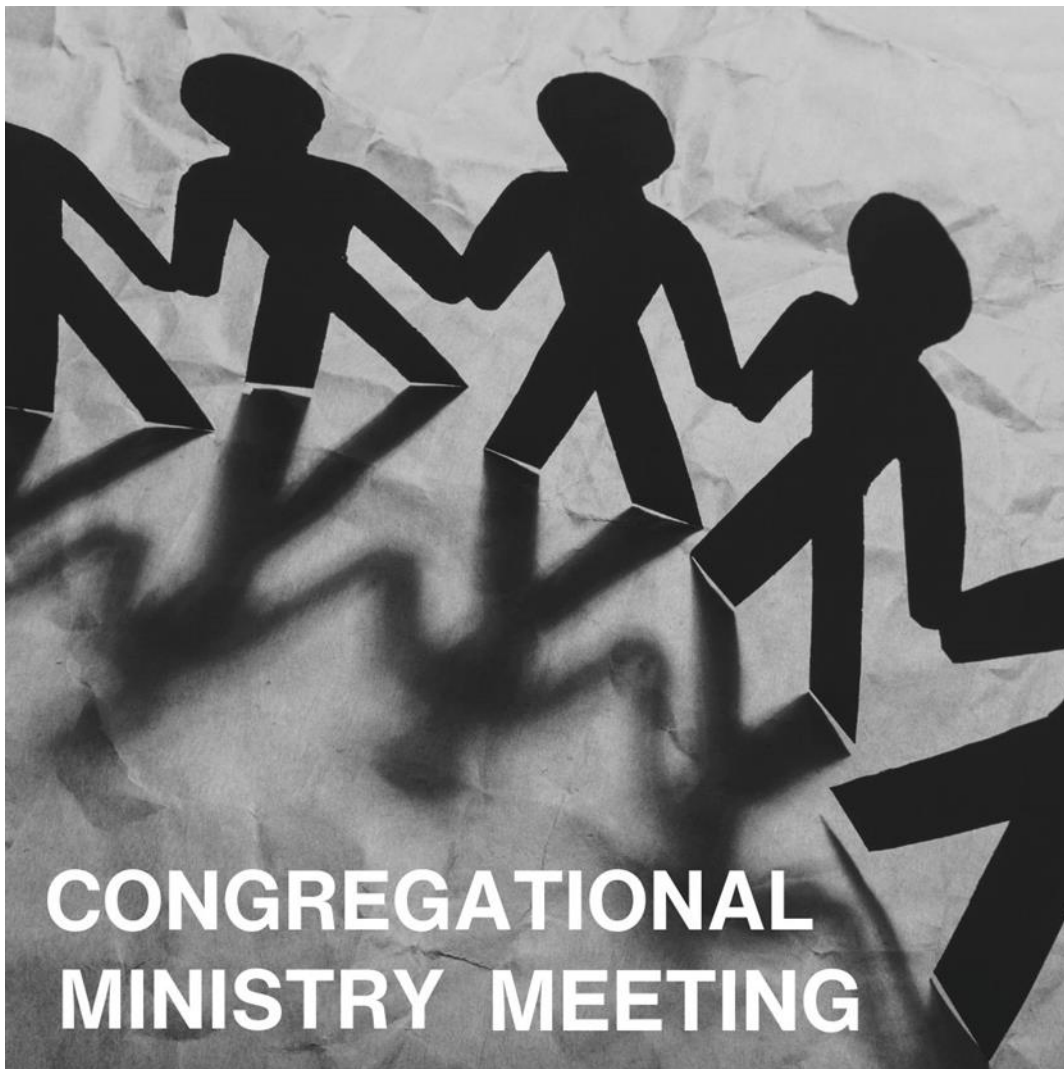


Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church of Canada

May 22, 2024 7:00 pm



“Know, Grow & Show Christ”



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AGENDA

- Welcome
- Devotion & Prayer
- Minutes of February 11 Annual General Meeting
 - Update on transition to fewer hours for Ministry Assistant and Janitor
- Ministry Reports
- Testimonies on the Impact of Ministry on Self and Others
- Small Group Discussion
- Miscellaneous
- Closing

Small Group Discussion Points

- 1) A lot has happened over the past year in the life of Emmanuel Church. What are you most thankful for? What are you most surprised by?
- 2) What challenges do you anticipate we, as a church, will face in the coming year(s)?
- 3) If there is one thing we could do or change, what would it be?

Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church Annual General Meeting Minutes

Sunday, February 11, 2024. 11:45 am "Hybrid" meeting

The meeting was called to order in the fellowship room with the provision for online attending via Zoom.

Pastor Sweis chaired the meeting and opened by commenting on James 1:2-4, and how the difficulties we are facing are not necessarily bad. He then led the meeting with prayer.

Acknowledgement of Quorum

It was confirmed that the required number of members was present to satisfy all the quorum requirements for both the general meeting as well as the elder votes.

There were 34 members present for the meeting, with all of them in person. At the current time, there are 65 active members and thus the 40% quorum requirement for the voting was exceeded.

2023 Congregational Meetings

The minutes from last year's Congregational meetings were presented as published in the Annual Report Booklet. There were four meetings with the first two already having their minutes approved at the spring meeting.

Approval for the minutes for the May 17 and June 11 meetings was moved by Eric Marshall. Seconded by Paula Outhouse. The minutes were approved.

Reports

The Elders and Deacons reports are in the Annual Report Booklet along with the Personnel report and the statistical report for the year. It was moved that these reports be accepted as published. Moved by Barry, seconded by Sally. Approved

The authors of all the reports were acknowledged and thanked for their efforts.

Elders Nominations.

The two names proposed by the Elders board were Joanne MacGregor for a one-year extension of her term, and Linda Thorsen for a five-year term. After an explanation of the process ballots were distributed to each member present.

The ballots were then collected and tabulated by Barry Roscoe and Dale Harty. The vote affirmed the two as Elders for the appointed terms. Both were welcomed with a round of applause. It was moved that the ballots be destroyed. Moved by Cecil, seconded by Barry. Motion carried.

Committee and Representative Appointments

The list was presented in the Annual Report Booklet along with the Ministry Leaders overview.

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer's report was presented by Pat Keith.

All the financial reports were included in the booklet. Explanations were offered for items that had varied from the budgeted amount and questions were answered from the floor.

After discussion, it was moved by Pat Keith that the report be adopted. Seconded by Butch Foley. Motion carried.

Budget 2024

The budget for 2024 was presented and the major changes were explained. It was noted that the process was very difficult this year and the resultant budget is reduced from 2023 through a 25 % reduction in the hours for both the Ministry Assistant and the Janitor. This reduction in hours will start on March 1, 2024. In addition, the Mission & Outreach line on the expense side of the budget was reduced to 7.5 % from 10 % of all general revenue. It was noted that the details on how to manage the reduced hours will be worked out in the weeks ahead.

After discussion, it was moved by Pat Keith, seconded by Kyla that the budget be adopted. Motion carried.

Other Business

Heating

Mike Whalen explained the efforts by the deacons to address the cost of heating the building. Many options were considered. Several items became clear, including: the current furnace is insulated with an asbestos-based product that must be correctly removed and disposed of if the furnace is replaced. Note that the current situation is of no health risk as long as it is not disturbed. Also, the current use of electricity maximizes the 200 amp service and if heat pumps are installed, it would require an upgrade to the electrical entrance.

In view of the current financial situation, a substantial investment in any upgrade is not recommended at this time.

Membership Covenant

Sweis explained the difference between the old and new membership covenants. Both are printed in the Annual Report Booklet. The updates were made to 1) make the covenant more mutual in nature, and 2) to avoid it from containing a list of arbitrary requirements that can easily lead to legalism. The elders welcome feedback on the new covenant and, once convinced it is correct, will propose a constitutional amendment at some point in the future to align the two documents.

The meeting closed with prayer.

The meeting adjourned with the singing of "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"

List of Attendees:

Joanne MacGregor
Judi Marshall
Eric Marshall
Barry Roscoe
Janice Roscoe
Pat Harrison
Linda Thorsen
Jamie Dennison
Brenda Whitmore
Dale Hardy
Lynne Woolnough

Leisa Wetter
John Harrison
Cecil Nichols
Terry Hyson
Pat Keith
Tony Gates
Debbie Gates
Sally Dennison
Sweis Ubels
Marion Dicks
Larry McCabe

Jan MacCabe
Butch Foley
Mike Whalen
Kyla Whalen
Jeff Holloway
Caroline Ubels
Wendy MacMurtry
Peggy Jefferson
Paula Outhouse
Diane Penny
Clare Howells

2024 Pastoral Report – *By Sweis Ubels*

*Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.
Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.
(Psalm 107:21-22)*

Spring 2024 is proving to be an exciting time in the life of Emmanuel Church! There are just so many signs of progress and growth. To me, it feels that we have finally emerged from the years of pandemic. And so, we praise God! Below I will try to outline some of the more pertinent details of my role as pastor, trusting that God will use it to inspire and encourage the church.

Preaching

This past year I have preached a series of messages through both Habakkuk and Philippians, and on the themes of “Grace”, “Holy Spirit”, “Healthy Habits”, and more currently “End Times & Eternity”. This spring, someone pointed out that the church is like a one-room schoolhouse, with every grade in the same space. This is a good analogy that reveals the challenge that comes with preaching to a diverse audience. I pray our weekly messages are of encouragement and help you walk the journey!

Small Groups

Small group ministry continues to be an effective way through which we see both spiritual and numerical growth! This spring we saw approximately 55% of those who call Emmanuel Church home participate in a small group. That’s a great number, though with room for improvement.... I was personally surprised to see how well the Alpha Course was attended this winter/spring, after all, we hosted it last spring as well.

Worship

It has been wonderful to have a depth to our team so that I don’t have to be on stage every week! A huge thank you to those who make this possible! One challenge has been our lack of ability to gather for a weekday practice with the whole team. We are coping, and are planning to host a worship & tech development day in late May.

Reduced Hours of Support Staff

At our AGM we passed a budget that reflected a 25% reduction in hours for both our Janitor and Ministry Assistant. We continue to adjust to this new reality. One clear expectation is that the bigger ministry events will need a coordinator with a name other than Kyla. We are in the process of developing clear and detailed ministry descriptions for these projects to help the new coordinator(s) be effective.

Missions

Though our latest budget reflects a reduction of our Outreach Allotment from 10% to 7.5%, we continue to support both the Nazarene Mission in Sri Lanka and Church Renewal International. I forward any updates from these partners to a list of interested people. Be sure to let me know if you would like to receive these updates. More locally, besides continuing King’s Kitchen we hosted 10 Pop-Up BBQs and an End of Summer Bash this past summer. In addition, we built a float for the local Christmas Parade where we handed out information on Christmas and our Candlelight Service. Finally, a training seminar was held to help us effectively share our faith. We are committed to continuing to reach our neighbours with the Good News of Jesus!

The Coming Year

I believe we are currently seeing the beginnings of a breakthrough in our church's ministry. My prayer is that this will continue! I fully expect further growth to present us with different challenges but am confident that together we will discern a way forward in facing these challenges.

Involvement with the Broader Church

Besides my work "within Emmanuel Church", I continue to be involved in the broader church as well. I serve as Well Facilitator for Aaron Ministries Network, which means that I am the main organizer of monthly meetings with other Christian leaders in the area. In addition, I am a volunteer mentor for Church Renewal International and lead a small group of pastors through the different levels of materials. Finally, I continue to be part of an online group of pastors in which we are being mentored in leading ourselves and our churches to renewal.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns you may have, and know that I love my work in this church and community!

Ministry Assistant Report- by Kyla Whalen

This position is one of great diversity and requires the Ministry Assistant to utilize abilities in the areas of organization, communication, prayer, and ministry, and is constantly in various levels of transition. During COVID-19, this was highlighted by the large shift in technology to enable our Emmanuel community to stay connected and creatively participate in the ongoing ministries. To facilitate this increase in responsibility, the Ministry Assistant hours were raised to 32 hours per week. Through these transitions, I was truly blessed to witness our Emmanuel family come together to care for each other and had the honour and privilege of witnessing God's love demonstrated through that season. This I continue to see in this present season of transition and am confident that God is in this one as well. As the Ministry Assistant hours have dropped back to the original 24 hours/per week this has provided an opportunity for those in our community to share their time and talents. Many have stepped up, using their gifts in leading the clothing giveaway, assisting with coordinating fellowship groups and assisting with behind-the-scenes details for various activities. I know many of you have been jumping in headfirst and some even taking the lead and I am so grateful to you all, thank you!

I have faced many challenges during this transition, some of which are; learning to ask for help, determining which tasks I need assistance with, and recognizing I may fall short of expectations at times. Personally, I am growing in setting boundaries, preplanning, and surrendering some of what I once was a part of. One of the biggest challenges has arisen due to the casual position I now have which requires me to work 12-hour shifts and normally those are overnight. This position also means I may be called in at short notice which then requires a last-minute adjustment of my hours as Ministry Assistant. This has most specifically been affecting Emmanuel Youth Group Thursday Nights, where I have had to cancel on many occasions. Are you able to help this ministry in my absence, or more frequently?

Tech Ministry

As we know, many hands make light work, the same can be said for each Sunday morning ministry. In our Tech ministry this year, we have seen a large transition, with volunteers leaving and joining. This year we have gained three more computer techs and three more sound techs, giving us a total of nine people who regularly volunteer! Over my years of coordinating this

ministry, this year has truly overwhelmed me with joy. Thank you, everyone, your behind-the-scenes dedication has truly blessed this congregation. Having said all this, there is always room for more people to be part of our team so if you are interested, we would love to have you.

Scheduling

Another challenge during this transition time is the scheduling of volunteers to cover various areas of our community life and especially our Sunday morning gatherings. Each quarter is prepared and a rough draft schedule is emailed to all involved, usually two weeks to a month before the quarter begins. This allows those involved to indicate any conflicts with the dates they are scheduled for. Once the schedule is finalized a copy is emailed and a hard copy placed in each applicable mailbox. Once that has happened it is each person's responsibility to find coverage for any changes to the schedule. In the past, when individuals have been unable to switch days with another person, I have filled in the gap which has required me to maneuver other responsibilities, creating challenges in other areas of my duties. In many cases, it has been myself or Mike who has stepped in to fill any gaps in the schedule and when neither of us was available this resulted in that ministry not operating to its full potential.

Looking forward, with my reduced hours and my new employment, the challenge for me will be to establish better boundaries. The first step in this is for me to remove myself from the regular schedule which will enable me to be a fill-in when I am available to do so. Additionally, the schedule will be worked so that Mike and I will have a week off together once a month so that we can worship together as a family. I absolutely thank you for your understanding in this matter and I welcome you to hold me accountable to these new boundaries. I am so very grateful to have you, my family, to help me grow through this transition. I praise God for our unity and discipleship in this way and many more.

In closing, I would like to celebrate you and all that you are and do. On a regular schedule, we have 32 volunteers rotating to help on Sunday. This is absolutely amazing! You truly are the backbone of the services, Thank you!!! Though we find ourselves in yet another transition, I am more than confident that we will become stronger together as we traverse this new territory.

Thank you, my family,

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens"
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Emmanuel Senior's Ministry Report—by Bob & Pat Keith

Note: This report may look much like that of last year. As we write this report we are entering into the 14th year of Seniors' Ministry and have found the format presently followed is stimulating and rewarding to both the volunteers and the seniors we serve.

Emmanuel Seniors' Ministry is a ministry to seniors in our church, in Middleton, the surrounding communities and Heart of the Valley Long Term Care Facility.

At Emmanuel, the ministry remains focused on the spiritual, social and overall well-being of those seniors we encounter. At Heart of the Valley Long Term Care Facility the ministry is focused on providing stimulating and inspirational sessions at least bi-weekly. The sessions are well attended and interactive. We continue to be encouraged by the participation as well as the requests received from residents, staff and families both in person and by phone for prayer and other spiritual needs. Other community involvement included:

- Luncheons for seniors held the last Friday of the month from April to December
- Food hampers distributed throughout the year to seniors in need.

- Christmas baskets or plants delivered to shut-ins in their home.
- Snowmen and Easter crosses were hand-crafted and delivered to all residents in the nursing home.
- Numerous Prayer Shawls were knitted and delivered to ladies throughout the year.
- Financial donations were made to Twelve Baskets Food Bank, and the Canadian Red Cross Fire Relief Fund.
- To the extent our dwindling volunteers are able; our plans for 2024 include continuation of the monthly get togethers from April to December. The monthly program throughout the year is generated as much as possible by the requests of the participants and will include both information sessions as well as entertainment sessions. This year, we find many of our seniors are ailing and are confined to home. Much of our outreach is now limited to augmenting services that Home Support and other agencies are not able to provide, i.e. limited hours available, doctors appointments, etc. At the nursing home, we will continue to provide support, praise and spiritual encouragement to residents, their family, care givers and staff.

We wish to express our appreciation to all those who attend the luncheons and enable this ministry to be self supporting. In addition, we extend a sincere thank you to the volunteers who assist in this ministry. The average age of our working core group is 75. With this in mind, we pray new members will come forward not only to help, but to share the joy in serving our senior population. If you are interested, please contact us.

To all who have supported the ministry in any way, thank you for your service to others.

All For The Glory of God

King's Kitchen --by Paula Outhouse

Kings Kitchen began as a means to meet goals and use people's gifts. Emmanuel church has a fantastic kitchen facility and it was not being used very often. A few women and myself had a discussion of this as well as the food insecurity, loneliness and homelessness in our area. One of the said, "We have to do something." We agreed to start a meal program if the elders and deacons were in agreement. It was a go and I agreed to organize the program. We would offer "a simple meal with friendly people" once a week. We were hoping to target the community members who were facing food insecurity, loneliness and homelessness. February 14, 2023 saw us opening our doors with 27 guests and 15 volunteers. It was a great start. We ran the ministry for 10 weeks with each week growing in numbers.

In November 2024, we started our second season. We made changes and looked forward to what became a busy season!

The meals continued being held each week. Our core committee kept things simple and the people came. Food was served cafeteria style with the guests meeting friendly servers. In between the main meal and dessert, a time of fellowship happened. In rotation we had sing alongs or a short devotion given by members of the church. A routine was in place; come at 5pm and mingle with other guests, 5:30 eat, sing/learn and then have dessert. Linger and chat. In the spring of 2024, ALPHA was offered after and it too became a huge success. The two programs were easily combined.

Our guests knew they were to hear of Christ and our basic beliefs since the event was sponsored by the church. This didn't ever meet with opposition.

Over the last two seasons, a new family was born. As the weeks went on people started staying longer after the meal so they could chat with each other. Some guests asked for prayer, others shared not only their concerns, worries but also their triumphs! People were building trust and comradeship. We were a growing family. We also grew in numbers. The word was out, Emmanuel was the place to be on Tuesday nights.

We were never meant to go this journey of life alone. Kings Kitchen has given many people a connection to others and to the church. Guests reached out for guidance and help. Guests from all walks of life have joined the table. All were welcomed with open arms. We have seen people grow in confidence, spirit and knowing their place in life better.

From serving 42 people, we grew to serving 104 on occasion. Eighteen dedicated volunteers have given of their time and talents. Individuals and businesses have given of the treasures. We know names, faces and lives. Blessings have been abundant for our guests, volunteers and church. Praise be to God.

Children & Youth Small Groups- *by Kyla Whalen*

The goal of children & youth ministry is to equip our children & youth (ages 2-18) to become disciples of Jesus. This is accomplished by helping them know Jesus, grow in His likeness through their relationship with Him, and learn to show their faith through word and deed within the community.

Children's Small Group

"Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

From January through June 2023, our numbers fluctuated between two to four children regularly, as they journeyed through "The Way: Abide discipleship pathway for kids" curriculum. These materials provided the focus for the whole year with some breaks throughout the summer and was facilitated by Paula, Mike, and myself.

As we geared up for the new ministry season beginning in September, we were blessed with several volunteers, enough to provide four teams of two leaders. This new structure facilitated shared responsibilities and better coverage and more importantly, it has allowed opportunity for relationships to form between our children and more of our congregation. Huge thank you to Jaime, Peggy, Mike, Michelle, Pat, Clare, and Wendy.

With the dawn of a new ministry season and with ample support, I recognized the need for a curriculum change. It was then that we found a free fun 24-month video curriculum online: Open.Life.Church. Accompanying this video is a vast number of resources allowing more freedom and creativity during facilitation. By the time we have run through this video series, we will have gone through the bible twice, touching on the major stories throughout. The video is presented as a form of a quest that contains the monthly bible story, a memory verse, three key practical applications, and worship. During the group a resource is utilized called "Prop talk,"

which is a creative engaging way to encourage discussion through the use of a prop. A colouring page with discussion prompts is also available and this page contains homework for the children and parents. Overall, the curriculum has been fruitful and very interesting to work with, I am grateful to be continuing in this way for the upcoming year.

Also, during the second half of this ministry season, we saw an increase in the number of children participating with three to six children attending regularly, praise God for that. This past Christmas the children performed at our Christmas Eve service and Easter celebration. Though this was our first attempt at engaging in a performance, the children did such an amazing job! Recently they even helped demonstrate to the congregation, what they were learning in group by carrying their prop from a "Prop Talk" on stage, and on a separate occasion they collected the offering. This is part of an intentional effort to engage and integrate children into every aspect of church life. The hope is to continue in this way, challenging and encouraging the children's participation within the various ministries throughout the church.

Sunday Youth Small Group

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

From January through June 2023, our numbers fluctuated between two to four youths regularly, as we went through "The Way: Abide discipleship pathway," curriculum until the end of that ministry season, taking a break throughout the summer. During this time the ministry was facilitated by Linda, Mike, and myself.

As we prepared for the new ministry season beginning in September, we were blessed with two new volunteers, allowing me to step back a bit and have a 3 week on and 1 off schedule for the youth. The purpose of the one week off is to allow the youth to be present in the service. Huge thank you to Joanne, Linda, and Ryan.

The leaders have been preparing their various small group materials as the Lord has led them. Much of the focus has been on identity, purpose, and belonging while teaching scripture. This group is facilitated in such a way to help the youth grow in relationships with Jesus and each other. For the majority of this ministry season, we have had a fluctuating number of two to four youths, however, more recently our numbers have moved to six on a more frequent basis.

This small group also joins the children's small group on occasion. During this time the youth can share what they've learned as they participate in the children's lesson. I believe this is of the utmost importance, as it allows for an intergenerational gathering where both the youth and children be examples and share what Christ has laid on their hearts.

Emmanuel Youth Small Group

From January 2023 through to the end of the ministry season in June our youth participated in video curriculums provided through Right Now Media. Each video series had a strong emphasis on identity, belonging, and purpose in Christ. Weekly we came together for a meal, to fellowship, watch a video, discuss, pray, and enjoy some games. We came together on Wednesday nights for 2 hours, and our attendance fluctuated between 7 and 16, however, the average attendance was 13 young people. Once a month we had "Rest Week", where we would

do something outside of our curriculum to have fun, rest, and fellowship. These rest weeks have been a highlight for the youth and involved; going to the movies, skating, and playing hide and seek at Riverside Park. This season of ministry was facilitated by Jeff, Mike, and myself. Thank you guys for all of your help.

The youth group took a break during the summer months; however, I remained in contact with all its members throughout the season.

As we prepared for the new ministry season beginning in September, I recognized the need to scale back the length of time this group met, due to my schedule. Through many conversations, we decided to move the youth group from Wednesdays to Tuesdays, after school, with the hope of engaging and encouraging the youth to participate in King's Kitchen. This would remove the expense of a meal, and the need to prepare it, allowing only the need for myself to facilitate, encourage community growth, and assist with possible volunteers. This, however, only lasted until the New Year, as the youth did not appreciate the reduced hours and were uncomfortable joining in this community meal. As such, during this time, the youth group attendance dropped from 13 to 6. We also needed to source other curriculums, due to Right Now Media no longer being available. I utilized several different online curriculums from Open.Life.Church, that contained videos and resources, free and fun. In December the youth group took a break, allowing for me to restructure for the upcoming months.

With the New Year, I had moved youth group to Thursday night but still providing snacks and a special meal once in a while. At this time the shift was made to using the Open.Life.Church curriculum, watching "Skit Guys" videos to discuss, and prompt deeper conversations. This form of video has been very fruitful in drawing out the deeper faith questions and provides insight into where the youth are in their journey.

The structure of the youth group is simple; announcements, prayer, discussion, and games. In addition to youth group, I have intentionally been meeting with youth outside of these hours for coffee, to strengthen relationships and catch up one on one. Showing and sharing that it is through relationships that we learn and grow.

A current challenge is that often these youth gatherings have had to be canceled due to my recent change in hours and new job situation. There is a great need for more assistance with volunteers that would help alleviate this situation. The youth are certainly frustrated by this but are showing great understanding. I would like to thank both the Youth and Mike for all of your support as we navigate this new territory.

Over the last month, our youth group has been growing in numbers again, we are now seeing 7-9 youth attending! In addition to this, and in celebration, 4 of these youths have been participating in our Sunday morning gatherings by assisting in various ways. This brings such joy to my heart!

Though this year has been a year of transition, it truly has been a year of blessing! Every person who has attended has impacted me personally in many ways. Just as we leaders are planting seeds, the youth too, are doing the same. They are an example to their peers, their parents, and to us. May we continue to grow in unity.

Welcome Ministry – by *Pat Harrison*

The purpose of the Welcome Team Ministry is to make everyone who enters our church building on Sunday morning feel welcome and comfortable whether they are regular attendees, newcomers or visitors. We presently have 7 rotating teams committed to this ministry, as well as

one individual who graciously will fill in on short notice if required. New schedules are drawn up every quarter. There is a specific list of guidelines to follow so that there is consistency from week to week. We are mindful that first impressions matter and we want each person who comes through the door to experience the love of Jesus from the moment they enter. Along with handing out bulletins, we are there to provide information, answer questions, give directions and help folks have the most positive experience possible. We provide newcomers with a welcome package consisting of a welcome card, pen, magnet and contact information. We try to minimize congestion in the foyer and keep everyone moving along so that every individual is greeted personally and no one is missed. Recently, we have added collection of the offering during the service to our duties. A member of the Welcome Team also is stationed at the outside door at the end of the service to send folks who are not staying for coffee hour off with a friendly farewell. Praise God we are seeing an increase in attendance lately and it is our prayer that this trend continues! I would like to sincerely thank each member of the Welcome Team for their dedicated service to this ministry!

PRAYER MINISTRY – by Joanne MacGregor

“And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people.” Revelation 5:8

What an incredible picture - every prayer finds its way to heaven filling bowls with heavenly incense that rises to the throne of God - a fragrant offering to the God who loves us and whose love moves Him to respond. In our Emmanuel community, prayer is our primary desire to see that every decision, ministry, and individual is fully engaged in this spiritual practice. As we review our prayer life in preparation for our congregational ministry meeting, it is clear there is much to rejoice in and give thanks for!

The foundation of Emmanuel’s prayer ministry begins with our Prayer Partners. This is a small group of people who have committed to consistently pray into the life of our church. Each month an update is prepared and sent to these individuals and they faithfully pray for each item included on that list. The Prayer Partners team presently has twelve members and they play a critical role in supporting and bathing every ministry, as well as the leadership, at Emmanuel Church in prayer.

Pre-Service Prayer is another focus that continues to grow with more and more people engaging in this opportunity. Those participating find it a sweet and precious time in the Lord’s presence. Each week a different person gives direction to the prayer time and it’s been wonderful to see how Holy Spirit has directed these individuals who have been willing to step out. There is no requirement for those attending to pray out loud, however, this would be a wonderful environment to grow in this area. Pre-service prayer has been a beautiful way to prepare for our corporate worship services and we truly encourage more people to consider taking part in the future.

The congregational prayer time, during our worship services, continues to grow into just that - a congregation-led prayer. Shifting from having just one person pray each week to having different members participate more accurately fulfills the purpose of this important aspect of our family life. We will continue to provide opportunities for all to take part in this privilege. There

have also been several services where opportunity was provided for those present to pray for each other. Many have found this to be a blessed time.

Following every service, the opportunity for individuals to receive personal prayer is always available. Our goal is to stand as a family, with each of us bearing one another's burdens and seeking God's grace and mercy for all. If you desire prayer following our Sunday morning gatherings, just stay in the sanctuary or reach out to one of the elders. A growing edge for our community, in the area of prayer, is our ability to discern when someone may desire prayer but be reluctant to ask for it. This requires all of us to be willing to have the eyes and ears of Jesus and then step out to offer this blessing to another.

Unfortunately, during this past ministry season, Sweis and the Elders made the decision to cease the Prayer Summit gatherings. Although the prayer summit had wonderful potential, the attendance was poor, so for now that ministry will be on hold. The hope is that it can be restarted at a future date.

Looking back over the past year it is incredible to see how the Lord has blessed us with so many answers to prayers. There are too many to mention specifically but just looking around in our ministry gatherings we can see such vibrant life with all who come, growing in loving relationship with God and with each other. Also, God has answered many prayers in the area of provision for which we praise and thank Him!

Finally, we continue to focus on 3 BIG Prayers each year and they are:

- 1) increased participation in services, small groups and corporate prayer
- 2) growing in joyful generosity with our time, talents and treasure
- 3) 10 baptisms during the current year

“ Where there is much prayer, there will be much of the Spirit; where there is much of the Spirit, there will be ever-increasing prayer ”(Andrew Murray). Let us continue to press forward in our commitment to grow in prayer!

Nazarene Mission – by Ashly Emmanuel

Our ministries in Sri Lanka have been going well by the grace of God. People are responding to the Gospel amidst challenging circumstances. Despite facing opposition, our pastors remain steadfast in their ministry, tirelessly spreading the message of hope.

Just this year, we have baptized 17 people across our branch churches.

My mom, Vasanthi, has been doing a great job catching up with our pastors on a monthly basis, encouraging, praying, and supporting them financially.

Our church in Moratuwa has seen some significant growth in the last year. The weekly attendance has now grown to about 100, forcing what was a gathering at the pastor's house to a bigger place. We praise God that this ministry continues to grow in a heavily Catholic and Buddhist community.

The pastors at our Moratuwa branch organized a training program aimed at nurturing young leaders and empowering them to effectively engage in ministry and leadership roles. The focus

was primarily on equipping these young individuals to lead and minister to children and youth within our community. It's incredibly encouraging to witness the enthusiasm and eagerness displayed by numerous young people who eagerly participated in this initiative.

We also continue to provide dry food rations to families affected by the financial crisis faced by the locals. Inflation is really affecting the people with no support from the government.

Lastly, it has been a year since dad passed away. So, on the week of his death anniversary, mom arranged for a meal to be provided to an elders' home. The majority of the people in this elders' home are either neglected by their family or do not have any family for care. It is a blessing to bless the elderly in memory of dad. This was an initiative by mom, and we love that she does these types of things as she celebrates dad's loss.