# The Echoes

January 2021

Inside: *Pastor Lyn looks forward*
*Christmas Eve*
*Sock Tree, Giving Tree, Comfort Kits*
*Servant of the Month retrospective*

# Emanuel Lutheran Church

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

# From Pastor Lyn

Happy New Year!

Never, in my lifetime, has there been a time when the new year has been so highly anticipated as this one. Maybe others of you have a different experience but I think it's fair to say that since about May, people everywhere have been ready for 2020 to end. All over the world, there has been a collective wish to see the light at the end of this exceptionally long tunnel. Each new year begins with hope like that, a fresh start, improved health, better times in general, etc. This year hope includes a vaccine. The world wants "light" to include a successful vaccine.

For people who have just come through Advent and Christmas "light" holds a deeper meaning. Within our hope is the One true Light, as in "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." The Divine light of creation made visible as the Light of salvation in Jesus' birth. [John 1:4-5].

The Season of Epiphany begins January 6th. Epiphany - a season to call forth the light. The days are beginning, minute by minute, to gain light which is symbolic for Epiphany; a growing intensity of light that culminates on Ash Wednesday, when we are asked to peer into the darkness of our own mortality. Then Easter morning we burst, relieved - into Resurrection light! Pentecost follows and we level off through the summer months. In some ways, the liturgical year feels like a roller coaster ride. A ride up toward the light followed by a dive into darkness. It can be disconcerting; however, it's meant to be enriching. The liturgical year is more than a method of keeping track of holidays. It is to call attention to the cycle or rhythm of life meant to move us into a deeper understanding of God in our lives. A life of faith accompanied

Emanuel is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Sunday Worship: 9 & 10 am

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## OUR VISION

Emanuel's vision is to be loving, supportive, and welcoming, as we reach out in service and in witness to our neighborhood and the city beyond.

We share a passion to nurture people in all stages and circumstances of life.

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

God is calling us to joyfully follow the Holy Spirit in ministry to

# Pastor Lyn, continued

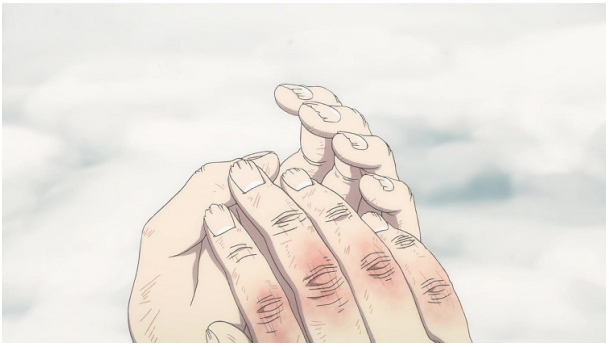
by liturgical ritual is a gift in that during the rhythms of the church year we are invited to grow and allow the fruits of the spirit to mature in us.

What are you going to do with hope and light in this new year? I hope for renewed emphasis of our "year that wasn't." That is, we didn't get to celebrate the 85th anniversary of Emanuel like we'd hoped. So here we are January 2021, our 86th year… ready, I believe, to once more move Forward in Faith. I wonder what you are thinking about the potential of those three words? What does Forward in Faith mean for you – for the congregation, this year? Does it mean waiting to move forward until things are "normal" or does it signify something more – or less? New year hope, forward movement is different for people of faith.

There are those in our community who continue to wait for God to do something; to perform a magical miracle that will end the coronavirus, stop contentious behaviors, eliminate violence, heal hunger, end homelessness and other economic uncertainties. Well – those folks are likely to be disappointed in both the new year and in God. Year after year they hope for a better year than the last yet wait for God or someone else to fix things. One would think it would dawn on humanity, even many in the category named "Christian," that God has already done something. God put into our hands the ability and the means to do something. There is plenty of fixing we can do in our little corner of the world. God promised to go with us… let's not forget that most important detail. We are not alone – no need to fear. (Remember the angel's words?)

God – Divine Light, Divine Hope – created all that there is and then decided to put a face on Divine Light and Divine Hope in the person of Jesus Christ. Yet, since the ascension, people still stand around looking up in the sky wondering where God is and when God is going to do something. Humans are such creatures of habit.

I don't make new year's resolutions but this year I'm going to hope that by next December my hands look more worn and chapped due to more hands-on than hands-off. I hope the roughness of my cuticles will be because I've helped more, touched more, engaged with more people and not solely because I've become more of a compulsive handwasher than I was in 2020. I hope to break some creature habits in order to be more of a hands-on light.



All this rambling, dear people, to say I pray the new year is better for you in every way possible, but I also pray and hope the new year brings you closer than ever to the baby who was born for you, the Savior who died for you and the Resurrected Lord who lives for you. We will be challenged by life in 2021 as in any year, yet remember – we are loved to death – and so we will move Forward in Faith one more year.

Shalom, beloved of God, Shalom.

Pastor Lyn

# Christmas Eve at Emanuel

Photos by Marsha Waggoner and Elaine Ixcot

We had two services on Christmas Eve. Marsha and Elaine captured some moments for us to share. They reported that seeing the church in candlelight was very moving. The cover image this month is Marsha's photo.

# The Sock Tree

Photos by Elaine Ixcot and Mike Epting

Every year we donate socks to Modesto Gospel Mission and we did not allow 2020 to stop us from continuing this tradition.

# The Giving Tree

Submitted by Elaine Ixcot and Mike Epting

We continued another Emanuel tradition of buying and wrapping Christmas presents for families associated with our Day Care Program. Again this year we took all the tags and replaced them with gifts.

# Zoom Meetings

Submitted by Lois Owen

Lois showed us how she (and Sue Wilke) prepare for the Tuesday Text Study Zoom meetings. However, the rest of can testify that the duct tape doesn't always hold!

# Easter Prayer

Submitted by Bob Reuter

As we celebrated the miracle birth of Jesus the son of God during this Christmas Season, we need to celebrate another miracle that God has performed. That is the transfer of knowledge and guidance to researchers to develop corona virus vaccines in record time. Hopefully, this will enable Emanuel Lutheran Church to celebrate worship services like we did a year ago. We pray that Easter will be a grand gathering of our congregation, with flowers, singing, Easter breakfast, and joyful greetings.

# A Thank You from Joyce

Submitted by Joyce Bachman via Sue Wilke

Joyce wants to thank everyone who has been so nice to her during 2020. This has been a tough year for many people who have been isolated and lonely. Joyce is grateful for the help she has received, the calls and the words of encouragement.

# Blessing the Quilts

Photos by Elaine Excot, note from Paula Kroeze

I want to thank everyone who worked on the quilts for the foster children the last few weeks. I want to especially thank Sue Wilke. She made over 10 tops, as well as helping tie and bind several. I also want to say a special thank you to Kristine Kraft, Barbara Crawford and Debbie Van Diepen. They had quite an assembly line going and got a LOT of quilts done. I also want to thank all those who worked on this project that kinda flew under my radar and I am not sure who was doing what but their work was showing up on the table. We got 31 quilts finished! This project touched a lot of hearts.

Paula Kroeze

# Food for Faith

Photos by Elaine Excot

Once more we filled up a car with food donations for Interfaith Ministries, now known as "The Food Initiative of Greater Stanislaus." They changed their name to emphasize their ministry of feeding hungry people in Modesto.

# Comfort Kits

submitted by Elaine Ixcot

These photos show Emanuel's contributions on their way to be assembled into "Comfort Kits", part of the "Love All Our Children" program for foster children. Emanuel made their promised donations of 115 nightlights, 63 small stuffed toys, 100 flashlights from Rebecca Circle and 31 children's quilts from our Piecemakers. Please note the Piecemakers only had 3 finished when they heard about this project. A huge thank you to everyone at Emanuel Lutheran Church. You are the greatest!

The Comfort Kit Drive, when all were assembled, came to 1,050 Comfort Kits for 2020. Comfort Kits started in a garage in 2013. As of the start of the 2020 drive they had assembled and created 6,523. Adding the 1,050 from this year's drive makes 7,573 since their beginning, distributing over a thousand Comfort Kits to foster children each year. Quite an awesome and meaningful achievement for our community.

# Servants of the Month, 2020

Compiled by Mike Epting

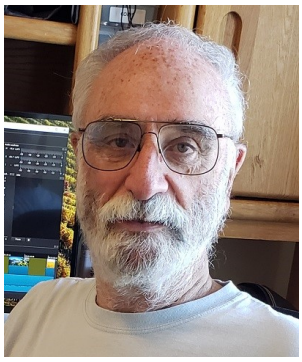
Last year in January I published a huge table of all of our designated servants going back to 2014. Such a table would be nearly unreadable if I were to add another year. I decided to solve the problem by starting a new tradition: a photo compendium of last year's honorees.

February
Mercy Maya

March
Josh Hollinger

April
Kathy Obermeyer

May
Bob Reuter



June
Mike Epting

July
Laura Marquez

August
Paula Braxton and Maria Ojeda

September
Barbara Vukich

October
Debbie Van Diepen

November
Dennis Strand

December
Elaine Ixcot

# About those videos…

Submitted by Mike Epting

You may have noticed that our online worship experience has been evolving. Beginning in March of 2019, we began posting videos of the sermons on Facebook. In May of that year we began also posting a few of them on YouTube, which made it much easier to watch them on television. Last March, because of the initial "shutdown" attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19, we began a more intense program of online worship activity. During the rest of spring and summer, we recorded and produced videos as an "off-line" activity, with no congregation in attendance during the recording. As you might imagine, this was somewhat of a trial for Pastor Lyn. She was forced to write and deliver her sermon much earlier in the week and then deliver it to a (distracted) audience of one, the cameraman. She also put a great deal of effort into staging, especially for the communion part of the service.

With the return of indoor worship in early October, we dropped the prerecorded service videos and began recording the live worship service. We did this for only two weeks because technical problems, coupled with the extensive editing and production process, meant that it was nearly impossible to make these videos available on Sunday. For most of the Fall, we produced videos of the Gospel lesson and sermon only and posted them within hours of the live service. Although far short of what we had been doing during the summer, these videos were perhaps more "real" and were viewable on Sunday afternoon.

When the most recent Governor-directed shutdown started, coupled with the filling of ICU beds in Stanislaus County, Rose and I sadly realized that it was no longer safe for us to attend church and then return to our residence full of seniors. That risk went two ways and we felt we would endanger both our fellow residents and our fellow parishioners. Pastor Lyn and I discussed alternatives for serving our video worshipers and settled on the one we began using on December 13. Again, we are recording only the Gospel and Sermon, but now Pastor Lyn does nearly all the work. She records the video on her own laptop in her office at church or at home, before she delivers it in person on Sunday. She uploads the videos to an online location accessible to both of us. When it is ready, I download it to my equipment, produce a finished video, and upload it to YouTube and Facebook. I also email all of you to let you know it is there.

I hope this is a temporary measure and that I will soon be again able to record all or part of the live services.

# December Council Notes

Council did not meet in December. Maria, our bookkeeper, still produced a financial report for council and accompanied it with this note:

"Attached are the November Financials. Income was down from the previous month and although expenses were down as well we were still $3,242.00 in the red. Building funds were also down this month. Hoping that next month is better.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns."

*[Note from Mike Epting: For years now, I have been receiving these reports from Maria and generating a much-simplified summary table. One fallout of this process is that when it appears in the Echoes this data appears to be ancient history. The reality is that Maria cannot generate a report for the month until the month is over. Therefore, she sends out November end-of-month data in December, several days after the December Echoes has been published. So, you see, the data that I publish in January is that from November. I hope you understand that this is simply the best we can do… (and I'd rather not mention that sometimes, like last month, I forget to change the name of month in the table heading, making it appear to be even older!).]*

| | November Income | November Expenses | November Gain/Loss |
|---|---|---|---|
| **General Fund** | 15,226 | (18,468) | (3,242) |
| **Building Fund** | 3,878 | (5,123) | (1,245) |
| **Day Care** | 28,355 | (33,635) | (5,280) |
| **TOTALS** | 47,459 | (57,226) | (9,765) |

# January Birthdays

Birthday Blessing Sunday is January 17

All those celebrating their births during the month of January will receive a Birthday Blessing Prayer from their Emanuel Family. Don't miss out!

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1/11** | **Steve Walker** | **1/17** | **Eric Obermeyer** |
| **1/11** | **Peter Cline** | **1/18** | **Tom Lutterman** |
| **1/11** | **Jeremy Lastra** | **1/20** | **Henry Yeoman** |
| **1/12** | **Julia Poston** | **1/20** | **Mary Lou Dieterich** |
| **1/14** | **Rylee Yearian** | **1/24** | **Sebastian Thompson** |
| **1/15** | **Carolyn Crenwelge** | **1/29** | **Gerry Castleberry** |

# Epilogue

*(You may safely skip this…)*

by Mike Epting, Echoes Editor

I've been continuing to read the Narnia series and am now halfway though the fourth book. However, much of my reading during the past month has been not the books themselves but articles about the books. I stumbled across a wonderful analysis titled: "Why Did Aslan Have to Die? Theories of Atonement in Narnia." This might sound intimidating (and it is), but also full of insights. Consider that, as I mentioned last month, Aslan is Jesus as Jesus would be in Narnia. So the real question is "why did Jesus have to die, on Earth"? We may think we know the answer to that question, but C. S. Lewis, a very wise man indeed, admitted that he did not.

The author of this paper points out: "And, believe it or not, theologians have been working hard to explain what exactly happened on the cross and why it matters ever since." He goes on to say that there are seven "major" theories of atonement, but he focuses on three that seem to be applicable to Aslan and Narnia.

The first is called "Penal substitutionary atonement" and basically says that God must punish the wicked, but he allowed Jesus (Aslan) to be punished in their stead. In this story Aslan dies to save Edmund (one of the children) from punishment. Upon reflection, though, we see that this theory just doesn't work because only the evil witch wants Edmund punished. Besides, in other writings we learn that Lewis was not fond of the substitution theory.

Theory 2 is "The Ransom Theory", which says that our sin bound us to death and put us under Satan's control. We were captive to Satan and Jesus died to pay a ransom and free us. In the Narnia story, Aslan buys Edmund back with his own blood: a redemption. This theory fits the story much better, and we know that Lewis did like this theory. In his so-called science fiction trilogy the Christ figure is named "Ransom".

The third theory is "Christus Victor". This is a bit more subtle: "there is no payment to the adversary. Instead, the death of Jesus functions to work God's victory over all the forces of evil. The cross is a sort of trick, a trap, that allows Jesus to show his power over death (via his resurrection) and utterly defeat evil powers in the world." This theory really shines in the context of the Aslan story. He actually knew all along that he could (would) be resurrected, but the Witch (Satan) did not. She did not know about the "deeper magic

from before the dawn of time" that enabled Aslan's restoration to life and vitality.

So which theory is the correct one? Lewis would encourage us to pick the one that rings true to us; the one that catches our imagination. In that portion of the story (myth) we each find Truth. In "Mere Christianity" Lewis wrote:

"A man can eat his dinner without understanding exactly how food nourishes him. A man can accept what Christ has done without knowing how it works... We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed. Any theories we build up as to how Christ's death did this are, in my view, quite secondary… not to be confused with the thing itself. "

# Emanuel Calendar of Events

# January 2021

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | **1** DAY CARE CLOSED THRU 1/1/21<br>Happy New Year!<br>OFFICE CLOSED | **2** DAY CARE CLOSED THRU 1/1/21<br>OFFICE CLOSED<br>10:00 am Organ practice |
| **3** DAY CARE CLOSED THRU 1/1/21<br>9:30 am Worship Service<br>10:30 am Worship Service | **4** | **5**<br>12:00 pm Text Study - via Zoom | **6**<br>7:00 pm Book Study via Zoom | **7**<br>9:30 am Book Study - Luther Hall | **8** | **9**<br>10:00 am Organ practice |
| **10** HEALING PRAYER SUNDAY<br>9:30 am Worship Service<br>10:30 am COUNCIL Mtg. - via Zoom<br>10:30 am Worship Service | **11** | **12**<br>12:00 pm Text Study - via Zoom | **13**<br>7:00 pm Book Study via Zoom | **14**<br>9:30 am Book Study - Luther Hall<br>7:00 pm Leah Circle via Zoom | **15** | **16**<br>10:00 am Organ practice |
| **17** BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS SUNDAY<br>9:30 am Worship Service<br>10:30 am Worship Service | **18** MLK Holiday | **19**<br>12:00 pm Text Study - via Zoom | **20**<br>7:00 pm Book Study via Zoom | **21**<br>9:30 am Book Study - Luther Hall<br>1:30 pm REBECCA CIRCLE | **22** | **23**<br>10:00 am Organ practice |
| **24** INTER-FAITH SUNDAY<br>9:30 am Worship Service<br>10:30 am Worship Service | **25** Echoes Deadline | **26**<br>12:00 pm Text Study - via Zoom | **27**<br>7:00 pm Book Study via Zoom | **28**<br>9:30 am Book Study - Luther Hall | **29** | **30**<br>10:00 am Organ practice |
| **31**<br>9:30 am Worship Service<br>10:30 am Worship Service | | | | | | |