

Like so many of you, we visited many of the Episcopal Churches in Alexandria before finding Emmanuel. In fact, we spent 5 years at two different Old Town churches, but never felt at home in either. Our son's baptism was really the tipping point for us. Despite having attended a church for a number of years, we didn't know the priest ... or anyone else in the church. We knew we needed a change. We baptized our son Alex in Scott's family's church in Charlottesville, and went on the hunt for a new church of our own.

We can no longer remember what first drew us to the doors of Emmanuel, but we do remember knowing we had found "our place" almost immediately. It was the smallest things that made the difference — Chuck greeting us at the door, and then remembering our names the next weekend. The nicest parishioner walking us to the infant room, versus just pointing us down the hallway. A service that felt progressive and relevant to our lives. And people at coffee hour who were genuinely interested in welcoming us to the church!

Our initial instincts about Emmanuel have been reaffirmed over and over again. Emmanuel is a wonderfully inclusive, one-of-a-kind community. We wanted to find a church that would be accepting of both us and our (spirited) children. The church ladies are wonderful with our littlest one, Layne, and the Sunday school volunteers are some of our son Alex's favorites. Coffee hour, Shrine Mont, and the many other social activities allow us to reconnect with both new and old friends. And we would be remiss to not mention both Chuck and Joani. The services never fail to hit home every week.

And last, but certainly not least, we have been truly blessed by the connection between the church and Emmanuel preschool — our children have had the wonderful opportunity to attend EPS over the last several years (and be taught by a few parishioners!). It was important for us to find a preschool that both aligned with our values and would provide our children with the building blocks necessary to be successful in school and within their community.

So thanks to you, parishioners, leaders, and staff of Emmanuel, for becoming "our place" and for welcoming our family with open arms!