


# Emanuel Spirit



The Newsletter of Emanuel United Church of Christ

"Sharing the Word in Bridesburg Since 1861"

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

November, 2015

Dear Emanuel Members and Friends –

*Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Revelation 1:4b-8*

*Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." John 18:36-37*

The verses above come from our Scripture readings on November 22, the last Sunday of the liturgical calendar, which is called Reign of Christ Sunday or Christ the King Sunday. On Reign of Christ Sunday, the church lifts up the reality that the Risen Christ reigns over all things, a cosmic reality that is hidden by the brokenness of daily life and the rebellion of those who claim to be in charge without acknowledging that ultimately God rules, and that any authority given to earthly rulers is authority only to serve and not to dominate.

On this Sunday, the reading from John's gospel shows Christ as a king who doesn't look much like a king. Jesus has been arrested and brought before Pilate. Formally, on paper, Pilate is in charge of the proceedings. But in reality, even in chains, Jesus is fully in control of all that happens, while Pilate and others merely perform the roles that have been assigned to them, like actors in a high school play.

*"Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us. He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision.'" (Psalm 2:1-4)*

We live in truly alarming times, with environmental devastation and military conflict on an apocalyptic scale – devastation and conflict in which our corporate leaders and political leaders have played a significant and detrimental role. In their pursuit of profits from fossil fuels, the loud voices of a few, amplified in the media by their billions of dollars, call for further environmental destruction, while the voices opposing them, including American Indian and other indigenous peoples along with millions of people of faith from Christian and other traditions, seemingly cannot get a hearing. Similarly, those who profit from the "permanent war economy" envisioned in 1944 by former General Electric president Charles E. Wilson continue to lobby our coin-operated political leaders of both major parties to continue and enlarge conflicts around the globe. We see the four horsemen of the apocalypse in Revelations 6 - conquest, war, famine, and pestilence - unleashed in our midst.

To some, these are signs of the end-times. In fact, the E-Bible Fellowship, a Delaware County-based remnant of the followers of the late Harold Camping's Family Radio program, had forecast that the world would end on October 7, 2015 – and that date has come and gone with little notice, as have Camping's predicted "end of days" dates of May 21 and October 21 2011, and so many, many dates from other "prophets" before that. So many groups – followers of Hal Lindsay, of Tim LaHaye and John Hagee and others, believe they have the "secret sauce" that, if sprinkled on selected (and out of context) Scripture verses, will enable them to pinpoint the time of the Lord's return, ignoring the fact that Jesus himself said that he did not know the day or the hour (Mark 13:32) and ignoring the fact that Jesus' very last words before his ascension were "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8)

So how are we to respond? Remember Jesus' words in Acts, "You will receive power....and you will be my witnesses." Far from retreating into end-times fantasies, we must allow ourselves to be empowered by the Spirit to redouble our efforts in the public square to proclaim the countercultural message of the Gospel. When our corporate leaders say that their bankrolled millions entitle them to seize and despoil ever more land, even public land, we must proclaim that "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." (Psalm 24:1) When our political leaders, aided and abetted by the media, seek to spread fear in order to mobilize support for military adventurism abroad, we must proclaim that, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses" (and some in fighter jets and some in drones) "but we trust in the name of the LORD our God." (Psalm 20:7) When we are told that we do not have resources to care for the poor, the ill, and the aged, we must recommit ourselves to Jesus' mission statement as stated in Luke 4:18-19: "To bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." When we feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of our personal struggles, and of the large-scale problems of our world, we must follow Paul's exhortation not to "be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14), but rather to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness". (Ephesians 6:10-12) As I John 4:4 states, "Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for greater is the One that is in you than the one who is in the world."

To quote an old hymn (Once to Every Man and Nation, #399 E&R)

    "Though the cause of evil prosper, Yet 'tis truth alone is strong.  
    Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne.  
    Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,  
    Standeth God within the shadow Keeping watch above his own."

May we be among those "faithful and wise servants, whom the master has put in charge of his household...Blessed is that slave whom his master shall find at work when he arrives." (Matthew 24:45-46) May we be like those addressed in God's message to the church at Smyrna (Revelation 2:10), "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life."

See you in church –

Pastor Dave

### **New Deacon Congratulations!**

On October 29, Michael Wilkowski was formally installed as Deacon. Michael has been doing many of the duties of a deacon, particularly in running the church's food cupboard on Thursdays. Michael has also been very faithful in caring for the building and making property repairs. Congratulations and blessings to Michael in his official role as Deacon.

### **Emanuel Fall Auction – Saturday November 28, 2015**

Emanuel Church will hold our Fall Auction on Saturday, November 28. Doors open at 11 a.m. Come one, come all, but come early; Emanuel's social hall fills quickly. Donations of new items are welcome.

### **Girl Scouts**

Emanuel Church has agreed to sponsor Bridesburg's Girl Scout troop by allowing them to meet at the church. As this newsletter goes to press, the Girl Scouts' first meeting at Emanuel will be held Thursday October 29. Thank you to the members of Emanuel for allowing the Girl Scouts to meet at our church.

### **Pennsylvania Southeast Conference meeting November 15**

The Fall Meeting of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference will be held on Sunday, November 15 at 3 p.m. at St. Paul's UCC, Amityville, PA. The primary agenda item will be the adoption of the 2016 budget, but there will also be opportunities to meet our UCC sisters and brothers from other congregations in the region. The agenda and other documents are available online at <http://psec.org/calendarevents/events/2015-fall-meeting-documents/> Any interested in attending are invited to contact Pastor Dave. We can leave from Bridesburg following worship, and should be back in Philadelphia by 7 p.m.

### **POWER Leadership Assembly November 19**

POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower and Rebuild) will hold a Leadership Assembly on Thursday, November 19 at 7 p.m. at Congregation Rodeph Shalom, 615 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia. Any interested in learning about the work of POWER, which includes advocacy on school funding and other Philadelphia justice issues, are welcome to attend.

### **Bridesburg Presbyterian Party, Saturday, November 21**

Allan Babnew, formerly of Bridesburg Baptist Church, is holding a party at Bridesburg Presbyterian Church on Saturday, November 21 from 1-4 p.m. to commemorate the closure of his former congregation, Bridesburg Baptist. All are welcome; please let Pastor Dave know by November 8 if you are interested in attending.

### **Midweek Service Dates**

Wednesday night Bible study, prayer and praise services will meet on November 4 to study Acts 23, and will meet again on November 18 to study Acts 24. Both services are at 7 p.m.

### **"All In All It's Just Another Brick In The Wall" – Wall Update**

Ditri Construction came in late October to repair the falling plaster and other water damage that had afflicted the sanctuary wall on the side of the church opposite from the cemetery. The yellow construction tape cordoning off pews near the wall has been removed, and that section of pews is now available during worship. The wall still needs to be painted, but that will be handled by members of the congregation. Thanks to all who donated funds for the repair, and many thanks to the congregation for their patience.

### **Volunteer Opportunity: Videographer**

At a recent congregational meeting, our members expressed enthusiastic support for videotaping our church services. While the primary intent is to allow our shut-in members, friends of the church who live at a distance, and those who otherwise can't attend to experience worship at Emanuel, it was also mentioned that such videos could be a means of evangelism, to be shared with those seeking a church home. So we need person or persons willing to make videos of the service. Shawn O'Brick has offered to help set up cameras for long-term videography, but in the short term, a volunteer with a cell phone camera (with both video and audio) or a camcorder may suffice. As it happens, Pastor Dave received a camcorder as a gift for 15 years of service at his day job – but isn't quite sure how to use it – and is willing to

donate it to the church, if someone can be found to operate it, and assuming the resulting videos are in a format that can be uploaded to Facebook or emailed. In any case, anyone interested and knowledgeable to make videos, please see Pastor Dave. We'd very much like to be able to videotape the Christmas Eve service, and make weekly videotapes of worship starting January 2016.

#### **Security Update**

Due to concerns about vandalism, the side gate to the cemetery continues to be locked at all times, and the front gate is locked at roughly 8:30 p.m. each night and opened again in the morning. Exceptions can of course be made for groups using the church at night. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause. If you need to have the gate unlocked at a specific time, please contact Charles McDowell at 267-977-7554.

#### **Emanuel Cupboard**

Food is available to our church's families every other Thursday at 5 p.m. This month, food will be available on Thursdays November 5 and November 18. For more information, please contact Michael Wilkowski at 215-743-8994.

#### **Scriptures for November**

November 1 (All Saints):	Ruth 1:1-18, Psalm 24, Revelation 21:1-6, John 11:32-44
November 8:	Ruth 3:1-5, 4:13-17, Psalm 127, Hebrews 9:24-28, Mark 12:38-44
November 15:	I Samuel 1:4-20, I Samuel 2:1-10, Hebrews 10:11-25, Mark 13:1-8
November 22 (Reign of Christ)	2 Samuel 23:1-7, Psalm 132:1-18, Revelation 1:4-8, John 18:33-37
November 29 (Advent 1)	Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25:1-10, I Thessalonians 3:9-13, Luke 21:25-36