

The Echoes

April 2024



*Inside: Easter Sunday and Holy Week
Sierra Central Valley Conference Assembly
Lenten Challenge — Success
Servant of the Month: Samantha Jones*

Emanuel Lutheran Church

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

From Pastor Lyn

Dear People,

Even though we have had signs of spring for some time now, the celebration of Easter somehow signals Spring better than the return of Day Light Savings Time or the Spring equinox. Easter was “early” this year, but it can occur even earlier. I found a site online that did a comparison of Easter dates year-to-year.

Interestingly, this site asserts March 24th to be the “rarest” date for Easter. According to the Gregorian calendar, the interval between March 24th Easters is 467 years! The last time it happened was in 1818 and the next occurrence will be 2285. Let’s have a party that year!

The good news is that it is Easter still! The season lasts 50 days and brings us up to the Day of Pentecost. The gospel lessons this year for the Season of Easter speak to the idea of “belonging.” For example, the disciple Thomas will discover his place with Jesus remains regardless of his doubts and we will be reminded of our place in God’s family on Good Shepherd Sunday. We should be reassured that no matter how many times we misstep or doubt or question, there will always be a place for us. We belong to God. Jesus does not expect nor does Jesus ask that we be perfect but only that we abide in him and bear fruit that is honorable and life-giving.

Recently I came across a quote that went something like, “hope is not the belief that all will be well, but the belief that God is present and working through all things, so that no matter how things turn out, we will be okay.”

That’s Easter hope on this side of heaven. On the other side, all things will be definitively well indeed.

2024 is 3 months old, the first quarter of the year already gone, yet so much has happened that the year feels older than three months. A lot of exciting and positive things along with the hard and challenging things. Oddly enough (or maybe not) it was a comment made by my veterinarian at a recent appointment for Gus the dog and Luther the cat, that got me thinking about all that has happened already this year. His comment compelled me to intentionally consider and remember (!) the fact that



Emanuel is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Sunday Worship: 9:30 am

Pastor Lyn Crase:
209-523-4531
pastor@emanuellutheran.org

Website:
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Church Office:
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Church Office Hours:
Monday through Thursday:
8 am — 3 pm
Friday 8 am — 2 pm

Paula Braxton,
Administrative Asst.
secretary@emanuellutheran.org

Laura Marquez,
Day Care Director
209-549-0672
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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 others.

Pastor Lyn, continued

everyone has something they are dealing with.

Believing we belong to someone and we belong somewhere and that hope is real – no matter how things turn out, may be enough to help us eagerly anticipate the next season, the next 3 months, or the next year rather than dread the that time based on how the year has gone so far. In other words, Hope is the belief that no matter how things turn out, we will be okay.

Jesus' first disciples struggled with belonging and had trouble finding their bearings as they tried to understand the first post-Easter world. At times, we struggle to find our place in our own post-Easter world. Yet, just as those first disciples found their way, their place, so too will we. This Easter Season perhaps our struggles with belonging or with faith or the situations and people in our lives can be an example of courage and hope for others. Because, no matter how things turn out, we will be okay! Easter Hope, indeed!

Christ is Risen, He is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!

Pastor Lyn

New LED Lighting

Photo by Dick Norquist

Drop by the church after dark and observe the new spectacular lighting. Our property committee has been updating our lighting with modern LEDs that save energy and much improve nighttime visibility. Samantha also reports that her ability to perform in the organ loft is much easier than before thanks to the new lighting there.



Easter Sunday

Photos by Mike Epting, Sue Wilke, and Chris Paulsen

We were joyous on Easter Sunday and blessed by the sights and sounds of celebration. There were flowers, a trumpet, and our Emanuel Singers. We happily passed the Peace of God to each other.



Easter Sunday, continued

We had Goodie Baskets for kids inside, the flower cross outside, and a wonderful brunch that fed Emanuel and Radiant Covenant Easter celebrators.



Easter Preparations

Submitted by Sue Wilke

It took a lot of people and time to prepare for the wonderful Easter brunch.



Maundy Thursday

Photos by Mike Epting

We met for worship on Thursday, March 28 at 6 pm, entering to white banners and the ultimate expression of Lenten sanctuary art. Pastor read John's description of Jesus's foot washing at the Last Supper and meditated on the meaning of this event. We continued with prayers, ritual hand-washing, and communion. While the altar was stripped, Kathleen sang Psalm 22. We departed in silence.



Good Friday

Photos by Mike Epting

We met for worship on Friday, March 29 at 6 pm. The altar was unadorned, Pastor Lyn was garbed in black, Sue Wilke and Barbara Crawford read the Passion according to John, Kathleen Reuter led us in prayer, and Dan Johnson carried the burden of the cross on his shoulders for us. Again, we departed in silence.



Grace is the Key

Submitted by Chris Paulsen and Donna Vickroy

Lenten Challenge — 40 days, 40 items SUCCESS

Grace Is the Key picked up all of our 40 Days, 40 Items bags. On behalf of the Outreach Committee, we want to thank you for your amazing generosity. We collected items and donated 63 bags on Palm Sunday morning. Ricky and Kim shared their HUGE thanks and joined us for worship. Your donations will go to help families in need.



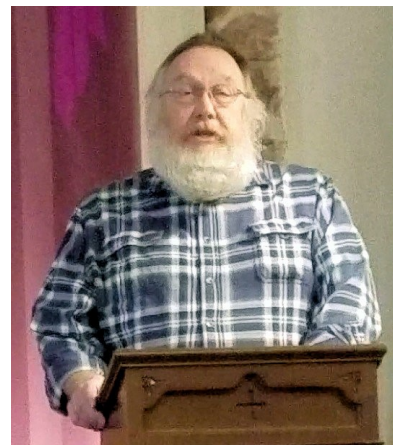
Covenant Voices

February 18, 2024: Dan Johnson is Noah

On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

FIRST READING: Genesis 9:8-17

Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.



February 25, 2024: Dick & Pat Norquist are Abraham and Sarah

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

FIRST READING: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.



April 3, 2024: Chuck Rowland is Moses

The third covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the central one of Israel's history: the gift of the law to those God freed from slavery. The commandments begin with the statement that because God alone has freed us from the powers that oppressed us, we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives. When Jesus throws the merchants out of the temple, he is defending the worship of God alone and rejecting the ways commerce and



Covenant Voices, continued

profit-making can become our gods. The Ten Commandments are essential to our baptismal call: centered first in God's liberating love, we strive to live out justice and mercy in our communities and the world.

FIRST READING: Exodus 20:1-17

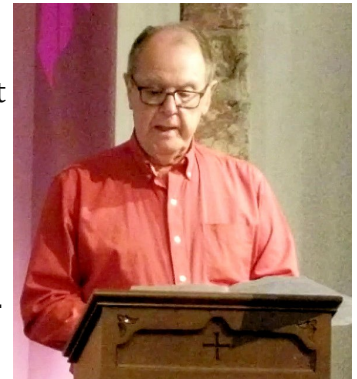
After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship. Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.

March 10, 2024: Tom Watkins is Moses

The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

FIRST READING: Numbers 21:4-9

Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.

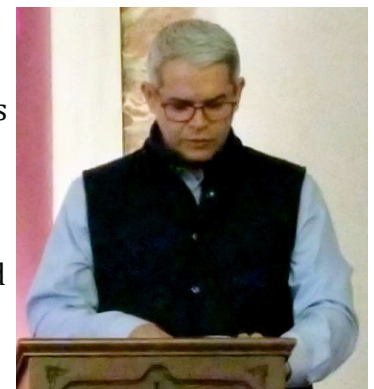


March 17, 2024: Pedro Tchmola is Jeremiah

God promises Jeremiah that a "new covenant" will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all the people to know God by heart. The church sees this promise fulfilled in Christ, who draws all people to himself when he is lifted up on the cross. Our baptismal covenant draws us to God's heart through Christ and draws God's love and truth into our hearts. We join together in worship, sharing in word, song, and meal, and leave strengthened to share God's love with all the world.

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The Judeans in Babylon blamed their exile on their ancestors, who had broken the covenant established at Sinai. Here the prophet looks to a day when God will make a new covenant with the people. There will be no need to teach the law, because God will write it on their hearts.



Sierra Central Valley Conference Assembly

Submitted by Sue Wilke

Our conference met at Saron Lutheran Church in Escalon on March 9. The purpose was to elect a new conference dean and to send names of nominees for Synod Council to the Synod Assembly.

Rev. Karen Johnson is our new dean.

We viewed a video message from Bishop Jeff and Vice President, Simon Wong.



Our worship service was led by Rev. Nelson Rabell-González and Rev. Callie Torres. It was done in English and Spanish.



Next Steps Workshop

Submitted by Donna Vickroy

Saturday, May 25 we will gather for "Next Steps", a workshop designed to help us explore what questions we, as women, need to research and think about as we plan for our future in a positive and proactive way AND how to go about moving toward pulling this information together as an action plan. Every "Plan A" needs a "Plan B". What are your plans for your health, housing, social network, resources, caring team, and spiritual growth? Join us in May to put this puzzle together. Invite your daughters, sisters, lady friends and neighbors. These are all individuals who may very well be on your team as you go forward. Registration is officially OPEN and will close Sunday, May 12. Cost for the day is \$40 and helps cover the costs for speaker, meals and supplies. Questions? Please see Donna V.



3rd Annual Senior Ball

Save the Date

THE STANISLAUS COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING IS HOSTING ITS

*3rd Annual
Senior Ball*

FRIDAY | 6.14.2024 | 5:30PM - 9:30PM

STANISLAUS VETERANS CENTER

3500 COFFEE ROAD, SUITE 15, MODESTO

APPETIZERS | DANCING | MUSIC | RAFFLETUNITY

Proceeds will benefit Senior Programs in Stanislaus County

Ticket purchases available May 1st

Ticket price: \$30 per person | Table (8 seats): \$240

****For ticket purchases, see Jeri****



Lenten Sanctuary Art

Photos by Mike Epting

During the season of Lent we witnessed a weekly transformation of the chancel. Marty Strand led our Sanctuary Arts group that performed this visual treat. On March 10, the cross appeared, leaning against the altar. On March 17, we see elements of bread and wine under the cross. On March 24, we see a shift of focus to make these elements more visible during communion. On March 28, Maundy Thursday, foot and hand-washing symbols added to our experience.



Step Into Spring — Ladies Tea Party

Submitted by Donna Vickroy

Leah Circle is hosting a tea party on Saturday, April 20 from 11 am - 1 pm. Our guest speaker will be Hannah Brady from the Senior Advocacy Network/Senior Law Project. We will share fellowship, music, and a delicious proper tea menu. Please sign up in the narthex to indicate you will be there, and how many guests you will be bringing. All ladies and little ladies are welcome. You will want to include your sisters, daughters, and lady friends. There is no fee for the tea, however we will have a free will offering basket and raffle items.

Do you have tickets yet for the beautiful quilt? Along with the quilt there will be several lovely baskets to raffle. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5. So many beautiful things to choose from; you will want plenty of tickets. All net proceeds will go toward helping fund the 90th Anniversary celebration (2025). Spring attire and hats would be fun, but are not necessary.

Questions? Please ask anyone from Leah Circle.



You are cordially invited to our spring tea:

Step into Spring

Where: Emanuel Lutheran Church
324 College Ave.

When: April 20, 2024

Time: 11:00 – 1:00

RSVP: 209-484-0665 (Sue)

There will be a free will offering taken at the door. There will also be a raffle table.



March Circle Reports

Submitted by Women's Circle Leaders

WELCA 2024 projects

Representatives of each circle met Sunday, March 10 to coordinate the projects that we would support for 2024. It was decided that each month a circle meets there would be a collection for WELCA and a separate collection for 2024 Projects. The suggested projects that the circles would support would be Emanuel's 90th celebration (2025), Without Permission, and the El Salvadorian Lutheran Ministries. It is up to each individual to donate what she can. If during the year, there is a need that arises, each Circle can donate from the Projects collection to that need. The representatives in attendance shared what they had been doing previously and all were pleased to be a part of the larger community in some small way.

Leah Circle March meeting

Present: Lois, Janice, Jeri, Donna, Rue, Alexandra, Kaete, Rose, Suzanne, Pr. Lyn

Old Business: We discussed the upcoming Tea. There were samples of some of the foods that we will serve. We will meet at 10 am on Friday, April 19, to set up and prepare what we can. We will meet at 9 am on Saturday, April 20 to finish preparing what we will be serving.

Suzanne read a thank you letter from the Ice Cream Company for our generous gift at Christmas.

New Business: Suzanne reported on the Executive Committee meeting that was recently held. We discussed how the Circles could support each other. It was suggested that we have an in-house project, a community project, and an international project. Support for the 90th anniversary is suggested as the in-house project. Without Permission, which provides support for trafficked women and girls is suggested for the community project. Support for the Salvadoran Lutheran Church is suggested for the international project. Leah Circle ladies approved of all three projects.

We signed cards for Lisa and Pat.

Bible Study: Lois led The Wired Word Bible study on the Alabama Supreme Court ruling on IVF embryos and the ramifications of all this can lead to.

Rebecca Circle met March 21, 2024 at the home of Pat and Dick Norquist. Marty led the meeting since Chris Paulsen was unable to attend. Connie Petersen gave the treasurer report and reported on the Executive Committee meeting that was recently held. The suggestions for projects this year are an in-house project, a community project, and an international project.

We decided on a raffle prize that we will donate to the Tea on April 20, 2024. Marty will choose a front door mat and will make a door wreath to go with it. The profits from the raffle will go toward the Emanuel Lutheran 90th anniversary quilt fund.



Circles, continued

The Bible study leader was Marty Strand. We continued a four-part study from the Gather magazine. The topic for the series is Scripture and nature: Teachers of faith. Session two was about God's creatures.

Following the study Pat served coffee, juice, and cupcakes. The ladies enjoyed chatting with each other at the end of our meeting.

Holden Evening Prayer

Submitted by Sue Wilke

We used this service on Wednesday evenings after the soup supper. Kathleen led the service.



Servant of the Month

Samantha Jones is our Servant of the month for April. She has enriched our worship experience with wonderful music before and after the service. If you have not been arriving early to hear her preludes, you have been missing out and you also should stick around for the postlude. In addition to her organ music, she has been making good use of our pianos, both in the sanctuary and in the loft. Like Barbara before her, she makes several trips up and down the stairs on Sunday.

Samantha has been rehearsing our Sunday singers nearly every week, preparing them for their Easter performance.



March Council Notes



Council met on March 10 at 11 am. Pastor reported that AT&T may drop all landline service, which could entail a considerable extra expense for us. On April 14, we will have a guest speaker, Jason Conway of Modesto Gospel Mission. Pastor continues to work on obtaining an intern; it could happen in June.

Lois Owen reported that Day Care has increased enrollment and the staff is happy. Bob Reuter reported a shortfall year-to-date, with pledges falling behind. Dennis Strand reported that after much work and discussion we decided to continue with Rank security despite new higher rates. New lightbulbs, mostly LED have been installed throughout, inside and outside. Property, with the assistance of Sanctuary Arts will test various “colors” of LED bulbs. Property is also addressing a letter from the city notifying us that we are not compliant with current requirements for separating compostable organics and the expanded recyclable materials for waste collection. All groups using our facilities will need to cooperate to become compliant.

Mellisa Molina reported that WELCA Circle representatives met to coordinate efforts for community projects and our 90th anniversary celebrations. Men’s Bible Study is considering moving from Wednesday to Saturday mornings to accommodate working men. Wednesday Adult Bible study will break for the summer starting in May. Chris Paulsen reported that Outreach is focused on ELC’s part of the Easter Brunch and working on Easter goody bags for children. Sue Wilke will make Easter Cards for the CARE ministry. Due to a scheduling conflict with the WELCA Tea, Outreach will not have a booth at this year’s Earth Day Modesto event.

Bruce Vickroy reported that Fellowship is working with Radiant Covenant on planning the combined Easter Brunch. Bruce and Donna are also working on continuity for kitchen supervision policies. Brett Owen reported that various Facebook and WiFi streaming problems have recently forced us to post service videos on Sunday afternoons, rather than live.

February	Income	Expenses	Gain/Loss
General Fund	23,118	(22,640)	479
Building Fund	7,685	(5,011)	2,674
Day Care	59,884	(47,514)	12,370
TOTALS	90,687	(75,165)	15,522

April Birthdays

Birthday Blessing Sunday is April 17

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

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------|------|--------------|
| 4/1 | Peter Van Diepen | 4/9 | Paul Owen |
| 4/2 | Marsha Waggoner | 4/13 | Ashlee Knoll |



Epilogue

(You may safely skip this...)

by Mike Epting, Echoes Editor

Last Wednesday morning our men's group read an Easter Gospel, Mark 16.

I have always thought of Mark as the "Reader's Digest" gospel because of its brevity, but I realized that much of its shortness results from the fact that it tells only the middle part of the story. It omits birth narratives found in Matthew and Luke and also post-resurrection descriptions in Luke and John.

The version of Mark 16 that Dan brought to us ends extremely abruptly at verse 8: *"So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."* A footnote explained that there are two alternate endings, one very brief and another longer one that describes a few appearances of Jesus and his ascension. Modern scholars are nearly unanimous in their belief that these verses were added much later, after the first manuscripts were circulated. The oldest existing copies lack these verses and there are stylistic clues that imply different authorship for them.

In my efforts to understand, I learned that the most ancient tradition asserts that Mark was a scribe who traveled with Peter and essentially wrote down what he learned from the apostle. Few believe this today, although it is generally accepted that Mark was the first of the four canonical Gospels, with Luke and Matthew written not long after, and John significantly later. Luke and Matthew used a lot of Mark's text in their versions, but John's was done independently. One thing that is quite clear is that we do not know who these men were or whether they were individuals or groups.

People have devoted their lives to study of the gospels and their origins. One theory that emerged is that in the years following Jesus's resurrection there was no urgency to write down

lengthy descriptions of his life story because his return was believed to be immanent. No doubt some of his teachings and sayings were written so that the word could be spread throughout the world. These may have been collected into a hypothetical "Q-source" that

Matthew and Luke also drew from.

The fact that all four gospels were founded mainly from oral tradition explains the differences among them, as eyewitnesses remembered the stories differently as the years passed by. At the time of Mark's writing, there were few surviving witnesses. Mark told the story of Jesus's life and teaching in a relatively straightforward and simple style. He did not extensively explore difficult theological concepts; if all we had was Mark, much of modern theology would be unsupportable. He left it to later writers to dig more deeply into the question "who is Jesus really?" In Mark, even the disciples don't truly understand his divine nature.

The ancient painting above illustrates some differences among the gospels. Mark writes of a young man all in white sitting on the right of the tomb. Matthew says an angel rolled back the stone and sat on it. Luke has two dazzling angels appear to the women. John says the disciples found the tomb empty and left but then Mary came and found two angels sitting at the head and foot of the resting place of Jesus. The painter seems to have extrapolated from Mark by putting wings on the young man.

Perhaps we are fortunate to have four gospels to give us perspective and different viewpoints.

