



The Clarendon Connection

February 2011 and March 2011

www.clarendonhillchurch.org

Clarendon Hill welcomes all people to
our church

Young or old, gay or straight,
Faithful or seeking,
You are welcome to join us on our shared
journey of faith.

We are a small but growing congregation
seeking to serve God, our community,
and our world.

Our resources may be limited, but our
imaginations and desires are not. We are
constantly seeking ways to serve others
and to work for a more just world.

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Sunday Worship
9:45 a.m. Choir rehearsal
10:30a.m. Worship
10:45a.m. Children's education
11:30a.m. Refreshments & fellowship

Communion will be celebrated on
February 6

Minister: Rev. Karl Gustafson
Music Director: John Adams
Sexton: Arnie James

A NEW YEAR

*The ladies of the Horizon's Bible Study used this devotional on
their first meeting for this year. This lesson is written by Beth
Bondurant.*

**“The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present
to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from
day one. Everything was created through God: nothing-not
one thing!- came into being without God. What came into
existence was life, and the life was light to live by. The life-
light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it
out”**

**From day one...life begins in God's light of amazing
potential where nothing is impossible.**

**God's creation includes every seed and cell... every breath of
wind and rain...every combination conceivable...any
contingency imaginable.**

**In Everything, God's life-light blazes...shinning with hope
and strength...mercy and grace...peace and love.**

**To live in God's light is to expect that no matter what
mountain or valley...what power or present situation...what
future challenge or change...what person or
probability...”NOTHING...absolutely NOTHING can ever
separate us from God's love”**

Belief enables our readiness for whatever comes today...tomorrow...this new year...for all of life.

O God...even when I know a storm is brewing...help my heart shine with blazing life.

O God...even when unsurmountable odds close in on me...open my mind and allow your burning truth to guide my thinking.

O God...when the darkness of separation and pain squeeze out my faith and hope...shine the warmth of your healing and hope with every breath...with every step.

O God...instill within my spirit the joy of love and forgiveness...of reconciliation and restoration...of kindness and gentleness...of unmistakable generosity and welcome for every person and place present to me today.

O God ...in trust...I BELIEVE...but in my doubt...I cling to the promise and potency that no darkness can overcome your life-light that has been shining...

FROM DAY ONE!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFTS!

Thanks to your generosity, we were able to fulfill all the gift requests from the Somerville Early Head Start family that we adopted for Christmas. We appreciate your warm and giving spirit! Special thanks to Sarah and Valerie Donovan for helping to make sure all the gifts were festively wrapped and delivered in a timely manner!

ANNUAL MEETING TIME

Please join us on Sunday, January 23rd immediately following the service for our annual meeting. The meeting is a potluck, so please bring an appetizer, main dish, side dish, dessert or beverage to share. Once we have had our meal, we will begin the annual meeting. The annual meeting is a time for the pastor and church committees to make reports about their activities for the previous year, as well as looking and planning ahead for the new year.

We will also conduct the business of the congregation, including voting on nominations for elders and deacons, the terms of call for the pastor, the budget for the coming year, and many other matters. Everyone can attend the meeting, but only members of the congregation are allowed to vote. We hope to see you there!

ENVELOPES ARE HERE!

The annual envelopes for giving are here, and if you haven't picked yours up yet, you will find them on the table just inside the sanctuary doors. We will be announcing the per capita (blue envelope) and the initial giving envelope (gold) amounts shortly. If you don't have a set of envelopes, but would like some, please contact Ellen . You can speak with her after a service or contact her by email (ellends@verizon.net).

This article came from Munir Jirmanus

SECTERIANISM AND

American and Papal pretensions to be defenders of local religious minorities -- aided in the last three decades by an army of US-funded NGOs -- have contributed more to the situation of sectarianism, rather than "safeguarded" the Christian community, argues Joseph Massad*

The horrifying scene of carnage in a Christian church in Alexandria, ending not only the passing year but also the lives of innocent people, was not just shocking to everyone in Egypt and the region, but also terrifying to some who began to postulate that this might very well usher in the end of the presence of Christians in the country, if not in the Arab world at large. The panic and dismay visited on most people have understandably led some to rush to offer dramatic scenarios for the immediate future. It strikes me as more opportune, however, especially, in these times to offer an analysis of what is unfolding that is informed not only by the past and current situation of Egypt, but also by the regional context in which this violent act was committed. Fanning the flames of panic and sectarianism will only lead to more such violence without improving the security situation nor would it bring about the sought after civic peace.

I should start perhaps historically with the advent of the modern age, which brought about European intervention in the Ottoman Empire, often under the guise of protecting the non-Muslim communities, which acted as a precursor to the later and full-scale European colonisation of the Ottoman Arab provinces. As is well known, this intervention has augured badly for the Christian communities, many of whom ended up being displaced from the very capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, while many others in the Syrian and Iraqi provinces began to immigrate to the Americas by the end of the nineteenth century through the present. This and subsequent colonial manipulation of sectarian identities by British and French colonialism brought about a number of episodes of communal violence against Arab Christians (and aided by later Zionist intervention, against Arab Jews) virtually unknown in scale and nature prior to the arrival of the European "protectors," whether the French in Damascus (in 1840 with the French-instigated blood libel against Syrian Jews, and in 1860 with the massacre of Syrian Christians), or the British in Baghdad (in 1933 with the massacre of Iraqi Assyrians, and in 1941 the massacre of Iraqi Jews).

The sectarian nightmare that Lebanon has constituted since the mid-nineteenth century, and the role of the French and the Vatican in it, is in a class of its own. Egyptian Christians have been spared such massacres in the modern period, though not the effects of French (beginning with Napoleon) and later British manipulation of existing sectarianism in the country. Surely, the extant institutional discrimination against Egyptian Christians by the different organs of the state cannot be laid fully at the doorstep of colonialism, but the Sadat's regime intensification of sectarian hatred and his opportunistic manipulation of Islam in the service of imperial policies along with his support of some Islamist groups against the threat of Soviet and other varieties of communism and Arab nationalism, facilitated the attacks on Egyptian Christians in the 1970s.

The policies of Sadat institutionalised a new trend in Egyptian popular culture that continues to dominate today in many corners of civil society, among Christians and Muslims alike. While sectarianism predates Sadat's rule, his anti-Arab attitudes and his campaign to de-Arabise Egypt by removing it from the Arab fold in the late 1970s and beyond contributed to this new sectarian trend. As most Egyptians saw their identity as grounded in the region, when Sadat insisted on de-Arabising them while allying himself with Israel and the United States, the majority of Muslim Egyptians opted for Islam as the new extra-Egyptian framework for their identity. This spurred many Christian Egyptians to revert to a more parochial and local identity of Copticness, rooted exclusively within Egypt. Arabness, as a non-racial non-essentialist identity, which defines Arabs as those whose native language is Arabic, included and welcomed Egyptian Christians under its banner, even though it was not always the major political current among most Egyptian Christian intellectuals. However, the new Sadat-generated momentum of de-Arabisation and the rise of Islamism, augmented in the early 1980s by the US (and Saudi) sponsorship of pan-Islamic efforts to fight its war in Afghanistan (in which many Islamist Egyptians volunteered to participate), led to the strengthening of sectarian Christian and Muslim identities that relegated Egyptian Christians to an unfortunate localism that

removed them from any regional identitarian project.

This has intensified the sense of isolation felt by many Egyptian Christians, especially in light of the sectarian anti-Christian societal discourse regnant in the post-Sadat era across the country, including but not limited to educational institutions, ranging from primary schools all the way to universities, in curricula, and among teachers and students alike. We must note though that anti-Christian institutionalised discrimination is often exaggerated by expatriate and some US-based chauvinist fanatics as "oppression" and played down by the state and its operatives as "non-existent" Assisted by actual incidents of communal violence, especially in the south of the country, the hyperbole on both sides is hardly mitigated. Yet, American and Papal pretensions to be defenders of local religious minorities, aided in the last three decades by an army of US-funded NGOs, have contributed more to this situation of sectarianism rather than --safeguardedĀ Christian Egyptians.

This Egyptian situation exists today in the context of horrifying sectarian violence made possible by the American invasion and occupation of Iraq which brought in its wake Al-Qaeda to the country (it does seem ironic that where the Americans go in the Arab world and outside it, they bring al-Qaeda along with them, not least in Yemen where their ongoing intervention has created a civil war in the country). While most of those killed in the American-instigated sectarian violence in Iraq have been Shiite and Sunni Muslims (notwithstanding the attacks on the tiny Palestinian community of Baghdad), Europe and America's media characteristically feature with much fanfare the equally horrifying violence against Iraqi Christians, as if the latter are somehow specifically and solely targeted among Iraq's sects and ethnic groups for such violence. Nonetheless, it is important to assert that it was the arrival of the Americans in Iraq that has pretty much reduced the size of Iraq's Christians to infinitesimal levels.

How is one to read the carnage of Alexandria in this context and what would be needed to contain its effects? Those few who believe that foreign intervention in Egypt might protect the Copts are wittingly or unwittingly using the incident to bring about a wider role for US imperialism in the country -- as if what the US has brought about in Egypt in the last three decades (in terms of massive enrichment of the rich and impoverishment of the poor, de-education, destruction of Egyptian agriculture, gargantuan corruption and theft of public funds, economic dependence, and diminishment of Egypt's regional political and military role, not to mention the US hand in the ongoing sectarianism) has not been sufficient, and as if the Americans have ever intervened anywhere in the world to help the oppressed or the discriminated against, unless one considers dethroned dictators or a business class, whose powers to pillage were curtailed by a nationalist government, "oppressed groups." Had the US been a protector, those in our part of the world who are oppressed (and this includes millions of people of all shades and colors) would not only have been saved by US intervention, but their very suffering would not continue to be underwritten by US policies, as is most often the case. So much then for the US as a protector of the lives of Arab, including Egyptian, Christians.

It strikes me that calls for state reform and putting an end to discriminatory policies are essential, but so are calls for reform in the religious institutions that claim to speak for Muslim and Christian Egyptians, and for the kind of sectarian discourse they churn out. This is not to suggest that the demographic differences between a majority of Muslim Egyptians and a minority of Christian Egyptians should be elided nor that the state's identifying "its" religion as the same as that of the majority of its population is irrelevant (something Sadat, under American aegis, did much to institutionalise and consecrate) when analysing the power of these religious institutions, but rather that at the level of sectarian discourse they can be seen often as mirroring one another. To say that the Egyptian state has had a hand in sectarian manipulation is to state the obvious, but this discourse now has an independent momentum and will have to be deconstructed by the anti-sectarian civil society forces in the country, not only in the political sphere, but also and especially in the cultural and social spheres (it is rather unsurprising that the sphere of wealth is the only sphere where no discrimination against rich Christian Egyptians can be said to exist).

And this should be done not by strategies of manifesting a special "admiration" for the Christians as a separate sect (as a secular Marxist Palestinian intellectual of Muslim background recently averred to me at a private gathering) and exaggerating the sectarian identity of "their" contribution to Egyptian and Arab history (a cause dear to Arab neoliberals and their Western sponsors). Rather we must understand how Europe and the United States, in claiming to "sponsor" and "protect" the local Christian communities and

make it *de rigueur* to "admire" them and identify "their" contributions to the modern Arab world in sectarian terms, will bring about the very same exclusion of these communities in the countries where they live and belong as those hateful fanatics, who target them for violence and who claim them to be foreign to the body politic, want to do. Zionism sought to create an exclusive Jewish state and empty the world of Jews who would all flock to the Jewish colonial settlement to live in a racist intolerant state. Similarly, these international forces are intent on transforming Arab and Muslim countries into Israeli-style exclusive enclaves of "intolerant" Muslims whom the ("Judeo-Christian") world *must not tolerate* on account of their own alleged intolerance.

In this vein, I should mention that one week before the terrorist attack in Alexandria, the Egyptian authorities uncovered a major Israeli spy ring in the country. Given the history of Mossad bombings of Egyptian post offices, cinemas, cultural centers, and train stations in the 1950s, and Mossad bombing operations across the Arab world that have never ceased to the present (the Mossad has always had a flair for car bombings), it would be important to investigate possible or even potential links between the Mossad operatives and the church bombers.

The irony remains, however, that it is the intolerant Americans, Europeans, and the Israelis and their extremist intolerant, though at times unwitting, local allies, namely the violent minority of sectarians among Islamists, who stand to benefit most from the Alexandria tragedy. Unless intellectuals in Egypt and the Arab world, Muslim and Christian, religious and secular, resist joining this international *alliance of the intolerant*, they may very well help them achieve their goals.

** The writer is associate professor of modern Arab politics and intellectual history at Columbia University in New York.*

COFFEE HOUR INSTRUCTIONS

For those of you who are newer to our congregation, (and even for those who have been doing coffee hour for many years), we decided to put together some instructions for how to "do" coffee hour. We hope that these are helpful! If you have any suggestions for changes, edits, or comments, please contact Ellen. (You can speak with her after a service or contact her by email (ellends@verizon.net.) Thanks to all of you who help to make our coffee hours so warm and welcoming!

Clarendon Hill Coffee Hour Instructions

1. Coffee/Tea – please prepare 1 pot of caffeinated coffee and one pot of decaf. You may set the coffee pots up before the service, or leave before the end of the service to prepare them. It's best to leave a little before the end of the service to turn the pots on so the coffee is ready when folks come down-stairs. The coffee is in the door of the freezer. The coffee filters are on the counter behind where the coffee pots are located. $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of coffee should go in each filter. There are one cup measures, either on the counter, or in the kitchen cabinets. Please plug one coffee pot in to the wall plug, and the extension cord in to the other wall plug. Plug the second coffee pot in to the extension cord. Make sure you turn the extension cord to "On" by flipping the switch. The tea pot is usually on the table on opposite side of the room from the coffee pot. Fill it with fresh water, and plug it in. (Plug is on the floor baseboard.) Turn it on. Please bring cream, half and half and/or milk for the coffee. These can be placed on the tray with the sugar. Make sure there are clean spoons for folks to use to stir in their sugar and/or dairy product.

2. Please bring some type of cold beverage for those who may not want coffee or tea. Any kind of fruit juice or just water is fine. (We tend to stay away from soda.) The cups for cold beverages are usually in the first glass fronted cupboard in the kitchen.
3. Place plates and the container with plastic ware on the table. Extra plates, cups, and plastic ware are in the first cupboard underneath the front counter.
4. Feel free to bring whatever you like for coffee hour. Please be aware that we have church members with SEVERE allergies to nuts, so please do not bring anything with nuts. (If you have to bring something with nuts, please mark it.) You may make/bake things to bring or buy them. If you buy items, please note that those with severe nut allergies will check the labels to be sure that they are safe to consume. If you make them, it's helpful to list the ingredients. When purchasing things, please note that even if they do not contain nuts, they may be made in a facility that processes nuts. Our members with nut allergies cannot eat those products that are made in facilities that process nuts. A few things that are nut safe (although always check the labels, as sometimes the ingredients used to make items change): Smart Food, Pirate Booty, Goldfish (Pepperidge Farm.) Sweets are trickier, as most aren't safe, but if you find one, please bring it! Some things that are always popular: hummus and pita (bread or crackers), fruit, bagels and cream cheese, cheese and crackers, salsa and corn chips, veggies and dip, cookies, pastries, doughnuts, sweet/quick bread.
5. After coffee hour is over with, please wash the coffee cups, coffee maker items and any other items that have been used (spoons, plates, cutting boards, knives, etc.). Dry them, and put them away. (Dish towels should be on the front counter.) Please wipe off the counters (both in the kitchen and where the coffee pots, cups and cold beverages are) and wipe down the plastic tablecloths on the food tables. Please sweep the area around the food tables.
6. If you have any questions about anything, feel free to ask!

Clarendon Hill Presbyterian Church
155 Powder House Boulevard
West Somerville, Massachusetts 02144-1613
Telephone: 617-625-4823

www.clarendonhillchurch.org

Date	Coffee Hour	Scripture	Mission	Greeter	Nursery
1/30/11	Siggers	Winchester	Jirmanus	Schemerhorn	Gustafson
2/6/11	Augers	S. Donovan	Liberace	Kumpa	V. Donovan
<i>Communion</i>					
2/13/11	Milanesi/Kumpa	Beran	Milanesi	Liberace	Schemerhorn
2/20/11	Camelio/Braga	Jirmanus	Schemerhorn	Cavano	S. Donovan
2/27/11	Reynolds/Bartin	P. Auger	S. Donovan	Milanesi	Gustafson
03/06/11	Gustafson/Cavano	Schemerhorn	V. Donovan	Auger	V. Donovan
<i>Communion</i>					
3/13/11	Arce/Fish	Reynolds	Kumpa	V. Donovan	Schemerhorn
3/20/11	Allen/Rhoads	J. Auger	Camelio	Schemerhorn	S. Donvan
3/27/11	Schemerhorn	Bray	Winchester	Kumpa	Gustafson
4/3/11	Donovan	Allen	Beran	Liberace	V. Donovan
<i>Communion</i>					
4/10/11	Siggers	C. Milanesi	Cavano	Cavano	Schemerhorn
4/17/11	Augers	Rantisi	Auger	Milanesi	S. Donovan
4/24/11	Milanesi/Kumpa	Liberace	Jirmanus	Auger	Gustafson
<i>Easter</i>					
5/1/11	Camelio/Braga	Cavano	Liberace	V. Donovan	V. Donovan
<i>Communion</i>					
5/8/11	Reynolds/Bartin	Winchester	Milanesi	Schemerhorn	Schemerhorn
5/15/11	Gustafson/Cavano	S. Donovan	Schemerhorn	Kumpa	S. Donovan
5/22/11	Arce/Fish	Beran	S. Donovan	Liberace	Gustafson
5/29/11	Allen/Rhoads	Jirmanus	V. Donovan	Cavano	V. Donovan
6/5/11	Schemerhorn	P. Auger	Kumpa	Milanesi	Schemerhorn
<i>Communion</i>					
6/12/11	Donovan	Schemerhorn	Camelio	Auger	S. Donovan
6/12/11	Siggers	Reynolds	Winchester	V. Donovan	Gustafson
6/19/11	Augers	J. Auger	Beran	Schemerhorn	V. Donovan
6/26/11	Milanesi/Kumpa	Bray	Cavano	Kumpa	Schemerhorn

If you are unable to fill your commitment, please do your best to switch with someone else. To be added to this list, please contact Val Donovan (mabel312@aol.com). *The Clarendon Connection is edited by Salam Lebbos.*