

The reason we came to Emmanuel was a strong sense of the parallel evolutions we observed within our family's practice of faith and within the Emmanuel community over the last several years.

I was raised in the Congregational churches of New England and Carl was raised in a large Catholic family in Southern New Jersey. We have had exposure over the years to numerous faiths and Christian denominations through public, private, and parochial schools as well as the inherent transience of our military lifestyle, which resulted in limited connections with church communities over the years. That is, until we moved to Alexandria in 2012.

In 2012, it became clear to us as a family that we wanted to settle more permanently in the greater DC area. At the same time, our two boys reached the ages where development of their faith formation and education was increasingly important to us. Realizing that we wanted a place to call our family's faith "home", we began visiting several churches around Alexandria and Arlington to find a faith community to which we could easily relate. When we first visited Emmanuel, it too was a community in search of something — a new Rector! People were extremely welcoming and Emmanuel seemed a great match for us ... our family was on a journey of discovery and the church was on a search for a new Rector. Being from different faith backgrounds and having experienced the struggles of an inter-denominational marriage over the years, we were looking for a diverse community of people that felt welcoming and accepting, not just of our family but for all types of families in search of a faith-based community. The military chaplaincy had been a good fit for us, as it regularly uses inter-faith and inter-denominational practices and services to bring together the wide range of faiths and backgrounds that Soldiers bring to units and communities. Our challenge was to replicate that inclusive environment in a congregation for our family.

As Emmanuel's search for a Rector culminated and Chuck was introduced to all of us, it became clear very quickly that we had found exactly what we were looking for. The parallels of Chuck's background in a large Catholic family appealed immensely to Carl, as he struggled with a decision to part ways permanently with Catholicism. The community's ease with and acceptance of our previous backgrounds and foundations of faith were refreshing. The availability of so many members of the community to connect with us, discuss our family's needs in faith, and present opportunities to engage with the community has been immensely welcoming to say the least.

In the short time that has passed, we have become more connected to the community at Emmanuel than we have in any other congregation during our adult lives. I've been attending and teaching Sunday school with our two boys and our younger son was baptized at Emmanuel last spring. Our family's journey of discovery through faith continues, and it grows more and more rewarding with each and every sermon that resonates with our daily life experiences. It has been amazing to watch the community at Emmanuel grow and evolve at the same time that we feel a growth and evolution in our own lives. We feel extremely blessed to be here, and we hope that our family's journey alongside Emmanuel's will continue for many years to come!