

Elizabeth: My British-born parents came to the United States in 1938 when my Dad was invited to do a year of research at the Swedish Hospital in Seattle. During that year, he was asked to stay to work on the Manhattan Project in support of the war effort. My parents had planned to return to England, but ultimately decided to remain in the United States.

Dad was raised in the Methodist church, and Mother in the Church of England. Although as children, we attended the Episcopal Church; my parents felt we should make our own decision about religion. Throughout high school, I continued to go to the Episcopal Church, but also attended different churches with friends. It was then that I decided that the services and rites of the Episcopal Church best met my spiritual needs. When I moved to Virginia, I transferred membership from my church in Washington State to Christ Church in Alexandria, where several of my friends attended.

When my husband Tom and I were dating, we liked the early morning service at Emmanuel. We were married in the lovely Chapel which holds a special meaning for us. The intimate service in the Chapel continues to be a favorite of ours.

Tom: I was born and raised by Swedish parents who immigrated to America through Ellis Island at the turn of the century. I attended the local Lutheran church in Everett (just north of Seattle) beginning when I was a toddler up until I was in about the ninth grade.

My parents and an aunt, uncle and grandma and our neighbors were musicians to their core. I remember our family sitting around the radio in the dark in the required air raid blackouts in the evenings during WWII listening to dance bands in NYC. And my parents held jam sessions at our house each weekend. I fondly remember falling to sleep in my upstairs bedroom listening to the music. Obviously, I learned the joy of making music from them and I was blessed with a reasonable singing voice and I learned to play the trumpet and a full set of drums.

In high school I joined a youth group in the Baptist Church and attended services there regularly. Many of my friends were involved and the activities included intramural sports, hiking and the like, plus bible study classes each week. It was high energy and kept me involved with learning of the church and doing so with good friends. But, I was still missing "something" to connect their teachings and service proceedings to my life and being in church.

When I was an undergraduate student at the University of Idaho, I saw a notice posted in the Student Union and took it upon myself to attend information classes at the local student Episcopal Church house. I thought I would take the chance of trying yet another Christian denomination.

I was comforted by the information classes. The services and rites in the Book of Common Prayer, where the entire congregation, including the priest and choir – all – participate in the service, not just by singing, but by speaking many parts of the service, all led with beautiful music. Unfortunately, my busy schedule of studies, working part time, fraternity officer and being on the varsity ski team didn't seem to leave enough time to attend the Episcopal Church on campus.

When I graduated from college I married my college girl friend in her Methodist church and attended that church in Everett in the summer until we moved to Moscow where I started my teaching years at the U of I. It was there that I met Bruce Bray, our neighbor and professor of music at the U of I. Wow! That is when it kicked in!

After long discussions about my history of church and music life, Bruce convinced me to find time to start going back to church, his church, St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Moscow where he was organist and choir director. One thing led to another in rapid fashion and before long I was singing in the choir, serving on the vestry and supervising the purchase and installation of a new pipe organ for the church. That was in the 1960s and I've stayed with the church ever since.

A special aspect of my time at St. Marks is that Bruce had the priest, the choir and the congregation singing antiphonally. Father Fleharty sang the psalms and communion service words. I fondly remember that wonderful experience to this day.

So there you have it of how and why I became an Episcopalian. It was a winding, long, enjoyable journey, and each step helped me build on the last. We all get here in different ways and, thanks be to God, we do.