



Emmanuel Lutheran Church

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www.emmanuelutheraneastmont.org

412-824-4525 (office); 412-401-5742 (Pastor's cell)

Office Hours: Wednesday 10-3, Thursday 9-1

December 30, 2024

The Wise men brought gifts And so do we.

On Sunday, January 5, we are celebrating the Epiphany of our Lord with music, presenting giving plans and a New Year's meal.

Our worship on January 5 will be a Christmas/Epiphany lessons and hymns with Holy Communion. We will hear lots of Scripture from the Christmas season and also the readings for Epiphany about the Wise men (kings) who followed a star to find the newborn king.

On Sunday, January 5, **Thomas Lalor returns to support our worship on the piano and the organ.** He is an experienced pianist who has accompanied us several times. He is gaining experience playing the organ as he enriches our worship. Thanks be to God!!



Daniel Orsen will be with us also and gift us a **solo on the viola.** Maybe more than one solo!!

LIKE THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST WHO BROUGHT GIFTS TO THE BABY JESUS, THE NEWBORN KING, WE HAVE **GIFTS TO GIVE JESUS.** We have many gifts to give. One kind of gift is financial. On this Sunday, each person/household is asked to present their **plan for 2025.** There is more information further in this letter so that you can come prepared on January 5 or send your response in the mail.



Also on Sunday, January 5, we will have a **festive meal following worship.** We remember the three kings with an Epiphany cake with a hidden gift. Our meal will be the traditional Western Pennsylvania New Year's Pork and Sauerkraut. Please bring your personal favorite side dishes or desserts to enjoy. There may be special guests.....

Planning for Spanish Language Worship - January 19

Pastor Linda and the Spanish speaking families have set January 19 as the start date for a Sunday evening worship service in Spanish. This will be held at a Lutheran church in the Beechview area. Worship at 6 pm. English classes for adults at 7 pm. Bible in English for children at 7 pm. **Volunteers are needed to teach.**

2024 Donations Deadline: All 2024 contributions that were not received by **Sunday, December 29** (last Sunday of the year) will be recorded as year 2025 donations regardless of the date on the check or the offering envelope used. We will be sending you a statement of your 2024 giving in the next few weeks.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS GIVING. You may give in person, send a contribution in the mail or donate online.

Go to <https://www.emmanuelutheraneastmont.org/> and you'll see the link. Or use the QR code for easy connection on your smart phone.

To order altar flowers for our weekly worship services, contact Judy Mayhood (412-760-0986), call the church office, or sign up on the Flower Chart in the entry way. The cost is \$50, or \$25 per vase. You can pay for flowers online or by check.

MY/OUR 2025 GIVING PLAN FOR CHRIST'S MINISTRY THROUGH EMMANUEL.

Understanding that all your income, possessions and wealth are a gift from God, you are now asked how much you plan to give to Christ's ministry, through Emmanuel. You may give any amount, whether weekly, monthly, quarterly, or a one-time gift (whichever works best for your budget). You may also give via offering envelopes, direct deposit, or Vanco.



In this mailing, you will receive a giving card with the information in the box below. If you receive this letter by email, use the form at the bottom of this page. You are invited to prayerfully fill it out, place it in the enclosed envelope with your name and address printed in the return address area, and **return it to Emmanuel by this Sunday, January 5**. After presenting these envelopes as an offering to the Lord on Sunday, January 5, 2025, the envelopes will be placed in a safe and returned to you, unopened, early in December 2025.

Why January 5? The Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord is on January 6. This is the date on the church calendar when we remember the three wise men who came to worship Jesus with their precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

You may also have a confidential conversation with ELCA Foundation representative Ryan Ebner to leave a portion of your remaining assets after your death, to an ELCA ministry, or to more than one ministry. (Ryan's phone number is 814-823-3285.)

Having acknowledged that all my income, possessions and wealth are a gift from God, I plan to give to Christ's ministry, through Emmanuel, the following:

_____ dollars weekly monthly quarterly a one-time gift (circle one)

By: envelopes direct deposit Vanco (circle one)

The above amount represents approximately _____ percent of my/our household income.

_____ The above amount represents growth in my giving.

_____ I plan to have a confidential conversation with ELCA Foundation representative Ryan Ebner to leave a portion of my remaining assets, after my death, to an ELCA ministry, or to more than one. (His phone # is 814-823-3285.)

Worship and pray

Come in person at 10 am every Sunday

By phone: Call 312-626-6799. When prompted, enter the meeting ID 923 3815 0341.

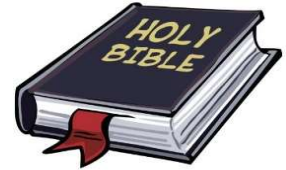
By computer or smartphone: Go to www.zoom.us. Enter Meeting ID 923 3815 0341.

At home without technology: Read the bulletin. Read the Scripture. Pray. Meditate.

BIBLE BOOK OF THE MONTH: II Samuel

We are entering the last phase of the Bible Book of the Month. Usually, the chosen book is one that we read during worship in that month. In the final six months of this project, that will not be the case. There are some books which are not read for Sunday worship or are rarely read such as II Samuel, I & 2 Chronicles and Job. We will also read Philippians and 1 & 2 Peter, which are read for Sunday worship, but this April we only hear Philippians. Psalms 73-106 will conclude the Bible Book of the Month Series in June. This is timed with Pentecost when we will read Psalm 104.

The Bible Book of the Month for January is II Samuel. The introduction to II Samuel is included in this mailing. As a reminder, introductions to all the Bible Books of the Month can also be found on the home page of our website, www.emmanuelutheraneastmont.org.



PRAYER REQUESTS: Call Pastor Theophilus for yourself or others to be included in prayer. Contact Marsha Kennedy also; she sends cards to let people know that we are praying for them. You can reach Marsha at 412-824-4966 or Marsha_Kennedy@verizon.net or 415 Kingston Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15235.

THE ANNUAL CONGREGATION MEETING IS SUNDAY, JANUARY 26 IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORSHIP.

Sun., Jan. 5, 11:15 am – Epiphany Meal after worship

Fri., Jan. 10, 10 am – Budget Meeting

Tues., Jan. 21, 1 pm – Church Council Meeting

Sun., Jan. 26, 11:15 am – Annual Meeting (snow date Sun., Feb. 2)



In the Bleak Midwinter Text: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1830-1894

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| 1 In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago. | 2 Heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heav'n and earth flee away
when he comes to reign;
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty,
Jesus Christ. | 3 What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him—
give my heart. |
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II SAMUEL

II Samuel tells the story of God's people under the reign of King David. II Samuel tells very personal stories about King David and his family. You will probably follow most of this book very easily. It is a continuation of the story begun in I Samuel. (I and II Samuel are really one book divided in half.)

Previously, in I Samuel, God raised a prophet named Samuel who brought God's message to the people. When they asked for a king, like all the peoples around them, Samuel told them why a king would create problems for them (such as taxes) and that they were better off with one allegiance and one rule: God. However, the people were insistent. God granted their desire. Under God's direction, Samuel anointed Saul as the first King Saul. When Saul proved disobedient to God, God directed Samuel to Bethlehem to the family of Jesse. The youngest son, David, was anointed king. Throughout the rest of I Samuel, Saul continues to reign. David gets Saul's (and everyone else's) attention when he kills the giant Philistine named Goliath. David becomes Saul's favorite because he can soothe Saul with music. However, Saul becomes jealous as he sees David, who is an exceptionally successful warrior, becoming more and more popular. David escapes Saul's attempts on his life and lives as an outlaw until Saul is killed in battle.

II Samuel begins when David becomes king following Saul's death. As you read, watch how David acts with honor in the midst of political intrigue. King Saul had tried to kill David, yet David mourns King Saul publicly and genuinely. When people bring David news of how they have killed or betrayed his competitors (such as King Saul's son), David has them killed. David treats the remaining members of Saul's family with kindness. Notice how his chief military person – Joab – does the political dirty work, often without David's knowledge and certainly without his approval. David never removes Joab, but his son Solomon does. King David acts from his heart rather than

conventional political expediency, even when his own son leads a revolt.

In temptation, King David also demonstrates that he operates from the heart. His affair with Bathsheba is willful, leading from one sin to another. (A lesson that may be easily overlooked: the temptation came while he was in the wrong place and not acting as a king. "In the spring, when kings go out to battle. . . David remained in Jerusalem." (II Samuel 11:1, 2). Repentance comes also when his heart is touched, and then he turns to God with all his heart. Although his sin might lead to impeachment in contemporary USA, I am grateful that David shows us true repentance. He is a truly helpful example for sinners who love God.

David is remembered as the greatest of all the kings of Israel and Judah (the country splits during his grandson Rehoboam's reign). Why?

1. Expansion of borders fulfilling the land distribution promised when the Israelites entered the Promised Land after leaving Egypt.
2. Unifying the 12 tribes (note the tribal tensions after Saul's death).
3. Establishing the capital Jerusalem on the border of the northern and southern groups of tribes.
4. Establishing Jerusalem as the center of worship. Although David, as a man of war, was not allowed by God to build a house for God, God approved his desire. David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. This traveling altar box was the untouchable sacred center for worship during the 40 years of wilderness. Two hundred years later, David gives it a permanent home
5. Most importantly, **GOD'S COVENANT THAT A SON OF DAVID WILL ALWAYS BE KING**. Although the time did come when no son of David ruled Israel or Judah, we now live under the rule of the son of David who is greater than David: Jesus, our Lord. Matthew and Luke are careful to show that Mary and Joseph are descended from David.

David is known as a musician and psalm writer. Which Psalms are associated with events in II Samuel?

Psalm 51 when he repents from his affair with Bathsheba; Psalm 3 when his son Absalom tries to take the throne; and Psalm 18 which is also in II Samuel 22. Other Psalms have introductions which identify them with events in I Samuel.