Volunteers Continue Long-Term Recovery Efforts To Help Tornado Survivors Across Our Diocese

The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan To Be Invested and Seated As 11th Bishop of Alabama on January 7
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The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan and Tina; photo by Carl Perna

The Most Rev. Katherine Jefferts Schori, the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, will officiate at the service to invest and seat the Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan as the 11th Bishop of Alabama. The Rt. Rev. Henry Nutt Parsley Jr., the 10th Bishop of Alabama, will pass the pastoral staff to Bishop Sloan during the service, to be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 7, at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham.

Bishop Sloan, who has served as our bishop suffragan since 2008, was elected to serve as our diocesan bishop on July 16. Under the canons of the Episcopal Church, a majority of the bishops exercising jurisdiction and diocesan standing committees must consent to the bishop-elect’s assuming office as diocesan bishop within 120 days of receiving notice of the election. The Presiding Bishop’s office has notified our diocesan office that Bishop Sloan has received the required majority of consents. Our diocesan Standing Committee cordially invites everyone to attend the service and the reception that will follow. For more information please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org.

Bishop Parsley and Bishop Sloan To Ordain Four Priests on December 13

The Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley Jr., bishop of Alabama, and the Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan, our bishop suffragan, will ordain Callie Plunket-Brewton, Derrick Craig Hill, Katherine Toshiko Nakamura, and Marilyn Baye Holland-Shuey to the Sacred Order of Priests at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 13, at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham. Everyone is cordially invited to attend the service and the reception that will follow. Clergy are invited to vest; the festal color is red.

After their ordination to the priesthood, the Rev. Callie Plunket-Brewton will continue to serve as the chaplain of the University of North Alabama in Florence and as a priest at Grace Church in Sheffield; the Rev. Derrick Hill will continue to serve as a priest at St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands in Birmingham; the Rev. Katherine Toshiko Nakamura will continue to serve as a priest at St. Michael’s in Fayette; and the Rev. Marilyn Baye Holland-Shuey will continue to serve as a priest at Holy Cross-St. Christopher’s in Huntsville.

For more information please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org.
Deo Gratias

October 28 atop Red Mountain was a shining celebration of our diocesan community and the ministry we have shared since 1996. There was a marvelous array of people from across the diocese, beautiful flowers and music, plentiful laughter, and most of all the contagious good spirit of Alabama Episcopalians.

Becky and I were deeply moved by your love and generosity expressed in several wonderful gifts. We are very grateful for the book of personal notes, the handsome portrait, the bountiful check, a clever toast by Bishop Sloan, and the kind salute from the state legislature. We will cherish these expressions of your affection always.

A quite unexpected highlight of the evening was the visit of our dear friends the Valdemas from Haiti. The Rev. Fritz “Pere Val” Valdema and his wife, Carmel, brought water from the well and purification system we have recently provided for the school at Thomazeau. When we visited the schoolchildren there more than four years ago, a young girl asked if we could help them get water for their school. Well, at last we have done so. Water has never tasted so sweet!

Our gratitude for this evening of surprises goes especially to Melissa Strange, the evening’s chair, Catesby Jones, Bill Gamble, Ben Alford, Susan Koonce, and Alleen Cater and the Transition Committee for their fabulous work. Bravo!

In every way the diocesan celebration was a witness to the great heart of this diocese and to God’s abundant grace among us. The Master of Ceremonies, Bill Gamble of St. Paul’s in Selma, said to us near the end, “If you two don’t feel really loved tonight, there is something wrong with you!” Well, I guess we are all right because we did—absolutely and unconditionally.

Thank you, Thank you, we say together.

It has been a high honor to serve God as your bishop, the greatest privilege of my life. These have been good years, replete with meaningful and varied ministry, many gifts, and no few challenges. You are an exceptional diocese; blessed with vital laypersons, clergy, and a fetching diversity of parishes that comprehend the richness of the Anglican tradition…. That is why October 28 was not only a lovely gift to Becky and me, but it was also a glorious celebration of the ministry of this great diocese from generation to generation.

It has been a high honor to serve God as your bishop, the greatest privilege of my life. These have been good years, replete with meaningful and varied ministry, many gifts, and no few challenges. You are an exceptional diocese, blessed with vital laypersons, gifted and dedicated clergy, and a fetching diversity of parishes that comprehend the richness of the Anglican tradition…. That is why October 28 was not only a lovely gift to Becky and me, but it was also a glorious celebration of the ministry of this great diocese from generation to generation. On January 7, I will hand the pastoral staff to Bishop Sloan with joy and trust in your good partnership in the Gospel going forward. He is a gifted and faithful bishop, and together you will be an excellent team as you write the next chapter of the history of the Church in Alabama. Godspeed you.

Becky and I look forward to continuing to make our home in Birmingham for the time being. We will be taking most of 2012 to travel and spend time with our family and friends, do some fishing and writing, and keep out of the way! My ministry as a bishop doubtless will continue in various ways until the end of my days. You will ever be in our prayers and love.

In one of her lovely poems, Mary Oliver writes about how the trees of the woods let sunlight flow from their branches. She concludes:

“It’s simple,” they say
and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go
easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine.

This seems a fitting farewell and benediction. By the grace of God, may you be filled with light—and shine!

Your grateful servant in Christ,

Henry

A Toast for Becky and Henry Parsley

By Bishop Sloan

Now I rise to make a toast, not silly, or tearful, or bland. It’s not time for a eulogy, or a roast, but for giving thanks, maybe a big hand.

Becky, Henry—we can’t thank you sufficiently for all of your leadership, caring, and love; but this is our moment to try, most un-academically to give thanks for you, to the Good Lord above.

And yet it’s just me up here talkin’, and you know it’s hard for me to resist putting a laugh into all this squawkin’, while telling Becky and Henry they’ll be missed.

They met on the Mountain at Sewanee; after seminary they went to Old Caroline. From the pictures I’ve seen, he was scrappy, And she was really quite a find!

By and by the Lord called from sweet Alabama and brought Henry home to be our tenth bish—into the land of War Eagle and Rammer Jammer, grits, mustard greens, and fried fish.

He served for two years as Coadjutor, while she made a home in our midst. He learned from Bob Miller, straight shooter; while telling Becky and Henry they’ll be missed.

They gathered at St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands to create 50 centerpieces under the expert direction of talented floral designer Carl Casiday, of Lola’s in Sheffield, and his assistant, Tommy Newman. It was a delightful day to catch up with old friends, make new ones, and be regaled by Carl and Tommy’s tales of memorable “flower” events. As main fruit-stabber, I handled at least 265 apples and 70 pears plus 70 pomegranates, each cut in half. Dean Nix, Lisa Miller, and some of the flower arrangers delivered the stunning centerpieces to The Club on Friday morning. In addition, mountains of magnolia, leucothoe, and hydrangea blooms, dried from the gardens of Betsy Cobb, Freya Neely, and others, were transported in a full-to-the-brim Penske moving truck. Some of the Thursday flower arrangers along with Memily Colvin, Kelli Jetmundsen, Harriet Heacock, Virginia Hillhouse, Terry Jones, Lisa Miller, and Anne Oliver assembled the spectacular arrangements at the entrance to the ballroom, on the stage, and near the windows. What goes up must come down, and it all did—thanks to the extra dedication of Bingham Edwards, Robert Koonce, Hank Poellnitz, Betsy and Al Simmons, and Loch Neely, who stayed late after the party to dismantle the arrangements and clear the room.

Reservations coordinator Sally Sinclair and Denise Servant watched the growing guest list carefully, with the happy result that they were able to fill several last-minute requests for reservations. We are deeply grateful for their extra work. Ben Alford, Anne and Lew Mitchel, Rob Morpeth, and Fiona Watts saw that everyone had seats and drink tickets.

Our outstanding Master of Ceremonies, Bill Gamble, made sure pronunciations and facts were exactly right. Dr. Stephen Schaeffer directed the Cathedral Church of the Advent Choir in a musically rich and perfectly done program; two favorite tunes featured talented soloists Paige Welch in “You’re the Top” and Amberlyn Richardson in “Stars Fell On Alabama.” The Rev. Deacon Dave Drachlis made sure the slide show worked properly, and Gail Perna took some great photos.

Once again people around our diocese joined hands and gave generously of their time and talent to provide the most gracious of Southern GOSPEL HOSPITALITY. Thank you, Melissa, for leading that effort. Surely more such fun is in the offing for investiture weekend, January 6-7. Please do let me know that you will help!

You can reach me at 205/969-7179 or alleenc@bellsouth.net.

How Did That Great Celebration Come Together?

By Alleen Cater, Transition Committee Chair

By all accounts the celebration for Bishop and Becky Parsley was a smashing success and honored them with a joyous testimony of thankfulness for their dedicated ministry. The event was beautifully organized by Celebration Chair Melissa Strange, with assistance in planning from Susan Koonce, Jenny Blackmon, Catesby Jones, and Ben Alford. Many others made substantial contributions of time and talent to create the memorable event. When you see these people, please thank them.

On Thursday morning preceding the Friday evening celebration, flower arrangers Bo Berry, Anne Couch, Bunny Edwards, Diane Gamble, Anne Heppenstall, Lee Nix, Vicki Poellnitz, Winnie Valhe, Melissa Strange, and I gathered at St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands to create 50 centerpieces under the expert direction of talented floral designer Carl Casiday, of Lola’s in Sheffield, and his assistant, Tommy Newman. It was a delightful day to catch up with old friends, make new ones, and be regaled by Carl and Tommy’s tales of memorable “flower” events. As main fruit-stabber, I handled at least 265 apples and 70 pears plus 70 pomegranates, each cut in half. Dean Nix, Lisa Miller, and some of the flower arrangers delivered the stunning centerpieces to The Club on Friday morning. In addition, mountains of magnolia, leucothoe, and hydrangea blooms, dried from the gardens of Betsy Cobb, Freya Neely, and others, were transported in a full-to-the-brim Penske moving truck. Some of the Thursday flower arrangers along with Memily Colvin, Kelli Jetmundsen, Harriet Heacock, Virginia Hillhouse, Terry Jones, Lisa Miller, and Anne Oliver assembled the spectacular arrangements at the entrance to the ballroom, on the stage, and near the windows. What goes up must come down, and it all did—thanks to the extra dedication of Bingham Edwards, Robert Koonce, Hank Poellnitz, Betsy and Al Simmons, and Loch Neely, who stayed late after the party to dismantle the arrangements and clear the room.

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Our outstanding Master of Ceremonies, Bill Sloan, Bill Gamble, and Bishop Parsley; photo by Gail Perna
Celebrating the Parsleys’ Ministry

By Diocesan Staff; Photos by Gail Perna

More than 400 people from across our diocese and beyond gathered at The Club in Birmingham on October 28 to celebrate the 15-year ministry of the Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley Jr. and his wife, Becky, to the Diocese of Alabama. Bishop Parsley will retire as our diocesan bishop at the end of this year.

The celebration included a reception, a slide show highlighting the Parsleys’ ministry, dinner, entertainment by the Cathedral Church of the Advent Choir under the direction of Director of Music Dr. Stephen Schaeffer, and a variety of special presentations honoring Bishop and Becky Parsley. Bill Gamble, our diocesan treasurer, served as master of ceremonies for the evening.

Representative Joe Hubbard presented a framed copy of a resolution, passed by both houses of the Alabama State Legislature and signed by Gov. Robert Bentley, honoring Bishop Parsley for his “years of faithful service to the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama.”

The Rev. Andy Anderson, the rector of the Nativity in Huntsville, helped renowned portrait artist Jerry Whitworth, who is a member of the Nativity, unveil a portrait of Bishop Parsley. Friends of the Parsleys commissioned the portrait as a gift to our diocese in honor of Bishop Parsley.

Joe Mays, our diocesan chancellor, presented to Bishop Parsley and Becky an album containing notes, photos, and memories, and the gift of a $20,000 purse of contributions from people across our diocese.

Bishop Sloan offered a poem and led a toast to Bishop Parsley and Becky (see box on page 4) that ended with everyone singing the Doxology. In their closing remarks, the Parsleys thanked members of the diocese for their love and support, and Bishop Parsley complimented our diocese as being one of the strongest in the Episcopal Church. “It has been an enormous privilege to serve as your bishop over these 15-plus years,” Bishop Parsley said.

“This is a glorious evening celebrating the great community of this diocese. Becky and I are deeply grateful for your love and generosity. Thank you, thank you, and God bless you.”

The evening concluded with the Cathedral Choir singing Peter Lutkin’s “Benediction” (“The Lord bless you and keep you”).

For links to the slide show, resolution, and additional photos of the October 28 celebration, please visit http://bit.ly/ujRjGs.
Are You Ready?

Hello, friends.

Last night at the party for Becky and Henry Parsley at The Club here in Birmingham (and it really was wonderful—congratulations to all who helped put it on), several people asked if I am ready to become our new diocesan bishop. I think one dear lady was a little surprised and maybe a little disappointed when I told her that I’ve sort of been wondering that myself. I told someone else that if somebody tells you they are ready to jump into something like this, I suspect they’re either not very bright or not very honest.

I have been thinking about this, and now I believe I have a better answer. Every time I’ve ever moved into a new position, I’ve had to wonder whether I was really ready to do what I was about to do—and every time, the real honest answer was “No.” I’ve never thought I was polished enough, smart enough, faithful enough; I’ve never had the experience to guarantee that I would succeed. And looking back I see that these are the times when I feel I’ve been at my best: when I didn’t know what I was doing.

Our daughter, Mary Nell, famous in our diocese for having her father embarrass her at diocesan convention on her 16th birthday, has been involved in the Special Session at Camp McDowell since it began in 1998, when she was four. For several years she was the youngest person in the community, and when she was 11 or 12 she became a golf cart driver. For the last three years she’s been a counselor, taking care of campers and making sure they are included and having a good time.

This past summer, wanting her to have a good week, I made sure that she was assigned to a couple of not-so-difficult campers. To her great credit, she came and asked me why I’d been so easy on her and asked for more of a challenge. I asked her who she wanted, and she told me she’d love to have a camper in a wheelchair. I made the necessary switches, the campers came, and so began the hottest week we’ve ever had.

A lot of people were hit hard by the heat, having headaches and being sapped of energy—Mary Nell among them. We started telling people to drink “water, water, water”; we extended rest period; we opened the pool at every opportunity; and we encouraged people to do whatever they could to stay cool. I told Mary Nell to take some time and lie down in my air-conditioned room, somebody else looked after her camper for that morning, and she felt better after lunch. But another person on staff said something to her about goofing off, and she was crushed. She was crushed to the point of wanting to go home, leaving the Special Session community, which she loves and looks forward to throughout the year.

After a long tearful conversation, she decided to stay. I asked her if it would be better to change to a camper who didn’t require so much physical effort, and she told me she loved her camper and didn’t want to switch. I told her there were people around when she needed help, but she would have to ask. That night, after the staff meeting, I came back to my room and found the note you see above: “I can do this.”

And she did. She not only survived the week, but her camper had a great time, and so did she. Sometimes I guess you just have to decide you’re going to do something before you’re able to do it. And that’s my better answer—I stole it from my daughter: I can do this. Not by myself, not without help, not without messing something up somewhere or another—but by God’s grace and with your help, patience, and forgiveness, I can do this. My experience this far is that when I don’t know what I’m doing, I’m much more likely to rely on the help I always need.

A final thought: we’re looking at what might be a bumpy ride for the Episcopal Church with General Convention looming next summer. There is sure to be something that will distress some of us; it seems like there always is. Please remember that these are our brothers and sisters who are upset, and that you and I are called to work within this Church to share the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ. These things do not change.

We are called to love and help each other even when we disagree. We may not always know what we’re doing or what the future holds, but maybe we’ll trust in God and each other more if we don’t. We may wonder whether we’re smart enough or faithful enough, but by God’s grace, which does not fail, and in the Name of Christ, we can do this. There is no limit to what people of good will can do given courage, hope, and strength by the Spirit of God. Sometimes we’re just going to have to decide we’re going to do something before we’re able to do it.

The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan
Volunteer teams from parishes across our diocese as well as volunteers from outside our diocese are continuing to help tornado survivors restart their lives. Although the devastation is still very evident from the deadly and devastating April 27th severe weather outbreak, the work of repairing and rebuilding is well under way in Calhoun, Cullman, DeKalb, Franklin, Hale, Jackson, Jefferson, Madison, Marion, Marshall, St. Clair, Tallapoosa, and Tuscaloosa Counties (please see the stories on the following pages, and also please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org). The Episcopal Disaster Response Trailer, on loan from the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, continues to be taken where needed to help with construction projects, and our new Episcopal Disaster Response Shower Trailer, designed and constructed under the leadership of the Rev. Deacon Clyde Pearce, is providing welcome “relief” for volunteers who are being housed in parish buildings (please see story at right).

Our diocesan Tornado Response Team and parishes have tailored their response efforts to meet local needs. With the help of local parish funds, diocesan tornado relief funds, and a grant from Episcopal Relief and Development, a number of families have been able to move into their “new” homes. Each house is being blessed, and each family is receiving a special cross for their home.

One diocese will continue to receive volunteer teams to help with the rebuilding efforts well into 2012. If you, your parish, or someone you know would like to volunteer to work in one of the recovery areas or provide food and/or lodging, please contact the Rev. Deacon David Whetstone, Tornado Volunteer Team Coordinator, at whetstone@cableone.net. For more information about how you can help with our diocese’s long-term tornado response efforts, please contact either the Rev. Bill King at bp3king@bellsouth.net or the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick at jgquick@bellsouth.net.

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Partnering with Families

Prepared by the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick with contributions from the Rev. Mary Anne Akin, the Rev. Deacon Jeannie Robison, George Pelekis, the Rev. Jack Alvey, the Rev. David Powell, the Rev. Deacon Joanie Hammonds, and Bill Wheeler

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! . . . For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. Psalm 133:1, 4

The April 27th tornadoes brought physical and emotional destruction throughout Alabama, but from the devastation grew an amazing spirit of service and a spirit of unity. Parishioners and volunteers from our diocese and around the country have offered to help in every way they can to help those who have suffered from the storms.

The response in each community throughout our diocese has been unique to the needs of the residents. A number of parishes have become directly involved in the rebuilding of homes with Habitat for Humanity. Canterbury Chapel, Christ Church and St. Matthew’s in Tuscaloosa have joined together to respond to the needs, and they have organized volunteers to help rebuild homes in partnership with Habitat. St. Luke’s and All Saints’ in Birmingham have also marshaled volunteers for Habitat home builds in the tornado-ravaged communities of Jefferson County. St. Francis of Assisi in Indian Springs and St. Simon Peter in Pell City have joined with local organizations to repair and rebuild homes in St. Clair County. Grace Church in Anniston has been working with families in Calhoun County. St. Luke’s in Scottsboro and St. Philip’s in Ft Payne have hosted volunteer teams who are repairing and rebuilding homes in Jackson and DeKalb Counties. Other parishes have reached out to people in need in their communities as well.

Parishes in three areas—Huntsville/Madison County, Birmingham/Pratt City/ Pleasant Grove, and Sawyerville—have chosen to partner with families to help those in need recover physically and emotionally from the trauma of the tornadoes and the profound losses they have experienced. Parishes have also partnered with local organizations that responded immediately to the needs of survivors and, because of their long-term presence, understand the needs of the disadvantaged communities they serve.

Huntsville/Madison County: Interfaith Mission Service

The April 27th tornadoes virtually destroyed the community of Harvest in Madison County—41 families lost everything, and 39 other homes suffered significant damage but were repairable. The Harvest Youth Center offered food, shelter, and respite for these temporarily homeless families.

The Interfaith Mission Service in Huntsville immediately saw an urgent long-term need and established the “Adopt-a-Family” program. When the program launched in May 2011, it paired low-income families who were hard-hit by the storms with congregations, families, and individuals who wanted to lend a hand. At first, the program met the basic needs of financial help for rent, security deposits, utilities, food, medicine, and car repairs. The program also provided clothes and school supplies as well as household items. In addition to providing for physical needs, the Adopt-a-Family partnerships offered much needed and welcomed emotional support and stability.

“Our family is a single mother with three children, ages 17, 14 and 12,” says the Rev. Mary Anne Akin, the Interfaith Mission Service’s clergy liaison to the Church of the Nativity’s Outreach Committee. “They were living in a rental house, which meant that they would receive no rebuilding money. They were left completely alone, with no resources. And they received only two months of rent from FEMA [the Federal Emergency Management Agency]. We met with the family in person, loved each one of them, established bonds of trust, and helped them determine their needs. Essentially, they needed everything! “The mother’s work source was destroyed along with their belongings,” Mary Anne continues. “We helped them prioritize immediate disbursements and discerned other ways to be supportive. Each step along the way seemed like a roadblock. At one point the mother stated, ‘I am one day away from being homeless.’ And, she was! We kept them afloat with rent, groceries, school clothes and supplies, even her car payment. Now we are assisting with her plans for a bare minimum budget. She has found only part-time work of 24 hours per week. With brainstorming and connections, our little group is hopeful that we can help rebuild life for our new friends. The realities of extreme poverty have opened the eyes of many in our church.”

The Interfaith Mission Services Adopt-a-Family Program has called forth compassion from a number of congregations in the Huntsville area, including Temple B’nai Shalom; Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations; Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; and two nondenominational congregations. The work will continue for months to come. For more information on how you can help, please contact the Rev. Deacon Jeannie Robison at jrobis1@comcast.net.

Birmingham/Pratt City/Pleasant Grove: Christian Service Mission

The tornadoes plowed through the Pratt City and Pleasant Grove communities in west Birmingham and...
projects where we care for the least, set up partnerships of great commission to go forth as obedient disciples to find “The philosophy of this ministry is to start with our recovery. Spending time with family members during this time of furnishing to repairing or rebuilding a family’s home and our diocese is organizing volunteer teams to help rebuild these homes.

**Sawyerville: HERO**

During the April 27th storms, 5 people lost their lives, 42 families lost their homes, and the homes of 17 additional families were left uninhabitable. HERO (the Hale Empowerment and Revitalization Organization) was on the ground assisting tornado survivors immediately after the storms. The organization was founded in 1994, responded to Hurricane Katrina, and has served the Hale County community since that time. Through extensive case management interviews, HERO found that 21 homes needed to be rebuilt—the remaining temporarily homeless families found “new” homes with other family members or in residential nursing facilities.

St. Paul’s in Greensboro partnered with one family and found housing for the mother and her children. The ECW of Trinity in Demopolis also adopted a family and helped them recover from their loss and devastation. Our diocesan Sawyerville Commission is helping rebuild the home of Pastor Kervin Jones, who is a charter member of the Sawyerville Commission and has been instrumental in helping organize the Sawyerville Day Camp. HERO partners with Habitat of Humanity, Hale County Inc., which establishes an Individual Development Plan for the family’s contribution in the rebuild-

Please see “Adopting Families in Tuscaloosa and Pratt City” on page 10. For more information please contact the Rev. Jack Alvey at jalvey@allsaintsbirmingham.org or George Pelekis at pelekis@charter.net.

**Diocesan Support**

Our diocese has funds from Episcopal Relief and Development and our Diocesan Tornado Relief Fund to contribute for construction management and building materials to repair or rebuild the homes of the families participating in parish-family partnerships. In addition, our diocese is organizing volunteer teams to help rebuild these homes.

Parishes, our diocese, and local community organizations are working together in unity with the families in need. The Lord is indeed bestowing his blessings on all participants, offering life evermore. For more information please contact the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, a member of our diocesan Tornado Response Team, at jjquick@bellsouth.net.
Adopting Families in Tuscaloosa and Pratt City

The people of Tuscaloosa and Pratt City will never forget where they were and what they were doing the afternoon of April 27, 2011. Darius and Karlecia Wilson of Tuscaloosa had just come home from work and were eating dinner with their two small boys. Catherine Guinn of Pratt City had been sent home early from her job at the Birmingham Police Department because of storm threats—she was watching the weather on TV.

"Nor will they ever forget the sound," The Wilsons say the noise was like 10 trains roaring by. For Catherine, it sounded as if a Boeing 747 were landing on her roof.

The Wilsons and Guinns took shelter in interior rooms of their houses, unaware of what was happening outside—they just knew it was bad. When the winds quit and they ventured out, they found trees toppled, debris everywhere, and the few houses that weren't flattened were severely damaged. They had just lived through one of the worst tornadoes in US history, and it had devastated their communities, both physically and morally.

Alabama Episcopalians have been among the many across the United States who joined in to help with relief efforts. Tracy Hipps, executive director of the nondenominational Christian Service Mission in Birmingham, and his group were in both Tuscaloosa and Pratt City from the start, coordinating more than 15,000 volunteers from as far away as Utah and Texas. People have been generous with both their time and resources—Tracy estimates that Christian Service Mission has distributed at least $10 million in donated items.

But more than eight months after the tornado, the people of Tuscaloosa and Pratt City are still rebuilding their lives, homes, and communities. The work will take years, and Episcopalians who continue to work in the tornado-ravished areas have come to realize that "disaster relief" goes well beyond bottled water, bags of used clothes, and collections of canned goods.

That is why Tracy guided two parishes in Birmingham—All Saints' in Homewood and St. Stephen's in Cahaba Heights—to each partner with a family, develop a long-term relationship, and commit to walking with that family through the entire recovery. When Tracy met with the Rev. Jack Alvey, rector of All Saints', and George Pelekis, a member of St. Stephen's, two families came to his mind—the Wilsons and the Guinns. Members of both parishes say that working with these two families is nothing short of a spiritual experience.

Although the Wilsons originally planned to rebuild their badly damaged home in Tuscaloosa, they later decided to move to Birmingham, closer to family, friends, and their workplaces. They went first to a house in Bessemer and later to an apartment in Pratt City. The members of All Saints' immediately jumped in to provide mattresses for the boys and much-welcomed other necessities.

Catherine Guinn lives with her two granddaughters, Shakyra, who is 18 and expecting a child, and 10-year-old Nikyria. One of the first orders of business for the members of St. Stephen's was to replace the Guinns' storm-damaged mattresses with new ones donated to the parish by Bedzzz Express. One Saturday in September, parishioners gathered to help Catherine clean and organize her home, make minor repairs, and clean up the storm debris in her yard. St. Stephen's is helping Catherine with labor as well as advice on the many repairs needed on her home.

Roxanne Hatch is one of members of St. Stephen's who have walked alongside Catherine through the turmoil. "Roxanne has become like a sister to me," says Catherine. "Just having someone to talk to is such a comfort. Your ministry has been a blessing."

For more about these parish-family partnerships, please read the stories from volunteers below, or contact the Rev. Jack Alvey, associate rector All Saints', at jalvey@allsaints birmingham.org, or George Pelekis, a member of St. Stephen's, at pelekisg@charter.net.

Continuing the Relief

By Matt Ennis, a Member of All Saints' in Birmingham

After the April 27th storms, the outpouring of support from All Saints' was massive. The Great Hall was filled, drained, and filled again with donated supplies, clothes, and food. Work parties went out almost daily to help our neighbors clear, sort, and repair. Now that relief efforts have shifted in scope, All Saints' will focus its efforts on a particular family affected by the storms.

Darius Wilson and his wife, Karlecia, had just come home from work and were eating dinner with their two boys (ages two and three) when the storm approached their east Tuscaloosa home. They immediately noticed that this storm was different. "It sounded like 10 trains and dropped debris instead of rain." As the tornado roared overhead, the family huddled together in an interior room and watched as the winds tore off the upstairs and rear of the home that Darius's father had built.

With much of their home gone and the children in tears, Darius and Karlecia did not know where to begin. Fortunately, they were able to move into a house in Bessemer. The house had three very small rooms and no central air-conditioning, so we started by providing a mattress for the boys and a portable air-conditioner. We also arranged for My Child's Closet to provide much-needed clothing.

The Calm After the Storm

By Emily Ball, a Member of All Saints' in Birmingham

"Lord, help me remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that You and I together can't handle." This prayer is typed on a yellowed scrap of paper taped to a cabinet in my grandmother's house. I say it about as much as I say, "Hello."

About a week ago, I spent time with a family forced to find a new place to live after the deadly tornado destroyed their Tuscaloosa home. With very generous donations from our church family, we were able to help the Wilsons furnish their new apartment in Birmingham, fill their closets, and return to a "normal" life. I was very anxious about going to their apartment. I couldn't stop thinking, "What would I say to Karlecia? What do I have to share? Would I cry? How can I relate to a very young mother of two who juggles school and a full-time job?" Well, apparently I had a lot more in common with her than I ever dreamed.

About a year ago, my husband and I moved here from North Carolina, where both of our families still live and gather regularly. From 2009 to 2010, our career paths had gotten muddled, we moved to a bigger house that required unexpected maintenance, and then there was a domino effect of one thing after another that wouldn't go in our favor. When our second baby, who needed a lot of attention and who my husband described as "all tonsils," was about a month old, we looked at each other and agreed, "It's just not up to us." We've always said, "God has a plan," and now we would have to believe it. We continued to work hard—sending out resumes, coupon cutting...
to the extreme, and battling fear with faith. I never understood how “saying” and “believing” were so different until now.

About a month later, my husband received a new and welcomed opportunity within his company with a start date that matched his 30th birthday. The only catch—it was in Alabama. Sight unseen, we were moving. God was in control, and we weren’t questioning it. Having both grown up in North Carolina, gone to school in North Carolina, and dreamed of retiring in North Carolina, this new direction contradicted everything we had planned for our growing family. However, we were at a point where the current cookie-cutter plan wasn’t working. Our new plan, we agreed, would be based on trust and faith. One apartment search later, we headed south. Although it was a challenge to leave North Carolina behind, we realized we can still be Tar Heels in the land of Roll Tides and War Eagles.

After we decided to let go and move forward in faith, we moved into our apartment five weeks after the job offer, our home sold in four months, our kids snagged the last spots at a great playschool, and we found All Saints’ Episcopal Church. In an attempt to meet new friends and envelop life in Birmingham, I decided to open myself up to new opportunities, just as my husband had. I attended a Guild of the Christ Child meeting because, after all, it is supposed to support and provide fellowship for mothers—and boy, it delivered! I walked out of that meeting renewed, refreshed, and certain we’d found our new home. I don’t know why, but I knew it was God’s intention for me to be there with those particular women. They brought me out of my “dark place,” as I often do—and have faith. She put together a plan of action with priorities so she was doing her part to encourage change in her life. We both smiled as the sun poured in through the window.

Simply by sharing its light during a dark time, All Saints’ has strengthened our faith and encouraged us to be active within the community and share our experiences with those who are in need of hope and answers.

The Road to Emmaus
By the Rev. Jack Alvey, Rector of All Saints’ in Birmingham

“What are not our hearts burning within us while we talk to others on the road?” These intimate words described an experience of resurrection as recorded by the Gospel according to Luke. After the death of Jesus on the cross, two men traveled to Emmaus in the depth of their grief and despair. Frederick Buechner explains Emmaus in this way: “a place we go in order to escape—a bar, a movie, . . . Emmaus may be buying a new suit or a new car or smoking more cigarettes than you really want. . . . Emmaus is whatever we do or wherever we go to make ourselves forget that the world holds nothing sacred: that even the wisest and bravest and loveliest decay and die.”

On April 27, many of our brothers and sisters and friends in Alabama and across the South started down the road to Emmaus. For many, this road was filled with death, ruin, and chaos. As we all know very well, there is nothing sacred about the devastation that the tornadoes have caused in so many of our Alabama communities.

Shortly after the storms, I met a woman who was traveling the road to Emmaus. Ms. Smith struggled to take care of two children and battled a chronic illness. She moved to Pratt City three months before the storms, only to watch her home take a direct hit from the tornado.

We spent about an hour and a half together. As we traveled around the compound trying to find necessary supplies, we both remained quiet. We shared a few words, but there was no joking around or smiling as there was little to joke around or smile about. Every time I thought to offer words of comfort, I clapsed my mouth shut as I knew there was nothing I could say to make it better. Finally we made our way over to the M-POWER Health Center for our final stop.

As we were saying our good-byes, she asked me if we could pray. After our prayer, our eyes were opened. We exchanged smiles, and she said, “I knew Jesus wanted us to pray together the whole time.”

“Were not our hearts burning within us while we were walking on the road?” These words describe another resurrection experience two millennia after Emmaus. Ms. Smith’s problems weren’t solved that day. She still faced a long road to recovery. But in the middle of it all, Jesus made himself known in the ordinary places of life and in a prayer. Our eyes were opened. Insightful and wise words didn’t reveal the power of resurrection. Rather, the simplicity of breaking bread and a prayer opened our eyes to see Christ alive in our midst.

Tending and Mending Hearts
By George Pelekis, a Member of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham

Since the devastating tornados hit Alabama on April 27, St. Stephen’s has been going full speed taking the light within out into the world, joyfully serving our loving neighbors. We all remember the donations placed around the altar and the bottled waters placed around the baptismal font on Sunday, May 1. We organized, sorted, and distributed those donations to Hanceville, Sawyerville, Pratt City, Pleasant Grove, and Canterbury Chapel, and we have been back to those locations many more times with donations of food, water, clothing, personal items, furnishings, and mattresses. We opened the Cahaba Heights Relief Center in Carpenter Hall with the support of the Red Cross, and we put on an awesome picnic for the Vestavia/ Cahaba Heights community. Work teams and individuals have cleaned up debris, helped repair and rebuild homes, and served with the United Way Long-Term Recovery.
Recently, partnering with families has become a huge effort to help provide for the needs of tornado survivors, and St. Stephen’s has partnered with the Guinn family in Pratt City.

Many of our members have been involved with this ministry since August and have witnessed our relationship with Catherine Guinn and her granddaughters Shakyra and Nikyria being a joyful, humbling experience. The light truly shines through precious little 10-year-old Nikyria, who everyone calls “Tiny.”

As we have partnered with the Guinn family, each of us has found that as we tend to the heart of our fellow neighbors, we begin to mend our own hearts as the Body of Christ is raised. Our time has been well spent with hospitality visits, workdays, and pastoral visits as we truly welcome the family into our loving worship community. We are forming a true long-lasting relationship not only with Catherine, Shakyra, and Nikyria but also with the Pratt City community.

Since April 27, my journey along the paths I have walked in response to the relief efforts has led me to meet some of the most loving neighbors. One of those meetings took place the week of August 7–13 when our sisters and brothers from St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church of League City, Texas, and Grace Episcopal Church of Alvin, Texas, came to help us in Pleasant Grove. The volunteers included the Rev. Dean Lawrence, Doug and Kay Shaffer, Tom Miller, Joni Desoto, Hilde Tipton, Phyllis Thompson, the Rev. David Price, Rod Dockal, and Charles Lamb.

When our Texas Good Samaritans arrived in Birmingham, they found us in the beginning of Stage 2 relief efforts of rebuilding our community. Through the introduction of Tracy Hips, the executive director of Christian Service Mission, the Rev. Dean Lawrence and the Rev. David Price were partnered with the Locally Organized Volunteer Effort (LOVE) in Pleasant Grove. Working with LOVE leader Gorden Thomason, a member of Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church, the Good Samaritans helped rebuild the home of Ms. Freeburg. They put their faith into action as they applied known skills and learned new skills to lay the foundation, put up siding and Sheetrock, finish the framing, install doors, clear debris, pull electrical wiring, and build stairs. Each day the members of this group showed their peaceful patience with tasks at hand and truly served with joyful hearts. They instantly bonded with Ms. Freeburg, who also shines the light of patience, hope, joy, and love, like the Good Samaritans she now calls family.

Good Samaritans
By George Pelekis, a Member of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham

Special thanks go to the members of All Saints’ in Birmingham, especially the Rev. Jack Alvey, associate rector, and Buddy Bland for their kind neighborly hospitality in housing the Texas Good Samaritans. Buddy and his wonderful team at All Saints’ cooked a delicious meal when they arrived, giving them good nourishing energy after a long 14-hour drive hauling themselves and tools and also pulling a trailer with a lectern, credence table, and altar rail to be used to rebuild a church. The meal also provided strength for their first 9 to 10-hour workday.

I walk away from this weeklong experience carrying each moment with these true loving brothers and sisters in my heart. I reflect often on a story Rod Dockal, one of the volunteers from Grace Church, shared with me about a Good Samaritan he encountered in Texas years ago after Hurricane Ike wreaked havoc on his home and property. After many other people passed by, one lone loving brother offered Rod a faithful helping hand that touched him in a healing moment. From this act of love and kindness, Rod knew that with this healing touch he had been moved to pass on these blessings to other neighbors in need.

From the depths of our heart we thank Rod and all of our Texas brothers and sisters for their loving care that shows us what eternal living is all about. May we follow their faithful example of passing on the healing touch to our neighbors near and far.
Working Together To Rebuild Tuscaloosa

By the Rev. Deacon Kelley Hudlow

There are three Episcopal churches in Tuscaloosa—Canterbury Chapel Church and Student Center, Christ Church, and St. Matthias’—in the hours immediately following the April 27th tornado, each parish began the process of contacting members and tending to their needs. This inward focus quickly turned outward to the community. St. Matthias’ became the “Spontaneous Unsolicited Volunteer Center” and served as the rallying point for volunteers going into the community to remove debris and deliver supplies. Both Christ Church and Canterbury Chapel served as distribution centers for clothing, debris and deliver supplies. Christ Church formed teams to handle debris removal, counseling, laundry service, transportation, and furniture collection, and the parish also provided support for two national daycare respite programs. All three parishes provided financial resources for persons displaced by the storm, including funds for hotel rooms, deposits, utility assistance, and other needs. In addition each parish established a tornado relief fund to accept donations.

Volunteer team from St. Mary’s in Akron, Ohio; photo by Libby Shaw

As the initial needs of the community began to move from survival to recovery, the clergy and leaders of the three parishes met to plan the long-term response. These discussions led to the formation of the Episcopal Tornado Recovery Cooperative (ETRC), which is managed by a 10-member board of directors, with representatives from each of the parishes and one member serving at-large. The ETRC board currently includes Bill Beemer (treasurer), Penny Freund (secretary), Ashley Perry, Dr. Rick Bryant, the Rev. Deacon Dr. Cindy Roff, Tyler Richards, Jackson Horton, and the Rev. Deacon Mary Jane Taylor, and me (chair). Our mission is to bring the compassion and love of Christ to our neighbors in West Alabama who suffered as a result of the April 2011 tornadoes. The ETRC received funds from our diocese, Episcopal Relief and Development, and local parishes to begin our work.

Our first step was to hire a case manager and a construction project manager to begin assessing needs. The ETRC case manager has been working in the community since July, and the construction project manager since August. We will complete our second ETRC rebuild soon.

Our second step was to secure a location to house volunteer groups. Beverly Phifer, a member of Christ Church, generously offered the use of Green Acres, the Phifer Wire Inc.’s employee recreation facility. With the use of this facility, ETRC was able to start hosting out-of-town work teams. To date we have hosted groups who have worked with Habitat for Humanity, Compassion Coalition, Hale Empowerment and Revitalization Organization (HERO), and Temporary Emergency Services. Each time a volunteer group arrives in Tuscaloosa, members of one of our parishes provide a welcoming supper as well as breakfast and lunch for the following day. We also provide information about Tuscaloosa and invite the volunteers to attend services at our local parishes. We have hosted work teams from Mobile, Texas, Georgia, Indiana, Florida, and Ohio. All of these groups have generously given their time, talent, and treasure to help rebuild our community.

Generous donations from several Episcopal parishes in Akron, Ohio, provided enough lumber to build a house. We donated the lumber to the local Habitat for Humanity, and volunteers from St. Mary’s in Akron not only helped unload the lumber from the truck, but they also assembled walls made from it.

As the work of ETRC increased, we added additional volunteer staff, including Libby Shaw as volunteer coordinator and Dr. Carl Ferguson as executive director. The ETRC is also represented at the Long-Term Recovery Coalition of West Alabama, and I serve as the cochair of the Case Management Subcommittee for that group. Future plans for ETRC include continuing partnerships with the Long-Term Recovery Coalition of West Alabama, local community programs, and building a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, which will allow ETRC to fund and participate in larger construction projects as well as smaller projects in neighborhoods surrounding Habitat homes.

The Tuscaloosa community has been truly blessed by the support ETRC has received from our diocese, parishes across our diocese, and both local and out-of-town volunteers. Together we will continue to reach out to our community as we work together on our long road to full recovery.

For more information about ETRC or to volunteer to help with our work, please visit our Web site at www.tuscaloosaetrc.com or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/etrc2011.
Faith Community Working
To Meet Unmet Needs
By Jerry Jacob, Our Diocesan Tornado Response Team Coordinator for Cullman

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Colossians 3:23

The residents of Cullman County continue to struggle to recover from the deadly devastation of the April 27th tornadoes. Some people have been able to rebuild, but many still lack enough funds to do so.

The Cullman Long-Term Recovery Committee continues to work to assist those who do not have enough resources to get their lives and residences back to what they were before the storms. Approximately 100 individuals or families fall into that category.

The members of the faith community in Cullman County, along with social service agencies, are the ones still trying to “love our neighbors.” We continue to need your prayers and your support.

St. Philip’s Hosts Tornado Response Teams
By Diocesan Staff

“St. Philip’s is a small parish with a big heart,” notes the Rev. Judith W. Comer, rector of the church. “One of the things we can do to help our community is provide hospitality to teams coming into our area to work. We have stretched our space to accommodate these teams, and we have been blessed by the wonderful folks who have stayed in our facilities.

“One group from the Piedmont Convocation of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina brought 26 people in June and stayed a week ‘camping out’ in our parish hall, library, Sunday school rooms, and even the nursery,” she reports. The parish arranged for the team to shower a few blocks away at the city recreation center. They brought their own food and cooked for themselves, but the parish hosted a cookout and swimming party for them at DeSoto State Park one evening after they returned from working on Sand Mountain. Parishioner Kathy Lauderdale made her home in Rainsville available for them during the day as a place to get out of the heat.

The Piedmont Convocation sent another team of 16 to St. Philip’s in late July, and in early August St. Philip’s hosted a team from the Foothills Convocation of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina. Further extending St. Philip’s hospitality, Luther Perry, a member of the vestry, and his wife, Judy, treated both teams to a meal at their restaurant, the Mountain Grill in Rainsville. All three teams took advantage of a disaster response utility tool trailer on loan to our diocese from the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.

Judith, along with the Rev. Dex Bender, the rector of St. Luke’s in Scottsboro, serves on the Long-Term Recovery Committee for DeKalb and Jackson Counties. The committee identifies and seeks to address unmet needs resulting from the disaster, using funds from a variety of sources, including our diocesan Tornado Relief Fund.

St. Francis’ Helping Shoal Creek Valley Survivors
by Ellen Hamilton, a member of St. Francis of Assisi in Indian Springs

The members of St. Francis of Assisi in Indian Springs are supporting ongoing tornado recovery efforts in heavily damaged Shoal Creek Valley near Ashville. More than a dozen people died in the area when a tornado swept across the valley on April 27.

The parish has focused its efforts on assisting with rebuilding Alpha Ranch, an independent living facility that offers assistance to young men who are coping with a difficult transition to adulthood. In addition to its own recovery efforts, the ranch staff has been coordinating recovery efforts for their neighbors. Members of St. Francis’ have taken meals to volunteers working in the area, and they also fielded a team to help rebuild a shed on the ranch.

Many Cullman residents don’t have the funds to rebuild their homes; the owner of this home had enough to rebuild the house but not to clean up or landscape the property.
Stanley Hubbard Jr., president of Kanuga Conferences Inc., contacted Bishop Parsley in early June about a special opportunity for children affected by the April tornado outbreak. Kanuga Conference Center in Hendersonville, North Carolina, and a number of generous donors were providing funds for young survivors from our diocese and other dioceses to attend Camp Bob free of charge. Camp Bob hosts summer camping sessions for disadvantaged children ages 8 to 15 at Kanuga’s Bob Campbell Youth Campus.

Bishop Parsley contacted both Leslie Manning and our diocesan Tornado Response Team about this wonderful offer, and they asked me to serve as our diocesan coordinator. I immediately contacted Kanuga and reserved 15 spots for children from our diocese for the July 10-15 camp session and 40 spots for the August 1-5 session.

In addition to serving as the Camp Bob coordinator, I was also a staff member for our diocesan Sawyerville Day Camp sessions. With a 10-day Sawyerville session just days away and the July Camp Bob session just two weeks away, I had to come up with a game plan fast. Not only did I have to find children affected by the tornadoes, but I also had to convince their parents to let their children go with me to North Carolina for a week!

Since the town of Sawyerville was hit directly by a tornado on April 27 and the area suffered a number of deaths as well as extensive devastation, I chose to make it my main recruitment zone for my first group of campers. I distributed information about Camp Bob at the Sawyerville Day Camp registrations, and I rode the bus to Sawyerville and talked to parents. I also called the parents of children on the waiting list for the day camp sessions, met with the principal of Greensboro West Elementary School to get names of students, and reached out to the after-school program in the community as well as local churches.

I took seven children to Kanuga for the July session of Camp Bob, and I couldn’t have had a better first group. Three of the children had never left the state of Alabama before, and none of them had ever been to the mountains. Nine-year-old Trevell, the youngest in the group, gawked at the Atlanta skyline as we approached the city. When we got home from North Carolina, I started recruiting children for the August session of Camp Bob. The camp leaders had encouraged me to bring up to 100 children — there were plenty of open spaces. I already had a lot of applications from children in the Sawyerville area, but I wanted to include some young people from Tuscaloosa as well.

Tuscaloosa is my hometown, and I had watched the April 27th tornado rip through my city on television while I sat safely in Birmingham. Not knowing whose homes had been destroyed or the names of the people who had died, I felt terrified, horrified, and helpless. I went home on April 29th with a carload of donations, work gloves, and my bike. I rode my bike through the devastation trying to account for friends I hadn’t heard from, and I was grateful to learn that while most of them had lost their homes, everyone still had their lives. I did everything I could to help them for the remainder of the weekend. Taking some of the young survivors to Camp Bob would be an amazing gift for me to give the children of my community.

My mom, Millie Hudson, had been a guidance counselor at Holt Elementary School for 8 years; she left at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. The tornado destroyed Holt School along with many of the students’ homes. I called the current guidance counselor, Joellen Dever, and she sent me a list of names and phone numbers of some of the families. I was able to sign up 12 of the students to go to Camp Bob with me in August.

I met with the school principal while she unpacked supplies at the temporary Holt Elementary School, a vacant middle school across town. She handed me a
the pen down to tell me that one of her two-year-old twins was having open heart surgery the following Monday. She was so grateful that one of her older children would be safe and having fun, which would allow her to give her baby more time when she needed it most. Not only had this mother lost her home in the storm, but she also continued to face overwhelming hardships—and through it all she was staying strong for her family! I hugged her before I left and promised her, as I did every parent, that I would care for and love her child as if he were my own.

I took 71 kids and 6 volunteers with me to the August session at Camp Bob—36 from Tuscaloosa, 34 from Hale County, and 1 from Birmingham. Our mode of transportation grew from a 15-passenger van for the first group to two huge charter buses, provided and funded by Episcopal Relief and Development, for the second group. I couldn’t believe how successful recruiting children and gaining the trust of their parents had been. Every one of these children deserved the chance laugh and have fun—48 of them had lost their home, a family member, their school, and/or their neighborhood, and their parents had lost their jobs. In addition, many of the children and their family were suffering from increased allergy or asthma symptoms from living in and near the storm debris. And perhaps most devastating of all, each of them had a daily visual reminder of the tornado’s path of death and destruction.

The families I met signing up children for Camp Bob filled my soul with gratitude. God blessed me with the precious gift of gaining trust and love from the children and parents while our diocese and Kanuga gave them a much-needed respite from their struggles to recover some normalcy in their daily life.

The Camp Bob staff is committed to helping campers grow spiritually. They also help them develop trust in others and trust in themselves, increase their self-esteem, demonstrate responsibility and initiative, and learn how to show love. Tragedy brought the 7 children in the first group and the 71 children in the second group together, and during the time we spent traveling and sharing experiences at camp, we became friends—we became like family.

Many, many thanks to everyone who played a part in making this incredible opportunity a reality. Thanks to Kanuga for the generous gift of summer camp for 78 children from our diocese, to Episcopal Relief and Development for providing our transportation, to Christ Church in Tuscaloosa for providing funds for our lunches, and to Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa for making the lunches. Thanks to Evelyn Dillard, Elizabeth Poellnitz, Jermaine Cole, Lindsey Mulllen, and Will Thomas for graciously putting their lives on hold for a week to be a part of our Camp Bob experience. Thanks to Leslie Manning for trusting me to coordinate this project and being there to guide me. Thanks to my mom for taking on many tasks to help make this project a success, and thanks to Debbie Tabb for being an amazing friend.

Enjoying a Fun-Filled Weekend

Judy Ault, Camp Alabama Storm Organizer, provided information and photos for this story.

Our diocese is partnering with several organizations to provide Camp Alabama Storm, a healing camp experience for children affected by the April 27th tornadoes. While the focus is on healing, community building, and recovery, the weekend at Camp McDowell is also about fun, relaxation, and a welcome, much-needed mini-vacation from the months of recovery efforts.

The camp is the creation and partnership of Camp McDowell, our diocese, the Birmingham Jewish Federation, Amelia Center, Children’s Hospital of Alabama, Hands On Birmingham, UAB Health System, Alabama Department of Mental Health, Collat Jewish Family Services, Community Grief Support Service, and Alabama Project Rebound, a crisis recovery initiative that addresses the emotional well-being of Alabamians affected by the April 27th tornadoes. Volunteers have raised more than $15,000 so far to cover all the expenses and offer this camp as a gift to the Alabama community. They hope to raise an additional $25,000 to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

The first Camp Alabama Storm session, which was held November 12-13, squeezed in as much fun as possible with a drum circle, arts and crafts, a hayride and bonfire, storytelling, outdoor cooking, canoeing, hiking, live music, games, and more. A second session is planned for March 30-April 1. For more information about Camp Alabama Storm, please contact Judy Ault at campalabamastorm@gmail.com or the Rev. Mark Johnston at mark@campmcdowell.com or 205/387-1806.
Finding “Release” from Grief through Art

By Amanda Agricola

The Rev. Kervin Jones, who is a charter member of the Sawyerville Commission and has played a key role in organizing the Sawyerville Day Camp program, sometimes notes that it is only through devastation and destruction that we realize the grace and power of God. Pastor Jones’s words—and his personal experiences of loss as a result of the April 27th storms—have helped shape our ongoing art project in the Greensboro community.

I went to Greensboro last summer to lead a wall mural project with the intention of piquing the artistic interests of the youth in the community. While I was in Greensboro, I met Blake Morgan, a young man who is already intriguing the people in his town with creative ideas. He has created an online publication that features “how to” articles on photography, poetry, and photographs of artworks. He has also launched an art notebook campaign, sending out notebooks to anyone in Greensboro who requests one, to be filled with drawings, collages, and writings. His strong interest and involvement with art made him a clear candidate for me to talk with about the mural project.

I went with an open mind about what would be painted on the wall in Greensboro. We really wanted this mural to be a reflection of the community. After Blake and I talked a few times, we chose “release” as our theme. Later, after the traditional Wednesday night dinner and service at Pastor Jones’s church and hearing his moving testimonial of having his entire life blown away in the April 27th tornado, I realized that in addition to release we should represent some breakage out of which freedom and faith are born. Immediately the idea of broken birdcages releasing various symbols of freedom sprang to my mind.

I set out making silhouettes of birds, butterflies, guitars, and birdcages for Sawyerville Day Campers to use. Cutting out stencils requires a lot of patience. To my surprise, after a little bit of coaching several campers did not give up—they actually cut out a few of their own stencils, which we sprayed on wooden panels the next day. We also used these stencils for the Sawyerville Day Camp mural wall on Tuscaloosa Street right across from the beautiful, new farmers’ market in Greensboro.

Like the pool mural at Camp McDowell, the Greensboro wall mural project will continue to grow and involve the community for summers to come. The mural will bloom and grow like a patchwork quilt, ever changing and always reflecting the beauty of the people who help bring the work to fruition.

Special thanks to the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham for funding the Greensboro wall mural project. Your donation is the rain and sun for our young people’s seeds and labor.

For more information about the Greensboro wall mural project, please contact Amanda Agricola at san-draag@me.com or Leslie Manning at sawyervillescamp@gmail.com.
Your Youth Department (YD) hosted District Days on October 30 for youth from parishes in the Montgomery, Tennessee Valley, and Birmingham areas. The events were well attended, and everyone had a really good time. The comments below, written by YD members, will help you understand the fun-filled events—enjoy!

“Birmingham District Day proved to be successful yet again! About 60 youth in our district came to Homewood Park dressed to impress. We enjoyed snacks, sack races, pumpkin designing, and much more. Enthusiasm and excitement for the opportunities for youth in our diocese spread as everyone enjoyed the group activities and heard about future events. Our District Day came to a close with a Compline service led by our youth. It was a beautiful day shared by beautiful people!” —Meredith Byars

“This year the Montgomery District decided to host our District Day on the grounds of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. The turnout was fabulous, with about 70 people representing parishes in Auburn, Millbrook, Montgomery, and Wetumpka. We started by playing the “balloon game” icebreaker—the goal is to pop another person’s balloon without using your hands while making sure your own balloon is not destroyed. Everyone ended up having a blast! Our big group activity was a giant game of Happy Happy Joy Joy, and the competition got intense! People scattered around the grass enjoying the beautiful park. Montgomery District Day was a huge success, and we hope to further increase our district’s presence in our diocese-wide events.” —Ann Kathryn Parrish

“With great weather and smiling faces, the Tennessee Valley district pulled off another wonderful District Day. About 30 youth arrived for an afternoon full of Harry Potter-packed activities. We got to enjoy quidditch, spell practice, wand making, and other wizarding events. We closed with an info session about upcoming events and a wonderful Compline service. All in all, it was a great day at Delano Park in Decatur!” —Sam Spearmen

Calling All 7th and 8th Graders!

All I want for Christmas is to go to . . . Winter Weekend at “Wonderful, Wonderful” Camp McDowell! This three-night winter fun event, January 13–16, will include all of your favorite camp activities—singing, hiking, worshiping in the “old chapel,” playing group games, roasting marshmallows at a bonfire, participating in a talent show and dance in Eppes Hall, going to canteen, and more—all planned and overseen by an enthusiastic and creative staff!

Interim Youth Ministries Coordinator Susan Oakes, who is serving as program director, is planning group sessions focusing on this year’s theme “The Faces of Jesus.” Andrew Harris, the youth minister of Grace Church in Anniston, will be the music director, and the Rev. Derrick Hill, priest associate of St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands in Birmingham, will be the chaplain.

We invite youth of all races and faith backgrounds to join us for this annual event—so bring a friend or two with you! Financial assistance is available. (P.S. This makes a great Christmas gift!)

For more information and to register, please visit Camp McDowell’s Web site, www.campmcdowell.com or contact Susanna Whitsett at susanna@campmcdowell.com. The deadline to register is JANUARY 9.
Reflections on the 122nd Annual ECW Conference

By Anne Couch Burke, Publicity Chair

The Montgomery Convocation graciously hosted our 122nd Annual Fall Conference on October 6 and 7 at St. John’s in Montgomery. The Rev. Elizabeth Wheatley-Jones, who currently serves as the priest in charge of All Saints’ in Grenada, Mississippi, was our guest speaker and brought a powerful message on “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands: Our Mission and Ministry in the World.” She focused specifically on the restoration of all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

When we learned about Elizabeth’s personal experiences on the Gulf Coast, we realized that her message was delivered with a yeoman’s heart and as a true servant of God. She was interviewing for a position at Christ Church in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, just hours before Hurricane Katrina struck the coast, and in the aftermath of the storm’s destruction she made the choice to stay at Christ Church in Bay St. Louis and focus as a true servant of God. “God is already present—the Good News” (from The Poisonwood Bible—Diary of a Country Wife).

The conference included a wine and cheese party hosted by Grace Church in Mt. Meigs and St. Paul’s in Lowndesboro. A string ensemble, including Dr. Jon Dailey, Clay McKinney, and the Rev. Mark Waldo Jr., provided lovely music, and a silent auction raised money to complete ECW’s ACTS 2 pledge for the sacristy stained-glass window at the Cathedral of the Advent in Birmingham, depicting a beautiful oil painting, donated by George Thompson of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, depicting a stained-glass window at the Cathedral Church of the Advent brought in most of the proceeds.

On Friday, Bishop Parsley and Bishop Sloan officiated at the service recognizing the 2012-13 diocesan ECW board members. During the service, the outgoing board members passed crosses to the incoming members. The new board members include President Fiona Watts of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham, President Elect Brenda Mayhall of Christ Church in Albertville, Secretary Jolai Jenkins of St. Andrew’s in Tuskegee, Treasurer Paula Bird of Trinity in Demopolis, United Thank Offering Chair Linda Kennedy of the Advent in Birmingham, Devotional Chair Cheri Blair of the Epiphany in Guntersville, Parliamentarian Gethryn Giles of St. Joseph’s in Mentone, Missions and Ministries Chair Joan East of St. Matthew’s in Madison, Assistant Treasurer Sallie Lowe of St. Andrew’s in Birmingham, Church Periodical Club Chair Marilyn Atkins of St. Peter’s in Talladega, Nominating Chair Memily Colvin of All Saints’ in Birmingham, Scholarships Chair Adelaide Cherry of St. Paul’s in Greensboro, Archivist Valerie Burnes of St. James’ in Livingston, Clergy Liaison the Rev. Rebecca DeBow, Clergy Liaison of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, Webmaster Sally Sinclair of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham, Publicity Chair Anne Burke of the Advent in Birmingham, Birmingham Convocation Chair Diane Weatherford of St. Luke’s in Birmingham, Black Belt Convocation Chair Pearl Slay of Trinity in Demopolis, Cheaha Convocation Chair Jane Wood of Grace in Anniston, East Alabama Convocation Chair Andrea Peacock of St. James’ in Alexander City, Montgomery Convocation Chair Mitzi Waldo of St. Michael and All Angels’ in Millbrook, Mountain Convocation Chair Pat Clayton of Calvary in Oneonta, and Tennessee-Valley Convocation Chair Sally Marsh of St. Barnabas’ in Hartsville. (Please visit www.alabamaeuw.org for a complete list of committee appointees for 2012-13.)

Outgoing ECW President Gethryn Giles spearheaded a very moving and poignant tribute to the Parsleys by arranging for the entire slate of ECW presidents since Bishop Parsley’s investiture in 1996 to attend this year’s conference and to help present Bishop and Becky Parsley a lovely quilt created by women across our diocese. Sue Ann Jones, Gwen Gissendanner, Tora Johnson, Sue Ann Reimisch, Edna Carr, Sue Haygood, and Dee Bubzy helped piece together the squares. We gave the quilt to the Parsleys in gratitude for their 15 years of service to our diocese.

We thank everyone who helped host this year’s Fall Conference, and we give a special thank-you to Mitzi Waldo and Margie Sellers for being there at every turn to make sure things ran as smoothly as possible!

As a new committee appointee to our diocesan ECW board, I feel overwhelmed with admiration for our group of humble and modest servants of the Lord. All the women of every parish are considered members of our diocesan Episcopal Church Women, and we invite each of you to be involved with this outstanding group.

Past and present ECW Presidents Jo Walton, Alice Tyson, Tina Johnson, Olivia Weingarten, Alleen Cater, Dee Bubzy, Gethryn Giles, and Fiona Watts with Bishop Parsley

Alice Tyson, Tina Johnson, and (far right) ECW President Gethryn Giles with the conference’s guest speaker, the Rev. Elizabeth Wheatley-Jones

Nancy Thompson (seated) with Linda George, Gethryn Giles, and Sally Marsh
From Gethryn S. Giles, Outgoing ECW President

As my two year-term as president of the ECW Diocesan Board comes to an end, I have been reflecting on the work of the women of our diocese. At our 122nd Annual Fall Conference held at St. John’s in Montgomery in October (please see page 19), the Rev. Elizabeth Wheatley-Jones reminded us that on page 855 of the Book of Common Prayer we can find a statement about the mission of the Church, Mission and Ministries have been the ECW theme for the last two years, and this statement certainly describes the activities of the ECW: “The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love. The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.”

The women of our diocese not only spend much of their time supporting local outreach efforts, but they also work to support our parishes in planning and worshiping, proclaiming the Gospel and promoting justice, peace and love. In addition, we raise funds for the United Thank Offering (UTO), ECW Scholarships, the Church Periodical Club (CPC), Krikit Krikit!, and other local and national efforts. Currently our national ECW Board is supporting Nets for Life, a program sponsored by Episcopal Relief and Development that provides mosquito nets to villages in Africa delivered by a team that teaches the local people how to use and care for the nets to help prevent malaria. Each net costs only $12, and I encourage everyone to make a contribution to this lifesaving project (please send your contribution to Episcopal Church Women, Carpenter House, 521 North 29th Street, Birmingham, AL 35201-2682). This is just one more example of the worldwide missions of all Episcopal women.

Serving as your ECW president has been very rewarding as well as quite educational. I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting many parishes for convocation meetings and learning about your ministries. Please visit our ECW Web site, www.alabamaecw.org, to keep up with what is happening and share with all of us what you and the women in your parish are doing. Please register your e-mail address so you can receive information sent through Constant Contact.

Each of the women of our diocese will continue to be very special to me. Many blessings!

Bishop Parsley Blesses Playground

By Marilyn Atkins, a Member of St. Peter’s in Talladega; Photos by Donna Dase

“Almighty God, you have blessed all parents and all who work at St. Peter’s Church and Day School with the joy and care of children. Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God for the children, their teachers, the playground, the outdoors, the Church, and all the significant projects that the United Thank Offering provides all over the world. We ask God’s blessings on this playground and all the children and families who come here to play. May St. Peter’s Church be known as a caring community for all God’s children and may strangers be welcomed and soon become friends. And may the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon this playground and all who play here, now and forever. Amen.”

Bishop Parsley officiated at a special service to bless the recently constructed playground at St. Peter’s in Talladega on October 25, with the Rev. Benjamin Turnage, interim rector of the parish, assisting. During the service, the children recited the Children’s Creed, which Father Ben has been teaching them in chapel, and then everyone sang “Jesus Loves Me.” More than 80 people participated in the service.

A $17,750 grant from United Thank Offering (UTO) provided significant funding for the playground, which includes equipment designed especially for mobility-challenged children and a wide sidewalk to accommodate wheelchairs. The fall Cheaha Convocation meeting, hosted by St. Peter’s, started after the playground blessing and focused on recognizing and giving thanks for the many significant projects UTO funds all over the world, with special emphasis on St. Peter’s “Every Child Deserves A Playground” project. During the meeting, Bishop Parsley shared his perspective on UTO, as did Province IV UTO Representative Georgie White, our diocesan UTO Coordinator Brenda Mayhall, and incoming diocesan UTO Chair Linda Kennedy.

The playground is always open to the public except during the morning hours when St. Peter’s Day School is in session. All children and their families are welcome to visit the playground after school hours, in the evening and on weekends.

Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform Honor Bishop Parsley

By Diocesan Staff

The Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform Foundation honored Bishop Parsley on September 23 during the organization’s Fifth Annual Bailey Thomson Awards Luncheon in Birmingham. Bishop Parsley received the Faith Community Partner of the Year Award for his leadership in the faith community and his advocacy of Alabama Constitutional Reform.

In presenting the award, Foundation President Audrey L. Salgado noted: “For a long time, Bishop Parsley has had a real concern about the injustices perpetrated by the 1901 State Constitution. He has acted upon his concerns by bringing Constitutional Reform to the conversation among not only Episcopalians but also through the work of the Alabama Faith Council, of which he was a founding member. While he frequently and vigorously encourages Episcopalians to participate in efforts for a new governing document, his voice and influence reach out into the everyday lives of Alabamians, who have similar concerns for justice, equality, and focused attention on the least of these among our citizens.”

Those who know him best describe Bishop Parsley as demonstrating “a deep spirituality, calm spirit, keen intellect, refreshing sense of humor, reason, and hospitality that embraces and welcomes all people,” she adds. “Those attributes have been evidenced in his leadership in the faith community in Alabama.”

The awards luncheon, which celebrated the 11th anniversary of the Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform Foundation, was held at the Thomas E. and Marla H. Corts Arena at Samford University. The Honorable J. Gorman Houston Jr., retired chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, gave the keynote address. Alabama Appleseed received the Partner of the Year award, Ronnie R. Aycock received the Thomas E. Corts Citizen Educator of the Year award, and Lenora Walker Pate received the Bailey Thomson Award.
St. Alban’s Celebrates 50 Years of Worship and Service

The Rev. Dr. J. Barry Vaughn, Rector, provided information for this article.

In 1961, 11 Episcopalian families living in the Bluff Park area of what is now part of Hoover began to meet for evening prayer on a regular basis. In February of that year the Rt. Rev. George Murray, the bishop of our diocese at the time, authorized the formation of St. Alban’s Episcopal Church.

On Saturday, September 24, 2011, about 100 people gathered for a festival Holy Eucharist followed by a seated dinner to celebrate St. Alban’s 50th anniversary. Our 10th bishop, the Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley Jr., presided at the service, and the parish’s rector, the Rev. Dr. J. Barry Vaughn, preached. After dinner, Father Vaughn and Senior Warden Ryland Byars presented Bishop Parsley with a painting by St. Alban’s “artist-in-residence,” Marilyn Burrier. The dinner concluded with a slide show featuring historical photographs of St. Alban’s.

On Sunday night the UAB Gospel Choir sang during a service of “gospel evensong,” and the Rev. Dr. A. B. Sutton Jr., the former pastor of Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, preached. Consisting of almost 30 singers, the UAB Gospel Choir sang three anthems—a setting of Psalm 150 by the choir’s director, Kevin Turner, “Whom shall I fear?” by Freda Givens, and “Psalm 100” by L. Craig Tyson. The choir has appeared on NBC’s Today Show and also in the PBS documentary Black America in the 21st Century. Dr. Sutton, who graduated from Bishop College in Dallas and Virginia Union School of Theology, is the founding pastor of Living Stones’ Temple. More than 50 members of the church joined St. Alban’s parishioners for gospel evensong.

Throughout the past five decades, St. Alban’s has continued to serve others both near and far. The homes and property of many of St. Alban’s neighbors suffered damage in the early morning storms that ripped through the Bluff Park area on April 27 and the tornadoes that followed later that day. As an ongoing outreach project, the parish collects pens, pencils, crayons, and other school supplies donated by members. Recently Father Vaughn and Ryland delivered a large basket of supplies to Bluff Park Elementary School counselor Amelia Calloway for distribution to students in need.

As part of a long-term effort to raise funds to help their “sister parish”—St. Alban’s in Crochu, Haiti, the parish has published the St. Alban’s—Here & There cookbook, which includes recipe contributions from parishes all over the United States dedicated to St. Alban. The cookbook contains more than 120 recipes, and 10 percent of the profits will benefit their companion parish in Haiti. For more information about purchasing the cookbook, please call the parish office at 205/822-2330 or look for it online at www.amazon.com.

By Meg Rankin, a Member of St. Paul’s in Greensboro

Sawyerville Day Camp 5K Run/Walk

By Meg Rankin, a Member of St. Paul’s in Greensboro

St. Paul’s in Greensboro hosted the 1st Annual Sawyerville Day Camp 5K Run/Walk on Saturday, October 1. Mayor J. B. Washington sent the 84 competitors, ranging in age from 9 to 77, on their way, and a Horseshoe Farm Fellow, riding a bamboo bicycle made in Greensboro’s local Bike Lab, led the participants. The route took runners by new Habitat for Humanity houses, historical homes and businesses, and the newly-established Pie Lab and Bike Lab. After crossing the finish line, the racers enjoyed refreshments in the garden at St. Paul’s. Those who placed received wooden crosses for their accomplishments.

The members of our parish give a huge THANK YOU to everyone who helped make this event possible. It raised close to $3,000 for next summer’s Sawyerville Day Camp! We hope that even people more will join us for the 2nd Annual 5K Run/Walk next fall!!

Mayor Washington at the beginning of the race; photo courtesy of Anne S. Bailey

A Horseshoe Farm Fellow, riding a bamboo bike, leading the participants on the race route; photo courtesy of Anne S. Bailey
Diocesan Convention
Parishes in Madison County will be hosting our 181st Annual Diocesan Convention on Febru-
ary 17-18, 2012 at the Von Braun Civic Center in
Huntsville. Bishop Sloan will preach at the opening
festival Eucharist and also give an address during the
convention. This year’s theme is “Celebrating Our New
Ministry.”
Convention begins with registration on February
17th at 8:30 am and concludes at 4 pm on February 18th.
 Lodging is available at the Embassy Suites in Huntsville
and the Marriott Springhill Suites. Registration and
nomination forms will be sent to all delegates on file on
December 13. For more information please contact Sarah
Sartain, Convention Coordinator, at ssartain@dioala.org
or 205/715-2060 ext. 314.

2012 OUTREACH SUMMIT
January 28 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham
Sr. Elena Elena Mayaquin, of the Episcopal Diocese of Honduras,
will be the keynote speaker for this year’s Outreach Summit. Particip-
ants will be able to choose from a wide variety of workshops designed to give practical tips on implementing and sustaining outreach efforts. The workshops include Disaster Preparedness and Response, Community Transformation through Outreach, Hispanic Mission Outreach, Global Short-Term Mission, Youth Domestic Mission, Kanos Prison Ministry, Spirituality and Outreach, and Public Policy Addressing the Needs of the Poor. For more information please contact the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, chair of our diocesan Department of Mission and Outreach, at jjquick@bellsouth.net or 205/669-6862.

ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK “TORNADO RECOVERY AND REBUILDING” BLITZ
March 11-13
We encourage everyone to participate in our diocesan-wide Alternative Spring Break “Tornado Recovery and Rebuilding” Blitz from March 11 through 31. College and high-school students along with families and adult teams will wield hammers and paint brushes, plant trees and help with landscaping, and feed volunteers. For more information, please contact the Rev. Deacon David Whetstone at whetstone@cableone.net.

2012 PARISH LEADERSHIP TRAINING EVENT (PLTE)
March 24 from 9 a.m to 3:30 p.m. at St. Luke’s in
Birmingham
The Parish Leadership Training Event (PLTE) pro-
vides a variety of workshops designed to nourish and
challenge clergy and laypersons in their parish leadership
role. Please save the date for this year’s event—additional
details are coming soon. For more information please
contact Sarah Sartain at ssartain@dioala.org or 205/715-
2060 ext. 314.

Disaster Preparedness and Response
By the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, Our Diocesan Coordinator

Episcopal Relief and Development has been an
essential partner for our diocese in responding to the
April 27th tornadoes by immediately sending emergency
funds to help communities provide food and shelter
to those suffering trauma from the tornadoes. A major
grant from Episcopal Relief and Development for case
managers, construction managers, and building materials,
which was added to our Diocesan Tornado Relief Fund,
is helping families recover and rebuild their homes and
their lives. Your generous contributions to Episcopal
Relief and Development are coming home!

Support from Episcopal Relief & Development is
possible because of its US Disaster Program, which grew
out of the Hurricane Katrina experience. On April 28th,
the day after the 62 tornadoes struck Alabama, almost
simultaneously our diocese contacted Program Manager
Katie Mears and Katie contacted the Rev. Deacon Dave
Drachlis, our diocese disaster coordinator. Dave and
Katie had worked together in providing disaster relief
after Hurricane Katrina.

Episcopal Relief and Development begins their work
after the first responders have completed their rescue
operations. Relief yields to short-term response and then
term-long response. When Katie visited Alabama about a
month after the tornadoes struck, she observed, listened,
and offered guidance. She was very impressed with the
local parish responses and encouraged the many and
varied efforts to meet the needs of those suffering in each
community. This is the same model that Episcopal Relief
and Development follows for its work in more than 40
countries to help alleviate global poverty.

Our 2012 Outreach Summit on January 28 at St.
Stephen’s in Birmingham will include a workshop on
Disaster Preparedness and Response. For more information
on the work of Episcopal Relief and Development, please
contact me at jjquick@bellsouth.net or 205/669-6862.

Online Encyclopedia of Alabama Includes
Article by the
Rev. Dr. J. Barry Vaughn

The online Encyclopedia of Alabama, an online re-
source that includes information about Alabama history,
culture, geography, and natural environment, recently
published a brief history of the Episcopal Church in
Alabama written by the Rev. Dr. J. Barry Vaughn, rector
of St. Alban’s in Birmingham. To read Father Vaughn’s
article, please log on to http://www.encyclopediacrofala-
bama.org/article/article.jsp?id=h-3143.

Clergy News

The Rev. Roger Allen has accepted a call to serve as
rector of St. James’ in Marietta, Georgia. He previously
served as rector of St. James’ in Alexander City.

Bishop Sloan’s
Visitation Schedule

December 18, Sunday
10 a.m. St. Mary’s, Jasper

December 24, Saturday
10:30 p.m. Advent, Birmingham

January 8, Sunday
10:30 a.m. Grace, Anniston

January 11, Wednesday
6 p.m. St. Peter’s, Talladega

January 15, Sunday
10:30 a.m. St. Thomas’, Huntsville

January 18, Wednesday
5:30 p.m. Grace, Sheffield

January 19, Thursday
6 p.m. Epiphany, Tallassee

January 22, Sunday
10:30 a.m. Epiphany, Guntersville

January 29, Sunday
11 a.m. EST St. Stephen’s, Smith Station
3 p.m. EST St. Matthew’s, Seale

February 1, Wednesday
6 p.m. St. Mark’s, Birmingham

February 5, Sunday
10:30 a.m. Trinity, Florence

February 8, Wednesday
6 p.m. St. Michael’s, Fayette

February 12, Sunday
10:30 a.m. St. Matthias’, Tuscaloosa
6 p.m. Canterbury Chapel, Tuscaloosa

February 19, Sunday
10:30 a.m. Good Shepherd, Decatur

February 22, Wednesday
6:30 p.m. St. Stephen’s, Eutaw

February 26, Sunday
10 a.m. Holy Comforter, Montgomery
4:30 p.m. St. Paul’s, Cullman
What’s New/Noteeworthy at the Episcopal Book Store

Song of the Stars: A Christmas Story by Sally Lloyd-Jones

From the author of The Jesus Storybook Bible comes a Christmas book that explores the joy, excitement, and celebration of all creation at the coming of Jesus. That night, the whole universe is breathless with anticipation—a rumor drifts over the open fields, a song floats over the hills, and the faces of little flowers lift to the skies—it’s time! “It’s time!” the sheep tell their young, while angels sing the song to the shepherds. Together they join in nature’s great chorus of praise to the Newborn King. The long-awaited child has arrived! Tim Keller writes, “The Psalms tell us that the created order now declares the glory of God (Psalms 19 and 68). How fitting, then, to imagine the animals and stars sensing and rejoicing in the coming of Christ the first time. This is a lovely book!”

The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662 edited by Brian Cummings

The words of the Book of Common Prayer have permeated deep into the life and literature of the English-speaking world. For nearly 500 years and for countless people, it has provided a background for use in all of life’s moments, from a marriage or a funeral, or even at a burial. Yet this familiarity hides a violent and controversial history. When it was first published, the Book of Common Prayer provoked riots among Catholics, and 4,000 people died in Devon and Cornwall during a rebellion opposing it. During the civil wars of the 17th century, radical puritans banned the Book of Common Prayer because they believed it encouraged superstition and idolatry, and it caused riots across Scotland. Conversely, with the spread of the British Empire and the book’s translation into a host of global languages, churches in the United States and other countries adopted it as the basis for worship.

In this new book, Brian Cummings includes three editions of the Book of Common Prayer: the first edition of 1549, which brought the Reformation into people’s homes; the Elizabethan prayer book of 1559, which was familiar to Shakespeare and Milton; and the 1662 edition, which embodies the religious temper of the nation through the centuries to modern times. The introduction explains the historical significance of the Book of Common Prayer as well as the controversial process by which it was put together.

Investiture and Seating of the 11th Bishop of Alabama January 7, at 11 a.m., at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham

Dioecesan Ultreya January 27-29 at Camp McDowell

Dioecesan Convention February 17-18 in Huntsville

December 16 Midday Musical Menu “A Christmas Celebration” featuring the G. W. Carver Concert Choir at 12:30 p.m. at the Advent in Birmingham. For more information please contact Dr. Charles Kennedy at kennedy@stjohnsadvent.org or 205/443-8553.

January 6-8 Church Leadership Conference “Leading and Innovating a Mission-Shaped Church” at Kanuga in Hendersonville, North Carolina. For more information please visit www.kanuga.org or call 828/692-9136.

January 20 Midday Musical Menu featuring Cathedral Church of the Advent organist Dr. Charles Kennedy at 12:30 p.m. at the Advent in Birmingham. For more information please contact Dr. Charles Kennedy at kennedy@stjohnsadvent.org or 205/443-8553.

January 27-28 9th Annual Church Music Conference with featured artist organist Joby Bell at the University of Alabama School of Music in Tuscaloosa. For more information please visit http://music.ua.edu/departments/organ/ or contact Dr. Faythe Fress at 205/348-3329 or faytheffress@earthlink.net.

January 28 Outreach Summit at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham. For more information please see the description online.

Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me)—Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson

Why do people dodge responsibility when things fall apart? Why are public figures unable to own up when they make mistakes? Why do we have endless marital quarrels over who is right? Why can we see hypocrisy in others but not in ourselves? Are we all liars—or do we really believe the stories we tell? Backed by years of research and delivered in lively, energetic prose, Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me) offers a fascinating explanation of self-deception—how it works, the harm it can cause, and how we can overcome it.

Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God’s Will OR How To Make a Decision without Dreams, Visions, Fleeces, Impressions, Open Doors, Random Bible Verses, Casting Lots, Liver Shivers, Writing in the Sky, Etc. by Kevin DeYoung

Intentionally short and written with an edge, Kevin DeYoung names and frames the problem that so many people seem to have with using the knotted nets that they believe is “God’s will.” Easily read in one sitting or fruitfully read more slowly over time, this book will surely be helpful to many who are struggling with this issue.

Mark Your Calendar

Investiture and Seating of the 11th Bishop of Alabama January 7, at 11 a.m., at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham

Dioecesan Ultreya January 27-29 at Camp McDowell

Dioecesan Convention February 17-18 in Huntsville

February 17 Midday Musical Menu featuring Sacred Classics performed by Adrianne Price (soprano), Melanie Rodgers (violin and viola), and Derek Kluz (piano) at 12:30 p.m. at the Advent in Birmingham. For more information please contact Dr. Charles Kennedy at kennedy@stjohnsadvent.org or 205/443-8553.

February 17-18 Our 181st Annual Dioecesan Convention hosted by parishes in Madison County at the Von Braun Civic Center in Huntsville. For more information please see the description on page 22 or contact Sarah Sartain, Convention Coordinator, at ssartain@dioala.org or 205/715-2060 ext. 314.

March 11-13 Dioecesan-Wide Alternative Spring Break “Tornado Recovery and Rebuilding” Blitz. For more information please see the description on page 22 or contact the Rev. Deacon David Whetstone at whetstone@cableine.net.

March 23-25 4th Annual Sample the Arts at the Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell. For more information please contact Danielle Dunbar at folk@smallencollaborative.org or 205/387-1806.

March 24 2012 Parish Leadership Training Event (PLTE) at St. Luke’s in Birmingham. For more information please see the description on page 22 or contact Sarah Sartain at ssartain@dioala.org or 205/715-2060 ext. 314.

The bookstore is 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 the staff research and special order a particular book, please contact the Episcopal Book Store, 2015 Sixth Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203; 205/323-2959; episcopalbooks.com; or visit the bookstore online at www.episcopalbooks.com.

Give a Present of Life

Submitted by the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick

This year’s Episcopal Relief and Development’s Gifts for Life catalog features items for everyone on your shopping list—and it provides a way to maximize your gifts while giving your family members and friends something they will never forget. Log on to www.episcopalrelief.org/GiftsForLife to make your selections. Your generosity can provide individuals and entire communities with the essentials they need to pull themselves out of poverty. For more information on the work of Episcopal Relief and Development, please contact me at jquick@bellsouth.net or 205/669-6862.

Give Gifts for Life this Christmas!

This Christmas you can provide a gift of hope. Gifts for Life helps people affected by poverty in more than 100 countries. Give a gift of hope today! For more information please visit www.giftsforkids.org.
Give the Gift of Hope with Sawyerville Christmas Cards

By Leslie Manning

“Love came to Sawyerville, and it was good!” —One of the Lower Camp participants, Summer 2010

Sawyerville Day Camp is again offering very special Christmas cards to help raise awareness of the summer camp opportunity and funds to support the campers and staff. Holly Ellis and Madeline Mullins, of the Nativity in Huntsville, took some of the artwork created by younger campers last summer and made two inspiring greeting cards.

For each $10 gift to the Sawyerville Day Camp, we will send a 2011 Christmas card to the person(s) of your choosing. We will let the recipient know that you have made a gift in their honor to Sawyerville Day Camp. If you prefer, we can mail you the cards, and you can fill them out and send them to friends and family.

Our diocese sponsors the two-week-long Christian Sawyerville Day Camp in Hale County. The campers attend the camp sessions at no cost, and there is no fee for the members of the volunteer staff, which is made up of high-school and college students and adults from all over our diocese and Hale County.

This past summer we served 447 campers and had our largest volunteer staff yet! The support of our diocese has helped Sawyerville Day Camp continue to grow and serve more of the children of Hale County. Our goals are to serve our Church through outreach, to improve race relations in Alabama, and to broaden horizons of both the campers and the staff.

Thank you again for supporting Sawyerville Day Camp, and blessings to you this Advent and Christmas!

To order Sawyerville Christmas cards online, please visit www.sawyervilleworkproject.org and click on the Christmas Effort link. For more information contact Leslie Manning at lmanning@dioala.org.