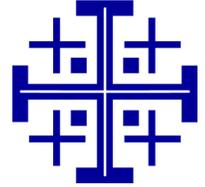




Immanuel Church-on-the-Hill
3606 Seminary Road/ Alexandria, VA 22304
www.Immanuel-on-the-Hill.org



“Behold how good and pleasant it is when God’s people dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1)

How is God Calling Us to Care About People in Prison?

Dear People of God at Immanuel, I invite you to join me for two special events on April 20 and May 1 to signal an expansion of Immanuel’s criminal justice initiative.

Our faith gives us many examples of how God wants us to treat incarcerated people, both the guilty and the innocent. As Jesus himself was being executed, he invited a convicted criminal to be with him in Paradise. Jesus’s first words in the Temple were to proclaim good news and release for captives. Jesus tells us that when we visit those in prison we are visiting Him, regardless of their guilt or innocence.

Why Criminal Justice?

- Major racial disparities in arrest/sentencing
- Harsher outcomes for poor people
- US global leader in numbers of incarcerated
- Prisons training ground for crime
- 1 in 3 adults in the US have a criminal record - excluding them from key aspects of citizenship - voting, jobs, housing, loans

Immanuel’s criminal justice/incarceration initiative is a bridge between issues of racial justice and larger social justice issues, examining where we can be the hands of Jesus for all people caught up in the system, whether police officers, incarcerated people, or those reentering society after prison. We have already done a lot – learning together, starting relationships on these issues with two Black churches, meeting with local representatives during Virginia’s January

legislative session in Richmond, providing Christmas Families support to children of inmates, and starting a chaplaincy with the Alexandria police while reaching out to local jails.

We invite you to pray for us, and also to consider prayerfully different ways to get involved. The first way is to learn more, and I invite you in particular to join us for a group showing of the moving film, *Just Mercy*, on Wednesday, April 20 and for the Forum Hour on criminal justice Sunday, May 1. Second, consider getting involved by befriending and mentoring someone coming out of jail or prison or advocating for a more just and effective criminal justice system here in Virginia. There are easy ways to get involved and trained, and Immanuel partner organizations to help, on the website.

We are on this journey together. I have no doubt that Jesus is with us as we explore how to support those affected by the criminal justice system. We will no doubt make mistakes. But our baptismal covenant is not a mistake, to “work for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being,” I look forward to seeing you on April 20 and May 1!

Respectfully,

The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr.
Rector

David Atwood
Vestry Steward for Adult Formation
and Discipleship, Social Justice

Kathryn Jackson Haskin
Social Justice