

# THE STEEPLE

## The Church of the Nativity

December 8, 2011

*The mission of the Episcopal Church of the Nativity, as part of the family of God, is to proclaim and spread the word and work of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, by Eucharistic worship and by ministry to the world.*

### Advent Waiting: Walking in the Dark

*Excerpts from Andy Anderson's Advent 2 Homily*

In Advent, just as the days have a longer period of darkness, recent global events make the world seem relentlessly dark: fragile economies in Europe and at home, terrorism and world peace, global poverty; and a political climate that is ignoring the hard, tough choices needed to sustain life for all. The season of Advent we observe plays out against all of this; particularly against the backdrop of a materialist culture seducing us into affirming ourselves by what we buy or consume; that others will love us because of what we buy for them.

Advent responds by reminding us that a child is in the womb yet waiting to be born. This child first came into the midst of a world and time very much like our own 2000 years ago. And he wants to be born in our own time and day. His birth which dark Advent anticipates is a light in the darkness. The darkness cannot overcome this light. In Advent, even in the dark, we are people of hope. We yearn for and expect the light that has come into the world in the Child whose birth we will celebrate at Christmas.

But to get to that birth, we must pause and let John the Baptist do his work, listening to the words he hurls at us in the dark, "Prepare the way of the Lord. Make God's paths straight!" John wants to lead us out of the darkness of our lives and world. But John's message is hard. We'd prefer to hear about the wonderful baby to be born in a stable surrounded by animals. "But you are not ready for that story," John insists. The church won't let us get to the child in the manger without first dealing with this tough prophet. "Repent. Prepare the way of the Lord," he says. "Change your ways."

John the Baptist lets us know that before we can get to the God who meets us in the manger, we've got some work to do. Someone once said God may take us "Just as I am," but God never leaves us "just as we are." If we are going to grow in knowing God, we have some work to do. There are many things that get in the way of more and more people's knowing the kind of life God wants for all. It is not only the materialism that the culture around promotes, but our own self-absorption that keeps us from forgiving others and giving the most important things in our lives the time so badly needed. We are so busy. We don't know how to slow down and listen to the yearnings of our heart's desires; desires that are really God's desires for us. We are afraid of the darkness of our own lives, of our addictions or failures and loss, and so we become immobile, choosing not to move in the dark towards life.

In our nation there are obstacles to jobs, to education, to health care, to peace and safety and dignity that must be removed if we are serious about who this Babe of Bethlehem grew up to be. John the Baptist gets us ready for the new life God wants to give us and to give the world in Christ Jesus. But first, in our personal lives and in the world, there is some rearranging that needs to take place, some tearing down and some building up.

It is dark out there, and to walk in the dark, we need a level, straight road. To walk in the dark towards the light of Christ's presence, we must reassess our values, the allocation of our resources and even our hopes. The wonderful news of Christmas first comes with a challenge: the birth does not come without the birth pains. New life does not come without the cost of changing the old. Advent calls for us to move around the pieces of our lives so we can walk through the dark. It means giving God some time to grow in trust and grace.

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CHURCH  
OF THE  
NATIVITY,  
EPISCOPAL

*Est. 1843*

### WORSHIP SUNDAY:

7:45 a.m.

Holy Eucharist  
Rite I  
(Bibb Chapel)

8:45 a.m.\*

Holy Eucharist  
Rite II and  
Children's Chapel

11:00 a.m.\*

Holy Eucharist  
Rite II

Church School

10:00 a.m.\*

(\* Nursery available)

### THURSDAY:

6:00 p.m.

Holy Eucharist  
Rite II  
(Bibb Chapel)

## PARISH NEWS and EVENTS



### ADVENT OUTREACH COFFEE Sales continues

**December 11 and December 18**

Outreach will be selling "Nativity Blend" (regular and decaffeinated) for your holiday pleasure and gift-giving. The sale table will be located in Ridley Hall after each service. All proceeds will go to the Haiti Children's Lunch Program. Our gift will provide the village children with one nutritious hot lunch per week. Enjoy a cup of coffee! Make a child happy!

### Sunday, December 11th at 4:00 p.m.

You will not want to miss this special family event! We will gather in Ridley Hall at 4:00 p.m. for Hot Chocolate and then go in groups to carol to our Nativity friends. We will have the routes assigned with a choir member leading the way! ***Children have seen caroling on movies and now let them see how much fun it is!*** After caroling we will return to Ridley Hall for a dinner prepared by Sally Stockton. Reservations are required for dinner! \$7 for adult meal and \$5 for children. (no cost for caroling and hot chocolate, but you really do want to stay for dinner!)



Caroling and Dinner!

### Give the Gift of Hope by purchasing your Christmas Cards to support Sawyerville Day Camp Ministry

Give the gift of swimming, laughing, arts n' crafts, sports, singing and friendship this season! For every \$10 donation made to the Sawyerville Day Camp ministry this holiday season, a beautiful Christmas card will be sent to your friends and family sharing the good news of your gift! If you'd rather send the cards yourself, you can do that too! This is a perfect gift for your friends, family, co-workers, teachers and coaches. All you need to do is fill out the simple online order form and make a donation either online or by mailing a check. The card is covered with beautiful pictures of our Lower Campers' faces from their self-portraits they made at Session 1 this past summer! To order cards, make a donation to this project or read more about this ministry, visit the Sawyerville Day Camp website: [http://sawyervilleworkproject.org/Christmas\\_Effort.php](http://sawyervilleworkproject.org/Christmas_Effort.php). Please call (205) 715-2060 ext. 341 or email Leslie Manning, [lmanning@dioala.org](mailto:lmanning@dioala.org) <<mailto:lmanning@dioala.org>> questions!

### HELPING THE CHURCH RECOGNIZE OUR BISHOPS

There are several ways we can help recognize and honor our Bishops Henry Parsley and Kee Sloan in this period of transition. Ecclesiastical Gifts (i.e. church things!) are being made to recognize their leadership and Nativity would like to participate in these opportunities to honor both Bishops. Some of you may have already participated personally through some direct solicitations, but we want everyone in the parish to have the opportunity to participate. For Henry, we can help fund the frame for his official portrait given to the Diocese and his "purse." For Kee's installation as Diocesan Bishop, we can help fund his Episcopal Ring and Crozier, new vestments, his Discretionary Fund, and the Friday night Rehearsal Dinner for Kee and his family, the Presiding Bishop, and other dignitaries. If you haven't already participated in these opportunities, please consider. Make your tax deductible checks payable to The Church of the Nativity, noted BISHOPS' GIFTS.

### THE SOURCE Books and Gifts is open!

Please remember to shop first at your local book and gifts store on Nativity's premises. The Source is open after services each Sunday.

Regular Hours of Operation: Tuesday-Saturday, 10-6pm; Sunday, 9-3pm  
(Open later during peak traffic flow Twickenham Tours, Art Shows, etc.)

*"Our aim is to provide an alternative resource for enriching individual and communal spiritual formation in an inspiring environment based on the Christian tradition but open to resourcing the faith community at large."*

Owner and Operator Rev. Cheryl Blankenship gives a warm welcome to all who enter. We are so pleased to have The Source to continue offering a selection of books and items of interest.

## Seekers Class 2012 will begin Sunday, January 8, 10:00 (room to be determined)



Clergy and lay members of our parish will be leading these classes designed to include church history, our prayer book and hymnal, our worship practices and etiquette, (like when to kneel or bow or make the sign of the cross!) and our views about scripture and the sacraments. Classes will also describe the many varieties of ministry opportunities available in the parish. This class for those seeking membership with The Church of Nativity and for those who want to refresh or to learn more about the Episcopal Church.

The Rt. Rev'd Kee Sloan the Bishop of Alabama, will be with us on Sunday, June 10 2012, to celebrate Confirmation and to receive other new members.

Please let Linda Wheeler know you will be attending by pre-registering at [linda.wheeler@nativity-hsv.org](mailto:linda.wheeler@nativity-hsv.org) or by calling her at 256-533-2455.

## NATIVITY YOUTH WEBSITE, check it out to stay informed [www.nativityyouth.org](http://www.nativityyouth.org).



The school semester may be coming to an end, but youth activities are still going strong! We had a great time on our Secular & Sacred Christmas trip and we'll keep that great vibe going when we **volunteer for Santa's Village on Saturday, December 10th.** I'll need not only youth to volunteer, but also adults - the more the merrier! We'll meet at 4:30 and be done at 9:00. Let me know if you want to help out!

The youth have also "adopted" a Sawyerville family for Christmas. We have had some great folks step up for the family, but we need more! **If you'd like to sponsor a child, please let me know.** **All presents are due on Sunday, December 11th.** We'll drive down to Birmingham after the 11:00 service to deliver them to St. Mary's, who has coordinated this year's Christmas project.

***On December 19th we will be meeting at Oscar Mason to help out with their Christmas party.*** As a youth group, we will also be making stockings for the kids in the after school program. Look out for more information on our youth website - we'll start this project soon!

***We will have our own Christmas celebration on December 21st. We will meet at 5:00*** to decorate the church tree with Chrismons created by many of you, followed by dinner and the white elephant gift game. I hope to see all of you there! I hope all of you are enjoying this lovely season of Advent and I'll see you soon!

Peace and Blessings,  
Liz

## New Class beginning Sunday, January 8, 2012 Love Wins by Rob Bell

Author, pastor and teacher Rob Bell presents a biblical vision for rediscovering a more spiritually satisfying way of understanding heaven, hell, God, Jesus, salvation and repentance. The result is the discovery that the "good news" is much, much better than we ever imagined! Brad Landry will teach the first class. The books can be purchased right here at Nativity at the new book store The Source.

## Interested in Cursillo? It all begins by attending a Cursillo weekend!

The dates for the 2012 Cursillo weekends have been announced. If you are interested in attending a Cursillo weekend and becoming part of the Cursillo community at Nativity, please contact Nativity's Cursillo lay rectors Debbie and David Collette for more information. The Nativity Cursillo Community will hold an informational event in January 2012 for those interested in learning more about this incredible experience.

**CHRISTMAS FLOWER ORDER**  
**DEADLINE is MONDAY, DECEMBER 12!**  
**2011 CHRISTMAS FLOWER DEDICATION FORM**

If you are interested in dedicating flowers for Christmas, please complete and mail this form with your check made out to "Flower Guild" to: Andrea Vandervoort, 434 Locust Ave. Huntsville, AL 35801.

**Christmas dedications are \$20 each**

**PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION. THANK YOU.**

Your Name as it is to be listed in Christmas Programs: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Do you wish to have your name listed in the Christmas Programs? \_\_\_\_\_

All dedications will read "To the glory of God and... *in loving memory of* or *in thanksgiving for* or *in celebration of*..."

***Please be specific by underlining or circling your desired dedication above***

Name for this dedication: \_\_\_\_\_

**ALTAR FLOWERS 2012 DEDICATION FORM**

If you are interested in dedicating **Altar flowers for a specific Sunday in 2012**, please complete and mail this form with your check made out to "Flower Guild" and mail to: Andrea Vandervoort, 434 Locust Ave. Huntsville, AL 35801. If you have questions, you may call Andrea at 539-2673.

**PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION, THANK YOU.**

**2012 Altar Flower Order Form**

**Altar Flowers are \$40 or \$20 for shared dedications**

Date desired \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Would you share a dedication? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to have your name listed in the bulletin? \_\_\_\_\_

All dedications read "To the glory of God and... *in loving memory of* or *in thanksgiving for* or *in celebration of*..."

***Please be specific by underlining or circling your desired dedication above:***

Name for this altar flower dedication: \_\_\_\_\_

**ECW Bazaar 2011 another success! More than 60 turkeys sold by our Friars!**

Glinda Wagner and Kate Noble Purvis wish to thank everyone who worked so hard to make this year's Bazaar a success. The Men's Turkey Fry was a hit again this year also. All proceeds from Bazaar and Turkey Fry are earmarked for Village of Promise and Oscar Mason Center After School Program!

Also, grateful thanks for the generous gifts for the annual raffle. Below are the winners of the raffle drawing:

Loring \$250 Gift Certificate—Marilyn Grundy  
Lyn's Gracious Goodness Basket—Lisa Caprio  
Al Christopher Casserole Caddy—Sarah Reed  
Worth Handbag & Gift Certificate—Elizabeth Jones  
Lawren's Gift Certificate—Elise Goodson  
Thirty-one Gift Certificate—Glinda Wagner  
Pane E Vino Gift Certificate—Sara Jane Tarter  
Carol McCrady Prayer Picture—Mrs. Lewis Adams  
Kim Wheeler Note Cards—Jennifer Cline  
Angel Nativity Shingle by Pattie Cline—Frances Moore

Carlisle Scarf—Phyllis Lawson  
Wine Cellar Basket—Alyce Manning  
Doncastor Wrap—Christy Starnes  
Topiary Tree—Angie Farrell  
Aigner Purse—Shirley Reder  
Etc Wrap—Mitzi Sewell  
Handknitted Scarf—Susan Austin  
Sweet Thing Gift Certificate—Kathy Priest  
Sweet Thing Gift Certificate—Ruth VonSant  
So-what Framed Card—Mary Anne Akin



Continued from page 1

Advent calls also us to help others find a way in the dark. We will meet Jesus in our neighbors, and especially where he said we would find him: among the poor and struggling of this world. It begins with reconstruction in our own lives. But God wants more of us. The level way out of the dark calls us to consider the economy and its implications for all; to consider healthcare and responsible care for this fragile earth our island home; to consider education and jobs creation and immigration and poverty in our nation and in our global family.

What would a level path to God mean for all people? John the Baptist comes right in the beginning of dark Advent and tells us to make a straight road to God's love and mercy. John draws from words of comfort preached by the Prophet Isaiah when the people of Israel were in captivity and struggling to find a way home, a way to life. What words of comfort need to be proclaimed in the midst of these dark times we live in? Level the hills that get in the way, raise the valleys, rearrange the furniture!

How each one of us does this is matter of faithful discernment. It takes time. And we must always remember that like John the Baptist, we are not the light, but we point to one whose sandals we are not worthy to stoop down and untie. We point always to Christ, not our selves. Although the world is dark, Advent helps us to walk in the dark while we wait for the light. It is no idle hoping or waiting that we do. The world needs for us not to be afraid, to learn to walk in the dark, to make a level path. There is a child waiting to be born; new life to receive!

Andy +

## **INTERCESSION REQUESTS**

### **We pray for those who are ill or recovering:**

Robert Boerner, Margaret Smitherman, Eileen Sullivan, Nativity's Tornado Family, Judith Douthit Cather, Gilda May, Ernie Limbo, Bill Marsh, Donald Perry, Angel Colin, Julie Kirk, Leigh Wahl, Billy Johnston, Sr., Elsie Olsen, Scott Shelton, Joy Gass, Sara Welch, Emile Joffrion, John, Nancy Kelly.

### **We pray for those in Military Service and those serving with the Peace Corps:**

Kuwait: Spencer Colin, Greg Riddle; Afghanistan: Blake Lane The Gambia, West Africa: Marisa Benzle

### **We pray for the departed:**

John Neely, brother of Loch Neely  
Bobby Woodruff

**We give thanks for the baptism of** Greer Katherine Baker, daughter of Jonathan & Margaret Day Baker baptized at St. Paul's Episcopal church in Mobile, AL on November 26.

### **We give thanks for the birthdays of our children:**

12/12	May Watson, Will Knight
12/14	William Ellison, Ireland Braudaway, Hope Howell
12/17	Maggie Sanders
12/18	Hunter Whitworth, Alton Hudson, Chandler Mason
12/21	Molly Ward, Evan Ward, Harrison Hunter
12/22	Margaret Bryant
12/25	John Laney
12/27	Allie Starnes, Evan Khodabandeh
12/29	Sanders Clayton, Will Pinson
12/30	Nicholas Ocampo
12/31	Christian Avolesse

***A Service of Nine Lessons and Carols  
Sunday, December 18, 5:00 p.m.***

## STEEPLE SCHEDULE

*The Steeple* is published each  
1st and 3rd Wednesdays.

To submit events or articles,  
you may bring them to Linda  
Wheeler in the church office or  
email:

[linda.wheeler@nativity-hsv.org](mailto:linda.wheeler@nativity-hsv.org)

The deadline for the next issue is  
Monday noon, December 19.

### CLERGY & STAFF

**The Rev'd Dr. Andy Anderson**  
Rector

**The Rev'd Mary Anne Akin**  
Associate

**The Rev'd Brad Landry**  
Associate

**The Rev'd Jeannie Robison**  
Deacon

**Suzanne Purtee**  
Organist/Choirmaster

**Lane Tutt**  
Adult Christian Formation

**Liz Williams**  
Youth Christian Formation

**Elizabeth Foster**  
Children's Formation

**Cassie Chenoweth**  
Assistant Children's Formation

**Audrey Clayton**  
Nursery Coordinator

**John Buyse**  
Property Manager

**Al Ford**  
Sexton

**Sally Stockton**  
Kitchen Coordinator

**Beverly Franklin**  
Bookkeeper/Business Mgr

**Connie Gadomski**  
Worship & Ministry Assistant

**Linda Wheeler**  
Assistant to the Rector

**Prentice White**  
Communication/Publication Admin

**Vestry**  
Verger/Wedding Coordinator

**Bland Warren**  
Senior Warden

**Pat Goodson**  
Junior Warden

**Russ Alexander**  
Treasurer

**Donna Joffrion**  
Clerk

### AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY

A member of the clergy is  
on call each week.

If you need assistance from a priest  
outside office hours, the priest on  
call will respond to your page.

The number to call *In Case of an  
Emergency Only* is 256-533-7007.

All other calls should be directed to  
church phone 256-533-2455  
and follow the prompts to leave a  
message for a priest to respond.

## Church of the Nativity, Episcopal

208 Eustis Ave. SE Huntsville, AL 35801

256-533-2455 Fax: 256-533-2374

[www.nativity-hsv.org](http://www.nativity-hsv.org)



A Service of Nine Lessons and Carols will be held  
at Nativity on Sunday, December 18 at 5:00 p.m.

## Christmas Pageant

Saturday, December 24, 4:00 p.m.\*

## Christmas Eve Services

Saturday, December 24

7:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.

## Christmas Day Service

10:00 a.m. in Nave