“...and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.”

2 Chronicles 31:5
Stewardship—Expressing Our Commitment to the Lord

By the Rev. Rob Morpeth, Our Diocesan Deputy for Finance and Administration

Like most major strands of Christian practice, e.g. prayer, service, and worship, stewardship can serve as an overall framework for personal appropriation and practice of our faith. Stewardship can serve as a framework into which much that is central to our faith may be woven. Indeed, its theological base lies within one of the central or core beliefs of Christianity: The Incarnation, the belief that God inhabited human flesh, i.e. that the divine entered into and took form of the material world. This transforming insight of Christianity into the relationship between God and nature provides the Biblical and theological underpinnings for stewardship as a central way of expressing our personal and corporate commitment to the Lord.

Oddly though, Christians often fail to make this connection or to recognize its importance. We readily affirm that Jesus was both God and Man. We may, even intuitively, perceive that somehow in order to save humans God had to be one. Increasingly, we are translating this fundamental linking of the divine and human into meaningful action to protect and preserve the physical world. More and more Christians are realizing that Sunday after Sunday we say we believe in the resurrection of the body, which demurs simplistic ideas of a nonphysical soul floating invisibly “up” into the heavens at death. When it comes to money, however, we draw the line. “Preacher,” we say, “you’ve gone to meddlin’ now.” We are fine with admonitions to prayer, study, worship, and even service, but we feel talk of giving money is out of bounds.

The Biblical warrant though for such talk is, as they say, “legion.” The fundamental principle of giving something of what you have to God (proportional giving) and that a goal for such giving might be 10 percent (the tithe) is most clearly expressed in the presentation by Abram of 10 percent of his bounty to a priest-king named Melchizedek. Although the act of giving proportionally is implied even as early as the story of Cain and Abel, if we accept the chronology offered by the traditional arrangement of the Biblical texts. From this early beginning proportional giving is continually affirmed in Scripture (spend some time reading through the Scripture references in the box at right). Stewardship in the Bible is one of the ways we relate to God; it is one of the ways we acknowledge our dependence on God; and, most significantly in our own times, it is a primary way of witnessing to what we believe.

Theologically, because of the linking of the divine and human in the Incarnation, what we do with our material possessions, even our money, becomes a matter of faith. Christianity affirms a nonidealistic world view. Within the Christian understanding of reality there is no divide between spiritual and material realities with the latter seen as evil and the former as holy. In Holy Communion each Sunday we make it clear that the divine, the holy, can be and is conveyed within the regular stuff of the world. Indeed, even in preaching the encounter with God that makes the event sacramental happens through the use of normal words. We stand firmly within this strong theological current of Christianity when what we do with our money is consistent with what we say we believe. It becomes, if we are serious about growing in the faith, the “reasonable” thing to do.

Were it not enough to have the practice of stewardship affirmed Biblically and theologically, it is also affirmed in our tradition. Beginning in 1986 the General Convention affirmed the Biblical tithes as the appropriate goal for Christian giving. Since that time the Convention has reaffirmed that fundamental statement of the Biblical warrant for stewardship. In 2000 and 2003 our own diocesan convention also affirmed the tithes and proportional giving as the foundation of good stewardship practice in the diocese.

These beliefs are repeatedly affirmed by the once-a-decade gathering of Anglican bishops at Lambeth, England.

Were it not enough to find these supports for stewardship in the Bible, our tradition, and arising from reason, there are yet other ideas that, when taken to heart, may impel us to bring this fundamental Christian practice into our own practices along with prayer, study, service, and worship. Significant among these other ideas is our need to express our gratitude to God enacted weekly in the Eucharist within our ordering and use of money. Good stewardship practice reminds us that it is not our money. We are reminded that neither the skills we bring to bear nor the assets we are able to invest are ultimately of our own creation. Our surrender of a proportion of our earnings to God’s work in the world and our acceptance of the Biblical and tradition-based tithes as a goal for our giving are daily reminders of the gratitude toward God for the gift of life and the abiding Grace that sustains us.

For these reasons my wife and I are joyful “tithers.” I recall Bishop Stough during a presentation on stewardship bringing the faithful to a moment of decision. Within that context he chuckled and said, “The only thing I can promise you if you take this step (to embrace the tithe and proportional giving) is that you’ll have 10 percent less money, but,” he affirmed, “since taking that step, I have never wanted for anything.” Dare to be filled with that which the world cannot take away. Dare to take God at His word by beginning your own stewardship journey. Make proportional giving your practice and the tithe your goal.

Scripture Selections for Reflecting on Stewardship

| Leviticus 27: 30-34 | Luke 12: 33-34 |
| Malachi 3: 6-10 | 2 Corinthians 8: 1-5 |
| Matthew 6: 24 | 2 Corinthians 9: 6-15 |

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Given To Be Given in Return

What we spent we had; what we kept we lost; what we gave we have.

—Ancient British epitaph

Such times as these are wake-up calls. What they do, at their best, is call us back to God.

We must never allow lean times to blind us to God’s abundance and our need to return thanks in generous giving. I firmly believe that next to prayer and worship—

and inseparable from them—the most important aspect of our spiritual lives is our giving.

Our journeys in faith have transforming moments, decisive experiences that change us forever. One of mine involved stewardship. I had always “given to the church,” usually a set amount each week beginning with a dollar when I was young and working up to 10 dollars a week as a young adult (remember, this was an increasingly long time ago!). I had always thought of it as “my share” in support of the church.

Then one day a friend told me about his stewardship, how he and his wife gave a percentage of their income to God through the church, with the Biblical tithe as the standard they lived by. As a lifelong Episcopalian—and a clergy child at that—I do not remember anyone telling me about percentage giving and tithing. Later, through the Alabama Plan of Stewardship Education, I learned much more, and Becky and I began a journey toward tithing, which we have done ever since.

The transforming part of it was not tithing itself. It was the focus on giving to God that changed everything. Our giving was no longer focused on the church budget or a fair share. It became focused on returning gratefully to God a faithful portion of all that God had given us, through giving to the church. What had been duty turned into gratitude. Money that had been a problem became a way of life.

Since then, I have considered offering each year 10 percent or more of all that we have as one of the most joyful aspects of our spiritual journey. It keeps us centered in the reality that life is gift, not our possession. It makes us aware, in lean times as well as prosperous ones, of God’s unchanging abundance in our lives.

I heard Rowan Williams say last summer, “What is given to us is given to be given in return.” This is worth writing in large letters at the center of our lives. It is an essence of Christ’s teaching and why the Bible is so chock-full of passages about giving. Money and possessions are sticky. The dark power of this world always tempts us to see scarcity and wants us to hold on for dear life to what we have. In radical contrast Jesus always says “let go.” It is in giving that we receive, not in keeping. Love gives. That is what it does.

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Christian stewardship is a life-changing and life-saving practice. It keeps us in constant awareness that our life belongs to God and that in the hierarchy of spiritual virtues gratitude is near the top. All our giving is our way of saying “thank you, thank you” for the abundant gifts of life and the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

When our Lord said, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,” he was telling us a precious secret. What we do with our substance leads our hearts toward God—or away. This is what the ancient couple whose epitaph is quoted above had learned in their journey.

Only what we have given away can we keep in eternity. What is given to us is given to be given in return.

All that we are and have is God’s extravagant gift. May all of our stewardship be extravagant gratitude.

Your servant in Christ,

**Where the Dream Meets the Budget**

Once upon a time, when I was young priest with dark brown hair and even goofier than I am now, I was elected to serve on the Executive Committee in the Diocese of Mississippi, a committee somewhat like our Diocesan Council, tending to the business of the diocese. I regarded it as part of my continuing education and tried to pay attention as we looked at line items, interest rates, and amortization schedules. Every meeting we looked at long columns of numbers that all added up to require that we be very careful in our spending and to try very hard to get people to give more to the work of the church so that the budget would balance. That was the first thing I learned—that the whole point of the committee was to get the budget to balance.

The worst part for me was when different parishes or ministries tried to get an idea past us. They’d come in with drawings and plans and tell us compelling stories about why they needed to do what they were trying to do, and ask us for permission to do it, and very often (and this is what made it so miserable for me) for financial support. They wanted financial support from the diocesan budget, the same budget we had already established yet again that we were going to have a very difficult time balancing.

Generally when I don’t really know what I’m talking about I try not to say anything; as a consequence I’m usually fairly quiet. But sometimes something breaks loose and I hear myself talking even though I don’t really know where I’m going with it. A group from the southern part of the state had come before the Executive Committee with lofty visions and an infectious optimism, full of possibilities, hope, and energy. We sent them away to reconsider the size and scope of their project and to come back with a more reasonable financial plan. I felt like we’d been too concerned about the numbers and not receptive and encouraging enough of their dreams, and I said so. I think I preached about the value of dreaming dreams a little before my brain could catch up with my mouth, and when I stopped, there was a stunned silence until one of the older priests of the diocese, a veteran of many such discussions, said, “Kid, this is where the dream meets the budget.” (He might have said Kee, but it felt like he said Kid, and it makes a better story.)

To the relief of all I retreated back into silence, and the meeting dragged on to its end. But I’ve often wondered about that moment, wondered whether he was right and whether I should have kept on trying to make my point. Since then I’ve been in many, many meetings where the dream seems to collide with the budget, and I can tell you this: the budget almost always wins.

A budget is nothing more than a tool, something we use to help us plan how we can be stewards of our resources to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel, the Dream of God, that the Church, with all her vestries, committees, budgets, schedules, and agendas, exists to serve. . . . So here’s what I want to say about stewardship: please don’t give to the budget. Please give to the mission of the Church, to the work of God in your parish and in our diocese; please give to the Dream.

For a long time it felt like that shouldn’t be right, but it took me years to figure out why. I had to unlearn the first thing I thought I knew about budgets for it to make sense: balancing the budget is not really our highest goal. The budget can be very useful and is often quite important, and I’ve learned how to pay attention, which numbers to look for, and which I can ignore. But a budget is nothing more than a tool, something we use to help us plan how we can be stewards of our resources to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel, the Dream of God, that the Church, with all her vestries, committees, budgets, schedules, and agendas, exists to serve. Not all ideas are good ideas, some plans are not the best way for us to serve the Dream, and just because we can do something doesn’t mean we should. We have all those vestries and committees to determine the best way for us to do what we are called and set apart to do; budgets are some of the tools they use. But when we focus on the means so closely that we can’t see the ends, when we confuse what we are pointing with and what we should be pointing at, when we reduce the mission of the Church to numbers on a page, we are in danger of losing who we are. We are people of the Gospel, called to carry on God’s Dream.

So here’s what I want to say about stewardship: please don’t give to the budget. Please give to the mission of the Church, to the work of God in your parish and in our diocese; please give to the Dream. Please don’t give so that the numbers all line up at the bottom of a spreadsheet; please give generously as a way of giving thanks to God for all you have been given in God’s generous love and so that your Church can share the love we have found in Jesus Christ. Please consider prayerfully what you are willing to give to the work of God in this part of God’s Church.

When the Dream meets the Budget, we need to remember that it is the Dream that you and I are called to serve.

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**Parish Outreach Grants Help Fund the “Dream”**

By Judy Quick, Chair of Our Diocesan Department of Mission and Outreach

Although budget constraints provided less funding than in previous years, thanks to your faithful donations of parish covenants, the Department of Mission and Outreach was able to divide $15,000 among nine parishes in the Diocese of Alabama for 2009. The purpose of the grants is to encourage parishes to start new or expand existing outreach ministries that will become self-sustainable within three years.

This year the grants address a variety of needs throughout our diocese, including food ministries, youth mentoring, programs for senior citizens, resources for those struggling with the difficult economic situation, ministries to our brothers and sisters in Christ who want to learn English, and programs to honor the Stewardship of Creation.

The 2009 Parish Outreach Grant recipients include Grace Church in Cullman, St. Andrew’s in Montevallo, St. Andrew’s in Tuskegee, St. Joseph’s on-the-Mountain in Mentone, St. Mark’s in Birmingham, St. Michael’s in Fayette, St. Timothy’s in Athens, Trinity Church in Bessemer, and Trinity Church in Demopolis.

For more information about applying for a Parish Outreach Grant, please contact Judy Quick at 205/699-6862 or jjquick@bellsouth.net.
The Alabama Plan—Alive and Well


The year was 1969, and the Rt. Rev. George Murray was Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama. A task force headed by two young priests, Bill Stough and Bill Youn, challenged the leadership of our diocese to envision a less secular, more faithful stewardship method—their first and embryonic version of a new stewardship education plan. Biblical and theological, the new approach combined prayer, Bible study, psychological insights, and good business methods to help parishes and individuals examine their current stewardship beliefs and practices and give them tools and resources to move toward a more spiritual and satisfying stewardship portion of their lives in Christ.

As the program developed, a cadre of lay and ordained individuals was trained to assist parishes as consultants. Within a few years the parishioners of the Diocese of Alabama had the highest average pledge in the American Episcopal church. (Alabama, for the year 2007, had the second highest average annual pledge, based on average Sunday attendance.) Soon other dioceses and denominations took notice, proving that its concepts and methods are universally applicable and effective and as timeless as the Gospel they follow and proclaim.

Believing that “the stewardship commitment of a parish will not rise above the level of commitment of their leaders,” the Plan begins with that leadership, clergy and laity. A consultant shepherd the leadership through an “Exploratory” session to determine whether or not the parish is prepared to commit to the program. If so, the consultant and parish enter into a covenant based on a set of criteria, which include acceptance of the tithe as the Christian standard and goal, a long-range plan of increased outreach for the parish, and a commitment to private and corporate prayer for the parish and the program. A Stewardship Committee, which also subscribes to the criteria, is responsible for the recruitment of the needed Workers to make the Plan function. This Godly Pyramid Scheme is crucial as it is the Workers who are “educated” in the concepts and theology of the Plan and from whom increased commitment of time, talent, and treasure is generally experienced. Their number is mathematically determined by the size of the parish as the covenant commits the parish to provide one trained Worker for each four remaining parishioners. The original process envisions a Stewardship Sunday home visit by the Workers to those whom they have chosen. The Workers then report to the Team Captain who recruited them. There is also a follow-up group in place.

I remain convinced that the Alabama Plan of Stewardship Education was inspired at its inception and that it continues to be a gift of grace to all who are led to adopt its discipline.

of the parish’s response is the prelude for a year-round stewardship education program for all ages. The Alabama Plan includes a number of positive departures from the usual stewardship “campaign,” the most significant being:

1. Accepting the Biblical tithe as the norm and goal of every Christian’s giving.
2. Calculating current giving as a percentage of income and proportionate giving as a tool to move toward the tithe.
3. Waiting to prepare the annual parish budget until the pledges are known, rather than announcing a budget goal to be funded.
4. Replacing the “should” and “ought” vocabulary with “pray” and “consider,” substituting grace for guilt.
5. Defining clearly the distinction between secular “fundraising” and “Christian Stewardship,” with increased giving as a secondary result of Stewardship Education and practice.
6. Focusing on the spiritual centrality of stewardship as a gift from God for the welfare and joy of the giver, and as a powerful tool for Discipleship development.

My involvement with the Alabama Plan began in 1974 when I was new to the church and to St. John’s in Montgomery. A friend visited us on Stewardship Sunday and, without apology or pressure, outlined the program, shared her own stewardship experience and left a pledge card with an invitation to consider the concepts. Carolyn and I prayed and talked, and, trusting God’s promises, adopted the goal of a tithe of all that God had given us. Because of the powerful positive impact this soon had on our lives, I wanted to learn more and to share with others, and was trained as an Alabama Plan Consultant. As my stewardship expanded my spirituality deepened, and within four years we were in seminary. In the parishes I have served since and as an outside consultant, I have used the Plan, and variations and insights of it, with unfailing effectiveness, both spiritually and financially, when faithfully applied and followed.

I remain convinced that the Alabama Plan of Stewardship Education was inspired at its inception and that it continues to be a gift of grace to all who are led to adopt its discipline. I pray that we can truthfully echo Chapter 29 of 1 Chronicles, David’s magnificent hymn of praise, the ideal King now also the ideal Steward, in his quintessential statement of faithful stewardship: “All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee.”

Your Treasures Can Give Life to Others

By Judy Quick, Our Diocesan ERD Representative

“And Jesus looking upon him loved him and said to him, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”—Mark 10:21

Jesus was clear and unequivocal. Following the law is all well and good, but it is not enough. The Great Command is to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The man with great possessions obeyed the law but found it too hard to obey Jesus, so he went away sorrowful.

We need not be sorrowful. We can find joy as we share our abundance with the poor in many ways, through our overflowing of time, talent and treasure.

One way is to honor your loved ones with a gift that makes a real difference in the lives of families living in extreme poverty around the world. The Gifts for Life Catalog from Episcopal Relief and Development offers a host of ways you can help lift others from poverty to prosperity, from adversity to advantage, from sickness to strength, and from hunger to hope.

High Impact gifts can build wells for clean water and sanitation, provide entire communities relief when disaster strikes, and offer micro-loans to launch a small business. Smaller gifts can buy a fish farm, honeybees, fruit trees, or a cow, chicken, or goat to feed families and provide ongoing income. Nets for Life® provides training with the mosquito nets to protect families from deadly malaria. Other programs offer HIV/AIDS education and support. With 92 percent of every donor dollar going directly to the programs, this is one of the best investments we can make for our good fortune.

You can order a Gifts for Life Catalog online at www.er-d.org or by calling 800/334-7626 ext. 3129. You can also contact Judy Quick at 205/668-6862 or jquick@bellsouth.net.
I Am a Tither

By the Rev. William A. Yon, a Retired Priest of Our Diocese

The practice of tithing has meant that I never quite caught on to the consumer economy. If it had been left up to me, our consumer economy would have gone into a recession long before now. I worry about that a little bit, but not much.

Another thing I like about tithing is that it is a way of keeping me connected to a world that is bigger than myself and my own immediate family. I define tithing as giving away 10 percent of my income to do what the Lord wants done in the world outside my own immediate family. So for me, it includes giving to my church, and to Habitat for Humanity, and to Greater Birmingham Ministries, and to a few other things that attempt to help those who have a lot less money than I do.

Those who gathered around my dining room table could fight over how we were going to spend 90 percent of our income, but 10 percent was set aside for those who were not at the table to speak for themselves. I like that.

Why 10 percent? Aside from the fact that it is in the Bible, I’m not quite sure. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that we are on the decimal system, and maybe that has something to do with the fact that we have 10 fingers, and not 8 or 12. Is 10 percent an arbitrary rule like a ground rule double, or is it a natural law like body temperature is 98.6 degrees?

In any case, the Book of Deuteronomy lays out the law of the tithe, specifying that 1 part out of 10 of one’s harvest is to be set aside to offer at the temple. The tithe offering had three uses: to maintain the community of faith, to support those who ministered to the community of faith, and to provide for the needs of those who have little—the widows, and the orphans, and the sojourners. I still think of the uses of the tithe in pretty much that same way.

I think tithing is mentioned only a couple of times in the New Testament and not in a very favorable light. Jesus says, “Alas for you, Pharisees. You pay tithes of mint and rue and garden-herb, but have no care for justice and the love of God. It is these you should have practiced without neglecting the others.” The tithing Pharisee becomes the poster-boy for prideful self-righteousness. Jesus says “Go ahead and tithe, but don’t neglect the weightier matters of the law.”

Why 10 percent? All I can say is that by the time I have given away 10 percent of my income, I can no longer pretend that I don’t have enough money to live on. The power of the demon whose name is YAHNEEDMOR has been broken. Some may be able to experience liberation by the time they have given away 8 percent or 5 percent or maybe even 2 percent. I don’t know. But for me 10 percent seems about right. It seems to be a kind of natural law of the way things are.

In talking about tithing, I have said nothing about “your church needs more money.” I don’t know that I have ever run into a church that didn’t need more money. But my stewardship decisions are not about that. My stewardship decisions are about what I have, not about what the church needs. I say, “Here is my 10 percent, or a large chunk of it. Do what you can with it.” Churches can be as oppressed as any one of us by the demon whose name is YAHNEEDMOR.

When our children were small, we instituted the “three bottle system.” We had a lot of those little baby food jars around the house, so each kid got three of them. I cut a slot in the lids, and the bottles were labeled Spending Bottle, Savings Bottle, and God’s Bottle. When the kids got to be about six years old, they would get an allowance. The starting rate at the time, I believe, was 20 cents a week, if you can believe that—2 cents went into God’s bottle, 2 cents into the savings bottle, and 16 cents into the spending bottle. I remember Betsy saying one time when she put the 16 cents into the spending bottle, “Boy, that’s a lot.”

When we went to church, they would fish the 2 cents out of God’s bottle and put in the offering plate. I remember feeling kind of funny when Stephen put in his 2 cents and the kid at the other end of the pew put in a quarter that his father had just pulled out of his pocket. I consoled myself with the thought that Stephen was learning to tithe—that other kid was learning to give a quarter. I thought that each of those practices might persist.

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After while I realized that calling one of the bottles “God’s Bottle” was bad theology. They are ALL God’s Bottles. God’s spending bottle. God’s savings bottle. And God’s giving bottle. So we changed the third bottle to the Giving Bottle.

Obviously in mentioning this, I am thinking that some of you may get interested in looking around the house to see if you can find some baby food bottles so you can institute the Three Bottle System in your household. If you decide to give it a try, I must warn you that you may wind up learning more from the Three Bottle System than your children do. Our children had been doing the Three Bottles for quite a while before my wife and I realized she and I were doing a Two Bottle System. We had a giving bottle and a spending bottle, but no savings bottle. So we decided to add the third bottle and began saving. We had learned that we could live on 90 percent of our income. Now we would see if we could live on 80 percent of our...
income. So we did, and after a while our savings started making money, and pretty soon we had what I began to call our “accumulated wealth.”

Incidentally, I have never thought of 10 percent tithing as some kind of final plateau of perfection. It may be a significant watershed on the stewardship journey, but not a final destination. That remained an abstract notion, however, until our kids were grown and gone, and my church decided it wanted to build a new building, and I wanted to contribute to it. I was already tithing, but I wanted to do more than that, so I reached into my “accumulated wealth” to contribute to the building fund: a contribution from my capital to support the parish’s capital project. It had nothing to do with the 10 percent tithe of my annual income. But that’s another story. I mention it here only by way of

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saying that tithing is not necessarily a final destination and the end of the story. The actual “end of the story” brings us to the heading of estate planning, or as I prefer to call it “the stewardship of a lifetime of accumulated wealth”—SLAW: My parents left me some money, and I would like to leave my children some money. The question is: how much? Neither my great and good friend Warren Buffett nor I believe in dynastic wealth, so each of us plans to leave our children only a relatively modest sum. In my case, I would like for it to be somewhat more than my parents left me, but there will be room also for bequests to some of the institutions that have blessed my life and to the causes that represent my most cherished values.

It’s hard to hang around church much without bumping into the idea that generosity is a good thing. That’s a good thing to share what you have with others. What is the alternative? To gather all the wealth into just a few big piles and put it in just a few pockets?

Tithing is, of course, a way of spreading the wealth around. I like doing it. It has blessed my life. And I cheerfully invite you to consider joining me as members of Tithers No Longer Anonymous. If you are interested in pursuing that idea a bit further, step one is to figure out what percentage of your income you are currently giving away. If you discover you are giving away 2 percent, the notion of jumping to 10 percent all at once will probably strike you as “fiscally unrealistic.” But if you decide giving away 2 percent is not enough to make you happy, you may want to consider increasing that percentage year by year in the direction of the tithe. I know a lot of people who have become tithers in just that way. God always starts with us where we are, so the first step is to figure out where we are now. That little exercise will not cost you a nickel. It’s just arithmetic, but it’s a way of looking at where you are, so you can begin to think about where you want to go.

The idea of starting where you are and growing is part of something called Modern Tithing that I ran into a number of years ago. Modern Tithing proposes also that the tithe may be understood to include all charitable giving, not just to the church; and that the tithe may be figured on after-tax income. Both these ideas relate to the fact that some of the responsibility for providing for the needs of the poor, which was once the sole responsibility of the faith community, has now been taken over by nonchurch institutions, and some of that responsibility is also included among the functions of government, supported by our tax dollars.

In telling you something about my stewardship story, I hope you will take note of the fact that I have not once used the words “should, ought, or must.” You may expect to hear “should, ought, and must” from parents, priests, and other patrulmen, but you didn’t hear them from me.

From me you hear the words of St. Paul (2 Corinthians 9:7): “Let each person give as he has decided for himself, without reluctance or compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver.” Each of us decides for him or herself. That’s a fact. Or is it, really? Are you just giving from habit? (“Put me down for the same as last year.”) Or have you given it new thought? Where are you going with your giving? What goals have you set for your giving? Have you made a real decision after prayer and careful consideration? Paul’s words invite us to be more intentional as each of us decides for himself or herself.

“Let each person give as he has decided for himself, without reluctance . . .” Just go on and do it. Don’t hold back. “Let each person give as he has decided for himself, without compulsion . . .” You don’t have to. Nobody is making you do this. That’s one the fastest one-two punches in the scripture: just go ahead and do it . . . you don’t have to.

For God loves for us to be cheerful in our giving. If you are frowning when you write down that number on your pledge card, maybe you are writing down the wrong number. Maybe you are experiencing some reluctance to turn loose of what you have. Maybe you are experiencing some sense of external compulsion. When our giving stems from the increasingly generous heart that is God growing within us, that’s when the giving gets cheerful.

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In telling you something about my stewardship story, I hope you will take note of the fact that I have not once used the words “should, ought, or must.” You may expect to hear “should, ought, and must” from parents, priests, and other patrulmen, but you didn’t hear them from me.

From me you hear the words of St. Paul (2 Corinthians 9:7): “Let each person give as he has decided for himself, without reluctance or compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver.” Each of us decides for him or herself. That’s a fact. Or is it, really? Are you just giving from habit? (“Put me down for the same as last year.”) Or have you given it new thought? Where are you going with your giving? What goals have you set for your giving? Have you made a real decision after prayer and careful consideration? Paul’s words invite us to be more intentional as each of us decides for himself or herself.

“Let each person give as he has decided for himself, without reluctance . . .” Just go on and do it. Don’t hold back. “Let each person give as he has decided for himself, without compulsion . . .” You don’t have to. Nobody is making you do this. That’s one the fastest one-two punches in the scripture: just go ahead and do it . . . you don’t have to.

For God loves for us to be cheerful in our giving. If you are frowning when you write down that number on your pledge card, maybe you are writing down the wrong number. Maybe you are experiencing some reluctance to turn loose of what you have. Maybe you are experiencing some sense of external compulsion. When our giving stems from the increasingly generous heart that is God growing within us, that’s when the giving gets cheerful.
The Many Reasons and Benefits of Giving Monthly to St. Luke’s

Members of parishes across our diocese are asked to talk about stewardship during worship services or write reflections for their parish publications. Members of St. Luke’s in Birmingham and St. Peter’s in Talladega graciously agreed to share their thoughts here and in “The Alabama Episcopalian Plus” on our diocesan Web site (www.dioala.org/096.html).

From a reflection by Sallie Johnson, a member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, printed in “The Dialogue”

The American Heritage Dictionary defines “steward” as one who manages another’s property, finances, or other affairs; an administrator, supervisor. In defining “Christian stewardship,” I remember the story in Genesis where God gives mankind “dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth” (1:26). What a tremendous gift—and what a responsibility!

As young adults, my husband and I made a commitment to St. Luke’s. Gradually we were able to increase our pledges in response to the needs of our parish. This commitment became more than a responsibility to take care of God’s place; it became a response, with gratitude, to our love of our church and our church family.

We have raised two children at St. Luke’s; now they are raising their families here. The gratitude for all St. Luke’s has meant to us through the past 34 years is difficult to express, so I suppose our financial pledge is a tangible way we combine our sense of responsibility with our love for our church home and the place where we know we have seen the faces of God and felt His presence.

From a reflection by Trippe Gray, a member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, printed in “The Dialogue”

Early in my adulthood I remember telling people that I did not often go to church (in another denomination) because I could not afford to give what was “required.” I cringe every time I think about those conversations. Out of pressure or guilt, I may have thrown a few wadded bills into the plate when it was passed around, but I remember feeling hesitant to do even that. Although I was a Believer during that time, my heart was not in the right place. I did not understand the blessings of Christian stewardship, and I had certainly not experienced that kind of blessing from giving.

Then a friend in the ministry gave me a Bible study—a tape about the Song of Solomon by a pastor from Texas named Tom Nelson. His message was frank, matter-of-fact, and compelling. His words touched me deeply and made God’s message real to me. My spiritual life began to take off, and for the first time I wanted to start giving financially. I began to pledge and started giving monthly to a missionary team and did so for several years. My heart sang every time I wrote that check, and I felt strength, security, and happiness in my giving. I was experiencing the joy that comes from being a cheerful giver.

Many years have passed, and I have found my spiritual family and home at St. Luke’s. I want to see our parish thrive in so many ways. I give to St. Luke’s because I love to see what we do for “those in need.” I give from a business standpoint—this institution needs operating capital. I give because God has blessed me and my family, and it just feels good. I give to invest in God’s Kingdom.

Thoughts from Bill McGeehe, a member of St. Peter’s in Talladega

The fiscal year of 2009 presented the customary new budget problems and also new hope for the parish of St. Peter’s in Talladega. Having had several transitions in leadership over the last few years, with the guidance of rectors as well as interim priests, St. Peter’s was thrilled to begin the new year with the Rev. Ray Waldon, our part-time priest in charge.

Father Ray brought with him a sense of excitement and energy about God’s plans for our parish and our community. The congregation was filled with a sense of the adventure before us and new growth of our church family. In the Episcopal Church there is always a familiarity and comfort from the things we love from our past, but there is also the longing and hope of the good things to be that are “unseen.” The excitement of Father Ray’s stewardship plan and goals for St. Peter’s were infectious and productive, and the increase in giving gave new life to our parish’s hopes and dreams.

We are on our way to good things in God’s name. With God’s help the giving and the pledges for 2010 will help us continue on our journey.

From a reflection by Leslie Naff, a member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, printed in “The Dialogue”

I have never been good at asking anyone for money, but I can invite anyone to be a part of something wonderful and rewarding. I want the members of St. Luke’s to take ownership and be good stewards of all the incredible programs we offer. These programs happen both under our roof and outside our halls. I do believe that the more you put into anything—with this I mean your enthusiasm, your efforts, your time, your heart, and yes, your money—you do reap the benefits.

My prayer is that we all may establish or nurture a giving relationship with God and our church. These relationships give so much in return. This place I call home is so important to me and brings me such joy. I pray that each of you feel the same, and I believe giving of ourselves in all ways is at the heart of this joy!

Thoughts from Donna Dase, a member of St. Peter’s in Talladega

To me it is important to support the church financially to enable the various programs. For example, I do not have kids in high school, but having a strong EYC is important to me.

It makes me feel good to give. I feel like I am doing God’s work.

From a reflection by Cindy Doody, a member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, printed in “The Dialogue”

A few weeks ago my daughter Margaret asked me, “Mommy, what is stewardship?” It was easy to explain to her about tithing to God, but I wanted her to understand why we give to the church. I explained the greatest commandment is to love God and love others. I give because I love God, and he asks me to give. I give to help others. Giving is one of the easiest ways to give back to the Lord for all the blessings he has given me.

From a reflection by Thomas Logan, a member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, printed in “The Dialogue”

Christian stewardship is something that has to be learned. So how does one learn about stewardship? In my case, it was through example. I learned that church was important to our family through my parents’ action. They did not sit me down and explain that church was important—we just went and again and again. I learned through my parents’
example that church was the number one priority.

The same was true about stewardship. My parents did not lecture me about stewardship—they just did stewardship. My parents never told me we should give money to those less fortunate, but I remember them discussing giving money to the Nashville Rescue Mission, a local Christian homeless shelter. I remember riding there with one of them to give a check at Christmastime—another example of their stewardship.

Now my family has stewardship modeled for us by our friends here at St. Luke’s. In our family, the older children receive an allowance. Out of every week’s allowance, a portion is set aside for the church. The girls decide how they want to give the money. They have given to a priest’s discretionary fund, Birmingham Hospitality Network, and our missionaries. We borrowed this idea from a St. Luke’s family who had done something similar with their children.

Our family’s response has been inspired by the examples of others. Is your response inspiring anyone?

From a reflection by Pat Miller, a member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, printed in “The Dialogue”

I was raised in a Baptist church in Montgomery, and from a very early age I can remember learning about stewardship. In our particular church, the leadership did a very smart thing (in my opinion)—they gave pledge envelopes to each member of a family, not just one envelope per family. It was at that young age that I began taking $1 to church with me, scaled away in an envelope with my name on it. What I did not know, at the time, was that the church was educating me on stewardship. This was a process and did not just happen overnight. The seed was planted and the foundation was laid for future growth.

After college my wife and I joined the Episcopal Church. As we began our journey in the church as adults, the lessons I learned as a child concerning stewardship began to surface. I felt a calling and a sense of responsibility. The Lord was asking us to trust him. I already knew what the scripture said about tithing; remember the foundation was laid at an early age. Now it was time to act. My wife and I made a conscious decision to trust the Lord and the church with our first fruits. It has been a decision that we have never regretted. The Lord has continued to bless our family in ways that I could never have imagined. Thanks be to God.

Thoughts from Rae Roberts, a member of St. Peter’s in Talladega

I believe we should give 10 percent as our Biblical tithe. I feel that when I give 10 percent, I get 100 more times than that back.

To me, time and talent are equally important. God has given each of gifts to use for His Kingdom, and we should share those gifts and talents.

From a reflection by Warren B. Cain, a member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, printed in “The Dialogue”

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

My family began attending St. Luke’s when I was very young. My parents were confirmed in 1952. I sang in the children’s choir in the Little Red Church in the village. I was confirmed by Bishop Carpenter in 1957. I walked in the procession following the cross up the hill to our new church building. I was married here, and our children were baptized, confirmed, and both were married here! Four of our grandchildren were baptized here. Our St. Luke’s preachers buried my parents and my older sister.

I worship here, pray here, laugh here, and cry here; visit with old friends and make new friends here; attend Sunday school and have taught Sunday school here; have eaten breakfast and lunch and dinner here; sing hymns and attend Bible studies here; serve on the altar guild here; receive the Body and Blood of Christ and serve the Blood of Christ to my church family as a Lay Eucharistic Minister here; and I feel the presence of the Lord here every time I enter this building.

St. Luke’s has been part of my life—all my life! How can I not give my “earthly treasure” to this place . . . where my heart dwells?


“Beloved, stewardship requires putting the expectations of others on a pedestal that may or may not reflect reality. We need to confront that false image—ourselves and others.”

From an article by the Rev. Ray Waldon, Priest in Charge of St. Peter’s in Talladega

I like to imagine that God created the earth and said to us, “I am giving you 90 percent of all that I have to make your life better. I can make wonderful things happen with that little old 10 percent that remains for me so that the hungry can be fed and the poor clothed. If you have a tough year, I will understand your plight. Use 95 percent or even 99 percent of all that is mine to pay your unexpected medical bills or keep your family whole during your layoff.

Beloved, stewardship requires putting the expectations where they belong—in full view with no apologies. It is a joyful time! The old cliché is so true: “Don’t give until it hurts, give and give until it feels really, really good.”
The Alabama Episcopal Foundation—Ensuring Donors’ Intentions Are Honored

By the Rev. Rob Morpeth, Our Diocesan Deputy for Finance and Administration

When does a will become a testament? The answer, of course, is that all wills are testaments, testaments to our forgetfulness or greed, testaments to the values of our lives in the same way that it has been argued in earlier years that our checkbooks would be. These legal documents, which provide for the distribution of our material assets upon death, can also become extraordinary witnesses to our deepest held beliefs about life and the values of faith, family, and friends. The choice is ours but must be made in advance. The Alabama Episcopal Foundation was established to help us with that choice and to ensure that, when it involves a gift to our parish or another Episcopal entity, the wishes of the donor continue to guide the use of the gift.

Established in 1999, the Alabama Episcopal Foundation provides a basket into which bequests, big and small, from all Episcopalians and friends of the Church can be gathered and disbursed with the safeguarding of the donor’s intent and service to the Church and community as the guiding principles. The Foundation Board guides the investment of gifts and the dispersal of funds to the parishes and organizations designated by the donor. For parishes it means an annual “extra check” representing 5 percent of the asset value of the gifts designated for that parish. The funds can be used to initiate new ministries and in service to the community. For larger parishes 25 percent of the annual distribution can also be used for capital expenditures; for smaller parishes 33 percent can be used for capital expenditures of the parish. Without the complications of creating legal documents to direct the use of bequests, donors can give with the confidence that the Foundation will oversee the use of their gifts and that ministry and service, rather than utility bills and office supplies, will be the beneficiaries of their generosity. Donors can “remember the Church in their wills” encouraged by the thought that their contributions will be pooled with others for investment thereby reducing broker fees and enabling diverse investment. They can give knowing that the ministry of their parishes or the Episcopal entity they identify will be strengthened by their gifts in perpetuity.

In most conversation about planned gifts or legacy stewardship most people think first of the more complicated, tax-driven gifts. These gifts attract much attention because they tend to be large, but more than 90 percent of the support for nonprofits through planned gifts actually comes from people simply remembering the organization in their will. Often this act of generosity requires only the insertion of a single sentence in a will, and it is something we can all do. We can specify that a certain percentage of our remaining estate flow to the Alabama Episcopal Foundation for the use of our parish or another entity. This simple sentence can trigger a gift that is administered by the foundation but the assets of which, along with future earnings, are distributed to the parish or designated organization. By the insertion of a single sentence in your will, it becomes a living testament to your commitment to God’s work in the world through the church.

Of course gifts can also be made through the foundation for the benefit of parishes by the purchase of life insurance, through gifts of real estate and stocks, and through the dispersal of excess retirement account balances. Including a sentence in our wills remembering the Church through the foundation, however, remains the easiest way to ensure that our last testament reflects the beliefs and values we held in life.

The Alabama Episcopal Foundation exists to serve you, your parish, and your diocese and its ministries by receiving, investing, and distributing your bequests and gifts.

For more information please contact the Rev. Rob Morpeth, Deputy for Finance and Administration, at our diocesan offices (Carpenter House), 205/715.2060 ext 311 or RMorpeth@dioala.org.

Empowering Parishes and Organizations

For more than 60 years the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF) has been providing programs, products, and services to congregations, dioceses, and related organizations to help them develop financial resources and build and train leaders. The independent lay-led foundation, established by former Presiding Bishop Henry Knox Sherrill, “seeks to bring about a growing number of healthy, vital, and vibrant congregations in service to God’s mission with the capacity to empower and support their members to live out the Gospel.”

The foundation’s Growing Financial Capacity initiatives help leaders conserve and grow the gifts and bequests that donors have entrusted to the parish or organization. Building Leadership programs and materials help train leaders to empower everyone in their church or group, and Forging Partnerships helps bring faith communities together to maximize their impact in service to the Church and world. In addition ECF has played key roles in establishing and supporting the Revolving (Church Building) Loan Fund, the Alban Institute, Godly Play, the College for Bishops, the Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS), the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP), the Fresh Start Program, the CREDO wellness program, and the Zaczekus Project on Episcopal identity and vocation.

ECF has also helped parishes, dioceses, schools, and agencies with capital campaigns and offers classes, workshops, and numerous brochures on numerous topics as well as an online newsletter. For more information about how ECF’s resources can serve your parish, please contact the Episcopal Church Foundation, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017; 800/697-2858; 212/297-0142 (fax); or visit www.episcopalfoundation.org.

Stewardship Resources

The members of our diocesan Department of Stewardship are available to help with information as well as educational materials and programs.

The Rev. Rob Morpeth, Deputy for Finance and Administration; rmorpeth@dioala.org; 205/715-2060 ext. 311
The Rev. John Frischnier, Chair; john@holytrinitychurch.info; 334/887-9501
Donna Gerold; dgerold@belkouth.net
The Rev. David Hall*, david.hall@ascensionepiscopal.org; 205/822-3480
The Rev. David Maginnis; dmaginnis@christchurch1828.org; 205/758-4252
The Rev. Jame Pool*; 205/879-8321
Larry Speaks; lspeaks@alphaweak.com
The Rev. Bruce White*; rector@stmaaa.org; 256/237-4011
Joe Wilson; jaswinbow@att.net
The Rev. Bill Yon*; randjedi@aol.com; 205/678-9455
* Stewardship Consultant

You can find more about the following materials online or through the Episcopal Book Store, 2015 Sixth Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203; 205/323-2959; ebsinfo@episcobooks.com.

Stories To Tell and Gifts To Share, a two-CD Rom set from Augsburg Fortress
Beyond Money: Becoming Good and Faithful Stewards by Dan R. Dick
Grateful and Generous Hearts by John H. Westerhoff
More Blessed to Give by John H. McNaughton
The New Context for Ministry by Lyle E. Schaller
The Steward Living in Covenant: A New Perspective on Old Testament Stories by Ronald E. Vallet
Bishop Richard Hooker established the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) Scholarship Program almost 90 years ago, and thanks to your generous support the scholarship fund is still contributing financial aid to students across our diocese. This year your ECW awarded scholarships to 21 students from 17 parishes.

We award these scholarships on the basis of a combination of need, merit, community involvement, and a strong commitment to the Church. Here are just a few examples of how this much-welcomed financial aid has made a difference in the lives of some of the recipients.

“I would like to thank the ECW for granting me this scholarship. I want you to know that I will work hard and continue to attend church as often as I can. On behalf of my family, my church, and myself, this scholarship means the world to me.”

“This money will help lessen the cost of tuition for my family. Thank you for your support and for helping make my plans for the future a reality.”

Please consider making a gift to the scholarship fund as an individual, small group, or parish. If you make a contribution in honor or memory of a loved one or friend, we will be sure to notify the person or family. In a thank-you note for a contribution made in honor of a family member, one person wrote, “Your gift to the ECW Scholarship Fund in memory of my father was more meaningful than you can imagine. . . . one of the last in-depth conversation he had with his grandchildren was about the importance of education and serving the church.”

For more information about making a contribution or applying for a scholarship, please visit our diocesan ECW Web site, www.alabamaecw.org, or contact your parish’s ECW president.
It was standing room only at high noon on August 8 in the Lowndes County Courthouse in Hayneville, with the pews full of faces glistening from their walk in the 90-degree sunshine. About 200 people, black and white, old and young, had processed and sung their way from the courthouse square to the jail to the Cash Store and the monument and then back to this room—the very room where the man who murdered Jonathan Daniels 44 summers ago had been acquitted by an all-white jury in a travesty of justice. Now here in that same room, Bishop Sloan was preparing to celebrate the Eucharist for a well-integrated congregation. It was the 2009 Jonathan Daniels pilgrimage.

Jonathan Myrick Daniels, a seminarian at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, had been working for voting rights in Selma and Lowndes County in the summer of 1965, and he and a group of African Americans had integrated St. Paul's in Selma. Tension was high in Lowndes County that summer, or “bloody Lowndes” as it was called. On August 14, Daniels had taken part in a demonstration in Fort Deposit, and he had been arrested along with a number of other civil rights workers. In the jail in Hayneville, Daniels and the others had endured the heat and filth and bad food of the lockup for several days before being released with no warning or explanation. They knew they were in danger. Walking to a nearby store to get a soft drink, Daniels and the others were confronted by Tom Coleman, who shouted insults at the racially mixed group, ordered them to leave, and then raised his shotgun and fired. Daniels pushed a teenaged black girl named Ruby Sales out of the way and took the shotgun blast directly in his torso. He died instantly. Coleman was tried and found not guilty in the courthouse a few yards from the murder.

During the Eucharist, candles were lit in memory of all the martyrs of Alabama of the civil rights movement, and our spirits were lifted by the beautiful voices of members of the choir of St. Mark’s in Birmingham.

But most striking and memorable of all was the homily that day. The theme of the sermon given in that place of martyrdom was the need for forgiveness. Delivering the homily jointly were Dain and Constance Perry, an interracial couple. For everyone who understood the injustice that had happened just outside and then inside that very room in 1965, it was a stunning experience to hear and see a black woman and a white man standing in that courtroom alternating their voices and speaking out of their own experience of the necessity for forgiveness.

It was even more stunning because Dain is a descendant of the DeWolfs of Rhode Island, the largest slave-trading family in the history of the United States. Constance is the descendant of slaves. And here they were witnessing to their faith and their commitment to end racism in America.

The evening before, about 25 people had watched a screening of the film *Traces* of the Trade about how Dain's family members had come to reckon with the discovery of their family's past and with their own discovery of the extent of their “white privilege” in American society. For Episcopalians, there was the special additional irony that Dain's family had provided a large number of priests and bishops, and that his grandfather had been the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the 1930s. That Eucharist in that thin place and that homily by that couple constituted a powerful witness of forgiveness indeed—a strong Christian testimony to our eventual ability, with God's help, to live up to the words of the great anthem of the Movement, “We shall overcome!”

For more about the pilgrimage, including additional photos, please visit www.dioala.org.096.html.
Photos of Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carol Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley reminded pilgrims of the four little girls who died in the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in 1963; photo by the Rev. Bill King.

Dain Perry, a descendant of the slave-trading DeWolf family of Rhode Island, and his wife, Constance, a descendant of slaves, giving their deeply moving homily and witness of forgiveness during the Eucharist inside the courthouse; photo by the Rev. Bill King.

Bishop Sloan leading the pilgrims in meditation and prayer at the old Cash Store; photo by the Rev. Bill King.

Some of the pilgrims spent a few moments in solemn reflection and prayer at the spot where Jonathan Daniels died when he stepped in front of Tom Coleman’s shotgun to save the life of Ruby Sales; photos by the Rev. Bill King.
From Dee Buzby, ECW President

I trust each of you had an enjoyable summer and are enjoying your fall ECW activities. I want to take a look back and share with you what a worthwhile time Gethryn Giles, Barbara Carpenter, Fran Low, and I had as your delegates at the 46th Triennial in Anaheim in July.

The theme of this year’s Triennial was “Grow in Grace.” Kay Meyer, ECW National President, summed it up in these words, “May we grow in grace and in the bonds of affections we hold for one another in prayer, in deliberation, in mission, in ministry, in play, in joy, in peace, in celebration, and in thanksgiving for what our Lord has done for us and for what He calls us to do for others.” Kay also spoke about the ECW continuing to broaden our work with the Millennium Development Goals both here and abroad.

The keynote speakers for Triennial were author Phyllis Tickle and Bishop Steven Charleston, who is the former president and dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and our Fall Conference speaker some years ago. Both were very well received, with Phyllis Tickle speaking about the grace of Tamar from the Old Testament and Bishop Charleston sharing his thoughts about the Virgin Mary and the beauty of her grace.

We were extremely honored to have the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev. Rowan Williams, as well as our Presiding Bishop, the Very Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, and the President of the House of Deputies, Bonnie Anderson, address us. The archbishop commended us for sharing our “prayers, care, and experience to strengthen the bonds that tie the Anglican Communion together and unite us one to another in Christ.” After Bishop Katharine’s remarks, she presented the Triennial Cross to every woman in attendance. Bonnie Anderson thanked us for our faithfulness, our long-lived history, and all we do for the Church, and she told us that we should all keep our “eye on the prize . . . that in God’s dream we are in relationship with each other.”

During the Sunday Eucharist for General Convention, the UTO Coordinators from all the dioceses present a token check to the presiding bishop that represents the total UTO donation of that diocese for the last three years. Barbara Carpenter, UTO Coordinator for our diocese, presented our token check for $108,535.46, including the $47,629.01 donated in 2008.

Another event everyone looks forward to is the Honored Women presentation. This Triennial 73 women were nominated from the various dioceses. Alleen Cater, the past president of our ECW, was nominated for this honor citing her leadership and devotion to the ECW. Alleen received her pin and certificate at our recent Fall Conference at St. Matthew’s in Madison.

Another honor presented each Triennial is a certificate of recognition of diocesan newsletters and Web sites. Sally Sinclair, our ECW diocesan Webmaster, was recognized with a certificate for the exceptional Web site she provides our diocese, and she also received many compliments from women from other dioceses.

Not only did we attend workshops and meetings, but we also enjoyed several social functions. We attended the ECW Welcoming Dinner, the UTO Dinner with Bishop Michael Curry of North Carolina as speaker, the Province IV Luncheon for the women and guests of our province, and an evening of entertainment by Elisabeth von Trapp. Several of us attended a reception sponsored by Duke University and enjoyed talking with the Rev. Dr. Jo Bailey Wells, who spoke at our 2008 Fall Convention held at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham and who recently delivered stoles made by Carol McAdams from Grace Church in Sheffield to six female priests in the Sudan. We also enjoyed speaking with Lauren Winner, a speaker at Women’s Weekend some years ago; we learned she will be publishing another book soon. We also enjoyed a Los Angeles Event with unusual entertainment, several other receptions, a U2 Eucharist celebrated by Bishop Mark Andres, and a great evening at our Bishop’s Dinner for all who came to Anaheim from our diocese. As you can see, we did a lot of work, but we had a good time too!

The Triennial was a time to renew friendships, attend workshops and meetings, learn from many informative workshops, carry on the business of the ECW, elect the new National President, enjoy wonderful speakers, participate in the daily Eucharist with all those attending the General Convention, and enjoy the company of those representing our diocese. It was also an amazing opportunity to observe all those who decide the future direction of our Church. From my observations, I came home with a positive feeling that when all is said and done, my Episcopal Church will be just fine.

From our ECW Calendar/Handbook in September, we read about St. Anne as a grandmother who credits her work to influences from spending many years on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and in New Orleans, relates his art to gumbo—rich with spice! Come enjoy a delightful meal and see an equally delightful array of pieces ranging from the spiritual to the whimsical, including creches, sculptures, watercolor and acrylic paintings, and pen-and-ink prints. Proceeds will benefit St. Stephen’s outreach projects. For more information please contact the parish at 205/967-8786 or visit www.sceuch.org.

The ECW of Christ Church in Tuscaloosa is hosting a Holiday Bazaar on Thursday, November 19, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. They promise you will find something for everyone on your gift list, and all your gifts will be wrapped and ready to give! You can choose from items the Bake Sale, Made with Love (handmade items including sock monkey dolls, Christmas ornaments, soft toys for children, knitted and crocheted items, and quilts), a Garden Shop (bursting with fresh delights and gift kits galore for decorating mailboxes, mantels, bulb kits, and other garden delights), Episcopal Merchandise (shirts, dog collars, flip-flops, and carry-all bags), Attic Treasures, Exquisite Collectibles (silver, crystal, and fine linens), and Artist Vendors, as well as copies of the parish cookbook, Through the Grapevine. Proceeds will provide funds for more community outreach within our diocese. For more information please contact the parish at 205/738-4838 or visit www.christchurch1828.org.

The ECW of St. Andrew’s in Montevallo will host its annual Christmas Bazaar and Bake Sale on Saturday, December 5, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the parish hall. You will find handmade jewelry, Christmas gift items, knitted and crocheted pieces, wreaths, and all kinds of holiday crafts plus copies of the 250-page ECW cookbook. While you shop you can also enjoy gumbo, chili, soup, and a variety of baked goods. For more information please contact Cynthia Shackelford at 205/665-6230 or shackel@montevallo.edu.
What’s Coming Up?

Youth Department District Days!

Come enjoy a regional youth event hosted by the Youth Department of the Diocese. Come for fellowship, food, fun, worship, and music! All youth groups are welcome. Each district will offer a unique event; information is available online at our diocesan Web site (www.dioala.org) or Facebook and through your youth ministers and priests.

October 25: Tennessee Valley District Day at St. Thomas’ in Huntsville, 4–7 p.m.

October 25: Montgomery District Day at Dream Field Farms in Montgomery, 3:30–6:30 p.m.

November 1: Birmingham District Day at Oak Mountain State Park in Birmingham, 2–5 p.m.

To find out more please visit www.dioala.org/096.html. Questions? Please contact Leslie Manning at lmanning@dioala.org or 205/715-2060 ext 325.

Christmas Conference at Camp McDowell

It’s that time again—time to register for Christmas Conference!

December 28–30
9th-12th grade youth
Sponsored by our Youth Department

“Getting Back to the Basics”

We are Christians, but what does that mean? This year at Christmas Conference, we’re getting back to the basics—the Basics of Faith. Come explore who we are as Christians by exploring the foundations of our faith. Our program director is the Rev. Chip Broadfoot, and our chaplain is Jonathan Chesney, both from the Ascension in Montgomery.

In addition to our program time, we will also go on hikes, sing songs, play games, meet new people, reconnect with old camp friends, and get into the Christmas spirit! Christmas Conference is a wonderful event, so sign up today! We hope you will use our NEW online registration capability. For more info or to register visit www.dioala.org/096.html. If you’re interested in staffing the event please contact Leslie Manning at lmanning@dioala.org or 205/715-2060 ext 325.

Please see “Working on Our Faith” on page 22.

Save These Dates!

October 25—Tennessee Valley and Montgomery District Days
November 1—Birmingham District Day
November 6–8—Fall Fling for 5th and 6th-graders
November 6–8—Happening #55 at Trinity Church in Florence
November 12—Diocesan Youth Ministers Meeting at St Stephen’s in Birmingham
November 14—Youth Department meeting
November 19–22—Province IV Youth Meeting (Upper South Carolina)
December 10—Diocesan Youth Ministers meeting at St Stephen’s in Birmingham
December 27—Pre-camp for Christmas Conference at Camp (staff only)
December 28–30—Christmas Conference at Camp for 9th-12th graders

The Rev. Thomas Joyner with Claire Wood and Kindall Tucker at Montgomery District Day 2008
Remembering Mr. Rick

By the Rev. Mark Johnston, Vicar and Executive Director of Camp McDowell

Death came as a friend for Rick Johnson, caretaker of Camp McDowell, on August 15. His visitation was at the new chapel of St. Francis before his burial in Poplar Springs.

Caretaker is a perfect title for Rick. He took good care of us for more than 50 years. Out of respect, most people began calling him “Mr. Rick” as he grew older. He never liked being called Mr. Rick, but he learned to accept it because of the love and respect people wanted to express toward him. “Rick” was how he wanted to be known.

Rick had volunteered and served in the Navy during World War II and the Korean War. A list of many of the countries he visited were tattooed on his arm. In the mid 1950s he began working at Camp McDowell part-time. Because he liked Rick’s personality and work ethic, the Rev. Scott Eppes hired him to his full-time position in the mid 1960s. At that time Rick moved to Camp McDowell with his wife, Louise, and their four children—they lived in the house on the right, just before the gate. Louise is doing well and will continue to live at Camp McDowell.

Rick always dressed in blue and drove a pickup truck, which his dogs enjoyed chasing as he drove around camp. Part of his job was to supervise the workboys and workgirls in the summer, and he was a positive and powerful influence as he helped us grow from teenagers to adults. Rick’s combination of common sense, his love for Camp McDowell, his work ethic, and his good humor endeared him to most. He was not appreciative of anyone who did not want to work—and work hard. For me and many others he was a father figure and mentor, giving us respect for work and a love for life and creation.

I worked for Rick in the summers as a workboy from 1967 to 1969. When I dropped out of college for a semester I worked with him in the winter and spring of 1970. From the moment I became the executive director in 1990, Rick was a loyal friend and associate. I often asked his advice, and he seemed to have a knack for knowing when times were hard for me. During those hard times he always had an assuring presence and word.

Two of his favorite phrases known by everyone who spent time with him are common in my speech. “Here we go like we had good sense” initiated many a job or project. If a job went well, or if an aspect of life was good, then it was “just like downtown Birmingham.” As the scale descended it could also be “just like downtown Double Springs” or “just like downtown Poplar Springs.” By the way, Poplar Springs has no downtown.

In closing, I want to tell again a story about Rick that was published in The Apostle shortly after I assumed the position of executive director. One spring morning I was walking down the hill toward the Eppes Hall dining room. It had rained the night before, and there were puddles. As I walked I watched Rick bend over a puddle in the asphalt and move to the side of the road several times. He was rescuing earthworms that would have died when the sun dried the puddle. The man was hard as a nail with a very soft heart. I miss him.

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Legacies of Life

By Ann Mancer, a Member of St. Luke’s in Birmingham

At the funeral earlier this year for Felix M. Drennen II, I could not help but reflect on all this family has done for our diocese, including the most recent tangible apostolic action of heading up the stewardship campaign for the new chapel at Camp McDowell and actually building it. The elder Felix was a fine man and set an example not only for his immediate family but also for his Church family.

With that in mind, I began asking around as to what we could do to continue Felix’s mission of being the hands and feet of Christ. The Rev. Deacon Clyde Pearce mentioned that the new chapel could use a Gospel book . . . and that set my mind into motion about finishing the Chapel of St. Francis.

Then Bishop Miller passed away in early July. I remembered feeling that it seemed “right” that he had presided at one of the first services in the new Chapel of St. Francis. He did so much for our diocese on a multitude of levels and saw evolutions too numerous to name here. At his funeral the “reverence” was powerful and caused me to expand my thinking about Camp McDowell memorials.

When pillars pass the torch, those of us remaining need to heighten our support. Our Church is a community. Each and every one of us bolsters the other . . . we all shelter, comfort, and heal each other. With that in mind, I asked Mark Johnston for a wish list of items needed to help complete the new chapel that we could donate in memory or honor of those who went before and paved a way for our spiritual elevation.

The list below represents months of contemplation, consultation, and research. Please review it and speak with your parish, Sunday school class, small group, or whatever part of our “Church family” you choose and consider pooling your resources to help complete the Chapel of St. Francis in memory or honor of anyone you designate. Individual contributions are welcome, as well. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Mark at mark@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806 or me at AMancer@aol.com. Once you have decided on an item or items, please let us know so that we can register your gift and place the order. Thank you!

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Helping Others Safely Enjoy the Wonders of Camp McDowell

By David Orrison, an Eagle Scout and Member of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham

I grew up enjoying the wonders of Camp McDowell, so I wanted to do my Eagle Project there. My project was to make the camp’s trails safer, family friendly, and more hospitable. In April I held a fundraiser at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham to help pay for the supplies needed for the work. Over this spring and summer, I went to Camp McDowell eight times with more than 10 different volunteers to help with the project.

Our biggest work effort was over Memorial Day weekend, and “yes,” it rained. That weekend we camped and cooked in the lower camp, and I had several friends who helped clear trails around and through downed trees onto safer trail beds including building a rock trail above the creek on the way to the cross. The most significant efforts though were clearly setting the Trail of Discovery off the Cross Loop that goes south of the Clear Creek dam and ends in a box-canyon with waterfalls and free-standing rock formations. The most strenuous part of the work weekend was placing two sandstone benches in the Discovery Canyon and at the base of the ladder to the Cross.

Over the summer we blazed all of the Camp McDowell trails with 2 x 6-inch blazes roughly 50 to 75 yards apart. Each trail is color-coded: St. Christopher’s is Blue, The Cross is White, Discovery is Red, Tillers is Orange, and Letho Brook is Green. Finally we built 11 trail signs to help navigate the key trail intersections pointing the way to trail destinations, and most importantly, which direction leads to Camp! Along the Letho Brook Trail, starting from the Boys Camp and going to the camp’s northern extreme, there are now trail access points to Miller Commons via Pfiefer Playground.

Making the trails easier to navigate and not having to rely on an experienced camper to guide you was the project’s objective. I wanted any family to feel comfortable to go out one afternoon to experience the wonders of Camp McDowell without worrying if they would get lost or miss dinner. The next time you are at Camp McDowell, please feel free to amiable take a stroll in the woods and explore with peace in your heart and mind.

Experiencing the Joy of Creation at the Growing Roots Workshop

By Margaret Wade Johnston, Director of McDowell Environmental Center

“The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature, and God.” —Anne Frank

The Growing Roots Workshop, the first of its kind offered by our Environmental Center, was sponsored by Legacy and focused on several aspects of environmental education. It was designed specifically for educators and their children and provided resources for both individuals and classrooms. More than 20 Alabama educators and their children hiked trails around Camp McDowell learning to identify and use edible and medicinal plants, measuring water quality by studying the organisms contained in the streams and ponds, and digging for fossils in the Minckin Archaeological Site, an inactive coal mine. In addition the three-day workshop was packed full of instructional, fun activities including arts and crafts, canoeing, stargazing, and birdwatching.

The principal of Donoho School in Anniston came with her daughter, Shelley Ann, a third-grader at Donoho. “This was an awesome experience!” she told me later. “Donoho’s sixth graders have traveled there with their teachers, Donna Plunkett and Robert Davis, for the past two years and have participated in a three-day long residential environmental program, similar to the one Shelley and I enjoyed. Donoho’s upcoming sixth graders are planning their trip for March 2010.”

“This was Shelley’s first experience with life outside the city—no streetlights, TV, or phones. It was a bit disconcerting for her at first, however, she adjusted quickly (as children do), and it was a wonderful bonding time for us. She learned to associate animals with the sounds we heard clearly after nighttime and (almost) appreciate life free from electronic distractions.

“The staff and facilities at Camp McDowell are the BEST, and I strongly encourage all educators, including homeschoolers, to check out the programs they offer.”

For more information please visit www.campmcdowell.com/cmec or contact me at maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806.

Your Christmas Cards Help Bring Children to Camp

By Michael Goldsmith, Director of Program and Development

Each year we give our friends the opportunity to help raise scholarship money through our Christmas Card Campaign. At Camp McDowell we provide the opportunity for children to experience the joy of God’s love and witness the beauty and wonder of God’s creation, and we believe this opportunity should be available to all. That is why it is so important that we work together to make sure that all God’s children can come to Camp. Your contribution to the Camp McDowell Scholarship Fund makes this possible.

We award more than $80,000 annually to campers attending Summer Camp, Environmental Education Center, our camp for children affected by the HIV/AIDS virus, and our Special Session for folks with special needs. Last year you helped us raise more than $10,000—thank you!

As we look toward the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we are reminded of the special needs of our children. What more appropriate Christmas gift could there be than to help send a child to “Wonderful, Wonderful Camp McDowell!” Camp McDowell will send a beautiful Christmas card to those you would like to honor informing them that a gift has been given in their name to the Camp McDowell Scholarship Fund. Please consider a generous gift to the children of your church family.

You can place your order online at www.campmcdowell.com or give us a call at camp and we will send you an order form. If you have any questions or if you would like to request a list of your last year’s order, please contact me at Michael@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806.
Grace Church Offers Grace Café
By Jim Thomason, a Member of the Café Committee

On the fourth Tuesday of every month, Grace Church in Cullman offers a free lunch with “no strings and no cost.” We welcome everyone who might enjoy Grace Café’s menu of delicious food, warm fellowship, and God’s love. During the lunch guests are given the opportunity to “pay it forward” by writing notes or sending thanks to Alabama military men and women.

We served 54 people at the inaugural lunch on Tuesday, May 26, and the number of guests has increased. The simple menu consists of barbeque chicken, baked beans, slaw, dessert, and coffee or tea. Guests also enjoy a “sing-along” with the Arnold Street Band.

“We are open to serve anyone who might enjoy the Café, regardless of church affiliation,” notes Bill McCartney, who is supervising the effort. Bill adds that the church prepares to feed 100 people, and “we came close last time. We hope to grow from there. We want to give those who come the best we have to offer,” he emphasizes.

Holy Trinity Provides Hope for Street Children in Guatemala
By Sandra Clark-Lewis, a Member of Holy Trinity in Auburn

Holy Trinity in Auburn has provided hearing screening test equipment to an innovative school program in Guatemala City, and thanks to a partnership between the school program’s staff and Auburn University’s doctoral program in audiology, street children with hearing loss are now receiving much-needed help. Auburn’s faculty, doctoral students, and alumni are training Guatemalan school personnel in the use of the test equipment to identify children who need follow-up testing and hearing aids.

The Rev. Bob Blackwell, rector of Grace Church, points out that this is a venture into “radical hospitality. It’s an opportunity to serve our community in a new way,” he explains. He hopes it will bring people together and provide food, fellowship, and faith for those who may want any or all of those things. The event has drawn people of all ages and from all walks of life.

For more information please contact the parish at 256/734-6212 or Jim Thomason at jthomason50@hotmail.com.
Blessing Animals in Honor of St. Francis

By Cathy Coleman, a Member of St. Michael and All Angels’ in Anniston

Parishioners from St. Michael and All Angels’ in Anniston and St. Luke’s in Jacksonville brought their beloved—and lovable—critters to Silver Chapel at Fort McClellan on Sunday afternoon, October 4, for the traditional Blessing of the Animals. For a few minutes Father Bruce White, rector of St. Michael’s, wandered around the lawn amidst dogs and puppies (and their owners) forlornly seeking cats or other species to bless. It wasn’t that he doesn’t love dogs—after all his own, Freddie, waited in the arms of his “mom,” Pam White, for his blessing.

It was just that Father Bruce and Father Michael Rich, rector of St. Luke’s, wanted to make sure no one would be left out, and the cats usually sit unobtrusively in their cages while the dogs are bouncing around greeting each other and their humans. Fortunately along came Deb and Bob Pratt with daughter Jackie and her cat Lucy, so the anticipated variety of critters was on hand, and the blessing service could begin.

Deacons Bruce Drube and Stan Easton were there in support of the occasion, and Sheri Drube oversaw a large crate filled with four sleeping Great Pyrenees puppies. Bruce provided baskets of dog, cat, and people treats, and this service on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi satisfied not only tummies but also hearts. The special service concluded with the prayer of St. Francis, and the crowd dispersed just as the rains began.

Lobsterfest To Benefit Outreach and Medical Missions

By Selina Mason, a Member of St. Thomas’ in Huntsville

St. Thomas’ in Huntsville will host its annual community festival on Saturday, November 14, marking the “Sweet Sixteenth” anniversary of Lobsterfest. The festival begins Friday night when customers start picking up their pre-sold live Maine lobsters. It continues Saturday from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. with a full day of live or cooked lobster, tenderly smoked barbecue pork and ribs, live entertainment, crafts, a bake sale, and kids’ games. A silent auction creates an air of suspense as secret bidders keep an eye on their treasures until the 4 p.m. deadline. And this year the youth group is sponsoring a furniture and book sale that should get the attention of the garage-sale crowd.

Every cent of the proceeds generated by this festival is used for two local outreach projects and international medical missions. It all began in 1994 when an ambitious group of parishioners from St. Thomas’ decided to sponsor a small village in the poor country of Honduras. The village had endeared itself to the Rev. Bill Hudson, who was our rector at the time and who suffered an untimely death in 1992. Our new rector, Kee Sloan, who is now Bishop Sloan, encouraged us to pursue a medical mission to Honduras, but we soon realized that the cost of such an endeavor was unprecedented for our parish.

The idea of a fundraiser evolved into a community festival, and the first Lobsterfest was celebrated on October 22, 1994. The idea was simple: fly in a bunch of pre-sold live lobsters from Maine, host a few craftsmen, and make a little money to go toward the medical mission. We promised each customer that every dollar we had sold 1,200 lobsters. A weary bunch of people realized we were indeed a parish family and enjoyed working together.

A lot of activities have been added to Lobsterfest since then, and parishioner Charlie Erwin has grown famous for his delicious smoked barbecue. We now order an average of 2,500 lobsters for the festival and sell almost as many pounds of barbecue. The festival is on the city’s radar as one of those not-to-be-missed community events, but its number one goal remains as a fundraiser for outreach. The community generously supports the festival, and parishioners are often asked, “When is Lobsterfest this year?”

The missions we support have grown from one to three. In addition to medical missions to Honduras and Haiti, we also provide funding and volunteers for the local Habitat of Humanity as well as First Stop, a unique ministry for the street homeless of Huntsville.

We furnish supplies and build homes with homeowners who are either employed or disabled. These new homeowners are proud to pay their monthly mortgage, and we have built 19 houses with Lobsterfest proceeds. With a recent study in mind that children are less likely to drop out of school while living in a safe, stable environment, we helped rebuild a neighborhood that suffered with a 65 percent school drop-out rate—it is now 90 percent Habitat homes.

For more information about this year’s Lobsterfest or to place an advance order, please contact St. Thomas’ at 256/880-0247 or stthomas@stthomashuntsville.org or Selina Mason at selinam@comcast.net or 256/682-6826.
Charles Taylor Celebrates 50 Years of Ordained Ministry

The Rev. Charles Taylor celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination at Holy Apostles’ in Hoover (Birmingham) on Sunday, July 26. Many members of the parish along with Charles’ family and other guests attended the morning worship service and reception.

“We were fortunate to have the Rt. Rev. Frank Allan, who is the retired Bishop of Atlanta and was ordained on the same day in the same church as Charles, come preach and join in the celebration. His sermon was an inspiration to us all,” notes the Rev. Margaret Hanson Taylor, rector of Holy Apostles’. “We were also fortunate to have our own Bishop Parsley participate as well. The music was inspired and joyful, and the wonders did not stop there: After the service, everyone enjoyed a tasty brunch and listening to Charles telling a couple of hilarious stories from his many years as a parish priest. Thank you, one and all, for helping to make this very special day one of great memories!”

4th Annual Black Belt Book Drive—Thank You!

By Michael Goldsmith, Program and Development

Our diocese does so much to raise awareness and provide support and programming for the Black Belt region of our state. Even so, I was reminded at registration this summer that there is still much work to be done. After I explained to a parent where the books from our Black Belt Book Drive would be going, I was surprised by his response. “Oh, I thought this was some kind of Karate ministry!”

For the past four summers, we have asked summer campers to bring a new or gently used book with them to donate to our Black Belt Book Program. This summer we collected 1,791 books! We gave 674 of these books to the children of Hale County at the Sawyerville Day Camp and 1,117 to schools in Bullock County. Memily Colvin, the facilitator of this amazing ministry, has been collecting books for the very needy libraries of the Black Belt for many years. Camp McDowell is proud to be able to partner with her in her efforts.

Thank you to all the summer campers who contributed! Please start getting your books ready for next year!!

¡APRENDA INGLÉS! ¡CLASES DE INGLÉS, GRATIS!

Las clases empezarán el 21 de septiembre y continuarán todos los lunes (de las 6:30 a las 8:00 de la noche)

Edificio Parroquial de la iglesia de St. Andrew’s, 925 Plowman Street, Montevallo, AL
(en la esquina en frente de Montevallo Escuela Secundaria)

Iglesia Episcopal de St. Andrew’s (“Dios les ama a todos quienes entran aquí.”)

LEARN ENGLISH! FREE ENGLISH CLASSES!

Classes begin September 21 and continue every Monday evening, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

St. Andrew’s Parish Hall, 925 Plowman Street, Montevallo, AL
(across the street from Montevallo High School)

St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church (“God loves all who enter here.”)
Stephanie Diethelm and Sabrina Evans Attend Conference

Stephanie Diethelm, Director of Christian Formation of All Saints’ in Birmingham (at left), and Sabrina Evans, Director of Children’s Christian Formation at St. John’s in Montgomery, attended the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) Formation Leaders Conference in Chicago in early August. CGS Formation leaders from around the world were present, along with our guest speaker Francesca Cocchini, an executive committee member of the CGS International Council. Although several parishes in our diocese are using the Catechesis, Stephanie and Sabrina are the only Formation Leaders in Alabama.

Trinity in Clanton Raises Funds for Cancer

Earlier this year members of Trinity Church in Clanton participated in the Chilton County Relay for Life and raised more than $1,600 for the American Cancer Society. They also hosted a hospitality tent at the event. Sheri Craig, a member of Trinity and a cancer survivor, participated in the survivors’ walk.

Read Our Online Christian Formation Newsletter

Our diocesan Department of Christian Formation has launched The Mustard Seed, an online newsletter that will be published 10 times a year. The interactive format will provide up-to-date information about and links to various Christian Formation resources. Many thanks to Sabrina Evans, Director of Christian Formation at St. John’s in Montgomery, for designing and editing this new publication.

To read The Mustard Seed please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org/096.html.

Stewardship of Creation Recycling Tip

Whenever you plan to dispose of anything, especially things beyond your daily garbage, visualize it at the landfill in your community. Consider how long it may take it to decompose. Then think how to avoid having your trash end up there. Is there a way to find another use for the item? Would there be someone who could use it?

Could you donate it? Sell it? Share it?

Donate: Check with your Goodwill, Salvation Army, or Muscular Dystrophy Association for their donation guidelines. The National Cristina Foundation (cristina.org/ds) places refurbished computers in educational and nonprofit organizations for people with special needs. Generally, charities want computers in working order with a Pentium-level or Power PC processor or better. Delete personal files, but be sure to leave the operating system and licensing information on the computer. You can find more tips on computer donation at techsoup.org.

Sell: Computers are one of the best-selling categories on eBay. If your hardware is up-to-date, it could be worth the effort of putting it up for sale online.

Trash: If your computer is more than five years old, it’s probably best to recycle. Organizations such as the ComputerRecyclingCenter (crc.org) accept obsolete computers and recycle unusable parts to keep them out of landfills.

The Advent Offers Special Music Events

By Music Associate Charles M. Kennedy

We have planned another exciting year of music events for your listening enjoyment at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham. The music department is pleased to offer the following special music events to the parish and as an outreach ministry to the city and region.

The Midday Musical Menu series continues with a performance at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, November 20, by the Samford University A Cappella Choir. Sursum Corda, Birmingham’s premiere vocal ensemble, will perform on December 18, the Ambassador Brass Quintet and Stephen G. Schaeffer (Director of Music and Organist) will present music for organ and brass on January 29, and Annie Joe Edwards will offer A Broadway Cabaret on April 23.

Our special liturgical celebrations featuring the Cathedral Choir include Evensong on March 7 and Choral Eucharist on Ascension Day, Thursday, May 13.

The special music event for this season will be a major recital on March 21 by British concert organist Dame Gillian Weir, one of the foremost musicians in the world, who has toured extensively on several continents.

For more information about any of our music offerings, please contact me at kennedy@cathedraladvent.com or 205/226-3505.

Shall We Gather Cookbook Fair and Tasting

The Church Ladies of Trinity Church in Wetumpka, publishers of the popular Shall We Gather cookbook, will host their 2nd annual Cookbook Fair and Tasting on Saturday, November 21, from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m. The event is open to any parish, group, or individual who has a cookbook to sell. Chairperson Rebecca Gregory notes that “this is an easy way for groups to make some additional money. Our location near the center of Alabama makes this a feasible opportunity for most of the state.”

For more information please contact Rebecca Gregory at 334/567-0158.
BISHOP PARSLEY TO LEAD SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Bishop Parsley will lead “Tongued with Fire—The Poet’s Voice and Our Faith Journey” on November 13-15 at St. Mary’s Sewanee Retreat Center. “Poetry can be one of the voices of the Spirit,” notes Bishop Parsley. “In this retreat we will explore a number of poems by faithful poets, from George Herbert and John Donne to T.S. Eliot, R.S. Thomas, and Mary Oliver. We will reflect on them as they speak to our lived experience in faith and life, with time for worship, quiet meditation and conversation in the stillness of the Mountain.”

For more information about the retreat, visit www.stmaryssewanee.org/programs/Nov13.shtml, e-mail stmaryssewaneeinfo@bellsouth.net, or contact Jean Hastings at jeanhastings@comcast.net or 615/585-4287.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FAMILY — A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

St. John’s in Montgomery is hosting “Understanding Your Family—A Systemic Approach” from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Friday, November 6, and 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, November 7. The Rev. J. Thompson Brown, Canon Emeritus from the Advent in Birmingham, will give five presentations outlining the theoretical concepts of Dr. Murray Bowen and their application to family living.

St. John’s cordially invites everyone who has an interest in gaining a broader and more comprehensive understanding of themselves, their families, and the interconnecting relationships between them to attend this two-day workshop. Participants will have opportunities to reflect on themselves and how they are managing in their relationships, and they will receive ideas and suggestion on strategies for making changes to improve family functioning.

For more information please contact the Rev. Evan D. Garner, associate rector of St. John’s, at evan@stjohnsmontgomery.org or 334/262-1937.

12TH ANNUAL BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE ON SHARED MINISTRY

This year’s Annual Bishops’ Conference on Shared Ministry will be held at Messiah Lutheran Church in Montgomery from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10. Keynoter the Rev. Dr. William Rusch, a leading ecumenist in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, will speak on the progress made since the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (DDJ) 10 years ago. Dr. Rusch will also preach at the closing worship service.

For more information please contact the Rev. Randy Jones at Messiah Lutheran Church, 6670 Vaughn Road, Montgomery, AL 36116; messiahlutheran@aol.com; 334/277-4213.

WORKING ON OUR FAITH

By Saunders McElroy, a Member of Our Diocesan Youth Department

When the members of the Youth Department for 2009-2010 first convened in July, one of the main goals that we needed to accomplish was establishing a theme for the programs at Christmas Conference, Spring Break Conference, and EYC Convention. Some years each event has an individual theme that is discussed only at that event and then the topic is changed for the following ones. Other years there has been a central theme on a big concept, with each event focusing on a “subtheme” that relates back to the main idea but still can be beneficial to someone who has not been present at other events.

Both styles work well, and when we planned for the upcoming year, we were keeping an open mind on which route to go. But when we began discussing as a group what was important to a program, it was clear that we all wanted a basic concept that everyone could relate to and grow from. We wanted to hear something relevant, program topics that could not only improve us as people but also improve our Christian life. There was one word that stuck a chord in all of us and seemed to fulfill the exact description we had laid out: faith. Faith is an integral part of Christianity, and in our discussion it became obvious that exploring this essential concept was the perfect way to go. We all need it, we all struggle with it, and we all want to learn how to grow in our faith.

Taking one facet at a time at each event, the program this year will move through a three-part series on faith. The foundation will be laid at Christmas Conference, where the theme will be “Getting Back to the Basics.” We’ll delve into the definition of faith and develop a clearer and more concise understanding of what faith is.

Our struggles with faith will move the discussion into a completely new topic. All of us toil with our faith, and at Spring Break Conference the theme will be “Doubt.” We’ll examine how these difficulties come about and how we name them and wrestle with them.

Maintaining our belief is also a challenging aspect of faith, and we will wrap up at EYC Convention with the theme “Keeping the Faith.” Our inspection of faith throughout the year is going to take us on an undeniably interesting and valuable journey. We hope to see you along the ride starting December 28-30 at Camp McDowell!

For more information about Christmas Conference please see “What’s Coming Up?” on page 15.

OUTREACH SUMMIT

Our diocesan Department of Mission and Outreach is hosting an Outreach Summit on Saturday, January 16, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at All Saints’ in Birmingham. All clergy, lay leaders—especially parish outreach chairs, and everyone interested in outreach is encouraged to come to experience renewed energy for mission and outreach, have the opportunity to share information and network with others, and learn practical tips on implementing and sustaining outreach activities. The workshops will include Discover Your Outreach Identity and Best Practices: How To Implement Outreach Programs.

For more information please contact Judy Quick at jjquick@kellsouth.net or 205/669-6862.

Advent Quiet Day

Bishop Parsley will lead this year’s Advent Quiet Day from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, December 12, at Grace Church in Anniston. He will lead us in meditating on the theme “Holy Waiting: The Spirit of Advent.” Brochures will be available in early November; for more information please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org.

Bishops’ Visitation Schedule

Sunday, November 1
9:30 a.m. Bishop Parsley, Grace, Cullman
10:45 a.m. Bishop Sloan, St. Francis’, Indian Springs

Sunday, November 8
11 a.m. Bishop Sloan, St. Stephen’s, Smith Station
3 p.m. Bishop Sloan, St. Matthew’s, Seale

Wednesday, November 18
6:30 p.m. Bishop Parsley, Trinity, Clanton

Sunday, November 22
10:30 a.m. Bishop Parsley, St. Thomas’, Birmingham
10:30 a.m. Bishop Sloan, Holy Spirit, Alabaster

Sunday, November 29
10:15 a.m. Bishop Sloan, Holy Cross, Trussville
11 a.m. Bishop Parsley, St. Stephen’s, Smith Station
3 p.m. Bishop Parsley, St. Matthew’s, Seale

December 2, Wednesday
6 p.m. Bishop Parsley, St. Luke’s, Scottsboro

December 6, Sunday
10:15 a.m. Bishop Sloan, Trinity, Wetumpka
10:30 a.m. Bishop Parsley, St. Luke’s, Birmingham

December 12, Saturday
6 p.m. Bishop Parsley, Iglesia Episcopal de la Gracia, Birmingham

“BODY PRAYER” RETREAT

Our diocesan Commission on Spirituality is sponsoring “Body Prayer” Retreat starting at 5 p.m. on Friday, November 20, and ending at noon on Sunday, November 22, at Camp McDowell. The Rev. Nancy Roth will help participants explore St. Paul’s statement that the human body is a “temple of the Spirit,” a holy space and what that means in terms of our own bodies, our lives, and our prayers through spoken reflection as well as simple “spiritual exercises” that help integrate body and spirit: movements drawn from Christian Yoga, breathing exercises, walking meditation, circle dances, and movement mantras.

The workshop is suitable for people of all ages and ability. For more information please contact the Rev. J.D. Barnes at rejjdb@kellsouth.net or 334/654-2556.

THE ALABAMA EPISCOPALIAN • SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009
What’s New/Noteworthy at the Episcopal Book Store

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology by Eugene H. Peterson

Spiritual theology is not solely for monks or academics; it’s for everyday disciples of Jesus. Lamenting the vacuous, often pagan nature of contemporary American spirituality, Eugene Peterson firmly grounds spirituality in Trinitarian theology and offers a clear, practical statement of what it means to actually live out the Christian life. This is the first in a five-volume series on spiritual theology by Peterson. Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places reminds us that spiritual theology must be about God and not about us. A Study Guide is also available.

Godology: Because Knowing God Changes Everything by Christian George

The deeper we dig into God’s attributes, the shallower we find ourselves. And the harder we shovel, the more difficult it gets. But God’s not done with us just yet . . .

This book is for you if you’re ready for a shock effect—ready for a language that may wake you up to the importance of knowing God.

Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church by Michael Horton

Have we left Christ out of Christianity? Are the faith and practice of American Christians today more American than Christian? Michael Horton addresses these provocative questions in this insightful book. He argues that while we invoke the name of Christ, too often Christ and the Christ-centered gospel are pushed aside.

The result is a message and a faith that are, in Horton’s words, “trivial, sentimental, affirming, and irrelevant.” This alternative “gospel” is a message of moralism, personal comfort, self-help, self-improvement, and individualistic religion. It trivializes God, making him a means to our selfish ends. The author skillfully diagnoses the problem and points to the solution: a return to the unadulterated gospel of salvation.

How and When To Tell Your Kids about Sex: A Lifelong Approach to Shaping Your Child’s Sexual Character by Stan and Brenna Jones

This book provides a vital tool for building the kind of Christian character in kids that will enable them to stand on their own and make the right decisions.

It offers parents a lifelong approach to shaping their children’s sexual character, and it will help you establish a biblical view of sexuality for your kids—and learn how and when to talk with your children about sexual curiosity, physical changes of puberty, dating, chastity, and more.

Messy Spirituality by Michael Yaconelli

Do you feel like you don’t pray enough, don’t read your Bible enough, don’t share your faith enough, don’t love God enough, etc., etc.? Then this book is for you. It was written for the spiritual perfectionist in all of us and for all of us who have been convinced that we just don’t do Christianity right.

The Praise Baby Collection: Music and Video for Baby’s Spirit and Mind—Praises and Smiles DVD

Recommended for age 1 to 36 months, Praises and Smiles gives parents a developmentally appropriate series that creates a nurturing environment for their child’s spiritual and intellectual development. Combining popular praise and worship songs with colorful real-world objects, it will actively engage your child’s spirit and mind, stimulating early learning in the areas of tactile, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual development.

For more information about these and other books or to have a staff member research and special order a particular book, please contact the Episcopal Book Store, 2015 Sixth Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203; 205/323-2959; e-mail ebsinfo@episcooks.com. You can also visit the bookstore online at www.episcooks.com. The bookstore is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Mark Your Calendar

Diocesan Convention February 11–13 in the Shoals area

Youth Minister Gatherings November 12 and December 10

October 23–24 Author, columnist, professor, and Lutheran pastor Martin Marty presents three lectures—The Paradoxes of American Religion (7–9 p.m. Friday), Wildly Religious and Mildly Irrational: The American Scene (9–10:30 a.m. Saturday), and Mildly Religious and Wildly Irrational: The American Scene (11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Saturday)—sponsored by SPAFER at Shades Valley Lutheran Church in Birmingham. For more information please contact Frank Romanowicz at 205/871-1815, 205/994-4048, or far32842@bellsouth.net.

October 29 Heart to Hand Craft and Gift Market from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham to benefit the parish’s mission trip with Constructores Para Cristo. For more information please contact Lisa Beatty at lisa@sschurch.org or 205/967-8786.

October 30–November 1 Spirituality and Recovery Retreat featuring keynoter Malachy McCool sponsored by our diocesan Department of Recovery Ministries at Camp McDowell. For more information please contact Sarah Sartain at ssartain@diola.org or 205/715-2060 ext. 314.

November 6–7 Understanding Your Family—A Systemic Approach, a workshop of five presentations outlining the theoretical concepts of Dr. Murray Bowen and their application to family living, led by the Rev. J. Thompson Brown, Canon Emeritus of the Cathedral Church of the Advent, at St. John’s in Montgomery. For more information please contact the Rev. Evan D. Ganner, Associate Rector, at 334/262-1937 or evan@stjohnsmontgomery.org.

November 12 Diocesan Youth Ministers Gathering from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham. For more information please contact lanming@diola.org or 205/715-2060 ext. 325.

November 13–15 “Tongued with Fire—The Poet’s Voice and Our Faith Journey” led by Bishop Parsley at St. Mary’s Sewanee Center for Spiritual Development in Sewanee, Tennessee. For more information please see the description on page 22 and visit www.stmaryssewanee.org/programs/Nov13.shtml, e-mail stmaryssewaneeinfo@bellsouth.net, or contact Jean Hastings at jeanhastings@somcast.net or 615/585-4287.

November 14–15 16th Annual Lobsterfest at St. Thomas’ in Huntsville. For more information please see the story on page 19 or contact St. Thomas’ at 256/880-0247 or stthomas@bellsouth.net.

November 17 Luncheon hosted by 55th Place in Birmingham from noon to 1 p.m. for laypersons and clergy. For more information please contact Emmy McGhee at 205/324-6129.

November 20 Midday Musical Menu featuring the Sanford University A Cappella Choir directed by Dr. Timothy Paul Banks at 12:30 at the Advent in Birmingham. For more information please contact Music Associate Charles M. Kennedy at 205/226-3505 or kennedy@cathedralladvent.com.

December 11–13 Advent Centering Prayer Retreat led by the Rev. Tom Ward at St. Mary’s Sewanee Center for Spiritual Development in Sewanee, Tennessee. For more information please visit www.stmaryssewanee.org/programs/Dec11.shtml, e-mail stmaryssewaneeinfo@bellsouth.net, or contact Jean Hastings at jeanhastings@somcast.net or 615/585-4287.

December 18 Midday Musical Menu featuring Sursum Corda, Birmingham’s premiere vocal ensemble, directed by Lester Seigel at 12:30 at the Advent in Birmingham. For more information please contact Music Associate Charles M. Kennedy at 205/226-3505 or kennedy@cathedralladvent.com.

December 30–January 1 “New Year’s Mindfulness Retreat: The Practice of Peace” retreat presented by the Rev. Gordon Peerman and Kathy Woods at St. Mary’s Sewanee Center for Spiritual Development in Sewanee, Tennessee. For more information please visit www.stmaryssewanee.org/programs/Dec30.shtml, e-mail stmaryssewaneeinfo@bellsouth.net, or contact Jean Hastings at jeanhastings@somcast.net or 615/585-4287.

January 2 Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop led by the Rev. Tom Ward at St. Mary’s Sewanee Center for Spiritual Development in Sewanee, Tennessee. For more information please visit www.stmaryssewanee.org/programs/Jan2.shtml, e-mail stmaryssewaneeinfo@bellsouth.net, or contact Jean Hastings at jeanhastings@somcast.net or 615/585-4287.

January 16 Outreach Summit from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at All Saints’ in Birmingham. For more information please see the description on page 22 or contact Judy Quick at jjquick@bellsouth.net or 205/660-6862.
New Diaconate Postulants Begin Formation Program

By the Rev. Bill King, Director of the Diaconate Formation Program

The third class of postulants for the diaconate in our diocese have begun their two-year formation program leading up to ordination in the fall of 2011. The formal formation program began with a two-day retreat at Camp McDowell on August 28-29 and will continue with monthly Saturday sessions including three weekends each year at Camp McDowell. For more information please visit www.dioala.org/096.html.

The Alabama Folk School—Free Workshops, November 11-14

Thanks to a generous grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, you can enjoy classes with master fiddler James Bryan and nationally recognized quilter Bettye Kimbrell tuition free at Camp McDowell's Alabama Folk School, November 11-14. You can also choose from a wide range of other classes taught by renowned folk artists, including Lenton Williams (Appalachian Brooms), Mary Ann Smith (Reed Basketry), Sandra Heaven (Pottery), and Cheryl Patton (Soap, Candles, and Jam). In addition, several well-known musicians will teach a medley of Old-Time Music classes—Beginning Fiddle with Jim Cauthen, Rhythm Guitar with Joyce Cauthen, and Clawhammer Banjo with Adam Hurt.

Director Danielle Dunbar invites everyone "to come stay with us in comfortable, air-conditioned, hotel-style lodges and enjoy being served well-prepared meals. This is an artistic retreat of your design—enjoy your class time and then relax on the porch, visit with new friends, and tap your toes to the live music. You won't forget the time you spend among this special community of art and nature enthusiasts!" she promises.

After taking classes earlier this year, Allison Barnes, of Southern Living magazine, wrote that she "truly enjoyed the instruction and hospitality at this first-rate folk school. It was a memorable experience that has inspired me to continue to study folk art."

Martha Jane, of Birmingham, notes that spending time at the folk school is a "breath of fresh air and respite in a hectic world. A very enriching experience on many levels—super instructors!"

"I love the folk school. It has been a very therapeutic activity for me," adds Cathy, of Fayette. "I especially enjoyed having my daughter share the experience with me."

For more information please contact Danielle Dunbar at folksc@campmcdowell.com or 205/363-9990, or visit www.campmcdowell.com/folkschool.

The Alabama Episcopalian

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Please send stories and photographs (color, if available) to Editor Norma McKittrick at apostledit@aol.com or 2156 Kent Way, Birmingham, AL 35226; the submission deadline for each issue is the 1st of the month prior to publication. Postmaster, parishes, and individuals, please send all address changes or additions to Circulation Secretary Denise Servant at dservant@dioala.org or Carpenter House, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203–2682.