



# 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



March 3, 2017

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

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### A Meditation for Ash Wednesday and Lent

The musical "Les Miserables" is a work largely about sin and forgiveness. Early in the piece the main character, Jean Valjean, has just escaped from prison, where he had been sent for stealing a loaf of bread. He goes to rob the house of the local bishop. As the old bishop sleeps, Jean Valjean steals most of his silver. The police catch the escaped criminal. They drag him before the bishop and say, "This man told us you gave all of this to him." Valjean hangs his head in front of the bishops. But the bishop quickly says, "Well, I did. Only I don't understand why he didn't take these beautiful candlesticks, too. I only want him to be a good man." And to Valjean he says, "You must use these to become an honest man." I think we find ourselves in essentially in the same position as Jean Valjean at the beginning of this Lent. We come with our broken lives, and our meager attempts to do better. Our accusers, and even Satan himself, seek to imprison us, to haul us before God and say, "Look at them, the miserable lot! Is that the best they can do?" But God loves us, and has given us His only Son.

Ash Wednesday and Lent are all about the love of God, but also about the holiness of God and our sinfulness. It is easy to concentrate on the grace we receive from God without counting the cost. Even in this story from "Les Miserables" the forgiveness did not come without cost to the bishop. He lost all of his silver. Forgiveness and reconciliation are not free. Our forgiveness cost God His only Son; it cost the suffering and dying of our Lord.

Lent is a time to take to heart the sinfulness of our lives, and how our rebellion grieves the heart of God. In that sense Lent is a great leveler, because we have all sinned in our own unique ways. As Paul Says in Romans, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) Sin is classically defined as anything that separates us from God and other people. Lent calls us, and offers us time and space, to contemplate all that does separates us from God and other people, and to realize how much we have gained through God's gracious sacrifice for us. Hence the age-old tradition of giving something up, meant to remind us of the manifold blessings we receive from God.

And then there are the ashes of Ash Wednesday. What a curious tradition. The ashes represent our mortality, the fact that we will all die, and our sinfulness. They are meant to be reminder right between our eyes, to get our attention. They represent our sin and rebellion, both individually and as a people. You see, within all of us there is a broken mirror. And try as we might to glue or tape that brokenness we cannot fix it ourselves. But the great Good News is that God can, and does.

I invite you to seize the great opportunity of this Lent: to look at the nature of sin in your life, whatever it is that separates you from God and your brothers and sisters. What else would you like to do? What would you like to change? On a broader scale, how can you and I, and our parish, contribute towards healing the sin and brokenness of our society and our world? Maybe we can only work on one or two things, but mostly I invite you to stop, to think, to thank, to pray, in short to live more intentionally.

As we stand before God, as we stammer out our case, as we acknowledge our sins, our only response, our only defense, is that our only mediator and advocate, Jesus, loves us. And that is enough. Let us meditate and build on this sure foundation throughout the opportunity this Lent offers us.

See you in Church, *Randy+*

## LENTEN ACTIVITIES AT IMMANUEL AND ELSEWHERE

**IMMANUEL LENTEN SERIES:** The theme of this year's Lenten Series is *Immanuelites Living Their Faith*. Highlighting the faith journeys of people from the parish, the series will take place during the forum hour on the five Sundays in Lent, beginning each Sunday at 10:15 AM in the Parish Hall. Participants will respond to questions from a moderator about their lived experience of being a follower of Jesus Christ.



Lenten  
Retreat

**LENTEN RETREAT: BLESSING AND GRACE: FINDING HOPE IN TROUBLED TIMES.** Life comes at us fast these days. So much information to process, so many things to do, too little time, nowhere to retreat. If you are feeling these pressures, whether personally or publicly (or both!), please come join us for our time away. We will be seeking strength for any challenges, hearing hopeful music based on resistance traditions, scripture about God's promises, meditations on blessing and grace in our lives, as well as spending time in prayer, silence, and reflection. Come, be refreshed by fellowship, language and love.

Chrissie Crosby will lead the retreat at Holy Cross Abbey near Berryville, Virginia on the weekend of March 31-April 2. The retreat will begin on Friday afternoon, March 31, shortly before the evening meal and will end after the noon meal on Sunday, April 2. For more information on the monastery, see their website <https://www.virginiatrappists.org/about/>.

Chrissie, a perpetual student of the Bible, holds an MA in Biblical Interpretation from Virginia Theological Seminary, and a certificate in Theology and the Arts from Wesley Theological Seminary. She is married to the Rev. David Crosby, Associate Rector of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill.

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. If you receive a scholarship, please complete a registration form and indicate that you have a scholarship. To provide an opportunity for parishioners who have not attended a retreat recently to attend, 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 available from the ushers, or from the office. If you have questions about retreat logistics, please contact Mary Ann Rehnke, [mrehnke@verizon.net](mailto:mrehnke@verizon.net) or 703-836-7142. Participants needing a ride to the Abbey may contact the retreat carpooling coordinator, Carla Murray, at [tigmurray08@gmail.com](mailto:tigmurray08@gmail.com) or 703-751-9241.



Rite II Yoda

### LENTEN SERIES ON THEOLOGY OF STARS WARS

The five-week Region IV Lenten series will begin Wednesday, March 8, at Church of the Resurrection. Each evening includes Eucharist at 6:30 pm, simple supper at 7:00 pm, and program from 7:30 to 8:30 pm. This year, The Rev. Greg Millikin, Assistant to the Rector at St. Paul's in Alexandria, is leading all five sessions on the topic "The Theological Themes in Star Wars." Here is the line-up of dates, topics, and locations:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Theological Theme in Star Wars</u>	<u>Host Church</u>
March 8	Myth/Legend (call narratives in the Old Testament)	Church of the Resurrection
March 15	Temptation	St. Paul's
March 22	Journey	Emmanuel Church
March 29	Spirit	Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill
April 5	Redemption	Meade Memorial Church



**OUR CYCLES OF PRAYER:** We are regularly encouraged to join our prayers with others around the world and throughout the Diocese of Virginia in our common witness to the works, needs, hurts, and joys in the Christian communion of the Anglican/Episcopal Church. So recently we reintroduced the discipline of including the Anglican and Diocesan Cycles of Prayer to our spoken Prayers of the People on Sundays.

In addition, we are beginning a Parish Cycle of Prayer. It will be specific to works begun, continued, and ended in the Name of Jesus Christ and to the Glory of God in this community that we know as Immanuel Church-on-the Hill. These prayers, Sunday after Sunday, will be for a variety of Outreach, Education, Worship and Fellowship activities of our church as outlined in the Directory of Parish Ministries.

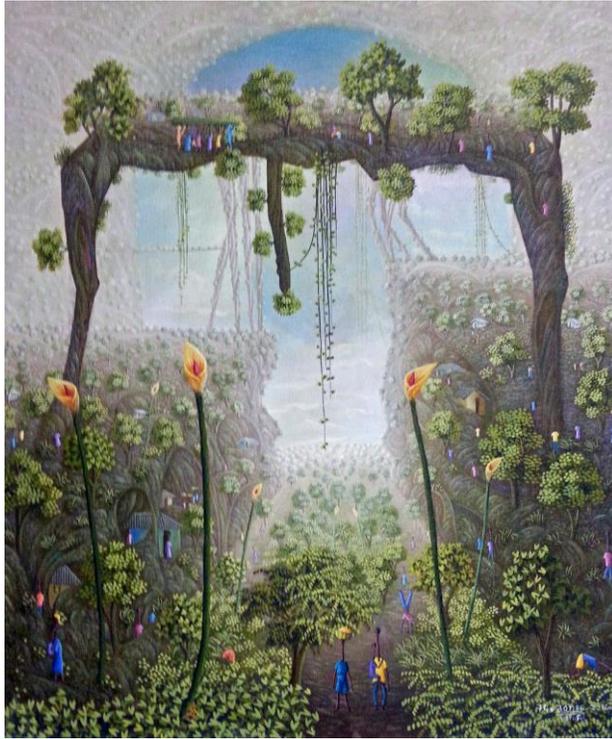
If you have any suggestions for this new Parish Cycle of Prayers, please contact Fr. David+. Thank you.

**NEW SUNDAY EVENING EUCHARIST:** On Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m., Immanuel began sponsoring a new Sunday evening Eucharist, along with Virginia Theological Seminary and Episcopal High School. The Eucharist is held in Immanuel Chapel, and it features a rotation of preachers, celebrants, readers, intercessors, and musical offerings from the three institutions. It will be a work in progress, and we will evaluate during the Spring whether it seems to be meeting a need. While now directed towards the Parish, the Seminary, and the High School, the hope would be to advertise the service as an intentional outreach to our neighborhood.

#### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR ANNUAL ORAL REHYDRATION THERAPY OUTREACH**

**PROJECT:** For the 10th year, Immanuel is teaming with our neighbors up the hill at Temple Beth El to prepare packets of dry ingredients shipped under the auspices of the United Nations & other relief agencies to scenes of natural or man-made disasters. We need your help! On **Wednesday evening March 8 and Thursday evening March 16** from 6:30-8:00pm we need about 30 volunteers to prepare materials. On **Sunday, April 2, any time between 9:00am and 3:00pm**, we need **everyone possible** to help assemble the packets (last year we prepared 18,000+ packets!) This is a great opportunity to meet new people, see old friends and have wonderful conversations, all while making a difference in the world. These activities take place at Temple Beth El, 3830 Seminary Road. Enter the building from the rear parking lot. Questions? Contact Jim Wise at 703-642-8225 ([jrwise52@hotmail.com](mailto:jrwise52@hotmail.com))

**IMMANUEL LIBRARY UPDATE: It's time to fill the shelves!** The Immanuel Library Committee, led by our senior parishioners, would like to invite everyone to peruse their bookshelves to see if there might be some volumes that they think might be good additions to help build our collection located in the Fairchild Room. Feel free to stop in to see the subject areas that are coming together, and then send the church office the titles of your possible donations. **Please do NOT drop off any books at the church!** The library committee first needs to review the offerings to make sure we don't have duplications and also to glean the best choices for a balanced collection in the limited amount of space we have in the Fairchild Room. As soon as the committee has reviewed all potential donations, we will be back in touch to let contributors know, with our heartfelt gratitude, what books we are able to accept. If you are interested in making a contribution toward the purchase of some of the titles that our clergy has recommended, you may want to consider a financial contribution with note in the memo line that it is for the Immanuel Library. Looking forward to a well-rounded and vibrant collection that will be well used by all our parishioners! Feel free to call if you have any questions. *Martha Manson and Jeannie Cummings*



*You are invited to attend the opening reception of*

**Haitian Art: Vision and Hope**

**Wednesday, March 8, 2017**

**6:00—8:00 PM**

St. Andrew's Episcopal School

8804 Postoak Road

Potomac, Maryland 20854

RSVP: [cjames@saes.org](mailto:cjames@saes.org)

A Simple Supper will be served.

Art is one lens through which international eyes view the island nation of Haiti. Art from Haiti speaks a language of spirit that is born of adversity and deeply rooted in an affirmation of faith and hope for the future. The featured artwork captures timeless themes of myth, birth, death, politics, and faith in every conceivable style. This exhibit of more than 90 works by Haiti's most talented artists captures the history, people, countryside, and the fabric of Haitian life. The paintings are works of inspiration. The exhibited works remind us of what we share with the Haitian people: our friendship, strong faith, and a common world with collective challenges.

All exhibited paintings are for sale. A percentage of each sale goes toward funding St. Andrew's initiatives at Christ Roi School in Civol, Haiti. Your generosity is much appreciated.

*For more information, please contact the Rev. Patty Alexander at [palexander@saes.org](mailto:palexander@saes.org).*

## Christmas Families Report 2016

This Christmas, Immanuel parishioners provided gifts, clothing, bikes and books to **280 Alexandria children and 155 parents**, most identified to us by the city's Community and Human Services Department and its emergency shelter. Five families came from the Christ Church's outreach ministry to families in need (we were happy to help out as a small token of appreciation; for many years now Christ Church has let us use a large room on top of the Ross Department Store at Washington & King as "Santa's workshop").

39 children received shiny bicycles, either new or refurbished beautifully by **Josh Miller** and crew with advice and guidance from **Bill Frye**. As a parish, we gave about 550 very nice books, including 30 books sent to children at the Community Lodging after-school program, all expertly selected by **Connie Kurz** and **Laura Snow** (bought at an 80-90% discount at the Green Valley Book Fair near Harrisonburg, VA) and paired with families by a team also including **Debbie Hewson** and **Martha Manson** (and **Jim Kurz** and **Jim Snow** helping with unpacking). And **Candy Levin, Laura Snow, Melissa Ennis, and Brooke Roberts** made beautiful clothes to complement the many dolls that were sure to make the recipients smile.

Gifts were transported from the workshop to the Parish Hall by the **Owen Malone, Ashley Chappell, and Owen Jr., Miles and Macon Malone; David, Jill, Colin and Ryan Baird; Eileen Monnin-Kirby and Liam Kirby; and Kevin and Zoe Switaj.**

**Lissa Soergel** with help from **Phyllis Sims** assigned 570 gifts.

Behind every one of these numbers is one of God's children building creatively with Legos and gaining a sense of numbers in the process, using an art kit and putting feelings into a painting, practicing for life with a doll, having curiosity raised by a science kit, or reading a book all their own.

### *Great thanks to:*

**the 61 parish families or individuals who together provided for 110 children and 65 parents;**

**the many more who contributed money purchasing books and gifts for everyone else (170 children and 95 parents, approximately \$10K in expenses matched by income);**

**and to the more than 60 helpers who under the leadership of Linda Serabian worked on the many things that need to happen behind the scenes.** Any list would be incomplete.

### **An afterword**

Thanks to John Smucker for encouraging people to join the organizing team for Christmas Families. The times when Lissa wrapped all the presents in our living room are long gone. We now have Linda Serabian coordinating and shopping and taking care of Santa's workshop and leading the team that prepares the gifts for wrapping, Connie Kurz leading the book team (and more), Josh Miller leading the bicycle team (taking over from Bill Frye), Ashley Chappell shopping, Nancy and Jim Wise preparing the Parish Hall, Doug John leading the crew transporting gifts from Santa's workshop to the Parish Hall, Dorothy Kellogg for data input, Brooke Roberts for communications, Dorothy Kellogg and Katherine Smith managing the "Boutique" of used items at Human Services, Phyllis Sims pitching in wherever needed, and the whole parish wrapping gifts and working in many other ways. There is still room for people to join the team, so please speak to Linda Serabian.

***Dagobert & Lissa Soergel, Linda Serabian, Connie Kurz***



**Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill**  
**Founded 1941**  
***Our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year***



April 23: Bob Trache Appreciation Sunday

- Holy Eucharist 7:45 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:15 a.m.
- Forum Hour & Reception – 10:15 a.m.
- Reception following 11:15 a.m. service

May 14: Stephen Wade Appreciation Sunday

- Holy Eucharist 7:45 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 11:15 a.m.
- Forum Hour & Reception – 10:15 a.m.
- Reception following 11:15 a.m. service

May 21: Haydn's "The Creation," a musical offering from Immanuel's choirs

- 10:30 a.m. Joint Service, Immanuel Chapel
- Reception following

June 11: Sam Faeth & Peter Ackerman Appreciation Sunday

- Holy Eucharist 7:45 a.m., 10:30 a.m.
- Forum Hour & Reception – 9:00 a.m.
- Reception following 10:30 a.m. service

*Watch This Space for More Upcoming Events*

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Lectionary Readings and  
Schedule of Services



**March 5, the First Sunday in Lent**

Genesis 25-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11  
7:45 a.m., HEI, 9:00 a.m., Children's Eucharist, 11:15 a.m., HEII, 5:00 p.m., HEII

**March 12, The Second Sunday in Lent**

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17  
7:45 a.m., HEI; 9:00 a.m., HE II; 11:15 a.m., HE II; 5:00 p.m., HEII

**March 19, The Third Sunday in Lent**

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42  
7:45 a.m., HEI; 9:00 a.m., HE II; 11:15 a.m., HE II; 5:00 p.m., HEII