



“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

## got water?

In the Spring of 2008, an unprecedented event occurred in the life of the congregation at Emmanuel, Cadillac. “Got water?” – a play on the catch phrase “Got Milk?” was on the lips of congregational members as they witnessed eight adults and 33 children receive the Sacrament of Baptism, all in one worship service.

Reflecting upon the steps that led up to this Baptismal Celebration, one can see how God was working through everyday circumstances to fulfill His purpose. In 2007, the Rev. Kelly Bedard served as Pastor of Discipleship, Outreach, and Youth. Rev. Bedard’s arrival in Cadillac was quite miraculous. Dr. Bryan Salminen, senior pastor of Emmanuel, was leading a retreat in Germany for the pastors and their spouses involved in Hurricane Katrina. Rev. Bedard and his wife Julie were participants in the retreat. Rev. Bedard had also been a student in one of Dr. Salminen’s classes when he taught at the Seminary. As they visited at a café in Germany, both Salminen and Bedard became excited about the possibility of serving together at Emmanuel.

Focused on the younger children, Pastor Bedard began making daily visits in Joyful Hearts

Learning Center, Emmanuel's daycare and preschool ministry. Rocking infants and talking and playing with children were definitely the highlight of his days.

In looking over school records, it was found that a large percentage of the preschool children and families not only did not have a church home, but also were not baptized. So Pastor Bedard followed up individually with each family and was simply amazed at their receptivity.

One man said, "I didn't have the church growing up, but we really like what our children are receiving at Joyful Hearts, and if Baptism is part of that, let's do it!"

And so as the snowball effect began to take place, as each visit was made, God moved these individuals to respond positively to the invitation.

The entire congregation became involved in

## Caring for the whole person in Christ's name.

the evangelism efforts. An outdoor cookout and Wednesday evening was planned, and although the words cookout and Holy Baptism may not seem to go together, Emmanuel members opened their hearts and hands to these families.

Bryan Salminen stated, "I have served large congregations in the past and in none of them had we witnessed that many baptisms at one time."

Other outreach oriented ministries have taken place at Emmanuel including Kids Hope USA which is based on "one child, one hour, one school, one church" premise. Through a local school, Pastor Bedard mentored an eight year-old boy who was in the room when his father committed suicide. No training prepares one to deal with that, but God worked through these weekly meetings. Later, the family asked Emmanuel to host the funeral of the boy's grandmother, and through this opportunity, more seeds were planted.

Emmanuel's vision is "caring for the whole person in Christ's name." God's people are motivated by the

Word and Sacrament and are continually looking at new ways to care for people in the church and the community. Through

a variety of "care ministries" such as Divorce Care, Grief Share, and a new Cancer care ministry called "Saving Souls, Saving Lives," the congregation continues to grow and reach out to both members and those in the community. The congregation has also established a health/wellness committee and hired a parish nurse to provide outreach opportunities to the church and community.

Through these events and processes, congregational members have been and are continuing to be equipped to share the joy of outreach. One man sent a note to Pastor Bedard after he returned to New Orleans. He said, "I have found this approach and outreach refreshing and helpful. You have taken a bit of the mystery out of it and related [outreach] to being a friend, and what better friendship than leading someone to the Lord?"

*This article is a compilation of stories and articles written by Rev. Kelly Bedard, Mardi Suhs, and Rev. Dr. Bryan Salminen. Rev. Bedard continues his outreach focus while currently serving Trinity Lutheran Church in New Orleans. Mardi Suhs is a staff writer for Cadillac News. Dr. Salminen is the senior pastor of Emmanuel. Rev. Joel Hess has now joined Emmanuel's ministry team as associate pastor of Youth and Education.*

