



**1995 – 2020**

Luther Oelke, Author

# WAY BEYOND SURVIVAL

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Having been asked to “update” the history of Emanuel’s as the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding approaches, I must admit to a feeling of inadequacy. That feeling has its origin in the excellent first history of the congregation published in 1970, *The Centennial Story of Emanuel’s Lutheran Church*. I cannot find reference to the actual author of that work but a committee of 5 prominent members is listed as the “History and Anniversary Book” committee. I find two names in that committee, Wm. F. Kraushaar and Odie Pederson, talented folks I knew, one of whom is likely the writer.

Please read that history (available in the church office) and discover why I am so impressed with their work. It is also necessary reading to understand fully the subsequent histories.

My feelings of inadequacy are then enhanced by the next update to the history, done on the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, by none other than my favorite history professor, A.G. Wiederaenders. Wiede, as he was affectionately known by colleagues, wrote not only Emanuel’s update, *A History of Emanuel’s Lutheran Church, 1970-1995*, but two histories of Texas Lutheran University. His update covered some exciting events at Emanuel’s, including the dedication of new facilities and new ministries. He is also an honest observer, citing the declining membership statistics that had set in by 1995. His work was augmented by the publication *Building on His Love*, printed in February 1998 in connection with the dedication of the renovated three-story education addition to Emanuel’s and a brief update by Betty Jean Jones in 1999.

## **Updating**

So here we go, updating again in an age of dramatically declining church membership in present day society and in an age of equally dramatic changes in church culture. When Kraushaar and Pederson wrote in the late 1960’s, churches were still booming, and Lutheran congregations in Texas continued to do so until sometime in the 1970’s. Emanuel’s peak membership occurred in 1965 with 2,104 baptized and 1,516 confirmed members and a Sunday average attendance of 646 total at the two services. Lenten services averaged 373. These banner years lasted for much of the next decade before the decline accelerated.

The idea of women pastors was just about to happen, but “church” was still pretty much a men’s domain even though, truth be told, the women and their organizations were the backbone of much congregational life.

By the time Wiede updated Emanuel’s history in the mid-90’s, women pastors were common and social change was churning society with the church caught up in the chase. Emanuel’s responded with programs for the developmentally disabled, with support for counseling, and attempts at outreach to other ethnicities. The Day School received additional attention, new facilities, and a Montessori curriculum was in place. A creative music ministry grew into a specialty of Emanuel’s.

Since Wiede ended his update during the pastorate of Pastors Sultemeier and Guilfoyle, and the dedication of the three -story facility, that might be a starting place for this update, say, in the 1995-1998-time frame. So, what is covered in the pages that follow should be read as only the history from that period through early 2020.

### **The Context**

A larger context would be helpful as this study advances from the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century into the 21<sup>st</sup>. Remember the Y2K scare? Everything was going amok when 2000 dawned! Well it didn't, but by 2000 it was obvious that many things were changing in the world of religion. Then came 9-11 and a nation wept, then went to war. The casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan mounted and there is still no peace, something for which the Church prays, as it prays for its members still in harm's way.

Some thought that world events would bring new life to organized religion. But what happened was that the church membership decline accelerated with traditional denominations like Lutherans taking a hit as they looked at newly termed "evangelical" mega churches' growing numbers. Meanwhile, marginalized groups asserted their rights while fundamentalist groups became a political force, the Religions Right. Denominational leaders recommended programs, initiatives, and a rethinking of mission to address the theological turmoil.

### **Changes**

Emanuel's was not immune to steep membership and worship attendance declines. This shows up in statistics such as baptisms and confirmations as well. In 1995 there were 13 baptisms and 11 confirmations; in 2019 that number was 5 and 3 respectively. Worship attendance fell from 354 in 1995 to 209 in 2010 and 160 in 2019. These declines approximated the statistics reported by the ELCA in general. Emanuel's 160 average attendance is actually significantly higher than the 119 average throughout the ELCA.

During these 25 years, Emanuel's maintained its traditional ministries and attempted new ones. The congregation dealt with and survived both the somewhat controversial ELCA- Episcopal agreement relating to ordination protocol and the 2009 ELCA decision to ordain gay clergy in relationships. Few membership losses at Emanuel's were directly related to these issues. Congregational and pastoral disagreements were more important factors in membership losses since 1998. But in this writer's opinion, a widespread spiritual malaise in society kept more former Emanuel's folks' home on Sunday morning than any specific issue or event.

Being nearly a century and a half old, one might rightly expect many Guadalupe County families to have connections with Emanuel's. In visiting with many Emanuel's members, one begins to fathom the depth of relationships within families that tie into Emanuel's. While worship attendance declined during the update period, the difficulty of dealing with a realistic membership statistic became an issue. The baptized membership reported to the ELCA through 2015 was over 1,000. Knowing this to be unrealistic and simply wrong, committees were formed, letters sent, phone calls made to ascertain if people "still on the books" but who did not contribute, or attend were members. That effort often resulted in some folks being offended, thinking that their relationship with Emanuel's was a family perpetuity. Throughout the update period and up to the time of this writing, persons request end-of-

life services from a church they haven't supported in years. Through all this, today we do have a more honest baptized membership statistic, just under 500.

Are such requests from lapsed membership an opportunity? Perhaps, and throughout the period we are addressing in this historical update, an attempt has been made to accommodate both active membership and legacy membership. Up to the present, the pastoral staff and volunteers have rallied around families when their loved one passed away whether that loved one had contributed or attended services. Many volunteers from Emanuel's have provided hundreds of sandwiches and desserts for the customary funeral receptions. Yet, as has been observed by church statisticians, inactive or lapsed members rarely return to active membership.

In addition, Emanuel's experienced "graying" as the average member's age increased. Emanuel's responded with strong programs for its older citizens. Holiday meal delivery, monthly senior services with meals, nursing home services, and home communions were implemented. Ironically, as experts have pointed out, the emphasis on aged members can lessen the focus on the younger families and youth programming. Recognizing this, Emanuel's employed personnel to reach out to these populations, but with limitations such as the secularization of American society, those attempts faced serious challenges.

In that context, baptism and confirmation "disappearances" continue throughout the Lutheran Church and Emanuel's experiences this as well. What do we make of parents and sponsors promise at the baptismal font? And of the professions at Confirmation? As has always been the case to some degree, the sacrament of baptism and the rite of confirmation increasingly present the Church with a challenge. It has become a veritable graduation from church activity. Sunday School in the traditional sense is a thing of the past for children and youth programs for post-confirmation youth face competition from a plethora of exciting activities outside of the church. Even assembling a confirmation instruction program is a daunting exercise. Currently a multi-congregational program holds promise as one answer to the challenge.

Adding to all this is the erosion – actually, the destruction – of any sense of Sunday specialness. Youth sports programs seemed to be the first to invade Sunday morning, but now Sunday morning is a fair-game time for any kind of activity since most local citizens are no longer church attenders. Though, in fairness, many of our Roman Catholic neighbors attend church on Saturday night, thus freeing all their Sunday. So, Sunday morning at HEB is not much different from Monday morning.

Since the beginning of this historical update, these factors have been challenging the Church's cultural tradition. Emanuel's has felt these factors profoundly and has tried to address them. Initiatives in reaching children have included a successful Godly Play program which was replaced by a new curriculum aligned with the emphasis *de jour* on family participation in children's Sunday School. That has now transitioned into a worship-release on selected Sundays for children of different age groups. The only remnants of traditional Sunday School are adult studies on Sunday morning, including the historic Bible Class, a tradition of Emanuel's, now coed, replacing the Men's Bible Class of yesteryear.

Post-confirmation youth have benefitted from significant expenditures. A space was transformed into an attractive youth facility adjacent to the fellowship hall, now partially utilized by Emanuel's chartered Boy Scout troop. That space was utilized for several years as a youth room until a decline in numbers resulted in a lack of programming there. The congregation continued to send youth of confirmation

and post-confirmation age to camp and to the Lutheran Youth Gatherings, but a local ongoing youth program remains a huge challenge. Currently a multi-congregation program is underway to renew interest and participation, offering mutual support among Emanuel's ecumenical partners.

A property acquisition was made possible by a generous member after the 1998 dedication of the remodeled three-story facility. It is known as the Alexander property. Adjacent to the newly converted Day School building, the lot provides some future expansion possibilities. The Day School building housed in the former Traeger book repository, was remodeled mainly by congregational volunteer workers.

In 2001, responding to the increasing interest in cremation and the columbarium movement in many churches, Emanuel's added a small columbarium. By converting what was first envisioned as a coat closet, this space just inside the main entrance was utilized. The result was an attractive small columbarium, with 36 niches.

In choosing significant ministries of Emanuel's since 1995, one must analyze participation and faithfulness by members, the scope of the ministries outreach, and the accomplishments achieved.

Some ministries, like the Day School and Music Ministry are extensions of previous work but have grown in their centrality to Emanuel's overall identity. There are members who have joined as a direct result of those vibrant ministries. Congregations of the ELCA who have Day Schools such as Emanuel's are in an enhanced position to attract new families. Those families attend Emanuel's on special occasions. Affirmation of Emanuel's continued support of the Day School was achieved in a congregational vote in 2018. Ambitious building plans were also discussed for future consideration. Much of the future of this ministry depends upon the status of preschool education in Texas and specifically in Seguin. Day School directors during the time of this writing included Pat Hoppe, a certified Montessori instructor, Jennifer Vogel, Melissa Ronning, Burlene LeClair, and the present director, Deb Haug.

### **Worship**

Congregations who have a vigorous music program also are in an advantageous position. Many of God's people treasure music. It is a well-known Lutheran tradition. An invitation to sing is often a first step into congregational activity for the newcomer. Talented members also provide instrumental support to the music ministry. Flute, brass, and strings, including classical guitar, are frequent components of a Sunday morning's experience. The program is directed by the longest-tenured professional church music director in the area, Thomas Engler. A legend in the Seguin community, Engler also participates in local civic and ecumenical activities and was recently recognized by Emanuel's for his 40+ years of service. Engler is the author of an entertaining essay on church music in the last half of the 20th century in *From Merger to Merger*, a publication of the ELCA Region 4-South Archives, available in the church library.

A summer tradition during this era was children's programming. A summer musical drew children from several congregations culminating in a presentation for an appreciative audience. Also, children's bell choir workshops were offered. Vacation Bible School was often staffed by the enthusiastic young counselors from either Luther Hill or Camp Chrysalis with Emanuel's members providing the support.

Sunday worship time became an issue as attendance fell. An experimental merging of the traditional 8 am and 10:30 am services into one 9 am service was met with mixed reviews. During the last interim

pastorate, an experimental “after the 9 am” contemporary service was added but did not generate significant interest. Finally, as is the present practice, the 10:30 am service was reinstated with a first Sunday-of-the-month 8 am service also offered.

A new Ash Wednesday practice emerged during this period, the imposition of ashes – curbside. Emanuel’s pastors have stationed themselves at a busy corner and proffered ashes on drivers’ foreheads along with a prayer. This practice has grown in ELCA circles and Emanuel’s was early in the trend.

An ecumenical Thanksgiving service also was initiated during this era with participants from many of the “downtown” congregations. The services featured choirs, liturgical dancers, and speakers from the participating congregations.

An Easter Sunrise service in Seguin’s Central Park was initiated as well with Emanuel’s and Spirit of Joy congregations gathering annually.

The Arts have contributed greatly to Emanuel’s worship experience. The windows in the sanctuary and especially the large art glass in the west chancel wall, spark contemplation. Banners, some made by talented members and one designed by renowned Brother Cletus have enhanced the chancel. Art glass windows from the 1912 sanctuary, some in storage since 1955, were electrified and placed along the walls of the sanctuary. When the sculpture, *God With Us* by Marika Bordes was unveiled in 2018, the Alpha and Omega windows were repositioned to provide balance to the walls on either side of the chancel.

For several years, chancel dramas were presented during the Lenten Season. The elaborate productions featured Emanuel’s members directed by member and local theater personality, Pat Hoppe. In subsequent years, the Lenten Season as well as Advent, have featured lunch or supper fellowship events following a more traditional worship format.

Communion (the Eucharist) practices saw several variations during the 1995-2020 era. The then-traditional wine-filled individual cups were abandoned in favor of a pouring chalice. Bread was sometimes proffered instead of wafers, and continuous communion became common. The desire by some to commune at the chancel rail, involving several steps, was addressed by the construction of portable railings placed at floor level in front of the chancel steps. The railing is sometimes removed because of special programming and in such cases continuous communion is practiced.

As is the dominant practice in the ELCA, the Eucharist is offered each Sunday and is open to all in attendance. Since the adoption of First Communion instruction, young children are often communicants, the decision resting with their parents. Old customs of communion cards and even older customs of “announcements” are relics of Lutheran history throughout the ELCA.

### **More Ministries**

In discussing congregational organizations, one must begin with the Ladies Aid. Though diminished in numbers since the earlier histories, it continues to be a powerful auxiliary, and one that provides significant funds for congregational support. Its annual bazaar with its famous coffee cake sales, is a community favorite. Some of the members are also quilters and provide high quality quilts for sale at the bazaar. They often contribute equipment and needed repairs to the church building.

The Women of the ELCA, known as WELCA, is a churchwide organization with conference and synodical functions as well as a local identity. However, the main function of WELCA is the nurturing of two "Circles", groups who meet monthly for Bible Study and fellowship. Formal meetings of WELCA as an auxiliary organization have ended at Emanuel's and most ELCA congregations.

In addition to the Ladies Aid quilters, and a ministry that has emerged since the last history was written, is the Lutheran World Relief "quick quilters." They meet weekly and have, since their inception in the mid-2000's has made over a thousand quilts for victims of disaster and famine around the world. They also collect and assemble school back packs and health kits that LWF distributes. Like the music ministry and day school, they have also invited participation in Emanuel's by new folks. Their expanded work and membership necessitated a move from cramped quarters in third floor former classrooms to a large former open classroom on the first floor.

The Altar Guild, responsible for much worship support, continues to provide that support with faithful volunteers. Communion, baptism, special services, flowers: All are dependent on the work of the Altar Guild. Former Youth and Family Director Jim Johnson has taught flower arrangement classes to several members who utilize their skills in floral arrangements.

The Mosaic Group Home clients, welcomed and ministered to by a core of volunteers, have become active participants in many Emanuel's activities, Mosaic, previously known as Martin Luther Homes, is a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with the developmentally disabled and has two group homes in Seguin. The piety and faithfulness of the clients is an inspiration to many members of Emanuel's. The future of this participation is currently a concern as the Texas entity of Mosaic, related to the ELCA, has been sold to a commercial organization. At the time of this writing there is hope that the relationship will continue as with Mosaic.

Boy Scout Troop 107 was founded at Emanuel's in 1924, sponsored by the then Men's Bible Class and continues as a small troop today with leadership from folks outside Emanuel's. They currently meet in the former Youth Room area.

Many maintenance and custodial issues are addressed by the Tuesday morning Property Stewards. A continuation of a similar group in previous years, the current co-ed group can be found each week addressing the many issues of an ageing facility. They find time to socialize and eat as well, celebrating each Tuesday. Without their faithful work in addressing maintenance and logistical issues Emanuel's would face great difficulties.

A new ministry was initiated in 2016, the Garden of Eat'n. Located near the former parsonage, *aka* Luther House, the plot provides vegetables for the community and is maintained by volunteers. A creative relationship with the Day School, provides children the opportunity to be involved in the growing and harvesting of the garden.

During the entire period of this historical update, the radio broadcast on KWED has continued, funded by individual members. A special broadcast of the 11 pm Christmas Eve service continues as a local tradition. A recent enhancement to the Sunday broadcasts is the addition of commentary by a knowledgeable member, assisting listeners with information about the service and Emanuel's. It is possible that this broadcast is one of few such ministries remaining in ELCA congregations in Texas.

Emanuel's participates along with other local congregations in a counseling ministry, the Christian Counseling Center and in the local food pantry, the Christian Cupboard. Support is also given to the Prescription Assistance Program administered by the Guadalupe Regional Medical Center. A special relationship with Habitat for Humanity developed with Emanuel's membership assuming leading roles in the organization. In addition to the space provided for officing, the congregation has provided lunches for the workers, quilts for the new residents, and willing volunteer workers. In 2020, a new home referred to as the Hoppe House, was completed and named in honor of member Layne Hoppe, an early leader in Habitat work.

## **Spaces**

As former Sunday School rooms have emptied, Emanuel's has offered space to non-profit community organizations. This has resulted in offices maintained by the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Habitat for Humanity, and National Association for the Mentally Ill. Al-Anon groups also use Emanuel's facilities. In addition, Emanuel's sanctuary is a frequent host for large gatherings from other community organizations and especially congregations with limited space. It is not unusual to see a large funeral at Emanuel's for a member of a local small church.

Returning to facility issues, the continued discussion of the old parsonage, also known as the Luther House, presents dilemmas. When deterioration was setting in, a considerable expense was incurred in roof and other repairs with the hope that a worthy purpose would appear after several attempts. Currently the Christian Counseling Center is soliciting grants that would enable further renovations that would enable the building to be appropriate for counseling offices and services.

The fellowship hall, or basement, the largest gathering space outside of the sanctuary, is currently undergoing renovations, including a long-desired ADA accessible entrance, the first step in a 3-phase project. After months-long delays due to permitting issues, the construction of the first phase, the ramp, began in June 2019 and was completed by the end of the year. The second and third phases await further plans and funding.

Upon its completion in 1956, the present sanctuary and related appurtenances were regarded as an outstanding example of modern church architecture, specifically Modified Contemporary Gothic. Cited by the then Lutheran Brotherhood Insurance Company (now Thrivent) in a publication highlighting significant churches, Emanuel's was praised. But 1956 church architecture was locked in an era of accessibility amnesia. How an architect could design an otherwise outstanding building without taking into consideration mobility issues is difficult to understand. Steps are everywhere it seems, and the attempted mitigation of their barriers has resulted in three elevator ventures and two exterior ramps, as well as the interior one constructed in 2019.

In the early 1990's, leading up to the dedication of the 1995-98 projects (c.f. *Building on His Love*, p. 5), conversation progressed relating to a ground-level addition adjacent to the sanctuary. This would have been an alternative to the remodeling of the three-story facility formerly connected to the demolished 1929-era Parish Hall. It would have provided ground floor space with a large fellowship hall without steps.

## Relationships

Ninety-five years of the historic relationship with Texas Lutheran University was celebrated in 2007 with a festive service featuring participation of TLU faculty, students, and alumni. The dawn and development of that relationship is discussed in *The Centennial Story of Emanuel's Lutheran Church*. A vacancy in the campus pastorate at TLU presented the opportunity for Emanuel's to aid the university in loaning the campus the interim and part-time presence of both Pastor Bigott and Pastor Theiss during the Autumn of 2019 and the Spring of 2020.

A new relationship that has developed during this period is that with a new ELCA congregation in Seguin, Spirit of Joy. The congregation was founded after a dispute at Faith Lutheran Church. After the historic 2009 vote of the ELCA to ordain Gay and Lesbian pastors in committed relationships, some congregations began the process of leaving the ELCA. That process began at Faith Lutheran but could never reach the required 2/3 vote for the congregation to sever relations with the ELCA. After months of rancor, the membership desiring to remain in the ELCA left Faith Lutheran and the ELCA authorized them to be a "mission start." They have become a viable congregation and have become a partner with Emanuel's in numerous activities, special services, Vacation Bible School, and the ELCA-wide God's Work Our Hands Sunday. Their purchase of the Juan Seguin Elementary School property in 2019 was made in anticipation of their outreach to the west side neighborhoods and the eventual establishment of social service ministries in which Emanuel's may be invited to participate.

## People

Pastoral leadership during the 1998-2019 period included two seven-year tenures and several shorter and interim pastorates. Following the Sultemeier/Guilfoyle era, Pastors Bonnie Claycomb served until the installation of Pastor Jeffrey Vayda who was installed in January 1999. He was joined by Associate Pastor Kevin Haug in 2000. Vayda and Haug were followed by Pastor Paul Zwarich in 2007 who served until 2015. Pastor Marcus Bigott came in 2017 and was joined by Pastor Kelsie Theiss in 2019.

Prior to the calling of Pastor Zwarich, Emanuel's participated in the *Bridge Building* study led by Dr. Peter Steinke in 2006. Following interviews and research a document was presented to provide guidance for the congregation as it moved forward with new pastoral leadership.

A similar document was produced prior to the calling of Pastor Bigott, *Transitional Planning Team Report to the Congregation*. It was presented to the congregation in September 2016 and included proposed Core Values, a Mission Statement, and a Vision Statement. It also included resources, goals and objectives. The report was enthusiastically adopted by the congregation.

As is the custom in the ELCA, when a pastor departs for a new call, the synod recommends an interim pastor to provide continuity while the call process proceeds. Emanuel's has seen, during the period addressed in this writing, several gifted interim pastors. Sheldon Hermansen, Charles Pegg, Annae Mae Storbeck, James Taylor, and Paul Cannon all served Emanuel's. In addition, Emanuel's has employed visitation pastors such as Darwin Huartson who ministers to members hospitalized in San Antonio hospitals, and Synodical Authorized Minister Willie Spreen whose work involved nursing home ministry and occasional funerals. Seminarian Donna Zipp also served in this capacity in 2012. In 2019 retired Pastor John Van Deusen joined the staff in assisting with the nursing home ministry as well as with responsibilities for the monthly 8 am Matins service.

Additional paid staffing during this era included Youth and Family personnel, Jeff Barkemeyer, Jim Johnson, Ariel Williams, Alex Norden, Megan Alves, as well as volunteers and part-time college students. Sunday School coordination during this time included Debra Reilly and others. Ministry to the bereaved is also addressed in seminars arranged by the Director of Congregational Care, Donna Simmons, often led by Pastor Huartson. Mitzi Preisinger and Whitney Bischoff preceded them in this ministry.

With the disappearance of traditional children's Sunday School, several options have been introduced led by volunteers. They include parent-included children's programming led by Sarah Kent. Also, age-appropriate worship time activities such as sand box ministry led by Kristen Bigott and Science Time by Wayne Stalsworth are being utilized as well as occasional children's sermons.

The work of all professional and volunteer personnel is supported by an office staff utilizing current technology. They produce printed and internet resources, often with short deadlines because of funerals and special events. Newsletters are now online resources, printed on request, and a comprehensive monthly on-line publication, *The Acorn*.

Personnel staffing the church office has survived many pastorates, conflicting directions, and a workstation location making concentration on work difficult. The location issue was addressed in 2019 by a rearrangement of office space to provide a better work environment. A remarkable stability has prevailed as Jeanie Hall, Laurie Lindsey, Kathy McKinney, Elaine Schutter, Bonnie Cheatam, Sherry Hardwick, and Denise Jahns, and many volunteers cranked out bulletins, reports, newsletters and whatever someone requested. A small group of dedicated volunteers gather each week to fold and finalize the next Sunday's bulletins. Others are "on call" as needs arise.

Custodial services during the period of this writing have included several competent and faithful personalities. Perhaps most notable are Porfirio DeLeon, Jay Forshage, and the present head custodian, Pauline Miriles Zunker who has served over 20 years.

## **The Future**

As 2019 dawned, it became clear that the future held many challenges for Emanuel's. The Church Council engaged Evan Moilan and the GSB Fundraising Consultants to work with a stewardship committee to develop a plan to assist in facing the financial challenges. Moilan was known to Emanuel's for his assistance in developing the 2020 Visioning which was fashioned by the Transitional Planning Team in 2016, previously mentioned.

The stewardship plan, named *Generosity: Creating Generous Generations*, aimed to reach out to 150 giving units with the goal of increasing regular contributions by \$55,000 in the 2020 fiscal year. Regular giving\* by Emanuel's members in 2019 was \$380,000, and the goal for 2020 would be \$435,000.

It should be noted that the budget and expenses for 2019, as in previous years, was augmented by transfers from investments. Emanuel's has been the beneficiary of deceased members' wills and gifts which has enabled the church to continue a vigorous ministry while contributions did not equal actual expenses. One of the goals of the stewardship effort is to narrow that gap.

At the annual business meeting in January 2020, the congregation approved an ambitious budget for 2020 of \$627,306, the highest in history, of which \$430,000 is anticipated from members' offerings, also

a historic number. The congregation looks forward to proposals for improvements in the fellowship hall and a significant addition to the Day School facility. These decisions will occupy much of the congregation's attention in the anniversary year.

As a new era, dawns, as the 150<sup>th</sup> year of worship and service begins, a spirit of optimism prevails. It is appropriate to say why, to summarize reasons to celebrate. Consider the following:

**+ Way Beyond Survival** – While hundreds of congregations have closed and hundreds more have dwindled into small gatherings of the faithful few, Emanuel's thrives! There is a vibrancy on Sunday mornings, in gatherings of the members, and in the enthusiasm of its pastoral leadership. *Good Morning Emmanuel's!* proclaimed each Sunday captures that vibrancy.

**+ A Loving Community** – Carved into the Mountain Street cornerstone, this phrase is lived out as the congregation ministers to the bereaved, prays for the poor, and welcomes all – young, old, male, female, gay, straight, street people, rich people. All are welcome!

**+ Unity of Purpose** – Adopted by the congregation is the goal for the future: *To be the church God is calling us to be by declaring God's love, serving others, and embracing all.* As we look beyond our 150<sup>th</sup> year of celebration, we live by this purpose.

So, **"May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Romans 15: 5-6