Reflections from the Rector’s Desk

Last month, I was honored and blessed by two specific conversations on the same day. Two conversations which left me in awe. Two conversations that left me with a deeper relationship with God, and a deeper appreciation for the depth of a Christian heart. I’m not a skillful enough writer to do these conversations justice, but I do want to tell you about them even within my limitations.

My friend Mike was recently involved in what can only be called a “suburban work accident”. He was splitting wood using a hydraulic press when the log he was working on exploded and slammed into his head. His nose was broken, his scalp torn, his eye too swollen to see out of. As he crumpled to the ground, he assumed he had been killed. He wasn’t—but has a good amount of work ahead of him for recovery.

My friend Dave’s big brother died this week. Even though their lives took different directions and even though they have clearly different personalities Dave idolized his brother. Growing up in a small mid-western town they worked together, went to school together, even became Eagle Scouts together.

Two different kinds of pain. Two different kinds of grief. Indeed two very different people. You might think that these two conversations would have been very different, but they weren’t. Both Mike and Dave chose to focus not on pain, not on grief, not on loss, but rather to focus on thankfulness.

They both, in their own way, wrapped their hearts in thanksgiving. They chose to center themselves in gratitude. In gratitude for relationship, in gratitude for health, in gratitude for family. Indeed, their very prayers were centered in this gratitude, in this thankfulness.

Meister Eckhart, a German mystic in the 14th century, would have understood this Impetus to thankfulness as the center of prayer. He is the one who reminded us that:

*If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is “Thank You,” it will be enough.*

This season, this fall, live into this impetus, live into your own thanksgiving, your own gratitude. As you deepen your thanksgiving your life will change, your relationships will deepen, and God’s love will pour ever more fully into your heart.

In Christ, John+
Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Reflections is published by Emmanuel Episcopal Church, and it serves the Sandhills community, the Episcopal Day School and Penick Village.

The deadline for articles is the 15th of the month preceding publication. Send articles to Rebekah O'Donnell, rodonnell@emmanuel-parish.org or Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 340 S. Ridge Street, Southern Pines, N.C. 28387.
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Emmanuel’s Best Chili

ANNUAL EMMANUEL CHILI COOKOFF!
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4
6 PM ★ PARISH HALL
ENTER YOUR BEST CHILI
SIGN UP SHEETS ARE IN THE
NARThex, PARISH HALL FOYER, CHURCH OFFICE
EACH HOUSEHOLD IS ASKED TO BRING A DESSERT OR SIDE DISH

Reflections
Dear Emmanuel Family,

As I was leaving Church one Sunday, a parishioner asked me “what do you think we do well at Emmanuel?” Immediately I thought of a million things we do well, pastoral care, outreach, welcoming new people, fun parish events! I had a great answer all ready to go. I went home and started thinking about the question. I do think we do all of those things well. Sometimes we get it wrong, and I am always so grateful for the amazing amount of grace we show each other. Emmanuel shows grace really, really well! I don’t think my answer is really what the parishioner was asking. I really think they may have been asking do we love well, do we love Jesus well, do we love each other well? I still believe the answer is yes!

I am proud to be on the staff at Emmanuel. I am grateful to worship here every week. I think what we do well is love, and I am very honored to be a part of that loving well! I think the question to think and pray about is how do we invite people into what we do well? How do we invite people to feel loved by Jesus? I hope you will discuss that question with each other. I hope you will share your thoughts around how to share what we do well with others. It is important work and I am excited to be a part of it.

The light of Jesus Christ is shining brightly at Emmanuel. I believe that with my whole heart. We are being the Church that cares, and for that I am grateful to you and God. I am excited to see how we can continue to minister to others, live out the Gospel, and build the Kingdom of God together. See you on Sunday!

Love,

Mary Balfour
Autumn has arrived, and I will admit I enjoy all of the comforts of this time of year. Saturdays mean afternoons of college football. Extra time is spent working around the yard as the growing season has come to an end. Amanda has several wonderfully flavorful soup recipes which appear in this season, and while writing this, the house is filled with the smells of a hearty pot of kale, potato, and sausage soup. The beautiful transformation of the foliage, the abundance of fall festivals, and children comfortably into the school year make for a great season.

One of my favorite recipes to pull out at this time of year is something called Federated Church Beer Bread. I first tasted this wonderful treat while on choir tour in the mountains of Pennsylvania in the late 1990s. This is also the time of year my grandmother usually sends me two jars of Apple Butter, made by the men and women of Manchester United Methodist Church, where I was baptized. I keep checking my front porch for the arrival of that welcome gift.

In thinking about all of these comforts, I found myself meditating on that now familiar bread recipe. It was while on choir tour, a stranger in an unfamiliar state in my late teens that this was served at an evening meal. Food is indeed the most delicious type of hospitality. Through simple bread I felt loved and nourished.

It led me to the question that I found myself asking at the end of my sabbatical time: how can I do my very best at making all who walk through our doors feel welcomed, loved, and fed?

Over the course of the summer I was in more than 40 churches and cathedrals either for worship, a musical event, or simply making a pilgrimage. My experiences were rich, and I learned many things. Perhaps the most important of these details was the experience of being a first time visitor again. Even as a professional churchman there is something a bit unsettling about visiting a new parish for the first time. I would wonder if I’m entering the church through the proper door. If a greeter/usher was not where I entered then I would need to search for a bulletin or some direction as to the order of service. Hymnody was sometimes completely unfamiliar.

I found some of my most memorable experiences were because of the worshippers who were around me—those places where complete strangers would introduce themselves, invite me to coffee after the service, or perhaps give me a helping directive about where I might find the hymnal or order of worship. Sometimes it was just warm smiles that made a house of worship feel like home.

As I have reflected on my
experiences this summer, I have worked to make some adjustments to my work and manner at Emmanuel. No matter what my mood, a smile is so very important. No matter the time crunch, everyone who walks through our doors is important and if they need assistance or need a moment for conversation, then they deserve my full engagement. Hymnody and liturgical music need to have a depth and richness, yet not be a barrier to full participation.

I also learned it was important to identify myself as a visitor, and to be bold enough to do so. Some of the most unexpected moments happened when I would do so. On Sunday, August 6, my family and I attended morning Eucharist at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. The parish is a smells and bells Anglo-Catholic house of worship (my favorite), and I was looking forward to high Anglican worship—I was not disappointed. After the service, I ran into Martha and Dodge Johnson. Martha had been the Organist/Choirmaster at St. Peter’s in the Great Valley under Rev. John Tampa. We shared some stories and sent a photo to John with our well wishes. In chatting with the clergy after the service, I learned their Priest Associate for Adult Formation, the Rev. Dr. Nora Johnson, knew Emmanuel Church well. She has worshipped with us on several occasions and had just returned from visiting her parents who reside at Penick Village. It was fun to make connections, and it certainly demonstrates the interwoven-ness of our Episcopal world.

I continue to reflect on my summertime as a visitor and how I can use those experiences to better minister in this parish. I would encourage all of you to never be afraid to reach your hand out and introduce yourself to someone you don’t know, be they a first time visitor or not. Don’t hesitate to demonstrate hospitality out of fear they could be someone who has been visiting for six weeks or have been members for 10 years, and you have just noticed them. Trust me, I do that still, and I’d rather feel slightly embarrassed and form a new relationship than to let fear prevent me from making a new friend.

As I finish writing this article, my loaf of Federated Church Beer Bread has finished baking. I have just served myself a warm slice, topped with two pads of butter. It is delicious. It transports me back to that evening meal nearly 20 years ago and the gift of nourishment. It stirs a memory of Christian love. Sometimes it can be in the simplest actions that have the longest lasting impacts. Embrace those simple moments. Remember what it is that made you feel home here at Emmanuel, and then reflect that to the new friends you meet here.

The Lord is our great comfort and we can sense His great love in the little comforts of life. If you would like to experience the enjoyment I get in making and remembering my friends from The Federated Church, then I offer to you this simple recipe.

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**Federated Church Beer Bread**

- 3 cups flour
- 6 Tbs. sugar
- 4 tsp. baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 1 can of beer (12 oz)

Mix together, bake at 350° for one hour. Enjoy!

Happy autumn!
Reflections from EDS Chaplain

By Steve Millender

We are well and truly underway this school year. September is behind us, and as I write October is already halfway gone. I am reminded of the old saying that “time flies when you are having fun,”... and I am certainly having a blast with the kids this year.

Highlights from the first month and a half:

- We have begun filling up the tree on the Specials Hall with leaves of thanks once again. It’s already looking good, with its first growth spurt. I look forward to seeing it fill up again throughout the year.

- In Sacred Studies, I worked with the 1st - through 5th-grade students to write our first iteration of the Prayers of the People to be said during Tuesday/Thursday Chapel Services. The prayers the kids helped craft are lovely, cogent, and they truly enrich our time in worship together.

- Episcopal Day School (EDS) and Emmanuel Episcopal Church (EEC) are working together to do joint outreach in our communities. We gathered up a full truckload of hurricane relief supplies for victims of Hurricane Harvey in amazingly short order. The children of EDS brought in hundreds of meals for Backpack Pals. And, we have already collected dozens of books which will be forwarded on to the Northern Moore Family Resource Center. Many thanks to Jill, John, Laurie, Mary Balfour and Tom for collaboration and coordination of this outreach effort, and many thanks to the church volunteers, students, families, faculty, and staff of both institutions who have made these efforts so successful!

- We had a record number of kids commit verses to memory in September, and are already off to a good start in October, where we reflect on Psalm 86 verse 11 and how it relates to self-control:

  Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

  We’ll keep focus on self-control, talking about what it really means to be in control. Self-control is not the absence of strong emotion, it’s the ability to identify those strong emotions and choosing how we react to them. It’s a tough lesson to learn, but we can do it, with God’s help and a lot of practice.

The lectionary has us covering several of my favorite parables this month. We’ve been working through the Parable of the Vineyard Workers, the Parable of the Two Sons, and the Parable of the Wedding Banquet. We’ve been talking a little bit about how those who were listening to the stories must have felt. This is helping us to get ready for the next batch of stories in the Gospel of Matthew... where the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and Chief Priests try to trip up Jesus and wind up getting the wrong end of the stick instead.

Thinking about how strongly the kids are reacting to our lessons so far, I am looking forward to sharing these stories with them over the next few weeks! I am so proud of these kids, and so thankful to have the opportunity to work with them. Please, join us any Tuesday or Thursday in the church when you find yourself up early and wanting to get a lift to your spirits to start your day!

Steve Millender, Episcopal Day School Chaplain

Advent Wreath Making
Sunday December 3
10 a.m.
Parish Hall

Please bring clippers and greens. Emmanuel will supply containers and candles. We will have a supply of greens as well.

Refreshments provided!

Please note: this is Christian Formation for all ages.
As a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, the Penick Village mission is “to create a loving community that nurtures the mind, body and spirit; and Vision, to provide a home for older adults that deinstitutionalizes the aging experience.

Since its inception more than 50 years ago, Penick Village has also remained true to Bishop Penick’s vision that no resident be turned away for lack of funds. Each year, the Benevolent Assistance Fund ensures those residents, who have outlived their resources, will be cared for in beautiful facilities by superior staff.

This year, about 12.9% of all residents will receive some aid, which will total about $1.7 million which is raised through contributions from the annual Art Show, the Penick Promise Partner’s Campaign, Emmanuel’s Thrift Shop, the Penick Village retail shop and the Mother’s Day Appeal.

Volunteer Opportunities
Companionship, assistance with Life Enrichment activities, driver, office assistance (computer skills helpful) and fundraising.

Penick Village Contacts
Tricia Wood
Director of Life Enrichment
692.0344
twood@penickvillage.org

Katrina Presko
Volunteer Coordinator
692.0366

Emmanuel Church Contacts
Pete Ackerman, Vestry Member and Outreach Liaison, jbajr41@gmail.com

What’s in your fruit bowl?
A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT BIBLE STUDY

Join Dr. Jill Connett, EDS Assistant Head of School, for coffee and conversation about how we can all best allow the Fruit of the Spirit to be developed in our lives. November’s focus is kindness!

Thursday, November 16 at 9 a.m. (following chapel)
Emmanuel Episcopal Church Guild Room

All Emmanuel Episcopal Church Parishioners and Episcopal Day School Parents are invited!

Outreach Spotlight for November
Penick Village
The Path: My Latest Steps on My Spiritual Journey

By Alyssa Arlene Schwartz

One morning last spring, as Kovas and I were seated outside the Parish Hall in between his appointments with the students of Episcopal Day School, Rev. Mary Balfour approached me with an important question. She asked me the question we had been asked almost a year previously: would we be willing to teach the junior high youth?

Over several weeks Blake and I had many discussions regarding this question, and on our own each sought divine guidance as to what we should do. In the end, I was still plagued by the feelings of disqualification that led me to decline in the past. Thanks to my upbringing I was confident in my scriptural knowledge, but there was and is so much I need to learn about the Episcopal Church. I believed someone in the congregation had to be more qualified than the “baby” Episcopalian and her Jewish husband to teach what I believe is the hardest age. The middle school years were when I first began questioning what I had been taught from the pulpit, investigating the actual scriptural text for myself. Surely the formation teachers needed to be prepared to have all the answers to every possible question, knowledge I had believed my own youth leaders to have possessed.

Blake left the final decision to me, as on the day by which we were to have reached a decision, I walked into Weymouth Woods still unsure of what answer I would give.

After walking a little more than four miles, I looked to the sky and let out a long, exasperated breath. I felt insecure and defeated, struggling with the knowledge that I was about to let my own pre-conceived notions and insecurities stop Blake from being able to provide a valuable ministry to the youth. I lowered my head and closed my eyes, and when I opened them, I saw dozens of lilac spots on the ground. I knelt down and reached towards the closest spot, when suddenly it began moving. All around me the lilac spots began vibrating, then suddenly flew into the air, a fluttering swarm of tiny butterflies. I stood there for what seemed like several minutes, reaching my fingers out and smiling as they landed on my hands and arms. Eventually the fluttering dispersed and subsided, and I continued down the path feeling that the Holy Spirit had just given me my answer. However, I was still a mile and a half from my car, sufficient time for my friend, self-doubt, to return. Just as I began hearing the internal dialog resume, I glanced to my right to see two white tailed does staring straight at me. One of my lilac friends returned, lazily floating past.
It is essentially a “greatest hits” of Bible stories, utilizing the New Revised Standard Version. Though it does not cover the entire biblical text, students in our class will be able to truthfully say they have read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation after completing the readings. The curriculum allows us as leaders to guide the youth through their own understanding of the scriptural text. Though originally intended to be completed during the 2017-2018 Christian Education season, it was evident by week two that this study will take us into early 2019. The new goal is to finish the Old Testament chapters by the time Formation breaks for the summer.

Sunday, October 22 was our sixth week of class, and already the youth have pleasantly surprised me with their observations. We had involved discussions regarding the nature of the fruit on the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. We have examined the order of creation and its potential implications for the relationship between mankind and nature. While retelling the story of Cain and Abel, one youth expressed that perhaps Cain did not understand mortality when he killed Abel, as Abel’s death is the first documented instance of a human dying in the biblical text. Each week we guide the youth on the latest footsteps of their spiritual journey. In so doing, I realize that though my quest for a denominational home may have ended, my own spiritual journey is not over. We walk along together on our shared journeys, The Path: A Journey Through the Bible as our guide.
Blessing of the Animals
Sunday, October 1, 2017
photos courtesy of Diane McKay
Special Delivery: The Pumpkin Patch
Monday, October 9, 2017
photos courtesy of Murray Dunlap
Volunteer Appreciation Lunch Fiesta
Wednesday, October 11, 2017
Happy Birthday, November!

On Saturday, September 30, parishioners from Emmanuel Episcopal partnered with members of Trinity Zion A.M.E. for a Habitat for Humanity of the Sandhills Faith Build.
Emmanuel Episcopal Church

Reflections

340 South Ridge Street
Southern Pines, NC 28387

Save the Date!

Emmanuel Episcopal Christmas Open House
Thursday, November 30
5:30 p.m.
Details Coming Soon