



**Witnessing Worship:  
A Photographic Study of Faith in Alexandria**

**Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum**

## Witnessing Worship: A Photographic Study of Faith in Alexandria

In 1985, photographer Nina Tisara documented fifty worship groups throughout the City of Alexandria. The 106 images, now in the Alexandria History Museum collection, provide a portrait of Alexandria's worship community at that time.

The idea for this project came to Ms. Tisara while driving from her home to work in Old Town where she was freelancing for a local newspaper. In that short distance there were seven different denominations of churches. The architecture initially caught her attention, but she soon realized it was the people at worship that truly interested her.

With the support of a small grant from the Alexandria Commission for the Arts, Ms. Tisara worked on the project for a year. The Alexandria List of Clergy given to her by The Rev. John Von Hemert of St. Paul's Episcopal Church served as her guide, and the telephone directory Yellow Pages provided contact information.



Homecoming at Ebenezer Baptist Church

Ms. Tisara photographed worship in many different churches, as well as synagogues and a home where Buddhist monks lived and worshipped. There were no mosques within the city, so none were available to be included.

Ms. Tisara used an approach familiar to those in photojournalism and anthropology. She sought to intrude as little as possible as she took the photographs, using only available light and foregoing the use of flash. Sometimes she had to be creative to get enough light. In one instance, Ms. Tisara used the light from a nearby soda machine for a photograph. To help her remain as unobtrusive as possible she used Tri-X film and high energy developers. She often returned to a worship place on multiple occasions to ensure good photos.

Nina Tisara sought to document “the breadth, variety, and vitality of worship in the city.” She came to call her project *Converging Paths* because the experience led her to conclude that, despite the many different paths worship takes, “we are all kin.”

This presentation is a sampling of the photographs.

*Nina Tisara*  
*Photography*  
3246 South Utah Street  
Arlington, Virginia 22206  
(703) 820-2791

June 1985

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

I have been privileged to receive a grant from the Alexandria Commission on the Arts to compile a photographic record of the churches and synagogues in the City today.

I call the project "Converging Paths." In it, I hope to photograph not only the architectural details of the outside structures, but the activities that bring people together in fellowship and communion.

It is my hope that the photographs resulting from this study will become an exhibit that celebrates the diversity and vitality of religion in the City.

Please let me know if you would like your church to be part of this activity.

Good wishes,

*Nina Tisara*  
Nina Tisara

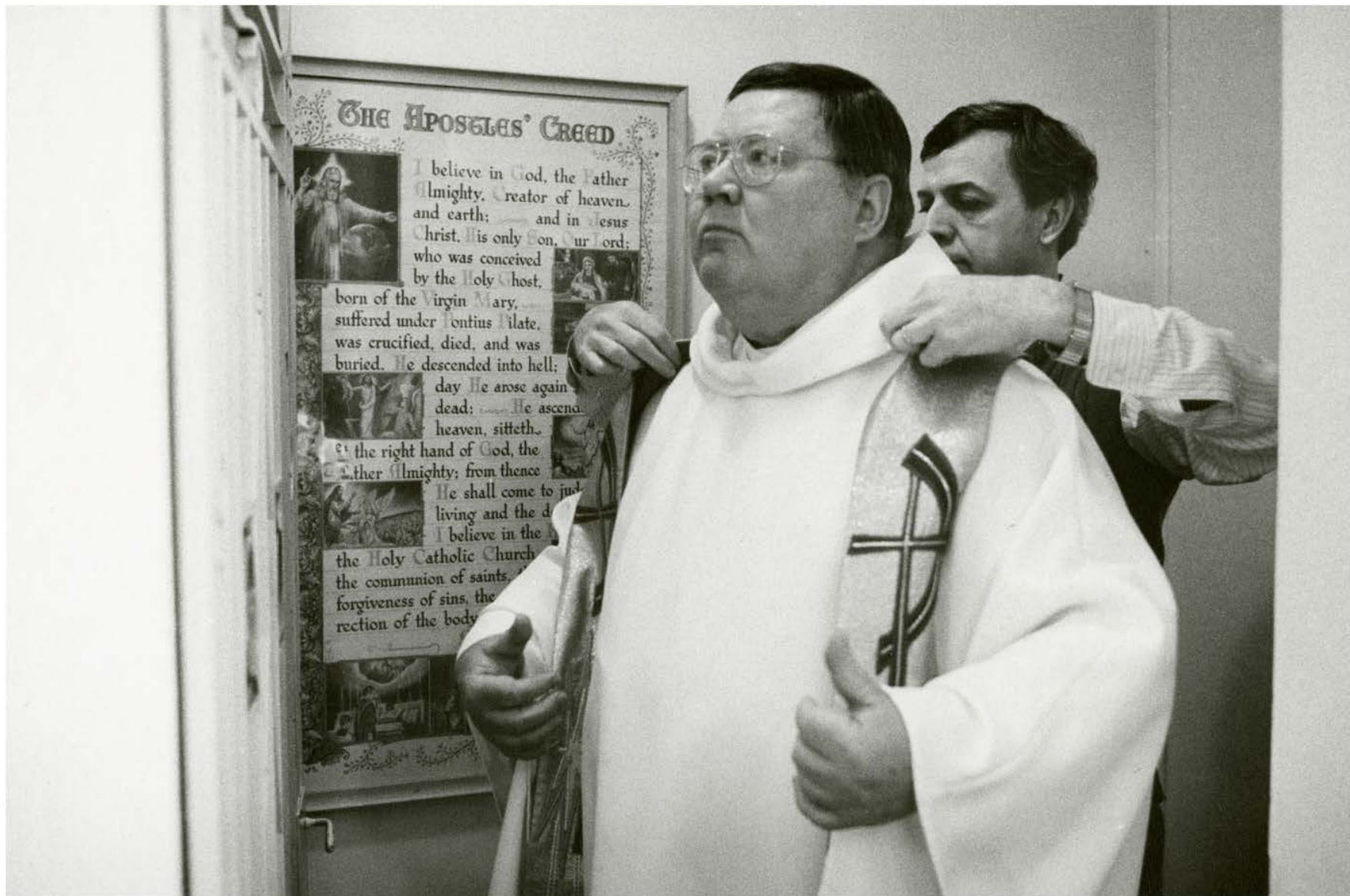
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
2911 Cameron Mills Road  
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

*We will be delighted to cooperate with you on this project. Let me know what you need - I'm enclosing a brochure about our church.*

*(Mrs) Mary Ferrell 549-5500 (Summer 9:00-11:00 M-W-F)*



Worship at Baptist Temple



Donning Vestments, St. Joseph's Catholic Church



Silent Prayer at Third Baptist Church



Imposition of Ashes at Immanuel Lutheran Church



Singing Hymns at  
Beverly Hills Community United Methodist Church

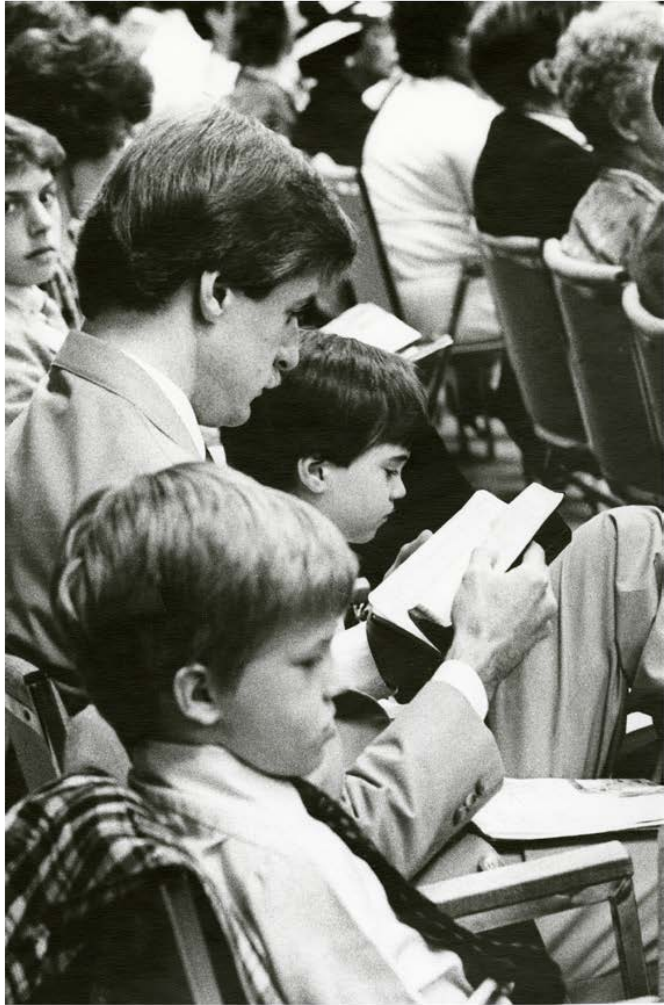


Gospel Song at Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church





Worship at Wat Lao Buddavong



Worship Service at Jehovah's Witness of Northern Virginia



Epiphany Play, Spanish Mass at  
Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church



Torah Reading (Reenacted) at Agudas Achim Hebrew Congregation



Worship Service at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints



Recessional at St. Joseph's Catholic Church



Choir at St. Paul's Episcopal Church



Usher at Beverley Hills United Methodist Church

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**Photographs by Nina Tisara**

**in the collection of  
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