

The CLARION



monthly

NOVEMBER 2011

A VIEW FROM THE WINDOW...



This has been one of those beautiful autumn days we have enjoyed this season. The afternoon sun is setting behind the homes across the street and the cooler evening air is beginning to drift in through my open windows. While the trees still are holding onto an abundance of leaves, the rich carpets of red, gold and yellow leaves on the ground beneath them are clear signs that Fall is moving on and Winter will be here soon. In the meantime, what a glorious opportunity to witness the extraordinary beauty of this season!

Nature's endless tension of "holding on" and "letting go" at the right times is a wonderful reminder of what we're trying to accomplish here at Emmanuel. As the oldest worshipping congregation in the Village, we hold onto so much history. As a member of the larger Episcopal denomination and the even larger Anglican Communion, we hold onto a rich treasure chest of worship tradition. As evidenced by our parish registers that date back to our founding in 1874, generations of families and

friends have called Emmanuel their spiritual home. We hold onto those memories dearly.

Yet, as seasons move from one to another, Emmanuel finds itself at a cross-roads of where we go next and what we end up "looking like" as we face the future. Education, worship, music, programs for different ages and even social events seem to constantly be in flux. That is as it should be for us to remain a vibrant and relevant congregation in the midst of a community that is always welcoming new people to live and work here. However, for most people, any sense of being "unsettled" and any time of "being in flux" can be profoundly unnerving and old anxieties seem to rise to the surface.

Let me address a few.

Despite a rocky summer and early fall, I do not plan on going anywhere. You called me to be your Rector and I intend to continue to be your Rector to the very best of my ability. The "honeymoon" is over and we are about the hard work of building a solid, mutually satisfying relationship built on trust and respect. For both sides, that requires a lot of "give and take" and learning about each other. I am committed to do that and I pray that you are too.

The Vestry and I have embarked on a "strategic planning" process of identifying our strengths and weaknesses. No, we're not writing another plan that will sit

on the shelf and gather dust! We're actually trying to look at the whole picture and focus our resources on the things we do well – that serve the greatest good – and then "let go of" the things that are no longer working well.

In order to move forward and do this in a thoughtful manner, we will need input from all of you in the various areas of our life as we look at worship patterns and content, educational offerings, pastoral care, networking groups for various ages and parish-wide social gatherings. None of this "examination" and "rethinking" happens overnight but we are committed to looking at the whole church in this way over time.

Given the reality of the environment in which we were planted, we do not expect Emmanuel to grow back to the size she was in the heyday of the 50s and 60s. But we do anticipate modest growth over time and expect that we can flourish right here in our own garden, so to speak. In terms of size, we will most likely remain a "pastoral size" church (based on average Sunday attendance) and our staffing, leadership teams and program offerings will need to complement that assumption.

That's OK!

Our mission as a church is to bring the good news of God in Christ to people in all of its various aspects. We don't have to be a "mega-church" to do that. We do have to be relevant and that is what I hope we will strive for over the next few years. We

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