

On Wednesday, January 18, twelve Immanuel parishioners spent the day in Richmond joining in the Day for All People, the annual "lobby day" of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. This was a record for Immanuel; nobody could recall more than 3-4 parishioners participating in previous years. (In fact, it appeared that Immanuel was better-represented than any other VICPP-member parish.) Our great turnout was driven by Immanuel's endorsement of legislation to limit solitary confinement, VICPP's top issue in this General Assembly. We were also pleased to be joined by Rev. Rosa Crawford of Alleyne AME Zion Church, her husband Elijah, and Hunter Forte, Alleyne's Senior Warden for Social Justice.

We each met with our state delegate and senators — among us, we covered five delegates and five senators. The process was mildly chaotic, as we squeezed into elevators with doctors and state police (who were having their own lobby days), and as we were joined by dozens of workers at Dulles and National Airports who lack health insurance or paid sick days. But it was a great joy to be able to witness to our legislators about the issues that our faith calls us to engage on. Besides limiting solitary confinement, these included limiting costs to prisoners for things like phone calls and emails, a variety of steps to stem the dramatically higher levels of maternal mortality among black mothers, and more funding for affordable housing in the Commonwealth. Our legislators appreciated our visits.

It was a long day — it was dark when our bus left the Immanuel parking lot and it was dark when we returned about twelve hours later. But it was hugely rewarding, after learning and praying about these issues, to act on them — and to do so as part of a statewide group of similarly-motivated folks.

The General Assembly will run into February. We will keep the congregation posted on how our issues fare.