

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

January 2024

From Fr. Bill.... *I wish you a Merry Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas, I wish you a Merry Christmas, and a New Happy Year!*

No, you did not misread this; nor did I misspeak. My wish for you is that you have a New Happy Year!

If you are like me, you were very happy to see 2023 come to an end. And I for one am looking forward to 2024 with a heart full of hope – hopeful for a year of health, hopeful for a year of love, hopeful for a year of peace, hopeful for a year of happiness.

Am I being optimistic? Probably. Am I being realistic? Probably not. I know that life isn't easy, that there will be times of pain, times of sadness, times of loss. But there will also be times of joy, times of love, times of peace. That is what life is – a mixture of good and bad, sorrow and joy, chaos and peace. Which is why I am choosing to live into 2024 with hope – and not just any hope, but Christian hope.

Our catechism teaches us that the Christian hope is to “live with confidence in newness and fullness of life, and to await the coming of Christ in glory, and the completion of God's purpose for the world” (BCP 861). To live with confidence in newness and fullness of life.

We live into the newness of life when, as one commentator wrote, we “abandon our judgmentalism” and accept each new day as a new day of blessing. We are called to abandon our old way of living and live into a new way – a way based on love – the way of Christ. To live in newness of life means to live into the new crea-

tion brought on by Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We live into the fullness of life by not shying away from what is thrown our way, but to embrace it head on with love – wasteful, compassionate, unconditional, love. I live into the fullness of life by allowing the

words of John who wrote, “let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so

that we might live through him. In this is love, not

that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:7-12).

Beloved, God loves us. Therefore, let us live this new year in the newness and fullness of God's love for us. If we do we can be assured that no matter what the universe throws at us – the bad, the good, and all that is between – God will be present with us – loving us. This is why, however unrealistic it may be, it is my hope for you, that your 2024 brings you a new, happy, year!



From Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center, Santa Rosa, California.

Advent was here and, boy-howdy, was my family busy. My oldest is a driver for UPS. She maxed out on driver's hours for three weeks in a row. My youngest took a part-time job loading trucks for UPS; going to work at one in the morning and off by 9 a.m, all month long. In addition to getting all of her regular work done, my wife was working hard to stay in front of the National Western Stock Show since she works for a veterinary laboratory testing company. I had, in addition to practicing for choir concerts and church services, found myself attending corporate retreats, covering for other employees in other states, and oftentimes didn't know what day it was.

So, my daughters, recognizing that December is chaos at best, found a place for all of us to get away for Christmas. We were planning on being in a nice quiet little cabin for Christmas Eve and Christmas, making multiple trips down the mountain Christmas Eve for church services. It was going to be quiet-ish, and it was going to be away from all of the distractions of being home. And then, (dramatic music playing) one of us caught the dreaded bug. You all know which bug. The one that has had us wearing masks. Poof! Just like that, all of our carefully laid plans came apart.

I remember getting ready for the birth of each of our children: putting together a new crib, building a chang-

ing table on top of a dresser, painting a room, buying diapers, moving a rocking chair, etc. I remember how busy we all were, just getting ready.

I can imagine all of the work Mary was doing to prepare for her first child. I can also very much see the look on Joseph's face as he told her the news. Instead of a quiet birth at home, they were going away – something completely out of their control sending them to his hometown. Not what they expected. Not what Mary planned.

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand” (Proverbs 19: 21).

Was it God's plan for His son to be born in Bethlehem? Or was God preparing Mary for the life of Jesus that was to come? I don't know what God's plan was then, nor do I know what God's plan was for us this Christmas. But I

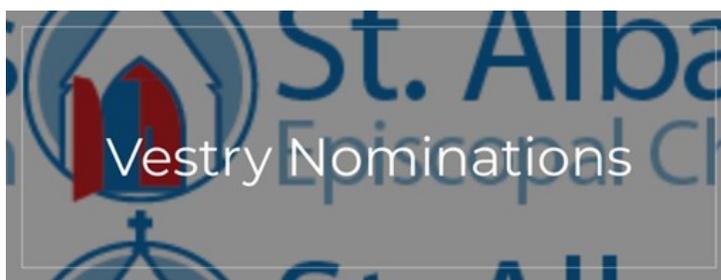
do know that my family had a very quiet Christmas. We did not travel anywhere. We stayed home. We had simple meals consisting of soup and bread. We slept a lot. We rested.

I was gifted the opportunity to be patient, to not force my wants upon a season that should be quiet. I was gifted the opportunity to reflect on Christmas in a different way. I was gifted a peace that I could not possibly understand. How rich the gifts were that I was given. I hope you all had a very Happy Christmas!



Wanted: Candidates for Vestry

The vestry is the governing body of the parish. It helps define and carry out the mission of the congregation, and supports the mission through its word and deeds. Vestry members serve 3-year terms, with one member serving one 1-year term with the option to run for an additional 2-year term. Currently, we have one member rolling off the vestry – Dr. Cathy Radebaugh – to whom we give all our thanks and



praise. We are seeking people interested in serving on the vestry for a one 1-year term. New vestry members will be elected during our annual meeting. If you are interested in serving on the vestry, please contact Fr.

Bill or any of our current vestry members, which are: Ann Kling, senior warden; Lisa Wallace, junior warden; Michele Warner, clerk; Catherine Radebaugh; Vicki Swanson; Bobby Warner; Karlyce Newkirk; and Dianna Oliver.

Outreach Report ————— by Linda Peters

January is often a time to take a deep breath, relax a bit after the holiday excitement and stress, and also take time to evaluate the past year. It is also a time to set new goals and make plans for the New Year.

While Outreach seems to be less active this month, we are anything but relaxed. While the Thanksgiving drive has concluded for another year (a huge success, thanks to you), and the gardens are sleeping under their tarps, and the student support fund slowly (very slowly) grows, we

are still busy provisioning the Little Free Community Pantry. To begin this month, our shopping list includes: mac and cheese cups and boxes, tuna pouches, cup noodles, peanut butter, oatmeal, and fruit snacks. By the time those items are purchased we will have spent



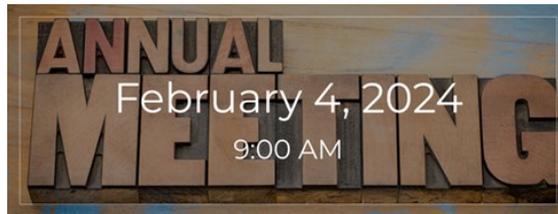
the January budget, and by the middle of the month we will have another list that includes many of those items plus things like peanut butter crackers, breakfast bars, ramen noodles, and granola bars. This is where the

congregation comes in. Because of your support we have been able to continue to supply our pantry with these items and more. You have donated food, cash, and your time. You have kept us going. You have helped numerous families get through tough times, have provided after school

snacks for the many students who stop by, and have made it possible for us to be the hands of Christ. As we evaluate the past year and plan for 2024, we also thank God for you and your support. You are a continuing blessing and we are so very grateful.

St. Alban's Annual Meeting: February 4, 9 A.M.

According to Article V, Section 3. of the Bylaws of St. Alban's Episcopal Church, the annual meeting of the members of St. Alban's will be held Sunday, February 4, beginning at 9 a.m. All members are invited to participate either in person by gathering together in the Parish Hall, or by appearing on Zoom (a link will be sent out prior to the meeting). The annu-



al meeting will consist of the election of vestry members, appointment of wardens, and presentation of the budget. We also will hear all we accomplished in the name of

Christ this last year, and reflect on how the Spirit is leading us to grow in 2024. Please mark your calendar to attend either in person or by Zoom.

A Merry Christmas Thank You

Thank you to everyone who helped make our Advent and Christmas Eve services so very sacred and special! Thank you, Altar Guild and everyone who helped decorate the church and the table for all our services. Thank you Henrietta, all the cantors, our choir, and Lucy Thames for enhancing our services with your beautiful music and singing. Thank you building and grounds folks for preparing our grounds for visitors. Thank you altar servers and lectors for serving and reading at our marathon Advent 4/Christmas Eve Services.



Thank you special events for a wonderful Wassail and Carols party, and for assisting with Fr. Bill's Christmas Eve reception. Thank you Judy and all the counters who made sure the offerings of people's treasures were safely counted and deposited so we can continue God's work in this world. Thank you Daughters for your wonderful quiet day and allowing us to be still in the presence of God. And thank you beloved people of St. Alban's for your presence in walking the Advent journey to Bethlehem together.

Monday, January 15 is the MLK Day of Service – the only federal holiday also designated by Congress as a national day of service. St. Alban’s will participate in this Day of Service by hosting a blood drive. The Garth Englund Mobile Blood Bank will be at St. Alban’s from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Appointments encouraged, but not required. Walk-ins are welcome. Scan the QR Code to register, or contact Fr. Bill if you wish to donate. Your donation may save a life. Come and serve.



**Garth Englund Blood Center
Blood Drive**
Hosted by:
St. Albans




Monday, January 15th 2024 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
311 6th St, Windsor, Co 80550

Appointments are strongly encouraged. Walk-ins welcome.
Please register in advance via the HemaConnect link:

1. Scan the QR code.
2. Create an account (use your legal name as it appears on your ID).
Note this is separate from the UHealth Connection App you may have
3. Leave the "Donor ID" section blank.
4. Select the time you wish to donate.





Dear friends in Christ, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us, and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of his return. Through the rhythms of times and seasons let us celebrate the mysteries of salvation. Let us recall the year’s culmination, the Easter Triduum of the Lord: his last supper, his crucifixion, his burial, and his rising celebrated between the evening of March 28 and March 30, with Easter day being March 31. Each Easter – as on each Sunday – the Holy Church makes present the great and saving deed by which Christ has forever conquered sin and death. All the days we keep holy are determined from Easter.

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, is February 14. The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated on May 9. Pentecost, the joyful conclusion of the Easter season will be celebrated on May 19. And, the first Sunday of Advent will be on December 1.

Likewise the pilgrim Church proclaims the Passover of Christ in the feasts of the holy Mother of God, in the feasts of the Apostles and Saints, and in the commemoration of the faithful departed.

To Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come, Lord of time and history, be endless praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

“Holy Graffiti” – Chalking the Doors



If you’ve ever wondered what those numbers and letters are on our red doors, they are the Epiphany Blessing! It is a tradition in the church that on the Feast of the Epiphany, Christians around the world will participate in writing this ancient, yet ever-changing formula on their doors: 20+C+M+B+24. The letters C, M, B come from the traditional names for the Magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, whose arrival at Mary and Joseph’s home is celebrated on Epiphany. The letters are also an abbreviation for “Christus Mansionem Benedicat,” which means “May Christ bless this dwelling.” The first and last numbers refer to the current year, and the plus signs in between represent the cross. Chalk to mark your own doors will be blessed Sunday, January 7. Pick some up and bless your house for the New Year! Clergy or laypeople can do the chalking.