

As Millennials, we've "grown up" as part of the "there's an app for that" generation. As Millennials who were married in the Episcopal Church — and later had to find a home church in a new city — we similarly learned, "There's a church for that."

When we moved from Indianapolis to DC in 2009, we began Episcopal Church "shopping." At the time, we were both working and traveling (very) full-time. To be transparent, looking for a church then meant finding somewhere to spend one to two hours on Sundays to get the most out of our faith experience in that moment. We tried an awesome array of churches and truly experienced diversity — but didn't quite find a church we consistently called our home.

When we got pregnant in 2013, we predictably bought a home in the "burbs" (Seminary Valley area of Alexandria) and felt ready to put down roots. Once again, we were church shopping, but we were looking for even more this time. While we were both raised in churches of different denominations, we shared something common — our respective families consistently attended church together and got very involved in those churches. We have great memories of our parents holding leadership positions; "making" us dress up, go to Sunday school, and generally behave; and the list goes on. As we started a family of our own, we wanted church to have that same consistent and big presence in our lives and in that of our children.

Thankfully, we attended Emmanuel and quickly knew we found our church home. The experience in the two hours we had at the service and in the coffee hour thereafter was outstanding. We loved the sermons Chuck and Joani delivered. They were authentic, relevant and included an explicit suggestion of how we might apply the lessons to our own lives. At coffee hour, so many different people proactively introduced themselves and we immediately felt welcome. We loved that the congregation included an excellent mix of long-time members and new members, as well as a strong emphasis on welcoming families. We also saw that Emmanuel offers a twenties and thirties (TnT) group, childcare and other "perks" we didn't realize we were seeking at the time...but then knew we "needed." When we communicated that we were ready to become members, our experience got better and better. Chuck took the time to meet with us to understand how we might get engaged. We started attending TnT functions and other events — and formed friendships we looked forward to growing each week.

Since becoming active members, we've benefited in ways we didn't anticipate but now count among our many blessings in life. We've served in ways big and small, all of which we've enjoyed. Tyler was asked to serve on the Lay Committee for one of Emmanuel's past seminarians...and was also asked to serve the beer at the recent Oktoberfest. Mandy started teaching Sunday School...and has been asked to help with some communications. We baptized our now 23-month-old daughter, Camilla, at the church, and she now asks almost daily if she can go (and have the crackers they serve at coffee hour...but still). Some incredibly kind members of the congregation organized a meal train when our now 2-month-old daughter, Kennedy, was born, and delivered amazing dinners to our door for a week. We look forward to baptizing her at Emmanuel soon as well.

Initially, we chose Emmanuel because the church is so welcoming and relatable. Ultimately, we've become increasingly active members because Emmanuel surrounds us with a community we want to be around, worship and serve with, learn from, and have our daughters always remember as a part of our family. When we church shopped, we didn't even realize "there's a church for *all* of that." But we're so grateful we found it in Emmanuel.