

Emmanuel Living

volume I, issue 10



Emmanuel Exists...

to glorify God through the prayerful nurturing and sending of disciplined believers to present Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

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December 2009

Managing Editor:
Janie Thiessen

Hope Begins in the Dark

By Karla Kroeker

'The people who walk in darkness will see a great light – a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow... If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the Lord and rely on your God. But watch out, you who live in your own light and warm yourselves by your own fires...' (Isaiah 9:2, Isaiah 50:10-11)

It's unexpected, yet almost unbearably beautiful, to consider that Christ arrived into a time and place in history marked not by eager anticipation and celebration, but by dread, fear, loneliness, and longing – not only in individuals, but in an entire nation overcome by oppression while yearning for deliverance. Sustained only by promises given hundreds of years earlier through the prophets, the people walked in darkness, waiting for the great light to appear.

And then Hope did actually appear - not in a flashy, ready-to-use package – but in the soft and tender form of a baby: a baby that would need time to be nurtured and cared for, and would have to grow and learn before He would fully deliver on His promise of hope.

Isn't that usually the form Hope takes in our lives? I guess I can only speak for myself, but I see this to be true in me – the full appearance and reassurance of hope in any given situation tends to be something that unfolds within me, taking its time to grow and mature. The best I can do, it seems, is to put myself in places and with people who remind me of this Hope. Scripture, songs, and truths written by others all provide declarative statements and promises to cling to while I hope for Hope.

Just as God's people walked in great darkness until Christ's arrival, we, too, often find ourselves in dark places – even at Christmas, because (apparently) illness, relationship difficulties, death, anxiety, and trouble don't take holidays. It's incredibly tempting during these times to create fires of our own making with which to

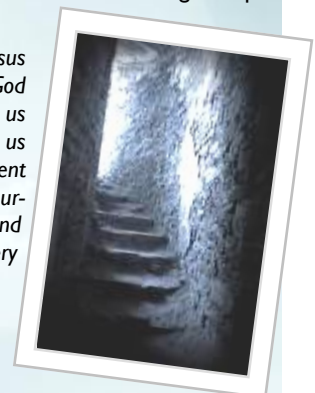
warm our frozen spirits, and the Christmas season with its abundance of festivities provides any number of ways to do that. If this is true of you this season, may the Holy Spirit provide the strength you need to position yourself in places where the True Light of Christ's Hope can shine on you, and where you can hear again the promises of hope, even while you wait for Hope to grow within your heart and mind.

If hope is flourishing within you this Christmas season, perhaps you could turn your mind to those in your circle of friends, family, and faith community who are walking in a valley of darkness – maybe you could be the one to cling to hope on their behalf, reminding them of what is True as you 'trust in the Lord and rely on your God' together.

With that in mind, you're invited to a community 'Longest Night' service on Monday, December 21st for those who have had a difficult year and for whom regular Christmas festivities are painful reminders of losses they've sustained in the past year. This service may be meaningful for you personally, or perhaps you'd be willing to come with a friend and simply sit beside them through the service as a way of acknowledging their grief with them before God. The service will be at the Grace Mennonite Church, starting at 7pm and ending by 8pm.

'May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.'

(II Thessalonians 2:16-17)



A Family Meeting

On December 6th members of our Emmanuel Church family gathered around a light lunch provided by our youth ministry to talk about the future and make some decisions. We listened together to testimonies from Ron & Anne Dueck, Henry & Barbara Doerksen, Manfred & Angelina Ginter, and Martin & Theresa Hildebrand. We then had the privilege of voting them into official membership. We are excited to have them join us in their commitment to this body of Christ, and in our commitment back to them as evident through membership. This gives them the privilege and responsibility of helping to make the key decisions about ministry at Emmanuel.

We also heard a presentation from our Senior Pastor, Terry Kaufman, about vision and the future of our facilities. Through our Mission Statement and Membership Covenant we were reminded of what Emmanuel is really all about, and how those who have led this church to this chapter in its history (through their service, vision, and faith) built this existing facility from a ministry perspective. Pastor Terry challenged us that to increase our fruitfulness we need to see people as God sees them, increase our vision, our passion, and our compassion. The number one solution to

more and more effective ministry is God working through His people. But a part of that doing more, and more effective, ministry is also to reduce any other barriers, and that includes limitations in our facilities. Pastor Terry also shared the journey we have been on over the past couple of years to assess and address our present and future ministry needs as it relates to facilities. Clearly, our ministries and our facilities must be driven by our mission and our covenant of membership before God, which direct us to be active in spiritual formation and spiritual fellowship. In many ways our facilities have achieved that through the years, but we are getting to a place where our facilities are no longer adequate in some areas.

Further, we must ask the question of what we need to do to continue to grow in the ministry of spiritual formation and fellowship for the next 20+ years. With all this in mind, a Facilities Vision Team is presently working hard to develop a plan to present to the congregation in 2010 toward the expansion of our ministry through these facilities. We are excited about what these developments could do for our effectiveness, and look forward to talking about this in the days ahead. We were reminded

that while there are many questions yet to discuss, we must remember that our greatest call to stewardship is to be stewards of the gospel, the relationships we have with people, and the opportunities we have been given in this community and beyond to share that gospel. Pastor Terry invited everyone to spend time praying, and talking together about the future ministry of Emmanuel for the next 20 years in anticipation of corporate discussions that will soon be happening. We are also invited to talk with him, or any of the Facilities Vision Team, about their work.

The membership also had the privilege of moving ahead in future ministry by adopting the 2010 Ministry Budget. This budget recommended an increase of about 4% to facilitate the continuation of our present ministry model. Church budgets are not about money as much as they are about ministry, so we are thankful that our membership adopted this budget with a 98% vote of approval.

Of course, we also enjoyed a great meal, some good fellowship, and over \$2500 was raised for our Youth Retreat Scholarship fund.

It was a good day.

Connecting

Growing

Serving

Multiplying

Emmanuel - what we are all about

Our Mission Statement:

We exist to glorify God through the prayerful nurturing and sending of disciplined believers to present Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Our Membership Covenant:

"Having been brought by God's grace to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and to worship and serve Him wholeheartedly as Lord, we now joyfully covenant together to live for His glory. To that end, we commit ourselves to care for one another and to promote the growth of the Body of Christ in knowledge, holiness, and obedience to His will. We renew our pledge to be active in public worship and the celebration of the ordinances; to fellowship together; to support the poor, promote missions, and advance the ministry of the Gospel among us, with the resources God provides. We will encourage family and private devotions and the training of our children, that they might come to trust in Christ for eternal life. We will seek to encourage and admonish one another in meekness and humility. We will walk carefully in the world so that by our example we may win souls for Christ, and not cause other Christians to stumble. May God's grace strengthen us to serve Him in love and faithfulness. Amen."



Missionary Hi-lights

We are excited to now have our Missionary Hi-lights included in *Emmanuel Living* instead of on the back of the Monthly calendar. And we look forward to keeping you up to date on all our missionaries as well as any special missions related events taking place. From time to time we will be letting you know when our missionaries will be in our area and we would like to encourage you to invite them to your home, as this is always a great source of encouragement for our missionaries, and will be a tremendous blessing for you as well!

Tony & Leila Frank – World Team in Mozambique

Pray:

- Safety as we travel from Mozambique to Detroit on November 28th & 29th

- Home Assignment December to March, for safety as we travel in the US and Canada, and for a good time of reporting and fellowship with supporters. May this be a time of mutual encouragement.

- Discipline as we have work to do while on furlough (Tony preparing for next year's teaching in Mozambique and Leila doing some translation from English to Portuguese)

Tony & Leila will be at Emmanuel on January 31st and in Steinbach area 3 weeks after that and will be staying at Chuck & Sue Nichols home (326-9679).

Garry & Teresa Verhoog – EFCCM in Ukraine

Pray:

- For safe travels and wonderful family time this Christmas.

**Garry & Teresa will arrive home in St. Labre on December 15th and will be around until the end of January. (204-429-2230)*

Jenny & Kirk Davis (Anthony & Naomi) - NTM in Missouri

Will be spending Christmas in Steinbach, planning to be here from December 24th to January 2nd and will be staying at Jenny's folks, Peter & Betty Klippenstein. (326-2560)



Tony & Leila



The Verhoogs



Kirk & Jenny & Anthony
(Naomi was on the way!)

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Pastor's Sabbatical

Emmanuel Evangelical Free Church has a policy to provide our pastors with a 3 month sabbatical after five years of ministry service. This sabbatical is provided to refresh and equip them in their ministry. We know that these sabbaticals help to increase both effectiveness and tenure in ministry. We are grateful that a number of our pastors have served with us long enough to qualify for sabbatical. Our Adult Ministry Pastor, Dave Dickey, is presently on sabbatical and will return just before Christmas. Early in

the New Year, our Worship Ministry Pastor, Karla Kroeker, will be leaving for a three month sabbatical, and plans are already in place to *fill the gap* until she returns in April. We are excited for her, and ask you to pray with us for a productive time for her. Thank you for your ongoing support of our pastoral team, especially through your prayers and encouragements.

Christmas Season Adventures

Our senior high group selected "**Christmas Around the World**" as our theme for our banquet this year. On December 4th, we had parents and others from the church donate ethnic foods for us to sample. The food was delicious and we had fun trying everything. We also played some Christmas bingo, sang some carols and we raised \$155 for Bibles and Fruit Trees in South America. [We used the Evangelical Free Mission "World of Hope" booklet]. A highlight was setting it all up together on the Thursday night before. Thanks to all who provided food. Thanks to Connie, Barb, Millie and Nick for serving us.

The high school Sunday School class hosted the **congregational lunch** on Sunday, Dec. 6th. The students

worked like beavers setting up tables and washing dishes. Thanks to all who supported us financially at the lunch. Thanks to all who donated soup/buns, Tina for the dozens of buns and Grauers for the noodle donation! Thanks to Heinz, Elsie, Kevin, Julie, Tammy and Janie for your help in the kitchen.

Our earlybird deadline is Dec. 13th for the \$40 rate for **DOWNLOAD 10**, our sr high retreat at Red rock Jan 1-3. [\$50 after] Registration forms available.

On December 7, our junior high youth enjoyed a **Christmas Party** based on the game of LIFE. Jesus explained part of His reason for coming to earth in John 10:10 when He said, "I have come that they might have LIFE and have it to the full." Our

Monday night events begin again on January 4th.

Youth Quake is a retreat at Briercreech on Feb. 19-21. It's available to gr. 9-12. Interested? Partial scholarships available.

Our **Young Adults group** is having a Christmas gathering on Tuesday, December 15th. Contact the church office for details. A May mission opportunity is being planned for young adults.

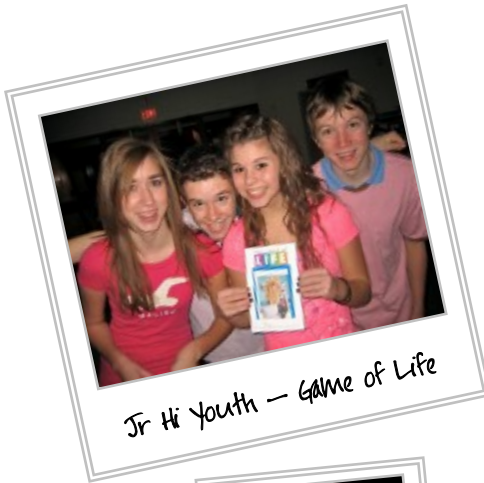
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***** * Christmas Season Adventures — the Scrapbook Diaries * *****



Jr Hi Youth — Game of Life



Awesome food provided for the Sr Hi Christmas — Thanks!



Game Pieces



Senior High Christmas Around the World

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Children's Ministries - PARTNERING PAGE

Family Christmas Traditions

Connecting

Meaningful family traditions provide parents with an invaluable tool to train their children in love and righteousness. As families establish and follow traditions, each family member is strengthened and the family as a whole grows in unity and love. We asked various members of the congregation about family Christmas traditions they currently have or traditions they remember from when they were young.

Growing

Lori Biedler mentioned 4 things that have become traditions in their family. Each year the family works on Samaritan's Purse Shoe Boxes to help them get into the spirit of Christmas. She then purchases an advent calendar for each of their 3 children and they go with another family to the tree farm to get a Christmas tree. Then on Christmas Eve they have a chocolate fondue.

Serving

Decorating the Christmas tree is the basis of Shaun and Angela Martin's family tradition. They include the whole family, and the children have called their tree-top star the "Bethlehem Star". They like to pretend and act out the Christmas story.

Kent & Pam Martens family does something they have called "Family Favours". At the beginning of the day, they pick names among their family and then they go and buy a \$10-15 gift for that family member. When they get home they wrap the gift and write out a certificate of something they will do for that person. In the evening they exchange gifts and certificates.

Multiplying

Sometimes a tradition can be the same or just slightly different from one family to the next. As the youngest in a family of 8, Janie Thiessen remembers the emptiness of the living room on Christmas Eve. No presents were

wrapped or put under the tree. Then on Christmas morning there would be 8 TV trays piled with gifts, one for each of the children. Judy Walker's memories were similar, but for her the Christmas gifts were found on the dining room table, hidden by sheets. Nothing could be "opened" until morning chores were done and breakfast was eaten. Her mom would then direct everyone to the right spot and the sheets were pulled off!

Sometimes the family tradition can be the extended family as well. Elma Reimer remembers going to church on the 25th then heading to Grandma's on the farm in the afternoon. The Uncle's would drive the sleigh up and down the long driveway to bring people to the house. They would have made sure to have rocks that had been heated in the stove at the bottom of the sleigh to help keep every one warm!

Traditions can also include people not a part of our family. Phyllis Neustaedter remembers how her dad, A.D. Penner, would take his Sunday School class tobogganing every year between Christmas and New Year's. She and her siblings would tag along to "Suicide Hill" in the Sandilands for tobogganing and skiing.

Often traditions are handed down from generation to generation, but every family can create its own traditions as well. We encourage you to take some time to think about your family traditions and to talk about traditions with your children. You may be surprised by what they consider as important for your family!

Prayer Corner

*Pray for our kids that they will have a Christ centered Christmas as God continues to give them the abundant life he promises those that love Him first.

*Pray for each other that we will all have a well deserved break and come back refreshed and ready to once again show God's love to His kids.



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