

Voices

Newsletter of EMMANUEL CHURCH in the City of Boston

SUMMER 2012



Paths To Prayer

Sometimes prayer is active and sweaty. On a hot summer day last year, Yolanda Rolle and a B-SAFE student touched hands.



FEATURES THIS ISSUE

2. From the Editor, A New Name
3. From the Rector
4. A Walk Back
5. Any Good Books, Pride
- 6–10. The Poetry of Prayer
11. Prayer Garden, Good News

Editorial Staff

Margo Risk, Editor
Matthew Griffing, Design & Layout
Michael Scanlon, Design
Keith Nelson, Printing & Mailing

Contributors

Tom Barber
Betsy Bunn
Matt Griffing
Joy Howard
Edgar Masri
Jaylyn Olivo
Margo Risk
Carolyn Roosevelt

Michael Scanlon
Pamela Werntz

Emmanuel Church Vestry

Peter Johnson, *Senior Warden*
Martha Mutrie, *Junior Warden*
Barbara DeVries, *Treasurer*
Paul Guttry, *Clerk*
Gail Abbey
Tom Bartlett
Jennifer Coes
Nadja Gould
Dan Hazen
Frank Kelley
Penelope Lane
Shan Overton
Elizabeth Richardson
Rick Stone
Pat Krol, *ex officio*

Emmanuel Church Staff

The Rev. Pamela L. Werntz, Rector
The Rt. Rev. J. Clark Grew, Senior
Pastoral Associate
The Rev. Susanne George, Deacon
Ryan Turner, Music Director
Nancy Granert, Organist
Keith Nelson, Parish Operations Manager
Janice Randall, Administrative Assistant
The Rev. Ed Pease, Controller
Event Sextons:
Katie Everett
Dennis Gaskell
Baltazar Jimenez
Adwoa Lewis-Wilson
Sid Richardson
Jessica Shaughnessy
Kevin Vetic

*Photos on the cover and contents by Matt Griffing.
Artwork on contents by Michael Scanlon.*

Read back issues of *Voices* at
EmmanuelBoston.org

From the Editor



People may assume that those who attend church are all expert at prayer, but we may disagree. Indeed, how many of us question our expertise, our worthiness, even our desire to pray?

In this issue writers share many beautiful paths to prayer. In her musings, Pamela Werntz urges us to move our feet as we pray, and Betsy Bunn's "The Walk Back" lets us join her in an ephemeral, but eternal moment. Her walk back in time, along with her close attention to the present, inspires us. Another walker, Jaylyn Olivo, finds prayerful remembrance in her garden, which is full of plants grown from cuttings offered by and shared with friends. Praying can be a struggle. Carolyn Roosevelt reviews "Breaking up with God: A Love Story" by Sarah Sentilles. We bring you the start of the review, which can be read in its entirety on Carolyn's blog.

It won't surprise regular readers that this issue about prayer contains poetry. I am happy to have some contributions by new voices. Tom Barber was inspired by a hymn sung on New Year's Day to write his poem "A Voice Comes from the Shadow", and Edgar Masri sends his translation from the french of LaMartine's Choeur des cèdres du Liban, or Chorus of the Cedars of Lebanon, a piece that he sent in response to a recent poetry conversation about Holy Spirit. Offerings by Michael Scanlon and Joy Howard, who have both contributed in past issues, portray surprising, "breath-taking" moments of prayer. Michael's "Prayer" envisions making love as the perfect (dangerous word) prayer, while his "That Which Is" grapples with theological puzzles and resolves into a simple experience of the divine. Joy Howard's "Loving Maker of our Days" uses poignant imagery to evoke our longing and gratitude for God's presence.

I mentioned Pam's musings on prayer above. Her "aphorisms" about prayer provide some insights that might catalyze our prayer lives when we feel stuck. We also include prayers from the Book of Common Prayer and the Bible. Jaylyn Olivo offers some reflections on the Pride Parade last month, reminding us that prayer can be joyous and celebratory, as well as active and sweaty.

*Read. Delight. Be inspired.
☛ Margo*

A New Name

During his sermon on June 10, Rabbi Howard Berman announced a change in the name of our sister congregation. Marc LaCasse sent the following announcement.

Central Reform Temple of Boston is a progressive Reform Jewish Congregation located at 15 Newbury Street, Boston.

We offer a special welcome to interfaith and multicultural families, gay and lesbian people, all residents of Boston's central city neighborhoods, and all who are seeking an experience of Judaism's universal spiritual ideals and traditions, regardless of religious background.

From the Rector

Prayerful Musings

As I've been imagining what brief thing I might say to you about prayer in this issue of *Voices*, my head has filled with aphorisms:

- the African proverb – “When you pray, move your feet,” which is a caution against separating prayer and action. The most eloquent prayers are often demonstrated by compassionate, just, brave, and generous responses to concerns and celebrations.
- Anne Lamott says that there are really only two kinds of prayer: “Please, please, please,” and “Thank you, thank you, thank you.” I often experience our corporate prayer as long on please and short on thank you. It was one of the many things I learned from visiting the Church in Honduras, one of the poorest countries in this hemisphere. Honduran Episcopalians there praise and thank God for much and ask for very little. In fact, they were scandalized by how much was asked for whenever someone from the US prayed aloud.
- then there's Joy Howard's sage counsel that “prayer is not a transaction; rather it is a posture.” It's a posture of willingness to be available to the Spirit, to be used for healing and transformation and praise.

Silence in prayer is where I am most drawn, especially silence in community prayer. If I didn't love to sing so much I might have become a Quaker. I wish for greater silence in our prayers in worship, not because words fail, and not because we do not wish to be disturbed. The people and situations in the world in need of our prayers should disturb us into action. Our thanksgivings should humble us into remembering that we are on the receiving end of so much grace.

I wish for greater silence because as we become more aware of the presence of the Divine, I suspect that silence is the only way to listen deeply for the breath or the spirit of God. Whenever we sing “Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand,” I want the music to stop and I want us to be still for a while – but no, we just keep making noise. It's beautiful noise, and yet I wonder how on earth can we ever hope to hear the still small voice – the Hebrew *bat kol* – the voice of the little girl or the echo of a voice – that is the voice of the Holy One.

My consolation is in Paul's words to the Church in Rome when he wrote “we do not know how to pray as we ought but the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.” (Romans 8:26) I pray that he's right!

– plw



Time out for fun! At a Picnic in Lars Anderson Park June 24, a group poses for a portrait. Left to right: Peggy Bradley; Wendy Grew; Michael Scanlon; Clark Grew; Pam Werntz ; David Silverstein and Jill Silverstein, members of Central Reform Temple of Boston; and Carolyn Robb-Baldwin. *Photo by Matt Griffing.*

The Walk Back

Walking up the hill. The snow that was sparkling magic on Sunday, and gray slush yesterday has melted, and the grass is trying for spring. Its time hasn't yet come, but it can pretend for now, reaching up from the puddled earth.

Jimmi stops to sniff at the edge of the woods. He's checking his messages, as dogs do. I wonder who was there: dog, squirrel, cat, raccoon, coyote, owl? He lifts his leg and leaves his own mark. We make our way up the hill slowly, stopping often for messages. I have the luxury of time today. We both revel in it. The walk is dense with life.

We reach the field. The sky is that deep shade of blue that holds no space for clouds. Never has. I remember discovering the shade when I was a little girl, and I look up now, with an old joy, knowing in a glance that the blue will be unbroken.

The sky is that
deep shade of
blue that holds no
space for clouds.
Never has.

We pass through the flat muddy field toward the river and the meadow. As we come to the river path, I notice that the water in the channel is moving, though there are still big patches of ice that look almost safe. For a moment I am back 30 years ago when our black Labrador, Firmly Jones, and his dumb blonde buddy lab, Miss Muffet, raced bravely out on the icy river. Muffet, less willful, responded to our whistle. But Firmly Jones continued and fell through the ice. He screamed. I shiver, hearing that sound again. I had never heard a dog scream. Sheer terror pierced the air. I shudder even now, standing safely on the bank. The story ended well; the dog and his teen-age rescuer made it to safety. But his cry remains in memory.

Jimmi and I walk on into the meadow. The sky is still that blue; the trees my sons climbed are 35 years taller; so are the sons. The tall grasses that hid them in our games of hide and seek are matted down for winter, waiting for the warmer days to come and games to resume. The pussy willow sprouts little promises that will be buds. I break some forsythia branches to bring home to force the spring.

While Jimmi sniffs, I sit on a bench. The sun feels warm on my back. Sometimes I have read there; mostly I've just been still and caught up on my staring. I remember when the bench came, the winter of 1990. We planted bulbs around it. They spread and multiplied, and each spring we remember. The metal disc on it does not give the date, just the words, "In loving memory of Suzanne." And for this moment, her beauty and her laughter and her energy fill the space again.

At the far end of the meadow is the beech tree, its trunk looking like an enormous elephant's foot. Well over 40 feet tall, it is climbed now only by an occasional professional with ropes. He reports carvings with dates as early as 1935 in its upper reaches. Recent days have been quieter, serving to hold pennies in its knotholes to be found by searching little fingers. The children don't know where the pennies come from, and no one will confess to the deed of stocking the money tree. One young mother laments, "I've tried to teach my children that money doesn't grow on trees, but they come here and see that it does." And maybe it does. Who is to say?

This morning is a gift. And patches of it feel much more than memory. For split seconds, I am there again. It is not that time goes back. Rather, that some moments become internal and eternal.

– *Betsy Bunn*
January, 2012

Any Good Books Lately

Breaking up with God: A Love Story
Sarah Sentilles (HarperCollins, 2011)

In her memoir *Breaking up with God*, Sarah Sentilles uses the extended metaphor of a love affair. She has some reservations, though: “Figuring it as a romance seems simultaneously so medieval-mystic, so patriarchal, so oedipal that it makes me cringe. Ever worse, calling it a breakup means I have to come out: I have to admit to myself and to the rest of the world the kind of God I loved – namely, a man.” Yes, a man: loving, tender, and wise, but also jealous and moody, and sometimes a little scary.

Of course, he’s an old family friend, someone she’s known all her life. The prevailing story at the church in which she was confirmed included a God who took attendance in church, but when Sentilles got to Yale, she was ready to leave that behind. She majored in literature, with a side helping of philosophy. After college, she moved to southern California, working in Compton with Teach for America.

Pride

I walked with the Emmanuel Church contingent in the Pride Parade yesterday. Pride – the bad kind – may go before a fall, but the good kind can come after years of injustice and inequality have been righted. The kind that swells the chest and dampens the eye and warms the heart. As I rode the T to



Scott Corey-Dunbar, center, holds one end of the Emmanuel banner in the 2009 Boston Gay Pride parade. *Photo by Matt Griffing.*

She discovered a much warmer and more welcoming God at All Saints, Pasadena, where she became so enraptured that she decided to become a priest. “By the time I arrived at All Saints, I had lived most of my life trying to be the person I thought other people wanted me to be because I believed that was the only way I would ever be loved. ... All Saints offered me a way out of this. God loves you God loves you God loves you, I heard every single Sunday. The priests promised God loved me exactly as I was, with all my flaws and failings and shortcomings.” But, at twenty-three, Sentilles was far from free of the urge to be what others wanted her to be, and becoming a priest was a very good way to feel special...

–CTR

Finish reading this review on Carolyn's blog:
anygoodbooks-mixedreviews.blogspot.com

Copley Square to meet my fellow Emmanuelites, I thought about the things we in Boston can be proud of: that this is the 42nd parade; that we live in a commonwealth where the common wealth gets more than lip service; that we’ve had a string of legislators who’ve kept that in mind – Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, Barney Frank, Cynthia Creem to name but a few; that marriage equality is alive and well in Massachusetts; that our Supreme Judicial Court has gone beyond local rule to suggest that marriage inequality at the federal level is unconstitutional; that the church I attend and her sister temple are way out front in striving for social justice; that my bishops [who ever thought I’d have a bishop?!?] led the charge for the Episcopal marchers; that we’ve come from the worst of gay-bashing through a generation who learned tolerance one gay friend/relative at a time to a generation who doesn’t understand what all the fuss was about. Yet, I do believe we all need to be vigilant over those who have yet to get the message. The ones who feel their own hetero marriages are diminished or threatened by the legality of homo marriage, the ones who use biblical passages to support their intolerance (of this issue and so many others), the ones who are afraid of anyone who is different from them. Xenophobia still holds sway in many quarters, and we who are smug about what we’ve gained must not forget that, must continue to educate one friend/relative at a time, must not let up on our championing of justice and equality until they become givens in our wider world.

– Jaylyn Olivo

THE POETRY OF PRAYER

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Acts 2: 1–4

A Voice Cries from the Shadow

Inspired by *A Stable Lamp is Lighted*, text by Richard Wilbur,
music by David Hurd

A voice cries from the shadow
A baby's simple feat
A light that fills the soundless
 Where every stone shall cry
 Where every stone shall cry
It moves the hopes of grief
And animates the still
And stills the soul's relief.

The sound, the light, the lightness
The baby has a name
A name, a time, yet timeless
 As every stone shall cry
 As every stone shall cry
Blamed for a blameless crime
Of water turned to wine
A loaves and fishes time.

So why are we so broken
And deaf and dumb and blind
And why have we rejected
 The stone the builders tried
 The stone the builders tried
Put out the light again
Extinguished help and solace
Offered by a friend?

Why not in this strange place
Why not this very time
A desert damp with meaning
 Where every stone has cried
 Where every stone has cried
Thirst water quenched, and wine
And bread, a sacrament
Where emptiness might rhyme?

—Tom Barber
January 2, 2012

Chorus of The Cedars of Lebanon

Eagles that pass over our heads,
Tell the raging winds
That we challenge their storms
With our rooted masts.
Let them come up, these tyrants of the wave,
Let their wing stir and growl
To assault our trembling arms!
Come on! their most ardent turbulence
Will only rock our rods
And only whistle in our hair!

Sons of the rock, born of ourselves,
We were planted by His divine hand;
We are the green tiara
that He placed on the peaks of Eden.
When the Deluge water ripples,
Our hollow flanks will be the refuge
For the whole race of Adam,
And the children of the Patriarch
In our woods will cut the ark
Of the nomad God of Abraham!

It is we, when the captive tribes
Have seen the heights of (Mount) Hermon,
Who will cover with our joists
The great arch of Solomon;
If, later, the Verb made man
Of a saint name worships and names
His father off a cross,
Altars of this great sacrifice,
For the instrument of his execution
Our branches will provide the wood.

In memory of these wonders,
Men bowing their foreheads
Will come to worship our remains,
Stick their lips to our logs.
The saints, poets, sages
Will listen in our foliage
To sounds like the great waters,
And under our prophetic shadows
They will compose their best songs
From the murmurs of our branches.

– *Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869)*
Translated by Edgar Masri

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

Romans 8: 26



Photo by Mike Gadd, www.flickr.com.

Prayer

As their eyes met and their lips grazed
The first and the five thousandth day of their love
Collapsed into a moment of golden, timeless, space.
Don't think that they became one, no; two, who had breached
The soul walls which confine so many
To a prison of defense and selfish needs.
Each spoke to the other and himself, through the other's lips and fingers.
Each heart's eyes truly saw the other complete and real.
Each hiding nothing, revealing himself in confidence, trust and pride.

They speak of perfection, dangerous word, often meaning other peoples' standards.
Do they know that in that moment they prayed a perfect prayer?
I had learned that it could not be one of asking; and had been thinking it might be one of thanks,
But now see it can only be the prayer prayed unknowing; the quiet prayer of being, prayed by those
Filled to overflowing by simply keeping trust.

– Mike Scanlon

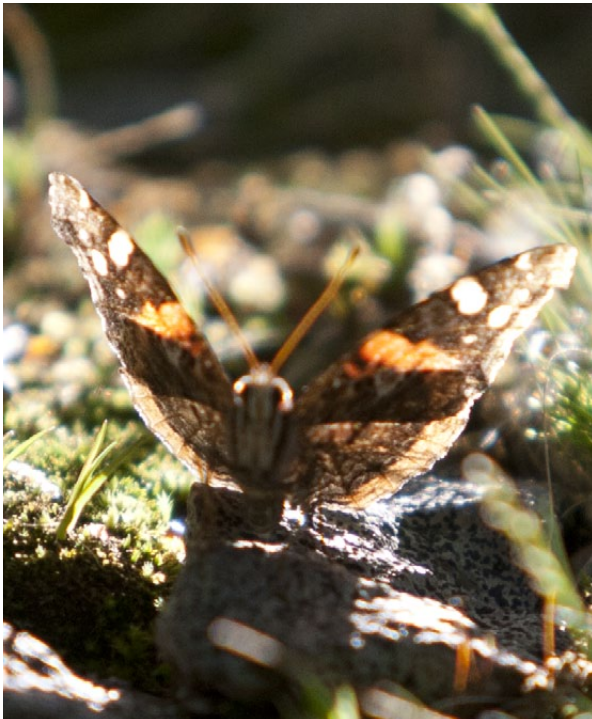


Photo by Matt Griffing.

And as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen

Book of Common Prayer

That Which Is

I

Of that which impels creation's force
I know neither who nor what;
Or whether named at all;
Nor whether conscious of Itself
Or us, creating with volition and intent,
Or unconsciously reacting to pragmatic facts.

But if its majesty knowingly directs,
And takes some interest in our petty acts
What assessment could it make of our estate,
Except to judge itself by our gain or lack
In our years of treading this sacred globe.
If it plans it plans that we not know its facts;
A mind and power of such scale and scope
That in analogy to our poor state is truly masked.

The assumption of our likeness sign only of our pride;
And in our loathing of our fellow beasts God's greatness is denied.

II

If there is an all powerful God, present everywhere
All knowing and all loving, holding all power,
Ever good and ever present without opposing force,
The beginning and the end, and we his creation made,
How comes it that our desire stands outside his ken?
Is not our driving force and appetite as much
Of God made as our head or soul?
How define God as absolute and supreme
Yet value more what our judgment means?
To what compare ourselves if our ambitions
Exceed the nature given as the Supreme One deems?

III

Herein lies a riddle strange:
I say God we cannot know
Yet here God sits beside;
Near and helpful as I plow this field of life.
While looking for the proof of complicated theory
Life's mysteries seem too large to grasp;
Yet here in blue sky and dried leaf I hear a voice
And see the glow of guide and kind protector.
I come quite late to wonder, if like all well hidden things
The answer to man's great question
Is sitting 'round us in plain view,
Creator and creation of one piece must surely be.

– *Mike Scanlon*

Loving maker of our days

Loving maker of our days, hold us now in your heart.

For those of us with sorrows too deep for words, come as the piercing music of birdsong.

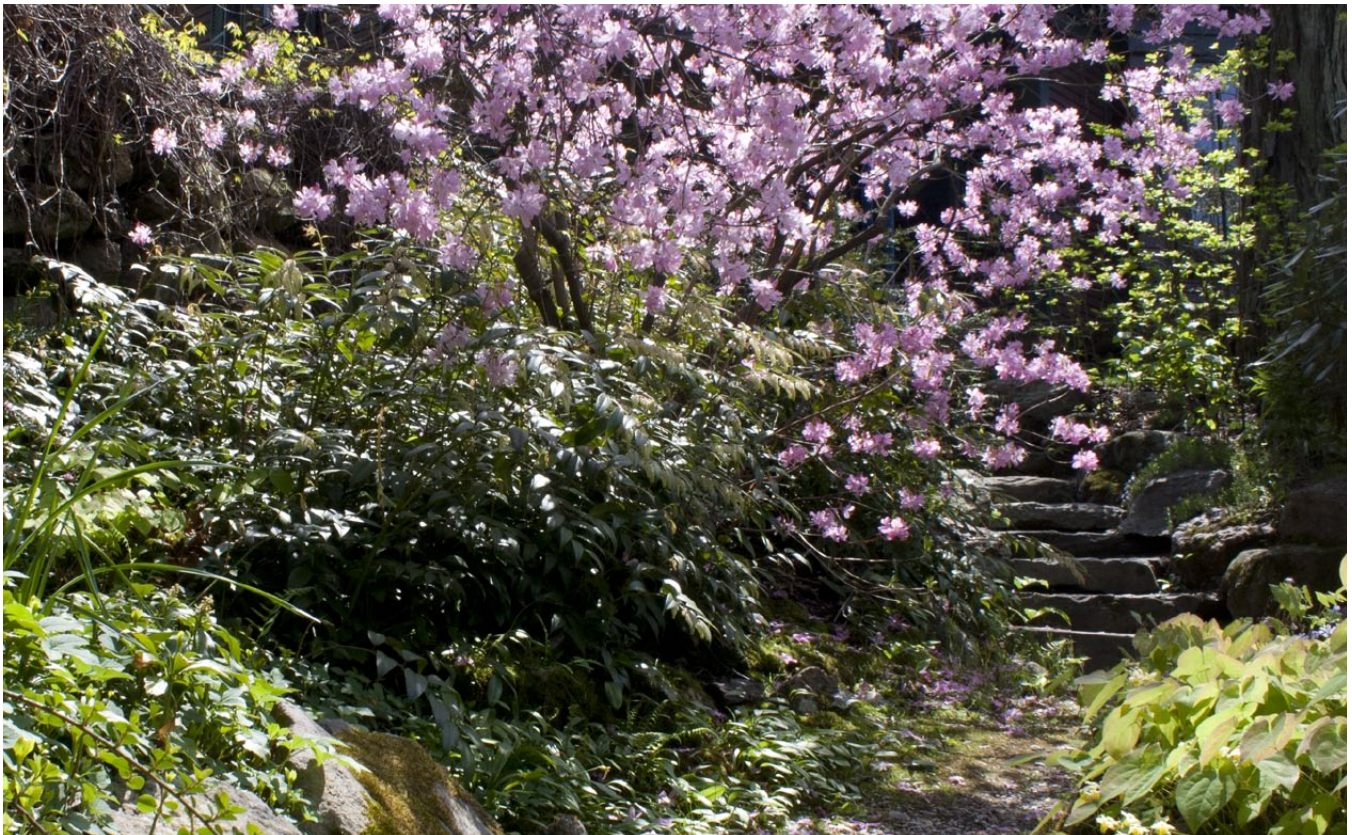
For those of us with pains too sharp for silence, come as the gentle quiet of a deep breath.

For those of us who are in several places at once, come as the singular, insistent glow of candleflame.

For those of us who float in dreams, come as the reliably solid bench of a pew.

For those of us eclipsed by darkness, come as a festival of colored glass.
You find us when we are most lost, love us when we are most afraid, and hear us when we are most silent. To you who are ever at work in our lives, we give thanks – for life, for love, and for the daily opportunity to be at work in your life. Amen.

– *Joy Howard*



A flowering dogwood in the Hollow at Fairsted, the former home and studio of Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of the Emerald Necklace park system in Boston and Brookline. Olmsted advocated the creation of parks as places of spiritual renewal. *Photo by Matt Griffing.*

Prayer Garden

I'd never really thought of the garden as a prayer, but I realize that that's what it's become. My garden in Brookline has plants from friends and family, many of whom are no longer with us. Starting in the very early spring each year, I make my daily rounds of the garden to see what's emerging from the earth. The pachysandra was a gift from an elderly colleague. The small blue hydrangea came from Richard and Grahame's wetlands garden in Lincoln, as did many daylilies. The seeds for the monster wisteria out back came from Abigail Adams's wisteria at the Adams homestead in Quincy; I've passed on uncountable seedlings to friends and family, including one of Abigail's descendents. The pink lily-of-the-valley came from Allen Rogers's garden in Brookline; Allen was a member of Emmanuel Church for years and a mentor and colleague to many musician friends in Boston. The variegated hosta all around the yard came from the house in Worcester where my sister-in-law grew up. One of the peonies started life in the garden of a friend's grandmother. The white rhododendron and pink azalea from a friend long-since moved back to her home town in Illinois. Some of the iris are from our friend Ken, others from my sister-in-law. Suffice it to say that my daily ground-staring walks are filled with prayerful remembrances of so many whose paths have crossed mine in so many ways over the last 30 years. These plants, in turn, have been divided and propagated to go to other friends' and families' gardens, carrying the memories and the prayers even further. It's a lovely way to honor and remember people.

— *Jaylyn Olivo*

Good News!

The Rev. Susanne George has joined Emmanuel Church as our Deacon, thanks to her recent appointment by Bishop Shaw in response to our request. Our mutual expectation is that she will be with us for three years. For those of you for whom Diaconal ministry is unfamiliar, Deacons are members of one of three distinct orders of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church (with priests and bishops). Deacons exercise a special ministry of servanthood directly responsible to the bishop, with liturgical functions closely associated with the activity of angels or sacred messengers since the earliest days of the church! The Rev. Chris Beukmann was raised up for ordination to the Diaconate by Emmanuel Church, and vestry member Tom Bartlett is currently a postulant for ordination to the Diaconate.

In the Deacon ordination service, the following instruction is given by the ordaining bishop as part of what is called "The Examination:"

My sister/brother, every Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ, serving God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God now calls you to a special ministry of servanthood directly under your bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.

As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example, to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.

In practice, Susanne will be working with Emmanuel Church mainly on weekends (like most Deacons, she has a Monday-Friday job), and she will engage deeply with us in areas of our parish life such as worship, pastoral care, outreach and education. We will have a proper welcome celebration in the fall!