

## THE RECTOR'S REPORT TO THE 2019 ANNUAL MEETING

I have told the story many times over the years of a moment I witnessed at the church I attended in graduate school. In the middle of the sermon the Rector stopped dead and looked at us. There we were: students and faculty, doctors, lawyers, at least one architect, a day-care operator, a couple of homeless people, a couple of fire fighters, people of several ethnic and racial backgrounds, young families and folks who had been members of St. Paul's, New Haven, for decades and decades. He found himself overwhelmed at what would bring such a diverse community together in one place on a Sunday morning.

I had a similar moment not too long ago watching people come forward to receive holy communion. To see such a diversity of people coming together at Emmanuel Church literally brought a tear to my eye and I choked a little during the final prayer.

In a time when traditional churches are struggling to attract new and especially younger members, Emmanuel is bucking the trend. In a political climate where racial tensions and ethnic alienation seem to be on the increase, Emmanuel welcomes people of every background. In a culture which is increasingly dominated by the screens in our homes and in our pockets, we continue to value the face-to-face fellowship that comes from being together. And in a society where the Church competes for time and attention among countless other attractions, our five weekly service offerings – including four each weekend – make it as easy as possible to attend worship.

In all of this we have been blessed, and so can be a blessing to the community around us. Like St. Paul did for the congregations he started almost 2000 years ago, I “never tire of boasting” about the time and talent you contribute to reach out to those in need.

I believe in the deepest part of my soul that we are God's people, doing God's work in the world. We have witnessed many changes in the Church over the last several decades, and I remain convinced that God is leading us in new directions. We need to be prepared to follow where we are led and to be open to new possibilities.

We also need to face up to the challenges that come our way. The most important of these is the challenge of funding the mission and ministries of Emmanuel. On the one hand, our campus is cobbled together from buildings constructed at different times and with different expectations of how they were to be used and by whom. In the almost 10 years I have been Rector, we have not had a single year without some surprise, from furnaces to roofs to flooding. It is expensive to maintain our property and keep it useful for own needs and the needs of the community around us. On the

other hand, the cost of staffing our programs is also significant. Our music and Christian formation programs are excellent because we can pay professionals to develop them for us. The cost of clergy leadership is also significant. Many congregations like Emmanuel find it impossible to bear the cost of a full-time priest. We are blessed to have Fr. Bill Smith and Deacon Joan Kelly to assist in leading worship, neither of whom receives compensation for their time and labors.

What this looks like on paper is a struggle to match income and expenses in our budget. We have worked hard to keep our expenses as flat as possible from year to year, denying even minimal cost of living accretions to staff members as a result. But our income from pledges has decreased steadily over the last couple of years. Though we will try to be as gentle about it as we can, you will hear more about our need for increased income throughout the year ahead, whether appeals for new pledges or information about new fundraisers or other opportunities. God will provide, but we must be ready to be a part of God's solution.

Many of the projects we initiated in our Sesquicentennial year will come to completion in 2019. We are awaiting completion of three new stained glass windows and for the restoration of the rest of our collection. A new display sign has been ordered and will be installed soon. And we continue to experiment with our Saturday 4:30 service as we get to know who is attending regularly.

As I pray about our life together this year, I hope that you will find your faith growing as you spend time in worship, fellowship, and outreach. I hope you will see that the more time you spend with us, the richer your experience of our ministries will be. And I hope that God will bless you, so that you may be a blessing to those around you.

The Rev'd Canon Dr. Mark Gatza,  
Rector