



EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH, GENEVA

## 2021 Annual General Meeting

21 March 2021

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# SENIOR WARDEN'S REPORT

March 2021

Due to Covid, our 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) was delayed until last October, so it's been only about five months since my last report.

Following our last AGM, we welcomed three new Vestry members: Robinah Najjemba-Were, Sroda Bédarida and Romain Lautel. We thank them for their willingness to give their energy and time to our Emmanuel community.

In recent months, our church went back into lockdown and the Vestry focused on keeping the church alive and functioning. This involved facilitating and supporting our wonderful Virtual Ministry team led by Andrew Close and David Pittuck who helped advance our abilities to live-stream and record services. The Vestry is supportive of our efforts in this arena as the ability to use technology to support our mission and spread the word and love of God and Christ is central to who we are.

Meanwhile, the business of the church continues in spite of Covid. Conversations are ongoing with tenants who rent our space, including the library and other church groups, as we cope with the realities of a global pandemic and the needs of our tenants for their own groups (i.e., library members and members of other churches who rent our space).

Now that the Conches property has been successfully sold (which I count as a major accomplishment for this Vestry), we hope and expect that future Vestries will be free to focus on enhancing our church and building the spiritual life of our community - continuing to be a spiritual haven for both existing and new members.

My time as Senior Warden ends now and I thank our rector Michael Rusk for his leadership, as well as every Vestry member and commission members who spend hours focused on the business of keeping Emmanuel alive and relevant to this world.

Special thanks to Debbie Groby, formerly co-Senior Warden with me, currently the People's Warden, who remains on Vestry.

I am grateful and thankful to every member of our community who participates, in whatever manner, in the life of our church. We each bring different gifts to the table. Thank you, all.

*Holly Smith Dinbergs*

## 2021 Deacon's Report

Nothing is better calculated to make us appreciate something than to be deprived of it, especially over a long period of time. So it is only natural that we all yearn to return to normal – whatever the new normal might look like in a post-Covid world – and to gathered celebrations of the Eucharist at Emmanuel.

Like you, I miss, and miss terribly, reassuring rituals which are part of our very DNA. As a deacon, I miss not being able to proclaim the Gospel from the midst of the congregation, or preaching from the pulpit without having to wear a stifling mask, or setting the table for Communion, distributing the Host to the circle gathered around the Altar, then cleaning up as a lovely Communion hymn is sung.

Yet the longer the pandemic draws on, still with no clear end in sight, the more churches, like all the other institutions that we considered pillars of society in a healthier, now almost unimaginable world, are obliged to reinvent themselves constantly and think outside of the box. I believe that the new ways we are finding to worship are blessings in disguise. Not only do they remind us how fortunate we at Emmanuel have been until now, perhaps more importantly, they help us realize how fortunate we continue to be.

We readers and intercessors have had to learn to slow down a bit, savor the words of Scripture and liturgy we are reading and pronounce them more carefully – because how else can a mask-wearer be understood? For lack of being allowed to sing our favorite hymns, we hear their texts sung for us, and they take on new meaning. Watching a service on YouTube or visiting with each other on Zoom are admittedly no substitutes for the community that our gathered worship, coffee hour and Breaking Bread all create. Yet think of all the Emmanuel diaspora, virtual visitors and new people we have been able to reach in Geneva and far beyond with our virtual choir, online worship and Bible Study.

Through it all, the faithful members of our Inreach Committee have continued to meet bimonthly and pray together, while keeping in touch with the parishioners on their contact list. We have forged new relationships with people we did not know well or even at all, and we have listened to people's stories during a time when all they may need is a sympathetic ear.

My own Lenten challenge this year has been to contact each and every person in the Parish directory, either by phone or e-mail, and to do so by Easter Sunday. Given that, as I write this, I am only up to the letter "K", perhaps I will indeed need the extension to Pentecost kindly offered me by the Rector. But at a time when many still cannot or prefer not to come to Church, it is important for the Church to come to them and let them know that we care about them and also see how Michael and I can pray for them in a confidential way.

Many in our congregation have been through very challenging times this past year, personally and professionally. Some have lost friends or relatives whom they could not say goodbye to and whose funerals they could not attend. That was why I was so pleased that we could hold a Service of Remembrance on January 19, where we gave thanks for the lives of those who had died in 2020 and early 2021, remembered them by name and lit candles in their memory. It was one of the most moving services I have ever had the privilege of attending anywhere and offered powerful witness to the way we continue to embody and live out our name: Emmanuel – God with us, now and always.

*Faithfully,*

*Richard*

## Music Report 2020–2021

The music at Emmanuel has been one of the worst hit elements of the whole pandemic crisis and yet music had been one of the things that has helped us survive it, and to remain hopeful.

At the start, a year ago, there was an excitement about how to be creative with the resources that still remained to us: instruments, small groups of singers and keyboard instruments. Each of these has been whittled away in the past few months, until only keyboard instruments remain as live music. Everything else has to be pre-recorded. This has demanded astonishing amounts of creativity and time from Andrew Close, who has been the real instigator and driver of the Emmanuel Virtual Choir. This has meant buying and learning several new computer programs, as well as hardware to support them. Not to mention to hours of editing, re-editing and rendering the films. To give you an idea, each three-minute film takes roughly twenty hours to make.

The Christmas Nine Lessons and Carols zoom service was a fantastic example of this new way of working.

As the one-year anniversary of the Virtual Choir rolls around we reflect with pleasure at the accomplishment, and sadness at the time we have all been apart.

I began an online choir rehearsal recently to try help keep everyone's voices in a good state. Like any group of muscles, those, which give rise to our vocal sounds, can atrophy if not used regularly. It's also been a terrific way to stay in touch with our choir members past and present. The real blessing of this time has been this re-connection with former members and to hear their voices, from across the years, resonate together in church again. I could never have imagined that possibility a year ago.

I hope, as soon as each of us is fully vaccinated, that we will be able to resume singing together in person. We have to await guidance on this, but that is my intention, at present.

For now, gathered services have returned and it is wonderful to see people again. Collaborating with Michael and Richard, to create new and varied services over this past year, has drawn us closer together and helped us to discover new strengths and abilities. It has caused me to ponder in wonder how God brought together this team of people at this time to continue a presence in this community. Thank you also to all the singers who continue to record their voices and faces (landscape, not portrait!) in their living rooms, hallways, kitchens and bedrooms. You are wonderful and greatly appreciated.

One of most fun and rewarding moments for me has been doing live improvisations of canticle texts, found by Michael. That is really living in the moment and, perhaps, with all our ability to make big plans removed from us, this is all we can do; live each moment in thankfulness and gratitude, while trusting the future to God.

*Shauna Beesley*  
*Music Director*

## Inreach Commission Report for AGM March 2021

Little has changed for my Inreach report since that prepared for the delayed AGM last October. Inreach continues to be a vital part of our Emmanuel ministry. It is indeed focused on those already known to the parish, but in prayer and support, extends far beyond those who have previously been identified as part of the Emmanuel community.

Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, we at Emmanuel take note that we have been spared some of the extreme tragedy of the past year. In our Parochial Report for 2020, we reported three deaths, only one of those likely due to Covid. Some of our parishioners have regardless been seriously affected by job loss and insecurity, other financial difficulties, and with our increased awareness through regular calls or messages, it seems that there have been more than the usual additional illnesses and health issues. Our extended families have also experienced losses and stress due to this pandemic.

The expanded Inreach team therefore continues to meet every fortnight on Zoom to update our Rector and Deacon on issues that have come up for parishioners in our contact groups and take action when we can lend support. We continue to lament the ban on pastoral visits, but have been able to deliver flower bouquets and occasionally take other action. Confidentiality is strictly observed. At the end of every meeting, we pray for the situations that have been mentioned as well as for the known places of

extreme Covid related pain in the world. If by any chance you feel that you have not had contact from the church and would like it, please contact Deacon Richard or Rector Michael. We don't want to neglect anyone but also do not want to pry or create yet another stress in these times.

The Inreach Flower Guild continues during the liturgical seasons when we are changing flowers weekly. Even when services were live-streamed only, the five dedicated volunteers kept a rota and organized with Rector Michael for a safe time to get to church and prepare the bouquets. As with so many volunteer roles, it has been a joy to see the increased confidence and initiative of these dedicated women. This is not a female-only mission, however – ALL new volunteers will be gratefully welcomed, especially when we come to a more “normal” time when we can again work in pairs.

The Inreach Team has become a supportive group amongst ourselves during the past challenging year. When we cannot meet at church coffee hour, it is a healing joy to pray together over Zoom. We are deeply grateful for the time and commitment of each of the following members, with an \* for those on the Flower/Altar Guild:

Bonnie Christen\*, Tigest Desta\*, Marietta Dewey, Nadiya Dzybynska\*, Nancy Gautier, Liana Georgana-Koch, Ann Goslin, Debbie Groby\*, Christine Housel, Miss Jones, Lesley Lawson Botez\*, Vicky Maltby, Helena Mbele-Mbong, Robinah Najjemba, Edith Tanner\*, Cyrus Gunavel Veloo, Rev. Michael Rusk, and our Deacon, Richard Cole.

*Debbie Groby  
For the Inreach Commission*

## OUTREACH COMMISSION

### ANNUAL REPORT: SUMMARY OF 2020 ACTIVITY

The Outreach Commission of the Emmanuel Church of Geneva operates in response to the concerns expressed by the Emmanuel congregation, and has its mandate from the congregation to uphold a longstanding commitment to support those in need in the Geneva community and in countries around the world. We are financially supported by an allocation from the Vestry, fund-raising initiatives within the church community and special events open to the public.

In 2020, the Outreach Commission supported projects for a total of CHF 26,120. Although significantly less than last year, this is a remarkable amount given the reduction in our fund-raising activity due to the restrictions of Covid-19. As a result, the Commission maintained its commitments, but focused on specific needs where a smaller gift would still be an effective contribution.

## INCOME IN 2020

	Vestry	17,000
	Donations	<u>9,223</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME 2020</b>		<b>CHF 26,223</b>

## PROJECTS SUPPORTED IN 2020

### GENEVA PROJECTS

**Jardin de Montbrillant and Café Care** **CHF 2,916**  
(Coordinated by Torsten Bartsch and Bonnie Christen, respectively)

**Café Care**, inviting women and children from Coeur des Grottes for lunch once a month, had to be discontinued due to Covid and dwindling numbers. Similarly, we were no longer able to prepare the meal once a month at **Jardin de Montbrillant**, but continue to supply sandwiches on a monthly schedule.

**Arabelle Foyer and Crèche** **CHF 1,000**

With the event for which we usually collect Christmas gifts cancelled, Outreach provided play equipment and a cake for the Christmas party at Arabelle Foyer.

### INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

**Meru, Kenya: International Peace Initiative** **CHF 1,000**  
(Coordinated by Torsten Bartsch and Kathleen Koch)

IPI seeks to empower women, educate children and create thriving, sustainable communities, Funds from Emmanuel were to support installation of a water tank and meals for the Kithoka Amani Children's Home

**Dhanusah Dt, Nepal: Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital** **CHF 6,700**  
(Coordinated by Bob White)

This is one of the world's busiest leprosy hospitals, diagnosing and treating nearly one-third of Nepal's new leprosy cases, and caring for other health needs, in particular Covid-19 at this time. It is run by Graeme and Meena Clugston, known by many at Emmanuel. Funds were used for diagnosis, treatment and care of children with leprosy.

**Gaza: Al Ahli Arab Hospital** (Coordinated by Helena Mbele-Mbong) **CHF 2,500**

This hospital, part of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, is a major provider of hospital care in the Gaza strip, and a safe haven of peace and compassion. Funds were to cover all costs for tonsil operations for 7 children

**Beirut, Lebanon: Ayadina Association** (Coordinated by Ann Goslin) **CHF 1,000**

This Association provides services for underserved people of Beirut especially the elderly and children. They have been providing much-needed meals during the current pandemic, a need which suddenly grew after the explosion. Our support is to help fund these hot community meals

**Venice, Italy: Chiesa Valdese** (Coordinated by Richard Cole) **CHF 1,636**

The Waldensian Church has close relations with the Anglican Communion, and Emmanuel has personal contacts with the Chiesa Valdese in Venice. One of the last events before the coronavirus lockdown was a song recital performed by Shauna Beesley, Richard Cole, and HuhnJu Sohn in early March to raise funds toward the restoration of the church building following flood damage.

**Kampala, Uganda: Sanyu Babies' Home** **CHF 4,031**

(Africa Night: Coordinated by Wilson and Robinah Were

Although Africa Night was an impossibility in 2020, this did not deter the African group from organizing fund-raising for a project – this year for the Sanyu Babies' Home, which we have supported in years past. Their greatest need at the moment is to report the roof. Established in 1929, Sanyu Babies takes in abandoned infants and young children, nurturing them until they are able to be placed in a family. Funds raised will go toward much-needed repair of the roof. (Funds were transferred in March 2021)

**Switzerland: Partner Sein** **CHF 500**

Partner Sein is the Episcopal Relief and Development of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland. Emmanuel provides an annual donation toward their international projects.

**United Thank Offering** (coordinated by Debbie Groby) **CHF 1,534 + 1,297**

The United Thank Offering (UTO) is a ministry of The Episcopal Church for the mission of the whole church. In 2020, in addition to the ingathering of the Blue Boxes, UTO sponsored an EpisGopal Race, challenging people to run/walk/hike to raise additional funds, to which a number of Emmanuelites responded. UTO Grants in 2020 primarily went toward covering needs caused by the coronavirus. The additional 1,297, raised during Thanksgiving, will be transferred in 2021.

**Butembo, DR Congo: Anglican University Apolo Kivebulaya** CHF 2,005  
(Coordinated by Michael Rusk)

The seminary is a major training center for the priesthood in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Emmanuel has committed to providing scholarship money for one seminary student over the three-year training period.

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES 2020<sup>1</sup>** CHF 26,120

To all members of our Emmanuel congregation, we express our gratitude for your continuing generosity. We wish to hear from you, for your suggestions for projects to support in the future. For more detailed information on our current projects, please ask us! Also, please check the *Emmanuel Star* of 16 February 2021 for our featured articles.

### **From your Outreach Commission**

Torsten Bartsch	Bonnie Christen	Roxana Dunnette
Debbie Groby	Helena Mbele-Mbong, Treasurer	Robinah Najjemba-Were
Joyce Oseku	Imelda Spierings	Huub Spierings
Jo Topping	Robert White	Joyce Witherspoon
Ann Goslin, Co Chair	Sophie Leacacos, Co Chair	Michael Rusk, Rector

## **Communications Report – March 2021**

It is only five months since we have held our last AGM, and so this communications report is not as detailed as the ones submitted for the October AGM in 2020.

The two biggest areas of change in communications have been the installation and successful adoption of our Livestreamed services, and some changes in responsibility for other areas in the communications for Emmanuel Church.

### **The virtual world**

Perhaps the greatest change has been the purchase and successful installation of a state-of-the-art live streaming station at the back of the church. Anyone who has been in church will have seen two beautifully mounted cameras and ambient mics which feed into a central mixing station at the back of the church. This setup allows us to livestream and/or record services and other items. I would say that the quality of

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<sup>1</sup> Of the budgeted amount of CHF 17'000, CHF 103 was not spent.

online services now matches the quality of preaching and musicmaking that we have been blessed with for many years.

More than anyone else, David Pittuck deserves a special mention in that he's been the person who has put in all the hours of work in cabling, building, and troubleshooting the system. Noel and I have particularly benefited from his planning and meticulous attention to detail. Thanks also go to Mike Romer who has seen to the installation of the housing and mounting of materials.

Our next stage, even as I write this report, is to follow the recommendations of Bill Bouldin in the installation of a large TV screen which will make 'hybrid' services much more satisfactory for those who happen to be in church.

The virtual commission has, despite its name, been very much in evidence in all of this. Thanks from me go to the whole team – David Pittuck, Noel Urassa, Innocent Urassa, Oliver Okello, Romain Lautel, Bill Bouldin and Michael Rusk.

### **The virtual word**

The other principal change has been a redistribution of duties in how we communicate words in our virtual life. As the indefatigable Marie Dumas stepped away from the website, Noel Urassa and Oliver Okello have stepped up, overseen by Michael Rusk and assisted by David Pittuck. This new team also looks after our Facebook page. Helena Mbele-Mbong continues to produce excellent *Epistles* and the *Emmanuel Star*, but the weekly preparation of the bulletin has now moved back into a task for the office.

### **Our next challenge**

One thing that I think all of us should be mindful of as we move forward in our life together as a community of faith is how we are to maintain a sense of a genuine, loving and real (as opposed to virtual) community. Speaking as part of a team who have been (I believe) very successful in creating a meaningful experience online, we all need to be aware our community functions best when we are present in the here and now: when we speak with each other, when we meet, and when we worship together.

No matter how successful our new-found methods of virtual worship and fellowship have been, they are no replacement for a spoken word, a smile, wave or a sense of being and praying together in the same space. Ultimately, perhaps all our new discoveries in communication will mean that we don't lose sight of how valuable and precious our communications are with each other, our family in God.

*Andrew Close*

## Emmanuel Youth – January 2021 through March 2021

We are very pleased that throughout the beginning of 2021, the students of Emmanuel have been actively engaged with different youth activities. With the difficult COVID regulations and Emmanuel not meeting in person for parts of 2021, we have been meeting on Zoom every Sunday afternoon at 15:00 with the youth. Additionally, Emmanuel students have gathered with other students in the Geneva area for online monthly All-Area Worship Nights, as well as a student quiz night.

Throughout the semester, we have been enjoying conversations surrounding two different series; “Know That You Know That You Know” and “Making Godly Choices”. For our first theme of the year, we started off digging into some of the major beliefs and components of the Christian faith. It is vital and always appropriate to be reminded of what exactly Christianity is, and what we claim to believe if we call ourselves Christians. We have continually encouraged the students to better understand the Christian faith, and to be in a place where they feel comfortable and confident sharing their faith with their peers.

Recently, we have been going through a series called “Making Godly Choices”. We recognize that students (and adults!) are making thousands of choices every single day. Some may be minor while others can have massive implications on our lives, and the lives of those around us. As we encounter all of these decisions, we desire to equip and enable students to make Godly choices. We recently looked at some characteristics we see displayed in the life of Jesus (gracious, compassionate, loving, forgiving) and challenged the students to look at the choices Jesus made (for example: to be forgiving) and to choose to reflect His choices throughout the following week.

As we approach April, we are excited to offer the students an opportunity to serve the Geneva community through an initiative of Youth Compass, called “Project Compassion”. This will take place from 5-9 April, and will incorporate students from different churches in Geneva. Students will serve by sorting food donations, collecting food and clothing donations, preparing lunches for those in need, and working on a community housing project. It is not too late for students to sign up if they are interested and able to serve throughout this week!

We are always encouraged, blessed, and excited by the youth at Emmanuel. Their commitment to youth activities during such a unique time has been a blessing and encouragement to us, and to one another. While we would have much preferred to be in person these past several months, we can definitely see a blessing in that the students have united and deepened their friendships even during such a uniquely difficult time. Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and encouragement, for the students and their spiritual growth.

*Blessings,  
Tommy and Meghan Bresson*

## Sunday School

The Sunday school has not been meeting since March 2020 when the first lockdown commenced. However, with the Emmanuel community beginning to regather on a Sunday morning, Crèche is planning to start up again. Christel Lautel has signaled her interest in supporting Eunice in this and to re-establish the early years learning. It is a time to lay good foundations with the very young children that attend Emmanuel so that the Sunday school can grow in years to come. We send our love to our dedicated band of Sunday school teachers – Agnes Kalinga-Maye, Marsha Staubli, and Kelly Massey-Carlier. We look forward to the time when Sunday school will be up and running again.

*Michael Rusk on behalf of Sunday school*

## Buildings and Grounds

After all the major work that took place in 2019 and the limited work that took place during lockdown in the spring of 2020, very little has happened as regards Buildings & Grounds in the last five months. Among the minor works that have been attended to are: the securing of the ladders to the wall by the bins; the purchase of two new bins; brass hooks installed in all pews so that cordons can be used to close off pews to achieve social distancing. The major work that has been undertaken has been the electrical work to install new cameras and livestreaming equipment to church with Mike Romer making a secure cabinet in which to store the new equipment. We are about to take delivery of a large monitor so that the congregation can see the Virtual Choir, online sermons, and contact from our Outreach partners. Thanks to Bill Bouldin, Andrew Close, David Pittuck, Noel and Innocent Urassa, and Oliver Okello for their work on this.

As regards the installation of an emergency exit from the Grande Salle so that more than 50 people can meet upstairs, the project has run into planning difficulties with the Ville de Genève being of the view that none of the gothic windows in the Grande or Petite Salle should be altered. This makes it very difficult to figure out how to proceed but a range of alternative solutions are being explored. If these do not work out, then the restriction of 50 people only upstairs in the Grande & Petite Salles will have to be applied.

To meet security concerns about the easy access to the garden – something that became a major concern during the summer and autumn, the Vestry authorized alterations to the church gates increasing them in size. The work cost CHF5'000. It remains to be seen how good a deterrent this will be to unauthorized use of the garden or if the railings will need to be raised as well. Our thanks go to Evelyne Romer for sourcing this work.

As always, the whole Emmanuel community owes a big thank you to Evelyne Romer for her wonderful care of the garden and the Emmanuel premises. The reason why the buildings and the garden are such an attractive place to visit is in large measure due to Evelyne's hard work and dedication. For this we are truly grateful.

*Michael Rusk on behalf of the Buildings and Grounds Commission*