

St. Alban's Episcopal Church The word

May 2019 Volume 18, Issue 4

From the Rector

Fr. Greg Syler, a classmate of mine from seminary, is one of those priests who has the energy to serve not one, but TWO! parishes, and he also finds time to blog at the Episcopal Church Foundation's "Vital Practices for Leading Congregations" website.

The parishes Fr. Greg serves have begun the process of merging due to, as he put it, "rising costs and increasing demands on organizational leadership." Fr. Greg recently published an article describing the process that the parishes are currently undergoing to merge in a way that enables both parishes to maintain their identity and their unique histories. In his article, he talked about the fact that many of our parishes were founded in the "Golden Age" of the church – the 1950's and early 1960's when attending church was the norm for families, Youth Groups were burgeoning, and Sunday Schools were standing room only. Running a church then, and running a church now, is a resource-intensive effort, requiring paid staff as well as innumerable hours of labor, effort and good-will from volunteers. But one line in Fr. Greg's blog caught my eye: "*if we wanted to quite literally re-create the church of yesterday, we'd need at least three times as many people and twice as much financial investment as they had back then.*"¹

Fr. Greg's experience, and the process his two parishes are undergoing, speak to the reality of the Church today: many churches are struggling with dwindling attendance and dwindling funds. Dwindling resources usually means that a church is in "survival mode," struggling to just stay open. Unfortunately, a struggling church is probably not engaging in mission, and mission is one of the cornerstones of the Christian Church, along with worship and discipleship. As Swiss theologian Emil Brunner wrote, "*The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church....*"²

We at St. Alban's are so richly blessed. We are a spirit-filled congregation, engaged in mission and outreach, but there are red flags. Our 2018 Parochial Report (a report to the National Church on our financial status and membership and service attendance statistics) shows a gradual, downward trend in our average Sunday attendance and participation in Christian education opportunities. That statistic is not too alarming, as I earnestly believe that if everyone who considers themselves to be a "member" of St. Alban's came to church on the same Sunday, there would be standing room only. I dream of that day.

As Fr. Greg knows, sometimes churches need to change, and change radically, to remain viable and active. How can we maintain, or even better, grow our church attendance? How can we encourage children, youth and adults of the importance of Christian Education – learning about our faith? Does our Sunday School program work as it currently exists? Does our programming and worship need to change to accommodate a culture that has changed and continues to change? Most importantly, are we helping people become disciples of Jesus through meaningful worship, education and outreach opportunities? I have more questions than answers. In fact, an entire industry has built up around trying to answer those questions. We are a thriving congregation, but are we growing? Does St. Alban's need to change? And if so, how?

I would love to hear your thoughts and your ideas around these questions.

-Fr. Jeff



Our clergy on Easter Day, April 21: Deacon Gaelyn, Fr. Jeff, Fr. Paul, Deacon Theresa and Seminarian Larry.

¹. <https://www.ecfvp.org/blogs/3675/why-merge>, The Rev. Greg Syler, April 2019.

² "The Word and the World." The Word and the World, by Emil Brunner, American Theological Library Association, 1965, p. 108.

From the Associate Rector

One of the best things I learned in seminary was the power of participating in a habit of regular daily prayer. I know, it sounds strange – that a person preparing to be ordained a priest would need seminary to teach them how to pray daily.

I've always struggled with certain kinds of discipline – keeping good habits up every day is a perpetual struggle. It's too easy for me to say, "eh, I'll do it later...or tomorrow." As I've gotten older, though, it's clear to me how essential good habits are to a full and happy life. We really are the product of our habits.

The seminary offered various daily services, but morning prayer is what worked for me – it became a cherished part of my routine. And for me an important component of making it work was the very fact that it was corporate – it would be too easy for me to wriggle out of it if I had no accountability.

At first, for me, the experience of attending daily worship was a bit jarring. I mean, what a bummer, I thought: the first thing we do in the morning is get down on our knees and admit our failings. Some days, the very first words out of my mouth in the morning were "we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed" – and it quickly put my life into perspective. What we're really doing when we confess our sins is saying, to God, "Help. I can't do this on my own."

Anne Lamott wrote a book a few years back called "Help, Thanks, Wow." It posits that the very essence of prayer can be summed up in these succinct expressions. In the confession of sin and in our petitions we admit to God that we are not complete on our own – that we need God's presence as well as that of our fellow Christians to support our growth in faith. Of course, much of worship is a matter of "thanks. When we worship God, when we pray the psalms, and often when we praise God in song, we are expressing the truth that all good things come from God. It's not God who needs reminding...it's us!

And when we see growth in our faith, and God's presence apparent in our lives – a byproduct of regular corporate worship and regular (dare I say DAILY?) prayer – it is definitely cause for "WOW."

I invite you this Eastertide to consider a practice of daily prayer, regular (dare I say WEEKLY?) attendance at corporate worship, and intentional engagement with Christian formation and education – with an eye towards growing deeper in your faith, becoming a more devoted disciple of our Lord.

Perhaps you or your family have not made attendance at Sunday School or weekly worship a priority. Maybe now might be a good time to start? I think you may be surprised at the fruit you see it bear in your life. I know I was and continue to be. Engaging in discipleship as a follower of Jesus is a daily task – and it requires commitment.

And I'll be honest here too: it's not a straight line toward the goal. Some seasons in life wear us down a bit; sometimes it feels like a step forward, then a step back. But it is worth the effort.

"Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to him from generation to generation in the church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever." (Ephesians 3:20)-Fr. Paul

The Warden's Pen

Spring has sprung!

You may have noticed that part of the playground is out of commission. We are replacing a cracked slide, but keep running into some problems. First a part was missing and then the wrong part was sent. Here's hoping that all will be finished before the next Word. Many thanks to **Carlos** who keeps chasing this down and will replace the slide when all the correct parts have arrived.

I hope most of you were able to attend the conversation with Neal Rosenberry, our kitchen designer. We have listened and heard your concerns (See **Betsy Anderson's** article on page 9) and are working to address them. The kitchen committee began meeting in 2015 and has worked very hard with the limitations we faced, Fairfax County code, existing electrical and plumbing problems, and square footage being the biggest. The new kitchen will belong to ALL of St. Alban's, both now and for a future generation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns as we move forward.

The feasibility study will have just begun as you receive this. Please participate in any way you are asked. It is important that we receive honest responses in order to figure out what the next steps will be.

At the last Vestry meeting, your Vestry was presented with our Parochial Report. This is a "snapshot" of what our parish looks like that we send to the Diocese of Virginia. Attendance is down. This is happening with churches around the world, but could I ask you a favor? Ask a friend to attend a service. "Check-in" on Facebook. Bring a friend to one of our concerts, fundraisers or other events. I thank you.

-Nancy Harrell, Senior Warden

Stewardship



The April Word, as well as this May Word edition, has several timely and informative articles on the status of and vision for our proposed kitchen renovation. I don't intend to repeat what the various contributors have to say, but I was particularly struck by a key line from **Jim Kilby's** lead article— "*...we are stewards of our property, stewards of our mission....*" It is fair to say that as often as we talk about the importance of stewardship as a key Christian discipline, we generally do so by focusing what we as parishioners should consider as we give to the church in terms of our time, talent, and treasure. Rarely do we talk about stewardship of church property or how we use our church property to further the mission and ministries we take on as we "*go now into the world*" and do the work Christ has given us to do.

So let's focus for a moment on what Jim has written. We have tangible real property that has been given and entrusted to us by virtue of gifts given by parishioners of our church—including those of us who presently occupy pews as well as many, many more who came before us. We can and should maintain this property as a very first step in attracting people from the community to join our church and experience a meaningful worship experience. Our buildings and grounds are extremely important as a means of outreach. Just as important, our buildings and grounds should be managed in way that supports the key ministries we have embraced. If those ministries include serving needy families and individuals in our neighborhood, then we have an obligation to make sure that our church property enhances and facilitates those ministries.

As you prayerfully consider the Vestry's recommendation to substantially remodel our kitchen, do so with Jim's stewardship message foremost in mind.

-Ron Vogel

WHAT WE DO WITH WHAT WE GIVE: Holy Trinity School



Part of the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, Holy Trinity School (HTS) is a historic elementary and secondary school located in downtown Port-au-Prince. We pray for them every Sunday and send an annual donation, thanks to the generosity of our parishioners with their pledges and Vestry and Budget Committee approval of the Outreach Committee annual budget.

According to Episcopal Relief and Development, four out of five Haitians live below the poverty line and over half in extreme poverty. Additionally, natural disasters, such as the massively destructive January 2010 earthquake, make obtaining healthy livelihoods extremely difficult for many communities. With 80 percent of its population living in poverty, Haiti is one of the most economically challenged countries in the world. If that were not enough, Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti as a Category 4 storm on October 4, 2016. The hurricane caused extensive flooding, mudslides, power outages and water shortages which led to the spread of cholera through contaminated water. Over one million people were affected, as well as HTS.

The most recent news we have of the school is from an Episcopal nun, a family friend of **Ginger Caress**. Sr. Sarah visited recently and reported that the school has been mostly rebuilt after the hurricane demolished the buildings. The HTS Director is Père Rigal Lucas (according to Sr. Sarah, he is a lawyer by training, honest, humble and "poor as a church mouse"). He says the greatest need currently is for scholarship funds for the students whose parents have been hit hard by the economic crisis down there (astronomical inflation in the last six months). If you would like to make a contribution to the scholarship fund, please send a check made out to St. Alban's, with "Holy Trinity School" in the memo line. For more information, please contact **Moira Skinner**.

-Moira Skinner



Easter Day April 21



The Great Vigil of Easter, April 20



Easter Egg Hunt



Palm Sunday April 14



Children's Service

Sunday school students learn about the history, symbols and foods of Passover and had a Holy Eucharist at a special program by **Donna Archer** and **Fr. Paul** on Palm Sunday.

Palm Sunday April 14





CHOIR NOTES



Virgil Thomson

May 5. Returning from our post-Easter break we will follow tradition and sing *This Joyful Eastertide*, a harmonization by Charles Wood (1866-1926) of a Dutch tune published in 1685. It appears in our Hymnal as No. 192, with a text by the Anglican priest, George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848-1934). Charles Wood was born in County Armagh, Northern Ireland and studied with noted composers Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry at the Royal College of Music (RCM) in London. Later, as a Professor at the RCM and Cambridge, Wood taught Ralph Vaughan Williams (see below) and Herbert Howells. Although best-known for his sacred music, he wrote eight string quartets, co-edited (with Woodward) three books of carols and founded the Irish Folk Song Society.

May 12. One of the great musical settings of Psalm 23 is the arrangement by the American composer Virgil Thomson (1896-1989) of *My Shepherd Will Supply My Need*. The text was penned by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), who as noted last month is regarded as the father of English hymnody. The tune arranged by Thomson is an American composition of unknown provenance. It first appeared in print in an 1828 collection of hymns, and in a form more familiar to us it was included in the 1854-55 *Southern Harmony* collection. Thomson studied music at Harvard and, like Aaron Copland and many other of his American contemporaries, in Paris with the revered composition teacher Nadia Boulanger, whose students addressed her simply as “Mademoiselle.” Thomson composed in almost every genre, including film scores, one of which (*Louisiana Story*) won the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1949. He was also an influential music critic.

May 19. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) composed or arranged many of our Hymnal tunes, some of which came from English folk traditions. He also wrote nine symphonies and numerous other works in various genres. RVW was born in the Gloucestershire village of Down Ampney, where his father was vicar of the Church of All Saints. He studied with Sir Hubert Parry at the Royal College of Music, earned degrees in both music and history from Cambridge University, and later studied with Sir Charles Villiers Stanford and Max Bruch. We will be singing RVW’s anthem, *O Taste and See*, the text of which is from Psalm 34, verse 8. It was composed for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on June 2, 1953.

May 26. Healey Willan (1880-1968) was born in England but came to Canada in 1913 to head the Theory Department at the Toronto (now Royal) Conservatory of Music. He is often referred to as the dean of Canadian composers. Although he wrote more than 800 works in a variety of genres, he is best known as a composer of church music, including the *Missa de Sancta Maria Magdalena* (S-91, S-114, S-158, S-202 in our Hymnal), parts of which we have sung when using Rite I). From 1921 until his death, Willan served as organist and choirmaster at Toronto’s Church of St. Mary Magdalene, an Anglo-Catholic congregation, where he “waged constant war on mediocre church music.” Our anthem for today is Willan’s *Rise up, My Love, My Fair One*, the last of the *Three Motets in Honour of Our Lady*.
-Clarence Zuvekas

In Loving Memory: Kenneth Butler



Longtime parishioner **Ken Butler** died on March 29. Ken was preceded in death by his wife, **Quincy**.

A funeral service was for Ken was held at St. Alban’s on April 4.

Please keep the Butler family in your prayers.

Fire and Hurricane Victims Relief Concert May 4 1:00 to 5:00 pm

Please come and support the victim of fires and hurricanes. We look forward to your attendance and participation and hope to equal or surpass last year’s contribution.

Admission by donation; food and drink available for purchase.
-Delores Baisden



Capital Campaign Update:



John Wasaff, Consultant

Please join the Vestry and the Capital Campaign Steering Committee in welcoming Mr. John Wasaff to St. Alban's as our on-site Feasibility Study Consultant.

John is an Executive Director at CCS Fundraising. He earned a MBA from Carnegie Mellon and a BS in Electrical Engineering from UVA. His passion for philanthropy began while volunteering for the Washington Jesuit Academy (WJA) where he witnessed the power of philanthropic organizations to improve lives and communities and where he helped build an auxiliary board for young professionals to serve WJA. Prior to joining CCS Fundraising, he was a Senior Product Manager for Cisco Systems, where he used his skills in analytics and modeling to increase the incremental revenue for his business unit by \$60M.

John will officially begin at St. Alban's on April 29 and will join **Tammy, Fr. Jeff, Fr. Paul** and the rest of the staff. In early May, some St. Alban's members will receive letters inviting them to participate in one-on-one confidential interviews with John concerning the direction and mission of St. Alban's and to share their opinions regarding the kitchen renovation project. The remaining members will be invited to complete an electronic survey containing similar questions. Please consider participating in the interview process and the electronic survey as your responses will directly impact the validity and accuracy of the Feasibility Study assessment for St. Alban's. If you have questions or strongly desire to participate in the interview process, please contact me at hokiebc1988@gmail.com.
-God Bless, Bill Calvert

A Parish Meeting on Kitchen Progress April 7

Following lunch on April 7, parishioners heard more details from the architectural firm and the kitchen committee shown below: Neal Roseberry (architect), **Delores Baisden, Kate Wettstein, Betsy Anderson, Rick Weinberg, Nancy Harrell, Fr. Jeff** and **Linda Cummings** (not present were **Fr. Paul, April Kreller** and **Benny Robles**) about the proposed kitchen design and the constraints of country code and limitations of space that drove the proposed design.



Parish Clean Up Day April 6. Getting spruced up for Easter.



A Kitchen at the Heart of St. Alban's Mission



On Palm Sunday, **Fr. Paul** asked us: Where are we this Holy Week? Are we content just to worship, to allow ourselves to be caught up in the beauty of recognizing Jesus as Lord? Or will we allow ourselves to be challenged and do what it takes to *follow* Jesus?

We have embraced the vision of St. Alban's as a welcoming place for serving the least among us, with hot meals and facilities that can help ease the burden of poverty and homelessness in our community, while offering a place to prepare for the joy and celebration of parish events that bind us together as a community in the life of Christ.

We were delighted that so many parishioners attended the lunch and discussion of the proposed kitchen design on April 7 (pictures page 8). Your questions and comments showed that you had taken the time to study the design and think about where we are being led.

Neal Roseberry, principal architect from Lemay Erickson Willcox (LEW), with over 30 years' experience in church design and renovation, laid out the principles and limitations behind the design:

- The physical plant of a church needs to be reviewed generationally. An inadequate physical plant will become a drain on the ministry of a church.
- Kitchens and toilets are the most expensive to renovate, and the kitchen requires the most purposeful design. The current kitchen is not designed around work zones. The redesign is led by placement of large equipment and storage.
- LEW, with the help of a kitchen design firm, prepared six layouts for the committee to review, and refined several to get to the current design.
- The support column and an abundance of windows detract from the efficiency of the current kitchen. Commercial-style kitchens typically do not have windows because they take up valuable storage space. Good lighting will be added to compensate for lost windows.
- There are serious plumbing problems preventing use of the dishwasher, and a complete gutting of the kitchen floor is required, contributing significantly to the cost.
- The cost of construction, if delayed, will only go up.

A lively discussion followed, and below is a brief summary of the responses to the main issues raised. For additional questions and answers, see the Kitchen page on St. Alban's website, coming soon!

Doors: Several parishioners worried that there is no direct exit from the kitchen to the outside. The current double window at the back of the parish hall will become a double door, for bringing in supplies and removing trash.

Fire: The design meets County codes. A fire suppression system and range hood mitigate the risk of fire. Only one egress is required.

Windows: Some people suggested placing windows above the scullery sink and to the left of the range. Both are possible, and the committee will take up this idea in the next stage of the design.

Loss of Pass-through Window: The window can allow disruptive kitchen noise to interrupt events in the parish hall. The committee recognized that the window is useful during the bazaar, but is not used at any other time, and so sacrificed it to the efficiency of the overall design.

Restrooms and Bump Out: The bump out is the maximum size allowed before triggering a requirement for a site plan that would add time and cost to the project. The design and size of the restrooms are dictated by accessibility standards.

More questions or comments? Please email betsy.anderson@me.com, or contact any other member of the Kitchen Committee: **Nancy Harrell, Rick Weinberg, Linda Cummings, Delores Baisden, April Kreller, Benny Robles, Kate Wettstein, Fr. Jeff or Fr. Paul .**

--Betsy Anderson



Baptism of Melanie Rose Allison Espinoza April 20

Melanie Rose was baptized by **Fr. Paul** at St. Alban's on April 20, at the moving candlelight service of the Great Vigil of Easter, **Deacon Theresa** assisted.

Melanie is the daughter of **David Allison** and **Erika Espinoza**, the sister of big brothers **Jordan** and **Edwin** and the granddaughter of **Gail Allison**. David and his mother Gail are longtime St. Alban's parishioners. Melanie's sponsors are Wendy Espinoza, Wilber Carranza and Alisha Morgan. The entire baptism was done by candlelight in conjunction with the service of the Great Vigil of Easter. Congratulations to our newest little Christian Melanie, baptized just in time for a glorious Easter Day, April 21.



A Trip to the Holy Lands Nine pilgrims went with **Fr. Paul** to the Holy Lands in March. We look forward to hearing their stories. Shown in photo below are: **Mary Trice**, **Mary Strain** (sister of David Wildes), **David Wildes**, **Mary Daymont**, **Joan & Remy Jurenas**, **Fran Walinsky**, **Donna Archer**, **Salome Metzger** & **Fr. Paul**.



From the Deacon

Response and Recovery

On May 4, through the coordination of **Harry Baisden**, St. Alban's will hold the second music fundraiser for Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD). The funds raised that day will support ERD's response to natural disasters in the US, including the recent floods in Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota and the wildfires in California.

The mission statement for ERD says that it "is the compassionate response of **The Episcopal Church** to human suffering in the world. Hearing God's call to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being, ERD serves to bring together the generosity of Episcopalians and others with the needs of the world."

The agency was founded by the Episcopal Church in 1940 to respond to the needs of refugees fleeing Europe during World War II. After the war, ERD turned its attention to humanitarian aid and disaster relief. Over the last 75 years, the agency has responded to earthquakes, a tsunami, hurricanes, famine and the need for malaria prevention. Its sustainable development work has evolved to focus on gifts and talents within communities.

US disaster response includes providing funding and working with FEMA and voluntary organizations within communities to assist with recovery over the long-term. ERD also recruits and supports volunteers who help with rebuilding.

ERD plays an important role in disaster preparedness for parishes across the country. Through their Preparedness Initiative, the agency provides access to financial, technical and education assistance to Dioceses and clergy to enable them to identify and reduce risks to parishes. The Episcopal Church Asset Map project allows parishes to share information.

Whether you contribute your talent, time or treasure to the concert, your gift assists our brothers and sisters devastated by the 2017, 2018 and 2019 natural disasters.

-Deacon Theresa

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Articles/photos welcome!
Submit by May 15
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May Birthdays



Carlos Guzman	1
Mel Daymont	3
Audrey Spencer	3
Sam Jillson	4
Ethan Krafft	4
Karen Smith	4
Joan Jurenas	5
Mariana Hershner	6
David Spencer	6
Julian Devereux	7
Rick Weinberg	7
William Peck	9
Bryan Campbell	10
Alec Albergottie	11
Emma Cheek	12
Brenda Nakato	12
Queenie Foard	13
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Joann Phillips	23
Steve Peck	25
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Carolyn Krafft	27
Fritz Gilbert	28
Rose Broberg	30
George Irish	30
Virginia Shea	30
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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL *Calling all volunteers!*



Ann Gates and **Melanie Jillson** are once again conspiring to create an original, fun and Bible-based week of outreach to our neighbors!

Whether you are a first-time volunteer, or are an old hand at this, we need your help and input to make this year's program a reality! For more information, contact Ann Gates, Melanie Jillson or **Fr. Paul**.

He is risen! Mark 16:6 Welcoming in a season of new birth and rebirth, and the promise of life in abundance.



Fay Froh puts base layer of flowers on the Easter cross with a little help from friends.



Clark (the Cat) Shankles on guard duty.

May Calendar Highlights

- May 3 **First Friday Lunch Bunch**
 Madigan's in Occoquan 11:30
 Contact the **Sares** to RSVP
- May 4 **Benefit Concert**
 for Hurricane and Flood Victims
 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm
- May 5 Trip to **National Cathedral**
 Contact **Debbie Rosse** to RSVP
- Youth Group** 4:00 to 5:30 pm
- May 19 **Youth Group** outing to Nats game

Sundays in May **Episcopal 101**
 9:15am Rm.11

Save the Dates!

2019 **Vacation Bible School**
 July 29-August 2

Parish Weekend at Shrine Mont
 September 27-29

Episcopal 101

What it means to be an Episcopalian and more!
 9:15 Room 11 Sundays in May:

- May 5 Introduction to Book of Common Prayer
- May 12 The Eucharist. Spiritual food and drink
- May 19 Scripture. What does it mean when we say "Holy Scripture is the Word or God, and contains all things necessary to salvation..."
- May 26 The Anglican Communion. One big happy family.