

The Almond Tree: *In Brief*



NEWS CIRCULAR OF IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

January 16, 2021

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CARPE DIEM: NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE RECTOR

For a long time I've been kind of weird about the passage of time. Some of it is the Carpe Diem (seize the day) mindset, trying to make sure I am making the most of the precious time that is fleeting. Part of it, of course, is the awareness of life moving on, of getting older, of losing people. And part of it is just good old fear of the unknown.

I'm preaching to myself here, and maybe you might find something helpful, as well, but I think our faith speaks to each of these three aspects of weirdness around time, and the advent of a new year is a good time to ponder it all.

- 1) ***Seizing the day***—What I have come to realize is that seizing a typical day is not just about getting work done or completing my omni-present to-do list. It's also about how I am approaching the day, ideally with some rest, eating well, time for exercise, and time for significant relationships. I have found that when one or more of these is neglected I pretty soon feel as if I'm not seizing anything, and everything starts to suffer. I would include in this list my prayer and worship time, certainly altered during this seemingly-unending pandemic, but which still vitally important. It is in prayer that I can take an inventory of how I am spending my time, how I am giving back, and then ask what God would have me do. In other words, it's not just what we do, but how we do it.
- 2) ***The awareness of life moving on***—Many of you have had this experience, I'm sure, but processing the death of my father has affected me in ways I am still discovering. Losing a parent, while also seeing one's own children growing, and losing other friends and relationships, can start to make one downright paranoid. We can begin to think, "All the good times are over." I like this antidote from Isaiah: "But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint". (Isaiah 40:31).



- 3) **The fear**—No matter how deeply one is a believer and a disciple there is still so much about the future that we just don't know. But we do know Who controls the future. We believe that God is outside time and space and not constrained by them. So that means that God is already *in our future*. That is quite an invitation to trust. Just as God was Lord of time and space before we were born, God is Lord of time and space now, and for all time. The famous poem from 1908 by Minnie Louise Haskins, especially some stanzas not as well-known, say it well:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.”
And he replied:
“Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

*So heart be still:
What need our little life
Our human life to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife
Of things both high and low,
God hideth His intention.
God knows. His will
Is best. The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears
Are premature; In Him,
All time hath full provision.*

God bless you all, and may it be a new year of grace,

Randy

The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr.
Rector



EYC, CYF and Parents Provide Huge Living Nativity and Christmas Walk

Dozens of Immanuelites worked shifts to provide an Advent immersion experience that was both solemn and celebratory, held outside on December 12, 2020 at The Grove and surrounding lawns on the VTS campus.

Creativity was on bold display at multi-sensory live action vignettes featuring; carolers, wisemen, biblical townspeople, a soldier, The Holy Family, a host of angels — including a pop-up stage performance by Sidney as The Angel Gabriel — multiple light and music displays, small camp fires, Christmas and palm trees, and numerous hand-crafted manger animals.

Parishioners and guests had the choice of driving by or walking through the truly heart-warming displays.



Photos taken by Aleia



All photos on this page courtesy of Keith June.

A NEW YEAR CALLS FOR A FRESH LOOK – PLANNING FOR YOUR BEST LIFE

Whatever your age, health status, or the amount of your assets, it's essential to make sure that your legal documents are current and reflect your wishes.

Now is an excellent time to take action – create or review your legal and estate planning documents to see if they fulfill your wishes.

What are Estate Planning Documents?

This is a general term that can include your Will, Power of Attorney, Health Care Power of Attorney, Advance Medical Directive (or “Living Will,”) and Revocable Trust.

How to Take a Fresh Look

Review your fiduciaries. Fiduciaries are the Executor under your Will, the individuals you have identified in your Power of Attorney or Health Care Power of Attorney, and the Trustee of your Trust.

Are these individuals still the ones you want managing your estate and making important decisions for you or your beneficiaries? Are you still in close touch them and do they know and understand your wishes? Do they know where your important documents are kept? Have you named alternates in case they cannot serve?

Ensure your documents still reflect your wishes in case your decisions have changed since you created the documents. You can make necessary changes through a Codicil to your Will or Amendment to your Trust, or you can create new documents.

Make a current list of all your accounts – such as bank accounts or brokerage accounts and store the account lists with your estate planning documents.

Doublecheck that accounts are titled correctly to show account owners accurately. Life circumstances change through marriages, births, deaths, and divorces and your accounts need to reflect what's current.

Recheck the beneficiaries and contingent beneficiaries listed for your accounts, such as your insurance policy or 401(k) plan. You can easily update them by completing a Beneficiary Designation form.

Check that your legal documents give someone control of your digital assets.

Make sure that person knows how to find your list of current passwords.

Online planning resources are available and can be a way to get started, as well as contacting your legal, financial, and estate advisors. If you decide to use an online tool to draft documents, it is very important to have those documents reviewed by an attorney to ensure they both meet your needs and comply with all legal requirements.

Leaving a Future Gift to Immanuel

As you do this important and necessary estate planning work, we hope and pray you will consider leaving a future gift to Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill. The Zabriskie Society recognizes parishioners who have made Immanuel, or one of its trust funds, a beneficiary of their will, insurance policy, financial account, or other planned giving program.

Planned gifts to Immanuel are for all of us to consider. It is not something reserved just for the wealthy. It's a loving and responsible act of hope and faith in Immanuel's future that all of us desire.

For more information about how you can become a member of the Zabriskie Society, contact Danette "Dani" Kauffman, danettekauffman@starpower.net or 202-258-9743.

Every situation is different, and this guidance is not legal advice. So be sure to work with your legal, financial, and estate advisors to determine what is best for you.



Look for Our next QUARTERLY issue of The Almond Tree: A Magazine of Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill published online **March 1, 2021!**

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Is Your Photo Current?

Let's Update Before It's Printed January 20th



For the first time, we will include a photo directory in the back of the print version of next month's annual report.

In anticipation of expected high demand, we ask that everyone please review your listing in our online directory to make sure that your data -- and photo -- is current. If not, please send an email with photo attached to [Aleta](#). Thank you!