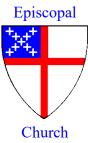
St. Alban's Episcopal Church 1308 Meadowbrook Drive Syracuse, NY 13224-1718 Website: stalbansyracuse.org Church email: stalbans.syr@gmail.com

The Rev. Julie E. Calhoun-Bryant, Rector

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Emmanuel Episcopal Church 400 W. Yates Street East Syracuse, NY 13057 Find the Sunday Service on Facebook facebook.com/emmanueleastsyracuse Email: emmanuel13057@gmail.com

The Rev. Julie E. Calhoun-Bryant, Priest-in-Charge

December 13, 2022

#### Dear Friends,

Last week I wrote about the limitations of time that God graciously placed on humankind. This week I want to speak about a limitation that God placed on Godself: we are created with free will. God has not programmed us to act and react in a certain way as situations present themselves. God gives us complete freedom to think and act for ourselves. Our brains can think critically and make complex decisions. We get to choose our priorities. We decide whether or not God dwells in the center of our being.

With freedom comes moral responsibility. That's the flip side of free will. We are free to choose good and we are free to choose evil. We can choose to help or to harm, to react in anger or decide to find another way. The two great commandments are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our hearts, minds, and souls will never be content until we choose to love God. You've heard the saying, "You can't put a square peg into a round hole," well we were created with a "God-shaped" hole in the very center of our being that only God can fill. The result of free will is that we often try to force something else to fit into that God-shaped hole, but it never satisfies the deep longing within us for our Creator.

God wants us to choose to love. When rejected by humankind God did not abandon us or destroy us. Instead God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son so that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) The second time the Son of God comes will be as judge of how we used our free will. Next weekend we will celebrate the first time the Son came, not in judgment, but in love. Christmas is known as the Feast of the Incarnation, which means that the Son of God was made human in Jesus. God has come and dwelt among us to call us to choose love of God and love of neighbor as the core purpose and meaning of our lives. Created in love, we are called to love in return - not forced, but called. God wants to be loved freely, not automatically, by us. Love is always a choice.

Over the years (and this past weekend) I've learned to ask myself the question, "Now that this (fill in the blank) has happened how would God want me to respond?" It reminds me that I have a decision to make and to make it thoughtfully based in what I believe about God. It helps reorient me when emotions are running high, and in that moment I can put God into the God-shaped hole.

The earliest name for Christianity was "The Way". We choose to follow Jesus on the Way that is lived deliberately and joyfully centered in loving God, our neighbor, and even our enemy, as we walk the road that leads to eternal life.

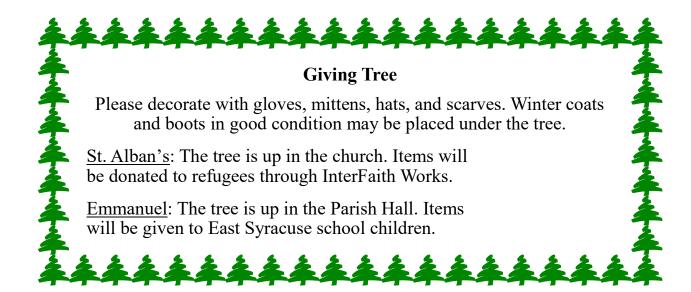
Wishing you a blessed Advent, Mother Julie+

# Attention!

Emmanuel's Christmas Eve service has moved to 4:30 p.m. to accommodate the organist's two church schedule.

## St. Alban's

Christmas Eve: 8:00 p.m., with Organ & St. Alban's Quartet Christmas Day: 10:00 a.m., with Organ & Carols



# Emmanuel's Christmas Movie and Pizza is after church on December 17.

Movie will be chosen on Saturday. Bring \$5 for pizza.

# St. Alban's Christmas Brunch is Sunday, December 18

Bring Christmas cookies to the party!





# ត្តករពិសាធិតិ នៅ ស្រឹក្សា ស្រីក្រីក្រី ស្រឹក្សា ស្រឹក្សា ស្រឹក្សា ស្រឹក្សា ស្រឹក្សា ស្រឹក្សា ស្រឹក្សា ស្រឹក្សា

The Joys of Christmas Concert

Thursday, December 22 at 7:00 p.m. Cocoa and Cookies to Follow

St. David's, DeWitt Coalition of the Arts

The program of music will feature the music of local composers, including some we know quite well. It will also provide the opportunity for some of our East Side Episcopalian friends to enjoy the music without having to miss out on their own Christmas services. Over the past year or so, we have been pondering how God might be calling us into new ministries, taking in to account the wonderful assembly of musicians we have at St. David's. We are imagining the St. David's Coalition of the Arts, a gathering of musicians with an outreach into our community. By high-lighting the work of local composers, this musical presentation will fit well with the emerging purpose of this coalition.

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# Greening of the Church: Volunteers Welcome! Emmanuel: Wednesday, Dec. 21 at 3:00 p.m. St. Alban's: Friday, Dec. 23 at 10:00 a.m.

### In Person Schedule: Both Parishes & Friends are Welcome!

Wednesday Emmanuel \*Bible Study: 2:00 p.m.

Saturday Emmanuel Coffee Hour: 4:15 p.m.

\*Worship: 5:00 p.m.

Sunday St. Alban's \*Bible Study: 8:30 a.m.

\*Worship: 9:30 a.m.

Coffee Hour: 10:30 a.m. \* also on Zoom

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Zoom Schedule & Codes: December 9-15** 

<u>Tuesday</u> Morning Prayer: 817 4372 7305 & 891158

10:00 a.m.

Wednesday Bible Study: 840 0349 8213 & 586548

2:00 p.m.

**Thursday** 6:00 p.m. Eat and Chat

Dec. 15 7:00 p.m. Rule of Life Monthly Meeting

**Saturday** 

5:00 p.m. Emmanuel's Holy Eucharist: **812 9701 3112 & 381729** 

Sunday

8:30 a.m. Bible Study: **835 9000 0245 & 562087** 

9:30 a.m. St. Alban's Holy Eucharist: **826 9515 6305 & 446765** 

<u>Use your telephone for Zoom</u> <u>Sunday at 9:30 a.m.</u> <u>Other Events</u>

Dial 1-646-558-8656

When prompted Enter 826 9515 6305# First number#

When prompted Enter #

When prompted Enter 446765# Second number#

That will put you in Zoom's waiting room.

## **Mother Julie's Schedule December 16-23**

<u>Saturday</u>	Sunday	Tuesday	Wednesday	<u>Thursday</u>	Monday & Friday
Emmanuel	St. Alban's	St. Alban's	Emmanuel	St. Alban's	Days off

4:00-8:30 pm 8:15-11:30 10:00-8:00 10:00-5:00 12-8 pm