

# The Sword

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" - Ephesians 6:17

St. Alban's Episcopal Church

December 2023

From Fr. Bill... *Love Forever Being Born*

I admit that I am fascinated by the images taken by the James Webb Space Telescope. If you don't know about James Webb, it is a space telescope designed to conduct infrared astronomy, allowing everyone, experts and novices alike, to view objects too old, distant, or faint for the Hubble Space Telescope to see.

So, what does the James Webb Space Telescope have to do with Advent and the Church? Well, until recently, I would have struggled to answer that question. That is, until I happened upon Kelly Latimore's new icon of the Blessed Virgin titled "Mary: Love forever being born."

Mary, as we know, holds a unique place in the Gospel story. The *Theotokos* (God-bearer) Mary, the mother of Christ, whose assent to God at the annunciation, allowed God to break through the veil and become incarnate in the person of Jesus. God, the creator of the universe, of all that is seen and unseen, and Jesus, the Word and Love of God, whose birth, life, death, and resurrection are the core of our faith.

Through James Webb, we can see images of ancient stars and galaxies long expired, as well as new stars being created and new galaxies being formed. Birth, life, death, re-birth (or resurrection): a divine mystery. Sounds very churchy, doesn't it? And this image of Mary, allows us to see this same divine mystery in motion.

Love came into the world through Mary. And through Mary, love is forever being born in us. We just have to follow Mary's example by saying "yes" to God. God doesn't work in isolation. Rather, God seeks to partner with us. God, you see, is in relationship. God is in community. Like Mary, we too are called to bear Christ in the world today – to bear that love in the world today.

We have entered the season of Advent, a season of preparation for the coming of Christ – the coming of love into the world. As sung in the beloved Advent hymn, "Love came down at Christmas, love so lovely, love divine. Love was born at Christmas. Star and angels gave the sign." But it just isn't Christ's first nativity that we are to prepare for, but Christ's second coming – the second coming promised in the Gospels. We are called to slow down and turn our attention to God and to love.

Through Jesus we know the greatest gift that we can give each other is

love. Love, love, love. We can give each other the gift of love that Jesus gave us: a love that is unconditional, unceasing, sacrificial.

This Christmas, let us follow the example of Mary and become bearers of God's love in our world because beloved, the world needs that love. Let us give each other our hearts and the love contained therein. Let us allow love to be born forever in us.



Icon: "Mary: Love Forever Being Born"  
by Kelly Latimore

Thanks to your generosity we were able to provide Thanksgiving gift cards to 74 families and have some funds to get us started on our 2024 Thanksgiving project. St. Albans truly blesses this community through this project and so many others. Many, many thanks to those of you who donated and made Thanksgiving a much happier time for those families.

During Advent, please consider following the Reverse Advent Calendar by donating the items shown each day on the calendar. Items can be left in the basket in the parish hall; those we can use in our community pantry will be kept here, others will be donated to the Windsor-Severance Food Pantry.

As we move into Advent and the Christmas season, you may be looking for ways to expand your involvement at St. Albans.



A few suggestions follow:

Community Pantry: Stocking the pantry, helping organize supply cabinets, donating shelf-stable food and hygiene items.

Community Gardens (currently slumbering): In the spring we will need to prepare the beds, and plant both seeds and starter plants. During the summer months we need folks to weed, water, and harvest. In the early fall we plant a few late season crops, and then prepare the beds for winter.

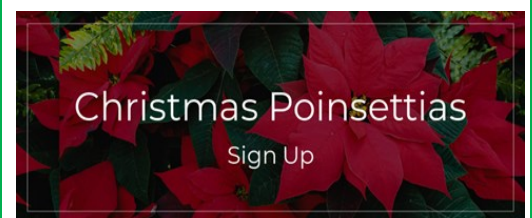
Student Support Fund: Collect your spare coins and drop them in the jar in the entry way to the church. We don't mind the paper bills either!

Reverse Advent Calendar from [litlefrepantry.org](http://litlefrepantry.org).

### Wassail and Carols Party – December 14, 6:30 p.m.



Celebrate the season with fellowship and song at our annual Wassail and Carols Party! We begin in the sanctuary singing favorite Christmas carols and a reading of "A Very Mercy Christmas" by Mercy Watson. Afterwards, join us in the Parish Hall for wassail, Christmas cookies, roasted chestnuts, hot cocoa, and wassail. Chill Potz will bring supplies for you to paint your own ornament. Cost per ornament is \$20 with \$5 going to support St. Alban's mission and ministry.



All are welcome to sponsor one or more poinsettias to honor an occasion or remember a loved one. The poinsettias will grace our beautiful stone church or your own home this Christmastide. The cost to sponsor one poinsettia is \$20. We will include the occasions and honorees in our Christmas Eve service bulletins. Purchase your poinsettia now through December 9. Sign-up at Church; proceeds go to support the mission and ministry of St. Alban's.

My dad and I had the chance to spend some quality time together over Thanksgiving. When we're together, we spend time doing little projects. I've helped him replace differentials in vehicles, plumbing for his water well pump, cut down trees, and put in chimney pipe for barrel wood stoves. Since he was here in Windsor, I took him by St. Alban's.

As many of you know, a couple of us parishioners replaced a door on the little house that badly needed it in October. The work, however, was not finished. To be done, we needed to put the siding and trim back together. It wasn't finished because the work was difficult, but because I had trouble figuring a nice way to finish the door. The solution I had would work, but it wasn't going to be pretty. Enter my dad. He gave me a couple of options on how to re-finish the door. I liked his options better than mine. It honestly took us longer to remove the old siding than it did to install the new finishes.

A priest once told me that he took a little sabbatical just before he was ordained. While meditating and praying on this retreat at a monastery, an older priest asked him what he was doing. He responded by saying he was

praying for enough wisdom from the experiences in his life to allow him to be a good shepherd to whatever flock he was to lead. The older man thought for a bit, and said to him, "It is a shallow pool of wisdom to share when there is only one person to fill it."

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out" (Romans: 11, 33 – 34).

My kids were told numerous times by their parents that they cannot possibly make every mistake by themselves. There are just too many to make. It's a lot easier to listen to someone else who has that experience, and then make your decision

or take action a little more informed. Thankfully, I am seeing them reach out to ask for advice, and not just from me.

Even my hyper-self-sufficient self has started to learn to ask for not only advice, but actual help. How much better was it for me to have more than one path to take to finish the door? How much better is it for me to have more than one experience to draw upon in life? How much better is it to draw upon the wisdom and knowledge of God?



### My Soul Magnifies the Lord – 2024 Annual Stewardship Campaign

Starting December 3 and continuing until Sunday, December 31, you will be asked to meditate over the words of the Magnificat and pray about your life and the ministries here at St. Alban's. You will be asked to discern such questions as: Where have you felt God's greatness being magnified in your life here at St. Alban's? When was a time here at St. Alban's that made your soul sing for joy? How may you respond to God's invitation to be the arms of Christ to the world?

You will receive a stewardship bag filled with information to help meditate on such questions, and information regarding the various ministries at St. Alban's to help you discern your gifts and how you can connect here at St. Alban's.

My Soul Magnifies the Lord



On Sunday, January 7 we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany and hear the story of the Magi bringing their gifts to the Christ Child. On that date we ask you to return the enclosed estimate of giving postcard on which you are asked to estimate your gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Your gifts will enable St. Alban's to continue to magnify the greatness of God in our Church and greater community. We'll then all celebrate in good old fashioned St. Alban's style!

How has St. Alban's helped your soul magnify the greatness of God, and where have you felt your soul rejoice in God our Savior? Let us use this Advent to find out and then share of yourself through your gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

# Christmas at St. Alban's

## December 24 @ 6 pm - Christmas Eve Family Service

Children of all ages are invited to come and welcome the baby Jesus and the Holy Family into our beautifully decorated sanctuary in this family-friendly Christmas Eve service. We'll sing our favorite Christmas hymns, hear a special Christmas message for children, and celebrate the night with Holy Communion.

## December 24 @ 8 pm - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Come celebrate the birth of the Christ Child in our Candlelight Christmas Eve Service. This traditional service will be filled with the singing of joyful hymns and carols, performances by members of St. Alban's choir, Holy Communion, and a candlelit rendition of Silent Night. This service will be livestreamed on our YouTube Channel.

## December 24 @ 9:00 pm - Priest's Christmas Eve Reception

All are welcome to gather in the Parish Hall following the 8:00 pm Candlelight Service for fellowship and refreshments hosted by Fr. Bill.

## December 24 @ 11 pm - Christmas Eve Midnight Mass

Come celebrate the holiest night of the year at our traditional Christmas Eve Midnight Mass. Join us as we celebrate the Divine Mystery of Christmas with beautiful hymns and carols, Holy Communion, and a candlelit rendition of Silent Night.



St. Alban's Episcopal Church  
311 6th Street, Windsor, CO 80550

*We wish you all a  
very Merry Christmas!*