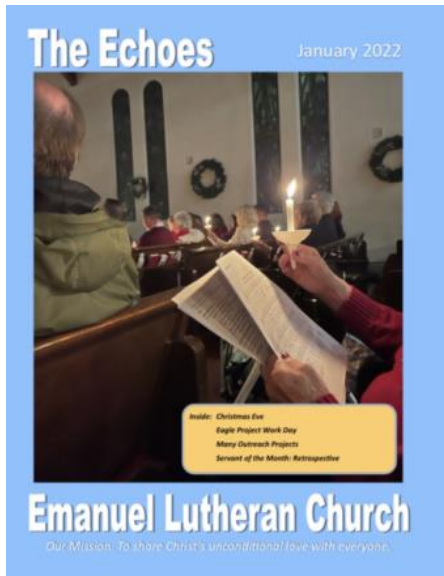


The Year in Review
Passing on the Faith

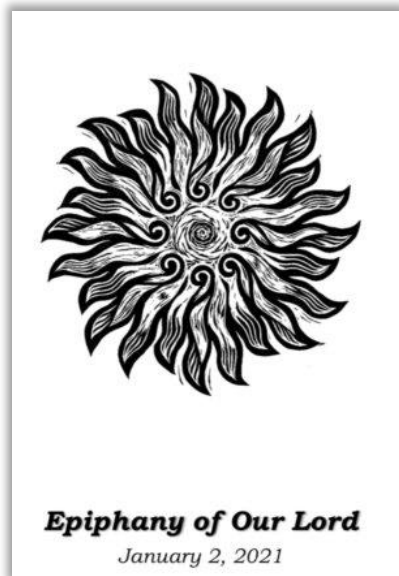


January 1 – December 31, 2022



January

The Echoes recaps the events of Advent and Christmas. The Servant of the Month was also a recap of the Servants for 2021: Alora, Paula, Chris, Fanney, Brett, Janice, Dan, Suzanne, Marsha, Rebeca and Matthew, and Kathleen.



It is January 2, and we are celebrating Epiphany. Elaine is the Trunkmaster this month. We bring our donations of food.



Pastor greets us in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We confess our sins and sing the

hymn of praise. We pray together the prayer of the day.



Barbara reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Isaiah. Jerusalem is told that nations will make a pilgrimage to her because the light of God's presence is within. God's glory is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Selections from Psalm 72 are read responsively. This passage looks forward to the endless reign of the Messiah, who alone can rule with perfect justice and whose citizens will enjoy perfect peace.

The second lesson is from Ephesians. What has been hidden is now revealed through the ministry of Paul and others. Both Jews and Gentiles participate in the richness of God's promised salvation through Jesus Christ.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew which tells the story of the visit of the Magi who have followed a star to honor a new king. Even though strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited Messiah.

Pastor begins her sermon by mentioning New Year's Resolutions. She says that we usually resolve to do better, but by Lent our "resolves" are beginning to wane.

A new year means new hope. The star appears for us. The Magi expected to find someone extraordinary. They found him. They witnessed God's glory revealed. It probably changed them forever. The Magi spent their time looking for signs.



What are we looking for? In Isaiah, we are told to shine. God's hope for the future is that his light will shine through us and attract others. Epiphany is for all people to see God. God's hope is that all people unite as one.

Pastor says that Martin Luther wondered if this baby really were the new king, why wasn't everyone in Bethlehem talking about him? Probably it was because the people feared Herod who feared an insurrection.

Pastor explains what the gifts signify. Gold, a royal symbol, represents hope. Frankincense, a priestly symbol, represents faith. Myrrh, a burial oil, represents love.

The Magi are warned in a dream not to return to Herod. The Bible tells us they went home “by another way.” Pastor feels this is proof of their change. She believes they became “followers of the way.” They discovered God and his hope for the future.



What we are all looking for: faith, hope and love, is already ours. She challenges us to let our light shine to give God glory.



Dan leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of the church. We share the peace, and the offering is collected.

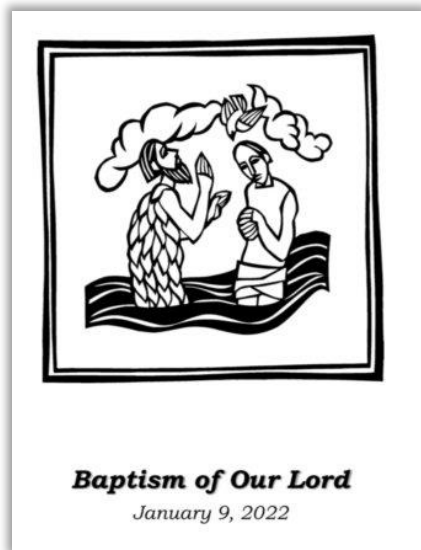


Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune.



*Pastor blesses us.
We sing the final hymn
while Dan extinguishes
the candles. Then he leads
the recessional.*

*We enjoy fellowship
time before going home.*



*January 9 is the Baptism of our Lord.
Pastor welcomes everyone to the service.
She also says that there is a The Year in
Review from the past year that is
available for anyone who wants to order
a copy. We confess our sins and are
assured of forgiveness. We sing the
Hymn of Praise and pray together the
prayer of the day.*



Rebeca and Matthew are our readers this morning. Rebeca reads the first lesson from Isaiah. God promises to bring the people home from their exile in Babylon. They don't need to be afraid because God, who formed, created, and called them by

name now redeems them from all their enemies. God tells them they are precious and honored and he loves them.

Matthew leads the reading of Psalm 29 responsively. This psalm speaks of the power and might of God. His power is compared to forces of nature.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. John the Baptist insists that he is not the Messiah, but the one who points ahead to the one who is coming. God indicates that Jesus is his beloved Son.

Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that Jesus is identified as God's son at his baptism. There are two themes in the Gospel's story for today: identity and prayer. Luke's story makes it clear who John is and who Jesus is.

It is also the story of the role of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit refines and cleanses us from the inside out. He will make a clean sweep of our lives. God provided a way for all the chaff (bad stuff) to be blown away.

Isaiah reminds us that God made us, called us by name and cleans us. God made us to love. Love drives the Holy Spirit. God names us "Child of God" before we are even born. We belong to God.

The term "redeemed" signifies that God is related to us and is responsible for caring for us. God loves us, and there's nothing we can do about it. We are precious in his sight. He honors us. Isaiah is the only place in scripture where God actually says, "I love you."



Prayer is also important. Jesus begins to pray after his baptism, and the Holy Spirit comes down. Prayer is vital in communication with the Holy Spirit.

God calls Jesus and us "Beloved." We are called to obedience and mission. We are now in charge of Jesus's mission on earth. We are to tell others, "God loves you, and there's nothing you can do about it."



Dan leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed. He also prays the prayers of the intercession. We share the peace and Barbara and Matthew take the offering.

Pastor begins the Great Thanksgiving. She blesses the bread and wine, and we commune.





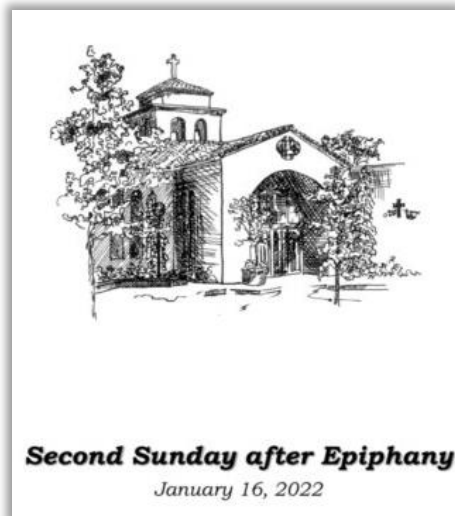
We receive the final blessing, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.



Dan leads the recessional as we sing the sending hymn. We are told to go with Christ into a weary world.



It is the second Sunday after Epiphany, and the altar is dressed in the green paraments and banners.





Pastor greets us with a warm welcome, especially for visitors. We begin with the opening hymn, and then we confess our sins and receive forgiveness in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The liturgy now includes the hymn of praise, followed by the prayer of the day.

Lois is our reader this morning. The first lesson is from Isaiah. The prophet declares that Jerusalem and Judah will be restored, regardless of the fact that their return from exile is marred by economic and political problems. God will rejoice over Jerusalem like a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. The people are called to celebrate.

Psalm 35 is read responsively and marvels at the love and strength of God.

The second lesson, from 1 Corinthians, tells of problems that have arisen in that church because the people were comparing their spiritual gifts, some thinking theirs were superior to others. Paul



tells them that the Holy Spirit has given all the perfect gift for their mission.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. Today's passage is the familiar story of the wedding at Cana where Jesus turns the water into wine, the first of many signs that reveal that he brings God's creative power and joyful presence into the world.

Pastor begins her sermon by saying that planning for weddings is complex. It can be expensive. It was no different in Jesus's time.

Pastor finds great joy and great humor in the Cana story. Pastor says the Bible contains both seriousness and humor. She believes that a sense of humor is a necessity.

John's goal is to reveal the identity of Jesus through signs. In this act of turning water into wine, there are several important points.

First, it begins on the third day, which is a reference to the resurrection and grace. It points to abundant life, then and now.

We know that Mary, his mother, was there. She is a witness to his first revelation and his last, on the cross. Motherhood represents abundant life, grace upon grace.

With every wedding, something always goes wrong. In those days, a wedding was a week-long affair. Midweek, the wine runs out. How does Mary know that this is the right time? Jesus's saying that it is not his hour is a connection to the resurrection, a time set by God. Mary encourages Jesus to be who he is. He uses ordinary water to become the best wine, showing joy, hope, grace upon grace. Jesus saves the bridegroom from disgrace.

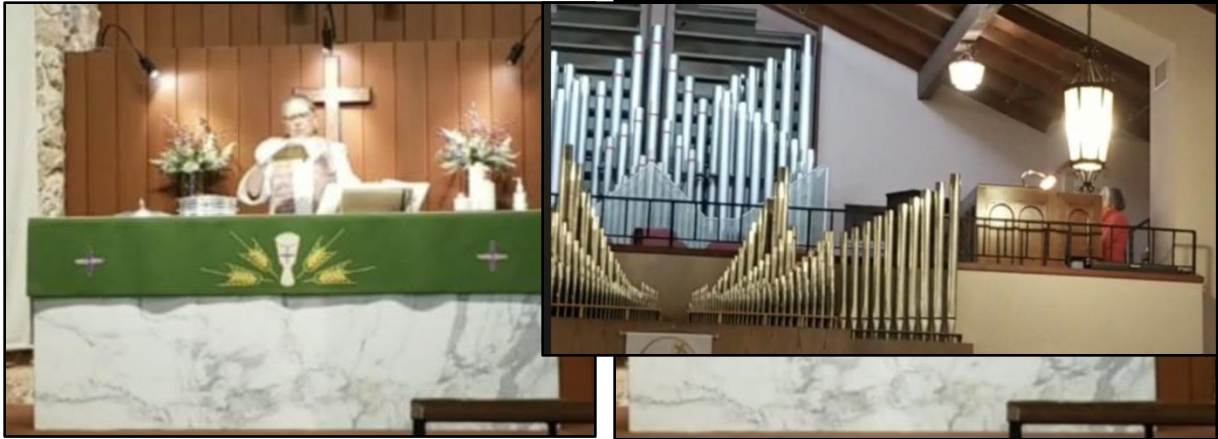


Hope is our work. Joy is our response. Grace is our promise. As a result, the disciples put their faith in Jesus.

Jesus wants to fill us with life-giving water, and turn it into the best wine. Life with Jesus goes beyond the day we die. When we finally realize this, Jesus laughs with joy. Our work today is joyful hope.



We sing the hymn of the day. Then Suzanne leads the confession of our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed. Then she prays the prayer of the church.



We share the peace, and the offering is taken. Then we begin the great thanksgiving. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, so that we may commune.

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



It is Birthday Sunday, and Pastor asks all January birthday people to stand up and receive a special blessing. It's only Mary, so she gets the biggest piece of cake!



Then we receive the final blessing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recession, as we sing the sending hymn.

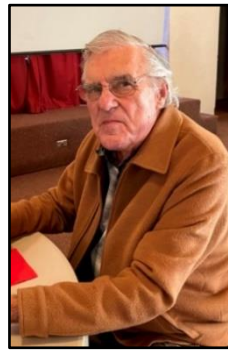


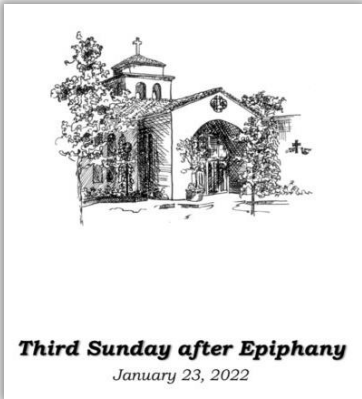


We are told to go with Christ into a weary world. We have been asked to get our coffee and goodies, and then we will have our annual meeting. Barbara plays the postlude. Many of us stay in the sanctuary to listen to the beautiful music before joining the fellowship time.

At the congregational meeting, we elect Brett and Chris to Council. Pastor commends Suzanne, who is going off Council, for all the work she has done over the last six years. Dan and Suzanne are elected to be representatives to the Synod Convention in June. Day Care director Laura reports on the status of Day Care. And Bob presents next year's budget, which is passed.

Our 2022 Church Council: Chris, Brett, Bob, Janice, Dennis, Marty, Pat, and Elaine.





It is the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Pastor welcomes us. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins.

Pastor assures us that we are forgiven in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We sing the hymn of praise and say the prayer of the day.



*Marilyn and Chuck read the lesson and the psalm. The lesson is from 1 Corinthians, as found in *The Message*. In this passage, Paul uses the body as a metaphor to describe how intimately connected we are in the church. Paul delivers a message of unity for the congregation at Corinth that still holds true today.*

Psalm 19 rejoices in the laws of the Lord. It is read responsively.

Pastor reads the gospel lesson from Luke. In it, Jesus has returned to his hometown of Nazareth. At first, the people are pleased with his message that the oppressed will be free. This quickly turns to anger when he says that this mercy will be shown to all people.



In her sermon, Pastor begins by explaining that she has combined two lessons for the Gospel and the Epistle. She asks us what are we going to do today. She reminds us how fast time passes the older we get. She tells us that Jesus gives us a lot to do.



The Gospel is very contemporary. Jesus is just getting started in his ministry. He speaks in his hometown temple. He claims the prophecy of Isaiah as his work. These words can be taken literally or metaphorically. The “poor” can mean lacking things or status.

Jesus says that today the scripture is fulfilled. Christians often expect Jesus to perform in a way they approve of. The leaders didn’t want to embrace change. Jesus was threatening to the leaders because he wanted to change the way the people thought.

He tells them that Elijah and Elisha were sent to those who were marginalized. That day the people’s attitude began to change. We might ask, “How can today be great if there are no miracles?”

Jesus requires us to act right now. We need to make the world a better place for all. We can’t tell God what to do. Sometimes he blesses those that we don’t consider worthy. The Israelites expected Jesus to make things better for them.

We want a gracious God, but can we accept grace being given to all? God often tells us to do something today.

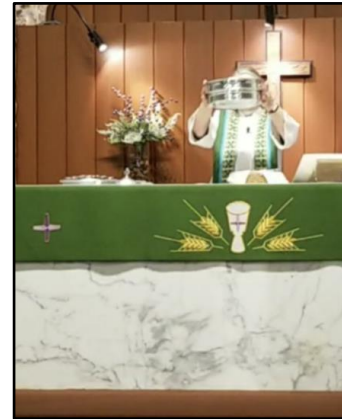
Paul says all parts of the body count, and all are given a gift. We can use our gift to help others. We are called to be the light of the world, and there’s no time to put it off.

We sing the sermon hymn. Then Barbara, our assisting minister leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle’s Creed, and she prays the prayers of the church.



We share the peace. Chris and Suzanne act as ushers to take the offering.

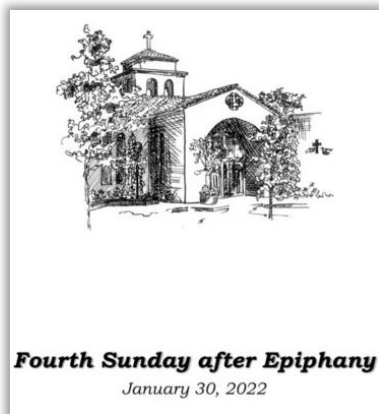
We start the Great Thanksgiving, and Pastor blesses the bread and wine. This is the body and blood of our Savior. We receive the bread and wine or a blessing.



The 2022 Council is installed.



The candles are extinguished, the sending hymn sung, and we are told to go with Christ into a weary world to share the good news.



It is the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, the last Sunday in January. Pastor welcomes us. We sing the opening hymn and pray for the forgiveness of our sins. Pastor assures us with the sign of the cross that all our sins are forgiven and forgotten. We sing the hymn of praise and pray



the prayer of the day.



Kathleen reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Jeremiah. In this passage, God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet and consecrates him in the womb. His job is to preach God's word during a difficult time, before the Babylonian exile. He is to make God known to Judah and the nations.

We read Psalm 71 responsively. The psalmist extols the strength of God as his refuge and his hope.

The second lesson is a familiar one from 1 Corinthians that speaks about the importance of love. Paul reminds the people that God has given many gifts through the Holy Spirit, but that the importance of them is the kind of love God shows us in Jesus Christ.



Today's Gospel lesson is from Matthew and Isaiah. In Matthew Jesus sends the disciples out to "proclaim the good news." It tells them not to be afraid in any circumstances because God, the Father, would protect them, give them strength and give the words to say. In Isaiah, there is an example of rain causing seeds to grow providing sustenance. Likewise, God's stories and our stories become an everlasting testimony to God's goodness.

Pastor begins her sermon by saying that Jesus asks us to repeat what we hear in church. We are filled with light as we learn more about Jesus.

Jeremiah was a reluctant prophet. We know little about him. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. He grew up in a small village. His story begins with his call. He says he was only a boy. Perhaps this means young in age or new in faith. He uses this as an excuse.

We, too, often use excuses when we feel inadequate. We tend to bluff it out. This ability has aided our survival. Pastor wonders how Paul might address the congregation at Emanuel. Her comment, "I don't even know where to begin with you guys!" evokes laughter.



Some people believe the American church seems to have lost its nerve. It is more concerned with programs than the Gospel. Jeremiah was told to preach what the people

didn't want to hear. The people had abandoned God. Problems arise when we choose scripture to support our way of thinking.

Jeremiah was rejected by the people, but he was a success in God's eyes. When we are filled with God's love, we will change hearts and minds. God's love never fails; neither will his words ever return empty. Jesus tells us not to worry about speaking.



The Holy Spirit will give us the words.

We sing the hymn of the day. Then Lois, the assisting minister, leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of the church.

We share the peace. Then the offering is taken.



We begin the Great Thanksgiving. Pastor blesses the bread and wine.

We come forward to commune. All are welcome.





The service ends with the final blessing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Dan does the duties of the acolyte and leads the recessional. We are told to go with Christ into the weary world and share the good news.



February

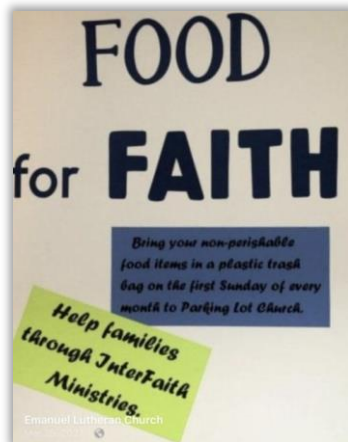
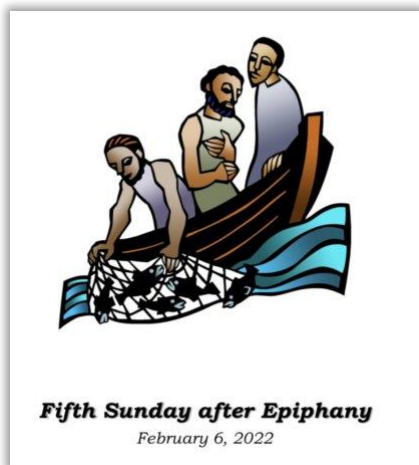
The Echoes this month features the ongoing work of the Outreach Ministry. Quilted lap robes were given to some of our shut-ins. Also, Diane, from Radiant Covenant donated some of her crocheted beanies and blankets.



Our Servant of the Month is Linda. She is a member of the counting team, a member of the Day Care Board and a member of Altar Guild. Linda was also active with the Katie's Kitchen ministry before COVID forced its closure. Thank you, Linda, for your service.



Gigi, one of our members who lives in Samaritan Village, shared that she put this 1000-piece puzzle together to keep busy and keep her spirits up. She hopes this may inspire others.



It is the first Sunday of February. This means that it is Food for Faith Sunday. Jeri is our trunk master this month. She will take the donations to Food Initiative of Greater Stanislaus County (FIGS) this week.

It is also the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Pastor greets us warmly and welcomes everyone to the service. We sing the opening hymn.



Then we confess our sins. We are forgiven in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Pastor tells us to rejoice because in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven. We sing the hymn of praise and pray the prayer of the day together.



Marsha reads the lessons for this Sunday. The first lesson is from Isaiah. Through a vision in the temple, the prophet Isaiah is called by God to announce judgment against Israel. At first, Isaiah is reluctant because of his sinfulness and shortcomings, but then he responds, "Here am I; send me!"

Psalm 138 is read responsively. In it, the psalmist thanks God and praises him, acknowledging that God cares for him and protects him.

The second lesson is from 1 Corinthians. Paul restates the story of the gospel that was given him. We have received the good news from generations of believers before us, and we continue to tell this story to the world.

Pastor reads the Gospel from Luke. Jesus's teaching of God's word has begun to draw great crowds. This teaching inspires hospitality, then obedience and then risk for Simon, James and John. Fear and amazement at Jesus's creative power lead these fishermen to leave everything and to become apostles.

Pastor begins her sermon by wondering where we learned to swim. She learned in a lake. The scary part about a lake is that you don't always know where the deep water is.

Jesus tells Peter, "Go into the deep water and let down your net. Peter probably thought it was a waste of time, but he obeys.



Pastor says this scripture is often labeled a “call” story, but it is really more of an epiphany story. Why did Peter obey. Deep sites are tricky and dangerous.



Luke’s story is different from the other gospels. Jesus had recently healed Peter’s mother-in-law. Peter recognized the holiness in this event. This is why it is an epiphany story. Pastor assures us that everyone changes after an epiphany, an event with God.

Peter obeyed, and then he began to act. Others were called, and they, too, responded. We have to be willing to work hard to do what Jesus says. It may be risky.

Peter’s first response was, “Get away! I am sinful.” Jesus tells him not to be afraid. Jesus tells him that from now on, he will be restoring people with God’s love and grace.

Is there really a cost? A condition? A risk? “Leaving” everything really means to be released from stuff and sin. What do we need to let go of?

We shouldn’t ask, “What will make the church grow?” A better question is, “What is keeping the church from growing?”

As we sing the hymn of the day, we can be released from everything, so that we can be in ministry with Jesus. Jesus will teach us how to do this. We are a forgiven and grace-filled people. Dan leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle’s Creed, and in the prayers of the church. After the prayers, we share the peace.



While Suzanne and Barbara take the offering, the choir sings "Wise Men from the East."



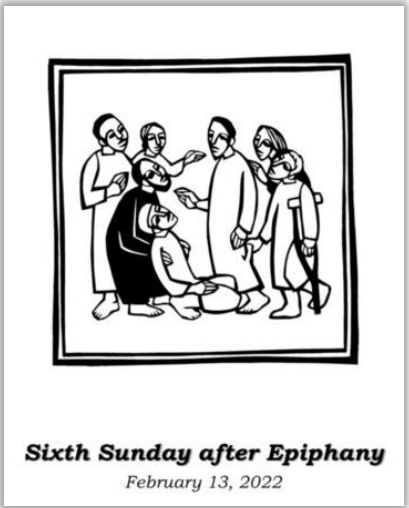
Pastor begins the communion liturgy. She blesses the bread and the wine.

The congregation is invited to come to the table where there is a place for us and enough for all.



We receive the final blessing. Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional. We are told to go with Christ into a weary world and share the good news.





It is the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, and it is already the middle of February. In the Narthex, we are greeted with a Valentine's tree.

Pastor always greets us warmly and tells guests we are happy to have them with us.



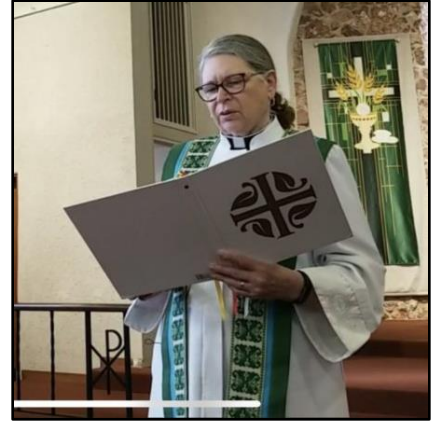
We sing the opening hymn, and then we ask forgiveness for our sins. We are forgiven in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with the sign of the cross. We sing the Hymn of Praise.

Pat reads the first lesson from Jeremiah. This passage, written in the form of a poem, is part of a collection of wisdom sayings, contrasting two ways of life. With God, our lives are blessed and the power and vitality of God is active in our lives. Without God, there is a curse and the power of death.



Psalm 1 is read responsively. Again, this is a contrast between a life that is spent meditating on and rejoicing in God's words, which brings good things, and a life that is spent without God, in sin and wickedness, which brings destruction.

Pastor reads the Gospel from Luke. In this passage, Jesus teaches his followers the costs and demands of being a disciple. He also lists the ones who are truly blessed in the eyes of God.



Pastor begins her sermon by telling us that these scriptures talk about life choices. Do we choose the good path or the bad path? She says that most of us want to choose the good path, but then we need to examine ourselves to see if we are authentic disciples, or is it just for show?

Pastor says the verse that really struck this week is Verse 19: All in the crowd were trying to touch him, and all were healed. Jesus established new standards for discipleship. How do we respond to prayer? Do we put ourselves under his power, or do we just expect God to grant our wishes?

Pastor indicates that some of the people were there just to get healed and then get on with their lives. Prayers are sometimes used to control God. “God, if you heal me, I’ll ...”

God wants to heal all our ills. A life-relationship with God should be our response of gratitude. Jesus invites us to choose real gratitude and a life of faith. We have these choices: faithful or not faithful; trust in God or trust in humans. God knows whether we are authentic or falsely pious.



We need to examine our kind of choice. We need to choose our friends wisely. Who can we trust?

Pastor says the word “prosper” in the passage from Psalm 1 that says “everything they do will prosper” means to be “blessed,” not with material things but with a life right with God.

Pastor gives us some thoughts to ponder. Jesus said the lowly are blessed. Do we trust God or the world? Do we really mean for God's will to be done? Pastor encourages us to tell our story, take risks, and do it today.

We sing the sermon hymn. When Pastor goes up to the altar, she realizes that she has no assisting minister, so Kathleen volunteers. We confess our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed. Kathleen leads us in the prayers of the church. Then we share the peace.

Chris and Suzanne volunteer to take the offering. Then we begin the Great Thanksgiving.



We proclaim the mystery of faith:

*Christ has died.
Christ has risen.
Christ will come again.*

Pastor blesses the bread and wine so that we may commune. This is the body and blood of our Lord. We are all invited to the table where there is a place for us and enough for all.





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

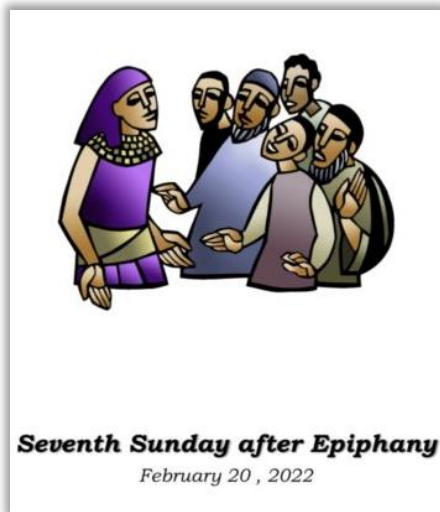


Under normal circumstances, this would be healing Sunday where we could kneel and be anointed with oil while Pastor said a prayer. Because we have not yet gone back to this procedure because of COVID, Pastor says a prayer for all those who are facing surgery this week, and for those who are ill and need healing. Then we receive the final blessing and sing the sending hymn. Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional. Again, we are sent into a weary world to share the good news.





This is Friendship Sunday. A new approach will be used this year. Each Circle will be given a “Bee” theme for the month. There will be a poster with a Bible verse and the Circle who is hostess for this Sunday. This month Lydia Circle has the theme “Bee loving.”



It is the Seventh Sunday after Epiphany, and we welcome Bishop Megan Rohrer to Emanuel. Pastor Lyn welcomes us, and we sing the opening hymn. Then we confess our sins and pray for forgiveness. Pastor assures us that our sins are forgiven and forgotten.





Chuck reads the lessons this morning. The first lesson is from Genesis. This is the familiar story of Joseph, many years after being sold into slavery by his brothers, revealing himself to them. He is now the second in command in Egypt. He tells them that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine. Then Joseph forgives his brothers.

The psalm today is Psalm 37. It is read responsively. Its message is one of reassurance that God will take care of the righteous and punish those who do evil.

The second lesson is from 1 Corinthians. Paul uses planting a seed as a metaphor for what happens with the resurrection of the body. The seed is totally different from the plant that grows. So will the spiritual body be different from the physical body.

Bishop Megan reads the Gospel according to Luke. In this passage, Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He tells them to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessings.



The bishop began the sermon by telling a story about growing up in South Dakota. They return each year at harvest time. Now there are machines that do all the work. The farmer sits in the combine and talks about the weather. This can go on for an hour or more. There was too much rain, not enough rain. There were crickets or other problems. The talk about the weather

is about doing your best during times over which you have no control.

In the Genesis text, brothers sell a brother into slavery. He forgives them and does not retaliate. The bishop says that when we meet people from the past, some have change and some haven't. This is a story of committing to each other in the future. The people in the Bible are human; they aren't always nice.

Luke says that we should try to live the way we want God to treat us. We don't have to like someone to treat them right. We are going to be measured the way we measure others. The bishop's mom used to tell her husband, "Would you rather be right, or would you like to be married?"



The bishop tells us that we need to be with people who don't keep score. We should try not to be the person who has to be right before sharing. When we find ourselves with more than we need, we should share.



The bishop tells us to give ourselves a break and allow ourselves to judge ourselves the way we want God to judge us. We are not perfect, but we are worthy of forgiveness. At the end of life, Bishop Megan says, very few people wish they had given out more retribution.



The sermon, ended, we sing the hymn of the day. Suzanne is the assisting minister and leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession.



We share the peace, and the offering is taken by Barbara and Chris.



The bishop blesses the bread and wine, so that we may partake of the body and blood of our Savior.

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

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.



It is Birthday Sunday, and Pastor Lyn leads the blessing prayer for those born in February. Then the bishop gives the final blessing.



The hall is all set for the luncheon to welcome Bishop Megan and their family. The servers are ready to do their part.



The cake is beautiful, but it must be cut before we can enjoy it.



Now we are ready to enjoy the delicious lunch prepared by the Fellowship and Outreach Ministry committees.

Bishop Megan, daughter Dominique, daughter Makayla and wife Laurel enjoy the luncheon.

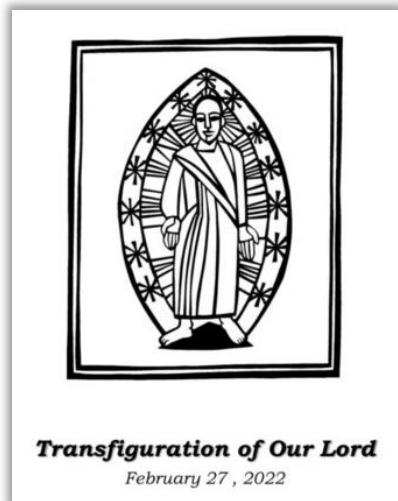






Everyone enjoys this time together to share food and fellowship. Thank you, Bishop Megan, for your visit.





It is February 27, and we are celebrating the Transfiguration of Our Lord. The service begins with a call to worship by the choir. Then Pastor greets us warmly as always.



We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. Pastor makes the sign of the cross to assure us that our sins are forgiven and forgotten. Then we sing the hymn of praise and pray together the prayer of the day.

Then Suzanne reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Exodus. This passage tells of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. Because his face reflected the glory of God, he had to wear a veil over it when he spoke to the people. He removed it when he spoke to God.





We read Psalm 99 responsively. This psalm speaks of the greatness of God and his love of justice.

The second lesson is from 2 Corinthians. In this passage, Paul contrasts the glory of Moses with the glory of Christ. Because of the veil, the Israelites could not see Moses's face. But we see the unveiled glory of God and are transformed into Christ's likeness.

Pastor reads the gospel lesson from Luke. In this passage, the disciples view Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah about his departure. Jesus's appearance is changed as to reveal the glory of God. God tells the disciples that Jesus is his son and to listen to him. When they come down from the mountain, Jesus heals a young man who is plagued by a demon.



Pastor begins her sermon with a reference to what an extraordinary week this has been with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. She says that we pray for peace in the world, and that we are called to pursue peace however we can.

Today is Transfiguration Sunday. This is one of God's great mysteries or miracles.



Jesus is the recipient of the miracle. Jesus is the bridge between heaven and earth. God tells us, "Listen to him." Pastor asks us what we have listened to this week. She says she has listened to a lot of news this week.

The story in the gospel this week takes place eight days after Peter has declared that he believes Jesus to be the Messiah, the son of the living God. Then Jesus predicts his death. The disciples don't understand this and don't want to

accept this. The Transfiguration comes between the two predictions of his death. God wants us to listen to Jesus, even when we don't want to or don't like what we hear.

The 10 Commandments are God's way of communication through the Law. Have the people learned to listen? Yes, for a while. Paul also reminds us to listen to Christ. Moses represents the Law. Elijah represents the Prophets. Jesus is surrounded by them. He is the Love in the middle for balance. The disciples didn't know how to handle this event, so they pulled out the "hospitality package."

Pastor invites us to use silent prayer as a time to listen. She reminds us that we are people of hope, and we know that love will win in the end.



Barbara is the assisting minister and leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace, and the choir sings while the offering is taken.



The Great Thanksgiving begins. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune.

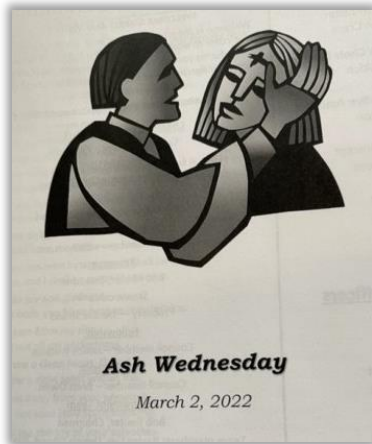


The service concludes with the blessing which we receive in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Chris extinguishes the candles as we sing the sending hymn. She leads the recessional, and Barbara tells us to go with Christ into a weary world. We respond with, "Thanks be to God."



On Tuesday, at text study, Pastor surprised us with a box of donuts. She has received a card from a friend every week since she was in seminary. This week, \$10 was included to buy colorful donuts to celebrate Mardi Gras.





It is March 2, Ash Wednesday, the most solemn day in the church year. Pastor was in church early this morning for the imposition of ashes, and she is again here at noon for a service that includes the imposition of ashes and communion. The Narthex has a new artistic reminder of Lent. It is called a wilderness tree. The paraments and banners are purple.



After singing the opening hymn, Pastor leads us in reading responsively Psalm 51. In this passage, the psalmist recognizes how sinful we are and asks God to forgive and wash us clean, so that we may proclaim our joy and praise. Pastor then blesses us, and we pray together the prayer of the day.



Lois reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Joel. In this passage, Joel calls the people to a community lament in anticipation of the coming Day of the Lord. The repentant community reminds God of his gracious character and asks God to spare the people, lest the nations doubt God's power to save.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew. This passage is part of the Sermon on the Mount. In it, Jesus commends almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, but emphasizes that spiritual devotion must not be done for show.

Pastor begins her sermon by indicating that Joel's warning to repent and get right with God before it's too late, followed a catastrophic invasion of locust that had ravaged the land.

During Lent, we are called to repent. Pastor tells us that the world needs to return to prayer. The passage says to "rend your heart." In more contemporary terms, this could be stated: "break your heart." Pastor says that we need a change of heart, not



something that we go back to. If a heart is broken, it may mend, but it is never the same again. With a broken heart, we need to rely more on God.

Pastor reminds us that God's heart is broken when human behavior is bad, when we abuse our bodies, and when we exhibit false piety.

The Lord's Prayer is a guide to prayer. We need to forgive, but not



forget. Pastor again reminds us that Ash Wednesday is the most solemn day in the church calendar.

The Ash Wednesday liturgy includes an Invitation to Lent. This is followed by the Confession of Sins. We then have the opportunity to approach the chancel for the imposition of ashes. As Pastor makes a cross of ashes on our brows, we are reminded of our human mortality and frailty. What seems like an ending is actually an invitation to make each new day a new beginning, in which we are washed in God's mercy and forgiveness.



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



Lois says the prayers of intercession.



Pastor blesses the bread and wine.





We receive the body and blood of our Savior. Pastor blesses us. We are told to go forth into the world to serve God with gladness.



March

The Echoes reports on Bishop Megan's visit to our church. Kristine is our Servant of the Month.



It is the First Sunday in Lent, and it is Food for Faith Sunday. Silvia and Pedro are our Trunkmasters this time. They will take our donations to F.I.G.S. this week.





Outreach has a new ministry. They are collecting money to give to Family Promise to buy shoes for the children.

The service begins with a warm welcome from Pastor. Then we have the baptism of Oliver Cruz Lopez. The parents, big brother and the sponsors gather at the font. Pastor baptizes Oliver in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then Oliver is marked with the sign of the cross. He is told to let his light shine.



The service continues with the confession and forgiveness of sins.

Dan is both assisting minister and the reader for today. The first lesson is from Deuteronomy. This passage gives instructions for celebrating the harvest when the first fruits of the produce of the land is offered back to God in thanks.

Psalm 91 is read responsively. It speaks of the protection the believer receives from God.

The second lesson is from Romans. In this letter, Paul reminds the Christians of Rome that the foundation of their creed is the confession of faith in the risen Christ as Lord.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. This passage tells us that after he is filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism, Jesus is led into the wilderness. Through his responses to the devil, Jesus defines what is meant to be called the Son of God.

Pastor begins her sermon by welcoming us to Lent, which she says is a metaphorical wilderness, with no distractions from God.

She encourages us to notice the wilderness tree in the Narthex. Barren trees, sticks and rocks remind us of the sacrifice that Jesus made. The trees represent harshness. The wilderness that Jesus visited probably had some trees, sturdy trees that could survive a harsh environment. She likens the situation of the people of Ukraine who are facing a wilderness of war.

Jesus confronted evil in the wilderness. Evil is convinced that it is in control. It becomes so convinced of its power that it forgets that God is most powerful. When we ask, "Why doesn't God do something?", God asks us, "Why don't you do something?"



We need to rely on the Holy Spirit when we have troubles. God is always faithful. Faithfulness is the promise of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, while no longer physically with us, is present through the Holy Spirit.

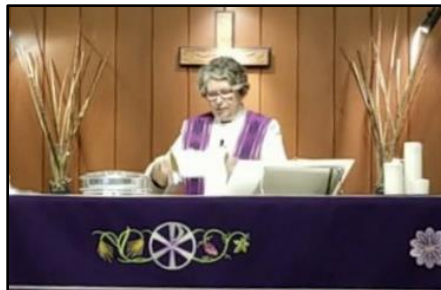
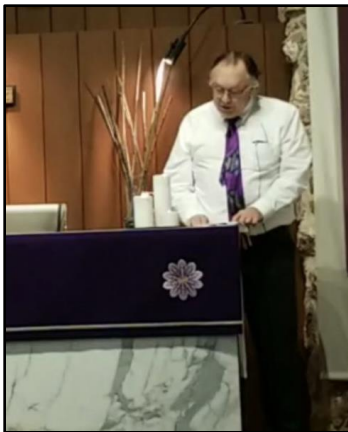


Pastor tells us that we celebrate God's faithfulness to Oliver who was just baptized. In baptism, we die to our old life. Pastor reminds us of the ashes we received on Wednesday. Both the ashes and the water are symbols of faithfulness. Pastor asks us to notice, when we come to communion, the old baptismal font that now has running water in it.

Jesus relied on two things to confront evil: prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. We, too, should rely on these when we face wilderness challenges. Sometimes, we have to walk alone, but God is always present.

The devil left Jesus, but he didn't go far. He never does, but we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and we will get through. We need to remember to lean into God's promises.

Dan, our assisting minister, says the prayers of intercession. The peace is passed, and the offering taken. Then Pastor consecrates the bread and wine, so that we may partake of the body and blood of our Lord.



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





We receive the final blessing. The candles are extinguished as we sing the sending hymn. Then Dan leads the recessional.



We are told to go in peace and that Jesus meets us on the way.

There are two options this year for midweek Lenten services. One is prerecorded and online. The other is an in-person, soup supper service, held in a private home.

Online Service:



The online service begins with Barbara playing the prelude. This is followed by Pastor reading the Gospel lesson from last Sunday.

Pastor explains that the theme of this week is Faithfulness. This is one of the five attributes of God that we will explore this Lenten season.

Pastor begins with reading the poem "The Things That Count" by Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

The Things That Count

*Now, dear, it isn't the bold things,
Great deeds of valour and might,
That count the most in the summing up of life at the end of the day.
But it is the doing of old things,
Small acts that are just and right;
And doing them over and over again, no matter what others say;
In smiling at fate, when you want to cry, and in keeping at work when you want to play—
Dear, those are the things that count.*

*And, dear, it isn't the new ways
Where the wonder-seekers crowd
That lead us into the land of content, or help us to find our own.
But it is keeping to true ways,
Though the music is not so loud,
And there may be many a shadowed spot where we journey along alone;
In flinging a prayer at the face of fear, and in changing into a song a groan—
Dear, these are the things that count.*

*My dear, it isn't the loud part
Of creeds that are pleasing to God,
Not the chant of a prayer, or the hum of a hymn, or a jubilant shout or song.
But it is the beautiful proud part
Of walking with feet faith-shod;
And in loving, loving, loving through all, no matter how things go wrong;
In trusting ever, though dark the day, and in keeping your hope when the way seems long—
Dear, these are the things that count.*

Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that Jesus was sent to the desert after his baptism, filled with the Holy Spirit. She says that whenever she faces a desert or wilderness experience, what she wants most is God's presence and to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

She tells us that we are supposed to be prepared for disasters, but are we really? Do we have our meds, important papers, etc. in one place? We, as people of faith, have stocked up. We are filled with the Holy Spirit and are ready for whatever happens.

Pastor says she knows our hearts are heavy when we think about the people of Ukraine. Some of them say they were not prepared. They had no idea that



something like that could happen. But the people of faith say they are counting on God seeing them through.

Pastor asks us to remember the last time we were in a shadow place. Sometimes, we are the only ones who know our problems and pain. We have to walk through those times alone. However, we are not really alone. We have God walking with us in the form of the Holy Spirit.

After his wilderness experience, Jesus began to have more human and God experiences knit together. Speaking our faith helps us to get through these times. It helped Jesus, too, when he was confronted by the devil.

Lenten Soup Supper and Home Church Service

Our hostess for our first soup supper is Lois. She has prepared a delicious and hearty vegetable soup. She and Pastor have met during the week to prepare discussion questions.



There are enough participants to fill two tables, and then some.





After supper, with Barbara on the keyboard and Kathleen and Lois leading the singing, we do the Holden Evening Service. Then we talk about how God is faithful all the time, even though sometimes it's hard to see it. The second topic is whether or not we are faithful and how we show it. Our third topic is to be if the church is always faithful. We have such

a lively discussion on the first two that we really don't have time to cover the last one.



It is the Second Sunday of Lent. Pastor greets us at the beginning of the service. We sing the opening hymn and then confess our sins.

Pastor assures us that our sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.





Barbara reads the lessons this morning. The first lesson is from Genesis. It tells of God promising a childless Abram that he will have a child and that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. The land of Canaan will be their inheritance. Abram's trust in God is sealed with a covenant-making ceremony, a sign of God's promise.

We read Psalm 27 responsively. This psalm tells of the importance of trusting in the Lord and his mercy that we will receive.

The second lesson is from Philipians. Although Paul's devotion to Christ has caused him to be persecuted, he does not regret the course he has taken. Writing from prison, he expresses confidence in a glorious future and encourages other Christians to follow in his footsteps.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus is not deterred from his sacrificial mission by either Herod's plotting nor Jerusalem's resistance to maternal love.

Pastor begins her sermon by recalling that on Wednesday, at the soup supper, we used the Holden Evening service. In it, there is a prayer that is sung, that has the response:

God of mercy, hold us in love.

Pastor says that people of faith pray this. Mercy is an attribute of God that is so relevant right now.

Jesus laments, "How often have I wanted to gather my people, and they would not." This makes God sad when we go our own way. God wants to hold us close.

God tells Abram to count the stars to show how many descendants he will have. Pastor says these are signs of mercy. Mercy can show up in an unlikely place or may not even be seen.



In the passage from Luke, we see the phrase: some Pharisees. Mercy is shown here in that Jesus knew that not all Pharisees were against him. Jesus knows our hearts: our motivations and our intentions.

There are two animals mentioned in this passage from Luke: fox and hen. Herod, the fox, is a reference to being sly and crafty. A hen who gathers her chicks under her wings is nourishing. We can choose with whom we align.

Faithfulness is a choice for us, but not for God. Mercy is also a choice. We can accept it or deny it; we can show it or not. Jesus is going to be faithful “today, tomorrow and on the third day.” This is a reference to his ultimate gift of mercy when he dies on the cross and is raised from the dead. Jesus gives mercy to all. It was necessary for him to go on his way. He chose to do it.



Pastor tells of a Peanuts cartoon she saw where Snoopy ends up falling out of a tree because he foolishly thought he could climb it. Lucy calls him a stupid beagle and goes on her way. Snoopy says, “Rats. I was hoping for a hug.” We all desire mercy.

Pastor asks, “Have we accepted mercy or ignored it?” God’s mercy holds us in love.

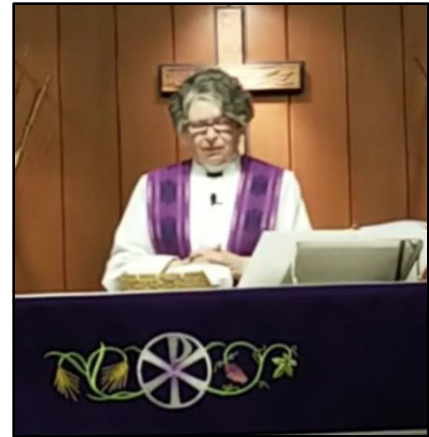


Kathleen leads us in the confession of our faith and the prayers of intercession. Then Pastor blesses the bread and the wine.





We eat the body and drink the blood of our Savior and are refreshed. Pastor offers a healing prayer for all who are sick or recovering from surgery.



Then we receive the final blessing so that we are strengthened for our journey.



As we sing the sending hymn, Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional. We are told to go in peace and that Jesus meets us on our way.

This is Friendship Sunday, and Rebecca Circle is our host. The theme for this month is "Bee patient." Marty made the cute table decorations.



It is March 16, and the online Lenten midweek service begins with Barbara playing a new hymn. We are examining the attributes of God, and this week's attribute is Mercy.

Pastor reads the same Gospel according to Luke that she did on Sunday. It is the passage about some of the Pharisees warning Jesus about Herod's wanting to kill him. Jesus tells them to tell that fox that he's not afraid of him and that he must be about his mission.



To begin her sermon, Pastor reminds us that this week's attribute of God is mercy. She asks us to look at the poem "To Live in the Mercy of God" by Denise Levertov.

*To lie back under the tallest
oldest trees. How far the stems
rise, rise
before ribs of shelter
open!*

*To live in the mercy of God. The complete
sentence too adequate, has no give.
Awe, not comfort. Stone, elbows of
stony wood beneath lenient
mass bed.*

*And awe suddenly
passing beyond itself. Becomes
a form of comfort.
Becomes the steady
air you glide on, arms
stretched like the wings of flying foxes.
To hear the multiple silence
of trees, the rainy
forest depths of their listening.*

*To float, upheld,
as salt water
would hold you,
once you dared.*

To live in the mercy of God.

To feel vibrate the enraptured

*waterfall flinging itself
unabating down and down*

to clenched fists of rock.

*Swiftness of plunge,
hour after year after century,*

O or Ah

*uninterrupted, voice
many-stranded.*

To breathe

spray. The smoke of it.

Arcs

*of steel white foam, glissades
of fugitive jade barely perceptible. Such passion—
rage or joy?*

Thus, not mild, not temperate,

*God's love for the world. Vast
flood of mercy*

flung on resistance.

Jesus lived in God's mercy. Some of the Pharisees showed mercy. Because Jesus did not lump all the Pharisees together is also an act of mercy. Jesus responds to tell that old "fox" (Herod) that mercy will be shown without fear or prejudice.

The third day is a reference to his final act of mercy, dying on the cross. Pastor tells us that it is important to note that when Jesus says "I," he speaks as a human, but also as the "divine I" or as God. Speaking as the divine I, he says that he must be on his way. In other words, it was necessary to continue healing, teaching, preaching and dispensing mercy. He would take that mercy all the way to the cross, the grave and the resurrection.



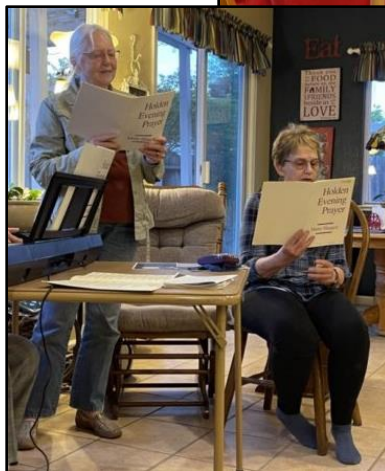
It is a great thing to have a God who loves us so much that he was willing to die for us and now lives for us. This means we all have do-over days. Sometimes, the world chooses to live without that mercy. Even we choose that sometimes. It's difficult to understand God's mercy flung out to everyone.

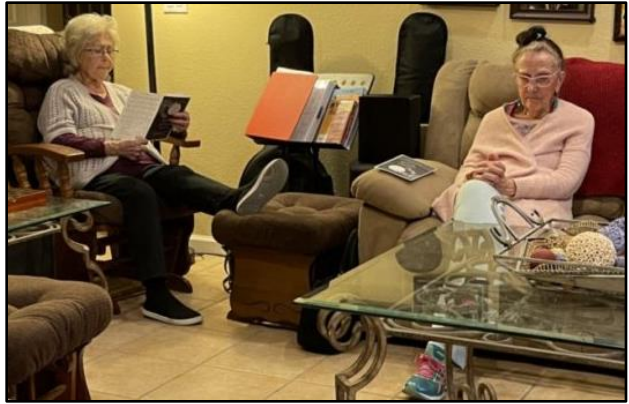


The Home Church Soup Supper is again held at Lois's house. She has made a delicious soup, served with tortilla strips, cheese and bread. There are cookies for dessert.



Barbara has come again to accompany us as we sing the Holden Evening Prayer. Kathleen and Lois are our music leaders. Following that, we discuss what it means to show mercy and be shown mercy.





It is the Third Sunday in Lent and Birthday Sunday. Pastor greets us warmly. Then we sing the opening hymn.

We ask forgiveness for our sins, and Pastor assures us that our sins are forgiven in Jesus's name.





Matthew reads the first lesson which is from Isaiah. In this passage, we learn that those who have been in exile have returned to their homeland. God enters into a covenant of love with them. They are told that those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.



Rebecca leads us in reading Psalm 63 responsively. In this psalm, joy is expressed because of God's rich blessings.

Rebecca also reads the second lesson which is from 1 Corinthians. In this epistle, Paul uses images from Hebrew scriptures and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ. He is our rock, our water, our food

and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.

Pastor reads from the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus tells the parable of the non-producing fig tree. This parable holds out hope for the final judgment to be tempered by patience.

Pastor introduces the theme of compassion as an attribute of God by recalling the song of Zechariah in Luke 1. Part 1 of the song is praise directed to God who shows us tender compassion. Part 2 is directed to John the Baptist who will be go before the Messiah. This Messiah will also exhibit the tender compassion of God.

Pastor indicates that the attributes of God overlap. Mercy leans towards justice; compassion leans towards kindness. Pastor says that currently many people feel compassion for those in Ukraine.



*In Isaiah's passage the words: drink, buy food without price, are examples of God's tender compassion. David's psalm shows compassion in God's steadfast love and in his always being our helper. Pastor says she has learned a new word this week. It is *ubuntu*. This is a word that means we are defined by our compassion for others.*

Pastor says that in our present world crisis fatigue is becoming a growing problem. It is a psychic numbing that causes compassion to fade. Christians can combat this by following the teachings of Jesus.



The fig tree parable is often described as a judgment parable, but Pastor indicates that Jesus ends the parable with grace. She says that God's grace is bigger than his judgment, but it is not without limits.

We each get one day at a time, but it is a do-over day. Good is shaped by the fruits of the spirit. God does not leave us to our own devices, but he provides help. Christians must not forget Easter joy, even when horrible things are happening. We are called to live in the "new dawn." We are called to look for bits of joy. God gives us one more chance to do good.

We are who we are because of God in us.



We sing the hymn of the day. Suzanne is the assisting minister, and she leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace, and the choir sings while Barbara and Chris take the offering.





Pastor begins the Great Thanksgiving. She blesses the bread and wine, and we partake of the body and blood of our Savior.



It is Birthday Sunday, and Pastor asks all those celebrating a birthday in March to stand, and she leads the congregation in the birthday blessing. Pedro is one of those celebrating this month.



We receive the final blessing.

We sing the sending hymn and go into Luther Hall for birthday cake and fellowship. Thank you, Arie and Greg for getting everything ready.



It is Week 3 of Lent. The theme is Compassion. The online service begins with Barbara playing a hymn.

The Sound of the Trees Robert Frost - 1874-1963

*I wonder about the trees.
Why do we wish to hear
Forever the noise of these
More than another noise
So close to our dwelling place?
We suffer them by the day
Till we lose all measure of pace,
And fixity in our joys,
And acquire a listening air.
They are that that talks of going
But never gets away;
And that talks no less for knowing,*

*As it grows wiser and older,
That now it means to stay.
My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder
Sometimes when I watch trees sway,
From the window or the door.
I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice
Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.*



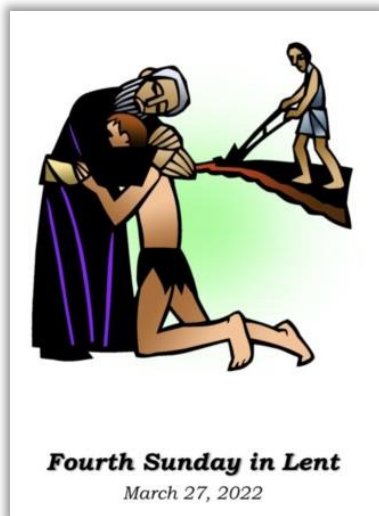
Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that we are focusing on the attributes of God: Faithfulness, Mercy, Compassion, Forgiveness and Love. This week's theme is Compassion. We are also focusing on creation, especially trees. She reads the poem "The Sound of the Trees" by Robert Frost.

This week's scripture is the parable of the fig tree from the Gospel according to Luke. In this parable, Jesus lets us know that bearing fruit, or productivity, is important in the life of discipleship.

Pastor tells us that we get back what we give. She says that if we were to tell someone if they weren't such a jerk, they wouldn't attract so much negativity, it would probably offend them. Jesus didn't worry about offending. He told it like it was. But there was always room for grace. The gardener defends the fig tree and asks for another year of care before chopping it down. We believe in a God of do-overs.

God encourages us to take risks to be fruitful. God is compassionate to us. We should be compassionate to others. Pastor encourages us to be our own gardeners. We need to aerate our roots and add fertilizer. In other words, we need to study God's words and act on them.

The midweek Home Church and Soup Supper took place at Suzanne's. A sausage and bean soup, prepared by Suzanne, and a ravioli soup, prepared by Rue, were served. Barbara came and played for the Holden Evening Service, which was led by Kathleen and Marsha. The discussion included how God is compassionate to us and how we are compassionate to one another. We also talked about the fruits of the spirit, what we possessed and what we lacked. Unfortunately, the photographer was also the hostess, and apparently, she can't multitask, so there are no pictures from this evening.



It is the Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 27. We are greeted in the Narthex with some reminders of upcoming events.



Pastor greets us warmly as always. She reminds us to look in the bulletin for announcements and highlights a few. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. We receive the assurance that our sins are forgiven and forgotten.



Lois leads us in reading Psalm 32 responsively. This is a song of praise and thanksgiving to a God who forgives our sins and remembers them no more.

The second lesson is from 2 Corinthians. Paul assures us that we have God's promise that in Christ everything is transformed into newness. All mistakes, all deliberate sins, all old history is reconciled with Christ's resurrection.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. In this passage, Jesus tells the parable of the son who ponders his father's love only after he has spurned it. The grace he receives is beyond his hope. That same grace is a crisis for an older brother who believes it is his obedience that has earned his place in the father's home.



Pastor begins the sermon by telling us that this week's attribute of God is Forgiveness. She says that reconciliation is also a part of this attribute. Forgiveness, according to Pastor, is easy for God but very difficult for humans.

God's prodigal attributes: faithfulness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love, are lavishly given. The parable of the prodigal son, as well as the one about the lost sheep and the lost coin, speak to repentance and forgiveness.

Both sons are prodigal. The father's love is also prodigal. Forgiveness depends on relationships. There are layers of forgiveness and reconciliation. We are not asked to forget. Only God does that. Throughout scripture, God gives; the people turn away, only to have God forgive again.



Some people have to learn the hard way. They need tough love or to be scared straight. The younger son demands his inheritance now. This request dishonored his father. He could have refused, but he didn't. The son's situation caused him to be scared straight.

His father's mercy was bigger than his anger. Love causes grace to happen. All his son had to do was accept the gift. The elder son displayed anger. He was resentful. We have three choices as to whom we wish to be. We can be wasteful (the younger son), resentful (the elder son), or generous (the father).

We are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation. We can be forgiven or forgive. Sharing the peace is an act of forgiveness. We carry that peace with us when we leave. God's grace is greater than his anger. Jesus is like a tree – always giving, never taking. Pastor tells us that every major event in the Bible is marked by a tree.

We don't know how this parable ends, but we are invited to live out this parable, to offer peace to all. Repentant and forgiven, we are going straight.



Barbara is the assisting minister. She leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed, followed by the prayers of intercession.

Suzanne and Chris act as ushers and take the offering. Pastor receives it and offers it to God.

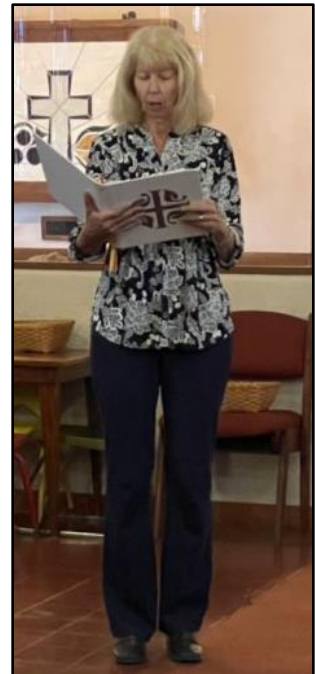


*Pastor consecrates the bread and wine.
“This is the body of Christ, broken and given
for you.” “This is the blood of Christ, shed for
you.”*



*We receive the final blessing, assuring
us that we are children of God, anointed
with the oil of gladness and strengthened
for the journey.*

*Dan leads the recessional, and Barbara tells us to go in
peace, that Jesus meets us on our ways.*



It is discovered during the Fellowship Hour that Suzanne, Barbara and Mary obviously got the memo on the dress code for this Sunday. Apparently, no one else was paying attention.



The midweek online service begins with Barbara playing a hymn. The poem for this week is by Anne Porter.

A Short Testament

Anne Porter

*Whatever harm I may have done
In all my life in all your wide creation
I beg you to repair it,*

*And then there are all the wounded
The poor the deaf the lonely and the old
Whom I have roughly dismissed
As if I were not one of them.
Where I have wronged them by it
And cannot make amends
I ask you
To comfort them to overflowing,*

*And where there are lives
I may have withered around me,
Or lives of strangers far or near
That I've destroyed in blind complicity,
And if I cannot find them
Or have no way to serve them,
Remember them. I beg you to remember them*

*When winter is over
And all your unimaginable promises
Burst into song on death's bare branches.*

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Pastor begins by reminding us that the scripture from Luke this week is about the Pharisees grumbling about Jesus hanging out with sinners. Pastor asks us why were the Pharisees so concerned about what Jesus did.

Pastor remembers someone she used to work with who was so obsessed with cleanliness, she spent hours washing her hands. The Pharisees were also compulsive about cleanliness. They took the Jewish laws regarding this way past extreme. Jesus,

on the other hand, did not worry about these things. Jesus ignored the Jewish laws that forbid him from touching lepers and other “unclean” people. He didn’t worry about what the Pharisees or anyone else thought. Jesus’s mission was to go to those who needed him most.

The scripture about the Pharisees is followed by the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. Pastor asks why Jesus would care about one sheep. She wonders if any of us think we are beyond God’s caring. She assures us that God will never give up on us. She assures us that every single person on this earth is so loved by God. We would be unlikely to ask why God cares so much if we were that lost sheep. God’s forgiveness is the sweetest thing on earth.



God welcomes sinners, eats with them, forgives them. We can count on this.

Home Church Soup Supper is at Lois’s again this week. We have chicken noodle soup. Lois decided since there were no vegetables in the soup, we should have a salad. There was a very complete salad bar and cookies for dessert.

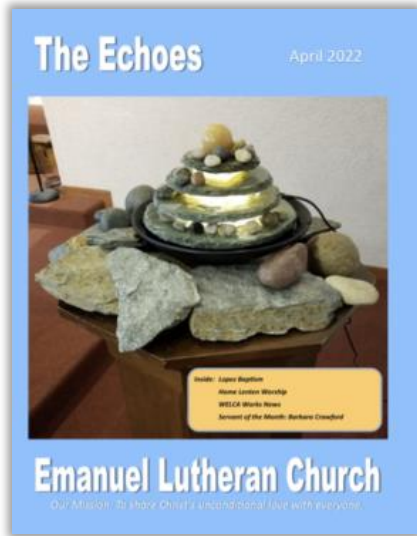




When we get ready to begin the service, Barbara accompanies us on the key board while Kathleen and Lois lead the singing of the Holden Evening Service.



The discussion tonight begins with the reading of the Parable of the Prodigal Son from Luke. We then discuss the attribute of Forgiveness, our theme for this week. Lois has prepared questions to which there are no wrong answers. We share our feelings and our stories.



April

The April edition of the Echoes features the new rendition of the old baptismal font. This is a temporary visual for Lent designed by the Sanctuary Arts Team. They plan to do a permanent fixture in the future.

It also features the baptism of Oliver Cruz. Samantha and Juan are the parents. Big brother Lorenzo was baptized two years ago. He was the first to be baptized with the new font.



Barbara is our Servant of the Month. She is acknowledged for her contributions to Piecemakers, WELCA and the Worship team. Barbara has been a faithful member all her life.

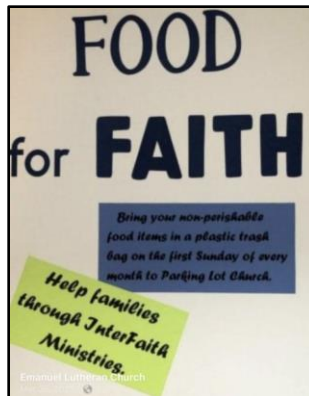
Another article is a beautiful testimony by Kaeta to God's presence in her life during some difficult health issues she is currently facing.



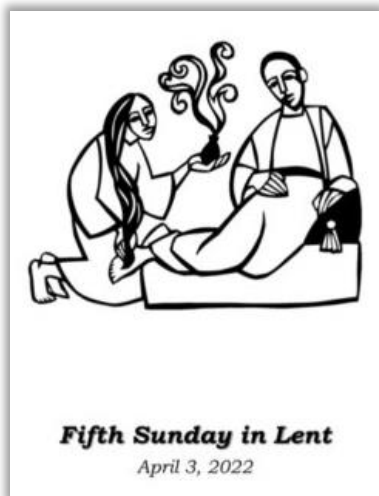


Also, there is an article highlighting the visit of a couple of Leah Circle ladies who have moved away. It was great to see Mary and Susan at a breakfast hosted by Lois.

The amaryllis are beginning to bloom. They were an Eagle Scout projects a few years ago.



It is the first Sunday in April, so it is Food for Faith Sunday. Rue puts her donation in Elaine's trunk.



The service begins with Pastor greeting us warmly.



We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. We are forgiven in the name of Jesus.

Marilyn reads the first lesson from Isaiah. In this passage, the prophet declares that long ago God performed mighty deeds and delivered Israel from their bondage in Egypt. At that time, they escaped through the waters of the sea. Now, God is about to do a new thing, bringing the exiles out of Babylon and through the wilderness in a new Exodus.



We read Psalm 126 responsively. In this psalm, we see the joy that comes from God's mighty acts.



The second lesson is from Philippians. In this epistle, Paul admits that his heritage and reputation could give him more reason than most people to place confidence in his spiritual pedigree. But the overwhelming grace of God in Jesus calls Paul to a new set of values.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. This is the familiar story of Mary of Bethany anointing Jesus's feet with an expensive oil. Judas complains that this is an extravagant waste, but Jesus recognizes that this gift is both an expression of love and an anticipation of his burial.



Before we begin the sermon, we sing "Jesus Loves Me." Pastor tells us that "Jesus loves me" is all we need to know. Today is the last Sunday in Lent. The last attribute of God that we are studying is Love. The other four attributes intertwine, leading to love.

Death is the point of today's story, but love is at the root. This happens at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. People in those days often washed and anointed their own feet. To wash another's feet was the job of slaves.

Mary's action was a very intimate act. Her action showed how much she loved Jesus. She was a model disciple. Her act was motivated by faithfulness. Her action was in contrast to Judas's.

She showed generosity. He showed greed.

She prepared for Jesus's burial. He prepared for Jesus's betrayal.

The disciples were probably aware that something was about to happen. God does a new thing because of love. Water and the Word form our new identity. We are marked by both water and ashes.

Love, disguised as water, is throughout Scripture. Pastor says that in watching the news, she sees the Ukrainians have two perspectives: some are losing hope; some are clinging to hope.

Where there's hope, there's love. Life is a combination of joy and sorrow. Suffering and joy always go together. Mary understood this, and she understood who Jesus was.

Discipleship is recognizing that hope and love are part of the past, present and future. Love gets to win. Always has, always will.

We sing the hymn of the day, and Lois leads us in the Apostle's Creed and prays the prayers of intercession.



During the offering, the choir sings an anthem.



Pastor blesses the bread and wine. Then we commune. Pastor tells us to pay attention to the sound of the water as we receive the body and blood of our Savior.

We receive the final blessing: we are children of God, anointed with the oil of gladness.



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



The online option for mid-week Lenten service begins with Barbara playing a hymn. The poem for this week is "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer.

Trees

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.*

*A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;*

*A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;*

*A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;*

*Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.*

*Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

Pastor begins her sermon by reviewing the attributes of God that have been the foci for these past weeks of Lent. She reminds us that the Gospel lesson for this week is the story from John, of Mary washing and anointing Jesus's feet. She also reads this week's poem by Joyce Kilmer. She indicates that the line that says, "Only God can make a tree," is an example of God's love. We have only to read the creation story to see God's love for nature.

This week, we learn about nard, a plant that grows in the Himalayas. The oil that Mary used was probably imported from India. This would explain why it was so expensive. It was often used with other spices to anoint the dead.

Mary used a Roman pound, the equivalent of about 11 ounces. It would have cost a year's wages. We don't know how they could afford it, but perhaps they were orphans who had inherited from their wealthy parents. They seem to have had a large house that allowed them to host large groups of people.



While Matthew and Luke report this event with Mary anointing Jesus's head, John says it was his feet. This shows how much Mary loved and respected Jesus. The first two Gospel writers connect this story to Jesus's death. John also connects it to forgiveness.

Mary's loving act is a mark of her discipleship. Loving acts are a mark of Christian discipleship. In today's world, it is sometimes difficult to love what we don't even like.

Pastor says that she wrote these reflections before Lent began. It was just about the time that war broke out in Ukraine. Pastor wondered where we would be by the time they were posted online. She wondered if love would have won by then. She says that of course love will win in the end, but she wonders how well we will love.

Love is God's ultimate attribute. It is also our attribute. We are called to love, even those that we don't like. She encourages us to show this love to the world.

The last Home Church Soup Supper is also on Wednesday evening at Lois's. Suzanne and Lois have both made soup for this evening. After the supper, a discussion about the attribute of love is discussed. We answer questions about what loving our neighbor means to us. This has been a wonderful activity for the last five weeks. Thank you, Lois, for the idea and for hosting these evenings.





The Outreach Ministry collected over \$700 for new shoes for Family Promise. They bought gift cards at a couple of shoe stores. These gift cards were delivered by Lois to Trisha. Currently there are 6 families with a total of 11 children who will benefit. They were greatly appreciated.



It is April 10, Palm Sunday. We are able to process in this year with our palm branches. Many of us gather in the Narthex. Pastor reads from the Gospel according to Mark. It is the familiar passage that tells of Jesus's triumphant entry in to Jerusalem. We enter singing "All Glory, Laud and Honor," waving our branches high.





We are greeted by Pastor saying, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We respond by saying, “Hosanna in the highest!” Pastor leads us in reading Psalm 31. This psalm is a call for help when the psalmist’s life was in a terrible state. It is a psalm of trust in the Lord.

Since this Palm Sunday, in place of a sermon, the Passion of our Lord from Luke is read by Kathleen, Melissa and Chuck. Each section is followed by a verse from a hymn.



Dan, the assisting minister, leads us in the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of intercession.



We share the peace.

The choir sings while the offering is taken.

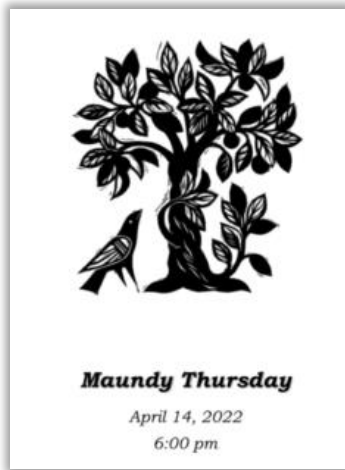


We begin the great thanksgiving. Pastor blesses the bread and the wine that we may partake of the body and blood of our Savior. All are welcome to this table. There is plenty for all.



We receive the final blessing. Dan is also the acolyte. He extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional.





It is April 14, Maundy Thursday. We gather in the evening to remember the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples. Lent officially ends at nightfall, and we celebrate with Christians around the world to celebrate the Three Days of Jesus's death and resurrection. The banners and the bare branches have already been removed from the chancel. Later the altar itself will be stripped.



We begin with a welcome from Pastor Lyn. Then we sing the entrance hymn and confess our sins.



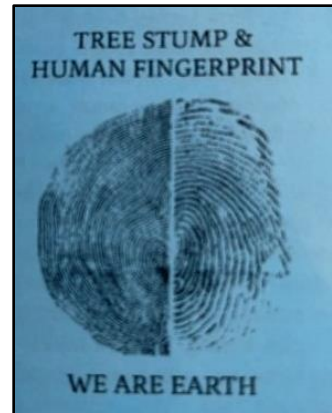
Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. In this story of the last supper is an event mentioned only in this gospel. Jesus performs the duty of a slave, washing the feet of his disciples and urging them to do the same for one another.

Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that the last supper Jesus shared with his disciples was a Passover meal. That evening was filled with intrigue and evil, but a light, a glimmer of hope and love intrudes.

During that time, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. This was the perfect example of what we are supposed to do in service, humble service, to others. Service comes from our trust in God. There is no act that we can do that will get us into heaven. Only our belief will get us into heaven. Love is what leads us into service.



Pastor tells us that we are linked to creation. She asks us to look at the last page of the bulletin. There we find a picture of a finger print and a tree stump. We are amazed to see the similarities. Pastor reminds us that a reference to the Tree of Life, pictured on the bulletin cover, is found in both Genesis and Revelations. It is a tree that is used in the crucifixion.



Jesus knew that his time had come. Last Sunday was his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Monday, he drove the moneychangers out of the temple. Tuesday, he was preaching in the temple. Wednesday, Judas begins to plot his betrayal. Even knowing all this, Jesus loved his disciples, even Judas and Peter.

Jesus trusts us to love others as he loves us. Love is an attitude that reveals itself in action. Service, without love, has no meaning.



Kathleen is the assisting minister, and she leads us in the prayers of intercession. We share the peace, and Pastor begins the Great Thanksgiving. Pastor blesses the bread and wine.

She tells us that instead of washing feet, she will be blessing our hands for service. She will do this after we have received the bread and wine from Kathleen and Barbara.



After we have communed, Barbara and Linda strip the altar while Kathleen reads Psalm 22 from the balcony.



The altar will remain bare until Easter morning. When the psalm is finished, we leave the church in silence.



It is April 15, Good Friday. Pastor begins the service at the font with an explanation of what this day means. It is not a day to mourn but to celebrate Christ's life-giving passion and to find strength and hope in the tree of life. We pray together the prayer of the day.



Pastor processes with the cross as we sing "There in God's Garden."



Suzanne and Kathleen read a passage from the Gospel according to John. This reading takes the place of a sermon. We hear the familiar story of Judas's betrayal in the garden. Jesus is confronted by the soldiers whom he asks the question: "Whom are you looking for?" When they answer, "Jesus of Nazareth," he replies, "I am he."



Jesus assures them that there is no need to arrest any of the disciples. When Peter draws a sword and cuts off the ear of the slave, Jesus tells him to put his sword away. Jesus is arrested and taken to the high priest. Peter follows and ends up denying that he knows him three times.

Jesus is then taken to Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate finds no fault in him and offers to release him. The crowd, stirred up by the elders, shout that they want Barabbas, a bandit and murderer, released. They demand that Jesus be crucified.

Pilate hands Jesus over to them. They make him carry his cross to Golgotha, and there he is crucified between two others. Pilate has an inscription that reads "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" placed over his head. The soldiers divide his clothing among them and cast lots for his tunic.



Jesus sees his mother standing in the crowd and tells his disciple to take care of her. When the soldiers come to break the legs of those on the cross to hasten their death, they find that Jesus has already died. Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body, that he might lay it in the tomb. Nicodemus comes with spices and herbs to anoint the body. They laid his body in a new tomb in a nearby garden.

After singing the hymn of the day, Pastor and Suzanne do the bidding prayer. The petitions ask prayers for the holy church throughout the world, for the bishop, clergy and other leaders of the church, for those preparing for baptism, for fellow believers, for our Jewish brothers and sisters, for those who do not share our faith, for those who do not believe in God, for creation, for those in public office, and for those in need. We end with the Lord's Prayer.



We leave the church in silence.



It is April 17, Easter Sunday. The altar, which we left stripped and bare on Friday, is resplendent with paraments, banners and flowers. The flower cross, on which worshippers put flowers that they have brought, has been placed at the Stoddard entrance where it will serve as a witness to the neighborhood.



The service begins as we sing the joyous strains of “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today.” Pastor begins with the age-old proclamation: “Alleluia! Christ is risen!” We respond: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!”

Pastor welcomes everyone warmly and remarks that it’s the first time since the pandemic that we can have a full service for Easter. The church is full with members and guests. We begin the liturgy which includes the “Kyrie” and “This Is the Feast.” We pray the prayer of the day together.



Lois reads the lessons. The first lesson is from Acts. In this passage, Peter crosses the immense religious and social boundary that separates Jews and Gentiles in order to proclaim the good news of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection, so that God’s forgiveness in Jesus’s name would reach out to all people.

We read Psalm 118 responsively. In this psalm, God is praised for his everlasting mercy. We are reminded that:

*“This is the day that the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

The second lesson comes from 1 Corinthians. This passage indicates that the core of the Christian faith and Paul’s teaching is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the crucified and risen Christ appeared to the earliest of his followers, so we experience the presence of the Risen One in the preaching of this faith.

The gospel lesson, which Pastor reads from John, is the familiar story of that first Easter morning. It began with confusion: the stone was moved and the tomb was empty. Disciples arrive, then angels, and finally Jesus himself. Out of the confusion, hope emerges, and a weeping woman becomes the first to confess her faith in the risen Lord.

Pastor begins her sermon by saying that this is the day which defines us: we are Resurrection people. We are called to be witnesses to the world. This is our mission: to

tell why we believe. Today, we remember that we are children of God and need to share God's love. The resurrection is so that we have hope in today and the world to come.

Mary's declaration, "I have seen the Lord," was the first witness. In John's gospel, women are present in every aspect of Jesus's life. Pastor says she hopes we see the Lord today and that our lives are changed forever. She reminds us that the "resurrection" is preached every Sunday. She tells us to look today with new eyes.



Mary expected to find a sealed tomb. She found the stone had been removed. Peter and John ran to the tomb, even though this could have put them in trouble with the authorities. They entered and saw the linens. They believed but didn't understand. The stone was removed, not so Jesus could get out, but so they could get in and believe. Sometimes, we may feel that we have stones blocking our paths. Pastor assures us that God has the power to remove those stones.

Peter and John believed, but "they told no one." Eventually, however, they acted on their belief. We need to take it seriously that God became human. Mary's tears were a normal human response. Mary received an amazing gift. Pastor believes that Mary continued to talk about this the rest of her life.

Pastor hopes we came to church to get a glimpse of God. She says if we listen to each other, we will learn more about God. Easter rolls away the "stones" in our lives.



Barbara is our assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace.





The choir sings their anthem while the offering is taken.

Pastor begins the communion liturgy and blesses the bread and wine.



We receive the body and blood of our Savior.



We receive the final blessing, but it is Birthday Sunday, so all those who have an April birthday, get an extra blessing.





The morning is not over yet. All are invited to stay for the Easter brunch which we will share with Radiant Covenant. And, of course, there will be birthday cake.



Joyce looks lovely in her Easter bonnet.



There is also seating indoors.



The flower cross is an excellent location for portraits. Suzanne is happy grandson Nathan and his fiancée Ana could join her this morning. Happy Easter, Pastor Lyn.



On Monday, April 18, several of us attend a gathering at Graceada Park to celebrate the overlapping of Easter, Passover and Ramadan. It is also a unified stand against the atrocities currently happening in Ukraine. Pastor Lyn is one of the speakers. She tells about her memories of Easter when she was young. Rabbi Shalom tells us about Passover. Ramadan is also explained by a gentleman from the mosque. Mayor Sue Zwahlen speaks about the way Modesto is welcoming to all. Sergei, from the Ukraine, remembers his homeland, and speaks to the tolerance for all there. We all hope that this horrendous invasion by Russia will soon end.



These are the speakers that represent the Catholic, Pentecostal, and United Church of Christ. There is also a lady from Cambodia. There are about 100 people of many faiths who attend.

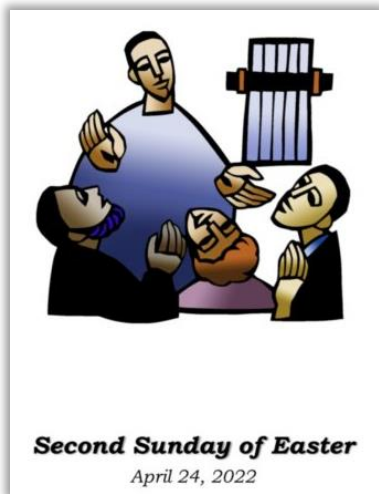


It is Friday evening, April 22, and we gather for a baked potato bar dinner and Bunco party. This is a fundraiser for the Day Care. There is a raffle table, too.



Dave, Karryn and Cecily will be able to use their raffle wins when it's Pentecost.

This was a fun evening, and a good way to support our Day Care. Thank you, Laura, Linda, Melissa and Lois for making this evening a success.



It is April 24, the Second Sunday of Easter. Pastor welcomes us warmly.

The service begins with the opening hymn. This is followed by the liturgy for the Thanksgiving for Baptism.



Pat is our reader today. She begins with instructions for reading the psalm in unison. This psalm was meant to start out softly and get progressively louder. We read Psalm 150, a song of praise, and get an A+ for our reading skills.

The second lesson is from Revelation, a book that recounts a mystical vision of the risen Christ experienced by a Christian prophet named John. In this passage Christ is described as a timeless redeemer, the beginning, present, and end of all time.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. This passage relates the unprecedented events of the day of resurrection. The risen Jesus appears to his fearful disciples. A week later, after Thomas is shown the wounds and worships Jesus, Jesus pronounces that the blessings of the resurrection are also for those who “have not seen and yet believe.”



The sermon begins with Pastor telling us that for hundreds of years the story of “doubting Thomas” is told on the second Sunday after Easter. Millions of listeners have heard this story. Pastor reminds us that we are all doubters at times.

Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. His second appearance is on the same day and the third, a week later. Mary saw and heard, and then she told her story. The fact that the disciples were “huddled in fear,” is proof that they, too, were doubters. We don’t know why Thomas was missing. There are gaps in all these stories. Pastor says that we are supposed to put ourselves in the gaps, an act that can sometimes be uncomfortable. All of them should have taken what they heard more seriously.



Faith, according to Pastor, is not what we believe, but what we have heard and seen. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. How we respond to what we hear is important.

Pastor wonders why Thomas was absent. Was he off grieving by himself? Did he feel guilty for running off? Did he just need to ponder his future? She reminds us that we have many crossroads in our lives.

Pastor tells us that there is no word in Greek for doubt. It is expressed by a lack of trust. Doubt is part of faith. Thomas just wanted to be sure. Questions keep our faith vital and authentic. God wants to be included in our decision making. We leave church each Sunday with trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

*Pastor indicates that the word used in Greek in this passage says that Jesus breathed *into* (not *on*) them the Holy Spirit. This “breath of life” changed them forever.*

We have to rely on our “breathed-into” experience that happens at baptism. It is our job to share our stories, not to condemn the world, but to show that God wants to save the world. If we want to “see” the face of God, we need to look into the face of others. God sends us with peace and grace. We are to bring that to a broken world.



Lois is the assisting minister this morning. She leads us in the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of intercession.

We share the peace, and the offering is taken.

Pastor begins the communion liturgy with the Great Thanksgiving. She blesses the bread and the wine, and we receive the body and blood of our Savior, broken and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins.



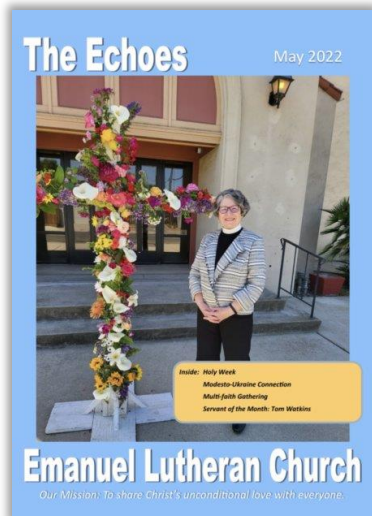


We receive the final blessing and sing the closing hymn, as Dan leads the recessional.



We are dismissed with “Go in peace. Tell what God has done.”

We respond with “Thanks be to God. Alleluia!”

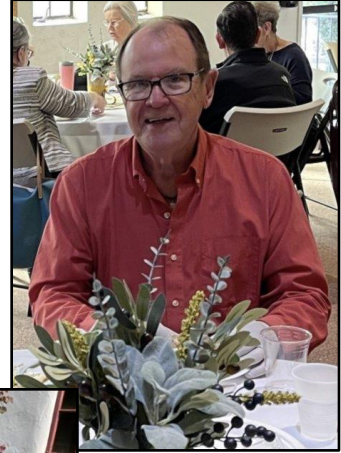


May

The May Echoes includes all the events of Holy Week and Easter.

Our Servant of the Month is Tom who was very active in Katie's Kitchen before the pandemic forced us to close. He was so good at cooking bacon he was known as the "baconater." He also keeps our roses in fine shape, and he serves on the Fellowship Ministry committee.

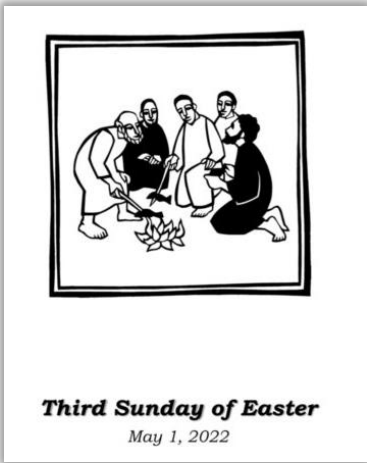
Sunday mornings often find him making coffee and putting the goodies out. Thank you, Tom, for all you do.



There is also an article submitted by Marsha and Sue on our sister city, Kholmynitsky, Ukraine. Sue has actually visited there. Here she displays some of her souvenirs.

The Piecemakers, our quilting ladies, gave quilts to some of our most senior ladies. Here Alice receives her quilt.





Third Sunday of Easter
May 1, 2022

It is May 1, the Third Sunday of Easter. Since it is the first Sunday of the month, it is also Food for Faith Sunday. Marsha puts her donation in Elaine's trunk.



Pastor welcomes us warmly and announces that Abigail and Gavin will receive their First Communion this morning. We sing the opening hymn and pray the Thanksgiving for Baptism. This is followed by This Is the Feast and the Prayer of the Day.



Melissa is our reader this morning. We read Psalm 30 responsively. The psalmist realizes that his strength comes from the Lord, and he praises God.

The second lesson is from Revelations. John's vision offers a glimpse of cosmic worship around the throne. At its center is "the Lamb who was slain."



Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. The risen Christ appears before his disciples by the Sea of Galilee where they were first called. After echoes of the fishing and feeding miracles, he gives a final reminder of the cost of a disciple's love and obedience.

Pastor begins her sermon with telling us that the Easter season is filled with scriptures revealing obligations for Jesus's followers.

Today's instructions are "Be fishermen," and "Be shepherds." The big question around Easter, according to Pastor, is "So what? What difference will all this make in our lives?" Fishing means evangelism, and shepherding means caring for others.

In the Gospel of John, the fishermen (disciples) see a stranger on the beach – a fire already going. When they cast their net to the right side of the boat, they catch 153 big fish. Why that number? The catch is huge and miraculous. The fish are all different. The church is meant to be diverse. The fish are netted, not caught with bait. It's the love of God that "catches" the fish – not some clever plan.



Jesus taught, ate and drank after the resurrection. He continued to relate to people. The disciples continued to reach out to people and take care of others. Jesus will continue to draw others to him. It takes a lot of people working together. So what? Will we shepherd each other?

Peter still has much to learn. Three times Jesus asks him, "Do you love me more than these?" We wonder if Jesus means more than his boat, his life as a fisherman, more than the other disciples love Jesus? We are to love others as much as we love Jesus.

All the disciples went on to serve God. Many were martyrs. When we join with other believers, we learn to "gather" (fish) and "care for others" (shepherd).

Pastor tells a story of a young man who professed to be a believer, but never went to church. He told the pastor that church was filled with hypocrites who sang boring songs and heard boring sermons. The Pastor asked him, "Do you love Jesus?"



"Oh, yes," replied the man, "with my whole heart."

"Would you die for him?" asked the pastor.

"Of course," replied the man.

"And yet," said the pastor, "you aren't willing to be bored for one hour a week for him?"



Pastor instructs us to fish and to be good shepherds.

We sing the hymn of the day. Then Dan, the assisting minister, leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. Then we share the peace.

Pastor begins the communion liturgy. She blesses the bread and wine. Abigail and Gavin and their family are invited to come forward. The children are given lit candles. They also receive special cups.

This is the body of Christ.

This is the blood of Christ.



After Abigail and Gavin have received their first communion, the congregation comes forward to commune.



The body of Christ, broken and given to you. The blood of Christ, shed for you. How blessed we are to hear these words and receive this gift each week.

Before we receive the final blessing, Abigail and Gavin are called up to receive special recognition. Abigail says that she feels a little different, and Gavin says he feels proud. Pastor assures them that we are very proud of them. She gives them a gift and a Bible from the congregation. We welcome them with applause.



We receive the final blessing in the name of God, the Author of life, Christ, the living Cornerstone and the life-giving Spirit of adoption. We leave to be fishermen and shepherds.



It is May 8, the Fourth Sunday after Easter which is always Good Shepherd Sunday. Pastor welcomes us warmly, and we sing the opening hymn.

Pastor leads us in the Thanksgiving for Baptism, This Is the Feast, and the Prayer of the Day.



Chuck is the reader for today. We begin with reading Psalm 23 responsively. This familiar psalm portrays the Lord as a shepherd who cares for his sheep.



The second lesson is from Revelations. We hear that Christ is the shepherd who leads his faithful to springs of the water of life. Christ is also the lamb who vanquishes sin and suffering.



Pastor reads from the Gospel according to John. Jesus responds to questions about his identity with the remarkable claim that he and the Father are one. Those who understand this are his sheep; they hear his voice, follow, and will never be snatched from his hand.

Pastor begins the sermon by telling us about a neighborhood chat in which a self-proclaimed pagan was inviting everyone to follow him to enjoy spring. She does not know if anyone responded, but she reminds us that we all need a shepherd to follow.

She points to the statue of Jesus above our altar. Most churches have a cross above the altar. Pastor says she has had many conversations with Jesus while sitting in the church and looking at the statue. She calls this statue the Good Shepherd Jesus, one who knows our names.



In the passage from John, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The elders ask, "How long will you keep us in suspense?" Pastor says this could also be translated as, "How long will you keep annoying us?" She wonders why they keep asking who Jesus is when they had already decided what they believed. They refused to listen to or believe anything Jesus said. Jesus tells them that they are not part of his sheep.

Pastor tells us that God has given us to Jesus. This should bring us comfort. She indicates the statue again and reminds us that Jesus stands with hands open. He always is there for us. Nothing can snatch us from Jesus's hand.

Pastor suggests that we remind ourselves all this week that we belong to Jesus. We should say, "God gave me to Jesus. I belong to Jesus. Jesus knows my name." Pastor tells us that all Jesus wants from us is a connection. When we sit with Jesus, with no agenda but an open heart, and listen to him, we begin to understand how Jesus reaches us.

During the fifty days after Easter, Jesus leads his disciples forward, reminding them that the resurrection would have an impact on the rest of their lives. Life would not be easy. Jesus has not promised us an easy life, only that we belong to him, and he knows our name. God's love overflows to us so that we can do good works in the world.



Our assisting minister, Kathleen, leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace and the offering is taken.

The communion liturgy is spoken, and Pastor blesses the bread and wine. We receive the body and blood of our Savior.



We receive the final blessing, sing the closing hymn and go to enjoy the goodies prepared by Rebecca Circle for Friendship Sunday. The theme this month is Bee Kind.



Happy Mother's Day to all the ladies who are mothers or mother figures to someone.

On Saturday, May 14, Rebecca Circle hosts the WELCA spring luncheon, Kindness. It is a salad potluck, and the food is delicious. The decorations are amazing. Fr. Victor Haglund is our entertainment for today. He presents a musical program in which he explains the different musical eras: baroque, classical, romantic, and contemporary. He also plays a piece from each era.





Pr. Victor Haglund



Salads, dessert.



Suzanne reads a story about bees working together to clean off three that had fallen into a bucket of honey. We are told to "Bee sisters." "Bee teammates." "Bee kind."

Jeri, Rue and Suzanne decide to get all dressed up for the occasion. Everyone has a wonderful time.



It is May 15, the Fifth Sunday of Easter. Pastor is in Denver at a seminar on homiletics. Barbara is at her grandson's wedding in San Diego. Dan is our presiding minister and Suzanne is our pianist. Dan welcomes us and after the opening hymn leads us in the confession of sins and the prayer of the day.



Marsha is our reader. We read Psalm 148 responsively. This psalm speaks of every living thing, human and animal and all of nature praising God.

The second reading is from Revelation. In this passage, John's vision shows us that in the resurrection the new age has dawned; God dwells with us already. Yet we wait for the time when the tears that cloud our vision will be wiped away. Then we will see the new heaven and earth, and the new Jerusalem.

Dan reads the Gospel according to John. In this passage, after washing the disciples' feet, predicting his betrayal, and the revealing his betrayer, Jesus speaks of his glorification on the cross. This deep complicated love of Jesus, even to death on the cross, will be the distinctive mark of Jesus's community.

Dan begins his sermon by quoting the verse: "Now the Son of Man has been glorified." Dan says that he will leave that idea to more learned preachers. Next, he focuses on Judas. Jesus knows that Judas will betray him. God gives us freedom to



choose what we will do, but sometimes that freedom may be skewed. Freedom is given in love, grace, forgiveness.

Jesus gave a commandment: Love one another just as I have loved you. The love of God was so great that it overflowed through Jesus. Dan asks us thought-provoking questions. How is Jesus's love expressed to us? How do we express that love to the

world? Do we accept the Holy Spirit guiding us? Dan pictures Jesus smiling because he loves us so much. The hope of God is among us here, the new Jerusalem. God is good. God is life. God is love.

Lois is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession.



We share the peace, and the offering is taken. Then we begin the communion liturgy. We are using a prepared wafer and grape juice cup that was consecrated before Pastor left for her class.

It is Birthday Sunday, and Dan leads us in the birthday blessing for those whose birthday is in May. Then we receive the final blessing, Chris extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional. We leave to enjoy a piece of birthday cake during the fellowship time.



It is the Sixth Sunday of Easter, and Pastor has returned from her continuing education class. She welcomes us warmly. She leads us in the opening liturgy and prayers.

Barbara is the reader for today. We read Psalm 67 responsively. It is a psalm of praise. The second lesson is from Revelation. In this passage we hear of John's vision of a new Jerusalem coming out of heaven, providing continuity with God's past actions. In this new city, God's presence replaces the temple, and the glory of God and the Lamb supplants sun and moon.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. As Jesus talks of returning to the Father, he promises to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will teach the disciples and remind them of all that Jesus taught. Even more, those in whom God makes a home will experience a peace that overcomes fear.



Pastor begins her sermon by speaking about the class she attended this past week. The theme was preaching “after the storm.” Sometimes storms seem to take over our lives. She says that we need to talk about the storms (traumas) to be able to move on.

One speaker said, “We are confronting collective trauma, and we don’t know what to do.” This speaker said the church is not telling God’s story. Pastor says that the gospel lesson takes place at the end of Jesus’s preaching/teaching. The disciples were anxious and full of questions. They were becoming traumatized. They were also confused.



Jesus said he was going away, and he and God would remain with them. Pastor introduces to a new word: coddlywomple. This means to travel in a purposeful manner to a vague place. We have a purpose but a vague destination. She says it will be high adventure as well as storms filled with blessings. Jesus tells us not to be afraid, but this is easier said than done.

Pastor found it interesting in her class that many of these devout church leaders were filled with anxiety. She wonders how we can believe God dwells in us and still be anxious about things over which we have no control.

When we are traumatized, we tell God’s story over and over out loud. We know Jesus’s peace is an overall sense of well-being, not an absence of trauma. We need to remember the Holy Spirit is always with us.



Barbara is also the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers. We share the peace, and the offering is taken.



Pastor blesses the bread and wine so that we may commune.

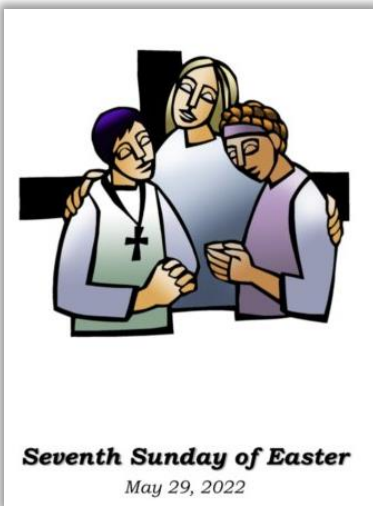


We receive the final blessing.





Dan leads the recessional as we sing the closing hymn. We are told to go in peace and tell what God has done.



It is May 29, and Pastor greets us warmly and leads us in the opening liturgy.



Barbara is our reader this morning. We read Psalm 97 responsively. This psalm says that all of God's creations declare his glory and all his people rejoice.

In the second reading from Revelation, we hear that the ascended Christ, hidden from our sight, promises to come again. We eagerly pray, "Come, Lord Jesus," with all who respond to this invitation.

In the Gospel of John, Pastor reads that Jesus prays that the life of his followers will be characterized by an intimate unity of identity with God and to share in God's mission: to proclaim the word that will bring others into this same unity.



Pastor asks, “What does God give Jesus?” and “What do we get?” God gives Jesus glory and authority. These indicate honor. God gives Jesus the work of salvation which was completed on the cross. God gives Jesus the Word; Jesus is the Word made flesh. God gives Jesus everything, including people. God gives Jesus God’s name. We should be united in harmony and love as God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are united. Jesus gives us eternal life, the Word and glory. This prayer absolutely establishes that we are loved and that Jesus is praying for us.

Giving is woven into the entire universe. We cannot live by getting but by giving. There is an unbreakable bond of love between God and Jesus. They want the same bond between us.

A problem with the church today is that it has stopped talking about God and what he does. The lack of God-talk prohibits unity. Unity is not the same as uniformity. We can be united but not the same. We are to be one with God. We need less I talk and more we talk.

After we come and are given, we are to go, to be a mission and share Christ’s love with everyone. Jesus knows us so well and loves us anyway. Pastor asks what this means to us.



Lois is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of intercession.



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





We receive the final blessing, sing the closing hymn and go forth into the mission world.

Many of us dressed in red, white and/or blue to celebrate the upcoming Memorial Day holiday.



June 2-4 is the Sierra Pacific Synod's Assembly at the Nugget Resort in Sparks, NV. Voting delegates are Dan, Suzanne and Pastor Lyn. Lois and Kathleen go as guests.





We attend business sessions during the day and enjoy a delicious dinner in the evening. There is a lot of tension with the business since many are unhappy with behavior that Bishop Rohrer has exhibited this past year. A resolution to ask them to resign or for steps to be taken to remove them fails to get the required 2/3 majority vote.

We head home Saturday morning, listening to the final proceedings via Pastor Lyn's phone. We are saddened that justice has not been done, but we are hopeful that we can still make a difference at Emanuel. Later that weekend, Bishop Eaton begins disciplinary action against Bishop Rohrer, and Bishop Rohrer does resign.



It is June 5, the Day of Pentecost. It is also the first Sunday of the month, so it is Food for Faith Sunday. Pastor begins the service with a brief recap of the Synod Assembly and the new information that has emerged.



Pastor welcomes us and leads us in the confession of sins. She then reminds us that we are forgiven in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



Matthew and Rebecca are our readers this morning. Matthew reads the familiar story of the Tower of Babel from Genesis. In this passage, God causes the people to speak different languages and scatters them throughout the earth.



Rebecca reads a passage from Psalm 104. In this scripture, the psalmist says that God rejoices in all that he has made.

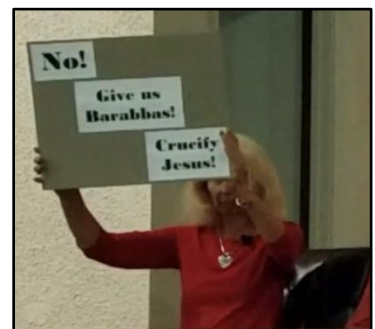


The second lesson is from Romans. Paul writes that we have been made co-heirs with Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. In this passage, Jesus assures his disciples that he and the Father are one. He also promises to send an Advocate, a Spirit of truth who will be with us and in us.



In place of the sermon this morning, we have a radio play, written by Suzanne. It is a recap of the events from the arrest of Jesus to his ascension. Suzanne explains that there are no costumes and that the scripts are read, not memorized. She rehearses the congregation on their part.





Lois is our narrator, letting us know whether this scene is in the present or the past. Barbara and Tom play Rachel and Jonah, the news anchors. Kathi plays Miriam, the roving reporter.



Miriam interviews Caiaphas, played by Chuck. He assures Miriam that within a week he will have eliminated this false Messiah, Jesus.



Next, she interviews Peter, who tells about the strange events at the last supper and the Garden of Gethsemane. Pilate enters and offers to free Jesus as his usual gift at Passover.



Next, she interviews Mary, the wife of Cleopas, who is a witness to the crucifixion. She is devastated that their hopes in the Messiah have come to nothing.



A second interview with Mary finds her rejoicing as she tells the story that happened on the road to Emmaus. A second interview with Peter reveals that Jesus has ascended into heaven and Peter and the disciples will spend the rest of their lives telling the world about Jesus.

Thank you, Suzanne, Lois, Kathleen, Tom, Barbara, Chuck, Dennis and Dan for reminding us about these important events.



Dan is also the assisting minister this morning. He leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace.



During the offering the choir sings "His Name Is Wonderful."



Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune. We receive the final blessing.



It is June 12, Holy Trinity Sunday. Before the service begins, there is a short congregational meeting to report on the Synod Assembly and on further developments concerning the bishop.

Pastor begins by reporting that since the close of the Synod Assembly, Bishop Megan Rohrer has resigned as Bishop of the Sierra Pacific Assembly. Reports are given by Suzanne, Dan, Kathleen and Lois.



The service begins at the conclusion of the meeting. Pastor greets us warmly, and we sing the opening hymn. We confess our sins and join in the Kyrie, and the Gloria.

Lois is our reader. The first lesson is from Proverbs. In this passage, wisdom is portrayed as a woman, God's first creation and his helper.



Psalm 8 praises God for his creation, especially human beings who were made only a little lower than the heavenly beings.

The second lesson is from Romans. Paul describes the life of faith in light of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The peace of God comes through Jesus Christ; his love comes through the Holy Spirit.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to John. We are told that Jesus's presence will be known through the Holy Spirit.



Pastor begins her sermon by saying that sometimes we have to break hard news to someone. We have to be careful choosing our words.

Jesus tells his disciples that he has many things to tell them, but they couldn't bear them yet. He left his Holy Spirit to help them along. The disciples were about to learn something new about God. The Holy Spirit would help them keep learning. Pastor asks us if we ever thought about the meaning of the word bear? She says that it means to accept a situation that is difficult.

Trinity Sunday is the only Sunday devoted to doctrine rather than what Jesus said. The trinity represents the different forms of the relationship of God with creation. The trinity is a mystery of our faith. We believe in it, but may not comprehend it. According to Pastor, the purpose of the trinity doctrine is to give words to our faith. Our faith changes as we learn about God.

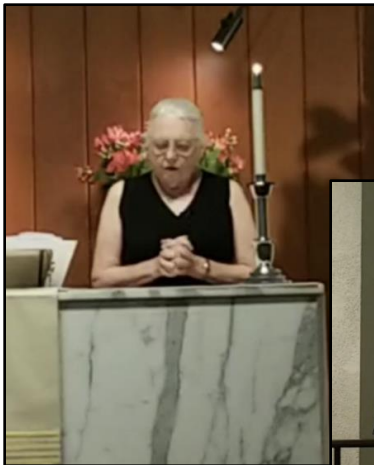
Pastor asks us how do we share what we know about God? She says it is never easy to put our faith into words. We may even suffer for doing this. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will teach us everything. Jesus promises that he will be with us when we talk about our faith.



Pastor says that Eleanor Roosevelt said that we should do something scary every day. Scary experiences are growth experiences.

In the Athanasian Creed we learn that the Son and the Holy Spirit are co-equal with the Father.

We should be prepared with our “God” statement. Then we rely on the Holy Spirit to give us the rest of what to say.



Kathleen is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace and the offering is taken.



Pastor blesses the bread and the wine.



We commune for all are welcome.



We receive the final blessing. Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recession. Then we gather together for fellowship.



We are proud of our family members who have graduated this year.

Second Sunday after Pentecost
 June 19, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org

Our Mission
 To share Christ's unconditional love with everyone.

Our Vision
 Emanuel's vision is to be loving, supportive, and welcoming, as we reach out in service and in witness to our neighborhood and the city beyond. We share a passion to nurture people in all stages and circumstances of life. We, as disciples of Christ, minister to our changing community in challenging cultural times.

It is June 19, Father's Day and Birthday Sunday. Pastor greets us warmly as always. We confess our sins and sing the summer liturgy.





Marilyn is the reader for today. The first lesson is from Isaiah. In this passage, the prophet announces God's impatience. The people's self-absorption is idolatry, and images of practices that displease God fill this reading. Like a vintner who crushes the grape to release the wine, God will use Israel's exile to establish a new community of the faithful.

In Psalm 22, we hear a plea for rescue and an assurance that God will answer those prayers.

The second lesson is from Galatians. In this letter, Paul relates that baptism is a powerful bond that unites people not only with God but with other believers. Those who call themselves children of God experience a transformation that removes prejudices of race, social class, or gender in favor of true unity in Christ.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus's mission includes foreigners, and his authority extends to the casting out of demons. Some who witness Jesus's work are seized with confusion and fear, but the man who was healed is commissioned to give testimony to God's mercy and power.



Pastor begins her sermon by recalling three phrases that people often use.

"Don't shoot yourself in the foot."

"The devil made me do it."

"Bloom where you are planted."

The first is used to advise not to do anything foolish. The second is a way of shifting the blame. The third is very good advice.

The gospel story is about healing, before and after. It is a short story about the Gerasene demoniac. Prior to meeting Jesus, he lived in the tombs. We don't know his name. After meeting Jesus, he is a person of the Way.

In crossing the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calmed the storm. Upon landing, he meets the demon-possessed man. The demons say they are called Legion because they are many.

Evil didn't want Jesus to treat them as they treated the man. Evil is crafty, but Jesus is craftier.

We don't know what caused his problems. We can only imagine that he had many mental illnesses: self-destructive behavior, trapped by circumstances, separated from normal living.

As an example of self-destructive behavior, Pastor recalls a man that she saw sitting outside her window, cutting his face. She called 911, but she never found out what happened to him after the police took him away.



Pastor says those who feel trapped by illnesses often have feelings of abandonment. She reminds us that Jesus will come when called. We can ask, "What's next, Lord?" In the passage from Galatians, Paul is livid about the church. The Law had replaced their faith. The Law had taken over for grace. There are limits to the Law. There are no limits to grace. The Law cannot save. Only grace can do that.

The healed Gerasene wanted to follow and serve Jesus. He was told to stay put, to bloom where he was planted. According to Pastor, restoration to the community is one of the hardest things to overcome.

When Jesus returned to Galilee, he met Jairus whose daughter was dying. Also, he met a woman who only wanted to touch his robe.

Pastor encourages us to bloom where we are planted. In other words, to tell what God has done for us. Pastor reminds us that Jesus always brings healing, but it may not be what we had in mind.



Barbara is the assisting minister this morning. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession.

We pass the peace, and the offering is taken.

This morning we celebrate Matthew's first communion. His family communes at the first table. Matthew is reminded to let his light shine before others that God may be glorified.



After Matthew and his family commune, the rest of the congregation comes to the table.



It is Birthday Sunday, and Pastor prays a special blessing on the people who celebrate their birthdays in June.



Then she says the final blessing before we go into Luther Hall to have birthday cake. There is a special gift for all the dads as they leave the sanctuary.

Jeri gives Dick and Pedro a bag of Hersey's kisses for Father's Day. Then it's time for cake.





Third Sunday after Pentecost
 Worship in the Courtyard
 June 26, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org

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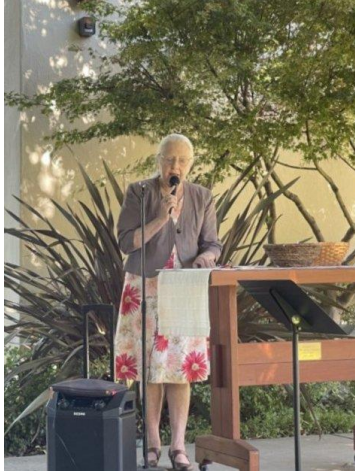



It is June 26, and this year we will hold the last service of the month in the courtyard.



Pastor greets us warmly. Barbara plays the hymns on the keyboard.





Kathleen is our assisting minister and reader. The first lesson is from 1 Kings. In this passage, the prophet Elijah flees for his life to the security of God's mountain. There God reveals to Elijah that there are still faithful people in Israel and commissions him to anoint new leaders, including his own successor, Elisha.

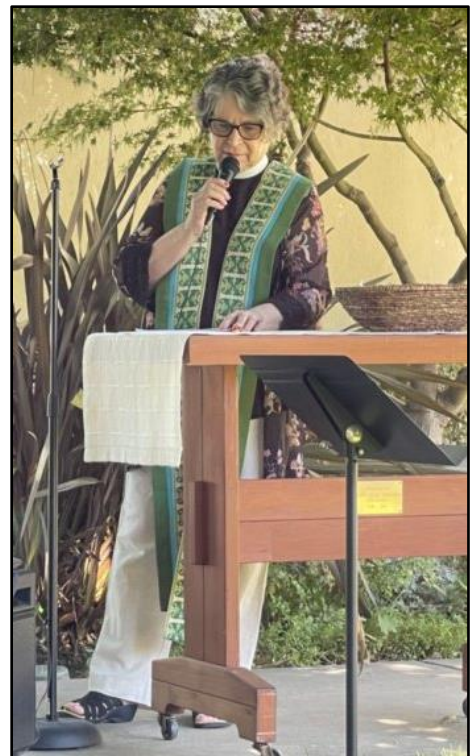
The writer of Psalm 16 rejoices that God is his refuge who will not abandon him.

This morning, Kathleen reads the gospel from Luke, in which Jesus is unwavering in his commitment to his mission in Jerusalem and calls his disciples to a similar single-mindedness.

Pastor Lyn had explained that she would read the second lesson from Galatians. However, she seems to have forgotten because she begins her sermon when Kathleen finishes. She says that she likes it when everything is neat and orderly. Sometimes, she says, you just can't get all your ducks in a row. You may have to gather up your ducks and run with it.

She then tells us that she hasn't forgotten, that she will include the reading from Galatians in her sermon. She tells us that Jesus expects singular allegiance. This can be really difficult. Very few people are able to do this. Jesus wants us to be committed to him first. Then we can work with him.

Our priorities should be God first, then family, then church. Putting Jesus first helps us to put everything in order. We do this because we love God. God expects this, and he also expects us to love others.



Paul's letter to the Galatians says the freedom that Christ gives is not permission to do whatever we want. It is the invitation to be what we could not be otherwise. The power and guidance of Christ's Holy Spirit produce a different kind of life, one marked by the fruit of this Holy Spirit.

Pastor says we do not throw away faith for the Law. Faith expressed in love is more important than religion.

We sing the hymn, and Kathleen leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. The offering is taken. Then we begin the great thanksgiving. Since we are outside, Pastor and Kathleen pass the pre-packaged communion elements after Pastor has consecrated them.



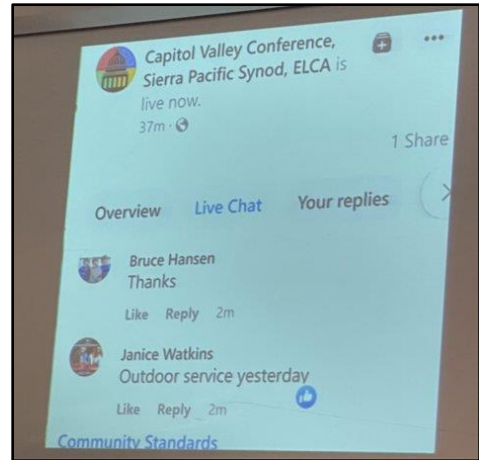
Pastor says the final blessing. We sing the sending song, and go into Luther Hall for fellowship. It has been a joy to worship outside enjoying the beauty of God's world.



On Monday, June 27, Pastor, Suzanne, Kathleen, Lois, Dennis and Marty, go to Advent Lutheran Church in Citrus Heights for a meet and greet with the new interim bishop, the Rev. Claire Burkat, from Pennsylvania. She will serve until we elect a new bishop in 2023. Bishop Claire has an impressive list of credentials. We are hopeful that she can help us put the Sierra Pacific Synod back on track.

We are excited to see a response to the online question: What has your church done recently that you enjoyed? from our own Janice W.

We feel that Bishop Claire has a sense of humor. A perk to this event was reconnecting with Jim and Paula, former members of Emanuel who now live in Sacramento.



On Wednesday, June 29, a Celebration of Life is held for Jean Salazar, long-time partner of Chris. She was a very interesting person who was well loved by her many friends.



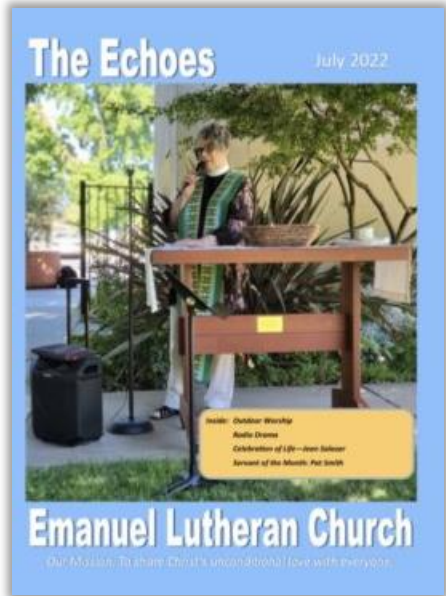


A luncheon follows the service. As always, Marty makes the table settings beautiful. The ladies of Emanuel provide salads and desserts.



A sad occasion is made better when shared with others.





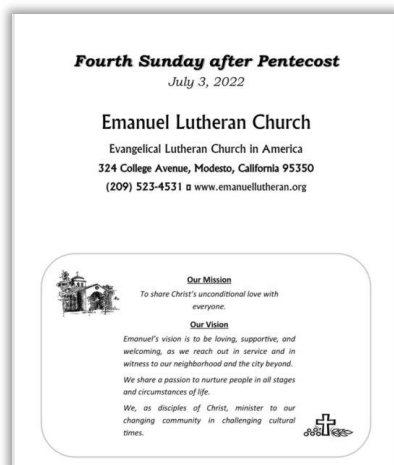
July

It is July already. Half the year has gone by. This month's Echoes includes all the events of the past month.



Our Servant of the Month is Pat. She currently serves as Council President and is on the Day Care Board. Thank you, Pat, for all that you do.

It is July 3, Food for Faith Sunday. Suzanne adds her donation to Yvonne's trunk. Yvonne will deliver our donations this week to FJCS.



Pastor greets us warmly as always. She leads us in the confession of sins and assures us with the sign of the cross that our sins are forgiven.





Marsha is our reader. The first lesson is from Isaiah. In this passage Jerusalem is compared to a mother who comforts her children.

Psalm 66 is a song of rejoicing because God's power is so great.

In the second lesson from Galatians, Paul encourages believers to do good and help one another.

Pastor reads the gospel lesson from Luke. In this passage, Luke tells the story of Jesus sending out 70 disciples to talk about what God has done. He tells them to go immediately because the harvest is ready and the workers are few. He tells them that any place that welcomes them, they should enter and heal the sick. If they are not welcomed, they should move on.



Pastor begins her sermon by saying that many of us can remember when evangelists knocked on doors, inviting people to come to their church. She says that Lutherans aren't good at doing this. Now the idea has almost become a negative thing. She believes that is too bad.

Pastor has a picture that shows Jesus knocking on a door. It, of course, is supposed to be Jesus asking to come into our hearts. She wonders why the door in this picture has such a tiny window. Does this mean our hearts are hard? In some pictures the window has bars, and in some, there is no window at all. Is it really that hard to get in?

Pastor says letting Jesus in is what Christianity is all about. Maybe Jesus wants us to come out and play. Maybe evangelism would work better if we invited others to come play with us. Discipleship brings joy.

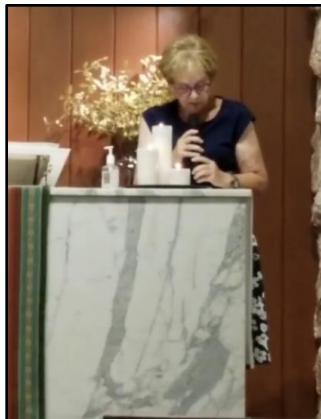
Jesus sends the disciples out in twos in today's gospel lesson. It can be exciting or even dangerous. We should be careful but committed to our work. If it's hard, do we quit and never try again? No, we brush the dirt off and try again.

We are called to help others get back on track, but we shouldn't fall into the same temptation. We reap what we sow. We should help others whenever the opportunity presents itself.

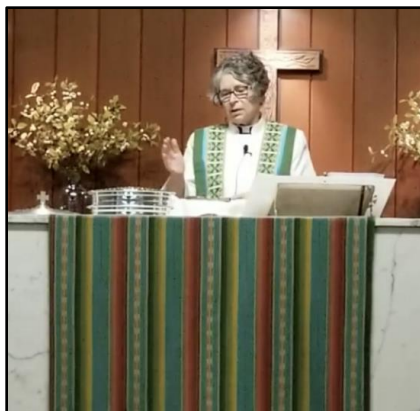
Pastor wonders how Jesus paired up the disciples. Did they number off? She suspects they were opposites with different gifts. It is safer in pairs. The harvest is short, so we should get busy now.

We will have failures and successes. Success comes from God working in us not from ourselves. Paul reminds us that we are not that important – the work goes on.

Pastor was recently asked by two young men on bicycles if she wanted a picture of Jesus. She said she had one, and, more importantly, she had a relationship with Jesus. She tells us, "Let's go on today with joy!"



Lois is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace and the offering is taken.



Pastor begins the communion liturgy and blesses the bread and wine. All are invited to come forward and receive the body and blood of our Savior.





We receive the final blessing. We have enjoyed all the wonderful patriotic music that Barbara has played for this 4th of July Sunday service. Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional.



Many of the congregation have gotten into the spirit of the holiday and dressed in red, white and blue.




Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
 July 10, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 • www.emanuellutheran.org

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It is July 10, and Pastor greets us warmly and fills us in on any important announcements. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. Pastor assures us that we are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ. We sing the summer liturgy.



Pat reads the lessons for today. The first lesson is from Deuteronomy. In this passage God tells the Israelites that his law is not too difficult or too far away for them to obey.

Psalm 25 asks God to lead us in his paths and to show mercy to us.

The second lesson is from Colossians. In this passage, Paul tells the members of the church at Colossae how much joy he gets in hearing about them and how he prays continually for them.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus is challenged to explain what is involved in obeying the greatest commandment. He tells a parable rich in surprises: those expected to show pity display hard hearts while the lowly give and receive unexpected and lavish mercy.

Pastor begins her sermon by asking, "How many experts do you know that have no common sense?" Not everyone has book learning, but are still very efficient and successful.



The "Good Samaritan" is today's lesson. The expert asks, "What must I do?" Jesus answers twice, "Go and do." Today's expert was both a lawyer and a religious

person. The lawyer was testing Jesus. The expert knows the law, but he doesn't get the law.

Jesus answers the question with a question. The expert answers correctly in the sense of the law. The lawyer only read the law, but he didn't act on it.

God wants us to love our neighbor as God loves. Pastor says she attended the service Friday night at the synagogue. Antisemitic flyers have been popping up in various neighborhoods. Rabbi Shalom asked other clergy to stand with him against hatred. Loving our neighbor is not the same as not hating. We act on love to help and do. We need to call out hatred when we see it.



Samaritans were hated. They were half-breeds. They interpreted the Torah differently. Jesus asks, "How do you show mercy to non-Christians?" There is more in common between religious groups than differences. The Samaritan was moved by compassion.

To receive grace, we must be so low there is no other way out. Are we willing to be sewed by our mortal enemies? Mercy comes to those who have no right to accept it. It is always a surprise. God's definition of a neighbor is very broad. To experience love, we need God, soul, and a moment. Pastor challenges us to go and do this week.



Our assisting minister, Suzanne, leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace and the offering is taken.




Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
 July 10, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 • www.emanuellutheran.org

Our Mission
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Our Vision
 Emanuel's vision is to be loving, supportive, and welcoming, as we reach out in service and in witness to our neighborhood and the city beyond. We share a passion to nurture people in all stages and circumstances of life.

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It is July 17, the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, and it is Birthday Sunday. Chris, our acolyte, lights the candles.



Pastor greets us warmly, welcoming everyone to the service. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. Pastor assures that our sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ.



Melissa is our reader this morning. The first lesson is from Genesis. In this passage, Abraham is visited by three strangers. He is told by them that within the year, he and Sarah will have the long-promised son.

In Psalm 15, we learn what characteristics describe a truly holy person.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. This passage tells the story of Jesus's visit to the home of Mary and Martha. Jesus tells Martha that it's important to take the time to listen to his word.

Pastor begins her sermon by saying that last Thursday was an interesting day. She has three stores that she frequents, and on Thursday, she went to all three of them. As it happened, in every store she ran into grumpy people. She attributed their attitudes to STRESS.



Today's gospel story is the familiar one about Mary and Martha. Last week we had the story of the good Samaritan. That story was shocking because the Jews hated the Samaritans and couldn't imagine them doing anything good. Today's story is shocking because women were present at the gathering.

We are called to witness and serve wherever we are. Everyone is called to minister. Jesus tells Martha not to let busyness interfere in ministry. Martha was responsible for all the preparations. She was anxious for everything to be perfect. Martha is in an uproar because of exhaustion. Jesus isn't criticizing her work (ministry), just her priorities.

Pastor acknowledges that many things can cause anxiety. She says, however, that the pictures coming from the new telescope bring her peace. She knows God is in control of all that.

She challenges us to spend time with God; then go and do.



We sing the hymn of the day. Then, Kathleen, the assisting minister, leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession.



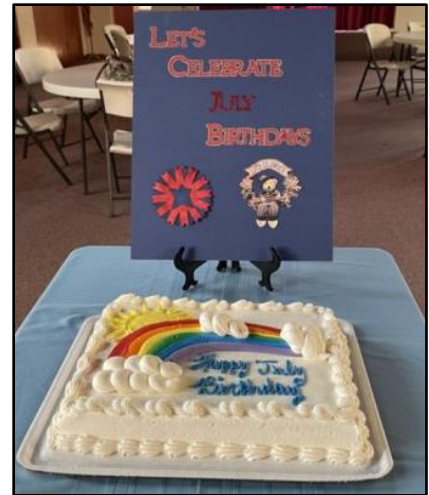
We share the peace.



The offering is taken and Pastor begins the great thanksgiving, blessing the bread and wine. All are invited to come to the table. Everyone is welcome.



It is Birthday Sunday. Pastor says a special prayer of blessing for all the July birthday people. She invites everyone to stay for birthday cake during fellowship. Then she gives the final blessing.



**Get your
ACT
together!**

Join us for a salad supper and mid-week study of Acts.

Time: Salad supper: 6:00 PM
Bible study: 7:00 - 8:30

Dates:
July 20 at Lois Owen's
July 27 at Lois Owen's
August 3 at Marsha Waggoner's
August 10 at Sue Wilke's
August 17 at Sue Wilke's
August 24 at Sue Wilke's

This Wednesday, we begin a six-week study of Acts. We meet at Lois's house for the first week. We dine on salads brought by Melissa and Suzanne, and cake brought by Pat.






We watch a short video introduction by Matthew Skinner, the author of the guide book. Then Pastor leads the discussion on the topic: 'What has God done''

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
 July 24, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 • www.emmanuelutheran.org

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Our Vision
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It is July 24, the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. We can see that there is something special going on this Sunday. There are chairs in the front of the church. In fact, Pastor indicates this in her welcome.





We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. Pastor reminds us that God graciously forgives our sins in the name of Jesus Christ. We sing the Kyrie and the Gloria.

Barbara reads Psalm 138, a psalm of praise and thanksgiving for the greatness of God.



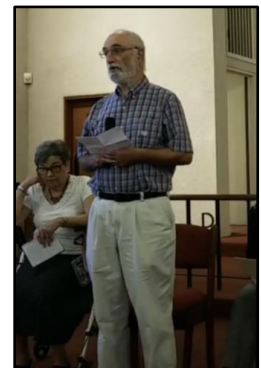
Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. In this passage Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. He reminds them to focus on God's coming reign, God's mercy, and the strengthening of the community. Jesus encourages his disciples to childlike trust and persistence in prayer.

Pastor begins the sermon by saying that she has asked the Text Study group to each take a petition of the Lord's prayer and put it in their own words and tell what it means to them.



*Pat: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
"God's name is holy, and that is the name by which He is known."*

*Mike: Your kingdom come.
"Let us recognize daily the presence of the Kingdom."*



*Kathleen: Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.
“Help me to walk your path and do your work on Earth
as in Heaven.”*



*Melissa: Give us today our daily bread.
“Help me with my real needs of today.”*

*Suzanne: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin
against us.
“Does God only forgive me to the extent that I
forgive others?”*



*Marsha: Lead us not into temptation.
“Be with me to help me resist temptations.”*

*Lois: Deliver us from evil.
“Give me the strength to avoid evil acts myself.”*



*Pastor: For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are
yours, now and forever. Amen
“Most holy Lord, all power and glory across the
entire universe and beyond, belongs to you and to
you only since time began and on into infinity. Amen*



We sing the hymn of the day. Then Suzanne, the assisting minister, leads us in the Apostle's Creed, and the prayers. Then the offering is taken.



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

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



It is Wednesday, July 27. It is the second session of the Bible study on Acts. We enjoy a delicious salad supper, provided by Kathleen and Kendra. We watch a short video and discuss the topic: What does God do? This is based on the stories of Phillip in Samaria, Phillip with the Ethiopian eunuch, Paul's conversion, and Peter and Cornelius. Then we enjoy cookies and ice cream for dessert and sing "Precious Lord, Take my Hand."




Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
 Worship in the Courtyard
 July 31, 2022

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It is July 31, the last Sunday of July, so we are having the service in the courtyard. Pastor greets us warmly and says how good it is to worship outdoors. We begin in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.





Suzanne is our reader this morning. The lesson is from Ecclesiastes. The teacher of wisdom who wrote Ecclesiastes sees that working for mere accumulation of wealth turns life into an empty game, a vanity of vanities. Nevertheless, he asserts in the next verse, it is good to find enjoyment in one's work because such enjoyment is a gift from God.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. In God's reign, the "rich will be sent away empty." Jesus uses a parable to warn against identifying the worth of one's life with the value of one's possessions rather than one's relationship with God.

Pastor begins her sermon with a familiar saying: You can't take it with you! Should you save up or spend it for enjoyment? It's a problem.

Solomon, who had every luxury, came to realize that all this was smoke. It's our relationship with God that is the only thing that matters.

Pastor confesses that she has been in a mid-summer slump. Ecclesiastes has caught her attention because it addresses all these things. Pastor tells us that in Jewish culture, Ecclesiastes is read in its entirety at the Harvest Festival. It exposes humanity's inability to see the worth of life. It is famous for several well-known phrases:

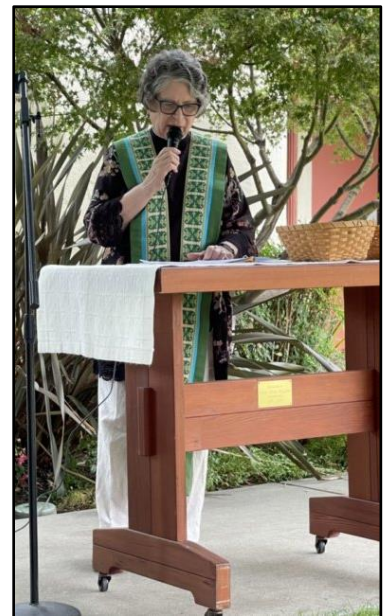
Vanity of vanities.

Eat, drink and be merry.

Nothing new under the sun.

God intends to be and should be first in our lives. Enjoyment comes from God. Our treasures cannot save us. We can only eat, drink and be merry if God is our core.

We should always be learning and growing. God wants to rule every aspect of our life. In the act of daily living, we honor God.

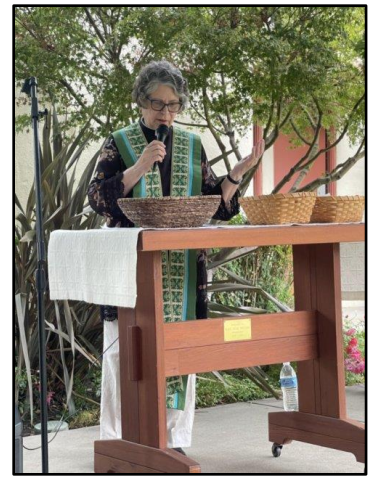




Barbara is our assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. Then we share the peace, and the offering is taken.



We begin the communion liturgy, and Pastor blesses the bread and the wine.

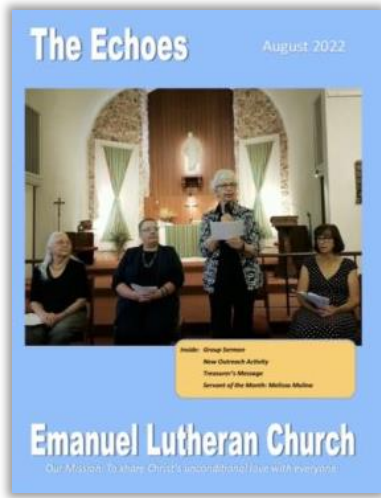


Communion is brought to us to make it easier.



After communion, we receive the blessing. We end with singing "This Little Light of Mine."



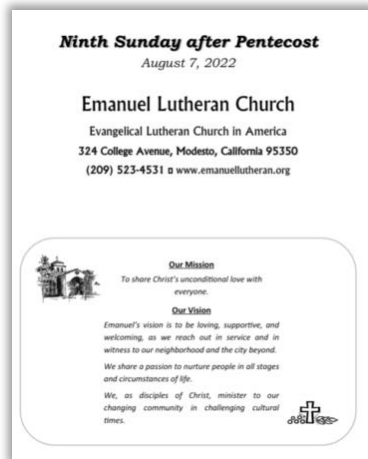


August

The Echoes highlights our Outreach Ministry. They recently received a Thrivent grant to help the Behavioral Health and Welfare Center of Modesto. Linda and Lois deliver some need items and gift cards to this program.



Our Servant of the Month is Melissa Molina. Although a new member of Emanuel, she is very active in the Text Study group. She is currently a reader and will soon be an assisting minister and communion assistant.



It is the first Sunday in August, Pastor Lyn's 7th anniversary at Emanuel. Sadly, she is home with COVID. We did not have enough warning to reschedule, so we are celebrating here, while she joins us online.

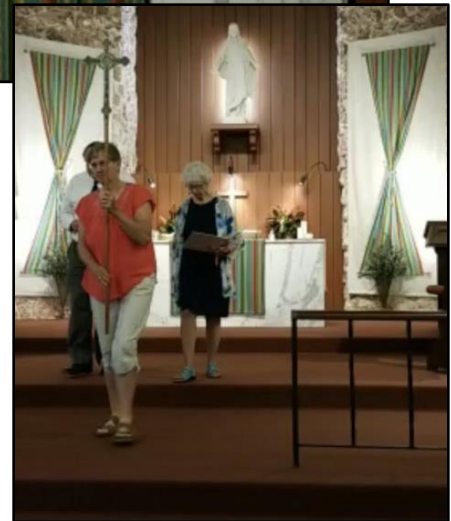




Dan and Suzanne have been asked by Pastor Lyn to do the service. Suzanne welcomes everyone. Dan leads the liturgy and gives the sermon. Suzanne reads the lessons and serves as the assisting minister. Dan and Kathleen serve communion. It's not the same without Pastor, but we are happy we can step up when needed.



Chris leads the recessional, and we gather in Luther Hall to enjoy cake and fellowship. Suzanne takes Pastor all her cards, flowers and pictures of the reception.





Pastor, we are so happy that you came to Modesto. We are sorry you weren't here today to celebrate.

On Saturday, August 13, we have an Ice Cream Social and Talent Show. It is hosted by Leah Circle, and everyone is invited. Ice cream sundaes are served, and several members of the congregation share their talent.





Leah Circle ladies are ready to make those sundaes. The room is ready for the guests.



What a good turnout! Even Pastor Lyn has recovered enough to attend.



Debbie says that she was instructed to dress nicely for the performance. Marilyn is ready to accompany the Lydia Lulus.





Kathi plays a duet with Suzanne and also a solo piece. Zane and Zoe do a dance routine. Then Zoe does a solo number. The Lulus are so popular that they come back for a second performance.

What talent!



We end the program with everyone singing "Let There Be Peace on Earth." A good time is had by all.

10th Sunday after Pentecost
August 14, 2022

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It is August 14, the 10th Sunday after Pentecost. We are so happy to have Pastor Lyn back after her ordeal with COVID. She assures us that she enjoyed watching the service on line, and she thanks Dan for stepping in at the last minute to do the sermon. She says how much she appreciated all the cards for the 7th anniversary of her ministry at Emanuel. She also tells us that we are expecting an important visitor this morning. Pastor Roger and Xander will be here. She invites everyone to stay for fellowship so that we can visit with them.



We sing the opening hymn. Then we begin the confession of sins with the sign of the cross. After we have prayed the prayer of confession, Pastor again makes the sign of the cross to assure us that our sins are forgiven.



We sing the Kyrie and the Gloria and pray the prayer of the day.

Barbara reads the lessons. The first lesson tells of Jeremiah who preaches the unpopular message of God's judgment. He suffers rejection. The true prophet, like Jeremiah, speaks God's word. The false prophet misleads people through dreams. The first is like wheat, the second like chaff.

Psalm 82 also speaks of God's judgment.

The second lesson is from Hebrews. The author presents us with rich stories of faith in a long list of biblical heroes, in which we find examples of trust in God that enabled them to face life's trials faithfully. In addition to these, we have Jesus, the perfect model of faithful endurance.

Pastor reads the Gospel from Luke. In it, Jesus delivers harsh words about the purifying and potentially divisive effects of obedience to God's call. The way of the cross often leads followers to encounter hostility and rejection, even from those they love.



Pastor begins her sermon by saying that the gospel message today is difficult. Jesus said he came to bring fire to the earth. He also came to bring division. We are asked to stand inside the fire with Jesus.

Pastor defines several important words. Fire is passion for the world. Baptism is to be plunged into humanity. Passion is a strong commitment to something. The peace that Jesus brings is not one that the world understands.

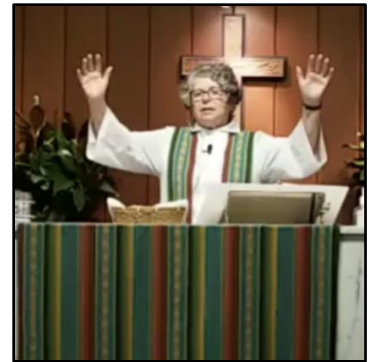
Pastor says that our priorities should be God, family, religion, and finally, church. We must be careful not to put religion before God.

To enter into God's presence is to enter into his word. God always gives us the words that we need to share our story with others. Faith does not make life easy. We must pay attention to the signs of our times.



Barbara is also the assisting minister, and she leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession.

The offering is taken, the peace is shared, and we begin the communion liturgy.



Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we are invited to the table where all are welcome.



The body of Christ, broken for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

With communion completed, we receive the final blessing, sing the closing hymn, and go in peace to serve our neighbor.




11th Sunday after Pentecost
August 21, 2022

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Pastor greets us warmly. She says that her morning started off with a dead battery in her car. She thanks Suzanne for coming to her rescue.



We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins and are forgiven in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.



Rebecca and Matthew read the lessons for today. The first lesson is from Isaiah. In this passage, God promises those who have returned from exile that where justice and mercy prevail, the ruins will be rebuilt and light will rise in the darkness. It is a day for new beginnings.

Psalm 103 rejoices in all the things God has done.

The second lesson is from Hebrews. Using images of Moses, the writer presents a striking vision of the new covenant of God made possible in Christ. There is no longer fear; only awe in the new promise in Christ into which we are invited.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus heals a woman on the sabbath, offering her a new beginning for her life. When challenged by a narrow reading of the sabbath command, Jesus responds by expanding “sabbath work” to include setting free from bondage.



Pastor begins her sermon with the familiar commandment: Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy. What does this mean? It is hearing and keeping God’s word. Sunday is a celebration of Easter. Sabbath can be any day. God wants one day dedicated to him.

Pastor asks us if Sabbath keeping is an obligation or an opportunity. She says that it can be both. She did remind us that Sunday is not a day of rest for a pastor. For Jesus, it was both an obligation and an opportunity. The woman in the gospel did not ask to be healed. It was Jesus’s idea. She most likely suffered physically, emotionally and socially. By healing her on the Sabbath, Jesus honored God by defeating Satan. Jesus restored the woman to the community. When the leaders objected, Jesus reminds them that they took care of their animals on the Sabbath. He tells them that she deserves as much.



Healing reveals God’s power and always honors God. Jesus did God’s work whenever it was needed. He took advantage of the opportunity. We are challenged to do God’s work.

Kathleen is the assisting minister. She leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle’s Creed. She also says the prayers of intercession.





We share the peace, and the offering is taken.



Pastor blesses the bread and wine. We are all invited to the table where all are welcome.



It is birthday Sunday, and Pastor asks all her celebrate their birthday in August to stand. We ask a special blessing on these brothers and sisters. Then we receive the final blessing, sing the closing hymn and go out to enjoy fellowship and birthday cake.

12th Sunday after Pentecost
 August 28, 2022


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It is August 28, the 12th Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor is on vacation. Kathleen is the presiding minister this morning, and Suzanne is the assisting minister. Suzanne greets us and makes the announcements. She also tells us that she received a text from Pastor, and she safely arrived in



South Dakota where she is visiting her mom. She sends us greetings from her mom.



Kathleen leads us in the confession of sins. She assures us that through Christ our sins are forgiven.

Chris reads the lessons this morning. The first lesson is from Proverbs, a collection of writings known as wisdom literature. Wisdom literature gave directions to

Israel's leaders and people for the conduct of daily life. Today's reading is about humility.

Psalm 112 speaks of the blessings of the righteous.

The second lesson is from Hebrews. The conclusion to this letter contains suggestions for the conduct of a holy life, all of which are shaped by God's love toward us in Jesus Christ.



Kathleen reads the Gospel lesson from Luke. Jesus observes guests jockeying for position at the table. He uses the opportunity to teach his hearers to choose humility rather than self-exaltation. Jesus also makes an appeal for hosts to imitate God's gracious hospitality to those in need.



Kathleen begins her sermon by asking if we heard all the words that tell how we are to live our lives. She confesses that she may not quite be there yet.



She talks about how difficult it is to achieve perfection. Sometimes it is easier not to try. She wonders if that makes her a failure. She remembers that God promises never to fail us or abandon us. This means we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will have no fear."

She asks Suzanne to come forward and talk about a time when she felt very successful in her teaching career. Suzanne tells about Shane, a student in her Language Arts 7 class, whose mother constantly sent letters, asking for special treatment: more time for homework to be done, an essay to be written, a test to be taken at a later date. Finally, on the last day of school, Shane came with yet one more letter from his mom. This time, however, it was to praise her for being the best teacher Shane had ever had. Suzanne says that she was pretty happy that she was finally getting recognition for being such a great teacher. This elation, however, did not last very long. Almost immediately, the phone rang, and it was Nichole's mother telling her that she was the worst teacher Nichole had ever had. Kathleen asks Suzanne what she felt about this experience. Suzanne said she has always been grateful for Nichole's mother because it brought her back down to earth, and she was able to get her head through the door to go to lunch.



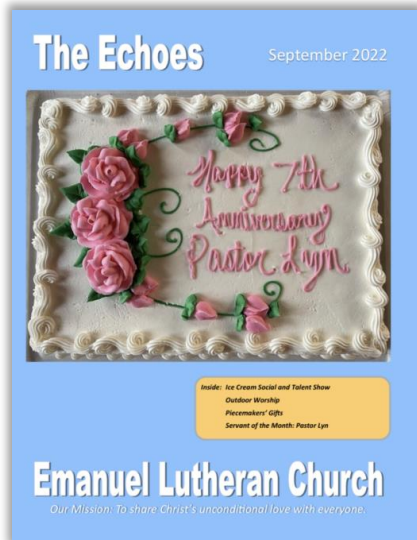
Kathleen ends her sermon by reminding us that God has surrounded us with a cloud of witnesses, with angels, with guides. What we have learned from these, we can use to help others. God is always with us telling us, "Be not afraid."

She reminds us that we are all part of God's family.

We sing the hymn of the day. Suzanne leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace. Pastor consecrated the bread and wine last week, so we are able to have communion.



We receive the final blessing, sing the closing hymn, and go out into the world to serve our neighbors.



September

The Echoes reviews all of the events of the past month. There is also an article about a quilt the Piece-makers made for Chris in memory of her partner, Jean.



Servant of the Month

Of course Pastor Lynette Crase is our Servant every month, but In honor of the completion of her seventh year with us, let's make a big deal about it. Seven is a mystical year in the Bible and last year should have been a Jubilee Year for her, but instead, she worked harder than ever. She has been a masterful shepherd for us, leading us skillfully through the trials and tribulations of the modern church. Covid, budget problems, clashes of ideas and beliefs, dwindling numbers — all of these have troubled the Church at large and the church on the corner of Stoddard and College. Pastor Lyn has steered us through these storm waters with determination, courage, and steadfast faith.



Our heartfelt prayer is that Pastor Lyn will bless us with her continued leadership for a few more years. We pray that when she does leave, it is to a well-earned retirement. We pledge to be her steadfast supporters and faithful followers in the future and to make her servanthood rewarding and satisfying. She has blessed us, let us also bless her.

13th Sunday after Pentecost

Worship in the Courtyard

September 4, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
(209) 523-4531 • www.emanuellutheran.org



Our Mission

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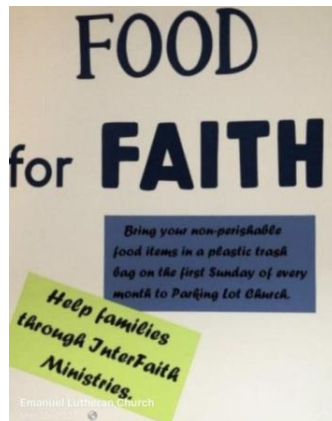
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It is the 13th Sunday after Pentecost, September 4. Pastor is still on vacation, so Dan is our presiding minister. It is also the last summer service in the courtyard. And it is Food for Faith Sunday.





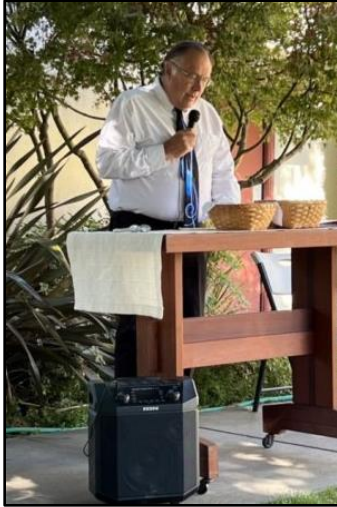
Dan greets us. He welcomes us and tells us that Pastor will be back next Sunday. Barbara reads lessons.

The first lesson is from Deuteronomy. Moses speaks to the Israelites who are about to enter the land promised to their ancestors. In this passage, he lays out the stark choice before them: choose life by loving and obeying the Lord; or choose death by following other gods.

Psalm 1 rejoices for those who follow the law of the Lord.

The second lesson is from Philemon. While Paul was in prison, he was aided by Onesimus, a man who had run away from Philemon, a slaveowner and a Christian friend of Paul. Paul told Onesimus to return to Philemon and encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a Christian brother.





Dan reads the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus speaks frankly about the cost of discipleship. Those who follow him should know from the outset that completing the course of discipleship will finally mean renouncing all other allegiances.

Dan begins his sermon by sharing his experiences from his recent trip to Hawaii. He laughs about Jimmy Buffet's "Cheeseburger in Paradise."

He remarks on Moses's telling the Israelites to choose life. Carpe diem. Seize the day. Dan says that life is a great gift because it enables us to give to others.

In the gospel, Dan says that Paul is against slavery. He uses the power structure to claim freedom for Onesimus by calling him his son. Onesimus was useless as a slave, but he will be useful as a Christian brother. He should be freed out of love.

In the gospel today, Jesus says to "hate your family." Dan says that hate is a strong word. He says it really means: love family less; love God more. Dan wonders if there is something we can do with "hate?" He reminds us that Christ on the cross pulls our sins to him like metal shavings to a magnet. His challenge for us: list our sins, one by one, and hate them.



We use the bread and wine that Pastor consecrated before she left. We receive communion in our seats.



We sing our closing hymn. We are grateful for Barbara who provides beautiful music, whether it is on the organ, the grand piano or even a keyboard.



14th Sunday after Pentecost
God's Work, Our Hands Sunday
September 11, 2022

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It is September 11; Pastor is back from her vacation. She greets us and has a few announcements for us. She reminds us that today is a day to remember, the 21st anniversary of the bombing of the Twin Towers. It is also God's Work,

Our Hands Sunday and Rally Day.

She tells us that she missed us and said she was asked how hard it is for her to find someone to fill in for her when she is gone. She told them that all she has to do is ask. She thanks Kathleen, Dan and Suzanne for their parts the past two weeks.



We begin with the confession. Pastor makes the sign of the cross to assure us that when we repent, we are forgiven.

We sing the Kyrie and the Gloria and pray the prayer of the day.





Kathleen reads the lessons for today. The first reading is from Exodus. While Moses is on Mt. Sinai, the people grow restless and make a golden calf to worship. This passage shows Moses as the mediator between an angry God and a sinful people. Moses reminds God that the Israelites are God's own people and boldly asks for mercy for them.

Psalm 51 is a plea to God for mercy and forgiveness for sins.

The second reading is from 1 Timothy. This letter contains advice especially intended for leaders in the church. Here the mercy of God shown to Paul, who once persecuted the church, is cited as evidence that even the most unworthy may become witnesses to the grace of God.

Pastor reads the Gospel from Luke. In this passage, Jesus tells two stories that suggest a curious connection between the lost being found and sinners repenting. God takes the initiative to find sinners, each of whom is so precious to God that their recovery brings joy in heaven.

Because this is Rally Sunday, today there is a children's sermon.



Pastor tells the children that she has a roll of quarters, but unfortunately, she has lost four of them. She sends them out to look for the lost coins. They do find them. Pastor reminds them that if some of the quarters are missing, the roll isn't worth as much. She says that is true of church, too. If any of the people are missing, we don't get as much done. It really does make a difference.

The children return to their seats, and Pastor begins her sermon. She says that today's gospel lesson is about sheep and coins. She wonders when was the last time we came face to face with a sheep, or if we've ever seen a sheep kneeling before a

farmer, asking forgiveness for its lack of common sense. She also says she's never seen a quarter being repentant for being lost in the sofa.

She wonders, then, if the gospel is about repentance, or maybe it's about bargaining. She says there are lots of bargaining stories in the Bible. She says mercy is also included in this lesson. Sometimes, God changes his mind. People don't like to do that! When God changes his mind, mercy is always involved.

All of these themes work together to form another theme: Jesus says, "Rejoice with me!"

Pastor asks us if God can ever lose or misplace anyone. She assures us that the answer is no. It's people who move away from God. Jesus upsets the religious leaders because he welcomes sinners to table fellowship. The lost have value. Jesus tries to change their perspective by asking, "Which one of you...?" Jesus models care and empathy, but the religious leaders couldn't do it.



We may be lost, too. Repentance is our acceptance of being found in Jesus. Because we have been saved, it is our job to search for the lost. We should exhibit public joy that we have been forgiven. Everyone matters. All have gifts. We need to be more concerned about people than stuff. The righteous don't lose anything by Jesus seeking the lost.

The religious leaders of that time couldn't kill the joy, so they killed the joy-bringer. The joy only stopped for three days, so we must let our joy be known.



Melissa is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace and the offering is taken.



The bread and wine are blessed. We are invited to the table where all are welcome. We come forward to commune.



Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional. We go in peace to love and serve our neighbor.



Today is Rally Sunday. For the first time in a long time, we have Sunday School for our children. Marilyn plays for the opening. Even the adults join in.



It is also God's Work, Our Hands Sunday. Chris has organized the making of hygiene kits for Grace is the Key. On Wednesday, we will join them at James Marshall Park to hand out these kits. We will also have socks to give away.



15th Sunday after Pentecost

September 18, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
(209) 523-4531 or www.emanuellutheran.org

Our Mission
To share Christ's unconditional love with everyone.

Our Vision
Emanuel's vision is to be loving, supportive, and welcoming, as we reach out in service and in witness to our neighborhood and the city beyond. We share a passion to nurture people in all stages and circumstances of life. We, as disciples of Christ, minister to our changing community in challenging cultural times.

It is the 15th Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor welcomes us in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. She reminds us that it is Birthday Sunday and that there will be cake during the fellowship time. She also reminds



us that Sunday school begins today for kids and adults.

We confess our sins and are forgiven in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We sing the Kyrie and the Gloria, and we pray together the prayer of the day.



Suzanne is our reader. The first lesson is from Amos. Amos was called by God to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Peace and prosperity in Israel led to corrupt business practices and oppression of the poor. The prophet declares that God will not tolerate such a situation.

The Psalm is 113. It is a psalm of praise to God who helps those in need.



The second lesson is from 1 Timothy. This epistle offers insight into how early Christians understood many practical matters, such as church administration and worship. The church's focused prayer for others is an expression of the single-minded passion God has toward us in Jesus. The word of God is never shackled or confined. Timothy is encouraged to proclaim that word of freedom in an honest and upright life as well as in his teaching and preaching.

Pastor reads from the Gospel of Luke. Jesus's mission includes making people clean again. Unexpectedly, a Samaritan, healed of leprosy, becomes a model for those who would praise and worship God and give thanks for his mercy.

Pastor begins her sermon by telling us that the parable we heard from Luke is about faith, healing, restoration, seeing and response. It is also about geography.

Where Jesus is located is always important. Jesus is on his last journey to Jerusalem. Jesus does not take the safest way. The Samaritans were descendants of the original Israelites. They believed that their holy places and scriptures were the true ones. They believed that the Jews were wrong. Neither Jews nor Samaritans had



anything to do with each other. They weren't even supposed to enter each other's territories or even speak to each other.

Jesus paid no attention to this, but he did put himself and his disciples in danger by entering Samaria. But Jesus never takes the easy way.

Maybe Jesus took the long way because he knew what was going to happen when he got to Jerusalem. Maybe he knew there was opportunity for ministry or maybe to make an impact on his disciples.

Luke may have been more interested in the theological rather than the geographical location.

Pastor says that she believes the leper who returned recognized a new place, a spiritual geography where the veil between natural and spiritual growth is lifted, where the connection between divine and human is more closely felt. This makes for a "mountain-top" moment.



Jesus's parables are all about faith. Faith is a gift, and we need to put it into action. Jesus healed all ten lepers. None were required to have faith. The one who returned is commended for his faith. The other nine were healed because they did what Jesus said. This is how they exhibited their faith, but they missed out on the spiritual connection with Jesus.

We Christians see things differently because of our faith. God always acts first and hopes we respond with praise and thanksgiving. God's gifts depend on his love for us, not on our faith. God provides what we need out of love for us, not because we deserve it. We are like the leper who returned praising God for what he has done. Geography matters, but it is the geography of the heart, not a worldly location.

Pastor indicates that people today tend to look everywhere except the Bible when looking for the answer to a problem. She says that God knows what's in our heart and what's behind our masks.

Today's gospel lesson is about a shrewd manager. She says that shrewd can have many meanings, both positive and negative. Jesus does not commend the dishonest

manager for his cheating. He is praised for his ability to come up with a plan quickly for his survival. It is the decisive thinking that Jesus was commending.

We need to be decisive, too. We need to get serious about God/Jesus now, not wait until a later date. God has already made a decision for us. We only need to accept his mercy and love.



Jesus talks about the problems created by wealth. It is only bad when it comes between us and God. Pastor says that Jesus talks about money almost as many times as the kingdom of God. That's because it's so easy for it to get in the way. We cannot serve (be controlled by) both God and money.

We need to be faithful in small things. The definition of an excellent congregation is one that does well in small things. She mentions distributing our hygiene bags and socks to the people at James Marshall Park. Pastor reminds us that we will probably not do anything really big this coming week, such as the stories we hear about in the news, but we will have many opportunities to do small things. She challenges us to not let them pass us by.

Melissa is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace.



The offering is taken, and we begin the communion liturgy. Pastor blesses the bread and wine and invites everyone to come to the table, for all are welcome.



This is the body and blood of our Savior, broken and shed for us.

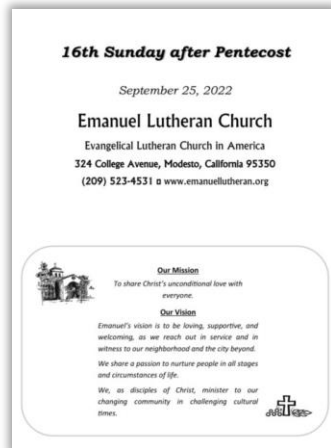
We receive the final blessing and sing the closing hymn.



Suzanne extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional as we sing our closing hymn.



We enjoy a piece of birthday cake before going to our Sunday school class.



It is the 16th Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor greets everyone with a warm welcome. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. We are forgiven and made whole.



We sing the Kyrie and the Gloria and pray the prayer of the day together.

Pat is the reader. The first lesson is from Amos. The prophet announces that Israel's great wealth is a cause not for rejoicing but rather sorrow because God's people have forgotten how to share their wealth with the poor. The wealthy will be the first to go into exile when judgment comes.

Psalm 146 rejoices because God gives justice to the oppressed, food to the hungry, opens the eyes of the blind and lifts up those who are bowed down.



The second reading is from 1 Timothy. Timothy is reminded of the confession he made at his baptism and of its implications for daily life. His priorities will be different from those of people who merely want to be rich.

Pastor reads the from the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus tells a parable in which the poor one is "lifted up" and the rich one is "sent away empty." Jesus makes it clear that this ethic of merciful reversal is not new but is as old as Moses and the prophets.

Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that we are getting close to the end of the church year. We will only have nine more weeks for the Gospel of Luke. Today's gospel deals with wealth, remembering and neighborliness.



In Luke, Jesus tells a series of parables. Today's parable begins, "There was a rich man..." Jesus is addressing anyone who is in love with money. Wealth was often equated with virtue. Jesus challenges this idea. Pastor notes that the poor man, Lazarus, has a name. The rich man does not. Lazarus sits at the rich man's gate or door. The custom was to help someone in need. Lazarus would have been happy with the dog's scraps.

When Lazarus dies, he goes to heaven; the rich man goes to hades or hell. The rich man asks Abraham for help, but Abraham indicates that he got his rewards on earth.

Pastor reminds us that God and the church are not the same thing. The church has caused great harm. Remembering can be a problem for those done with church and for those who think they have lots of time. Faith has to be action.



This passage is meant to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. We have the opportunity to put our faith into action. Pastor challenges us to do that this week.

Kathleen is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession.



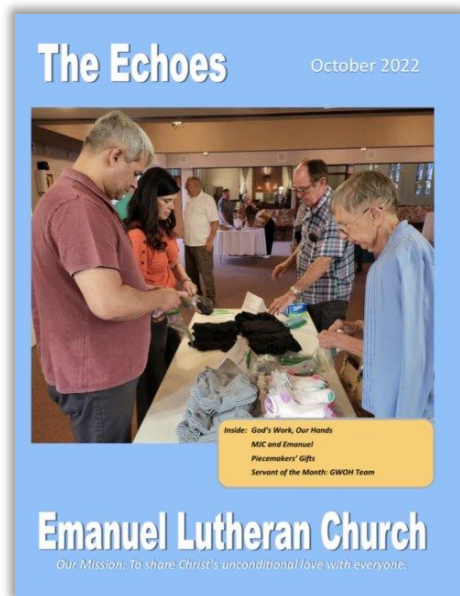
We pass the peace and the offering is taken.



Pastor blesses the bread and wine so that we may commune. Everyone is invited to partake.



We receive the final blessing and go in peace to love and serve our neighbor.



October

The October Echoes features a group assembling socks and hygiene bags for God's Work, Our Hands. Those bags were distributed at James Marshall Park.

The Servant of the Month is all the people who went out to James Marshall Park.

Another article this month is about the quilt the Piecemakers made for Bill Reinheimer.



17th Sunday after Pentecost


October 2, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org

Our Mission
 To share Christ's unconditional love with everyone.

Our Vision
 Emanuel's vision is to be loving, supportive, and welcoming, as we reach out in service and in witness to our neighborhood and the city beyond. We share a passion to nurture people in all stages and circumstances of life.

We, as disciples of Christ, minister to our changing community in challenging cultural times.



It is October 2, the 17th Sunday after Pentecost. It is also Food for Faith Sunday. Jeri, Yvonne and Chris are three of many who participate in this ministry.



FOOD
for FAITH

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

Help families through InterFaith Ministries.

Emanuel Lutheran Church

Pastor welcomes everyone warmly. She invites Paula to come forward for a Temple Talk. Paula tells about a new ministry that the Task Force has decided on. We are planning to start a day care for the elderly. The Task Force has researched what is most needed in Modesto, and they have decided that this is



an important way to serve our community. We are asked to fill out a form if we are interested in helping.



We begin by singing the opening hymn and confessing our sins.

Melissa is the reader this morning. The first lesson is from Habakkuk. Injustice and violence in the time leading up to the Babylonian exile move this prophet to lament: How can a good and all-powerful God see evil in the world and seemingly remain indifferent? God answers by proclaiming that the righteous will live by faith.



We read Psalm 37 responsively. In this psalm, we are assured that evildoers will wither like grass, and the righteous will receive justice.

The second lesson is from 2 Timothy. This letter is written to Timothy as a personal message of encouragement. Timothy is reminded that his faith is a gift of God. He is encouraged to exercise that faith with the help of the Holy Spirit.



Pastor reads the from the Gospel according to Luke. On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus instructs his followers about the power of faith and the duties of discipleship. He calls his disciples to adopt the attitude of servants whose actions are responses to their identity rather than works seeking reward.

She begins her sermon by saying that she is a fan of deep topics, such as “mountain-moving” prayer. This is a deliberate discipline, one that changes the pray-er. Mustard seed faith can move mountains.

Our challenge is to put our faith into action. Pastor tells us that small things can make a difference. Mother Teresa had a ministry of small acts. “Be faithful in small things. In that, your strength lies.”

The whole book of Habakkuk is a conversation with God. Habakkuk is angry with God. He’s sick of what’s happening, and believes it’s time for God to do something. God listens to Habakkuk.



Pastor says that being angry with what’s happening is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of faith is fear. Paul reminds Timothy to rekindle is faith. He tells him to do his best and not let fear overtake him.

We are to trust in the Lord, delight in the Lord, commit ourselves to acting and be still and be quiet. We may need to call out bad behavior, but we must forgive when there is repentance.

Forgiving is the difficult part.

Faith is a gift. It does not depend on our strength. Worrying about something is to worship it. Pastor hopes that we pray that we can use our today faith and increase our tomorrow faith.



Suzanne is the assisting minister this morning. She leads us in the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of intercession.

We share the peace and the offering is taken.






Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune.



Then we receive the final blessing and go forth to serve and love our neighbor.


18th Sunday after Pentecost
 October 9, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org



Our Mission
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Our Vision
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It is October 9, the 18th Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor welcomes everyone and reminds us that there are a number of flyers in the bulletin that are important. She encourages us to look at them carefully.

We confess our sins and receive forgiveness. We sing the Kyrie and Gloria. Then we pray the prayer of the day.

Suzanne is the reader this morning. The first lesson is from 2 Kings. Naaman, a Syrian general, suffers from leprosy in this passage. Elisha miraculously cures his illness, but only after Naaman realizes, with the help of his servant, that he also needs healing for his pride. The foreign general then acknowledges the sovereignty of the God of Israel.



Psalm 111 praises God for his splendor and majesty and for all that he does for his people.

The second lesson is from 2 Timothy. Though Paul is chained as a prisoner, the word of God is never shackled or confined. Timothy is encouraged to proclaim that word of freedom in an honest and upright life as well as in his teaching and preaching.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus's mission includes making people clean again. Unexpectedly, a Samaritan healed of leprosy becomes a model for those who would praise and worship God and give thanks for God's mercy.

Pastor begins her sermon by saying that today's parable includes faith, healing, restoration, seeing, response and geography. Where Jesus is located is always important. Jesus is on his last trip to Jerusalem.

Jesus does not take the safest way.

Samaritans were descendants of the original Israelites. They felt that their holy places and scriptures were the true ones and that the Jews were wrong. Neither Jews or Samaritans had anything to do with each other. They weren't even supposed to enter the other's territory or speak to one another. Jesus paid no attention to this, but he did put himself and his disciples in danger. But Jesus never takes the easy way.

Maybe Jesus took the long way because he knew what was going to happen in Jerusalem. Maybe he knew there was opportunity for ministry, or maybe he wanted to make an impact on his disciples. Luke may have been more interested in the theological than the physical location.

The leper who returned recognized a new place: a spiritual geography where the veil between natural and spiritual growth is lifted, where the connection between divine and human is more closely felt. This makes a “mountain-top” moment.

Jesus’s parables are all about faith. Faith is a gift and we need to put it into action. Jesus healed all ten lepers. None were required to have faith. The one who returned was commended for his faith. The other nine were healed because they did what Jesus said. This is how they exhibited their faith. But they missed out on the spiritual connection with Jesus.



Christians see things differently because of our faith. God always acts first and hopes we respond with praise and thanksgiving. God’s gifts depend on his love for us, not on our faith. God provides what we need out of love for us, not because we deserve it.

We are like the leper who returned praising God for what he has done. Geography matters – but it is the geography of the heart, not a worldly location.



Barbara, the assisting minister, leads us in the confession of our faith in the words of the Apostle’s Creed and the prayers of intercession.

We pass the peace and the offering is taken.



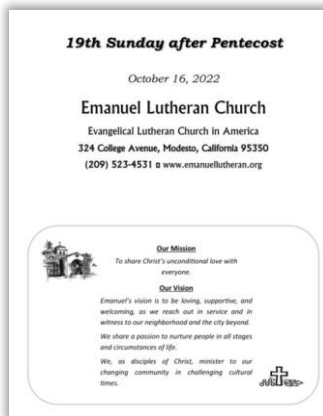
Then we begin the great thanksgiving. Pastor blesses the bread and wine.



This is the body and blood of our Savior broken and shed for us. We commune and receive the final blessing.



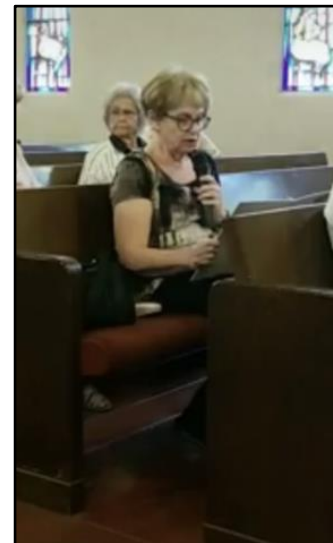
Dan leads the recessional as we sing the closing hymn. We join in fellowship and Sunday school classes.



It is Sunday, October 16. Pastor greets us and welcomes everyone to the service. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sin. We are assured of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. We sing the Kyrie and Gloria and pray the prayer of the day.

Lois reads the lessons for today. The first lesson is from Genesis. Returning to the home he had fled many years before after stealing his brother's birthright and his father's blessing, Jacob wrestles all night long with a divine adversary who ultimately blesses him and changes his name to "Israel," a name that means "he wrestles with God."

We read Psalm 121 responsively. It speaks of the steadfastness of God in caring and protecting his people.



The second reading is from 2 Timothy. The writer of this letter continues his instruction of Timothy, his younger colleague in ministry, by emphasizing the importance of faithful teaching despite opposition.

Pastor read the Gospel according to Luke. Jesus tells a parable of an unjust judge who is worn down by a widow's pleas. Jesus is calling God's people to cry out for justice and deliverance. For if an unethical judge will ultimately grant the plea of a persistent widow, how much more will God respond to those who call.



Pastor begins her sermon by speaking of the importance of persistent prayer. She also reminds us that the theme of the Stewardship drive this year is "Mustard Seed Faith." Prayer and faith go hand in hand. They are necessary for everything, including the financial aspect.

Pastor tells us that we need to take our requests to God persistently. Sometimes prayer seems to go unanswered, and sometimes the answer is not what we expected. Jesus encourages us to pray in order to grow in our relationship with God. Luke places a greater emphasis on prayer than the other gospel writers.

Pastor tells us that Jacob was born persistent. He grabbed Esau's heel at birth. He grabbed Esau's blessing. He, himself, was deceived by Laban who switched brides on him at the wedding. Finally, Jacob wrestles with a divine being. He was grabbed by this being. Jacob really wasn't a super hero.



Sometimes, we are good at talking to God, but we are not good at listening. Jacob is changed for life by this incident. He is forced to admit his deception. He lied to his father, but spoke the truth to God.

God wants us to choose dependence on him rather than self-reliance. God can turn us into mustard seed people. The widow became persistent after years of weakness. God grants justice to those strong in faith. Lack of faith is often a sign of prosperity. Faith in action is important. Pastor challenges

us to pray every day for the people on our prayer list.

Dan is the assisting minister. He leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace and the offering is taken.



Pastor blesses the bread and the wine. We receive the body and blood.

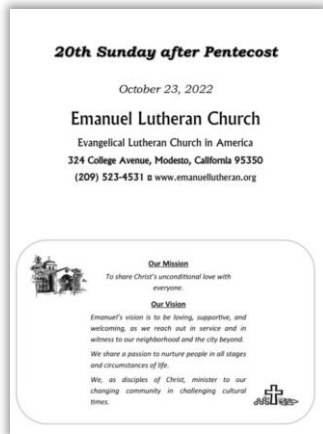


It is birthday Sunday. Pastor asks all those with an October birthday to stand. We read together the birthday blessing prayer.

Then she blesses the quilts that the Piecemakers have made. These will be for sale at the Oktoberfest next Sunday.



We sing the closing hymn and go out to fellowship and have a piece of birthday cake.



It is October 23, the 20th Sunday after Pentecost. Pastor greets us warmly and welcomes visitors. She reminds us that the Oktoberfest will be after church and invites everyone to stay and enjoy the festivities. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. We are assured of forgiveness. We sing the Kyrie



and Gloria and pray together the prayer of the day.



Barbara is the reader today. The first lesson from the book of Sirach. The author of this wisdom book urges readers to give generously to God. The author also asserts that God is a just judge who does not show partiality but listens to the prayers of those who are oppressed and poor

We read Psalm 84 responsively. The psalmist speaks of the joy of being in God's house.

The second reading is from 2 Timothy. The conclusion of this letter to a young minister offers a final perspective on life from one who faces death. Though others let him down, Paul was sure of his faith in the Lord, who stood by him and lent him strength.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. In this familiar passage Jesus tells the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Jesus indicates that those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Pastor begins her sermon with an Oktoberfest parable. A rabbi was at the point of death. His congregation gathered around him to pray, but one of the members of his congregation went to the tavern to drink. He prayed, "Please, God, give the rabbi good health so I can have my schnapps." This prayer was answered because it was from his heart and soul. Pastor tells us that today we will get to have fun and fellowship, and we will be blessed.



Today's gospel lesson was about arrogant prayer. Prayer is faith in action. Inclusion is important. Jesus often flipped roles. The Pharisee is an overachiever for the law, but he is spiritually lazy. He is thankful for not being bad. On the other hand, the tax collector is a social pariah. He is the ultimate bad guy. He prayed humbly, asking for mercy, which is an act of God. He doesn't say "please" or "thank you." He goes home knowing he is forgiven.

Pastor quotes Jonathan Swift: We have enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another. She reminds us that we need to pray and to serve.



Dan is the assisting minister today. He leads us in the Apostle's Creed and prays the prayers of intercession. We share the peace, and the offering is taken.

We begin the great thanksgiving, and Pastor blesses the bread and the wine. Then we commune.



Pastor invites all of the Sunday school teachers to come forward for installation. She indicates that she is very happy that we have begun to have Sunday school again. Chris is the Sunday school director and the Council member in charge of the Spiritual Life ministry.





Chris extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional as we sing the closing hymn. We enjoy fellowship before Sunday school classes begin.



The Oktoberfest begins at noon. There is a raffle table, games to play, activities for children, music, and, of course, a delicious lunch of sausage, potato salad, coleslaw, beer and wine, and an apple pastry for dessert.





Martin Luther attend. We meet new friends. We win goodies at the raffle.



S

Reformation Sunday

October 30, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emmanuelutheran.org

Our Mission
 To share Christ's unconditional love with everyone.

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It is October 30, Reformation Sunday. The church is beautiful in red. The congregation is also wearing red in honor of the festival day.

The new banners are given by Chris, her brother Bruce and sister Jane, in honor of their parents, Hermit and Wanda.

Chris is the Council member giving the Temple Talk this morning



Pastor greets us and wishes us a happy Reformation Day. She reminds us that Bishop Claire will be here on Saturday to meet with our Conference. She encourages us to come.



Then she asks Council President Dennis to make an announcement. Dennis informs us that a leak in the water pipes under the church has been discovered. We will be working to fix this situation.

We continue with singing “A Mighty Fortress Is our God.” This is followed with the confession of sins and the singing of the liturgy.

Matthew reads the first lesson. It is from Jeremiah. This passage tells us that the renewed covenant will not be breakable, but like the old covenant, it will expect the people to live upright lives. To know the Lord means that one will defend the cause of the poor and needy. The renewed covenant is possible only because the Lord will forgive iniquity and not remember sin. Our hope lies in a God who forgets.



Lois reads Psalm 46 responsively with the congregation. This psalm assures us that God is strong enough to bring us through any problem.

Lois also reads the second lesson, a passage from Romans. Paul’s words stand at the heart of the preaching of Martin Luther and other Reformation leaders. No human beings make themselves right with God through works of the law. 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 and empowers our faith in Jesus Christ.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. 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 her sermon by reminding us that this is Reformation Sunday which commemorates the day Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Chapel in 1517. She says that Luther was in the right place at the right time. The invention of the printing press by Gutenberg changed times forever. The church has been in a constant state of reform. The accountability for the church is to be truthful. We are called to be a part of this reformation.

Truth-telling is a value trait. Pastor says that we often justify whatever truth that is convenient.

God's grace is freely given. Our choice is to accept it or not. Indulgences became a problem for Luther. They kept the church coffers full, but Luther didn't believe you could pay to be free from sin and get to heaven.



Jesus said we are never free from sin. Only a relationship with him brings forgiveness. Pastor says when we pray, we need a "pause" button: Our Father, (pause). Jesus will bring us into the presence of the Father. Jesus connects with us through everything. God will always put us back together, help us to make the right choices. Being "free" helps us turn away from self-centeredness. Jesus has taken on the burden of our

bad choices and paid the price.

Reformation living involves a connection to the truth. We are challenged each day by "mountain" problems, but we are called to move mountains. Our challenge: pray to move mountains.

The service continues with the singing of the hymn of the day. Melissa is the assisting minister, and she leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace.

The choir sings while the offering is taken. Then we continue with the great thanksgiving.



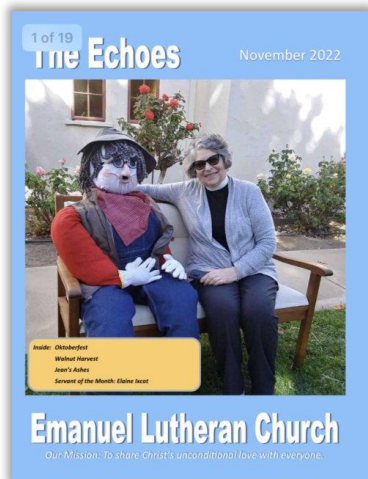


Pastor speaks the words of institution: On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread, blessed it and said it was his body. Then he took the cup, blessed it and said it was his blood. We eat and drink for the forgiveness of sins.

The service ends with the blessing and the singing of the sending hymn. We are told to go in peace to love and serve our neighbor.



Some of the ladies wore their red hats today.



November

It is November. The Echoes remembers the events of the last month.

The Servant of is Elaine, our Council member in charge of Outreach. Here she is modeling the coat she won in the Oktoberfest raffle.

There is also a report on the walnut harvesting out at Kristine's.



Chris also submitted a story about distributing Jean's ashes in the cemetery.



On Saturday, November 5, Conference 8 meets at Emanuel. Interim Bishop Claire Burkat and Vice President Simon Wong are present.

Pastor Sylvia from Turlock gives the message.



There is a good turnout. The lay members meet with the bishop and vice president while the pastors have their own meeting. After lunch, the bishop meets with the pastors, and the lay members do an activity to help us become better acquainted.



Pastor Lyn and the Conference Dean, Pastor Mark from Lodi. A delicious is served



All Saints Sunday


November 6, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org

Our Mission
 To share Christ's unconditional love with everyone.

Our Vision
 Emanuel's vision is to be loving, supportive, and welcoming, as we reach out in service and in witness to our neighborhood and the city beyond. We share a passion to nurture people in all stages and circumstances of life.

We, as disciples of Christ, minister to our changing community in challenging cultural times.



It is November 6, All Saints Sunday. We remember today those of our loved ones that we lost this past year. It is also Food for Faith Sunday. Rue and Suzanne put their donation in Lisa's car.





The white paraments are used for this festival Sunday. Pastor welcomes everyone to the service.



Lois reads the scripture lessons. The first lesson is from Daniel. This book was written in the second century BCE, when the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes was severely persecuting the Jews. Daniel's vision of the four beasts proclaims that human kings will come and go, but the kingdom will ultimately belong to God and to God's people.



We read Psalm 149 responsively. This psalm is a song of praise and a call for help when persecuted.

The second lesson is a reading from Ephesians. After giving thanks for the faith of the Ephesians, the writer of this letter prays that they might understand the wisdom, hope, and power of God that is embodied in Jesus Christ.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. In echoes of the prophet Isaiah and Mary's song of praise, Jesus reveals surprising things about who enjoys blessing and who endures woe. He invites his disciples to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders.

Pastor begins her sermon by asking us if we dream and do we remember what we have dreamed. She says that sometimes dreams are wacky. She says memories tend to pop up in our dreams.



She asks us why we came to church today: Are we anxious or worried? Did we come to remember someone who died this last year? Do we just like to come to church?

Daniel is the only apocalyptic book in the Old Testament. Chapters 1 – 6 are history. Chapters 7 – 12 talk about the future. (Evil doesn't get the last word.) In Daniel's world, dreams were important messages. The "sea" in this passage represents chaos. The four beasts that arise are four world empires that are evil. Brutal reigns rise and fall. God will eventually get the last word. In the kingdom of God, the comfortable are expected to help the uncomfortable.



After a night of prayer, Jesus is confronted by a crowd. The ordinary people need help in the form of healing. The disciples need to learn from Jesus. The apostles, those who will be sent, need strength.

Jesus meets us where we are – no rules or regulations. He focuses on what we need. We listen and come to church to get what we need to get through the next week. Jesus takes on our burdens, so that we can take on the burdens of others.

Our challenge for the week: Pray for our community. Pastor tells us to remember our history and focus on the future.

Kathleen is the assisting minister. She leads us in confessing our faith with the words of the Apostle's Creed. She also prays the prayers of intercession.



At this time, Pastor prays for those who have passed on. We are invited to light a candle for a loved one when we come up to commune.



We share the peace, and the offering is taken. Then Pastor begins the communion liturgy. She blesses the bread and wine.

We come forward to receive the body and blood of our Savior and to light a candle for someone we have lost this past year. So many dear ones are remembered this year



We receive the final blessing, sing the closing hymn and go out to be blessing to the world.




Mustard Seed Faith Stewardship 2023
WELCA Thankoffering Sunday
 November 13, 2022
Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org

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It is November 13, and it has been designated as Mustard Seed Faith Sunday. It is also WELCA Sunday. Pastor greets us warmly. We sing the opening hymn and confess our sins. This is followed with the singing of the Kyrie and the Gloria.



Chris reads the lessons for today. The first passage is from Malachi. These verses describe the people's arrogant attitude toward God. When they ask 'what good does it do to serve God?' they are really asking 'what good does it do for me?' We serve God because God is God and deserves to be served. God treasures the faithful, fulfilling



the promise God made in Exodus 19:5. "Now, therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine."

We read Psalm 98 responsively. It is a song of praise, calling on everyone to sing with joy and to play music to honor God.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew. The disciples had been given the authority to heal, but they had not yet learned how to appropriate the power of God. They began relying on their own abilities rather than God's. The disciples' attitude reflected the attitude of an unbelieving and unresponsive generation. Jesus wanted the crowd and the disciples to understand that even a small amount of faith can move mountains.



In place of the sermon today, several of the Council members share what it means to them to have Mustard Seed Faith.



Pat: She looked at a mustard seed and wished she had that much faith. You can't have too much faith. It is her goal to continue to work on increasing her faith.

Elaine: Even a small amount of faith is important. It's easy to say you have faith, but it can be a slow process to have faith in that which you cannot see. Sometimes, we take it for granted, sort of like a big toe, very important but rarely thought about. Her faith has grown through prayers and conversation with Jesus.



Sometimes prayers are answered in a way that is unexpected. Morning prayer starts her day.



Dennis: Mustard Seed Faith was working with the pipe workers. They prayed with us before starting to work. "Praise the Lord!" was the response to fixing the pipes.

Chris: Her family has been part of Emanuel for 62 years. She started coming again when her mom got sick. When her mom died, she wondered if she would stay. The she joined the Outreach Ministry and Bible study. He faith began to grow. She became more involved because of this.



Brett: He bought an electric car eight years ago on faith. It had an 80-mile range. He had to drive to home. He stopped to charge it in Pleasanton. He left at 10:00 P.M to drive the Altamont. He made it home and still has the car.

Bob: He always asks God to help him choose the right path. He always does.

Pastor: Jesus knew the disciples had faith. Mountains can be anything. Jesus will help us move the mountains. We only need trust in him.





Suzanne is the assisting minister this morning. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We pass the peace and the offering is taken. This morning the women of WELCA bring forth their special Thankofferings.

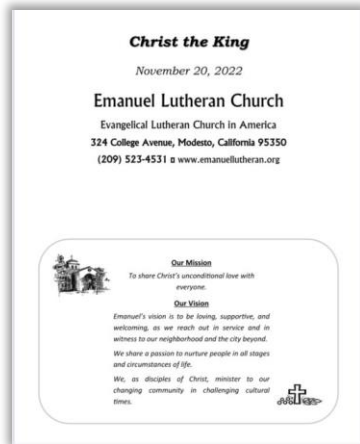


We begin the communion liturgy. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we come forward.



We receive the final blessing and go out to be a blessing.





It is November 20, Christ the King Sunday, and the last Sunday of the church year. It is also birthday Sunday. Pastor greets us warmly and welcomes newcomers. We confess our sins and sing the Kyrie and the Gloria.



Suzanne is our reader today. The first lesson is from Jeremiah. This passage builds on the common, ancient Near Eastern metaphor of the king as shepherd. Judah's unjust rules have caused their people, their "flock," to be scattered. Nevertheless, God will raise up a new and righteous shepherd who will rule a restored Judah.

Psalm 46 is read responsively. According to this psalm no matter what troubles arise, our God is with us, a refuge and strength.

The second lesson is from Colossians. This passage praises the mystery of the political, personal, and mystical Christ, the one who was present at creation and is eternally reigning with God.

Pastor reads the gospel from Luke. Amid scoffing and slander from those who sarcastically call him Messiah and king, Jesus reveals that to be Messiah and king is to give one's life for others. Here he uses his power to welcome a despised sinner to paradise but puts his own death into God's hands.

Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that it is Christ the King Sunday. She indicates the paradox of the great cruelty and love of the cross. There is both human and divine reality: life and death. Chaos and suffering compared to the safety of God is the theme of the readings this morning.



Today is about remembering. Shared memories are a powerful thing. We remember Jesus's words of forgiveness from the cross. An unexpected act of faith – the criminal asked to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingdom. He recognized something beyond that place. It takes a lot of faith to expect to be saved when one is unworthy.

Jesus holds all the power. We do not need to fear. We can have faith in the midst of chaos. God turns chaos into calmness. We are in the wilderness and paradise at the same time. God is always with us.

Avoidance tactics are common and easy, but they don't work. God is found in the noise. Pastor says she never minds noisy children.



God's promises are fulfilled in us. We are not expected to fix anything. God does that. We belong to the King, and he belongs to us.



Melissa is the assisting minister. She leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace and the offering is taken while the choir sings.



We then begin the communion liturgy. Pastor blesses the bread and wine.



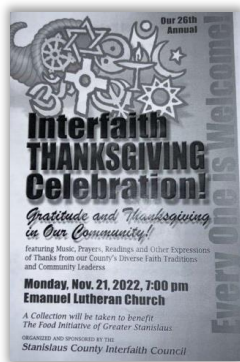


We receive the body and blood of our Savior.

Pastor asks those who celebrate their birthday in November to stand, and we pray together the birthday blessing. Pastor gives the final blessing, and we sing the closing hymn.



We enjoy birthday cake during fellowship time.



On Monday, November 21, Emanuel hosts the Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration in Luther Hall. There are a number of community speakers representing various religions and other areas of interest. One that is of special interest for us is Kayla Kindley. He begins his presentation by saying he had been fed many times in this very room at Katie's Kitchen when he was homeless and attending MJC. He speaks of how much this ministry meant to

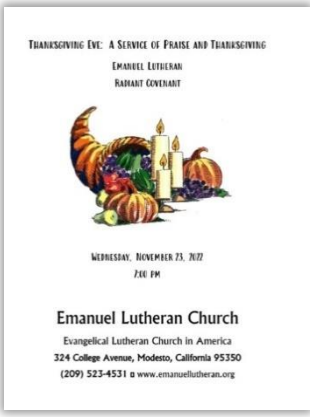
him. It was often the only meal for that day. He says how wonderful it was that we provided take-away boxes, so that leftovers could be eaten later in the day. He is an artist and doing very well now, having graduated from college. He donates two of his paintings and gives a third one to Pastor Lyn. Rue, Jeri and Suzanne approach him after the program ended, telling him that



they were some of the cooks. He says he had seen them in the audience and wanted to blow them kisses.



Also of interest is Terence's presentation. Pastor Lyn gives the benediction.



On Wednesday, November 23, we have a joint Thanksgiving Eve Service with Radiant Covenant. Pastor Lyn leads the Litany of Thanksgiving. Pastor Zach gives the homily based on Psalm 100. There is an opportunity for the congregation to share what they are thankful for. Pastor Lyn closes us in prayer and says the final blessing. We go into Luther Hall for pie and fellowship.




First Sunday of Advent
November 27, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
(209) 523-4531 or www.emmanuelutheran.org

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It is November 27, the first Sunday of Advent. The altar is adorned with the blue paraments. The theme for this year is "Prepare the way." This is why there is a path to the manger. Pastor greets us and makes the announcements. She invites Matthew to come forward. He reads an explanation about the Hope candle and a scripture from Psalms, says a prayer and lights the first candle. We sing "Prepare the Royal Highway."



We confess our sins, sing the Kyrie, and pray the prayer of the day.

Kathleen is the reader for today. The first lesson is from Isaiah. The visionary message presented in this reading focuses on a future day when God establishes a universal reign of peace. Divine decisions will make war obsolete, and the worshipping community responds: "Let us walk in the light of that, Lord, now!"



We read Psalm 122 responsively. This passage speaks of joy at being able to worship God.

The second reading is from Romans. Paul compares the advent of Christ to the coming of dawn. We live our lives today in light of Christ's coming in the future.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew. Jesus describes his second coming as a sudden, turbulent event that will bring about deep change to our normal, day-to-day lives. Therefore, he urges people to stay awake, be aware, and wait expectantly, because the Son of Man will come unannounced.



Pastor begins her sermon by observing that in today's culture, Christmas is all year long. She says that today's gospel lesson is about missing the "big event."

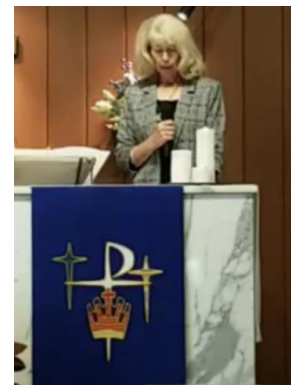


Christmas prep is during Advent. Pastor asks, "Who or what is most important to you?" She wonders if we are prepared for Christ's return. She reminds us that this year's theme is "Prepare the way." Time is circular. We begin with the end. Through Jesus, God's reign is already here. Both saved and unsaved are within the church. Jesus is always coming, no second coming because he comes daily.

Jesus's humanity is not compromised by his divinity. He was fully human and fully divine. We need to live knowing Christ will come again.

Our challenge: Who/what is most important? We can't focus on the busyness of living. Jesus wants us to go along with him whenever he chooses. Love and preparedness go together. Love God and neighbor. Love wins in the end. We have a new chance to love better.

Barbara is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers.





We share the peace, and the offering is taken. Then we begin the communion liturgy. Pastor consecrates the bread and wine. Then we commune.



We receive the final blessing, and Dan leads the recessional while we sing the closing hymn.




December

It is December and the Echoes features those ladies who took wearing red for Reformation Sunday to a whole new level. The articles remind us of the events of the past month.

Our Servant of the Month is Dennis. He currently serves as head of the Property Committee. He works very hard to see that our campus is beautiful and well maintained.



December 3, is our Cookie Exchange event. The hostesses for this activity are the ladies of Lydia Circle. Everyone brings cookies to share. We enjoy eating them and singing Christmas carols.

Second Sunday of Advent
 December 4, 2022
Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 • www.emanuelutheran.org

It is December 4, the second Sunday of Advent. It is also Food for Faith Sunday. Lisa and Silvia do their part to help.



Pastor greets us and makes several announcements. She tells us that we will begin today with the lighting of the second candle, the peace candle. This will be followed with the baptism of Autumn and Savannah.



Rebeca reads an explanation of the Peace candle, a scripture passage, a prayer and then she lights two candles.

We are then instructed to turn toward the font at the back of the sanctuary.

Mom Krista and Dad Roy present Autumn and Savannah for baptism.



Pastor puts the holy water on their foreheads and baptizes them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.



Kathleen lights their baptismal candles to remind them to let their light so shine that God's glory is revealed. Pastor tells them that they can light these candles each year to celebrate their baptism.



The service continues with the scripture lessons. Marsha is the reader this morning. The first lesson is from Isaiah. Isaiah describes the coming of a future, ideal ruler, who will renew David's royal line (the stump of Jesse). Gifted by the spirit of God, this ruler will reign with perfect justice. Enmity and danger will be restored to harmony and peaceful coexistence.

We read Psalm 72 responsively. This passage speaks of a king who will rule the people with justice and peace will be in abundance.

The second lesson is from Romans. God's promise to include Gentiles within the circle of God's blessed people has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christians live out their unity by welcoming and encouraging each other just as Christ welcomed them into God's family.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew. Just before Jesus begins his public ministry, John the Baptist appears, calling people to mend their ways and speaking of a powerful one who is to come.

Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that the liturgical church doesn't "do Christmas" until December 24. "Preparing the Way" is the theme for this year. John the Baptist is the focus for today and next week. He prepared the way for Jesus.



Pastor tells us that while "repent" is not a popular topic, it really means to change your ways. She says that we should end each day with repentance.

Christianity means that God is turning to us. Repentance is not something we can do by ourselves. We need God. It means to change the way we live and accept God's will.

Today's candle is the Peace candle. Peace means a total well-being with God, people and creation, even peace among creatures.

People kept coming back to John for baptism. They weren't really serious about repenting. In baptism, we are washed on the inside. Like the wind blows away the chaff from the wheat, the Holy Spirit blows away the bad stuff in us. We grow in faith through commitment to Jesus.



How we live and bear fruit is what's important. We do good things for the right reason. Pastor challenges us to "bear good fruit!"



Kathleen is the assisting minister. She leads us in the confession of our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed. She also prays the prayers of intercession. We pass the peace, and the offering is taken while the choir sings.



We begin the communion liturgy. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune.






We receive the final blessing. Chris leads the recessional as we sing the closing hymn.



There is a special dessert for Autumn and Savannah and their brother and sister.

Third Sunday of Advent
 December 11, 2022

Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org



It is December 11, the third Sunday of Advent. Pastor greets us and welcomes everyone to worship.



Matthew reads an explanation of the third candle, the Joy candle. He reads the scripture passage and says the prayer. Then he lights three candles.



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

The reader for today is Pat. The first lesson is from Isaiah. The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.



We read Psalm 146 responsively. This psalm declares that those whose hope is in God are happy. God cares for all his people.

The second lesson is from James. In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate perseverance rather than restlessness.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew. John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth. From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus's response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

Pastor begins her sermon by reminding us that today's theme is joy. We are half way through Advent. Jesus's words and deeds form the foundation of Christian joy. Every Sunday is "Joy" Sunday. Today's scriptures are filled with joy.



Where do we find joy? John the Baptist expected the coming of the Messiah to bring an end to Roman rule and to bring justice to the world. This would bring joy to him.

Jesus remembers that John is in prison. John asks questions. Are you the one? So far nothing had been done. Rome was still in charge. Possibly John was disappointed. But there's no hypocrisy between Jesus's words and deeds.

Sometimes we Lutherans are uncomfortable expressing our beliefs. Following Jesus is not always easy. Questions and doubts are not bad. They can lead to change. This can lead to joy.

Seekers should find joy by seeing and hearing and in our words and deeds. Our mission this week is to spread joy through our words and deeds.



Melissa is the assisting minister this morning. She leads us in confessing our faith in the words of the Apostle's Creed. She also prays the prayers of intercession. We pass the peace, and the offering is taken.






Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune.



We leave in peace because God is near. We enjoy the goodies provided by the ladies of Rebecca Circle.



Fourth Sunday of Advent
 December 18, 2022
 Emanuel Lutheran Church
 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
 (209) 523-4531 • www.emmanuelutheran.org

It is December 18, the fourth Sunday of Advent. As usual, Pastor greets us, welcoming all to worship. She makes several announcements. Then she invites Rebeca up for the lighting of the fourth candle.





Rebeca reads an explanation of the fourth candle, the Love candle, the scripture lesson and the prayer. Then she lights all four candles.

We confess our sins and receive forgiveness. Melissa is the reader for today. The first lesson is from Isaiah. An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God with us!

We read Psalm 80 responsively. This psalm pleads for God to come to the rescue of Israel.

The second lesson is from Romans. Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening, he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.



Pastor reads the Gospel according to Matthew. Matthew's story of Jesus's birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

Pastor begins her sermon by saying that Joseph didn't get as much attention as Mary, but that is normal for the mom and baby to be the focus. Pastor feels that Joseph was an extraordinary man.

She says that men who adopt a child and raise it as their own are extraordinary. Joseph experienced all the joy and frustrations of raising a child.

Matthew's story does not give a lot of details about Joseph, but it does establish an ancestry for Jesus. Matthew was writing primarily for a Jewish audience. However, there are several Gentiles in the genealogy that Matthew includes. This shows that God intended Jesus to be for all people.

The people listed in the ancestry were not perfect people. And they were a diverse group. Jesus can take the worst of the worst and make something new.

Joseph listened to the angel. He had a choice, but he decided to follow through and marry Mary. He decided to trust God. He gave the baby the name that the angel told him: Jesus, which means God saves. The name describes what he will do. By naming him, he became his legal father.



God knows our names. We belong to him. God desires for us to have a relationship with him. Pastor says she believes it would make a tremendous difference in our world if we could convince everyone that Jesus loves them. God is love. It's impossible for someone to declare they don't believe in God and love someone or something, even if it's just coffee.

Pastor reminds us that love had the first word at creation, and love will have the last word. It's up to us to tell people that God loves us just as we are. God's love has the power to change lives forever.



Kathleen is the assisting minister. She leads us in the confession of our faith and the prayers of intercession.

We share the peace, and the offering is taken. We begin the communion liturgy.

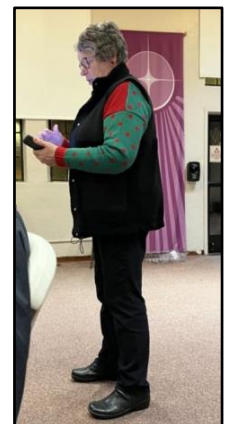
Pastor blesses the bread and wine, so that we may commune.



It is birthday Sunday. Pastor asks all who celebrate their birthday in December to stand. She confesses that her birthday was yesterday. We pray the special birthday blessing and then receive the final blessing. We go out to enjoy fellowship and birthday cake.



Throughout Advent, we have met every Wednesday for a soup supper and short service. These have been joyous times.



After Sunday school, the text study group take Pastor out to lunch to celebrate her birthday. They have all donated toward a gift card for the Gallo Performing Arts Center.



Happy Birthday, Pastor!



**Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service**

December 24, 2022
7:00 pm

Emanuel Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
324 College Avenue, Modesto, California 95350
(209) 523-4531 | www.emanuellutheran.org

It is December 24, Christmas Eve. We gather at 7:00 for the traditional candlelight service. The chancel is resplendent with poinsettias. The baby is in the manger. The wreaths on the walls have lights.





Dan lights the Christ candle. Pastor greets us and wishes us a Merry Christmas. We confess our sins and are forgiven.

Matthew and Rebeca are the readers this evening. The first lesson is from Isaiah. This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!



We read Psalm 96 responsively. This psalm instructs us to sing to God for all that he has done.

The second lesson is from Titus. The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present, we live wisely and justly while also anticipation the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. 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 up for a talk about angels. She says they might be kind of scary, but they always say, "Don't be afraid." She tells them that this is the message for tonight. We don't have to be afraid of anything.

Pastor begins her sermon by saying that there were lots of angels gathered around the manger in addition to Mary, Joseph, Jesus and the shepherds. We should treasure the holiness of this night.

We are drawn to the stable outside of Bethlehem. We are also drawn to the church to hear the story. Pastor tells us that tonight is more than candles and music. We should come to see Jesus who was born just for us. God knows what it's like to experience the same things we do.



Angels almost always say, "Don't be afraid." They understood when something extraordinary happens, it's scary. Gabriel greeted Mary that way. She was afraid, but she only questioned how it was possible. She trusted God. Joseph trusted God, too.

The shepherds were told not to be afraid. They weren't important, just ordinary people. Jesus was born for each of us. Love was born in that stable. God loves us just the way we are. God does not condemn the world but saves it.



Dan is the assisting minister. He leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of intercession. We share the peace, and the choir sings while the offering is taken.

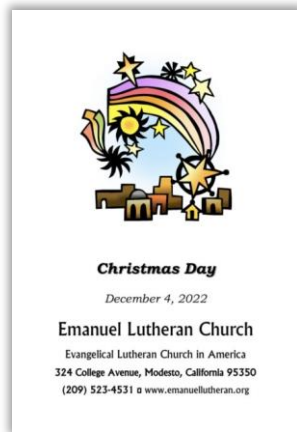
The communion liturgy is said. Pastor blesses the bread and wine, and we commune.



After communion, Pastor and Dan go down the aisle, lighting the candle of the person sitting on the aisle. Each one in turn lights the next person's candle. As this happens, we sing "Silent Night."



We receive the final blessing. Chris leads the recession. We are sent out, being told that Christ the Savior is born and we should proclaim this good news.



It is December 25, Christmas Day. Since it is a Sunday, we have a church service.

Pastor greets us with Merry Christmas. We begin with the confession of sins. We continue with the liturgy and the prayer of the day.



Chuck is the reader this morning. The first lesson is from Isaiah. The prophet invites the people to give God no rest until God reestablishes Jerusalem. In turn, they will receive names full of promise: Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord, a City Not Forsaken.

We read Psalm 97 responsively. In this passage, we see the mighty power of God through nature.

The second lesson is from Titus. God saves us not because of what we do. Rather, God is a God of mercy and salvation who graciously cleanses us in baptism and

renews our lives through the Holy Spirit.

Pastor reads the Gospel according to Luke. The world's deep night is shattered by the light of God's new day. The glory of God is revealed to poor shepherds, who share the good news with others.

Pastor begins her sermon by saying the baby has been born. The shepherds arrived. Eight days later, in the temple, the parents are amazed at what is said. Not much else is told. We have to fill in the gaps.

Mary was probably fiercely protective of the baby. Mary and Joseph were normal parents.



Everyone reacts to the birth. Mary reacts to Gabriel when the angel tells her she will have God's son. She reacts to Elizabeth, her cousin. She reacts to Joseph's loyalty. She ponders all these things. She tries to make sense of all that has happened in her head and holds the words in her heart. The angels respond to God's instructions. The shepherds react to the angels. They go to the manger. They tell everyone.

The question is: What have we learned? What have we pondered? What are we holding close? What is our reaction?

Love, peace, hope, light.

Suzanne is the assisting minister. She leads us in the Apostle's Creed and the prayers of the church. We share the peace and the offering is taken.



Pastor begins the communion liturgy. She blesses the bread and wine. She invites all to come forward.



We receive the final blessing.



Dan extinguishes the candles and leads the recessional. The service is ended.



This is the last service of 2022. It's been an interesting year. We still feel some effects of COVID. We still haven't gone back to all the way things were done before the pandemic. But it's been a good year. We've added new outreach activities. We've survived.

As always, this book is dedicated to our Pastor Lyn. We thank you for all you do, especially the times you kick us out of the box and make us stretch ourselves to become better people and more effective servants.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this journal that looks back on 2022. A special thank you to Luci, the Quality Control Supervisor, who made sure everything was done correctly.

