

Stewardship Minute – Ally Powell-Switaj
17 November 2019, 9 a.m.

Hello, my name is Ally Powell-Switaj and I'm happy to be here with you today and to take a moment to share my experience with Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill during our Stewardship campaign.

I was a cynical teenager. I questioned everything-as you can imagine, I was a delight for my parents. One of the things I questioned the most was religion and, in particular the structure of organized religion. My main struggle was, if God is ubiquitous, why did I have to be in a particular building, on a particular day, doing particular things in order to strengthen my relationship with him?

While I grew **slightly** less cynical over the years, and my relationship with God grew and strengthened, I still had a nagging doubt about that "same building, same time" idea. It was only when meeting with Father Crosby in preparation for Benton's baptism at Immanuel in 2013 that I finally got my answer.

He said, "being at church on Sunday and being a part of Immanuel allows you to be in community with others who are also deepening their relationship with God." It hit me like a ton of bricks --of course, community! And that, the COMMUNITY of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill is what I am so grateful for; that community that has blessed us so much as a family that makes me want to give generously.

I'll share just one more thing that really drove home for me the strength and love that embodies this community. As a mom of young kids, a 2-year-old and an infant, at the time we joined Immanuel, I was constantly worried that their chatter, noises, and wiggles would be a distraction to others during service. Many of you probably experienced my version of the sign of peace, "peace be with you, I'm so sorry, peace be with you, I'm so sorry..." as I tried to apologize for my active little family.

Finally, one day, just a few weeks after officially joining Immanuel sweet Mary Wade turned and looked at me dead in the eye and said, "don't you ever apologize for that again. They are making joyful noise and it is a LIVING church because of it." I was absolutely stunned by her generosity and kindness-talk about a true Christian act. The same sentiment was echoed again and again, time after time by many in this community. We are ALL welcome here. We are noisy, funny, serious, devout, Christ-like, and, yes even cynical, members of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill.

And because of the generosity and love with which this community has given to me in so many ways and has helped to bring me closer in my relationship with God, I am glad to give generously, with an open heart in my stewardship pledge to support this community that truly embodies the love and acceptance of Jesus.