



**Merry Christmas and happy new year to members and friends of Emmanuel Lutheran Church!
We pray that your Christmas is peaceful and grace filled!**

The Savior has been Born! Luke 2:8-19

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize Him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem!

Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing Him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Come and join us at 7pm for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service – “The Light Shines”

New time for Sunday Service - Please note starting January 2nd, 2022 our worship begins at 10:30am

A ROMANIAN CHRISTMAS STORY *By Rev Michael Jarrett*

It was the year 2007, and our family had moved to Romania to spend the year helping Fr Catalin, a Romanian priest, to work with families whose children had contracted AIDS from contaminated blood supplies.

Once diagnosed, a child with HIV and their family were treated as outcasts by the local community, who feared the disease could be spread through casual contact. The children would not be allowed to attend school, play with other children, or even go to church. And because the drugs which keep HIV from morphing into the deadly “acquired immune deficiency syndrome” were provided only sporadically by the government, most children died within 15 years. It was for these outcasts that Father Catalin had created the “Miriam Foundation” and sought to provide love, comfort, care and resources for these victims of HIV.

And now, on this wintery day we were headed with him to visit a family whose son had AIDS...

The snow was blowing and the sky an ominous gray, as my wife Mary, our 14 year old daughter Clara, myself and a Romanian priest, squeezed into a microscopic car for a three hour ride from the city of Ploesti, to visit a family whose son was dying of AIDS.

The little car rattled and groaned as we left the pavement and went onto the so called “village roads” that were actually ruts and trails in the dirt made by horse drawn carts and foot traffic.

We banged, bounced, and changed a tire on the way, but finally arrived in a small Romanian village, where we pulled into the muddy yard of a ramshackle house.

The door swung open and a family of four ran outside to meet us. Alex, the father was deaf and about 45 years old. His wife, Alina, had been preparing food for our visit and came out wiping her hands and wearing her apron. She had striking eyes...one bright blue and one brown, and a smile that broke language barriers. Their daughters, Rahela, 12 and Sabina, 14, were bouncing up and down in excitement!

The family was excited to see Fr. Catalin, a treasured friend, and also to have American guests visit them. And of course, they knew we brought much needed resources for them to celebrate Christmas in a few weeks.

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Their son, Evan, was 17 yrs. old and had AIDS. His young, formerly strong body had been ravaged by the disease and was now nothing but skin and bones. He sat on a cot, his back against the wall, wrapped in a blanket with a wool winter hat on his head.

After introductions, his family gathered around, and we visited with them as Father Catalin interpreted. Evan told us that not long before he was diagnosed with HIV, he had heard the Gospel during a Bible study and came to have faith in Christ. He was hungry to know everything about Jesus and His Kingdom and because it was soon to be Christmas, he was especially interested in what the Bible taught about Jesus coming as an infant. I read the Christmas story from the Bible & we talked well into the evening about Jesus' birth, death & resurrection.

As we were getting ready to wrap up the evening, I asked the family to tell me what Christmas meant to them. The mother, Alina said, *"Since Jesus was born in a human family, God must deeply care about people...and families...our family too!"* Everyone nodded and smiled as she shared.

Rahela said *"Since Jesus was part of a family, he knows what we are going through and He will have pity on us"*. As she said this she started to cry. Her father put his arms around her as his eyes filled with tears and kissed the top of her head softly.

And when it was Evan's turn, he said *"The most important thing about Christmas, is that Jesus' was called 'Immanuel – God with us'"* He paused, looking around, and then said softly *"If God is with me, I can face anything!"* Everyone was encouraged by Evan's words and we prayed and gave thanks to the Lord. Our visit ended with hugs, goodbyes and the prospect of a long bumpy ride back to the city.

This would be Evan's final Christmas on earth. He died a week later surrounded by his family. His last words were *"Don't cry, Mama, it's going to be all right. Jesus is coming to bring me home"*.

Christmas, 2007, was a hard year for Evan's family, but the Gospel of Christ gave them peace and hope as they wait to be reunited with him someday in Heaven.

It was a hard Christmas for us too, as we saw firsthand the terrible effect of AIDs on families. We cried a lot as we visited with precious young people whose lives were devastated through no fault of their own.

It was a hard year emotionally - *but it was a good year too!*

We were reminded what Christmas is really about: *Jesus, the greatest gift ever, given on Christmas day so we could have a new life, an abundant life & an eternal life!*

Jesus said... "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die"

We pray that you have a peaceful, grace filled, Merry Christmas!

LET US PRAY

Father, thank you for sending Jesus to earth to save us from our sins and give us an eternal life.

As You used the Shepherds to proclaim the Glad Tidings of Great Joy to all who listen, *use us too!*

We hold up before you all who are who are grieving their way through these holidays and ask that You give them peace and consolation during this season.

Father we pray that as we celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace You would draw us closer to You. In Jesus' Name. Amen & Amen

May the Lord bless and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Pastor Michael & Mary

Please call to set up a home visit for communion or prayer. Pastor Michael - 570 933-4065 Mary - 570-933-1670 DiAnn Ferry - 758-1766

To visit our church website or watch services online: www.emmanuelchurch-dornsife.org Email: revjarrett@yahoo.com