

# THE ALMOND TREE



NEWSLETTER OF IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

August 2018



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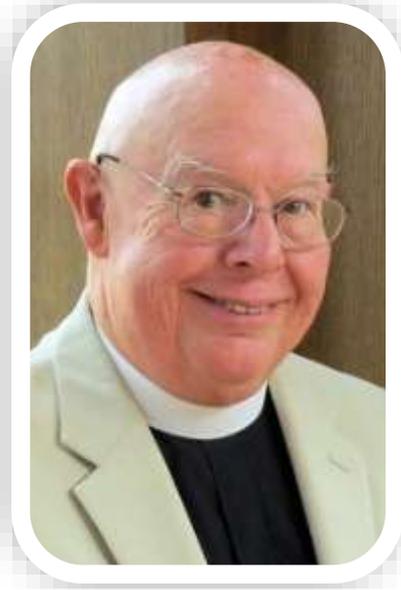
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# Gift of A Sunday Sermon

On Sunday, July 29, 2018, the Rev. Dr. Frank Wade, Priest Associate, used the practice of midrash to give a nuanced view of the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 in John 6:1-21



## The Boy with the Loaves

This morning I would like to invite you to a Bible study, but with a twist. I would like to look at today's Gospel using the Jewish practice called midrash. Midrash is not itchy spots on your stomach but an ancient approach to Scripture that has rewarded Jewish thinkers for centuries but is rarely used by Christians. The Hebrew word literally means 'seeking' and 'inquiring.' The common modern interpretation is 'to expound.' It involves going beyond the printed text and speculating on questions the text does not address. One of the earliest forms of midrash dealt with the question, "Why didn't Adam talk Eve out of eating the apple?" Another example is wondering what the patriarch Abraham was like as a child. You can see that these questions have no definitive answers because the Bible does not address them. Midrash is an

exercise of informed imagination, providing enrichment from the journey if not the destination. It meanders through possibilities and allows thoughtful people to come to different conclusions. I would like for you to join me in applying midrash to the feeding miracle in today's Gospel.

The story is well known and respected. All four of the Gospel writers tell about Jesus taking a small amount of food and feeding a large number of people with it. Mark and Matthew tell us it happened twice. The dynamics of the event are hard to nail down. The humanist view is that Jesus inspired people to generous sharing. The spiritual view recognizes the creative powers of God, as demonstrated in Genesis. Traditional Bible study and scholarship address those questions to great advantage. Midrash, however, is free to raise other – what might be called extra-textual – questions.

The story is that Jesus was teaching a large crowd when he suggested to his disciples that they feed everybody. The disciples were appalled. "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" Thankfully, Andrew found a young boy who had five barley loaves and two fish, but he hopelessly wondered, "What are they among so many people?" At this point, Jesus took over and the miracle took place. Our midrash begins with the boy. What was he doing with all of that food?

It is true that growing boys consume prodigious amounts of food, but five loaves and two whole fish are beyond the capacity of even the most vigorous of teenage consumers. Why would he be there with that much food?

I think he was planning to sell it. I think his parents recognized that Jesus would draw a crowd and that the crowd would want to be fed. They may have been the first, but were certainly not the last to try to cash in on Jesus' popularity. The family got up early. Mother prepared barley loaves. Father went to the lake to fish and the son prepared to join the throng that was converging on the prophet from Nazareth. "Don't sell these too early," the mother cautioned. "Wait until people are really hungry." "Keep it all tucked in your sleeve," advised the father, "lest some slick-fingered disciple take it from you." The boy played his role perfectly. When the crowd became hungry and the disciples began to cast about for food he stepped in front of Andrew with a sweet smile, five loaves, two fish and an open palm. The deal was quickly concluded. A fair price was

asked. A fair price was paid.

And what happened next? The attention of the Gospel writers and everyone else shifted to Jesus who took the loaves and fish, gave thanks and distributed the miraculous abundance. But what happened with the boy? There is of course no record, but midrash allows us to create one.

I think he went home. He had done his job and his parents would be pleased. The teachings of Jesus were not really geared to the boy's immediate concerns, so he turned his back on the crowd and walked home, undoubtedly feeling pretty good about himself and undoubtedly missing an event so amazing that it would be told and re-told countless times, including here at Immanuel Church this morning.

Bible study in any form, including midrash, cannot stop with a mere recounting of what went on. The ultimate question is always, "So what?" What does the story have to say to us or about us? If the Gospel story or the midrash extrapolation of it are just about food served up in a field or teenage profiteering, then it is not worth the effort. They are no more than entertainment, like whistling or seeing animals in cloud formations. What could this boy's story have to tell us? He did his job and he missed the miracle. What's the takeaway?

One could be that the raw material of God's work is often provided by people who do not know that is what they are doing. Random kindnesses often multiply like loaves, feeding people in unimagined ways. When we put money in the offering we do not know how it touches lives, but it does. When we speak a difficult truth or follow up on difficult promises we provide fodder for God's miracles. In the presence of children, adult words and examples are like fish given to Jesus—we have no idea what will be done with it or how. But something happens every time we do our job as the children of God, just like something happened when the boy in the story did his job and God made a miracle out of it.



The story could also remind us that if we ask small questions we get small answers. If all we ask is how much can I get for the fish or the effort or the consultation or the product, we can always get an answer, but we might never see a miracle. If we concentrate on money more than meaning, security more than service, grades more than education, getting more than giving, or popularity more than purpose; if our eyes are on how others see us but not on how God sees us, we will probably do OK in this small-minded world. But, like the boy in the Gospel, we will probably miss being part of a story that is worth telling and re-telling for thousands of years.

That is how midrash might look at today's Gospel. The bad thing about the speculation of midrash is that I cannot say for certain I am right. The good thing is that you cannot say for certain I am wrong. Amen.

***When we speak a difficult truth or follow up on difficult promises we provide fodder for God's miracles...But something happens every time we do our job as the children of God, just like something happened when the boy in the story did his job and God made a miracle out of it.***

**THE REV. DR. FRANCIS "FRANK" H. WADE**  
Priest Associate  
Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill

# A Visit from 7,552 Miles

## The Right Reverend Joel Waweru Mwangi, Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya, Makes a Special Visit to Preach at Immanuel



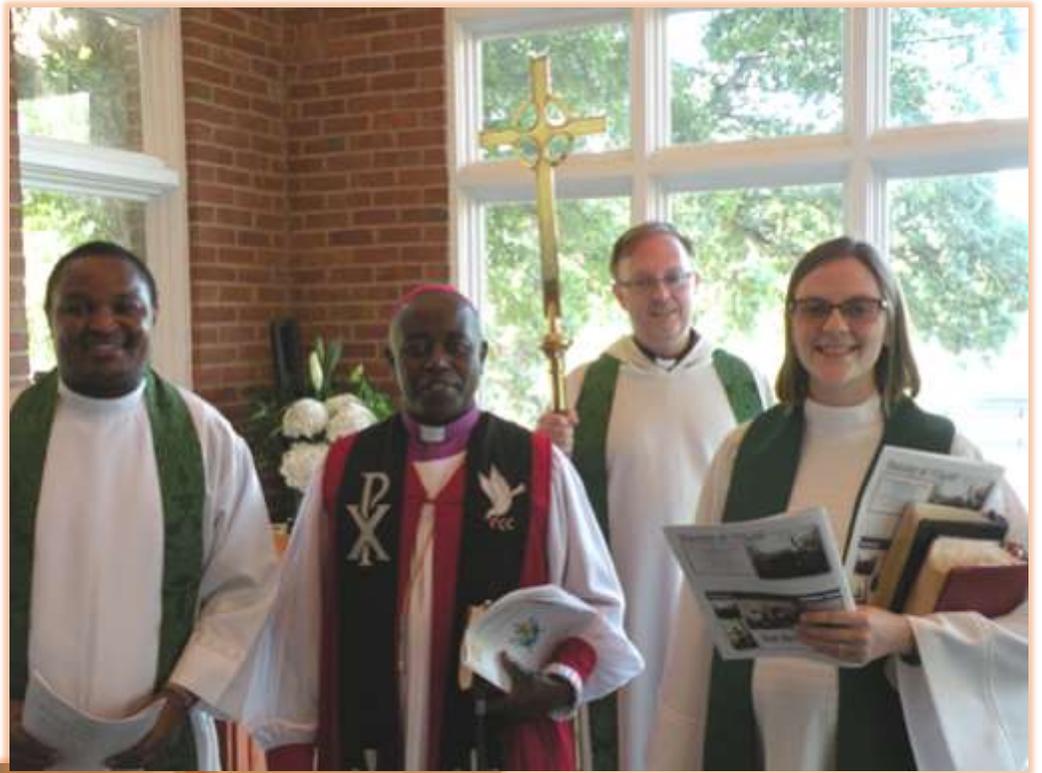
The Rev. Peter Gachira, Vicar, Immanuel's International Anglican Congregation, invited his native country's Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Joel Waweru Mwangi to make a special stop during his busy U.S.A. tour in order to preach at Immanuel. Alexandria was the first and only visit in the Mid-Atlantic for Bishop Joel and his wife, Mrs. Tabitha Muthoni Waweru.

On Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:30p.m., an assembly comprised 50/50 of parishioners from Immanuel's Episcopal and International Anglican Congregations, gathered in Zabriskie Chapel to hear Bishop Joel preach on Matthew 4:18-22 where Simon (Peter) and Andrew left their nets and followed Jesus to "become fishers of people". Immediately after the service, Bishop Joel and his wife were guests of honor at a bountiful potluck dinner reception featuring savory American and Kenyan dishes, and American desserts.

One highlight of the Eucharist, which was based on the Kenyan Anglican Book of Common Prayer and printed in the service bulletins (you can view a copy from [our website](#)), was *The Blessing* — the one feature quite different from our own. Bishop Joel led us in the traditional Kenyan blessing via a "call and response," where we sent our problems, difficulties and the devil's work — with a sweep of our arms — towards the altar cross, and "swept our hopes" up toward heaven!



The Rev. Peter Gachira, Vicar, International Anglican Congregation; Bishop Joel; the Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Rector; and the Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker, Assistant Rector, in the Narthex of Zabriskie Chapel just before the processional.



Bishop Joel's wife, Tabitha, (far right) surprised the congregation by joining the International Congregation's Ladies Quintet in singing traditional Kenyan songs.

Bishop Joel addressing guests at his dinner reception in the parish hall.





Bishop Joel is welcomed by the Rev. Peter Gachira, Vicar, Immanuel's International Anglican Congregation (left). He poses with the Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker, Assistant Rector, (right), and for a group photo with his wife (second from right) and members of the International Anglican Congregation at his reception (below).



# THE GREAT ZABRISKIE FLOOD OF 2018

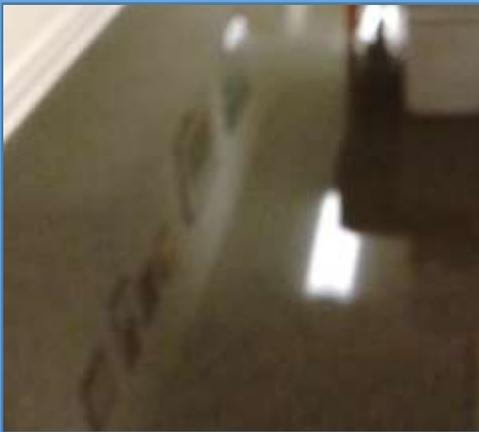
- Martha Shimkin

*"We've got flooding in the basement"*, is how Janice Corbett sounded the alarm after her evening exercise class. It rained a lot this summer. It rained for two solid weeks in May. By May 31, the ground was so soggy that an intense Friday afternoon storm pushed water into Immanuel's Zabriskie Chapel building. As Janice, and Aleta Powell, our parish administrator, mopped the floor and carpet surrounding the men's restroom, water began pouring through the sides of the closed window, sloshed through doors, streamed down the hallway, and cascaded down the steps so that both the Zabriskie education wing and the administrative offices began to flood. In less than thirty minutes, the mild flood became a serious emergency.

*"Which room is flooded"* was the reply that our Rector, the Rev. Randy Alexander sent to Aleta's cell. Her response text of *"All of them. Please help us!"* prompted him to immediately bring his entire family, the Rev. Patty Alexander, and their sons William, Peter and Andrew back to the office. At the same time, Janice called John Bednar, Vestry Steward for Resources, who put out a cell phone emergency alert: *"Flooding at church, not a drill.... Need help ASAP... major flooding."* And the people came.

Responders included Valley Drive Cooperative Preschool dads, their director, Cindy Hodgkins, and the assistant director, Brandy Reber. Responders showed up with shop vacs. Jane Tavernier, our music director,

joined the effort, buying multiple large floor fans specifically to help. Deacon John Hogg came. Tom Kerns showed up, as did Rosi Urbine, and Jeannie Cummins Eisenhour. Dehumidifiers were brought in with more fans and vacuums, mops, rags, and buckets for bailing. All told, 20 people came that Friday evening to hold back the flood. Thank you to everyone who showed up, helped out, and prevented even greater losses.



## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- ⇒ Come to the "Tale of Two Floods" event on September 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m., Zabriskie Parish Hall,
- ⇒ Contribute generously to "plug the hole,"
- ⇒ Support future discussions, events, and campaigns to permanently fix our flood risk.

While the water was stopped, the damage was done. Office records and sheet music were hung to dry and school materials were thrown out. Our clergy and office staff, the music director, and the preschool suffered weeks of upheaval in their workspace. Despite best efforts, the carpet mildewed. The office closed for nearly a week, with staff working from home. Luckily, preschool was out for the summer so children were not displaced.

"It was really demoralizing," shared Father Randy at a vestry meeting.

"Such a mess," said Tom Kerns.

"Water was projectile shooting through the sides of the window like a garden hose," commented Aleta.

John Bednar organized the clean-up, including professionally shampooing and disinfecting the carpet. Handyman Eric Diaz removed baseboards, then reinstalled and painted them. Eric's crew replaced clogged drain lines and installed a larger drain at the primary weekday entry. The church had to remove a large Magnolia tree that was partly to blame for drainage problems.

There is a lasting memory, certainly on the part of our responders, the office staff, and, as it turns out, insurance companies.

After a flood in 2015, Immanuel reached the maximum coverage amount of flood benefits allowed in our insurance policy. Vestry has tallied the cost of the 2018 flood response at over \$20,000, with additional work still anticipated. In addition, volunteers have provided more than a hundred hours of pro-bono labor. The good news is, if you tour the lower levels of Zabriskie now, you cannot detect there had been a flood. As in previous floods, while the building suffered, a clean-up crew took care of it, experts came in, drains and drain covers were replaced, downspouts cleared, the project completed. But there is still more to do and you have the chance to be part of it.

How can you help? Find those listed in this article who helped stop the damage and thank them. Consider adding your name to the Immanuel responders list so you get a future call to help. Reach out to the preschool with welcome and support. Participate in the Immanuel “plug the hole” fundraising effort to bring in a targeted \$10,000 toward the 2018 flood response. Come to the Immanuel September 15 parish community event at 7:00 pm in Zabriskie Parish Hall where we will thank the responders, enjoy water-themed entertainment in the “Tale of Two Floods,” contribute generously to “plug the hole,” and support future discussions, events, and campaigns to permanently fix our flood risk.

*We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen*

*(Book of Common Prayer, Thanksgivings for the Church #3, excerpt, pg. 838)*

## 2018 Flood Remediation and Repair

Removing, reinstalling and painting baseboards, cleaning	\$3,000
Plumbing, drains, flood avoidance work	\$2,500
Installing tile in classroom, removing carpet	\$3,500
Professional disinfection, mold removal	\$2,000
Electrical work	\$800
Tree removal	\$1,000
Handyman services	\$4,000
Window replacement, step replacement	\$2,500 (estimate)
Other cleaning and repair	\$1,000 (estimate)
<b>Current best estimate for flood related damage</b>	<b>\$20,300</b>

# HILL HAPPENINGS

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



A requiem celebrating the life of the Rev. Derrill P. Crosby will be held this Saturday, August 25, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 6320 Hanover Avenue, Springfield, Virginia.

His son, the Rev. David Crosby, will preach and celebrate this requiem mass. A reception will follow the service in the auditorium of the Education Building, directly across from the church.

## Purchases at Ten Thousand Villages Saturday, September 1<sup>st</sup> from 2-4 pm To Benefit Christ Church's Refugee Ministry

Christ Church's Refugee Ministry has worked with 24 families for over 2 ½ years to help welcome them to our community. Many of you joined our families in July for a wonderful community meal we hosted at Immanuel – and by all accounts everyone had a great time – we know they felt the love and concern from so many in our parish that support this important ministry! While the majority of the families are now financially independent, some still need our help to move to self-sufficiency.

On **Saturday, September 1<sup>st</sup> from 2-4 pm, Ten Thousand Villages**, located at 915 King Street in Old Town, will donate 10% of their proceeds to Christ Church's Refugee Ministry and once sales hit \$2,000 it will go up to 20%. **Note: you must mention Refugee Ministry.** Members of the ministry will be on hand to answer questions and share information. Thank you for your support !



## **ALIVE! FURNITURE DELIVERY DAY: Volunteers Needed Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup>!**

Saturday, Sept 8<sup>th</sup> is Immanuel's Saturday to deliver donated furniture to Alexandria families in need. We have taken the responsibility for delivery on just two Saturdays a year. Jim Wise will be driving a truck and we need some strong, able-bodied folks to help move furniture that day. High school students needing volunteer hours, scout troops, teens — all able-bodied people who can empathize with local families that often live without the basic necessities of urban life — are asked to help.

It's **only one day**, so won't you help? Volunteers should be at the rear of First Christian Church, 2723 King Street at 8a.m. The work will be for 5 hours, until about 1p.m. Come help and improve your spiritual well-being and that of our community at the same time by helping families in need! Thank you.



**SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKSHOP September 8<sup>th</sup>:** All School Teachers (and anyone interested in teaching Sunday School) – This coming year is going to be a fresh, and hopefully exciting time in our children's ministries. Therefore, you are all invited to an invaluable but quick workshop to help us better prepare.

The workshop is on **Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00a.m.-12:00p.m. in the largest Sunday School Classroom, Zabriskie Chapel.** We will work on familiarizing ourselves with the brand new curriculum, brainstorming ideas, and generally enjoying fellowship opportunities with refreshments. If you have never taught Sunday

School and/or have always had an interest in working with children, then this is a great time to start, so please join us. We hope to see you there! To RSVP, ask questions or address concerns, please contact the Rev. John Hogg ([jhogg@icoh.net](mailto:jhogg@icoh.net)) or Linda Serabian ([serabian@somaarchitects.com](mailto:serabian@somaarchitects.com)).

# Save the Date!

## A Tale of Two Floods

**Saturday, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup> – An Evening of Thanks and a Call for Aid  
7-9 p.m. in Zabriskie Parish Hall**

**NEW CHALLENGE! A generous parishioner who wishes to remain anonymous has promised to match, dollar for dollar, all contributions up to a total of \$500. Gifts must be made by Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup> to be eligible for this match.**

**Your donation can work harder and raise matching funds.  
Put “Flood Relief” on the memo line of your check for all flood-related donations.**

### Enjoy

- ◆ a variety show telling the story of the Great Flood in Genesis and Immanuel’s flash flood in June
- ◆ a tribute to Immanuel’s first responders who cleaned up after the disaster, repaired the damage, and put permanent fixes in place
- ◆ a live auction and other chances to help “plug the hole” in Immanuel’s budget caused by flood expenses
- ◆ refreshments of wine and cheese, cookies, and other sweet treats

Come rally together to help “plug the hole” in this year’s budget caused by major outlays for flood clean-up, repairs, and preventative work so we can avoid a repeat scenario when storms hit again. We hope you will participate and consider making a generous contribution. Please come! Sign up in the narthex or **call 703-370-6555 and press number 9 during the voice recording to leave a message, or ask for extension #205.** Childcare will be available.



# Save the Date!



Are you traveling outside of the USA this summer? In our September issue, which will highlight our Parishioners' pilgrimage to The Holy Land, we'd love to show your photos of you visiting holy places: churches. Send your photos and brief descriptions of your visit to churches outside of the continental United States to [apowell@icoh.net](mailto:apowell@icoh.net) with "church photos" in the subject line. Thank you.



## *Want to become an **Acolyte**?*

Immanuel loves having acolytes; however, our current team is stretched a bit thin, so we need a few more members — including older teens and adults. If you and/or your child is interested, simply let us know with an email to [apowell@icoh.net](mailto:apowell@icoh.net). We hope to begin a training class this fall!

Thank you for considering this vital lay ministry.





*In Our September Issue:  
Immanuelites Visit the Holy Land!*

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# HOMECOMING

August 20 <sup>th</sup> - 31 <sup>st</sup>	Holy Land Pilgrimage	Let's all pray for our fellow parishioners as they travel in Jesus' footsteps in the Holy Land.
September 9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Homecoming Sunday Service</b>	10:30 a.m. Immanuel Chapel
September 15 <sup>th</sup>	"Tale of Two Floods" Fundraiser Entertainment and Lite Fare	7-9:00 p.m., Zabriskie Parish Hall
September 16 <sup>th</sup>	Fall Schedule of Services Resumes	8:00a.m., HE Rite I, Zabriskie Chapel 9:00a.m., HE Rite II, Zabriskie Chapel, 11a.m., HE Rite II, Zabriskie Chapel International Anglican Congregation 11:15a.m., HE Rite II, Immanuel Chapel
September 19 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday Evening Eucharist Returns — <i>NEW TIME</i>	6:00p.m., Zabriskie Chapel