

Stewardship Minute for Sunday 11/10/2019 – 9 AM Service -- Julie Bruns 11/7/2019

Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill is my church home – has been since the late 1980's. I have been with Immanuel longer than I have lived in my own home! When I first started at Immanuel, my family lived only five minutes away from the church. After moving further away, I thought about joining a geographically closer church. But every time I thought about leaving Immanuel, it just felt like a big lift – something to think about next month – or when school is out – or next year. After three or four years, I realized I didn't want to find a different church – Immanuel was -- and is -- my church home.

So why is financially supporting my church important? Well...why is paying our rent or mortgage important? Our homes provide us warmth, shelter, comfort, safety -- a place where we can be ourselves. Some of us have lived in our homes for decades; others only a few years – or a few months. But whether we live in an 800-square ft. apartment - or a large house – or something in between, we all understand the need to invest some amount of our financial resources to secure shelter. The same applies to our church home.

The Immanuel community shelters my soul, brings me comfort and community, and gives me a focus for loving my neighbors as myself. Stewardship lets us – as a community-- have a building and grounds and rector and staff that host our parish AND our Anglican and Muslim neighbors AND the Dignity congregation – AND the Pumpkin Patch - AND a slew of outreach ministries too long to list here. It gives us terrific youth education – and wonderful music -- Vivaldi and the Shrinemonters!!

I have laughed and cried in this church – and experienced so many intimate moments of spiritual connection where I have felt the presence of God. Immanuel has connected me with people whose lives inspire me and with ministries that both humble – and make me feel happy to be alive.

But back to stewardship... I would love to tell you I have always been a generous pledger, motivated by high ideals. But the truth is ... my current pledge started as a big mistake. I started pledging at a nominal level fairly soon after joining Immanuel, but a few years in, probably when my pledge form was already late, and I was filling it out in a hurry, I made a significant error in Immanuel's favor. I didn't realize my mistake until I opened the glowing acknowledgement from the Stewardship Team – at which time it is likely I said something that would not be appropriate to repeat from this lectern!! But after several days of consideration – which included mentally walking through the conversation I would need to have with Doug John – I think he was the stewardship wrangler at the time – I decided I cannot tell them I made a mistake. [Who does that ????]

I know God was working the situation, and in the deep way you know what you need to do; I knew I needed to stand by my pledge. It might have been the still, small voice; it might have been the desire to avoid embarrassment. But once I committed, I asked God to help me keep that commitment and make it part of my baseline.

Today, I am full of gratitude for so many people and gifts in my life – and one of them is turning what started as a mistake – into personal happiness and the knowledge I am supporting the continuation of our beloved Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill community. Thank you. And... I encourage you, too, to go make a big mistake! 😊