



December 1, 2020

Merry Christmas Emmanuel Faith Family!

If I were to summarize 2020 in one word, it would be **unexpected**. The first few months of the year were great, and then came COVID-19. Our EFCC family had to quickly pivot from in-person ministry to online gatherings for a season. While we had no idea how long the impact of the pandemic would last, we knew two things for sure: God was not surprised and he was on the move.

One of the unexpected blessings of COVID has been seeing the way you have responded so faithfully. We made financial cutbacks initially because of the pending uncertainty the pandemic presented, but we saw our church body respond through consistent, faithful giving. I was and am so proud of our church; thank you for your partnership in the Gospel!



*Photo taken at our very first outdoor sermon video shoot.*

**Your faithful giving allowed us to continue doing ministry both in-person and online. As we launched our online services, we saw God at work in the midst of uncertainty. He used our online services to reach many with the Gospel — seeing many put faith in Christ for the first time.** In addition to our online gatherings, we've seen Jesus use the devotionals that our team creates to serve families in this unique season. One story I heard really captured my heart. EFCC member Kathy Gayheart was in Texas visiting her daughter and granddaughter when the quarantine hit. While she hated being away from her husband, Dingus, she stayed to care for her young granddaughter while her daughter, a nurse, worked long hours taking care of COVID patients. Being away from each other was harder than they thought, but they used EFCC's *Daily Fill* devotionals to stay close. Every night, they'd have a Zoom call with each other, reading and discussing the devotional, staying connected to each other and EFCC.



*Families — and their pets! — come together to watch our online church services.*

Another way we saw our body respond to crisis was through the faithful ministry of our Care Team who made calls to check on those in our church family. John and Mary Waring faithfully called many of our congregation and prayed with them. John received this a few months ago: "John, I appreciated your phone call so much. It was like the Lord used it to say, 'I see what is happening and am in control. Just continue to trust me with your families' needs.' May the Lord continue to use you as you take the time and effort to pray over the phone." Friends, this truly is the body of Christ ministering to one another and a great picture of what we are called to do for each other as a church family.

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However, we know that we aren't only called to focus on ourselves, but also on the world around us. The world needs the Good News more than ever, and our amazing EFCC global partners have been strategically placed around the globe for such a time as this. One example is our work in Lebanon. This small country hosts millions of refugees from Syria. It has suffered greatly from COVID-19 and from a recent devastating explosion in the port of Beirut, which in an instant displaced 300,000 people. Because of our long-term partnerships in the region, we responded quickly, demonstrated Christian compassion and created new opportunities to share the Gospel. In the past three months alone, more than 20,000 people received food and medical assistance. We are providing ongoing education to 1,370 refugee children, and most importantly of all, thousands of Muslim families are hearing the Gospel for the first time. EFCC continues to impact the nations!

As we move into 2021, I'm sure there is more "unexpected" heading our way, but I'm confident our church will respond in faith just like we have done in 2020. **We know the best is yet to come, but we need your help to make it a reality. In light of that, I'm asking you to consider Emmanuel Faith as you plan your year-end giving.** I'd like to highlight three specific funds that are essential for our impact in this next season.

**First**, I'd ask that you consider a gift to BEYOND. As we've previously mentioned, the Worship Center renovation is a roughly \$4 million project. I'm confident that we can pay this off relatively quickly if each person gives what Jesus calls them to invest. **Second**, I'd ask that you consider an above-and-beyond gift to the General Fund. Our General Fund allows us to continue to do ministry that impacts our church family and community. **Finally**, I'd invite you to give to our Outreach Fund to support our local and global ministry partners sharing God's love around the world.

Thank you for your financial partnership as together we strive to help people live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus. As a leadership team we're committed to being good stewards of the funds you entrust to us – maximizing them to make an eternal impact. If you'd like to participate, we've included a donation envelope, or you can give at [www.efcc.org/give](http://www.efcc.org/give).

As we close out an unexpected year, we have the chance to celebrate our unexpected God. After all, Christmas was unexpected, but it was this unexpected event that led to our salvation! As we close out a year that has defied expectations, let's be sure to prepare room for the God who does the same. Let's celebrate together the God who meets us on our turf and takes us to his. That's unexpected; and that's the message of Christmas!

Personally, my family and I have been so blessed to be part of Emmanuel Faith Community Church. Thank you for welcoming us into your church family. We are excited to see how God will continue to impact lives for Christ in this coming new year.

Merry Christmas, our Savior is born!



Pastor Ryan Paulson



*EFCC church family members worshipping the Lord on the field during an on-campus service.*

*P.S. Check out our website at [www.efcc.org/christmas](http://www.efcc.org/christmas) for all the ways you can get involved this Christmas season — online and on campus.*