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

September 9, 2016

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

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HOMECOMING SUNDAY AT IMMANUEL

Some people who are now part of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill grew up in Alexandria, but many grew up elsewhere in the United States, or in another country. Sure, for a few of us, Alexandria has always been home, and they have a lot to teach us about this special place. But, for many of us, work or family, or some combination of the two, brought us here. Most of us have lived in several places and we have family and friends scattered in still other places. It is not uncommon to meet new folks at the church door, folks who have just moved to town and report knowing no one here. They come to church seeking a real community; they come seeking a spiritual home. They speak clearly and convincingly of a deep need most of us share.

One of the great blessings of being part of a local church is that deep sense of community that can develop. I believe the Lord can use that longing for community, and the community itself, to draw us closer to Him and to each other. There are many parallels between a church community and a biological family:

--We are not all alike; far from it. Just as we marvel at how different siblings can be, so, too, are brothers and sisters in Christ. Different experiences and perspectives, different passions and hopes, and varying economic, social, political, and theological outlooks make us quite a varied lot. So what draws us together? Our love of Jesus and the desire to worship together in a real community draw us together, and God shows up in surprising ways!

--We will not all like the same things. On any given Sunday you can find several folks relishing every verse of a certain hymn, while others are gritting their teeth until it is over. That is how it should be in real community! Not everything will appeal to everyone; in fact, certain things will repel some of us. We must always remember that our Christian tradition offers us a broad menu when it comes to worship and means of approach to God, and thank God for that!

--Really being part of a family requires that we pitch in, that we invest ourselves, and the church family is no different. A parish I know in California made a list of all of their ministry opportunities, a list of some 1,000 positions. Their list includes service as an usher, a lector, a chalice-bearer, singing in a choir, membership on a committee, service on the Vestry, and the like. If we compiled a list of available ministry positions at Immanuel, we would come up with many, many opportunities to be involved in some aspect of our life and ministry together!

--Being part of a family, or a real community, entails taking a certain amount of pride in that community, a certain *esprit de corps*. It involves a certain amount of our identity being caught up with the family or the community, with staking our claim, and declaring it publicly.

Finally, just like in a biological family, the amount of blessing and fulfillment we receive is directly proportional to the amount of ourselves that we invest in the family. For the Christian, this is all a part of Stewardship. Hear these words, traditionally heard in the Episcopal Church on Thanksgiving Day, about Home:

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks and water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley…and you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you" (Deuteronomy 8:7-10).

Try substituting the word "community" for the word "land" and see how it might resonate with your experience.

Happy Homecoming!

Randy+

HOMECOMING POTLUCK LUNCH:
September 11 in the Zabriskie Parish Hall, immediately following the 10:30 Holy Eucharist in Immanuel Chapel

Parishioners are asked to bring a dish to share that will serve 8-10 people. Categories are listed below (first letter of last name):
o A-B: Desserts
o C-E: Side dishes: salads, coleslaw, beans,
o F-H: Appetizers: cheese & crackers, deviled eggs, vegetable trays, fruit, salsa,
o I-Z: Main course dishes: Sliced ham, fried/roasted chicken, sandwiches, casseroles, quiche, chicken/tuna salads, pasta dishes, vegetarian specialties, etc.

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

Volunteers! Please contact Caroline Bergmark (cbergmark@yahoo.com or 703-801-6157). Volunteers are needed to set-up Saturday, Sunday morning for acceptance of food, serving and for clean-up.

THE 2016 ELECTION: THE MOST UNSETTLING IN RECENT MEMORY: Join the Senior Ministry on September 20 from 12 p.m. - 2 pm in Zabriskie Parish Hall. Bring your lunch and listen to Dr. Helen Desfosses, retired professor at the State University of New York who teaches politics and policy at George Mason University. She will lead participants in a dialogue about the important role of seniors' votes and some of the circumstances that make this year's election unprecedented, including the diminished role of traditional factors such as political parties and experience; the increased role of powerful personalities, unlimited campaign funds, the media; and a context of growing populism and economic inequality. We will supply dessert and drinks. Bring a friend! RSVP by 9/16 to jaddington@icoh.net or (703) 370-6555.

NEW AND NEW-*ISH* MEMBER RECEPTION SEPTEMBER 18 5:00-7:00 P.M. Please mark your calendars and save the date for Immanuel's New and Newish Member Welcoming reception, in Zabriskie Parish Hall. If you are a new or newish member of Immanuel and have not received an e-mail invitation, please e-mail Janice.Corbett77@gmail.com. Please be sure to RSVP yes or no to Jennifer Addington at jaddington@icoh.net or call her at 703-370-6555. We look forward to seeing you there!

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION! Immanuel and Virginia Seminary will jointly sponsor a **Choral Evensong and Forum** on Sunday evening September 25th, beginning at 6 p.m. in Immanuel Chapel. The Immanuel choir will lead the Evensong, and then **Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will be the guest speaker** at the forum. An active Episcopalian, Secretary Albright will speak on the theme "The Life of Faith and the Faith of the Nation." This event is part of our new effort at Immanuel to reach out to international Anglicans in the Washington area, particularly those in the diplomatic community. There will be a festive reception at the end of the evening. The event is free and open to all, but those coming will be requested to reserve a space, for planning purposes. Seats are limited so please send an email to Hartley Wensing, to hwensing@vts.edu.

SEEKING DELEGATES TO DIOCESAN CONVENTION: Immanuel sends three lay delegates and one alternate delegate, along with our clergy, to the annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia. The coming Convention will be held at the Hyatt Reston Hotel in Reston on January 26-28, 2017. If you would be interested in serving please contact the Rector. Our Vestry needs to finalize the names of our delegates as soon as possible.

ALTAR FLOWERS make wonderful offerings of thanks for special anniversaries and memorial events ï as gifts that illuminate Godôs creation and bless our worship. You may sign up to give flowers for either chapel by calling Jennifer Addington, the Parish Administrator, at 703-370-6555. There have been many weeks when no one has taken advantage of this opportunity--a drain on the church budget as well. Look at your calendars and pick a special day to give flowers!

WELCOME OUR SEMINARIANS

Halim Shukair recently joined Immanuel as a Seminarian. Hailing from his home country of Lebanon, Halim is currently a 2nd year candidate for ordination at the Virginia Theological Seminary. He is preparing for a life of ministry under the Diocese of Jerusalem, which presides over Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. Prior to starting seminary, Shukair worked in the financial department of the American University of Beirut. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Marketing from the Lebanese American University as well as a Diploma in Theological Studies from the Near East School of Theology (Beirut, Lebanon). Halim has been involved in many ministries of his home parish, All Saints Episcopal Church, Beirut, Lebanon.

Halim has a particular interest in Christian formation, liturgy, contemplative life, and youth ministry. He is excited to be doing his first year of Field Education at Immanuel and believes that Immanuel will help him to continue to discern his call to the priesthood and where God can best use his talents in this ministry.

Pilar Padrón, our returning senior seminarian at Virginia Theological Seminary, hails from Buffalo NY, where she is a postulant in the Diocese of Western NY. Her home parish is St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Westfield, NY. She graduated from SUNY Fredonia with a degree in English in 2013. She has a background in mission work in El Salvador that focused on building relationships in the Episcopal Church. Pilar also has a deep love of music and is a trained vocalist. Please welcome Pilar back to Immanuel!

MUGS AND MAGNETS

Last Sunday, parishioners enjoyed their post-service coffee in stunning new **75th Anniversary Mugs**, emblazoned with the church seal and our new anniversary logo. After several requests from your fellow congregants, we're making the mugs available for sale -- $10 for a single mug, $15 for two – all proceeds to defray the costs of planned special events for our anniversary year (stay tuned)! At this Sunday's potluck, look for the special display and smiling volunteers who'll be standing by to make change.

Also available (at no charge) is the parish seal on a magnet or a sticker. Come show your pride in our parish and pick up one or both of these!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR EPHESIANS IV: NOVEMBER 2, 9 AND 16

"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Ephesians IV (also known as Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill 101- a guide to your parish), will be offered in three sessions: November 2, November 9 and November 16 7:00-9:00 p.m. in the Zabriskie Parish Hall. Each session will cover different parts of parish life and ministries. The goal of this course is to provide an overview from the ministry leaders on the various ministry activities and ways in which YOU can become involved.

<u>Wednesday, November 2</u>
History of Immanuel and Immanuel's role in the community. Relationship with VTS. Communications and Vestry.

<u>Wednesday, November 9</u>
Fellowship, Stewardship/Planned Giving/ Capital Campaign, Stewardship Resources. Facilities and Outreach.

<u>Wednesday, November 16</u>
Worship/Lay Ministry, Children, Youth & Family Programs, Senior Ministry, Adult Christian Discipleship & Formation.

YOUTH NEWS AND NOTES

As a congregation we are blessed to find ourselves arriving at a remarkable juncture this fall. With our new worship schedule we are at a time when the open joy we share in each other's company is being given the opportunity to grow within our walls *and* be shared with families of our surrounding community in innovative ways. I say "new" because even though we are returning to a once familiar schedule of three services, we are not returning to the way things were, especially in regards to children and youth. I am excited by the introduction of new elements into the life of our parish as noted by Father Alexander's recent letter to the parish and listed below:

- On the first Sunday of every month (called "First Sundays"), the 9:00 worship will be a Children's Eucharist geared towards all families. It will encourage - if not depend on - children and youth to participate as acolytes, readers, ushers and in many other roles and ways. The service will include a children's homily that invites our youngest parishioners to gather up front.
- On the third Sunday of every month (called "Family Nights") we will have an evening formation program that will begin at 5:00 and be advertised to the surrounding community. The first hour will be social with a pot-luck dinner after which the children and youth will break off to go to their program areas. The parents will remain in the parish hall for formation and fellowship opportunities. Please note that on these Sundays Sunday School will not be offered in the morning.

- Every Sunday there will be Children's Chapel offered at the 11:15 Eucharist. This will be held in the small chapel adjacent to the main Sanctuary. Children's Chapel will begin at the start of the service and conclude at the Passing of the Peace when children will return in time for the Eucharist. This is being offered primarily for two reasons. It will hopefully help to meet the desires of families that need a later service on Sundays. In addition, it is abundantly clear from research, case studies, and open discussions that we cannot grow or fully meet the needs of the parish if we only build one of our three services as a welcoming space for families with children. I am particularly excited by this new addition because it is always better to offer options as opposed to limitations. It will hopefully expand our invitation to new families, especially those with children moving onto the VTS campus and/or who live in the surrounding community.

These new elements, in addition to our traditional offerings of Godly Play, Sunday School, and EYC, put Immanuel in a great position or "Kairos." Kairos, an ancient Greek term long used by Christians, refers to an opportune time, a moment, or a season of planting and harvesting, in our relationship with God. This is our time to give all children a bright and inclusive path and open our doors wider to those families looking for a community of faith to call their own. This is our moment to declare, even more loudly, that we are not a congregation that loves its children only when they are quiet. Instead, we are a congregation that loves its children and welcomes them to lift their voices as a sign of continued life. I am excited to be your Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries at this time and I eagerly look forward to all the joyful opportunities and promises this wonderful congregation holds.

<u>Important Dates Concerning Children Youth and Families</u>

Sunday September 11 – Parish picnic and open registration for Sunday School, Godly Play and EYC, as well as new acolytes.

Monday – September 12 – 7:00 PM The Children, Youth and Families committee will be holding a meeting open to all families. This will be a discussion with Q&A regarding the coming year.

September 18 – First Day of Godly Play, Sunday School and Children's Chapel. This is also the start of the EYC year with the inaugural *Breakfast Club* at 10:15 in the Zabriskie Kitchen and Minature-Golf starting at 6:00 that night at Top Golf on South Van Dorn.

John Hogg, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries

The Pumpkin Patch begins October 2nd

Your Help is Needed!

Pumpkin Patch – 2016!! To many in our community, Immanuel is simply known as the "Pumpkin Church" and for good reason. Now in its 23rd year, the Pumpkin Patch is Immanuel's major fundraiser for Outreach. For a month, we all pitch in as a Christian community in a common endeavor selling pumpkins, baked goods, and crafts. The results speak for themselves. Last year, we had a profit of over $58,000, all going to fund our outreach programs.

The Pumpkin Patch requires the efforts of the entire parish in organizing, advertising, cooking, baking, and selling. We will have four truck deliveries, two on "Pumpkin Sunday" on October 2nd, one on Wednesday, October 12th, and one on Wednesday, October 19th.

Please, we need ***everyone*** to help sell pumpkins – especially if you haven't done so before. It's also an easy and fun way to meet your fellow parishioners. With your supervision, your children are also welcome to help sell. Please sign up to sell on the volunteer sheet posted in the narthex in both Chapels (Sunday mornings only) or, preferably, sign up on line at **http://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090e4ea9a823a4fc1-2016**. Help is particularly needed on weekends when 65% of our sales are made.

In addition to selling pumpkins, we will be selling soups and baked goods. Last year, over $13,000 of our Pumpkin Patch profits came from food sales. Let us know if you can help with cooking and baking.

We also need volunteer day coordinators to help oversee daily operations including opening and closing. You can pick your day. It's an important job and we particularly need persons with past Patch experience.

Pumpkin Patch is a time when each of us can make a tangible contribution to the church. It's also fun and a chance to meet and work with fellow parishioners.

Contact Jamie Conrad, Jim Snow, Jim Wise, John Bednar or John von Senden to answer questions and to volunteer. They can be reached at Outreach@icoh.com.

Advent Retreat
Meeting Matthew, the Man Behind the Advent Gospels
Holy Cross Abbey, Berryville, Virginia
December 9-11, 2016

He is the storyteller we will hear in the Advent Gospels and, as with all who tell the story of Jesus, his tale is basically autobiographical. In his Gospel, Matthew shows himself to be traditional but embracing a new vision; selfish but converted to generosity. Unlike most of the other disciples, he made his living with his mind rather than his hands. And with his mind he found threads of consistency in scripture's jumble. His Christmas story focuses on Joseph rather than Mary. And he met God in dreams and Jesus in the midst of business.

Matthew is not that different from us. He coped with change both within and without. He worked to make sense out of confusion. He looked at Christmas in a unique way and knew God in the commonplaces of rest and work. He is one of our companions along the Way and a man worth knowing.

The Rev. Dr. Frank Wade will lead the retreat at Holy Cross Abbey near Berryville, Virginia on the weekend of December 9-11. The retreat will begin on Friday afternoon, December 9, shortly before the evening meal and will end after the noon meal on Sunday, December 11. The retreat is silent except during the group sessions. For more information on the monastery, see their website https://www.virginiatrappists.org/about/.

The $350.00 registration fee includes all materials, comfortable accommodations, individual rooms each with a bathroom, and all meals. Two scholarships given in memory of Charles Willis are available; please contact the rector for scholarship assistance. To provide an opportunity to attend to those who have not recently participated in a retreat, preference in awarding scholarships will be given to those who have not received a scholarship in the last two years.

Registration is limited to 15 persons; please reserve your space using the form in the *Almond Tree*. If you have questions about retreat logistics, please contact Mary Ann Rehnke, mrehnke@verizon.net or 703-836-7142. Participants needing a ride to the retreat may contact the carpooling coordinator, Carla Murray, at tigmurray08@gmail.com or 703-751-9241.

Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill
Advent Retreat
Holy Cross Abbey Retreat House
December 9-11, 2016

1. First person registering for retreat

Name_____

Address_____

Daytime Telephone _____ **Evening Telephone** _____

E-mail _____

2. Second person registering for retreat

Name_____

Address_____

Daytime Telephone _____ **Evening Telephone** _____
E-mail _____

Number of registrants _____ x $350 = _____ Total registration fee

Please make check payable to Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill and label it Advent Retreat. Return this form and your check to the Immanuel Church office, 3606 Seminary Road, Alexandria, Virginia 22304. Please put Advent retreat on the envelope.

If you need to cancel your registration and there is no one on the waiting list who can take your place, Holy Cross Abbey retains the $50.00 per room deposit. All but $50.00 of your registration fee would be returned to you.

Immanuel Church -on-the-Hill
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Lectionary Readings and
Schedule of Services

September 11, The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, Homecoming Sunday
Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Luke 15:1-10
8:00 a.m., HEI, Zabriskie Chapel, 10:30 a.m., HEII, Immanuel Chapel
September 18, the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 8:18—9:1, Psalm 79:1-9; 1 Timothy 2:1-17; Luke 16:1-13
7:45 a.m., HEI; 9:00 a.m., HE II, Zabriskie Chapel; 11:15 HEII, Immanuel Chapel
September 25, The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15; Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16; 1 Timothy 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31
7:45 a.m., HEI; 9:00 a.m., HE II, Zabriskie Chapel; 11:15 HEII, Immanuel Chapel