



# Lent 2011

*Reflections by Members and Friends*

## **Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

Bethesda, Maryland

**Celebrating Lent ... 40 Days for 50 Years!**

**1961 - 2011**

***“Sing to the Lord a New Song”***



## Introduction

This year our devotional focus for the season of Lent will be the celebration of Emmanuel's 50 years of worship. This book is full of faith stories from some early members of the church, from our pastors, and from friends of Emmanuel. Each person has taken a lectionary text, and told their faith story. These verses are a source of unity across disciples and denominations! So as you reflect on the readings, approach each day in prayer with us. Indeed the booklet has in-depth sharing by our fellow travelers on our faith walks. The Holy Spirit worked with each of us as we wrote and shared with you. Let the Spirit work within you as you read and pray the devotion. Then open your heart and mind to God's work within you. These gifts are our gifts to you during the contemplative season of Lent.

As a guide - First read the passage cited for the day. Then read the meditation and offer the prayer for the day. Sit quietly and be in the moment. Let the words and thoughts into your heart. Choose to accept them and let them lead you. Take a moment of gratitude and pray for each writer who shared with you on this day.

Blessings for a spiritual Lenten journey.

Date: March 9, 2011 Ash Wednesday

Scripture: Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

Why begin Lent with this lesson? Do we actually need Jesus' warning against "practicing your piety before others"? Isn't the problem that we don't practice our piety at all? Or that we don't have any piety to begin with?

In fact, this lesson is important for us. This Lent most of us will recommit ourselves to practices of piety. We will pray more, read the Bible more, lead (at least for a while) more disciplined lives. This will be very good. And mostly we won't be doing this in order to be "praised by others."

But if we're not careful, we will be doing this so we can praise ourselves. The danger for people like us is that we practice our piety because we think better of ourselves when we do this. The danger of Lent is always that we practice our piety because we think we're getting something out of it.

Really though, Lent isn't so much about us at all, or about what we decide to do. Lent is about the Lord Jesus, and about our letting Jesus get a stronger grip on us. May all we say and do this Lent be for the sake of Jesus' mission.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, serving You is our deepest joy. Show us this Lent how to serve You more and more faithfully, and guide us in your service until we rest in your presence. Amen.

Bishop Richard Graham

Date: March 10, 2011

Scripture: Genesis 2:15-17, 3: 1-7

The lesson from Genesis is about choices and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At first glance this seems easy enough: choose good, not evil. But is it really that simple? One hundred and fifty years ago our country was rushing toward Civil War. One of the issues / causes - if not the central issue - was slavery. Those who supported slavery and those who wanted to abolish slavery all read and quoted the same Bible; both groups believed they were making the good choice and the other choice was evil. Look at any one of the divisive issues of today and you will find there are some who believe their choice is good and the other side's choice is evil. And we all read and quote the same Bible. How are we to make the good choice? We should pray and pray and pray and remember the words of Micah that tell us to do justice, love kindness, and to be humble. And we should remember that even if we make the evil choice, we worship a God who forgives the humble and contrite.

Prayer: Lord, help us to make the good choices and forgive us when we do not. Amen.

Bob Jones

Date: March 11, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 32

One of my colleagues asked me, what are three things for which I am grateful? My response was freedom, my personal faith, and my daughter, Ashley (along with family and friends). With thoughts of friends, I thought of those at Emmanuel and how we come together in fellowship.

After I read Psalm 32, I find verse 8, "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" provides a sense of comfort. Is this David speaking, or is it God? I believe it is God speaking. He knows me, and through my life, He has guided me and will continue. I trust Him. I also find Psalm 16:7 brings the same comfort. As I think about Lent, I am grateful for the forgiveness that God provides.

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the blessings in my life, and continuing to guide me in the way that I should go. Amen.

Patti Leppert

Date: March 12, 2011

Scripture: Romans 5:12-19

In 1 Corinthians 15:22, Paul writes: “for just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.” This is a good backdrop for our scripture in Romans. Adam is, in a way, a symbol of all humankind ... his actions work to affect the entire human race. Jesus is a different kind of symbol, while his actions also affect all of us. The parallels are not unique; we have seen them before. In this case we can look at these parallels in a different way: disobedience and obedience, condemnation and acquittal (there’s a legal term for you), sin and righteousness, and death and life.

The language Paul uses can be confusing ... but after Moses, we have the law, which changes the equation a little. In verse 19, however, we have Jesus’ obedience counteracting the disobedience of Adam (and all of us) so that we can count on that grace, that generosity, that gift of life:

*For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many  
Were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience  
The many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19 (NRSV)*

Prayer: Thanks to God that we were not held to the condemnation of Adam ... but instead were acquitted in Jesus. Amen.

Jane Rosenquist

Date: March 13, 2011

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

*The New Interpreters Bible* says “To the extent that Jesus’ temptation serves as a model for Christians, it might teach us that to be a “child of God” means to have a trusting relationship to God that does not ask for miraculous exceptions to the limitations of an authentic human life.”

2010 was certainly an eye-opener for me and for Jesse as we both battled our ailments. I found that it was good to have a trusting relationship with God and to feel that He was watching over us, no matter what was ahead. So we tried to relax and enjoy each day and let Him take over. A real blessing!

It was comforting to have our church family and pastors watching over us and helping us. If the early members of the “Grubby Thicket group” had not persevered, we would no have Emmanuel as it is today. There has been much loving concern for us when we really needed help. Now as I face the future I know that God is with me and I do not have to be afraid. Praise be to God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have sustained us all our lives and we pray that You will be with us forever. Amen.

Shirely B. Hangen

Date: March 14, 2011

Scripture: Hebrews 2:10-18

The book of Hebrews was written to new Christians who might have been considering going back to the Jewish religion. It is really a point by point argument on how Christianity is better than Judaism, from showing how angels served Jesus (proving Jesus' superiority) in chapter 1 to the reminder that God resurrected Jesus (proving Jesus' importance to God) in Chapter 17.

Chapter 2 explains why it was important for Jesus to be completely human, as shown when he was "not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." This passage stresses two reasons: (1) so that, in dying, He could free us from the power of death (verses 14-15); and (2) so that, in experiencing temptation as only a human can, He is able to help us with our own temptations.

Prayer: Dear God, help us to see Jesus as our brother and our Savior. Only by being truly human was He able to atone for our sins and reconcile us to God. Amen.

Tom Botsford

My source for this was Understanding the Bible, Scott Tunseth, ed. (Augsburg Fortress, 1990)

Date: March 15, 2011

Scripture: Exodus 34:1-9

This passage is a favorite to many. God gives Moses and his people a Second Chance. A chance to repent and a chance to show God, that they are worthy of his grace. So many times in life, we all need a “Do Over”. A chance to do things the way we meant to. In life we are too often too hurried, not fully informed or not focused enough on our tasks or goals. A “Do Over” gives us a chance to get it right. In Exodus, God grants his people another try. The Hebrew Nation turns their focus back to their One True God.

A second lesson here should not be lost. God shows each of us the importance of granting others a second chance. Since none of us are perfect, there will come a time when we have the opportunity to let someone try again. Without God’s Grace and Compassion, where would any of us be? Likewise, if we are not compassionate and fair with each other how can we claim to be Children of God?

Prayer: Thank you, dear Lord for all the times You have given us another chance. Guide us to be caring and fair as we strive to be faithful to your teaching and representatives of your kingdom.

Amen.

Mike Dixon

(a note from the editor – the same verse is also assigned for tomorrow – an error on my part. We have a delightful chance for two perspectives... I thank them both!)

Date: March 16, 2011

Scripture: Exodus 34:1-9

God is merciful. God is slow to anger. God abounds in love.

This God in the Old Testament book of Exodus is the same as John the Evangelist proclaimed in the New Testament when he wrote, "God is love." It tells us who God is. God's love is very different from human love. God's love is unconditional.

Human love is almost always conditional – it's based on something. We say we love someone based on our feelings and emotions, or on how our conditions are fulfilled by someone. We say, "I love you because you're beautiful" or "I love you because you take good care of me." That kind of love can change from one moment to the next. When a spouse says they no longer "feel love" or they "fall out of love," that death of love shows how conditional it was.

God loves us because He is love. God's love is unconditional and not based on feelings or emotions. The love that parents have for their children is as close as we can get at unconditional love – it doesn't stop when we don't "feel love." But even with that, God's love so transcends our human definition that it's almost incomprehensible.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach us to love You and each other as You love us. Forgive our human failings, and help us to live in peace. Amen.

Doug Murtland

Date: March 17, 2011

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4a

Have you ever taken a trip and had no real idea where you were heading as you left home? This is exactly what happens to Abram when God calls him to take this journey.

Actually the divine instruction that comes to Abram is as much about where he *should not* remain as it is about heading off for a journey. He is told to leave his home, a place in which he is a leader. Abram is called to leave behind everything he knows, but is not really told where to head, not yet.

Now some would say that Abram set out on a pilgrimage, but one usually knows that they are heading to a sacred site. The destination is not sacred - it is Abram who makes it sacred due to it being his destination. The places to which God leads Abram are not spiritually significant sites when Abram gets there. Instead, they become spiritually significant because of what Abram does after he arrives.

We may not be called the same way Abram was called. However, it is good for us to remember that obedience, listening, worshiping, selflessness and remaining open to new understandings is how God can make all of our journeys and changes of direction into spiritual pilgrimages.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be open to a call from You, no matter what that call may be. Strengthen me with your Spirit so that I may have courage to answer your call with a "yes." Amen.

Pastor Robert Lewis

Date: March 18, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 121

After reading this psalm, I had to breathe a huge sigh of relief. What an absolutely comforting thought to know the extent that we are cared for. Perhaps my favorite part about this psalm is how it can be applied to all ages. While reading this, I thought back to my childhood, being wide awake and cowering under my covers during a middle-of-the-night thunderstorm. All I wanted on nights like these was comfort and knowing that someone would take care of me during my time of fear. Now as an adult (although I still am scared of thunderstorms!) my fears have turned to thoughts of uncertainty. What if I don't find a job? What if I can't pay my bills? What if my life doesn't work out the way I have been planning? When my imagination runs wild and takes hold of my fears, I need to stop and remember, "The Lord watches over you. He will keep you from all harm." These true words will not only apply to today and tomorrow but forever! To me there is no greater comfort than knowing I am safe and being cared for. So whether you are 7 or 97, let your fears be relinquished by knowing that God is always watching over your life.

Prayer: Dear God, we are so comforted in knowing that You are always with us and guiding our lives. Thank you for consistently lifting us up and help us every day to remember your never-ending presence in our hearts. In your name we pray, Amen.

Jessica Lashway

Friend of Emmanuel

Date: March 19, 2011

Scripture: Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Fifty years old! The age of fifty is often seen as a turning point, the beginning of “old age” when a person is eligible to join AARP. Numerous observations and comments have been made about growing old; I like this one:

Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be.

The last of life, for which the first was made.

*----- Robert Browning “Rabbi Ben Ezra”*

When I turned fifty, I, like many others, sensed that I was entering a new phase of my life. As I looked ahead now that the years of child rearing were over, new opportunities were presenting themselves and I faced new decisions about the direction I would take.

Abraham was led to new insights and new ventures when he was far older than most of us are when we seek new directions in our lives. He became the founder of the Hebrew nation and the “father of us all.” He is the quintessential model of faith, cited by Paul in the letter to the Romans to illustrate that great truth that so inspired Martin Luther, justification by faith. In Paul’s writings we come to understand that just as Abraham’s faith was counted as righteousness, we are made righteous by God’s grace, through Christ’s saving work. We are called and equipped by the Spirit to do God’s work. We can look to the future with confidence because God will lead us on.

We look back with gratitude at what God has done in our lives and in our church. And we look forward to what “the best is yet to be.” So “sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.”

Prayer: O God, guide us to trust You as Abraham did, and lead us to a new day of grace and service, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Rhoda MacKenzie

Date: March 20, 2011

Scripture: John 3:1-17

Although he was a Pharisee, Nicodemus was a secret follower of Jesus. As a Pharisee, he was an expert in Jewish theology and law and yet did not understand that it is impossible for natural man to see or enter into the kingdom of God. Man's sinful nature makes all men blind to spiritual truth and dictates that, no matter how intelligent, or moral, or "good" a man is, he simply cannot, by his own ability, earn his way into the kingdom of God. He must be born again. The rebirth of which Jesus speaks is not of the flesh but a rebirth of water, that is, Baptism, and of the Holy Spirit. It is a rebirth that is based upon a man's faith in the crucified Christ and is not simply a "correction" of the man's old nature by the Holy Spirit. Rather, it is one in which the man is made a new creation in Christ. It is through this rebirth that we come to share in the life and the divine nature of Jesus Christ; that we dwell in Christ and He in us. We have done nothing to merit this salvation; indeed if we were to be judged on our own merits we should surely be condemned. But God the Father sent his Son to save mankind, not to condemn us; thus, our salvation is a gift, freely given to us and to all men out of God's grace and great love for all mankind and secured to us by the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Each of us can have this great benefit and become an inheritor of the kingdom of God by inviting Jesus to come into our heart with true belief and faith in our Savior, the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Almighty God, I thank you for the precious gift of your Son and the sacrifice He made for me and for the gift of the Holy Spirit in my daily life. I pray that with the help of the Holy Spirit I may continue to grow ever deeper in my faith in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Richard Knutsen

Date: March 21, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 128

This psalm appears to me as a message of promise... if we keep our faith strong in the Lord we will be comfortable and satisfied in our lives on Earth. It is a spiritual message, too, in that, if we obey God then good things will happen to us, our family, and everyone who trusts in the Lord (Jerusalem). In truth, we have to understand that reading this psalm literally is to realize that "faith" (like "God") is a verb and we must be proactive in order to receive the special "Peace" from Jesus. "Peace" is when people do not fight each other. We need to take action to live our faith and become walking fonts of compassion. Others should see and experience God's love in the example of our life.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, please show us how to best keep our faith in You and walk in Your ways. Grant us peace to get along with others so that we may live happy and meaningful lives at work, at home, and at church.  
Amen.

Martha Shauck Lundberg

Date: March 22, 2011

Scripture: Hebrews 3:1-6

“The builder of all things is God.” This thought gave me back my faith.

Perhaps some Christians never doubt our Lord’s existence. I can’t claim that. At 17, I lost my beliefs. If there was no proof of God, perhaps there was no God. If so, death was a great black chasm – an absolute inability to do anything, ever again. Suddenly, I was lost, terrified – as if wandering in the desert.

The idea that brought me back to my beliefs came on a walk home from school. It was a spectacular spring day, and I had taken a course in statistics. What, I idly wondered, were the odds of a world with such beauty? What was the likelihood of such variety, with bees, dogwoods, squirrels, mice, and foxes – each evolving and all interrelated? Could this have happened by chance?

The probability, I realized, was unimaginably small. How much more likely it was that a caring, knowing, purposeful Builder had created our world. And, therefore, the signs of God’s existence were everywhere around me!

Lent is a time of searching and uncertainty. But spring is here, bringing all its glorious testimony to God’s presence in our lives. The builder of all things is God!

Prayer: Father, help us to recognize You every day in the creatures, plants, and minerals of your world. May we appreciate and preserve them, so that people forever know You through your creation. Amen.

Liz King

Date: March 23, 2011

Scripture: Romans 4:6-13

This passage begins with the promise of freedom from penalty or guilt from our sins. Being able to “let go and let God” comes to mind as does Martin Luther’s teachings that we are saved by faith and God’s grace. This is important to me as Easter approaches since Jesus’ dying on the cross outweighs my sins, small or great. The statements and questions about Abraham’s justification by faith and connection to the Jewish rituals mean to me that we should not use the rituals (works) to justify our salvation. When we believe in Jesus and repent of our sins, we are following in Abraham’s steps with strength in our faith.

Prayer: Dear Father, continue to strengthen our faith by remembering our salvation is given to us through your grace. Thank you for sending Jesus to save us from the punishment of our sins. Amen

Phyllis Axtell

Date: March 24, 2011

Scripture: Exodus 17:1-7

"There was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said 'Give us water that we may drink.' " How often we expect our needs and our desires to be acknowledged instantaneously, and when they are not we express doubt and frustration. Even when God has shown us, over and over, that He cares, when He has bestowed blessings upon us and lifted our burdens, even then, when our current wish isn't granted, our faith falters and doubt creeps in. We blame God. Why do we do this, when our beliefs tell us God is with us at all times? We need stronger faith.

True faith trusts God to do the right thing at the right time -- that which is in our best interests even though we may not recognize those best interests as such. True faith realizes that God loves us and is there for us when we call on Him. True faith opens doors we don't know exist. And it brings us peace of mind in troublesome times.

Prayer: God, strengthen my faith. Help me to understand your ways, and even when I don't, to accept them, secure in the knowledge You are there for me. Amen.

Mae Scanlan

Date: March 25, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 95

At a time when Emmanuel Lutheran Church is considering new forms of worship, this psalm offers some thoughtful reminders on the topic. Notably, it is written in the first person plural; worship is a collective effort, a collective experience. It is not intended as a solo exercise to be done in isolation. Then listen to the words of the Psalm - "Sing to the Lord," "Shout joyfully," and again "Shout joyfully". Worship is a joyous expression as we "come before his presence with thanksgiving". It is not a classroom, or lecture hall - maybe the ancients had their own version of the mosh pit. It is reverential - "Bow down" and "Kneel before"; "the Lord is the great God" and "The great King above all gods."

The psalm ends on a cautionary note, "Do not harden your hearts." He is asking us to persevere even when the way of God may not be readily apparent to us. It is not easy to "Shout joyfully" when God appears to have abandoned us, individually or collectively. It is not easy to persevere and to "Come before his presence with thanksgiving" when we can focus only on what has gone wrong in our lives.

Prayer: Lord, help me, help us, to continue to find new ways to shout joyfully and to come before You, to bow before You, with thanksgiving for You are indeed the great God. Amen.

Jim McGee

Date: March 26, 2011

Scripture: Romans 5:1-11

There's nothing like a sudden health crisis to make you think hard about your relationship with God. My cancer diagnosis came at a time when I felt particularly good; healthy, fit, a happy Granny of 6. The next day I was having CT scans and a few weeks later I was lying on a gurney in a small cubicle waiting to be wheeled into the OR. My world-class Johns Hopkins surgeon had left to scrub for the surgery. My husband and daughter were being ushered into the waiting room. I was all alone and absolutely terrified. And in that moment, I felt God's presence like never before. I knew my life was in his hands. I pictured Christ's loving arms around me and the next thing I knew I was awake in my hospital room. In Romans 5: 1-11 Paul talks about the blessings that come from "justification by faith", and this is what it means to me. That even though I have done and said and thought all sorts of awful and unkind things, God welcomes me into his arms. I may not have access to anyone of any importance on earth, yet God hears me, stands beside me, counts me as his, and will never abandon me.

Prayer: Loving Lord, what a gift You have given us, through your son Jesus Christ, to be born into a new life with You. Open our hearts to hear You, so that we may better serve You each and every day of our life. In Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Susan Waldrop

Date: March 27, 2011

Scripture: John 4:5-32

In speaking with the Samaritan woman, Jesus' words overflow with metaphor: the hour, food, harvest and one which caught my attention – "living water."

Recently I learned that the congregation in Virginia Beach which we developed and where Shirley and I stayed for 15 years, may close its doors and merge with another congregation. That caused me to be sad. Yet upon reflection, thinking of all the pastoral acts, the many members and friends who were part of that church during that time, I was quite certain that Christ's spring of "living water" was a living force in our lives together during those years. With regret, it is time to move along.

At about the same time, I learned that the congregation we served in Blacksburg is preparing to celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Clearly, this "spring of water welling up to eternal life" has been flowing all these years in this congregation serving townspeople, VPI staff, and students. That news makes my heart glad!

This year Emmanuel celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I rejoice to be joined with those of the past, present and future who have received so much from the stream of "living water" offered by the ministry of Emmanuel. Unexpected love and concern from Emmanuel has come to me during this year. I come to recognize myself as a "Samaritan" – one to whom the good news has come in unexpected places and unexpected times. Jesus has transformed ordinary water into wine, as he did at Cana, which flows to the chalice on our altar as we celebrate the Eucharist. Praise be to God!

Prayer: Give us this water, Lord; satisfy our spirits at the deep well of eternal life, springing up abundantly. Let us drink of it daily and never thirst again. Amen.

Jesse S. Hangen

Date: March 28, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 81

Today's passage on the whole soberly reminds us of Israel's debt to God, and laments her wayward disregard. But I can't help smiling at the way it begins: "For the choir director; ... Sing for joy to God our strength... Raise a song, strike the timbrel, The sweet sounding lyre with the harp" – a ringing exhortation to use joyful music in worship.

Emmanuel, for me, has always meant music and joy. From the children's choir where I learned to sing decades ago, to today's sublime hand-bell choir that today fills the Sanctuary with audible gold, Emmanuel's music lifts the congregation up and binds us together, a shared delight available nowhere else.

My parents always told me I was the youngest Charter Member of Emmanuel, not yet two when we broke ground. In my heart, Emmanuel has always been a family. As we consider our first half-century, I am struck most by the importance of community, of being "the people of God." Our relationship with God abides in individual contemplation, faith and prayer, but we affirm it together – in the Eucharist and the Creed, in music, service, and fellowship. Faith sanctifies community, and community nurtures faith – nowhere more than at Emmanuel.

Prayer: Dear Lord, even as we turn our hearts to You in meditation, let us remember that fellowship strengthens our ties to You; that where two or three have come together in your name, You are there among them. Let us always come together to raise a song, make a joyful noise, and replenish our souls. Amen.

Jennifer Georgia

Date: March 29, 2011  
Scripture: Genesis 29:1- 14

*"...they replied, here is his daughter Rachel, coming with the sheep."*

In the first look at this scripture, one would think it is about Jacob, the well, water or even the sheep. If we take a second look one may see that it is about Rachel. God has already given Jacob his blessing, in his dream of climbing the ladder and his struggle with God in this dream. Here we see Rachel, a leader among the other shepherds; she was trusted to take care of a valuable family treasure, the sheep. The other shepherds, showing respect for Rachel, wait for her to arrive before opening the well to water their sheep. The sheep followed her; they knew her voice and she knew her sheep; she cared for them. She tended her father's sheep.

Rachel, a woman, is shown as a pastor, a leader who watched over her sheep, nursed the weak, healed the sick, searched for the lost one, as the Good Shepherd would do. For one day she would be the matriarch of Israel, just as Jesus would be the Good Shepherd, our savior, who knows and cares for his sheep.

God works in mysterious ways and uses the least of his people to do his will, even those we feel are less fortunate or less likely to succeed. God knows them. Let us remember to not make quick decisions when strangers are placed in our paths. We are all called to tend the God's sheep.

Prayer: Dear Lord, teach me to be humble as the shepherd with my neighbors and to be ready to tend your sheep when You call me. Amen.

Katherine S. Burrell

Date: March 30, 2011

Scripture: John 7:14-31

In this text we read about Jesus and the disciples making their 3rd journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. The occasion is the Feast of Booths, the autumn festival in which the Jews celebrated the fall harvest and the sojourn in the Sinai wilderness.

The text contains the fourth of Jesus' disputations that John features in his Gospel. As in other disputations Jesus is teaching and revealing who he is. (John does not record many miracles or healings). In this one Jesus' identity, his teaching and his actions are under discussion and challenge. Some people declare that He is a good man (v. 12 ) and think He is the awaited Messiah (v. 26). But others think He is deceiving the people. In verses 11, 13, 19-20, 25 and 30 we read that Jesus' life is in danger.

So, Jesus, in the first days of the festival, does not come out into the public. But about the middle of the festival He boldly goes to the temple area and teaches. From here on we have the disputation. The theme He is making is that his teaching is from the one who sent Him (v.16). That is to say, He is not promoting himself but is doing the will of God. His pitch is that "anyone who resolves to do the will of God," will know that his teaching is God's not his own (vv. 16-17). In addition, because the Jews at that time were concerned not to break the law, He argues that his deeds of compassion are more important than keeping the law (vv. 23-24).

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us realize your point/lesson for us in our daily lives. We are to remind ourselves that we are doing your will for the sake of our community and our Church. Amen.

Steven F. Benz

Date: March 31, 2011

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16: 11-13

Just as the Lord led Samuel to Jesse, to choose Jesse's son, David, to be king over Israel, so He led the charter members of Emmanuel to the "Grubby Thicket" (the original name of our land) in Bethesda. Through faith, and led by God, these modern-day disciples built Emmanuel Lutheran Church at the corner of Bradley Blvd. and Seven Locks Road. As the congregation grew, the members were led by God, to choose Pastor Lookingbill to lead them. Out of the "Grubby Thicket" grew a new church building, and a congregation, led by God, to serve him in our community and around the world. As we begin our next 50 years as a congregation, let us remember the faith of our charter members and let God lead us to find more ways to serve Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, guide us and lead us so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways. Bless Emmanuel Lutheran Church as we continue to serve You. Amen.

Bobbie and Ken Seidelmann

Date: April 1, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 98

“O Sing to the Lord a New Song, for He has done marvelous things.”

Emmanuel Church has a history with this Psalm. Melba and I were privileged to have served on Emmanuel’s 25th Anniversary Planning Committee. Psalm 98 was selected as the anniversary theme. It is a pleasure to recount this great Psalm of praise once again on our church’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Psalm 98 is relevant to Emmanuel’s life, especially in that it celebrates music: “Make a joyful noise to the Lord ... break forth into joyous song and sing praises ... with the lyre and the sound of melody, with trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the king, the Lord.”

And so we do make a joyful noise to the Lord at Emmanuel with her fine organists and music director, choirs, special music programs and a congregation that loves to sing the great hymns of the church.

As we join together to praise God for his blessings, for his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel, and to Emmanuel over the past 50 years, let us continue to be a blessing to Him through this great ministry of Christ, Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

Prayer: Lord, You have blessed this congregation for 50 years. We thank you and seek your gracious love and grace for Emmanuel for many years to come. Amen.

Pastor Dick Reichard

Date: April 2, 2011

Scripture: Ephesians 5:8-14

All of my life, I've been a rule-follower. We Germans like order and structure, so rules were followed, even if I didn't understand the purpose of their existence. As I grew older, I began to see the sense behind most rules, but I also began to question the reason for others. I struggled into adulthood with how to be obedient, but make changes where I felt the man-made rules should be changed. As I raise my daughter, who is not a rule-follower, and who is almost a teenager, I know I need to show her the purpose of being obedient without making her complacent.

In today's verse, we see that God's light is what shows us the truth, the goodness in being. "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness", says Paul. "Everything exposed by the light becomes visible." Here is the answer, then, to my query. God can show us the path to truth, goodness and righteousness. How wonderful! By following God and Jesus' teachings, we will learn the structure and purpose of how to lead our lives. God may want us to be compliant with his rules, but He certainly doesn't want us to be complacent. He wants us to use our minds and our hearts, while He illuminates the path we need to travel, to assist with our decisions and actions. Amazing!

So as I struggle with raising my daughter to do the right thing, and to know why she should do this when she doesn't feel like it, I get support from God through the people of Emmanuel Lutheran Church. The confirmation classes, the church lessons and sermons, the social gatherings where Emma learns that having fun doesn't involve "fruitless deeds of darkness"--all of these help illuminate God's path for her. Certainly Paul was right—there is fruit in the light.

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for providing the light that helps us in our daily struggles, so we can see the path You would have us travel. As we celebrate our church's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, help us to spread the light You provide for us, so that others may share in the gifts of your goodness and truth. Amen.

Pamela Schuettler

Date: April 3, 2011

Scripture: John 9:1-41

The most amazing thing about Newgrange in County Meade in Ireland is the Passage grave there. It's about 5000 years old and was built by unknown people who lived in the Boyne valley as farmers and stock raising folks. The Newgrange mound is huge and impressive as an ancient burial focus that clearly displays the ancient appreciation for light and darkness.

There is a "roof box" over the entrance of the mound that allows light to enter the mound exactly on the winter solstice (21 December) and penetrate the length of a very dark passage to the inner chambers. When the light extends to the inner chamber there is a sudden dispersion of the light that makes the whole of the chamber come alive! We who stand and wait in the darkness are finally free from blindness and can see from the light that has arrived.

So it is with this story of the blind man from birth in the Gospel of John. The ancient superstition that sin caused physical illness and deformities is challenged by Jesus, who is the light of the world that has come into this man's darkness. With his saliva made into mud and the waters of the Pool of Siloam, this man who was blind can now see. Those who are blind to the Grace of God's healing and wisdom will see light through Jesus; those who think they can see but refuse to recognize Jesus' compassion and faith will be seen as blind.

Prayer: Father, Abba, who brings light into the world, help us to see your Son's deeds of compassion and hear his caring and faithful words that we too may see and follow the way. Amen.

Jan P. Lookingbill, Pastor

Date: April 4, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 146

This is a psalm of exuberant joy. Although it seems strange, in Lent, a time of penitential considerations, to have a lesson expressing such ebullient delight, but when it comes to the content of the psalm, it expresses confident assurance of the goodness and mercy of God. No matter how grim things become, we are called to remember that God is there with all his support and grace and that He is there for each of us. "Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help!" It doesn't say that things might not be the way we want them, but with God, we can bear them. Other helpers may fail, but God, never.

Prayer: Oh God, continue to grant me the grace of your presence and support. Help me always to know You in this way, for You are my rock and salvation. Amen.

Mike Poston

Date: April 5, 2011  
Scripture: Colossians 1:9-14

I did not have to search too deeply to know that there is such truth to the importance of praying for others. I try to take seriously: "I will keep you in my prayers," as I know I am the recipient of many prayers offered by sincere angels and have been told by others how much it means when someone is praying for specific guidance.

Our family needed support when John was in surgery and in rehab. I have a long list of those who prayed. I know it made a difference because we were at peace. In the grieving process, I was poignantly aware that those prayers were still at work as I felt peace at times when I wondered: why I am so calm? Now as each day unfolds and when traveling on long journeys I know prayers of others accompany me. God's presence is so apparent and felt.

Someone said "Peace is not the absence of trouble but the presence of God." When the presence of God is felt, there is comfort, love, joy, thanksgiving – all that Paul writes in this passage. Then light shines and darkness is dispelled.

When others pray for you and ask for wisdom and understanding, we join with the psalmist in asking for understanding and help (Psalm 119:169-176).

Prayer: Change me, Lord, so I can be attuned to the lives of those for whom life seems difficult and also for those who are joyful for many reasons. Teach me how I can be silent, quiet for long enough so I can ask: What would you do, Lord? What do you want me to do? I long for your presence and as Solomon, I ask for an understanding heart. I need your strength for living each day. You are my rock. Equip me with sensitivity to pray for others and their individual needs. In Christ's name I pray. Amen

Kristi Johnson

Date: April 6, 2011

Scripture: Matthew 9:27-34

This text is about God's making of miracles. Though we don't often discuss miracles today, we all have seen them in the birth of our children. And there are those miracles that guide and protect us as we go through very trying times, or personal issues. I stress the word occasionally because I believe that God hears all of our prayers but does not always answer all of them as we might wish. There is a difference between "want" and "truly needing". Then also, sometimes God's plan for us may be other than what our own plan might be. God does see further down our road than we do. So it is when we are in most need and at that time of need, call out to God for deep and sincere help, we can receive a miracle. So it has been with me on several occasions. God's work in my life gives me the knowledge that God will carry me through to the accomplishment of whatever God's plan is for me.

Prayer: Every day I thank you, God, for the miracles of my children and the miracles You have given my life to continue serving You. Amen.

Dennis Quicker

Date: April 7, 2011

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14

“I haven’t had a chance to sit down all day” declared my 5-year old son. My husband was somewhat confused at the commentary and quickly realized that our son was simply repeating my statement earlier in the week. It seems like when I finally find time to relax and recharge, something interferes. Whether it is laundry, a buzzing blackberry, or an empty pantry, it seems like I will never be finished and be able to “sit down”. How do I recharge my “old bones” when I do not have time to relax? I confess that sometimes on Sunday morning, I think I should just stay home and relax. After all, it is difficult to change out of my comfy clothes, enter a cold car and drive to church. I could be reading the paper, I could be taking an un-interrupted shower, and I could even watch that Netflix movie that arrived thirty days ago. If I miss church, Sunday is not the same, I do not feel as “re-charged” and ready for the week to come.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I pray that You continue to show me and help “breathe life” into our exhausting, deadline-infested and constantly moving lives and remind us of our true purpose in life, to believe and share your faith. Amen.

Sheri Parker White

Date: April 8, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 130

Psalms 120-134 all bear the name "A Song of Ascents." It is believed that this refers to the annual religious pilgrimages to Jerusalem which brought the worshippers singing to Mt. Zion. This reading illustrates a testimony of trust in the Lord by one who knows that even though he is a sinner, the Lord hears his cry out of the depths.

During our darkest hour, we turn to the Lord and He hears us and helps us through our difficult time. He does this regardless of who we are and what "kind" of Christian we are. We are all imperfect. We are all sinners, but the Lord forgives our imperfections and loves us and ultimately will grant us divine redemption.

Prayer: Lord, let my trust in You grow deeper during this Lenten season so that I may serve You in the best ways I can and nourish our relationship. Amen.

Sue Hunley

Date: April 9, 2011

Scripture: Romans 8:6-11

Paul wrote: “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (verse 9). And the reformer John Calvin said that “all that Christ has suffered and done for the salvation of humankind remains useless and irrelevant for us, as long as Christ remains outside of us and we remain separated from him” (Institutes III.I.1). Remaining apart from the Holy Spirit is a deadly condition.

What must we do to acquire the Holy Spirit and to receive Christ within us? The good news of the Gospel of Jesus and our personal experience is that all that we need to do is ask God and it will be given to us (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9). God will entirely renew us by making his Spirit dwell in us, giving life to our mortal bodies and recreating us into children of God who were born not of the will of man but of the will of God (Romans 8:11-17; John 1:12-13; Calvin, Institutes III.I.2-4).

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit and recreate us into children of God! Amen!

Tobias and Marijke Asser

Date: April 10, 2011

Scripture: John 11:1-45

We all know this story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. But it's been years since I read the entire story in this chapter of John, and I was amazed at its complexity when I read it again. I had missed many of the twists and turns in it. Jesus was asked by Mary and Martha to come heal their brother Lazarus, who was sick. But the story says Jesus delayed coming by two days, and instead of healing Lazarus, he dies. So did Jesus deliberately let him die? Did Lazarus have to die in order for Jesus to prove himself as our Savior? What kind of God would do that, when Jesus could have healed him? I think it helps to not take the story too literally. Instead, we need to take it as a precursor and illustration of Jesus' own suffering and resurrection, and what those events mean to us personally. Jesus too suffers before He dies, and He too lies in the tomb for days before his resurrection. Further, John seems to be saying that each of us must recognize ourselves as dead men and women like Lazarus, who need new life, who only through and with faith in Christ can walk out of the tomb into new life. Jesus is the true miracle, the resurrection and the life, and whoever believes in him will have eternal life. As one commentator says, whoever does not believe this miracle sees this story as a spectator. It is only when the story becomes my story does the meaning of this miracle become clear.

Prayer: Dear God, help me and everyone to have the faith to understand that only through the miracle of your Son can we be lifted up to new and eternal life. Amen.

Larry Ries

Date: April 11, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 143

From verse six of this sometimes called a “psalm of repentance of David”, a desperate person cries out: “I stretch out my hand to You; my soul thirsts for You.” I am reminded of the hymn “O Jesus, thou art standing outside the fast closed door.” (referring to Rev 3:20 “I stand at the door and knock.”). Perhaps the hymn was inspired by a painting showing the Savior knocking with scarred hands at a closed door with no latch. The artist explains that the door can only be opened from the inside. We must reach out to Him.

A small child was delivered to church with the instruction to “Knock. If the door is open, go in. If not, we will go home again.” Hopefully, for fifty years the doors of Emmanuel have remained open to ALL who knock.

Prayer: O Lord, especially throughout these forty days, bless the journey that all your people make. Source of living water, may we drink of You and live. Amen.

Bill Wertman

Date: April 12, 2011

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 1-10

The most important message in the text is the emphasis on God's abundant love and grace by sending us his only Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue and save us. You are not saved by your own efforts but through faith and God's infinite grace and love.

He made us what we are – whole and ready to fulfill our life with good deeds and love for our fellow man.

I probably joined Emmanuel around 1970. We had returned from Oberammergau, Germany in 1967. If I remember correctly, it was either Pastor Shaeffer, himself, or a church member who visited me at home and invited me to come to the service.

Over these many years, my family and I celebrated many happy occasions at Emmanuel: a wedding, five confirmations, and two baptisms. We also celebrated two memorial services, one for my Catholic mother, and the other for my Jewish husband. I love and appreciate Emmanuel's ecumenical attitude towards non-Lutherans. My mother and husband always felt welcome.

The church has been wonderful to me during my five year battle with breast cancer – which I hope to win – with God's help and your prayers.

Gratefully,

Doris A. Moss

Date: April 13, 2011

Scripture: Matthew 22: 23-33

What is heaven like? The Sadducees try to trip up Jesus by imagining heaven as a place where earthly laws reign. But Jesus will not be so easily tripped up. "God is not God of the Dead, but of the living."

Any doubt as to what is meant is swept away in the next passage - The Great Commandment. "Love your God and love your neighbor as yourself."

What is heaven like? Does it matter? God is not God of the dead, but of the living. We need to focus on the guidance God offers for life here on earth. Love your neighbor; feed the hungry; comfort the poor and sick. In due time we will learn what heaven is, or is not.

Prayer: Help me to understand that finding a place with You after death, means finding You among those we live with today. Amen.

Donna K. McGee

Date: April 14, 2011

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4-9

The prophet Isaiah is my most-loved Old Testament author. In today's lesson he leads our attention toward the sufferings of Jesus which occurred in the last days preceding the Resurrection; detailing for us his obedience to the Call of God.

As a child, the pleasant anticipation of Easter Sunday overshadowed my attention to the solemn lessons offered in the Lenten services. With maturity, I have come to more fully appreciate their deep significance. This reading from Isaiah - sometimes termed the third "Servant Song" - brings me to focus on the stark reality of the bitter conditions which confronted Jesus.

We also find a call to follow in the footsteps of the Servant of God. The world continues to challenge, as it is filled with injustice, hunger and need; Isaiah sets a requirement that God's will must be done. He then encourages us, by saying "For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded". The harsh intrusion of the world becomes resolved by the presence of The Lord. Each morning I can lift my head, banish fear, embrace resolve, and with joy lift my voice; "Dear Lord God, I thank you for giving me this day".

Prayer: Dear Lord God, morning by morning, waken us, open our ears to hear, and help us to do your will. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Carl Seils

Date: April 15, 2011

Scripture: Psalm 31:9-16 (NSRV)

Although this reading is an account of David's suffering in his adversarial relationship with Saul, it gives a vivid image of Christ's suffering. Jesus' neighbors scorned Him for his words; following his Father's will brought nothing but pain and ostracism. On the cross, his very bones wasted away with misery. Yet, He was faithful to his Father's call, knowing that there was a divine purpose to his circumstances and that He was not alone. He was a broken vessel that in the hands of the Father would be made new and filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We all have times of deep suffering; times when we feel totally consumed by the pain, and our bones are wasting away with the misery. People can shy away from us when we are in pain, adding to our grief and making us feel like a pariah. However, our hope rests in the hands of God. In these times, too, He has a plan for our future, a plan for our happiness. When we feel like broken vessels, we can be assured that his hand will mold us into a new creation that will be filled with living water.

Prayer: Dearest heavenly Father, bless those who are suffering from loss of loved ones, loss of vocation, loss of hope. Hold them in your hand and let them see there is a purpose in this darkness that will lead to a new brightness, just as the darkness of the tomb led to the light of Easter. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Candy Heinlein

Date: April 16, 2011  
Scripture: Philippians 2:5-11

I was trying to remember when I first learned about the concept of setting goals. Although I am sure I set them for myself in high school-to achieve certain grades, etc. I don't know that I recognized them as formal goals. The clearest memory of such is from college, when we learned to write patient care plans. These documents included the patient's problem(s), interventions, goals of treatment(s), and then outcomes/evaluation – were the goals met or not. Since college, the idea of goals has come up in life in various ways. It takes introspection when setting goals for oneself, and often we are taught that goals should be “realistic” and also measurable.

When reading the scripture for today, I thought that it presents a very high goal-for me to try and live like Jesus. How on earth can this be realistic? How can this be measured? We must remember that God does not expect us to be perfect. God expects that we use Jesus as our mentor as we live our lives. The message is to practice compassion, mercy, patience, humility, and honor. Maybe this will be measured by the response of someone to whom you show compassion; maybe by the way you feel after helping someone in a situation where you had nothing to gain, but perhaps even had to sacrifice. Maybe the outcome can't be evaluated by you at all. The important piece is to show the love of Jesus.... and, that we can all do.

Prayer: Dear Lord – Thank you for giving us Jesus, so that we can see an example of how to walk humbly with You. Amen.

Anna Roberts

Date: April 17, 2011

Scripture: Matthew 27: 11-54

Here we are, just a week away from Easter Sunday when we celebrate Christ's resurrection from the death He suffered at the hands of Pontius Pilate and the people who clamored for him to be placed on the cross, as written in Matthew's words.

Jesus' mission was to communicate God's love for his people and to make possible God's remission of our sins. We celebrate because this remission allows us to know God's love for us. We then strive to follow the messages and teachings Jesus taught.

Our congregation is celebrating the 50 years of service and learning in our community. We are among the many people who have been blessed to attend and serve the Lord here. And I know that today we share God's love in this congregation.

In 2010 I decided to have both knees replaced. As I entered the operating room I didn't worry. I was going into the hands of medical specialists and believed God was guiding all. And during this event and my recovery, I felt the love of our pastors and the congregation as I received much-appreciated visits, cards, calls, and messages. The feeling grew stronger, like an aura. It soothed me and gave me a feeling of peace. I am sure that love speeded my recovery. I thank God and all of you for the love we share.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I ask your help in looking to come closer with your presence. I thank you for your presence and love in our congregation and community. In Jesus name, Amen.

Gene Boone

Date: April 18, 2011

Scripture: John 12:1-11

Meditation: "You will have the poor with you always"

In this reading we find Jesus again visiting the home of his friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus. They are having dinner and one assumes having an enjoyable visit together when Mary brings out "very costly ointment" and begins to anoint the feet of Jesus. The house was "full of the scent of this ointment" as Judas Iscariot begins to criticize Mary for spending so much for the ointment rather than donating money to the poor.

Judas had no real concern for the poor but was interested in how he could benefit from contributions Mary might have made to the poor in place of buying expensive ointment. Do we, like Mary, give our best to the Lord in whatever way we can, even if it involves personal sacrifice or provokes the criticism of others? Are we sometimes more concerned about getting something in return rather than simply giving to the poor because it is the right thing to do?

Thinking about the needs of the global poor can be overwhelming. Television, newspaper and internet articles all blast news of countless unknown souls who are struggling just to have enough food to eat each day. Yet as we individually decide give from our abundance to those in need, do we seek public recognition when we write a big check to charity? Do we want our names on plaques announcing our contributions? Do we donate to charity simply to get a tax write-off? Maybe what we really need is to mentally "see the face of Christ" in each person we may help by anonymously (or at least "quietly") donating to worthy causes.

Prayer: Lord, Let us each act on your command to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and shelter to the homeless, regardless of the potential recognition of our generosity. For You alone see what we do in your name. What else matters? Amen.

Martha M. Novelly

Friend of Emmanuel

Date: April 19, 2011

Scripture: John 12:20-36

We recognize this passage in John as the one in which Jesus talks to his disciples about his upcoming death. In looking at it we also see God using Jesus to teach us how to pray. Jesus is in turmoil as He faces his upcoming death. He is human and cries out to his Father. Why do we not do something similar? We have the example yet when we are in turmoil; often we do not follow this example. Is it because we are afraid, because we forget or is it because of some other excuse? How often we forget the simple phrase, "take it to the Lord in prayer."

During these "40 Days," we must do what Emmanuel's saints have done for 50 years; we must turn to God in prayer. We must ask God to guide our church as we continue to teach God's word; we must turn to God in prayer for each of our members that they will know God's love and turn to God in prayer.

No matter how small the problem or great the turmoil, we have a Father who loves us and hears our prayers! What blessed assurance!

Prayer: Dear God, help us follow your Son's example and turn to You in prayer. Amen

Diane Swenson

Date: April 20, 2011

Scripture: John 13:21- 32

During the Last Supper, Jesus foretells his betrayal. "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me" (13:21). Confused, Simon Peter asks "Lord, who is it?" (13:25). Jesus' answers "It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish" (13:26). Jesus hands the bread to Judas and the betrayal begins. At this moment, Satan enters Judas (as told by John). Then Jesus tells Judas "do quickly what you are going to do" (13:27), as if He must grant Judas permission. No one takes his life from Him, He lays it down freely. Thus it would seem to imply that eating with Jesus does not guarantee one's discipleship. "So, after receiving the piece of bread, he (Judas) immediately went out. And it was night." (13:30). Fittingly, Judas shows no remorse in John; we can only understand that he has done exactly what he intended to do. John has no story of Judas' death. It is enough that he has gone out into the darkness. Judas in the Gospel of John, is the representative defector, who is contrasted with the Beloved Disciple (13:23), who is a child of God, marked by love. The Beloved Disciple, according to John 19:35, is the one that "has testified so that you also may believe" that Jesus died, buried, and then rose again. The Beloved Disciple is designated as the special eyewitness of Passion Week whose testimony lies behind the Fourth Gospel (and therefore he is the guarantor of the truthfulness of this testimony).

And with Judas' departure, Jesus foretells of the hour to come: "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him." God's will, will be done.

Prayer: Jesus, we thank you for laying your life down for us, so that we may have life and have it abundantly. Please help us to live according to thy will. Amen.

Kim Groves

Date: April 21, 2011

Scripture: John 13:1-17; 31-35

Can you believe it? Jesus washes the disciples' feet! In this passage, Jesus provides a visual aid to all and proves He is the greatest servant of all time. The story is familiar to many...when the disciples booked an upper room for what was to be The Last Supper, there was no servant to wash dirty feet at the door, as was their custom. After supper, Jesus stripped down to a small piece of cloth around his waist, even looking the part of a servant, and took a water basin and towel and began washing their feet. He saw a "teachable moment" and acted, leading by example. After He had finished, He asked his followers to do the same unto others.

He knew that He had limited time to spend with them before departing to his Father...his betrayal had already been set in motion. In verses 31-35, Jesus tells his disciples that where He is going they cannot come, and so commands them to love one another as He has loved them. He knows that they will be known as his disciples if they obey this commandment.

Prayer: Dear God, as we remind ourselves of your ultimate sacrifice during Lent, help us to follow your commandment. Instill in us the security to serve, to look for opportunities to put others ahead of ourselves and to act on them. Amen

Kurt Einwaechter

Date: April 22, 2011 Good Friday

Scripture: John 18:1-19:42

An anniversary is “The annual remembrance and commemoration of a notable event” (combination of several sources). With remembrances, emotions range from sadness to happiness to reflection. Today is the anniversary of Good Friday, a very notable event in the world, church and personally. Today is also the anniversary of my father’s death, a deeply personal event for our family and friends. This 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church has evoked many experiences shared in this devotional. Anniversaries are times to pause and remember and then look forward.

On this day, we remember our Lord Jesus being arrested, questioned, flogged and crucified. We remember his precious words from the cross. On anniversaries, we have rituals. For me, one is to reread the account in John and then to hear the pastors preach on the seven words from the cross. Each year I have been moved with Jesus’ tender words to his mother. “Dear woman, here is your son.” (Jn 19:26) These words overflow with tenderness and sadness. Mary shows such grace in her grief. The passage evokes gut-wrenching aches and I have the benefit of having 2000 years having passed and KNOWING what lies ahead in 3 short days (the “Good” part of Good Friday). Mary did not know that.

As heart-wrenching as my father’s death was and still is for our family, we have peace in knowing he is with our Lord. We also now can start to smile on the happy times and laugh through the funny times and be thankful for all the teaching times he gave us.

As joyous as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emmanuel is, there have been joyous, sad, funny and learning times. With the Holy Spirit’s power and the focus on spiritual things, we work toward God’s goal in this house with joy.

Prayer: Dear crucified and risen Lord, we remember and thank you for your ultimate sacrifice. Cradle us in your arms as we experience your gift of life. In your name we pray. Amen.

Ginger Boone

Date: April 23, 2011

Scripture: John 21:1-18

Again, this year the world often seems to be in a “perfect storm” of uprisings in countries of the Middle East and harsh weather patterns here at home. We are beset with anxiety about what to think and how to act. In John 21, Jesus says to his disciples “tend my sheep.” Good advice for difficult times.

As the years go by, it seems that the seemingly smallest friendly acts of human interaction serve to fulfill Jesus’ advice. A nursing home which I visit, has become a second residence that plays out daily incidents of human interaction and support among the residents. Residents, whom at first glance you might think have little awareness, show quick support for each other as wheel chairs pass. A brief smile, a twinkle in the eye, a small wave, a word of greeting are all exchanged. It is extraordinary to see such kindness among those who have lost so much of their former robust physical and mental capacities. It is a blessing.

John 21:18 says *“Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.”* It was Bette Davis, I believe, who said *“Old age ain’t for sissies.”* So often it is the human interaction and support within the community of seniors that fulfills Jesus’ call.

Prayer: Help us God to provide those small acts of comfort that sustain our daily lives. Amen.

Floyd & Sally Swanson

# Prayer Requests

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# **Easter Morning ....**



**“He is Risen”**

**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

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Office Hours: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Mon-Fri

**Jan P. Lookingbill, Pastor**

**Robert L. Lewis, Jr., Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Pastor**

**James L. McGee, Church Council President**

**Katherine S. Burrell, Parish Administration**

**Dingwall Fleary, Director of Music**

**Susan Drumm, Director of Joyful Praise, Children's Choir**

**Anna Roberts, Parish Nurse**

**Ligia Benjumea, Nursery Attendant**

**Sunday Worship 8:30 am and 11:00 am**

**Sunday School and Family Worship Service 10:00 am**

Norwegian Worship September-June every second Sunday at 3:00 pm