

Stewardship Moment – October 27, 2019
Joel C. Spangenberg
Member of Christ Church Washington Parish

My name is Joel Spangenberg and I've been a regular attendee at the early Sunday service for over 13 years.

I remember first seeing Christ Church, lit up by a few lights on its small knoll, one evening back in early 2006 when I first came to the area for a Navy assignment.

By the time I moved into a house on Capitol Hill a few months later, I knew where I wanted to attend church. I found my way over one Sunday morning to Christ Church and haven't looked back.

I grew up as an Episcopalian, truly a cradle Episcopalian. Admittedly I wasn't that fond of church or Sunday school as a child. I gained greater interest in faith when I was a teenager and got confirmed.

It wasn't until I was an adult, after my college years, that I felt drawn to revisit and renew my faith. I'm still not completely sure why this happened, but here I am.

By the time my wife and I began to have children a few years after I joined Christ Church, my commitment to a life of faith had taken on a new dimension. I wasn't only growing in my own faith but I was helping my children grow in theirs. This was a new experience to me and not a path for me to go alone.

Christ Church has been with me on this journey.

What I have come to value most at Christ Church is, one, the community of believers and, two, the way in which we approach faith.

First, the faith community here is remarkable. We as Episcopalians seem to have the concept of community down, and this expresses itself in the Eucharist and the coffee hour, through the Church's different groups and through outreach, and in many other ways.

Let me thank this community – you – who has always welcomed me and my family.

I was particularly impressed by this Parish community's support for my friend and our neighbor Master Dong. You may have seen him around Capitol Hill teaching his Home Do class to children outdoors or even here at Christ Church. He's hard to miss in his martial arts uniform and his quick smile.

He is one of those inspiring people that you infrequently encounter that left his known life behind to help others in the unknown. In particular, he went to Turkey to help Syrian

refugees a few years ago and has endured challenging circumstances in serving others. He has expanded his work in assisting with refugees from war-torn regions of Ukraine, spending time in that country too.

From time to time he has come back to DC, where he still maintains residence, to visit. He has met with a number of people from this church and they have generously supported his unique efforts.

This acceptance and empowerment of a member of our community have stood out as an example of what a community of faith can do.

Christ Church translated its faith and words into action, making life better for the vulnerable and left behind. This faith community is one that brings me joy.

Second, faith in this Church is not put upon us as a burden. It is shared with us as a blessing. But it is a blessing that needs to be engaged with regularly.

The sermons and the adult forums have inspired me here as I have pursued my own independent study of scripture.

In this Church we are encouraged to question and seek as ways to grow in faith.

This is summarized to me in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus tells his disciples

“Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

We of a faithful mind are encouraged to actively engage with God. This blessing of faith guides us in our development as people and as examples to those around us.

I'd like to remind everyone that this is our church, a community of faith for us to be a full member of. It is open to all like our Eucharist, truly as Jesus intended it.

Please consider pledging for the coming year. We are impacting many lives in a positive way. Please be a part of this effort.

Thank you.