

December 17th, 2023
at 7:30 pm

The Booklet

A Service of Reflection in the Advent Season

*Livestream the service at
www.facebook.com/saintalbans or*

*[www.youtube.com/channel/UCdwV9f
01mc4ymXD16YdNUBA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdwV9f01mc4ymXD16YdNUBA)*



ST ALBANS

Spirit-Led. Christ-Centred. Contemporary Urban Church

www.stalbanschurch.ca

Welcome to St Albans Church!

We welcome all people, no matter their age, ability, gender, cultural background, sexual orientation, income level or faith tradition to join us as we seek to deepen our relationship with God and each other.

Together we're exploring how we are called to serve in the world, right here in downtown Ottawa.

If this is your first time at St. Albans welcome! If you would like to be on our mail or email list, or have any other questions or requests, please feel free to place a written note on the offering plate when it is

circulated, speak to a fellow congregation member,

Michael our priest revmichael@stalbanschurch.ca or

send an email to our office office@stalbanschurch.ca

During the service, if you are a breastfeeding parent, you are welcome to breastfeed where you are seated or anywhere else in the church, as you feel comfortable.

About this booklet

This booklet is your guide to our worship. You're going to experience and participate in worship through music, prayer, readings, reflections and

silence. Every time it's your turn to say or do something, you'll see it here in this booklet (usually in bold). If there are surprises, or you have questions, ask a neighbour.

Participation

Our hope is that everyone gathered will feel able participate in our worship this morning. At various points in the service we may suggest certain postures. But please feel free to adopt whatever posture (standing, sitting, kneeling) is appropriate for you at any time. If you would like to do some sketching or writing during the service, you are most welcome – at the back of the church is our Art Cart, stocked with books and art supplies. The books are communal so please date your work, no need to sign it, but the Art Books will become over time an anthology of our collective experience.

Welcome

Land Acknowledgement

St. Albans gathers on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people. We remember the Indigenous peoples on whose land we are gathered, wherever we are. Our acknowledgement is also a statement of our commitment to the ongoing work of reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbours.

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow, a light has shone. For the yoke that was weighing upon them, and the burden upon their shoulders, you have broken in pieces, O God, our Redeemer.

Let us Pray

God of mercy,

hear our prayer in this Advent season for ourselves and for our families who live with painful thoughts and memories. We ask for strength for today, courage for tomorrow and peace for the past. We ask these things in the name of your Christ, who shares our life in joy and sorrow, death and new birth, despair and promise. Amen.

Lo, How A Rose Er Blooming | Traditional

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!

Of Jesse's lineage coming
As seers of old have sung.
It came, a blossom bright,
Amid the cold of winter
When half-spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The Rose I have in mind:
With Mary we behold it,
The tender mother kind.
To show God's love aright
She bore to us a Savior
When half-spent was the night.

This Flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,

Dispels with glorious splendor The darkness
everywhere.

True man, yet very God, From sin and death He
saves us

And share our every load.

The First Reading: Isaiah 40:1, 25-31

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help
to come?

**My help comes from the Lord, the maker of
heaven and earth.**

The Lord will not let your foot be moved and the
One who watches over you will not fall asleep.

**Behold, the One who keeps watch over Israel shall
neither slumber nor sleep.**

The Lord, the Lord, watches over you; the Lord is
your shade at your side,

**so that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the
moon by night.**

The Lord shall preserve you from all evil and shall
keep you safe.

The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth for evermore.

The Gospel: Matthew 11:28-30

A Liturgy of Remembrance - Lighting of Four Advent Candles

First Candle:

The first candle we light to remember those persons whom we have loved and lost. We pause to remember their name, their voice, their face, the memory that binds them to us in this season. We hold them before God, giving thanks for their lives in ours.

Please take a moment to remember those who have died. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

Lord, each of us takes our loved one by the hand and leads them to you, the God of love, Here we present them to you. Accept our love and thanksgiving as we entrust them to your loving

care. We want our loved ones to be free at home with you. We ask that you save a place for us beside them. We ask that you fill us with motivation and energy in the days ahead when we feel like giving up; remind us often of our true homeland when we are caught up in the desolation of the journey. Help us to find joy in the people, events and the beauty of nature which surrounds us.

Thank you for the gift each of these people has been in our lives. We want to believe that we will celebrate the treasure of love with them again, when we are all in your presence forever. May this truth sustain us in the days to come. Take our sad and aching hearts and comfort us. Comfort us, for we only feel hollowness and emptiness. God of sorrowing, draw near! Amen.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel | Traditional

O come, O come Emmanuel

And ransom captive Israel

That mourns in lonely exile here

Until the Son of God appear

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Second Candle:

The second candle we light is to redeem the pain of loss; the loss of relationships, the loss of jobs with the security they bring, the loss of health in ourselves or in family members, the loss of joy and peace in our lives from the stresses which surround us, the loss and loneliness we experience when our loved ones do not share our faith. As we gather up the pain of the past we offer it to you, O God, asking that into our open hands you will place the gift of peace.

Please take a moment to remember the losses. I invite you to name them, aloud or in the silence of your hearts....

God of mystery, we turn our hearts to you. We come before you in need of peace, grateful for the mystery of life and ever keenly aware of your promises of guidance and protection. We want to

place our trust in you, but our hearts grow fearful and anxious. We forget so easily that you will be with us in all that we experience. Teach us to be patient with the transformation of our lives and to be open to the changes which we are now going through. Amen.

O come, O key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O
Israel.

Third Candle:

The third candle we light for those who experience a loss of direction in their lives. God of the Exodus, you led Moses and your people through the wilderness to a new land. Hear our prayer. We want so much to have a sense of direction, to know where we are and where we ought to be headed. But the darkness and the questions stay. You ask us to be full of faith, to believe deep within that you are our signpost, that

you are our wisdom and our guide, and to trust in your presence. Your words to us are clear: “Do not fear, I go before you.”

God of our depths, we cry out to you to be our guide. Help us to have a strong sense of inner direction and grant that we may have the reassurance of knowing that we are on the right path. Take our lives and use them according to your will. Take all that is lost in us and bring it home with you. Amen.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here.

Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O
Israel.

Fourth Candle:

The fourth candle we light as a sign of hope, the hope that the Christmas story offers to us. We

remember that God, who shares our life, promises us a place and time of no more pain and suffering.

O God whose spirit is known by those whose hearts are thankful, and who makes cheerfulness a companion of strength, lift up our hearts, we pray, to a joyous confidence in your care. Guide us when we cannot see the way. Teach us to know that a shadow is only a shadow, because the light of eternal goodness shines behind the object of our fears. Where there is love in life, teach us to find it; help us to trust it and enable us to grow in the power of love. So may our lives bring comfort and encouragement to others. We ask it, in the name of Jesus Christ whose life is our light.

Amen.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of humankind;
O bid our bitter conflict cease,
And be for us our Prince of Peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Prayers of the People

In the spirit of this season let us now confidently ask our God for all the good things we need: For ourselves as we participate in this Christmas as special people coping with our many different losses. God, hear our prayer.

And in your mercy, answer.

For our families and friends, that they may continue to help and support us. God, hear our prayer.

And in your mercy, answer.

For any person we have loved who has died, for all the losses we know in our lives, that all may be redeemed by your Easter promise. God, hear our prayer.

And in your mercy, answer.

For our family and friends, that you may bless them with love, peace, and joy. God, hear our prayer.

And in your mercy, answer.

For peace throughout the world as proclaimed by the Christmas Angels on that faraway hillside. God, hear our prayer

And in your mercy, answer.

For greater understanding of the lessons of love and acceptance as taught by Jesus your Christ. God, hear our prayer.

And in your mercy, answer.

God of great compassion and love, listen to the prayers of these your people. Grant to all, especially the bereaved and troubled ones this Christmas, the blessing we ask in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray

A Liturgy for Missing Someone

I willingly carry this ache.

I carry it, O God, to you.

You created my heart for unbroken fellowship.

Yet the constraints of time and place,

and the stuttering rhythms of life in a fallen world dictate

that all fellowships in these days

will at times be broken or incomplete.
And so we find ourselves in this season,
bearing the sorrow of my separation from (*Speak the
name of the absent person or speak the name of
Jesus*).

I acknowledge, O Lord, that it is
a right and a good thing to miss deeply those whom
we love
but with whom we cannot be physically present.
Grant me, therefore, courage to love well even in
this time of absence.

Grant me courage to shrink neither from
the aches nor from the joys that love brings,
for each, willingly received, will accomplish
the good works you have appointed them to do.

Therefore I praise you even for my sadness,
knowing that the sorrows I steward in
this life will in time be redeemed.

Use even this sadness to carve out spaces
in our souls where still greater repositories

of holy affection might be held, unto the
end that we might better love,
in times of absence and in times of presence alike.

We now entrust all to your keeping.

May our reunion be joyous, whether in this life or in
the life to come.

How I look forward, O Lord, to the day
when all our fellowships will be restored, eternal and
unbroken.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

Christ our King, how I long for your return.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

Christ our Shepherd,
how I pine for your voice.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!

Christ our older brother, how I miss you.

Make haste, O Lord. Return to us! **Amen.**

In the Bleak Midwinter | Christina Rossetti

In the bleak midwinter frosty wind
made moan,

earth stood hard as iron, water like
a stone:

snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign: in the
bleak midwinter a stable place
sufficed
the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have
gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim thronged
the air,
but only his mother, in her maiden
bliss,
worshiped the Beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a
lamb,
if I were a wise man I would do my
part,
yet what I can I give him, give my
heart.

Lighting of Individual Candles

Each of us comes bearing our own hurts,
sorrows, broken places. I want to invite each of
you to offer your personal wound to the God
who loves each of us deeply and wants to carry
our pain. God waits patiently, gently calling out:
“Give me your pain, come to me... all who labor
and are heavy laden, I will refresh you!” I invite
each of you to come forward and light a
candle. As you light the candle, remember that it
is God who lights a candle in our darkness and
holds us close until we are able to shine.

Instrumental: In the Bright Sky by Andrea Dow

People place light candles on the altar

These lights in their brightness are only symbols, but as they burn and finally go out, we remember that suffering passes, though memory remains forever.

Closing

As we gather this evening, we embrace and claim the darkness that is present both in the world and in our own lives. As people who are familiar with the darkness, we also know that we gather to be illumined by the light of the Christ Child this Christmas season. May the Christ Child, born in a lowly stable, himself an outcast and marginal, bring light, comfort, peace, and joy this holiday season.

Abide with Me | Henry Francis Lyte

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows
flee
In life, in death, o Lord, abide with me
Abide with me, abide with me

May the hope of the Christ Child sustain us
through this darkness.

That together we may shine again. Amen.

*You are invited to join us at the back of the church
for refreshments or to remain in prayer today – if you
have any questions or concerns or comments about
the service, we want to hear from you
office@stalbanschurch.ca.*

St. Albans Staff

The Rev. Michael Garner

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Office Hours - on campus Déjà Vu 232B - 11am-1pm;
open for connecting Wednesdays 9am-12noon.

Available at other times by appointment.

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