

# The Almond Tree: *In Brief*



NEWS CIRCULAR OF IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

August 1, 2020

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PHOTO CREDITS: *Monarch butterflies visit Zabriskie Parish Hall* - Chris von Schoening; *Cookies for Delivery to Goodwin House and The Hermitage Delivery* - Candy Levin; and *New Shed for Immanuel: An Eagle Scout Project* Courtesy of Peter Beckmann and Corey Wargo-Bergmark by Father Randy

## CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

*“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers”* (Ephesians 4:11)

Dear Immanuel members and friends,

A storied, well-beloved, pastime for every generation of Christians is finding Bible verses that imply we don’t actually need to do some part of Christian living. A particular favorite among those explaining they don’t feel called to some ministry, is found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (see above).

Many adults—harkening to Paul’s imagery of us as different members of the Body of Christ with select skills and purposes—have said, “Everyone has their own gifts, and mine just aren’t in Youth Ministry.”

I have had literally hundreds of such conversations over the last ten years. Hundreds of adults have explained to me that children and youth formation isn’t their charism or calling, how they aren’t called to be teachers. You may feel the same way...

And I have some bad news.

The young people in our parish are already learning from you. Each child, confirmand, teenager, and young adult who comes through the door (when we’re



able to go inside) is already looking to us to see what it is a Christian... well... is. We may not feel part of children and youth formation, but we are, every week and with every interaction. This fits with Paul's imagery in its actual context and conclusion:

“But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” (Ephesians 4:15).

You may have some special gifts, Scripture tells us, but we all must grow in every way ... not just the ways we'd like. We are all teachers, preachers, and evangelists to the people in our lives whether we thought we signed up for that or not.

As the new Assistant Rector with a focus on Children, Youth, and Families, I have to start here. Christian formation and the care of families aren't an area of ministry some people do behind closed doors in the Fairchild Room. Formation models that suppose young people are only formed during Sunday School time are based on the idea that children are the future: We'll just set them up over there somewhere, and let them out when they're fully formed Christians.

But there is a huge and fatal flaw in those models; children aren't the future—they're here now. They, too, are the body of Christ. They, too, are teachers, preachers, and evangelists moved by the Holy Spirit and teaching us things about the living God!

The clergy, vestry, a plethora of committees, youth leaders, and Sunday School teachers are preparing for what we all know will be a very weird program year at Immanuel. In the midst of a global health crisis, in this time of nothing-being-quite-normal, I urge us all to remember who we really are. We really are beloved members of the Body of Christ, whose vision for healing and peace in the world is needed now more than ever. We really are the communion of saints and the great cloud of witnesses surrounding those people who we have the good sense to show love, compassion, and charity.

We really are... we. Whether baptized and confirmed, brand new and considering those things, young and preparing for them, we are a church, a community, a family. You are not alone; you are not deficient; you are not called to just-do-one-little-thing-for-the-church-and-then-slink-anonymously -out-the-back-before-the-last-hymn-so-you-don't-have-to-talk-to-anybody. You are an important, instrumental, vital part of God's dream for this world—and I believe with all my heart that you are as essential to forming our young people as I am.

And they'll form us too, because they aren't the future; they're here now. And they are an equally vital part of who we are in Christ, and as Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill.

— *Father Sam*

The Rev. Deacon Sam Sheridan  
Assistant Rector

### **AUGUST 7<sup>th</sup> -- HARPERS FERRY TUBING TRIP FOR RECENT GRADUATES AND COLLEGE STUDENTS:**

If you've been stuck in your parents' house all summer waiting to go (or go back) to college, we've got an appropriately social-distance friendly activity for you! Shoot Fr. Sam an email at [ssheridan@icoh.net](mailto:ssheridan@icoh.net) if you'd like to make the 70ish minute drive to Harpers Ferry Adventure Center in Hillsboro, VA on the morning of August 7th and we'll spend some time sitting in rubber tubes and floating down the river. It'll be \$25 and you'll need to get there--but don't let that stop you: if either is an issue we'll figure out



P.S. I don't think every 18-24 year old reads weekly emails from their church with the regularity and attention to detail that one might hope. If you're the parent or friend of a college student associated with Immanuel please help me get the word out to them.

# Farewell Immanuelites

We bid a fond farewell to long-time parishioner Laura Parsons, who recently moved to Louisville, Kentucky to live closer to her father. She continues to worship with her Immanuel Family online at our 10:30 a.m. Eucharists via Zoom. Laura's mail will continue to be forwarded to her for the foreseeable future, so feel free to write to her at her Alexandria address and she'll receive your notes and well wishes.



Our new directory will be published on our website August 8th.

Vestry Member **Martha Shimkin** Finds "...*The outside spiritual Eucharist a beautiful and meaningful way to come together in worship.*"

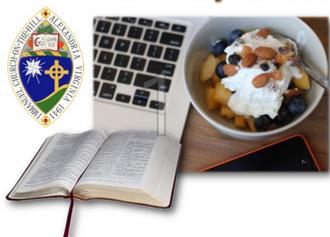


On July 19, Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill came together for a first in-person worship service since the COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions were put in place. This occurred outside on the Seminary grounds, following physical distancing and public health precautions that were issued by the state and local jurisdictions, as well as the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. While different from what we know as a typical service, the 40 or so participants each week found the outside spiritual Eucharist a beautiful and meaningful way to come together in worship. We enjoyed music, readings, a sermon, the liturgy, fellowship from afar, and a chance to see and support each other. After collecting feedback and making some changes, including an earlier start time, we went for another outdoor service on July 26, and feel ready to move forward as "ordinary," weather permitting, until we can meet indoors.

All are invited to join this in-person worship, as well as the online Zoom worship service, which we also converted to a spiritual Eucharist. Thanks so much to the Seminary for giving us shaded space in The Grove, and for the Vestry appointed planning team: Randy Alexander, Sam Sheridan, Susan Parsons, Keith June, Kathryn Jackson-Haskin, Darrell Wilson, and Francine Wargo, who helped me organize. We are also grateful for volunteers now and in the future who helped set up and tear down the worship space, so far including John Bednar, Kevin Kirby, Julie Bruns, Shawn Whitman, Katherine Smith, and Ken Gerhart. Come and see, help if you can, or continue joining the Zoom service. We are happy to give more options to safely worship together.

I was glad when they said to me, "*Let us go to the house of the LORD*". (Psalm 122:1)

## Breakfast Bible Study via Zoom



Join us on Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup> for **Breakfast Bible Study via Zoom**. Our new theme is **God's Loving Concern**; we will read Matthew 18:10-14, using the *African Model of Reflection*. For more information, please visit [our website](#) or contact Chrissie Crosby. No prior knowledge or experience in bible study is necessary! We will guide you through the process.

First, dial **1 (929) 205-6099**, then at the prompts, enter your meeting ID and password. Meeting ID: **959 5450 6553** Password: **027913**

Look for "Tales of the Pumpkin Patch" in The September Issue of  
The Almond Tree: QUARTERLY Magazine of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill!

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STORY GALLERY:

## Tales of the Pumpkin Patch

Share your funny or unusual experiences at [Immanuel's famous Pumpkin Patch](#) and we'll feature them in the September 1<sup>st</sup> issue of **The Almond Tree Quarterly**. Deadline for submissions -- including any photos -- is **August 15, 2020**. Send to [office@icoh.net](mailto:office@icoh.net) or mail your story to Aleta at the office: 3606 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304-5200