Delegates Gather for Our 180th Annual Diocesan Convention
Delegates and guests gathered at St. Luke’s in Birmingham on February 11-12 for our 180th Annual Diocesan Convention; photo by Dave Drachlis.

Our 180th Annual Diocesan Convention
February 11–12 at St. Luke’s in Birmingham


The Rt. Rev. Henry Parsley sent the convention delegates home with a challenge to make the Church ever more open and hospitable to every child of God, with no exceptions. Bishop Parsley, who will retire as our diocesan bishop in January 2012, chose “Gospel Hospitality” as this year’s convention theme and offered it both as a description of what the Church does and as the model for what it can do.

“It is my fondest hope for you that this diocese will continue to be a place of welcome for all sorts and conditions of people in God’s varied family and a beacon of unity in the midst of diversity and of balance in an age of extremism,” Bishop Parsley said in his convention address (please see page 3 of this issue). “We do not only need apostolic succession; we also need apostolic hospitality.”

Bishop Parsley touched on Governor Robert Bentley’s widely reported comments on what it means to be brothers and sisters in Christianity. “With all due respect, I must disagree with our new governor,” he said. “My sisters and brothers are not just those I see at church or those who believe the same as I do. They are everyone who is loved by God.”

The theme and challenge of hospitality was reflected throughout the convention’s activities. The preacher at Thursday’s convention Eucharist, the Rt. Rev. Edwin “Ted” Gulick, retired Bishop of Kentucky, painted a vivid picture of the Parable of the Prodigal Son with its models of radical hospitality in the father and reluctance, even hostility, in the older son. “Hospitality is not something we get around to in our free time,” he said. “It is the living of whose we are.” Bishop Gulick reminded the convention delegates that the parable is unresolved. “We are not told what the elder son did,” he noted. “The parable waits to be resolved in the life of the Episcopal Church in Alabama.”

The convention, hosted by St. Luke’s in Birmingham, began Friday morning, February 11, and was adjourned Saturday afternoon. The two-day format was designed to reduce costs for our diocese and parishes. St. Luke’s offered wonderful hospitality with many volunteers on hand to assist delegates and visitors. Bishop Parsley thanked our diocese for the “privilege of being with you and serving God together” during the past 15 years. He also encouraged us, as we prepare for life under new leadership, to focus on six points of mission and ministry:

• Maintain the Church’s role as a leader in social responsibility and open-mindedness.

The Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan, our diocesan bishop suffragan, warned us away from anxiety in a time of transition. “Concerns about issues in the larger Church seem to be less pressing for the moment, but they are still there, lurking, waiting for someone on one extreme or another to stir things up, as they surely will,” he said. He emphasized that such times offer the opportunity for the opposite of anxiety: “It is a moment for us to decide again whether we will live in fear or in faith, for us to decide where we put our hope.”

In other business, delegates approved a $2.6-million balanced budget, slightly smaller than the 2010 budget. Delegates also elected deputies to General Convention to be held in Indianapolis in 2012, and they adopted a resolution urging parishes to support the national “Rebuild Our Church in Haiti” Campaign, to which the convention offering was given.

The 180th Annual Diocesan Convention delegates will officially reconvene at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham on July 16 to elect the 11th Bishop of Alabama. For more about our diocesan convention, please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org.
I greet you gladly as we gather from all corners of our diocese for this 180th annual convention. May the grace and love of our Lord be with us abundantly as we renew our life and ministry together and engage the work God calls us to do.

We are grateful to St. Luke’s parish for their most warm welcome and yeoman labors for us. This is our shorter, parish-based model for convention, and St. Luke’s has graciously let us take over the whole place for these two days and again in June. Thank you, dear friends.

I am glad that our brother Ted Gulick, the recently retired Bishop of Kentucky, is here to nourish us from the riches of Christ’s grace. Ted, Barbara, Becky, and I have shared closely the journey of the episcopate in this province for many years, and I hold Ted in the highest esteem as a friend and colleague. They have recently moved from their old Kentucky home and been “carried back to old Virginia.” We welcome you warmly.

I am accustomed to addressing you first thing in the morning, and this early afternoon time slot reminds me of a favorite story I heard Archbishop Robert Runcie tell about a time he was to speak after a meal. As the hour drew near for him to speak, the lady sitting at table next to him noticed that he was acting strangely. “Are you alright, your Grace?” she asked. “Yes,” he said, “but I have to get up in a moment, and my leg has gone to sleep. Rubbing it isn’t helping.” Blushing she replied, “That’s because it is my leg you are rubbing.”

I chose the theme “Gospel Hospitality” for this my final annual convention as your diocesan for several reasons that will become apparent in the course of this address. It is a theme close to the soul of Christian community and our mission in God’s world.

Jesus Christ came among us to reveal the gracious hospitality of God for all the world. In words that echo throughout Epiphany, John the evangelist wrote, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Another translation says “made his home with us.” The Incarnation is God’s homing among us. Our word hospitality derives from the Latin word for guest and for receiving guests with generosity. So the Incarnation is an act of supreme hospitality wherein God makes his home with humanity and receives us as beloved guests.

I chose the theme “Gospel Hospitality” for this my final annual convention as your diocesan for several reasons that will become apparent in the course of this address. It is a theme close to the soul of Christian community and our mission in God’s world.

The famous Russian icon on our convention booklet is an image of the Holy Trinity, based on the story of Abraham and Sarah’s welcome to their three visitors by the oaks of Mamre, strangers who they later recognized as a revelation of God. It is sometimes called the icon of hospitality. The icon depicts both the three angelic visitors and the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Each is distinct, but all have the same face. They bow humbly to one another as they sit at table, forming an image of the dance of love and mutuality in the being of God. Here is an image of the communion at the heart of reality and of the generous hospitality of God that saves us and gives us life: The Church’s task is to show this same hospitality to the world. “Welcome one another . . . just as Christ has welcomed you,” St. Paul exhorts us (Romans 15:7). Just as Christ has welcomed you, he stresses. We must welcome one another with the same mercy and unconditional acceptance that we have received. This is our timeless mission, to invite all people to feast on the infinite generosity of God.

An African American spiritual sings of sitting at the welcome table: “I’m gonna sit at the welcome table. I gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, hallelujah! All God’s children gonna sit together . . . one of these days.” Springing both from the African American experience of not being welcome at the table and from the vision of God’s inclusive grace in Christ, this old spiritual invites us to radical hospitality. The altar of this church—and of all our churches—is the welcome table, where the bread of life is shared and where all are meant to find the unconditional welcome of God.

When I reflect on these nearly 15 years as your bishop, the word hospitality captures much of what I feel today. Becky and I are deeply grateful for the gracious hospitality you have shown us during these years. We have shared life and faith and ministry together in extraordinary ways.

We have rejoiced together and struggled together, laughed and sometimes wept together, sung praises together and put our shoulder to the plow together. We have been greatly blessed by our diocesan staff, and no one is more grateful for their excellence and dedication than I. Becky and I will always be profoundly thankful for the privilege of being with you and serving God together. “Sweet home Alabama” has become our home, and we will always be proud to have been grafted onto the fruitful vine of this great diocese.

Most of all today I want to salute you—salute you for being who you are and for your dedication to Christ’s ministry of reconciliation and renewal in so many ways. Together we have rounded the turn into the third Christian millennium and a new century together and joyfully celebrated the 175th anniversary of this diocese.

At the same time these years also have included some unusually challenging times in our society and some fractious seasons in the life of our Church. Among them the shock of 9/11 and global terrorism, the wars of the Middle East, Katrina, the Haitian earthquake, severe economic swings and a Great Recession, and, of course, the ongoing debate about sexual ethics in the churches. “May you live in interesting times,” says the Chinese proverb. Well, we have.

Through it all you have kept your focus on worship and mission, have reached out generously to many in need, and have shown deep spiritual maturity. It has not always been easy, but we have largely kept our balance and maintained “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

During these years we have established six new parishes and shared in the significant renewal of several others. We have built two new campus ministry centers and the beautiful St. Francis Chapel at camp. We have helped develop ministry centers and support clergy in Brazil and helped build schools and medical and nutrition clinics in Haiti, while at home starting new outreach centers and acquiring land for future church growth. We have extended our outreach by reestablishing the permanent deaconate and have committed ourselves to serious environmental stewardship. It has been good to see our youth ministry grow in grace and strength, to see Sawyerville ministry expand and blossom, and to see Hispanic ministry take root among us in several forms, including La Gracia, our first Hispanic church. The ACTS 2 campaign has moved us forward in mission in important ways and will continue to bear fruit for years. It has taken all of you to make these things happen, and I am very proud of you.

I was heartened to discover recently that I have had the privilege of consecrating 14 new church buildings since 1996 and dedicating 7 major parish additions. This is remarkable and speaks volumes about the vitality of the Diocese of Alabama. During a time when many dioceses have been mired in internal conflict and retrenchment, we have continued to expand our ministry. At a recent reckoning we were one of the four growing dioceses of the Episcopal Church (which is both a happy thing here and a reminder of the challenges facing us nationally).

Most important of all, the Gospel has been preached, lives have been transformed by the love of Christ, and God has been joyfully worshiped and faithfully served.

All of this has been accomplished because of your
vision and generosity, your faithfulness to the comprehensive-ness and moderation of our Episcopal/ Anglican heritage, and your good sense of humor and hospitality. Even as I salute you, we say with the psalmist, “Now nobis, donum,” not to us, but to God be the glory.

I believe that we are well-positioned to take in stride the diversity of this Church. Change is inevitable, and being in communion is always far more important than being in agreement about everything. We will inevitably have different views on issues such as committed same sex relationships. Our dioceses and parishes will not always be completely in step with each other. That is the nature of the Church. “There’s wideness in God’s mercy, like the wideness of the sea.”

In our often fractious times we must not succumb to the seduction of polarization, which seems to be the hobgoblin of our day. At the welcome table there is room for different points of view within the catholic faith as expressed in our creeds and Prayer Book. It is my fondest hope for you that this diocese will continue to be a place of welcome for all sorts and conditions of people in God’s varied family and a beacon of unity in the midst of diversity and of balance in an age of extremism. As I have said to you in the past, I say again “God needs us all and needs us together.”

It has been said that healthy transition in leadership enables us to give thanks for what has been good, to acknowledge what has not been perfect, and to enable everyone to move on. Much has been good during these years. Not all has been perfect, to be sure, and it is well to remember that “God’s strength is made perfect in weakness.” God is not finished with any of us yet, thankfully. We are grateful to the Nominating Committee for their dedicated work and discernment in helping to raise up the 11th Bishop of Alabama to continue the journey, and I trust that the transition will be both orderly and life-giving.

“May you live in interesting times,” says the Chinese proverb. Well, we have. Through it all we have kept your focus on worship and mission, have reached out generously to many in need, and have shown deep spiritual maturity. It has not always been easy, but we have largely kept our balance and maintained “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

It is not appropriate for me to look very far ahead now, but I do need to sound a few notes toward the future. I very much hope that you will give serious attention to financial stewardship in the days to come. The Alabama Plan for Stewardship Education needs renewal among us. It is still the best approach to Christian stewardship that I know. Concurrently we need to make our covenant giving for diocesan ministry more adequate and equitable. I applaud you who are wonderfully faithful in meeting our agreed covenant guidelines, but the reality is too many still do not. Thus, recently we have had to cut two full-time staff positions from your diocesan ministry.

We need more of this. Ministry with young adults needs attention and new creativity. We are an aging Church and must be attentive to the needs of young adults and children. In the age of Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter, and other emerging social patterns and networks, we must find new ways to connect with young adults and their hunger for God. Our society is growing more diverse each year, and we need to reflect this diversity more adequately than we do. One of the most repeated commands in the Old Testament is “welcome the stranger.” Diversity is a beautiful gift, and if we are to continue to grow and make disciples we must embrace it. We need new models for sustaining our smaller churches and support lay ministries. I am delighted to see partnerships developing between some of our larger parishes and smaller ones that are very beneficial to both. We need more of this.

Our communications effort and strategy led by the Rev. Deacon Dave Drachlis is proving to be highly effective in spreading the message of our Church. I have learned how essential it is today to have a staff person who is proactive and strategic in this area, and I pray that you will continue this after the ACTS 2 funding ends. Finally, never forget how important the Episcopal Church continues to be in this state as a leader in social responsibility and open-mindedness. We may be a comparatively small Church numerically, but we are able to make a big difference for compassion and for the poor and for progress in our communities. Society looks to the Episcopal Church for enlightened leadership. These are a few of the ways we need to move into God’s future in 2012 and beyond. They all mean some change. They all promise greater vitality.

When I hand the crozier to my successor on January 7, 2012, I will recall the words of Francis of Assisi to his successor, “I have done what was mine to do. Now you must do what is yours to do.” This is the way that the Church continues to grow and expand and be faithful from generation to generation. No one will be more eager than I to see what God has in store for you—and what you have in store for God—in the years to come! Retirement as your diocesan does not mean retiring from the vocation of bishop. As I gather up the fragments of many years of full-time ministry, travel and spend time with family and friends too often neglected, and do some intentional fishing, I will be eager to see how I might be useful to the Church in new ways. We have been enormously blessed since going to seminary nearly 41 years ago and have been led on vocationally in ways that could never have been imagined in my callow days at the General Seminary. “Vocation keeps making more of you;” wrote Gail Godwin. Indeed it has, and I expect it will continue to.

When Paul writes about the ministry of bishops in the Pastoral Epistles he lists a number of criteria. A bishop should be “above reproach, sensible, not a lover of money, gentle, have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy,” among others. In both of his lists the word “hospitality” prominently appears. A bishop must be hospitable—what a splendid thing for us to think about as we prepare for an episcopal election.

We can easily think of hospitality as denoting good home-cooking, rocking chairs on the porch, and sweet tea and congeniality. We Southerners know about such hospitality, don’t we? And it is a good and gracious thing, as far as it goes.

But “Gospel Hospitality” goes further. It is much more robust and radical. Jesus’ hospitality extended not just to his friends but to the sinners and outcasts of his day. He shared table fellowship with those on the margins and those considered unrighteous, to the unending consternation of the Pharisees. He spoke about the feasts of God’s kingdom where everyone was welcome, not just the invited guests but those from the highways and byways. Jesus said “love your enemies, as well as “love one another” (which sometimes can be harder than loving our
enemies!). On the cross we beheld his life-transforming love as he stretched out his loving arms to all, even those who crucified and rejected him—and indeed to the sinful and broken ones of every time and place. To even the likes of us. The cross is God’s ultimate hospitality, a saving embrace of mercy and loving kindness for the whole world.

Desmond Tutu once described it this way:

There is a movement at the heart of things to reverse the awful centrifugal force of alienation, brokenness, division, hostility and disharmony. God has set in motion a centripetal process, a moving toward the Center, toward unity, harmony, goodness, peace, and justice; one that removes barriers. Jesus says, “when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to myself”; as he hung from his cross with out-flung arms, thrown out to clasp all, everyone and everything in cosmic embrace; so that everyone, everything, belongs. None is an outsider, all are insiders, and all belong in one family, God’s family, the human family.

That is Gospel Hospitality. It is the deep meaning of the Incarnation and the Cross. We are a continuing part of this great movement of healing and reconciliation. Our churches are meant to live this cosmic embrace and make God’s expansive love real.

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In the 1950s J.B. Phillips famously said “your God is too small.” Today I suggest that the danger is that “your church is too small.” We need to be as large as Christ’s embrace. And that is large indeed.

We see much hostility in our culture today, especially toward those who differ from one another. We need to move from hostility to hospitality, from regarding the other with fear to regarding him and her as Christ. Christ in the stranger, Christ in the poor, Christ in the opposite party and other culture, Christ in those who differ most from us. As Henri Nouwen wrote, “it is obligatory for Christians to offer an open and hospitable place where strangers can cast off their strangeness and become our fellow human beings.”

With all due respect, I must disagree with our new governor. My sisters and brothers are not just those I see at church or those who believe the same as I do. They are everyone who is loved by God.

I felt the welcome of God keenly when I visited Sawyerville last summer and saw the hospitality offered by our youth to Black Belt youth and by them to us. Bridges of hope and love were being built across wide social gaps.

I felt it keenly when Bishop Sloan, Rob Morpeth, Pat Wingo, and I visited Christ Church in Albertville on the day after a tornado ripped apart their church building and their beautiful neighborhood. There on the damaged porch Episcopalians and others were serving food and refreshment to their neighbors and relief workers, offering Gospel Hospitality in the midst of tragedy. It was an altar in the world.

I have seen such communion vividly in the work of many of our parishes and individuals in Haiti, in medical clinics, in building schools and feeding programs, extending the hospitality of our affluent land to a faithful people ravaged by poverty and crisis. The pictures of the first of many meals for nearly 200 undernourished children in the mountain village of Crochu made possible by Krik?Krac! were profoundly moving. A welcome table indeed. Thank you, Becky and all the clergy spouses.

I feel the hospitality of God as I attend worship at La Gracia with our Hispanic friends, when I see our integrity chapter seeking to help us respect the dignity of every human being, when I officiate at Cursillo events and witness the unconditional love of Christ transforming many of us, when I see how the ministry of the Camp McDowell Environmental Center touches the children of our state, and how our soup kitchens and free medical clinics nourish the poor among us.

All these and more are helping many experience the feast of grace. They are the hospitality of God taking flesh, transforming us from fearful people to free people and moving us from separateness to true community. “All God’s children gonna sit together one of these days, hallelujah!”

I believe that this is why St. Paul is so specific about bishops being hospitable. We are called to lead and serve the Church in extending God’s welcome table as far as possible so that all can feast on the infinite generosity of God. We do not just need apostolic succession; we need apostolic hospitality!

This is not always easy. It is ever tempting to worry about the vestments and rearranging the deck chairs and business as usual. The Church is often tempted to turn inward and circle the wagons in fear. And, as I heard the Archbishop of York say years ago, it is easy to get so up to our rears in alligators that we forget that we are here to clean up the swamp!

Nevertheless, apostolic hospitality is the essential calling of the episcopal office so that we welcome all of God’s people generously and make room for their diverse gifts. This is how Christ “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” lived, and it is how we must live—in radical hospitality, welcoming one another just as Christ has welcomed us.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the rich life and ministry you have shared with Becky and me since 1996. May you show the same generosity to your next diocesan bishop and may Gospel Hospitality abound in this diocese, making you an ever brighter beacon of welcome and hope for the world today, tomorrow, and always.

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Today I do not say “Farewell.” That will come later, on October 28th. But I do say, in the words of a favorite poet, “Fare forward!” Fare forward in the hospitality of Christ. Fare forward in love for one another. Fare forward in making the feast of God’s grace available to all.

And the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you always. AMEN.

In the name of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Well, we have had two really fine stirring, challenging sermons by our cousin Ted Gulick, we heard a really wonderful address by our brother Henry Parsley, and now it’s time for the address by the Bishop Suffragan—and who knows what might happen? The Diocesan Bishop is tasked with giving a State of the Diocese Address, celebrating the past and challenging us into the future, and the Keynote Speaker, Chaplain, Challenger, and Outside Agitator has dibs on the theme du jour—so we have the past, the future, and the present covered. But nobody knows what the Bishop Suffragan is supposed to say at a diocesan convention. You might hope that if the speaker doesn’t know what to say, it might be short. And you know that hope is powerful stuff.

This will be my fourth convention address or sermon as your suffragan. I’ve quoted St. James Buffett and Mister George Carlin, who was sometimes funny but never a saint. I’ve told you about Miss Ethel, whose father traded mules, and Jimmie Lee Washington, uneducated but wise. Last year I started by mortally embarrassing our 16-year-old daughter on her birthday and ended by quoting Popeye the Sailor Man, for heaven’s sake! Who knows what the boy might say next!!

How exciting—how frightening—to not know what might happen next. The moment is fraught with potential for something wonderful or something disappointing or something challenging. Maybe it’ll be fun. Maybe it will be controversial or inspiring or reassuring. Maybe it’ll be a waste of time. At this point, at the end of the third paragraph, we are still wondering. How exciting—how frightening.

Let’s assume that all the people who figured that this would be a good moment in our busy day to go grab a cup of coffee or make a call or find a bathroom or smoke a cigarette have left the room. It may be that some of those folks are assuming whatever they’re doing now is a better use of their time than sitting here listening to me, and you know they might be right—that could be true for all of us. But here we are, you and I, connected by our innate optimism, our shared hope that I will have something to say that’s worth the time it takes to hear it.

How exciting—how frightening—to have hope, to have faith. It’s funny about hope: If the hopeful were sure that it was all going to work out, their hope would be certainty and not hope at all. If the faithful knew that it would all be fine, they would not need faith. It is necessarily exciting and frightening to have hope or faith; it calls us to look beyond ourselves, to put our trust in another.

It’s funny about hope: If the hopeful were sure that it was all going to work out, their hope would be certainty and not hope at all. If the faithful knew that it would all be fine, they would not need faith. It is necessarily exciting and frightening to have hope or faith; it calls us to look beyond ourselves, to put our trust in another.

We have made much of the example of Abraham at this convention—as an example of hospitality, as an example of faith, as an example of hope. At the beginning of the 12th chapter of the Book of Genesis, we read the story of God calling Abraham:

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.

How exciting, how frightening . . . can you imagine the conversations you’d have to have after you announced to your family and friends that at the age of 75 you were going to pack everything up and move, that you didn’t really know where you were going, that the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth, had spoken to you and said that you were going to have children and grandchildren to make a great nation, even though you and your spouse had never been able to have children before?

The excitement of that moment would have been energizing I’m sure, but fear is very often paralyzing. What could Sarai and Abram have been thinking? Surely they must have known what a crazy thing this was. Surely they had many reasons to ignore the call of God and stay right where they were. And surely they would have long ago forgotten if they had, if they’d played it safe.

How odd of God to choose . . . Abraham and Sarah. He was 75; she was barren. It was a crazy thing for them; it couldn’t have been God’s safest bet either.

And while we’re at it—how odd of God to choose Jacob, the lesser of twins, who cheated his brother and ran away, whose hip was put out of joint in a wrestling match. How odd of God to choose Moses, reluctant liberator, who despite a speech impediment was called to preach freedom to the Hebrews and argue their case before Pharaoh (I sort of suspect Moses spoke with a lisp). How odd of God to choose David, the youngest and least of the sons of Jesse.

How odd of God to choose Isaiah, a man of unclean lips, to be the great prophet of hope.

How odd of God to choose Israel, nearly insignificant on this world’s stage—a hardheaded, stiff-necked people—to be a Light to the Nations.

How most wonderfully odd of God to become incarnate by the Virgin Mary and be made man.

When Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem, there was an old man there named Simeon, who had been told by the Spirit of God that he would not die before he saw God’s Messiah. When he saw the baby Jesus, he said, “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

How odd of God to choose Simeon, an old Jewish man in the Temple, to proclaim to the Jews that their Messiah had come to be the Light to the Gentiles.

How odd of God to choose Simon called Peter, who had no resume and no experience, who blundered between enthusiasm and fear, who walked on water with Jesus and then denied that he knew him, and on whom Christ has built His Church.

How odd of God to choose Saul of Tarsus, so zealous first in his defense of the religion he’d grown up in, and then in his efforts to spread the Gospel near and far struggled so hard to balance law and grace.

I am no scholar of anything at all—I think I’ve proven that sufficiently. But I’ve read enough Church history to appreciate how odd it was of God to choose Origen, Constantine, Benedict, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, or Thomas Cranmer. Our history is filled with men and women whom it was odd for God to choose.

And yet, by God’s relentless grace, all these and thousands more women and men no more qualified and no less sinful than we have offered themselves to love and serve God through Jesus Christ our Lord, offering themselves into an unknown future to shine the Light of Christ. They were none of them perfect, but they were all of them enough, limited vessels conveying God’s boundless grace. Each of them came to their own moments to choose—how exciting, how frightening—and they chose to find their way around the fear to faith. They chose hope.

I went to Honduras for the first time in 1983. I had no idea what I had gotten myself into. I’d been asked to fill in for another priest who’d gotten sick. I was part of a team from the Diocese of Mississippi that went to a little village called San Joaquin. We spent the first night at a hotel in the big city, and early the next morning we crammed about 25 gringos, all our luggage, and a ton of medicines and medical supplies on an ancient yellow
I said, “Hola, señor.” It was apparently up to me to say something to him. At a hairpin turn the driver had to put it in reverse, go back a few feet, then into a low gear to go forward a few feet, and then back and forward and back and forward until we could resume. It was when some of the other team members were trying to figure out who could express our concerns to the driver that I realized nobody on the team could speak Spanish any better than I, or at all. I'd taken Spanish in high school and a little in college and never given it another thought. We would have interpreters when we got to the village, but for right now, as the driver was grinding the gears to go up an unbelievably steep hill on our way to another incredibly tight hairpin turn, it was apparently up to me to say something to him. I said, “Hola, señor.” That means “Hello, sir.” I was pretty sure about that. He looked amused that I was trying to talk to him and said, “Hola.” Then I began to make my case: I said, “¿El autobús es muy grande, sí?” (The bus is very large, yes?) He looked at me as if I’d said water is wet or rocks are hard, but trying to be agreeable, he said, “Sí.” And then I came to my point: “Y el camino es pequeño.” (And the road is small.) I believe at this point he under- understood my concern; he responded with several sentences, all in rapid-fire Spanish, accompanied by hand motions and facial expressions, none of which I understood. When he was done, he looked at me for a response, but I had no idea really whether he had said, cheerfully that he made this trip every week or that we are all sure to die, so the best I could do was to look at him blankly. He took his eyes off the road, which did not diminish my concern, to look into my eyes, and he took one of his hands off the wheel to pat me on my shoulder and said, “Confía en mi.” I said, “¿Cómo?”—which translated loosely is Huh?—and he said it again: “Confía en mi.”

Now I knew that “en mi” was “in me.” I knew that “confía” was “with.” And I knew that to my deeply Southern ears “fía” sounded suspiciously like “fear.” So literally: “With fear in me?”

Was he telling us to be afraid with him? That didn’t match the reassurance I hoped I’d seen in his face or the pat on my shoulder. I went back to my friends and told them that I didn’t understand what he said. Then I went to the back of the bus and dug through the small mountain of duffle bags to find my bag and the Spanish to English dictionary that I’d stuffed in there. It took a while, but finally I think I found the verb he’d been using: “confiar,” to trust. What he was saying, all he could say, and what I really needed to hear, was, “Trust me.” I decided we only had two choices. The first was to panic, get off the bus, and find our way back to the city—and try to make it to the village another day. And the other was to trust our driver.

I told the team what I hoped: that we would be okay. I told them we were fine. And, of course, we were. That hope is powerful stuff.

At one point as our journey continued, the driver stopped the bus and came to talk to me. It took us a while again, but finally I figured out that he needed us all to get out so that he could get the bus across a creek without the weight of 25 gringos making the bus scrape the rocks. My friends grumbled about having to walk through the creek, and I told them, with all the assurance I could muster, “Trust him.” It was the best we could do.

When the bus couldn’t get us any closer, he turned off the engine and explained to me that we would have to carry our things the rest of the way. I asked him, I think, how far it was, and he told me, I think, two or three kilometers, over the ridge. I didn’t know the word for “mile” in Spanish and wasn’t really sure how far a kilometer was, so I just thanked him. Then he surprised me by grabbing a couple of duffle bags full of medicine and carrying them up into the village alongside me. When we got there, and after I’d caught my breath, I introduced myself and asked his name. I don’t remember all of his names, there were four or five altogether, but I do remember that one of the names, the one I latched onto and the one that we called him for the rest of the week, was Jesus.You cannot imagine how many times I’ve preached about trusting Jesus the Bus Driver since 1983.

How very odd of God to choose . . . me, despite my various shortcomings and faults, to serve in this role, in this part of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. Surely I could not have been God’s safest bet. But . . . “is anything too wonderful for the Lord?” And now that we’ve gotten to it: how odd of God to choose you.

How exciting—how frightening—to not know what might happen next. The moment is fraught with potential for something wonderful or something disappointing or something challenging. How exciting—how frightening—to have hope, to have faith: hope that cannot be certainty, faith that necessarily involves an element of risk. It is a moment for us to decide again whether we will live in fear or in faith, for us to decide where we put our hope. I hope you know that the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and Saints were not much different from you and me. Just like us, they had problems and issues, faults and shortcomings. I hope you know that none of them had all the answers either. They couldn’t see into the uncertain future any better than we can. I hope you know that none of those people were forced to choose faith over fear, none of them had to choose to trust God more than they trusted themselves. They had the same choice we have, and they were able, by God’s grace—the same grace that is extended to us—to offer themselves into their moments exciting and frightening they chose to trust God. They were no more qualified and no less sinful than we, and they chose to live in hope.

We come now again to a moment to decide, and I think we only have two choices. We can panic and get off the bus, or we can trust the Driver. I want to tell you what I hope: We will be just fine. That hope is powerful stuff. We will be just fine because our hope is in God.
If we are laboring under the illusion that our hope is in us, in our abilities or resources, in our budgets and strategies, then we will surely be paralyzed by our fears and debilitated by our inadequacies. It is when we really trust God, when we really know that our hope is in Jesus Christ, that we are able to answer God’s call to us and shine the Light of the World. We may wonder why, we may think it odd, but we need to know that Jesus has put His trust and hope in us.

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, one of my favorite movies, Andy Dufresne escapes from prison and writes a note to his friend Red inviting him to come join him in a little village on the Pacific coast of Mexico. The note ends with these words: “Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.”

When Red is released, he takes a bus through Texas on his way to join Andy. The last words of the movie are spoken as we see Red walking across the beach to embrace his friend. You have to imagine Morgan Freeman’s voice saying this: I hope I can make it across the border. I hope to see my friend and shake his hand. I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams. I hope.

“Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.”

Let us live in hope, you and me, knowing that our hope is in God the Creator of all that is, who loves us and invites us to offer ourselves into love and service. Let us live in hope, you and me, knowing that our hope is in Jesus Christ our Lord, who knows what it is to be human and calls us anyway. Let us live in hope, you and me, knowing that our hope is in the Spirit of God blowing wildly among us, ruffling our hair, and sending us out from this place rejoicing to share God’s love and shine Christ’s Light. Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?

They lived not only in ages past, there are hundreds of thousands still.
The world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus’ will.
You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea;
in church or on trains, in shops or at tea.
For the saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one, too.”

Let us live in hope. Thanks be to God. AMEN.

The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan

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Clergy Introduced at Convention

The deans of the Birmingham, Cheaha, East Alabama, Mountain, and Tennessee Valley Convocations introduced new clergy during the 180th Annual Diocesan Convention: (front) the Rev. Geoff Evans; the Rev. Dexter Bender; the Rev. Canon Joe Gibbes; the Rev. Lesley Hay; the Rev. Anna Brawley; the Rev. Brad Landry; (back) the Rev. Susan Sloan, dean of the Tennessee Valley Convocation; the Rev. John Fritschner, dean of the East Alabama Convocation; the Rev. Bruce White, dean of the Cheaha Convocation; the Rev. Dr. Glenda Curry, dean of the Birmingham Convocation; and the Rev. Bill Winters, dean of the Mountain Convocation.
The lay and clergy delegates elected the following people to serve our diocese:

DIOCESAN COUNCIL (3-year terms)

Northern District
Bingham Edwards

Middle District
Rip Britton

Southern District
Sydney Cummings

STANDING COMMITTEE
The Rev. Jack Alvey (4-year term)
Jimmy McLemore (4-year term)
Larry Meyer (3-year term)

DISCIPLINARY BOARD
The Rev. Scott Arnold (1-year term)
The Rev. Neil Kaminski (3-year term)
The Rev. Lee Shafer (3-year term)
The Rev. Sara-Scott Wingo (2-year term)
Reggie Hamner (3-year term)
Stan Herring (1-year term)
Martha Jane Patton (2-year term)

DEPUTIES AND ALTERNATES TO GENERAL CONVENTION

Northern District
Deputy—The Rev. Susan Sloan
1st Alternate—The Rev. Andy Anderson
2nd Alternate—The Rev. Lee Shafer

Southern District
Deputy—The Rev. John Mark Ford
1st Alternate—The Rev. David Peeples
2nd Alternate—The Rev. Dr. Herman Afanador

Middle District
Deputy—Virginia Hillhouse
1st Alternate—Jane Pounds
2nd Alternate—M. E. Spencer

At Large
Deputy—The Rev. John Fritschner
1st Alternate—Paul Thibodaux
2nd Alternate—Nancy Terrell

Deputy—The Rev. John Mark Ford
1st Alternate—The Rev. Eric Stelle
2nd Alternate—The Rev. Dr. Herman Afanador

Deputy—The Rev. Scott Arnold
1st Alternate—The Rev. Charles Younson
2nd Alternate—The Rev. John David Barnes

Deputy—The Rev. Evan Garner
1st Alternate—Cecil Williamson
2nd Alternate—Charles Israel

Deputy—The Rev. John Fritschner
1st Alternate—Paul Thibodaux
2nd Alternate—Nancy Terrell

Deputy—Marcellus Smith
1st Alternate—Cecil Williamson
2nd Alternate—Charles Israel

Deputy—Ernest Edgar
1st Alternate—Cecil Williamson
2nd Alternate—Charles Israel

Deputy—The Rev. John Fritschner
1st Alternate—Paul Thibodaux
2nd Alternate—Nancy Terrell

Deputy—Marcellus Smith
1st Alternate—Cecil Williamson
2nd Alternate—Charles Israel

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2nd Alternate—Nancy Terrell

Deputy—Marcellus Smith
1st Alternate—Cecil Williamson
2nd Alternate—Charles Israel

Resolutions Passed

#1 THE 2011 PROPOSED PROGRAM AND BUDGET

Please see the pie chart at left; also please see the budget summary online at www.dioala.org.

#2 THE PROPOSED CAMP MCDOWELL BUDGET

Please see the budget summary online at www.dioala.org.

#3 RESOLUTION TO CONTINUE OFFERING ANTIRACISM TRAINING

Be it resolved by this convention that the Diocese of Alabama commits itself to the work of ending institutional racism and other forms of racism in this diocese and extends for five years the mandate of the Commission on Race Relations in the Church to offer Antiracism training.
Training and to fulfill the requirement for all ordained persons, professional staff, and those elected or appointed to positions of leadership on committees, commissions, and boards to take such training;

And be it further resolved that the Commission of Race Relations creates a system of identifying those persons in the above categories who have not taken the training and develop a process to be robust in encouraging them to take this training.

#4 TO FURTHER SUPPORT THE RECOVERY OF OUR COMPANION DIOCESE

Be it resolved that this 180th Convention of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Alabama recognizes the ongoing selfless response of our parishes and individuals to the overwhelming suffering of our brothers and sisters in our Companion Diocese of Haiti caused by last year’s devastating earthquake, hurricane, and cholera epidemic.

And be it further resolved that this 180th Convention of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Alabama encourages parishes and individuals to continue to live into our companion relationship and our Lord’s call to serve, through our work, our gifts, and our prayers.

And be it further resolved that the convention urges the diocese and its parishes and individuals to support the Episcopal Church’s national “Rebuild Our Church in Haiti” campaign to raise funds to reconstruct Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port-au-Prince, the heart of the Diocese of Haiti.

Explanation:
Much good work has been done in Haiti by many churches and organizations during the year after the earthquake. There is one thing no one else can rebuild for the Episcopal Church: Holy Trinity Cathedral. Home of the famous murals that depicted the Biblical narrative, the cathedral was a beacon in a land where strength of faith is inversely proportional to economic development. As the site of Holy Trinity Music School, the cathedral trained a touring choir and the nation’s only symphony orchestra, providing both cultural development and income. Holy Trinity Professional School and the primary and secondary schools, also located on the cathedral grounds, all raised up future leaders in an environment of cultural and spiritual grace. In 35 seconds, it was all reduced to rubble.

Bishop Jean Zaché Duracin and the people of Haiti have asked for our help. The Episcopal Church, acting through the Executive Council, asks every Episcopal diocese and congregation to join in this initial phase of rebuilding the Diocese of Haiti through a fundraising campaign. As they say in Haiti, “Men anpil chay pa lou”—“many hands make the load lighter.” Working together, we can complete this project brick by brick, and $10 buys a brick. Additional information is available online at www.episcopalchurch.org/HaitiAppeal.

#5 STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION

The recent financial difficulties in the world have stressed the budgets of individuals, families, churches, and the diocese. These difficulties have led to redactions in budgets and certain ministries in this diocese.

The danger in such financial setbacks is that all can begin to look at life, including the gifts of our time, talent, and treasure, with eyes of scarcity. There exists a need to give serious attention to financial stewardship in the days to come in order to maintain and expand our ministries in the name of Christ.

The Alabama Plan for Stewardship Education is a successful and proven approach to Christian Stewardship. There are other methods that engage our congregations in meaningful education on the meaning of stewardship.

Therefore be it resolved that the 180th Convention of the Diocese of Alabama encourages all missions and parishes to engage in purposeful education on stewardship.

#7 REACHING YOUNG ADULTS

We commend the diocesan staff in its offering of a Parish Leadership Training Event focused on young adults. Being cognizant of our aging church population and aware of our increasingly diverse society,

Therefore be it resolved that the Diocese of Alabama commits itself to working with the Parish Division on Evangelism and the Christian Formation Commission to develop and explore best practices for reaching young adults and other underrepresented populations within the Church. Parishes are encouraged to explore the demographics of their membership in order to reveal areas deserving increased emphasis and report these findings to the diocese.

#8 LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We recognize that Episcopalians in Alabama have been a voice for social progress and engaged in reaching out to all people.

Therefore be it resolved that the Diocese of Alabama continues its leadership in social responsibility through embracing all in the name of Christ.

#9 SMALL CHURCH MODELS

In view of the difficulty of sustaining viable ministry in small churches and locales and the success of partnering relationships between smaller churches and larger churches,

Therefore be it resolved that this convention heeds Bishop Parsley’s suggestion and resolves that the diocese explore and develop new models for sustaining our smaller churches.

#10 IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE MINISTRY OF BECKY PARSLEY

Rebecca Knox Allison Parsley has been a faithful servant and friend to this diocese for more than 15 years. She has extended gracious hospitality and opened her home to laity, clergy, and especially clergy spouses during these years. She has been involved in many ministries and extended the hand of Christ to people around the world. Her leadership in the companion dioceses of São Paulo, Brazil, and Haiti, particularly the Krik! Krik! School Lunch program, feeds both body and soul.

Therefore be it resolved that the 180th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Alabama expresses to Becky and Henry Parsley its love for them, best wishes for the future, and deep appreciation and thanks for their work, ministry, and friendship. They will be missed. For what was, what is, and what will be . . . thanks be to God.
#11 IN THANKSGIVING FOR HENRY PARSLEY’S LEADERSHIP

The Rt. Rev. Henry Nutt Parsley Jr., the 10th Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama, has served the Episcopal Church as a priest for some 37 years and as Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama for almost 15 years. In these years he has proclaimed the Gospel in both word and action. Bishop Parsley demonstrates a deep spirituality, calm spirit, keen intellect, refreshing sense of humor, reason, and hospitality that embraces and welcomes all people. His ministry of reconciliation and renewal is a constant reminder of God’s kindness and mercy and has touched the lives of countless individuals, families, and organizations throughout this state, nation, and the world. He is a leader to our diocese, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The fruits of Bishop Parsley’s leadership abound. During his episcopate, this diocese prospered in worship, service, and education. His vision for growth and evangelism, particularly in the successful ACTS 2 Campaign, led to many projects including the establishment of six new parishes, two campus ministry centers, the St. Francis Chapel at Camp McDowell, the expansion of existing churches, and 14 new church buildings. His commitment to outreach, including the renewal of the vocational diaconate and Hispanic ministry, inspired many in our diocese to reach out in new ways and expand on existing programs. This diocese is currently one of only four listed as growing within the United States and is known nationally for its ministry to youth and young adults and its vibrant Cursillo community.

Therefore be it resolved that the 180th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama expresses to Bishop Parsley and Becky its love for them, best wishes for the future, and deep appreciation and thanks for their work, ministry and friendship. They will be missed. For what was, what is, and what will be . . . thanks be to God.

#12 A RESOLUTION THANKING MR. JAMES SLEDGE FOR HIS SERVICE

Mr. Sledge has served the diocese for many years, managing the budget, the trust, and other financial matters. He saw us through the recession in a year when the DOW was down 30 percent, while our funds only lost 15 percent.

Therefore be it resolved that the 180th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama expresses our great appreciation to Mr. Sledge for his expertise, devotion, and service by applause.

#13 A RESOLUTION IN RECOGNITION OF OUR GUEST PREACHER, THE RT. REV. EDWIN (TED) GULICK

Be it resolved that the 180th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama extends welcome to the Rt. Rev. Edwin (Ted) Gulick, our guest preacher, and his lovely wife, Barbara. His insightful and spirited leadership in worship and meditation reminds us of “God’s Hospitable Heart” and inspires each of us to go forth in kind.

#14 A RESOLUTION EXTENDING OUR DEEP-FELT CONCERN AND SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF OUR COMPANION DIOCESE OF HAITI

The 180th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Alabama recognizes that this past year has been extremely difficult as the people of Haiti have suffered a deadly earthquake, further devastation from a hurricane, a cholera epidemic, and continued political unrest.

Therefore we resolve to extend our deep-felt concern through our continued prayers and support.

#15 A RESOLUTION TO EXTEND AN INVITATION TO THE 181ST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ALABAMA

Be it resolved that the churches of Huntsville and Madison extend a warm welcome to the diocese and an invitation to the convention in the year 2012. We look forward to seeing you February 17 and 18 at the Von Braun Civic Center in the Rocket City. It will be a blast!

#16 A RESOLUTION THANKING ST. LUKE’S CHURCH FOR HOSTING THE 180TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE DIOCESE OF ALABAMA

The 180th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama resolves that it most heartily gives thanks to St. Luke’s Church (aka Convention Center) for being our gracious host. The convention expresses appreciation to the Rev. Rich Webster, the clergy, staff, and countless volunteers. You welcomed all of us into your home and made us feel like members of your family.
There’s a lot to be said about Youth Ministry in our diocese. It is truly amazing to think of just how many youth make up the “Community” (EYC) part of “Episcopal Youth Community” and also just how many youth participate the youth-related events that occur each year. Of course there are the usual activities—summers spent at Camp McDowell, events put on by the Youth Department, Junior EYC events like Fall Fling and Winter Weekend, weeks spent as counselors at Special Session and/or Sawyerville Day Camp, to name just a few.

But to many an Alabama Episcopalian’s surprise, there is another way our diocese extends a hand to include young Episcopalians. At each annual diocesan convention, all the young people in our diocese are represented by two Youth Delegates who are selected from our 11-member Youth Department. The two Youth Delegates are just like all of the other voting delegates, with full voting rights and voice. How cool is that?

The two Youth Delegates are responsible for giving the official Youth Ministry Report and for acting as the voice of ALL the youth in our diocese—ALL the youth. Such a responsibility is both humbling and a bit nerve-wracking, especially since the two delegates are usually (no offense to the other delegates) the youngest at convention. This year the other Youth Delegate, Zeke Jones, and I were expecting a very drab, very “businesslike” gathering of adults. But to our delighted surprise, we were surrounded by involved, intelligent, hilarious, wonderful people who care deeply about the well-being of the goings-on and people of the Diocese of Alabama. In other words, they were just like us—just add 10, 30, 50 years.

After hearing the reports, laughing at the jokes, addressing the issues, discussing the resolutions, dancing at the Friday night gala, meeting great people, and worshipping as one “Convention,” it became apparent to us that the Diocese of Alabama is alive and rockin’.

The experience of serving as a Youth Delegate is one that Zeke and I will not soon forget. It gave us the hope that the sense of community we and the other youth members of our diocese are drawn to in our own youth events does not end with high-school graduation. Rather it will continue long into our lives, always changing and always growing.

So watch out future Diocese of Alabama—Zeke and I might be back for another convention! It might be the 230th Annual Convention, and we won’t be the Youth Delegates anymore. The community will continue to grow, and the cycle of what makes us “us” will continue long into the future.
I have a special bond with my laying hens at our home in Alabama. I walk out each morning with food scraps, and as I approach the chicken yard, I start saying, “Good morning, ladies!” They come running and gather around my feet as I distribute their treats such as cornbread or vegetable scraps. I wander over to check their laying house and usually find an egg or two. As I walk past them on my way out of the chicken yard, I thank them sincerely for their gift of eggs.

Why am I telling you this? Because the clergy spouse Krik? Krak! school lunch program hopes to soon start a laying hen mini-agriculture project in the little village of Crochu in our Companion Diocese of Haiti. They already have hens and pullets wandering around the village. I recall a few scratching around St Alban’s schoolhouse after we helped serve the first Krik? Krak! school lunch there—but the chickens are not contained, nor do the people harvest the eggs to eat.

I like the idea of sustainability. I like independence—most folks do. I am proud of our school lunch program, the kitchen, and the work it has brought to Crochu, but I also want to think of ways to provide more sustainable help to the community. Thus, the laying hens. We are hoping to go to Crochu soon and put up a small chicken house and yard.

We want to teach the schoolteachers and children to tend the hens. The “little ladies” will gift the children of Crochu with eggs as well as baby chicks.

The clergy spouse school lunch program is going well by the way! Thanks to your generous donations, we have completed a beautiful kitchen in which to prepare the food and store the cooking utensils between lunch days. We are hoping to be able to expand the lunches from the current one per week to two per week soon.

If you have been following my periodic stories of the Krik? Krak! project, you know that Krik? Krak! is a Haitian phrase used to begin a storytelling session. An elder will yell out, “Krik!” meaning “Anyone ready to hear a story?” Others will shout back, “Krak!” meaning “Yes, let the stories begin!”

There are so many Krik? Krak! stories to tell and so little time. If you would like to have one of the Krik? Krak! team come to your parish or organization and share some of our experiences, please contact me at maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806, or Becky Parsley at theparsleys@bellsouth.net or 205/595-1926.

Provide children with lunch, and they can eat for a day. Teach them to raise chickens, and they can eat for a lifetime!
The success of Camp McDowell’s mission and ministry resulted in the camp staff and members of our diocesan Department of Camp McDowell initiating a strategic planning process last summer. We assembled a steering committee and hired a consultant to facilitate the effort. In February the members of the department unanimously approved the resulting strategic plan as a guide for future expansion of the camp and conference center. We presented the plan to Diocesan Council in March.

The strategic plan proposes facilities and programs that will complement and expand the successful ministries that are the heart of Camp McDowell. Most of the proposed new facilities will be part of a complex known as Bethany Village, named for the town where Jesus’ friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived and where he often visited. Bethany Village will have a summer camp-style area that will be completely accessible and very “green” in both its structure and infrastructure. Special Session, Camp McDowell’s summer camp session for adults with disabilities, will be held in Bethany Village, which would allow multiple Special Session camps as well as make more days available in the current facilities for traditional summer camp sessions, which now operate at or near full capacity. Bethany Village may also allow us to fulfill our dream of having more people with disabilities work as staff members at Camp McDowell.

The strategic plan also proposes that during the school year Camp McDowell will host a residential Farm Education program that will complement the successful McDowell Environmental Center. The Farm Education Program will teach schoolchildren about plants, animals, food production, soil, and other sciences through a hands-on curriculum. The Camp McDowell Farm will be revived as both a teaching and production farm, and it will provide some of the food for our guests.

The conference center facilities fill to full capacity during diocesan family retreats and meetings, and our diocese is growing. To meet the need for additional guest lodging, the strategic plan calls for lodges, similar to the ones in Miller Commons, to be constructed in Bethany Village. In addition, the Camp McDowell staff will work with our diocesan family to provide faith-based programs in all of the camp’s adult/family facilities.

Our Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell is continuing to grow, and the strategic plan includes constructing additional facilities in Bethany Village, including a dance hall that will also be used for concerts plus additional studios for pottery, quilting, canning, chair caning, and other folk arts.

The strategic plan also provides for upgrading the current camp facilities, including the addition of a meeting area to Eppes Hall in the summer camp area. Our summer camp and the McDowell Environmental Center sessions usually fill the dining hall, and to provide meeting space for these groups, we now must move tables and benches to make space for participants to sit on the floor.

The strategic plan is a guide that will ensure that Camp McDowell will remain the heart of our diocese and its spiritual center. It will also ensure that care will be taken to maintain “God’s Backyard.” The camp staff and the members of our diocesan Department of Camp McDowell look forward to growing its mission and ministry with you. We will be making an investment for our children as well as an outward and visible sign of living the Gospel in the world.

By the Rev. Mark Johnston, Executive Director

The 5th Annual Father/Son Retreat in February was absolutely filled to overflowing with good times for fathers and sons! They made priceless memories canoeing, hiking, taking turns on the giant swing, enjoying a snake-side t’mores, showing off in a talent show, playing a “how well do you know your father/son game” (styled after “The Newlywed” game), singing, worshipping and sharing plenty of hugs, smiles, laughter, and time to just “be.”

Program leader Steve Mistrot, of All Saints’ in Birmingham, offered thoughts for reflection and discussion about the gift of the father/son relationship. Thomas Lane and Stratt Byars ably served as camp staff, and the Rev. Mark Johnston celebrated a closing Eucharist, which the group enjoyed along with parishioners from Holy Apostles’ in Birmingham. Everyone was grateful for the most glorious weather imaginable—Mark Johnston said he ordered it special for that weekend!

The warmth shown between the fathers and sons and camaraderie within the group truly made it a holy event—a time for fathers and sons that was set apart and special. We hope every father and son in our diocese will join us next year!
It’s Starting To Look a Lot Like . . . Summer!

By Susanna Whitsett, Summer Camp Coordinator

Don’t miss the BEST SUMMER EVER at Camp McDowell!

Camp sessions do fill up, so if you haven’t already e-mailed or snail-mailed your application, please download one from www.campmcdowell.com and send it in SOON!

For information please contact me at susanna@campmcdowell.com.

Camp McDowell 2011 Camp Schedule

| May 27-29  | Primary I Camp for entering 1st and 2nd graders with an adult camper |
| May 31-4  | Elementary I Camp for entering 3rd and 4th graders |
| June 6-15 | Senior Camp for entering 10th-12th graders |
| June 20-25 | Junior High I Camp for entering 6th and 7th graders |
| June 30-July 5 | Special Session Camp |
| July 6-13 | Sophomore Camp for entering 8th and 9th graders |
| July 15-20 | Middler Camp for entering 5th and 6th graders |
| July 22-29 | Junior High II Camp for entering 7th and 8th graders |
| July 31-August 4 | Elementary II Camp for entering 4th and 5th graders |
| August 5-7 | Primary II Camp for entering 1st-3rd graders |

Just Imagine What You Would Do . . .

By Danielle Dunbar, Camp McDowell Staff Member

What would you do if you knew you could not fail? Is fear the thief of the joy you might experience if you tried something new?

Contemplate the answers to these questions and more at one of our Alabama Folk School workshops! Created for adults, our sessions are part music or art workshop, part retreat, and part reminder of how to live the simple life at our beloved Camp McDowell.

From June 12 to 16, the Alabama Folk School will host Camp Fasola—A Summer Camp for Learning and Singing Sacred Harp. For the 9th consecutive year, the Sacred Harp Musical Heritage Association will offer Camp Fasola to teach Sacred Harp singing, history, and traditions. Camp Fasola is open to both youth and adults, beginner and experienced singers.

Multiple daily sessions will be devoted to teaching Sacred Harp singing, and the participants will also enjoy time for recreation and fellowship. More than 200 people attended Camp Fasola in 2010! For more information please e-mail camp@fasola.org or call 404/237-1246.

During Craft Week, June 21-24, you can choose from Twined Bags led by Monica Moore, T-Shirt Memory Quilts led by Angela Taylor, Linoleum Block Printing led by Debra Riffe, Mosaics led by Linda Munoz and Rhys Greene, Alabama’s Biodiversity led by Dave Hollaway, and Alabama BBQ (instructor to be announced). You can enjoy the festive activities of an Irish Weekend on July 22-24.

For more information please visit www.campmcdowell.com/folkschool or contact me at danielle@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806.
McDowell Environmental Center Offers Two Amazing Adventures!

By Maggie Johnston, Director

Camp McDowell is offering two amazing adventures for families this summer.

**June 5-7 is Growing Roots Family Camp Extreme.** You and your family will camp out on Camp McDowell property, swim at Tiller’s Beach on Clear Creek, canoe, hike, and thoroughly enjoy good old-fashioned fun without television or technology.

**July 22-24 is Growing Roots Family Camp with an Irish Touch.** You and your family will sleep in Miller Commons, learn about nature under the guidance of our fine McDowell Environmental Center staff, and create nature crafts, as well as swim at Tiller’s Beach, canoe, and hike. You will also have the option of joining and observing Irish crafts, dancing, and so much more at the Alabama Folk School.

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

Free Workshop for Educators—Fascinating Flora and Fauna

By Maggie Johnston, Director

Thanks to the generosity of Legacy, Partners in Environmental Education, Camp McDowell is offering a great workshop FREE for educators.

**Fascinating Flora and Fauna, July 31-August 2,** will focus on native and invasive plants, tree identification, organic gardening and composting, sustainable agriculture, native wildlife, and outdoor classrooms. The three-day workshop will include canoeing, water-quality testing, hiking, and a birds of prey presentation by “Big Dave” Hollaway, Camp McDowell Environmental Center’s senior naturalist.

*For more information please contact Toni Bruner at Legacy, 334/270-5527. For a registration form please contact me at maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806.*
Did you happen to see your parish featured in the 2010 Episcopal Church Women (ECW) Calendar/Handbook? If not, maybe you saw something about one of the parishes in your convocation. Our theme for 2010, “Serving Others in Christ: Mission and Ministries in the Diocese of Alabama,” was used throughout the year in many ways.

At our convocation meetings, we shared the mission and ministries of the parishes represented there. It was both informative and joyful to learn about all of the good work that is being done in our diocese.

Our keynote speaker for the 2010 ECW Fall Conference was the Rev. Margaret Rose, codirector of the Mission Leadership Center at the Episcopal Church Center in New York. Using Mission and Ministries in the Episcopal Church as her theme, she gave us information about past and present ECW missions, both domestic and foreign.

Speaking of the Fall Conference, I want to express our sincere appreciation to the ECW members of the Cheaha Convocation and especially St. Michael and All Angels’ and Grace Church for a well-organized and delightful conference. We were honored to have the Jacksonville State Gospel Choir entertain us on Thursday night.

The women of our diocese are actively working toward our ECW mission “to empower, motivate, and nurture the women of the Diocese of Alabama in utilizing their gifts and talents to serve Christ in the world.” I would like to summarize some of our activities for 2010.

ECW Scholarships—ECW College Scholarships totaling $9,600 were awarded to 20 recipients.

United Thank Offering (UTO)—At many ECW events the UTO “Blue Boxes” are placed on the tables, reminding us to honor the things for which we are thankful by putting money in these boxes. The National UTO Committee awarded a grant of $17,750 to St. Peter’s Church and Day School in Talladega for playground construction to allow physically challenged children full access to playground activities. The other UTO grant awarded to the Diocese of Alabama was for a joint grant request with our companion diocese for $40,000 to be used for rebuilding St. Alban’s Church and School in Crochu, Haiti.

Church Periodical Club (CPC)—From the funds collected on CPC, the Alabama Episcopalian • March/April 2011

Sundays, nine seminarians from our diocese were awarded $275 each for the purchase of books.

Parish Leadership Training Event (PLTE)—For the third year, our ECW Diocesan Board conducted a workshop at PLTE. We plan to have another workshop at this event on April 2, 2011.

Daughters of the King—According to the Dr. Yolanda Seawright, the Order of the Daughters of the King is continuing to grow, and there are now almost 50 chapters in the Diocese of Alabama. Approximately 30 new members were added in the last year. In 2010, the Daughters donated 50 new Books of Common Prayer to the Chapel of St. Francis at Camp McDowell in honor and memory of the Daughters.

St. Clare’s Needle Arts Guild—This is an eguild, a resource that is available only through our Web site. There is a wealth of information there—just log on to www.alabamaecw.org and click on the link for St. Clare’s Needle Arts Guild.

ACTS 2—Three years ago, our ECW Diocesan Board pledged $65,000 to the ACTS 2 capital campaign toward the sacristy of St. Francis’ Chapel at Camp McDowell. This was a five-year pledge, and we have raised all but $3,000 of the pledge. During 2011 we plan to have a fundraising event in the Southern District of our diocese.

New Officers for the years 2012 and 2013—At the 2010 Fall Conference, we elected our officers for the coming two years: Fiona Watts, President (St. Stephen’s in Birmingham), Brenda Mayhall, President-Elect (Christ Church in Albertville), Jolai Jenkins, Secretary (St. Andrew’s in Tuskegee), Paula Bird, Treasurer (Trinity in Demopolis), and Linda Kennedy, United Thank Offering (UTO) Chair (the Advent in Birmingham). These officers will be installed at our 2011 Fall Conference in Montgomery in October.

In summary I would like to ask two things of you. First, visit our Web site, www.alabamaecw.org. Second, join in the activities of the Episcopal Church Women whether your parish has an active ECW or not.

We give thanks for all women of this diocese who by their faith and love give so freely and generously of their time and talents to serve Christ. You truly carry out our 2011 theme “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands, Our Mission and Ministry in the World.”
St. Thomas’ Valentine’s Gala Supports Krik? Krak!

By Parish Staff

A Valentine’s Day dinner and dance at St. Thomas’ in Huntsville raised more than $4,500 to help feed hungry schoolchildren in the remote mountain village of Crochu, Haiti. The money will support the Krik? Krak! program initiated by the clergy spouses of our diocese to provide one hot meal a week to the children at St. Alban’s Episcopal School. The program is part of our diocesan companion relationship with the Diocese of Haiti and St. Simeon Parish.

The evening included a gourmet meal courtesy of Tom and Cindy Atkins with assistance from their kitchen team of Bob and Barbie Harwell, Dick Strobel, and Jeannie Randal; dinner music by Susan Fletcher, St. Thomas’ choir director; dancing to music by entertainer Tony Mason; a Haitian art sale; and a rose for each of the ladies. Lydia Allison and her high-school service organization helped host and serve the meals. The decoration committee included Becky Stokes, Barbara and Larry Meyer, Jane Williams, Brenda and Horton Smith, and Dave Drachlis. Sharon Drachlis coordinated the event for the clergy spouses.

St. Columba Moves Building To Church Property

By Kelley Jones

The members of St. Columba in-the-Cover in Huntsville are buzzing along setting up a new-to-us building on our church property on Taylor Road in Big Cove. In January we moved a small building, which we have named Cort Commons, over the mountain from Jones Valley to our land, and since its arrival work has been done to put it on the foundation, connect electrical lines, and add a heating and cooling system. Work is currently under way to connect plumbing lines and complete some carpentry projects. Cort Commons will be our meeting hall, and it is destined to become the core of our new church campus once it is built. We are currently holding our Sunday and Wednesday evening services in the building we are renting on Sutton Road.

We have a small but active community, and we invite everyone to come visit us. We also invite you to keep up with our progress by visiting our Web site, www.stcolumba parish.com.
A Neighborhood Exchange Mission Trip

The junior-high youth leaders of the Cathedral Church of the Advent in downtown Birmingham, Christ Church in Fairfield, and St. Luke’s in Mountain Brook (Birmingham) thought students from Fairfield and the “over the mountain” area all could gain from sharing experiences together in each other’s neighborhoods. “We wanted students to see that in some ways we are different, but our need for Christ and our call to be a part of His work to redeem the world unifies us,” explains Cameron Cole, director of youth ministries at the Advent. So they planned a “neighborhood exchange mission trip” for the last weekend in February.

About 50 students participated in the joint venture. On Saturday they did service work in Fairfield in cooperation with Christ Church’s CityWorks community restoration project, an effort to help make that area safer and more beautiful. They stayed in the homes of Advent and St. Luke’s parishioners in Mountain Brook on Saturday night, and they worshiped at Christ Church on Sunday morning. The curriculum for the mission trip included three talks based on Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to do good works which He has prepared in advance for us to do.”

For more information about the mission trip, please contact Cameron Cole at cameron@cathedraladvent.com or 205/226-3345.

Grace Cafe Serves Food, Fellowship, and God’s Love

Grace Cafe opened its doors for the first time in May 2009. Since then it has nourished thousands of people with delicious food, warm fellowship, and God’s amazing love.

Open on the 4th Tuesday of each month, Grace Cafe is a gift to our community with no cost and no strings attached. The underlying idea is that different people need different things at different times. Some may be hungry and just need a meal. Others are lonely and need to feel loved and connected to something or somebody. Still others are looking for help finding, renewing, nurturing, or relishing their relationship with God. Grace Cafe is an effort to fill these three constellations of universal needs for anyone brave enough to gather around our parish hall’s tables.

Amazingly people from every facet of our community have come: rich and poor, professionals and the unemployed, business owners and laborers, and those from every age, racial, and ethnic group in our city and county. It is a wonder-filled amalgamation of people talking, singing and breaking bread together.

Grace Cafe is a ministry of Grace Church in Cullman. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at gracecafe@att.net or 256/338-3074 or the Rev. Bob Blackwell at gracecullman@aol.com or 256/734-6212. Both of us are happy to share whatever information we have.
Celebrating the Ministry of the Rev. Grady Richardson

With information provided by Jean Moore Sanderson and the Rev. Grady Richardson

The Rev. Grady Richardson retired in December 2010 after more than 42 years of uninterrupted service in the Dioceses of Alabama and Mississippi. “During this time I have had the following titles: curate, vicar, associate rector (three times), rector, chaplain, and priest in charge (two times),” Grady notes. “However, I have not been a dean or a bishop.”

On Christmas Eve, the members of Calvary Church in Oneonta, where Grady served as priest in charge for more than five years, hosted a retirement celebration after the evening service. “Grady and his wife, Ginny, were such a blessing to our church family,” Jean Moore Sanderson says. “We are grateful that God placed them in our fellowship.” During the celebration the congregation gave Grady and Ginny both a Christmas gift and a retirement gift in appreciation for their service.

“Well, this is it—the ‘end of the line.’ Finally—‘the last roundup’—my ‘last hurrah’ before joining the ranks of other retired and unemployed clergy,” Grady told the congregation during his “final” sermon at the worship service the morning of January 2. “After forty-two and a half years of doing pretty much the same thing every Sunday morning, it will feel strange not to be running downstairs to put the finishing touches on a new or slightly used sermon. I won’t say that I’ve always enjoyed preparing to be the head participant in the Church’s liturgy, but I can say, unequivocally, what an absolute thrill it has been to conduct liturgy and to share with you and the others in other places some insights I’ve picked up as I’ve studied God’s Holy Word. And I don’t mind telling you that it is the Church’s liturgy and going through the regimen of preparing to preach each week that has kept me alive and going as a priest all of these years!”

“One of the truly great things about worship in our Church—the Episcopal Church—is that we are all invited to take part in the action. As you’ve heard me and other clergy tell you, the meaning of the word ‘liturgy’ is ‘a work of the people’—meaning that you are supposed to be as actively involved as I am. And don’t forget that in our Church the worship of God takes precedence over anything else. It’s why we build beautiful churches instead of ‘family centers,’ for example—because we desire an environment that is conducive to worship—in all the beautiful forms that worship takes in our Church.

“To your great credit, Calvary Church always has been a friendly, accepting church. In your ranks here are ‘all sorts and conditions of men,’ as the Old Prayer Book put it so unforgettably.

“And that is truly one of the beauties of a small church: unlike a large, affluent city church, you’re not ‘all buttoned down,’ but you are a place where everyone—regardless of his or her means or appearance—is accepted and enjoyed and acknowledged as a child of God—in equal standing with each of the rest! It’s been said that in the Kingdom of God there are no second-class citizens—and certainly you show this to be true.”

Grady concluded his sermon with, “I think I’ve said quite enough—but if I might put a biblical spin on most of what I’ve said, I would direct you to St. Paul’s famous analogy in which he compares the church to a human body; neither can function properly unless each of its members are functioning properly and in sync with one another. Also, I would bid you to recall how Paul ends another of his epistles: ‘And finally, brothers and sisters, farewell—farewell—farewell—and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you (and with me) now and forever more. Amen.’”

Grace Food Pantry Now Has “Greens”!

By Frank Romanowicz, a Member of Grace Church in Woodlawn (Birmingham)

The big news that day was “They have greens!”

The word spread like wildfire through the neighborhood, and folks were excitedly waiting for Grace Food Pantry to open the morning of Friday, February 25, the day Grace Food Pantry raised the bar in sharing food with the less fortunate in these hard days for many.

In partnership with the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama, our main food supplier since June 2004, Grace Food Pantry inaugurated a pilot program to deliver fresh fruits and vegetables to those we serve in Woodlawn, Eastlake, and Avondale. The fresh food handed out that day included potatoes, oranges, onions, and turnip greens.

The managers of what used to be known as the United Way Community Food Bank say that as the project progresses the food bank will purchase loads of easy-to-handle items such as carrots, apples, and sweet potatoes. They also hope to expand into other fruits and vegetables, and hopefully local farmers will donate some of their produce. (Does the word “glean” ring a bell for you?)

Grace Food Pantry Director Sandra Chance reports that the pantry serves about 80 families a week and gave out 32 tons of food in 2010. The addition of fresh vegetables and fruits are usually out of the reach of our clients, who have increased in numbers over the years, with children being about one-half of the people receiving food children and the elderly another 15 percent.

Our pantry, which has 501(c)3 status, operates solely on donations from individuals and churches and a few foundations, and our operation is completely separate from Grace Church’s operating budget. Each component of the formula of giving and sharing is essential for the sustenance of the ministry. Without our donors, there would be no pantry and little to no food for many. That is not an exaggeration. These times, which are hard enough for many, are now being compounded by the rising gasoline prices that are seriously chipping away at the family food budget.

Lenten Luncheon Angels

Submitted by Judy Wilson, a Member of St. Timothy’s in Athens

On Wednesdays during Lent, St. Timothy’s in Athens hosts ecumenical midday services followed by lunch served in the church hall. After each meal, Sandy Oppman, Bobbie Patton, and other members of the parish cheerfully take care of all the clean-up duties. Bless you, Lenten Luncheon Angels!
The Rev. Margaret “Maggie” Hanson Taylor Retires

By Mickey Bunn

On January 9, more than 200 members and friends of Holy Apostles’ in Birmingham (Hoover) held a retirement celebration in honor of the Rev. Margaret Hanson Taylor, who is affectionately known as “Maggie.” She told the congregation that while good-byes are painful, we need to celebrate the joy that comes from walking our journeys together—first in building our relationship between ourselves and God and then between one another. After the service everyone stayed for a feast and party, and yes, the celebration included equal doses of laughter, joy, and tears.

Most everyone in our diocese knows Maggie as the first female Episcopal priest in Alabama to “plant a parish” and serve as the rector at Holy Apostles’ since the parish’s beginning in 1994. Her work over nearly 17 years at Holy Apostles’ will long be remembered by all who were blessed to work with her, be comforted by her, and learn from her—but the path that led her to become the founding rector of Holy Apostles’ is also quite notable and inspiring.

Growing up Maggie saw much of the world as an Air Force “brat” (an expression that military families consider endearing), and she emerged with a resilient personality, keen social skills, and a high level of international awareness. While attending Colorado College, she found her way to the Episcopal Church, and she earned her undergraduate degree in religion. Since that time women were not allowed to become priests, Maggie understood her calling was to lay ministry. Years later, after serving in a variety of positions in the United States and Taiwan, Maggie had a chance conversation with an Episcopal priest who chided her for remaining a lay minister and challenged her to become a priest! She was directed to the bishop of the Diocese of Rhode Island, who told her that “in this diocese we are in the business of making things possible.” Maggie recalls that throughout her life when people had said she ought to go to seminary, she ought to be a priest, “I pushed the door, and the door was closed, but this time I pushed the door, and it sucked me through like a cosmic vacuum cleaner—and, zap, there I was in seminary!”

After earning her master of divinity degree and being ordained a transitional deacon and then a priest, Maggie accepted a position as an assistant priest at the Nativitv in Huntsville. Four years later Bishop Robert Miller sought out Maggie and asked her to establish a new parish in the Hoover area of greater Birmingham. She recounts that Bishop Miller told her, “I want the rector of this new church to be a woman, and I want it to be you!” Maggie never thought that her “calling” would be to establish a new church, but she took a great “leap of faith” and accepted the enormous challenge. After only six months of very hard work and many long hours, Maggie led the first worship service of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Apostles on October 4, 1994. It took nine years of love and toil for the initially small handful of people worshiping in several office building locations to add to their numbers and eventually complete the construction of a beautiful and functional church in 2003. Under Maggie’s leadership and inspiration, Holy Apostles’ has grown to be a strong, vibrant parish.

On January 9, we not only said good-bye to the only rector we have known, but also to her husband, the Rev. Charles Taylor, who has served graciously as our priest affiliate. While Maggie will be sorely missed for her spirit and energy, and sharing her many gifts with us, she will always be at the heart and soul of our “church on the hill.” As she told us in her parting words (quoting from Henri Nouwen), “From now on, wherever you go, or wherever I go, all the ground between us will be holy ground.”

Apply for Outreach Grants

May 9 is this year’s deadline to apply for the Department of Mission and Outreach’s Parish-Based Outreach Grants. The purpose of these grants is to encourage parishes to start new or expand existing outreach ministries that will become sustainable within three years. These grants are only for parish-based outreach and cannot be used for pass-through monies to other agencies or groups that do not directly involve parishes or parishioners. The Department hopes that these grants will enable parishes to engage in new and creative ways of being Christ’s presence in Alabama.

The Department of Mission and Outreach also offers two individual outreach grants. The Domestic/Local Mission Grant to Individuals and the Global Mission Grant to Individuals. These grants support short-term, one-year work. These individual grants may be submitted at any time throughout the year, and applicants may re-apply.

You can download a grant application form on our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org, or contact me at jgquick@bellsouth.net or 205/669-6862.
ST. ANDREW’S-SEWANEE ALUMNI AND FRIENDS GATHERING
May 4 at St. Luke’s in Birmingham
St. Andrew’s-Sewanee School (SAS), an Episcopal boarding and day school in Sewanee, will hold an Alumni and Friends Gathering at St. Luke’s in Birmingham on Wednesday, May 4. Head of School the Rev. John Thomas, Director of External Relations Tim Graham, and Director of Alumni Relations Elizabeth Duncan will be the SAS hosts for the evening. For more information about the event, please contact Elizabeth Duncan at 931/596-5651 ext 2119 or eduncan@sasweb.org. For more information about the school, please visit www.sasweb.org.

YOUTH MINISTRY SABBATH RETREAT
May 5-7 at Camp McDowell
All youth ministers (paid and volunteer) plus spouses of youth ministers, Youth Department advisors, and everyone who works with young people are invited to the 3rd annual Sabbath Retreat on May 5-7 at Camp McDowell. The Rt. Rev. Charles Farmer Duvall, the retired bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast and a nationally acclaimed storyteller with a keen sense for pastoral care and sustainable ministry, will lead the retreat. He will delight and enlighten the participants with stories, meditations, and worshipful experiences to help them learn more about self-care and also provide a bit of Sabbath during the week. For more information and to register, please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org, or contact Registrar Janet Perkins at 777/498-1678.

14TH ANNUAL CRAWFISH & SHRIMP BOIL
May 28 from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Holy Apostles’ in Birmingham (Hoover)
The members of Holy Apostles’ in Birmingham (Hoover) cordially invite everyone to enjoy a feast of crawfish and shrimp cooked to perfection by Boil Master Paul Gilbert plus corn and potatoes with char-grilled hotdogs at this fun-filled fundraiser on May 28. There will be entertainment for children of all ages including a Live Walk and swing music by Hoover Jazz Band—The First Edition under the direction of Sallie White. Baseball fans may want to take in a game or two at the 2011 Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament at nearby Regions Park Stadium. For more information please visit holyapostles.dioala.org, contact Bill Davis at billdavis2ii@att.net, or call 205/988-8000.

GROWING ROOTS FAMILY CAMPS
June 5-7 and July 22-24 Camp McDowell
At Growing Roots Family Camp Extreme on June 5-7, your family will camp out on Camp McDowell property, swim at Tiller’s Beach on Clear Creek, canoe, hike, and thoroughly enjoy good old-fashioned fun without television or technology. At Growing Roots Family Camp with an Irish Touch on July 22-24, your family will sleep in Miller Commons, learn about nature under the guidance of the McDowell Environmental Center staff, and create nature crafts, as well as swim at Tiller’s Beach, canoe, and hike. You will also have the option of joining and observing Irish crafts, dancing, and much more at the Alabama Folk School. For more information please see page 16 in this issue, visit www.campmcdowell.com, or contact Maggie Johnston at maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806.

14TH ANNUAL CRAWFISH & SHRIMP BOIL
Saturday, May 28th, 10 am-3 pm
Holy Apostles Episcopal Church (Hoover)
Calling all cooks to enter this year’s Gumbo Gala! On May 7 at Caldwell Park on Birmingham’s Southside, amateur and professional teams will compete for several titles, including “Best Gumbo in Birmingham.” The first, second, and third-place trophies will be awarded in the amateur division, along with awards for specialty categories plus the “Spirit Award” and “People’s Choice Award.” Teams from Episcopal parishes will be eligible for the “Most Divine Gumbo” award, which the team from the Ascension in Birmingham (Vestavia Hills) won last year.

YOUTH MINISTER SEARCH
The Nativity in Huntsville is seeking a full-time youth minister. This large, historic, downtown parish has approximately 1,500 members and an active youth ministry, with approximately 80 students on the current rolls and 60 students participating in some weekly activity. A youth council composed of parents, Sunday school teachers, and chaperones strongly supports the youth ministry.

Applicants must have a college degree and at least two years of experience in a related field. Preference will be given to candidates who have theological training. For more information or to apply for the position, please contact the Rev. Brad Landry at blandry@nativity-hsv.org or 256/533-2455.
WHAT’S NEW/NOTEWORTHY AT THE EPISCOPAL BOOK STORE

**Bare Bones Bible Handbook for Teens** by Jim George

This fast and friendly overview of every book of the Bible will inspire teens to explore the wisdom and truth of scripture as they discover the answers to: What is the major theme of each book of the Bible? What are the most important lessons for everyday life in each book? Who are the key characters and what do they teach us? What are the key events in each book? This fascinating survey also includes sidebars geared to teenagers’ interests and life, giving them a solid foundation of knowledge about the Bible. It’s a must for every youth group and leader!

**Feast: A Quiet Time Book** by Liz Edrington

Cameron Cole, the director of youth ministries at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, notes that he is often asked to recommend a good devotional book for teens, and it is extremely difficult to find one. “Feast: A Quiet Time Book is perhaps the best I have seen,” he says. “This devotional connects students to God’s Word and the love of Christ. It is not simply a moralist ‘go be good for God’ pep talk—it really helps students deepen in relationship and love of Christ while being accessible to teens.”

**Jesus and 12 Dudes Who Did** by Mindy MacDonald

This is a fun book for your young one! A long time ago, 12 simple “dudes” named Jesus called their names, and this book shows children who each disciple was and what they did as they followed Jesus.

**Revolve Devotional Bible (New Century Version)**

This is the perfect bible for teen girls. It is filled with engaging storylike descriptions of the women in the Bible plus study sections and daily devotional readings that discuss relevant issues.

**NIV Backpack Bible (New International Version)**

This complete NIV text comes in a handy size (4½ by 6½ inches) small enough to fit into any backpack or gym bag. It’s perfect for kids on the go!

**A Year with Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Daily Meditations**

This book showcases Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s writings, letters, and sermons in a daily devotional format that will encourage and deepen readers’ personal reflection and meditation time. It makes a great companion to Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy by Eric Metaxas.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Cursillo Weekends**

- #178 June 8–12, #179 September 7–11, and #180 October 19–23

**Diocesan Convention**

February 17-18 in Huntsville

**EYC Convention**

April 15–17 at St. John’s in Montgomery

**May 4**

St. Andrew’s-Sewanee Alumni and Friends Gathering at St. Luke’s in Birmingham

For more information please see the description on page 22 or contact Elizabeth Durham at 931/598-5651 ext. 2119 or edumen@asovho.org

**May 5–7**

3rd Annual Youth Ministry Sabbath Retreat at Camp McDowell

For more information please see the description on page 22, visit www.diocela.org, or contact Leslie Manning at l Manning@diocela.org or 205/715-2060 ext. 325.

**May 6**

Midday Musical Menu featuring Lonnie Parsons in “A Cabaret—Piano Man!” at 12:30 p.m. in Clingman Commons at the Advent in Birmingham

For more information please contact Music Associate Charles M. Kennedy at 205/226-3505 or kennedy@cathedralavent.com.

**May 7**

6th Annual Episcopal Place Gumbo Gala at Caldwell Park in Birmingham

For more information please see the description on page 22, visit www.gumbogala.com, or contact Kris Mueller at kmueller@episcopalplace.org or 205/939-0085.

**May 20–21**

Enneagram I Workshop led by Dr. Joseph B. Howell at Holy Comforter in Gadsden

For more information please see the description on page 22, contact Sue Tidwell at susfive@aol.com, or call the parish office at 256/547-5361.

**May 28**

14th Annual Crawfish & Shrimp Boil at Holy Apostles’ in Birmingham (Hoover)

For more information please see the description on page 22, visit holyapostles.diaola.org, contact Bill Davis at bdavis25@att.net or call 205/988-8000

**June 5**

Cathedral Choir “Bon Voyage” Concert at 4 p.m. at the Advent in Birmingham

For more information please see “The Cathedral Choir Plans East Coast Tour” story and photo below or contact Music Associate Charles M. Kennedy at 205/226-3505 or kennedy@cathedralavent.com.

**June 5–7**

and July 22–24 Growing Roots Family Camps at Camp McDowell

For more information please see the description on page 16, visit www.campmcdowell.com, or contact Maggie Johnston at m maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806.

**June 25–July 2**

“Mountains to the Gulf: Helping Teachers Make Connections” workshop for formal and informal teachers and environmental educators at the McDowell Environmental Center

For more information please see the description on page 22 or contact Maggie Johnston at m maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1896.

**July 31–August 2**

Fascinating Flora and Fauna workshop free for educators at Camp McDowell

For more information please see the description on page 16 or contact either Toni Brouer at 334/270-5527 or Maggie Johnston at maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1896.

May 28-29, June 1–4, June 15–18, July 13–16, July 27–30, August 3–6

Environmental Center at Camp McDowell: Fun for All Ages in the Great Outdoors

For more information please see the description on page 22, visit www.campmcdowell.com, or contact Maggie Johnston at maggie@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1896.

NOTE: The bookstore has a new location and new hours. Our address, phone, e-mail, and Web site are still the same, but we’ve moved up one floor into a new space that has been designed and built especially for us and for you—with more visibility and easier access. You can enter the bookstore down the small garden path on 6th Avenue North or from the Cathedral’s parking lot on the corner of 6th Avenue and Richard Arrington Boulevard or from the church through the parish hall. We are now open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

For information about these and other books, or to have us research and special order a particular book, please contact the Episcopal Book Store, 2015 Sixth Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203; 205/ 323-2959; chsinfo@episcobooks.com; or visit the bookstore online at www.episcobooks.com.

The Cathedral Choir Plans East Coast Tour

This summer Dr. Stephen Schaeffer, director of music and organist, has planned a choir tour from June 12 through 19 with performances in churches and cathedrals along the East Coast. The tour will begin with a concert at All Saints’ in Atlanta on Pentecost Sunday, June 12, followed by concerts at St. Paul’s in Winston-Salem, the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, and St. Mary’s in Arlington. The choir will present Choral Evensong at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, on June 16 and then travel to New York City, where they will be the visiting choir for Choral Eucharist on Trinity Sunday morning at St. Thomas’ Fifth Avenue. Later that day they will conclude the tour by presenting Choral Evensong at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine.

The choir cordially invites everyone to a “bon voyage” concert at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham on Sunday, June 5, at 4 p.m. For more information about the upcoming choir tour, please contact Dr. Charles Kennedy, music associate and organist, at kennedy@cathedralavent.com, or Dr. Stephen Schaeffer at 205/226-3506; also please visit www.adventbirmingham.org.

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Loaves and Fishes for Sawyerville

By Memily Colvin, Volunteer Co-Coordinator

“There is a young boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?” (John 6:9)

You know the story of the young boy who, while listening to Jesus in the crowd, was discovered by the disciples to have some food in his possession. (How thankful we all are that his mother had insisted that he carry some bread and fish along for the trip!) His lunch was shared by the crowd of thousands, thanks to one of Jesus’ miracles.

So it is with the Sawyerville Day Camps.

Not all of us can be there for the miracles that occur at the day camps in Hale County, but we can all be a part of this powerful youth ministry by donating the much-needed supplies for both camps (Session I—June 17-25 and Session II—July 6-14). It’s a lot like loaves and fishes.

Sawyerville Day Camps—there are two now, each serving 200 children!—are really “all about the kids,” but those kids and the staff need lots of supplies and prayers from all of us. The list includes bathing suits, beach towels, cleaning supplies (we use school facilities and must keep them clean), paper goods, soft drinks and snacks (lots of these—we’re talking about feeding teenagers!), books, staff dinners, and of course money and gift cards.

If you, your Sunday school class, other group, or parish want to be a part of the fun and joy that is Sawyerville, please contact me at memily.colvin@gmail.com or 205/979-8684.

It’s a great way to be a part of the miracles in Hale County!