

THE MOSAIC

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EMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

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Pastoral Ponderings



The congregation of my first pastorate included several WWII veterans. Getting to know them was a privilege. I have been thinking about them lately, about what they knew about endurance, resilience and courage. Those who served in combat rarely spoke of those times, preferring to let the past stay in the past. One exception to that was after September 11, 2001. Those octogenarians who had been to war were the ones who spoke up against U.S. involvement in another one.

Another exception was the time when Don and I spent a few hours painting the church basement together. As we did so, he told me about his service in the Pacific. When he was 21, he enlisted in the army, just ahead of the U.S. entry into the war. This made him slightly older and higher ranking than many of those who were drafted shortly afterwards. That afternoon, as we painted, he told me how he had been part of three amphibious assaults on Pacific islands. Three times, he survived the terror of that kind of engagement. Three times, he lost almost all the young men under his command, when he was just a young man himself. I cannot imagine enduring that even once, not with body and mind still intact. Yet, when the war ended, he returned home and picked up his life again, farmed the land that had been in his family for 170 years, and finally took “early retirement” at age 94.

The veterans mostly did not talk about their experiences, but their wives did. They told me about their persistent worry for their husbands overseas, about listening to war news on the radio and reading letters over and over again, about the dreaded telegrams or in-person notifications of a death. They described the first meetings between a returning father and children who had never known him or didn’t remember him. Those initial encounters often held more pain than joy. One girl, whom I now knew as an adult, was afraid of the soldier who came home to live in her house. It took months for her to adjust to her father’s presence.

continued...

I gained a new appreciation for the hardships suffered by military families, especially in times of war. I wish I had thought to ask what Christmas was like during those years. I would like to have heard it in their own words. I can imagine though – not a time when all was merry and bright.

We are facing what is for most of us the most unusual Advent and Christmas of our lives. The threat of coronavirus to health and life continues unabated. The election is over, but the nation is as polarized as ever. The ways we celebrate this season will be dramatically different from other years. Some of us are struggling more than others, but all of us are having a hard time. Here's some good news – the world as we know it is very much like the world into which Jesus came. Our struggles, including fear, enmity, brokenness, loneliness, disease, and death, are the struggles with which Jesus became intimately acquainted when he took on human flesh



And more good news – Emmanuel is like the congregation of my first pastorate. You are resilient and loving and courageous. We will survive and even thrive, because we will lean into the strength of our faith and we will lean on each other. This is my prayer that the *God of hope will fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* (Romans 15:13)

Peace,
Kathy

BC:AD

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect
Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven

-- Ursula Askham Fanthorpe (1929-2009)



“Adoration of the Shepherds”
Gerard van Honthorst, 1622

Advent and Christmas Worship



The history of humanity is fraught with pain—especially the pain that comes accompanied by fear and leads to oppression and violence of one people against another. This is the world into which Jesus was born and through which his teachings would challenge and call for transformation. The opening words of an anonymous Jewish poet, “I believe in the sun, even when the sun is not shining,” were scrawled on a wall during the Holocaust. This theme song for our season calls us to examine our penchant for annihilating fear by annihilating each other. The power of narrative and music will call us to a different response— transformation and reconciliation through hope, love, joy, and peace. This Advent and Christmas, let us fill the night with music and light and affirm and act on the reasons why we can still “believe, even when” we are discouraged.

November 29

10 a.m.

I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow
Isaiah 40:1-11, Mark 1:1-15

December 13

10 a.m.

I Believe in God: Ode to Joy
Isaiah 57:14-19, Luke 1:1-4, 26-56

December 6

a.m.

I Believe in Light: Illuminating Peace
Isaiah 9:2-7 and John 1:1-18

10

December 20

10 a.m.

I Believe in Love:
Daring Right Relationship
Isaiah 7:1-14 and Matthew 1:1-25

December 24

7 p.m.

We Believe, Even Now
Isaiah 52:7-10, Isaiah 2:1-20

Rituals are important. They deepen our sense of participation. They provide a place for memories to reside and the enacting of ritual brings memories to the surface. One long-standing Advent ritual is the Advent wreath.

When we gather for worship in person, we attend to the lighting of the candles, adding one each Sunday of Advent until Christmas Eve when the center Christ Candle is finally lit. This tradition will continue within our Zoom worship, never fear. But you may wish to deepen your participation by lighting your own Advent wreath in your own home. You might light it every day of the week, in addition to during worship. Some people keep an Advent wreath on their table and light the candles during the evening meal. If you own an Advent wreath already, why not bring it out of storage and enjoy it this season. If you don't own one, consider making your own. It could be as simple as 4 candles set in a circle with one in the middle for Christmas Eve.



**Blue Christmas Service
with the FOCUS Churches
Sunday Evening, December 20
6:00 p.m. via Zoom**

We have experienced unprecedented loss this year. Family and friends have succumbed to death in the pandemic. Thousands have lost economic security; some have lost businesses built over a lifetime. Most of us have lost beloved rhythms of life that enriched us with variety in our activities and with the presence of others. We can also name many losses related to hatred and violence.



Join us for a short time of worship on the longest night of the year. Through scripture, prayer, music and candlelight, we will acknowledge our sorrow and grief and take comfort in knowing that God came and dwelt among us in the midst of hardship.

On Sunday, Dec. 27, we will gather in our Zoom church to worship God as we reflect upon the blessings of the Christmas season and look forward to the New Year ahead. Pastor Kathy will be on vacation, and the service is being planned by our Worship Ministry Team, Jan Curtis and Edith Leet.

We expect to have several readings and sing a number of Christmas carols. We invite you to become one of the readers for this service. We welcome readers of all ages. We will provide you with the reading, which you will do from your own home. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Jan at jmcurtis1919@gmail.com, 607-368-0972 or Edith at edith.leet@outlook.com, 518-482-6612.



The Power of Story

Our Bible is full of stories, from Noah, to Jerimiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and many others. Jesus' stories and parables taught and provoked the listeners to stretch their world vision, to hear God more clearly. Today people continue to use stories, though it is less a group of shepherds around a campfire. Today's stories are conveyed by books, social media, video, TV, movies. So, as we remember the story of the young teenagers, Mary and Joseph, who traveled to Bethlehem when Mary gave birth, let's stretch our world vision by hearing more stories. In our world today, how have others held on to hope and joy in the midst of brokenness? How do we hope in the joy of Christ's coming?

The Worship Design Team has assembled a series of movies that complements our worship experience. These videos are easily available on the internet, one for each week of Advent. Then on Wednesday evenings, beginning December 2nd, anyone who would like to discuss their reactions to the video can meet via Zoom. These videos are powerful. You may decide to watch them and just ponder to yourself or join your Emmanuel family for a conversation. God is calling us every year, every day to see the coming of Jesus. Listen for God, keep your eyes and ears open.

The week of 11/29 the film is: "Defiant Requiem"

Wednesday, 12/2 optional zoom discussion at 7pm.

The week of 12/6, the film is: "Sweet Honey in the Rock"

12/9 optional zoom discussion at 7pm

The week of 12/13, the film is: "Following the Ninth"

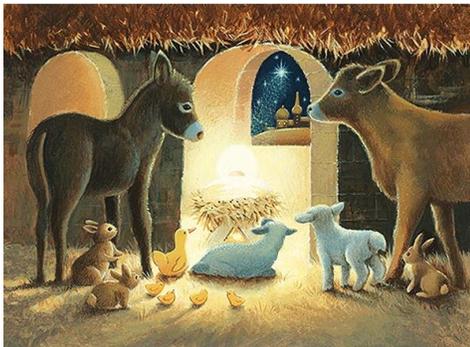
12/16 optional zoom discussion at 7pm

The week of 12/20, the film is: "Singing Revolution"

12/23 optional zoom discussion at 7pm

All of the movies are available on YouTube or Amazon Prime at minimal cost. Amazon Prime offers a free 30-day trial. Some titles are available through your local library. Be sure to allow adequate time for libraries to find these titles.

THE STABLE



The winds were scornful,
Passing by;
And gathering Angels
Wondered why

A burdened Mother
Did not mind
That only animals
Were kind.

For who in all the world
Could guess
That God would search out
Loneliness.

Sr. M. Chrysostom, O.S.B.

Children and Advent

Making the Advent season meaningful to children is an important goal in our Lifelong Faith Formation programming. You will be catching glimpses during our Sunday morning worship services, and lots more will happen during Bible club. These are the objectives for children, ages 2 thru 8th grade:



1. Hear the Christmas story and deepen their understanding of its importance.
2. Make their own nativity sets and re-enact the story to tell it to others
3. Express their feelings about the Christmas story through art.
4. Learn sign language for the song, "This Little Light of Mine". The children will create a virtual choir to present this song in signs at our Christmas Eve worship.
5. Bible club during Advent will be on Sundays at 1:00. Everyone is invited – you can even bring a friend! If you have any questions or want to participate, please contact Marilyn Malone.



Calling all bakers, candy makers, and cookie frosters. Would you like to share the goodness of fresh Christmas goodies with our congregation this Christmas? Here's how:

1. **Bake** your favorite Christmas recipes. To be extra COVID safe, *wear a mask and gloves* when you take food out of their pans. Then:
2. **Package** single-serving portions in plastic wrap. Again, *wear a mask and gloves* when you do this.
3. **Bring** your goodies to the Church Office on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, Dec. 14-16, between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.
4. Volunteers will **Pack** bags for each of our Emmanuel families on Thursday, Dec. 17. *Packers will wear a mask and gloves and will maintain social distancing. (Packers get to personally pack the bag for their own family.)*



Think about how much joy you will be sharing by becoming a **Baker** or a **Packer**. As Pillsbury once reminded us, "Nothin' says lovin' like something from the oven..." If you can volunteer to be a **Baker** or a **Packer**—or both—please contact Edith Leet at edith.leet@outlook.com or call her at 518-482-6612. We need to hear from you by Sunday, Dec. 6.



Happy Birthday...

Kathy Moore

December

8th

Brian Hughes

11th

Matthew Lahut

12th

Dwight Smith

12th

Tom Lahut

14th

Tammy Skinner

18th

Molly Wilkerson

20th

Johnson Din

24th

Mushel Din

26th

John Ketcham

28th



winter begins
December 21

Annual Reports are due December 31



Dear Friends:

Maybe you lost your pledge card. Maybe it was eaten by your dog or shredded by your Roomba. Maybe you just feel like paper is so 2020 and you are ready for 2021.

Here is some Exciting NEWS! You can now submit your 2021 pledge to EBC **online!** Your online pledge is secure and goes directly to our Financial Secretary, Ruth Pushee, as it always did, but you can save a stamp and a trip to the mailbox. Just go to our Emmanuel website and click on Giving, or use the link : <https://www.emmanuelalbany.net/pledge>

In gratitude,

Judy Henningson

PS- Your paper pledge card still works too. You can just mail it to the church.

Food, Fellowship, Fun...Virtually!

The series of relaxed supper get-togethers over Zoom are continuing. Here is the planned theme schedule:



- Friday, 12/4, 7pm - Latinx night - Tacos, Ropa vieja, Pernil, enchiladas, Guacamole ...
- Saturday 12/ 19, 6:30pm - Dessert! - Christmas cookies and hot chocolate/hot toddies (with any old optional entree...)
- Sunday, Jan 10, 2021, 6:30pm- Middle eastern favorites (lamb, hummus, falafel, pita, OLIVES!, cucumbers & yogurt, etc.)
- Friday, Jan 22, 7pm - Asian food night - Beef with broccoli, Raw Tuna, Tofu in peanut sauce, Hunan eggplant! (hint, order from your favorite take out if you're tired)

REMEMBER – The themes are a chance to try something new or share a recipe for an old favorite. If the theme doesn't float your boat, come anyway with your own menu. You can still chat with friends in Zoom-space. On Zoom, all foods are created equal!

**Remember the
Food Pantry...**

bar soap



Deadline for the January MOSAIC is December 18.

Christmas Eve Offering: One Great Hour of Sharing



2020 has been quite the year; pandemic, famine, hurricanes and continuing great poverty through-out the world. With this thought in mind, we will be receiving the One Great Hour of Sharing offering on Christmas Eve. OGH serves people in over 80 countries around the world including our own. Sponsored by eight Christian U.S. denominations and Church World Service, One Great Hour of Sharing makes sure that we can respond to needs as soon as they happen and that tens of thousands of people receive support for ongoing relief, rehabilitation, and development.

When you take a global view of our world, natural disasters occur every week. If you include disasters of human origin, the opportunity to respond to people in need is even more frequent. The larger disasters are captured by our news media, and word of these tragedies is brought into our homes. It is difficult to imagine the suffering of those whose lives are forever changed. However, many needs of our world—whether in a neighboring state or half the world away—remain uncovered by our news media. With our extensive network of international and domestic partners, American Baptists can make a difference wherever and whenever disaster strikes.

Consider with gratitude the gifts you have received in a difficult year. Then give generously to the OGH offering. You can send a check to Emmanuel with the designation for *One Great Hour* anytime in December. You can also give online through the church website at <https://www.emmanuelalbany.net/giving> . In the “Giving” section chose the *Special Offering* in the Offering drop down list. In December it will go to OGH.



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