



# 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



December 10, 2015

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

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### *On Our Way Discerning: the Experiment Continues*

As you know, we as a parish are engaged in a great experiment this year, one very few parishes ever have the challenge, or opportunity, of engaging; the discernment of how to worship in two places, in two homes. Our year-long, lived experiment of worshipping in both Immanuel and Zabriskie Chapels began in September. The first leg of the experiment involved all worship, education, and fellowship taking place on the grounds of the Seminary, with weekday worship and all other activities taking place at Zabriskie Chapel. We will begin the second leg of the experiment in January, with the following schedule:

- 8 AM--Holy Eucharist at Zabriskie Chapel
- 9:15-10:15 AM—Church School, in the classrooms, and Forum, in the Parish Hall, at Zabriskie Chapel
- 10:30 AM—Holy Eucharist at Immanuel Chapel (one large, combined Eucharist),  
with additional coffee and fellowship following, with Godly Play in the Gibbs Room
- 5PM—*Potential* Eucharist, beginning in February, jointly-sponsored with the Seminary

The goals of this leg of the experiment are many. First, the vast majority of us will be worshipping *together*, in a space where we can all fit, and where there is still room to grow. This larger attendance should also help our challenge with acoustics in Immanuel Chapel, which are also being studied and will be worked on for their improvement. Second, and perhaps most important, this experiment will allow a full hour for both Church School and our Forums, both of which have been squeezed regularly by the 9:15 Eucharist running late and taking their time. Third, there should also be more time, amidst a saner Sunday morning schedule, for fellowship and deepening of community. Fourth, we will have a larger, stronger choir, as we combine our 9:15 and 11:15 choirs, while still maintaining their unique identities. How will we do that? Those currently in the 11:15 choir will continue to rehearse on Thursday evenings and sing one of the anthems on Sunday morning. Those currently in the 9:15 choir will continue to rehearse before the Eucharist on Sunday mornings, and then sing another anthem. The whole choir will, of course, sing on the hymns and service music, but each sub-group will sing their own anthem, of different types of music, and rehearse separately.

In short, the goal of this second phase of the experiment is to capitalize on our expanded worship space and opportunities at Immanuel Chapel while also capitalizing and building upon our space for parish life activities (including our recently-renovated parish hall) at Zabriskie Chapel. The overall goal continues to be the same as I outlined in the original letter to the parish over a year ago: "First, I hope there will a deep sense of gratitude and wonder at this awesome and exceedingly rare opportunity our parish now faces. Second, may there be a sustained focus on what is best for the future of the parish and its growth, and how to serve God's plans and dreams for us in this time and place. Third, let us engage a generous and nimble spirit of adventure, of compromise, and of listening. We must rise to the occasion, drawing upon the best of our long and proud history as a parish, a history that pre-dates many of us who are now here."

A survey will be available shortly, both online and in paper form, seeking to gauge what we have learned in this first leg of the experiment. Another survey will take place in late May, at the end of the second leg.

In all of this, as we try to discern and grasp hold of so many blessings and such potential, may God be praised, and as we all compromise, listen, and reflect, may our community be strengthened.

God bless you all,  
Randy+

## THE ASSOCIATE'S CORNER

### The Power of Prayer

Long before I was ordained, I served as a pastoral/Eucharistic visitor and as a Stephen Minister. Being a member of and leader in a congregation meant I was invested in the life and people of that parish, and I wanted to know how everyone was doing. There were times where it was apparent that life was challenging and prayer was called for, so I offered to pray for any whom I knew, by name, intentionally.

Since being ordained and serving here at Immanuel, there have been times where clergy have not been informed of trials and tribulations some were experiencing. It might be afflictions to mind, body, or spirit. It can be most awkward and even embarrassing when someone thinks we know and we don't. Because if we're not told directly, how can we know? Bishop Susan Goff recently reminded the clergy at our semi-annual retreat, if something is shared with one bishop, they don't always think to inform the other two bishops. The same can be said for parish clergy. We try, but it doesn't always work that way.

Then there are some who are eager to ensure others are being ministered to in a pastoral way by clergy, but do not or will not ask the same for themselves when an issue or problem should be visited upon them. That puzzles me. Why can we not minister to you in your time of need as you would have us minister to others in theirs? If I push back about the power of prayer for you yourself, I do it in love.

Approaching my anniversary of being ordained priest (Dec. 15, 2012), I review the vows I took in this sacred trust. In the Examination, I committed "... to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor," and to "persevere in prayer, both in public and in private, asking God's grace, both for yourself and for others, ...". I do this through personal prayer as well as at corporate Morning Prayer here in Zabriskie Chapel weekdays at 9:30 a.m.; using our weekly prayer list, the birthday list, our parish directory, and those needs of my own concern. Please know you are loved and prayed for regularly.

Of late, I have sensed more of a turn to prayer, with more intentional requests for prayers, or being notified of events that might call for a pastoral response directly or indirectly. Some are celebratory, others are challenging. Please know that Fr. Randy and I are both here to be of help and service. Please know also that it is our custom here on the 3rd

Sunday of the month, following services, to offer healing prayers for you or for others, with the laying on of hands and anointing with blessed oil.

If we can do nothing more, we can always pray with you and for you. Blessings & Peace always, David+



### DECEMBER 13 IS THE MAIN SUNDAY FOR CHRISTMAS FAMILIES: • INGATHERING OF GIFTS AND USED ITEMS, • SPECIAL COLLECTION, •

**WRAPPING:** Christmas Families brings the good news of Christmas to 100+ families from Human Services and the Alexandria Community Shelter, 360 people in all, in the form of nice lasting new gifts – educational toys, building sets, dolls, art kits, science kits, clothing, books – and used items in good condition (bicycles, computers, clothing, toys, books). 150 children and parents were adopted by 43 parish families.

**A special collection** on December 13 will cover gifts for the additional 210 people on our list, books for all families, and refurbishing or buying bikes. Please make checks to Immanuel, marked Christmas Families.

### Christmas Families Activities Sunday, December 13 helpers needed

- Ingathering of gifts, presentation at the altar at all services
- Ingathering of used clothing (marked by sizes), toys, books, computers, at all services
- After the 9:15 service, at Immanuel Chapel: Need drivers to load cars with gifts, deliver Monday morning before 10 to Human Services, 2525 Mt Vernon Ave (entrance Mt Ida)
- After the 9:15 and 11:15 services, in the **Parish Hall at Zabriskie Chapel: Wrapping gifts**, all hands on deck
- 1:30 – 3 pm Need several cars/vans to load gifts and deliver Monday morning before 10 to Human Services, 2525 Mt Vernon Ave (entrance Mt Ida)

**ALL-PARISH SURVEY ON “THE EXPERIMENT IN TWO CHAPELS”:** As Fr. Randy mentioned in the Dec 6 Forum Hour, we have prepared an all-parish survey to collect input on Immanuel’s “Experiment in Two Chapels.” You can complete the survey in hard copy or online: hard copies will be available in both chapels Sunday December 13, and a link to the online version will be emailed parishwide early next week. A second survey will be issued after the next phase of the experiment, in May 2016. The information from both surveys will be used to help discern the best use of Immanuel and Zabriskie chapels. We hope every member of the parish will participate in this important information gathering project! Deadline for returning the survey is January 3.

**SCHEDULING INFORMATION FOR**

**LITURGICAL SERVERS:** For the next leg of our experiment, with the shift to two Eucharists on Sunday mornings at 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., we have made some necessary adjustments to everyone’s profile in the Scheduler Pro system. IF you had indicated a preference for the 9:15 and/or 11:15 services, you have been moved to the 10:30 service for scheduling purposes. Please visit your profile page if you need to make a change, or let Jennifer know ([jaddington@icoh.net](mailto:jaddington@icoh.net)).

**SAVE THE DATE FOR THE JANUARY SENIOR SPEAKER SERIES EVENT** which will be held on Saturday, January 9 at Immanuel, from 9:30 a.m. to Noon. The topic will be “Caregiver Resources and Support”. This will be a very informative session, providing information for those serving as caregivers on how to get the support they need to care for themselves and their loved ones. This free event is co-sponsored by Senior Services of Alexandria and AARP. Call [703 836 4414 ext. 110](tel:7038364414) or go to [www.seniorservicesalex.org](http://www.seniorservicesalex.org) to register.

**IMMANUEL’S MONTHLY SATURDAY MORNING BREAKFAST BIBLE STUDY** will meet 19 December, the third Saturday. We gather in the Fairchild Room at 7:30 a.m. for breakfast, with Bible study beginning at 8 a.m.. We promise to be done by 9:00! Our theme for this year is *God Calls Us to Listen*. This month we will read Luke 2:8-20, using the African Model of Reflection. Come, be fed in body and spirit with food, fellowship and God's word. For more information, please contact Scott Bunn ([sbunn8@gmail.com](mailto:sbunn8@gmail.com)) or Chrissie Crosby ([cmcfaddencrosby@gmail.com](mailto:cmcfaddencrosby@gmail.com)).

**REMINDER FROM THE TREASURER:** As we approach the end of 2015, if you have not yet completed your 2015 pledge, this is a gentle reminder that your pledges are vital to the mission and ministry of Immanuel Church on-the-Hill. As of December 4, 2015 a significant portion of our 2015 pledge income has not yet been received. And finally, a reminder that pledges and gifts received or postmarked by December 31, 2015 will be reflected in your Annual 2015 Statement for tax purposes.

*Susan Gilbertson, Treasurer*



We continue gratefully receiving your financial pledges for God’s work at Immanuel in the coming year. Pledge cards may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the office, or you may pledge online at the parish web page, [www.icoh.net](http://www.icoh.net).



**HELP IMMANUEL WHEN YOU SHOP ON AMAZON** Do you ever shop on Amazon.com? Immanuel is participating in the Amazon Associates program. If you click on the Amazon icon on our website (it's under Immanuel's address/phone) and shop at Amazon.com, our church will receive a donation of a minimum of 4% of the purchase price of your shipped items. Once you're on Amazon's site, you just log into your account or create a new one, then shop and check out normally. You will pay the same Amazon prices and can use coupons and promotions as usual. Amazon will "remember" that you came through our website and make a donation to Immanuel. **The key is to enter Amazon.com through Immanuel’s website** by clicking on the icon or going through our Amazon Associates page. Please consider bookmarking that page ([www.icoh.net/amazon](http://www.icoh.net/amazon)) so you don’t forget! And no, the Rector will not get to see a list of what you ordered from Amazon.com; this program operates solely on the basis of the amount of your purchase. THANK YOU for making this extra effort to help Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill.

## A BLUE CHRISTMAS COMES TO IMMANUEL:

This year on Wednesday December 16 at 6:30 in Zabriskie Chapel, Immanuel Church will be offering its first Blue Christmas Service. So what is a Blue Christmas Service?

As Christmas approaches, we all encounter a constant stream of messages about the happiness of the holidays: joyous celebrations, gift-giving and spending time with family and friends. However, for many, these messages are painful reminders of what they will be missing this Christmas. Be it from broken relationships, unemployment, financial uncertainty, addiction, health issues, isolation, the loss of a loved one, or the absence of a dear family pet, there are numerous contributors in our lives that can lead to being alone and feeling “blue” in the midst of a world that is focused on celebration. For some, Christmas Day is the most difficult celebration. For others, Christmas Eve, or New Year’s Eve, or the beginning of another lonely New Year brings heartache instead of celebration.

When we hurt at Christmas time, it may help if we have a way to acknowledge our sadness and concern, and be assured that we are, in fact, not alone. Immanuel offers such a way with its Blue Christmas Service. In this service, we recognize that this is not a season of joy for everyone. We invite everyone to reflect privately and prayerfully on their pain, their loneliness, and their sadness so that they may offer it up freely to God for healing and transformation. Everyone is invited to join in prayers, readings and reflections to remind us that God is present for those who mourn and struggle and that God’s Word comes forth to shine light into darkness.

The overall goal of this service is to help provide a possible way of finding hope and comfort in knowing that you are never alone. Always remember that God knows your pain and loves you unconditionally.

Always remember *Immanuel*, God with Us.



**MESSIAH SING-ALONG** All members of the Immanuel community are invited to join in a joyous celebration of Christmas: a sing-along of Handel’s masterwork, *Messiah*, to be held at Immanuel Chapel on Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. This is one of the special events planned as part of the Dedicatory Year of Celebration for the new chapel.

The performance will be directed by Dr. Mark Whitmire, who directs the NOVA Community Chorus and is a former music director at Immanuel. Choral support will be provided by choir members of a number of Alexandria’s Episcopal Churches, including Immanuel, the VTS Chorus, the NOVA Chorus, and the St James (Richmond) Choir – well over one hundred voices in all. Orchestral support will be provided by members of the Washington Philharmonic Orchestra. The celebration will culminate with the *Hallelujah Chorus*, to be conducted by the Very Rev. Ian Markham, Dean of the Virginia Theological Seminary. *But this is, first and foremost, a sing-along, and we encourage everyone to come prepared to lift your voices and join in the choral portions.* We expect to have a number of scores available for sharing at the event, but encourage you to bring your own, if you have one. If you have questions, please direct them to Doug John at [djohn@jhenergy.com](mailto:djohn@jhenergy.com) or the Rev. David Crosby at [dcrosby@icoh.net](mailto:dcrosby@icoh.net).

## Christmas Greens and Flowers and Special Christmas Music

This Christmas season you are invited to make a donation for Christmas greens and flowers or special Christmas Music at the Christmas Eve Services. If you wish to remember a loved one or make a donation in thanksgiving for a loved one, please complete and send this form along with your check to the Parish Office or place it in the alms basin. **Names will be printed in the Christmas leaflets for all donations received by 9 a.m. on Monday, December 21. Please print all names very clearly!**

**Greens/Flowers:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

In Thanksgiving for: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

**Special Christmas Music:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_



Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

In Thanksgiving for: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_



## **CHRISTMASTIDE AT IMMANUEL**

**Zabriskie Chapel**, 3606 Seminary Road, Alexandria (corner of Quaker Lane and Seminary)  
**Immanuel Chapel**, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria (on the campus of Virginia Theological Seminary)

### **Sunday, December 20, 2015**

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist, Rite I, Zabriskie Chapel

10:30 a.m., Advent Lessons and Carols and Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Immanuel Chapel

### **Thursday, December 24, 2014, Christmas Eve**

Christmas Pageant and Holy Eucharist, Rite II

5:00 p.m., Immanuel Chapel

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Choral Preludes

10:15 p.m., Immanuel Chapel

A special musical program with solos, choral pieces, instrumentalists and handbell music.

Festival Holy Eucharist, Rite II

11:00 p.m., Immanuel Chapel

### **Friday, December 25, 2015, Christmas Day**

11:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist for Christmas Day, Rite II, Zabriskie Chapel

### **Sunday, December 27, 2015**

The First Sunday after Christmas

8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist, Rite I, Zabriskie Chapel

10:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Immanuel Chapel

### **Sunday, January 3, 2016**

The Second Sunday after Christmas

8:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist, Rite I, Zabriskie Chapel

10:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Immanuel Chapel

### **Wednesday, January 6, 2016**

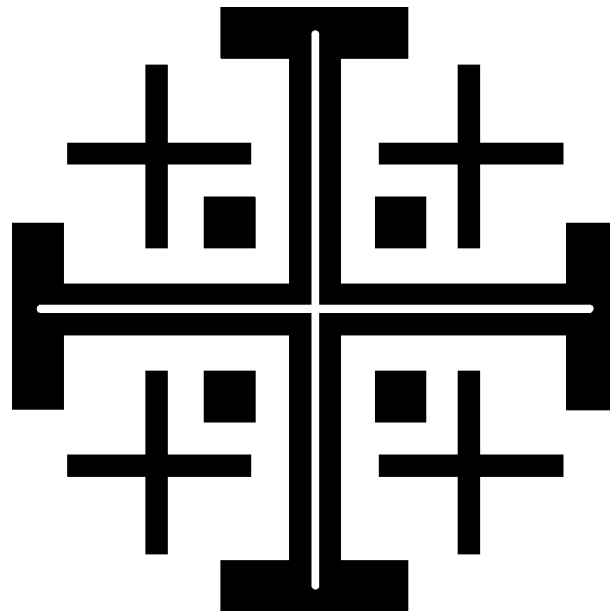
The Feast of the Epiphany

7:30 p.m. The Ordination of Randy Hicks Rowe as a Deacon, and the Holy Eucharist for Epiphany  
(Site to be determined)

## THOUGHTS FOR ADVENT

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth that ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now.”  
— William Hutchison Murray

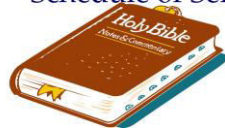
“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”  
— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*



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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

Lectionary Readings and  
Schedule of Services



**December 13, The Third Sunday of Advent**

Zephaniah 3:13-20, Canticle 9, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 3:7-18

8:00 a.m., HEI; 9:15 a.m., HEII, 11:15 a.m., HEII

**December 20, The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

8:00 a.m.: HEI; Micah 5:2-5a; Psalm 80:1-7; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

10:30 a.m., Lessons and Carols; Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-25; Genesis 3:1-22; Isaiah 40:1-11; Isaiah 64:1-9a;

Baruch 4:36—5:9; Isaiah 7:10-15; Luke 1:26-38