

St. Alban's Chronicle

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
3001 Wisconsin Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20016
December 2008

Household Practices in Advent

Below, you'll find daily readings and prayers for use in your household. For Sundays, please use the lessons at the Eucharist.

Advent I – November 30 - Prayer (light 1 candle)

Lord, come into our hearts to help us prepare for the coming of your Son. Help us to remember that because He came we have grace to be your children. Guide us on the lighted path he has shown. Amen.

Readings:

Mon. - Isaiah 2:1-5	Tues. - Isaiah 11:1-10
Wed. - Isaiah 25:6-9	Thur. - Isaiah 26:1-6
Fri. - Isaiah 29:17-24	Sat. - Isaiah 30:19-26

Advent II - December 7 - Prayer (light 2 candles)

Lord: Keep us awake and alert, watching for your Kingdom. Make us strong in faith, so that we may greet your Son when He comes, and joyfully give Him praise, with you, and with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Readings:

Mon. - Luke 5:17-26	Tues. - Matt. 18:12-14
Wed. - Matt. 11:28-30	Thur. - Matt. 11:7-15
Fri. - Matt. 11:16-19	Sat. - Matt. 17:9-13

Advent III – December 14 - Prayer (light 3 candles)

Holy God: Through long generations you have prepared a way in our world for the coming of your Son, and by the Spirit you are still bringing the light of the Gospel to darkened lives. Renew us, so that we may welcome Jesus Christ to rule our thoughts and claim our love, as Lord of lords and King of kings. Amen.

Readings:

Mon. - Matt. 21:23-27	Tues. - Matt. 21:28-32
Wed. - Isaiah 45:5-25	Thur. - Isaiah 54:1-10
Fri. - Matt. 1:1-7,17	Sat. - Matt. 1:18-25

Advent IV - December 21 - Prayer (light 4 candles) Our Loving Savior; we could not find you, but you came and found us. Come to us in this time of celebration. Come with the gentleness of a baby in a manger; come with the power of God. We ask this of you, remembering your great love for us. Amen.

Readings:

Mon. - Rev. 20:1-10	Tues. - Rev. 20:11-21:8
Wed. - Luke 1:5-25	Thur. - Luke 1:26-38
Chr. Eve - Luke 2:1-14;	Chr. Day - Luke 2:15-20

Household Blessings for the Wreath, Tree, and Creche

The Advent Wreath:

O God, by your word all things are made holy. We offer you this Advent Wreath, which we ask you to bless. Help us use it to prepare our hearts for the coming of your Son, and help us receive him into our hearts with joy. We ask this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Tree:

O God, who sent your Word to dwell amongst us and be our True Light; Bless this tree, we ask you, which we have hung with signs of your creation and with lights. Let it remind those who behold it this season of the mystery of his incarnation and may we be grafted as living branches on to His Body, who lives and reigns with you now and forever. Amen.

The Crèche:

Bless, O Lord, this Christmas manger, which we have prepared in honor of the birth of your Son. Through the mystery of His Incarnation all creation has become holy and the worthy birthplace of Emmanuel, who is God with us, now and forever. Amen.

SAVE A TREE!

The St. Alban's *Chronicle* is now available on our website BEFORE the printed copy reaches your doorstep. If you would like to be taken off of the "snail mail" list and access the *Chronicle* each month on-line instead (in living color!), please e-mail the Office at ericg@st-albans-parish.org to be removed.



We welcome the faithful, the seeker, and the doubter, for God's embrace is wide and God's Good News is for all.

WORSHIP AND PRAYER SCHEDULE AT ST. ALBAN'S

8:00 am.....Holy Eucharist, Rite I
9:15 am.....Holy Eucharist, Rite II
11:15 am.....Holy Eucharist, Rite I
5:30 pm.....Holy Eucharist, Rite II

MONDAY

12:05 pm.....Noonday Prayer

TUESDAY

7:30 am.....Holy Eucharist
12:05 pm.....Noonday Prayer

WEDNESDAY

12:05 pm.....Healing Eucharist

THURSDAY

12:05 pm.....Noonday Prayer

FRIDAY

12:05 pm.....Noonday Prayer

CLERGY

The Reverend Scott A. Benhase, Rector
The Reverend Erin S. Hensley, Assistant Rector for Youth & Young Adult Ministries
The Reverend Timothy A. Boggs, Assistant Rector for Stewardship & Outreach Ministries
The Reverend Harriette H. Sturges, Deacon, Coordinator of Children's Ministries
The Reverend Loren B. Mead, Honorary Associate

EPISCOPAL CAMPUS MINISTRIES

Carolyn Seaton, Chaplain, American University

PARISH STAFF

Eric Gustafson, Parish Administrator
Ron Hicks, Parish Verger
Vilma Smith, Director of Financial Affairs
Sonya Subbaya Sutton, Director of Music
Dr. Norman Scribner, Director of Music Emeritus

VESTRY OFFICERS

Kate Bouvé, Senior Warden; Jim Sottile, Junior Warden;
Stephanie Kinney, Secretary; Christopher Holmes, Treasurer

VESTRY MEMBERS

Nathalie Bramson; Bill Edgar; Andrea Farr;
Marc Fetterman; Kammie Hedges; Chuck Holmes;
Keith Jones; Danette (Dani) Kauffman; Sam Lewis;
Eric Melby; Jennifer Thorson Martin; Bob Woolfolk;
Mary Jane Shackelford, WSA Board Representative

ST. ALBAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Tel.: 202-363-8286 Fax: 202-363-6828
Office Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Web site: www.st-albans-parish.org

St Nicholas Day – December 6

To keep the meaning of Christmas, some folk shy away from dealing with Santa Claus. But Santa Claus came from the tradition concerning Nicholas, Bishop of Myra. So, make the tradition of St. Nicholas a part of your Advent preparation for Christmas. We want to be truthful with our children. That can make us uncomfortable with the concept of Santa Claus. We know the power this figure has (or he wouldn't be such a persistent force of this season), but we don't know how long we should allow children to believe in him. How do we handle his tradition so he does not upstage our celebration of the birth of Jesus?" One possible way to deal with this is to return St. Nicholas to his original role as a sainted figure who loved and cared for children, especially poor children. We can teach our children that he still lives through any person who is willing to continue his work of generosity and compassionate love for the poor.

An Alternative Advent Calendar

Nov 30 - Sunday, Advent 1. Read & meditate on Isaiah 64:1-9, Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9, Mark 13:24-37

Dec 1 - Count each light you use to decorate this Christmas. Give 10¢ for each to Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington

Dec 2 - Vote with your dollars. Buy from locally owned businesses and locally grown food, even if it means by-passing items that are out-of-season.

Dec 3 – Think about the gifts you plan to give this Christmas. Would you feel **uncomfortable if Jesus was present** during your gift-sharing?

Dec 4 – Make a list of the **things you would like to receive**. Include alternative gifts such as the gift of someone's time or a donation to a ministry serving the poor. Give \$1 for every "luxury" item on your list. Suggestion: The Kiva Foundation (www.kiva.org) works through in-country nonprofits to identify deserving entrepreneurs who request microloans to start or

modernize their small businesses. You can contribute directly (and be paid back, with minimal interest) or you can buy a gift certificate to allow someone else to contribute to a project of his/her choice.

Dec 5 - Sunday, Advent 2. Read & meditate on Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8

Dec 6 - Today is **Saint Nicholas Day**. To learn more about the story of Bishop Nicholas, visit www.StNicholasCenter.org. Join fellow members of the parish today in outfitting a new apartment for a family through the Transitional Housing Corporation. Contact Tim Boggs for more details.

Dec 7 - Step outside the mainstream media. It exists often just to sell us more stuff. Pledge to read, watch or listen to at least one form of alternative media each week.

Dec 8 - Let Christmas be a beginning to "**Close the loop**" at home, work, school, church. Buy products made of recycled materials. For help use the National Green Pages or visit www.GreenPages.org

Dec 9 - JOY stands for Jesus, Others and Yourself. Joy happens when all three come together in a relationship. Others include people, animals and the environment. Stuff can distract us from Joy.

Dec 10 – Think not only about year-end contributions, but also about **Socially Responsible Investing**. For help visit www.socialfunds.org

Dec 11 - Be in touch with nature through hiking and gardening. Be awed by natural wonders large and small, like sunsets and compost worms.

Dec 12 - Sunday, Advent 3. Read & meditate on Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28

Dec 13 - Today people in Mexico celebrate the festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Learn more about this holiday by going to <http://saints.sqpn.com/mary0003.htm>

Dec 14 - Share a skill. Pledge to teach a child to garden or bake, a teenager to do home repairs.

Dec 15 – Considering shopping at the Heifer Project (www.heifer.org) to buy gifts for Christmas.

Dec 16 - Instead of sending Christmas cards, make a card that shares your concerns as you anticipate the birth of the Prince of Peace. Invite others to sign it and mail it to a political leader.

Dec 17 - Practice the 5-R's - reduce, reuse, recycle, restore, respond. Use water, electricity, & fossil fuels conservatively (e.g., use compact fluorescent light bulbs. They use only 25% of the energy that regular bulbs do).

Dec 18 - Tend to your health--Spiritual: pray, meditate, spiritualize life. **Mental and intellectual:** journal, avoid media overload. **Physical:** exercise, eat well.

Dec 19 - Sunday, Advent 4. Read & reflect on 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16: 25-27, Luke 1: 26-38

Dec 20 - The biggest shopping binge of the year creates an enormous amount of waste. Keep track of how many bags of garbage you have this week and give \$1 for each bag. Suggestion: Donors Choose (www.donorschoose.org). Teachers from all over the country submit projects for which they are seeking funding (typically for additional classroom material or aids). You can pick a project to fund based on its location, the economic level of the students it would benefit, the type of project, or all of the above. You can donate yourself or give a gift card to someone so they can pick the project to fund. You get a thank you from the classroom teacher once the project is funded.

Dec 21 - Take some time to look through photos of past Christmases. What do you remember?

Dec 22 – Make a gift to Episcopal Relief and Development. Go to www.er-d.org to find out more.

Dec 23 – Give an anonymous gift to the Community Council for the Homeless at Friendship Place.

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve. Read and meditate on Isaiah 9:2-7; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-4 (15-20).

Dec 25 - Christmas Day. Read & meditate on John 1:1-14. **Christmas does not end at midnight December 25th!** The 12 days of Christmas are just beginning. The great festival of Epiphany is not far off. Don't take down your decorations or manger scene. Continue your Christmas journey and joyous celebration.

Dec 26 - Read Acts 6-7. Today is **Boxing Day**, the day we remember St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Fill a box with food or clothing and give it to someone in need.

Dec 27 - When have your friends, neighbors and relatives been a **blessing to you**? Give 50¢ for each situation you can remember.

Dec 28 – Honor **Holy Innocents Day**. Read Matthew 2:1-18. Where are children in danger today? Pray for the children of the world.

Dec 29 - Visualize yourself **talking to God face-to-face**. Name five blessings in your life that are not things. Donate a generous amount for each.

Dec 30 - Acknowledge **all Creation as God's**. Vow not to abuse Creation. See God's work in Nature, even in the dead of winter.

Dec 31 - **New Year's Eve**. Make some time to be quiet during the day. Pray for three hopes for the coming year: for yourself, our country, and God's world.

Some of the above ideas were adapted from www.simpleliving.org

Christmas Day Community Dinner

Thursday, December 25

The hype appears so early that one can easily forget that as Christians we celebrate the Festival of our Lord's Birth on December 25. One of the ways to keep a focus on the religious aspect of Christmas is to participate in hosting the Christmas Day Dinner. A banquet of ham and turkey with all the trimmings provides food and merriment to parishioners as well as the surrounding community: the elderly, students, and others who have no other ways of celebrating the gathering of friends and family. There is nothing perhaps more lonely than being alone on Christmas Day, listening to the carols and the songs of the season.

There are jobs for Christmas Day, Christmas Eve, and several weeks before the dinner. You may share in the responsibilities of this community fellowship and outreach endeavor in many ways: bring a turkey you've baked along with your family's bird, make or buy a pie, or candies, donate time or money for buying mundane things such as napkins, candles, and cups. Drag greens from your yard to use for decorating and come on Christmas Day to cook, serve, clean up, or welcome guests. Many parishioners like to bring their children when they bring contributions to give them a sense of the importance of sharing on this day, or the children come with them and help serve for an hour or two on Christmas Day. The dinner begins after the Christmas Day service is over.

There will be sign up sheets in the back of the church for you to pick what you would like to do to participate in some way. The sheets will be available after each of the Sunday services from November 30 right up until the last Sunday before Christmas, December 21. For questions, please call the parish office at 202-363-8286.

J2A's Winter Sale, a fundraiser for their 2009 Pilgrimage

In late June of 2009, J2Aers, ninth and tenth graders in our parish, and their leaders will be making their holy pilgrimage to Northern Ireland. Their time together will not be a European vacation or a mission trip. Rather, this time is dedicated to seeking God, encountering Christ, and learning about peace and reconciliation.

In addition to chili sales and Café St. Alban's, we're offering ways this winter for parishioners, families, and friends to be part of this transformational experience for our teens. Of course, donations in any amount and at any time are greatly appreciated. Checks can be made to St. Alban's Parish with "J2A 09 pilgrimage" in the memo line.

All donations and proceeds from sales will go towards the J2A pilgrimage. One of the items below offers a way to give twice, to J2A and to those who are in need in DC. The J2A group gives thanks for St. Alban's support the last two Sundays in November. The group will be continuing to accept donations and sell items in the Wade Room on the first two Sundays in December. Please see below for the items for sale for this fundraiser. They make great gifts and are for a great cause. For more information, contact Erin Hensley at erinh@st-albans-parish.org or 202-363-8286, x207.

Fleece Blankets

Cozy blankets in navy blue with St. Alban's Parish embroidered in white. You can buy one for yourself, for a friend, or give one to those who are homeless. They will be distributed through Grate Patrol, Samaritan Ministries, and our Crossroads Shelter.

\$25, with \$16.66 going to J2A

Honor Cards

Greeting cards with a lovely framed picture of a Celtic cross on the front and a message on the inside: "In honor of you, a donation has been made to ..."

\$5 each, with \$3.82 going to J2A

The C. S. Lewis Recordings CD

This CD compilation features two C. S. Lewis classics: "The Four Loves" and "C. S. Lewis Speaks His Mind."

Approximately 220 minutes on four discs.

\$30, with \$15 going to J2A

Invitation to Silence: An Aid to Centering Prayer CD

Simple prayers and gentle music to aid in the practice of centering prayer. Approximately 78 minutes on one CD.

\$15, with \$7.50 going to J2A

Episcopal Key Chain

Two colors available, navy or red.

\$7, with \$3.50 going to J2A

Episcopal Dog Collar

Available in navy. Available in small and large.

\$15, with \$7.50 going to J2A

Episcopal Dog Leash

Available in navy. Available in 4ft. and 6 ft.

\$18 for 4ft., with \$9 going to J2A

\$19 for 6 ft., with \$9.50 going to J2A

Episcopal Flip-Flops

Available in red or navy with black trim. The Episcopal shield design is on the bottom tread and leaves an imprint in the sand. Available in all sizes.

\$20, with \$10 going to J2A.

A - Z Concert

SINGING A - Z cordially invites you to our 2009 winter concert, Saturday, February 7, 7:00 pm, in Satterlee Hall at St. Alban's. This concert is a preview of our show for DC public school children, "Where In the World Am I?" and our concert for seniors, "Small and Blue and Beautiful." Themes for the concert will include respect for our beautiful earth and the need to give our best to live in peace and keep our world beautiful and safe. Children and adults will love this fun-filled evening of music and drama by a chorus and diverse group of instrumentalists noted for excellence in performance. This concert is free of charge, as it is our opportunity to share our vision with you. Save the date!



Parish Staff News

Vilma Smith, our Parish Finance Director, has had to take disability leave for the remainder of 2008. We are not certain as to when she can return. During this interim, the Rector has hired Douglas Dykstra, a parishioner, to be the interim Finance Director. Doug worked for decades at the Washington Post as the Business Manager of the Sunday Magazine, so he comes to this work with great credentials. We are thankful that Doug was available to step in on such short notice.

This, as you no doubt know, is a busy time in the financial life of the parish. We are approaching the end of our fiscal year, we are in the midst of our Every Member Pledge campaign, and we are developing a budget for the coming year. We ask that all parishioners be patient if you have dealings with our finance office. And please keep Vilma in your prayers as she recovers.

Going Green with Solar Energy

Earlier this year we applied to the District's Department of Energy for a Renewable Energy Project Demonstration Project grant. And we won! The grant will cover approximately a third of the cost of installing a 2.8 kW rooftop fixed-mount photovoltaic solar system. The system should generate 40-50% of our electricity (total usage is approximately 9200 kW/year).

Although the demonstration grant program has ended for this year, the District expects to have a new program in 2009. This will likely be a rebate program, which should make application for assistance easier than under this year's demonstration authority.

We live in a south-facing duplex with a flat roof (the sloped façade visible from the street is just for looks) on which the three solar panels will be installed. There are three preconditions for considering a system such as ours: the condition of your roof (must be sturdy enough to hold the panels), the extent to which it is shaded, and whether your current meter is capable of negative metering (running backwards). The shade analysis, done by our solar contractor SunNetZero, dictated placing the panels toward the rear of the house to leave them exposed to maximum sunshine year-round. An added bonus is that this makes the panels invisible from the front of the house.

Current Federal tax policy giving homeowners a \$2000 tax credit for installation of alternative energy generators expires at the end of 2008. However, it is being replaced by a tax credit of a third of the homeowner's cost so we will wait until after January 1 to begin installation.

Once the system is up and running, our electric meter will run backwards when we are generating electricity. We will have a web site that will allow you to watch our generation and consumption of electricity – stay tuned!

We've also installed a whole-house, on-demand hot water heater that eliminates the need to keep a large tank of water heated at all times. We hope this will help reduce our consumption of natural gas. If you have any questions about either of these projects, we are more than happy to share our experience.

--Sandy and Jim Kolb



Salon St. Alban's

Salon St. Alban's is privileged to have Dr. Timothy Sedgwick as our speaker on December 7th. Dr. Sedgwick will speak at the forum that morning on "Jesus and Healing the Cycle of Revenge." He will explore the human problem of revenge and of revenge cultures and the need of salvation as given in the law (*lex talionis*) and in forgiveness. Salon St. Alban's will meet for lunch at the Westchester and have an in depth discussion with Dr. Sedgwick on his forum presentation.

Dr. Sedgwick is the Clinton S. Quinn Professor of Christian Ethics and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Virginia Theological Seminary. He is also the author of *Preaching What We Practice* with David Schlafer (Morehouse, 2007); *The Christian Moral Life: Practices of Piety* (Eerdmans/Forward Movement, 1999); *The Making of Ministry* (Cowley, 1993); and *Sacramental Ethics: Paschal Identity and the Christian Life* (1987). Dr. Sedgwick has contributed to two books published by bioethics task forces of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, *A Christian Response to the New Genetics: Religious Ethical and Social Issues* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003) and *Faithful Living Faithful Dying: Anglican Reflections on End of Life Care* (Morehouse 2000). Since 2005, Dr. Sedgwick has served as President of the Board of the *Anglican Theological Review*.

Our vision of Salon St. Alban's is based on 18th century salons where intellectual ideas were hotly debated. We invite speakers to share their thoughts on faith and spirituality, with discussion and questions from participants.

We especially invite the members of The Theological Book Group to join us as they will be reading Dr. Sedgwick's book, The Christian Moral Life: Practices of Piety and the Salon will be an opportunity to talk with Dr. Sedgwick.

(For those of you who have come to previous lunches, we have asked the Westchester to change the table set up so that everyone can see and hear better.)

SALON ST. ALBAN'S will meet for lunch on Sunday, December 7th after the 11:15 service in the Westchester Dining Room, 4000 Cathedral Avenue NW. The cost of the lunch is about \$23. Cash or check only, no credit cards.

Reservations are required as space is limited.

Please contact Joanne Brainard to reserve. Email (preferred) jebbrainard@yahoo.com or phone 301-365-3647.

IDEAS ALIVE!

"Conversation on the Economy": Parishioners embark on a journey

Your Sunday Forum Committee thought long and hard before deciding how to speak to a global economic crisis that will not let us go for even one day without feeling and seeing its impact. We finally opted for two structured Ideas Alive! sessions -- on November 9 and 16 -- in which we could engage the issues and each other in small groups. We proceeded to collect the best ideas from these groups as grist for a report to the parish on how we ought to respond as a Christian community.

We had 30-plus participants at each session, more than half of whom attended both. We are truly thankful for the willingness of so many to invest their time and energy in this process and prayerfully pledge to offer a report (look for it in your January *Chronicle*) that will help guide the parish's efforts in the weeks and months ahead. We see the two Forums as an early step in what may well be a long journey.

In the meantime, please attend our four extraordinary Advent Forums on the theme "Why Do We Need a Savior?" These programs were planned months before the world's financial underpinnings were so palpably shaken. Perhaps these Forums can help us understand the unfolding crisis from a more deeply Christian perspective.

And, in the moment, enjoy two reviews by Forum Committee members -- one on the first "Conversation on the Economy," the other on the "Stepping Out of Homelessness" presentation offered by David Downes of Samaritan Ministry on October 12.

**-- Ann and Andrew Ramsey-Moor, Co-Chairs
St. Alban's Sunday Forum Committee**

"What should people of faith be thinking, saying, and doing?"

The Ideas Alive! session on November 9, "A Conversation on the Economy -- Part 1," focused on how our parishioners are feeling about the situation personally and on the global impact of the crisis. Sunday Forum Committee member Sandy Kolb, who facilitated the three small-group discussions, posed a series of questions that focused on hopes, fears, faith, and the presence of God in the midst of the economic crisis.

Group members expressed hopes for a stronger local and global realization that we are all truly interdependent. They called for a more just society with a stronger value system.

Many said that we have become too materialistic as a society, and that the current crisis is a real opportunity to change our lifestyles.

The groups worried about how long the crisis would last. Some expressed concern that the financial preparations they have made for retirement would not sustain them through the extent of the crisis, given that the resources of many already have been significantly depleted. Others worried that our children would be demoralized and left with an uncertain future.

One of the questions asked, "what should people of faith be thinking, saying, and doing?" "Just what we are doing now, for starters," many said. Creating a safe place to discuss the circumstances and to give and receive support was forefront in most minds. "We need to be God's representatives on Earth," suggested others. Group members felt strongly that we should be active together -- politically and spiritually. "We are not isolated," one asserted; "we will come out of it."

When asked where in the crisis God is, some expressed the belief that "God is helping us come to our senses." Referring back to the day's Old Testament reading from Amos, one person said, "Justice needs to roll down . . ."

One might say the overriding message from this Forum was connected to community, justice, realization -- values we should demonstrate in doing God's work.

-- Christopher Bailey

A compelling and practical response to homelessness in D.C.

On October 12, St. Alban's welcomed David Downes, Executive Director of Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington (SMGW), who spoke on "Stepping Out of Homelessness."

Parishioners gathered to learn more about this faith-based social services organization and its response to poverty and homelessness. As it happens, our parish played a seminal role in a joint effort of twelve parishes from the Episcopal Diocese of Washington to create Samaritan Ministry in 1986. It has remained very involved in the life of SMGW and its Next Step Program, which helps program participants work toward meeting their own goals one manageable step at a time.

Downes's own first step toward involvement with homelessness occurred through a weekend personal development workshop exercise, which involved a meal of crackers and cheese shared with "James," a man sitting on the street outside the CVS in Dupont Circle with a sign in his hand: "I'm hungry." This exercise of eating a meal with a person experiencing homelessness became "one of the best meals [David] ever had . . . with quite an extraordinary human being."

Downes called parishioners' attention to recent news stories related to poverty and homelessness. Job cuts are continuing; there is a lack of legal services for D.C. residents living in poverty; and more seniors nationwide are finding "no place to live" in their advanced years, according to an AARP bulletin. In light of these and other pressing social afflictions, understanding the issue of homelessness seems particularly critical.

To this end, Downes outlined both some facts and some myths. For instance, recent studies have refuted the validity of the popularly-believed "Magnet Theory," which posits that setting up homeless services in a given area will draw a large number of people without homes to that location in quest of social assistance. In reality, those who move do so because of employment opportunities and for familial or other non-service-related reasons. Another myth is that substance abuse and mental illness are invariably at the root of homelessness. In fact, 25% of people experiencing homelessness have mental illness; 40% struggle with substance abuse; and 15% live with both mental illness and addiction (National HCH Council, Inc., January 2002). Other factors contributing to homelessness include poverty, diminishing work opportunities, wage declines, lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable health care, and domestic violence.

Former SMGW program participant "Wendell" brought the Forum's message home in a compelling and personal way, moving parishioners with his hope-filled success story. Together, Wendell and Downes informed minds, touched hearts, and sparked additional interest in opportunities to lend a hand.

For more information on the Next Step Experience and on ways to help, visit: [HYPERLINK "http://www.samaritanministry.org"](http://www.samaritanministry.org) www.samaritanministry.org or call Samaritan Ministry at (202) 722-2280.

-- Christine Oblitas

Hello, I Am a Newcomer to Your Church

You cannot know the reason why I am here this morning. It may be as simple as a move to your community or as complicated as a personal crisis that leads me to seek strength from God. In either case, I am here. And I will probably remain here and come back to worship with you next Sunday and the Sunday after and the Sunday after that, if you will do some things for me. Won't you please...

...Smile at me as I walk in the door. You are my first impression of the church during the first few moments I am in your building, and this first impression will probably stay with me a long time.

...Help me find my place in the service. I will not find your help an intrusion. In fact I will remember your kindness.

...Speak to me during the coffee hour. I know you want to see your friends and settle that piece of committee business. But I may find it hard to believe that you truly care for each other unless I first see evidence that you care for "the stranger in your midst."

...Tell me good things about your church and your clergy. I want to believe that I have come to a place where people love each other and where they believe that they are doing important and exciting things for the Lord.

...Notice me – even if I am not a "family." I don't want to feel invisible just because I am unmarried, a single parent, a teenager or an older person.

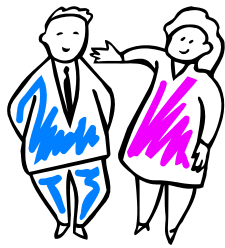
...Talk to me again the second week when I come back, and the third and the fourth. I am still not part of your parish family. Please don't feel you have "done your duty" by me just because you made a point of greeting me the first week I was here.

...Invite me to become part of some church group or organization. I need more than worship every Sunday. I need to know that I am accepted and affirmed by a group of people within the church who know me by my first name and who care about me as an individual.

If you can find it in your heart to do these things for me, I will come back ... the second Sunday, the third, and maybe forever. I will worship with you, join your choir, work at your fair, teach in your church school, contribute to your canvas, and become a highly involved member of your church and, in so doing, I will find my own life immeasurably enriched as a result of having become a member of your church.

Excerpt of a sermon preached by the Rev. Chris Moore at St. George's Chapel,
Rehoboth Beach, on August 17, 2008.





OUTREACH

Our Blue Bag Partnership Delivers the Goods.— by Jim Tate

The Blue Bag partnership between St. Alban's Africa Roundtable and Safari Club International's DC Metro Chapter has accomplished much this year. We have delivered seven bags: one to Antigua (Patsy Conner), one to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kem and Jon Sawyer), three to Rwanda (Suzie and Bill Brewster), and two to Mexico (Lin Schmale-Tate). This is the story of our success to date told partly in the words of the generous souls who took the extra effort to carry a bag during their normal travels.

The process of filling and delivering a blue bag is very simple, with at least three ways of getting the goods delivered to the needy. The traveler can shop and fill the bag with selected items of their own choosing. This can be done here in the United States before leaving, or after arrival at the destination. Another option is talking about your upcoming trip with friends or organizations you belong to, and making the funding, shopping, selecting and filling a group project. And third, our partnership has put together a fund for buying needed items and paying excess baggage fees at the airport if necessary.

This is what Kem and Jon Sawyer said about the process: *"The Blue Bag program couldn't be simpler: You take one of the bright blue duffel bags, fill it with useful goods, and check it along with the rest of your luggage. For all the current difficulties in the airline industry there's still a generous luggage allowance on overseas flights – we had no trouble checking 40 pounds of Blue Bag goods with no extra charge."*

Here are summary reports from the participants below. If you want to see the full reports with pictures, go to: www.st-albans-parish.org/outreach/pdfs/BlueBag2008.pdf.

The Sawyers (Jon and Kem) combined their Blue Bag delivery with a trip to see their daughter Ida who works with Human Rights Watch in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on the shores of Lake Kivu and surrounded by three volcanoes – a place of stunning beauty, extreme poverty and chronic violence. Since their visit, lawlessness and fighting have resumed. Thousands of DRC citizens are homeless and Ida and her staff are sheltering against the turmoil. In the Sawyer's own words:

Our Blue-Bag Trip to Eastern Congo—
"Many thanks to the St. Alban's Africa Roundtable-DC Metro Chapter Safari Club International Blue Bag Program for giving us the inspiration to take along a Blue Bag stuffed with equipment, toys and clothes when we visited Goma, on the eastern edge of the Democratic Republic of

Save the Date - Our Next Newcomers Dinner is Almost Here

On Sunday, December 7, from 6:30-8pm all are welcome, both newcomers and members, to gather together for great food and fellowship. These dinners provide opportunities to share what we love about St. Alban's Parish, how we found our way here, and where God is calling us in our ministries. The evening begins with introductions in the large group, then continues with a blessing, the main course, and we close our time together with questions and answers during dessert. Please join us for this important time of connection in the life of our parish family. Also, if you are a member, please consider helping to host the celebration by helping set up, bringing a dish, or helping clean up afterwards. For more information, contact Erin Hensley at erinh@st-albans-parish.org or 202-363-8286,x207.

Inviting our Neighbors to Worship through Song: Christmas Caroling on the Fourth Sunday of Advent

On Sunday, December 21, after the 5:30pm service, we will walk to nearby apartment buildings, sing Christmas carols, and leave lovely postcards that include the dates and times of our special Christmas and Epiphany worship services. We will gather in Trenbath Assembly in Satterlee Hall to divide into groups, distribute song sheets, and talk about "talking points" for after our singing. After the Christmas caroling, we will meet up again in Trenbath for fellowship, hot chocolate, hot cider, and some tasty treats. If you're interested in singing on the 21st or bringing some goodies for afterwards, please contact Erin Hensley at erinh@st-albans-parish.org or 202-363-8286,x207. We hope parishioners young and old can be part of our first adventure of letting the neighborhood know we're alive and well and welcoming to newcomers.



Congo, earlier this summer. In our Blue Bag we had some equipment for the Human Rights Watch Office. We also brought along a camera, tape recorder, clothes and toys for the Center for Victims of Torture, a local Goma NGO that serves women who have been raped, their children, and others caught up in a decade-long civil war that has claimed over 4 million lives. It was wonderful to see the work that these two groups and others are doing in a place that needs so much – and to have the opportunity to leave something behind.” (Kem and Jon Sawyer)

Patsy Conner traveled to her childhood home in Antigua, West Indies and took a Blue Bag to a home for girls on the island.

My Blue Bag journey to Antigua’s Sunshine Home for Girls—

“I had a wonderful childhood growing up Antigua, located in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies. Economic hardship, the rule rather than the exception, was the engine that drove migration from the island, and caused my family to move to the United States when I was a teenager. With the help of a childhood friend, the Antiguan Ambassador to the United States, I identified the Salvation Army’s Sunshine Home for Girls in the village of Johnson’s Point for my Blue Bag. This home provides for vulnerable girls between the ages of 8 and 16 who are victims of physical and sexual abuse, incest, and delinquency. “

“Another friend, the Rev. Anne-Marie Jeffery, an Antiguan who currently serves as Priest-in-Charge at St. James, Bowie and as Episcopal Chaplain at Bowie State University, and I went shopping in Antigua to fill the Blue Bag.”

“The Sunshine Home administrator, Major Carmen Mott and the girls would like to thank St. Alban’s and the SCI - Metro Chapter for sponsoring the Blue Bag program. It was spiritually renewing for me to visit my childhood home, and I am happy that I took advantage of my vacation to make the Blue Bag Program available to people in need at the Sunshine Home for Girls. It is my hope that others would do the same thing whenever the opportunity arises.” (Patsy Conner)

Safari in Rwanda is about much more than seeing wild-

life— Suzie Brewster and her husband Bill have just returned from a month-long trip to Africa. They took two Blue Bags to families living in their hunting reserve and sent locally purchased contents for yet another bag back with their Professional Hunter as they got ready to travel back home. In a brief conversation, Suzie told me she might be taking a bag to Jamaica when we talked briefly before they went on the road again.

Lin Schmale-Tate just returned from a quick trip to Mexico where she took two Blue Bags to help some of the street

children left behind when their fathers leave Mexico for work elsewhere.

Blue Bags for Mexico’s Homeless Children— “I had a business trip to Guadalajara, representing U.S. floriculture at an international agricultural meeting. This particular trip did not seem to lend itself to the usual Blue Bag program because I was traveling to a hotel meeting. But husband Jim asked me to take Blue Bags with me ‘...for the street children.’ So I did.”

“The manager of my hotel gave me a contact for an orphanage, Hogar Ana Maria Casillas Cruz.” in the small town of Tepatitlan de Morelos, about 70 kilometres east of Guadalajara.” After reviewing an information sheet on the orphanage, I called the director, Patricia Lupercio, and asked her what was most needed (she said “Everything! Clothes, sweaters, shoes, food....). So, we set up a time to visit.”

“I went to a local store and bought two shopping carts full of jeans, sweatshirts, sweaters, and cute pink outfits for children ranging from 4 years to 14 years old. I threw in a few toys, and several boxes of galletas (cookies).”

“Hogar Ana Maria Casillas Cruz is run privately, totally based on donations from institutions and individuals. It is housed in the same compound as a private school, attended both by children from the town and from the orphanage. It was very institutional, but all spotlessly clean and bright-- a place where these former street children are safe, well-fed, cared-for, and educated.”

“The Mexican government sends children to this institution when they are collected from the streets of cities as far away as Mexico City and Cuernavaca. So there are about 70 children, ages 7 months to 16 years, and they are taken care of by two Sisters, and of course, by each other, the older ones helping with the younger ones.”

“Having once done the “Blue Bag thing,” I would absolutely do it again. It’s easy, and it is incredibly rewarding. You get much, much more than you give, and the Blue Bag program provides the support you need. (Lin Schmale-Tate)”

When we began this project, our goal was to send ten bags overseas in 2008. With only three bags to go, we are optimistic that we will meet our goal this year and be able to set an even more optimistic goal in 2009. If you are planning to travel to an underserved community sometime this year, please take a Blue Bag with you.

WSA Reaches Out Far in 2008

The Workers of St. Alban's (WSA) is a 21-member board of parishioners that meets monthly to disburse funds raised in the St. Alban's Opportunity Shop to many organizations serving the homeless and underprivileged residents of Washington, D.C. and its surrounding area. WSA also grants a substantial portion of the funds to the parish and several of its programs as well as a few international organizations. The popular Op Shop, which began at St. Alban's 53 years ago, is a thriving business which serves the needs of many people in our community for low-cost clothing and household items which parishioners and others in the community donate to the shop. The Op Shop has raised more than \$100,000 for the past several years.



This year, through November, the WSA has granted a total of \$77,275 to the following Washington, D.C. area programs: A Wider Circle, Community Council for the Homeless (Friendship Place), Calvary Women's Services, Charlie's Place at St. Margaret's, Downtown Cluster Geriatric Center, EFFORTS, Hope and a Home, Journeymen's Theater Ensemble, Jubilee Jobs, Lorton Arts Program, Pregnancy Aid Centers, Inc., Dinner Program for Homeless Women, Hope House, Joseph's House, Mary House, NOMIS Youth Network, Our Place DC, Rachel's Women's Center, Right to Read, Sarah's Circle, SINGA, Inc., St. Luke's Shelter, Transitional Housing Corporation, and Visitor Services Center. This year WSA supported the international program Africa Roundtable. Bread for the City, Church of the Epiphany Welcome Table, Emmaus Services for the Aging, and several others will be considered next month.

WSA granted \$38,000 to the parish, including \$15,000 to the operating budget, \$4,000 to clergy discretionary funds, and a total of \$19,000 to the following programs: Crossroads Shelter, St. Alban's Early Childhood Center, On Beads of Prayer, and Singing A to Z. St. Alban's also supplies the space and utilities for the Early Childhood Center.

The WSA board hears several reports on grant applications each month and gives priority to smaller organizations with budgets under \$1.5 million while continuing to consider grants to those larger organizations with which it has maintained a long-standing relationship. Some of the larger organizations which WSA has supported many years are Bread for the City, Community Council for the Homeless, Downtown Cluster of Congregations, Episcopal Senior Ministries, Home Care Partners, Martha's Table, My Sister's Place, Samaritan Inns, Samaritan Ministry, The Episcopal Center for Children, and Transitional Housing Corporation.

The WSA's mission is to support projects that alleviate human suffering and directly affect the underprivileged and underserved. Its work reaffirms the Christian belief as stated in "An Outline of the Faith" in the Book of Common Prayer, to love our neighbors as ourselves and "to seek justice, freedom, and the necessities of life for all people." The grant application form may be found on the church web site, www.st-albans-parish.org/resources.

The Op Shop, located on the lower level of the Wisconsin Avenue entrance to Satterlee Hall, operates with the help of 60 volunteers, about half of whom are St. Alban's parishioners and the other half from the community. If you are looking for a new ministry to people of all ages and from many different circumstances, from regular customers to tourists, please keep the Op Shop in mind. Bob Gemmill, head of personnel, would like to hear from you at 202-362-6784 or the Op Shop at 202-966-5288. Your morning or afternoon shift of three hours will be time well spent. If you prefer sorting or pricing items, you also will be welcomed greatly. The shop is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for customers and for receiving donations. Donations should be good quality, resalable items. If you come to the desk inside, you will receive a tax donation form. Items that are not sold within a reasonable time are given to one of WSA's regular charities.



If you are interesting in knowing more about any of the organizations that WSA has supported, please contact Mary Jane Shackelford, President of WSA, or Betsy Sanders and Nan Pierce, co-chairs of the Budget Committee which makes agency reporting assignments.

---Sharon Whitehouse

Reflections on the Margaret Parker Walk for Youth Ministries: A Person to Remember and a Ministry to Support

On Saturday September 27, around 75 of St. Alban's parishioners, personal and work friends of the Parker family, and around 10 dogs came together to remember Margaret Parker and the youth to come at St. Alban's Parish. We came together for the Margaret Parker Walk for Youth Ministries, a walk to raise money for an endowment fund for youth ministries in Margaret's honor. Donna Palmer, Alex Palmer, and David Sottile arrived early to help set up coffee, water, and sign ups. After everyone was registered, Tony welcomed us to his home and introduced close family and friends. The Rev. Scott Benhase thanked everyone for coming and shared about Margaret's ministry in the church with youth. After a word of prayer and with Tony's leadership, we walked almost two miles on a loop in Battery Kemble Park. We walked a path that was one of Margaret's favorites and came back to live music and a lovely barbeque luncheon.

Mark and Sue Edwards were two of the walkers that day. When asked to share memories about Margaret and the walk, here's how they responded: "Margaret was one of those special people who really loved the young people—our daughters and sons—she connected with through the Youth Ministry at St. Alban's. Margaret made each feel special and welcomed into the best of her world with Tony and Beau and all the nieces and nephews we met at Margaret's memorial service. As our daughter's Rite 13 co-leader, she also shared her struggle with cancer with honesty and faith."

"When her husband Tony organized the walk in her memory, we knew we wanted to honor her through our participation. With dogs also welcomed to accompany Beau, we knew this was the best representation of Margaret. It was wonderful to meet the many other people who also knew and loved Margaret, and wanted to support her wish of creating an endowment to support the Youth Ministry at St. Alban's. Her spirit will remain with all of at St. Alban's, and live on through the ongoing good works that will be assisted through this special endowment."

Jane Easton, a member of our senior youth, felt much the same way. She remembers Margaret as "overwhelmingly compassionate" and "a good example for a model Christian citizen." Jane believes that Margaret "really touched a lot of people, and this was evident in the crowd that arrived to walk in her remembrance." Caitlyn Edwards, another member of our senior youth, has fond memories of "hopping in the back of her old Mercedes with her dog, seats covered in dog hair, always stopping to get gas or lunch." She remembers that "the best thing about Margaret was that she was just an over-all loving person."

As you can tell, Margaret's ministry with young people shaped their lives as well as that of their families. The Margaret Parker Fund for Youth Ministries, an endowment fund dedicated to youth ministries in her honor, will continue to shape the lives of young people at St. Alban's Parish. With the help of parishioners and friends of Margaret's outside of the parish, a total of \$22,535 was raised for the Margaret Parker Endowment Fund for Youth Ministries at St. Alban's Parish. We give thanks to God for Margaret, for Tony, for the walkers, the donors, and the prayers. We look forward to how God will continue to shape the lives of young people with the help of the Margaret Parker Fund for Youth Ministries at St. Alban's Parish.

Children Help the Homeless-Samaritan Ministry

The children of St. Alban's Parish have been involved in looking out for those without homes. Involved through prayer, marching and raising money, they have represented us as a parish in an excellent way. This November the youngest of us took a MINI walk after the 9:15 service. We carried placards inviting others to walk with us, to feed the hungry and house the homeless and walked down Wisconsin, in front of the Cathedral and back to church. A short distance, indeed, but a great beginning.

Our 4th- 6th graders have organized themselves into a program called Kids Reaching Out. Carrying their new banner, they did the maxi walk to raise money and awareness for the homeless on November 22. Our donations went to Samaritan Ministry. In cold hard cash we raised over a thousand dollars. In warm gratitude and fellowship we raised our level of awareness and our level of compassion for ourselves and others.



St. Alban's joined more than 30 other faith groups of the National Religious Coalition Against Torture in a procession to the White House on November 12. Banners and speeches called on President-elect Obama to sign an executive order, as soon as he is inaugurated, banning US use of torture any time, any place, for any reason.



The gift that saves and builds lives.

If you are like many of us, you have at least one person on your Christmas list who has all the "things" they could possibly want or need. Instead of more stuff, honor your friends with gifts that nurture life. One favorite organization is Heifer International. Gifts range from \$10 (tree seedlings) to under \$50 (bees, ducks & geese, chicks) to \$120 + (goats & sheep, water buffalo) to \$500 and above (heifer, "knitting basket" comprised of two llamas and two sheep, a male and female of each). Each recipient family must give the first born of any gift to another in their village. All hemispheres. Check out: www.heifer.org or call 800-698-2511.



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Submit articles for the *Chronicle* to: EricG@st-albans-parish.org

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