

St. Alban's Chronicle

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
3001 Wisconsin Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20016
February 2009

Amahl and the Night Visitors: An Epiphany triumph!



Thanks to all who participated in our January 4 production of Menotti's opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. The all-star cast was amazing, and the SRO audience clearly very much enjoyed bringing the Christmas season to a close with this. Our own **Joan Phalen, Will Gerson, Doug Dykstra, Rich Turner, Jim Shaffran and Rick Dirksen** played the Mother, Amahl, the Page and the Kings. Members from all the choirs made up the Shepherds Chorus, and it was truly a joyful parish event.
(See close-up picture on the following page.)

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 Timothy A. Boggs, Associate Rector
The Reverend Harriette H. Sturges, Deacon,
Coordinator of Children's Ministries
The Reverend Loren B. Mead, Priest Associate

EPISCOPAL CAMPUS MINISTRIES

Carolyn Seaton, Chaplain, American University

PARISH STAFF

Eric Gustafson, Parish Administrator
Ron Hicks, Parish Verger
Doug Dykstra, Interim Director of Financial Affairs
Sonya Subbaya Sutton, Director of Music
Dr. Norman Scribner, Director of Music Emeritus
Ashley Allen, Parish Secretary

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;
Joanne Brainard, WSA Board Representative

ST. ALBAN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

3001 Wisconsin Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20016
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



Amahl and the Night Visitors

Christmas flowers

This year's Christmas flowers were spectacular, thanks to the Flower Guild Flower Memorial Coordinator Adelaide Brown, and to you—all of you who contributed in memoriam or thanksgiving for loved ones. If you made a contribution but have not yet sent in your check (or have yet to contribute for earlier memorials), please be sure you mail your payment, made out to St. Alban's Flower Guild, to:
Carl Ackerman
4000 Cathedral Ave. NW, #654B
Washington, DC 20016

Exciting new staff announcement

Please welcome the newest member of our staff, **Ashley Allen**. Ashley began work as our new Parish Receptionist and Secretary on January 22nd. She brings a wealth of gifts to our parish, among which is expertise in professional writing. We are all excited to have a warm and welcoming full-time presence again in the front office. Please drop by to get acquainted with Ashley.

IDEAS ALIVE! -- SUNDAY FORUM REPORT

Parishioners grapple with global economic crisis

Nearly 50 St. Albanites participated in our two Ideas Alive! Forums that focused on the economic crisis and how we should respond to it -- individually, collectively, and as a community. The sessions, which took place on November 9 and 16, were dubbed "A Conversation on the Economy -- Parts 1 and 2."

Those who attended the first session were given five discussion questions aimed at articulating their/our fears in the midst of gloomy news of lost jobs and diminished wealth; considering an appropriate Christian response; and pondering God's presence in the midst of it all. The second session's three questions focused on our parish and how we might help fellow parishioners, both immediately and in the long run.

Participants agreed that the situation is quite serious. As such, it demands that St. Alban's become a place where we take time to talk about the crisis and share ways of understanding and coping with it.

Among the suggestions on the macro level were:

- * Encouraging "going green" in ways that could provide jobs while reducing our energy use and costs.
- * Offering presentations on how the crisis is impacting developing countries.
- * Educating parishioners about what has happened in similar, past situations. We can learn from our own history as well as from the experiences of other countries.

Ideas for action within the parish included:

- * Responding in stages. Providing immediate short-term help for members in crisis while trying to take a longer-term perspective, based on developments.
- * Linking the Stephen Ministry with those who are suffering economically.

* Better publicizing the various networks and ministries within St. Alban's. Many of us don't know about opportunities to help through existing mechanisms (for care of St. Alban's members and for assistance to the rest of world). Perhaps the website could be utilized in this regard.

* Making sure people know about the Career Transition Group.

* Focusing on how people can deal with rising health-care costs.

* Giving special attention to those in their 20s and 30s, who will have different job/career needs than older workers.

* Lowering materialistic expectations of young people, perhaps through teen sermons.

* Connecting with other faith communities to develop a broader network.

* Continuing to encourage people to share the burden -- having empathetic listeners helps!

There's a lot here to ponder as we begin 2009. The Sunday Forum Committee plans to offer more Ideas Alive! sessions on the economy in the year ahead. Feel free to suggest specific topics and or/emphases as we go forward.

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



Singing 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.

Why Do We Need a Savior?

During the four weeks of Advent, we walk in darkness, sing somber Advent songs, and await the imminent birth of Christ, the Great Light. We also ponder our need for a savior. This Advent just past, we had considerable help doing that from four distinguished professors at Virginia Theological Seminary, each of whom shed light on the question from the vantage point of his or her particular discipline. Reviews of their four extraordinary sessions follow.

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

"The Savior: An Answer to the Problem of Evil" (November 30)

At our first Advent Forum, The Very Rev. Dr. Ian Markham, Dean of Virginia Theological Seminary, addressed the age-old question of why God allows suffering and evil. Dean Markham began with two commonly heard responses. The first has to do with the notion of free will. If God wants us to live a life based in love, but to freely choose how to live, the possibility of hate must also be present. The second is that learning and good can arise from otherwise bad occurrences or situations (for example, we often hear people say that they have grown stronger because of some kind of trial they have faced).

However, Dean Markham said, the Bible points us toward a different answer. He noted that it is largely a book *about* suffering and evil. It abounds with stories of adultery, genocide, and murder, not the least of which is the central story of Christ's crucifixion. Indeed, Christianity as a religious tradition engages the reality of pain in human life.

With the Incarnation, God experienced the evil and suffering in the world and can therefore identify with it. With the Crucifixion, the "Creator of the universe died at the hand of creation." Jesus' death is often described as the triumph of good over evil, or as a ransom for us; but Dean Markham emphasized that it created new possibilities for human life and action. Saved, through the Crucifixion and Resurrection, from the consequences of our egoism and selfishness, we experience the Atonement – an "at-onement" with God. Healed, we have the power to live differently, including how we deal with evil and suffering.

Forgiveness is a way of coping with past hurt. It frees the forgiver as well as the forgiven and makes us whole. Forgiveness may only be offered by the one who has been wronged; however, sometimes we may be asked to forgive evil done in and to the wider society, even if not directly to us. The example Dean Markham gave was Nelson Mandela asking the people of South Africa to forgive and reconcile, a request he had the moral authority to make because of his long imprisonment and suffering.

God, by virtue of having engaged in human life and suffering, can forgive us for the sins that we commit *and* ask us to forgive each other. In Jesus we have a Savior who identifies with, acknowledges, and was a victim of human evil. He thus has the authority to move us into a different place in terms of how we deal with human suffering, how we understand and approach past hurt and pain. This is a uniquely Christian belief.

The initial comment from the group was that Christians are very good at preaching forgiveness, but not very good at helping the victim forgive. Dean Markham acknowledged that forgiving is difficult, and that societal pressures for revenge are great. Moreover, forgiving requires God's help. Our liturgy supports forgiveness through the act of confession and the passing of the peace. The peace, which is positioned just before the offering, flows from Jesus' charge in the Sermon on the Mount to make peace with your neighbors before you make your offering to God. In fulfilling this Christian obligation, we are doing more than just wishing someone else "peace." We are inviting God's peace into our lives to help us do the hard work of reaching out to all those we have harmed.

As the session ended, someone in the audience pointed out that many good things entail some risk. Even giving a child a pair of roller skates raises the possibility that the child might fall and get hurt. That, said Dean Markham, is a great paradox – that inherent in any good may be the potential for harm.

-- Sandy Kolb

Ash Wednesday Services

Wednesday, February 25

7:30 am Holy Eucharist with imposition of ashes
12:00 pm Holy Eucharist with imposition of ashes
6:00 pm* Holy Eucharist with imposition of ashes

* note there is only one evening service this year

PARISH OFFICE: 202-363-8286

Please join us for food, fellowship and live music.



Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

6:00 – 7:30 PM, Satterlee Hall

Children \$3.00 * Adults \$6.00 * Families \$16.00

*Tickets can be purchased on Sunday February 22
or at the door on Tuesday February 24.*

Hosted by Rite 13. Proceeds go to their beach trip this summer.

'Jesus and Healing the Cycle of Revenge' (December 7)

In our next Advent Forum, Dr. Timothy Sedgwick, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Christian Ethics at VTS, explained our need for a savior by examining the human problem of revenge and the larger cycle of revenge that has played out over and over, across the centuries, in places and situations too numerous to mention. Dr. Sedgwick shaped his presentation around three questions: What is the human problem? What is the solution? And what are the relevant models for this in Christian tradition?

The basic human problem is *lack of connection*. Sociologist Emile Durkheim wrote about anomie and resultant alienation -- the opposite of the "deep kind of connectedness" that is the ideal. Two key manifestations of alienation are anger and resentment. Anger, traditionally one of the Seven Deadly Sins, is not in itself wrong. (Eighteenth-century Anglican Joseph Butler thought it was a normal, natural response -- a passion equal to righteous indignation when an injustice has been done.) It only becomes a problem "when it reaches a point where we want to destroy the other" (resentment). Then, that resentment does something bad to us. It undercuts our sense and experience of the world as gift as well as our true self, resulting in a profound lack of connectedness with others.

There are two kinds of solutions to this problem: law-based and grace-based. The first, the *lex talionis* of Hammurabi's Code and the Old Testament, does more than codify resentment. It creates a legal framework that gives *confidence that someone else will right the wrong*. In so doing, it breaks the "get even" cycle of revenge. But, as Dr. Sedgwick noted, "retributive justice doesn't reconcile." The Christian response to the revenge cycle is, in the end, through sacrifice. When one is able to offer oneself to the other, care for the other, even at risk to oneself, something new happens. Refusing the response of revenge -- as the Amish community in Pennsylvania notably did following the terrible schoolhouse massacre in 2006 -- changes the equation. Sacrifice "is a statement that the other is more important -- that we are connected." It enables reconciliation.

Turning briefly to the international political scene, Dr. Sedgwick applied the above solutions to two different situations: Bosnia and South Africa. In Bosnia, a law-based solution was requisite. Order literally had to be put back in place by the U.N.'s International Court of Justice to ensure there would not be continuing genocide. In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did much to heal the nation after years of wrongs committed and suffered under apartheid. Confession and forgiveness began to create a new reality. However, the problem of law remains in that country.

How, then, is Jesus the solution, the ultimate healer of the cycle of revenge? Dr. Sedgwick presented three models, or theories of atonement, from Christian history. The ransom theory -- good vs. evil, God vs. the devil -- focuses on Jesus' descent into hell to liberate the captives. It is a large cosmic story. The satisfaction theory is centered upon Christ's death for our sins. As in traditional societies, *honor* matters. Someone has been dishonored, and that requires satisfaction. The judge (God) must be paid in order to restore honor; so Jesus pays the price with his life. The exemplary theory is the one most central to Anglican thought. (One sees it in the work of Richard Hooker, Rowan Williams, et al.) Here, Jesus is the *prototype* -- the model that shows what we are to be, and in which we participate. This draws us into a new life. In his cross, suffering, and passion, Jesus embraces all who suffer. Instead of reacting with resentment, we now have a deep sense of thankfulness for the life that God has given us and an enduring sense of the connectedness and love of others.

-- Ann Ramsey-Moor

"Framing a Biblical Christology" (December 15)

At our third *Ideas Alive!*, Dr. Kathy Grieb, Professor of New Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary, looked at why we need a savior through the lens of biblical theology. She taught us a new word: *soteriology* (soter = savior), the study of Christ's role as savior. Metaphors for the human condition suggest dimensions of our need and thus of our salvation. If we are ignorant, we need a teacher. If we are lost, we need a guide. If we are prisoners, we need to be set free. If we are guilty, we need to be justified. If we are sick and broken, we need a healer. If we are separated and alone, then we need reconciliation.

In her search for guidance from New Testament scripture, Dr. Grieb referenced all four Gospels, as well as Paul's letters to the Romans and Corinthians. Each book, as it turns out, emphasizes a different dimension of our need, and of how Christ saves us. Mark tells of the responsibilities of discipleship as well as its fulfillment. Matthew shows us how to live anew and bring blessings to one another. Luke (the physician) tells us of our illness and separation, and of our need to be healed. John emphasizes our blindness and need to be given sight. Paul's teaching runs the gamut as regards human need and Christ's salvation. He stresses our imprisonment and need to be set free. He speaks of our foolishness, and need for a different kind of wisdom. He cites our uncleanness, and need to be washed clean. He mentions our alienation, and need to be reconciled. He paints us as orphans who need to be adopted and blessed as children and heirs. He portrays us as sinners who need to be forgiven and justified. He compares our poverty to the richness of God's grace. He cites our aimlessness and meaninglessness, in contrast to the joy of discipleship and the acceptance of mystery.

Dr. Grieb quoted the words of John Newton's hymn, "Amazing Grace," to bring these ideas home to us in a familiar way: "I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind, but now I see!" In the great multiple-choice test of the Christian life, the answer to the question of what kind of savior we need is "all of the above." Thanks again, Dr. Grieb, for your lively thoughts and clear articulation. Now each of us will need to say "soteriology" once or twice in the next week, to consolidate the learning.

-- Gordon B. Avery

"For the Time Being: Waiting for the Savior in Postmodern Times" (December 21)

Dr. Roger Ferlo, Associate Dean and Professor of Religion and Culture at VTS, was the final speaker in our Advent Forum sequence. His talk proved a fitting capstone for a really challenging lecture series. Because Dr. Ferlo taught literature at Yale before he became a priest, he came at the question -- which he had not been previously asked to answer in this fashion -- by using the poetry of three giants. In his opinion, these three speak eloquently to the sensibilities of jaded postmodern people who no longer know whether or what to believe.

He began his exploration with a poem by Emily Dickinson that starts with the line, "The World Is Not Conclusion." Dickinson, raised in a devout Calvinist family that was also involved with the founding of Amherst College, speaks of "the Tooth that nibbles at the soul." For her, suggested Dr. Ferlo, this represents not the tooth of doubt, but the tooth of belief. Belief in this context may be a lot like our response to a toothache: we simply cannot ignore our needy condition. The poet, who was fond of the phrase "nimble believing" (as opposed to "true believing"), sees us as both believing and disbelieving a hundred times a day. "Faith slips -- and laughs, and rallies."

The next poet Dr. Ferlo chose was none other than the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. He focused on Williams's poems "Our Lady of Vladimir" and "Advent Calendar." In the former poem, his images are of an Infant Jesus whose presence is heavy, stifling, even invasive. He brings his message of truth in such a manner that we cannot avoid it. "The child has overlaid us in our beds, we cannot close our eyes." We cannot "shake off his insistent pushing warmth." How can we fail to respond?

Dr. Ferlo concluded with W.H. Auden, with whom he became acquainted while serving a church in Manhattan. Auden's "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio" is a complex work, written in New York City during World War II. Its setting is the immediate aftermath of Christmas. "Once again," Auden declares, "As in previous years we have seen the actual Vision and failed to do more than entertain it as an agreeable Possibility, once again we have sent Him away."

Regarding the work, Dr. Ferlo suggests that there is "an odd humility in all this." The times are difficult; and for now, our faltering faith and the efforts that flow from it must suffice. Auden's theology, and his view of our need for a savior, are summed up in the Chorus:

*He Is the Way.
Follow Him through the Land of Unlikeness;
You will see rare beasts, and have unique adventures.*

*He is the Truth.
Seek Him in the Kingdom of Anxiety;
You will come to a great city that has expected your
return for years.*

*He is the Life.
Love Him in the World of the Flesh;
And at your marriage all its occasions shall dance for
joy.*

As Dr. Ferlo put it, the narrator here has the last word. Needless to say, participants departed with a lot to think about.

-- Andrew Ramsey-Moor



New Stephen Ministers in Training

St. Alban's Stephen Ministry began its second training series in mid-January. Seven parishioners discerned a call to pastoral care, applied, met with the Stephen leaders, and have made the commitment to 50 hours of training – bless their hearts! These ministers-in-training are Janice Molchon, Sandra Loether, Kelli Mansure, Molly Buck, Ann Nix, Jeffrey Wood, and Kim Hurst. A member of Metropolitan Memorial Methodist Church is also joining us for training and will become part of the Stephen Ministry there.

Stephen Ministers are an extension of the pastoral care provided by clergy. They serve quietly and *confidentially* when parishioners face difficult transitions, such as illness, bereavement, job loss, divorce, or isolation. Nine parishioners have been serving in this capacity for the past year, and when the Stephen trainees are commissioned in spring, our parish's capacity for spiritual caregiving will be greatly expanded.

If you wonder if regular visits from a trained Stephen Minister could help you through a hard time, contact Stephen Leaders David Johnson or Jo Turner at the church office, 202-363-8286, exts. 210 and 219 respectively, or speak with clergy. And please keep our new trainees in your prayers.

Catherine Is Coming? Are You? Say Yes! Catherine is coming! Catherine Maresca! Who is Catherine?

Catherine is one of the founders of Christian Family Montessori School in 1981. She is currently the Director of Religious Education for the school and continues to serve as a catechist for the 9-12 year old children. Catherine has an M.A. in Religious Studies from Howard University Divinity School and a B.A. in Theology from Trinity College. Catherine is also the founder and Director of the Center for Children and Theology and president of Parent Child Press. Catherine has been a trainer of adults in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in numerous locations throughout the US and most recently in Uganda.

Catherine is coming at the invitation of Harriette and the leaders of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program here at St. Alban's Parish. She is coming for ALL the adults in the parish to inform, to inspire, to illuminate our relationship with God, each other and the children. This is not a training but a time to meditate, ponder and enjoy this process and the Good Shepherd of us all.

When are we all gathering to listen and participate? Please come Saturday, February 21 and/or March 28 from 9:30-3pm downstairs in Satterlee in the Level 2 Atrium, the room known as Corinth. Lunch will be provided. Please sign up at once by calling or emailing Harriette at 202-363-8286, ext 203 or hsturges@st-albans-parish.org.

SAECC Annual Community Meeting: Making the Right Educational Choice for YOUR Child

On Wednesday, February 4, the St. Alban's Early Childhood Center (SAECC) will host Ward 3 DC Board of Education representative, **Laura McGiffert Slover**, to discuss important developments in the DC Public School System and Ward 3 schools in particular. Ms. Slover will also be joined by a representative from an independent school who will address how to think about whether or not to apply to a private school based on your individual child's personality, skills, interest and needs. The event is free and open to the public; babysitting and refreshments will be provided. The forum will take place from 5:30 - 7:00 pm in Satterlee Hall (3100 Wisconsin Avenue). Satterlee Hall is located across from St. Alban's Church on the Cathedral grounds. Please join us -- and spread the word!

For more information, please contact Carola McGiffert at cmcgiffert@hotmail.com.



Lenten Retreat at the Beach **WILDERNESS SPIRITUALITY: Jesus, Us, and the Hard Times**

Sponsored by
St. Alban's Parish

led by The Reverend J. Carlyle Gill

When: February 27-March 1

Where: Dupont Memorial House Retreat Center,
Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

Time: Dinner on Friday through lunch on Sunday

Cost: \$285 includes two nights lodging in double occupancy room with private bath, six delicious healthy meals (with vegetarian options) and retreat tuition.

Schedule: Meditations and centering prayer, lectio divina, silence, plenty of free time, everything is optional.

Registration: To reserve a place, send \$150 check (non-refundable) made out to St. Alban's Parish to Jennifer Martin, 8821 Ridge Road, Bethesda, MD, 20817.

For more information: Call or email Lacey Gude at 301-229-1599 or laceyagude@aol.com or Jennifer at 301-469-7786 or Jennifer_N_Martin@mcpsmd.org.

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

Articles for the March 2009 *Chronicle* must be received by February 15, 2009

Articles for the April 2009 *Chronicle* must be received by March 15, 2009



St. Alban's
Chronicle

St. Alban's Chronicle (USPS 560-600) is a periodical published once-monthly (with a special issue at Easter and at Christmas) by: St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Washington, DC. Postmaster: send address changes to St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 3001 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20016-5099.

Volume 108 ~ Issue 2