Diocese Holds First Acolyte Festival
Thank You Norma

After more a decade-and-a-half as editor of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama’s newspaper, the March/April issue of The Alabama Episcopalian was Norma McKittrick’s last as its editor.

Norma was hired to the diocesan staff in 1997 by then Bishop Coadjutor Henry Parsley, and has faithfully chronicled the life and ministries of our diocese for more than 16 years — first as editor of The Apostle and more recently as editor of The Alabama Episcopalian.

She managed the transition from the monthly 8.5– by 11-inch, two color Apostle, to the full-color, tabloid-sized, bimonthly Episcopalian in 2009.

During her tenure, she collaborated with Bishop Parsley, Robert Miller, Onell Soto, Marc Andrus, Kee Sloan and Santosh Marray — and the other clergy, staff and people of the diocese — to tell the church’s story.

Prior to becoming the editor of The Apostle, Norma worked on the editorial staffs of Southern Living and Cooking Light magazines and as editor in chief of Cran Hill Publishers.

Of her time as a member of the diocesan staff, Norma said, “I appreciate the opportunity I have had to share my professional expertise in producing The Apostle and later The Alabama Episcopalian. Much more than putting together the pages of a newspaper, serving as the editor has been a personal ministry of gathering information and photos from people around our diocese and telling ‘our’ stories in creative ways. Many thanks to art directors Becky Denny, Scott Fuller, and Miles Parsons in collaborating with me in presenting the words and images in inviting, inspiring ways.”

She recalls the support of the Rev. Ken Fields, outgoing editor, who mentored her through her first issue as editor, which was published in January 1998. And she remembers working with the late Rev. Emmet Gribbin, also a former editor, who loved to take photos. “I always had a delightful time with him at diocesan conventions, ordinations, and other gatherings.”

“We are all so grateful for Norma’s skillful and patient offering of her gifts in the service of this part of God’s Church. She has helped us tell the story of God’s people in the Diocese of Alabama, and we are very grateful to her not just for the duration of her ministry but especially for the quality of it,” said Bishop Sloan.

The diocese is in the process of redesigning its communications program and staff. In the interim, the Rev. Deacon Dave Drachlis, diocesan communications coordinator, will gather articles for the Episcopalian, the website, and other diocesan media.
Hello, friends

Recently I heard a remarkable song on the radio by Lyle Lovett called “Church.” It’s about a preacher who wouldn’t stop preaching, so that the congregation became concerned they were going to miss lunch.

“Now church it started right on time, just like it does without a doubt. And everything was all just fine, except when it came time to let us out … And the preacher he kept preaching, he said now I’ll remind you if I may, you all better pay attention, or I might decide to preach all day.” So Lyle Lovett devised a plan and enlisted the aid of the choir, who joined him singing: “To the Lord let praises be, it’s time for dinner now let’s go eat. We’ve got some beans and some good cornbread, and I listened to what the preacher said. Now it’s to the Lord let praises be, it’s time for dinner, now let’s go eat.” Reminded by this that lunch is waiting, the preacher relents, and the song ends: “And the moral of this story, children, it is plain but true. God knows if a preacher preaches long enough, even he’ll get hungry, too.”

We’ve all kidded a preacher about the length of the sermons; we’ve all listened to sermons that seemed like they would never end – I might have preached one or two like that myself, when even I had to wonder if it would ever get where it was going. The length of a sermon is a reliable source of church humor, and God knows we need more humor in the Church. But seriously, have you ever noticed that we value sermons that way, so that ‘good’ sermons are short, and ‘long’ sermons are … well, ‘not so good’? Does it seem to you that a lot of us sort of roll our eyes when a hymn has too many verses? And a ‘good’ service gets us all out in an hour, so we can get to the (insert favored place to eat Sunday dinner) before the (insert another denomination.)

“Risen Indeed”

Holy Church really reduced our celebration of the love of God in Jesus Christ into something we have to endure, like filing our taxes, or a trip to the dentist?

In truth, I suspect that most of us don’t have this attitude, but we’re church people, or we wouldn’t be reading this column, or writing it. When you ask people who don’t go to church why they don’t, the answer is very often that it’s boring. The churches that are attracting large crowds seem to be relying on a mixture of message and entertainment, often a little heavy on the entertainment.

The story is told of an American tourist who was excited to be in one of the large cathedrals in England. She was marveling at the architecture, and the windows, and the beauty of it all, when she saw one of the sextons who’d come into the nave to do his job. She said, with great enthusiasm, “Do you work here?” He said, “Yes, mum.” She said, “Aren’t you just thrilled to come to work here every day?” He looked up and patiently replied, “One doesn’t thrill for thirty years, mum.”

Now we’re two thousand years into being God’s Church. Many of us go to church pretty regularly; some of us have for years and years. Of course we’re not in it for the thrills, but … I just have to think that if we really believe what we say we believe – that the Lord God of Creation consented to be born as a human at Bethlehem, so that those who believe can know the very nature of God, and recognize Christ in ourselves and in others; that Jesus the Messiah consented to be tortured and killed on Good Friday, and on the third day rise from death on Easter morning, that in His death and resurrection we are redeemed and adopted as Children of God; that the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is really about celebrating the love of God for us and for all of God’s children – if we really believe all that, we should be eager to come to church, not as a duty, and not for thrills or gimmicks, but to share and celebrate that the Lord is risen indeed.

I’m really not advocating for longer sermons (I’ve listened to my share, and I know it can be hard work to pay attention sometimes …). But I do want to say that if we think of our worship as drudgery, if we have to force our children and ourselves to go to church, we’re doing something terribly wrong. If we go to church expecting to be bored we will nearly always find what we’re looking for. And if we expect that the next generation will come to church out of obligation or duty, we are deciding that our churches will soon be museums, instead of communities of worship.

What the Church needs most is for us to believe what we say we believe: “Alleluia. Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.”

What will work in one place is not necessarily the best idea for another place, but all of us need to know that it’s no longer sufficient to do things the way we imagine they’ve always been done.

Without the Resurrection, we would be lost in our own sinfulness. But he is risen indeed, and we are offered forgiveness, and redemption, and grace, and hope even beyond death – Alleluia!

Now it’s our turn to tell our Lord’s story: the remarkable astounding story of God and humanity, the story of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension. Now we are the disciples called to share the love of God. How can we share that love in such a way that it is compelling and engaging, not with gimmicks or marketing ploys, but faithfully, joyfully, and honestly? How can we worship God, giving thanks for all that we are and all that we have, telling the astonishing story of God’s grace and mercy, and sharing in the communion with our Lord and our sisters and brothers in Christ, in such a way that it is something we ourselves look forward to? And how can we encourage those among us who are called and trained to preach the Good News so that we regret that the sermon or the service is about to end, like a child coming to the last bites of an ice cream cone?

This is our job in the next decade or two; friends: to find answers to these questions. This is our moment in the long parade of the story of God and humanity, when you and I are stewards of this part of God’s Church. What will work in one place is not necessarily the best idea for another place, but all of us need to know that it’s no longer sufficient to do things the way we imagine they’ve always been done. What we have to share with the world around us is good news, the best news anyone’s ever heard: today, here and now – the Lord is risen indeed! We need to truly and deeply believe what we say, so that everything we do, all our committees, all our budgets and agendas and conventions, all our worship has to be about this – the Lord is risen, indeed. Alleluia!
In this article, I wish to make a case for the reclamation of one of the fundamental mandates of Jesus to his Church: “to proclaim the good news of the kingdom”; the command to “go make disciples”. I wish to do so by advocating for the redemption of the word “evangelism” and reintroduce it into the fabric of the everyday vocabulary of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. Let’s face it, “evangelism” is simply what it is, “go tell others and do so by showing them how blessed you are through the gift of hearing, knowing, sharing and living your call to discipleship… “to go make disciples”. We frequently ascribe to its core principles every time we reaffirm our baptismal covenant, “Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ”. We cannot be the prophetic Church when we pay lip service or worse yet shy away from its fundamental place in the church’s Great Commission. So often time we are guilty of deferring it to other entities whose distortion and misrepresentation of its true essence has violated its fundamental sacredness and done violence to the virtue of our core vocation as disciples of Christ to, “Go into all the world”.

By evangelism, what does the Church mean? The definition that I prefer, which comes from the writings of St. Paul and the Gospel of John is this, “making others ambassadors and friends of Christ” (II Cor 5: 20; John 15: 14). Paul W. Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner have edited a book entitled “The Study of Evangelism”, a compilation of thoughts on the subject by several renowned theologians in the academy. In their analysis Chilcote and Warner write, “evangelism is a vital part of something larger than itself, namely, the, mission Dei (mission of God). While evangelism is but one part of God’s larger mission in the world, it is the essence – the heart – of all Christian mission. Evangelism is a process. Making a Christian is a process that takes place over a long period of time… Evangelism is a process more than it is an event.” (page xxvi)

This definition cuts through the theological jargon and clearly makes the point. As one engages in making others the friends of Christ, there is the presupposition that the one making others friends of Christ is already a friend of Christ. This friendship with Christ begins at baptism, when individuals, men, women and children, become members of Christ, children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Through baptism, individuals take their rightful place in the family of God. This underscores the point that evangelism is not merely a personal activity, but it is equally a corporate activity, where we accept the place that God has for each of us in his Body in the world, the Church.

At the center of the Church’s life, there is obedience to Christ, who is Lord of the Church. Evangelism is the Church’s obedient response to Christ who commands the apostles of every age, to go into the world and make all his disciples by preaching to them the Good News (Mat 28: 19). As the Church continues to live out this mandate it must remain faithful to the Great Commission from Jesus. We witness in the Acts of the Apostles the early church paradigm, a community of believers who formed themselves into the Church. Evangelism was important to the Church then because through evangelistic thrust, the Church demonstrated it cared for the totality of a person. This spirit characterized their concern for the spiritual and material development of their human beings and that the individual, as both body and soul, was important. There is another reason why evangelism is of great importance to the Church, and it is this; through our involvement in evangelism, as evangelists, we are constantly renewed, strengthened and better equipped for service through our involvement in evangelism, as evangelists, we are constantly renewed, strengthened and better equipped for more effective service.

Falling in love Again with Evangelism

In the spirit of Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism, one the commissions of the Anglican Communion, I remind us all, “the success of mission is determined not by measured results but by faithfulness to Christ, believing that in him God has won the victory and will overcome the world”. Let us resolve to fall in love again with Jesus and the Great Commission, let us renew our commitment to be the missional church, let’s reclaim the art of retaining baptized believers and making God seekers into disciples; and let’s reconnect the very fiber of our being to a healthier, viable and life giving community of faith trusting in him who calls us to, “Go make disciples”.

Worship and music demonstrate in a public way the uniquely solemn, attractive and meaningful liturgical witness. However, here are some general strategies from the clergy and leadership. A vital church isn’t necessarily defined by the size of its membership but the quality of its mission and ministry. Teach Christian stewardship as a lifestyle discipline rather than an activity for the solicitation of funds. Conversion of the heart translates to conversion of the “pocket”. Jesus teaches, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6: 21). Highlight all major events in the life of the congregation. The Church must also be seen as rooted and grounded in prayer and spiritually focused. Clergy and vestry must give leadership in making church the place where people want to be. Finally, work diligently to make church a safe space for all and boldly advertise and promote it as such, and of equal importance deal expeditiously with potential conflict before they get out of control. Please strive to be seen and known as a church that lives and breathes reconciliation because as Christians we live as reconciled reconcilers.

For ministry are an imperative that shouldn’t be overlooked. Provisions should be made to care for young families, child care, Christian Education for all ages, youth events, acolytes’ ministry and others as may be appropriate. Effective use of the various liturgical seasons allowing people to experience the rich variety of expressions available to the church will help. Also, it serves to make liturgy more attractive and can go a long way to counter comments about the monotony of our worship.

It is important to make church a place of welcome, this inviting atmosphere must begin with curb appeal, welcome signs, and user friendly website with all the relevant information for anyone seeking a church, even to the warmth coming from members. Visitors should be given as much guidance in navigating our worship books. A well trained Usher Ministry can make a difference in how friendly and welcoming your church is perceived. Strive to be a mission-shaped church invested in all possibilities that can diminish suffering through as many partnership/outreach activities.

When a church loses its mission it loses its soul and begins to disintegrate from within and the first to get crushed are the clergy and leadership. A vital church isn’t necessarily defined by the size of its membership but the quality of its mission and ministry. Teach Christian stewardship as a lifestyle discipline rather than an activity for the solicitation of funds. Conversion of the heart translates to conversion of the “pocket”. Jesus teaches, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6: 21). Highlight all major events in the life of the congregation. The Church must also be seen as rooted and grounded in prayer and spiritually focused. Clergy and vestry must give leadership in making church the place where people want to be. Finally, work diligently to make church a safe space for all and boldly advertise and promote it as such, and of equal importance deal expeditiously with potential conflict before they get out of control. Please strive to be seen and known as a church that lives and breathes reconciliation because as Christians we live as reconciled reconcilers.

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The Alabama Episcopalian • May/June 2014

From Bishop Marray
Gumbo Lovers Gather At Annual Episcopal Place Fundraiser

9th Annual Event Posts Record Number of Teams at One of Birmingham’s Favorite Outdoor Festivals

By Kris Mueller, Photos by Brit Hackabay

The 2014 Episcopal Gumbo Gala, one of Birmingham’s favorite outdoor festivals drew a record 41 cook teams and more than 2,000 gumbo lovers to the city’s Sloss Furnaces on April 26.

First Place Spirit Award winner “Holy Apostles With Fire” team members are (from left, rear row) Courtney Sargent, Lane Oden, David McElroy, James Holcombe, Michael Wooley, Susan Jackson, Justin Aldridge, (front row) Richard Eppes, Kenn Gaddis, Dave Moon and Bill Davis.

John Pelham of Pelham Financial Company and St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands continued to make his mark on the annual fundraiser for Episcopal Place. Chair of the event planning committee during a key period in its growth from 2010 to 2012, he captured this year’s prestigious Alabama Gulf Seafood Award. The award is given for the best gumbo using seafood sold by Alabama businesses and sourced from Gulf and local waters. Accepting the trophy with him were his teammates from Trinity Commons.

Another big winner at the 2014 Gumbo Gala was the team from All Saints’ Wednesday Morning Sinners/Robbie D. Wood Inc. Buddy Bland and Butch Williams captured the award for “Most Divine Gumbo” from among Episcopal organizations. Bishop Kee Sloan presented the award.

For the past two years, readers of AL.com and The Birmingham News have voted Gumbo Gala as one of Birmingham’s Best Outdoor Festivals. Area chefs and food professionals, including Alabama Governor’s Mansion professionals, including Alabama Governor’s Mansion, Bishop Kee Sloan presented the award. Bishop Kee Sloan presented the award.

Executive Chef Jim Smith and food experts from Southern Living served as judges for the awards. Birmingham band Rollin’ in the Hay provided high-octane groove grass music as event guests sampled gumbo.


Merrimon Epps of St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands chaired this year’s event planning committee, which included Dan Price, Libba Vaughan, Kathryn Dordon, Steve Mistrot, Terry Rogers and Brad Cain.

Proceeds from the event will be used to provide supportive services to the 148 low-income seniors and younger disabled adults who live in Episcopal Place’s affordable housing community. Supportive services like van transportation, subsidized meals and housekeeping, resident activities, and health and exercise programs help residents manage the challenges of growing older on limited incomes. For more information about Episcopal Place, visit www.episcopalplace.org.

Alabama Gulf Seafood Award winner “Pelham Financial/Trinity Commons” team members are (back row) Bartlee Liston, Emily Collette, Big John Pelham, Little John Pelham, Ian Briggs, Chris Coffee, (Front Row) Jasmine Rogers, Sarah Rogers, Kirby Pool, Nate Cocker, Lena Pelham, Sonya Smith and Stephanie Newwood.

Chef’s Choice Award for Chicken/Sausage Gumbo winner “Sausage Thyme” team members are (from left) Scott Tigg, Jamie Parris, Rusty Hughes, Andrew Benson, Steve Mistrot, and (not shown) Ben Ridelehoover.

More than 2,000 gumbo lovers to the city’s Sloss Furnaces for the 9th Annual Event Posts Record Number of Teams at One of Birmingham’s Favorite Outdoor Festivals.

“Most Divine Gumbo” Among Episcopal Organizations Award winner All Saints’ Wednesday Morning Sinners/Robbie D. Wood team members (from left) Buddy Bland, Butch Williams and Dr. Jim Remley, are pictured with the Gumbo Gala Mudbug mascot.

2014 WINNING COOK TEAMS

ALABAMA SEAFOOD MARKETING COMMISSION’S BEST ALABAMA GULF SEAFOOD AWARD

Pelham Financial/Nowlin/Trinity Commons

“MOST DIVINE GUMBO” AMONG EPISCOPAL ORGANIZATIONS

All Saints’ Wednesday Morning Sinners/Robbie D. Wood Inc.

BEST GUMBO COMPETITION: PROFESSIONAL DIVISION

Boateng’s Cajun Creations Restaurant

BEST GUMBO COMPETITION: BACKYARD DIVISION

First Place – First United Methodist Church Choir Croux
Second Place – Team Ennis
Third Place – St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church

CHEF’S CHOICE COMPETITION

Chicken/Sausage Gumbo – Sausage Thyme
Seafood Gumbo – Dixie Fish Company
Specialty Gumbo – 3 Huts and A Cot

PEOPLE’S CHOICE COMPETITION

First Place – St. Martin’s in the Pines RouxStirs
Second Place – Garage Café
Third Place – Church of the Ascension

SPIRIT COMPETITION

First Place – Holy Apostles With Fire
Second Place – St. Luke’s Episcopal Church NOLA Gumbo
Third Place – Church of the Ascension
First Diocesan Acolyte Festival is Grand Success

The inaugural diocesan Acolyte Festival was held on Saturday, April 26, at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham. More than 50 acolytes, and 15 adults who work with acolytes, participated in this daylong event that celebrated the ministry of acolytes and their leaders.

Acolytes were welcomed to the festival by the Right Rev. Santosh Marray, assistant bishop. Icebreaker games helped participants get to know each other. Children and youth participated in two workshops. “Holy Smokes”, led by youth acolytes from St. Michael’s Fayette, helped other acolytes learn how to use the thurible. “The Ministry of Acolyting”, led by the Rev. Alison Carmody, explored the ministry of acolytes and their role within the Eucharist Service. Meanwhile adults were invited to share their experiences including the joys and challenges of leading acolytes.

After a catered lunch sponsored by the host parish, Cathedral Church of the Advent, participants competed in the “Acolyte Olympics”, a series of games based on acolyte responsibilities in the service. This light-hearted exercise was a big hit and offered opportunities for acolytes from participating parishes to further bond.

The day culminated in a Festival Eucharist led by Bishop Marray, the Very Rev. Andrew Pearson, Jr., dean of the Cathedral, and the Cathedral’s choir, organist, and acolytes. The service began with a grand procession from outside the Cathedral, complete with parish banners. The acolytes participated in a re-commissioning service as part of the Eucharist. Holy Cross, Trussville was awarded the “Bishop’s Bowl” for their superior performance in the Acolyte Olympics.

“The Acolyte Festival was a wonderful opportunity to thank acolytes and their leaders for their gift to our Church,” said Bishop Marray. “In order to truly honor the acolytes’ ministry to their parishes and our diocese, the festival was offered at no cost to participants, thanks to generous donations from parishes and individuals.


For additional photos of the Acolyte Festival visit: http://bit.ly/1luURaS

Reaction from Holy Cross, Trussville

There were fun games, intriguing workshops, and a wonderfully beautiful service.
Jacob Raulerson

At the Festival, we learned about the thurible and how to use it. This was a cool experience. Learning about the altar guild at the Cathedral was cool because now if I go I know what to do.
Nick Bramblette

I like the acolyte festival because we got to play with the water gun in the olympics. Also I liked getting to use the thurible and winning the Bishop’s Bowl.
Mary Virginia Mize

I think the festival was fun. We got to eat skittles and listen to funny stories. At the end of the service, we ended up winning the Bishop’s Bowl.
Jacob Brannan

At the acolyte’s festival I learned how to help with the altar. I also learned how to swing the thurible. I had fun learning about acolyting. I will go back next year.
Mary Brooks Browne

I think the Acolyte Olympics was fun and AWESOME and I am coming next year!
Jack Brannan

As an adult who attend the festival, it was an opportunity to share challenges we all face and gain perspective. For our parish, it allowed our acolytes to see that they’re not just “window dressing,” but rather taking an active part in sharing the Gospel. The re-commissioning by the Bishop closed out a beautiful service and gave all of us who serve, both young and old, a chance to see our role in a new light.
Rebecca Raulerson
Lent and Easter
Around Our Diocese

As we entered the season of Lent, we invited parishes throughout our diocese to give us their best shot – to send us their best photos – of Lent and Easter at their church.

We thought we’d share a few in this issue of The Alabama Episcopalian. You can find more Lent & Easter photos online at: http://bit.ly/1erkn3m
More than 400 Episcopalians gathered May 10 for “Episcopal Day” at Regions Field to watch the Birmingham Barons play the Pensacola Blue Wahoos, eat barbeque and hot dogs, and have fun together.

Bishop Kee Sloan threw the first pitch and a children's choir from local Episcopal parishes, directed by Susie Youngson, children's choir director at All Saints' in Birmingham, sang the National Anthem.

With plenty to eat and drink and a defensive game, there was time to talk to old friends and make new ones. “It is good to see people from other parishes you know from convention or Cursillo, and have a chance to meet socially,” said Mike Rohr, from Holy Cross, Trussville.

“I liked the bouncing houses and singing with other choirs and standing in front of the microphone,” said Kylie, an All Saints’ first grader. Her friend Kathryn, also from All Saints’, chimed in: “I like spending time with Kylie and singing for everyone.” Their younger friend Samantha — which I was informed “is short for Sam” — also commented, “I like being with my friends.”

It was also a time for extended families to be together. Grandparents, siblings, spouses and grandchildren gathered at several tables. Many were taking advantage of the close proximity to Mother’s Day to celebrate “Mother’s Day at the Barons.”

Kathryn Dorlan from St. Stephen’s in Birmingham, working with Diocesan Special Events Coordinator Georganne Perrine, and their committee, organized the event. “We started planning in the fall,” explained Dorlan. The committee was made up of members from The Cathedral Church of the Advent, St. Stephen’s, and All Saints’. The Baron’s staff made the organizing process go smoothly, but, we had to find a date after Easter and before the end of school to ensure the best chances for a good turn out, according to Dorlan. The venue was the banquet room on the third base side. The venue was “awesome and wonderful,” but that it was even better to see so many people from different parishes, said Chris and Mindy Strickland from St. Stephens’. An estimated 10 parishes were represented at the game.

The event was “electric,” for Alabama’s Assistant Bishop Santosh Murray, who was attending his first baseball game. “It is much better than watching it on TV,” he said. “The entire gathering is exciting.” The children’s choir and the family atmosphere inspired Murray. “The church is family,” he said. “We as a church need to engage the secular world, in this case, through sport.”

That sentiment was echoed by Sloan, who, after expressing his gratitude to the organizing committee, said, “The more we take the church out into the world and show that we are not snooty and snobby, the more of an impact we will have on our community.” He admitted that throwing out the first pitch was fun, and said plans are to repeat the event next year.

Everyone was having a great time. Oh, and there was a ballgame going on too! The game was scoreless until the sixth inning, and then it was tied at one. Still tied in the bottom of the ninth, the Barons were at bat with the bases loaded. With two outs and two strikes on the batter, a liner between second base and shortstop allowed the Barons to score the winning run — perfect end to a perfect day.

St. John’s Decatur Seeks Director of Children’s Ministries

St. John’s Episcopal Church in Decatur, AL, is accepting applications for a fulltime Director of Children’s Ministries.

As a part of the parish’s program staff, the Director of Children’s Ministries will develop and administer Christian formation programs for children from birth through the fifth grade.


The application deadline is June 16.
Diocesan Altar Guild Holds Spring Festival

More than 50 Altar Guild members from 18 parishes participated in the Diocese of Alabama’s Altar Guild Festival March 29. The Church of the Ascension, Vestavia Hills hosted the daylong meeting that began with a celebration of Holy Eucharist.

“Altar Guild and Our Spirituality” was the topic of a presentation by the Diocese of Alabama’s own Lynn Hendricks, Province IV Altar Guild president and a member of All Saints’ Church in Birmingham.

“Floral Design Using Garden Flowers” was the title of the afternoon program. “Presenter Matt Clinton of Matt Clinton Designs in Tuscaloosa, offered innovative ideas for our worship spaces,” said Martha Noble, Diocesan Altar Guild chairperson, and a member of St. Stephen’s in Birmingham. “The attendees enjoyed the day’s programs and time to visit and share ideas with others within the diocese.”

Matt Clinton of Matt Clinton Designs in Tuscaloosa leads “Floral Design Using Garden Flowers” workshop during Diocesan Altar Guild Festival.

Participating in the Spring 2014 Altar Guild Festival are, from left, Martha Noble, Diocesan Altar Guild Chairperson; Lynn Hendricks, Province IV Altar Guild president; and Sue Bushin, the festival’s hosting parish, Church of the Ascension in Vestavia Hills.

Chapter Officers of the Daughters of the King Gather for Spring Assembly

Chapter officers of the Order of the Daughters of the King in the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama gathered at St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Huntsville on April 5, for the Spring Chapters-Officers Assembly. The Rt. Rev. Santosh Marray, the Diocese of Alabama’s assistant bishop, was the guest speaker and delivered a dynamic message on prayer, service, and evangelism. The assembly culminated with the Service of Holy Eucharist led by the Rev. Susan Sloan.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; I will give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise (Isaiah 43:19-21, NRSV).

The Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Alabama is about to do a new thing. While we will continue to endorse a residential seminary education as the norm for training priests, we are in the process of developing an alternative way, a school for ministry that will train non-stipendiary and bi-vocational priests, vocational deacons and lay people who want to further their training in ministry.

This effort attempts to address a growing need throughout the Episcopal Church, no less in the Diocese of Alabama, for priests to serve smaller or rural parishes that may not be able to afford or simply do not need a full-time, salaried priest. In addition, the mission of our school for ministry will be broader in focus than those in other dioceses which exist to train only priests; our school for ministry will exist with the purpose to educate those training for lay ministries and for the vocational diaconate, in addition to those training for the priesthood—a broad-spectrum approach to theological education that recognizes and nurtures the ministry of all the baptized in authentic and concrete ways.

We are using the Iona Initiative, developed by the Diocese of Texas, as a basis for our school for ministry and expect it to be ready to go into operation in September 2015. The program normally runs one weekend a month for 10 months out of the year and includes both practical sessions and academic ones in a classroom setting.

If you have been pondering your call to ministry, whether lay or ordained, as a priest or as a deacon, you can find out more information on our diocesan website about how to follow up on your call by downloading the Vocational Discernment Process Manual at http://bit.ly/1IGHT0C. Highlighting the “Governance & Admin” tab on the diocesan home page, clicking “Diocesan Policy,” and scrolling to — and clicking on — the “Vocational Discernment Manual” link will also access the manual.

Among other things, you will be instructed to contact your rector for an initial meeting. If your parish does not have a rector or other clergy leadership, you should contact Bishop Sloan to talk about your call.

This new thing that we are doing is designed to do exactly what Isaiah says in Chapter 43: to make streams in the desert and to give drink to God’s own people; to provide pastoral leadership and care for all the folks of the Diocese of Alabama.

The ONE Conference: A View From Close-to-the-Ground

By Kreg Shehine

The One Conference was GREAT! As soon as we got there, Mom pointed out the playground beside Miss Mary’s House. Then I think she said something like “Be careful” or “Don’t climb too high” or one of those things she’s always saying. It was hard to hear, since I was already running toward the awesome jungle gym. And I met two grannies. Dad said the church is all about sharing stories, including one from Bishop Kee, but nothing about stinky grannies. Dad said the church is all about sharing stories, so he was glad for the opportunity to connect to new friends.

Saturday morning Mom got up early and went to yoga. She said she really appreciated the “sampler” of spiritual practices spread throughout the day. She said it gave her new ideas to explore for her own personal spiritual practice.

Saturday night I asked Dad what he did all day. He said he met lots of people and talked about church. I asked him the main thing he learned, and he said, “I’m coming to see that formation, mission, worship, and spiritual practice are really all the same thing.” I asked him, “So why do you have to go to so many different meetings at church?” He got a funny look on his face, and said, “I guess it’s still important to think about those things separately to help the church operate effectively. But Jesus showed us that all those disciplines are just different facets of the same gem.” I asked if our church’s worship committee ever talked to our church’s Christian formation committee. He got another funny look on his face and said he’d have to talk to the rector about that.

I asked Mom what she did. She said she gathered a lot of practical tools, resources, and connections. She’s really excited to help our church figure out how to help everyone in our church community grow and learn. She said the conference had helped her think about how to work with all the different kinds of people at church: children, youth, young adults, senior adults, catechumens, newcomers, and long-timers.

There was a concert that night, but all the fresh air and sunshine did me in. I skipped the party and crashed hard.

Sunday morning, Ah, pancakes. I got to eat with my new friends one more time. Then we went for a walk in the labyrinth. All the grown-ups from my church walked in it, but they were sooo slow. I finished first! Then we had to come home, but Mom and Dad said we can come back next year. They were talking the whole trip home about the conference. They said next year they hope lots more people from our church and other churches will go. I can’t wait to meet even more new friends at next year’s One Conference!
The faithful people of three churches, St. Mary’s in Jasper, Childersburg, and Birmingham, have come together through the leadership of The Rev. Huey Gardner to build and name a lodge at Bethany. It will be an important part of the new parish and family lodge complex, which will be similar to Miller Commons. St. Mary’s Lodge will be situated by the 5.2 acre lake and recreational green area that is nestled among the group of lodges. This new group of lodges will provide much needed space for more parish retreats, spirituality retreats coordinated by camp and the Diocese, more Alabama Folk School events, Diocesan Convention guests, and many other groups.

Huey, Rector of St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands, says, “We are viewing this work as an opportunity to get to know other people who share the common bond of worship and ministry in a parish named St. Mary’s.” Tim Murphy, Rector of St. Mary’s in Jasper, adds, “I am very grateful for Huey’s initiative in orchestrating this effort and we are delighted to be a part.” The people of all three parishes will contribute to building and dedicating the lodge. The Rev. Louis Skipper, St. Mary’s—Childersburg, notes that this project is a great way to work with larger parishes, to help keep small churches vibrant, and to be remembered at Camp McDowell.

Like Mary so eloquently expressed in the Magnificat, this group seeks to magnify the Lord. St. Mary’s Lodge will be a concrete and lasting way these churches give thanks for all that God provides.

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

The Bethany Campaign Cabinet is grateful to all those who have adopted lodges in the expansion. All of the lodges have now been named. Many thanks for your generosity and leadership: St. Mary’s—Jasper, Childersburg, and Birmingham, St. Luke’s, the Cathedral Church of the Advent, family and friends of Rev. & Mrs. Emmet and Elsie Gribbin, Christ Church—Tuscaloosa, and the Church of the Nativity—Huntsville.
One of the privileges of being your bishop is that I get to go to Camp McDowell for all sorts of things. Right now it’s a special joy to go and see where we’re building Bethany Village. Last week, as I looked out on what is becoming our lake, I had a sense of it all coming round full circle.

Bethany Village has been a dream for a long time, a dream first dreamed by myself and our friend Mark Johnston, and then by many others. At first the dream was about what we could do in this place – programs, ministries for people with disabilities, vestry retreats, conferences, parish retreats, camp sessions, environmental education, the Alabama Folk School, environmental stewardship, and (as bishops sometimes say) more and more. Then the dream became more real, and we started talking about how we would do all that: buildings we might build and where they would be, a special swimming pool, and how large the dining/meeting hall would need to be. Soon we were talking about how much money it would all cost, and how to raise it, how we could give foundations and parishes and individuals the opportunity to be a part of it all.

A few days ago as the sun was going down I looked out at the lake that will be there, and in my imagination I saw people in canoes and flat-bottomed boats, fishing and splashing and taking in some of the everyday wonders of God’s Creation. I imagined people walking the trail around the lake, and then going to dinner in Doug Carpenter Hall. I wondered what we might be doing after dinner: a dance or some entertainment in Hall Hall, a program in Phifer Hall, maybe a class in cooking or quilting or blacksmithing, compline in the Chapel, or … the possibilities are endless. From dream to reality and back to dream again … and endless possibilities. You might be there that night when our imagination has become reality, or your children, or their children – I might see you there. We will have stories to tell, and stories to hear.

And through it all, the love of God is poured on Bethany Village and those who come: Episcopalians and others, from all over Alabama and beyond, young and old, with all the gifts and abilities and challenges and disabilities people have. We wonder and dream about the What and the How, but we know about the Why – the mission that is God’s Church is to share God’s love with all of God’s children. Bethany Village will be a wonderful way to share that love, a place for us to shine the Light of Christ, and you, dear friends, are making it possible. Thank you all for your incredible support. I say this all the time, but it’s no less true because of the repetition: it’s an exciting time to be an Episcopalian in the Diocese of Alabama. Thanks be to God.
During this past April Clergy Conference, I enjoyed an early morning run through what will soon become Bethany Village at Camp McDowell. It is hard to believe how much has already been accomplished, with a barn and a farm, roads and cabins and the beginnings of a beautiful lake.

As I ran along the gravel road, I imagined where the dining hall would be, and the camp store, and the new swimming pool that will accommodate persons with physical disabilities. I imagined Vestry Retreats gathering here, as well as inner city children discovering the beauty and fragility of God’s creation.

I imagined farm to table produce, and students learning not only where their food comes from but also the dangers of food insecurity. I imagined the sound of music from the folk school, and preservation of our Alabama Heritage.

Finally, I imagined delegates to Diocesan Convention, all housed at Camp at walking to the Chapel for prayer. I imagined friends from around the Diocese walking together, stopping to chat with folks they haven’t seen in years. I could almost smell the hamburgers and chicken cooking, could almost hear the laughter and conversation coming from a hundred places, could almost see the glow of a campfire, or the Chapel lights in a full Camp McDowell at Convention time.

This is no mere dream. Bethany Village is about to become reality and I ask each parish family to become a part of it.

Of all the places in our Beloved Diocese we call Holy, Camp McDowell is the one spot we all share. It is not only Holy Ground but Common Ground, a place where folks from big churches and small churches and big towns and small towns and all points north and south come together as a family.

But there is even more to this dream. I do not know of a parish that doesn’t want to grow or attract young people. Bethany Village is just the sort of compassionate, smart, creative ministry that is well suited to the challenges and demands of the coming century. Our parishes will benefit from Bethany as part of our mission and ministry. Bethany will help us grow.

In short, Bethany will be our witness. Bethany will be our legacy. Join us.

If your parish has not been contacted to participate in building Bethany, please call us to set up an appointment. There are many ways for your parish, no matter what size, to be a part of this visionary expansion. Call or email any of the following staff and leadership:

Rev. David Meginniss, dmeginniss@christchurch1828.com, 205-758-4252
Rev. Mark Johnston, mark@campmcdowell.com, 205-387-1806
Mrs. Danielle Dunbar, danielle@campmcdowell.com, 205-563-9990
Many Thanks to Our Village of “Saints”

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

It continues to take a village of saints to build Bethany at Camp McDowell. Numerous saints have assisted by donating building materials and or giving deep discounts.

Larry and Robert Brudi are a Father and son dynamic duo who operate Johnstone Supply in the Birmingham area. They love Camp McDowell and they have been a tremendous asset in regard to technical assistance for our heating, cooling, and other mechanical needs. They have provided us with some equipment pro bono and have procured other equipment at deep discounts. Their gift is one which will “keep on giving” because they are supplying us with equipment that is top of the line in regard to energy efficiency. The price tag of Bethany is lower because of them and we will be able to maintain our low rates because of the equipment they are providing. Of course it allows us to reduce our carbon footprint as well.

Another saint is Ranson Roussel. Ranson discovered Camp McDowell recently through attending Cursillo. Through his company, The Distribution Point, We are receiving more deep discounts and donated plumbing supplies. Among the items donated are all of our commodes and bathroom sinks. We need a lot of them and this is a very generous gift.

Spenser Brown grew up coming to summer camp with his siblings, and he and his sister were part of our summer staff in the 1990’s. He was able to get Pfister to donate all of our sink faucets and other fixture needs.

Thanks to all of these saints! Read about more saints in the near future.

The camp cabins at Bethany are almost finished! CREATE, a work week to build God’s Kingdom for entering 9th and 10th graders, will be the first camp held in these cabins June 23-27, 2014. Geothermal piping is being installed in the lake bed and the farm school is taking shape. St. James’—Alexander City has adopted and is building the handicap-accessible pier and staff housing is being completed.

For more information, please contact Development Director Danielle Dunbar at danielle@campmcdowell.com, 205/358-9234, the Rev. Mark Johnston at mark@campmcdowell.com, or the camp office at 205/387-1806. [www.BethanyAtCamp.com, Instagram account, CampMcDowell, or Facebook page, Camp McDowell (official)]
**Flat Jesus is a Fun Summer Companion & Great Evangelism Tool**

*By Christina Dorn*

Summer is a time for sun, fun, travel and adventure. This year the Diocese of Alabama’s Christian Formation folk invite you to take Jesus along with you on your travels — “Flat Jesus” — that is. He packs easily, doesn’t eat much, and can really add to your adventure.

Seriously, while we know that God is always present no matter where we go or what we do, adding Flat Jesus is a fun way to incorporate faith and evangelism into summer activities, while carrying a visible reminder that Jesus is with us wherever our summer journeys lead.

The Flat Jesus movement was conceived for just that purpose. Our friends at St. James Church in Birmingham, Michigan, created “The Adventures of Flat Jesus” as one way to help their parishioners stay connected to the church in summer. To add to the fun, parishioners posted pictures of their travels and adventures with Flat Jesus to a special Facebook page throughout the summer months.

Parishioners enjoyed taking Flat Jesus out to dinner with the family, to visit with their grandchildren, and on many other fun summer outings. The parish realized that Flat Jesus was a great conversation starter and was a perfect opportunity for parishioners to share their faith. The project quickly grew, going international and leading hundreds of people to embrace the fun of Flat Jesus.

To join our Flat Jesus adventure, download the template from http://bit.ly/1stXNrX and decorate your Flat Jesus. Print Flat Jesus on cardstock and laminate for a long-lasting adventure. Then take your Flat Jesus with you, take his photo enjoying summer, and share your photos on his Diocese of Alabama Facebook page http://www.facebook.com/dioalaflatjesus. When you like the Facebook page, you will receive adventure updates from around our diocese. Happy summer, everyone!

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**Feed, Seed & Weed**

May 3, 2014 was “Feed, Seed & Weed Saturday” at the Church of the Holy Comforter in Gadsden. Volunteers distributed 65 to 70 bags of groceries during their monthly Bens & Rice Ministry. Meanwhile other volunteers tended the church’s Eden Project garden beds, that produce a harvest fresh fruits and vegetables and cut flowers, to supports the Beans & Rice Ministry. Administered by the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the ministries engage volunteers from throughout the parish.

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**You Can Take it With You**

They say “You Can’t Take it with You!” “Oh yes you can, and it’s easy” if you are talking about Christian formation, says Kathy Graham, the diocesan coordinator for lifelong Christian formation. Here Kathy shares a number of ideas to help families, who are going to be away from church some during the summer.

1. Gaze at the ocean, the lake, the mountains, the woods around you and give thanks to God for His creation! Think of ways to protect these areas.
2. Collect items from these locations and designate a space as a sacred space for you to gather for prayer or silence.
3. Attend or help with a Vacation Bible school
4. Attend or help with a summer camp – over night or day camp.
5. Spend time reading and reflecting on what you’ve read with others. Share a daily devotional or word of the day.
6. Serve lunch at a local food pantry. Prepare a meal as a family and deliver to a shelter.
7. Clean out closets and playrooms and take donations to a charity.
8. Spend time with family – share stories, listen to elders’ stories, make memories for sharing.
9. Spend some quiet time with God— enjoy and appreciate silence in a world so cluttered with noise and distraction. Start a new spiritual discipline— different ways of praying, use music, art, crafts, walking, yoga, etc.
10. Sing! Singing is a joyful noise! Sing gospel hymns, children’s hymns, VBS songs, camp songs, etc. For 4th of July sing patriotic songs— how many references to God are in these songs?
11. Remember to practice your family rituals— prayers before bed, blessings before meals. Enjoy meals together more often since school schedules are on break.
12. Share Bible stories— think of different fun ways to share these stories— use props, costumes, puppets, etc.
13. Look at the night sky – the brightness of the stars— listen for the night noises–
14. For Fourth of July celebrations use this holiday to thank God for our country and the freedoms we enjoy and give thanks for those that serve to protect these freedoms. Learn about words like freedom, peace, liberty, In God We Trust, etc.
15. Take the Gospel reading for the summer Sundays and have each family member come up with one idea to connect or present that story during the week.
16. Make a Flat Jesus and take him with you— keep a journal with writing and pictures of all that you did together. (See “Flat Jesus is a Fun Summer Companion & Great Evangelism Tool” on this page.)

Kathy also offers the following resources: The Spark Storybook Bible, Jesus Calling, The Jesus Storytime Bible, Deep Blue Kids Bible, To Dance with God, Celebrations that Touch the Heart. For more ideas or resource suggestions contact Kathy Graham kgraham@dioala.org
2014 Foothills Day Camp Prepares to Make a SPLASH, Prayer Partners, Donations Invited

SPASHL! That is the theme for next month’s Foothills Day Camp, a one-week camp experience for Calhoun County children, ages six to 10, who might otherwise not have an opportunity to attend a summer camp. Swimming, canoeing, a zip-line ride into a lake, and just getting wet -- rain or shine -- are among the activities planned for this the camp’s third year.

Sponsored and facilitated by Grace Episcopal Church in Anniston, Foothills Day Camp takes place at Camp Lee, which is operated as a ministry of the United Methodist Church of Anniston. The Anniston community, Camp Lee, area churches and members of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama all provide support to make the camp possible. Volunteers are invited to help by serving as prayer partners with the camp staff members, providing swimsuits, beach towels, snacks, dinner or by making a monetary donation to the camp. For additional information contact the Rev. Lee Shafer at by email grace@erectnet@ cableone.net or telephone at (256) 236-4457.

Building bridges across which the Holy Spirit can move is a major objective of the camp. Foothills Day Camp provides a venue where people -- both campers and staff -- from diverse faith and socioeconomic backgrounds, can come together to share a common experience and be touched by God's unconditional love.

Camp is staffed by high school aged young people, college students, and adults of all ages from the Anniston area and the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama. In addition to serving the children of Calhoun County, the camp provides an opportunity for its youth staff members to develop leadership skills. Foothills Day Camp is modeled after the Diocese of Alabama’s Sawyerville Day Camp which serves the children of Hale County.

This year’s Foothills session begins July 21 and concludes July 25. Camp staff will gather at Grace Church on July 20.

More than 70 Participate in 2014 Rites of Spring Weekend

By Susan Oakes, Youth Ministries Coordinator

More than 70 young people participated in this year’s Rites of Spring weekend at Camp McDowell March 28 – 30. The event, which encompasses the annual EYC Convention, is a program for all high school students.

What a fantastic job it is to work with such amazing youth and young adults! This year at Rites of Spring, our program theme was “Hear My Voice” and we focused on skills to learn how to hear God’s voice guiding us towards becoming the most ideal person God has made us to become through listening to our lives and responding with our talents.

The youth shared their spiritual autobiographies during small groups and created icons to take home with them. Learning to listen to our lives and responding with our talents are important spiritual practices that we hope the youth will take with them far beyond this one event.

Identifying our God-given talents and living into those talents to meet the world’s needs is one way in which God calls us into relationship. It’s a wonderful thing to see so many young people stand up in front of their peers and express themselves in a way that says, “This is who I am and these are my talents and I want to offer myself to the Church.”

Off-Going Youth Department Members Reflect on Their Experience

Most of last year’s Youth Department members following their final meeting at Carpenter House are from (from left) Kit Goldschmidt, Adam Westfall, Sally Fargason, Jess Lingle, LB Passey, Hannah Kendrick, Miranda Therkelsen and Jon Auman.

I think the most rewarding part of being on YD (Youth Department) or going to YD events is the relationships you make with other people. Before I was able to attend senior high events, the only time I could see my camp friends was for one week at Camp McDowell. As I began coming to YD events as a 9th grader, I had more opportunities to see my camp friends and our relationships became stronger. As a result, my camp friends have become my best friends. The relationships I’ve made on YD are different than the relationships I have with my classmates. All of my YD relationships grew out of a mutual love for Camp, our diocese, acceptance, and God. YD has provided me with friendships that will truly last a lifetime.

Hannah Kendrick, YD Chair

In some ways I feel like I’ve been on YD ever since my first summer at Camp McDowell; this community of young people infects your life in ways you don’t even realize. It was such an honor to serve as a representative this year and my senior year of high school would not have had as much meaning, or been as fun without it. I’m so appreciative of the youth of this diocese and the advisers of YD for nurturing and supporting me. I love being a part of this family and I have memories to last a lifetime.

Julia Thiemonge, Northern District Representative

Most of this year’s Youth Department members are from (from left) Julia Thiemonge, Northern District Representative, Jon Auman, Robert McCown, Mary Margaret Murdock, LB Passey, Sally Fargason, Robert McCown, Paley Smith, Jackson Maysor, and Sam Jones.
Thirty young adults from Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi gathered for a weekend of spiritual growth, fellowship and recreation at Camp McDowell April 25 to 27. The following is a reflection on the event by participant Austin Kendrick Cook:

Throughout the weekend, we participated in a program that spoke to us on a spiritual level and spent time with friends, old and new. We stayed in Scott House where we had space to gather and spend time together in fellowship.

Our program, led by the Rev. Doug Carpenter, was called “Together On This Sacred Journey” and focused on “making us more aware that we walk together, wondrously connected, on an amazing, and often mysterious, adventure.” He entertained us with insightful and thought provoking stories and taught us how important our “traveling companions” can be throughout our lives. Several participants later commented that they originally came for fellowship but ended up gaining much more through the program.

During the weekend, we spent time hiking, canoeing, and relaxing in the beautiful woods of Camp McDowell. We also had a chance to meet new friends from all areas of the diocese. We had participants from Huntsville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Auburn, and even Atlanta, GA and Meridian, MS.

We closed the weekend by discussing other events for young adults both locally and throughout the diocese. It is clear that there is exciting energy in the young adults community to build young adults groups and events and to grow these into thriving ministries. I feel strongly that this will become an annual event and am hopeful that our young adults community will continue to grow. We look forward to having even more young adults join us next year!
It was a sweltering October afternoon in 2006 on the outskirts of Croix des Bouquets, Haiti, a community east of the capital city of Port-au-Prince. A small delegation from the Diocese of Alabama’s Companion Diocese Commission stood amid the dust of a dry, dirt field—empty except for a lone donkey, munching dried stubble, and piles of rock marking the field’s perimeter.

There to explore Alabama’s new companion relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, they listened as Father Fritz Valdema, a local Episcopal priest and their host, shared his and his wife’s vision — their dreams — for a much needed, permanent home for their burgeoning life-saving ministry to malnourished children.

Today, more than seven years later, their field of dreams are reality, thanks in no small measure to the work and generosity of the good people of our diocese. St. Mary’s began fielding teams to plan and help with construction and to develop the garden and orchard. And the parish began raising funds to help with construction.

As the nutrition program grew, and construction progressed slowly, a short-term grant in 2009 allowed Carmel to rent temporary facilities for the clinic in Croix des Bouquets. Carmel began conducting periodic medical clinics at the facility, supported by medical teams from our diocese and other organizations.

Then in 2010, a powerful earthquake devastated much of Port au Prince and surrounding communities, killing thousands and injuring thousands more. Walls at the Lespwa Timoun construction site toppled, and Carmel’s temporary clinic filled with the injured. Meanwhile construction of the permanent clinic had to be rethought, and restarted.

Finally, on Jan. 13, 2014, Lespwa Timoun opened its doors at its new, permanent location. That once dusty field had been turned oasis by the hard work and significant contributions of so many — among them the good people of St. Mary’s and the Diocese of Alabama; the Christian Haitian-American Partnership, Myrtle Beach, SC; Haiti Serve, Knoxville, TN; St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Mt. Pleasant, SC; Christ Church in Springfield, MO; St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Murfreesboro, TN.
A Parish Representative’s Passion

By Marilyn Lands

“I became aware of the work of Episcopal Relief & Development when I first heard about the Millennium Development Goals, which inspired me to learn more and to change our family’s approach to charitable giving, especially in response to international relief efforts. I continue to be encouraged by my fellow parishioners who choose to donate first to Episcopal Relief & Development in response to disaster relief. Parishioners tell me of their confidence in knowing that the funds will reach those in need and will be well spent.

I have learned that Episcopal Relief & Development is more than just disaster relief. I am discovering how Episcopal Relief & Development is living into the principles our Social Justice Sunday School Class at Nativity has been exploring through our study of When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor (Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert). The book offers a path forward found, not through providing resources to the poor, but by walking with them in humble relationships.

My passion for Social Justice and the long-term alleviation of poverty led me, and several members of our class, to attend the workshop “Beyond Relief: Cornerstone Conference for Community Compassion” sponsored by the CornerStone Initiative Project in Huntsville. Dr. Fikkert and Bob Lupton, the author of Toxic Charity, were presenters. Patty Lowe, Executive Director, of the Cornerstone Initiative gave an overview of the organization’s work and recommended a gentle form of asset-mapping; asking questions and focusing on the positive; starting with front-porch conversations and moving to neighborhood conversations and, ultimately, collaboration conversations. Patty reminded the audience that “real community development only happens through conversations.”

Among the highlights of the conference was hearing from Noël Castellanos who spoke on compassion and justice and remarked that “we need to redefine success to mean that the most vulnerable of our cities must become flourishing places of God and transformation” and that in order “to confront injustice we must see value in all people.”

Bob Lupton quoted Jacques Ellul: “Almsgiving is Mammon’s perversion of giving. It affirms the superiority of the giver, binds the recipient, demands gratitude, humiliates him and reduces him to a lower state than he had before.” Lupton also discussed the differences between relief and development and that “a crisis demands emergency intervention (relief) and a chronic need requires development and stated that “starvation is a crisis; hunger is a chronic condition.” For example, he proposed a model transforming food pantries into food co-operatives and clothes closets into neighborhood stores and reminded participants “that we must give the gift of dignity.”

As I absorbed their wisdom, I admit that the conference challenged me and our group in many ways and also reminded us of the wonderful work that our Episcopal Relief & Development organization continues to do throughout the world. The international agency works closely with the worldwide church and ecumenical partners to help rebuild after disasters and to empower local communities to find lasting solutions that fight poverty, hunger and disease.

Our Social Justice Sunday School class at Nativity provides a community where we can engage in meaningful conversation about the issues that matter most today for our families, our communities, and the world. Episcopal Relief & Development provides a link to what our church is doing at home and throughout the world; a living example of best practices and asset-based community mapping that affords Christians opportunities to give of our time and talent as we respond to the needs of the marginalized, listening to their stories, and honoring their gifts. That lifts all of us up together, both givers and receivers, in that great mystery of love that we call faith.

The Episcopal Relief & Development website www.episcopalrelief.org has many resources including free publications, special reports, and updates on relief and development efforts, examples of disaster preparedness plans, resources for worship and Christian formation, the Millennium Development Goals, and ways to seek and serve. Please visit the website to learn more about how you and your parish can become involved with this vital program to provide relief and development throughout the world.”

For more information or a presentation on Episcopal Relief & Development, contact the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, Diocesan Coordinator (gquick@bellsouth.net ; 205-669-6862).

Interfaith Mission Service Recognizes Work of the Commission on Race Relations

The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama’s Commission on Race Relations was recently honored for its work promoting racial harmony, religious respect, social justice, and care for the most vulnerable.

The commission received the 2014 Marilyn Malby Memorial Racial Harmony Award from the Interfaith Mission Service in Huntsville during a banquet May 1 marking the organization’s 45th Anniversary. The Rev. Deacon Carolyn Foster and the Rev. Deacon Tom Osborne, commission co-chairs, accepted the award on behalf of the diocese for the commission’s work including the annual Jonathan Daniels and the Martyrs of Alabama Pilgrimage.

Founded in 1969 by 10 Christian churches and Temple B’nai Sholom, the Interfaith Mission Service now includes 28 area churches, two synagogues, and the Islamic Association of the Tennessee Valley. Four Huntsville area parishes from the Diocese of Alabama – the Church of the Nativity, Holy Cross/St. Christopher’s, St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, and St. Thomas Episcopal Church -- are members.

The mission of the organization is to “strengthen and enhance our congregations’ capabilities to meet human needs, participate in the public forum, and promote religious, racial and cultural harmony,” according to its website.
Five From the Diocese of Alabama Being Ordained to Transitional Diaconate

Mary Beatrice Sullivan was ordained to the diaconate by the Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan, bishop of Alabama, Saturday, May 10, 2014, at Grace Episcopal Church in Cullman. She is now serving at Holy Spirit Episcopal Church in Alabaster. She is a graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA.

Christopher Kevin Hartley was ordained to the diaconate by the Rt. Rev. Santosh K. Marray, assistant bishop, Wednesday, May 21, at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Birmingham. He was graduated in May from the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, TN.

Mary Balfour Van Zandt was ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Sloan Saturday, May 31, at St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands in Birmingham. She is serving at St. Michael’s in Fayette. She was graduated in May from the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, TX.

Jonathan Colton Chesney will be ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Sloan Saturday, June 7, at 11:00 a.m. at the Church of the Ascension in Montgomery. His placement following ordination has not yet been announced. He was graduated in May from Virginia Theological Seminary.

William Bentley Manning will be ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Marray Wednesday, June 11, at 6:30 p.m. at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Birmingham. Following his ordination he will serve at St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands. He was graduated in May from the School of Theology at Sewanee.

Volunteer to be a Prayer Partner for Sawyerville Day Camp

The Sawyerville Day Camp is one of the most rewarding ministry experiences for our diocesan youth and adults. However, while it is great fun to work with the youth in the Black Belt, it involves a lot of hard work and it means that for a week, these staffers and coordinators are “out of their comfort zones”. They are sleeping on floors (if they are sleeping), trying to be creative and loving, and trying to keep ahead of the very energetic campers in their charge.

Being a prayer partner is a way to uphold them in their ministry and to remind them how much we appreciate what they do everyday. It is also a way for those who cannot serve on the staff to be a part of this wonderful ministry. In addition to praying for their staff member, prayer partners write four notes of encouragement. Themes and suggestions for the letters are available. Consider joining this important ministry today by contacting Linda Kennedy at prayers@sawyervilledaycamp.org.

Clergy News

The Rev. Sandra Mayer is serving as interim rector at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Selma.

The Rev. Steve Shanks, deacon at Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Trussville, will be moving to Richmond, VA. His last Sunday at Holy Cross was Easter Sunday.

The Rev. Bob Blackwell retired as rector of Grace Episcopal Church in Cullman May 31.

The Rev. Bill Blackerby retired as Birmingham Episcopal Ministries Chaplain May 25. He has accepted a call to serve as the interim rector at Grace Episcopal Church in Cullman beginning June 29.

Bonnie McCrickard will serve as associate rector at the Church of the Nativity in Huntsville following her ordination in June by the Rt. Rev. John C. Bauerschmidt, bishop of the Diocese of Tennessee.

The Rev. Brandt Montgomery associate at Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa, has accepted a call to serve as Chaplain of Ascension Episcopal School in Lafayette, LA beginning on Aug. 1.

The Rev. Jay Croft, who has been offering services for a small deaf congregation at Holy Comforter in Montgomery, is moving to Maryland.
A group of clergy and spouses from the around our diocese gathered April 24 under bright blue Alabama skies across from Stough Lodge at Camp McDowell to consecrate Pop’s Garden.

The garden was dedicated in memory and celebration of the life and ministry of the Rev. Milt Glor, and in thanksgiving for his wife Janice. Milt, who served our diocese as a priest for more than two decades, died in 2009. Camp McDowell was home to two of his greatest loves – Cursillo and Special Session. He served as a member of the staff of Special Session, a summer camp for people with special needs, from its inception in 1999 until his death in 2009. It was here that he picked up the nickname Pops, and it stuck.

The new garden provides an easily accessible sacred space for meditation, reflection and celebration.

The idea for the garden came from Betty McCutcheon of Grace Church in Sheffield. A comprehensive design—Celtic in feel—was created by June Mays of Birmingham and Sewanee. Volunteers led by Betty, and the Shoals Master Gardeners crafted the garden. Contributions for the garden came from around the diocese.

The garden is circular in design and contains rugged rock elements hewn in sandstone from Gresham Quarry in Dennis Mississippi. The central focal point is a large sandstone cross, encircled by dwarf gardenias, seasonal bulbs and annuals. The outer circle contains stone bird-baths and benches set off by a stone border. It is planted in various native plants including several types of ferns, hosta, astilbe, salvia, sage, coreopsis, and Solomon’s Seal. Surrounding the garden are native oak leaf hydrangeas, blueberry and butterfly bushes. There are tea olives on each side of the entrance. Stone angles mark the entrance to the garden and a sacred space on the garden’s edge overlooking Camp McDowell’s undisturbed natural beauty. The garden and vista are wheelchair accessible.

Pop’s Garden is phase one of a comprehensive plan to beautify the entire Stough/Scott field. Phase two will correct drainage and parking lot issues, phase three will provide an attractive entryway to the back dining hall and beautify the service and grill area. The final phase will be the completion of a children’s discovery garden, development of which is already underway adjacent to the playground.

For more on Milt and Janice and a list of contributors visit: http://bit.ly/1qPxBwn

For additional photos of Pop’s Garden visit: http://bit.ly/1gIvBfQ
UPCOMING EVENTS

SUMMER CAMP IN “GOD’S BACKYARD”
Now until August at Camp McDowell

Registration for Summer Camp is on-going at www.campmcdowell.com

Space available in almost all sessions! For more information, contact Camp at 205.387.1806 or susanna@campmcdowell.com

“My SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR WHOLEHEARTED LIVING”

June 21 in Albertville or July 26 in Tuscaloosa

The Metagem Institute will offer a Spiritual Practices for Wholehearted Living workshop June 21 at Christ Church in Albertville and July 26 at St. Matthias’ in Tuscaloosa. The workshop introduces spiritual practices that aid in cultivating courage, compassion, and connection—the three attributes that author Brené Brown, researcher and storyteller, says are required for wholehearted living. Awareness of our connection to the Divine is the starting point for an authentic and fully engaged life. From our life giving relationship with Christ flows courage, compassion, and connection to all that is. More information & registration links at: http://bit.ly/SB9nqT. Questions: mary.c.akamatsu@metagemi-institute.org

ALABAMA FOLK SCHOOL

At Camp McDowell

Annual Youth Fiddle Workshop
June 23 – 25

Join us for our first Annual Youth Fiddle Workshop. Stringed instrument students aged eight to 18 are eligible for this workshop, which will combine fiddle lessons with the typical summer camp activities. For more information, visit our website at www.alfolskschool.com.

Watercolor Workshop
October 19 – 24

Our 17th annual Watercolor Workshop will take place this fall. Choose from one of three highly skilled instructors: Ken Austin, Deborah Hill and Wayne Spradley. To view teacher bios and class information, visit our website at www.alfolskschool.com.

Old Time Week
October 30 - November 2

Our Old Time Week line-up has been announced! Choose from one of nine music classes in banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin and Old Time Repertoire. To register, visit www.alfolskschool.com.

THE ACADEMY FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

August 4 – 9 at Camp Sumatanga

If you yearn for that kind of deep rest which is best called resting-in-God’s-presence, then this word is for you: The Academy for Spiritual Formation, meeting this year from August 4-9 at Camp Sumatanga in Gallant, AL. The Academy is an annual five-day retreat sponsored by the United Methodist Church, Upper Room Ministries, and this year also by our diocese. It is open to all who want to rest. There is a program, a daily rhythm of prayer and silence, time away—but mostly, there is God. This year there are three Episcopalians on staff: the Rev. Marc Burnette, his wife, Dr. Jennifer Roth-Burnette, and the Rev. Mary C. Earle, retired from the Seminary of the Southwest. This year’s topic is Celtic Spirituality. This ancient way of encountering Christ, crucified and risen, has not exhausted its resources for contemporary Christians—not by a long shot. Its well runs deep; its water is fresh to this day. Drinking deeply will refresh your soul. To register, contact Pat Luna at patluna@me.com. More information at: http://academy.upperroom.org. The Lord is waiting there for us, so see you soon!

FACE, FAITH, ART AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

August 18-August 23 at Kanuga Conference Center

“Renewing the spirit. Enriching the mind. Inspiring hands and voices.” The 17th Liturgical Arts Conference will embody the work of the church and the individual expressions of our faith through our hands, eyes and voices. Participants may choose from classes in embroidery, photography, weaving, painting, choral singing, flower arranging and intermediate canvawork. Discover or develop your personal creative abilities as you work, share and play in an encouraging Christian community. The Conference Coordinator is Lark Howell from our diocese.

Details & online registration at: http://bit.ly/1kYBlGg

DAUGHTERS OF THE KING FALL ASSEMBLY

September 13 at Holy Apostles in Hoover

The Diocese of Alabama Chapter of the Daughters of the King will hold its Fall Assembly at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Apostles, in Hoover, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Featured speaker will be Dolores Hydock, with a dramatically different story program.

MUSIC UNDER THE STARS

September 19 at St. Mark’s, Birmingham

Join us for the second annual “Music Under the Stars” at 6:00 p.m. Come enjoy a night of fun and entertainment with music by Birmingham jazz legends Cleve Eaton, the Birmingham Heritage Band, Shaun Pezant and Top Secret, the AL Jazz Hall of Fame Student All-Star Band, and others. For more information, contact the Rev. Jayne Poo, 205-322-8449.

RECOVERY MINISTRIES FALL RETREAT

September 26 – 28 at Camp McDowell

The Department of Recovery Ministries announces its Annual Fall Retreat at Wonderful, Wonderful Camp McDowell Sept. 26 – 28. All are invited to join this weekend of fun, laughter, music, beautiful fall weather, and interesting speakers. The Rev. Stuart Hoke will be the keynote speaker and Retreat Leader (Google him at www.revstuarthoke.com for more about this exciting speaker). Join us on the journey. There will be no charge for your extra baggage or the peanuts -- just your room and camp food. An online application will be available soon on our webpage at http://dioala.org/ministries/recovery_ministries.html, or contact Kathy Graham at kgraham@dioala.org. Check with Kathy for information about available scholarship funds.

ECW FALL CONFERENCE

October 2-3, St. James, Alexander City

Plans are underway for the 125th ECW Fall Conference, hosted by the East Alabama Convocation. Keynote speaker is the Rev. Becca Stevens from Nashville, TN. She is an author, Episcopal priest, and founder of Thistle Farms & Magdalene, a non-profit of women who have survived prostitution, trafficking and addiction. We also have activities planned that are sure to make for a very fun “girls time!” Be sure to keep an eye out for announcements, invitations and registration forms. For more information on the ECW go to: http://www.alabamaecw.org, and for more information about Becca Stevens visit http://www.beccastevens.org

DATES TO REMEMBER

Cursillo Weekends #192 April 10-13, #193 June 12-15, #194 September 4-7, #195 October 9-12

General Convention June 25-July 3, 2015, in Salt Lake City

Sawverville Day Camp Sessions June 14-20, June 21, July 6-12

Create Bethany @ Camp McDowell June 23-27

Special Session at Camp McDowell July 1-6

Young People Paint Birmingham (7th-9th graders) June 16-20

Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage (Hayneville, AL) August 9

Conference of Retired Clergy & Spouses at Camp McDowell August 4 - 6

Work Boy/Work Girl Reunion (1947 and 1992) at Camp McDowell August 8 – 10

Christmas Conference at Camp McDowell December 28-30
**Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense by Francis Spufford**

Francis Spufford’s Unapologetic is a wonderfully aggressive defense of Christianity. Refuting critics such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and the “new atheist” crowd, Spufford, a former atheist and Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, argues that Christianity is recognizable, drawing on the deep and deeply ordinary vocabulary of human feeling, satisfying those who believe in it by offering a ruthlessly realistic account of the grown-up dignity of Christian experience. Fans of C. S. Lewis, N. T. Wright, and Diana Butler Bass, will appreciate Spufford’s crisp, lively, and defiant thesis.

**Evening Prayers: For Every Day of the Year by Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt**

Blumhardt’s message is a most spontaneous and penetrating word of God, and it speaks right into the need of the world. — Karl Barth

We want to turn to God at the end of each day, but often don’t find the words to express our deepest feelings and longing. This collection of prayers is one of the few daily devotionals especially intended for use in the evening. Blumhardt’s words speak a certainty in God’s nearness. The peace that flows from them comes from a firm conviction that God’s kingdom is on the way — and this reassurance can bring us serenity each night.

**Faith Alone: A Daily Devotional by Martin Luther, with James C. Galvin as general editor** (Updated Edition in Today’s Language)

Freshly translated from the original German into today’s English, this book contains a treasury of devotionals taken from Luther’s writings and sermons (1513 to 1546), conveniently divided into daily readings to point readers to the Bible and a deeper understanding of faith. Through daily readings, Luther’s straightforward approach challenges you to a more thoughtful faith. Read one brief section a day or explore themes using the subject index in the back of the book. Faith Alone will deepen your understanding of Scripture and help you more fully appreciate the mystery of faith.

**Baby’s First Bible with illustrations by Colin and Moira MacLean**

Carefully selected stories, timeless verses, and delightful rhymes take young children on a journey from creation through the resurrection. Perfectly portable board book with a built-in plastic handle, this can go anywhere. Full color illustrations with peek-through windows and special parent-child activities. 10 spreads.

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; ebsinfo@episcobooks.com; or visit the bookstore online at www.episcobooks.com.

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**Bishops’ Visitation Schedule**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Bishop</th>
<th>Church Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 15, Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bishop Sloan</td>
<td>Trinity, Demopolis</td>
<td>St. Paul’s, Lowndesboro</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Bishop Marray</td>
<td>St. Paul’s, Lowndesboro</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 22, Sunday</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Bishop Sloan</td>
<td>St. Michael’s, Faunsdale &amp; Holy Cross, Uniontown (at Uniontown)</td>
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New Institute for Conscious Being Provides Path to Spiritual Awakening

Next conferences scheduled for December, 2014 at Kanuga and at Camp McDowell in Spring 2015

By Brigid Galloway

Fifteen years ago more than 100 participants from across the diocese of Alabama attended the first Enneagram conference at Camp McDowell lead by Joseph Howell, Ph.D. For many it was the first time they heard about this ancient method of discovering one's true spiritual self and how to access that all-important identity. Today, Howell heads up the Institute of Conscious Being with co-founder Rev. Susan Sloan, rector at St. Stephens in Huntsville. Faculty members include Raymond Moody, M.D. best-selling author of twelve books including *Life After Life* and journalist, Brigid Galloway. Camp McDowell serves as the Institute's sacred home.

The institute uses the Enneagram as a core teaching method, while employing many other bodies of knowledge in teaching consciousness. Consciousness is interpreted by the faculty as the awareness of one's true and false being, the ego, the soul, and from those understandings, informing one's relationship to the Divine while living in a broken world.

Awareness on this scale, is the lens through which self-concept, relationships, faith, the environment, and the geo-political picture are viewed. Though all relationships to the Divine are honored and included, the Institute for Conscious Being is grounded in Christ's teachings.

“The Institute for Conscious Being seeks to call forth awareness of one's soul to light the way for the blinded ego,” Howell says. “In this endeavor, many can benefit from the wisdom of spiritual tools taught and practiced by the Institute’s trained leaders and faculty. The ripple effect among and beyond the people who avail themselves of such learning can be significant as so much needless suffering can be eliminated.”

Global Mission Touches the Heart

By Christine Merer, Global Missioner, St. Stephen’s Birmingham

No adoptions ever occur from here. The mission of El Hogar is to raise up a new middle class of Honduras. The children ages 5-21 years old, receive an education and learn a trade when they graduate from El Hogar, they then have something to offer a future employer. Many of the children go on to the University after graduating. (The University is free).

Leading teams to El Hogar has been an amazing experience for me. It has been such a pleasure introducing people to my spirit Alabaster. Our band of eight spent a week at El Hogar painting the dorms and loving on the children. Our next visit is June 28. Two visits are planned for 2015, in March and in June.

I would describe El Hogar as a ‘thin place’. In the walls of El Hogar; heaven and earth meet. You can feel the Holy Spirit moving and working at El Hogar. The director of the program has often shared that she is guided by the Holy Spirit to the children she rescues from the streets. The teachers at El Hogar so freely share the love of Christ with all of the children. Christ’s love can be felt in this place. It is his power and Love that keep El Hogar going.

I encourage all to discover the transformative power of Christ’s love as we engage in global mission. Christine Merer (omenger@gmail.com) participates in the Global Mission Roundtable. For more information on the Global Mission Roundtable, contact Christine, the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, (jgquick@bellsouth.net), or go to instituteforconsciousbeing.org.