Celebrating Parish Ministries
Our 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention
The Rt. Rev. Lloyd Allen, Bishop of Honduras, who stood here and you can respect me as a servant of God."

He explained that the Diocese of Honduras, part of Province IX of the Episcopal Church, has been dependent on outside funding for all of its 150 years. “Dependency is unhealthy, it is pathological, it is dehumanizing,” he noted. The diocese was dependent on others for 98 percent of its budget when he became bishop 12 years ago; now it is 48 percent self-sufficient and has a plan to be fully self-supporting. Bishop Allen issued an invitation for us to visit the Diocese of Honduras, but he added a condition: “Do not come with what I call the Santa Claus Syndrome. Those days are over,” he declared. “Teach us to fish—do not give us a fish.”

The convention officially welcomed one new ministry, Canterbury of Huntsville, a ministry to college students and young adults in the Huntsville area that began last summer. The ministry hosts meetings in coffee shops, restaurants, and churches in Madison County.

The convention delegates passed balanced 2013 budgets for our diocese and Camp McDowell. By a narrow margin, the convention delegates also approved a resolution encouraging elected officials to address laws related to reducing the prevalence of gun violence; the resolution also called on governments to address “the mental health crisis in this state and nation.”

Responding to Bishop Sloan’s address and in keeping with the theme of “invitation,” the convention delegates passed a resolution to “invite all to a reasonable, authentic faith; beautiful, meaningful worship; and genuine, loving community that offers an environment in which we can explore the Christian faith honestly and openly.” The delegates also pledged to support “planting” a place of hospitality and inclusion called Bethany Village. In addition, the delegates called on Bishop Sloan “to initiate a process to grow out of our dependency on others to what this dream may bring us as we work together to explore the Christian faith honestly and openly.” The delegates also pledged to support “planting” a place of hospitality and inclusion called Bethany Village. In addition, the delegates called on Bishop Sloan “to initiate a process to grow out of our dependency on others to what this dream may bring us as we work together to explore the Christian faith honestly and openly.”
Bishop Sloan’s Address to Our Diocesan Convention, February 22, 2013

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

It’s good to see all of you out there, good to see this part of God’s one holy catholic and apostolic Church gathered as a family and ready for business. Now that I’ve been a bishop for a few years and have become familiar with the larger Church, I can say with confidence that we don’t know how lucky we are to be part of such a wonderful endeavor, to be part of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. I am reminded how lucky I am when I hear my purple colleagues talk about their challenges and difficulties, and I am grateful to our Lord and to the people of God in Episcopal parishes across our diocese for trusting me to be your bishop. We have challenges and difficulties, too—but we also have so many blessings and so many wonderful people to work with, and I am grateful for all of you. I really do believe the best days for the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Alabama are ahead of us, and it is an honor to serve as your bishop. No matter what you might hear our friend Mark Johnston say about his work, surely I have one of the best jobs in the Episcopal Church.

I am grateful to God for many gifts. I’m grateful to you and many others for the work you have done and the work that is yet before us. I especially want to thank the clergy, staff, and members of St. John’s in Montgomery for hosting our time together, and Georganne Perrine in our diocesan office for coordinating this convention. Sarah Sartain has been coordinating our convention beautifully for years, and this is Georganne’s first go-round. So if you see her, give her a pat on the back. Sarah was very gracious to accept my appointment to be our Clergy Transitions Officer, and she is doing a great job through a busy stretch of a lot of coming and going, so I’d appreciate it if you could give her a hug as well.

I am grateful to my friend the Rt. Rev. Santosh M сторону, and I'm looking forward to a healthy time of service of our diocesan family. Santosh has already filled several

I am grateful to an outstanding group of priests and deacons who serve our parishes and who make the life and ministry of our diocese meaningful and faithful and fun. And I am grateful to their spouses, whose generosity and understanding make it possible for our clergy to serve our Lord and God’s people. I will never be able to say enough to you or to her how very grateful I am to my wonderful wife, Tina, but I’ll keep trying.

We are honored to have the Rt. Rev. Lloyd Allen, Bishop of Honduras, joining us for this convention. He will speak to us tomorrow morning. He is here to be part of St. John’s Lenten program next week. Lloyd, thank you for being here with us.

We’ll have a variety of reports, spoken and on video—reports on Sawyerville, youth ministry, college work, Special Session, and Camp McDowell among them. So our young people and some of the ways they are involved in our diocese and in our parishes will be well represented. I also want you to hear it from me that the young people of this diocese are a huge part of what makes us special. I’m grateful to our young folks and for the not-so-young folks who work with them.

The theme of our diocesan conventions for the next three years is “Invite, Inspire, Transform.” This year we’re especially going to focus on the idea of inviting. You’ll be shocked to hear that I have a story to tell about that—or maybe you won’t.

A long time ago in a diocese not far away, a boy was learning how to be himself. In 1971, I was 15 years old—tall, thin, awkward, goofy, and shy—as you can see I’ve worked hard to overcome being thin. My friend Clif had signed up to be a counselor at the diocesan summer camp, Camp Bratton-Green, and he wanted me to come, too. But being awkward, goofy, and shy, I was reluctant. He told me there would be lots of singing, but I said no, no. He told me we would play softball, but I said no. He told me there would be pretty girls there, but I said no, no, no! He said if I went to camp for a week I wouldn’t have to cut the grass, and that, I thought, was a compelling argument. It’s funny the things that will change your life.

So I signed up to be a counselor for a session of third and fourth graders and was surprised to be accepted. I was also surprised to learn that my friend Clif had been assigned to an earlier session. When he came back from camp, two weeks before my session was to begin, he told me about all the fun I was going to have. He talked about skits and songs and an imaginative energetic program. And he told me about the Permanent Staff, a group of college kids who were hired to serve all summer. Clif said they were the Coolest of the Cool, that I would really like them. But I knew—being awkward, goofy, and shy—it would be safer for me to hang out with the third and fourth graders.

The day the training session was to begin my dad drove me to camp. It turned out we arrived a couple of hours early. Dad needed to leave but offered to stay, but that was way too gooby for me, so he let me out at the administration building, which turned out to be one of the only air-conditioned buildings at camp. I waved to my dad to let him know I was okay, opened the door, and went in.
I said, “Yeah.” (I get that a lot, actually.)

He asked me if I knew how to play spades. Well of course I knew how to play spades—everybody knew how to play spades, but the other three at the table groaned. You can play spades with five players, but it’s not nearly as much fun as playing with four so you can play with a partner and keep score. So I said, “No.”

The other three relaxed, but that one guy didn’t give up on me. He told me to have a seat and that they’d teach me how to play. He threw his cards in the middle of the table and took Shaggy’s cards out of his hand and threw them in, too. Charles Manson looked at me with his Charles Manson eyes and threw his cards in with complete resignation, and the girl In A Bad Mood continued in her motif and said “Aw, c’mon, Bill!”

Bill pulled up a fifth chair, sat me down, and taught me how to play a game I already knew how to play. By the time the rest of the staff arrived, I was comfortable there. More than that, for the first time in my life, I was cool—even if it was only Cool by Association. It’s funny the things that will change your life.

Later that evening, somebody told me Bill had lost a bet and shaved his head a few days before. He’d gotten a woman’s wig out of the costume closet to cover the sunburn. Two weeks later, I came back to be a counselor at my first Special Session, where I learned a lot about dignity and respect and about myself. Two years later, I had graduated from high school and was on the Permanent Staff. Remembering the gift Bill had given me, I tried to look out for the kids who were left out.

A long time ago, a boy found a place where he could start to learn how to be himself. And it started with an invitation.

I graduated from college, went to seminary, and eventually wound up serving as chaplain at Ole Miss. One day I went to some sort of program at the university and was delighted to see my old friend Bill Phillips. At the reception after the program, I told him how much it had meant to me that day back in 1971 when he invited me to play spades. I thanked him and told him that moment had really changed my life. He told me he was glad it worked out for me but that he had no memory of that at all. He remembered sharing his head but he didn’t remember inviting me to play spades.

It was hard to believe that such an important moment for me had made really no impression on him at all. I didn’t really understand it until a few months later. Miss Tina and I were having dinner in Oxford, and while I was standing at the salad bar, a pretty young woman came up and asked me if my name is Kee. I told her it is, and she proceeded to tell me a story of how, back in the summer of 1974, I had let her keep the cap that I always wore—she’d kept it all night long. She told me that for just a little while she was cool because I let her take my cap, and I was one of the Permanent Staff. She said it had meant the world to her when she was a chubby fourth grader. She asked me if I remembered her, and I had to stretch my memory a little to tell her that I did.

What a great gift it is to be invited, to be included; what a great privilege to be in a position to be able to invite and include others.

Sometimes the invitations come as part of a plan or program, but sometimes it’s much simpler than that—who would have ever thought that a game of spades could change somebody’s life? Or a tattered old railroad cap?

I’ve often wondered how different my life would have been if Bill Phillips hadn’t invited me to play spades. I wonder where I would have wound up if I hadn’t been invited to find myself there at camp, had not felt good about being part of that loving community, had never gone to Special Session. What if I’d never been invited?

We all have stories of being invited, of being asked to join, to come along. I expect you are in stories that other people tell, too, about how they were invited and included.

The theme of our convention for this year is Invite. We have so much to be excited about in our Church—reasonable authentic faith, beautiful meaningful worship, and genuine loving community that offers an environment in which we can explore the Christian faith honestly and openly—we have so much to invite our friends and neighbors into . . . and yet we find ourselves a little awkward about all that, a little goofy, a little shy. We are stewards of a great treasure that we know is meant to be shared, but . . . we don’t.

Episcopalians are awkward about inviting someone to come to church, just plan goofy about evangelism, and shy about being too pushy with our faith. I understand that. But I also understand what a great gift we have been given and what a privilege it is to invite someone to share the treasure our Lord has entrusted to us. So what if . . . what if every member of the Diocese of Alabama invited somebody to come to their parish for something? I’m not talking about knocking on doors and handing out pamphlets, although in the right circumstances that might not be such bad thing. I’m talking about how important an invitation can be, about being aware that the life of your congregation has something you can offer to someone you work with, or your neighbor, or somebody in your algebra class, or another parent on the soccer sidelines, something that they need. You could invite them to a Lenten supper, or a men’s group barbecue, or a middle-school lock-in, or maybe even—dare I say it—a Sunday morning service. Truthfully, I don’t know what might happen if everybody would invite somebody. But we can pretty nearly predict that nothing’s going to happen if we don’t.

A few years ago our suffragan bishop was elected to become the Bishop of California, and people started talking about who we could elect to take his place. Some of the members of the parish I was serving and some of the members of the clergy of our diocese asked me if I would let my name be put forward. But still awkward, goofy, and shy after all these years, I was reluctant. Then a woman in the Wednesday morning Bible study group didn’t give up on me. She asked me what I meant by taking a moment to keep myself from losing my own voice. I told her I didn’t want to presume, to reach beyond my station in the Church. She told me she thought I might be hiding my light under a bushel. I had to think about that, and eventually I decided I’d have to trust God with the whole election thing. It’s funny the things that will change your life.

We are always learning to be who we are. Sometimes we need to learn how to work around being awkward, goofy, and shy so that we can become who God made us to be. Sometimes we need to take our light from under the bushel and let it “shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

We are stewards of a great treasure that is meant to be shared, and we can not hide the Light we have been given. As we continue to learn who God has made us to be, we need to get past our awkward goofy shyness and invite people to come join us, to share the gifts of God with the people of God. Maybe I’m just dreaming with all this Everybody Invite Somebody idea—but where would we be without dreams?

Not quite so long ago, a young man was learning how to be a priest. One of the members of the congregation I served was Miss Clarice. She was in her eighties by the time I met her, but still she was there for every service, every Bible study, every time the church doors opened. She always wore a hat and always said the same thing after every service: “Enjoyed the preachin’, Father.”

She was a dear sweet lady who loved for me to come and visit. Every time I was there we had sherry. It might have been good sherry, but it was wasted on me—I
thought it tasted like cough syrup. But I sipped away at it every time because it meant a lot to her. She was the sweet woman who brought cheese straws to every reception, fried chicken to every potluck, a warm hug and a genuine smile to every gathering. It seems like every parish has someone like this—I hope you know who I’m talking about in your own congregation.

She was married to Mr. Louis, who’d started a small chain of gas stations and coin-operated Laundromats. He prided himself in being a good business man, tight with his money, sparing in his affections, always keeping his eye on the bottom line. He was on the vestry of the parish when I came there, mostly, he told me, so that he could have a say in how all the money his wife was giving to that parish was being spent. He was regular in his attendance, if you count coming every Christmas and Easter as regular—or the funerals he attended so that people in town wouldn’t talk. Every time I saw him at church, it looked like he was there against his will.

He was always unhappy, easily offended, and quick to hold a grudge. Everybody understood that you had to meet him on his terms or not at all—and I have to admit that not at all was how I preferred it. When I came to visit and to take my dose of sherry, he made it a point to be somewhere else, which was fine with me.

Everybody called her Miss Clarice because of the respect and affection we had for her, people called him Mr. Louis because he was married to Miss Clarice. We all thought Miss Clarice was fragile and assumed that she would die before her husband, who seemed as strong as a bull, if a little less cuddly. So it was a surprise when she called and told me he’d had a heart attack and asked if I would preach at his funeral. Well, of course, I was glad to, but I wondered what I’d say: ‘If you . . . what if we never find a way to overcome our awkward goopy shyness so that we can shine the Light? What if we never chase our dreams? What if we never invite, never include—what opportunities will never take shape, what seeds will never be planted, what lives will never be changed forever?’

There’s a great song you might know, the “Garden Song.” It was written in 1975 by David Mallett and has been recorded by many artists through the years, being slightly amended several times. The chorus in the version we usually use goes like this:

Inch by inch, row by row, gonna make this garden grow,
All it takes is a rake and a hoe and a piece of fertile ground.
Inch by inch, row by row, someone believe these seeds I sow.
Someone warm them from below ‘til the rain comes tumblin’ down.

In the original version, it was more of a prayer. Mallett wrote, “Please bless these seeds I sow, please bless them from below.” He went on to sing: “We are made of dreams and bones.” It’s a striking phrase, and I think it carries a lot of truth: to become who God made us to be, we have to have both dreams and bones.

We have dreams before us, dreams that will make us more able to invite people into the family of God. We have dreams of changing and expanding the way people explore and discern the call to ministry, lay and ordained. We have dreams of growing the incredible work that we have started with children in the Black Belt in the Sawyerville Day Camp. We have dreams of finding new ways of offering fresh expressions of worship, not to replace the old ways we know and love, but to add to them. These are dreams worth chasing, and there are other dreams, too—dreams we don’t yet know. Not every dream is something we ought to do, but we ought to encourage the dreamers among us to help us find new and engaging ways to invite people to come farther in, to come higher up, to be reconciled with God, and to be reconciled with God’s children.

A great dream that we are chasing as a diocese is an expansion of our work at Camp McDowell. I am proud and excited and a little bit scared to tell you that we are well on our way to making the dream of Bethany Village a reality. Most of you know that I have been privileged to work in summer camp sessions for people with mental and physical disabilities and that part of the beginnings of the dream of Bethany Village has its roots in that work. But there’s much more to it than that—it’s also more capacity to host groups and events from all over our diocese and beyond, an expansion of our nationally-known Environmental Education program, a more hospitable setting for the Alabama Folk School, and a training ground for living more responsibly in our fragile environment.

If I ever stop giving this address, the next thing on our agenda is a report from Camp McDowell and Bethany Village. I invite you to give it your attention and open your imagination to what this dream may bring us as we work together to invite more and more people to find out who God has made them to be.

At Camp McDowell and in parishes and ministries all across the Diocese of Alabama, we are blessed with a patch of fertile ground. I am grateful to all those who’ve gone before for all the work they’ve done to prepare it for us—inch by inch, row by row.

Dream with me, saints and sinners—let’s chase our dreams to find new ways to invite people into the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ, more ways to include those who need to be brought into our community of faith. Dream with me about ways we can shine the Light of Christ more brightly, more widely, trusting God to bless these seeds we sow.

Thanks be to God. Amen.
Bishop Marray’s Sermon at the Opening Festival Eucharist, February 22, 2013

Photos by the Rev. Dave Drachlis and David Robertson

“For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30).

The popular Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) program Antiques Roadshow once carried a show where an individual brought to the show’s appraiser a tingly woven large blanket exquisitely knit with all its awesome details. In the middle of this beautiful blanket was an obvious flaw, a kind of a blotch that seemed grossly misplaced and gave the impression that interwoven in this beauty is a deliberate effort to besmirch it in a way that seems to corrupt its image.

The appraiser began to explain, as seems to be the practice, the story behind this piece of art. It was a blanket from the Navajo tribe of the First Nations Native Americans that was used among other usages to carry water, and that the obvious flaw that seemed out of place was actually a deliberate part of the design. It was done to allow the spirit to “breathe” into the blanket, reflecting the belief that it is through brokenness and imperfection that the Spirit of God breathes divine presence influencing how we are shaped and formed as creatures of God.

In his response to God’s instruction in Genesis 31:3, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you,” Jacob now journeys home spending many years in Haran, marrying two wives and bearing 11 sons, and in the process acquiring much wealth, servants, and livestock. Jacob is returning to his father, Isaac, in Hebron. However, his greatest nemesis was yet to be faced, his brother, Esau. In collusion with his mother, Rebecca, Jacob was guilty of stealing Esau’s birthright. This feud seemed to rival that of the proverbial Hatfields and McCoys, which has become in the American folklore lexicon synonymous with the peril of family honor, justice, and vengeance. Jacob must engage his greatest fear, and we know this from all the logistical arrangements made for the people and creatures under his care, his family, servants, and livestock. This night he wrestles with his interior self in quest for an answer to his present predicament. In the process he encounters the figure of a man wrestling with him all night until daybreak. This isn’t an ordinary tussle; rather it’s one that prevailed to the point where there isn’t a victor. However, the visible sign of this holy encounter is made more profound in what remains in the aftermath of the struggle. A man is left with a visible limp, a new name (Jacob to Israel), what remains in the aftermath of the struggle. A man where there isn’t a victor. However, the visible nimbleness was yet to be faced, his brother, Esau. In collusion with his mother, Rebecca, Jacob was guilty of stealing Esau’s birthright. This feud seemed to rival that of the proverbial Hatfields and McCoys, which has become in the American folklore lexicon synonymous with the peril of family honor, justice, and vengeance. Jacob must engage his greatest fear, and we know this from all the logistical arrangements made for the people and creatures under his care, his family, servants, and livestock. This night he wrestles with his interior self in quest for an answer to his present predicament. In the process he encounters the figure of a man wrestling with him all night until daybreak. This isn’t an ordinary tussle; rather it’s one that prevailed to the point where there isn’t a victor. However, the visible sign of this holy encounter is made more profound in what remains in the aftermath of the struggle. A man is left with a visible limp, a new name (Jacob to Israel), what remains in the aftermath of the struggle. A man where there isn’t a victor. However, the visible nimbleness was yet to be faced, his brother, Esau. In collusion with his mother, Rebecca, Jacob was guilty of stealing Esau’s birthright. This feud seemed to rival that of the proverbial Hatfields and McCoys, which has become in the American folklore lexicon synonymous with the peril of family honor, justice, and vengeance. Jacob must engage his greatest fear, and we know this from all the logistical arrangements made for the people and creatures under his care, his family, servants, and livestock. This night he wrestles with his interior self in quest for an answer to his present predicament. In the process he encounters the figure of a man wrestling with him all night until daybreak. This isn’t an ordinary tussle; rather it’s one that prevailed to the point where there isn’t a victor. However, the visible sign of this holy encounter is made more profound in what remains in the aftermath of the struggle. A man is left with a visible limp, a new name (Jacob to Israel), what remains in the aftermath of the struggle. A man

Jacob’s limp is a “holy limp,” which is indicative of our own personal encounter with God and the aftermath of how transformed we may be as a result of this holy encounter. God speaks to his Church in various ways, some clear and coherent and easy to interpret, others hazier, inordinately challenging, less clear, and more difficult to follow, which may require a deeper level of spiritual engagement. However, one thing is for certain—God’s engagement with us is never meant for God to prevail but for God to stay in communion with us through the night of our travail. This is what St. John of the Cross calls the “dark night of the soul.” In that moment of inner struggle and confusion, pray with the Psalmist, “heaviness endures in the night, joy comes in the morning.” This is the blessing we are promised and do receive in the end.

Too often we are eager to succumb to the temptation of deferring the struggles of our life to Satan without giving much thought to the fact that just maybe God sending me down this road of unrelenting suffering is actually processing my formation, gently sifting the depth of my faith, gradually transforming me into the person he desires me to be. This is how the Apostle Peter describes the experience for early Christians: “In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus is revealed” (1 Peter 1:6).

The invitation to take up the cross is actually more a spiritual appropriation of the life Jesus has called us to join him in, as against a demonstration of our physical prowess to carry a large piece of timber. We can then see the face of God in each other as our journey intersects at the cross within the crucible of God’s grace, that defines our common journey both with those we love and those we have no clue exist, yet we are held together by Jesus’ love and grace. Lent is the penitential season that fleshes out this more intimately as we engage in personal introspection, self-critique, self-examination, and our annual spiritual checkup. To discover and/or rediscover moments of our own holy encounter with God and recognize the “holy limp” that defines our Christian pilgrimage as a badge of honor marking the fact that you have been with God and for that you’re never the same. In fact I’m tempted to say, “Don’t trust anyone who doesn’t walk with a limp.”

Diocesan convention this year calls us to Invite, Inspire, Transform, with particular emphasis this year, the first of the threefold theme vis-à-vis, “Invite.” The overwhelming question for us this morning and for this convention is, “Invite to what?” I want to believe we invite to join us in an extraordinary journey to experience God's faith in his beloved children and God’s hope for us in the midst of this sense of hopelessness that characterizes the lives of so many; to experience God’s promise to be with us, God’s love in the midst of a cruel and judgmental worldview.

Let this invitation be for this Church to help redefine the journeys of so many brothers and sisters who have been sidelined, shunted to the periphery of the society because of circumstances beyond their control including in some instances the color of their skin, ethnicity, nationality, social and economic standing, or intellectual acumen. Invite them to a Church that points to God’s grace freely offered to all without any reservation or works of human hand (Ephesians 2:8).

Good friends, I am so inclined to believe and so are many who have encountered God as Jacob did that we wish our churches to be havens of sacred space and hospitality for all God’s people, a reservoir for sinners, and a fountain of spiritual, moral, and emotional transformation. If that’s the Godly vocation of the Episcopal Church, then for many of us Episcopalians Christians there is still a lot more work to do to transform and/or reform the image of this Church in some crucial communities across our diocese. Granted, much of how the Church does mission is contextual, it just seems counterproductive to our ethos as the ecclesia, the holy community, hewed out of Christ’s cross and resurrection to exist in a community that is active around us and maintain a Church that is in hospice care. That can’t be the mission of God for my Church.

People are longing, itching to see the face of God so that they too can walk with the “holy limp.” We have the answer and, hence, that obligation to invite them to the banquet feast fully knowing that many may fall short of the enormous expectations we tend to place on them, such as, are they like us, do they dress like us, do they speak like us, and will they fit in with us. We ourselves may be required to make the necessary attitudinal adjustments as we issue the invitation. This convention
Our 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention theme calls us to the vision of an “Inviting Church,” and this is how the Lord of the Church speaks for the Church on this matter: “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors in case they may invite you in return and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:12).

I believe Jesus’ calling is for a Church that pays attention to the breakdown in human condition outside her doors and within her walls. And that while it is noble to feed them in the physical sense of the expression of our love, let it be more than a tick on our “to do” list. For it is even nobler to assimilate them into the community so that they can experience the “thin space” for themselves.

We have a marvelous tradition to share with the rest of the community. The magnificence of the Episcopal Church is that all are welcome. Welcome to a Church that lives in shared council at the highest level of decision-making. One that worships in beauty and splendor. One that is not afraid to live outside itself and tackle hard questions of faith and formation. As someone once observed, “Only this Church will raise hundreds of thousands of dollars and give it away in outreach in this diocese and beyond.”

A Church of broken crosses dashed on a piece of board held in the shape of a mosaic and reads “REJOICE.” One similar to that given as a gift by the Potter’s Guild of St. James’ Episcopal Church in Alexander City to their new rector. Each of us is the story of broken crosses, and our common experience is held together by the grace of God and the sacrifice of our Savior on the cross. When you have encountered this God whose Son came and died for our salvation you can never be the same, and people will notice the difference. Amen!!!
Our 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention

Photos by David Robertson

People Elected and Approved To Serve Our Diocese

The lay and clergy delegates elected the following people to serve our diocese.

**DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

*Northern District*
The Rev. Basye Holland-Shuey
Barbara Meyer

*Middle District*
The Rev. Andrew Pierson (2-year term)
The Rev. Geoff Evans (3-year term)
Phyllis Hall

*Southern District*
The Rev. Brandt Montgomery
Bill Garrett Jr.

**STANDING COMMITTEE**
The Rev. Evan Garner
Roger Holliday

**DISCIPLINARY BOARD**
The Rev. Deacon Kathi Jacob
Gary Weaver

**Nominations Ratified**

**DIOCESAN DEPARTMENT CHAIR**

*Department of Architecture*
Don Cosper

*Department of Camp McDowell*
The Rev. Stephen Hood

*Department of Christian Formation*
The Rev. Dr. Margaret Scalise

*Diocesan Ecumenical-Interfaith Commission*
The Rev. David Kendrick

*Department of Ministry and Higher Education*
The Rev. Michael Rich

*Department of Liturgy and Music*
The Rev. Charles Youngson

*Department of Mission & Outreach*
The Rev. Deacon Judy Quick

*Department of Parish Development and Evangelism*
The Rev. John Mark Ford

*Department of Recovery Ministries*
Kathryn Hollifield

*Department of Stewardship*
The Rev. Evan Garner

*Department of Youth Ministries*
Logan Oakes

**DIOCESAN COMMISSIONS AND AGENCIES**

*Commission on Hispanic Ministry*
The Rev. Judith Comer

*Race Relations Commission*
The Rev. Deacon Carolyn Foster
The Rev. Deacon Tom Osborne

*Cursillo Secretariat*
Keehn Berry

*Commission on Spirituality*
Lark Howell

*Companion Diocese Commission*
The Rev. Deacon C.J. Van Slyke

*Commission on Sawyerville*
Jamie Plott

*Task Force on the Stewardship of Creation*
Michael Churchman
NOMINATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Standing Resolution 9: Those nominations of diocesan officers and committees that are made by the Bishop and presented to the convention for confirmation shall be distributed in written form for consideration by the delegates. If any delegate desires that a separate vote be held on any nomination, he or she shall notify the Secretary of the Convention. All others shall be presented later in the convention for a single vote of confirmation.

Department of Finance
William Gamble, Esq., Chair
Robert Gamble
Glenda Barker
Carol Myers
Thomas Damman
Pat Connor
The Rev. Aaron Raulerson
Harry Hargrove
The Rev. John Mark Ford
Philip Passafiume
Will Ratliff III
The Rev. Maurice Goldsmith
The Rev. Derrick Hill
The Rev. John Coleman

Trustees of the Trust Funds
William Gamble, Esq., Chair
The Rev. Maurice Goldsmith
Carol Myers

Officers of the Diocese
Chancellor Maibeth Porter Esq.
Assistant Chancellor Meade Whitaker, Jr. Esq.
Assistant Chancellor Augusta Dowd, Esq.
Secretary The Rev. David Kendrick
Assistant Secretary The Rev. Rob Morpeth
Treasurer William Gamble, Esq.
Assistant Treasurer The Rev. Rob Morpeth

Trustee for the University of the South
The Rev. Dr. Lucius “Andy” Anderson

Commission on Ministry
The Rev. Russell Kendrick
The Rev. Dr. Catherine Collier
The Rev. Huey Gardner
The Rev. David Hall
Marc Smith
The Rev. Anna Brawley
Dr. Jon Blankenship
The Rev. Katie Nakamura-Rengers
Barbara Megiminnis
Virginia Hillhouse
The Rev. Deacon Mark LaGory
Mildred Wakefield

Resolutions Passed

#1. THE 2013 PROPOSED PROGRAM AND BUDGET

Please see the pie chart at right and the budget summary on our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org.

#2 THE PROPOSED CAMP MCDOWELL BUDGET

Please see the budget summary on our diocesan Web site.

#3 ENCOURAGING ACTION TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE

Be it resolved that we, the people of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, can no longer remain silent while children, teachers, and other citizens of our country are drastically affected by gun violence; and

Be it further resolved that we urge our elected officials to take seriously their charge to review and prayerfully consider all laws, including those concerning the regulation of firearms, to work to reduce the prevalence of gun violence, and to acknowledge that, absent a concerted and coordinated effort to address the mental health crisis in this state and nation, no gun control legislation can begin to reduce and eliminate acts of gun violence; and

Be it further resolved that the Diocese of Alabama encourages all faith communities and persons of goodwill to add their voices to ours so that we can turn the tide of violence in America.
#4 RECOGNIZING CANTERBURY OF HUNTSVILLE

Be it resolved that the 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of Alabama recognizes Canterbury of Huntsville as a Diocesan Campus: Diocesan Campus Ministry site according to the provisions of Canon 9, Section 7. Canterbury of Huntsville is a ministry to numerous institutions of higher education in Madison County and the Tennessee Valley; and

Be it further resolved that Canterbury of Huntsville be accorded one (1) voting delegate to diocesan convention, beginning with the 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention, according to the provisions of Canon 3, Section 2.

#5 SUPPORTING BISHOP SLOAN’S ADDRESS TO “INVITE, INSPIRE, TRANSFORM”

We, the tall, thin, awkward, goofy, and shy but now cool Episcopalians of our diocese, in gratitude to our bishop and his staff hereby resolve to invite all to a reasonable, authentic faith; beautiful, meaningful worship; and genuine, loving community that offers an environment in which we can explore the Christian faith honestly and openly. We pledge ourselves to flesh out the “dreams and bones” of this diocese in planting a place of hospitality and inclusion called Bethany Village on the patch of fertile soil at Camp McDowell and to further expand our invitation within all parishes. It’s funny the things that will change your life.

#6 CALLING FOR CONVERSATION

Under the theme of invitation, be it resolved that we call upon Bishop Sloan to initiate a process by which we may have an authentic conversation on the status of the blessing of same-gender unions and that a report be made to the 183rd Annual Diocesan Convention.

#7 EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO ST. JOHN’S IN MONTGOMERY

Whereas this convention recognizes that the fertile ground of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Montgomery has been a most gracious host for the 182nd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Alabama; and Whereas the St. John’s Angels be recognized for their compassionate hospitality and the use of their beautiful worship space; therefore

Be it resolved that we recognize the outward and visible signs of their direction and guidance, and that we will strive to model the example in our home parishes; and

Be it further resolved that the seeds sown here at St. John’s will bear fruit to be seen by future generations.

#8 INVITATION TO OUR 2014 ANNUAL DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Be it resolved that Bishop Sloan and the Diocese of Alabama invite all to come on February 21-22, 2014, to the Winfrey Hotel and be part of an awkward, goofy, shy community that will continue to be stewards of the great treasures God has planned for us and to share in the gifts of God with the people of God. Invite a friend, and bring a deck of cards—we just might play a game of spades.

#9 WELCOMING BISHOP SANTOSH MARRAY

By the grace of God we welcome the "cool" Bishop Santosh Marray and his wife, Lynn, to the Diocese of Alabama. He brings us his many gifts and will help the diocese grow from the bottom up. His presence is a blessing for the Diocese of Alabama. We are grateful to have Bishop Santosh and his wife as additional broken pieces in our diocesan mosaic.

#10 WELCOMING BISHOP LLOYD ALLEN

We welcome Bishop Lloyd Allen to our 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention. We thank him for his presence. May the seeds that he is planting inch by inch, row by row allow the Diocese of Honduras to grow to self-sufficiency by 2019.
Reflecting on the 2013 Diocesan Convention Youth Lock-in

By Ward Talafaro, Youth Department Birmingham District Representative

When we planned this lock-in, we set one goal: a gathering to promote a youth presence at diocesan convention. I remember walking into the Church of the Ascension in Montgomery on Friday, February 22, expecting just a few things, but what I got far surpassed any expectations.

About 30 participants (9th through 12th graders) from parishes all across our diocese and their youth leaders arrived eager to represent the youth at our 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention being held at nearby St. John’s. The group was focused, energetic, positive, and when necessary followed orders when presented with them.

The schedule for the lock-in was simple and relaxed, and with such a great group of participants and plenty of activities, the weekend flew by. And boy, when we went to St. John’s, did we make an entrance—one that will make diocesan convention history! When the time was just right, we surprised everyone with a flash mob to Jai Ho, and it was a huge hit with everyone! To see all this planning come together with such fluidity could not have been more perfect. Our plan succeeded, and we reached our goal—we created an incredible and powerful youth presence that will not soon be forgotten! This event was a rousing success—I could not have asked for anything to go better.

Planning the first-ever Diocesan Convention Lock-in was just as rewarding as it was legendary. Nothing could have made it better. It’s just another reminder of how much I am honored to play a role in our diocese.

“The 182nd Annual Diocesan Convention’s theme of “Invitation” was definitely present throughout the weekend. As a youth delegate to convention, I witnessed several moments of invitation and fellowship that so often characterize events in our diocese. Our diocesan staff welcomed our group of kooky teenagers, who were attending the first-ever Diocesan Convention Lock-in at the Ascension, with open arms as we brought our usual laughter and energy to St. John’s to increase the youth presence at convention. We are so grateful for their willingness to let us take the convention by surprise with our flash mob and even more grateful to our bishops and everyone else who so enthusiastically joined in. Seeing Bishops Sloan and Murray ‘get jiggly with it’ was absolutely priceless. We also offer many thanks to the folks at the Ascension for hosting us. We had a blast!” —Margaret Blackerby, Birmingham District Representative

“Just a few weeks ago, I had the great privilege of participating in diocesan convention as a representative of the Youth Department. Initially I was concerned that the adults would not be very receptive to my peers and my presence there because this was a time for grown-up decision-making and discussion. I was pleasantly surprised, however. Not only were the adults of our diocese extremely welcoming, but they were also very encouraging when it came time for Margaret and me to actively participate in things such as voting and resolution committees.

“It was such a rewarding experience to see where our Church is now as well as the plans for our future. Our diocese’s confidence in and concern for the youth have given me a great sense of empowerment and purpose. Although my time on the Youth Department is coming to a close, after attending diocesan convention I realize that the work never stops. Our diocese is as strong as its people, so may the work we’ve done continue to speak for us. God’s peace.” —Sarah Reeves, Southern District Representative

Wonderful Winter Weekend!

Winter Weekend for 7th and 8th graders at Camp McDowell on January 18-21 was wonderful! More than 60 youth from all over our diocese attended a fabulous three-night retreat. Lots of enthusiasm, music, laughter, and a special worship-filled program marked this annual event. Cold temperatures did not dampen the fun of the “Winter Wonderland Dance,” the talent show, or any other of the fun activities. Many thanks to a GREAT staff led by the Rev. David Dill, rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Decatur.

Upcoming Youth Mission and Outreach Opportunities

FOOTHILLS DAY CAMP
July 14-19
Foothills Day Camp, which takes place at Camp Lee in Anniston, is modeled after Sawyerville to provide a summer day camp opportunity for children age 6 to 10 who otherwise might not have the opportunity to go to camp and also to build bridges in the community. Each day offers a variety of “camp” activities along with a program, games, and crafts. Foothills Day Camp has staff openings for 25 youth and young adults age 15 and older and 10-12 counselor in training (CIT) openings for youth age 13 and 14. You can apply online at www.graceanniston.org. For more information, please contact the Rev. Lee Shafer, at gracerector@cableone.net or 256/236-4457, or Ellie Fisher, at jinellisfisher@att.net or 256/238-1122.

Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage and Youth Lock-in
August 9-10
The Ascension in Montgomery is hosting the annual Youth Lock-in to encourage youth to participate in the Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage in Hayneville. The pilgrimage is a powerful experience that allows us to connect intimately with the life and martyrdom of Jonathan Daniels, a civil rights activist and Episcopal seminarian. This year we will be incorporating a service project for the community of Hayneville into the lock-in activities. All junior and senior-high youth along with adult chaperones are invited to attend this special event. The cost is $40, and you can register online on our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org; the deadline to register is August 4. For more information, please contact Holly Bauer at hbauer@co.ascension.org or 334/263-9839.

Fathers and Sons Make Lots of Fun Memories

The annual Father/Son Retreat on March 1-3 was great fun! Fifty fathers, sons, grandparents, nephews, uncles, and special friends who are like fathers or sons sang, joked, laughed, and played together. They were having so much fun that they hardly even noticed the wintry weather. Snow flurries? No problem! As long as you don’t swim, you can still canoe! Bitter winds? No worries! We can have burgers in Eppes Hall just as well as on the ball field!

The weekend included a snake and bird presentation by Camp McDowell Senior Naturalist “Big Dave” Holloway, amazing storytelling by McDowell Environmental Instructor Zech Hook, music by uncle-nephew team Ben Radilehoover and Avery Arthur, and program leadership by Steve Mistrot of All Saints’ in Birmingham. The Rev. Aaron Raulerson, rector of Holy Cross in Trussville, served as chaplain for the weekend. Our volunteer staff included youth ministers Stratt Byars of St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands in Birmingham and Murray Stuart of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham, along with Lee Auman, who is returning for his second summer as a boy cabin counselor.

“I wanted to write and thank you for the AMAZING experience my son and I had this weekend,” wrote one dad. “This camping experience met my hopes and expectations and then some. My son is a very shy child around big groups (which he showed again this weekend), but he just was so excited about his new friends he made in the St. Matthew’s cabin. What I didn’t realize is that I also would make new friends. I also didn’t realize that not having outside distractions (phones, computers, etc.) made it so much easier to focus on my son and give him the attention he so desperately craves. I am amazed by your camp, and our family will work to become supporters of you and your facilities going forward. I have every intention of being at all possible events in the future.”

Mark your calendar to register next January for the 2014 Father/Son Weekend!
What’s Growing at Camp McDowell? QUALITY TIME!

By Susanna Whitsett, Summer Camp Coordinator

One of the defining characteristics of programs at Camp McDowell is relationship-based ministry. At Camp McDowell, we don’t bring out the “big guns” of activity—we don’t have jet skis, motorbikes, or big bouncy things in the pool. And no one seems to miss these because one of the key ingredients in “God’s backyard” is none other than the all-elusive QT—QUALITY TIME. The lack of computers, cell phones, and video games during our retreats and summer camp sessions gives room for some other things like conversation, listening, and hearing. In turn, these things give room for RELATIONSHIPS to GROW.

The many relationships that have grown/will grow and be lifted up this winter and spring include new and renewed friendships among middle-school youth and closer family ties between all combinations of fathers and sons and mothers and daughters. When summer camp comes around (and it is just around the corner), we again will see growth in the form of friendships, pastoral relationships, and peer ministry.

For more information about upcoming events, please visit www.campmcdowell.com, contact me at susanna@campmcdowell.com, or call 205/387-1806.

Summer Camp Is Filling Up—Sign Up Now!

By Susanna Whitsett, Summer Camp Coordinator

A new addition to the Summer Staff team is Chaplain Jonathan Chessney, a seminarian from the Ascension in Montgomery attending the General Seminary in New York City. The roles listed with each name above are the primary roles, however, during the summer any staff member may assist in another role if needed/appropriate. During the summer, it’s TEAMwork that makes the DREAMwork! Please keep all of these leaders in your prayers as they endeavor to live and work as examples of sacramental ministry in a summer of messy, magical, and meaningful ministry at Camp McDowell.

SEEKING PRAYER PARTNERS

We are seeking support for our staff members in the form of Prayer Partners. If you are interested in praying for and writing letters to a staff member, please contact me at susanna@campmcdowell.com or call Camp McDowell at 205/387-1806.

Growing Roots—Connecting Families to Nature

By Margaret Wade Johnston, Director of the McDowell Environmental Center

Have you ever longed for an opportunity to slow down and connect with nature? Even more importantly, have you wished you knew how to connect your own child with nature?

Today we hear so much about “Nature Deficient Disorder” in children, but in actuality, most of us are suffering from this in one way or another. We rarely take long walks in the woods or linger by a stream to watch for wildlife. Few people today are comfortable enough in the woods to even consider taking their own family on a nature adventure.

The McDowell Environmental Center (MEC) and the Alabama Folk School are offering the perfect solution to this conundrum—a Growing Roots: Connecting Families to Nature retreat on July 17-19. One parent or grandparent (or both), can bring the children for three days of exciting fun plus two nights’ lodging, all meals, and more outside adventure than you can imagine!

You will be bringing your child or grandchild on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure that will include hikes to magical sandstone canyons for geology lessons and fossil digs at the Minkin Paleozoic Trackway. You will combine nature and art through mosaics with nationally known artist Linda Munoz of Little River Art Studio. Wading, swimming, and tubing in beautiful Clear Creek will include lessons on the invertebrates and fish that live in our local Alabama waters. All of this adventure and learning is set against the backdrop of the beauty of Camp McDowell’s more than 1,100 acres of forests, sandstone canyons, streams, and waterfalls. And what an amazing way to share three days with your child! As we have heard children say after a trip to McDowell Environmental Center, “This place is better than Disney World!”

Log on to www.cmec.dioala.org to download a registration form. For more information, please e-mail me at maggie@campmcdowell.com or call 205/387-1806.

This retreat will be limited to 15 families, so don’t wait to register—the first Growing Roots retreat of the summer for educators filled in only a couple of weeks!
More than 200 people gathered at St. Luke’s in Birmingham on Friday, February 8, for a festive celebration of 20 years of Sawyerville Day Camp. It was an incredible evening of birthday cupcakes, delicious food from Little Donkey in Homewood, and music by the “bands” of Sawyerville. As D’Ann Somerall of St. Luke’s said, “It was so wonderful to see God’s work in action!”

The highlights of the evening were the tributes to the camp and its supporters delivered by Bishop Sloan, the Rev. Rob Morpeth, and Sawyerville Coordinator Leslie Manning. Rob told the crowd that the day before the camp was to start in 1993, flyers were distributed around town, and the next day 70 eager campers showed up. He added that those campers have been showing up ever since.

In perfect camp director fashion, Leslie began a rousing roundup and “thank you” for all the activities and people responsible for supporting the camp over the years. The crowd chanted, “It’s All for the Kids!” after each thank you. The enthusiasm in the room and love for this ministry was palpable.

Corey Jones, Worth Stuart, Michael Goldsmith, Danny Whitsett, Frank Kimbell, and Brian McCool played several music sets during the evening, while the crowd enjoyed placing bids on vacation homes, gift packages, artwork, a beautiful quilt made by Dottie Crawford from Sawyerville camp T-shirts, and of course, pie from Greensboro’s famous Pie Lab. Gift packages were also available for partygoers to make donations for snacks, swimming supplies, and speakers for future camp sessions. Throughout the evening, photos that spanned 20 years and “thank yous” to our supporters filled a giant screen. There was even a huge birthday card that will be sent to camp this summer as the celebration continues throughout the year.

The tremendously successful evening raised enough to fund the expansion of the camp to three weeks this coming summer. Debbie Tabb of Greensboro summed up the evening by saying, “I had a fantastic time . . . it’s all for kids! Decorations, food, everything was awesome, and so many people!”

Leslie emphasized that without our gracious sponsors and supporters throughout the years, Sawyerville Day Camp would not have been possible. “We appreciate our support teams throughout the diocese who realize every day that ‘It’s All for the Kids.’ We especially appreciate our corporate sponsors, Little Donkey Restaurant, International Wines and the Yeates family, Modus, LLC-Electronic Discovery/Litigation Support Services, Cate Shiloff of MindVolt, Miles Parsons, Vivian Jones, and Good People Brewing Company, plus the gracious clergy and staff of St. Luke’s for hosting the event.”

The 20th Birthday Celebration Committee included Carole Kelly, Memily Colvin, Kathryn Kendrick, Emily Thornton, Lindsay Joe, Corey Jones, Leslie Manning, Parker Garrett, Katherine Cole, D’Ann Somerall, Lisa Lee Tweedy, Jessica Harris, Alison Bruhn, Jamie Alvey, Melissa Mistrot, Evelyn Pritchard, Patty Ringland, Melissa Strange, Sara Nall, Linda Kennedy, Jenny Phillips, and Crystal Jones.

Thanks again to the people and parishes of our diocese and the hospitality of Hale County for getting us to 20 years! For more about the Sawyerville Day Camp Project, please visit www.sawyervilleworkproject.org.

How Can You Help Sawyerville Day Camp in 2013?

June 21-29, July 5-13, and July 19-27

Donate Money
Help us raise the $100,000 needed annually to sponsor this free camp and youth event! Send a check written to and attention Sawyerville Day Camp, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203; or donate online at www.sawyervilleworkproject.org (click on the “DONATE” link at the top left of the home page).

Meals/Food
If you’d like to bring a meal for the staff, sponsor a meal, volunteer during the week in the kitchen, or for more information, please contact Meals Coordinator Evelyn Pritchard at esp0921@aol.com.

Supplies
Memily Colvin coordinates gathering all donated supplies (books, snacks, bathing suits, towels, goggles, drinks, etc.)—it’s a huge job! To help with donation, request to do a supply drive, or for more information, please e-mail sawyervillesupplies@gmail.com.

Prayer Partners
For more information about being a prayer partner, please contact Coordinator Linda Kennedy at lindakennedy17@gmail.com.

For additional information or ideas, please visit www.sawyervilleworkproject.org.
This is my favorite time of the year—not just because spring is upon us, but also because it is the time of year that the ECWs of our diocesan convocations hold their spring meetings. I just love the opportunity to get out and about in our diocese and meet all you wonderful Episcopal Church Women.

This year began for me with an invitation to address our diocesan convention. For this convention, all of the presentations were prerecorded, which meant I had to learn another skill, “The art of voice over PowerPoint.” With the help of a techno-savvy friend from St. Stephen’s, I was able to tell the convention delegates all about the great work of the ECW, even though I was out of town on a business trip with my husband.

I am constantly amazed by the many varied ways that the women of our diocese raise money for outreach and inreach projects. Here are just a few—making cheese balls, selling soup, hosting bazaars, making crosses, serving tea, making Moses Baskets, packaging boxes for soldiers in Afghanistan, collecting blankets, handing out beans and rice, as well as baking and cooking and serving—and this is just the tip of the iceberg. I am very proud to be associated with this talented group of women.

Your hardworking ECW Diocesan Board met in January to make plans for this year, and we will meet again in April. We are all excited about the Fall Conference, which will be held in Demopolis this year. Mark your calendar for October 10-11, and plan to join us there, where we will be thoroughly entertained by our speaker Dolores Hydock. Dolores is a local storyteller, and I know she will make us laugh and cry and leave us with many happy memories.

Spring is also the time that we start looking for new officers for the convocations. If you would like to get involved a little more, there is plenty of work to be done. Contact your convocation coordinator, and let her know you are interested. You can find her contact information on our Web site, www.alabamacew.org.

April 30 is the deadline for submitting applications for ECW Scholarships. Applications can be found on our Web site, www.alabamacew.org. We are blessed in this diocese to have many, many talented, dedicated young people who serve God in so many ways. We wish we had more money to hand out because every applicant is so well qualified.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if there is anything I can do for you. I wish you all a very happy Easter season!
United Thank Offering Grant Update

By Chair Linda Kennedy

On February 28, our diocese submitted a grant application to fund the first cabin for Bethany Village at Camp McDowell. The grant application will be reviewed by the National United Thank Offering (UTO) Board this spring with notification to recipients in June. Our diocese had several strong grant applications this year. We reviewed them using the criteria that the project was to respond to human need by loving service and to seek to transform unjust structures of society. The ECW UTO committee reviewed the applications first, and they submitted their recommendation to Bishop Sloan for his review.

Members of the committee represent each of our diocese’s convocations. The committee includes Sharon Likos of the Birmingham Convocation, Maggie Noland of the Black Belt Convocation, Rita Barham of the Cheaha Convocation, Andrea Peacock of the East Alabama Convocation, Margie Sellars of the Montgomery Convocation, Angela Anderson of the Mountain Convocation, and Jeanne Burch of the Tennessee Valley Convocation. Grants are awarded each year across the United States and the world. Support for the grants comes from the biannual UTO Ingatherings at local parishes across our nation.

Reaching Out of Our Comfort Zone

By the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, Department Chair

“Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget; the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” (Book of Common Prayer, page 826)

Bishop Sloan set the stage perfectly as he led us in this prayer at the beginning of the 2013 Outreach Gathering on February 9 at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham. The participants came to learn about our diocesan domestic missions and our diocesan and parish global missions as well as concrete and practical ways to engage in these and other ministries. The workshop leaders emphasized that servant ministry calls us to get out of our comfort zone.

Leslie Manning and her Sawyerville team described the 20-year Sawyerville Work Project ministry (www.sawyervilleworkproject.org), which began as a dream to provide a summer camp for disadvantaged children in the Black Belt and has become a signature diocesan youth ministry that now hosts three summer sessions serving 600 children. Youth counselors Betsy Cobb and Lydia Allison noted that “kids are just kids,” they are pale, and they steal their heart. Staffers are needed for each session this year (June 21-29, July 5-13, and July 19-27). People can also help by providing or collecting bathing suits, swim goggles, pool towels, books, and 975 Cheese It Bags! The staff appreciates donated meals as well as prayer partners.

Gail Perna shared the “radical inclusion” of Camp McDowell’s Special Session (www.campmcdowell.com), which Bishop Sloan started when he was rector of St. Thomas’ in Huntsville. Special Session provides a welcome time for people with physical and mental challenges to enjoy fun and friendship at Camp McDowell. Special Session counselors Jordan Oakes and Hannah Kendrick, of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham, talked about their experiences in meeting all of a camper’s physical and emotional needs and respecting the dignity of the camper at all times—and how they were transformed by serving the profound needs of the camper. Gail offered many ways for individuals and parishes to help including being a counselor; sponsoring a camper or a counselor; sponsoring a Pasture Party; helping with the dance setup, talent show, or ice-cream social; visiting with the campers and counselors; and volunteering with arts and crafts projects, sports, horseback riding, and swimming.

Becky Rothrock gave a presentation about ESVO Ministries (esvoministries.com) established by the Deibert family in Nicaragua, one of the global missions supported by the Advent in Birmingham. The ministries include a blacksmithing vocational school and Nueva Imagen, a program to help women transition from prostitution into a new life in Christ.

The Rev. Deacon C. J. Van Slyke, chair of our Companion Diocesan Relationship with Haiti, updated us on our work in Haiti and encouraged participation in short-term missions. She also suggested other ways to participate in this diocesan-wide ministry including collecting school supplies, children’s and prenatal vitamins, and reading glasses; assembling birthing packs; and providing seeds for gardens.

Bishop Sloan told us about the ongoing medical mission work of St. Thomas’ in Huntsville with the Diocese of Honduras, where the Sloan Clinic now serves the community of San Pedro Sula. I invited participants to join the newly formed Global Mission Roundtable, where people can learn from each other’s experiences and encourage wider participation in global mission. The Lunch and Learn Sessions focused on Beans and Rice Ministries, Stop Hunger Now, Footsteps Day Camp, and Mission/Outreach Fundraising.

The Episcopal Book Store offered a wide selection of items, and the Rev. Doug Carpenter signed copies of A Powerful Blessing, his biography of his father, Bishop Charles Colcock Jones Carpenter Sr., who served as the Sixth Bishop of Alabama, 1938-1968.

After the outreach gathering, one participant wrote that “Life Begins at the Edge of your Comfort Zone.” Let us stretch a bit, reach out of our comfort zone, and go into the world to love and serve the Lord!

May 1 Deadline for Mission and Outreach Grant Applications

By the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, Department Chair

The deadline to apply for the Department of Mission and Outreach’s Parish Based Outreach Grants is May 1. The purpose of these grants is to encourage parishes to start new or expand existing outreach ministries that will become self-sustainable within three years; they are for parish-based outreach only and cannot be used for pass-through monies to other agencies or groups that do not directly involve parishes or parishioners. The department hopes that these grants will enable parishes to engage in new and creative ways of being Christ’s presence in Alabama.

Individuals may apply for a Mission Grant for Individu- als, which are designed for people connected to our diocese who are directly involved in sharing God’s love with people in need both within and outside our diocese or the United States. These grants support short-term, one-year work. Applications may be submitted at any time, and applicants may reapply.

You can download an application form from our diocesan Web site, www.diocela.org (follow the link under Our Ministries/Mission & Outreach), or contact me at jjgquick@bellsouth.net or 205/669-6862. You can submit your application by e-mail with an e-mail authorization from your parish rector/priest-in-charge and vestry.

The Department of Mission and Outreach looks forward to receiving your application and supporting your new parish outreach or individual local, domestic, or global mission ministry.
Feed My Sheep
By Katie Dewees, Nursery Director at St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands in Birmingham

Catechists from several Episcopal and Catholic churches gathered in Birmingham on March 1-2 for Feed My Sheep, a Catechesis of the Good Shepherd regional gathering and retreat. St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands in Birmingham hosted Friday night’s dinner and presentation, and All Saints’ in Birmingham hosted Saturday’s events.

The weekend was an enriching time of collaboration and renewal. Mary Mirionne, Director of the National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and Anna Hurdle, National Formation Leader, gave presentations about the Catechesis, an approach to Christian Formation that is based on the educational principles of Maria Montessori. The Catechesis aims to foster each child’s unique relationship with God through a carefully prepared environment and adult catechists who have been trained to nurture the child’s natural sense of wonder. For more information, please visit www.cgsusa.org.

New Ministry Reaches Out to Deaf Nationwide
By Diocesan Staff

St. John’s Church for the Deaf in Birmingham is reaching out beyond its doors to minister to deaf congregations and individuals nationwide. The parish has started a new ministry that provides worship services live via the Internet to deaf congregations that do not have clergy fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), the third most common language in the United States after English and Spanish.

There are few clergy in the Episcopal Church who are fluent in American Sign Language, most are older, and many deaf parishes are losing their priests, according to the Rev. Marianne Stuart, St. John’s rector and president of the Episcopal Conference of the Deaf. Additionally there are presently only three or four seminarians with that skill who are planning to enter deaf ministry.

The idea to serve deaf congregations who don’t have signing clergy came from the Rt. Rev. Philip M. Duncan II, Bishop of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, who contacted Stuart after the priest at St. Mark’s Episcopal Deaf Church in Mobile died in 2011, limiting them to Morning Prayer. With help from a grant from the Episcopal Conference for the Deaf, St. John’s purchased the necessary equipment, and the ministry went on the air. Today the ministry serves St. Mark’s in Mobile, St. Ann’s in New York City, and St. Paul’s in West Hartford, Connecticut. These churches need little more than a decent laptop computer and a large-screen television or projector; an Internet connection delivers the live feed. Eucharistic ministers administer the consecrated elements, which are provided by nearby parishes. Each church is encouraged to have its own readers for the lessons and prayers of the people to help retain their own sense of community and involvement as much as possible.

Another ministry St. John’s in Birmingham offers consists of a weekly Gospel reading and sermon on DVD in both American Sign Language and English. The DVDs are sent to people who don’t have access to a church for the service, which are mailed nationwide to approximately three dozen churches and individuals, who receive them via the Internet. Eucharistic ministers administer the consecrated elements, which are provided by nearby parishes. Each church is encouraged to have its own readers for the lessons and prayers of the people to help retain their own sense of community and involvement as much as possible.

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Our Diocese Implements New Discernment Process
By Diocesan Staff

Our diocese is implementing a new process to assist individuals in discerning a call to a more developed lay ministry, the sacred order of deacons, or the holy order of priests. “The Department of Christian Formation provides support and tools to invite, inspire, and transform individuals and faith communities in their relationships with Christ and one another,” explains the Rev. Russell Kendrick, commission chair.

The new process is designed to:
* Better define the expectations for conversations between parish clergy and those seeking discernment;
* Enrich the experience of discernment at the diocesan level by including experience in a setting beyond an individual’s sponsoring church;
* Increase conversations and contact between the Commission of Ministry and those seeking a deeper understanding of their vocation in the church;
* And merge the previously independent processes of discernment for deacons and priests.

The new process is explained in the Diocese of Alabama Vocation Discernment for Ministry manual, which is available on our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org (click on the “Governance & Administration” link at the top of the page, and then click on the Governance and Diocesan Policy links).

Department of Christian Formation Develops Mission Statement
The members of the Department of Christian Formation adopted the following Mission Statement during a retreat at Camp McDowell in February: “The Department of Christian Formation provides support and tools to invite, inspire, and transform individuals and faith communities in their relationships with Christ and one another.” During the retreat, the members also made final edits on a new family ministry project, “Faith Formation in the Home,” and planned a workshop for PLTE to be held at St. Luke’s in Birmingham on April 20.

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Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!


The resurrection joy is the gift to the world of new life, life conquers death, and the love of God is freely gifted to us in a spirit of renewed hope and optimism. Easter comes after the 40-day Lenten observance and Holy Week, which mark a period of fasting, contrition, and penance; the witness to despair, injustice, abuse of power, travesty of justice, and the condemnation of an innocent man, God’s incarnate son Jesus Christ. The profound message to the world and its people is that out of darkness comes light and out of death emerges abundant life.

The message of Easter is that Jesus identifies with suffering of every kind and by embracing it is able to transform our life of poverty and pain into the triumph of glorious resurrection. Out of suffering emerge new hope, life, joy, and deeper levels of maturity. Easter calls for a change of heart, a turning to God that concomitantly demands a change in ways of thinking and behavior toward each other. Redemption is all about the birthing of transformation, reformation, and conversion; of learning to live in love even with those we vehemently disagree with in matters of life and faith. It is a call that is still being made to us even today.

We are also reminded that fear and uncertainty of death should not overwhelm us; Jesus wins the victory over the grave. Easter is a visible reminder that only God in Christ can truly fill. A happy and joyful Easter to all!

Clergy News


The Rev. Corky Carlisle began serving as full-time interim rector of Holy Trinity in Auburn on March 11.

The Rev. Rusty Goldsmith began serving as part-time interim rector at St. Andrew’s in Birmingham on March 1.

The Rev. Peter Horn began serving as interim rector of St. Alban’s in Birmingham on February 17.

The Rev. Dennis Nichols has accepted a call to serve as rector of the Holy Comforter in Gadsden on May 15.

The Rev. Paul Pradat began serving as interim rector of St. Thomas’ in Huntsville on March 10.

The Rev. Gates Shaw resigned as rector of Christ Church in Fairfield on February 17.

The Rev. Jonathan Waddell is serving as interim rector of St. Simon Peter’s in Pell City.

Upcoming Events, Workshops, and Retreats

Camp McDowell Alabama Folk School Workshop

Old Time Music & Crafts Week
October 31-November 3

Come join us for our annual 4-day Old-Time Week workshop! Our top-notch musical and artistic teachers include Suzy Thompson and Jimmy Triplett (fiddle), Bill Mansfield and Adam Hurt (banjo), Tim Avalon and Eric Thompson (mandolin), and Susie Coleman and Jim Holland (guitar). For more information please contact Director Sarah Mills Nee at 205/387-1806 or folkschool@campmcdowell.com, or visit www.afjfolkschool.com.

DOK Spring Assembly
May 4 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
at St. Simon Peter’s in Pell City
St. Peter’s Chapter of Talladega and St. Simon Peter’s Chapter of Pell City invite all Daughters of the King (DOK) to this year’s Spring Assembly. Please make reservations by e-mailing nancylyrue@gmail.com by April 25; for directions to St. Simon Peter’s, visit www.stsimonpeter.org. Please bring $10 for catered lunch. For more information, please call Ann Powell at 205/338-7727.

Bishops’ Visitation Schedule

April 28, Sunday
9 a.m. Bishop Sloan Christ Church, Albertville
9 and 11 a.m. Bishop Marray Christ Church, Tuscaloosa
5 p.m. Bishop Sloan St. Timothy’s, Athens

May 5, Sunday
9 and 11 a.m. Bishop Sloan Advent, Birmingham

May 12, Sunday
10 a.m. Bishop Sloan St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands, Birmingham
10:30 a.m. Bishop Marray St. John’s, Montgomery

May 15, Wednesday
5:30 p.m. Bishop Sloan Trinity, Demopolis

May 19, Sunday
10 a.m. Bishop Sloan Nativity, Huntsville
10:15 a.m. Bishop Sloan Ascension, Montgomery

May 26, Sunday
10:30 a.m. Bishop Sloan Holy Cross, Trussville
11 a.m. Bishop Marray St. Mark’s, Prattville

June 2, Sunday
10 a.m. Bishop Sloan St. James’, Alex City
10 a.m. Bishop Marray Resurrection, Gadsden

June 9, Sunday
10 a.m. Bishop Sloan St. Barnabas’, Hartselle

June 16, Sunday
10:30 a.m. Bishop Sloan St. John’s, Decatur
10:30 a.m. Bishop Marray St. James’, Livingston

June 23, Sunday
9 a.m. Bishop Marray Holy Cross, Unontown/ St. Michael’s, Fultondale
11 a.m. Bishop Sloan St. Mark’s, Boligee

June 30, Sunday
8:45 and 11 a.m. Bishop Marray All Saints’, Birmingham

Around Our Diocese
**What's New/Noteworthy at the Episcopal Book Store**

*By Cindy Funderburk, Manager*

**Galatians for You by Timothy Keller**

First in a new series of expository guides to the Bible, Timothy Keller's *Galatians for You* closely examines the text of Galatians in an expository, engaging, and applied way. Tim’s trademark gift of clear explanation and compelling insights make this a uniquely flexible resource for Bible teachers, devotional readers, and anyone with an interest in the book of Galatians.

**C.S. Lewis, a Life by Alister McGrath**

Fifty years after his death, C.S. Lewis continues to inspire and fascinate millions. In *C.S. Lewis, a Life*, Alister McGrath paints a definitive portrait of this towering intellectual figure, popular fiction author, and atheist-turned-Christian thinker. This extremely readable new biography is filled with information based on extensive scholarship. It not only devotes a significant amount of attention to the formation and character of C.S. Lewis, but it also offers incisive and balanced analyses of all his main literary works.

**Rise of the Time Lords: A Geek's Guide to Christianity by Michael Belote**

In each chapter of *Rise of the Time Lords*, Michael Belote shares a sci-fi story or scientific principle and uses them as analogies and illustrations to demonstrate the way Christians view the spiritual world and scriptural teachings. In these pages you will learn about the Trinity from a Pringles can, about sin from star formation, about the afterlife from R2-D2, about the duality of man from Schrodinger's cat, about grace from air conditioners, about judgmentalism from Einstein's relativity, and much more. This is the Gospel for geeks... the truth of Christianity expressed in a way that will excite and engage the kind of people who love Star Trek and Doctor Who.

**To Heaven and Back by Mary C. Neal, MD**

A kayaking accident during a trip to South America takes one woman to heaven, where she experiences God's peace, joy, and angels before she comes back to life again. This firsthand experience of heaven forever changed Mary Neal, who is an orthopaedic surgeon. It gave her newfound understanding of her purpose on earth, her awareness of God, and her closer relationship with Jesus. This book will reacquaint you with your personal faith and walk with God.

**J Is for Jesus: An Easter Alphabet and Activity Book by Debbie Trafton O'Neal, illustrated by Jan Bryan-Hunt**

This alphabetical rhyming journey brings the story of Holy Week and Easter to life. It suggests simple activities and craft ideas that will bring families together and help everyone see the story of Jesus’ love through new eyes.

**Dioscematic Convention**

February 21-22 in Birmingham

**General Convention**

June 25-July 3 in Salt Lake City

**Cursillo Weekends**

#188 June 6-9, #189 September 12-15, and #190 October 10-13

- **April 20** 8th Annual Episcopal Place Gumbo Gala from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Sloss Furnaces in Birmingham. For more information please visit www.gumbohola.com, or contact Kris Mueller, director of development of Episcopal Place, at kmueller@episcopalplace.org or 205/935-0085.
- **April 21** Evensong sung by the Cathedral Choir at 4 p.m. at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham. For more information please contact Music Associate Charles M. Kennedy at kmueller@episcopalplace.org or 205/226-3505.
- **April 27** 16th Annual Crawfish & Shrimp Boil from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Holy Apostles’ in Hoover (Birmingham). For more information please e-mail Bill Davis at billywaiz@q12.net, contact Holy Apostles’ (424 Emery Drive) at 205/988-8000, or visit http://holyapostles.diala.org.
- **May 3** Wine Tasting to benefit Foothills Day Camp hosted by Grace Church in Anniston from 6 to 8 p.m. at Tyson Fine Wines and Things. For more information, please contact the Rev. Lee Shuffler, Rector of Grace Church and founder of the day camp at gracechurch@sableone.net or 256/236-4457.
- **May 3-5** Small Parish Weekend at Camp McDowell. For more information please visit www.campmcdowell.com or call 205/387-1806.
- **May 4** Daughters of the King Spring Assembly from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Simon Peter’s in Pell City. For more information please see the description on page 18 or call Ann Powell at 205/338-7727.
- **May 18** Centering Prayer Workshop presented by Diana Tschache, coordinator for Contemplative Outreach in Alabama, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa. For more information or to register please contact Tyler Richards at 205/200-9533 or tkgod@gmail.com.
- **May 24-26** Yoga Journey of Body, Mind, and Spirit—Honoring God’s Holy Temple retreat at Camp McDowell. For more information please contact Andrea Peacock at andreapeacock@chance.net, visit www.campmcdowell.com, or call the Camp McDowell office at 205/387-1806.

**The Donkey’s Easter Tale by Adele Colvin, illustrated by Peyton Carmichael**

Stuck inside their small stable one rainy afternoon, two little donkeys listen to a story their grandfather tells them, a story that they will always carry in their hearts. Years ago, when the grandfather was still a young donkey, he was called to serve a man named Jesus. Carrying Jesus on his back into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the faithful donkey stays with the Lord throughout that first Easter week. He watches with fear and awe when Christ overturns the money tables in the Temple and feels blessed to see Jesus cure the sick and teach parables. At Jesus’ side throughout the Last Supper, the agony in the garden, and the betrayal and crucifixion, the donkey experiences Christ’s compasion for all creatures and discovers that God’s love is for everyone and always will be. After watching Jesus die and mourning his death, the donkey learns of Christ’s Resurrection and travels to Galilee to see Jesus once again, experiencing the joy all Christians share at every Easter celebration. Marvelously illustrated, this timeless, thoughtful, sensitive story teaches children of all ages the meaning of what it is to love and serve Jesus Christ.

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; 205/332-2595; cbainfo@episcobooks.com; or visit the bookstore online at www.episcobooks.com.
Come to St. Stephen's in Birmingham on Thursday evening, June 27, and enjoy some great music, delicious food and beverages, an entertaining renowned speaker, and fantastic opportunities to help provide scholarships for underprivileged students who otherwise could not attend our wonderful, wonderful Camp McDowell Environmental Center. You will have so much fun that we decided to call it a FUNdraiser!

Herb Trotman will kick up the band while we enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres. Dr. Jim McClintock, UAB's Endowed Professor of Polar and Marine Biology and author of Lost Antarctica—Adventures in a Disappearing Land, will share his incredible experiences. And you will have the opportunity to bid on amazing artworks by local artists as well as vacation cabin rentals and other items in the live and silent auctions.

McDowell Environmental Center (MEC), a residential program that has been a part of Camp McDowell's ministry for about 19 years, has grown to host 8,300 people a year, including children and teachers from more than 130 schools. The MEC's 20 or so professional naturalists teach science, social studies, and character education through experiential hands-on learning. We hike into St. Christopher's Canyon to study the geology of Alabama, and we seine for the tiny critters (invertebrates) that live under the detritus in the pond and Clear Creek.

What great joy it is to see children's eyes light up the first time they hold a tiny dragonfly nymph in their hands. How magical it is to watch them overcome their fears and cross the swinging bridge or develop their determination to set and achieve their goals on the Climbing Wall or Pamper Pole. What great delight we take in teaching them about the formation and uses of coal, helping them realize the importance of flipping off a light switch, and knowing that they are becoming better stewards of the Earth.

Our traditional Camp McDowell scholarship fund helps many children attend Summer Camp and Special Session, but we have a separate scholarship program for schools and individual students who need financial assistance—and this fund is running low. Due to a lack of money, many children miss out on the opportunity to attend the MEC program with the rest of the students in their schools. The cost of a three-day, two-night program is $135 per student; that small amount covers the cost of all instruction, lodging for two nights, seven meals in Eppes dining hall, two snacks per day, and all the fun a child or adult can stand!

Please make plans to come to this special FUNdraiser on June 27th not only to have fun but also to help to make the world a better place by making it possible for more schoolchildren to spend time God's Backyard at Camp McDowell Environmental Center!

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

By Margaret Wade Johnston, McDowell Environmental Center Director