

THE STEEPLE

The Church of the Nativity

December 21, 2016

Our Mission

God's family at the historic Church of the Nativity is joyfully and energetically committed to sharing Christ's love and healing by proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel through worship and service to the world.

THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS!

Christmas Message from the Rector

On this day of the Winter Solstice, God's creation lets us know that the light always overcomes the darkness in the world around. And this means that it is almost Christmas with God's message of light, hope and peace for our world. On Christmas Eve we will proclaim that God's light of love and life we know in Jesus shines into the darkness of our lives and world. And we will hear that great proclamation from the Prophet Isaiah, The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

The Church of the Nativity will be ablaze with light and beauty like no other time we gather. It's cold and dark outside; it can be cold and dark in our lives, but we have seen a great light, and on us and our world that light always shines. Always! Ever!

The Christmas story captured so beautifully in Luke's Gospel finds its meaning in the first chapter of John's Gospel, also read during Christmas. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory...

Christmas lights that sparkle all around this time of year point to the light and life of God in Christ that brings life to all people. And so we who have beheld God's incarnation in the birth of Jesus and celebrate that birth, not only at Christmas but in our lives and world every day, put up lights and light candles, piercing the darkness. Our lives, too, pierce the darkness with love.

Did you notice during the season of Advent how the light kept getting brighter and brighter each Sunday with more candles lit in the church until finally that great Nativity Christmas Tree is lighted and glows with light. I love our Nativity Christmas Tree with its misshapen branches and unbalanced form. It is so charming, but if I think about it, it is so real. That is the way the live Christmas tree always is in the Anderson home. There are usually gaps in its fullness. We have to turn it until we get its best side, but it's never really symmetrical. It does not have that perfect shape that many "fake" Christmas trees display (one reason I hope we will keep our artificial tree at Nativity a few years longer; it was made before they became perfect!).

If we think about it, this is the way it is with our real lives—and not only with our physical bodies, but with our spiritual lives. Our lives are misshapen and often unbalanced. We do not have that perfect shape that we often wish we had. We have our faults and our sins and shortcomings. But thinking back upon the Christmas trees we decorate with beauty and lights, the lights shining on the trees shine through the gaps and diminish the faults. I like our Christmas tree best at night when the lights shining transform it beautifully. The lights on the great Nativity Christmas Tree make it splendid.

This Christmas, may we know that the light of Christ shining into our lives allows us to reflect a far greater beauty. Whatever darkness you may be feeling or you have known, allow God's perfect love and light in Christ pierce that darkness. Know that the greatest message of Christmastide is that we have seen a great light and that light always shines in the darkness **and the darkness cannot overcome it.** God's light is shining on and through your life. And it is beautiful. You are a splendid vessel of grace and of light.

What joy and mirth we can claim and celebrate at Christmas! I pray for God's light and life in Christ to keep shining through you and through our life and ministry together at Nativity. Wishing all a happy, blessed and joyful Christmas and blessings in the New Year.

Andy +



CHURCH
OF THE
NATIVITY,
EPISCOPAL

Est. 1843



**Annual
Responses
are still gladly
accepted!**

YES, YOU CAN
STILL RESPOND TO
GOD'S
MISSION
THROUGH
NATIVITY IN 2017!!!

[Click or tap for the
online response
form](#)

LIVING
GENEROUSLY

Children's Formation

Children's Christmas Pageant

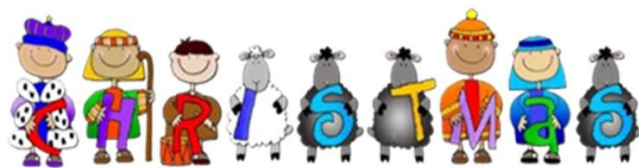
✳️ 4:00 pm Christmas Eve Service

It's our great Christmas Eve tradition: all the children playing the parts of the Nativity, gathered around Baby Jesus in church.

Our traditional pageant will be enhanced by new costumes this year.

If your child got fitted last week, great; if not, your child can still get a costume on Christmas Eve.

✳️ Please email Mary Coe mcoe@nativity-hsv.org with questions Can't wait to see all our beautiful children on Christmas Eve!



✳️ For all children age 3 through 6th grade

✳️ Saturday, December 24th

3:00-4:00pm - All pageant participants come to Ridley Hall. Look for signs in foyer to see where in Ridley to find your costume and get instructions. Children age 3 through 3rd grade sit with their families in church until their time in the pageant.

4:00pm Children's pageant and Holy Eucharist - After the pageant, parents meet their children in Ridley Hall to change out of costumes, then return to church for remainder of service

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sunday, December 25th 10:00am service, no nursery or children's chapel. No Sunday School this week.

Sunday, January 1st, 10:00am service, no nursery or children's chapel. No Sunday School this week.

Sunday, January 8th, Regular schedule resumes.



EYC Church of the Nativity



Chrismons, Caroling and the Pre-Christmas EYC Gathering



Next EYC:
Youth kickoff event,
January 8th



Contact: Sarah Watts swatts@nativity-hsv.org

Christmas Eve and Christmastide Service Schedule

Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 24

- 4:00pm* Children's Christmas Pageant and Holy Eucharist
 7:30pm Christmas Eve Festal Holy Eucharist
 10:30pm Christmas Eve Festal Holy Eucharist with incense

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 25

- 10:00am Holy Eucharist, Rite II, (Bibb Chapel)
 (no nursery, no Church School)

First Sunday after Christmas

Sunday, January 1

- 7:45am Holy Eucharist, Rite I, (Bibb Chapel)
 10:00am Christmas Readings and Carols
 (no nursery, no Church School)

* Nursery available



Organ Recital

Kenneth Miller

Friday, January 13th, 7:30pm

A Friends of Music Event

[Click or tap for Nativity's Concert Series](#)

2017 Youth Kickoff Event

When: Sun, Jan 8 from 4:30-6:00pm

Who: All 7th-12th graders & their Parents

Where: The LOFT (3rd floor Joffrion)

Why: To get together, have fun and look our 2017 events calendar

What to bring: An appetizer to share & your calendar

All youth and their parents are encouraged to gather together for our 2017 kickoff event. We'll play games and spend time with parents and youth looking at our 2017 calendar.

Nativity 101:

A Class for ANYONE New to Nativity Begins January 8th, 2017 at 10:00am in Ridley Hall

Nativity 101 is for anyone, including Episcopalians who have transferred in or in the process of transferring their letter. This class is the foundation for our Seekers / Catechumenate Class process that continues February 12th for anyone seeking to be Confirmed or Received into our Episcopal Church Community or existing Episcopalians who desire to renew their Baptismal Covenants.

- January 8 Who are we Nativity Episcopalians?
 January 15 *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) Practical Implications
 January 22 Sunday Worship, The Eucharist
 January 29 Church Manners and Etiquette
 February 5 How can YOU get involved?

For more information, please speak with Lane Tutt or Amy Baxter abaxter@nativity-hsv.org
 (256.533.2455)

WINTER WEEKEND

JANUARY 13-16, 2017

A 3 NIGHT RETREAT FOR ALL 7TH AND 8TH GRADERS

Price: \$145

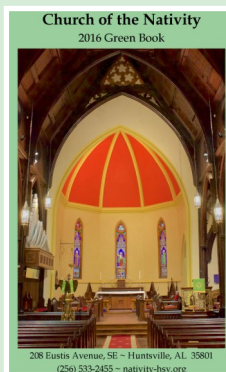
Contact Stratt Byars at stratt@campmcdowell.com for more information
 Website for Registration and Information: <http://campmcdowell.com/winter-weekend>

You are invited to Wonderful, Wonderful Camp McDowell for fun, worship, and community together. There'll be hot chocolate, campfires, inside and outside activities, and more friends than you'll know what to do with!
 Invite a friend and register today. Scholarships are available upon request.

Registration and event website:

www.campmcdowell.com/winter-weekend

Digital Green Books Available



We now have a digital version of our 2016 Green Book and directory. This version is designed to be searchable, but cannot be copied or printed. It is designed this way to protect the privacy of those listed, and includes a confidentiality message on the first page of the document.

To request a digital Green Book, please email Glenn Sommer
gsommer@nativity-hsv.org

We will only send directories to Nativity members. Green Books without directories are also available

Has your address, phone number, or email address changed? Have you dropped your landline? If so, please let us know so we can update our records.

Directory update information:

Connie Gadowski (256.533.2455)

cgadomski@nativity-hsv.org

Prayers and Love extended to Nativity's Interim Rector Dan McKee

We have been praying for Nativity's 2001-2003 Interim Rector, Father Dan McKee. Please continue keeping Dan and Diane in your prayers during this time when he is just returning home from the hospital. Encouraging cards or notes would be welcome and may be sent to their home in Mississippi:

500 Hazelton Drive
Madison, Mississippi 39110

Please no phone calls at this time. Mary Coral and Jimmy Murphree are in touch with the McKees and would be glad to share updates with you.

"OUR TIME"

A no-cost grief support
retreat for youth & adults

March 3-5, 2017

@ Camp McDowell



[Click here for more information about OUR TIME.](#)

Curious about Cursillo?

Informational Dinner - January 8th, 2017

Cursillo is an incredible movement that has provided many Episcopalians with a method to deepen their spirituality by focusing on piety, study, and action.



The Cursillo movement in the Diocese of Alabama is one of the strongest in the nation, with over 8,000 having attended a Cursillo weekend, including several hundred Nativity parishioners. Bishop Furman Stough was the driving force behind bringing Cursillo to our Diocese and Emile & Martha Joffrion were also instrumental in this process, participating in Alabama Cursillo #1 back in 1979.

The Cursillo Movement in the Diocese of Alabama and at the Church of the Nativity in particular is as vibrant now as it was back at its inception, maybe more so. Those of us whose lives it has transformed for the better can't wait to share it with a new generation of pilgrims. If you have been thinking about attending a Cursillo weekend (all of which are held at wonderful, wonderful Camp McDowell!), we are hosting a no-pressure, no-obligation informational dinner catered by Sally Stockton to answer any questions you may have.

DATE:	Sunday, January 8, 2017
TIME:	5:30 pm
PLACE:	Kay and Don Wheeler's home 506 Eustis Avenue
COST:	Nothing (same as the Cursillo weekend!)

We are excited about the upcoming year and hope you will consider enriching your spiritual life by becoming part of the exciting Cursillo community.

Cursillo weekends (Thursday through Sunday) offered in 2017 include March 9-12, April 6-8, June 8-11, September 7-10, and October 5-8 (you only attend one weekend). The registration deadline for the March weekend is January 30, 2017 and the April deadline is February 28, 2017.

I hope you will join us for this complimentary, obligation-free dinner and find out more about the Cursillo community at Nativity and in our Diocese.

If you would like to attend our dinner, please RSVP to David Collette drc3898@knology.net (256.527.2560) by January 3, 2017.

STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

Chances are, in the lead-up to Christmas, you are interested in finding a little bit of peace and quiet in the midst of this time of preparation and excitement.

The season before Christmas is often seen by the world as a chance to buy the right present, find the perfect tree, and keep busy with the parties, connections, and obligations that fill our schedules.

In the church world, the season of Advent helps us to prepare for the return of Christ into our lives by reminding us to slow down and appreciate the simple beauty of a single candle in the darkness, or the quiet stillness of a morning made new.

Advent is a beautiful time for us as faithful people, when we are called to look for those quiet moments in our lives and find the daily return of God in exciting but gentle ways. For many of us, there is a great tension between the hustle and bustle of the countdown to Christmas and the twenty-eight days of watching and waiting for Christ in our lives. We need help in making sense of this tension, and thanks be to God the church has tools to help us live in the tension and find peace in the midst of hustle and bustle.

Here are some thoughts on environmental stewardship as a way to connect our spirits with the Living Presence of God in the world:

Many of us find God mightily present in the beauty of creation, and reflecting on this presence is a fantastic way to slow down and wait for the Light of Christ to appear, yet again, in our lives. Like a sunrise, or a ray of light from behind a cloud, Christ's healing and redeeming Light breaks through the darkness and offers us grace and strength—even in the midst of the busiest of seasons!

May these meditations make us more aware of the miracle of Christ, who returns to us in Creation and shows forth His Light in the beautiful world that we experience!

"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork."

Psalm 19:1

In our rush-a-day world we often miss the natural world around us: the sun peeking over the trees as it awakens for its morning travels, the pink-tinged sunset, or the beauty of the full moon in the star-strewn night sky.

Let us wake up to the amazing world around us!

Prayers

Dear Lord, help us to learn to feast on the gifts of nature that you have provided for us. Let us stop taking these gifts for granted. We ask for your help in developing within us a deeper appreciation for all of your creatures and the natural world within which we live. Amen.

For moon and stars, for the fertile earth and seas, for that which you give to sustain us, we offer our thanks, gracious Lord. For all that is beautiful, extravagant and wild; for the sounds of birds and the scent of distant rain; for rivers and hills and the love that called them into being, we praise you, O generous God. Give us such a sense of yourself in creation, that we might see your presence in all things, blessing the earth with our presence, and not cursing. Amen

"Almighty God, whose loving hand hath given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor thee with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of thy bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Book of Common Prayer, page 826

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

Genesis 1:26

Meditation

"Dominion isn't exploitation and plunder; dominion is care, compassion and concern, the kind of dominion that God has over us and is described in one word—love. It is about taking care of what has been given for us to use, but not abuse."

The Rev. Canon Sally G. Bingham,
Love God, Heal Earth

Compiled from a book of Advent meditations written by the Environmental Stewardship Committee of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, San Marcos, TX and used with permission

CREATION - Let's Take Care of It

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 2:5

IMPORTANT NOTICE on Year-End Contribution Checklist

Type of contribution	Report for 2016	Report for 2017
* Checks written in December 2016 and deposited in church offering in January 2017		X
* Checks written and deposited in church offering in January 2017 but "backdated" to December 2016		X
* Checks written and deposited in church offering in December 2016 but "postdated" to 2017		X
* Checks written in December 2016 and deposited in the mail and postmarked in December 2016 but not received by the Church until January 2017	X	
* Checks written in December 2016 and deposited in the mail in December 2016 but not postmarked until January 2017 and not received by the Church until January 2017		X
Your 2016 statement will be mailed by January 31, 2017. The Church cannot assign "value" to any non-cash donations, including donated stock. Please consult your broker or tax advisor for the value of donated stock.		

Stocks and Appreciated Securities are a GREAT Way to Support Your Pledge and God's work through Nativity! -With another year of gains, parishioners who pay their pledges by stock transfer are well positioned for generosity AND tax advantages. By donating stock, you can offset those gains with a tax credit based on the appreciated value. You may prepay your 2017 pledge with a gift of stock made before year end, fulfill your 2016 pledge, or make a special Christmas offering to God's mission and ministry through Nativity. Contact Beverly Franklin bfranklin@nativity-hsv.org (256.533.2455) to find out more. It's easy....and you and the church gain!

Parish Financial Report - Period Ending 11/30/2016				
	CURRENT MONTH	BUDGET for PERIOD	ACTUAL YTD	BUDGET YTD
Pledges Received	89,843.18	103,610.56	1,070,594.79	1,151,384.47
Plate	10,061.25	7,083.33	78,001.72	77,916.67
Other Revenues	2,982.54	10,292.01	132,527.79	111,707.99
TOTAL	102,886.97	120,985.90	1,281,124.30	1,341,009.13
Diocesan, School of Theology, & Outreach	18,516.15	24,863.82	238,350.14	276,635.44
Personnel	66,540.71	71,250.00	792,562.35	783,750.00
Other Expenses	29,616.38	24,941.54	234,786.77	280,564.25
TOTAL	114,673.24	121,055.36	1,265,699.26	1,340,949.69
NET \$	(11,786.27)	\$ (69.46)	\$ 15,425.04	\$ 59.44

Copies of financial records and vestry minutes are available in the church office for members to review. Please contact Beverly Franklin or Amy Baxter to set up a time to review these documents.

Vestry meetings are open to the congregation. Vestry meetings are the **third Tuesday** of each month, beginning at 5:30pm in Joffrion Hall, 2nd Floor, East (J2E).

Huntsville Assistance Program (HAP)

With the first Sunday of January being New Year's Day, HAP Sunday will be January 8th



Items currently needed:

canned fruit
beans and rice (1lb bags)
soups
spaghetti sauce
spaghetti

Thanks for all your support!

PRAYER REQUESTS

We pray for those whom prayers have been requested:

Ann Bishop, Elise Goodson, Sue Magee, Tom Booth, Debra Cote, Mary Goodwin, Phyllis Beck, Sara Welch, Fr. Dan McKee, Shirley Singleton, Genny Hoskins Beaver, Rick Barnett, Jim Martin, Kai Gustafson, Keith McRae, Diane Helser, Dick Gragg, Bess Smith, Leigh Wahl, Elsie Olsen

We pray for the birth of a child:

Rowan Lee Hendrickson, son of Susy & Josh Hendrickson, born November 17th

We pray for a marriage:

Chelsea Gwathney & Walter Walker III were married at Nativity on December 10th

We pray for the departed:

Bradley Turner, nephew of Mary Hendricks
William Reckmeyer, father of Kaaren Dunn
Claire Johnston
Nancy Lackey

We pray for those deployed/serving with the Military:

Doug Faith, Afghanistan
Kenneth Vandervoort, US Navy

We give thanks for birthdays of our children:

12/21	Evan Ward	12/21	Molly Ward	12/22	Margaret Bryant	12/25	Charlie Vowell
12/28	Tess Lambert	12/29	Will Pinson	12/30	Nicholas Ocampo	1/1	Diana Sommer
1/2	Clover Farrell						

The Church Office will be closed

Friday, December 23rd & Monday, December 26th for the Christmas holiday

Monday, January 2nd in celebration of New Year's Day

2017 ALTAR FLOWER DEDICATIONS

Please print all information

(\$40 or \$20 for shared dedications)

Please make your check payable to:

Nativity Flower Guild

Date desired: _____

Your Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Would you share a dedication? Yes No

Do you wish to have your name listed in the bulletin? Yes No

Name for this altar flower dedication: _____

Please check your desired dedication:

- ☐ To the glory of God and...
- ☐ In loving memory of...
- ☐ In thanksgiving for...
- ☐ In celebration of...

Mail your form and check to:

Andrea Vandervoort
434 Locust Ave
Huntsville, AL 35801

If you have questions, you may call Andrea at (256) 539-2673.

STEEPLE SCHEDULE

The Steeple is published the 1st and 3rd

Wednesday of each month.

To submit events or articles, bring them to the church office or email:

gsommer@nativity-hsv.org

The deadline for the next issue is

9:00am Tuesday, January 3rd

CLERGY & STAFF

The Rev. Dr. Andy Anderson
Rector

The Rev. Rusty McCown
Associate

The Rev. Bonnie McCrickard
Associate

The Rev. Robert A. Serio, M.D.
Deacon

Christian Crocker
Choirmaster and Organist

Lane Tutt
Adult Christian Formation

Sarah Watts
Coordinator of Youth Ministry

Mary Coe
Children's Formation

Amanda Goeke
Children's Formation Assistant

Audrey Clayton
Nursery Coordinator

John Buyse
Property Manager

Marlin Wilder
Sexton

Regina Milton
Weekend Sexton

Sally Stockton
Kitchen Coordinator

Beverly Franklin
Bookkeeper/Business Mgr

Connie Gadomski
Worship & Ministry Assistant

Amy Baxter
Assistant to the Rector

Glenn Sommer
Communications

Prentice White
Verger/Wedding Coordinator

WARDENS' COUNCIL

Bill Starnes - Senior Warden

Allen Daniels - Junior Warden

Robert Dunn - Finance Chair

Brandon Smith - Treasurer

Margaret Devenish - Clerk

Brenda Chynoweth - Adult Formation

Beverly Farrington -
Long-Range Planning

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY

A member of the clergy is *always* on call. If you need assistance from a priest outside office hours, the priest on call will respond to your message.

The number to call *In Case of an Emergency Only* is 256.533.7007

All other calls should be directed to the main phone 256.533.2455 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

nativity-hsv.org

Upcoming Events at a Glance - January 2017

1	New Year's Day Holy Eucharist, Rite I, (Bibb Chapel) Christmas Readings and Carols (no nursery, no Church School)	7:45am 10:00am
2	Church office closed, New Year's Day Holiday	
8	HAP SUNDAY Nativity 101 begins & Church School resumes	10:00am
10	Simple Eucharist (Bibb Chapel) Men's Ministry Breakfast w/guest speaker	6:30am 7:00am
13	Friends of Music Presents ~ Kenneth Miller, Organ	7:30pm
16	Martin Luther King Jr Holiday (Church Office closed)	
23	Registration deadline for April 15 th Baptisms	
24	Centering Prayer with Sister Mary (Ridley Hall)	5:30pm
25	**Nativity Family Spaghetti Dinner (Ridley Hall)	5:30pm
29	Nativity Newcomers Dinner (off-site)	

****Nursery Available by Request**

December 21, 2016