions because of the pandemic. We still have many restrictions, but many of us are in the process of getting the vaccine. We look forward to a time in the not-too-distant future when we can begin to gather safely again. How we rejoice in that hope!*



*On Thursday, Rebecca Circle gathers for a Zoom meeting. Marty leads the Bible Study, Part 2, on Angels.*



*The exciting news this week is our techie, Mike, was able to live-stream the church service. This meant that those at home were able to participate in the full service from a safe place. Lent has begun. The theme for Lent this year will be covenants. The altar is dressed in purple. Even a home altar might use those colors.*





*Pastor welcomes us, and we do the opening liturgy. Kathleen reads the lessons. The Old Testament lesson tells the story of Noah and the ark. God makes his first covenant which is marked with the rainbow. God promises never to destroy the earth again by the waters of a flood. This covenant is made to every living thing: humans and animals.*



*The Gospel is Mark's version of the baptism of Jesus. Jesus sees the Holy Spirit descend upon him as a dove and hears God's voice, proclaiming him God's beloved son.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by saying she has baptized many babies and children, some young people and even a few adults. She once asked if a newly baptized child felt any different. The child replied, "My head's wet." She asks us what does happen next after the baptism. The service continues. Maybe there is a reception. Pastor reminds us that immediately following his baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, Jesus is driven out to the wilderness. There he is tested by Satan. We, too, receive the Holy Spirit at baptism and are immediately thrown back into the real world. With baptism comes a list of responsibilities, inside the church and outside. We are supposed to attend church, learn about God, take communion, show God's love to everyone, help justice and mercy prevail. We learn about God to be prepared to live in the world. Faith directs our words and actions. Pastor tells us that God does not cause bad things*

*to happen, but he allows them. However, he is always there, walking with us through everything. When we are tested, we can put into practice what we know about God.*

*Pastor tells the story of a seeker who asks a wise man how to become holy. The wise man says, "Two words." "What are they?" asks the seeker. "Right choices," responds the wise man. "How do I know if I've made a right choice?" asks the seeker. "One word," says the wise man, "growth." "How do I achieve growth?" the seeker asks. "Two words," says the wise man. "Wrong choices."*



*Wilderness times are opportunities for growth. God made a covenant between him and every living creature. God never goes back on his promises. God waits patiently for us to make right choices. Jesus chose the path to death, and God was with him. We have been tested by this past year. Pastor asks us to ponder the choices that we have made.*

*Following the sermon, the singing of the hymn of the day and the prayers, Pastor begins the liturgy for Holy Communion. She blesses the bread and the wine, both on the altar and those at home.*

*This is the body of Christ,  
broken and given for you.*

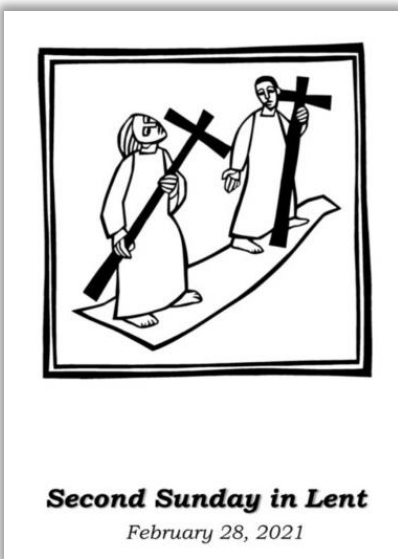
*This is the blood of Christ  
shed for you.*





*The blessing is extended to all, present in the sanctuary and worshipping at home. We receive the sign of the cross as Pastor blesses us that we may be a blessing to others.*

*We sing the final hymn. What a joy for those of us who have been worshipping at home to hear Barbara play.*



*The second Sunday in Lent and the end of February. We are just a couple of weeks away before we mark the first anniversary of the pandemic shut-down.*

*Some are comfortable being in the sanctuary and some more comfortable in their living room.*





*Wherever we choose to worship, Pastor welcomes us and wishes that we find inspiration in our service.*

*Pat reads the lessons.*



*The Gospel from Mark is read by Pastor. She indicates that what stood out to her is the importance of sight, not just physical, but sight that leads to understanding. Peter wanted Jesus to be one kind of Messiah, but it was not the way Jesus wanted. Jesus had to tell Peter to get behind him, maybe so he could better see Jesus and understand his way.*

*The Old Testament lesson tells of God's promise to Abraham to make him the father of nations. Abraham and Sarah were just ordinary people whom God used in an extraordinary way. Abraham had tried to make God's promise come true by having a son, Ishmael, with Sarah's maid Hagar, but this was not God's plan. When God was ready, Isaac was born, a son of Abraham and Sarah. God instructs Abraham to live in full view of God.*

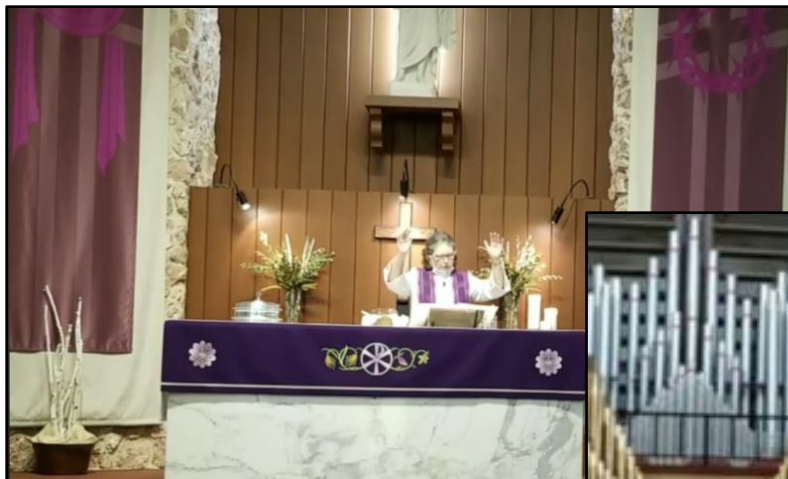


*Jesus instructs Peter and us to "Follow me." This means we are to let Jesus lead. It may not always be easy to follow Jesus. Jesus says that we are to deny ourselves, in other words to bend our will to his way. He also tells us that we are to take up our cross, in other words be ready to sacrifice in order to display our faith and bear the consequences. In that way we can follow him wherever he leads us. We can keep our eyes upon Jesus if we follow. Pastor tells us that the Bible tells us, "Fear not." 365 times. That's one for each day of the year.*

*Following the sermon and the hymn of the day, Pastor prays and then blesses the bread and the wine, both on the altar and those in our homes.*



*The body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ is given and shed for you.*



*The service ends with the blessing and the closing hymn.*



## *March*

*The Echoes talks about the new Outreach Ministry's project of Easter baskets for Family Promise. Laura, our Day Care Superintendent, has come up with the clever idea of an Easter tree with tags that have suggestions for gifts that are needed. We will have the whole month of March to fill these baskets.*

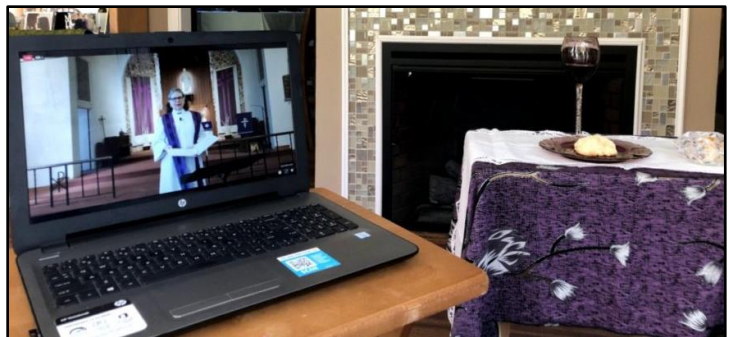


*The Echoes also has an article about a former member who grew up at Emanuel before moving away to take a teaching job. Jared was a contestant on Jeopardy on February 10. He ended up coming in second, but many of the congregation were thrilled to see someone they had known since he was a little boy. Garry Hayes posted on Facebook that he had taught Jared in Sunday school.*

*Paula is our well-deserved Servant of the Month. Paula has spearheaded the Piecemakers since the beginning.*



*The third Sunday in Lent has arrived. We still have two services in the Sanctuary, and one that is live-streamed on the church Facebook page for those who still worship at home.*





*Marsha reads the lessons which include the Ten Commandments from Exodus, Psalm 19 and 1 Corinthians.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel, according to John. In this passage, Jesus makes a whip of cords and drives the cattle and sheep out of the Temple and turns the money changers' tables over. He also tells the sellers of doves to take them out of God's house.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by asking if we have ever turned the tables on anyone or had the tables turn on us. She mentions that the first recorded use of that phrase dates back to 1634. Pastor uses the idea of turning over the tables as a metaphor for turning other things over. For example, Moses, Paul and Jesus turn over conventional wisdom and beliefs. She says that we need to turn our own tables over and rethink how we are going to do things.*



*Pastor reminds us that the Ten Commandments are a covenant, too. One of our Lenten themes is covenants. The first three are directed to God; the last seven are directed to us.*

*Finally, Pastor reminds us that God can be worshipped anywhere. She wonders what the post-pandemic church will be like. Will people return to Emanuel or not come back at all?*

*After the sermon, we have the prayers and Holy Communion.*



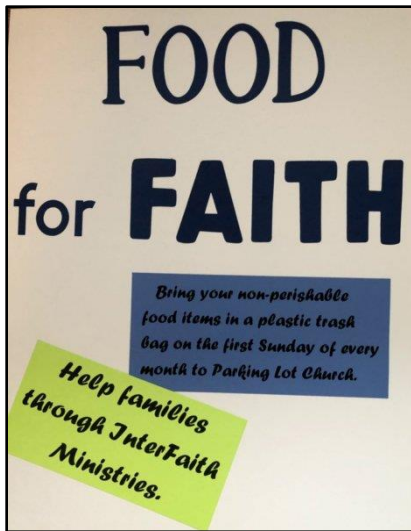




*We can receive the body and blood of our Lord at church or in our homes.*

*(Some churches have a church mouse; some have a church cat.)*

*The service ends with the blessing and the closing hymn.*



*This is the first Sunday of the month and donations were accepted. Susan was the Trunkmaster who delivered the food to InterFaith this week.*

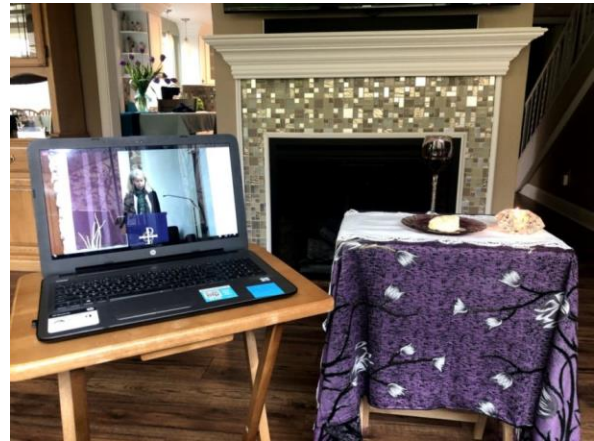
*We are already at the fourth Sunday in Lent. Stanislaus County just can't seem to get out of the purple tier, the most restrictive for the virus.*



**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

March 14, 2021

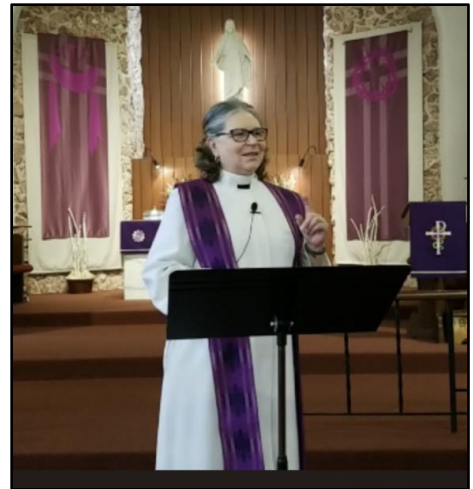
*But church goes on, whether in the Sanctuary or in our homes.*



*At the 9:30 service, Barbara reads the lessons. We learn from the Old Testament that snakes were sent to punish the Israelites for complaining against God and Moses, but God forgave them and healed them when they repented. In the New Testament, we learn that we have been saved by grace through faith, and that this is a gift from God, not something we can accomplish by good works.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel from John and compares the lifting up of the staff by Moses, so the Son of Man must be lifted up on the cross in order for the world to be saved.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by reflecting on some walks she has taken with Prince Gustavus (aka: Gus, the dog). She says that she has tried to notice if the people she passes are looking up or looking down. She found it interesting that most people were looking down, perhaps either because they didn't need to make contact with anyone or they wanted to make sure they didn't trip. She wonders how much we miss when we fail to lift our heads.*



*Pastor says there are several connections she could make between the Old and New Testaments, but she has decided to look at problems and solutions. The problem in the*

*text from Numbers is snakes! Pastor does not like snakes! She had a dream before she arrived at seminary that her room was covered with snake and mice. She made her brother check it out before she would move in.*

*The Israelites were whining in the wilderness. This resulted in snakes biting their ankles. They did realize then that they shouldn't be whining. Moses interceded for them, and God provided the solution: a bronze snake on a pole. Snakes down on the ground, a problem. Snakes up on a pole, a solution.*

*In the Gospel, the problem is humans on the ground. The solution is a human on the cross. Instead of our keeping our eyes on the Savior, we are too prone to keeping our eyes on the world that causes us to sin. We needed salvation, and that was provided by a human being, God's son, being lifted up on the cross.*

*If we are the problem, we can't be the solution. The solution has to come from outside ourselves. We are sinful and we need a Savior. Whereas the snakes in the wilderness were real snakes, they are also metaphorical, representing everything that keeps us discouraged and feeling unlovable and unsavable. Jesus tells us to give him all our "snakes," and he will take them to the cross. He has nailed those to the cross and erased them from our history. We need to look up and keep our eyes on the cross. Jesus did not come to the world to condemn us but to save us. That's all we need to know.*

*Pastor blesses the bread and the wine, that we may partake of the body and blood of our Lord.*





*We are invited to the table in both the Sanctuary and our homes.*



*The service ends as we receive the blessing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*



*This fifth Sunday of Lent finds us as we have been for a year now. There are still restrictions and guidelines due to the Covid-19 virus pandemic. The good news is that many of us have been able to receive the vaccine with many others soon to be able to get theirs. Church for the Emanuel family is still in person and online.*



*This week Pastor opened up both sides of the church to accommodate a larger group.*



*Pastor greets everyone and welcomes us to the service whether we are in the sanctuary or watching online at home.*



*We confess our sins and are assured of forgiveness in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

*Kathleen reads the lessons from Jeremiah and Hebrews. We hear of a new covenant that God will make in which he promised to write his law upon our hearts. In Hebrews we learn that because of his obedience, even unto death, Jesus is raised to the royal priesthood in the order of*

*Melchizedek. The Psalm tells of the joy of following God's law.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. In this chapter, Jesus relates that the only way a seed can produce is to die as a seed. He is explaining that the purpose of his coming is to die, so that others may be saved.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by saying that people are more skeptical than ever right now. They want to see that there is a God. Pastor asks us why we go to church and what we expect to see and hear there.*

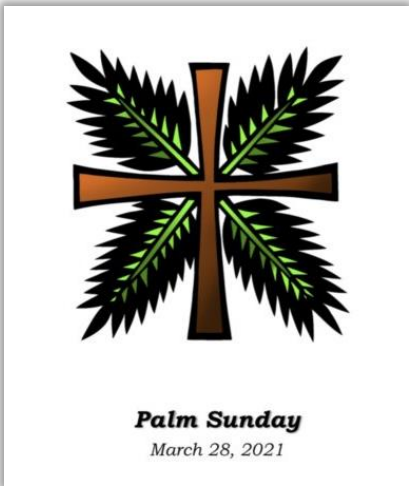
*The Lenten lessons this year have been about covenants. The covenants have dealt with community with creation, with the saints, with humanity, with Christ. In today's lesson, Jesus tells of his impending death. Crowds of people have been following him since Lazarus's resurrection. Gathering people, all people, is an important theme. Jesus came for the sick (sinners). The miracles were not enough to convince the people. It takes seeing Jesus on the cross. Pastor reminds us that there is no Easter without Good Friday.*



*Pastor indicates that Jesus said that he will “draw” all people to him. She says that this word in Greek is a harsh word. Walking with Jesus is not always easy, but God is always with us. God does ask us to keep our Baptismal promises. Loving others that are different is hard, but we must love our neighbor, no matter how different. When we do, we see Jesus.*



*Pastor prays, “Hear us, O God,” and we respond, “Your mercy is great.” Holy Communion follows the prayers. We are blessed and sing the closing hymn.*



*Palm Sunday has arrived. We are able to have two indoor services, but continue with the live streaming and then the recorded service posted online.*

*We are not able to process in, waving palm branches, but there are palms everywhere, and we can wave them from the pews during the opening hymn.*

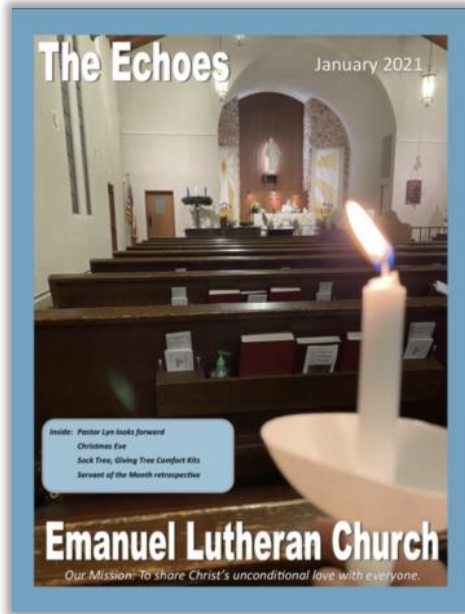
*As is the custom, the entire Passion story is read from the Gospel of Mark. There is no sermon today.*



*Dan, Chuck, Barbara, Lois and Kathleen are our readers*



*Marsha and Pat  
and Jack  
decorated their  
front doors for  
Palm Sunday.*



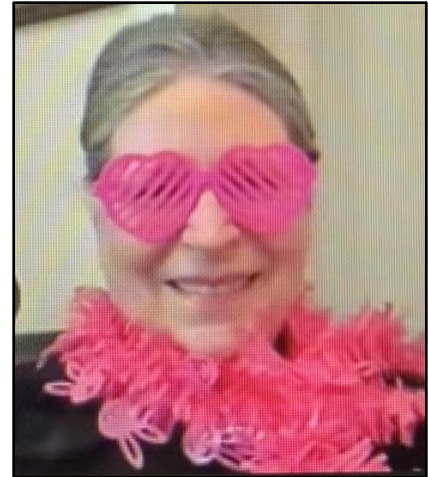
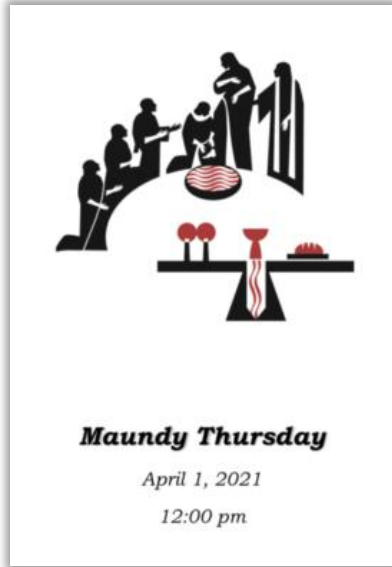
## *April*

*The Outreach Ministry assembles the Easter baskets for Family Promise. They have so many that they also take baskets to our over-90 members: Joyce, Barbara, Florence and Alice.*





*And for a special treat, they also give a basket to Pastor Lyn who models one of the gifts that she found.*



*Maundy Thursday service is at noon, but it is live streamed and posted on Facebook later in the day for those who will be worshipping at home. This service commemorates the last supper Jesus had with his disciples.*

*The service begins with the purple paraments still on the altar, but will end with the altar stripped.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John which tells the story of the Passover feast which is the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples. During this time, he washes their feet to teach them that they are to be humble like him and serve others. He tells them that he will be with them for only a short time. Then he reminds them that if they love one another, people will recognize them as his disciples.*

*In place of washing feet, it has been the custom the last few years to have the blessing of the hands. Pastor instructs us, whether in the sanctuary or at home to make the sign of the cross on our hands as she blesses them.*



*Pastor remembers those who have died this past year from the Covid-19 virus. The congregation is invited to light a candle for anyone whose memory they wish to honor.*



*This done, we begin the communion liturgy. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we partake of the body and blood of our Savior.*





*The service ends with the stripping on the altar. It will remain bare until church on Easter Sunday.*



*Kathy, Debbie and Paula are our Altar Guild team for this evening.*



*Good Friday service begins with Pastor reading the Gospel of John, beginning with Jesus and his disciples going to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, then the betrayal by Judas, the interrogation of Jesus by the Pharisees and then Pilate, and ending with the crucifixion and the laying of the body in the tomb.*

*Pastor begins her meditation with saying that we all know the story of Good Friday. She says that for many it's a sad day that they wish to ignore. But, according to Pastor, it's not the saddest day for Christians. That distinction goes to Ash Wednesday where we acknowledge the mortality of our earthly*

*bodies.*

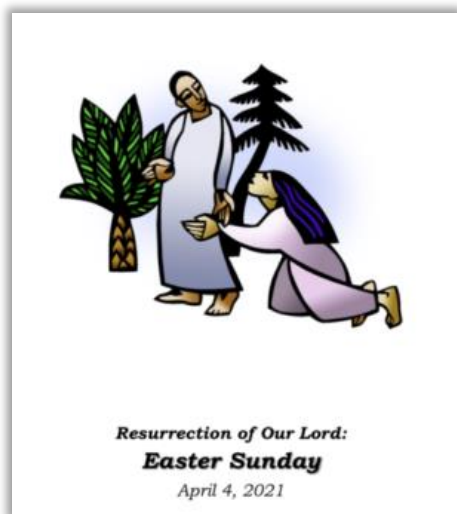
*Pastor tells us that this day is called "good" because of what Jesus did. Good because it means life for us. In this story just read, Jesus reveals his identity as the*

*man born for this day, the divine man, when he says, "I am he." Pastor describes Pilate as a ruthless man, a manipulator, a conniver, interested only in impressing Caesar. But, she says, he could also be reflective. He was intrigued by Jesus and wonders what is truth. However, he does not recognize the truth even when it is standing right in front of him.*

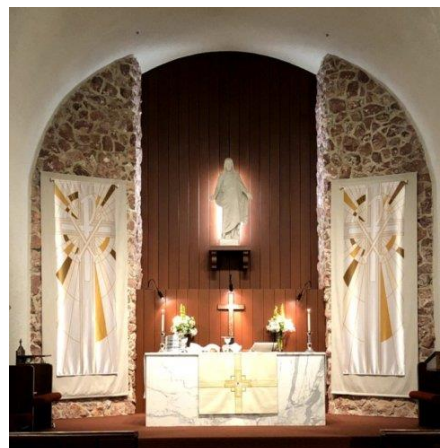
*Pastor says that for her, Good Friday is good this year because it has given her hope for a broken world. She suggests that we can help heal the world by telling someone that there is hope because Jesus gave his life for us. The world needs to hear that.*



*The congregation sings a hymn, and Pastor prays for all in need. We end with everyone praying the Lord's Prayer, and the blessing.*



*The bare altar is redressed. The new white paraments are beautiful and complement the new banners.*



*Easter Sunday begins with the glorious strains of “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today.” Pastor greets us by saying, “Christ is risen!” We respond, “He is risen indeed! Alleluia!”*



*The Confession is followed by the reading of the Scripture lessons for today. Rebeca and Matthew are our readers.*

*In Acts, Rebeca reads the story of Peter telling the story of Jesus dying on the cross and being raised from the dead on the third day. Peter*

*declares that God shows no partiality.*

*In Psalm 118, we all read the verse that says, “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”*

*In 1 Corinthians, Matthew reads Paul’s words that even he, a persecutor of the Christian church, can receive God’s grace.*



*Pastor reads John’s Gospel telling of that first Easter morning when Mary Magdalen finds the tomb empty and runs to tell Peter and the disciples. They also view the empty tomb and leave, but Mary, who stands weeping, is asked by two angels, “Whom are you looking for?” She replies that she is looking for where the body has been taken. At this point, she sees Jesus who also asks whom she is looking for. She replies that she is looking for Jesus and wants to know where the body has been taken. When he calls her by name, she finally realizes that Jesus is alive.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by saying often Pastors try to come up with a new angle to present the Easter story, but she says it's really not necessary. It's simple: Jesus lived. Jesus suffered. Jesus died. But he didn't stay dead. He rose and lives! This gives us hope that we, too, will live forever. Sadly, she says, that there are people who don't believe because they need to see with their own eyes the risen Jesus. She believes that Jesus understood that there would need to be proof. All of us doubt at times. According to Pastor, doubt is not the opposite of faith but an integral part of it. Faith grows when we seek to understand when we are doubting.*

*Pastor returns to the question that Jesus asks, "Whom are you looking for?" He had asked that same question when he was approached in the garden the night of his betrayal. He asks it now. He knew it would be a relevant question for all generations. Pastor wonders if we expected to see the risen Lord this morning. She assures us that the tomb is still empty.*



*Pastor prays for the church, the world and for us. Then we pass the peace. Because we are still using pandemic protocol, we can only wave to each other.*

*The Communion liturgy begins. Pastor blesses the bread and wine.*



*Then Pastor blesses us. We sing our last hymn while*



*Chris extinguishes the candles and carries out the cross. Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!*



*After the service, the four ladies who wore an Easter bonnet to church gather at the flower cross.*



*Thank you, Jeri, Joyce, Suzanne and Marsha for this festive gesture.*



*Dan welcomes us this Second Sunday of Easter. He tells us that Pastor Lyn is taking a few well-deserved days off so she can be rested, refreshed, restored, rejuvenated and all those other R's.*





*Lois reads the lessons. In the first lesson from Acts, we learn that in the early church all possessions were shared so that no one was in need. Psalm 133 speaks of how pleasant it is to live in unity. In 1 John, the apostle tells us that if we claim fellowship with Jesus, we must live in fellowship with others. He also tells us that all of us sin, but can find forgiveness in Jesus's sacrifice.*

*Kathleen reads the Gospel according to John. In it, we hear about the first time Jesus appears to the disciples when they were hiding behind locked doors. He tells them to look at his hands and side, so that they may believe. One of them, Thomas, wasn't there, but when the disciples tell him that Jesus is indeed risen, he declares he will not believe unless he can physically put his finger into the nail holes and his hand into his side. The next week, Jesus again appears to the disciples and calls Thomas to come and do as he had declared he must do. Thomas then acknowledges Jesus as Lord and God. Jesus says it's great that he now believes, but he commends all of us who believe without seeing.*



*Kathleen begins her sermon by reminding of us what a beautiful situation the early church was, all living in harmony, all giving everything they had to the apostles, who then distributed it as needed. She compares the infant church and its members to new parents who think their child is the most perfect child ever born. At first, it was perfect, but of course, that couldn't last.*

*We are all broken, Kathleen tells us, but it's what Christ came to do – heal brokenness. The Psalm that was read this morning is actually a prayer for healing and unity, not a reflection of the current times. It's a prayer for the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, to come back together.*



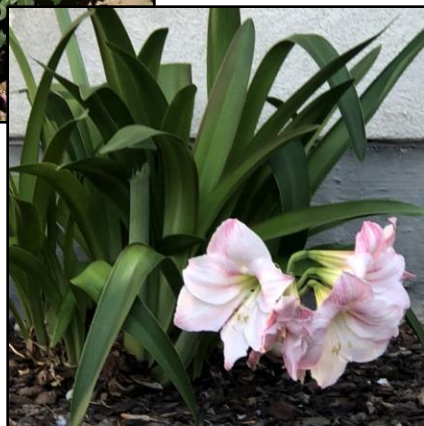
*Kathleen says that the reunion that we are talking about today is between the children of God. She says that when Jesus appears to his disciples that first time, they must have felt joy, shock, fear and shame, yet more joy as Jesus tells them, "Peace be with you."*

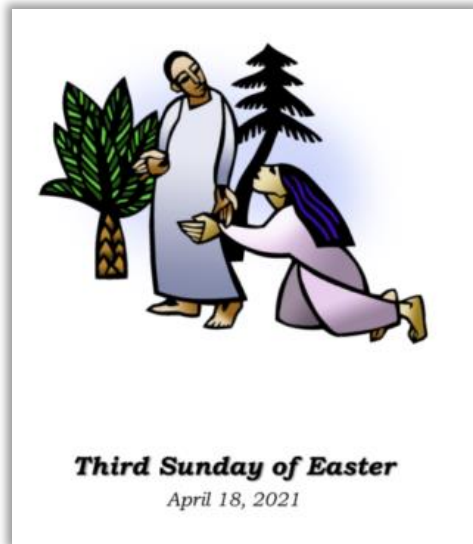
*This group of followers soon becomes the larger family that we read about in Acts. But as the family grows, that early perfection crumbles as they become contentious. Kathleen reminds us that in 1 John, we are told that all sin. We learn that if we confess our sins, we will be forgiven, and that this forgiveness is for the whole world. We all belong to the family of God, whether we look alike or even believe alike. We are family because we share a belief in the risen Lord.*

*The elements of the sacrament were consecrated last Sunday, so we are able to partake of the body and blood of our Savior.*



*The campus is beautiful, thanks to Debbie and Tom.*





*It is the Third Sunday of Easter, and we are told if we are fully vaccinated and feel comfortable, we may worship without wearing masks. What a joy that is! Most of the congregation meet that criterion. It is good to have Pastor Lyn back, too. She greets us and compliments Dan, Lois and Kathleen for the excellent job they did last Sunday.*

*Suzanne reads the lessons at early service. Matthew and Rebeca read them at the late service. In Acts, Peter and John are asked for alms, but Peter, invoking the name of Jesus, heals the man instead. The Psalm assures us that God is with us. The lesson from 1 John tells us that God loves us so much that he calls us his children.*





*Pastor employs a new way of presenting the Gospel. She tells it in her own words, like a story. It is the beloved story of Jesus appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. It is quite effective.*

*Her sermon begins with her telling us about how she and some other students in the seminary would get together each afternoon to talk about what they had learned that day. Often, they would walk as they talked about their classes that day. She said it was an important way to process all that they had learned. She likened this to the two disciples, probably*

*returning home after the crucifixion and the report that Jesus was risen. They walked and talked to process all of this astounding news.*

*Pastor says that now she walks and talks with Gus, the dog. She also keeps in contact with others through phone calls and Zoom, but it's not the same as walking and talking with trusted friends.*

*Pastor tells us that God only asks of us what we are capable of doing. Sometimes, we might not even be aware that we are capable, but God will supply the help of the Holy Spirit. We see this in the lesson from Acts when Peter is able to heal a man, lame for many years. He does this by the power that is in the name of Jesus. Next week, we will learn that Peter and John are arrested because of this, but they continue to do as God asks them.*



*Pastor asks us, "What are you capable of doing?" She says the answer is: Loving one another. She reminds us that the lesson from 1 John tells us that we can only get love right if we get sin right. We need to accept that we are sinners in need of forgiveness.*

*We are capable of doing far more than we realize because we do not walk, talk or share alone.*

*Following the hymn, Pastor prays for the whole church, the world and everyone in it. This is followed by Holy Communion.*



*This is the body of Christ.*



*This is the blood of Christ.*



*We receive the blessing and leave to enter the mission field and do whatever God asks us to do.*



*It is the Fourth Sunday of Easter. Stanislaus County is still in the Red Tier, so we are able to worship inside the Sanctuary. Now we are allowed to take off our masks if we have been vaccinated and feel comfortable in doing so. Pastor greets us.*





*Kathleen is our reader at the early service. In the first lesson from Acts, we learn that Peter and John have been arrested for healing the lame man, invoking the name of Jesus. They do not hesitate to rebuke the elders for being instrumental in Jesus's crucifixion. The Psalm today is the beloved 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. In the second lesson from 1 John, we are encouraged to love one another in action and deeds, not words, and that we will abide in Jesus and he in us, if we follow this commandment.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by saying that many of us probably know Psalm 23 by heart. But, she says, we need to "own" it. She indicates that David, the author, was a shepherd boy who became king. She also tells us that God, as a shepherd, was a common theme in ancient cultures. We are like helpless sheep, dependent on our shepherd.*

*The shepherd, unlike a hired hand, cared for the sheep. In today's world, there are many "hired hands" who care nothing for the sheep they try to attract. We need to be careful whom we follow.*

*And interesting note is that in Psalm 23, where it says,*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me*

*All the days of my life.*

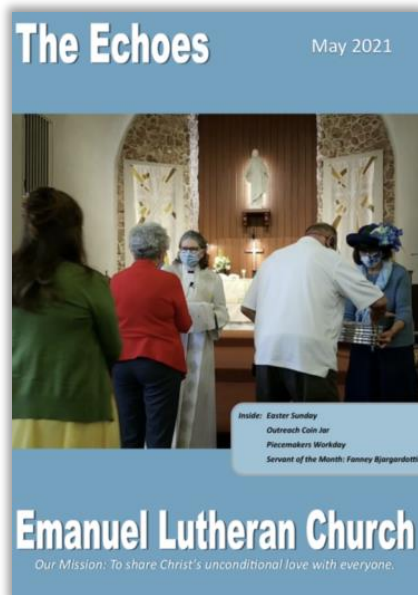
*the word follow actually should be translated pursue.*



*What can I do when problems are getting worse? Psalm 23 assures us that I shall not be in want. God knows what is best for us and that is Jesus. If we wonder what we might have that someone else might want or need, we can share Jesus because it's what we have. People need each other to help take of themselves.*



*The bread and wine are blessed for Holy Communion. We sing the closing hymn as the candles are extinguished. Then Chris leads the recession with the crucifix. The service is ended.*

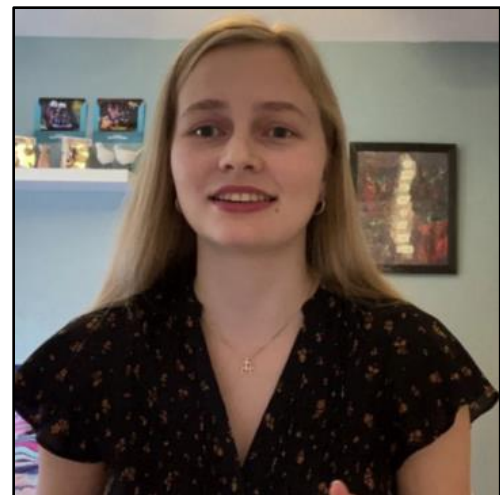


## *May*

*The Echoes recalls the Easter service.*

*Our Servant of the Month for May is Fannery. Fannery has been our youth representative on Council this past year. She not only has kept in touch with the youth of the congregation, but has also called many of our over-90 members. She graduated from Furlock High School this year and is headed for Yale University in the fall. Fannery has been a wonderful member of Emanuel, and we will miss her. We do wish her all the best in her new endeavor.*

*The Echoes also tells us that the Outreach Ministry continues to do amazing things, even during a pandemic.*





*Thanks to Chuck and Marilyn, the donations from the congregation are delivered to the Shower Shuttle.*



*The Piecemakers continue to meet and work on quilts. We are hoping to donate some of the quilts to immigrant children.*





**Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
May 2, 2021

*Suzanne reads the lessons at the early service, and Lois reads them at the late service. The first lesson is from Acts and tells the story of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Psalm 22 is a praise psalm. The second lesson is from 1 John. It reminds us that love is from God, and that those who abide in love, abide in God and God abides in them.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. In this text, Jesus reminds us that he is the vine, and God, the Father, is the vine grower. In order for us to flourish, we must abide in him. Then we will bear fruit.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by remembering an old Sunday school song that goes: "Love isn't love until you give it away."*





*Pastor indicates that the power of God's love is an important message today. So is the passing on of God's word. If we love someone, they, in turn, can share that love with someone else. It has a ripple effect.*

*Passing on the faith is a promise we make at every baptism. Pastor finds it sad that many people today fail to have their children baptized, or, at least, fail to follow through on the promises that they have made.*

*Pastor tells us that when people are in our presence, they are in the presence of God. There is power in both speech and action. Often evangelism takes place on a wilderness road. The eunuch from the lesson in Acts received the word from Phillip. He, then, was able to pass on the faith to the very core of the Ethiopian Court. Worship was important to him.*

*Pastor also tells us to remember that God is love. She says that if you believe in love, you believe in God. Our challenge this week is to engage with people that pop into our minds. We should then call them or go see them.*



*The service continues with the singing of the hymn of the day, the prayers and communion.*

*Finally, we are blessed and sent out to the mission field.*

*Mother's Day preparations:*



*The Outreach Ministry committee sponsored a workday to prepare gifts for Mother's Day. Some of our young people helped make cards for our over-90 ladies. They also helped tie ribbons around the flowers to hand out after church.*





*The service begins with Chris lighting the Christ candle. Pastor greets everyone, and especially all the mothers worshipping here today.*



*Chuck reads the lessons at early service and Chris reads them at the late service. In the first lesson the Holy Spirit is given to gentiles, whom Peter then baptizes. Psalm 98 is a praise psalm in which all of creation praises God.*



*In the second lesson, we are again reminded that God is love and all who believe love the children of God and obey God's commandments. We are also told that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth.*

*commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. We are also told that we are no longer servants, but friends.*

*Pastor begins the sermon with a reminder that today's lessons have been about love. Today is Mother's Day, and Pastor says that often we first learn about love from our mothers or a mother figure.*

*In the Gospel according to John, Pastor reads that Jesus gives his disciples the*



*God's love leads us to maturity and a better relationship with Jesus. She tells us that we will soon be entering the "green" season. This is a time we are meant to study and learn. God's story is part of our story, not a separate story.*

*The core message today is that God is Love. God loves us. There is nothing we can do about that but accept this truth. We did not choose Jesus. He chose us. He decided we are loveable.*



*Love in action is how we are to operate. We are able to do this because of the love God has instilled in us. Religious strife often comes from thinking that we know God best.*

*God died because of love. He rose to give us hope. He shares the Spirit that we may bear fruit. We have the freedom to choose whether or not to believe, but God already*

*believes in us. With God's strength, we can love others.*

*The service continues with the hymn of the day, the prayers, Holy Communion, the blessing and the final hymn.*

*After the service, the Outreach Ministry committee hand out carnations to every lady.*



*Alice and Joyce are thrilled to be recipients of this gift.*



*Rebecca Circle  
enjoyed lunch out. They  
are so happy to be able  
to meet in person.*



**Seventh Sunday of Easter**  
May 16, 2021

*This the seventh and last Sunday of  
Easter. Next week will be Pentecost, and the  
altar will be dressed in red. The new  
paraments and banners have been a  
wonderful enhancement to worship during  
the Easter season. Pastor greets us and  
welcomes any guests.*





*Today, we do have a special guest, Rev. Dianne Wendt is visiting. Many will remember when we were still in the call process, and Pastor Stan Niemi, the interim, had to resign due to health issues, we invited several seminary students and pastors waiting for a call to serve as pulpit supply. Pastor Dianne was one of the students who graciously agreed to come several times and serve as the presiding minister. Since then, she has been ordained and served her first parish. She is now waiting for a new call and was delighted to visit Emanuel once more.*

*In the first lesson today from Acts, we learn of the choosing of Mathias to replace Judas as an apostle. Psalm 1 assures us that those who have not walked in the way of the wicked, but have delighted in the law of the Lord, are happy. The second lesson from 1 John tells us that God gave us eternal life through his Son. Kathleen reads at the early service and Chris at the second service.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. This Sunday it is the high priestly prayer that Jesus prayed the last time he was with his disciples before his death. In it, he asks God, not to take them out of the world, but to protect them as they serve in it.*

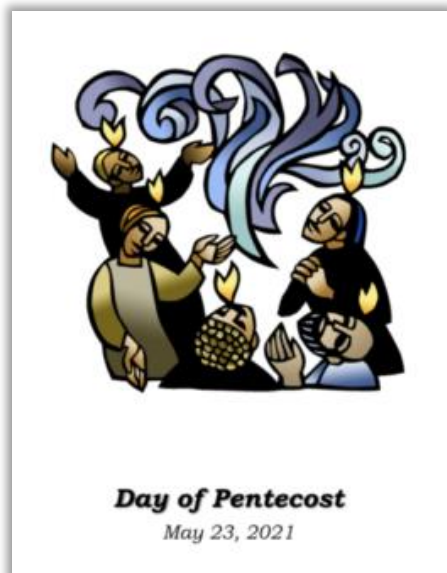
*Pastor begins her sermon by talking about the World Wide Web. She says that you can order a T-shirt or send a message to a cousin. It can be a wonderful thing or something dangerous.*

*Pastor tells us that the world was on John's mind in the Gospel lesson for today. The word world is mentioned 12 times in this scripture. She says that the world is the round sphere where we live. We belong to the world, but we are not of it. It is where we have activities among people.*

*In John 17, Jesus prays for himself, for his disciples and for the future church's mission. We are the community for whom Jesus prays. Where Jesus is, is where we are to be. God gives to Jesus and to us. He delights in giving, and we benefit, receiving love, mercy, forgiveness.*

*Our job is to tell others. We are sent into the world to tell others that they, too, belong to God. Jesus prays for us. We pray for the world.*

*The prayers, Holy Communion, the blessing follow, and the service is ended.*



*It is Pentecost Sunday and the church is adorned in red.*



*Today we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. Pastor greets us, and we pray together. At the early service, Suzanne reads lessons and Lois reads them at the late service. The first lesson is the familiar story of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples like a tongue of fire. Suddenly, they are able to speak in other languages, so that all the people in the city of Jerusalem hear the message of God's deeds and power, each*

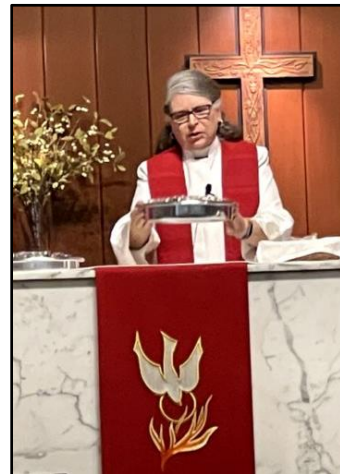
*in his own language. This, of course, is astonishing to those present, but Peter reminds them that this was foretold by the prophet, Joel. The psalm is Psalm 104, which speaks of the power of God through the Holy Spirit. The second lesson from Romans speaks of the hardships of living, but the Spirit helps us when we are weak and don't even know how to pray.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel from John, in which Jesus assures his disciples that he has to go away, so that the Holy Spirit can be given to them.*

*The sermon begins with Pastor saying that she has made peace with the wind because of its cleansing power. We have had several very windy days lately.*



*Pastor tells us that Pentecost is a high festival in the church. Its color is red. It was originally a Jewish festival that came 50 days after Passover. The Jewish people celebrate the giving of the Torah. They often brought their first fruits to the Temple.*



*We are supposed to strive for spiritual growth all year round. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate. We first receive the Holy Spirit at our Baptism.*

*The people of Jerusalem, hearing the disciples speaking to them in their own languages ask the question: "What does this mean?" Peter answers that they are not drunk. It was the fulfillment of the scripture from Joel. It was the end of an era, and a new beginning. We, too, are at the end of an era and a new beginning of a post-Covid world.*

*Things are changing rapidly. The Holy Spirit is given to all. We are called to be prophets, not to predict the future, but to proclaim God's word. We are to remember the past and use the present to show a path to the future.*





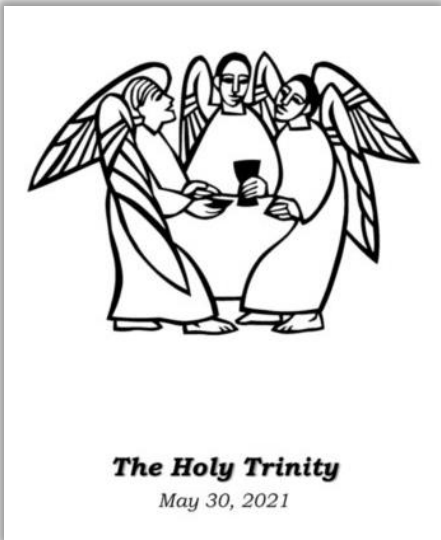
*Following the hymn of the day, Pastor prays for the church, the world, and us.*

*The bread and wine are consecrated so that we may partake of the body and blood of our Savior.*



*Finally, we receive the blessing, and the service ends.*





*It's May 30, and we celebrate the Holy Trinity. We begin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The rose on the altar is in honor of the birth of Oliver Cruz Lopez. Oliver's big brother Lorenzo was baptized at Emanuel just before the pandemic shut everything down last year.*



*Marsha reads the lessons at early service, and Dan reads at the late one. The first lesson, from Isaiah, tells of his vision of the seraphs who are praising God. Isaiah is reluctant to be in their company because he is a man of unclean lips. The seraph touches his lips with a coal to cleanse him of sin. Then Isaiah volunteers to be God's messenger. Psalm 29 describes the power of God's voice. We read it responsively. In the second lesson from Romans Paul describes what we can accomplish with the help of the Trinity. Pastor reads the familiar story of Nicodemus from the Gospel according to John. In this lesson we are assured of*



*God's love which is so strong that he sent his son to save the world, not to condemn it.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by asking, "How can we solve a mystery?" She says curiosity is involved, but it can be dangerous if it becomes an obsession. The Trinity is a mystery that has to be taken on faith. God is three, yet one. The Trinity has always been. Whereas the Trinity is not named in the Bible, it is alluded to.*



*Nicodemus is a Pharisee and a man with questions. He has an open mind and an open heart. He represents humanity. Light and darkness play a role in this story. Nicodemus seeks Jesus out at night. The darkness represents ignorance. But searching for the light gives us hope. Nicodemus is not a disciple; yet he stands up for Jesus at his trial and helps with the burial after the crucifixion. This teaches us that we can be an untraditional disciple. People of faith can*

*believe and question. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. Nicodemus is the Patron Saint of Curiosity Seekers.*

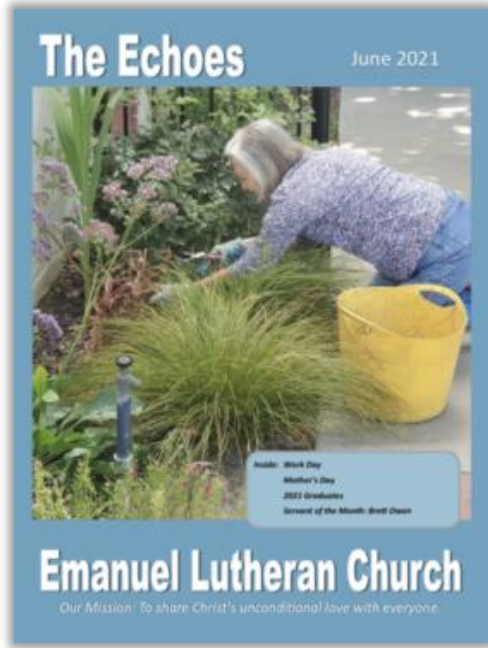
*There is hope for now and the future in John 3:16. We should be curious, and let love rule our lives.*

*Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we celebrate Holy Communion.*



*The service ends with the blessing.*

*Marsha, Barbara and Suzanne wear the red, white and blue to honor Memorial Day.*



## *June*

*The June Echoes features an article on the Work Day. The yard crew did a lot of pruning and cleaning up the campus. Good job, everyone who participated.*



*The Servant of the Month is Brett. He is our backup techie whenever Mike is unavailable. Thank you, Brett, for all you do.*



*June finds us in the summer format, which means worship in the courtyard for the first Sunday of the month. It is also the baptism of Rowan and the last Sunday for his family who are moving to Albuquerque.*



*The service begins with the baptism. Rowan is presented by parents and sponsor.*





*Rowan is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

*Pastor tells Rowan to let his light so shine that all will see the glory of God.*

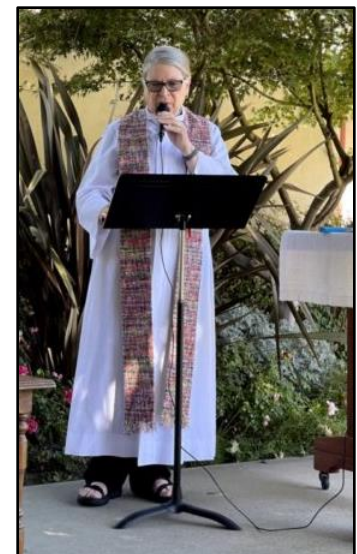


*The lesson from Genesis is the familiar story of the serpent tempting Eve who in turn tempts Adam. Both hide from God after eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. All receive the punishment due them for disobedience, but God continues to be with them. In Psalm 130, the author rejoices that God does not keep a record of our sins, but he always forgives us. In 2 Corinthians, Paul rejoices that even when things seem to be falling apart, God is with us, creating a new life for us.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel, according to Mark, in which Jesus is accused of driving out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus points out how ridiculous this is because if Satan were to use his power against himself, he would already be defeated. Jesus's mother, brothers and sisters, alarmed at his behavior, come to get him and take him home. Jesus's response is that those who do the will of God are his true family.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by asking us, "Have you ever been accused of being out of your mind?" Or had someone ever asked you, "What were you thinking?" Jesus's family*



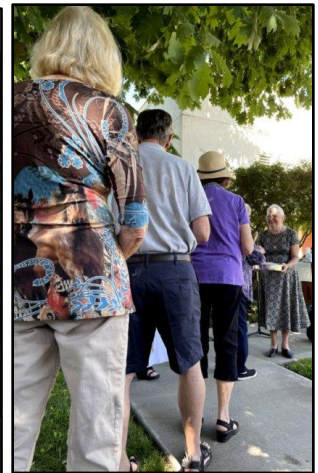
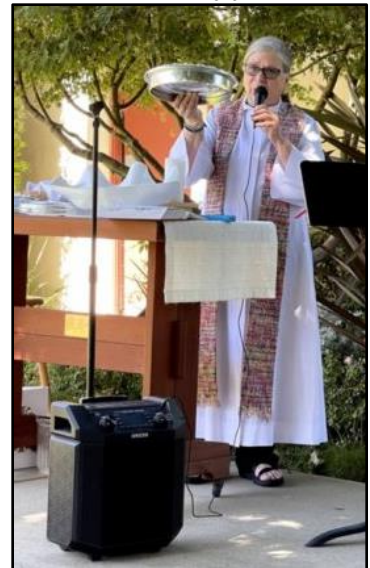
*was worried about him. He was acting so irrationally. He was challenging the authority of the Pharisees. He resets the boundaries with religion and evil. There has to be a balance between law and grace.*

*Pastor tells us that family can be more than blood relations. Jesus claims all of us who do God's will as his family.*

*God created order out of chaos, but soon there were problems, good versus evil. Jesus was human; sometimes he was tired, frustrated, angry. Or maybe he was just on fire. He spoke the truth. Christ's love moves us to extremes. God's love rules.*

*Pastor reminds us that in Baptism, the parents and sponsors make promises to God, but God makes promises, too. He promises to be with us always. We need to tell everyone about God's love.*

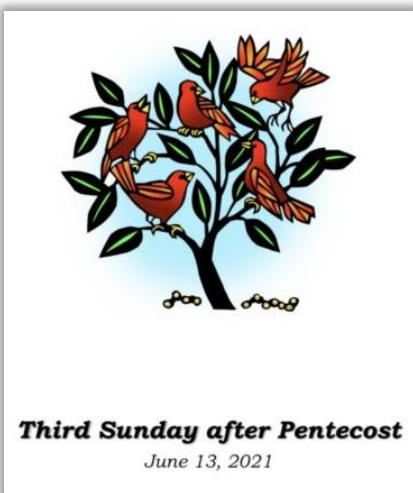
*The service continues with the hymn, prayers and the communion liturgy. Pastor blesses the bread and the wine. We come forward, as all are welcome.*



*This is the Body of Christ, broken and given for you. This is the Blood of Christ, shed for you.*



*The service ends with the blessing. After which, Pastor calls the departing family forward to bid them farewell and Godspeed. She says this is her least favorite thing, but we all wish them well and hope they keep in touch.*



*This Sunday continues the long season of Pentecost. The paraments are now green.*





*Pastor greets us as usual to begin the service. During announcements, she informs us that Florence Broden, a long-time member has passed. She was 100 plus years old. We sing the opening hymn, confess our sins and pray the prayer of the day together.*

*Chuck reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Ezekiel. In this lesson, God tells of planting a tender shoot from the cedars of Lebanon on a high mountain. In Psalm 92, the author praises God for his faithfulness. There are, again, references to trees that bear fruit. In the second lesson from 2 Corinthians, Paul assures us that Christ died for everyone. This means we are all included in his resurrection, no matter what we have or how we look.*



*The Gospel from Mark compares the Kingdom of God to the planting of seeds that somehow grow until they are ripe for the harvest. It also compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed that is the smallest of all seeds, but it grows to be a large shrub capable of holding the nests of many birds.*



*In the sermon, Pastor indicates all the rich imagery from nature that was present in the lessons this morning. The cedar trees were very important to the economy. They were used to build the Temple. They do not even begin to produce cones until they are 40 and live to be 2500 years old. The mustard plant, says Pastor, is just the opposite, but both are fruitful. Pastor says that people are like trees because they manage to survive.*



*The reference to the planting of the tree on Zion is a Messianic allegory: Jesus is the tender shoot. We are planted in God's word, nourished at God's table and can be fruitful even in old age.*

*Jesus included everyone in his death, so we are all included in his resurrection life. The mustard seed parable tells that one tiny seed can make a major difference. Our job is to plant our seeds of faith. God makes us strong. His word gives us the strength to survive hardship and remain fruitful.*

*Pastor says the prayers and blesses the bread and wine. After we commune, Pastor asks if there are any grads present. Rebeca comes forward for a special blessing.*

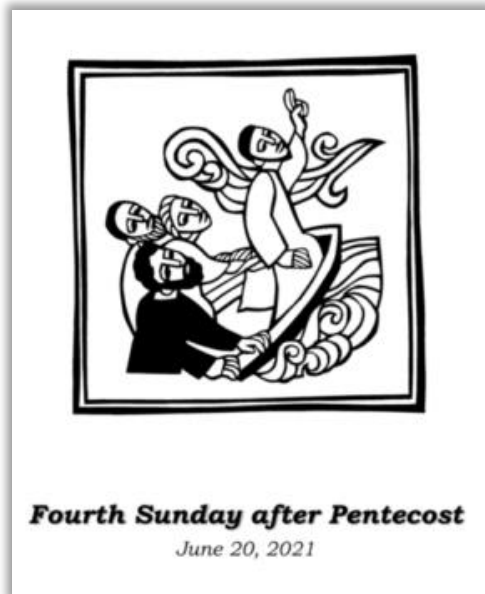


*Janice made the sign honoring the grads for 2021.*

*We sing the final hymn and gather for fellowship.*



*It's wonderful to be able to gather together again after the service.*



*It's the fourth Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor welcomes everyone who is in church and online. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins.*



*The first lesson is read this morning from the RSV by Barbara. The same lesson is also read from The Message by Suzanne. In this scripture from Job, God calls Job to task for complaining*

*about all that is happening to him. God reminds Job just who is in charge. Barbara reads Psalm 107 in which God stills the storm that threatened the sailors. In the second lesson from 2 Corinthians, Paul tells the congregation at Corinth to step up and not waste the life that God has given them. He tells them to live openly and expansively.*



*From the Gospel according to Mark, Pastor reads the story of Jesus calming the sea. The disciples ask him if he even cared that they were perishing. Jesus asks them why they have no faith.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by reminding us that last week, the scripture used imagery of trees. This week, it is the sea. The Bible often uses nature to teach us about power or good*

*versus evil.*

*In today's lessons, God speaks out of the chaos. Jesus also speaks to us out of the chaos. Chaos does not bother God. It's not that he doesn't care. He is just more powerful than the chaos.*

*Pastor indicates that change can occur when we encounter God. Many of us have been "in the belly of the whale" at some time in our lives. It's hard to hear, "God is with you," when bad things happen. Job had a journey to complete before understanding God's ways and connecting with him. We, too, need to look back at*

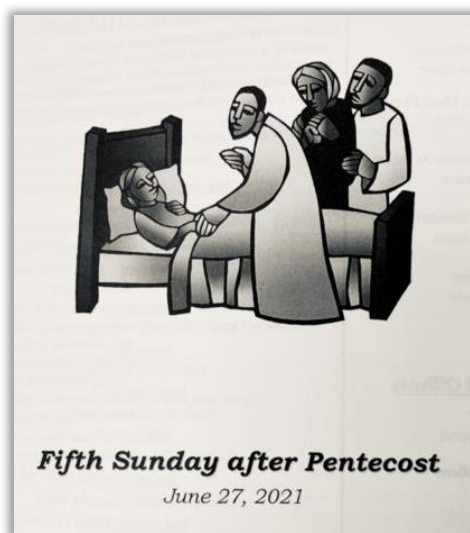
*times God was there. He will work good out of evil. Even the tiniest seed of fruit can produce a mighty thing. God does care, and he is always near.*



*The hymn of the day is followed by the prayers and the blessing of the bread and wine. Then we commune.*



*Following communion, we are blessed and sent into the mission field in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*



*It is the fifth Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor Lyn, while setting things up, trips and falls. She dislocates her little finger. Although she says she can still do the service, she is overruled by wise*

*counsel. Rose takes her to the emergency room, and Suzanne is given the task of filling in for the pastor. Fortunately, Pastor Lyn is extremely organized, and all Suzanne has to do is read the liturgy and Pastor's prepared sermon.*

*So, Suzanne greets the congregation and explains why she is up in front. We begin with the confession, but there will be no communion because the bread and wine cannot be consecrated without a pastor. We sing the opening hymn and pray the prayer of the day.*



*Chris reads the lessons. The first is from Lamentations, using The Message. The prophet assures us that God's love never runs out, that he is always faithful. When life is hard, we should be patient, because the worst is never the worst. God will never walk out on us. Psalm 30 also assures us that we should praise God because he will turn our weeping into joy, and our wailing into dancing. In 2 Corinthians, we learn that it is good to help others, even if we are in hard times.*

*Suzanne reads the Gospel from Mark. This is the story of Jesus who is approached by Jairus, a leader of the synagogue, who asks Jesus to come heal his dying daughter. Jesus agrees, but on his way to his house, a woman who has suffered from a 12-year-long hemorrhage touches Jesus's cloak, believing that will be enough to heal her. Jesus, feeling power leave him, confronts her. He then assures her that her faith has been sufficient to heal her. Meanwhile, news comes that Jairus's daughter has died, and Jesus is no longer needed. Jesus, however, assures Jairus that his daughter is not dead, only sleeping. He then proceeds to the house, enters with the parents and some of his disciples. He takes the child's hand, and tells her to get up. She rises and is made well.*

*Suzanne reads Pastor Lyn's sermon. The sermon begins with a definition of *calced*. This is a story, in this case a miracle, within a story. Today there are two females, both of whom experience a miracle. Pastor's sermon says that often you find yourself at the doctor for one reason, and another problem is found. Or you have to ignore your problem because someone else needs to be cared for.*

*We learn that sometimes the miracle is not exactly the one we are looking for. For example, someone who dies of cancer does not get the miracle of healing, but does get the miracle of salvation.*

*Healing and salvation are not mutually exclusive. They go hand in hand. To desire healing in your life is to desire Jesus in your life. These two miracles are in between two other important stories. Before these two females are healed, Jesus had driven demons out of a young man into a herd of pigs who then ran over a cliff into the sea, into the chaos it represents. Afterwards, Jesus does miracles on both sides of the sea, Jewish and gentile.*

*In today's story we have one female who is 12 years old and one whose disease is also 12 years old. Twelve is a perfect number in scripture. In these stories, the number 12 indicates that they are worthy of hearing and that they are authoritative. For the little girl, death would mean the end of community and productivity. For the woman, her 12 years of isolation has robbed her of community and productivity. The number 12 is a connecting element in these stories. One important connection is that Jesus called both these females, "Daughter," one a nobody, one a somebody. One is told, "Daughter, your faith has made you well." The other is told, "Daughter, get up." A new relationship is*



*established with Jesus, based on trust. Another similarity is that both females were, according to the beliefs of that day, unclean. Disease was considered the result of poor choices or especially sinful behaviors. Once unclean, you were put outside the community until healing or death.*

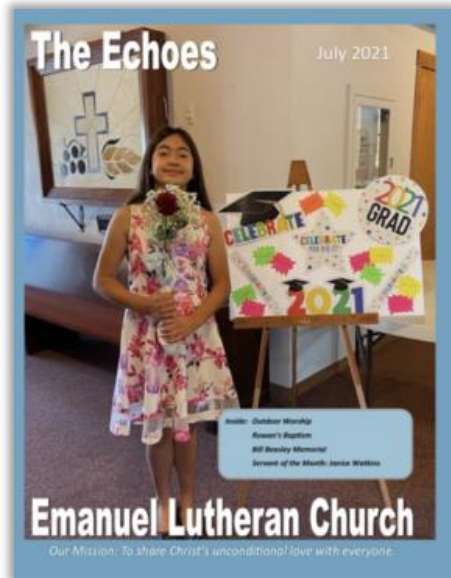
*Uncleanness did not bother Jesus. He knew that unclean and unholy were not the same thing. Jesus does not keep from touching us based on how we look or how others see us. Jesus takes our uncleanness upon himself and transfers his holiness and cleanness back to us. Many of us have experienced this healing power. All of us will experience in the final moment when Jesus comes for us at the time of death. At that moment Jesus will grasp our hand and hold it all the way home to heaven.*

*Uncleanness did not bother Jesus. He knew that unclean and unholy were not the same thing. Jesus does not keep from touching us based on how we look or how others see us. Jesus takes our uncleanness upon himself and transfers his holiness and cleanness back to us. Many of us have experienced this healing power. All of us will experience in the final moment when Jesus comes for us at the time of death. At that moment Jesus will grasp our hand and hold it all the way home to heaven.*

*The final words Jesus spoke to the two were, "Go," and "Get up." These are not just locomotion words. They are resurrection words. They were able not only to move but to reconnect. They were restored to shared life. We should let ourselves be pulled in by the hand of Jesus. We need to share this story and our stories with others, so that we are sharing Jesus.*

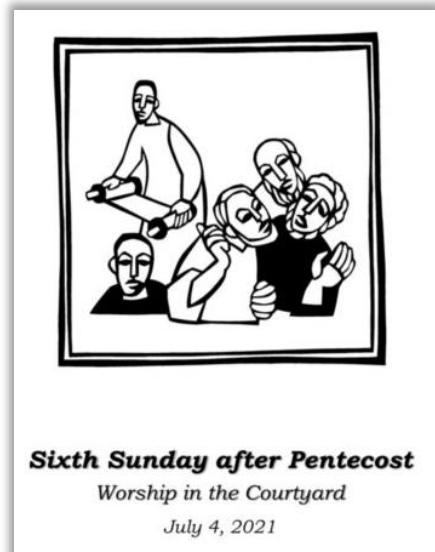


*After the sermon, we sing the hymn of the day, and hear the prayers. Then we receive the blessing and share fellowship with one another.*



## *July*

*The July Echoes features a tribute to our graduates. Our Servant of the Month is Janice. Janice serves on Council as the chair of the Fellowship Ministry. She recently volunteered to take over as secretary for Josh, who has moved to Albuquerque. During the pandemic, Janice has sent cards out to members and has just stayed in touch.*



*It is July 4, and Pastor is on vacation. Dan has volunteered to be the presiding minister and Suzanne is the reader for today. Since it is the first Sunday of the month, we meet in the courtyard for the service. Pastor has consecrated the bread and wine at the Text Study meeting, so we do have communion. The congregation is not shy in showing their patriotism by wearing red, white and blue.*



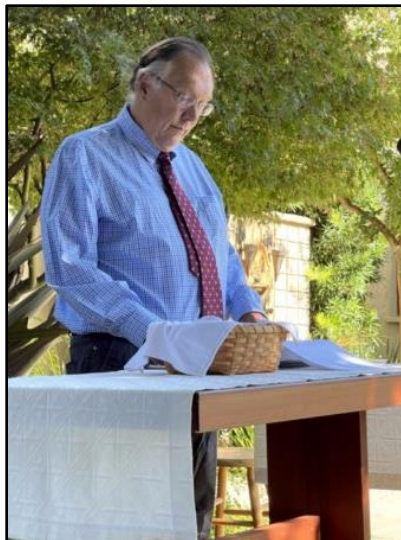


*Barbara begins worship with the “Star Spangled Banner,” which we all sing.*

*Dan greets everyone, and Suzanne reads the lessons. In Ezekiel, God sends the prophet to the house of Israel who have been rebellious. He tells Ezekiel to speak the words given him and not to worry whether or not the people respond. Psalm 123 is a plea for mercy. In 2 Corinthians,*

*Paul says that the only reason he will boast is in his weaknesses because in those he is made strong.*

*Dan reads the Gospel according to Mark. In this passage, Jesus teaches in the synagogue in his home town. The response from his neighbors is not positive. They remember him as the carpenter. They have known his whole family forever. Jesus says a prophet will never be honored in his home town. He then sent his disciples out two by two to preach and heal.*



*Dan begins the sermon by reminding us that today is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Independence Day. We celebrate freedom from tyranny, becoming our own country, and, most importantly, we celebrate the freedom to worship as we please. Dan speaks about other freedoms, ones indicated by FDR and Martin Luther.*

*While we have the freedom to pursue many things, we have the responsibility to accept that others also have this right.*

*Dan remembers the joy of traveling. He says that a scout master told him to look up and trust his feet that they know where they are going. He says that sitting at a campfire was the beginning of his spirituality.*

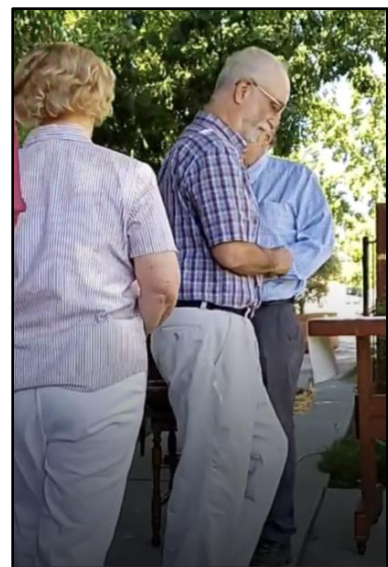
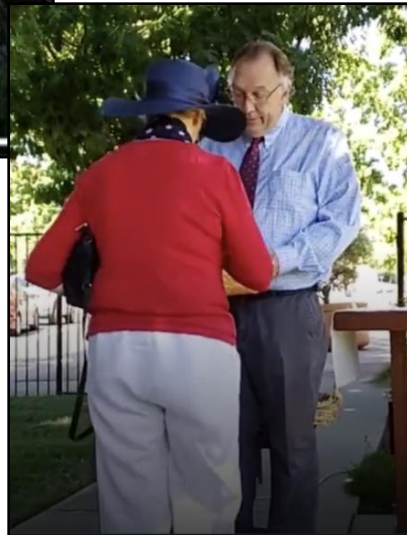
*Dan says the idea of free will, governing what happens, is complexing to him. He wonders if we make the right choices or just go along following a pattern. Dan remembers a story he heard about there being two bears fighting for our souls. One bear is filled with compassion, trust and love. The other is filled with fear, shame and self-destruction. The bear that will win is the one we feed. Dan tells us to take that step toward compassion. We should be there for each other during the hard times.*

*We need to look outward to help others. Then we need to look inward to see what's in ourselves. We need to look up to God, then stand up and feel the Spirit filling us.*

*We may experience people who try to bring us down, deride us for our beliefs. But we are never alone. Jesus is in solidarity with us. We also have the community of each other. Sharing God's love, the best we can, is our job. God's grace is sufficient.*



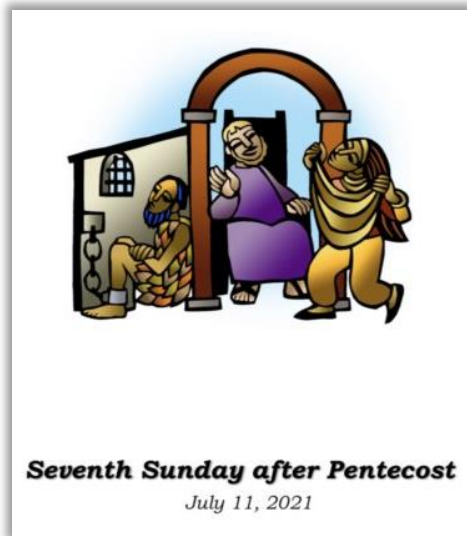
*Pastor consecrated the elements when Text Study met on Tuesday. Dan says the liturgy, and we commune.*





*Dan gives the blessing, and we go inside where it's cool to enjoy the fellowship hour.*





*Pastor is still on a much-needed vacation, so Kathleen is serving as liturgist. Kathleen welcomes everyone and begins the service with the confession of sins.*



*Marilyn reads the lessons. In the first lesson from Amos, God shows Amos a plumb line that he is using to show how far Israel has gotten away from his word. Amos protests that he is a humble shepherd and tender of fig trees. God tells him to go prophesy to his people in Israel. He does, and this upsets the*

*king's priest who tells him to go away and return to his own land of Judah. Psalm 85 speaks of the Lord's faithfulness, righteousness and peace. In the second lesson, Paul tells us that all God's plans and purposes are united in Christ. Through Jesus we have been made God's children and promised salvation.*

*Dan reads the gospel according to Mark and gives the sermon. In this gospel lesson, we learn that Herod Antipas foolishly offers his step-daughter any reward up to half his kingdom. At her mother's instructions, she asks for the head of John, the Baptizer.*

*Dan begins the sermon by stating that Herod had no right to kill John, the Baptist. He reminds us that*



*Herodias, Herod's wife, had been the wife of his brother. She held a grudge against John because he said that the marriage was wrong. She had no right to manipulate her daughter into asking for John's head. Dan says that Herod was a coward who was afraid to lose face in front of his guests. In contrast, Amos was brave enough to speak God's truth.*

*The horror of what happened to John reminded Dan of other horrors that have happened. He thinks of Dietrick Bonhoeffer who wrote prayers from a Nazi prison, praising God.*

*Dan recalls visiting Auschwitz while traveling in Europe. He says that there were beautiful flowers blooming, and he remembers thinking that God was reclaiming that place of horror.*

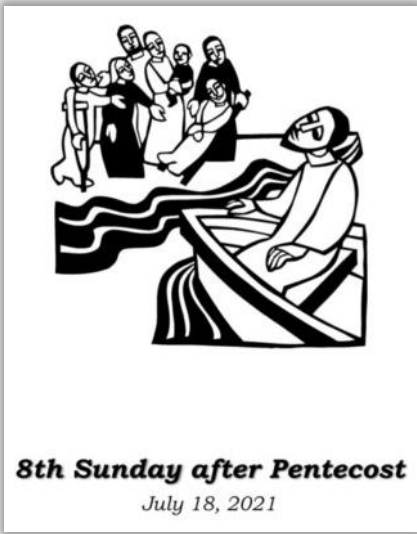
*Dan reminds us that God loves us and wants to reclaim us. It is God's desire to bring us into community with Christ. It is the hope for God's kingdom that calls us into action.*



*Kathleen does the communion liturgy. We will use the bread and wine that Pastor Lyn consecrated before leaving for her vacation.*

*The service ends with Chris extinguishing the candles and leading the recessional out of the sanctuary. Thank you to the volunteers that have kept church going during Pastor's absence.*





*It is the second Sunday in July, and we welcome Pastor Lyn back from her vacation. She brings us greetings from her mom, Jane. We are happy to hear that she is doing well and that Pastor had a wonderful time visiting family in her home town. We sing the opening hymn and begin the liturgy with the confession of sin.*



*Marsha reads the lessons. In the first lesson, Jeremiah compares a bad shepherd who has scattered the flocks to the bad kings who have scattered the people of Israel. But God promises to gather the people again and raise up a new king from David's line who will save Israel and Judah. The psalm today is the familiar and much-loved Psalm 23. It reminds us that God is with us "all the days of our lives." The second lesson is from Ephesians. In this letter, the author reminds the readers that while originally they were not part of the chosen people, they are now, because of Jesus's death and resurrection, they are included in God's family of faith.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark, in which we see the disciples reporting back to Jesus all that happened when he sent them out to teach and heal. Even though he tries to give them a chance to rest, they are pursued by many who seek healing. Jesus has compassion on them and heals many.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by talking about the importance of soul tending. She says that gardening*



*for some is a way to tend their souls. She is reminded of the nursery rhyme that goes*

*Mary, Mary, quite contrary,  
How does your garden grow?*

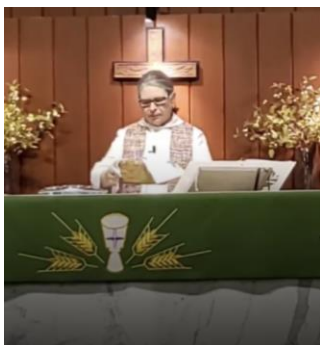
*Pastor asks us, “How does your garden grow? How is it with your soul?” Soul tending is a good thing, designed to make us feel better and improve our relationship with God. Whereas many things, such as gardening, can help, we also need to spend time with the Bible and Jesus. The poor shepherd hurts the sheep while the good shepherd takes care of the sheep.*

*The Hebrew word that we translate as soul also means throat and is often used to mean the whole person: body, soul, spirit. The Hebrew word that we translate as spirit also means breath. It is how we connect with God. His breath mingles with our spirit.*



*There is a lot of stuff going on around us that can lead to our needing a break. Life is relentless, but so is God. God constantly pursues us, body, soul and spirit. So much can leave our spirits bereft. God pursues us persistently “all the days of our lives.” Our spirit is healed whenever we touch the fringe of Jesus’s shawl.*

*After we sing the hymn of the day, we have the prayers and the Apostle’s Creed. Then we begin the communion liturgy and Pastor blesses the bread and the wine.*



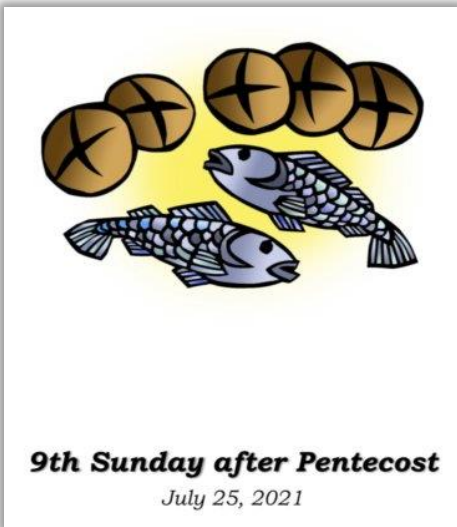


*We come forward to receive the body and blood of our Savior. When all have communed, the service ends with the blessing, the extinguishing of the candles and the final hymn.*



*In the evening we gather again in the courtyard for a musical concert. Neil, a local musician, attended Emanuel with his family when he was little. He entertains us tonight, playing a lot of folk music that is familiar to all. It is a wonderful evening. Thank you, Marsha, for setting this up.*





*We are at the last Sunday of July. Pastor greets us and explains that she is adding a time for individual prayer during the prayers of intercession. She asks us to say these prayers silently. We begin with the opening hymn and the confession of sins.*



*Chuck reads the lessons. The first is from 2 Kings. In this lesson, we see that the prophet Elisha miraculously feeding 100 people from a few barley loaves. There is even food left over. The psalm is Psalm 45. In this passage, all of God's works praise him for God lifts up those who have fallen. He gives them food and satisfies their*

*desires. In the second lesson, from Ephesians, we are told that we are rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. Because Christ dwells in our hearts, our lives are strengthened and empowered by the presence of the Spirit.*

*Today's Gospel lesson is from John. Pastor reads the familiar story of Jesus's feeding 5000 men, plus uncounted women and children, with five barley loaves and two fish. The food is blessed and distributed by Jesus himself. There is so much left over that it fills twelve baskets. When Jesus realizes that the people want to make him king, he leaves. He*



*later joins his disciples as they are sailing across the lake by walking on the water.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by saying that she is going to do something different today. She is going to tell two stories. The first story is a retelling of the Gospel. Pastor gives us some interesting insights. For example, Phillip is a disciple who was sought out by Jesus. Barley was food that the very poor people ate. Jesus showed his disciples how to do ministry by handing out the food himself. When the people want to crown Jesus an earthly king, he literally runs away. His disciples, not knowing exactly what to do, return to what they know which is fishing.*



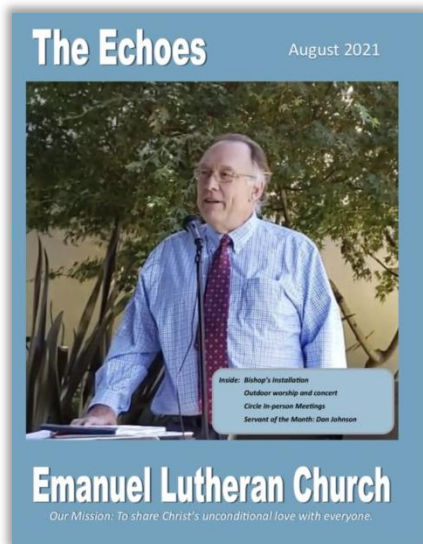
*In the second story, Pastor talks about the musical concert that was held in the courtyard last week. She mentioned that everyone was enjoying the music and fellowship when in walked Jesus, in the form of a homeless man. He was asking for water and when he might see his children. The congregation was quick to offer him food and water, but what*

*he really needed was shoes. His feet were bloodied and blistered from being barefoot on the hot pavement. Pastor says that the poor are always among us so that we can practice compassion. She says that she felt so bad that we didn't have any shoes to give him, so she went to the Dollar Store this week and bought flip flops in various sizes, just in case this happens again. She lays the shoes in front of the altar. The prayers are said and the bread and wine are blessed. We eat of the body and blood of our Lord.*



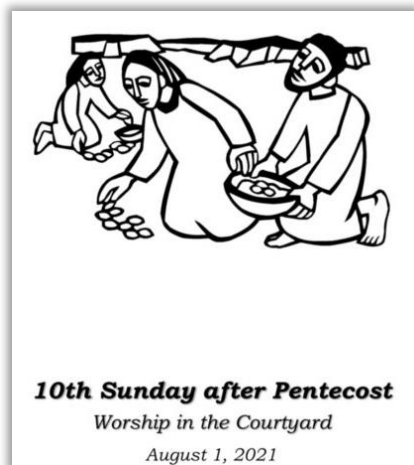


*We are blessed in Jesus's name.*



## *August*

*The Echoes recaps the highlights of July. The Servant of the Month is Dan who graciously volunteered to give the sermon the two Sundays that Pastor was gone. He also takes an active part in the life of the congregation. Pastor thanks him and everyone who kept things going while she was gone.*



*It is the first Sunday in August, Pastor Lyn's 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Emanuel. We have planned a "surprise" reception for her.*



*It is also Food for Faith Sunday, and Mary's car trunk is open to receive donations.*



*We are worshipping in the courtyard where Pastor greets us.*



*Barbara reads the lessons. In the lesson from Exodus, we learn that God provided manna, bread from heaven, for the Israelites in the wilderness. He also sent quail so that they would have meat at night. Psalm 78, recaps the story in Exodus, reminding the reader that God gave them food when they needed it. In Ephesians, we are told that God equips the saints for the work of the church, and that by working together, we can be more like Christ.*

*Pastor reads from the Gospel of John. In this passage, Jesus tells the crowd that they seek him because he fed them. He cautions them about being too interested in earthly bread, but to seek the true bread from heaven. When they ask where to find this bread, Jesus replies, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty."*

*In her sermon, Pastor says that we need to locate Jesus and ourselves to make sense of life. Jesus expects us to be life-long learners.*

*Pastor indicates that in these passages, we see conflict because we want to have power and control, maybe even over Jesus. Peace and unity are a goal, but sometimes*



*unity is around what is wrong. We unite over complaining. In the lesson from Exodus, God answers their complaints but wonders if they will follow instructions. Manna is the consummate "faith" food. We can only receive it one day at a time.*

*Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, talks about unity to become the person God calls us to be. We are given a measure of grace to do our best. We need to keep ourselves in equilibrium with God. God has torn down the dividing walls.*

*We cannot force anyone to believe as we do. We can only be an example. Do we live in such a way that others see Christ in us? Love matters more than disunity. How do we advance as a diverse community and achieve equilibrium? We need to listen and follow God's instructions.*



*Pastor consecrates the bread and wine, and we commune. Then Pastor blesses us.*



*She thinks the service is over, but Suzanne steps up to the mike. She explains to the congregation that President Dennis has asked to say a few words about how happy and grateful we are that Pastor has*

*been with us for six years. Suzanne says that her first impression of Pastor was that she would never make it at Emanuel because she was too nice. She soon realized that Pastor was the perfect person to get us out of the comfortable box we like to stay in, that she was always trying something new, and we are so happy she came to Modesto. Suzanne then invites everyone to come in and have a piece of cake. She says that there is a basket for cards, and blank cards for those that forgot. We enjoy a time of fellowship after the service.*

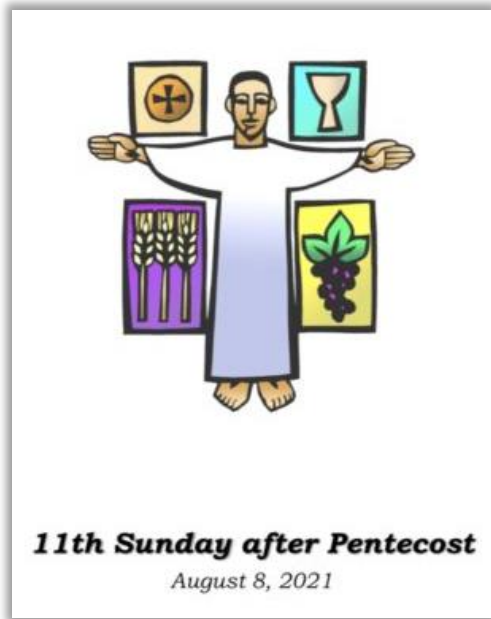


*We received this note from Pastor:*

*Thank you to everyone for the lovely anniversary party last Sunday in celebration of my 6th year as your pastor! As I said then, I'm always surprised when that particular year mark comes around. I think it's because time goes fast when you enjoy what you do! Thank you for all of the cards, notes and kind words, the gifts, the cake, the flowers - every single thing you did made the morning very special. You are an amazing group of faithful people and I do love being your pastor! Peace & blessing as together, we move into year seven, a promising and exciting future.*

*Gratefully,*

*Pastor Lyn*



*It is August 8, the 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor greets us and welcomes visitors. We have people visiting from Livingston, Sacramento and South Dakota. After the opening hymn, we confess our sins.*



*Marilyn reads the lessons and the psalm. The first lesson is from 1 Kings. It tells the story of Elijah who is running for his life from an angry and vengeful Queen Jezebel. He flees to wilderness where he sits under a bush and waits for God to kill him. Instead, God sends an angel who twice brings him bread and water. Psalm 34 sings the praises of God who delivers us from our terrors, saves us from our troubles and sends angels to encamp around us. We are told to "taste and see that the Lord is good." The second lesson is from Ephesians. We, as Christians, are called to be imitators of God. We are not perfect, but the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives so that our actions and attitude reflect the love and forgiveness that we have received through Christ's death and resurrection.*





*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John in which Jesus, after feeding the 5000, explains that he is the true bread from heaven.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by asking the question, "Why is bread so important?" She explains that Jesus had a lot to teach, and bread was something that everyone understood. Pastor says that recently she saw a question on the Internet that asked what food would you choose to be calorie free. For her that would be bread, especially if it was right out of the oven. Bread is an important food in many cultures.*

*Pastor says that a relationship with Jesus is easy, but for many people, that is difficult to accept. Many people are against religion, but they search for spirituality. Pastor reminds us that a relationship with God is crucial, but she asks us how do we accomplish that. Her answer is to go to church and to pray.*



*We are fed and nourished by God's word and his presence in the bread and wine. We need this every week. Relationships are two-way. In the Gospel, Jesus said that no one can come to him unless "drawn" by the Father. Pastor tells us that the actual meaning of the word used in this passage is "hauled in." It is the same word used when the fishermen were told to haul in their nets. If we worship, pray and commune often, we are soon "hooked" by God.*

*Pastor returns to the Old Testament lesson. She indicates that while Jezebel was a "bad girl," she was used by God to teach a lesson. Elijah was afraid and burned out. He went to the wilderness to die. Instead, he received nourishment and rest for the work ahead.*

*Worship can be public or private. We must be careful not to break God's heart with ugly words and actions. God's love gives good to us. Our love for others needs to do this, too.*

*After singing the hymn of the day, Pastor goes to the altar to say the prayers. Then she blesses the bread and the wine.*



*Then the congregation communes.*

*Pastor has chosen to add healing prayer to the service. She is not quite ready to do it as before the pandemic, but offers a general prayer for anyone who needs special prayers.*

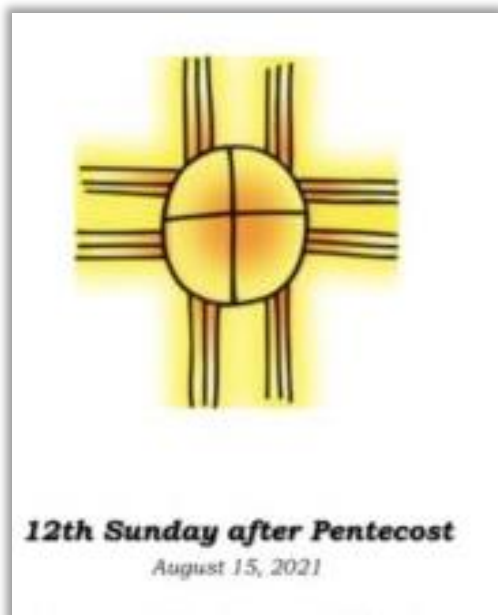




*We receive the blessing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Dan is our acolyte this morning. We are told in dismissal that we are to go in peace, that we are the body of Christ.*



*An upcoming project is God's Work, Our Hands Sunday. Thank you, Marty, for the beautiful bulletin board.*



*The service on this 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost begins, as always, with a greeting from Pastor Lyn. We also learn that one of our members is the police officer who was shot in the line of duty. He is in critical, but stable, condition. We are asked to keep Michael in our prayers.*



*Chris is our reader this morning. The first lesson from Proverbs is about Lady Wisdom who invites people to partake of her banquet which will provide what is necessary for fullness of life with God. The selection from Psalm 34 reminds us that those who seek God lack no good thing. The second lesson is from Ephesians. Because we, as Christians, are filled with the Holy Spirit, we regularly rejoice together, give thanks to God for one another and care for one another. In doing this we honor our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John in which Jesus identifies himself as the true “bread of life.” This connection will not be truly understood until after his death and resurrection, as it is celebrated in Holy Communion.*



*Pastor begins her sermon by indicating that Emanuel has a remarkable outreach ministry, much of which is around food: potlucks, soup suppers, the Care Cupboard, Katie’s Kitchen. She wonders if we should put up a sign that says, “Free bread every Sunday!” This is the fourth of five Bread Sundays.*

*Pastor mentions that the readings today are ancient but timely. Jesus’s words are always authentic. He never worried about offending anyone. Sometimes his teachings*

*are difficult, even harsh. Jesus's flesh is true food, his blood, true drink. We believe in the literal presence of Jesus in the bread and wine. We share in his life.*

*In Proverbs, we met two women, Wisdom and Folly, who set up two choices: good or bad. Lady Wisdom is complete and perfect. Madam Folly is rash and irresponsible. Every day we have decisions to make – good or bad.*

*In Psalm 34, our choices are to take in Christ's life or not, to listen to God or to Evil, to choose Wisdom or Folly.*

*In Ephesians, we are told not to waste time on things that take place in darkness. We are to be complacent, but we are encouraged to drink in the Spirit of God. Our time on earth is limited. We need to make good choices. We need to take in Christ's presence, to live a Christ-like life.*

*The important question for this week is, "What does real presence mean to me?" Jesus took the worst the world had to offer, the crucifixion, and turned it into something beautiful. God can turn our worst choices into something wonderful through the Holy Spirit.*

*Pastor blesses the bread and wine, so that we may eat of Christ's body and drink of Christ's blood. In this way we are nourished. After we have communed, Pastor blesses us. It is Birthday Sunday and all August birthdays are invited to stand for special prayers. One of our members celebrated her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier in the week. A special happy birthday to Joyce.*





*After the service we are invited to enjoy a time of fellowship and yummy birthday cake.*



*It is the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. The summer is rapidly coming to an end. Pastor greets us, as always. We sing the opening hymn, and Kathleen reads the lessons.*

*In the first lesson, Joshua encourages the Israelites to choose which god or gods to serve. He announces that he and his family will serve the Lord. The Israelites agree to serve God, too. In the portion of Psalm 34 that Kathleen reads, we are assured that God takes care of his children, but evildoers will be punished. The second lesson from Ephesians tells us to put on the full armor of God, including truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation so that we will be protected from evil.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John, in which we get the hard lesson where Jesus says that we must eat of his flesh and drink of his blood. Many of his followers*





*turn back after hearing this. Jesus asks the 12 if they, too, want to return to their old lives. Peter asks, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*

*In her sermon, Pastor begins by reminding us that the past five weeks have been about choices. Jesus gives his disciples a chance to make a choice when he asks, “Do you want to leave, too?” Pastor tells us that these words are even more important today in this*

*dangerous world. Choice can be a difficult thing. Sometimes it’s just too hard, so we let someone else choose for us. Freedom to choose has eternal complications.*

*Pastor assures us that it is okay to pray for someone else. There is considerable power in intercessory prayer, especially the part where we pray, “Thy will be done.” We often seek to please God with our choices. In the Old Testament lesson, the word covenant means alliance or agreement. Joshua relates that we and God are in the Covenant together. The Israelites are inspired to renew the Covenant and make a good choice when they hear Joshua say, “Choose this day you will serve. We will serve the Lord.”*



*Choices are freely made, but affect the outcome of our lives. We take Jesus into our bodies through the bread and wine. He sticks with us through everything – the good and the bad. All prayer matters. It makes a difference. Jesus asks critical questions. Whatever our war, we need to remember that Jesus goes into battle with us.*



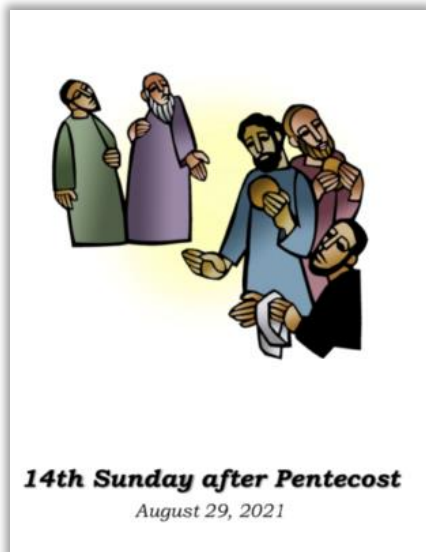
*After the hymn of the day and the prayers, Pastor consecrates the bread and wine, and we celebrate Holy Communion.*



*Pastor asks Fanny to come forward. She is leaving this week to begin her studies at Yale. She has been a valued member of our congregation since she was in junior high. We will miss her, and*

*wish her the very best. Pastor prays for her and all students who are starting the school year.*

*Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional as we sing the closing hymn.*



*We are at the end of August. Pastor greets us, and we sing the opening hymn.*



*Rebeca reads the first lesson from Deuteronomy. This scripture tells us that the Israelites believed the law was a divine gift that provided the guidelines for living out the covenant. Moses tells them that they should not add nor subtract anything from the law and that they should teach it to their children. Psalm 15 tells us that those who do right, speak the truth and do not slander their neighbor will dwell with God.*



*Brett reads the second lesson from James which encourages Christians to listen carefully and to act on what they hear, especially by caring for those least able to care for themselves.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark in which Jesus challenges traditional ways in which religious people determine what is pure or impure. Jesus believes that the godly words and deeds that come from a faithful heart are more important than the observances of religious practices.*

*In her sermon, Pastor says that we like routines. We like personal routines and religious routines. Liturgy is a way to establish routines. Deviation from routines can be upsetting.*

*In the Gospel, Jesus and his disciples are told, "It's time to eat. Go wash up." Jesus says, "I don't have to." In Bible times, the tradition was that hand had to be washed, at least symbolically, before eating. They couldn't eat unless they had at least a fistful of water. Jesus is more concerned with the "dirt" that is inside our hearts than on our hands.*



*The Pharisees believed that the water made them holy. Therefore, they felt that Jesus was disrespectful of the law. The Pharisees were concerned with how things appeared. Jesus was concerned with inner motives.*

*Rites and rituals can serve to keep us separated. We have had to change routines and rituals because of COVID-19. We have had to think of what was really important:*

*God and people.*

*Pastor asks us, "What do our actions do? Do they keep us apart or do we include others?" We tend to maintain boundaries. We need to examine what we do. Is it good or does it need improvement?*

*Pastor ends with saying, "If a fistful of water could restore holiness, just think what a heartful of Jesus can do?"*

*We sing the hymn of the day, and Pastor says the prayers. Then she blesses the bread and wine and we celebrate Holy Communion.*





*Finally, Pastor blesses the congregation, and we leave to spread the love of God.*

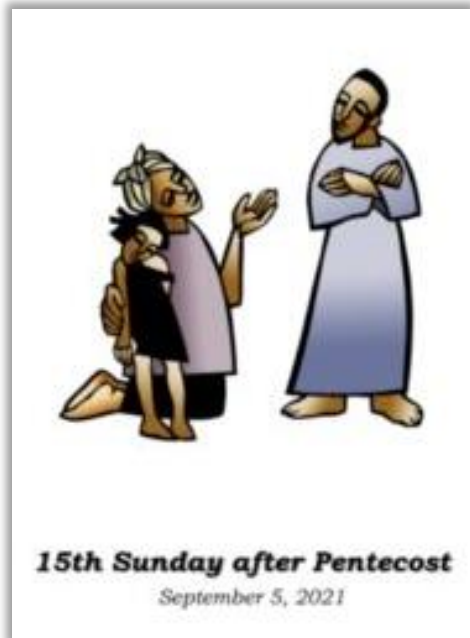


## *September*

*It is September. School has started for most of this area. Summer is essentially over. The Echoes looks back over the month of August.*

*Suzanne is Servant of the Month. She was chosen for the many reasons including her expertise as the Facebook Guru. She also is a frequent reader and is always willing to transport anyone who needs a ride.*





*It is the 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. It is Food for Faith Sunday, and the congregation continues to be faithful in bringing food to share.*



*Pastor is on vacation for this week, visiting her children in Colorado. Kathleen serves as Liturgist.*

*Marsha, Barbara and Kristine present the scripture lessons in the form of a radio play. This serves as the sermon today. It is entitled "Hope, Wisdom, Compassion and our Actions." During the "radio" program, commercials for the upcoming God's Work, Our Hands Sunday are included.*





*This is only one of the Outreach Ministries that we have. Next Sunday, we will have the opportunity to help with several others.*



**16th Sunday after Pentecost**  
**"God's Work. Our Hands."**  
 Worship in the Courtyard  
 September 12, 2021

*It is the 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor is home, and we are having our last courtyard service of the summer. Mike learned an important lesson in outdoor live streaming: a camera pointed in the direction of the sun may overheat and shut down. Something to remember for next year.*





*Suzanne reads the lessons, but the camera is already beginning to overheat. In the first lesson, Isaiah talks about being able to put up with abuse because he listens to God; God hears him and strengthens him. In Psalm 116, we again hear that God hears us when we call on him. He is always there to save us. In the lesson from James, we hear that it is almost impossible to control our tongues. We use it to praise God and curse his children.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark. This is the familiar story of Jesus asking the disciples who do people say that he is. They respond that they say Elijah or John the Baptist or one of the other prophets. In response to the question: "Who do you say that I am?", Peter states, "You are the Messiah."*

*Jesus instructs them not to tell anyone, and then begins to explain that he must die in order to rise again. When Peter protests, Jesus rebukes him by saying, "Get behind me, Satan!" He then tells them all if they want to be his followers, they must take up his cross.*

*In her sermon, Pastor tells us that when God speaks to us, we should listen carefully. She assures us that God also listens to us. God expects us to be authentic and honest. Our topic today is obviously: Listening.*



*We are admonished to watch what we say. God bends down to hear us. It is hard to tame the tongue. It is easier to talk than to listen. The disciples don't like the idea that Jesus must die. It doesn't fit in with their plan. Jesus tells them not to try and hinder him. We, too, need to get our agendas out of the way. We can't go along with the crowd. There is no time to waste. God is waiting to hear from us.*

*We finish the service with singing, praying and taking Holy Communion. Then it is time for the projects that have been planned for God's Work, Our Hands.*

**"God's work. Our hands." Sunday**



**TODAY after  
the service**

*Projects are ready. And we  
get to work!*










*Finally, all projects are completed. The ones that are going to Chrysler School are boxed up and will be delivered this week.*



*Meanwhile, the kitchen crew has been making the picnic lunch.*

*We enjoy eating hotdogs, potato or macaroni salad, chips, and a variety of cookies. And we enjoy the fellowship.*



**17th Sunday after Pentecost**  
September 19, 2021

*The Sanctuary is beautiful this 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.*



*Pastor welcomes everyone, as usual and invites President Dennis to make an announcement. Dennis tells us that the Executive Committee of the Council has approved renting worship space to a new Covenant Church that will be moving into this area. He tells us that next week, we will have the opportunity to meet some of their congregation in a joint fellowship hour.*



*Then we sing the opening hymn and have confession. Marsha reads the first lesson from Jeremiah. In it, we learn how Jeremiah suffered when preaching God's word to Judah was met with intense opposition and persecution, but Jeremiah continues to trust God in the midst of his suffering. Psalm 54 is a cry for help when David's life is sought by strangers. The second lesson from James tells us that God's wisdom unites our hearts and minds. We manifest this wisdom in peace, gentleness, mercy and impartiality toward others instead of living to satisfy our own desires.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark. In this text, Jesus warns what can happen if the church is seduced by the world's definition of greatness: prestige, power, influence, and money. The solution to this problem is servanthood.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by mentioning all the intrigue and drama in today's lessons. In Jeremiah, we learn that others were seeking his life. In the psalm, David needs help from God because there are those who seek his life. In James, we learn that the worst enemy is the one within ourselves. The Gospel also says that we are our own worst enemy. We see this in the disciples who are putting their own desires first.*

*Pastor says she does enjoy a good murder mystery, so today's lessons do not disappoint. The Bible is full of stories that reveal all sides of human desires and actions. Early on, Jesus began*



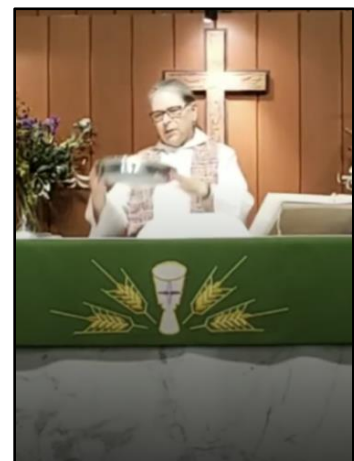
*teaching his disciples that he had to die in order to be raised from the dead. They just don't get it. It's more than they can comprehend.*

*Pastor says that you have to hear something seven times in order to learn it. Jesus keeps repeating the same story, but the disciples are very dense. He keeps telling them that he will die and rise again. They were expecting a military messiah, one that would defeat Rome and put Israel back in power.*

*Jesus knows that they have been arguing about who will be first in his kingdom. He tells them that whoever would be first must be last and servant of all. Jesus takes a child, someone with no value in that culture, to give them a wake-up call. In his kingdom, there is no rank or status. All are equal.*



*We must learn to seek God in lowly places. We need to care for those in lowly places.*



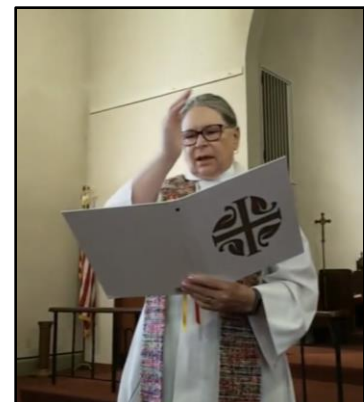
*Pastor prays for the church and for the world. Then she blesses the bread and wine. We are invited to the table to partake of the body and blood of our Lord.*

*Pastor calls on all the September birthday people to stand, and we say a special birthday blessing prayer. Finally, Dan extinguishes the candles and carries the cross out. We sing the closing hymn, and the service has ended*

*The Council meets for a working retreat to plan the Stewardship Drive for this year. Our theme will be "Passing on the Faith." The Council members are asked to sign up for a Temple Talk in which they explain how they will pass on the faith in the future. These will begin on October 3. Following the retreat, Pastor and several members of the Council go into the Sanctuary to bless a quilt Suzanne and her friend Frances have made for Anthony, a former member of Emanuel who now lives in New Mexico. The quilt will be mailed to him on Monday.*



*It is the 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost and the last Sunday of September. We are already in fall. The liturgy changes as we approach the end of the church year. Pastor greets us and reminds us that Radiant Covenant Church will be sharing our facilities beginning today. They will join us for the fellowship*



*hour so that we can meet each other. We begin in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

*Chris reads the lessons. The first, from Numbers, has as its focus what constitutes legitimate need and legitimate leadership. Psalm 19 focuses on the importance of God's word and teaching. The second lesson, from James, says that the marks of a Christian community include praying for those who are sick and in need, celebrating those in good health, restoring those who have strayed, confessing sins to one another, and offering forgiveness to each other.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark, in which Jesus, on the way to Jerusalem, teaches his disciples about ministry that involves service and sacrifice. His disciples are slow to realize that these words apply to them as well as to others.*

*Pastor says that if she were to give the sermon a title, it would be "The Power of Prayer." Pastor tells us that there are so many negative things happening, we really need to be praying. The power of prayer and praying people is mind-blowing.*

*Pastor asks us if we have experienced the power of prayer, do we talk about it? The second question is, "How do you talk to non-praying people?"*

*Prayer can help us understand difficulties. Prayer nurtures saltiness. God isn't finished with us yet.*

*Pastor says that there is always at least one person who criticizes the group. There may even be more than one. In one version of Numbers, they are called the "rabble." We should be careful what we pray for because we may get it. Moses was unhappy with the complainers, but then he turns around and complains to God about*



*the complainers, but then he turns around and complains to God about*

*being stuck, dealing with complainers. God's spirit never leaves us but allows us to continually have the power to serve and pray.*

*The psalms were Jesus's prayer book. It is also ours. The psalms invite us to be creative in prayer.*

*In James we are cautioned to use our words carefully and to pray in all situations. We should ask others to pray for us when we are in need. We have a powerful prayer chain at Emanuel. Faith is connected to prayer. Prayer, spoken from the heart, is powerful.*

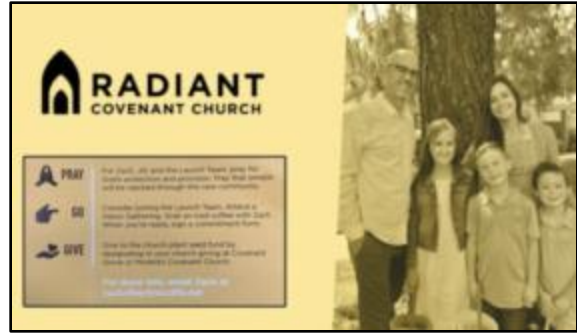
*All will be salted with fire, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. We all sin. We are human. We need to pray in our own way and let others do it their way.*



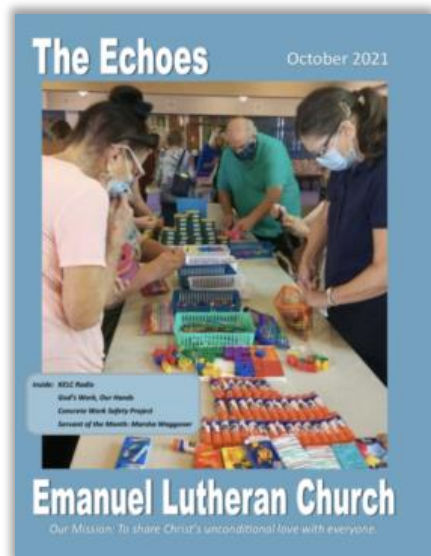
*After the hymn of the day, Pastor says the prayers of the church and blesses the bread and wine so that we may commune. Chris extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional during the closing hymn.*



*During the fellowship hour, we have the opportunity to meet some of the members of Radiant Covenant Church, who will be sharing our worship space. They are warm and friendly, and we have a wonderful time talking with them. We look forward to the next time we have a joint fellowship.*



*Their Sunday School meets in the courtyard and the Sanctuary. We are happy to be able to help fellow Christians have a place to worship.*



## *October*

*In this edition of the Echoes, Marsha has been chosen Servant of the Month. She has been an active member for many years, and she is always willing to read the lessons. She frequently gives others a ride to church. She participates in Bible studies and WELCA. She often volunteers in activities in the community.*





*The Echoes also tells the congregation of the upcoming Stewardship Drive. We are reminded of the importance of filling out a new pledge card. This is helpful when we are determining the budget for the next year. Even if you don't pledge, it's important to indicate how you want your donation used.*



*It is the first Sunday in October. Many members of the congregation bring food donations that will help the homeless and low-income families.*



*Pastor greets us as always. She indicates that there are a lot of things going on this Sunday.*

*One will be the blessing of the quilts that are in the front of the Sanctuary. These are the works of the Piecemakers and will be sold this morning and next Saturday at the Craft Fair. The money will go to help support the Day Care.*



*Today also marks the beginning of the annual Stewardship Drive. Our theme this year is "Passing on the Faith." Each member of Council has been asked to give a Temple Talk, answering the question: "How will you pass on your faith?" Suzanne gives her testimony for Week 1.*



*This is also the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the Sanctuary. Barbara and Dick reminisce about the building of this space. Dick says that his dad made the wrought iron symbols in the altar railing.*

*Barbara remembers helping stuff bulletins when she was a child.*

*Chuck reads the lessons. In Genesis, we learn that God did not mean for people to live in isolation, but in a relationship, so God, out of his love for humanity, created them male and female, to provide companionship for each other and to become "one flesh." In Psalm 8, the writer wonders why God even*



*bothers with us, and yet he created us only a little less than the heavenly beings and gave us the responsibility for his other creations. In the second lesson from Hebrews, the passage emphasizes that Jesus, through whom God created everything, also suffered death that we might have salvation.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark in which Jesus shows that women and children are valued. In her sermon, Pastor reminds us that today marks the start of the Stewardship Drive. She emphasizes that it is not all about money. She tells us that at the recent Council retreat, we came up with a list of seven core values that we feel define Emanuel. She will preach on each of these over the next seven weeks. Today's core value is "Acceptance."*

*Jesus used children to teach about acceptance. Children were not valued at the time Jesus lived. The disciples did not want children hanging around. They were often unruly and disease ridden. Jesus accepted the children just as they were. This tells us that we don't have to be "grown-up" to be accepted by God. Children were subject to their fathers. They had no rights.*



*Jesus wanted the disciples to realize that they weren't any more special than anyone else. We are all dependent on God's grace. His love for us is unconditional. We need to practice unconditional acceptance of all God's children. God places dignity on all people, and we should do the same. We, also, need to tell others about God and his love for all.*



*We continue with the hymn of the day, the prayers and the consecration of the bread and wine.*



*We are invited to commune. Pastor assures us that all are welcome at the table.*



*Following Communion, Pastor blesses the quilts that the Piecemakers have made. She hopes that all who wrap up in a quilt will feel the love of God.*





*Finally, the candles are extinguished and the cross is carried out. We are invited to fellowship in Luther Hall where a cake that commemorates the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be served. We will be joined by the Radiant Covenant Church congregation. We enjoy getting to know these people.*



**Fund Raiser Event**

**Fall Market**  
*Original Art & Craft Faire*  
 Saturday - October 9th  
 Noon to 8pm  
 It will be held at  
 Emanuel Lutheran Day Care  
 Parking lot - College Ave  
 Near MJC  
 Vendor spots available!

Contact: @fortheightresin  
 @fiddle\_leaf\_freddy

Contact Laura Marquez: 209-549-0672  
 (See important information on the following page)

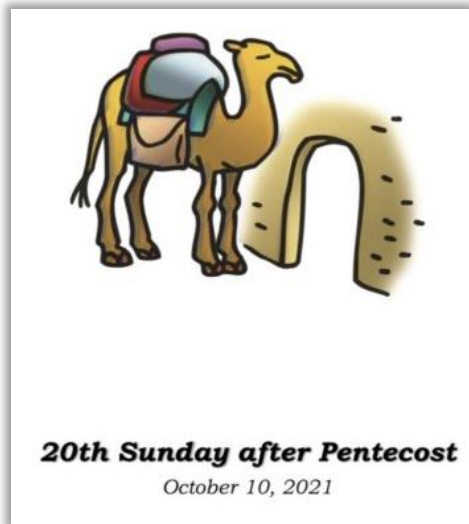
*Our Day Care holds a fundraiser on Saturday, October 9, in the church parking lot. Vendors bought space for their booth. It was a big success.*







*A BBQ filled the air with a delicious aroma. A place to sit and eat and listen to the music of the DJ completed the afternoon.*



*The 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost has arrived. Chris lights the candles, and Pastor greets us and makes a few announcements. Pat is the Council member who is giving the Temple Talk this morning.*

*The service begins with the opening hymn and the confession of sins.*



*Suzanne is our reader today. The first lesson is from Amos. Amos was a herdsman who was called by God to be a prophet. He warns the wealthy upper class of the northern kingdom of Israel that God's demand for justice brings blessings, while corruption and oppression incur God's wrath. Psalm 90 asks for God to satisfy us with his love so that we have reason to rejoice. The second reading comes from Hebrews. In it, we learn that we cannot hide our actions and desires from God. However, Jesus understands our human weaknesses and temptations because he also experienced them. We can, therefore, approach the throne of grace to receive divine mercy from Christ.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark. In this scripture Jesus has been teaching his disciples about what is most valued in God's eyes. Jesus has a conversation with a rich man that illustrates this message for the disciples in a surprising but unforgettable way.*

*Pastor begins the sermon with telling us that today's key word is "Tolerance." She says that this can be both a negative and a positive word. The Gospel story is an example of tolerance. The most important phrase in today's lesson is used twice. It is, "Jesus looked at them (the young man and the disciples) and loved them." Human nature hasn't changed much, but no matter what is going on, Jesus sees us and loves us.*

*The prophets were important because they kept religion honest. They recognized hypocrisy and called it out. They didn't worry about popularity. Religion can be the most dangerous source of evil. The prophets listened only to God, and they pointed out the evil. If we are going to worship a compassionate God, we need to behave like him. We have to be careful not to give ourselves credit when God is working through us. We have work to do, and God knows we can do it.*



*No one will be able to resist Jesus. He knows what we are going through. He knows everything about us. We can still approach him and receive his mercy.*

*The disciples were perplexed by Jesus's teachings. Jesus knew where the journey would end, but the disciples were still confused. The path of life is often difficult. It is more so without God. Jesus makes the journey sweeter and easier.*

*Pastor found this truth, "We cannot exist without God. God, except for love, could exist without the world." If we believe Jesus, then forgiveness is real. The more we believe, the more tolerance begins to look like love.*



*With the sermon ended, we sing the hymn of the day. Pastor prays for us and the world. We begin the communion liturgy, and Pastor blesses the bread and wine.*



*The congregation communes.*



*Pastor says healing prayers. She gives us the final blessing.*

*Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recession as we sing the closing hymn.*



*On October 16, WELCA holds its fall luncheon. Rev. Sara Wilson is our guest speaker. Pastor Sara speaks about her visits to Rwanda, Israel and Honduras as part of her global mission work for the Sierra Pacific Synod.*

*The ladies learn that our theme for this year will be "Bee Faithful." There are Scripture readings and songs, a short business meeting and election of new officers. Then the ladies enjoy a salad luncheon potluck.*





*President Barbara and Vice President Kristine conduct the meeting.*



*Marty made the table decorations.*

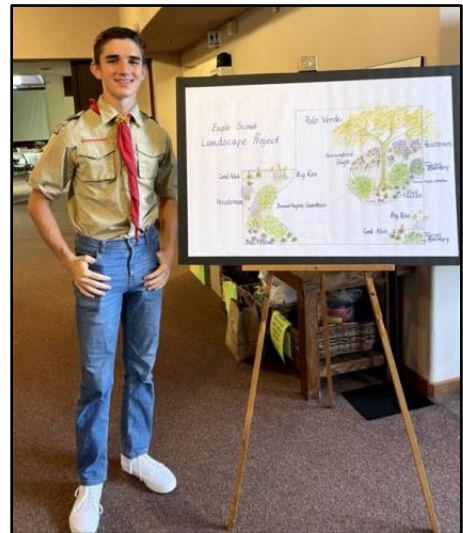


*The ladies brought salads to share, and the Steering Committee members brought desserts. A good time was had by all.*



**21st Sunday after Pentecost**  
October 17, 2021

*It is the 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. This Sunday we will meet our Eagle Scout, Tommy, who is going to landscape the area on Stoddard where the city removed the tree. He is standing in front of the layout, created by Paula.*



*Dan lights the candles while Barbara plays the prelude. After Pastor greets us, Dennis and Martha give their Stewardship Temple Talk.*

*Dennis then introduces Tommy officially and Rob, his Scout Master.*



*We confess our sins, and Pastor forgives them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

*Dan reads the lessons for today. The first lesson is from Isaiah. It is one of four "servant songs." In this familiar passage, the servant's healing ministry and redemptive suffering are understood to be fulfilled in the life and death of Christ.*

*In Psalm 91, we are assured that we need not fear for God is our refuge, and his angels watch over us. In the second reading from Hebrews, imagery from scripture and Jewish worship practices are used to present Jesus as the great high priest who was obedient to God's saving plan. Through his suffering and death, we have eternal salvation.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark. In this lesson James and John ask Jesus to grant them seats of honor. Jesus tells them that he and his followers will "rule" through self-giving sacrifice.*



*Pastor begins today's sermon by telling us that the key word is "Reciprocity." She says that this implies a condition, a deed was done, followed by an equal response. It's a give-and-take between God and us.*

*The disciples in the Gospel have a skewed understanding of reciprocity. Peter said in last week's lesson that they have given up everything. Now they want their reward. Jesus responds by saying, "You do not know what you are asking."*

*Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem. His words confuse them. They felt they had done enough to receive a high place in heaven. Jesus cautions us, "Be careful what you ask for." Even today, some people feel that if they do a lot for the church, then they deserve honor, in the church and in heaven.*

*In Isaiah, we get a description of a servant, one who will eventually prosper. We do not know if the servant is an individual or Israel. In the middle of this passage, we get a description of the "suffering servant." As Christians, we take this to be Jesus. Pastor wonders if we could survive what Jesus suffered. God does not promise us an easy world, but he will be with us.*



*Psalms 91 is a plea for protection in danger and in suffering. We, too, turn to God in times of trouble. Pastor wonders if for today, we might see this psalm as a plea for protection from the times when we are blindsided by hidden traps and deadly hazards.*

*Most trouble in the church comes from an unconscious yearning to receive a place of honor. Pastor reminds us who it was that ended up with Jesus, on his right and left sides, when he was lifted up on the cross. Two bandits were crucified with him.*

*Pastor says that churches are either maintenance-minded churches or mission-minded churches. A maintenance church thinks only the number of people who come or how much money is given. During stewardship, we are emphasizing "Passing on the faith," with the implication of effectiveness. There are certain traps we can fall into. A maintenance-minded church asks, "How many pastoral visits are being made?" A mission-minded church asks, "How many disciples are being made?" A maintenance-minded church asks, "How many Lutherans live within a 20-minute drive of this church?" A mission-minded church asks, "How many unchurched live within a 20-minute drive?" Pastor says that she believes mission is a priority at Emanuel.*

*In Hebrews we see that Jesus suffered when he prayed, but because he honored God, God answered him. This is definitely reciprocity.*

*Pastor says the best definition of reciprocity is “mutual dependence.” We depend on God, but God also depends on us. God needs us. Jesus lived on earth as a servant. We are told in scripture: The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. We need to ask not how we can get people to support us, but how we can support others. God needs a relationship with us. The work of our hands and the work of God’s hands will both prosper.*

*Following the sermon, we sing the hymn of the day, Pastor says the prayers of the church and consecrates the bread and wine so that we can commune.*

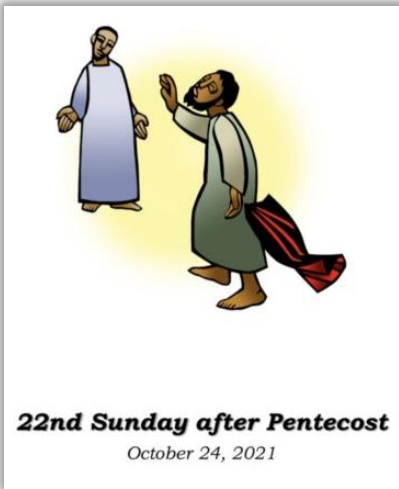


*This is Birthday Sunday, and we pray a special blessing for those who celebrate in October. Then Chris extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional.*



*We enjoy birthday cake and fellowship after the service.*





*It is the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. Not only do we rejoice that we can come together to worship, but we also welcome the rain. Since Mike is on vacation, Bret takes his place as our techie for the day. He live-streams the service. Thank you, Bret. Dan is the acolyte who lights the candles as Barbara plays the prelude.*



*Pastor welcomes everyone and reads a thank-you letter from Kristine to everyone who helped pick up walnuts yesterday. The walnuts are now available to anyone who wants them. The donations will go to Piecemakers or Outreach. Pastor assures everyone that they are delicious. Elaine gives the Stewardship Temple Talk about passing on her faith.*



*Pastor then leads us in the confession of our sins and assures us that we are forgiven.*



*Barbara reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Jeremiah. This passage speaks to Judah and its homecoming from exile in Babylon and to Israel and its restoration. The northern tribes had been lost in exile to Assyria.*

*Psalm 126 speaks of the joy the people will feel when they are brought home after exile. The second lesson from Hebrews indicates that priests of old offered sacrifices for their own sins and served only until death. In contrast, Jesus is God's Son, the holy, sinless, resurrected high priest. Death did not end his priesthood, but through his death he has interceded for our sin.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark in which we meet Bartimaeus, a blind beggar. Bartimaeus comes to Jesus with faith asking that he might see again. Bartimaeus is the first person to call Jesus, Son of David, in the Gospel of Mark.*



*Pastor begins her sermon by recapping the Gospel lessons from the last two weeks. Two weeks ago, we met a rich man who was unable to give up his wealth. Last week, it was James and John who wanted to sit at Jesus's side in glory. This week, we meet a blind beggar who wanted to see. Jesus accepts everyone and loves them.*

*The key word this week is Hospitality. Pastor says that it is much more than just welcoming people. It is also consideration, empathy, thoughtfulness, and gratefulness. It's a way of being. All of these elements are present in the story of Bartimaeus.*

*The Gospel of Mark begins with Jesus's baptism and the calling of the disciples. From that point on, Jesus is on the move. Large crowds follow him. Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus even though he lived on the outskirts of the community. When Jesus hears Bartimaeus, he says these sweet words of hospitality: "Call him here." Bartimaeus springs up and immediately goes to Jesus. It's interesting that Jesus*

*asks him the same question that he asked James and John, "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus wants a relationship with him to be voluntary. He heals him with no strings attached. "Go. You are healed." Bartimaeus joins the crowd and follows Jesus. We get hospitality from Jesus. We should give hospitality to others.*

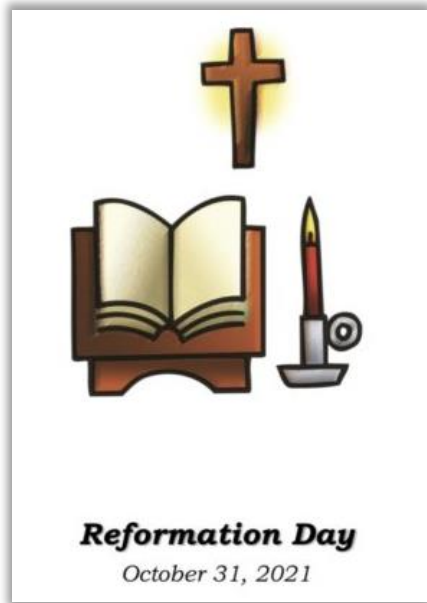
*In Jeremiah, we are told to sing praises now. Don't wait. The palmist speaks of joy and gladness. In Hebrews we learn that Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins, once for all. Because of this, we can be joyful and show hospitality.*



*Following the sermon, we sing the hymn of the day and have the prayers. Then Pastor blesses the bread and wine so that we may commune.*

*The service ends with a blessing for all of us. We leave after singing the closing hymn and enjoy fellowship, hopefully showing hospitality to all we see.*





*It is October 31, Reformation Sunday! The church is resplendent in red. And so is the congregation.*



*Pastor welcomes us as she announces how pleased she is to see all the red. Of course, our opening hymn is the traditional "A Mighty Fortress Is our God."*



*Our Treasurer, Bob, gives the Temple Talk this morning, explaining a little bit about the importance of Stewardship and passing on the faith.*





*Matthew and Rebeca read the lessons. There are two “first” lessons today. The first is from Deuteronomy. It is known as the Shema, which Jesus restates in Mark when he answers the question, “Which is the greatest of the commandments?” The second is from Jeremiah and is the traditional Reformation text that speaks of the new covenant that God will make with his people.*



*Psalm 46 is said to have been Luther’s favorite psalm. It is the basis for the text of “A Mighty Fortress Is our God” that Luther wrote.*

*The second reading comes from Romans. Paul’s words are at the heart of the preaching of Luther and other Reformation leaders. That is, we are brought into a right relationship with God through the divine activity centered in Christ’s death. This act is a gift of grace that liberates us from sin.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. In this lesson Jesus speaks of truth and freedom as spiritual realities known through his word. He reveals the truth that sets people free from sin.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by indicating that Luther’s action of nailing the 95 Theses to the church door was revolutionary. She says that the church is always or should be in a state of reformation. She believes that it is currently in reformation.*

*Scripture convinced Martin Luther that we are saved by grace. He did not plan to start a new religion. He*



*simply wanted to fix some errors that he found in Catholicism. She reminds us that grace through faith is still our central belief.*

*Pastor says that today's key word for Stewardship is Listening. We come to faith by listening: listening to each other and listening to God. We can listen to God individually or in community.*

*Psalm 46 tells us, "Be still and know that I am God." This implies that we follow through with what we have heard. How we act reflects how well we listen. Before there was writing, there was the oral tradition. This was how faith was passed on before we could read.*

*The most important lesson to learn today is that God forgives our sins, and then he forgets them. The lessons today encourage us to talk about God's commands, tell our faith stories, and thereby pass on the faith.*

*Luther was convinced that God is our refuge and strength. Pastor says that if we are in the midst of a storm to remember the verse from the psalm that tells us to be still and know that God is God.*

*When Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment, he responds with the Shema, from Deuteronomy: Love God and love your neighbor. Pastor tells us to remember that Jesus loves us, and God forgives and forgets our sins.*



*We sing the hymn of the day, confess our belief in the words of the Apostle's Creed, have the prayers and share the peace.*

*After the offering is taken, we are treated to the choir being back. It is wonderful to hear a musical response to the offering.*



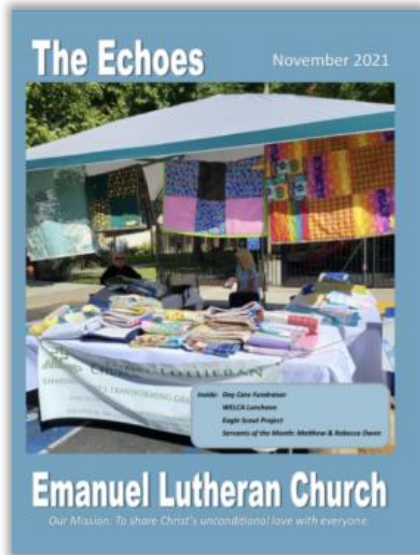
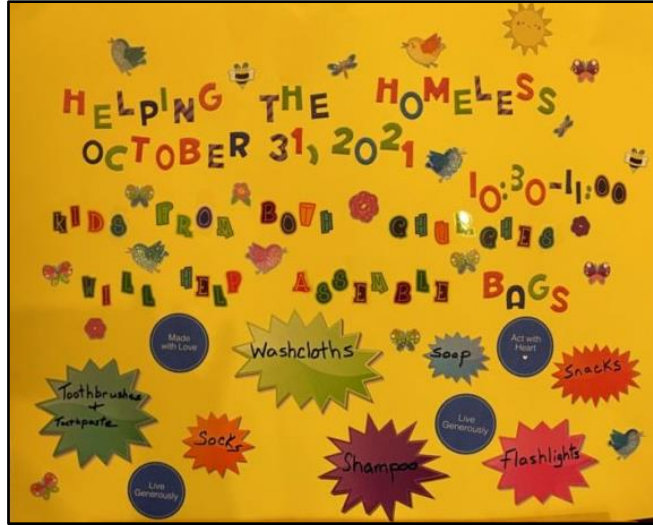
*Pastor then begins the Great Thanksgiving and blesses the bread and wine. It is a very colorful communion this Sunday as so many are wearing red.*



*Pastor gives the final blessing before we leave.*



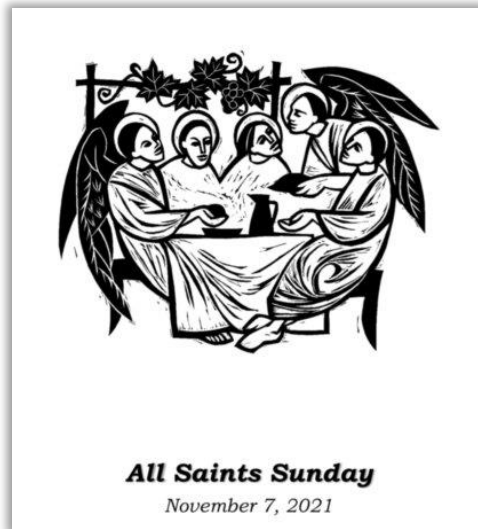
*Chris has everything organized to make hygiene bags for Grace Is the Key to share with the homeless people of James Marshall Park. After the service members from both Emanuel and Radiant Covenant participate in assembling the bags.*



## *November*

*It is November and the Echoes reminds us of the events that took place the past month.*

*Rebeca and Matthew are the Servants of the Month for November. Both of them have been readers for several years. They are always willing participants when there is a project to be done. Thank you, Rebeca and Matthew, for your service.*



*It is the first Sunday in November, which is traditionally All Saints Sunday, a time to remember our members and loved ones who have passed on this last year. Later in the service, Pastor will read their names and light a candle, while Barbara marks each name with the tolling of the bell chime.*



*The chancel is adorned with the white paraments and banners.*

*Pastor greets us in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*





*Janice is our Council member who gives the Stewardship Temple Talk about Passing on the Faith.*

*We confess our sins, and Pastor assures us of forgiveness.*



*Lois reads the Scripture lessons. In the first lesson, Isaiah tells of his vision when God will gather all people on the holy mountain and provide a feast for them. Here God will wipe away all tears; sorrow will be no more, and God will destroy*



*death itself. Psalm 24 assures us that God is all mighty and powerful, and that the righteous will receive a blessing from God. The second lesson from Revelation is also the reporting of a vision. John tells of a new heaven and earth in which God resides with his people and eradicates all mourning, despair and pain.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel lesson from Mark. In it, Jesus comments on the poor widow's gift given out of poverty rather than abundance.*



*In her sermon, Pastor reminds us that it is All Saints Sunday. She says that it is a joyful, but poignant day. We remember those who have died this past year as well as those who have died in the more distant past.*

*Hope is the underlying theme for today's lessons. Our hope is in Jesus. In Mark, we see hope in the widow's ability to listen and in her charity.*

*The core value today for Stewardship is "Charitability." This includes generosity and gratitude. These attributes describe the widow. We show our generosity in pledging toward building and operations.*



*How did we get so generous? We learned from those who came before. The widow listened and learned, so she gave out of an attitude of gratitude. Jesus was watching those who were giving. He noticed, not the amount, but the way it was given. The widow gave with confidence that God would provide what she needed*

*Passing on the Faith includes humbleness. It also includes hope, hope in a new heaven and earth. We live in the "already, but not yet." God's kingdom came with Jesus's death, so we already live in his kingdom. But we are also promised a new kingdom that will come. We are not yet living in that one.*

*Jesus crushed death. We have nothing to fear. We live as faithful stewards in the confidence that death does not have the last word. We learn from relationships: good or bad. We celebrate the gift of life that comes from God with no strings attached.*

*Stewardship is an act of Passing on the Faith.*

*After the hymn of the day, Pastor prays for us, the church and the world.*



*After the prayers, Pastor tells us that we light candles in remembrance of those who now live in Christ's light, having claimed the promise of their Baptism into Christ. We are told that we will have the opportunity to light candles when we commune. Pastor reads the names and lights a candle for each of the four members of Emanuel who died this past year. Barbara tolls the bell chime as each name is read. We remember Bill Beasley, Florence Broden, Ila Reinheimer and Ronald Silva.*



*We share the peace and take the offering. Then we begin the communion liturgy. Pastor consecrates the bread and wine, and we commune and light our candles.*






*We receive the final blessing and gather for fellowship before going home.*



*It is Food for Faith Sunday, and Jeri is this month's Trunkmaster. Rue adds her donation to the others.*



**25th Sunday after Pentecost**  
November 14, 2021



*It is the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost and the last "green" Sunday of the year.*

*Pastor greets us; we sing the opening hymn and then confess our sins. Pastor assures us by the sign of the cross that God forgives and forgets all our sins.*



*Marilyn reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Daniel. This is an example of apocalyptic literature, which is full of strange visions and symbolism. It is concerned with God's revelation about the end time and the coming kingdom of*



*God, when God will vindicate the righteous who have been persecuted. In Psalm 16, the writer rejoices that God is always there as his refuge and will never abandon him. The second lesson comes from Hebrews. In it, are images of worship and sacrifice, used to highlight what Christ has uniquely accomplished through his death. Because we have received forgiveness through Christ's death, we live with sincere hearts by trusting in God's promises and encouraging love and good works from each other.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Mark. This tells of the last week of Jesus's life when he warned his disciples concerning trials that were to come upon them and upon the world. He exhorts the listener not to be alarmed.*



*Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that next Sunday will be the last Sunday of the church year. Today's Stewardship core value is "Love."*

*Apocalyptic literature is often referred to as "end times" scripture. Pastor believes that "better times" is a better perspective.*

*Pastor indicates that love motivates both God and us. Love is at the root of all charitable giving.*

*In Daniel, we learn that evil never wins. This scripture is meant to provide consolation. Everything will be all right in the end. Psalm 16 reiterates this. Knowing Jesus makes us believe this. This concept can bring comfort when things are hard.*

*In the Gospel we see Jesus using hyperbole, not to scare us, but to get our attention. We ask ourselves: Will justice happen here or in the afterlife? We see the contrast between everlasting life versus everlasting shame. These words can cause confusion and angst, but we should remember that love is the governing word.*

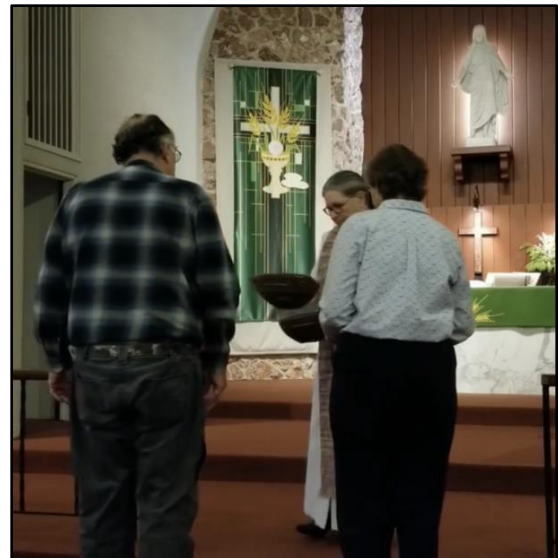


*If we believe what Jesus said is true, then hell is irrelevant. All things will be made new. In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is with us to give us strength. God gets the last word. All we need to remember is to love others.*



*Pastor prays for us, the church and the world. We share the peace. Then the offering is taken.*

*Pastor begins the communion liturgy. She consecrates the bread and the wine. Everyone is invited to the table.*





*This is the body of Christ, given for you. This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.*



*Pastor introduces the Council members and indicates their Ministry. Dennis, President, Property; Pat, Vice President, Children, Youth & Family, and our liaison with the Day Care; Janice, Secretary, Fellowship; Bob, Treasurer, Finance; Martha, Worship and Sanctuary Arts; Elaine, Outreach; Suzanne, Spiritual Life and Social Media. She invites everyone to partake of special treats during the Fellowship time in honor of the Council.*



*After the service, the Council meets.*



*It is November 21, the last Sunday of the liturgical church year. We celebrate Christ the King Sunday and WELCA*



*Thankoffering Sunday. Pastor greets everyone and explains*

*that in addition to the above celebrations, it is also Birthday Sunday, and that we are all invited to have a piece of birthday cake during the fellowship hour.*



*Since this Sunday recognizes the work that women do in the church, all of the participants in today's service are women.*

*Kathleen is our reader. The first lesson is from Daniel. This was written during a time of great oppression that seem endless. But Daniel's message is that it shall end. The Ancient One (God), who is judge, will call all nations to account and will give dominion to "one like a human being," the Messiah. Psalm 93 proclaims the power and majesty of God. The second lesson is from Revelations. In it, the Almighty God, who spans all of time, is celebrated. Jesus is also celebrated as the firstborn from the dead who rules over the world's rulers and whose return we eagerly await.*

*The Gospel comes from John. In it, the story of Pilate and Jesus presents two different ways of exercising power, through force or with love.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by indicating that fact checking is second nature to us now. We understand that the Internet isn't always right.*





*She says in today's Gospel story, Pilate is fact checking. He asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answers this question with a question. Pastor says she believes that Pilate was asking the wrong questions.*

*This incident takes place during the trial of Jesus. We might wonder why we're getting an Easter story so close to Christmas. Pastor reminds us that we can't have Easter without Christmas, nor Christmas without Easter.*

*Today is Christ the King Sunday. According to Pastor, we don't like the idea of "kings." We are very defensive of our religious practice. We are more apt to say, "Jesus, my Savior," rather than "Jesus, my King."*

*The Jewish leaders really didn't have a problem with the kingship of Jesus. It was the fact that he claimed to be God's son that they objected to. Both the Jewish leaders and Pilate were interested in self-preservation.*

*Pilate is put on trial when Jesus responds with, "Who do you say that I am?" Instead of asking Jesus, "What have you done?", Pilate should have asked, "Who are you?" Jesus does not answer *what* but *who*. He explains that his kingdom is not of this world. Knowing the Truth is the same as being a disciple. Pilate does not recognize Truth. He rejects becoming a disciple.*

*Pastor concludes with asking us to fact check ourselves: What makes Jesus King? Let us pray that we continue to listen to the truth in Jesus's voice.*



*Pastor says the prayers of the church. Then we share the peace. The choir sings while the offering is taken.*



*The women are given the opportunity to bring their Thankofferings forward. These donations will be sent to the National WELCA to support various ministries.*



*Pastor consecrates the bread and wine so that we may commune.*





*Pastor prays for all the November birthdays, and then she blesses the congregation. We leave to enjoy birthday cake and fellowship.*



*It is the first Sunday in Advent. The paraments are blue. It is also the first Sunday of the church year. The giving tree is ready for tags.*



*Pastor welcomes us. We have begun to have an Assisting Minister again. Dan is serving in that capacity, and so he lights the first Advent candle. This candle represents Hope.*



*Suzanne reads the lessons for today. The first lesson is from Jeremiah. In this scripture, we see that “righteousness” in the Old Testament often refers to being faithful in relationship. God acts righteously in both punishing Israel for its sins and showing mercy. In today’s reading, Jerusalem’s future name – “The Lord is our righteousness” – proclaims that God is even now working salvation for Israel. In Psalm 25, the writer proclaims his trust in God as his hope for salvation. The second lesson is from 1 Thessalonians. In this letter, Paul expresses his joyful gratitude for them. He voices overflowing thanks, joy and blessings*

*for the people of this growing church.*

*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. We see that God will fulfill God’s purposes, and, already, hidden signs of that fulfillment abound. God’s people shall be given strength to stand boldly on that day to receive his promised redemption.*

*Pastor reminds us that this weekend starts the holiday rush. She remembers when she was a child, how hard it was to wait for Christmas.*

*The meaning of “Advent” is “Coming to.” We look forward to Christ’s second coming. The past helps us make sense of the future. We get hope from the past. That same hope is passed on to us.*



*Jeremiah had an excuse for not answering God, but he learned to listen and speak God’s words. God promises that truth and justice shall prevail. Hope helps us with the present and the future.*

*Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians was written 30 – 40 years before the Gospels were written. His letter reflects his love for them. He wanted to remind them that they had reason to rejoice even though they were still a “work in progress.”*

*People were still waiting for the second coming when Luke wrote his Gospel. Jesus uses the past to help people see the future. The fig tree was often used as a symbol of peace and prosperity.*

*Signs will show us the kingdom of God is near. Many fear the end, but we are excited. Jesus warns us to avoid traps (things that make us worry). Our hope is in God. His words will never wear out.*

*Praying people are the hope for the world. Because we believe in what Jesus said and did, we do not fear. Jesus will reappear, but he is always with us even if we can't see him. Eventually, all will be revealed in a new world.*

*Following the sermon and the hymn, we have the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of the church. Then Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune. The service is ended.*

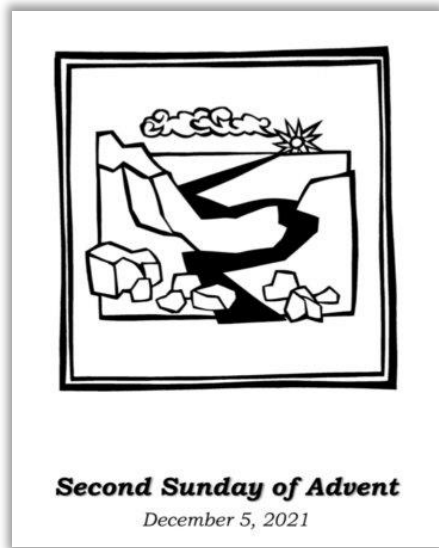


*On Saturday, December 4, WELCA holds its annual Cookie Exchange. We were instructed to bring three dozen cookies to share. Then we were able to take cookies home with us. The leftovers will be sold after church tomorrow. We enjoyed singing Christmas songs with David and Barbara. It's always a fun way to start the season.*





*"It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Everywhere you go."*



*It is the second Sunday of Advent. Pastor greets us, and we sing the opening hymn. Kathleen lights the second Advent candle, the candle of Love.*



*We confess our sins, and Pastor assures us that we are forgiven.*

*Chris reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Malachi. God announces a covenant with Israel. A messenger will prepare the way for the coming of the Lord by purifying and refining God's people, as silver and gold are refined.*



*The psalm for today actually comes from Luke and is read responsively. This scripture is traditionally known as Zechariah's Song. It is his response to receiving his voice again after the birth of his son, John the Baptist.*

*The second lesson is from Philippians. In this letter, Paul expresses his joy in working with the church at Philippi. He encourages them to grow in love and knowledge.*

*We are having trouble with the sound system this morning. Pastor's lapel mike is not projecting her voice, so she moves to the lectern for the Gospel and the sermon. The Gospel according to Luke tells us that John the Baptist is a herald of Jesus, whose way is prepared by "repentance for the forgiveness of sins." We get a sense that this coming Lord will challenge the political and religious authorities.*

*Pastor remembers when children are little, they often exert their independence by saying, "Me do it!" She says for some of us that*



*philosophy carries into adulthood. We want to do it all. John the Baptist was fiercely independent until God called him to preach repentance for forgiveness.*

*Elizabeth and Zechariah raised John to be independent. They were old when he was born. They had waited their whole lives for this miracle – a baby. John’s motivation was love.*

*Pastor reminds us that we don’t like the idea of repentance because we don’t like to admit sin. In a spirit of independence, we believe we can fix ourselves and everything else. She tells us that the Greek word for sin means to “miss the mark.” Repentance is actually turning away from bad behavior and turning toward God.*

*Pastor mentions that Paul loved the Philippians. He encouraged them to live in joy, knowing they are loved. We are to wait in love/with love. This is the story of Advent and Christmas.*

*Assisting Minister Kathleen leads us in the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of the church.*



*During the offering, we have an anthem from the choir.*

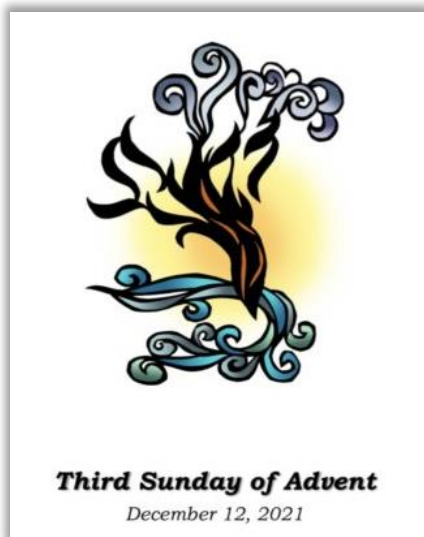


*The bread and wine are blessed, and we have communion.*





*Once again, we are blessed before leaving the service. Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional out. We are told, "Go in peace. Christ is near."*



*It is already the third Sunday in Advent. Pastor warmly welcomes us*





*Suzanne is the Assisting Minister this morning. She reads the Advent message and lights three candles on the Advent wreath. The third candle is for Joy and is the only one that is pink.*

*Pat reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Zephaniah, a book mostly about judgment. However, after repentance has occurred, God makes a promise: to those who call on his name, God reveals God's ultimate goal, a right relationship among all the peoples of the earth. Salvation is at hand, a joyous prospect. The psalm today comes from Isaiah and is read responsively. This is a hymn of thanksgiving and may have been used during the Feast of the Tabernacles. It is a true expression of joy. The third lesson is from Philippians. Paul urges his friends there to trust God with all their concerns and worries with the hope that they will experience God's joy and peace.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel from Luke. In this passage John the Baptist heralds the mighty one who is coming. He teaches that preparation for God's reign is a matter of bearing fruits of merciful justice, radical generosity and vocational integrity, rather than identity.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by saying that John the Baptist seems an odd character to put with “joy,” but he knew he was the forerunner of the Messiah. He is asked, “What should we do?” Pastor tells us that we often wonder how do we please God. Joy is a much deeper emotion than happiness. It can be experience, even during sad times.*



*“What should we do?” is a timely question for Advent. It can be a puzzling question. Maybe the question should be, “What can I do?” We should wait. We believe that the Messiah never left the world. He is here as the Holy Spirit.*

*The word “do” in Greek also means “bear.” Good deeds don’t make us Christians. We do good deeds because we are Christians.*

*Pastor says that sometimes we “should” too much on people. There will always be people to help – continuously. We need to be part of the community: we not I. John asked the people to buck the system and work together.*

*For this Christmas, Pastor exhorts us to put the “we” back into helping others. She says to produce good fruit where we are planted, to be satisfied with what we have and to get rid of the things that get between us and God. Then we rejoice, singing and shouting to God!*



*We confess our faith with the Apostle’s Creed and have the prayers of the church. Then Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune. Kathleen helps with this.*



*We receive the final blessing. Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional.*



*We gather for fellowship before going home.*

*On, Tuesday, Text Study takes Pastor Lyn out for lunch to celebrate her birthday. We eat at El Compadre in Roseburg Square. The group took a collection and gave her a gift card in appreciation for all she does.*



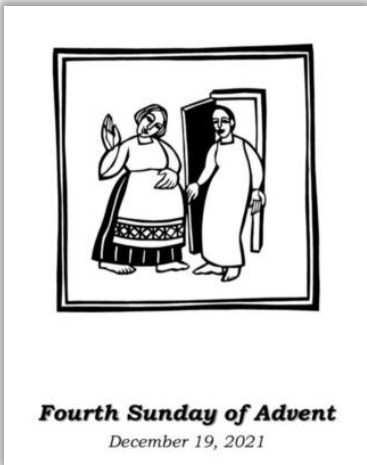
*Our Outreach Ministry obtained blankets through a Thrivent grant. Here Chris is delivering them to Kim from Grace Is the Key to be distributed to the homeless.*



*Leah Circle has a Christmas luncheon at Suzanne's. Pastor Lyn is our guest.*



*Lydia Circle reports on their Christmas project. They donated 14 Walmart gift cards to the Gospel Mission's teen Christmas program. Marsha, Barry and Barbara delivered them along with some blankets.*



*The Fourth Sunday of Advent has arrived. Today we light the Peace Candle. The service opens with the choir singing the call to worship.*



*Our Assisting Minister Barbara lights the candles in the Advent Wreath. She also reads the lessons for today. The first lesson is from Micah. Micah, after pronouncing judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who like David will come from Bethlehem, and will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament*

*writers understood this passage to refer to Jesus. The second lesson is from Hebrews. In this passage, through obedience to God's will, Jesus allows his body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one in which we are made a holy people.*



*Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. It is the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, two women who are filled with the Holy Spirit and faith. Both Elizabeth's greeting and Mary's song of praise tell of a saving God who remembers,*



*scatters, lifts up and fulfills all things. After the Gospel, we sing the Magnificat from the Holden Evening Prayer Service.*

*Pastor begins the sermon by repeating the greeting that Elizabeth used when she saw Mary approaching. Pastor reminds us that these are familiar words of comfort used in praying the Rosary. Pastor says that the stories of Elizabeth and Mary belong together because they are both stories of faith.*

*Elizabeth's story is more than a prelude to the "big" story. It is a story of surprise and faith. Elizabeth is the mother of John the Baptist. Meanwhile, Mary flees to see Elizabeth immediately after her encounter with Gabriel. Mary's situation could have led to dire consequences. As an unwed mother of the priestly class, she would have been stoned or worse. However, Pastor doesn't believe that Mary left in fear, but rather she goes with joy, faith, love and humility to celebrate with Elizabeth.*

*Their stories of faith are examples of the same faith that we should have today. They hear God's word and believe. They both prophesy about their sons. Mary's song clearly states that the world would be changed forever. The Magnificat uses verbs in the past tense to foretell the future.*

*The paradox of Advent is that we realize the Messiah has already come, and we look to the future when his coming will fix everything that is wrong. We do need to remember that God is in charge of the fixing, and it will be to God's satisfaction, not our own.*

*What does the Magnificat say to us today? Jesus was born in the midst of everything that was wrong with the world. He comes to us today in the midst of whatever is wrong. He may not fix that wrong, but he will be with us through it.*

*Christmas came because the world was broken. It is still broken; we still need Christmas. We, as Christians, need to make a difference. Faith is powerful and can bring a peace that gives us a sense of well-being.*





*Barbara leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of the church. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, so we can commune.*



*It is Birthday Sunday, and Pastor asks for all December birthday people to stand. She laughs as she and Dick are the only two people. She quips,*

*"Guess we get all the cake!"*



*We are blessed. Then Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional.*



*We gather for fellowship and birthday cake.*



*December 24, Christmas Eve, has arrived. Our service is at 5:30, and will be a candlelight service. The paraments and banners are in white. Poinsettias adorn the chancel. The Christ candle is lit.*



*There is a glitch in the live streaming of the service, so there are not as many pictures as there should be. Pastor welcomes us with, "Merry Christmas!" Dan reads the lessons for this evening. The first lesson is from Isaiah. This passage is in the form of a poem that promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression. This hope is based on the birth of a royal child whose name is full of promise. We read Psalm 96 responsively. It speaks of God's greatness and majesty and encourages us to worship and honor the Lord. The second reading is from Titus. In this passage, the appearance*

*of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Therefore, we live wisely and justly in the present while anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.*

*The Gospel is read by Pastor. It is the familiar story from Luke that tells that God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.*



*Pastor calls the children forward and reads the story of Clopper, the donkey who carries Mary to Bethlehem and witnesses all that happens the night of Jesus's birth.*

*Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that all over the world, we sing joyfully tonight. We are having our second pandemic Christmas. We had hoped it would be over by now. We still have hope, born of love.*

*Pastor says she loves Christmas stories, all of them. The Bible leaves a lot of gaps in the story, so we tend to fill in the gaps. One of her favorite stories is "The Friendly Beasts." All the stories seem to indicate that this is a sacred time.*

*During Advent, our theme has been trees. Everything in the world tonight joins in singing, even the trees, according to the psalm.*

*God, for the sake of love, came as a baby. The gift of Christmas is so important because we don't deserve this love, but it's ours anyway. God loves us, and there's nothing we can do about it. This night is about love in a broken world.*

*God became human, lived a normal life, had a three-year ministry, died on the cross, only to rise again. The Lord is passionate about his world. Joy is knowing we have an answer to our problems. Tonight, we love God back. Jesus is for all the world. God put skin on. Jesus is the hope for the world.*

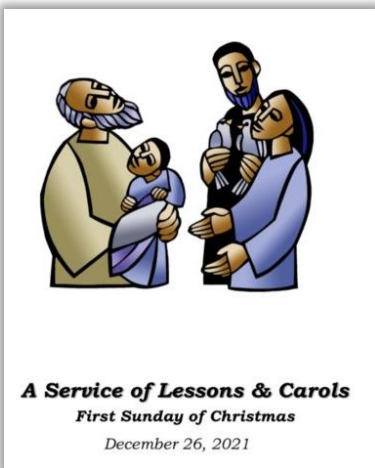
*There is a mystery about this night beyond understanding. Good news! We are needed to tell the world about Jesus.*

*We continue the service with the prayers and the blessing of the bread and wine. We commune and are blessed. We have sung Christmas carols throughout this service. We end with the lighting of candles and singing "Silent Night," as the lights are dimmed.*



*We pray, "Jesus, let your light so shine in us that all my see your good works in us and glorify our Father in heaven.*

*We leave joining in the carol, "Joy to the World." Merry Christmas.*



*It is December 26, the First Sunday of Christmas. We are having a joint service of Lessons and Carols with Radiant Covenant Church.*



*Pastor greets us and introduces Ellie Gundlach from Radiant Covenant. Ellie will be the Assisting Minister this morning and deliver the homily. The scriptures are read by Pat, Kathleen and Chris. We sing a carol in between each lesson.*



*Ellie reads the Gospel according to Luke. It is the story of Jesus being presented in the Temple when he was eight days old. Mary and Joseph encounter Simeon and Anna, two prophets who have been promised that they will see the Messiah before dying.*

*Ellie begins the homily by saying she wants to reflect on Jesus's life, beginning with the encounter with Simeon and Anna. She says there are three important things to know about Simeon and Anna.*



*The first is that they had lived long lives. Second, they waited for the promise that God had made to them. Third, they rejoiced when they saw the baby Jesus. Simeon showed quiet contentment. Anna rejoiced out loud. Both relied on the Holy Spirit continuously. The Holy Spirit rested on them. They heard and acted on what the Holy Spirit said. They are an example of believing in God's words and promises. Ellie asks us to imagine being in the Temple that day. What would our reaction be?*



*The confession is made, the prayers said, and the bread and wine are blessed. We commune for the last time this year.*



*We receive the final blessing and join together for fellowship.*



*We have survived another year of pandemic. There have been challenges, but we persist. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this document. Also, thanks to Luci, the cat, who has carefully monitored the creating and the printing of this story.*

