

THE ALMOND TREE

NEWSLETTER OF IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL



March 2019



In This Issue...

FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR 2

Lent: A Time to Connect Deeply to the Heart of God

by the Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR INTERNATIONAL ANGLICAN CONGREGATION 3

by the Rev. Peter Gachira, Vicar

RECORD TURNOUT FOR SHROVE TUESDAY 4

A GIFT FROM HEAVEN 5

An interview with Chris von Schoening, Immanuel's long-time volunteer, as she prepares to retire from her 13-year church gardening ministry.

MISSION FOR DIGNITY 8

The Rev. John E. Hogg describes the reasons behind — and rewards of — this annual EYC initiative.

HILL HAPPENINGS 9

Journey to the Cross through the Eyes of Children Exhibit at Seminary Memorial Chapel 9

Meals on Wheels needs you 10

You can now make Easter Flower and Music Dedications online 10

The Haiti Micah Project needs more sponsors for children 11

LENT AND HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE OF SERVICES 12

Lent: A Time to Connect Deeply to the Heart of God



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During the season of Lent, many choose to give up something or add a discipline to their daily routine. What is the point of such a practice? While we all may have different ways we connect with our Lord and God, the purpose of giving up something we crave or adding something that makes us focus our time differently for a season is to draw us closer to the one who loves the whole world. We take up our crosses daily and during Lent to bring us closer to the heart of our God who loved us so much that he sent his Son to take up his cross and to live and die as one of us. Drawing closer to God is not something that happens by osmosis or even by only showing up to church. Our faith requires regular practice and devotion, so Lent provides an opportunity to start practicing again.

If you have not yet had the chance to add a discipline or have struggled with one you've considered, it is not too late to start. After all, Lent is a time when we realize that we are too dependent on our schedules and our cravings, and we are often motivated by things that only leave us feeling empty in the end. When we sin and fall short, as we do again and again, our gracious Lord is merciful and slow to anger and ever forgiving. So, with God's help, we try again.

One recommendation I have for a Lenten discipline this year is something that we should be doing throughout the whole year. Delving daily into Scripture is a way to connect deeply to the heart of God because it is the God-inspired word, the recorded stories of our identity and faith. Though ancient, Holy Scripture is active and living because every time it is read, the Spirit truly breathes through and works through it to transform lives and hearts. What better way for us to understand how God works in our lives (and has worked since the beginning!). What better way for us to know how to respond, as Christians, to our neighbors, including our enemies. What better way for us to be fed with something that will last, spiritual nourishment for the journey ahead.

The nightly routine at the Rickenbaker house includes reading Eleanor a Bible story. Even at 7 months old, she is learning the stories of our faith; she hears about her brother David who, though small, bravely confronted a giant out of his trust in God. She hears about her sister Ruth through whom God worked to transform pain and hardship into joy because of Ruth's faithfulness. And most especially, Eleanor is learning about Jesus, the one who came for her, who is her friend and Savior, who died for her and rose again, that her life (now and for eternity) might be forever changed. James and I need to be reminded of these stories, too, and we feel blessed to be able to share in them with our daughter.

“Our identity and our understanding of who we are as children of God is strengthened when we know the stories of our faith.”

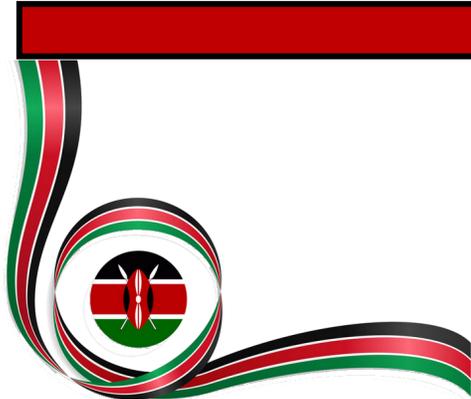
Lent is a season of repentance, of reflection, and of realizing our incredible dependence on our Savior. Moreover, it is a time to remember who we are as followers of Jesus. Our identity and our understanding of who we are as children of God is strengthened when we know the stories of our faith. We can study them by ourselves or with our families or in groups at church. One way you can further enrich your weekly worship is by reading the Scripture before Sunday mornings. You can easily find the readings in advance by checking out: <http://www.lectionarypage.net>. Spend some time each week reading the Old Testament, Psalm, Epistle, and Gospel readings in advance and looking up a little background. Jot down your questions, your realizations, the ways in which the Word inspires you and the ways that it challenges you. Then, when you come on Sunday mornings, you will be able to hear it with new ears and eyes.

May this Lenten season be one of nourishment as we journey to the foot of the cross and fall upon our knees before the one who gave it all. Our loving Lord desires an active relationship with us, so even in our busyness and even in our brokenness, the least we can do is get up and try again.

In Christ,

Rachel

The Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker
Assistant Rector



The International Anglican Congregation at Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill

The Rev. Peter Gachira, Vicar

The International Anglican Congregation of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill serves the African community and the wider community of faith in the DMV area. Our main objective is to develop and grow a vibrant community that impacts and transforms us in our spiritual journey. We envision an extension of the Anglican Church in our land transforming

humanity, equipping them to serve Christ, with a mission to empower God's people for holistic ministry inspired by God.

The goal of this ministry is to address the unique needs of members of the Anglican Church from Kenya and other countries living in the DC metro area and to ensure a continued Christian fellowship, spiritual growth and social connectivity. The international Anglican Congregation therefore caters to the spiritual and pastoral care of its members and the international community providing a platform for fellowship and participation in the church.

As a diverse community that is rooted in God's love, the IAC is called to offer all people a sense of identity, purpose and community they seek. In a society that is increasingly diverse and to some extent divided, our fundamental task is to create an environment of trust, kindness and safety; and to be a church that welcomes the stranger, embracing people from all generations, cultures and social situations as members of the church who are worthy of love, respect and support of the entire Christian community.

In the past two years members of the International Anglican Congregation have developed intimacy with Christ and with one another and have become a strong community of faith because of their relational aspect. The congregation has a strong pastoral presence in the D.C metro area, with numerous opportunities to practice ministry through evangelism, pastoral care and missions.

In addition to our worship service, we have been able to administer sacraments to our members including baptism, and on February 10, 2019, four of our members were confirmed. With the use of social media, we continue to engage our members through, "a chapter a day" Bible study, Google Hangout Bible Forum (Wednesday at 7:00p.m.), and Weekly Prayer every Friday at 6:00p.m. As part of evangelism we are able to organize monthly home fellowships in which we invite friends for a meal and prayers.

During this season of Lent, we prepare ourselves for the celebration of death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, purifying ourselves from sin and selfishness through self-examination and repentance, prayer, fasting and self-denial, and reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. As we walk through the journey of Lent, we are reminded of the 40 days of Jesus spent in the wilderness and how he was tempted, yet through the power of the

Holy Spirit, remained faithful to God and overcame the devil. These will not only create in us the desire to do God's will, but will help the members to remain faithful and obedient to our baptismal covenant, our calling and mission.

As we reflect on Christ's temptations and his victory, we not only seek to deepen our faith, but we intend to share the Good News with other people by reminding them of God's love through compassion and the acts of kindness. We will visit people in their homes and invite them in our houses for prayers, food and fellowship. We plan to participate more in various events in support of our community.



According to The Rev. Dr. William Countryman, "...the great purpose of human existence is to enjoy communion with God and with God's creation. We are called to portray our richest and most joyous kind of human life by loving the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbors as we love ourselves (Mark 12:28-31). This, however, is not automatic. Like every human excellence, we have to practice it, reflect on it, grow into it, making ourselves open and available for the conversation with the transcendent and with one another."

Our upcoming activities for Lent are as follows:

40 DAYS CHALLENGE:

In this program we seek to revisit our series on spiritual disciplines.

Week 1-2: The inward disciplines (prayers, fasting, meditation and study)

Week 3-4: The outward disciplines (Simplicity, solitude, submission and service)

Week 5-6: The corporate disciplines (confession, worship, guidance and celebration)

Week 7: Holy Week

Shrove Tuesday: Record Attendance!

A good time was had by all at this year's annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, held Tuesday, March 5th in the Zabriskie Parish Hall of Immanuel. According to organizer Tom Kerns, we had a record turn-out of **nearly 170** adults, children, and teens dining on a mountain of pancakes — including gluten-free and vegan varieties — pounds of bacon and plenty of syrup.

The following day, Ash Wednesday services were held at noon, 6:00p.m. and 7:30p.m. in Zabriskie Chapel.



Cameron, the Rev. John, Peter and Silas Hogg donned festive Mardi Gras beads.



A Gift From Heaven

Chris von Schoening, Immanuel's long-time Memorial Garden volunteer, was gracious enough to grant Aleta an interview, as she prepares to retire from her 13-year church gardening ministry.



“Hi...wanted you to know that I’m dropping off some wood chips for Chris -- you know, the garden guru -- by the holly berry tree...she’ll know where it is”, was the start of a typical telephone message that I take for Chris von Schoening, Immanuel’s long-time volunteer horticulturalist extraordinaire -- who prefers to simply be called a “Church Gardener”. After thirteen years of full-time devotion to the Zabriskie Memorial Garden, she’s decided to step down. Tom Hewson, former Senior Warden of the Vestry, will lead the new *Grounds and Gardens Team*; a group of parishioner volunteers who, along with several outside vendors, will care for the garden. This article is my feeble attempt to showcase her decades-long commitment to this hands-on ministry.

Like the aforementioned wood chips, all types of plant materials – and sometimes, plants and seeds -- are donated to Immanuel by way of “give this to Chris”. A tall, slim, slightly shy woman who seems to have both a photographic memory and encyclopedic knowledge of every seedling, sapling and shrub ever planted in the Zabriskie Chapel’s Memorial Garden, she once told me that she purposely “plants for each view from every window” of the chapel and parish hall. Having cultivated the garden for well over a decade, parishioners, associates and even neighbors up Quaker Lane and down Seminary Road know Chris by name. Ever resourceful, she has the keen eye to see trash as a treasure for the garden. Where we see rotting pumpkins after Immanuel’s annual pumpkin patch sales are over, she sees bird food and fertilizer for the garden’s shrubs and flowering trees. Chris sees what needs to be done and quietly sets about accomplishing the task herself; be it planting bushes to – on numerous occasions – digging graves for cremains prior to funerals and committal services.

The impromptu giver of *everything* – from little bouquets, to advance notice of when the camellias will be in bloom, to explanations of why she plants milkweed (answer: to attract monarch butterflies to the front of the Parish Hall), to copious amounts of time working in the garden -- is about to retire from the garden ministry. Father Randy asked if I could conduct an interview to highlight her contributions and ministry. First I mentioned the wood chips, then I asked for a phone interview. Chris countered that, since she was coming in to Zabriskie to volunteer for fire watch duty that afternoon – a duty that our newly-installed fire panel has thankfully made obsolete – she gave me the wonderful opportunity to conduct a brief interview in person. As always, Chris was here at the ready.

Before we dive into what brought you to volunteer for Immanuel as its grounds manager, would you please describe your interested in gardening ?

“Agriculture training – specifically, breeding and crossbreeding of plants; I specialized in this training at my university in (my native) Germany. For a long time, someone in my family always had a knowledge of and interest in agriculture. With others in our neighborhood, my mother would work in the community garden -- sometimes. She was more of an artist and dressmaker...my daughter (Alexis) does all of the sewing now.”

With a smile, Chris added, “ She *inherited that* from her mother and grandmother.”

What should prospective volunteers know about this work before taking on such a challenge?

“Learning about all of the things that need to be done. It’ll be easier with the gorillas (*Gorilla Tree Service LLC*); I’m very happy with the gorillas. They’ve worked here for 3 years., and know which branches need to be trimmed, and (all of) the work that needs to be done.”

When asked for another example, Chris suddenly stops herself, then takes the question one step further. “You know, my concern is the future of the garden. When I started working in the garden under George Currie, people would complain ‘*There’s no color, only green stuff*’ so I started planting more blooming plants, adding some color. And I transferred some plants that have been donated by people. And some (flowering) trees were donated by people in honor of someone.”

“Now we have color; but I want people to think about how the garden will look in twenty years. You know, expand the burial ground and fix the pond – or at least make a decision about that pond.”

Sorry, but I’ve got to ask: Why are you leaving *now*?

“I started in 2006 -- thirteen years. I took over from George Currie when he was 80, and I just turned 80, so maybe it’s time.” I asked her about George’s tenure: “How long was George the church gardener? Oh, I don’t know. At least 25 years. George got a Beautification Award (for the garden from *The Alexandria Beautification Commission*), and when he received that award he’d been working on the garden for over 25 years.”

What’s been the funniest thing that’s happened, and what fun things occur?

“Planting something and getting something else. I once planted a special tree and it turned out to be something completely different from what it was supposed to be. It’s happened to me. I plant something from seed, and something completely different and unexpected would sprout up.”

Chris shakes her head as I laugh, then continues; “I used to joke about things with Warren Phillips, who was a volunteer who always came because I wanted second opinions about things; when I lost trees to diseases, things like that. His son David has worked in the garden at times, beginning when he was a student at NOVA. George hired him and Curt Wannamaker.”

“For the first few years after George left, we had a few work days. Warren would be here, a few ladies would pull the English ivy that went wild growing up the trees, and I’d cook soup and serve lunch...those (work days with lunch) were nice, but they sort of died away.”

What’s been the most surprising discovery?

“Other people, what everyone else gave and planted before me.



Chris “...plants for each view for every window”. Both windows of the Rector’s office have views of early Spring daffodils.



Immanuelites aren’t the only ones to enjoy the Memorial Garden.



(Reflecting on her garden ministry), ***“It was a gift from heaven, really. I have to use it; I have to share it with everyone who comes here... “***

And every time I touch something, I think about them, and I think about George Currie. The interest I had in the garden, in the beginning, was from George, but it was given to me...” (Chris stops, takes a very long pause, and with tear-filled eyes and a very soft voice, revealed) “It was a gift from heaven, really. I have to use it; I have to share it with everyone who comes here... I felt obligated, and still feel that way.”

What’s next for you, Chris?

“I’ll still do the work of caring for the Memorial Garden until his (Tom’s) team is in place because no one else knows what needs to be done.” With a smile she adds, “You know, I always wanted to be a Sunday School Teacher, but when I was the Church Gardener, well, I knew that I couldn’t do *both*.”

We walk outside to look at the garden, her labor of love, and a few steps after we turned the corner, I notice Chris making a beeline for a three-foot pile of wood chips, hiding beneath the heavy shade of a medium-sized holly berry tree. Chris saw from a distance what I didn’t see from less than four-feet away. “Yeah, this is good mulch; really good quality. I’ll use it to....” and she rattled-off at least four uses for the mulch that she’ll tend to herself. Immediately.

- Aleta Y. Powell

Several of the volunteers mentioned in this article have passed: Mr. George Currie died in 2016, and Mr. C. Warren Phillips died in 2018. Cover photo of Chris courtesy of Hance Haney. All other photos — which were shot in mid-March — were taken by Aleta.

Mission for Dignity 2019

The Rev. John E. Hogg, Assistant Rector for Children, Youth, and Family Ministries, describes the reasons behind — and rewards of — this annual EYC (Episcopal Youth Community) initiative.

We find them on street corners, at traffic intersections, in metro stations and various other locations. They are the men and women who rely on the kindness of strangers to help them simply make it another day. Many are homeless or temporarily living at shelters, but for whatever reason, all of them are in a situation that none of us would find desirable. Regardless of the reason, every man, woman or child on *the street* desire to start the day with one simple thing: to be acknowledged, to be seen as a person. They want dignity, something which is understandably difficult to feel or maintain when you are relying on the kindness of strangers.

In our Baptismal vows, we promise to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. One way we can strive to live fully into this vow is by helping others see or find the dignity in themselves, especially when they are feeling lost. We can help lift them up, if only for a brief moment, and remind them that they are not completely lost. We can remind each of them that they have value in this world and a place beyond their hardships. Therefore, the EYC (Episcopal Youth Community) of Immanuel is once again enacting its outreach ministry. It provides the opportunity for all parishioners to offer the homeless a simple reminder that they are not forgotten, while also giving them some basic essentials to hopefully help their day shine a little brighter.

With the funds raised at its annual BBQ, and from a generous contribution from the Outreach Committee, the EYC will provide individual care packages that contains socks, nail clippers, assorted snacks, bandaids, gum and notes of encouragement. These care packages will be neatly packed into quart-sized zip lock bags that can easily fit into a briefcase, car glove compartment, purse, or backpack. Starting Sunday, March 31st, you can find them in 3 locations: the narthexes of Zabriskie Chapel and Immanuel Chapel and outside the door of the EYC room. The care packages will be available in these locations as long as supplies last. It is our hope that you will grab as many as you would like and as often as you would like and carry them with you on your way around town, to work, etc. That way, when you do see a man or woman in need you can hand them one of these packets and make that brief connection that could change their whole day.

Be aware that there is a chance that some who receive a care package from you may not respond in kind. Part of respecting the dignity of every human being is giving them the autonomy to say “no”. That is perfectly ok and normal. We can remind each homeless individual that he or she still has value and a place beyond their hardships. However, there is also the very real chance that you will have a rich and humbling encounter with someone who is extremely grateful for the gesture. You never know, this brief encounter just may change your day for the better as well.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

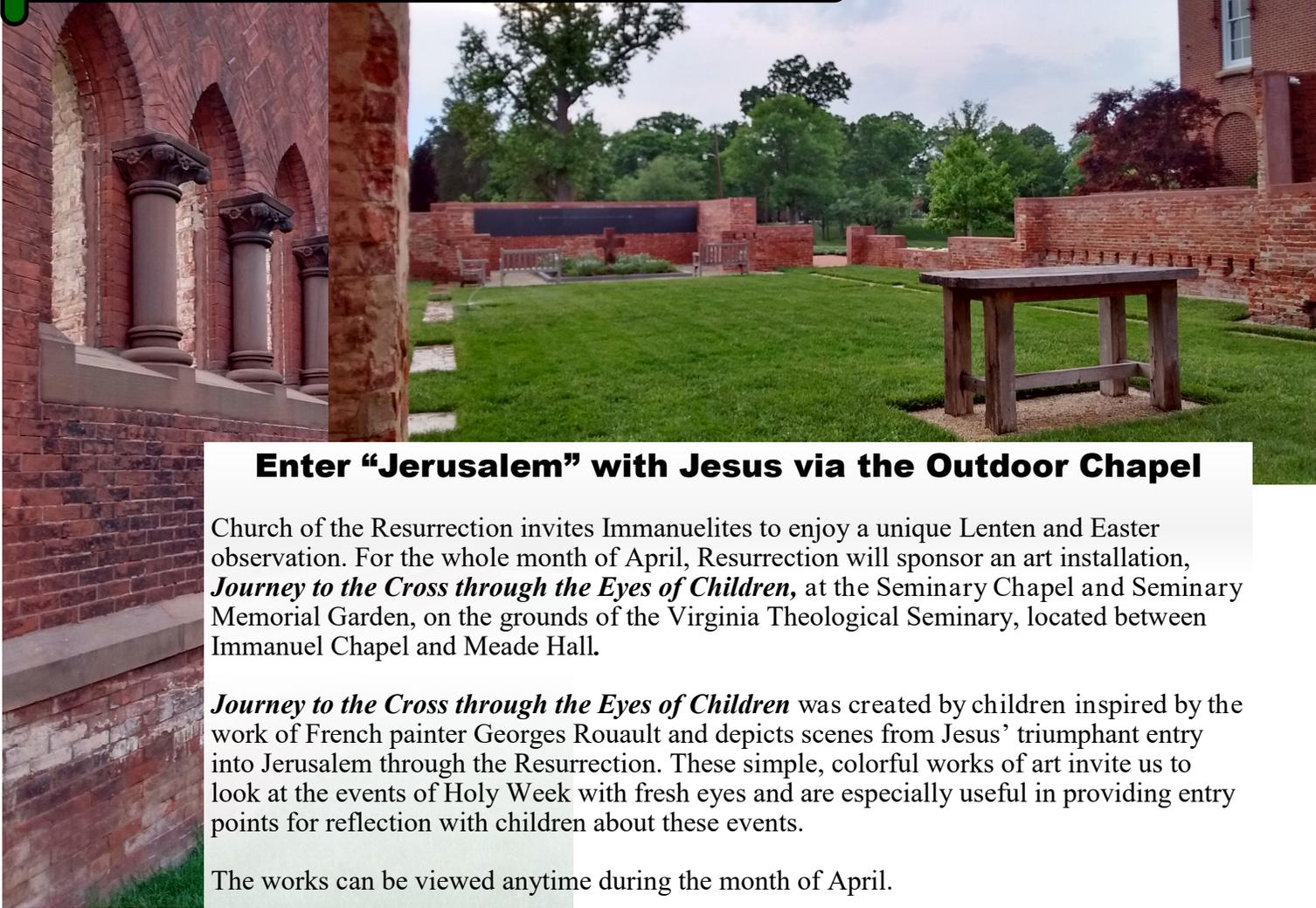
John

The Rev. John E. Hogg



HILL HAPPENINGS

The Special Event Calendar of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill



Enter “Jerusalem” with Jesus via the Outdoor Chapel

Church of the Resurrection invites Immanuelites to enjoy a unique Lenten and Easter observation. For the whole month of April, Resurrection will sponsor an art installation, *Journey to the Cross through the Eyes of Children*, at the Seminary Chapel and Seminary Memorial Garden, on the grounds of the Virginia Theological Seminary, located between Immanuel Chapel and Meade Hall.

Journey to the Cross through the Eyes of Children was created by children inspired by the work of French painter Georges Rouault and depicts scenes from Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem through the Resurrection. These simple, colorful works of art invite us to look at the events of Holy Week with fresh eyes and are especially useful in providing entry points for reflection with children about these events.

The works can be viewed anytime during the month of April.

SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY MEET-N-GREET BROWN BAG LUNCHEON

to discuss Programming

Monday, April 1st at Noon
Zabriskie Parish Hall

BEVERAGES AND DESSERTS PROVIDED

To RSVP, send an email to Karen Besser, Senior Ministry and Fellowship, at Karen.Besser@gmail.com by Monday, March 25th.



Letters of Faith from Prison, our Sunday Lenten Series



Please plan on joining our Sunday morning Lenten series, which focuses on several pivotal letters written by Christians who had been imprisoned during their ministry. These figures will include St. Paul, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Martin Luther King, Jr., among others. We will read passages from their letters, and additional reading suggestions will be offered. Look for more information in the weekly bulletins, the e-blast, and the next *The Almond Tree*.

- The Rev. J. Randolph



FREE CHILDREN'S BOOKS: For the next week, gently-used children's books are yours for the taking next to the EYC Room in the the basement of Zabriskie Chapel. Feel free to take as many or as few as you'd like, courtesy of Father Randy's "Let's clean this hallway up" initiative. Any and all books that remain after Sunday, March 31st will be donated to Goodwill Industries, Arlington.

MEALS ON WHEELS : One of Immanuel's oldest ministries is Meals on Wheels (MOW). Immanuel volunteers and others provide meals to Alexandria's homebound seniors, who otherwise are unable to provide adequately for themselves. Under the auspices of the city's Senior Services Center and in partnership with Jeffrey's Catering, Immanuel volunteers deliver two meals (one hot and one cold) prepared by the catering company to 45 or more senior citizens once a month. The yoke of this ministry is light; two hours per month on the first Thursday of every month. Over the past 6 months or so, we've lost a few of our stalwart volunteers. If you are interested in helping out, please contact me at ddhenry1@gmail.com or Ollie Patton at OBPatton@comcast.net.



<https://www.immanuel-on-the-hill.org/easter-flower-and-music-dedications.html>



CLICK HERE!

EASTER FLOWER AND MUSIC DEDICATIONS 2019



**SECOND SUNDAY POTLUCK FELLOWSHIP
FORUM, PALM SUNDAY, April 14th, 6:30 p.m.**

Church of the Resurrection invites Immanuel's parishioners to join them in the Parish Hall the second Sunday of each month for an engaging potluck fellowship forum. We will set-up at 6p.m, enjoy a potluck in the Parish Hall at 6:30p.m., then view clips from the 1999 movie "American Beauty". Cleanup will begin by 8:30p.m.



SPONSORS NEEDED FOR HAITIAN CHILDREN: The Haiti Micah Project (HMP) is one of Immanuel's long-standing outreach ministries that works with orphaned and at-risk children in Haiti, many of whom are among the poorest of the poor. Over the last decade, HMP has dealt with homeless refugees, a cholera epidemic, civil strife, and continuing economic hardships. Its ministry includes a meal program that provides a hot nutritious lunch to over 400 children each day, an orphanage for 29 children, and educational stipends in a country where education is not free or readily available.

Donations of any amount are needed, but parishioners are invited to sponsor a child for one year at a dollar a day (\$365). Look for a sign-up board on the Usher's Table in the Zabriskie Narthex. Refer any questions to Jim Snow (jamesbsnow@verizon.net). Thank you.



CALLING ALL GRILL MASTERS! Do you like hanging around large grills with friends, cooking BBQ and pretending to call it work? Then we need you! The EYC (Episcopal Youth Community) is hosting its annual Parish BBQ on **May 4th** and we invite anyone who wants to help cook and prepare **authentic, homemade, Southern BBQ** to join us on Friday **May 3rd**. We will gather several hours before sunrise — allowing early-risers who wish to cook *before* starting their workday to participate — and cook all day and night. We welcome helping hands and all skill-levels that want to help us. For more information, and to express your interest, please contact The Rev. John Hogg (jhogg@icoh.net).



June 1, 2019

Save the Date

**DR. JANE TAVERNIER AND FRIENDS IN CONCERT
JUNE 1ST, ZABRISKIE CHAPEL AND PARISH HALL**

Want a new and perfect start to your summer entertainment? Save the date for an all-classical chamber music concert to benefit the Assisi Music Festival — Dr. Tavernier visits Assisi, Italy each year — and the Immanuel Choir. All involved welcome your generous support. Look for more details soon.



In Our April Issue:
 Holy Week by **The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander**

www.icoh.net

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Lent and Holy Week Worship



HOLY EUCHARIST, WEDNESDAYS MARCH 13 - APRIL 17	6:00 p.m.	Zabriskie Chapel
PALM SUNDAY, APRIL 14	8:00a.m.	Zabriskie Chapel
	10:15a.m.	Gather at the Old White Post Office, VTS Campus, for Bagpiper-led Palm Sunday Procession
	10:30a.m.	Immanuel Chapel
MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 18	7:30 p.m.	Immanuel Chapel
GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 19 Stations of the Cross Children's Liturgy Solemn Liturgy for Good Friday	Noon	Immanuel Chapel
	6:00 p.m.	Immanuel Chapel
	7:30p.m.	Immanuel Chapel
HOLY SATURDAY, APRIL 20 Liturgy of the Day The Great Vigil of Easter	8:30 a.m.	The Oratory Chapel of Immanuel Chapel
	7:30p.m.	Immanuel Chapel
EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 21	7:30a.m	Zabriskie Chapel
	9:15a.m.	Immanuel Chapel
	11:15am.	Immanuel Chapel