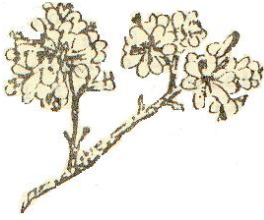


# THE ALMOND TREE

## Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill

The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr., Rector  
The Rev. David M. Crosby, Associate Rector  
Jennifer Addington, Editor



May 21, 2015

*"I said to the almond tree, 'Sister, speak to me of God.' And the almond tree blossomed." Nikos Kazantzakis*

### A MATURE CHRISTIAN

From time to time I try to browse the websites of other churches, both to see what they are up to and to gain new ideas and perspectives. Recently I was reading the qualifications a parish expected of its candidates for Vestry. Prominently on the list was the expectation that a candidate would be a *mature Christian*. I've been thinking about that off and on ever since.

On the one hand, I was quite impressed by that. Much as I love our Anglican tradition, and I really do, I'm afraid our tradition does not, in practice, encourage enough the growth into Christian maturity, the kind of which St. Paul was so clearly speaking (1 Corinthians 13:11). I'm afraid, to put it simply, we have for too long and too often set the bar of expectation too low. So it was refreshing to see spiritual maturity listed as an expectation and goal, especially for anyone presuming to engage in lay leadership in the congregation.

And yet, on the other hand, I began wondering how I, or anyone else, would define Christian maturity? Where would I begin? Where would you begin? Could I ever conceive of including myself in that category? If forced to define maturity I would list regular attendance at worship and reception of the Sacraments, basic familiarity with the Biblical story (particularly Christ's life, ministry, death, and resurrection) and the ability to tell the essentials of the Christian story to anyone who might ask, an ongoing life of prayer, some engagement with the poor and with outreach, and coming to view the totality of one's life in terms of being a child of God on a journey towards reunion with God and with other people. Central to all of this, in my view, is the regular confessing of where we fall short. Does this cover much of what that other parish had in mind in their requirements for a mature Christian? I have no idea.

But I am reminded of a very slippery slope here. It is not a great distance from holding up Christian maturity as a virtue and goal towards which we are all striving to claiming that one is, in fact, mature, and looking down upon those who have not yet ascended to that pinnacle. There is much room for abuse here, I would fear. I believe this may be why, at least in our better moments, that our tradition has not stressed this maturity even as much as we should have. We are historically wary of spiritual arrogance, of any position that says, "I have arrived!"

So we are left with a quandary – how do we hold up spiritual growth and maturity in Christ as an absolute necessity of the Christian life and of being a disciple of Jesus Christ while not encouraging spiritual arrogance and also leaving plenty of room for folks at all points on the journey?

Not too long ago I had the privilege of attending the funeral of someone I would consider to have been a mature Christian. I believe some advice he always offered speaks well to this balancing act. Jim Fuller, whom I first came to know when I was a Curate, regularly said anyone who had grasped the truth of the Gospel, of God's unconditional love and the message of Christ, should be like one beggar who tells another beggar where he has found bread. Amen, Jim, and thank you. My hope and prayer is that kind of humility is what we are striving for at Immanuel – a humility that leaves plenty of room for the doubter, and even the skeptic, while holding up growth in holiness, growth into the stature of Christ, as the goal.

I firmly hope, pray, and believe that Jim is now experiencing a kind of maturity in the nearer presence of God that he could never have experienced in this world. I thank him for his example and help along the way.

How many people might be grateful to *you* for your Christian witness and growth, especially if it is witnessed to in a humble way that simply says, "Come and see!"?

See you in Church. Randy+

**PASTORAL CARE CORNER:** Please remember these parishioners in your prayers: Please remember these parishioners in your prayers:

Kay Neer, Mary, Bill Frye, Chris Stanek, Jacquie, Warren Phillips, Morgan, Cadence, Catherine, Dana Hengst, Marcia Murray, Natalie Doyle-Hennin, Stephen Hansen, Nancy Kelly, Ann MacNamara, Harry Diffendal, Senie Ogelsby, Christian Finne, George Currie, Isabel Frye

**Please also remember in your prayers** members of our extended Parish family: Dean and Charlotte Kellogg, Chris Rarick, Eleanor Boothe Smith, Sam Faeth, Anthony Christino, Jr., Lois, Jane Burton, Jim Clear, Ann and Larry Kaplan, Aubree Bowling, Paul, Carol Brown, Thomas Arminio, Robert Carter, Stephen Miller, Molli, Marianne and Gerard Ennis, Bill Ennis, Donna Gray, Tina Bennett Kirkwood, Dorothy Phaneuf, Mildred, Nancy, Brian Crowley, Bill and Barbara Stafford, Kathryn, Anna, Kelly, Peggy Ann Stancil, Robert Barnes, Charlie Welcome, Mary Margaret, Brandon, Joe, Betty Hoover, Lyn Lubic, Leila Fortune Bell, Troy Baxley, Vincent, John S., George B., Joe, Arthur Sachs, Linda Taucher, Ralph and Loretta Grimm, Thomas Tighe, Shelvea Rarick, Peter Ackerman

**Those serving in the U.S. and overseas:** Todd Bates, Ian Phillips, John Patrick Miller; Jon and Nicole Anderson, Noah Barker, Allen Kellogg, Keith June, Ryan.

## **A LETTER FROM OUR SEMINARIAN, RACHEL SHOWS**

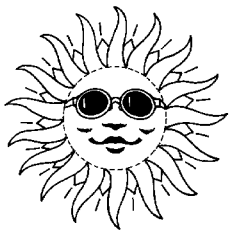
Grace and peace to you. I have thoroughly enjoyed joining you all at Immanuel this school year, and I look forward to returning to you in the fall of this year. It has been a great year of learning and growing in faith with you, and I have so appreciated the warmth and welcome of this wonderful community. I truly see God at work at Immanuel in so many ways! Some of my favorite memories of this year have been the coffee hour conversations and working alongside you to unload and sell pumpkins in October. It has been a fun year!

This summer, I will be serving as a seminarian at Grace Episcopal Church on Russell Road, here in Alexandria. While there, I will be able to experience the daily ins and outs of parish life, as well as serving in Sunday worship. I will have the amazing opportunity to serve with both congregations, both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking (La Gracia) congregations there. At the end of May, I will be attending a week-long preaching conference at Roslyn Retreat Center near Richmond. Furthermore, I will be working for the Diocese of Virginia's publication Center Aisle at General Convention in Salt Lake City from June 25-July 3rd. It will be a busy summer, but I certainly would appreciate your prayers for me. Know that I will be keeping you all in prayer as well!

Please feel free to email me this summer at [rshows@vts.edu](mailto:rshows@vts.edu). I'd love to hear from you, and I look forward to seeing you in the fall!

In Christ, Rachel Shows

**REDISTRICTING REFORM:** in collaboration with *Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy* and others, George Mason University is hosting "A Conversation about Redistricting Reform" on Thursday, June 4, 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. at GMU's Arlington Campus, 3351 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Hazel Hall. All are welcome to attend this free public event. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/why-redistricting-matters-tickets-16914510757>



## **SUMMER SCHEDULE TO BEGIN MAY 24.**

We begin our summer schedule of worship services on "Shrine Mont" Sunday, with Sunday services at 8 and 10 a.m. Mass on the Grass will take place on June 14 (following the usual 8 a.m. Eucharist). The 8:00 and 10:00 a.m. worship schedule will continue until September 13 when we return to the schedule of 8:00, 9:15 and 11:15 a.m. services – and they will take place in the Immanuel Chapel on the grounds of the Virginia Theological Seminary. We hope you all have a wonderful summer, keep us in mind as you travel, and a reminder from our Treasurer: "please help us by keeping your pledges up to date."

## THE CHILD & FAMILY NETWORK CENTERS' AMIGOS SUMMER SCIENCE CAMP FOR CHILDREN 3 - 6

3700 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304

9 weekly sessions June 29- August 28, 2015

Child and Family Network Centers (formerly the Network Preschool) was started by a group of mothers in what was then public housing in Cameron Valley with support from Immanuel and later other churches in Region IV. It grew to providing free preschool and family services for 175 children. It is still one of the charities Immanuel supports.

The summer camp is a new fee-for-service venture that uses the classrooms at CFNC's new headquarters (not otherwise used in the summer) to provide a service to the community and, we hope, to make a profit to plug the hole in CFNC's budget. I thought that some of Immanuel's families might be interested.

Children explore science while learning Spanish. Our bilingual program provides activities that inspire children to play, learn, and have fun. Each day includes exciting themed projects and outdoor play.

Tuition **per week**: morning (9am-12pm) \$125, afternoon (1pm-4pm) \$115, Full Day \$230. Extended care is also offered from 7:30am - 5:30pm.

REGISTER ONLINE AT [www.cfnc-online.org/summer-camp](http://www.cfnc-online.org/summer-camp) or call 703-836-0214.

7/6- 7/10 Bugs to Dinosaurs - creepy crawlers stomp

7/13 - 7/17 Block Party - building ramps and pathways

7/20 - 7/24 Loose Parts - fun experiments/build toys

7/27 - 7/31 Ooey Goey Fun - time to get messy

8/3 - 8/7 Float and sink, dark and light, test hypothesis

8/10 - 8/14 Push, Pull, Go!

8/17 - 8/21 5,4,3,2,1 Blast off! Outer space and beyond

8/24 - 8/28 Nature Explorer - scientists come to life

For more information, contact Dagobert Soergel  
dsoergel@umd.edu 703-823-2840 cell 703-585-2840

**GOOD NEWS FOR MALAWI PARISH** The Diocese of Virginia has approved a Mustard Seed grant of \$5,000 to purchase materials needed for rebuilding St. Philip's Church in southern Malawi. This is the parish led by Fr. Martin Kalimbe that Immanuel parishioners, VTS students, and the Outreach committee helped with donations for emergency humanitarian assistance early this year. Using the materials bought with the grant, the parishioners of St. Philip's will provide labor and other supplies. We hope that this grant from the Diocese will help complete the healing of this Christian community.

Mustard Seed grants are awarded in four broad categories: 1) youth and college ministries, 2) local outreach, 3) world mission, and 4) strengthening local churches.

Below is a photo of how St. Philip's church appeared following the floods, along with a description by Fr. Kalimbe of the church's situation.



*This is the damaged church building that we used to meet in before the heavy rains. The name of the church is St. Phillip. Currently we meet in a community hall. The community hall is a small building that some Christians worship sitting outside the building. It becomes unbearable when it is raining. Some Christians have even stopped coming to church. We have tried to mobilize some resources locally that we can use in rebuilding the church.*

*"However, the resources are not enough to buy all the materials that will be required to rebuild the church. The following are the materials that we will require: corrugated iron sheets, cement, nails and wood planks. The money we have raised is enough for buying bricks and other building materials*



**THE 1ST ANNUAL DC WALK TO END GENOCIDE ON APRIL 26 WAS A BIG SUCCESS!** Eighteen Immanuelites, including three members of the youth group and four children, joined the nearly 200 walkers to honor the millions of people who have lost their lives because of race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality and to support peoples around the world who face genocide and mass atrocities. The Walk raised \$33,500 including \$125 from Team ICOH, \$910 from Team Cooper, and \$500 from Immanuel via the Outreach committee to co-sponsor the Walk. The money raised will support life-saving work in Sudan, South Sudan, and Congo. Walkers made signs to carry along the 2-mile route. Our youngest Immanuelites, Jacob Cooper (age 5), Sydney Onley (age 7), and infants, Silas and Peter Hogg, carried in their hands or displayed on their stroller, the following messages respectively: “Justice for Everyone,” “Be Kind,” and “As you do to the least you do to me.” Thank you to all who supported the Walk with donations and prayers, and we hope to have an even bigger turnout next year.

Submitted by: Rebecca Cooper

Walkers: The Onleys – Doug, Kameran, & Sydney; The Coopers – Rebecca, Franc, & Jacob; The Hogs – John, Cameron, Peter, & Silas; Mary-Jo Cooney & son, Alexander Spottswood; Rick Glassco; Chrissie Crosby; Jeannie Cummins & Amanda Eisenhour; Timo Kirby; Addie Biache



**FROM A ROOM AT SAINT MATTHEWS GUEST HOUSE, WESTMINSTER, LONDON:** If, as Herod, we fill our lives with things and again with things, if we consider ourselves so unimportant that we must fill every moment of our lives with action, when will we have time to take the long, slow journey across the desert as did the Magi, or sit and watch the stars as did the shepherds, or brood over the coming of a child as did Mary? For each of us there is a desert to travel, a star to discover and a being within ourselves to bring to life.



## THE “MANLY MEN” FROM THE MEN’S FISHING TRIP WAITING TO CAST OFF!



## UPCOMING SUMMER EVENTS TO PUT ON YOUR CALENDARS

**NEWCOMERS' COFFEE ON JUNE 14 AT 9:30A.M.** We invite all newcomers to Immanuel in the last year to gather in the Parish Hall for a newcomers' reception before Mass on the Grass. We have been able to contact some of you who have started attending since last May but not all. Please come and join us for coffee and conversation.

**SPRING POTLUCK LUNCH (ALSO) JUNE 14** in the Parish Hall immediately following Mass on the Grass. Parishioners are asked to bring a dish to share that will serve 8-10 people. Categories are listed below (first letter of last name):

A-C Dessert

D-M Main Dish (sliced ham or fried/roasted chicken, sandwiches, casseroles, quiche, chicken/tuna salad, pasta dishes, vegetarian specialties, etc.)

N-Z Side dishes

Please bring your dishes (marked with your name to ensure their return to you) to the kitchen before the service.

Volunteers! Please contact Sudie McGahuey ([smmcaghuey@comcast.net](mailto:smmcaghuey@comcast.net)) or Martha Sedgwick ([mwallacededgwick@gmail.com](mailto:mwallacededgwick@gmail.com)). Volunteers are needed to set-up Saturday morning, Sunday morning for acceptance and preparation of food, serving and for clean-up.

Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill  
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Alexandria, VA 22304  
703-370-6555  
office@icoh.net  
<http://www.icoh.net>

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

Lectionary Readings and  
Schedule of Services



**May 24, The Day of Pentecost**

Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:25-35, 37; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15  
8:00 a.m., HEI; 10:00 a.m., HEII; Services at Shrine Mont

**May 31, The First Sunday after Pentecost, Trinity Sunday**

Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17  
8:00 a.m., HEI; 10:00 a.m., HEII

**June 7, The Second Sunday after Pentecost**

1 Samuel 8:4-11, 16-20; Psalm 138; 2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1; Mark 3:20-35  
8:00 a.m., HEI; 10:00 a.m., HEII