

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

May 2024

From Fr. Bill..... *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7)*

We have been hearing a lot about love recently. Throughout these great 50 days of Easter, love has figured prominently in both our Epistle readings from 1 John as well as our Gospel lessons, many of which come from the Gospel of John.

It is said that John's Gospel is the "Love Gospel," as the love of God for God's people and Christ's love for his disciples figure prominently in the Gospel lessons. "For God so love the world ..." (John 3:16). Through the love of Christ, all of us have been redeemed to God once and for all. All that we need to do is to share that love with the world. The question I have been pondering is: why is it so hard?

It sounds simple enough, doesn't it? Our own presiding bishop, the Most Rev. Michael Curry even wrote a book (*Love is the Way*) to show how the way of love is "essential for addressing the seemingly insurmountable challenges facing the world today: poverty, racism, selfishness, deep ideological divisions, competing claims to speak for God." And yet, so many of us walk another way. So I wonder, why is it so hard to love?

Without love, violence and war continue, and political, racial, economic divisions become greater. And yet, the words of Jesus' final command to his disciples con-

tinue to ring through my head: "I give you this command, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). The Great Commandment it is called – to love one another just as Jesus has loved us. Wow! So how do we do this? How do we love someone with whom we vehemently disagree? How do we love

someone who is so unlike us in every aspect? What if we actually follow Jesus' teachings? Show mercy. Look beyond the exterior and into the heart. Look for the belovedness that is instilled in each one of us. Remember that we are all beloved of God.

Is it easy? No. Can it be done? Absolutely. But we must do it with intention. We must do it with purpose. We are going to

hear much more about love these last couple weeks of Eastertide. And I hope you will come and open your hearts to hear God's words of love. Let the words inform how you look at the world and at each other. Let God's words transform you.

Beloved, do not let hate rule your heart but instead let love lead the way. And when you start to feel the pangs of hatred or anger slip in, always, always, always remember the words as stated in the first letter of John: "Love is from God. And everyone who loves has been born of God" (1 John 4: 7). That, beloved is all of us, for we are all born of God.



The universe is impossibly big. Mind-boggling big. It is so big that the fastest thing we know of, light, takes 47 billion years to travel from our home star to the edge of what we can see. Forty-seven billion years, and light travels 5,879,000,000,000 miles in one year. My brain just doesn't wrap around that.

So then the question is: how big is God to create something like that?

I remember listening in on discussions regarding religion in college and later as a young adult. Is God the big CEO of the universe, looking down upon us with disdain and head shaking? Is God above us, below us, behind us, in front of us, and within us? Is God a celestial traveler that comes by

every couple thousand years or so to set things right again? There are so many people with so many ideas on what God is.

I personally don't take comfort from the idea of a CEO God looking down upon creation. Honestly, with the unfathomable size of the universe and my complete inability to comprehend how big it is, I much prefer the descriptions of our God that depict him walking along side us. It's really why Jesus makes sense to me. I can relate a bit.

That's the word, though: relate. How can I relate to a being capable of creating something so massive, and yet have the ability to walk with us in our day-to-day lives?

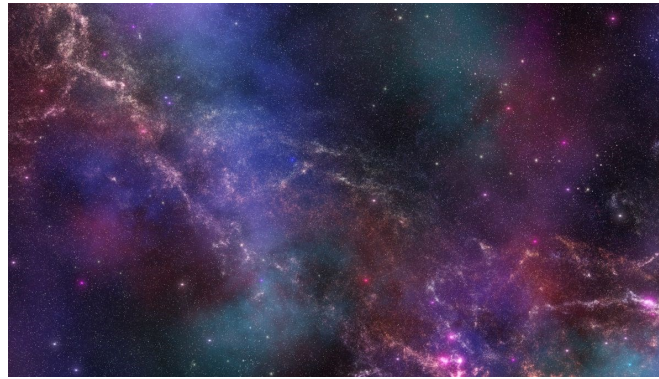


Photo from Live Science.

How do I make a relationship with the God I've described, and have that relationship make sense?

When I start a large project, there is no way to do all of the activities everywhere all at once. The work is divided up into manageable bits that are given to other people to break further down into other manageable bits, so that all the little bits, when they come together, make the whole. The adage holds true: "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time."

So then, instead of trying to comprehend the whole of God, I try to look for God in the small things. Things that I can comprehend, that I can have a chance at understanding. Someone helping a mom with her hands full loading her

car. A young teen giving a willing ear to the little old lady at the grocery store. Picking people up and bringing them to church. Feeding the kids and community in a little red sidewalk pantry. Knowing all the while, that while we feel some good in doing so, there is truly no reward being sought.

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much" (Luke 16: 10).

I guess being faithful and observing how God works in the small things means we also can be faithful in the big. We also are reminded that we need to be true to ourselves and our faith all of the time, not just when it feels good. In what little things do you see God?

World Labyrinth Day, May 4

The labyrinth is a tool by which anyone who walks it can have a direct, spiritual experience. Unlike a maze, the labyrinth has only a single, non-branching path, which leads to the center. It is often a metaphor for life's journey – a symbol that creates a sacred space that leads us into its heart, then back out again along the same path. There is no getting lost in a labyrinth. Rather, one is offered a path that weaves back and forth, in and out, until it



ends in a central circular area. Here, walkers pause to reflect before departing as they came, carrying back wisdom gained on the inbound journey. Starting Saturday, May 5, you are invited to come and walk St. Alban's labyrinth on the front yard of the church. Come

and hear what the Spirit speaks to you as you walk the path to the center. The labyrinth will be up all May for your use.

What's your good news for this month? Do you have big, good news or small, good news? Often, we know about the sad things in each other's lives, but let's start sharing the good news. It doesn't have to be huge, good news like Leslie and Jesse buying a house (congrats on that by the way). It can be small, good news. Maybe you cleaned out the garage or planted your garden. Maybe you mastered that sourdough recipe (please share the results if you did). Maybe you got up off the couch and went for a walk and saw or heard something amazing. You can email your good news to me throughout the month, kling_ann@hotmail.com. I will share it in the *Sword*.



Photo from BBC Wildlife.

Here's two good news items to get us started. Sunday night, even though I felt like sitting on the couch, I got my shoes and jacket on and took Maggie, my dog, for an evening walk on the Greeley trail near my house. Suddenly, I realized there was a chorus of frogs singing down in the gully where the water gathers when we have had a lot of rain. I love that sound! When I lived on the farm property in Western New York, there was a lot of water in the creek below my house. I would sleep with my window open in the spring just to hear the peeper chorus. It was a reminder that spring had arrived and that after

the cold of winter, rebirth was happening all around me. Grass was turning green, daffodils were blooming, daylight was increasing, and the frogs were singing the good news to the rest of creation!

My second good news is something I learned about our dear Phyllis Cook. I was having a drink at William Oliver's with the wonderful board members of the Clearview Library District Friends and Foundation, sitting next to Toni Rae K. We were talking about the 2008 tornado. Toni Rae asked, "You go to St. Alban's, right? You know Phyllis?" I confirmed that I did indeed go to Saint A's and, of course, we all know Phyllis.

"You know, she watched my son when he was young and during the tornado she took him downstairs and read books to him. He didn't know that something bad was happening. He was not traumatized by the tornado because Phyllis took good care of him. Phyllis lives her faith." As Episcopalians we are not fond of evangelizing. But sometimes evangelizing is as quiet as living your faith, demonstrating your love for others through your everyday actions. Phyllis does that every day. And that is good news!

See you next month. Don't forget to email me Your Good News.

Mother's Day: May 12

On this Mother's Day, we give thanks for the divine gift of motherhood in all its diverse forms. Let us pray for all the mothers among us today: for our own mothers, those living and those who have passed away; for the mothers who loved us and for those who fell short of loving us fully; for all who hope to be mothers some day and for those whose hope to have children has been frustrated; and for all mothers who have lost children. We pray for all persons of all genders who have mothered others in any way, for those who have been our substitute mothers, and for the earth that bore us and provides our sustenance. We pray this all in the name of God, our great and loving Mother.



Community Pantry

We continue to celebrate our limited window of opportunity to add canned goods to the pantry. Most needed are canned fruit, protein items (tuna, chicken, Spam), and soup. Once the daytime temps reach the mid-80s we will have to stop offering canned items due to food safety concerns, but the next time you shop please consider picking up a couple of cans for our community pantry.

Most of you are aware of the sharing cabinet in the community garden. While it makes it easier to access items grown in our church garden, we also encourage people to add items from their home gardens. One way to do that is to "Plant a Row for the Hungry."

Learn more here:

<https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/projects/plant-a-row>. Know that as your hands tend your home garden they are also the hands of Christ helping those who may not have access to the blessings of freshly grown fruits and vegetables.

Gardens and Grounds

St. Alban's is hitting the ground running this year with continuous clean-up from wind storms and leaf removal, which seems like a never-ending job. The vegetable bins are cleaned up and a fresh layer of top-

soil is being added. We should be ready for planting around Mother's Day weekend. We will need two or three volunteers to help get our planters filled, so if you have a green thumb and wish to shake off the winter doldrums come by St. Alban's community garden

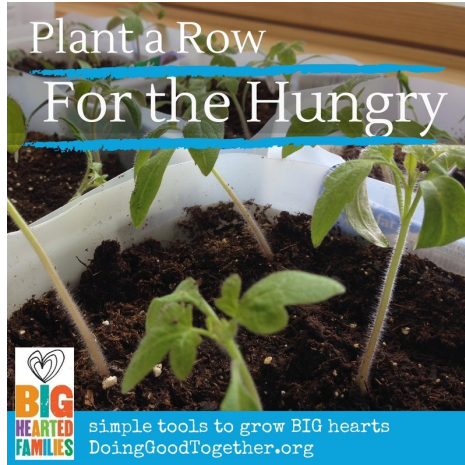
around 9:30 a.m. on May 18 and get your hands dirty. Those dirty hands can cleanse your soul!

We are a ministry that provides nourishment not only for the soul, but also provides caring and sharing our daily bread with brothers and sisters in our community who are in need. A tomato or squash can help.

Thank you to everyone that participates in feeding our neighbors. We get many compliments from those outside our parish that acknowledge our Church teaches the importance of giving. We lead by example!

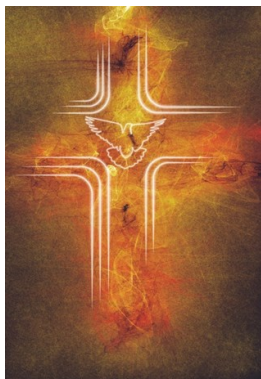
It's time to gather a team to mow St. Alban's grass. With a 7-8 person rotation, each of us only mows twice during the season. Last year's team was outstanding in keeping our Church clean and presentable; we received many compliments on our little patch of Earth.

There will be a mowing sign-up sheet in the parish hall next Sunday, May 5. Volunteer to help St. Alban's shine all summer!



Pentecost, May 19

Pentecost, the birth of the church, is Sunday, May 19. Please wear your reds, oranges, or yellows, to represent the fire that the Holy Spirit sends us. Also, if you know another language, we will ask you to participate in the reading from Acts praising God in any language you know. Bring your one act of unselfish love journal and we will celebrate your acts over birthday cake.



Celebrate the Class of 2024

St. Alban's celebrates students of the Class of 2024. Congratulations Jonah Bearden and Sam Hoyt (Windsor High School), Emma Bearden (University of Nebraska), and Neva Peltz (Cornell University).

