



# THE MISSISSIPPI EPISCOPALIAN

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## Annual Council to convene on Coast in late January

By Tracy Williams

Come to the beach to see the regrowth and rebuilding that has taken place, and participate in the vision of the diocese for the coming year. The 189th Annual Council for the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi will be held January 29–31, 2016, in Biloxi. Gulf Coast congregations have been working together to plan and prepare for this event, themed “Being One Church in Mission”.

The main activities will take place in the Convention Center in Biloxi on Highway 90. On Saturday evening, we will gather at the eastern edge of Biloxi for food and fellowship in the Maritime &



Seafood Industry Museum, beautifully restored to preserve and showcase the history of the Gulf Coast.

Music will be provided by the Rockestra Revolution, young musicians who use their orchestra instruments to play contemporary rock music.

A limited number of vendor booth spaces are currently available and can be reserved on the website: <http://annualcouncil.dioms.org/>

Hotel rooms are being held for the diocese at the Beau Rivage at a special rate, but will be released to the public on January 6, so make your reservations now.

*Tracy Williams is a member of the 189th Annual Council Committee.*

## Hawkins appointed dean

By Scott Lenoir

The Rev. Dr. Charles Hawkins, rector of St. John’s/Ocean Springs, has been appointed dean of the A.C. Marble School of Spiritual Formation. The school’s dean for the last several years was the Rev. Beth Foose who recently stepped down from the office. Hawkins’ tenure began in October when he was appointed by Bishop Seage.

The Marble school is a part of the IONA Initiative that is based at the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, TX. The school has been training vocational deacons for several years, but the mission will soon be expanding.

“As you know, we are currently training Canon 6 deacons in the Marble School. I anticipate that, perhaps as early as next fall, we will begin forming bi-vocational priests in the program. That will be an



*The Rev. Dr. Charles Hawkins*  
Scott Lenoir/Photo

important step forward,” wrote Bishop Seage in his letter of appointment to Hawkins.

Hawkins said that he looks forward to the opportunity of serving as dean. His work will be mostly administrative in the beginning, but more hands-on as the mission of the school expands to include presbyter training.

Hawkins came to Mississippi from the Diocese of Kentucky where he was ordained to the priesthood in 1999. Among other degrees, Charles has a Master of Theology from Duke Divinity School and a Ph.D. from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He has done post-doctoral study at Oxford University, England, and at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Recent diocesan and community activities include: examining chaplain for the Diocese of Mississippi (2013- present); co-director of Post Ordination Consultation (a training program for the newly ordained) 2015- present; examining chaplain for the Diocese of Kentucky (2001-2013); dean, Anglican Studies Program, Diocese of Kentucky (2005-2006); member of the Curriculum Development Committee, Deacon Training Program, Diocese of Kentucky (2007).

Hawkins has held many teaching posts throughout the years in addition to his ministry that were primarily focused on philosophy, ethics, Anglican history, theology and liturgy. He will be teaching a course at Tulane’s Gulfport campus in the spring on the historical and geographical context of the emergence of the biblical text.

*The Rev. Scott Lenoir is the editor of the Mississippi Episcopalian.*

## Starkville Bridges program continues growth

By Kelly Olivieri

*Starkville Bridges* recently held a luncheon at the new Mill Conference Center with representatives of many charities and organizations present to learn about the program, including the Salvation Army, Helping Hands, the Emerson Family School among others.

The Rev. Deacon Bobby Weatherly addressed the group giving an overview of what a Bridges out of Poverty training is like. Weatherly reviewed mental models, asked group discussion questions, and challenged notions of what “normal” behaviors are acceptable in society.

*Starkville Bridges* is spearheading an initiative within the community to host another Getting Ahead class in Starkville with the traction from the luncheon. The idea is to provide grants, content programming, and training for any group wishing to host a Getting Ahead class. At this point, two churches have indicated an interest in doing a class in 2016.



*The Rev. Deacon Bobby Weatherly presents the goals of Starkville Bridges program to representatives of various charitable organizations in the Golden Triangle area.*

Kelly Olivieri/Photo

In order to do this, *Starkville Bridges* sponsored Kathleen Olivieri, Kim Coble, and Chris Taylor to one of the national Bridges out of Poverty trainings in Indianapolis, IN, last November. Olivieri, Coble, and Taylor are now able to train people within their organization to achieve the final goal of hosting a Getting Ahead class.

The founding member of *Starkville Bridges* is the Rev. Deacon Lynn Phillips-Gaines. She continues to guide the organization towards sustainability for the future. Gaines was ordained in January 2011, and began *Starkville Bridges* in June of that same year. The following year in 2012, *Starkville Bridges* was awarded nonprofit status. In Spring 2015, the *Starkville Charity Collaborative* (managed by *Starkville Bridges*) was formed with proceeds from the Invest in Others award, which Gaines received.

If you or your organization is interested in getting involved or becoming a host group with *Starkville Bridges*, please contact Kelly Olivieri at 662-312-2025 or at [bridgesoutofpoverty@gmail.com](mailto:bridgesoutofpoverty@gmail.com).



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# Truckin'

**November 1** — In the morning, Kyle and I caught an early flight (5:55 a.m.) for DC to attend the investiture of our new presiding bishop, Michael Curry. We actually arrived early and were able to check into our hotel and get breakfast before heading to the National Cathedral for the service. The service was phenomenal with a clear sense of the Holy Spirit being present. Bishop Curry preached a great sermon. In the afternoon, we caught up with friends from the College for Bishops and, in the evening, we dined with Raphiell Ashford, a Mississippi seminarian at VTS, and the Rev. Bruce McMillan, rector at Christ Church, Holly Springs.

**November 2** — After getting breakfast, we flew home through Charlotte, NC. We arrived home with enough time for me to say hello to the girls, change my clothes and then drive to All Saints' in Jackson for a visitation. At the service, I was assisted by their rector, the Rev. William Ndishabandi. At All Saints', I preached, presided, and confirmed five. After the service, I enjoyed a reception which was followed by a meeting with the vestry. I am so thankful for the faithful commitment of this parish.

**November 3** — I arrived in the office early after dropping the girls at school. My desktop was swamped with notes and messages. In the morning, I met with the Allin House staff for our weekly meeting. Later in the morning, I had a phone appointment with an aspirant for holy orders. I spent most of the day catching up on paperwork, emails, and phone calls. In keeping



with my Tuesday custom, I left the office a little early in order to pick up my daughters from school. I worked from the house for a while before having a quiet supper and evening with my family.

**November 4** — Early morning workout. After arriving at the office, I met with the Very Rev. Edward O'Connor. Later in the morning, I attended a lunch banquet with Mission Mississippi at the Convention Center. Following the banquet and program, I returned to the office for three in person meetings and one phone meeting.

**November 5** — In the morning, I met with the Rev. Sam Godfrey of Christ Church, Vicksburg, for his annual consultation. Sam and I were in the same Post Ordination group a long time ago! It's great to catch up and hear more about his ministry. After lunch with Kyle, she returned with me to the office to meet with Fatih Ozcan and Hatice Gonul with the Dialogue Institute of Mississippi. They brought us gifts including a tray of baklava! It was so good! Fatih and his organization have invited us to make a trip to Turkey.

**November 6** — Early morning workout. In the office, I met with a lay leader within our Diocese. I spent the rest of the morning and early afternoon trying to get organized and caught up! I left early in order to take some time off! In the evening, I drove Katie to Bratton-Green for the Fall DOY weekend.

**November 7** — Watched football! In the afternoon, I drove to Holly Springs for my visitation at Christ Church. That night, I had supper with the Very Rev. Bruce McMillan at the Univer-



Bishop Brian Seage

sity Club in Oxford. It was sad to see melancholy strike the Ole Miss faithful when Arkansas converted an unlikely 4th down to stay alive in overtime and win the game.

**November 8** — At Christ Church, I confirmed five and received two while also preaching and presiding. After the service, I enjoyed a reception with those in attendance at the service. Following the reception, I set out for home.

**November 9** — Early morning workout. After workout, I drove straight to Gray center for a breakfast meeting with the members of our POC (post ordination consultation group). We are so blessed to have an incredible group of new ordinands. Six members of this group will be ordained to the priesthood on January 16 at St. Andrew's Cathedral. I took the rest of the day off.

**November 10** — In the morning, I attended staff meeting. Following this meeting, I met with various members of the staff relative to their areas of focus. I am increasingly impressed by the ministries of everyone. I left the office early in order to watch Betsy's basketball game at St. Andrew's.

**November 11** — Early morning workout. My day was packed with meetings. It started with a phone meeting while getting tires for Kyle's car. Later in the morning, I had annual consultation with the Rev. Deacon James DeDeaux. Following the meeting with Deacon Dedeaux, I met with Chancellor Tate, Canon McCormack and Canon-Elect Ponder over lunch. In the afternoon, I met with Emad al-Turk from the Muslim Cultural Center in Mississippi. Later in the day, I met with two clergy from the Delta Convocation and, before leaving the office, I met with an aspirant for Holy orders.

**November 12** — First thing in the morning, I met with Mary Beth Welch about the ECW conference. Later in the morning, I kept a phone meeting in addition to an annual consultation with the Very Rev. Robert Wetherington, Rector at Redeemer, Biloxi, and dean of the Coast Convocation. Over lunch, I met with members of the Diocesan Stewardship (VPG) Task force. After lunch, I went to the dentist to have two cavities filled.

**November 13** — Early morning workout. In the morning, I accomplished various tasks at the office. I left the office in the early afternoon to drive to an out-of-town basketball game for Betsy. The St. Andrew's girls played well but lost a narrow one by two points. I was horrified to learn about the attacks in Paris. After saying a couple prayers, I sent Bishop Pierre Whalon of

the Convocation of American Churches a note.

**November 14** — In the morning, I drove to Gray Center for the ECW conference. The keynoter was the Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan of the Diocese of Alabama and originally from Vicksburg. Kee is an awesome presenter and storyteller. I was honored to preside at the closing service while he preached. In the afternoon, I watched some football with Kyle before setting out for the next day's visit in Tupelo. During the drive, I thought and prayed about the many people affected by the horrific events in Paris.

**November 15** — This morning's visitation is at All Saints', Tupelo. It was originally scheduled for November 1 but the parish was helpful in allowing us to reschedule so I could be at the investiture of the new presiding bishop. At the service, I confirmed eleven while also preaching and presiding. Following the service, we enjoyed a festive reception in their parish hall. Before leaving for home, accompanied the Rev. Paul Stephens and the Rev. Deacon Billy Walton, I visited the Rev. Gene Asbury and his wife Karen in the hospital. When I was newly ordained, Gene was a wonderful role model. I set out for home after the visit. In the evening, I enjoyed supper with Kyle and Betsy. Later in the evening Katie returned from a Happening weekend in Pascagoula. She had a great time!

**November 16** — Morning workout. After returning home, I received news that Gene Asbury had just died. May the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. +

**November 17** — After taking the girls to school, I attended the staff meeting at Allin House. Later in the morning, I met with Peggy Jones to discuss my vacation that starts tomorrow! At lunch, I attended a meeting with Mission Mississippi to discuss the State Legislators Prayer Breakfast. After the meeting kept three phone appointments. I left a little early to pick up the girls from school.

**November 18** — I spent the morning pulling stuff together for our afternoon departure. Later in the morning, I worked a statement regarding the attacks on Paris. At lunch, I picked up the girls from school in order to head to the airport for vacation!

**November 19-30** — Vacation.



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## Notes & "Quotes"

by Suzanne Cox

### Notes from around the diocese:

**St. Paul's/Meridian** offered some stress relief for holiday shoppers. The EYC hosted *Drop and Shop* on Friday, December 5th. Shoppers were able to drop their children off at the church between 5:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. to be cared for by the youth of EYC. The children were entertained with movies, games, and crafts, and supper was provided, all for \$20 per child (\$5 additional for each sibling).

The children of **St. John's/Ocean Springs** will present a Christmas pageant on Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24th, at 4:00 p.m. Children age three and up are invited to participate. The call is out for singers, instrumentalists, readers, angels, stars, shepherds, stable animals, wise men, and a holy family.

**St. Alban's/Bovina** hosted a *Christmas Make & Take* event complete with cocoa or Christmas tea on Sunday, December 6th. The Create and Carry Craft Group offered a variety of crafts chose, most of which could be made that evening from pre-assembled kits. Projects included yarn wreaths, knitted wristlets, spool ornaments or pendants, burlap bows, and t-shirt no-sew bags.

The ECW at **St. James'/Greenville** is helping St. Monica's Ministry of Hope. Begun by St. Joseph Catholic Church, this ministry's purpose is to share God's love with the female prisoners housed at the Washington County Regional Correctional Facility. The ECW is collecting and donating items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, bar soap, and clear deodorant to be used as Christmas gifts to the women.

**St. Paul's/Corinth** is assembling outreach care packages for the local high school students. They are asking for monetary donations or donations of personal hygiene products (hair products, body wash, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.) for approximately 60 young men and women.

Members of **St. Peter's/Oxford** will visit the Lafayette County Detention Center on Monday, December 21st, to share food, fellowship, and song. The Brotherhood of St. Peter has asked for support of this ministry through providing home-baked cookies for the Christmas party. St. Peter's has been engaged in this ministry for the past ten years.

**Grace Church/Canton** will celebrate *Feliz Navidad* on Tuesday, December 15th, at 5:00 p.m. Volunteers are needed, especially those who can speak any Spanish.

The Wednesday Sunday school boys at Grace Church sold Advent candles to raise funds to help families through Episcopal Relief and Development's *Gifts for Life* program. selling Advent candles next Sunday. There are only a few left.

The One Family of Faith Sunday school class at **St. John's/Laurel** collected items for the residents of the Comfort Care Nursing Center. Baskets containing gift items that included small blankets or throws, manicure supplies, t-shirts, movies, candies, gloves, crafts, and personal care products were blessed before being delivered to the residents.

**St. Philip's/Jackson** will host a Dickens Dinner on Wednesday, December 16th. Diners will be treated to a feast of orange cranberry congealed salad, roast beef with rich mushroom wine gravy, goose and hen in orange sauce, wild rice with walnut butter, spinach Madeleine, corn pudding, rolls, assorted desserts, wassail and tea.

The *Festival of St. Nicholas* was celebrated at **St. Peter's by-the-Lake/Brandon** on Sunday, December 6th. Members were invited to come learn the story of Saint Nicholas and even catch a glimpse of the jolly old elf. Little ones who left their shoes at the door found goodies stowed in them. Cookie-decorating, crafts, and supper followed in the parish hall.

**Ascension/Hattiesburg** held a stained glass sale in their parish hall on Sunday, December 6th.

Parishioners at **St. Columb's/Ridgeland** organized and delivered Thanksgiving dinner for the personnel at Ridgeland's Fire Station #5. *Feed the Fire Persons* provided turkey, side dishes, desserts, beverages, napkins, plates and utensils.

**St. Stephen's/Columbia** began a new education offering on Friday, December 4th. *Worldviews, the Bible, and the Believer*, an N.T. Wright online course examines how worldview gives rise to behavior and beliefs, in the ancient world and modern day cultures. The video-based course runs for 15 weeks.

Christmas outreach projects at **St.**

**Pierre's/Gautier** include donations to Sue's Home, a transitional house for women and their young children; Operation Backpack; Operation Christmas Child; and support for those serving in our nation's military.

**Church of the Incarnation/West Point** raised approximately \$5,000 for Habitat for Humanity. The money will be used to purchase a new heating and air conditioning unit for an existing Habitat home — just in time for cold weather! This summer they also raised \$1,600 to replace a roof.

### Quotes this month:

The Rev. Jeff Reich, **St. John's/Laurel**: "When people get very busy the first thing to go is time spent in prayer. When people are stretched thin the first, or at least the easiest, activity to forgo is Church. When I ask about this, it is not uncommon to have as a reply, 'God understands,' or 'I think about God so it is OK.' In our prayers, and especially at Church, we receive the Grace of God in ways that occur in no other activity or place . . . I truly and firmly believe that time spent in prayer and giving time to corporate worship are some of the most important things we can do . . . that time is healing, enkindling, enlightening and life giving because of the forgiveness we receive."

The Rev. Walton Jones, **Trinity/Natchez**: ". . . God's love can help us to step out in faith and give of what we have rather than being fearful of what we don't. We are called to be generous, thankful, and focused on the needs of others, but it's hard to do that when we don't feel there's enough to go around. I have good news. There is enough to go around. There is plenty of food, there is plenty of money, there is plenty of love in our lives to go around."

The Very Rev. Robert Wetherington, **Redeemer/Biloxi**: "Advent takes us back to that foundational principle of our faith in very human terms. No matter how we first experienced Jesus. No matter what the path to transformation and discipleship may have been. The story begins with the entrance of a human being into this world that somehow was the presence of God in human form."



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# OUR DIOCESE

## Speaking in Faith

By Carol Mead

Friends in other Christian traditions sometimes question the Episcopal way of relying on the Book of Common Prayer rather than praying “spontaneously.” Some people have asked, “How can you pray with authenticity if you’re reading prayers out of a *book*?”

It’s ironic that my first instinct in defending our tradition is to go to, well...a book. *The Episcopal Handbook* (Morehouse Publishing) speaks of the tradition of often reading our prayers. The *Handbook* says, “When the disciples came to Jesus and asked him how they should pray, he didn’t suggest that they make it up as they go along. He offered them a well thought out form of prayer that we now call the ‘Our Father.’”

In all seriousness, I understand that some people feel that printed, pre-written words are not genuine and personal. But our book forms us, after all, in *common* prayer: sharing prayers not only with the person in the next pew but also with the person in the next generation and with all persons who have used the *Book of Common Prayer*. For example, when we say morning prayer



“out of the book,” we share those prayers, as each hour passes, with another time zone’s worth of Episcopalians across the world. And we share our prayers from generation to generation, with all persons down through time who have prayed from this common book.

Of course, in prayer we need to be, above all, authentic and honest. The Catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* defines prayer as “responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” Sometimes my need for prayer, for communicating with God, comes at a time when I am so troubled or so jubilant that I cannot summon words at all. I’ve always felt that I can be more present in my relationship with God if I’m not spending my energy searching for human words.

So if I’m asked why we pray out of a book instead of praying spontaneously, I let people know that we do both. But I also try to communicate to others the power we Episcopalians find in *common* prayer.

I’d love your feedback on topics for future columns. You can contact me as follows: The Rev. Carol Mead, St. Peter’s by-the-Lake, 1954 Spillway Road, Brandon, MS 39047. I’m also available by email at [stpetepriest@bellsouth.net](mailto:stpetepriest@bellsouth.net)

*The Rev. Carol Mead is priest-in-charge at St. Peter’s by-the-Lake Episcopal Church in Brandon.*

## Arnold Bush returns to Mississippi

By Joane MacKey

The vestry of St. Paul’s/Meridian has called the Rev. Arnold A. Bush, a native of Laurel, and graduate of Millsaps College in Jackson, to serve as interim rector overseeing parish programs, administration, preaching and liturgical worship. Fr. Bush currently resides in Birmingham, AL. Bush follows the Rev. Brian Ponder who accepted a call as canon-elect for finance and administration with the Diocese of Mississippi in Jackson last October.

Fr. Arnold graduated seminary from The University of the South in Sewanee, TN. He was ordained deacon at St. John’s/Laurel and ordained priest at Redeemer/Brookhaven, where he served as rector. He was the church planter for St. Peter’s by-the-Lake/Brandon from 1981-1990 before moving to Christ Church/San Antonio, TX. Before retiring as an active priest in 2002, Fr. Arnold also served in Gulf Breeze, FL, Jacksonville, FL, Tifton, GA, and Niceville, FL.

Fr. Arnold brings to St. Paul’s many years of experience facilitating congregational vitality and growth, which he learned from participating in evangelism and renewal programs in the southeastern states for the Episcopal Church Center.

“My passion is to assist parishioners experience deep fulfilling relationships with the living Christ and create structures for outreach teams, study and care groups, and for vitality and growth within the congregation,” said Bush.

In reflecting on his new position, Bush said, “I recall attending diocesan meetings at St. Paul’s as a teenager and as an adult. I also have memories of competing against Meridian High School in football, basketball and track.” Fr. Arnold went on to say, “I am excited about working in a congregation that has many outreach ministries in Lauderdale County, supports foreign missions and offers a quality music program.”

*Joane MacKey is the secretary/bookkeeper at St. Paul’s/Meridian.*



*The Rev. Arnold Bush*



*Pictured are the newly elected officers of the Diocesan Episcopal Church Women who were installed at the Fall Conference held on November 13 & 14 at Gray Center: (Left to right) Laura Griffin, vice-president; Anne Freeze, treasurer; Lindsey Richard, president; and Darcy Strickland, secretary.*

***A date to remember:  
Tuesday January 5, 2016.***

Deadline for the January issue of *The Mississippi Episcopalian*

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## Seeds of Faith Conference focuses on Jesus, Buddah and love

By Anne Dowdle

'Tis a small world after all. Meridian's Church of the Mediator parishioner Barbara Thomas was on a tour to Bhutan and Tibet this past spring when she met Arvid Straube of San Diego.

As a result of their many conversations during the tour, the Rev. Dr. Straube, a recently retired Unitarian Universalist minister, will be the speaker for the Mediator's Seeds of Faith Conference the weekend of Feb. 19-21. This conference, open Episcopalians as well as the general public, and will explore the topic, "Jesus and Buddha: What's Love Got To Do With It?" Straube's wife, Sonya, a native of Alabama, will also attend the conference.

The conference will begin at 5:30 that Friday evening with registration and a wine and cheese reception in the parish hall. At 6:30, Dr. Straube will discuss "Christianity, Buddhism and the Future of Religion."

A continental breakfast and registration at 8 a.m. Saturday will be followed by: "The Axial Age and the Birth of the Great Religions" at 9:00. At a 10:30 break both Mediator's bookstore and labyrinth will be open at 10:30. Straube address, "Jesus, the Buddha and the Religions that Followed," begins at 11:00. Lunch will be served in the parish hall at noon fol-



Barbara Thomas, chair of the Seeds of Faith Conference, holds the conference brochure that Jeannette McPherson's conference committee produced.

Sprague, Marcus Losack, Marcus Borg, Margaret Guenther, Lawrence Kushner, Amy-Jill Levine and Barbara Brown Taylor.

lowed by the fourth presentation, "Living Buddha, Living Christ" at 1:30.

On Sunday at 9:30 a.m., Dr. Straube will conduct a question and answer session in the parish hall. He will close the conference with a homily during the Holy Eucharist.

The cost for the conference is \$55 and checks should be made payable to The Episcopal Church of the Mediator and mailed to Post Office Box 3400, Meridian, MS 39303.

Lay worship leaders may renew their licenses by attending the conference.

Additional information can be obtained by calling the church office at 601-483-3959 or by emailing the church at [ecmediator@gmail.com](mailto:ecmediator@gmail.com). The website is [www.episcopalchurchmediator.com](http://www.episcopalchurchmediator.com).

Since 1994, the Seeds of Faith conference has served as an outreach in spiritual formation by the Education for Ministry (EfM) participants at the Mediator. Speakers have included Bob Haden, Jack and Christine Spong, Barbara Crafton, Steven Charleston, Minka

## Straube raised as fundamentalist, but converted though acceptance of doubt in seminary

By Anne Dowdle

The many pathways Dr. Arvid Straube has taken through his life in academic studies, as a minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church and as a practitioner and teacher of Buddhist meditation, will be reflected in his presentations during the Seeds of Faith Conference at the Episcopal Church of the Mediator Feb. 19-21.

Under the umbrella of "Jesus and Buddha: What's Love Got To Do With It?", Dr. Straube will also discuss the "axial age" and the development of the great religions of the world.

A native of Nebraska, Straube says he was reared in a "very fundamentalist and evangelical Church of God, which taught that every single word in the Bible is true." He felt "called" at an early age to the ministry.

"My grandmother wanted me to be a minister, but I don't think she even knew a Unitarian Universalist church existed," said Straube.

His initial two years of study were spent at Anderson College in Anderson, IN. While he describes it as a fundamentalist college, he says "the professors were not fundamentalists and they introduced us to the idea of doubts during classes in Old and New Testament studies.

"It was a crisis of faith time for me," Dr. Straube recalls, adding that he could then see the "hypocrisy and rigidity" in fundamentalist beliefs. He became a counselor at a Christian camp in Cape Cod in the summer. Watching a sunrise one day, he had his first "mystical experience" whereby he felt the beauty of the sun and the presence of God.

He completed a major in sociology at Ball State University followed by an M.A. in divinity at the University of Chicago Divinity School and then a Doctor of Ministry degree at the Meadville Lom-



The Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube keynotes 2016 Seeds of Faith Conference.

Sonya Prestridge/Photo

bard Theological School. Later he was a participant in Individual Spiritual Formation training for two years at the Shalem Institute in Bethesda, MD.

"After my first mystical experience, I started reading about Eastern religions. In divinity school, I took a course in religious experiences, which included world religions, and it was the most fascinating course I have ever taken."

He had his first meditation experience when he signed up for a 10-day retreat with Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg in Wisconsin. While he describes his impetuous jump into meditation as "mostly boring and painful" because of the long sessions, he found himself "dancing along with everything

that existed" and had many feelings of "bliss and awakening."

"You then wake up to the way things are...and you want to let go of greed, ignorance, hatred and fear."

After visiting a Unitarian Universal Church for the first time, "I immediately felt at home."

"This religious denomination," he explains, "is a faith that measures faithfulness by how we act with wisdom and compassion in the world. We consider ourselves Christian and more because we have expanded our embrace."

Dr. Straube says they believe there is no eternal damnation and there is no creed. The congregations are open to Christians, Jews and the other great religions as well as atheists, agnostics and theists. They foster intellectual freedom with a goal of insight and spiritual growth from the major religions.

Dr. Straube was ordained to the Unitarian Universalist ministry by the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, BC in 1979, serving as an associate minister in a Bellevue, Washington, church for three years before beginning a 21-year ministry at a church in Durham,

NC. His last 10 years as a minister were spent at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in San Diego, where he led a 134-year-old congregation of 1,200 to a "proud reputation of standing up for free speech and human rights with emphasis on marriage equality and immigrant rights."

He has also worked as an adjunct faculty member at Duke Divinity School, the Starr King School for the Ministry and San Diego State University and is currently at the Meadville Lombard Theological School.

His abiding passion throughout his ministry, he reiterates, has focused on spiritual development and work for social change.

For more than 40 years Dr. Straube has also followed and taught a Buddhist meditation practice in the Vipassana (insight) tradition. A self-described disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, he has studied under Joseph Goldstein, Thich Nhat Hanh and Shinzen Young.

"The biggest stumbling blocks to meditation," he notes, "are boredom and lack of discipline. What I tell people is that you cannot fail if you just do it. A successful meditation session is one you did."

He has also pursued studies in transcendental meditation, but he has not practiced it. Although he believes it has effective techniques, "I am not sure about all the hype."

His other interests include New Testament studies, American religious history and contemplative Christianity.

He explains there are two major categories of meditation: concentrated meditation and mindfulness, both of which will be included in his talks.

"Now that I have retired from parish ministry, I love working one on one with people who are serious about developing their full potential as human beings." His specialty clients are parish ministers.

In preparation for this conference, he recommends two books, "Living Buddha, Living Christ" by Thich Nhat Hanh and one on the Axial Age titled "The Great Transformation" by Karen Armstrong.

Anne Dowdle is a communicant at Mediator/Meridian.



# Being thankful can be difficult — Anne Lamott's book *Small Victories* addresses the issue

By Janet C. Nail

"In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (First Thessalonians 5:18)

All things? Even when life sucks and there is nothing—nothing!—to be grateful for? Yes, even then.

Anne Lamott's book *Small Victories: Spotting Improbable Moments of Grace* (Riverhead Books, 2014) may be described as a book about being thankful when you can't find anything at all for which to be thankful!

Life is hard. No matter how much you try to be good—you go to church regularly, read the lessons, teach Sunday school, sing in the choir—life is going to hit you from behind and leave you cross-eyed with pain. People die; they get cancer, they go through painful divorces, they get hit by cars while crossing the street. And you stand there screaming, "It's just not fair!"

No, it's not fair but it's what you have.

First of all, Ms Lamott reminds you to consider the Book of Welcome. Oh, you don't find it in your Bible? That's right, the cooler heads that selected the Canon of Scripture felt that telling people that they come into the world loved, cherished, valued unconditionally, would make them into sissies. They chose instead the ever-popular slaughter, exile and shame.

You have to write the Book of Welcome yourself. And to write it you must hack through the thicket of judgment, condemnation, and shame to meet God, who is waiting to gather you into His (Her?) arms and cradle you in love.

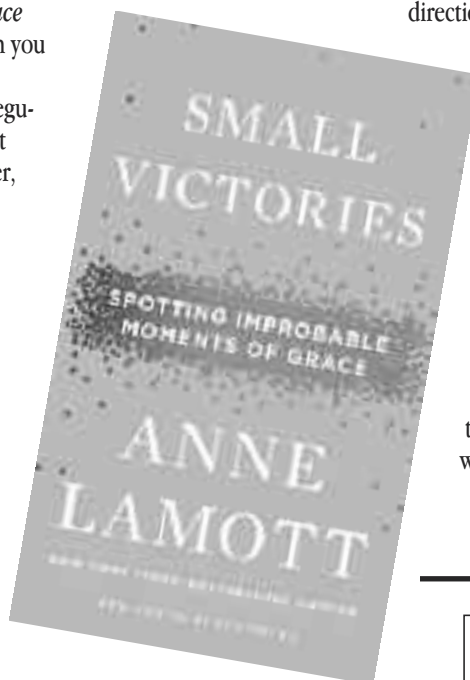
That is how you survive family dynamics that leave you feeling worthless; you look for God-in-other-people. You reach out to aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends whose families welcome you, teachers—someone who wants to show you love. You just have to look for it, and when you find it, you have to recognize it, accept it, and give thanks for it.

Suppose your child is a "late reader", his best friend is not only an early reader, he is reading three grades above level. His mother, to make it worse, is a gorgeous, slim, elegant woman who drives a Range Rover with a bumper sticker supporting the politician you loathe. Next to her, you feel fat, frumpy, and stupid and your car needs to hide around the corner.

You could avoid her, but your child and her son are close; they are soul mates. And here's the kicker: she's nice. She is friendly; she invites you in for tea and cake when you stop by to pick up your child and doesn't seem to mind that your old, middle-class car is sitting in her drive.

Here is the hard part. You must forgive her for making you feel so worthless. You must get that chip off your shoulder, smile and drink the tea. You must be thankful that your children are friends and that she welcomes your child into her home. And you must mean it.

You can, with God's help.



Another example from Anne Lamott's life: a friend has been hospitalized with severe depression and suicidal impulses. She decides to visit him, and she invites a competent friend who has an SUV with GPS to drive down with her. They start out and everything looks fine. But they are talking and catching up and they pass the exit.

No problem. They will go to the next exit and double back. But there is construction and they have to take a detour. This takes a lot of time, but finally they are back on the interstate, going the right direction. The woman driving gets a phone call from her husband; he wants to chat. She

tells him that she will call him back; they are dealing with bad traffic. He hangs up in a snit and she starts crying. The patient's wife calls next and tells both women that her feelings are hurt because they didn't invite her along.

Amid the emotional turmoil, they reach the hospital. Visitors who got there earlier have all the private spaces. But a worker going off duty steers them to the garage, where she often meets friends. They settle down on old, comfortable chairs and talk. The patient is cautiously optimistic that he is coming out of his pain. He is grateful that they came.

In all the barriers they overcame, they find God's grace. They give thanks unto God, and shrug off the detours, the hurt feelings, the turmoil.

Your life is probably not so dramatic as Anne Lamott's. But I know that you face pain every day of your life. Just remember: the Bible says "IN all things give thanks", not "FOR all things". Give thanks for surviving. Give thanks for the people who love you. Give thanks for the small victories you will see.

Find God wherever you can. And give thanks.

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Hailey Wile Allin

Katie Ann Bradshaw

William Hewlett Compton

Jennifer Lea Southall

Morris King Thompson III

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Your prayers and presence are requested.

Clergy: red stoles

Reception following



DIOCESAN CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2015

- 6: Bishop Seage visits Holy Cross, Olive Branch — 1:00 p.m.
- 9: Convocational Deans' Meeting — Allin House — 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- 10: Finance Committee Meeting — St. Andrew's Cathedral — 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- 11-13: A. C. Marble School
- 12 Disaster Preparedness Committee — Allin House – 2:00 p..m.
- 13: Bishop Seage visits St. Paul's, Woodville — 10:30 a.m.
- 17: Executive Committee Meeting — St. Andrew's Cathedral — 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- 23-28: Allin House closed for Christmas
- 27-Jan. 1: Winter Solstice — Camp Bratton-Green
- 31: Allin House closed at noon for New Year's Eve

JANUARY 2016

- 1: Allin House closed for New Year's Day
- 4-6: Presbyter Discernment
- 5: Deadline for *The Mississippi Episcopalian*
- 15-17: A. C. Marble School
- 16 Ordination to the Priesthood — St. Andrew's — 10:30 a.m.
- 18: Allin House closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday
- 20: Fresh Start — St. Andrew's Cathedral — 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- 24: Bishop Seage visits Trinity, Pass Christian — 10:30 a.m.
- 29-31: 189th Annual Council — Mississippi Coast Coliseum, Biloxi

FEBRUARY 2016

- 1-2: Allin House closed following Annual Council
- 2: Deadline for *The Mississippi Episcopalian*
- 7: Bishop Seage visits St. Paul's, Columbus
- 7-9: Presbyter POC — Gray Center
- 12-14: Senior High DOY — Gray Center
- 18: Convocational Deans' Meeting — Allin House — 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- 26-27: Leadership Summit

FAITHFUL DEPARTED

**Virginia Lee Brinkley Greer**, 92, communicant of Trinity, Hattiesburg, died August 2, 2015.

**Darrell Marshall Davis**, 55, communicant of St. Paul's, Corinth, died August 20, 2015.

**Billy Ross Brown, Jr.**, 81, communicant of St. Peter's, Oxford, died September 12, 2015.

**Kate S. Knapp**, 101, retired deacon, having served St. Andrew's Cathedral, Jackson, died September 16, 2015.

**Hilda Herring Ginn**, 95, communicant of St. Mary's, Lexington, died October 19, 2015.

**Janis McQueen May**, 66, communicant of Trinity, Hattiesburg, died October 21, 2015.

**Nancy Hillman Boyd**, 85, communicant of St Paul's, Meridian, died October 30, 2015.

**Barbara Henderson Brunson**, 79, communicant of St. James', Jackson, died October 30, 2015.

**Albert Williams Weems Jr.**, 88, communicant of St Paul's, Meridian, died November, 2, 2015.

**Sharon Evelyn Butler Wyatt**, 67, communicant of St. James', Jackson, died November 5, 2015.

**James R. O'Dair**, 92, communicant of Trinity, Hattiesburg, died November 5, 2015.

**Marjorie "Marge" Jane Wallace Peddle**, 84, communicant of St. Peter's, Oxford, died November 7, 2015.

**Lorraine Smith Ott**, 98, communicant of Trinity, Hattiesburg, died November 9, 2015.

**Robert Sharp Forster**, 70, communicant of St. Peter's, Oxford, died November 12, 2015.

**Taylor H. McElroy, Jr.**, 88, communicant of St. Peter's, Oxford, died November 13, 2015.

**Eldridge Eugene Asbury**, 86, retired priest, having served Incarnation, West Point, Mediator-Redeemer, McComb-Magnolia, and All Saint's, Tupelo, died November 16, 2015.

Deployment Report

For The Diocese of Mississippi

December, 2015

New Calls/Appointments

**The Reverend Arnold Bush**, *to be Interim Rector*, St. Paul's Church, Meridian

In Transition

Christ Church, Bay St. Louis

St. Thomas', Diamondhead

Redeemer, Greenville

St. Paul's, Hollandale

St. John's, Leland

St. Mary's, Lexington

St. Paul's, Meridian

Mediator, Meridian

Holy Cross, Olive Branch

St. Peter's, Oxford

St. Francis', Philadelphia

St. Timothy's, Southaven

†

De Colores

Gift Items

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4. Before Worship

O Almighty God, who pourest out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship thee in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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December 2015

The Mississippi Episcopalian

7



# Nativity silent auction raises funds for refugees through ERD

By Janet Lacy

Our church family at St. Paul's/Columbus began a new tradition this year: a silent auction of nativity scenes created by church members at the annual Advent wreath supper on the first Sunday of Advent. According to tradition, St. Francis is responsible for the first crèche in 1223, in an attempt to bring the focus back to the birth of Christ, which was our first hope for our church families.

The timing of the silent auction, beginning on the weekend of the Paris tragedy, emphasized our second goal of acknowledging the parallels of the Holy Family, who were homeless refugees, with present day refugees. The money raised was designated for refugee relief through Episcopal Relief and Development.

The first auction was a success! Any size and media was welcomed, and there were no duplicates among the seventeen creations, ranging

from one created from Legos to a beautiful painting on a rock. The church members who gave of their time and talent and the ones who bid on these scenes were reminded of the true meaning of the season, and raised \$565 for refugee relief.

Janet Lacy is a communicant of St. Paul's/Columbus.



**Episcopal  
Relief & Development**  
Healing a hurting world

Morris Thompson III/Photos



## Memorial quilt panels displayed on World AIDS Day

By Judy Barnes

In commemoration of World AIDS Day on December 1, St. Alexis/Jackson, with assistance from staff and members of St. James'/Jackson, displayed ten large panels from The AIDS Memorial Quilt. The panels are approximately 10'x10' and include nine 3'x6' sections dedicated to specific people who have died of AIDS. Many of these contain articles of clothing and bits of memorabilia (keys,

ticket stubs, photos, travel souvenirs) and have been assembled by grieving friends and family. The quilt was begun in 1987 and now contains more than 46,000 individual 3-by-6 foot sections.

The touring panels were displayed at St. Alexis from November 29 through December 4. On World AIDS Day there was a panel discussion on the status of AIDS in the US and globally followed by a worship service with readings and poems from the Hindu, Jewish, Islamic and Christian traditions.

My daughters and I are inspired to create a section in memory of a good friend and adopted family member who succumbed to AIDS in 1990. After the awful pandemic that AIDS was then, it is gratifying to know that with new drugs and proper medical care, people are living with HIV/AIDS.

Judy Barnes is a member of St. Alexis/Jackson.



The Rev. Chuck Culpepper leads in the AIDS day memorial at St. Alexis/Jackson with quilt panels behind him.

Judy Barnes/Photo

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**GIFTS TO NOURISH**

**GIFTS TO STRENGTHEN**

**GIFTS TO SUSTAIN**

**GIFTS TO SUCCEED**

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