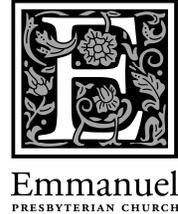


Friends of Emmanuel,



2017 was one of the most important years in the life of Emmanuel. The most significant event for the church since we began occurred at the end of June, the retirement of our founding pastor, Charlie Drew. I'm writing to you, who have been part of Emmanuel or have some connection to our church, to share some highlights of our previous year.

The first six months of the year were filled with activities. A few highlights to report:

- *Spring Retreat* - Charlie spoke at our spring retreat with a focus on sharing key lessons and convictions from a life devoted to ministry. He spoke about "praying large", encouraging us to pray beyond our basic daily needs and personal concerns. He reminded us why Fellowship-Word-Prayer-Sacraments-Mission (FWPSM) have been emphasized at Emmanuel – because they are the practices that keep us close to Jesus. He emphasized the importance of loving the church, and he spoke to a topic on which he frequently instructed: finding Christ in all the Scriptures.
- *Seminar on Science and Faith* - Charlie and Jeannie presented a seminar on science and faith. Aside from helping us think through some challenging issues, it was a reminder of the value both Charlie and Jeannie (individually and together) have been to the church.
- *Retirement Party* – We had a wonderful worship service and lunch, and a special program with speeches and presentations to honor Charlie and recognize his faithful ministry. The love and appreciation for Charlie and Jeannie were deeply evident, and we were grateful for the many who travelled to join us. As people shared stories, I was struck by hearing a number of people say that their marriages were saved because of Charlie's involvement, and there were several who shared how they really came to understand grace through his teaching.

The latter six months were also filled with great and encouraging moments. An important part of the transition plan was the creation of a new position, the Director of Community and Family Ministries. At the start of August, Melissa Toomajian joined the staff. She has helped us with all sorts of new events to connect people; she has reached out to individuals who benefited from personal attention and support; she helped manage and organize many aspects of what happens on Sundays, and as she transitioned to our particular context has taken on a number of areas of leadership, which stirs anticipation for 2018. A key highlight of her work was the recent December Christmas Brunch for Women, a fantastic morning that helped build community and relationships among the women in our church while stirring growth through addressing life issues with the gospel.

In setting priorities for the year, we noted that FWPSM (fellowship, word, prayer, sacraments, mission) are so ingrained in our DNA that they provide a natural focus to keep us unified in this season of transition. The ministry of the word, sacraments and prayer will remain largely the same (while Charlie and I have our own styles, our convictions in these areas are the same). The particular focus for the fall was on fellowship, with new events to help those new to the city (or Emmanuel) get into the life of the church as quickly as possible, and to deepen relationships in the church and foster stability during the transition.

Mission will be more of the focus in 2018. With things having settled a bit, we are preparing to be more intentional about organizing ourselves so we can be effective in outreach, whether that is in better equipping our members to serve Christ as they go into the world, or to use the various gifts God has distributed within the community to work together to serve our neighbors and engage people who are not part of a church with the message of Christianity.

While highlighting some of what was new or distinct to this year, I'm happy to report the "ordinary" nature of our ministry continues to move forward. This fall we received new members, had baptisms, heard many personal stories, had numerous gatherings for prayer, shared many meals, worked through a book of the Bible on Sundays, and we visited people in the hospital and provided care for the struggling.

We continue to see God at work in and through our church. At the end of August the staff devoted a week to praying together every day for the university, students, and those who serve in campus ministries. The fall membership class was the first in a while where a couple of undergraduates joined the church, and the bulk of new people who came this year are students (mostly graduate students). Another example of God's work comes from a personal story a member shared at our service the week before she moved out of New York. She spoke about how the last years of her life were extremely hard and overwhelming, but her report was focused on how God brought her through it and used that period of suffering to heal her of life long problems. Her community at Emmanuel was a key piece of how God worked in her suffering, and she ended her story with these words: "Well done, good and faithful servants of Emmanuel. Be encouraged. God has done great things through you. To God be the Glory!"

Her focus is right. We may not be the greatest church in New York (however one would determine that) but we serve a great God, and we trust He will continue to be at work in and through us.

Here are some suggestions for those who are interested in supporting us:

- Please pray for us! – We have always believed that while we will seek to do everything we can to faithfully steward what God has given us, the work is ultimately His and apart from Him we can do nothing.
- Give. – Churches always have financial needs, and that is certainly heightened with a university neighborhood ministry in a high turnover city. Our giving is actually the lowest it has been in 10 years, and this is a crucial year for us to be sustained as we build for the future of our work as a church. Please consider contributing financially.
- Tell people about Emmanuel. – Most people come to Emmanuel because they know someone at the church or someone suggested they visit. If you know people who are moving to New York, or are here but not connected with a church, please encourage them to visit us.
- Keep in touch. – It is not only encouraging to hear from those who have been part of our church, but it is also particularly helpful to learn about what people are doing so we can think more specifically about the aspect of preparing and equipping. We know the majority of people are only with us 2-5 years, so we aim to care for and nurture them. We also want to make an investment in them so they bring something of the gospel with them wherever they go next.

We have devoted much of this fall to praying in new and specific ways. If there are ways we can be praying for you, we would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Strickman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Rev. Scott Strickman