

# The Emmaus Encounter

The Newsletter of Emmaus Lutheran Church December, 2025

*Dear Family of Emmaus,*

As Advent comes upon us once again here on the coast of Maine, I've been thinking a lot about 'roots'—our personal histories, yes, but also our church roots. Most of you know that Emmaus Lutheran Church was founded by a group of Danish women in the late 1800's. I imagine those women gathered, prayed, and built a community with their families long before this building even existed. I have been fortunate enough to spend time with many of our congregants whose ancestry dates back to those very people!

Those families knew something about long winters, short days, and the kind of faith you carry not only in church, but around the hearth and kitchen table. I'd be willing to bet that their faith was not loud or showy. I imagine it was warm, steady, and shared in the ordinary rhythms of life. And that is where I want to begin this Advent—because there is a word from Denmark (and Norway, too) that I think speaks beautifully to the season we are entering: it's called "*hygge*" (pronounced *HY-OO-gah*).

Now, if you've ever tried to translate *hygge* into English, you know it doesn't transfer cleanly. We don't really have an American word for it. Some people call it "coziness," but that's not quite right. Others say it's "comfort," but that doesn't get there either.

*Hygge* is not just something you *do*. It's a way of being.



It is the feeling of exhaling when you come in from the cold. It is warm candlelight and good conversation. It is a pot of soup shared with someone who needs company. It is knowing you don't have to perform or impress—just belong.

And maybe it's no surprise that I feel drawn to this word, *hygge*, because I have a bit of Scandinavia in my bones, too (my maiden name is Tonnesen). My grandfather lived close to those cold edges on the coast of Norway, where people

learned to survive the winter not just with fire and shelter, but with togetherness, with intentional warmth, and with a kind of quiet joy that feeds one's soul.

People living in northern climates discovered that if they didn't find a way to make peace with the dark, the dark could easily swallow them. So they learned to light candles. To gather. To slow down. To savor. To make a practice of being present.

And that, to me, is where *hygge* becomes some-

thing more than cultural—it becomes *holy*.

## Hygge as a Spiritual Practice

Advent arrives every year just as the days are shortest and the nights, longest. Even the earth around us seems to say, '*Slow down. Pay attention. Make room for Light.*'

☪ So, what if this year we practiced Holy *Hygge*?

*continued on page 2...*

# Holy Hygge

## Pastor's Letter Cont. from Page 1...



Not to escape the dark, but as a way of inviting God into the quiet and ordinary corners of our lives. What could it look like? Maybe...

- Lighting a candle before dinner and praying, *Come, Lord Jesus...*
- Reading a short devotion wrapped in a blanket, letting silence speak.
- Listening to soft music and breathing a bit deeper.
- Sharing soup with a neighbor who might otherwise eat alone (or inviting them to our Holden Evening Prayer service on Dec. 10).
- Stepping outside and looking up at the glorious stars, remembering the sky over Bethlehem.

Hygge becomes *Holy* when we recognize Christ's presence in rest, warmth, and community—just as surely as we recognize Christ in worship and Word. After all, Jesus did not come into the world in a palace with trumpets; He came in a stable, surrounded by straw and lamplight and a small circle of people keeping watch in the dark.

Our Emmaus ancestors—those Danish women who prayed and planted the seeds of this congregation—knew something about this. They practiced faith in kitchens and living rooms, in song and story, in friendship and care. They wove together a community warmed by relationship and hope.

And we are still that kind of church.

So, whether your Advent days are full of family or a bit more quiet this year...whether the holidays bring joy, grief, or a little of both...whether you feel close to God right now or are still waiting for a glimpse of light in the dark...please know that you are not waiting alone. Christ is here, with you. In every table you gather around, in every candle you light, in every breath you take in the cold air and release back into the night, God is here. Emmanuel=God with us!

So, may you find rest and comfort in this season of Advent. May your heart be a place of welcome and your table be a place of grace. May your long winter nights be filled with Christ's promise that the Light will once again, return.

*In peace and gratitude,*

*Pastor Gail+*

## Happy New Year!

The church calendar begins with Advent (from Latin *adventus*, which means “coming into”), a four-week period of preparation and meditation before Christmas. The story of Jesus in Advent is the story of hope coming into the world. When the time was just right, God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world. The Advent season teaches us to prepare to receive Jesus, the hope of the world.



It is a new liturgical year and as Lutherans we now move into the liturgical Church Year A. At Emmaus we will begin the church year with a new bulletin for Advent.

This Order of Worship will include weekly lighting of the Advent candles where each week a family will light a candle on the Advent

wreath and the Pastor will share an Advent prayer. We also will be singing musical Setting Ten. In this worship space we will await, watch, listen, and prepare for Jesus' coming.

The evening services of Christmas Eve mark the beginning of the church's celebration of the Nativity of Our Lord traditionally known as the twelve days of Christmas.

## Christmas Eve Service—Dec. 24th at 5pm

The sun sets earlier each day so the Winter Solstice is approaching. The “shortest” day of the year is December 20th, so from that day forward there will slowly be more light in the evening. Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service this year will begin at 5:00pm and include special music, singing of carols, a sermon by Pastor Gail, and Holy Communion. This service will be held in-person and also on YouTube. On Christmas Day there will be no worship service. On the first Sunday after Christmas, December 28th, Emmaus will have our traditional service of Lessons & Carols at 9:00 a.m. Bring your friends and family in celebration of the birth of the Messiah!



[www.emmausfalmouth.org](http://www.emmausfalmouth.org)

## A Letter from the Bishops of the ELCA

Beloved in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we write to you in this moment of national and global tension with clarity and conviction. Our faith compels us to stand where Jesus stands—with and for those whom society often seeks to exclude, erase, or diminish.

Our shared confession that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) grounds us in the conviction that all people possess inherent dignity. The incarnation of Jesus Christ reveals God's profound solidarity with humanity—especially with those who are marginalized or oppressed. The gospel we proclaim insists that our neighbor's need is the occasion for our love and that our public life is shaped by justice, mercy, and a commitment to the common good.

Further, we have a shared tradition in our social teachings which grounds us. The ELCA's Social Message on Immigration reminds us:

"We are to respond to newcomers as we would to Christ—welcoming them, meeting their immediate needs, and advocating for justice in our laws and policies."

Likewise, our recently adopted Social Statement Faith and Civic Life affirms that Christians are called to be "a public witness, holding leaders accountable when they fail to protect the vulnerable."

We are living through a time when vulnerable communities are being scapegoated and attacked. Immigrants and refugees are vilified, though Scripture commands us to welcome the stranger. People of color continue to bear the devastating weight of racism woven into the fabric of our society. Transgender people, beloved by God, are being targeted with laws and rhetoric that deny their dignity and even their right to exist. These assaults on our siblings are not political abstractions—they are deep wounds in the body of Christ.

In this time of division and fear, we, as people grounded in our faith, insist on love. This commitment flows from our faith in Christ crucified and risen—the One whose love breaks down barriers, confronts hatred, and transforms hearts.

Love insists on the **dignity of every human being**.

Love insists on **justice** for the marginalized and oppressed.

Love insists that the **church must reflect God's diverse, life-giving community**.

Love insists that we **listen, speak, and act with respect**, even in disagreement.

Love insists on **hope**, trusting that God's kingdom of justice and peace will prevail.

This love also compels us to speak clearly against Christian Nationalism, which our Churchwide Assembly named as a distortion of the Christian faith and an unhealthy form of patriotism. Christian Nationalism confuses the Gospel with political power, turns God into a mascot for the state, and privileges some people over others based on race, religion, or birthplace. This is not the way of Jesus. The kingdom of God is not a nation, not a culture, not a political ideology—it is God's reign of love, justice, and mercy for all people.

Therefore, as bishops of this church, we declare that the ELCA cannot be silent. Our call is clear: • To proclaim the God-given dignity of every human being.

To resist systems and ideologies, including Christian Nationalism, that oppress, dehumanize, or erase.

To stand shoulder to shoulder with those who are targeted or harmed.

To bear public witness that the love of Christ is stronger than fear, stronger than hatred, and stronger than death. We call on all members of the ELCA to join us in prayer, advocacy, and action:

- Pray for those who are vulnerable and for all who work for justice.
- Advocate in your communities, legislatures, and Congress for laws that protect migrants, advance racial justice, and safeguard LGBTQIA+ people.
- Engage in the holy work of hospitality, creating spaces of safety, affirmation, and belonging for all God's children.
- Model respectful dialogue in a polarized world, seeking understanding rooted in love.

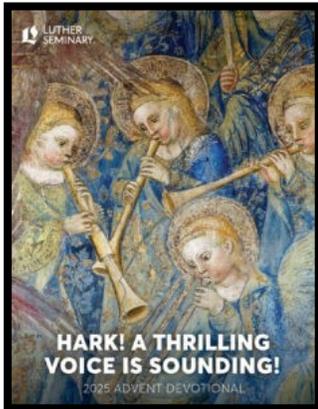
Hold fast to hope, trusting that the Spirit is still at work renewing creation and reconciling the world to God. In baptism, we are marked with the cross of Christ forever. That cross is not only a sign of our hope—it is also a summons to follow Jesus into solidarity with those who suffer.

### Bishops Letter Cont. from Page 3...

In the power of the Spirit, let us be bold. Let us be faithful. Let us Insist on Love—in our words, our actions, our public witness, and our life together.  
October 8, 2025

Together in Christ! This letter is signed by 49 ELCA Bishops. If you would like to view the list of the Bishops that signed this letter, there is a copy posted on the bulletin board in the office annex.

### Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding!



That's the theme of this year's Advent Devotional. This offering in Advent is a daily devotional booklet published by Luther Seminary. Feel free to pick one up in the narthex and take it home with you for a deeper Advent experience. If you would like one mailed to your home, just call the church office, 781-4820.

### Angel Tree Christmas Wrap Up

Thanks Emmaus for another great effort for the children and families of *The Root Cellar*! The Angel Tree was host to over 40 cards representing wishes of boys and girls for toys and clothing. Every card was chosen and cash donations were made for the purchase of even more. The deadline to return your UNWRAPED gifts for The Angel Tree is Sunday, December 7th.



### Poinsettias for Christmas Eve

Help brighten Emmaus' Christmas celebration by providing a poinsettia (or two!) to decorate the church. Once again these beautiful poinsettias will be provided by Skillins and are only \$17. You may also bring your own poinsettia and drop it off at church. You may offer a special notation, for example, in memory of or in honor of, a special person. We will acknowledge all the donors and



honorees in the bulletin on Christmas Eve. You can fill out the form found inside your bulletin and drop the form off in the narthex. If you need assistance from our church secretary, just call the office at 781-4820 on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

### Go Take (another) Hike!

There was a great turnout for hiking the Range Road Trail in Cumberland last month (photo at right was apparently taken by Lucy?). Plans are already in the works for the next hike at Knight's Pond Preserve, also in Cumberland. Knight's Pond is the largest undeveloped parcel in Cumberland with a 46-acre pond and two smaller ponds. Bring your neon orange "Holy Hikers" hat and join Heidi and the gang on a trail in God's great creation on Saturday, December 27th at about 1:15 p.m.



### Eliminating Hunger in Maine

Our Thankoffering for December is *Good Shepherd Food Bank*. Good Shepherd was established in 1981 as a non-profit organization working to eliminate hunger in the state of Maine. The need for food assistance is the highest it's been in almost 10 years, and it's up to us to help Mainers access the food they need to thrive. Through their network of over 600 partners, Good Shepherd distributes more than 31 million meals to Mainers experiencing hunger. You can use your specially marked Giving Envelope, or just write "Thankoffering" in the memo line of your check. Visit their website!

<https://www.gsfb.org/>



~MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS~

**Dec. 7—Breakfast For All!**

The monthly Breakfast-for-All will be Sunday, December 7th starting at around 8:15 a.m. Plan your breakfast at Emmaus in fellowship and thanksgiving for the Season of Advent.

**Dec. 10—Midweek Advent Service**

Emmaus will host a midweek Advent Service on Wednesday, December 10th. We have invited our other local Lutheran churches to join us. Soup Supper will be served starting at 5:00 p.m. Holden Evening Prayer will begin at 6:00 p.m. led by *The Roadies*. Make the beautiful music of Holden Evening Prayer during Advent a hallmark as our anticipation mounts looking forward to Jesus' coming.

**Dec. 13—Monthly Bean Supper**

The next Bean Supper at Emmaus will be Saturday, December 13th at 5:00 p.m. You don't want to miss a special musical program planned by David Hansen and *The Roadies*. After a hearty meal of home baked beans, hot dogs, sides, and desserts, we will "carol" our way upstairs to decorate the Christmas Tree! This is your chance to become a part of the caroling choir and Deck the Halls!

**Dec. 24—Candlelight Service**

A candlelight service of Holy Communion will be held on Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24th at 5:00 p.m. All are welcome to come and celebrate Christ's birth. The service will also be live streamed on YouTube. O Come Let Us Adore Him!

**Dec. 27—Holy Hikers**

This month we will be hiking Knight's Pond Preserve in Cumberland. We'll meet in the parking lot at Emmaus on December 27th at 1 o'clock, or you can meet directly at the trailhead at around 1:15.

**Dec. 28—Service of Lessons & Carols**

A special service of Lessons & Carols will take place at Emmaus on December 28th at 9:00 a.m. This period of time celebrates the Nativity of Our Lord, or traditionally known as the twelve days of Christmas. The carols continue!



**A Tribute to Those Volunteers**



A new community outreach ministry took place at Emmaus on Thanksgiving Day. We give thanks for all the wonderful volunteers who came to Emmaus and put together meals for a local apartment complex in need of

food and friendship on Thanksgiving Day. A few volunteers are pictured here, but there



were many more volunteers that



donated food and time toward the effort (too many to list!).



Over 21 meals were delivered, and afterwards others were invited to gather and sit down together and share a meal in thanksgiving for the effort, for one another,

and for all our many blessings. Come Lord Jesus.



*Well done, Emmaus!*

## Rooted in Grace-Growing in Generosity



Grounded in faith and blessed by God, we respond to share our faith and the blessings we have received. Thank you for your part in our life together in

Christ and thank you for sharing the gifts that God has given you for the upbuilding of the body of Christ at Emmaus Lutheran Church. Last month our Stewardship Campaign concluded with praise and thanks for all those who offered a pledge card for 2026. Here are the results of the campaign **to date**:

2026 Cards Returned: 33

Annual 2026 Pledged Amount: \$102,575

These figures stand up fairly well when compared to the 2025 campaign where there were 29 cards returned for a pledged amount of \$121,060. Please return your pledge card if you have not already done so!

## Pastoral Concerns

Pastor Gail Angellis is the rostered ELCA minister of Emmaus Lutheran Church. Emmaus is affiliated with the New England Synod of the ELCA and is also a *Reconciling in Christ* congregation. Here we believe there is a place for EVERYONE. For pastoral care concerns you can contact Pastor Gail at [pastor.gail@emmausfalmouth.org](mailto:pastor.gail@emmausfalmouth.org).

You can also contact Pastor Gail at (207) 781-4820.



### EMMAUS LUTHERAN CHURCH

265 Middle Road  
Falmouth, ME 04105  
(207) 781-4820  
[www.emmausfalmouth.org](http://www.emmausfalmouth.org)

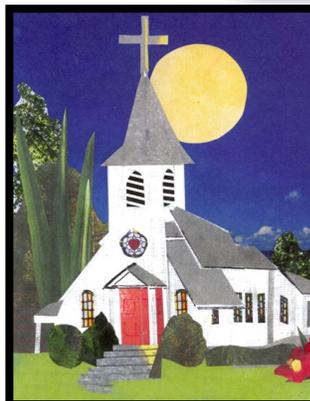


Pastor—Rev. Gail Angellis  
Church Musician – David Hansen  
Secretary – Beverly Lindahl

#### Worship Schedule:

Sunday Worship – 9:00 a.m.  
Sunday School – 9:30 a.m.

Emmaus is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and a *Reconciling in Christ* (RIC) congregation.



# EMMAUS

Lutheran Church



	<u>October</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Regular Income	\$9,391	\$167,476
Expense	(\$15,469)	(\$153,494)
Net	(\$6,079)	\$13,982

Our Treasurer reports that year-to-date Emmaus is positive about \$14,000. Emmaus is running within 1-2% of budgeted verses last year. Bi-annual taxes were paid in October. The Maintenance Reserve account is showing negative \$31K, however this will even out as Emmaus is awaiting reimbursement of \$33K from MEMA for the parking lot project.

If Council approves the proposed 2026 budget at their December meeting, they plan to distribute a copy to the congregation and answer questions well ahead of the Annual Meeting in January.

*"I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your faithful giving each week. Your generosity allows our ministries to thrive, touching lives and spreading God's love in countless ways. From worship and discipleship to outreach and care, every gift you give makes a difference. Thank you for your commitment and generosity—our ministry at Emmaus wouldn't be possible without you!" ~Pastor Gail+*

You can always give electronically through Vanco (a one-time donation or even repeating donations) by clicking the Online Giving button below (you will need your routing number and account number—be sure to include any zeros that may begin your sequence of numbers). Most banks also offer automatic bill pay (EFTs) at no cost.

