

Fifth Sunday of Easter - May 3 2026

First Reading: Acts 7.55-60;

Psalm 31.1-5,15-16; ,

Second Reading: 1 Peter 2.2-10;

Gospel: John 14.1-14

What is your legacy?

There is something deeply human about wanting our lives to matter — not only in the present moment, but beyond it.

Not in a grand way, but in the quiet hope that something of who we are, and what we love, might endure.

Today's readings provide a few images or truths that point to our legacies as Christians.

In the Book of Acts, we meet Stephen - the first Christian martyr— full of grace and the Holy Spirit. At the end of his life, he entrusts himself completely to God: *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”*

And even in his death, Stephen's witness shapes what comes next. In Acts, we learn that Saul of Tarsus, who witnessed Stephen's stoning, eventually becomes Paul, who is converted and carries the Good News beyond Jerusalem into the world.

The story of Stephen's witness points us to a first truth: **A life given to God is never lost — it is multiplied.**

We may not see the fruit of our faithfulness, yet it is bearing fruit all the same.

In John's Gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples at a moment of their uncertainty: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled.”*

He doesn't offer them a road map. He offers them himself: *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”*

The life of faith is not about mastering the route. It is about trusting the One who leads us. And that trust is not only personal — it is communal.

In the First Letter of Peter, we hear this beautiful image:

“Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.”

Each of us is a living stone — part of something that began long before us and which will continue long after us.

Which leads us to a second truth today: **The Church is always a work across generations.**

We are here today because someone else believed in this place. Someone gave; someone made room for those they would never meet.

Some of those gifts were visible. Others were quiet decisions - acts of faith made with the future in mind.

And because of them, Emmanuel church is here.

Sometimes legacies come from the most unexpected places.

There's a remarkable story about Mary Goodman, a free Black woman who lived in the mid-19th century in New Haven, Connecticut. She worked as a laundress, washing clothes to earn her living.

She had no wealth or status – just quiet, faithful discipline.

When she died in 1872, she left all that she had, a total of \$5,000, to establish a scholarship at what was then Yale's school of theology for "*young men ... preparing for the Gospel ministry, preference being always given to young men of color.*"

She spent her life washing clothes...

and in the end, she helped clothe the Church with future leaders.

She likely never met the people her gift would serve. She would not hear the sermons they would preach, or experience the congregations they would guide, or the lives they would touch.

Her story reminds us that legacy is not about the size of a gift - It is about the direction of a life.

What do you want to be remembered for? What values do you wish to pass on to others?

A life given to God is never lost. It is multiplied. Especially in a Church that is always a work across generations.

And so, the same invitation comes to members in parishes today.

Not because anything is lacking —but because something living is meant to grow.

In recent months, your parish leaders have taken a small but meaningful step in that direction by focusing on strengthening Emmanuel Church's endowment and the beginning of an Emmanuel Church Legacy Society.

It is a simple way to recognize those who include Emmanuel Church in their long-term plans — not for recognition, but as an act of faith for the future.

The truth is, what we give today through our pledges and offerings sustains the life of the church now. But what is given through legacy — through endowment — sustains the church for generations to come.

It ensures that worship continues; ministry continues, that this spiritual home remains here for people we will never meet.

It ensures a future that is secure, a place that is prepared, a spiritual home that endures beyond what we can see.

So, the question becomes:

WHAT PART OF THIS SPIRITUAL HOUSE WILL STAND BECAUSE WE WERE HERE?

For some, that means showing up faithfully; for others, offering time, gifts, or leadership.

And for some, it may also mean making a lasting gift through a will or other estate plan as an expression of gratitude.

This is a way of saying: *“Emmanuel Church matters to me. And I want it to matter for others.”*

Because one day, others will stand where you now stand. They will pray where you have prayed. They will seek hope where you have found it.

And the question is not whether that future will come — but whether you will help make room for it.

So let us live — and give — in such a way that when our part is finished, the witness continues, the doors remain open, welcoming, hospitable to all, and the Gospel is still being proclaimed—

Not because we were remembered, but because, through us, Christ is remembered...

The way, the truth, the life...

God with us. Emmanuel.

AMEN.