

Emmanuel – God with us

Emmanuel. It is a word we sing with joy at Christmas, we read with reverence in Scripture, and we speak with hope in our prayers. Yet its meaning, “God with us,” reaches far deeper than a seasonal sentiment or a comforting phrase. It is the heartbeat of the Christian life, the assurance that God has not remained distant, abstract or detached, but has stepped into the mess and beauty of human experience to dwell among us and within us. For Runnymede Christian Fellowship, this truth shapes not only our worship but our identity and our mission, reminding us that every act of faith begins with the confidence that God Himself is near.

From the moment Jesus entered the world in the vulnerability of a manger, the extraordinary declaration of Emmanuel became tangible. God chose presence over power, relationship over spectacle. He did not come wrapped in royal robes but in swaddling cloths, held not by dignitaries but by humble parents. And in that simple scene we glimpse a truth we must never lose: God delights to be with us in every circumstance, not only in our moments of success but also in our moments of fear, uncertainty and quiet longing. Emmanuel is the God who steps into the ordinary and fills it with divine purpose.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus revealed the depth of what it means for God to be with us. He walked dusty roads alongside fishermen, tax collectors and outcasts. He shared meals with those society dismissed. He touched the unclean, comforted the grieving, restored the broken and lifted the heads of the ashamed. He listened, He wept, He laughed and He prayed. Jesus demonstrated that being “with us” is not a passive presence but an active, loving engagement. His presence transforms not by overwhelming force but by gentle, persistent grace.

Even the cross speaks the language of Emmanuel. In choosing to suffer and die for humanity, Jesus identified Himself completely with our pain, our sin and our separation. He faced the deepest loneliness so that we need never face it again. And in the silence of the tomb, before resurrection brought triumph, Emmanuel remained true—God with us even in death, ensuring that no darkness is too deep for His presence to enter and redeem. When He rose, He not only conquered the grave but confirmed forever that His presence would never again be limited by time or location.

After the resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples that He would be with them always, to the very end of the age. This was not metaphorical reassurance but a literal gift of His Spirit. At Pentecost, Emmanuel moved from God beside us to God within us. The Holy Spirit became the abiding presence of Christ in the believer’s life, guiding, comforting, convicting and empowering. We are never alone because Emmanuel is not a historical memory but a present reality.

In our fellowship, this truth reshapes how we gather, how we pray and how we serve. When we come together on a Sunday, we do not merely assemble out of duty or tradition. We come with expectation because Emmanuel meets us in our worship. As we raise our voices, as we break bread, as we share Scripture, the God who is with us draws close to encourage, challenge and

renew. When we pray for one another, we do so knowing that Emmanuel is working in ways we cannot see, knitting hope into wounded hearts and bringing peace that surpasses understanding.

In our daily lives, this same promise steadies us. When work feels overwhelming, when relationships strain, when illness frightens or when questions linger unanswered, Emmanuel stands beside us. Not as a distant observer but as a present companion. His presence does not always remove the difficulty, but it transforms our experience of it, reminding us that courage grows not from the absence of fear but from the awareness of divine companionship.

Emmanuel also compels us outward. Because God is with us, we are called to be with others. Presence becomes ministry. Listening becomes love. Compassion becomes witness. In neighbourhoods, workplaces and homes, we carry the presence of Christ, not through grand gestures but through faithfulness, kindness and the quiet confidence that God is already at work.

As we continue our journey as a fellowship, may Emmanuel be more than a name we celebrate. May it be the reality we live. God with us in our worship, in our conversations, in our joys and sorrows, and in every step of discipleship. And as His presence shapes us, may others glimpse through us the hope of the One who came near and never left.

Questions

In what ways does the reality of “God with us” shape how you face moments of fear, uncertainty or change?

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.” — Isaiah 41:10

How does Jesus’ willingness to enter the world in humility challenge your own expectations about how God works in your life?

“He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” — Philippians 2:7

Where have you recently recognised the presence of Christ in your everyday routines, relationships or responsibilities?

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” — Matthew 28:20

How does the indwelling of the Holy Spirit help you experience Emmanuel not just as a concept but as a daily companion and guide?

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” — Romans 8:16

What practical steps can you take to reflect the presence of Emmanuel to those around you—especially the lonely, weary or overlooked?

“We love because he first loved us.” — 1 John 4:19