

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

March 2024

From Fr. Bill..... *Look around; happiness is trying to catch you. (Fortune cookie)*

Are you familiar with the “Check-In”? It is a tool used by many businesses and organizations at the beginning of any meeting to let folks bring to the front anything they are carrying with them emotionally, or anything going on in their lives, so that they are not distracted for the bulk of whatever meeting is to occur. The Church is one organization that loves the “Check-In” and because we are the Church and care for one another, much time is spent on the “Check-In.” So much so that oftentimes little else (the scheduled work) gets done. (This is one reason why it takes so long for any decision to be made in the Church.) But that is okay because truly, the Church should care how its people are doing. If we didn’t, we should re-evaluate why we are in fact the Church.

I bring this up, because we are officially in the middle of our Lenten pilgrimage, and it is time to check-in. How is your Lent proceeding so far? Did you pick up any spiritual practice? If so, how is it going? Did you give up anything for Lent? If so, are you able to maintain that fast? If you are participating in the 30-Day Act of Unselfish Love Challenge, how are you doing so far? If you are playing along with Lent Madness, is your bracket broken? (Confession: mine totally is – that darn Joseph of Arimathea!)

It is important to check in on yourself during this Lenten pilgrimage because the journey is long, and we oftentimes tend to forget the purpose of why we are on this walk. I know there are times when I forget it is Lent and I resort back to my usual way of living or be-

ing. Other times, I get so caught up in the self-examination that I become overly critical of myself that I make life miserable for those who are around me. Several times, I tend to “fail” at my spiritual practice or fast and then feel shame for my inability to do this one little thing.



Do any of these ring true for you? If not, that is wonderful! Continue on! However, if any of these do resonate with you, do not fret. You too are having a fruitful and spirit filled Lent.

St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, chapter 8: 38-39, “I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow – not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below, indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (NLT).

The purpose of Lent is not to shame or degrade or make you feel bad. Instead, it is a time for you to rediscover, strengthen, reconnect, or re-build your relationship with God, who loves you and calls you beloved. That is all.

“Look around; happiness is trying to catch you” my fortune cookie said the other day. For the remainder of our Lenten pilgrimage, I invite you to adopt this as your check-in prompt, but maybe substitute God/Jesus/Spirit for happiness. This Lent, beloved, look around; where is God trying to catch you? Happy Lent!

Character was once defined for me by a very young man. He told me that character is what you do when you think nobody is watching. If a person isn't being held accountable for their actions, how do you think they act? How would you act?

Over a decade ago, I came across a Christian magazine that had an article discussing sin and Jesus' forgiveness. I can't remember the article, and I can't find it now on Google or I would cite it here, but the imagery has stuck with me.

A young man wrote that he had an extremely disturbing dream — a nightmare. In this nightmare, he saw all of his sins categorized in filing cabinets. Whether they were organized by severity or by date or alphabetically didn't matter. The horror came from the fact that the young man knew these were his sins and his alone.

The young man opened a file cabinet, and pulled out a note card. On it was written the offense, who it was committed against, and the young man's name. Placing the card back, he pulled out another one, with a new offense, who it harmed and, of course, his name. And another. And another. Sometimes the sin was against God. Sometimes it was against people he loved — hundreds of file cabinets worth; thousands of sins.

Off down the hallway of the file cabinets of sin, the author saw a figure going through them. He couldn't see who it was, but he could see where this person had been. The file cabinets had been opened there. The man went to a cabinet opened by this mysterious figure and grabbed a sin card from inside. On it he saw the sin, who it was committed against, and his name crossed out, and in red, Jesus was written underneath.



“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

In his dream, the young man cried out “No! I should die, not you! The wages of sin is death!” Jesus looked up, took another card, crossed the young man's name off, and wrote his own instead.

Being held accountable for what your character shows is a difficult thing. Being accountable for someone else's crimes?

That's a Jesus thing. When you all ask how I am doing and I jokingly say, “better than I deserve,” the specter of this story is playing in my head.

I pray for myself for the strength of character to be a better, visible, more intentional Christian. I pray that your Lent is also giving you ways to strengthen your character, and help you on your walk with God.

Blessed Assurance

Lyrics: Fanny J. Crosby 1820 – 1915; Phoebe P. Knapp 1839 – 1908

By Henrietta O'Neill

In 1864, Fanny Crosby was introduced to William Bradbury, a pioneer in writing music for American Sunday schools. Bradbury was so impressed by Fanny's poetic gifts, that he challenged her to turn her talents to writing Christian songs and hymns instead of secular songs. It is said that she prayed fervently prior to setting pen to paper and that many of her hymns seemed to flow from her mind as in a conversation. Such it was with the composition of the hymn, “Blessed Assurance.”

One afternoon in 1873, Fanny was visiting with her good friend, Phoebe Knapp, who was an amateur mu-

sician and enjoyed composing melodies. On this occasion, she had a new melody she wanted to play for her friend. Phoebe played the tune through once and asked Fanny, “What does this tune say?” Fanny knelt in the Knapp's parlor and Phoebe played the melody over again. Fanny smiled and rose to her feet announcing: “It says, Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine,

Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!” Fanny continued to dictate the verses and Phoebe wrote them down, joining them to her melody, resulting in the hymn we have today.



Spring is once again upon us — warmer temperatures, spring blossoms, hay-fever, and itchy eyes. Spring reminds us that we are obliged to prepare and ready our buildings and grounds for beautification in the coming summer. So please bring your rakes, gloves, and a smile.


Presenting our Church in the best light for Easter week is a mission St. Alban's takes pride in every year. This ensures our devoted parishioners and welcomed guests can visibly see the dedication we exude in our faith and our community. We have designated Saturday, March 23, beginning at 9:30 a.m., as our annual spring clean-up day, weather permitting. Objectives are to rake the grounds; clean up remaining leaves, limbs, and trash; remove and store garden container tarps; and clean out



flower beds. With enough assistance this usually takes 2-3 hours of work and we're known to have a good time while working up a good sweat. We'll throw in some hot coffee and fresh donuts to lure you away from your pillow. We need your help in kicking off our spring 2024 goal to make Holy Week and our annual Easter egg hunt

a thing of beauty.

A sign-up sheet will be available in the Parish Hall and we look forward to a team of St. Alban's dedicated green thumbs showing up and refreshing our Church's appearance to shine like our faith. A donut, some hot coffee, and getting your hands dirty are always good for the soul.



Easter Flowers

Help us celebrate the Resurrection by sponsoring an Easter lily or Easter bouquet for our Sanctuary. A signup sheet is in the Parish Hall to let us know who you wish to remember, honor, or celebrate. We will list the names in our Easter Sunday bulletin. The cost to sponsor a lily or bouquet is \$25. You may make your donation by giving online through your Realm account, by cash (please write "Easter flowers" on the envelope), or by check with "Easter flowers" in the memo line.

Stepping Stones of Windsor
Helping Neighbors In Need

Please join us for
**Stepping Stones of Windsor's Soup Luncheon-
Charity Fundraiser and Silent Auction**

SUNDAY, 03/17/2024 12:30PM - 2:30PM

OUR LADY OF THE VALLEY CATHOLIC CHURCH
1250 7TH ST, WINDSOR



**Local soups, salads, rolls/
bread & desserts will be served!**



Cost: Free-Will Donation

**COME AND LEARN HOW STEPPING STONES OF WINDSOR
HELPS PEOPLE IN THE WELD RE-4 SCHOOL DISTRICT
REMAIN IN THEIR HOMES AND HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE.**

[STEPPINGSTONESOFWINDSOR.COM](http://steppingstonesofwindsor.com)

Stewardship Update

My Soul Magnifies the Lord!



Thank you good people of St. Alban's! As of February 27, we have received estimates of giving from 55 members amounting to \$178,342 compared to the goal of \$178,000. Thank you for helping us achieve our stewardship goal!

ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP 2024

Community Choir Rehearsal

Those interested in singing with the Community choir at the Ecumenical Easter sunrise service are invited to rehearse on March 10 and 17 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at St. Alban's. No experience necessary — just a love of singing! Come join other singers from our various Walnut Street churches and to worship with our fellow members in Christ on Easter morning.

Holy Week Schedule



From early times Christians have observed the week before Easter as a time of special devotion. The three holy days, or Triduum, of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are at the heart of the Holy Week observance. Holy Week ends at sundown on the Saturday before Easter with the celebration of the Great Vigil of Easter. We hope you will be able to join us as we walk with Jesus toward Calvary and his glorious resurrection!

Palm Sunday, Sunday, March 24, 7:30 a.m. and 10 a.m. Join us as we gather to hear about Jesus' triumphant entry into the City of Jerusalem with the waving of palms and shouts of "Hosannah," followed by the Passion of Christ as told by Mark.

Maundy Thursday, March 28, 6:30 p.m. Join us as we express our acts of love and servanthood to our neighbor by washing each other's feet during our Maundy Thursday service. This moving service begins the Holy Triduum (three holy days) as we walk toward resurrection Sunday.

Overnight Vigil in the Garden, Thursday, March 28, from 8 p.m. through Friday, March 29, 8 a.m. Following our Maundy Thursday service, please stay awake to pray with Christ for one hour during our overnight vigil in our Columbarium Garden. A sign-up sheet will be in the Parish Hall for you to select the hour. For those who wish to stay awake and remain at home, our

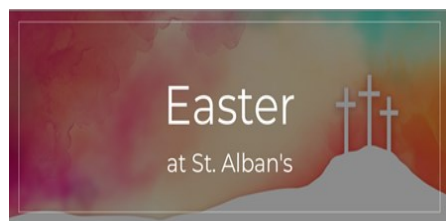
vigil will be live cast on our YouTube channel. Simply log on and pray when you so feel called.

Stations of the Cross, Friday, March 29, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You are invited to participate in a self-guided, outdoor Stations of the Cross walk using the meditation devotional, "Everyone's Way of the Cross," and outdoor stations created by our own Christine Ginnity. The stations will line the sidewalks on Walnut and 6th Street. Come alone or with a friend and walk the Via Dolorosa, tracing Christ's passion.

Good Friday, March 29, 6:30 p.m. Join us as we continue our journey to Calvary at our Good Friday service with a canting of the Passion Gospel as told by the Apostle John, the Veneration of the Cross, and Holy Communion from the Reserve Sacrament. The darkness of Good Friday prepares us for the joy of Christ's glorious Resurrection.

Holy Saturday, March 30, 10 a.m. Join us for a poignant contemplative service as we sit in the liminal space between Good Friday and Easter.

Great Vigil of Easter, Saturday, March 30, 7:30 p.m. Join us for the Great Vigil of Easter. This year, we are joining with the good people of Bethel Lutheran Church and Windsor UMC for a true ecumenical service! We will start at Bethel Lutheran Church where we will re-light our Pascal Candle from the great fire and hear stories of our salvation. We will then process to Windsor UMC where we will continue the stories, we will then process to St. Alban's to celebrate, with bells and loud cheers, the Resurrection of Jesus, our Lord.



Windsor Community Easter Sunrise Service at Boardwalk Park/Windsor Lake - Sunday, March 30, 6:30 a.m.

Join the beloved people from Bethel Lutheran, First United Methodist, St. Alban's, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints for our Windsor Community Easter sunrise service at the Windsor Lake bandshell at Boardwalk Park. This Ecumenical service is a celebration of music, scripture, and prayer as we wait for the rising of the Light of Christ with the rising of the sun over Windsor Lake. Bring a chair, dress warm, and let us celebrate Christ's defeat over death in his Resurrection!

Easter Egg Hunt and Blessing of the Easter Baskets, Sunday, March 30, 9:30 a.m. Children of all ages are invited for St. Alban's Easter egg hunt and blessing of the Easter baskets. Bring your little ones for a time of joy and celebration on this Easter morning! Littles are invited to bring their Easter baskets for a special blessing!

Feast of the Resurrection Easter Service, Sunday, March 30, 10 a.m. (One service only.) Come and celebrate the Feast of Christ's Resurrection with music, singing and ringing of the bells! Let us proclaim with a loud voice that Jesus Christ is risen today!

Easter Brunch, Sunday, March 30, 11 a.m. Please join us after our 10 a.m. service for a special time of fellowship at our Easter brunch! Good food and mimosas will help us greet the new season of Easter. Please contact Diane Simcik to let her know what you would like to bring to share.