

STEWARDSHIP

GIVING AS A MATTHEW 25 CHURCH

The Immanuel Session has chosen the theme “Living as a Matthew 25 Church” for the coming year. This theme expresses our ambition as a congregation to strive toward the vision set forth in Chapter 25 of the book of Matthew. The choice was inspired primarily by the closing verses of this chapter, verses 31-46, which describe the Son of Man coming in his glory with all the angels and separating people “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” with the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

The blessed sheep are those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, and visited the prisoners; the cursed goats are those who failed to do those things. The Son of Man says to each of them, “Truly I tell you just as you did it to one of the least of those who are members of my family, you did it to me.” As a congregation, we at Immanuel strive to be Christ-serving sheep who reach out to those in need.

Our Stewardship theme for the coming year is “Giving as a Matthew 25 Church – It All Starts Here.” As we enter the season of Stewardship when we make financial pledges to support the life of the church, it is interesting to focus on the two prior sections of Matthew 25 as well.

The chapter begins with the parable of the ten bridesmaids. Five wise bridesmaids who made sure that they had enough oil for their lamps were ready in the middle of the night when the bridegroom arrived; they were ushered into the wedding banquet. Five foolish bridesmaids, on the other hand, having failed to stock their lamps, had to run out to buy oil and missed the bridegroom and the banquet entirely. Their failure to plan ahead left them shut out and hungry. Certainly this is a practical lesson for all of us to plan ahead for future needs and to be prepared for whatever may come “for [we] know neither the day nor the hour”.

The familiar parable of the talents, in the second section of Matthew 25, tells of a master who left home for a long journey, leaving his servants with various sums of money (“talents”). The servants who invested their talents and multiplied them were rewarded by the master on his return; but the servant who buried his one talent so as not to risk losing it was condemned. This story reminds us of the importance of using all of our “talents” of money, time, and our many God-given abilities productively to the benefit of God’s kingdom and not hoarding them or letting them waste away.

Let’s embrace **Living** and **Giving** as a Matthew 25 church this year, preparing for the future with strong financial support of our church and investing our many talents to empower Immanuel with the resources to help us all go forth and be sheep who feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked and visit the prisoner.



Pictured: the very first harvest presented to SHARE from our interfaith garden!



Matthew 25: 40 “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,* you did it to me.”

As we seek to be a "Matthew 25 congregation," Session voted to open our doors as a hypothermia prevention shelter for one week this winter in partnership with FACETS (www.facetscares.org). We will host approximately forty of our neighbors without homes each night, providing a warm dinner, snack, breakfast, and to-go sack lunches each day. Our goal as a church will be to welcome each guest as though we are welcoming Christ himself into our midst, and we are excited to share more about this program in the days ahead.

The FACETS Hypothermia Prevention Program is a partnership of Fairfax County faith communities, and through this program guests have access to a number of resources including life skills training, housing counseling, and case management. Immanuel will need a lot of volunteers to make our hosting week a success! Please note that all volunteers must attend one training in order to participate in the program.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

(All volunteers must attend one training to participate)

11:20am on Sunday, October 29th

VOLUNTEER TRAINING with FACETS Director Maria Avila

While Immanuel elders will provide the rest of the volunteer training opportunities (*see below*), this is your chance to be trained by and meet the director of the whole FACETS Hypothermia Prevention Program. The training will conclude with a Q&A.

6:45pm on Sun., Nov. 5th

6:00pm on Monday, Nov. 6th

7:00pm on Wed., Nov. 29th

11:20am on Sun., Dec. 3rd
(first Sunday of Advent)

11:20am on Sunday, Dec. 17th
(training for last-minute volunteers & students home for winter break)