

Emmanuel Episcopal Church History

The Little Chapel on Great River Road became a reality when Mr. & Mrs. William Nicoll gave by deed, one half acre of land to the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of St. Mark's Church, Islip; with the stipulation that there should be no charge for the pews. A modest structure with no chancel, transepts, choir, or robing room was built. The cost of the Chapel was slightly over \$600.00. On November 16, 1862, the first service was held with the Rev. Reuben Riley, Rector of St. Mark's Church officiating. The offering was \$9.09, and there were sixteen communicants.

A meeting of the Vestry of St. Mark's Church was held July 23, 1873; and a resolution was passed by them to transfer the Chapel to the charge of the vestry of St. John's Church, Oakdale. No legal papers of transfer were ever made; and although St. John's assumed pastoral oversight and supplied clerical services, the property legally remained the Chapel of St. Mark's.

The members were small in number, but they improved and enlarged the Chapel by their liberal contributions. In the Spring of 1877, an addition of eight feet was made to the southwest end of the Chapel and two wings of eight feet square were added. One was used for a robing room and the other for a Parish and Sunday School Library. A portico was also erected over the entrance. The first service held after the enlargement of the Chapel was June 3, 1877 with the Rev. J. Newton Perkins officiating as Minister in Charge. On Sunday, October 28, 1899 [37 years after the Chapel was first Opened], the Congregation determined by ballot, the name to be thereafter known as Emmanuel.

A bell was presented to the Church in December 1877 by Mr James Gregory. It weighed 238 lbs. And was inscribed with the words "Emmanuel Church, Islip, L.I. Thou shall open my lips, O, Lord, and my mouth shall show Thee praise." On Monday December 10, 1877, the Minister in Charge, laid the foundation stone, without religious ceremony, of a new tower that was to be erected at the eastern corner of the Church. Mr. J. Neal Plumb of "Deer Range" was the donor of the tower. A tin box was buried under

the tower containing a sketch of the parish history, a list of Sunday School teachers and pupils, a Church almanac for 1877, a copy of the diocesan paper, "Helping Hand", a Harvest House Festival Program, and Christmas Carols for 1877. The bell was placed in the tower and rung for the first time, Christmas Day, December 25, 1877. At the same time, a chancel stained glass window was uncovered, which was presented by the Rev. J. Newton Perkins. On May 4, 1878, The Rev. J. Newton Perkins placed on the outside door of the entrance to the Chapel a notice stating that on Saturday, May 18, 1878 at 7:00 P.M., a meeting would be held to draw up resolutions for the Chapel to be known by the name of "Rector, Church Wardens and Vestry of Emmanuel in the Diocese of Long Island." The notice was read to the congregation on the two following Sundays, May 5 and May 12. On May 18, 1878, the Rev. J. Newton Perkins officially became the first Rector of Emmanuel, his salary being \$15.00 per week.

The first Vestrymen were:

Mr. William Nicoll-Senior Warden-
Delegate to the Diocesan Convention
Mr. James Gregory- Jr. Warden
Mr. Alexander H. Hammond- Clerk-
Delegate to the Diocesan Convention
Mr. George A. Hart
Mr. Rudolph M. Klein

Emmanuel's beautiful Cemetery was the generous gift of Mr. & Mrs. William Nicoll. One acre of ground was conveyed to the Rector, Church Wardens, and Vestry of Emmanuel, on May 21, 1878. The Cemetery and Lych Gate were consecrated by The Right Rev. Abram Newkirk Littlejohn, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese, the 5th day of June 1878. The first burial at Emmanuel Cemetery was June 28, 1878.

One of the biggest changes came to Emmanuel Church in the Spring of 1879 and the Spring of 1880. The original entrance and portico were removed, and a large stained glass window was put in its place. The window, a memorial to Sarah Ives Plumb, was given by her husband, Mr. J. Neale Plumb. The new entrance was made through the tower. A recessed Chancel was added, which made the Church thirteen feet longer. The Church was then papered, painted, carpeted, and supplied with Prayer Books and Hymnals. This was all done

at the expense of Mr. J. Neale Plumb. The Right Rev. Abram Newkirk Littlejohn, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese, consecrated Emmanuel Church, June 23, 1880 and confirmed three persons.

In the early days at Emmanuel, the Church was closed during the winter months; but Sunday School continued all year round. In 1881, The Women's Missionary Association Auxiliary was organized. The women met once a week to sew and prepare boxes to send to the needy. The Church continued to grow; and in 1889, the Rectory was built and furnished for \$5,000 by Mr. & Mrs. W. Bayard Cutting.

Christmas Day, 1897, The Rev. T.S. Pycott, Rector of Emmanuel, dedicated the baptismal font. It was indeed an elegant service, and the little Church was full to capacity. The baptismal font was a gift from Bronson Murray Cutting and his sister, Olivia Cutting.

On Thursday, May 31, 1900, a special meeting of the Vestry was called by the Rector, Rev. H.M. Kirkby, concerning Mr. William Nicoll. The following was written:

“Mr. William Nicoll was elected Senior Warden of Emmanuel Church on the 18th day of May, 1873. Since that time, he has been Senior Warden continuously to the day of his departure [death]. He has served the Parish in many capacities. In each office, he has been faithful. He has given generously of his thoughts, his time, his money, and his prayer. To him, more than any one individual, is due to the organization, growth, and prosperity of this Parish. The honesty and integrity of his business dealings, his upright daily life, his constant participation in the services and sacraments of the church, and his unfaltering trust in God won the esteem of all. We thank God for his example and friendship, and we pray that light perpetual may shine upon him and that he and we may be partakers of the Heavenly Kingdom.”

Emmanuel property was expanded in 1902 by the generosity of Mrs. William Nicoll and Mr. Raymond S. White. The same year the beautiful stained Glass window behind the altar was donated by Mr. & Mrs. Charles B. Hobbs in memory of their son, Edward Minor Hobbs, who died at the age of

seven. Mr. Charles B. Hobbs was a prominent lawyer who was very much a part of Emmanuel for many years. He was elected to the Vestry in 1901. Mr. Hobbs Served on the Vestry for over forty years. During this period, he served as treasurer and clerk. He was also the church organist for ten years. Mr. Hobbs Was Chairman of the Cemetery Committee; and under his guidance, many improvements were made to beautify the grounds. He was very much concerned About the future; and as a result, he established an Endowment Fund that grew and gave the security to Emmanuel Church it needed to ensure its continuance.

A small but unique Parish House building was purchased and presented to the Church by Mrs. W. Bayard Cutting in 1903.

Once again, the structure of Emmanuel changed. In 1908, the organ transept was added by the congregation; and in 1909, the baptistry transept was added, by the gift of Mr. & Mrs. W. Bayard Cutting. Electricity was installed in 1910, paid completely by the Women's Guild.

In 1912, the congregation was saddened by the death of Mr. William Bayard Cutting. A special meeting of the Vestry was called, and the Rector, Rev. W.N. Webb wrote:

“William Bayard Cutting, who departed this life March 1, 1912, was an ideal Christian gentlemen. He served His Lord and his Church and his Fellowmen, as a devoted Churchman, a practical philanthropist and an advocate of sane and wholesome reforms, both social and political; and so he became widely known in State and Nation, and not withstanding the fact that he always held himself unobtrusively in the background. His private benefactors were well directed and varied, and probably no one knows the full number of them. As a churchman, he gave loyal support in a large way to all of the various activities of his Church and was a deputy from the Diocese of N.Y. to every General Convention since 1883. He came to Great River twenty-five years ago, identified himself at once with our little Church and having ‘loved it in the beginning, he loved it to the end.’ He was a member of our Vestry since April 6, 1896 and a Warden since March 31, 1902. His presence at our deliberations was an inspiration itself and his advise always potent. It is hard to realize that we

shall see his face and hear his voice no more; but we reverently thank God for his example and for the privilege of fellowship with him. A little while for most of us and we shall see him again, and together worship God. To his family, we extend our most sincere sympathy. May the peace of God which passeth all understanding rest upon them. While for him, our friend and brother departed, we join in the ancient petition, ‘Grant him, O Lord, eternal rest; and may light perpetual shine upon him.’”

The Angel of Rest within the Lych Gate was a gift of Mr. Charles B. Hobbs in 1920. After many years of negotiations, an addition to the cemetery was obtained by grant from the Corporation of Trinity Church, New York, running nine hundred and ninety-nine years, with the option to renew. The grant was dated July 1, 1920. In 1921, a solid cement wall enclosed the cemetery. On August 13, 1922, The Rev. William N. Webb retired from the active ministry and by action of the Vestry was made Rector-Emeritus of the Church.

In 1933, The Rev. A.S. Carrington became Rector of Emmanuel. During his rectorship at the Church of the Incarnation, Brooklyn, he suffered much from a long sickness, which left him somewhat incapacitated by lameness. Largely on this account, he resigned from the Church of the Incarnation and came to Great River. In this little village, having somewhat recovered his health, he did remarkable work, building up the church to a strength of numbers far beyond anything ever before attained. He was elected a member of the Board of Managers of the Church Charity Foundation and because of his interest in young people, he was assigned to the Board’s Committee on the Sayville Cottages of St. Ann’s Church, where his advice was invaluable. He was a forceful and sincere preacher and a faithful and devoted rector and friend, entirely unsparing of himself in spite of his infirmity. His cheerful fortitude in suffering, his unconquerable Christian spirit, compelled admiration. He died March 25, 1937.

After the death of Fr. Carrington, The Rev. E.W. Cromey became Rector of Emmanuel. His tenure was brief, ending when the Vestry disconnected the utilities supplying the rectory necessitating a forced withdrawal on Fr. Cromey’s part. The next Rector was The Rev. W.T. Hindley

who remained with Emmanuel from 1940 until 1942. The parish experienced a period of uncertainty from 1942-1950.

In 1950, The Rev. J.W. Torok became Rector and served until his death in 1955. Fr. Torok was a great entertainer and regaled numerous friends of his in the rectory, including a number of Bishops. Many of us who were of a younger age in those days remember his attractive daughter, “Tinka” and her teenage friends, a great attraction for the young men in the parish.

Dr. Herman S. Sidener became the Priest-in-Charge, from 1955 until 1961 when he became rector from 1961 until his retirement in 1966. Under Dr. Sidener, the level of preaching reached a new high; and the parish began to see some small signs of growth. Dr. Sidener’s eloquence would reach fearsome heights at times leaving the parishioners with the feeling that his histrionics would have a dire result.

The Rev. Harold G.F. Courtney assumed command of the Rectory in 1966 until he retired to his native Brooklyn in 1969. Under Fr. Courtney’s guidance, the first realization for a parish hall became evident. He was the first Rector since Fr. Torok to reside in the rectory on a full-time basis. No longer was it possible to use the downstairs as a Sunday School and meeting place for the parish organizations. Thus the impetus grew for the building of a parish hall. Modest donations were solicited, and a fund of several thousands of dollars was accumulated. Fr. Courtney was far-sighted enough to suggest to several of his former parishioners in Brooklyn that they bequeath part of their estates to Emmanuel Church. The first major portion of the funds became available in early 1970’s. In addition, Mr. Sparks, a world renowned horticulturist and one-time gardener for Mrs. W. Bayard Cutting, arranged for the remainder of the cost to be paid from his estate. Mr. Sparks was one of the mainstays of the parish from the days of Fr. Carrington until his death. The strong leader at that time was Mr. Thomas Mordicai. He led the parish as the moneys were obtained and handled negotiations with the various estates to the benefit of all.

The construction commenced on March 15, 1972 and was handled by Mr. Peter J. Nilssen. Mr. Ronald Woodward, A.A., who was the architect for the Diocese of Long Island designed the present structure with a view incorporating the new building within the parish complex so as to become an integral part of the whole, without disruption. His success speaks for itself, and today the center of parish activity is represented by the magnificent parish hall. Mr. Roger Raymond served as chairman of the building committee and gave of his time and efforts most generously.

The Rev. E. Joseph Mackov and his family came to Emmanuel April 1, 1970. It was a delight to see and hear the laughter of The Rev. & Mrs. Mackov's Two little girls, Patty and Liz. During Fr. Mackov's and his wife Emma's days, Emmanuel enjoyed a Play Day School, which was headed by Mrs. Mackov.

There were many successful and happy Christmas Bazaars and Rummage Sales during this time. It was Fr. Mackov who started the Sunday School Christmas Pageant; and now it had become a yearly event, enjoyed by children and adults of the parish. It was during Fr. Mackov's Rectorship that the Parish Hall was completed. Bishop Jonathan G. Sherman dedicated the Parish Hall on May 20, 1973. Fr. Mackov left Emmanuel on June 30, 1974 to become the Rector of All Souls Memorial Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C.

The Rev. Russell A. Bechtel came to Emmanuel on November 14, 1974. Fr. Bechtel was Associate at St. Bede's Episcopal Church, Syosset, N.Y. and served a year as Supply Priest at St. Mark's Church, North Bellmore, N.Y. before coming to Emmanuel Church. Fr. Bechtel was a strong leader, an excellent preacher, and a great asset to Emmanuel.

The Rev. Robert L. Schwarz became Rector of Emmanuel Church in 1979. Following his study at the George Mercer School of Theology in Garden City, New York, he became a priest in the Diocese of Long Island. Two years later in September of 1979, he came to Emmanuel Church with his wife Barbara and family. Father Schwarz was a charismatic individual who brought 91 friends and acquaintances with him. Emmanuel Church Sunday

School became well known in the area; and a very large, active youth ministry formed at the church in combination with other area churches. The September "Homecoming" attracted many new families to Emmanuel. The Wednesday night Healing Service filled the church with people from the surrounding community for prayer, music, and fellowship. Our parish family was active and vibrant as the rafters rang with joy and standing room only was at a premium. Then, in 1986, Father Bob accepted a call to St. Ann's Church, Sayville, N.Y.

From September 1986 to August 1987, The Rev. Gregory Wood was Interim Priest with the assistance of The Rev. William Thoelen. The Rev. Canon Edward J. Tourangeau came to Emmanuel Church in 1987. He served as Canon at St. Paul's Cathedral in Peoria, Illinois before coming to Emmanuel Church with his wife Patricia. The restoration of buildings and re-activation of a project to expand the parish cemetery was started. In 1992, Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Guy E. Dorr became our next Rector. He was Rector of the Church of the Messiah, Heflin, Alabama before coming to Emmanuel with his wife Kathleen Dorr. Fr. Guy's organization and leadership skills fostered individual growth into leadership positions in the parish family. Our Fellowship Group and Father Dorr's Lenten Programs were organized at this time. His Lenten Programs and Christian Education were exemplary. We all remember Father Guy and the children sitting on the altar steps every Sunday. Father Dorr moved to Arizona in 2003.

In February 2004, The Rev. Canon Domenic K. Ciannella came to Emmanuel Church. He and his wife Annette moved into the Rectory, and he became the resident Priest-in-Charge. He served in various churches in the Diocese of Long Island before becoming Rector of Holy Trinity, Hicksville, New York, where he served for 34 years before retiring in 1993. Following various interims in the Diocese of Long Island and Southern Ohio, he came to Emmanuel Church. He is presently a member of the Board of Managers for Camp De Wolfe.

Father Ciannella had the grace and experience, vision, wisdom, and age to nurture parishioners and bring Emmanuel forward to a more

mature level of spirituality and Christian education. He reminded us that our gifts must go beyond the front gate to the larger community.

Through Father Ciannella's and Emmanuel Vestry's guidance, the expansion of Emmanuel Cemetery became a working reality in 2011 and 2012. The church buildings were restored, repaired, painted; the roofs replaced, and the driveways paved.

Father Cianella retired on January 31, 2013. He loved to sing, and his rich voice led us in song every Sunday. Fr. Ciannella's home visits with Holy Eucharist and prayer to parishioners were a great comfort to each of them. He served as Chaplain to the Great River Fire Department. The congregation was grateful to have him as our priest.

On September 1, 2013, a new chapter began with the arrival of The Rev. Lauren McLeavey as the new Cleric in Charge, and also as the Chaplain to the Great River Fire Department. The Rev. McLeavey was born and raised in Boxford, MA, and moved to Queens after college in 2002. She attended The General Theological Seminary, graduating in May 2013. She was ordained a Deacon on June 1, 2013 and Priest on December 7, 2013. We look forward to exciting programs and new growth under the guidance of The Rev. McLeavey.

Come worship with us, all are welcome!

Sunday 8am & 10am

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