

Matt and I moved to Alexandria as newlyweds in 2007. Soon after settling into our new home, we set out to find a church home. Matt was raised Catholic and I was baptized Episcopalian but primarily raised in a very relaxed Congregational Church. Despite our different religious upbringings, we were completely on the same page when it came to what we hoped to find in our future church. We wanted to find a church where we would be comfortable, feel close to God and have the opportunity to grow spiritually. We hoped to find an earnest and reverent church that also possessed humility and a healthy sense of humor. We were looking for a church where we could listen to relevant sermons and teachings that we could relate to — a Church where we could learn without being lectured. We desired a church with a warm, accepting, graceful community — a community made up of young families and long-time church members, who welcomed, educated and celebrated children (as we planned to start a family eventually). We also wanted a church that would give us a variety of opportunities to get involved, while also giving us the freedom to choose our own level of participation, without pressure or guilt.

We feared that finding a church meeting our many wants, hopes and desires would be quite challenging. However, we were committed to the quest and planned to be patient, since we knew that finding the right church would be well worth the wait. We talked to friends and neighbors, and even did some internet searching, and we created a list of promising churches in the area. Once we had our list, we set out to work our way through it. We can't recall exactly how or why, but somehow Emmanuel ended up at the top of that list. As such, it was the first church we visited. It was also the last. After experiencing Emmanuel, we just didn't need to look any further. We had found our church home. Now that we are parents, we're particularly grateful that we get to raise our son, Jackson, in this wonderful church community. Jackson also attends Emmanuel Preschool, which is an incredibly special place that has deeply touched and enriched all of our lives. We are beyond thankful for everything this special church has to offer. Emmanuel is truly everything we were looking for in a church — and more.