

The Red Door

Emanuel Lutheran Church
Preaching the gospel at all times and,
when necessary, using words

April 2014 edition

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A Second Life Journey For Emanuel

By Jim Hyland, Editor

Gail Sheehy – world renowned author of *Passages* and other treatises on human behavior – was covering a story on the violence in Northern Ireland from a vantage point among a raucous crowd in the center of Londonderry when a sniper’s bullet literally blew off the face of a young man standing nearby. On what became known around the world as Bloody Sunday in that awful struggle, Sheehy’s thoughts turned suddenly to speculation about her own death and the true meaning of what she’d come to believe was her ultimate purpose in life. Over the following weeks and months, she fought her way through a series of strange and confusing crises as she pondered “...what am I going to do with the rest of my life.” This struggle marked the beginning of what she later called her “second life journey.”

It’s entirely possible one day we’ll each face a similar life changing experience and launch into a second life journey of our own. No matter our age or our place in society, a sudden feeling our precious lifelong behavioral patterns have been torn from us will intrude on our consciousness. It needn’t be a bullet

that launches our second life journey as it did in Sheehy’s case. Instead, it might be a diagnosis of an incurable disease, the loss of a prestigious job, the death of a child – anything to make us feel our life is no longer in working order.

Dave Daubert, the pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Elgin IL, suggests that spiritual communities have second life journeys in much the same way as individuals. In the January issue of *The Lutheran* he wrote, “*God is interested in a transformed world and that means reconnecting churches with what (He) is up to in the world (and) teaching church members to recognize (Him) as a living, breathing, dynamic part of their lives, helping them recover a sense of the vibrancy and activity of a God who just can’t stay away.*” Daubert’s words are a clear sign the Church Renewal Process we currently have under way at Emanuel is, indeed, the beginning of a second life journey for us as a congregation.

Think of it. In responding to a call from the Lord, we’ve begun questioning our cherished values and the true meaning of what we’ve come to believe is our ultimate purpose in God’s plan – much as Sheehy did in Northern Ireland. We’ve launched into a serious reflection on the nature and quality of our faith in the gospel of grace, on our hope in the new and the not-yet and on our love for God and the people in the community we serve in His name. These meditations are calling us to make a deeper, more mature commitment of faith – one in which the fervor and idealism of the morning of our history as a spiritual community has been seasoned with the disappointment and disillusionment of the afternoon of that history.

“Packing” for this new journey has been more than a little scary, but we can take inspiration and comfort from Brennan Manning’s *The Ragamuffin Gospel* where he promises our journey will end quietly with

a new wisdom in place – a wisdom of taking up some things and letting go of some things, of accepting human frailties and of fresh purpose and new dreams.

Let's pray that over the next few weeks and months we'll begin to experience a new realization of what God is up to in our little corner of the world; and that God will find us to be a congregation from which He just can't stay away.

Family, Friends & Neighbors

Stories of the vibrant life of the people of Emanuel

Five-year-old Jack Brown wanted to do something really special to show his love for God and Emanuel during the Lenten season. So, one evening at dinner at the Penne Pomodoro, he asked his dad – Ted Brown, the President of the Emanuel Community Center – “what if we asked this restaurant to help us raise some money for the hungry people you help at church?”

Ted did just that and after a day-long sharing of great food and giving from the heart to young Jack's caring fund on March 5th, Penne turned over nearly \$1750 to our food pantry. A very proud dad, Ted proclaimed several dozen families won't be going hungry for a while because of Jack's kind heart.

Atta' boy, Jack!

Accompanied by our beloved organist, Donna Miller Hyland, **McKinney high school junior, Nicholas Tharp** – Jim Hyland's (and Donna's) grandson – sounded the clarion call to enter the sanctuary and the soulful “Adagio” from “Sonata” at the offertory on Palm Sunday. Nick has earned first or second chair trumpeter honors in the top bands at McKinney ISD since his middle school years and is currently competing to become drum major of the marching band in his senior year at McKinney High.

Share the good news of your family's, friends' or neighbor's activities or events with your friends at Emanuel. Drop a note to our editor, Jim Hyland at his e-mail address jimhylandathome@yahoo.com. Your news item will appear in this Family, Friends & Neighbors column the following month.

Laugh of the Month

Better Keep in Touch

Author unknown

Jake, the rancher, went out one day to fix a distant fence. The wind was cold and gusty and the clouds rolled gray and dense.

As he pounded the last staples in and gathered his tools to go, the temperature had fallen and the wind and snow had begun to blow.

When he finally reached his pickup, he felt a heavy heart. From the sound of the ignition, he knew that ol' truck wasn't about to start.

So Jake did what most of us would do if we'd been there. He humbly bowed his balding head and sent aloft a prayer, asking the Lord to start his frozen truck.

But as he turned the key just one more time, he softly said, “no luck.” They found him three days later frozen stiff in that old truck.

Now Jake had been around in life and done his share of roaming. But when he saw heaven, he was amazed to find it looked just like Wyoming!

Of all the saints in heaven, his favorite was St. Pete. So they sat and talked a minute or two – okay, maybe it was three. (Nobody was keeping score 'cause in heaven, time is free.)

‘I've always heard,’ Jake said to Pete, “that God will answer prayers, but the one time I asked for help, well, he just plain wasn't there.

“Does God answer prayers of some and ignore the prayers of others? That don't seem exactly square – I believe all men are brothers.

“Or does he randomly reply, without good rhyme or reason? Maybe, it's the time of day, the weather or the season.

“Now, I ain't trying to act smart; it's just the way I feel. And I was wondering; could you tell me – what the heck's the deal?”

Peter listened very patiently and when Jake was done, there was a smile of recognition, and he said, “So, you're the one!

“That day your truck wouldn't start and you sent your prayer a-flying, you gave us a real hard job – hundreds of us were trying,

“We rushed to check the status of your heavenly file – you know, Jake, we found we hadn't heard from you in quite a long while.

“And though all prayers are answered, and God ain't got a quota, he didn't recognize your voice, and started a truck in Minnesota.”

In and Around Emanuel In April and May

Celebration of the Word

Easter, April 20

Church Council meeting

Monday, May 12 @ 6:30 p.m.

Community celebrations

Earth Day, April 22

Holocaust Remembrance Day, April 28

Mothers Day, May 11

Emanuel Community Center Board meeting

Tuesday, May 6 @ 6:30 p.m.

Food Pantry packaging & distribution

Tuesdays, 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Sunday gatherings

Worship service, 10:00 a.m. & 12:15 p.m.

Adult Sunday School, 11:15 a.m.

Do you know a homebound member of Emanuel or perhaps you have a friend or neighbor whom you'd like to give a copy of The Red Door and consider joining you in worship on Sunday morning? Print copies are now available in the narthex at Emanuel on Sunday; feel free to take as many copies as you need to share the good news of our congregation.

Our Church Council Focuses On Change

Karen Roberts, Church Council President, announced recently the Council is intensifying its focus on ways of helping our members adapt to the myriad of changes occurring in our immediate neighborhood and those in the broad community we serve in the name of the Lord. Mindful that Christ has asked each and all of us to spread the good news of His message of love no matter the circumstances or the personal cost, the Council, through the efforts of various committees, is seeking ideas and hands-on assistance from the members and friends of Emanuel in stewardship, spiritual education, evangelism, assimilation of new members and renovation and care of our buildings and grounds.

Which area(s) is (are) your passion for Christ as you might share it (them) with your brothers and sisters at Emanuel? Contact Karen with your questions, comments, suggestions or offers to pitch in and help out with the work that needs to be done in any area(s) that interest you. Drop a message to her at her e-mail

address, ksr502@yahoo.com and she'll connect you with the appropriate committee chairperson.

Your copy of the minutes of the March 9th Church Council meeting is attached. Please contact Council president Karen Roberts with questions or comments.

Our Community Center (ECC) At Work

Ted Brown, EEC President, reported that thanks to the hundreds of pounds of food – worth thousands of dollars – that we now receive from our mission's partner Greenland Hills United Methodist Church, our food pantry is able to provide nutritious *family-specific packages* to the hungry families in our neighborhood. In addition, with the help of the *Kids in Mission* group at Greenland Hills – who collected and packaged food for the recipients' hungry furry friends – the pantry also distributed 75 pounds of dog and cat food in March.

(Ted also noted that instead of asking our hungry pantry visitors to deal with our unpredictable Texas weather as best they can as in the past, we now invite them into the shelter of Ericson Hall while they await their food supplies for the week.)

Your copy of the minutes of the April 1st Emanuel Community Center board meeting and the ECC financial report for March is attached. Please contact ECC president Ted Brown with questions or comments.

The Sound of Music From the Loft

Donna Miller, Emanuel's Director of Music, invites us to enjoy several stirring musical offerings during holy week, April 13-20. Palm Sunday (April 13) featured two trumpet-organ pieces by a guest musician and the sweet sound of songsters from our children's choir.

On Maundy Thursday (April 17) The Emanuel Choir will set a somber mood as we remember Jesus' suffering in the garden the night before His death with *I Give You a New Commandment*. Then the mood will become gloriously joyful on Easter Sunday (April 20) as several guest singers join The Emanuel Choir in inviting us to *Come and Be Joyful* and the children's choir offers their sweet praise for our risen Lord.

Our Youth Group Scores Big

Julia Hernandez, director of our youth group, announced a fabulous result from the group's late March garage sale – a total of \$340 was raised. The money is to be divided equally between the Youth Group fund and the Hispanic Scholarship fund. Congrats to all who helped to clean out the garage.

Your copy of the Youth Report from March is attached. Please contact the Youth Group leader, Julia Hernandez, with questions or comments.

Death and Taxes

Food for thought from Pastor Julio Cruz-Natal

I think it was Benjamin Franklin who first said, "There are only two things in life which are certain, death and taxes."

Wise man that he was, Franklin was especially right-on about taxes – no matter who you are or what you choose to do in life, you'll be hard pressed to prove him wrong about the ever-present tax collector. (Think about the woman in Houston who's been in the news lately over *her mother's* problems with the IRS. It seems the IRS seized the woman's tax refund for last year because *30 years earlier*, her mother had failed to return a Social Security check made out for an amount of more than she was actually owed – instead cashing the check and buying food for her family – when the Houston woman *was only five years old*. How's that for the certainty of taxes in life?)

But what about the certainty of death? Many of us try to put that off of as long as we possibly can. We can't argue with eating healthy foods, exercising regularly and following our doctor's advice about healthy living; that's simply ensuring ourselves a happy life for whatever time God has in mind for us to be here on earth. But tinkering with the reality of our life coming to an end with things like cure-all medications, cosmetic surgery, cloning, cryogenic preservation and alien abductions (honest, alien abductions) is no more effective in extending the inevitability of our dying than was Juan Ponce de Leon's belief that a fountain of youth existed somewhere in south Florida. Ben Franklin was right; death is, indeed, one of only two things of which we can be certain in our life. But I pray that as we here

in Emanuel think about the certainty – the inevitability – of *our own death*, we pause to give a good deal of thought to what Jesus said to His apostles about death. "*Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.*" (John 12:24) Forgive me for putting words into Jesus' mouth, but I believe he was saying, "Yes, I'm going to die, but don't worry; if I don't die, it's likely nothing of what we've done together here will ever be remembered." (I heard that same thought was repeated – and strongly emphasized – in a recent late night TV drama when an off-camera voice said, "All we do in life will soon be forgotten; it's in dying that our good deeds are remembered and treasured.")

For us at Emanuel, the end of life for our body isn't a point in time we try to avoid at all costs. Instead, we acknowledge – and we celebrate – that we wouldn't be experiencing the fruit of the life of Jesus at all during our life if not for the end of His life.

The road to His empty tomb – and, thus, to our own fruitful life beyond physical death – passes through the cross on Calvary. Jesus faced the pain and agony of human death, all the while trusting that His father would bring about a new life for us – a life He secured by His glorious resurrection.

In these holy days of mourning and jubilation, of somber remembrance and joyful celebration, we acknowledge Jesus' willing sacrifice of His life, and we follow Him with full knowledge of the life that lies ahead for us – a life beyond the reach of death; a life no longer limited by sin.

So let us render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's – money for the tax man and praise and thanksgiving for God for having changed your life and mine from just a single grain of wheat lying on the ground to one that, upon death here on earth, will bear much fruit in His kingdom.

Pastor Julio

One Last Thought

The Christian forgives and does not extract vengeance – punishment in kind – precisely because he (she) has known forgiveness from God; because he (she) knows that God offers, again and again, a chance for repentance." (From the Hidden Jesus: A New Life by Donald Spoto)
