



June 30, 2020

## Dance with Him from the Start

By The Rev. David Crosby

I have been using this time of COVID-19 and forced stay at home physical distancing to focus on my home office – cleaning the space, sorting papers, cataloging books, purging files — all those things left undone for far too long!

And in the midst of this, a “simple gift” from a clergy colleague and friend appeared and inspired me to craft this meditation. I thank Randy for inviting me to share these thoughts with you.

In July 2012, I started as your Associate Rector during the interim after Sam Faeth’s retirement and before Randy Alexander was called as the tenth Rector of Immanuel. Mary Sulerud, the interim Rector and a long-time friend, and I had shared liturgical groundings elsewhere and knew how to “dance with one another” from the start.

The day I arrived at Immanuel and opened my office door the first time, I found a “To My Successor” letter from the previous Associate Rector dated April 2011, a full fifteen months before I arrived. Peter Ackerman, a fan of U.S. Presidential history, knew the custom that the soon-to-be “former” would leave a note in the desk for their successor.

Peter wrote and assured me that Immanuel was wonderful, citing what a privilege it is to serve here. He included his business card, saying he was just a call or email away to offer me help of any kind. His letter was then, and remains now, a true gem!

My start with you was about initiation, questions, and experiences that began a process of self-discovery, understanding, and integration. I understood my interim role was to be a generalist and a “jack-of-all-trades.” I observed the overall rhythm, life, and flow of the parish. When Randy arrived, I pledged my support to follow his lead and offered input. We developed our own rhythm where we shared many ministry functions and “divided and conquered” on others.

I was fortunate to have five months with you as a deacon to establish my bearings as a new kind of liturgical minister. There were so many "firsts" for me as a new clergy person in your midst – celebrating my first Eucharist, presenting confirmands to a Bishop, working with couples whose wedding I officiated, presiding over funerals and committals, baptizing my first infant at Easter, and trying different Holy Week observances.

You are a "teaching church." You mentor VTS seminarians and take international students under your wing. You help form newly ordained clergy.

Sam Sheridan arrives this week as your next new Assistant Rector. He understands you some and you may think you know him, but his growth in ministry is only beginning. Your work together is far-reaching and ongoing. I invite you to "dance with him" from the start, just as you partnered with me. Learn from each other and love one another.

Why do I share this? You marked me indelibly. I learned from you to make "Grace and Gratitude" an integral expression of thanksgiving. You exhibit a Christ-like love through active engagement of the other.

You were everything Peter told me you would be. I grew so much in my ministry with and because of you. We worked well together in our shared journey of faith. The time since being ordained a priest has filled me with delight and great joy! So now, I ask you to do that for Sam, just as I now charge Sam to be open and eager for you.

I will always treasure your Grace, and you will forever have my Gratitude for a most amazing first call. You abide with me, as I hope I remain with you. Always. Good luck and Godspeed to you and Sam Sheridan.