

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Advent 4, Year A

Sunday, December 21, 2025



St. Alban's Episcopal Church
Simsbury, CT
Celebrate. Inspire. Serve.



Welcome to St. Alban's!

We're glad that you've chosen to be with us this morning! Your prayers and presence for today's worship are a gift to this community; and we invite you to journey with us at whatever point you find yourself on the path. We pray that you sense the love of Christ, the holy stirring of the Spirit, and God's presence here this morning.

Worshipping with children

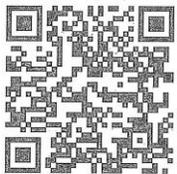
We invite you to visit our Playground in the rear balcony. Please feel free to bring books or an activity bag to your seats; or, sit in the balcony and allow your children to explore the space during worship. And please don't worry about wiggles, conversation, crying, laughing – all of it is welcome in this space and to the glory of God! If you need help finding the bathrooms, a changing table, or the water fountain, please ask an Usher.

Learning more about St. Alban's

We invite you to fill out one of the "Welcome" cards you can find on the table in the rear of the Sanctuary. This allows you to receive mailed materials from St. Alban's and our weekly e-news. You can also visit our website (stalbanssimsbury.org) or find us on Facebook.

Donating to St. Alban's

During our service today, Ushers will pass Offering plates. You are welcome to place cash or check donations directly into the plate. We also invite your donations through our website (stalbanssimsbury.org, click "Donate").



stalbanssimsbury.org/donate

You can find your way to that link with the QR code here and on the donation card in the Narthex.

If you need a gluten-free wafer at communion please let the priest know when you approach the altar for communion. You can also receive a blessing instead of bread by crossing your arms over your chest.

As you settle in to worship today, take the time and the moments of quiet you need to make the transition from getting here, to being here.

Our service comes from [Enriching Our Worship](#) and [The Book of Common Prayer \(BCP\)](#) and we make use of all hymnal resources approved by [The Episcopal Church](#). Everything you need to worship fully today can be found in the bulletin.

***A note about standing, kneeling, sitting rubrics**

One of the spaces that has received more attention during the pandemic is around ableism. Our society, in large part, functions as though everyone has nearly full use of their bodies. Where a "standing" rubric might have been added alone, we're adding "seated", as well, as an invitation for you to listen and respond to the needs of your own body. You are invited to remember that our bodies are created by God and intended for worship, just like our voices. However you feel comfortable doing that, God sees that it is good!

WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Because too many people are wandering in the wilderness, because too many people are sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, we light candles. Today we stop everything and light these candles: one for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love. May the light from these candles overwhelm the world. (Light the fourth candle.)

Let the light and the fire from these candles burn away everything that is preventing God's love from being born among us.

Friends, be not afraid, even now – even now - God's love is overwhelm the world!

HYMN *standing or seated.*

How bright appears the Morning Star

H82 497

1 How bright ap - pears the Morn - ing Star, with mer - cy beam - ing
 2 Though cir - cled by the hosts on high, he deigned to cast a
 3 Re - joice, ye heavens; thou earth, re - ply; with praise, ye sin - ners,

from a - far; the host of heaven re - joic - es;
 pit - ying eye up - on his help - less crea - ture;
 fill the sky, for this his In - car - na - tion.

O right - eous Branch, O Jes - se's Rod! Thou Son of Man and
 the whole cre - a - tion's Head and Lord, by high - est ser - a -
 In - car - nate God, put forth thy power, ride on, ride on, great

Son of God! We, too, will lift our voices:
 whom adored, assumed our very nature;
 Conqueror, till all know thy salvation.

Jesus, Jesus! Holy, holy, yet most lowly,
 Jesus, grant us, through thy merit, to inherit
 Amen, amen! Alleluia, alleluia!

draw thou near us; great Emmanuel, come and hear us.
 thy salvation; hear, O hear our supplication.
 Praise be given evermore, by earth and heaven.

THE OPENING ACCLAMATION

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.

THE COLLECT FOR PURITY

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid:
 Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly
 love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE GLORIA *all stand*

S280

1. Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and
 peace to his peo - ple on earth. 2. Lord God, heaven - ly

King, al - might - y God and Fa - ther, we wor - ship you, we
 give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. 3. Lord Je - sus
 Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, 4. you
 take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy
 on us; 5. you are seat - ed at the right hand of the Fa - ther: re -
 ceive our prayer. 6. For you a - lone are the Ho - ly One,
 you a - lone are the Lord, 7. you a - lone are the Most
 High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spi - rit, in the
 glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Please be seated.

READING: *Isaiah 7:10-17*

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. The LORD will bring on you and, on your people, and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 80:1-7, 16-18

Qui regis Israel

- 1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- 2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.
- 3 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 4 O LORD God of hosts, *
how long will you be angered
despite the prayers of your people?
- 5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; *
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
- 6 You have made us the derision of our neighbors, *
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- 7 Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- 16 Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, *
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.
- 17 And so will we never turn away from you; *
give us life, that we may call upon your Name.
- 18 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN *standing or seated.*

Come, thou long expected Jesus

H82 66

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo - ple free;
2 Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art:
3 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king,
4 By thine own e - ter - nal Spi - rit rule in all our hearts a - lone;

from our fears and sins re - lease us, let us find our rest in thee.
dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
born to reign in us for ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

THE GOSPEL: *Matthew 1:18-25*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of

the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

SERMON

The Rev. Joseph Pace

THE NICENE CREED

Standing or seated

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit**

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man.

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.**

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Intercessor

May our hearts leap for joy as we again assemble in prayer to await the Lord's coming. With Mary may our soul proclaim God's greatness as we say: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the church: As the celebration of your incarnation draws near, we remember the many ways your revelation is lifted up in the world. We pray for our sisters and brothers in Christ, praying as we do today. Wherever the church is found on the frontiers of mission and service, may your ministry be strengthened and our vision of ministry be stretched. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For this assembly: May we be enriched by our diversity and dedicated to preparing leadership for the future, acknowledging our present gifts, and remembering those who in the past birthed us into faith. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the young Marys and Josephs in our society, and for new-born children, especially those undernourished and without parental love and care: may all be given a home and an atmosphere of home-making. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For an end to violence, oppression and injustice: As you lead us, Lord, from darkness to light, make us children of the light. May we join with Mary's song that we may be among those who exalt the lowly and fill the hungry with good things, routing out the proud of heart and drawing courage from the power of your arm. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our own spirit: With Mary may our hearts be magnified, made much bigger than we imagine them to be. May the new breath of Advent stir in us such ardor that we extend our selves much more than we thought possible. May we like Mary set out across the barren county without fear, to visit the Elizabeths in our lives. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the sick, the elderly, and those who live alone: especially for Tim, Kathy, Amanda, Margi, Monica, Jeff, Jason, Julie, Cassandra, Maryann, Mike, Bob, Val, Jack, Julie and anyone we name now silently or *aloud*. (*At this time, we invite your intercessions and thanksgivings silently or out loud.*) Send upon them the power of the Holy Spirit, that they may abound in hope, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Celebrant continues

Lord, we gather up the prayers of this household, confident that as each day you transform darkness into light you know our deepest thoughts and will refresh our spirits. We pray in the name of the one who transforms principalities and powers and renews heaven and earth, Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE CONFESSION OF SIN

Standing, seated or kneeling

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

**Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name.
Amen.**

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The mission and ministry of St. Alban's depends on the financial and prayerful generosity and gifts of members of our congregation and community. We welcome your one-time or ongoing donation today. Please place cash or checks in the Offering Plate; or use the QR code on the inside cover of this bulletin, on the cards found in the rear of the Sanctuary, and in the Narthex to make an online donation. We are grateful that you've chosen to share your gifts with us today.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *instrumental*

PRAYER OVER THE PLEDGE CARDS

Gracious and loving God, giver of all that is good and true and beautiful and life-giving. These cards represent our sweat, they represent our lives, they represent our dreams. The pledges which we make on them are but tokens of the awesome gifts that have been given to us and they are pledged in thanksgiving for all we have received, for all we have been inspired to be, for all we are challenged to become, in this place.

May they be the first fruits of all we have and not what we have left over, so that we may live out as closely as possible how you give to us. May we see them as our offering to you, sacred, holy, yet earthy, filled with possibilities. May we hold this image in our hearts and minds so as we watch our offerings each week come to your table, we can see our very selves being part of this offering, it is us on the table, living sacrifices to you. **Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING: EUCHARISTIC PRAYER A

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. For you are the source of light and life; you made us in your image, and called us to new life in Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Celebrant and People

SANCTUS

S129

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and
might, hea - ven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est._____

The Celebrant continues

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Celebrant and People

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Celebrant continues

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ: By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.** And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

FRACTION ANTHEM

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

THE INVITATION

THE COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

Anyone of any age and tradition is invited to receive Holy Communion, and no one who comes to the altar with outstretched hands will be turned away. To receive a blessing instead of the sacrament, approach the altar and cross your arms over your chest.

To receive Holy Communion, you may stand or kneel at the altar rail; or stand in the space between the altar rails, in front of the altar. If you need the sacrament brought to you, please let someone know and we will be honored to bring it to you. If you need a gluten-free wafer, please let the priest know at the altar.

Remember, that communion "in one kind" (bread only) is a sufficient manifestation of the sacrament. If you'd like, you can simply hold the cup while the chalice bearer offers the words of reception, without drinking from the chalice.

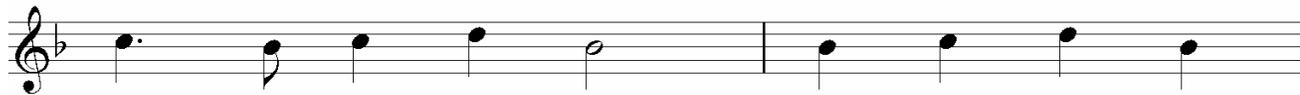
COMMUNION HYMN

Savior of the nations, come!

H82 54



1 Sa - vior of the na - tions, come! Vir - gin's
2 Won - drous birth! Oh, won - drous child of the
3 Thus on earth the Word ap - pears, grac - ing
4 Come, O Fa - ther's sav - ing Son, who o'er



Son, make here your home. Mar - vel now, both
Vir - gin un - de - filed! Might - y God and
his cre - a - ted spheres; hence to death and
sin the vic - tory won. Bound - less shall your



heaven and earth, that the Lord chose such a birth.
Ma - ry's son, ea - ger now his race to run!
hell de - scends, then the heaven - ly throne a - scends.
king - dom be; grant that we its glo - ries see.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Let us pray.

Celebrant and people

**Eternal God, heavenly Father,
you have graciously accepted us as living members
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,
and you have fed us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.
Send us now into the world in peace,**

and grant us strength and courage
to love and serve you
with gladness and singleness of heart;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE BLESSING

Celebrant

May the Lord Jesus Christ who walks on wounded feet walk with you to the end of the road. May the Lord Jesus Christ who loves with a wounded heart help you to love your neighbor and one another. May the Lord Jesus Christ who serves with wounded hands help you to serve each other and your neighbors. May you see the face of God on everyone you meet, and may the blessing of God Almighty, The Creator, The Redeemer and the Sustainer be with you this day and remain with you always. Amen.

HYMN *standing or seated*

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

H82 56



(Dec. 23) 1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som
(Dec. 17) 2 O come, thou Wis - dom from on high, who or - derest
(Dec. 18) 3 O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy
(Dec. 19) 4 O come, thou Branch of Jes - se's tree, free them from
(Dec. 20) 5 O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen
(Dec. 21) 6 O come, thou Day - spring from on high, and cheer us
(Dec. 22) 7 O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind in one the
(Dec. 23) 8 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som



1 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile
2 all things might - i - ly; to us the path of know - ledge
3 tribes on Si - nai's height in an - cient times didst give the
4 Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny that trust thy might - y power to
5 wide our heaven - ly home; make safe the way that leads on
6 by thy draw - ing nigh; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of
7 hearts of all man - kind; bid thou our sad di - vi - sions
8 cap - tive Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile



1 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
2 show, and teach us in her ways to go.
3 law, in cloud, and ma - jes - ty, and awe.
4 save, and give them vic - tory o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
5 high, and close the path to mis - er - y.
6 night, and death's dark shad - ow put to flight.
7 cease, and be thy - self our King of Peace.
8 here un - til the Son of God ap - pear.



THE DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

