

The History of Emmanuel Church Richvale



Emmanuel Church traces its relatively recent origins (compared to other Richmond Hill churches) to the founding meeting of the Richvale Women's Auxiliary on February 16, 1949. This organization was formed under the auspices of the Rev. W. F. Wrixon and Mrs. Wrixon of St. Mary's Anglican Church, Richmond Hill, in order to fulfill the religious needs of its community. The first significant achievement of the W. A. took place a year later. In April 1950, the members opened a Sunday School using the facilities at Charles Howitt School on Pearson Ave. and MacKay Drive.

Following this initial success, the Auxiliary's progress was temporarily halted when a canvass of the area in early 1950 was unable to locate sufficient families to support a separate Anglican Mission in Richvale. This delay was temporary. On March 5, 1952, the Church Extension Committee of the Anglican Church purchased land on MacKay Drive for a future church. One indication of future events occurred on Mothers Day, May 11, 1952. The Rev. W.F. Wrixon held an adult church service at Charles Howitt School. His successor, the Rev. A. Chote, continued Mr. Wrixon's work by *"visiting the W.A. often, encouraging them to carry on with the work towards the founding of a church in Richvale."* In 1957 Mr. Chote's successor, the Rev. Jim O'Neill also encouraged the Auxiliary effort in founding a church. In 1958, under the Rev. Newton-Smith, the first regular adult services were held in Charles Howitt School. The formation of a permanent congregation attending regular services culminated in April, 1959 with the appointment of the Rev. Edward Morley to the Richvale Mission Parish of **St. Barnabas**. Three months later the name was changed to **EMMANUEL**.

The change from **St. Barnabas** to **Emmanuel** was prompted by the forced closing of Emmanuel Anglican Church on Hanlan's Point on Toronto Island to make way for the Toronto Island Park Project. With the closing of this beloved church in 1959, the congregation appealed to the bishop to select another parish where the work of Emmanuel could continue. The bishop recommended that people of the new Richvale Parish could carry on Emmanuel's spiritual tradition. The treasures of Emmanuel, Hanlan's Point were transferred to the Richvale Parish including *"all furnishings of the Church – altar, plaques, pews, pulpit, lectern, vessels for the Holy Table, organ, and baptismal font."* Their transportation was a lengthy ordeal, as they had to be taken by ferry from Toronto Island to the mainland before being trucked up Yonge St. to Richvale. The items were placed in a portable building on the lot at 15 MacKay Drive. By August 1959 the Rev. Edward Morley was holding regular services for the new Emmanuel Church, Richvale congregation in the portable.



On Sept. 27, 1959 Mr. Morley and Mr. Newton-Smith of St. Gabriel's Anglican Church, Richmond Hill conducted dedication services for the portable church and all the inherited furnishings. One hundred and forty people

attended the inaugural service, including members of the original Hanlan's Point congregation. It became a tradition to invite the Hanlan's Point Congregation each year at the time of Harvest Festival. This carried on until there were very few of the original congregation left.

The retirement of Mr. Morley and the appointment of the Rev. Fred C. Jackson in October of 1960 began a new phase for the congregation of Emmanuel Church, Richvale.

“At his very first service, Mr Jackson, who for seven years had taught at the old St. Barnabas Sunday School in Richvale and was curate of St. Mary's in Richmond Hill, commissioned the congregation to go out and canvass for a permanent church. He expected construction to start within a year.”

The building campaign commenced in January 1961 accompanied by a stewardship campaign. The Richmond Hill Liberal described the exciting progress as follows:

Emmanuel Church, Richvale is a beehive of activity. With its new minister, Fred Jackson, the church is heading into its current campaign to bring more members into active parish life.

The Campaign Committee headed by Chairman, Mr. Ron Nuen and Co-Chairman, Mr. Lionel Boswell, has plans well under way.

The Parish Dinner and the Annual Vestry Meeting on January 27th will be an important event on the campaign. Mrs. Boswell and ladies in the church are making arrangements for a dinner at Wrixon Hall to mark the occasion.

Mr. Norm Winterfield, Chairman of the Visitations Committee is organizing a group of fifty volunteers to visit some two hundred Anglican families in the parish on February 5th.”

High confirmation numbers for the then small community of Richvale were indicative of the enthusiasm and spirit of the Emmanuel Congregation. A local paper headline for March 8, 1961, read as follows:

“BISHOP WILKINSON BRAVES BAD STORM FOR EMMANUEL CONFIRMATION SERVICES”

At this service, seventeen candidates were presented for confirmation while on December 27th of the same year; Bishop Snell presided over the confirmation of nineteen additional candidates. The strong growth of this new parish was also exhibited in the Sunday School. At the annual meeting held on January 28, 1963 to review the activities of 1962 the Sunday School report showed, *“a gain of 85 pupils over the previous year. The present staff totals 21.”*

Nonetheless, economic reality threatened to spoil the congregation’s quest for a permanent church building. Following the retirement of the Rev. Fred Jackson, the Rev. Ken Thatcher was appointed in June 1963. He recognized this potential impediment, and suggested that the members construct their own church building. Mr. Thatcher (*who was formerly an engineer*) explained the idea of a “Do-It-Yourself Church” as follows:

“With just over 100 families in the parish, I knew we just could not afford to put up a church at the usual enormous cost. So, I suggested we do it our own way.”

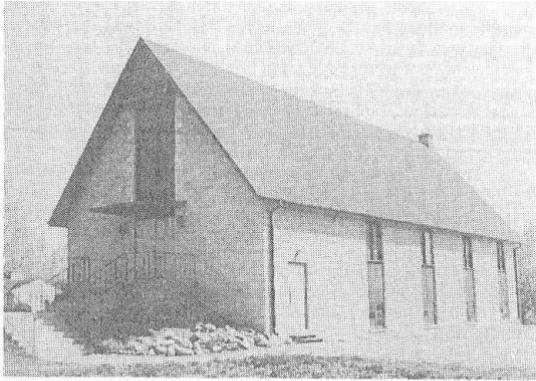
Not surprisingly, all did not easily receive Mr. Thatcher's original idea. In fact, Mr. Thatcher recalled some people telling him, he had "*taken leave of his senses.*"

However, that reaction was short lived. The members quickly signed their names to a list enumerating their various skills. While architect Mr. N.L. Irwin of Messrs. Hanks, Irwin and Pearson designed the basic shell, and builder, H.F. Heidman constructed the basement, walls and roof, "*every night, at least twenty people – men, women, teenagers – turned up to hammer nails, saw boards, lay bricks, varnish furniture, slap on paint, even scrub floors.*"

Emmanuel Church's unique origins were thus doubly blessed by the fact that individual members of all ages made both spiritual and physical contributions to the erection of their church – in a manner similar to the contributions made by the pioneer settlers who brought their religion to Vaughan Township more than a century earlier. Mr. Thatcher commented:

"The greatest satisfaction is the tremendous spiritual shot-in-the-arm this whole project has been. The spirit in the parish is marvellous. It's like the primitive church. People feel that this is their church in a way that it could never be if they were simply making payments on it. They've hammered in the nails, put on the paint, built it with their own hands.

As might be expected, such an undertaking had its lighter moments – although at the time laughter was not always appropriate! Mr. Thatcher recalled one occasion when, during the cornerstone ceremony in December of 1964, the trowel to be used by the guest of honour was accidentally dropped from a considerable height into a six-foot ditch of mud and mire. Tense, uncomfortable moments passed before a bystander was able to retrieve the vital ceremonial instrument.



— courtesy Professor Allan Glivison

Emmanuel Anglican Church, Richvale, continues the spiritual traditions of the original Emmanuel Anglican Church on Hanlan's Point.

The first service in the permanent building was held on Palm Sunday, April 11, 1965. The dedication service was held on May 20, 1965. In the dedication programme, a special tribute was included for those members who made special individual contributions:

“All the inside finishing – carpentry, electrical systems and plumbing were carried out by members of the congregation, working under the supervision of the many skilled masters of their trades we are so fortunate to number among the Parish of Richvale. To these dedicated people, who have given up numberless hours of what should have been their leisure time, after a full day’s work, we give our most hearty thanks, and ask God’s blessing upon them. During the Service of Dedication, we ask you to remember them in your prayers, for without them we would not be here tonight.”

Below is a list of our Ministers since the construction of the church building:

The Rev. G. J. “Bill” Rhodes	1967 – 1970
The Rev. George Young	1970 – 1973
The Rev. John Coneybear	1973 – 1975

The Rev. R. A. “Ron” Armstrong	1975 – 1981
The Rev. Trevor C. Denny	1982 – 1995
The Rev. Murray McColl	1996 – 2001
The Rev. Dr. Peter Robinson	2002 – 2011
The Rev. Canon Chris King	2012 -

Emmanuel Church has been through many ups and downs over the years. It was almost ready to close the Church doors in the early 1970s. However, the arrival of the Rev. Ronald Armstrong in 1975 brought new life. Ron and June and their four children generated an exceptional spirit of enthusiasm within the congregation.

The celebration of “Dick Edmunds Day” on April 25, 1976 was one indication of Emmanuel’s renewed purpose and spirit. Richard “Dick” Edmunds (1894-1980) had played such a vital role in Emmanuel’s establishment that, a special day of celebration was held in recognition of his outstanding contributions in public service and church activities throughout his life. People came from all over including government and town representatives.

Another indicator of the regeneration of the parish was the introduction of “*LAOS, School of Lay Ministry*”. Ron had long had a dream of establishing a school of lay ministry. LAOS was an ecumenical programme based on the belief that “*the Christian will be effective only when s/he is well-informed and able to uphold Christian doctrines through a familiarity with scripture.*” Ron disciplined full time students. There were daytime and evening courses and no fees. Many parishioners and others took advantage of the teaching. Scriptural understanding and a personal relationship with Jesus emphasised in the teaching contributed to the greater member participation and commitment to the church and in their personal lives.

Other indicators were:

- . Wednesday morning healing services
- . 3D courses
- . the renovation of the garage into a meeting room and the construction of a bathroom and office behind.
- . the paying off of the Church mortgage.
- . “Prayer and Praise” services

It was during this time that our goals were established:

**TO BE A LOVING COMMUNITY
TO BE A HEALING COMMUNITY
TO BE A MINISTERING COMMUNITY**

In December 1981, the Armstrongs left Emmanuel to serve as missionaries in Bequia, a tiny island in the West Indies. Many Emmanuelites past and present still have a connection with the Bequia Mission.

Following their departure the Wardens decided to rename the new meeting room the “Armstrong Room “ in recognition of their life and witness among us.

In March 1982, God sent us the Rev. Trevor Denny, Joy and daughters – Kara and Rachelle. God used them to carry on the unique traditions and spirit of Emmanuel and to start some new ones. Joy, a primary teacher by profession, was a tremendous asset to the Sunday School programme. She also initiated the Christmas “Encouragement Baskets”.

The Banner **“Our Life in Christ”**, at the front of the church, was commissioned when Trevor expressed his desire to move the altar away from the wall so he could face the congregation during communion. This work of art was designed and created by Karen Pascal. It is a very valuable piece of liturgical Art and is featured in the book, *“Art of the Spirit”*, Contemporary Canadian Fabric Art.

“Our Life In Christ” was inspired by God, made to His glory and is admired by all. It was dedicated to the Glory of God June 10, 1984.



The Emmanuel Banner is a visual expression of “*Our Life in Christ*”. It incorporates the elements that are central to Emmanuel – the altar and the cross – and repeats the arch shape found in the windows and the front of the church.

The rich, clear colours are a statement of the abundance and fullness of “*Our Life in Christ*”.

The theme encompasses so many aspects of the Gospel. The outside border is like a rainbow – a reminder of the covenant God made with Noah that He would never again destroy the earth by water – a shadow of the new covenant we have with God, which is perfect.

The hands of God reach down behind the cross giving us salvation and the living water that Jesus promised.

These hands cup together forming a dove and thus the actions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit meet in the centre of the tapestry. The cross is not found in the tapestry, but is on the altar. However, the placement of the design on the surface of the tapestry and the actual altar and cross in the foreground blend and interact.

The colours of the “*living water*” which flow from these hands are the colours traditionally associated with the royal priesthood – blue, red and purple. As well as flowing from the hands out over the lower surface of the tapestry, they flow out over the altar – the red depicting the blood of salvation that flowed from the cross.

Above and beyond the cross is a glorious sunrise playing forth the metaphor of light that is so central to our knowing of God, “*In Him was light*”; Jesus is the “*Day Spring from on high*”. He is the Son of Righteousness who has arisen forever “*with healing in his wings*”. The arms of the Father sweep down to us like a dove or an eagle bringing salvation and eternal life to man.

Resting between all these symbolic signs of God and the eternal life He has given is Man. Like the sweeping gentle curves of a landscape, the figures symmetrically lift their hands in worship to Emmanuel – the God who is with us. The colours in this area are the colours of the earth, warm and natural. The figures suggest men, women and children choosing to acknowledge and magnify God. Truly our response to our Creator – King – Saviour is like Mary’s: “*My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*”

In 1985 we once again found ourselves “doing it ourselves”. For many years our Rectory at 9 MacKay had been inadequate and below Diocesan standard. In July 1985 the property at 7 MacKay came up for sale. Quick thinking by a parishioner held the property until Emmanuel made a decision. An emergency Vestry meeting was called and unanimously agreed that we couldn’t pass up this opportunity. With the help of the Diocese the house and land were purchased.



7 MacKay Drive, the new Rectory

However, the house was already 40 years old and in need of major renovations before it could be occupied. It didn’t take long to decide that it would be to our advantage to do the work ourselves.

Once renovated #7 MacKay became the Rectory and #9 became our Christian Education Centre much needed for our Sunday School and adult education. For three years the older children had gone down the road to the Richvale Library for their classes. The Armstrong room became the Nursery.

During the Rev. Trevor Denny's tenure the "Healing Prayer Ministry" grew. His pastoral skills blessed many and he encouraged others to develop theirs. A chapter of the International Order of St. Luke the Physician was started in 1985 with the first of 17 Annual Healing Missions. He had teams of "Prayer Counsellors" he oversaw who met with those in need of individual healing prayer.

- The Book of Alternative Services was introduced.
- Men's breakfasts were revived
- Women's breakfasts started in 1990
- House church Groups proliferated
- The mortgage was paid off on the Rectory
- An elevator was added to the church
- Emmanuelite Newsletter started
- Trevor Denny also mentored many Wycliffe divinity students

In 1995 the Rev. Trevor Denny was called to St. Peter's Anglican Church, Scarborough.

In 1996 the Rev. Murray McColl and his wife Sandra came into our lives. It meant moving from the town in which they grew up and Sandra giving up a well-paying, high profile job to come to the northern edge of the GTA. They had to know it was God calling them to leave children, grandchildren, aging parents, friends, and church.

Their children grown, both jumped right in to Emmanuel life. Sandra brought with her a sunny disposition and palpable sense of fun. She always had a smile for everyone. She became one of the driving forces in the Women's Breakfasts.

Murray has a wonderful sense of God's presence. God's gifts of discernment and knowledge blessed many who came

to him for prayer. He waited on the Lord to such a degree that often God revealed the sermon as Murray stepped into the pulpit.

Christian Healing of Body, Mind and Spirit are close to Murray's heart. He called us to Repentance and Reconciliation. Murray and Sandra were always ready to listen and pray for anyone's needs. A monthly Eucharist for Prayer teams and other parish leaders were instituted for their support and Prayer and Alpha Courses were initiated.

Unfortunately, Murray had poor health throughout most of their time here, and was unable to be as active as he wished.

We have long been aware that God sent our priests to us. We have often felt God gave Emmanuel parish to the priest for a purpose - our mutual spiritual growth. Murray and Sandra profoundly sensed this when Murray's underlying heart condition came to the fore. It seemed, God wanted him close to Toronto and the medical expertise it offered, not three hours away. They were blessed by the fellowship and love given them by Emmanuel.

In 2001 health issues prevented the Rev. Murray McColl from continuing his ministry at Emmanuel.

In 2002 God blessed us by sending the Rev. Dr. Peter Robinson and his young family. Peter and Tiffany came with newborn Sofia and two-year-old Benjamin. Anna came along two years later. The Rectory was in need of some interior decorating and preparation for the "little ones". A backyard fence had to be erected for their protection from busy Yonge Street.

Parishioner volunteers primarily did the refurbishing of the rectory interior. In July 2004 the McGolpin Hall

renovations were started by parishioner volunteers. (Note: William McGolpin, was the man who had been worshipping at Emmanuel, Hanlan's Point the longest and who provided lunch for the closing service).

2003-2004 saw the return of a Wycliffe student, Ed Haley, to be mentored. Among other things he oversaw the re-emergence of Vacation Bible School. A tremendous success with lots of parishioner participation!

Peter Robinson continued the Alpha Courses and started new courses led by himself and others such as:

- How to Read the Bible
- Prayer Course
- Life Keys Course on Spiritual Gifts
- Short courses for Adults.
(St. Theodore of Canterbury, North York, and Emmanuel became satellite locations for courses run in conjunction with Wycliffe College Lay Diploma programme).
- And many more during the years from 2002 through 2011.

During the Visioning Process in 2003-2004 we developed Key Purposes for Emmanuel:

Parish Life

To be a dynamic community that is welcoming and caring to all people and that has fun as we grow together.

Prayer

Prayer is absolutely essential to the life of our community.

Holy Spirit

To recognize and use the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to each one of us to build a vibrant community.

Mission

To prayerfully and financially support and personally encourage those who are called to take the good news of Jesus to the wider community in this country and overseas.

Faith Development

To enable every person who comes into our community to mature in vital relationship with Jesus Christ.

Healing

To be agents, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of the healing ministry of Jesus leading to physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness.

Worship

To worship in such a way that people are drawn into a deeper relationship with God who is glorified through our praise and thanksgiving.

Outreach

To actively discern God's will in meeting needs in the name of Jesus throughout our local community.

Under Peter Robinson's ministry Emmanuel was a place where learning was promoted and encouraged as people searched to go deeper in their understanding of God and their relationship with Jesus.

The sermons were published on the web site and Sermon Series at special times of the year were popular.

We were blessed to have several Wycliffe students who Peter supervised and mentored. He involved others to meet with them, pray for and encourage them. The students were given the responsibility of running the annual

Vacation Bible Camp, a major focus every summer and considered a main outreach to the community around us.

With the help of a grant from the Diocese, the Christian Education Centre underwent some major renovations to create a larger meeting area for the Sunday School and other groups.

The rectory underwent a few renovations mainly accomplished through Peter who was quite skilled (*among his many other gifts*) at building. He installed a bathroom in the rectory basement and replaced the carpet on the main floor with wood.

In the winter months Peter made a skating rink. With the help of some neighbours to maintain it, all the children in the neighbourhood were welcome and had lots of fun learning to skate and play hockey.

Messy Church was started to encourage families to come on a Saturday to spend time learning about God, participating together doing a craft and enjoying a meal.

The Annual September BBQs were another outreach event for the community and families from VBC often came and participated in the fun and fellowship. Tiffany Robinson was instrumental in developing new and innovative ways to involve and encourage the children in Sunday School and helped develop the “Explorer Program”.

Peter Robinson was appointed as Professor of Proclamation, Worship and Ministry at Wycliffe College in 2011 and they moved to Toronto.

We have been blessed by our Interim priests between incumbents and while Murray was ill. Here are the names of those who have served at Emmanuel over the years:

- The Rev. Joe Wright
- The Rev. Don Beatty
- The Rev. Ted Briffet
- The Rev. Canon Bill Riesberry
- The Rev. Paul Walker

We are so grateful for their ministry and contribution to the life of Emmanuel.

The Rev. Canon Chris King (*Cathy, his wife had recently passed away*) came to be our new pastor in February 2012. His daughter Clare and his newly adopted dog, Sunny, came to live in the rectory with him. Once again we were blessed with a man God called to bring healing, pastoral care and the love of God to our parish. In July 2017, he married Erica who is a wonderful and very welcome addition to the Emmanuel Church family.

Chris, very quickly, was loved by all who came in contact with him. He met people on the street as he walked with Sunny, in the local pub and wherever he went. Clare has been a great help with children's activities and at Vacation Bible Camp. She provides ideas and energy for games and activities with the kids that us old folks could not possibly begin to contemplate!

The Men's Breakfasts restarted at the rectory as well as two Growing Groups held Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The Wednesday morning group meet at senior residences to accommodate some of our senior parishioners who moved there. Once a month they bring Communion and conduct a service for the residents.

In May 2013, Sheila Craig retired for the last time as Administrative Assistant after many years of service. What a great celebration was held in her honour!!

Kaili Kinnon who came to organize Vacation Bible Camp in the summer of 2012 was then hired as our Family Worker, Worship Leader in the fall of 2012. In June 2013 she took on additional duties as Parish Office Administrator. The parish was blessed to have such a talented and energetic young lady. She left Emmanuel to work as Youth Coordinator at St. Clement's Church in Toronto.

Canon Chris King joined the ministry of Emmanuel in February 2012. He told friends, "I inherited a church mostly of older people with young hearts. My experience is that the people of the church are more than that. They have young hearts and are devoted to Jesus Christ our Lord. We see this in many volunteers who work tirelessly to complete the many tasks needed for the church to function. The growth of the music group and the congregation's openness to liturgical renewal are a blessing to us all. Emmanuel is a great church to be part of, as it has been down the years past and will be (we hope and pray) for the years to come".

Pat Merchant, a most efficient Parish Secretary, came in March 2015 to keep us in order. God provides for our needs.

In every decade there have been many people who have contributed above and beyond the call of duty. Their names could fill this booklet. God knows who they are! But few have been here for all of the 50 years we celebrated in 2014. Lou Boswell, who organized the dinner for the beginning service in 1964 also organized the dinner for the 50th anniversary. Her husband Lionel, who was instrumental in the initiation of the building of Emmanuel and was well known in the community of Richvale, is with the Lord. God bless them for their service, faithfulness and love.

Two themes stand out in God's work at Emmanuel: the community physically working together, and ongoing scripture-based child and adult education.

While Emmanuel may be the youngest congregation in Richmond Hill in terms of years, it has established itself in terms of Christian spirit and historical importance. Its unique origins which include the founding efforts of the Women's Auxiliary, its self-help building projects and emphasis on spiritual growth in Jesus, have created for Emmanuel Anglican Church an historical tradition beyond its years.

Indeed, GOD IS WITH US! We really don't know what the total plan is for Emmanuel. However, thank God, He does.

New Emmanuel Anglican Church For Richvale Area

Presently meeting in a portable on the site, the church will receive the interior fittings, as well as the name and traditions of the Emmanuel Church at Hanlan's Point which was built in the early 1900's and razed in 1959.

The Parish of Emmanuel was not always located in Richvale. There is a long and colorful history associated with the name Emmanuel for this particular name was associated for some fifty years or more with the people of Hanlan's Point on Toronto Island. For a number of years previous to 1906 the Brotherhood of St. Andrew conducted open air services at Hanlan's Point under the direction of the Rev. H. C. Dixon the original minister. A church was then erected and the Parish of Emmanuel, Hanlan's Point came into being. From 1906 to 1956 a long list of ministers served the people of Hanlan's Point.

In 1956, due to the city of Toronto acquiring residences on the island for the purpose of turning the islands into a recreational centre, the board of Emmanuel Church was faced with the prospect of Emmanuel Church disappearing from the scene. It was decided to approach the then new parishes struggling to organize to see if they would perpetuate the name Emmanuel and its spiritual life. St Barnabas mission, located in Richvale was approached and by mutual consent it was decided to not only perpetuate the name Emmanuel but to provide a church home for many people whose lives were so much a part of Emmanuel, Hanlan's Point.

The final service was held on June 21, 1959, at Hanlan's Point at which time the handing over of the parish church,

its spiritual life, memorials and furnishings to Emmanuel Church, Richvale took place, by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Wells. An annual anniversary service is held for the people of Emmanuel, Hanlan's Point at the new location of Richvale.

The transfer of name and furnishings was not without problems. To move the church from its location on Hanlan's was considered but was a physical impossibility so the men of Richvale removed the furnishings, which were used in the portable building supplied by the Anglican Church Extension Board. There was not enough room for everything in the portable so some of the furnishings were stored and some loaned to other parishes.

From 1959 to 1962 the parish has grown under the direction of Rev. Edward Morley and at present under Rev. Fred. C. Jackson, who at the age of 67, is to become a Priest in the Anglican Church, when most of his age and experience are looking forward to retirement. Now there unfolds for us another of the wondrous words of our Lord, as the new building goes forward to completion we are reminded of the meaning of Emmanuel — "God with us."

(excerpt from the
Liberal)

October 4, 1964