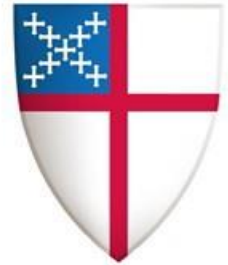




The Episcopal Church
in Arlington

saintalbansarlington.org

open-minded, joyful, authentic



ST. ALBAN'S TODAY

What It Means to Be Church

The following idea was always right below the surface of my theology of church, scratching to get out. But, the words just wouldn't formulate. Finally, they came to me via an Episcopal priest from Michigan. These words speak to what it is to be the Living Body of Christ, both individually and communally as the Church, as our church.

As the season of Epiphany unfolds before us, we focus our attention to God in Human Flesh, Jesus. We ask ourselves "What is to be God in Human Flesh?" "What is the implication of this new reality for the world?" "What is the implication of this for us, individually and collectively?" Can we look at Jesus and therein see God? Can we look at ourselves and see a "living member of the Body of Christ?"

Blessings to all of us as we continue to grow into our baptisms.

—Kevin+

(To follow Jesus) means that there is no creature, no institution, no action, no issue which is beyond the reach and concern of our ministry. For all of us Baptized Christians it means that there is no forbidden work, there is no corner of human existence, however degraded or neglected into which we may not enter. No person, no matter how beleaguered, whom we may not befriend and represent because we can only love God as much as we love the person we love the least.



It means that there is no cause, no matter how vain or stupid, that we may not witness to. No risk however costly or imprudent that we may not undertake.

That is the Gospel. That is what it means to follow Jesus. That is what it means to leave father and mother, sister and brother to follow the one who has redeemed our lives to God. That is what it means to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. ~ Deon K. Johnson, Rector, St. Paul's, Brighton, MI

Heaven

Some interesting (I think) thoughts and perspective from Fr. Richard Rohr, OSB. Worth spending your time pondering in these seasons of Christmas and Epiphany. Pax. —Fr. Kevin

The purifying goal of mysticism and contemplative prayer is nothing less than divine union—union with what is, with the moment, with yourself, with the divine, which means with everything. Healing, growth, and happiness are admittedly wonderful byproducts of prayer, but they must not be our primary concern. The goal must be kept simple and clear—love of God and neighbor, union with God and neighbor. Our common word for this state of union is heaven. Wherever there is union, there is a little bit of heaven.

*Much of common religion is well-disguised self-interest—high premium fire insurance for the afterlife—instead of self-emptying love. Most of the official Catholic liturgical prayers ask in some form, “That I or we might go to heaven.” (This is not a guess. I have counted!) Is there no other priority than my personal salvation? If it is true that *lex orandi est lex credendi*, “the way you pray is the way you believe,” then it is no wonder Christians have such a poor record of caring for the suffering of the world and for the planet itself, and the Church has fully participated in so many wars and injustices. We have been allowed to pray in a rather self-centered way, and that fouled the Christian agenda, in my opinion.*

Jesus talked much more about how to live on earth now than about how to get to heaven later. Show me where Jesus healed people for the next world. He healed their present entrapment and suffering in their bodies, not just their souls. But many Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, pushed the goal into the future, making religion into a petty reward/punishment system inside a frame of retributive justice. (The major prophets—and Jesus himself—teach restorative justice instead.)

Once Christianity became a simplistic win/lose morality contest, we lost most of the practical, transformative power of the Gospel for the individual and for society. I cannot state this strongly enough.

Objectively, we cannot be separate from God; we all walk in the Garden whether we know it or not. The branch that imagines itself to be separate from the Vine (John 15:1-8), acts as if it is separate from God. We call the result sin, but the real sin is the imagined state of separation. It is our own delusion and decision!

We came from God and we will return to God. Everything in-between is a school toward conscious loving. As theologian Charles Williams (1886-1945) said, the “master idea” of Christianity is co-inherence. “You already know the Spirit of Truth; the Spirit is with you and in you!” (John 14:17). God is your deepest desiring. But it takes a long time to allow, believe, trust, and enjoy such a wonderful possibility. We move toward union by desiring union. We move into heaven by desiring heaven now. So just pray for the desire to desire union. Then the actions will take care of themselves.



Activities

Juliet and John to be Married

December 31, 9:30AM at Holy Eucharist

Come join us Sunday, December 31 at 9:30AM to celebrate the marriage of John and Juliet during our Holy Eucharist service.

MLK Day of Service

January 15, 9:00AM

Joining up with national celebrations, this event honors the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. People of all walks of life come together across Tarrant County to serve at more than 30 service sites. This is an amazing event that you do not want to miss! Join us to make it a day on, not a day off. You will be so glad you did.

St. Albans will join with other parishes in the Diocese to participate. More information coming soon.

Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and Lent

February 13 and later

This is a reminder that we will begin the Lenten season on Shrove Tuesday, February 13th, in the middle of February.

2018 Pledge Cards

The 2018 Budget is being finalized. If you've been meaning to financially participate in the life and ministry of the parish, now is the time to get your pledge card to Dave so that it can be included in the budget. Drop your pledge card in the offering plate, mail it in, or hand it to Dave.

Men's Breakfast

January 27, 8:30AM @ Southern Recipes at 2715 N. Collins Street

Annual Meeting

January 28

The Annual Meeting will include Vestry and Convention Delegates elections as well as updates to the Budget. Come join us so that you can vote for your representatives and can keep apprised of the health of the church.

Valentines Hearts for Crow Teachers

February 14

Help us to celebrate the teachers of Crow Elementary this year by making Valentines hearts.

Be on the lookout for more information.

Thank You

Whew!!!

It's been a full couple of months at the Episcopal Church in Arlington: starting up this new format of the newsletter; the 70th Anniversary Celebration replete with confirmations / receptions and Bp. Mayer's visit; the Annual Musical Fundraiser; the Crow Holiday Market; the Christmas Parade; and Christmas Eve. So many thanks to so many people who gave 110%. Our church is an amazing place full of amazing people who are committed to letting the community know about this wonderful gift that is St. Alban's. There is no hiding our light under any bushels here. Nor should there be. Lots of churches say "All are welcome." The Episcopal Church in Arlington is one of the few churches that actually practices welcoming all, as they are.

I remain convinced that Arlington, Mansfield, and Grand Prairie are full of people who are looking for a church in which they are truly welcome and valued how they are. As individuals in our society become more and more isolated, more and more they yearn for connection. But, they don't want to be connected with groups that want to "fix" or changed them. They want to be valued, appreciated, and loved for who they are. Kind of like Jesus did. This is our particular charism, our gift of the Holy Spirit.

Every time we invite people in to celebrate an anniversary, to see a show, to join in the parade, to shop at a Holiday Market, to celebrate Christmas with us, to connect with us through the newsletter, Facebook, and website is one more way of connecting with someone out there who is searching to be accepted, valued, and loved. Thank you for not hiding your light under a bushel. Thank you for doing the work of the good steward. Thank you for practicing "All are Welcome."

Peace,
—Fr. Kevin

New Beginnings

by Jennifer Toy

Each New Year brings a chance to reflect on your situation in life, set goals for the upcoming year and work at resolutions like losing weight or smoking less. The changeover also brings the chance to reflect on the situation in your spiritual life. Are you feeling disconnected? Lost? Stuck in a rut? You can find ways of addressing those things.

Spiritual life is pretty much an ongoing adventure. There are lots of exercises that you can explore that will bring your spiritual life into active engagement with your daily life. Some of the exercises are formal such as Sunday services or taking the Eucharist. Some of the exercises use church language such as praying the daily office or singing hymns straight out of the Hymnal. There are plenty of informal exercises as well like walking in nature or managing church technology that don't use church language and that feel more practical.

We recently held a class on personalities and prayer that was designed to give people a better idea on finding daily practices that fit their personalities. You don't, however, have to only look or try exercises that you think will fit your personality. Engagement in church life, for example, is not limited to services or Sunday school. Engage with something that you love doing. If you love to knit, then knit for the church who provides knit items to people that need them. If you love programming, then get involved in managing the church website. The point is that your spirituality adventure is about finding the place where your gifts and joys meet the world's deepest need.

In case you need some additional encouragement, here are some questions to get you started:

- Is there something that I've wanted to do that I could offer to help the church with? For example, do I have experience in Media/Technology/Writing/Teaching?

Cont. on p. 5

*New Beginnings, cont.***Germinating Thoughts**

If any of the short sentences that follow appeals to you, place it in your heart and ponder on its inner meaning. This will cause the truth to germinate and grow.

Do not force it open with your mind. That would only kill the seed.

Sow it where the soil is rich. Sow it in your heart. Give it time.

"You do not have to change for God to love you."

"Be grateful for your sins. They are carriers of grace."

"Say goodbye to golden yesterdays - or your heart will never learn to love the present."

—Anthony de Mello, SJ

- Have I been wanting to increase my prayer/ meditation time because of busyness or decrease it because of discomfort? Maybe it's time for a change in practice and time to try something new. Write in a journal, sing songs, or go for a mindful walk.
- Is there some way that I see God outside of the ceremonies that I wish others knew? Write a letter for the newsletter or teach a class for the church.

Take a moment during this changeover to reflect on what you want your spiritual life to look like and to think of ways that you can create that life. God will just appreciate you finding more ways to connect. If you need assistance with ideas, feel free to email Fr. Kevin at: kevin.saintalbans.episcopal@gmail.com so we can give you some ideas to help get you started on another part of your journey.

From the Vestry

Jeri Jarzabski, Vestry Liaison for Outreach



"You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity" 2 Corinthians 9:11

From the beginning St. Albans has been active in community outreach. Did you know that 10% of the yearly pledge is dedicated to our Outreach Programs? In addition to the monetary contributions for our various projects, we put a lot of boots on the ground. Whether officially planned out through the Outreach budget or put together over coffee and donuts, we had something in the works almost every month. These are a few of our efforts.

Partnering with 3 other saintly congregations, we opened the 4 Saints Food Pantry. The facility, located at St Luke's in the Meadow, is available for residents in east Fort Worth.

Rise Against Hunger - Joining with others in the diocese we packaged 2000 meals

Crow Christmas Store - We set up a "store" at the elementary school. We provided 800 homemade/semi-homemade gifts for the children of Crow Elementary to purchase for their parents.

Arlington Life Shelter - 4 times a year the Food Team cooked and served dinner to 80 people in transitional housing.

God has blessed us with a generous spirit. Let us make 2018 another terrific year for all things giving.

Crow Holiday Market Update

Market Day is over and many happy children, volunteers, and teachers are celebrating the joy of giving. Thanks to so many people, we had enough gifts, enough helpers, and more than enough fun! The kids were so excited, and the teachers, staff, and Crow volunteers (who are parents and grandparents) were so appreciative.

The kids chose to "spend" their unused Crow Credit by giving the balance on the credit cards to Charity, Savings, or Tips for Volunteers. They were generous with their choices. St. Alban's will "match" their Charity donations with real money (close to \$800), donating the balance of our designated Outreach budget for this event to be used for a February meal packing event at Crow for "Feed My Starving Children" <https://www.fmssc.org/>. We will have another chance to work with Crow families when we are invited to help at that event.



Come See Us

*Services are held @ Theatre
Arlington on Sunday
mornings at 9:30am at
305 W Main St, Arlington,
TX 76010*

Dark Night of the Soul

By Jennifer Toy

Winter brings with it a whole host of changes in the environment that can change how we think about our lives: dark mornings, dark nights arriving earlier, cold, rain or snow, and a general sense of wanting to stay indoors and cuddle in front of a fireplace. For some, the body slows down and the mental health can begin to take a dive. In some instances, the mind and spirit can dive into a Dark Night of the Soul without us realizing it.

The Dark Night of the Soul is essentially a spiritual crisis that can be accompanied by depression or existential questioning. What is the purpose of my life? Does God really exist? Why does anything matter? The Dark Night of the Soul can be brought about by the movement into the winter time, by tragic events like the death of a loved one or by a general sense of malaise and dissatisfaction with life. Unlike depression, the Dark Night is specifically a spiritual crisis and is in fact a developmental stage in the journey of our spirituality. It's not an end result of anything, but is a temporary way station meant to get you to the next level of intimacy with God. The deeper questions that you ask are the pathway that leads you to that greater intimacy.

There is no way around the fact that the Dark Night of the Soul is called dark for a reason. It feels terrible and disconnected. But in all that terrible feeling, spending the time to ask why *cont. on p. 7*

Dark Night, cont.

you feel terrible can lead to revelations about yourself and about your place in the universe. These answers to your questions can be an indicator that God is with you as you go through the painful experience of a Dark Night. Most of the time we tend to imagine that God is only in the good feelings that we have when we go to church to perform ceremonies and hang around loved ones. We are reluctant to remember that God is in the bad feelings as much as the good and that the soul grows during the Dark Night specifically because God is bringing us closer. God is in our Dark Night coaxing us into God's arms.



While the Dark Night feels terrible, there is hope. The hope for us is that our experience and feelings are mirrored in the experience and feelings of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was alone, depressed and abandoned by his friends. He didn't want to deal with the sense that he had about his own impending doom. He wasn't happy about dying or being betrayed or abandoned anymore than we would be happy in our own Dark Night. He felt the same absolute loneliness in his Dark Night that we feel in ours. On the surface, him dying made no sense, but Jesus knew that God didn't stop functioning just because he was feeling terrible. We know that God gave Jesus' death the ultimate purpose in life, which we celebrate season after season and have for millennia. We have joy because Jesus had a Dark Night of the

Soul. The ultimate lesson for us is this: You never, ever know what God may be doing for you behind the scenes as you walk through your own Dark Night, and you never know what joy or purpose God may bring to your life.

If you think you are in a Dark Night, please do feel free to reach out and email Fr. Kevin at kevin.saintalbans.episcopal@gmail.com. There are people who have gone through the experience who can help you as you travel through yours. You might feel loneliness in the journey, but you do not have to do the journey alone. Fr. Kevin can help you go through the process by putting you in touch with spiritual directors who understand the experience and can help you maintain hope in the experience.



Events

Arlington Holiday Parade



Parishioners participate in the Arlington Holiday parade by entering their own float.

Crow Holiday Market

