



Emmanuel News Notes

December, 2008

Pastor Lookingbill ponders. . . . momentous days

Dear Friends,

The whole of the United States of America as well as the world powers are waiting to see what will happen when President-elect Barack Obama takes office in January. This time of "waiting" is an especially important time in the "transition" of power that takes place peacefully after each elected term is completed. Especially for the USA in these rare times, this transition and the decisions that are made about people and policy are of special significance. As the events of a financial crisis sink into the everyday life of Americans, as the stress of an extended war on terrorists continues, and as numerous examples of greed and injustice surface, we as Christians are compelled to pray for God's guidance.

Advent is the appropriate time of the Church year to appreciate this "waiting" period in the history of America and the time of prayer that is welcomed in these momentous days. Advent has always been a time of waiting for Christians, waiting for the coming Messiah of God, waiting for the celebration that settled on 25 December in the early Church, waiting for the festival of lights that ushers in the extending daylight that will bring us out of winter into spring and new planting. Children know how long it takes for Christmas to come, as they wait out each day and every night wondering what surprises will come under the green tree of Life!

So in these days of anticipation, we wonder what surprises will come to America and the world when a new President comes to office, an elected President who brings young children with him into the White House. It's not the color of the walls of the official residence that interests the press, but how the color of the President's skin will grab the media's attention. The tears in the eyes of many of the Civil Rights Advocates as the election results were reported told the tale of a journey that has been difficult and worthwhile. We will have a new enthusiasm for democracy and for leadership in the promise of this young leader.

Although President-elect Obama has been compared to Moses and to Jesus, leaders of the people through difficult times and as men who "walked through" or "over the waters," this President-elect is not of Biblical ambition. We have always believed that God works through men and women of courage and vision, and we pray that such courage and vision will be part of the new Administration in our country. But, walking through the Red Sea and walking over the Sea of Galilee is not required! Walking humbly with God so that compassion and justice will again fill our communities is what will please both God and the American people.

When the angel Gabriel came to visit Mary with words of anticipation, Mary was barely able to figure out what was happening. Yet, with all the courage that a young woman could find, she responded believing that a great blessing would come to the people through her trust in the Almighty. Mary told the angel Gabriel, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." How appropriate at this time in Advent that we are looking for such a sincere response from our leaders as Mary gave when the time was right! Through Mary's courage and selfless devotion to Life, the child Jesus was born into a world filled with uncertainty and confusion. May our God guide us through these days of anticipation.

In Christ's Service,

Jan P. Lookingbill, Pastor

DATES OF NOTE

- Dec 4 Joint study with Har Shalom at Emmanuel (page 2)
- Dec 5-7 Chrysalis High School Retreat (page 10)
- Dec 12 Family Film Night (page 5)
- Dec 14 Sankta Lucia (page 4)
- Dec 15 Fun Bunch Lunch (page 4)
- Dec 15 Gift Wrapping (page 3)
- Dec 21 Caroling at the National Lutheran Home (page 2)
- Dec 24 Three worship services
5 p.m. Family service
9 p.m. Festival service
11 p.m. Festival service in the chapel
- Dec 25 Christ Mass at 10 a.m.
- Jan 4 Congregational Brunch (page 2)
- Jan 10 Youth Lock-in

WORSHIP

Sunday 8:30 & 11:00
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE ENCOUNTER IN ADVENT

For the three Wednesdays in December before Christmas Eve, the Wednesday morning Bible Encounter will study some of the Old Testament texts about the coming Messiah! It is no secret that the Jewish people from the time of Isaiah up to the first century were continually looking for the promised Messiah of God. The records of the Sanhedrin (the ruling leadership in Jerusalem) from the 1st century report the search that continued and the expectation that God would finally send an "anointed one." Join us on Wednesdays at 10:30 in the Christian Education room for this study. We enjoy a brown bag lunch after the study with a dessert provided by members of the group.



"RELIGION AND SCIENCE: PATHWAYS TO TRUTH"

Pastor Lookingbill will continue a Wednesday Evening study on Religion and Science in Advent. Using material that has been sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, we are sharing videos hosted by Francis S. Collins, the Director of The Human Genome Project, that feature various scientists and seminary professors considering questions about God and science. You need not have joined the study group earlier to come and find out what scientists are saying about their view of Religion. Please let Pr. Lookingbill and the office know you are planning to join the group. We meet for supper in the Fellowship Hall at 6:30 p.m. and proceed to the Christian Education room for the study about 7:30.



THIS YEAR'S INTERFAITH STUDY WITH HAR SHALOM CONTINUES ON 4 DECEMBER

Rabbi Leonard Cahan and Pr. Lookingbill will continue their Interfaith Study on Elijah and Elisha at Emmanuel on 4 December at 7 p.m. After the first meeting when the two prophets were introduced, we continue to investigate the compelling story of Elijah as he faces the 450 prophets of Baal! Throughout this study, it is of interest how Elijah is featured at Jewish traditional feasts as well as in Christian New Testament writings. Who is supposed to appear before the messiah comes? And who is on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Jesus? Join us at Emmanuel in the Fellowship Hall on 4 December at 7 p.m. to continue our study this year.

Feast of the Epiphany Brunch Sunday, January 4

Celebrate the Epiphany season with a Sunday brunch after the late service on the Feast of the Epiphany! Join Emmanuel members and families for fellowship on January 4 as we begin the new calendar year and celebrate Christ as the Light of the world. You may leave your gold, frankincense, and myrrh at home and instead contribute your favorite food items for the brunch as the gift giving season continues. The Parish Life Committee will coordinate the brunch.

Hot dishes are especially needed and should be baked Saturday and refrigerated overnight. Side items, such as breads, muffins, fruit, cheese, crudité's, and other finger brunch food, as well as desserts, are also needed. All food items may be stored in the kitchen of the Fellowship Hall before Sunday Services.

Sign-up sheets for the January 4 brunch will be available in the Narthex beginning in December. Please let the Parish Life Committee know many persons in your family are planning to attend and what you will bring to share. If you have questions about the brunch, please contact Sheila Murtland at (301) 983-2683 or lakenheathway@aol.com.



December 21, Sunday, 4 pm Caroling at the National Lutheran Home

Everyone of any age is invited to join us for Christmas Caroling at the National Lutheran Home. We will meet in the lobby. Afterward we will head over to the Beardalls' home for a Pot Luck Supper. The Beardalls' home is located at 741 Owens Street, Rockville, MD. For more information call Pastor Lewis.

Emmanuel News Notes is published eleven times a year by Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 7730 Bradley Blvd, Bethesda, Maryland 20817, Telephone: (301) 365-5733; Fax: (301) 365-9236
Email: info@elcbethesda.org
website: www.elcbethesda.org

Pastor:
Youth & Family Ministry
Council President
Parish Administrator
Director of Music
Joyful Praise (Children's) Choir

Rev. Jan P. Lookingbill
Rev. Robert L. Lewis
James McGee
Katherine Burrell
Dingwall Fleary
Susan Drumm

THE GIVING TREE – IT IS HERE!!!

The awaited time has come! It is Advent time and with the Christmas season comes Christmas compassion, a time when we especially remember people far less fortunate. At Emmanuel, we once again remember a group of people who live in Anacostia with families to support. Christmas, rather than being a happy time, just adds another burden to their lives.

Fortunately for our Southeast DC neighbors, they live near an organization called Southeast Ministry (SEM). Run by the development director, Monica Goletiani, SEM provides several challenging GED and job readiness programs to help Anacostia residents back onto their feet. Many of their graduates find new employment, despite formidable odds.

Emmanuel assists SEM through a Giving Tree project (as well as through Gifts of Hope and other contributions). Through this project, we buy Christmas presents for the children of the folks participating in SEM's programs. In so doing, we are supporting the participants' self-help efforts. We're also showing compassion for their children - who have been living for years with the poverty imposed by having underemployed parents.

Yes, it means a little more shopping. That's a nice problem to have, compared with the issues faced by the families we're helping. Won't you buy a few presents for an Anacostia family this Christmas?

So... how do I help?

Please **select an ornament and sign your name and phone number to the sign up sheet near the tree**. The ornament has gift suggestions and sizes on the back. Then **return the gift (wrapped and with the ornament attached) to the church by December 14**. We'll take the gifts to Southeast Ministry in time for them to "appear" under the family Christmas trees. Happy shopping!

THANK YOU FROM COMMUNITY-BASED SHELTER

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you to all who contributed to the October Community-Based Shelter project. Around 60 of you donated supplies, prepared sumptuous meals and served at the homeless shelter during the first week of October. Our guests at the shelter were very grateful for Emmanuel's generosity. What is really amazing is that almost every person responded "yes" when they were called to ask for assistance! That is truly a testament to you folks. From our guests at the shelter and from the Outreach Committee... a huge THANK YOU!!!!!!!

THE GIFTS OF THE SEASON

The wise men brought gifts with significance. We too can celebrate Christ's birth in a significant way with meaningful gifts for those Christ left in our care. The Gifts of Hope program gives us a way to make presents through Lutheran churches and charities in Maryland, across America, and around the world. We can help them serve poverty-stricken and vulnerable people by buying the gifts they need.

Through Gifts of Hope, you can celebrate Christmas by sending a present to downtown DC (food for a needy family). The present can be something that's needed immediately (hearing aids) or that helps someone prepare for the future (supplies for a GED student). All the gifts are meaningful, and badly needed.

Here's how: From November 23 - December 14, Gifts of Hope lists will be available in the bulletin and at tables in the narthex. You can select a good or service requested by a Lutheran synod or service organization, and make a donation to buy the item. You'll receive a gift card and an insert describing the present you have given. On Christmas, you can give the card to the person in whose name you've purchased the gift, and tell them about the good work being done in their name.

In the tradition of giving, let's celebrate Christ's birthday with gifts of significance and hope!

Gift Wrapping December 15, 2008

The youth will be providing gift wrapping services on Monday, December 15, 2008 in the Fellowship Hall. They will begin at 4 pm and continue accepting packages to wrap until 7 pm. You can bring your own wrapping paper, or have the youth use the paper they have. If you would like to drop packages off on Sunday, December 14, we will secure them until they are ready to be picked up on Monday. The youth will be accepting donations for the wrapping service with the proceeds going toward the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. Please contact Pastor Lewis if you have any questions.



The Auxiliary had a very successful Fall Festival on Saturday, November 8.

The Baked Goods table took in \$687.50. Grandma's Attic made \$2,549.27. The overall total of money raised was \$7,650.

Since all the money is used to provide "extras" for the Home's residents, the Auxiliary thanks you on their behalf if you baked, donated items, or just enjoyed shopping for bargains.

Jean Abel

THE FESTIVAL OF SANKTA LUCIA

The festival of Sankta Lucia begins before dawn, on the thirteenth of December, the longest night of the year. The origins of this tradition are not in Scandinavia, but in Syracuse on the island of Sicily around 304 A.D. According to the Sicilian legend, Lucia's mother, a wealthy lady, had been miraculously cured of an illness. Her mother, a Christian, was persuaded in thankfulness to distribute her wealth to the poor. So, by candlelight, the mother and daughter went about the city secretly ministering to the poor of Syracuse.

Unfortunately, this was during the last great persecution of Christians in the reign of the Emperor Diocletian. The pagan young man, to whom Lucia was engaged, took a dim view of distributing her dowry, and denounced her to the prefect who ordered Lucia to be seized and tortured. Her martyrdom is recorded in ancient sources.

With the coming of Christianity to Sweden shortly after 1000 A.D., missionaries and priests may have told the story to inspire new converts. As Lucia Day comes at the darkest time of year, the candles witness to the True Light—the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the morning of the thirteenth of December, the strains of "Sankta Lucia" are heard as the maiden comes with her crown of candles dispelling the darkness.

In honor of her martyrdom, it has long been the custom to donate money on Lucia Day to institutions working for the blind. Scandinavian tradition holds that in Sweden, Lucia brought food to the poor villagers. Today, the festival is celebrated in schools, hospitals, and towns each of which has its own Lucia Bride.

The Lucia Procession at Emmanuel will be held on

December 14th, 2008
in the sanctuary
following the early service

(Boys and girls ages 4 through high school are invited to join in the procession. Please contact Anna Roberts if you are interested in participating—phone 301-765-0285 or by email to

December 15, Monday, noon Fun Bunch Lunch

Come join us for the Fun Bunch lunch this month as we gather for food, fellowship and Christmas Carols. Lunch will be catered for a small donation. Bring traditional Christmas cookies to share for dessert.

From the Council President:

Greetings

Merry Christmas!

It seems strange to write those words just one week after Election Day.

I am not trying to connect the two events, as tempting as that might be. I am just looking ahead to the next month and also reflecting on this time last year.

What a difference a year makes. This time last year, we were contemplating a frightening deficit and staff cut backs. Giving was not only behind in our budget; it was behind in the previous year's giving. And there was every possibility that it might be worse in 2008.

But you responded to the need. This year, after ten months, we are about 5% ahead of last year. Normally that would be cause for optimism.

But these are not normal times.

I don't need to say more.

Before the economy went south, we were 7+% ahead of last year. That margin has slipped slightly, at least in part we hope, because giving picked up this time last year in response to our appeals to the congregation.

So, we are guardedly optimistic that you will maintain that 5% margin through the end of the year. Your Council intends to be as conservative as possible in our planning and budgeting process. There is little reason for optimism.

In difficult times like this, it is important to remember that there are many more who have an even more difficult time.

Recently I heard a rebroadcast of an interview Studs Terkel did with a woman whose family was hard hit by the Great Depression. She talked about standing in soup lines, picking crops in Texas and other hardship stories. But finally her father got enough money to buy a car. And the first place they drove to was a Hooverville in Oklahoma that went on for ten miles.

He told his children that he wanted them to remember, that as difficult as things were for their family, others had it far worse.

So as we enter the season of Advent and a time of rebirth and a time of giving for all Christians, I want to thank you for the support you have provided to Emmanuel in so many ways.

Have a blessed Advent!

Peace and Joy

Jim McGee

1920Jimmy@gmail.com

Stewardship Committee Announces "Pledge Season"

The pledging process or "pledge season" is now beginning for 2009. All Emmanuel members should have recently received a letter from the Stewardship Committee, along with a pledge card, regarding our goals for the upcoming year. The pledging process is important for providing guidance to the Church Council as they consider and plan the church's budget for the upcoming year. Pledging can also be helpful for individual Emmanuel members to plan out their own contribution goals for the upcoming year.

Although many of us will face a variety of economic challenges in the upcoming year, the Stewardship Committee and Church Council are asking that members at least maintain their level of giving when pledging for 2009 and for those that are able, to increase their giving 3 – 5%. These pledging goals would allow us to continue the positive momentum that we achieved in 2008.

Pledge cards are also available in the narthex and the church office and can either be mailed to the church or dropped off at church on Sunday (offering basket). The Church Council, as well as other members of Emmanuel Lutheran, greatly appreciate your contributions and pledges for the upcoming year.

Family Movie Night and Pot Luck Dinner

December 12, 2008
Friday, 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Seuss' *Horton Hears a Who!*
Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Horton is an Elephant who has no trouble believing in a world that extends beyond his own although many of the other characters in the film do. As he sees it, "maybe they aren't small, maybe we're big." Maybe there is even someone out there bigger than him and his world, and he and his friends are actually the small ones. And what about the fact that he does not have any more proof than a tiny voice only he can hear? As long as that voice calls out for his help, Horton is not about to tell it that it does not exist. Hmmm, sounds familiar.

This is a wonderful movie for all ages. Bring a dish to share and a friend who will enjoy the movie with you.

SPECTACULAR YOUTH SKI RETREAT January 23 - 25 2009 Seven Springs Ski Resort

All youth (and some adult volunteers) are invited to come on the SPECTACULAR Youth Ski Retreat on the weekend of January 23-25, 2009 at Seven Springs Ski Resort, Somerset, PA. We will depart from Emmanuel at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 23 and stop at McDonald's in Breezewood, PA for supper (bring money.) We will sleep Friday and Saturday nights at Trinity Lutheran Church in Somerset, PA, ski all day Saturday and Sunday, and return to Emmanuel around 7 p.m. on Sunday, January 25.

You do not have to know how to ski to come on this trip. We will teach you. In fact, it's a great way to learn how to ski, and many of our youth have learned to ski on previous years' trips. The cost is \$180 per person, which includes transportation, lodging, food Saturday and Sunday, and lift tickets. Adult volunteers are needed to help with driving and to assist as mentors. A large van is needed to transport the skis, boots, and poles. Sign-up packets will be available in the Narthex in Mid-December.

If you have any questions, contact the trip leader, Jim Audas

Dinner Club

During the month of November, we had several people sign-up for the Dinner Club. We will be putting the groups together and contacting everyone the first week of December. We will ask the Dinner Club groups to try to meet in December and definitely to meet in January. If you are still interested in joining a Dinner Club, please contact Pastor Lewis.



Parish Vital Records

New Members

Emma Anne Bray, daughter of Patrick M. and Susanne Bray, sister of Sarah and Megan, granddaughter of Annette and Mike Poston, by infant baptism 2 November 2008

Ava Sofia Forsbacka, daughter of Matthew and Elizabeth Forsbacka, sister of Amy, by infant baptism 9 November 2008

Hospice Care

Jill Day in Llandudno, Wales

Deaths

Ida Margaret "Peggy" Cleveland, mother-in-law of Linda Cleveland.

Steve Brown, cousin of Debbie Brown

Mary Hood, mother of Susie Drumm

David Franklin Osborne, Sr., friend of David and Colleen Wallace

Christian Education Notes for December

SUNDAYS

Sunday School - 10 a.m. in the Atrium and Classrooms
The Sunday School classes will begin rehearsing the songs for the Christmas Pageant during the Sunday School opening each week in December. Please be on time so the children can rehearse and have time for their regular Sunday School lessons.

December 7 - Rehearsal then Regular Sunday School lessons
December 14 - Sankta Lucia, Rehearsal then Regular Sunday School lessons

December 21 - Christmas Pageant
December 28 - No Sunday Classes

Book of Faith - 10 a.m. in the Parlor
Kristi Johnson and Diane Swenson are continuing the Adult Bible Study on the Book of Faith during the Sunday School hour. You are welcome to join them anytime. Grab your cup of coffee and bring a Bible.

Adult Forum - 10 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall
The Adult Forum is an opportunity to have a Christian discussion on the issues of the day. All are invited.

CONFIRMATION

December 1 - Regular Confirmation Class
December 8 - Regular Confirmation Class
December 15 - Regular Confirmation Class
December 22 - Regular Confirmation Class

ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans

The youth and adults who will be attending the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans will continue with their fund raisers during December. This church-wide event happens every three years and most youth only have one chance to attend a Youth Gathering. At the Gathering they will participate in leadership training, outreach work, and have a chance to see their church beyond the doors of their own congregation.

According to the Youth and Family Search Institute, attending events such as the Youth Gathering during their teenage years is one of the top five reasons young adults give for being involved with the church. Several other surveys from other denominations show that having attended events such as the Gathering during their teenage years is in the top three reasons young adults with children come to church (exact position depends on the survey).

Help grow the church and train future church leaders through you donations and participation in our youth fund raisers.



Pastor Lewis—for goodness' sake

Dear Saints and Sinners,

Grace to you and peace from God as we get nearer to our celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Now, there are those who would take exception with my opening greeting and it has recently become more evident in the last couple of days (I am writing this on November 14, 2008), as the statement, "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake," begin to appear on Washington, D.C., buses starting next week and running through December from the American Humanist Association \$40,000 holiday ad campaign.

I have always found it interesting that there is a small, but vocal minority of people who for some reason take pride in announcing that they do not believe in God. There are those who have written earnestly argued, but hopelessly flawed books on the topic, while others have come to terms with the notion that they are alone in the universe. Now we have these "Why believe in a god?" ads that will be popping up all over town as we get closer to celebrating Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ.

I also find it interesting that Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, says that the ads are not intended for a believing audience, but for other non-believers, to let them know that they are not alone. Well, yes, they are. But I digress.

This is a topic that could be discussed in a long theological article or even a thesis. It is a subject that interests me a great deal—one I would like to devote months of reflection and then write a Pulitzer Prize winning article on it. Instead, I am sitting in the office trying to figure out how to keep this letter short enough for this issue of *News Notes*. So, rather than writing my own *Summa Theologica*, I have a few paragraphs at best. Therefore, here are a couple of initial reactions: I have never understood this business of connecting goodness to a belief in God. The slogan is a non-sequitur for me. I do not believe in God in order to be good. I believe in God because God believes in me (yes, another topic for a thesis).

I am also confused as to how I can know what being good means. "Be good for goodness sake?" Sounds really cute. I could make a little wrist band out of it and make some money. But who is going to tell me what that means exactly? The American Humanist Society? I do not think so!

This does raise the questions, who is the definer of "goodness?" In the name of whose "goodness" should I be good? I ask this because there is just too much "badness" in the world done in the name of "goodness."

When you think about it, you can look back in history and certainly identify certifiable villains - truly evil people. No question. Fortunately they are a rare breed. But for the most part, history has unfolded with good people at the helm with good intentions and great plans but who manage to make a mess of

things. Offhand I can come up with the names of people such as Joseph McCarthy and Patricia Dunn. How about the folks at Ford Motor Company who gave us the Edsel or the fashion designers who gave us leisure suits and cargo pants. Then there is Ray Kroc, who gave us McDonald's along with promoting an immediate-satisfaction mentality. I am sure Alexander Graham Bell never realized that his little invention would foster such things as robo-calls, tele-marketers and being awakened at 2 a.m. by a wrong number that almost gave you a heart attack because the only reason anyone would call you at 2 a.m. is to give you bad news. I could go on, but I won't. There are lots of good people doing what seem like good things that become bad things.

Goodness - what is that? I just cannot believe in it. Too many bad things have been caused by people who have thought they were doing good.

And this is where God comes in. If we humans can not define "goodness" or even do a good job at "goodness," then we have to look to the One who is Good. That is the One who was born in a manger. The One whose birth we celebrate on the twenty-fifth day of December. The One who is the reason for the season.

PAX,

Pastor Robert L. Lewis, Jr.

History of Education

The decent docent doesn't doze:
He teaches standing on his toes.
His student dassn't doze and does,
And that's what teaching is and was.

David McCord

The Modern Hiawatha

From "the Song of Milkanwatha"

He killed the noble mudjokivis,
With the skin he made him mittens,
Made them with the fur side inside,
Made them with the skin side outside,
He, to get the warm side inside,
Put the inside skin side outside:
He, to get the cold side outside,
Put the warm side fur side inside:
That's why he put the fur side inside,
Why he put the skin side outside,
Why he turned them inside outside.

George A. Strong

Youth and Family Ministry Calendar

This calendar includes all Youth and Family Ministry Events, not only those for youth. Events advertised for "Youth" include those from 7th grade to 12th grade. Family events or "everyone is invited" are appropriate for all ages. Fun Bunch events are for older adults.

December 5 - 7, Friday - Sunday

Chrysalis High School Retreat

This is the Metropolitan D.C. Synod's High School retreat at the 4H Retreat Center in Front Royal, VA.

December 12, Friday, 6:30 p.m.

Family Movie Night and Pot Luck Dinner

This month's movie is Dr. Seuss' *Horton Hears a Who!*

Everyone is invited to come out to watch a great movie and bring a potluck dish to share. See page 5 in this issue for more information.

December 14, Sunday, Following the First Service

Sankta Lucia

Immediately following the First Worship Service, the Sankta Lucia celebration will begin.

December 15, Monday, noon

Fun Bunch Lunch

Come join us for the Fun Bunch lunch this month as we gather for food, fellowship and Christmas Carols.

December 15, Monday, 4 pm

Gift Wrapping

The youth will offer gift wrapping in the Fellowship Hall. They will gladly accept donations to go toward their trip to New Orleans for the 2009 Youth Gathering. See details on page 3 in this issue.

December 21, Sunday, 4 pm

Caroling at the National Lutheran Home

Everyone of any age is invited to join us at the National Lutheran Home to sing Christmas Carols to the residents. We will meet in the lobby. Afterward, we will gather at the Beardalls' Home for a Pot Luck supper. See page 2 in the issue for more information.

December 24, Wednesday, 5 pm

Christmas Eve Family Service

Everyone is invited to join us for the Christmas Eve Family worship service. This is a great service for the whole family as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

December 25, Thursday, 10 am

Christmas Day Service

Come and celebrate the Birth of Christ with us on Christmas morning.

January 10, Saturday, 6 pm - Sunday 8 am

Youth Lock-in

This is the first Youth Lock-in of the new year. All youth are invited to this lock-in that will be full of surprises as we spend the first part of it away from the church. Bring a snack to share, and \$20.

Christmas memories: The Sunday School Program

It is cold and it is dark. The street lights make pools of light at the intersections, but don't seem to illuminate much else. The trip to church is a combination of excitement and of dread. Excitement, because it is Christmas and all the good things of the season are beginning. Dread, because the Sunday School program requires performance and maybe memory will fail or disaster happen. With moist palms, the children gather in the basement of the church where teachers and parents attempt to organize them into the processional lines. There is occasional giggling and even some shoving, but women who've had experience in dealing with these exuberances quickly squelch any untoward activity. Soon, *The Sunday School Program* will be underway.

Upstairs, the pews have filled to overflowing. The lights are dim, but parents can see one another and greet friends. The organ has been playing softly while the parents, grandparents, and willing neighbors gather. Now, the lights are turned off, only the enormous Christmas tree standing behind the pulpit is lighted along with a single taper on the altar. The organ is silent and only an occasional clearing of throat or rustle of clothing is heard. The silence seems to last forever. Doors open at the sides of the nave and sounds of shuffling footsteps are heard. This is the scary part, trying to walk quietly in the dark. Soon the aisles at the side of the church are filled and then the children start up the center aisle, still being as quiet as can be.

The fourth grade girls who really know how to sing begin the first verse of *Oh little town of Bethlehem* and soon all the children are singing. As the children reach the altar rail, each of them is carrying an unlighted candle in a holder. The pastor lights each one and the children line them up on the altar railing. The glow expands and as the song ends, the altar is fully lighted. More carols, some recitations, the Gospel story from Luke, special music, more carols, and finally the benediction and wish for all to have a joyous Christmas. It's over, the lights are on and the children are invited to return to the basement of the church where they'll receive a gift from the Ladies Aid.

There is much talk in the pews as parents compliment one another on how well their children had done. They know that there will be considerable delay as they wait for their charges.

Downstairs, the Sunday School ladies keep order as the children line up to receive paper bags from the husbands of the Ladies Aid ladies. What treats! An apple or an orange, some hard candy, a few peanuts, and, inside a wax paper wrapping, a freshly made popcorn ball. The children soon have scattered peanut shells as they make inroads on the treats. Finally, everyone has departed to find that snow has begun to fall again and everything on the way home looks special. The colored lights showing from Christmas trees in the windows, the pools of light at the intersection, the cold, the remaining taste of peanuts, and the aroma of the popcorn ball kept for enjoying at home all tell that the magic of the Christmas season has begun once again.



He who sings scares
away his woes. -

CERVANTES

Greetings!

I am aware that many of the items I am listing here are mentioned in other sections of this newsletter, as the son of a very successful and incredibly eloquent minister (far more so than I will ever be!), one thing I learned through observation is that it is impossible to “. . . tell them too many times, especially if it is really important.” So, for the next few lines I’m going to list the dates on which there will be special music here at Emmanuel.

In brief, here is a thumbnail overview of MUSIC RELATED EVENTS for you to circle on your personal and family calendars during the months of December and January. Some of these dates reflect changes from what may have published previously.

Among the most significant is the fact that the winter cantata presentation by the choir will not take place on December 14th, but in January. Note the new date below.

This listing appears in chronological order

December 7 (Second Sunday of Advent)

Music by Joyful Praise and Emmanuel Ringers

December 14 (Third Sunday of Advent)

*Sankta Lucia – Annual Presentation
(newly redesigned for this year)*

December 21 (Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Cynthia Keith, joined by two other flutists, providing special selections throughout the service. Because I must be away, the organist will be Kristi Johnson.*

December 24 (Christmas Eve)

*5:00 Special music from Joyful Praise and other youth which we are blessed to have among us.
9:00 Music from the Adult Choir and Emmanuel Ringers*

December 25 (Christmas Day)

Festive music with organ, piano, assisted by guest instrumentalists

December 28

At both services, with the assistance of members of the choir and others, I will lead an exploratory study of our new hymnal, the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). This will include tips on navigating through this new resource, and perhaps serve to dispel many of the fears – and, frankly, the downright disdain some have expressed regarding portions of its liturgical content.

January 4 *More of above, remembering there’s no such*

thing as “. . .too many times.”

January 11 Cantata *by the Adult Choir and assisting instrumentalists, at 11:00.*

Please be aware that the annual talent program we call **Treasures of Emmanuel**, is being postponed from January 31st to Saturday, February 28th at 7:30 PM. More on that later, but as a teaser, it will be a post-Mardi Gras show, with no *few* holds barred! Also, watch the next issue for news about this season’s Service of Lessons and Carols.

Until next time, I am

Faithfully yours,

Dingwall Fleary

dingwallfleary@verizon.net

**In the early afternoon [of December 21] I’ll be conducting the annual winter concert by The McLean Symphony, with special guests, Danielle DeSwert, pianist, and a most phenomenal chorus, the MetroSingers. Then, at 7:00 PM, I guest conduct the National Gallery Orchestra in the West Garden Court, again, with Ms. DeSwert as soloist.*



The perfect tree. Who is to say which tree is perfect? This one is lopsided. That one is ideal except it’s bare at the top or that one over there is great if you look at it from this angle. This one is a nice shape, but it’s a long-leaf pine. That one has perfect shape and wonderful needles, but it’s too short, too tall. That really is the problem with a perfect tree in the wild or in a tree lot. They are like the rest of us, perfect in some respect and flawed in one or more ways at the same time. There is one truly perfect tree and that is the one that has all the treasured ornaments on it, the ones the kids made in first grade, and Grandma’s angel at the top or nestled in the branches and Great Aunt Maude’s star on the top. It isn’t the tree that makes for a family’s Christmas, it’s the memories that the tree evokes this year and again and again in the years to come.

Many families display nativity scenes during the Christmas season. Some are family heirlooms, some newly purchased. Each scene depicts the same wondrous event, yet the different figures don’t look much alike—some are fanciful, some dressed as we suppose the Holy Family dressed, some carved, some fashioned from modeling clay. It doesn’t seem to make much difference; they are loved and enjoyed. Do you display such a scene in your place? Do you make sure that the Baby Jesus doesn’t show up in the manger until Christmas eve? And, do the cows in their stalls kneel at midnight on Christmas eve? All God’s creatures have something to celebrate.

EMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

7730 Bradley Boulevard
Bethesda, Maryland 20817

Phone: (301) 365-5733
Fax: (301) 365-9236
Email: info@elcbethesda.org

Jan P. Lookingbill, Pastor

Robert Lewis, Pastor
Youth & Family Ministry

James McGee, Council President
Katherine Burrell, Parish Administrator
Dingwall Fleary, Director of Music
Susan Drumm, Joyful Praise Choir
Ligia Benjumea, Nursery Attendant

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Bethesda, MD 20817
Permit No. 2772

WE'RE ON THE WEB
WWW.ELCBETHESDA.ORG

DECEMBER, 2008

