Bishop of Costa Rica Visits Holy Cross Episcopal School, Montgomery

By Liz Fryer

On Friday, September 9th, Holy Cross Episcopal School in Montgomery was honored by a visit from the Rt. Rev. Hector Monterroso Gonzalez, Bishop of Costa Rica, who was visiting as a guest of Church of the Ascension. Church members Pat Bamman and Foy McGowin arranged the visit and graciously brought him to see the school.

Principal Kathy Taylor escorted the Bishop on a tour so that the guests could see the classrooms, meet the teachers and students and showcase the school's outstanding curriculum and enrichment programs. She also invited them outside to experience the picturesque campus and see the beautiful Chapel of the Annunciation describing its history and the history and founding of Holy Cross School in the late 1990s.

Pictured in photo (L-R): Pat Namman, Kathy Taylor, the Rt. Rev. Hector Monterroso Gonzalez, and Foy McGowin

Legacy Giving Through the Nativity Trust/Alabama Episcopal Foundation Enables New Ministry Support at Manna House

Thanks to those who have generously made gifts and bequests to the Nativity Trust through the Alabama Episcopal Foundation, Nativity’s Outreach Ministries were able to support a new ministry that supports feeding the hungry all over our city. The Vestry approved a $5,000 grant to Manna House to buy a much-needed piece of equipment: an electric pallet jack.

Manna House is part of the Huntsville Dream Center, a great resource in the Huntsville area, and one of Nativity’s major partners in serving the hungry in our community. Pictured here are Fran Fruhler, Director of Manna House Ministries; Lee Hicklen, Outreach Committee Chair and Vestry Member; Fr. Andy Anderson; and Mtr. Bonnie McCrackard.

Manna House is our partner in several ways, including providing weekend meal packs to the children and families at Huntsville’s Blossomwood School who would otherwise go hungry between the weekend days they do not have school meals available to them. Nativity can embrace this new ministry because of this collaboration with Manna House and our many members, adults, children and youth who gather weekly to prepare over 200 meal packs and deliver them to the Blossomwood children.

The Alabama Episcopalian

The Anglican Communion
An 80-million-member worldwide community of 38 provinces
Archbishop of Canterbury
The Most Rev Justin Welby
Lambeth Palace, London, England SE17 1JU

In the Diocese of Alabama
About 34,000 baptized members in 92 parishes and worshipping communities and 8 college campus ministries. Established in 1830.
Bishop
The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan
Carpenter House
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Montgomery, AL 36103
205/773-2060

In the United States
A community of about 2.6 million members in 119 dioceses in the American and abroad. Established in 1789.
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The Most Rev. Michael Curry
Episcopal Church Center
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212/867-8400

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All editorial submissions should be sent to Kelley Hudlow at khudlow@dioala.org. The deadline for each issue is February 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1.

All address corrections or additions should be sent to Denise Servant at dservant@dioala.org or Carpenter House, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203–2682.

The DioAla News Update is sent by email on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month. This publication includes the current news and events from throughout the Diocese. To subscribe to this email update visit http://bit.ly/2eGwFt5.

2017
The Alabama Episcopalian Schedule

March 1 (deadline February 1)
May 1 (deadline April 1)
August 1 (deadline July 1)
November 1 (deadline October 1)

Submissions should be sent to the Rev. Deacon Kelley Hudlow at khudlow@dioala.org. Images should be submitted electronically, and in the highest resolution possible.

About the Cover

Deacon Ordination
Photo by Kelley Hudlow
Story and photos
Page 5

ON THE COVER

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Molly G. Parme, Art Director
Fran Servant, Circulation Secretary
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Maybe Christmas ... Perhaps ... Means a Little Bit More!

But this year, as we turn the corner on a long hot dry summer with the promise of a few months of cooler air, and to leave an especially ugly political season behind us, I am ready and more than ready for a little bit of peace on earth and good will on earth toward everybody.

of buying and selling, something that peeks out from behind the decorations and lights, something about good will toward each other that we only allow ourselves to let in for a few weeks every year. I believe it's the Spirit of Christmas, when we all seem to be a little more kindly disposed toward one another, when we seem to be a little more willing to give to those in need, when our defenses are lowered just a little bit.

It seems that most of us give ourselves permission to be mostly indifferent toward people we don't know for about ten and a half months out of the year, to be concerned only about ourselves and those we love, until we start hearing Christmas songs on TV or on the radio, and we are reminded that we ought to be more loving, more generous, more aware of love and joy and hope. And I wonder why we don't try to expand this part of our lives, not so that we have to endure even more commercials using Saint Nicholas to sell stuff, but to increase the number of days and weeks and months of our lives in which we look for good will more often, and try to live more generously, more lovingly toward the people around us.

So in my mind I'm singing about the "Hap-happiest time of the year" which is still two months away, just to pull my mind out of some of the unpleasantries in the news. And I wonder if maybe I need to stop relying on the calendar to roll around again and find the real Spirit of Christmas that is always there. Maybe I need to find the good will toward God's children inside myself every day instead of just toward the end of the year. Maybe the good will toward all and peace on earth that we all so desperately need comes not from outside us, from the music and the decorations and the presents, but from inside our own hearts.

"Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before! 'Maybe Christmas,' he thought,'doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas ... perhaps ... means a little bit more!'" Maybe it is the love of God we are offered in Bethlehem's manger, and the love of Christ we are given to share with the world.

I ask you to pray, friends. Pray for our nation, for God's amazing grace to heal what is broken and filled with pain and anger. Pray that we may live in the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ in such a way that those around us are invited to find peace on earth, and good will for all of God's children, all year long.

Hello, friends

It's getting pretty close to the end of October as I write this. This morning I heard my first advertisement using a Christmas song on the radio. "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year." I admit that there is something decidedly Grinch-like that comes out in me once a year, as Christmas seems to start earlier and earlier every year and I try in vain to hold onto to Advent and wait at least until December 24th before I allow myself to hum along with all the Christmas tunes we will all have been bombarded with by then ... ah, me.

But this year, as we turn the corner on a long hot dry summer with the promise of a few months of cooler air, and to leave an especially ugly political season behind us, I am ready and more than ready for a little bit of peace on earth and good will on earth toward everybody.

There is some magic about Christmas that I don't quite understand, something that transcends our divisions and differences, something that survives the frenzy of buying and selling, something that peeks out from behind the decorations and lights, something about good will toward each other that we only allow ourselves to let in for a few weeks every year.

Maybe the good will toward all and peace on earth that we all so desperately need comes not from outside us, from the music and the decorations and the presents, but from inside our own hearts.

BISHOP’S VISITATION SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

December, 4
St. Luke’s, Birmingham 10:30 a.m.
Calvary, Oneonta 4:00 p.m.

December, 11
Grace, Cullman 10:30 a.m.
Good Shepherd, Decatur 6:00 p.m.

December, 14
St. Bartholomew’s, Florence 5:00 p.m.

December, 18
St. Stephen’s, Eutaw 11:00 a.m.
Holy Apostles, Hoover 6:00 p.m.

December, 21
St. Mary’s, Jasper 5:00 p.m.

December, 23
St. Mark’s, Boligee 6:00 p.m.

December, 24
Church of the Advent, Birmingham 5:00 p.m. & 11:00 p.m.
On October 15, 2016, a service of Recognition and Investiture was held for the Rt. Rev. Santosh Marray as the 11th bishop of the Diocese of Easton. The service was held at Chesapeake College in Wye Mills, Maryland. The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, was joined by bishops and clergy from across the Episcopal Church. The Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan served as the preacher.

As part of the service, Sarah Sartain, Staff Officer of the Diocese of Alabama, made the presentation of the episcopal ring, a gift of the Diocese of Alabama. Also present from the Diocese of Alabama were the Rev. Rob Morpeth, the Rev. Deacon Dave Drachlis, and John Hoerner. This team live streamed the service via Facebook and YouTube, making the service available for those unable to attend.

In his sermon, Bishop Sloan reminded the audience that having Bishop Marray was a gain for them, but that it was a loss for the Diocese of Alabama. “We love this man that y’all have chosen to be your bishop. And we’re real proud of Santosh, Lin, and their family. And we wish them every blessing. And I miss you brother.” Sloan continued later, “And now you have called a little boy from Guyana, who has offered himself into the love and service of our Lord Jesus. You called him to be the bishop of Easton and told us several times that you will uphold him in this ministry. And I know you will… I know that Santosh is a good bishop. I’ve seen it and felt it and heard it for four years. And I am grateful to God and to Santosh, I know he’s going to be a good bishop for the Diocese of Easton.”

Prior to his election, Bishop Marray served as Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama from 2012-2016. Prior to this, he served as assistant bishop in the Diocese of East Carolina, and as bishop diocesan of the Seychelles.

The service can be viewed at https://vimeo.com/187751359.
Nine Ordained to the Diaconate

Nine women and men from throughout the Diocese of Alabama were ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons Saturday, October 1, 2016, by the Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan, during a service at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham. The service was offered by the Rev. William King, Dean of the Deacon’s School for Ministry.

They are: Dave Lambert, St. Francis Assisi, Indian Springs; Judy Neil, St. Alban’s Church, Birmingham; Andrea Peacock, St. James, Alexander City; Jennie Randall, St. Thomas, Huntsville; Bob Serio, Church of the Nativity, Huntsville; Pearl Slay, Trinity, Demopolis; Susan Southwick, Holy Cross, Trussville; John Stewart, St. Matthias, Tuscaloosa; and Charlie Venable, St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands, Birmingham.

They comprise the fourth class of deacons to be ordained since the permanent diaconate was restored in the diocese in 1999. King offered in his sermon that the fourth class joins “into that ancient order that draws its strength and character from the wisdom and instructions of the very first Christian generation. And the shape and direction of our diocese will forever be strengthened as a result of the ordinations that we will witness and acknowledge this morning.” With Saturday’s ordination there are presently 36 deacons actively serving parishes in the diocese, 10 retired deacons, and 1 deacon living out of state. Deacons are non-stipendiary. They have a role both in the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the table during Eucharist, and have special ministries both within and outside their parish.

Deacons assist bishops and priests in the work of the church, and have a special responsibility to minister in Christ’s name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless. Deacons are often described as bridges between the church and the world. They are called to make Christ’s redemptive love known to the world and to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world.

Their formal preparation included a two-year Deacon’s School for Ministry program. The program included monthly Saturday sessions, three weekend sessions each year at Camp McDowell and an extensive theological and scriptural reading program. Students also explored a variety of community ministries during their formation. Completion of the four year Education for Ministry curriculum of the School of Theology at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, was also required before ordination.

Deacon Lambert will serve at Epiphany in Leeds, Deacon Neil will serve at Grace Church in Woodlawn, Deacon Peacock will remain and serve at St. James in Alexander City, Deacon Randall will remain and serve at Holy Cross, Demopolis, Deacon Southwick will remain and serve at Trinity in Huntsville, Deacon Stewart will remain and serve at St. Matthias in Tuscaloosa, and Deacon Venable will remain and serve at St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands in Birmingham.

Additional Photos of the service by Kelley Hudlow are available at http://bit.ly/2emxPX2

Video of the webcast of the service is available at https://vimeo.com/185413133

Four to be Ordained to the Priesthood

Four transitional deacons will be ordained to the Sacred Order of Priests in the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama in November and December. The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan will ordain Tommie Lee Watkins, Jr., John (Trey) Ira Kennedy, Tyler Clayton Richards, and Pamela Kathryn Payne. Each is being ordained in the congregation that they are serving as deacons, and each will continue to serve these congregations as priests.

Watkins was ordained on Friday, November 11, at 7 p.m. at Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa. Kennedy was ordained on Saturday, November 12, at 10 a.m., at St. Paul’s in Greensboro. Richards will be ordained on Saturday, December 10, at 10 a.m. at St. Andrew’s in Montevallo. Payne will be ordained on Saturday, December 17, at 2 p.m., at St. Michael’s Fayette.
Disaster and Long-Term Development: Hurricane Matthew

By the Rev. Deacon Judy Quick, Diocesan Coordinator, Episcopal Relief & Development

“Loving and merciful God, you bestow your grace on all of your children. Remember our sisters and brothers throughout the world who, in partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development, strengthen communities, empower the poor, nourish the hungry, restore the sick, and uplift those affected by disaster; and uphold Episcopal Relief & Development for the next seventy-five years, so that your Kingdom might be known to all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.” Amen.

Episcopal Relief & Development is profoundly grateful for the loving response to our brothers and sisters near and far who have been affected by natural disasters these past months. Episcopal Relief & Development has received so many inquiries on how to help and to respond. Donations made to Episcopal Relief & Development are providing direct support for food, water, and shelter for over 520 families staying on church properties in the southern peninsula of Haiti and are helping US dioceses assess and respond to local needs after the storms. Churches in affected areas are leveraging their existing ministries and community relationships to provide specialized services and care for people who are displaced from their homes.

In Florida, Episcopal Relief & Development support will expand the ministry of Church Without Walls in Jacksonville to provide food, water, clothing, bedding, and sheltering materials for up to 300 homeless individuals in the area. In North Carolina, the Diocese of East Carolina is responding by reaching out and providing gift cards in hard-hit areas. In particular, support from Episcopal Relief & Development is helping to increase the response of the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry affiliated with La Iglesia Episcopal de la Sagrada Familia, a Spanish-language congregation in the town of Dunn.

Concerning our friends in Haiti, Abagail Nelson, Episcopal Relief & Development Senior Vice President of Programs notes: “The Haiti response is developing rapidly as transport and communications are restored to impacted areas. The hurricane caused extensive flooding and mudslides, power outages, and water shortages — compounding concerns about the possible spread of cholera. The Church is reaching out to the vulnerable in its midst.”

The Church is reaching out, in Haiti, and in the United States, and around the world. Episcopal Relief & Development continues to partner with churches throughout the Anglican Communion to spread the love of Jesus while transforming communities, economically and spiritually, through honoring the gifts of individuals, churches, and communities.

There are so many ways you can be a part of this dimension of our Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement:

1. Pray
3. Stay Informed
5. Donate

Thank you!

To learn more about Episcopal Relief & Development’s programs worldwide, visit www.episcopalrelief.org or contact the Reverend Judy Quick, Deacon, at jgquick@bellsouth.net 205.669.6862 (home), 770.366.4034 (cell) or Ms. Marilyn Lands at marilynlands@gmail.com.
Diocese Continues to Respond to Natural Disasters

By the Rev. Deacon David Whetstone, Diocese of Alabama Disaster Response Coordinator

*The Perfect Storm* is both a movie and a book about a fishing crew that faced the weather elements off the Massachusetts coast, and lost their lives in a dreadful storm that resulted from the confluence of several independent variables to create a weather condition that was nearly impossible to predict. The movie title became iconic in explaining things that happen when we cannot predict outcomes in situations with complex and mitigating factors. In Alabama, our “perfect storm” came in April 2011. Alabama had storms before, but we had no idea that this storm was one for the history books. There were 363 tornadoes in three days, and an estimated 343 fatalities.

In response to that storm, the giving people of Alabama opened their hearts and gave our diocese money to help address the wreckage left behind the storm. Much of that money was directed toward helping rebuild or to refurbish homes of folks who lost almost everything. These funds were also used to provide equipment for long term use in responding to disasters in our own Diocese, and throughout the country.

Through the work of the Rev. Bill King and the Rev. Deacon Clyde Pearce, a mobile shower facility was constructed. The portable shower trailer provides two private showers, and needs only a water source, such as a garden hose. Water is heated through instant-on water heaters powered by propane tanks. Heated air and lights can be provided by using an onboard gasoline powered generator. The trailer can be towed by a pickup truck with a towing package. Many parishes have kitchens and areas suitable for sleeping, but lack showers. The portable shower trailer allows these parishes to host volunteer groups.

The trailer has been used in our diocese, as well as Toms’ River, NJ, following Hurricane Sandy. Currently the shower trailer is in St. Francisville, Louisiana, at Grace Church, which is hosting up to 40 volunteers. The rector of Grace Church, Father Roman Roldan has volunteers working at various sites in that region of Louisiana providing much needed assistance with dry wall destruction, and general cleanup necessary for crews to bring houses back in to a condition suitable for habitation.

The diocese is continuing its efforts to be able to respond to disasters. Currently the Rev. Rob Iler is designing and outfitting a tool trailer, which will allow volunteer groups to help perform minor rebuilding in affected areas. The tool trailer will also be available to be used in non-disaster settings to assist in repair work for people that do not have resources to hire contractors. The diocese is also providing assistance in the development of a portable kitchen at All Saints’ in Homewood, which can be used to feed volunteer groups as they work in areas where local infrastructure has been hard hit.

The diocese continues in the Church’s mission as followers of Jesus to reach out to neighbors in need. Money from the Bishop’s fund has been sent to help many dioceses and organizations over the years including the Diocese of Mississippi (Hurricane Isaac, Tupelo tornado); Habitat for Humanity; Tuscaloosa (Pike County tornadoes); Diocese of Louisiana (severe floods); Diocese of Western Louisiana (severe floods); Diocese of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City tornadoes); Diocese of Colorado (extreme erosion from flooding); Diocese of New Jersey (Hurricane Sandy); Diocese of New York (Hurricane Sandy), and the Diocese of East Carolina (flooding from Hurricane Matthew). Through developing resources that can be deployed at times of disaster and financial contributions, we are able to help those in times of great need to find hope and to rebuild their lives.

As we continue to provide resources to our neighbors affected by disasters, we need your support. Your financial gift to the diocese to support disaster response allows us to respond with immediate financial aid to other dioceses and agencies so that those affected can have shelter, food, and clothing. It also allows continued diocesan support and development of tools that can be deployed at times of crisis both here in our diocese and elsewhere.

If you have questions, or would like more information about the Diocese of Alabama Disaster Response, please contact the Rev. Dn. David Whetstone, Diocese of Alabama Disaster Response Coordinator at whetstone@cableone.net.

Ms. Lucinda Murphey (1836-1900) Remembered

By Charles Hart, Member of the Commission on Race Relations and Parishioner, Holy Comforter, Gadsden

Of Saturday, September 17th at Gadsden’s Holy Comforter’s closing Communion service, the Rev. Carl Saxton II blessed and dedicated a container of dirt that came from the gravesite of Ms. Lucinda Murphey, a fitting tribute to the conclusion of a fruitful anti-racism workshop that weekend. What is extraordinary about this is Ms. Murphey was African American, born in slavery, and was apparently a full member of Holy Comforter in 1888.

Now the rest of the story –

Susan Murphey-Kyle (1867-1946) and her husband married and settled in Gadsden bringing with them Susan Kyle’s mother, Susan Wainwright Murphey and Ms. Lucinda Murphey, her servant. Parish records list Ms. Lucinda Murphey as a member, the notation “Colrd” (Colored) just before “B.C.C.” {Baptized; Confirmed; Communicant?}, and her residence as being with Mrs. Kyle.

In 1894, during a time when blacks were disfranchised, parish records show all three women signed a notarized document accepting notice of a parish meeting to ratify the sale of the lot where the church stood, indicating Ms. Lucinda Murphey was fully included in the business affairs of the church.

Not much is known about Ms. Lucinda Murphey. Parish records do not list a burial service for her, but she was buried in Southern Hills Cemetery, a site restricted to people of color, with a nice headstone and a wrought iron fence around the plot. That cemetery was saved from neglect by the prodigious efforts of Ms. Chari Bostick, who also prevented the cemetery from being taken over by the town of Gadsden. The Holy Comforter Comforter’s closing Communion service, the Rev. Carl Saxton II blessed and dedicated a container of dirt that came from the gravesite of Ms. Lucinda Murphey, a fitting tribute to the conclusion of a fruitful anti-racism workshop that weekend. What is extraordinary about this is Ms. Murphey was African American, born in slavery, and was apparently a full member of Holy Comforter in 1888.

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Not much is known about Ms. Lucinda Murphey. Parish records do not list a burial service for her, but she was buried in Southern Hills Cemetery, a site restricted to people of color, with a nice headstone and a wrought iron fence around the plot. That cemetery was saved from neglect by the prodigious efforts of Ms. Chari Bostick, who was present at the dedication of the container with soil from the gravesite. At the last big cemetery cleanup, Holy Comforter parishioner Ken Raun helped clear off kudzu and vines from Ms. Murphey’s plot and is paying to have the headstone professionally re-set. Parishioner Bob Pine helped collect the soil from her grave, bought the container and had the inscribed plaque made.

The missal stand on the altar which has long been in use at Holy Comforter is inscribed: “Ad Gloriam Dei et In Memoriam Lucinda Murphey. Born in Slavery, Died January 18, 1900. Faithful unto death. Presented by Mrs. T.S. Kyle and Mr. C.W. Murphey.”

In April 1907, the Diocesan newspaper carried this description from a local paper, of the dedication service for this missal stand: “Perhaps the most interesting memorial in all Alabama is one which Mrs. Kyle and her brother presented as a testimonial of their love and affection for their old black mammy, whose simple, yet noble, history is best told in the inscription. [quoted above].”

Ms. Murphey’s soil container currently rests under the altar, on top of which sits her missal stand. Each year on Holy Comforter’s Christmas memorial poinsettia list an anonymous donor has had her name recorded as “Ms. Lucinda Murphey.” The parish remembers Ms. Lucinda Murphey, in life and in death re-members her as a part of its current congregation.
Holy Apostles Serve in Baton Rouge

A Reflection by the Rev. Robin H. Hinkle

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it (Song of Solomon 8:7)

Beginning on August 12, 2016, while many of us in Alabama were busy getting our kids ready for their first weeks of school and preparing for another football season, the people in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the surrounding towns were experiencing a flood for which many of them could not have prepared. Over 21 inches of rain fell over the next three days resulting in the worst natural disaster in the United States since Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy. Before the waters had even completely receded, I began to have visits to my office at the church from people asking when we would be going to help. You see, our parish has deep connections in Louisiana. Several of our families here have families there who were impacted by the flood. We also have a fair contingent who is originally from Louisiana. It therefore became a question of how quickly we could send a team down to Baton Rouge to help with the flooding relief efforts.

Over Labor Day weekend, our small but mighty team made the trip to Baton Rouge. What we found three weeks after the flood was astounding. The waterline was apparent on the homes, businesses, and churches that we passed. Some places had water up to the eaves, others halfway up the walls. Everything was affected—not a structure was untouched in the flooded areas. The streets were lined with the contents of the houses that had been flooded out. We also saw the refuse of the businesses and the churches. Mattresses, computers, church pews, beds, cabinets, TVs, cribs, kitchen items, rugs—all were piled along the curbs. This went on street after street, mile after mile, from one community to the next. We were told that over 157,000 homes had been affected. The contents had been cleared out of many homes, but now the families were in the midst of the grueling work of gutting and mucking their homes, trying to stay ahead of the mold that was starting to grow and spread. Our team therefore worked with people from all over the country, helping to pull up floors, pull out drywall and insulation and demolishing cabinets—all in an effort to get the houses dry and clean so that they can be rebuilt. Imagine stripping your home down to the wood studs, throwing everything else onto a trash heap in your front yard. That is what we were doing in our work. I have been told that it may take up to 6 months just to muck and gut all of the homes. It will then take many more months to rebuild them.

I invite and encourage the people of our diocese to keep Baton Rouge in our prayers, contribute to the needs of the saints, and if possible, consider sending a team to Louisiana to help the families in need. We worked with two groups in obtaining site assignments in Baton Rouge. The first was through the Diocese of Louisiana, Father Roman Roldan at Grace Episcopal Church in St. Francisville, LA. He is coordinating the diocesan response in Baton Rouge and the surrounding areas. Second, we worked with Pastor Ed Brazier of Trinity Lutheran Church in Baton Rouge and his cohorts at www.Evacuteer.org. I am happy to talk to anyone who may want to plan a trip to the area to share with you how we planned and prepared for our trip.

The Rev. Robin H. Hinkle may be reached by email: rhinkle@holypostleshoover.org. Additional information may be found on the Diocese of Louisiana website: http://www.edola.org/flood-relief/

Seeing the Face of God in Each Other

By the Rev. Deacon Carolyn Foster, Co-Chair of the Diocesan Commission on Race Relations

There are just a few of the comments from attendees of the September 17 “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other” Anti-Racism Workshop: “eye opening,” “challenging,” and “life-changing.” The workshop was hosted by Holy Comforter in Gadsden and sponsored by the Diocesan Commission on Race Relations in the Church. This training is essential to Christian formation and the Commission on Race Relations urges all members of the Diocese to make this a priority as we seek and serve Christ in all people.

This faith-based workshop offers a positive vision of the unity that can be achieved through Christ. This training is a requirement for all members of the Diocese in leadership positions, at both the parish and diocesan levels. Two workshops a year are sponsored by the Commission, one in the fall and one in the spring, and trainings are held at different locations around the Diocese. The Spring 2017 workshop will be Saturday, March 11, at Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa.

If you would like to host a workshop for your vestry, staff or parish, this can be arranged at a time convenient to the parish. Contact the Rev. Deacons Carolyn Foster (carolynjfoster@bellsouth.net) or Tom Osborne (trosborne@una.edu) for details.
Stewardship of Creation: Gardens & Butterflies

A Reflection by The Rev. Pamela Payne, Chair of the Diocesan Task Force for Stewardship of Creation, and Deacon-in-Charge at St. Michael’s, Fayette

Church gardens are one way to respond to this vast spectrum of injustice. There we work together to create, produce, and nurture all of God’s creation. There we see partnership, reciprocity, interdependence, and vulnerability. In the garden, we may taste and see that the Lord is good. In gardening, we minister to the “least of these” in creation and in human societies. Gardening is ripe with theological imagery that may help us craft a future in which the monarch butterfly again thrives, and the vulnerable of all human communities are protected.

"God walked in the garden in the cool of the evening," the book of Genesis tells us. God walks in all our gardens, and stops in rapt attention to watch the monarch butterfly. Why? Because it matters. It matters to God, and so it should matter to us. Hearts that hold dear the monarch butterfly are hearts that can—with God’s help—save the world.

The Task Force for the Stewardship of Creation in the Diocese of Alabama exists to serve and educate parishes and individuals about how they may care for creation in the name of Jesus Christ. We are seeking new members and parish liaisons. Task Force members are appointed by our bishop. Liaisons are appointed by the Task Force. If you would love to serve with us, please contact Pamela Payne (pam.payne34@gmail.com) or Danielle Dunbar (ddunbar@diola.org).

A delicate—but feisty—monarch butterfly fell on a marigold at Common Ground, the garden at St. John’s, Decatur. Bumble bees and tiny wasps also feasted, but no one who watched them worried about being stung. Those of us visiting from St. Michael’s, Fayette, felt we had momentarily stumbled upon the peacable kingdom.

Carol Hancock, lead gardener at Common Ground, two years ago encouraged the gardening committee to adopt organic practices, and to seek certification as a wildlife refuge from the National Wildlife Federation. The results of this were apparent to those of us from St. Michael’s, who were there on a field trip to educate ourselves as we begin our own church gardening project. Folks accustomed to mono-crop row gardening might find companion-planting chaotic and unconventional. But the thriving plants and pollinators reveal the wisdom of such sustainable practices.

There were quite a few monarch butterflies feasting that September morning at Common Ground. But ten years ago, there would have been more. The population of monarch butterflies has decreased by 90% since 1995. Erratic weather and habitat loss have contributed to their decline. Scientists and volunteer monitors who track these beautiful creatures believe there is a strong chance monarchs could become extinct within twenty years.

The butterfly has sometimes been embraced as a Christian symbol. A caterpillar’s transition through the shroud-like chrysalis to renewed life as a color-splashed winged creature is likened to the Resurrection. In light of the monarch’s endangered status, the correlation between butterflies and resurrection seems both ironic and yet perhaps hopefully prophetic. Imagine a world without the monarch butterfly. Some people would weep at such a thought. Imagine, instead, a world where we find a way to save the monarch butterfly.

The world is full of tragic injustices—toward people, especially children, and also toward the environment. Though it seems daunting, we must respond to all of them—poverty, racism, environmental injustice, the monarch’s extinction. They are all interconnected, and the brokenness that drives one injustice also causes another. Our response to them must be creative, comprehensive, and tenacious.

Our current policies aren’t going to work either. We often encourage them to share, to be generous, and to use their time to help others, but emphasizing the "time and talent" approach to stewardship almost always obscures the exclusively treasure-focused moment of bringing our offerings to God when the ushers pass the plate down the pew. What can we do to teach our children what it means to give a significant portion of what God has given us back to God through a sacrificial, proportional, first-fruits offering?

If we want our children to know what Jesus meant when he said, “Don’t worry about your life, what you’ll eat or what you’ll drink, or about your body, what you’ll wear” (Matt. 6:25 CEB), we need to start talking about money. Unfortunately, our silence is teaching them the wrong lesson. I like clipping coupons and prefer to keep our thermostat at a 6:25 CEB), we need to start talking about money. Unfortunately, our silence is teaching them the wrong lesson. I like clipping coupons and prefer to keep our thermostat at a comfortable 60 degrees, but I also encourage my children to give of their allowance to give to God when the ushers pass the plate down the pew. I definitely do those things because of course I am worried that we will not have enough. I do them because that’s how I value money as a gift that’s been entrusted to me. That’s how I express my stewardship of God’s blessings. And that practice of financial stewardship—sacrificial, proportional, first-fruits giving—has given me an attitude of abundance instead of scarcity, of faithfulness instead of fear.

That’s the attitude I want my children to know, which is why Elizabeth and I need to talk with them about our money—specifically how much we are given and how much of it we give away. I want them to know that by global standards we are rich—in the top 0.06% of the world’s population[1]—and I want them to know that we don’t take those blessings for granted. I want them to see that we give 13% of our income back to God and that we do it joyfully because that practice helps us to learn to depend even more fully on God. This fall, when it’s time to fill out a pledge card, I hope everyone in my family will be involved so that we might all grow together in our appreciation of God’s blessings and our confidence in his provision.

What about you? What does your attitude toward money say about your relationship with God? How do your spending and saving proclaim your faith that God will always provide? How does the transaction history in your bank account reflect your belief that God is the source of all your blessings? You might be a coupon-clipper, or you might be an overspending, but, either way, you can still use your money to build your faith. Whether we like it or not, our attitude toward money says something about our faith in God. Maybe we should all be more intentional about what beliefs it communicates.


Hiding Money

by The Rev. Evan D. Garner
Rector of St. John’s, Decatur and Member of the Department of Stewardship

Whether I intend it or not, my attitude toward money is teaching my children something about God. Perhaps I should consider what lessons I want it to teach them.

Like most of you, I grew up in a middle-class family that didn’t talk about money. If I ever asked how much my father made, the response was, “That’s private, and it’s rude to talk about it.” Of course, that didn’t stop me from getting into playground arguments over whose parents made more money. Likewise, if I ever asked how much our house cost, my parents would say, “That’s none of your business, and it’s rude to talk about it.” I could tell that we lived in a nice house, but, for some unknown reason, quantifying that niceness was a social taboo. Most of my parent’s finances were hidden from me and my brothers and me, but occasionally they would share with us that the monthly utility bill was “a whopping $300” and that we all needed to do a better job of turning off the lights. I recall a stretch when my father was in between jobs, forcing us to cut back, but, except for a general admonition about the importance of frugality in lean times, the burden of that curtailment was kept from the children.

There was one financial practice, however, that wasn’t hidden from us. Once a month in church, my father would take out his checkbook, write a check for our family’s monthly pledge, and then fold it and hand it to one of us to put in the alms basin. How exhilarating it was to be invited into this act of private devotion! I remember feeling a sense of pride and a protective instinct that was awakened within me because I had been trusted with this piece of confidential financial information. Uncharacteristically, my father didn’t forbid us from taking a peek at the amount, which, to a boy with no appreciation for finances beyond a

The Rev. Evan D. Garner

Photo by Jo Frances White/Sandy Feat Arts

November/December 2016
**REMEMBER WHY**

Remember all of the mud and construction at Bethany? We built a lot of new facilities in a really short time! Why did we do it? So we would have a place that offers how the world could be. Thank you for following our story which is really the story about building God's kingdom at Camp McDowell. To paraphrase Bishop Sloan: for those who despair, camp is a place of hope; for those who feel lost, it is a place of belonging; for a world that is broken and hurting, camp is a place of joy and love.

Bethany Village has added so much to camp in terms of accessible and beautiful facilities. People of all ages and abilities can now come to camp. In fact, Special Session, a camp for adults with special abilities, will double the number of sessions offered in 2017. Joni & Friends, a global organization that extends the love of Jesus to people who are affected by disability, also utilizes the facilities at Bethany for their own summer camp.

More parish retreats can take place because of our additional lodges and convention will be held at camp again in 2019. Environmental education at camp is expanding through the McDowell Farm School and the Alabama Folk School is growing because it has more studio space. Summer camp on Clear Creek is better than ever and alternative and additional camps are being held at Bethany. Some examples include Create Camp, a work-boy and work-girl type session, and Grief Camp, a camp focused on teens who are grieving the loss of a family member.

**CIRCLES OF FRIENDS**

A Giving Circle is a group of friends who combine their pledges in order to have a naming opportunity at Bethany. Many of us want to share our best day at camp with people of all ages and abilities. It’s one of the reasons we built our fantastic new facilities. We need your help to complete the covenant. Working together, we can all make a pledge that makes a difference—and leave our names in Bethany Village.

Many who love camp have started Giving Circles. Most have a goal of $10,000. If just 10 people pledge $1,500—$25 a month or $300 per year for 5 years—the circle will reach its goal and have a naming opportunity at Bethany. 10 friends can leave their names on an 11X17 paver that will be part of a landscaping planter at The Doug. Please see the giving circles below and consider joining one today or start your own! Contact danielle@campmcdowell.com for more information.

- William & Amy Neely’s Giving Circle
- Liz Lee’s Giving Circle
- Julie Farmer's Giving Circle
- Gene McCall’s Giving Circle
- Jimmy Gauld’s Giving Circle
- Lyle Holnake’s Giving Circle
- Tom Brown’s Giving Circle
- Mark Johnston's Giving Circle in memory of Bobby Bevill
- Alabama Folk School Giving Circle

**HOW ARE WE DOING**

We are excited to share that we have raised $194,085 to date AND we have a challenge gift of $100,000 waiting to match the first ten circles that reach $10,000. What a great few months! Help push us to $400,000 by making a pledge today and getting your circles completed and matched! If you need more information, give Danielle Dunbar a call at 205-358-9234 or visit http://campmcdowell.com/ circle-of-friends-campaign. Thank you!

We are looking for 1,000 friends to share their story which is really the story about building God’s kingdom. What a great few months! Help push us to $400,000 by making a pledge today and getting your circles completed and matched! If you need more information, give Danielle Dunbar a call at 205-358-9234 or visit http://campmcdowell.com/circle-of-friends-campaign. Thank you!

**Planning Under Way for 186th Diocesan Convention**

The 186th Convention of the Diocese of Alabama will be held at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center in Birmingham, Alabama, on February 17-18, 2017. The Convention will be hosted by St. Andrew’s, Grace Church Woodlawn, and St. Mark’s Birmingham. The theme for convention will be “Why Jesus? Telling the Compelling Story of God’s Love.”

Registration will be done on-line through Access ACS. Delegates should be in place and certified through AccessACS by December 16th, 2016. Retired or non-parochial clergy can register through their parish or by contacting Georganne Perrine directly at gperrine@dioala.org.

A block of Hotel rooms has been reserved for our Convention at the Sheraton Hotel at a rate of $139. The group rate is available until January 25, 2017, subject to availability. Registration fees are $130 per person. There is no costs for the Clergy Spouse luncheon. If you would like to bring your spouse or a guest who is not otherwise registered for Convention to the Friday evening Gala only, you may purchase a ticket for $45. This can be done through AccessACS or by contacting Georganne Perrine directly.

All who are interested are invited to participate in a Sharing Faith dinner on Thursday evening prior to Convention. A separate registration with additional details will be sent closer to time to sign up for this opportunity.

Convention will begin Friday at 10:00 a.m. with optional workshops and opportunities to learn more about the missions and ministries from around our Diocese. The official Call to Order will begin at 1:00 p.m. on Friday and registration will run from 9:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Convention will conclude with a closing Jazz Eucharist on Saturday at 4:00 p.m.

Deadline for Registration, Resolutions, payments & Nominations is January 20, 2017. A full schedule, links for registration, hotel reservations, and updates can be found on the diocesan website at http://dioala.org/convention/general_information.html.

For assistance please contact Georganne Perrine (gperrine@dioala.org or 205-358-9230).
Wonderful wonderful Camp McDowell has become even more wonderful with the addition of Bethany. In many ways it seems hard to believe that we have completed the first full year of using the new facility for our mission and ministry. It seems longer ago than last February when we hosted Diocesan Convention for the first time. It seems like Bethany’s Kids summer camp has been a part of us for many more years. It seems to me like Bethany has been here for a longer time because it fits who we are so well, and I think it helps us continue down a familiar path of being who we believe that God is calling us to be.

Frankly, it is all turning out to be better than I thought it would be. I thought the facilities would be beautiful and functional. They are more beautiful and functional than I had dreamed. I thought a lot of people would want to use the facilities at Bethany, but there are more coming than I expected. I thought we would have a few more innovative new ministries begin here, but I was wrong because there are many new, innovative ministries beginning. I thought we could continue to “break even” financially with Bethany as we have at camp in the past, and it appears that we are. I never dreamed I could go to so many dances at Hall Hall in a year, or that the bass would grow so quickly in Sloan Lake. It appears that Bethany is turning out better than I had dreamed.

We are not perfect at Camp McDowell, but I have never been a part of an organization that strives harder to be the best we can be. Our staff strives to be a “well-oiled machine”. Thank you for being patient with us in our growth. I am very proud of the camp staff and how they are adapting to be twice as large as we were 18 months ago.

Guests often ask me, “What is next?” One of the next things we are going to do is complete the last of the funding of Bethany. We are close, but not quite there. Thank you for being so generous. This next year let’s raise the last ten percent we need. Another thing we are going to do this next year is grow our ministry and create more opportunities for you to come back to camp for Spiritual Formation. Adults, children, and families will all have more opportunities to learn more about who God is calling them to be. Another aspect of camp is that we are always trying to improve what we have been. This next year we intend to strive to improve all what we do. Whether it is having Summer Camp on Clear Creek, hosting Cursillo five times, putting more food on your plate grown at camp, improving our recycling, or continuing to upgrade our facilities we will strive to improve what we do. Above all, we will be striving to meet the needs of our wonderful and vibrant diocese.

In regard to facilities, this next year we will be moving toward zero landfill, thanks to a generous grant from The United Thank Offering which is allowing us to build our own recycling center. In 2017 we will be trying to figure out how we can build more staff housing. A fourth dining hall is also needed for the camp at Bethany. We will be completing our analysis in 2017 of our ability to create all of our own electricity from renewable sources that will reduce our carbon footprint by an estimated 74%.

I am looking forward to continuing to strive continue to grow to be the place and people we are being called to be.
Summer Camp at Camp McDowell, in two wonderful, wonderful locations!

Since 1948, Camp McDowell has offered traditional, residential summer camps rooted in the teachings of the Episcopal Church. Our mission is to show the way the world could be through worship, learning, rest and play in the beauty of God’s backyard.

Did you know that with the addition of Bethany Village, Camp McDowell now has TWO LOCATIONS for summer camp?? Yes, it is true!

In 2017, residential summer camp for rising 1st-12th graders will be offered in the original CLEAR CREEK location for the 69th season! Under the coordination of Stratt Byars (Summer Camp and Retreats Coordinator on Clear Creek), the beloved tradition of Summer Camp will continue to provide a supportive Christian community where young people learn to be themselves, to develop an abiding respect for all life, and have a whole mess of fun!

For the 3rd season, summer camps and retreats will ALSO be offered in BETHANY VILLAGE (“up the hill”). A variety of programs for children, youth, and families will again enable more people with varying abilities to experience the magic of summer camp at Camp McDowell! Events that utilize the McDowell Farm, the Rodgers Teaching Kitchen, the accessible facilities, and more offer a “new song” to the ongoing symphony that is Camp. Susanna Whitsett (Faith-based Program Developer), Ali Papp (McDowell Farm School Director), and Lisa Marie Ryder (Alabama Folk School Director) are already collaborating on the programs and activities that call campers to ENVISION the way the world could be, to INCLUDE as many people as possible, and INSPIRE kindness, creativity, and learning.

A complete schedule of summer camps and retreats offered by Camp McDowell (or in collaboration with) is below. Fees for each program will be announced around the first of the year.

Mark your calendar now for 2017 Summer Camp in Clear Creek AND Bethany Village at Camp McDowell.

Be sure to tell a friend!

Online registration opens January 11

Remember, it won’t be wonderful, wonderful without you!
On behalf of all the year-round Camp McDowell staff, the Department of Camp McDowell, and the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, we welcome your prayerful consideration to apply for Summer Staff at Camp McDowell for the 2017 summer season!

In the summer of 2017, Camp McDowell is introducing the first ever summer staff at Bethany Village. For the previous two summers, a group of interns faithfully served the growing needs in Bethany Village. Now, Camp has reached a point of transition from internship to full-time summer employment for Bethany Village.

For those that are familiar, we'll still hire twenty-eight summer staff members for the Clear Creek Camp, but we'll be supplementing that group with four to eight staff members that will be focused on the programs and ministries central to Bethany Village. This group will live and work in community while carrying out routine farm work, support roles for Conference Center groups that utilize Bethany Village during the summer, and critical counselor and leadership roles within some of Camp McDowell’s unique summer programs.

All Camp McDowell Staff members have potential to have a deep impact in the lives of campers. At Camp McDowell, the expectation is that each summer employee serves as a model of sacramental ministry, fulfilling an example of loving and servant leadership to the campers and to one another. Staff in Bethany Village have a particular opportunity to participate in the care and keeping of Camp McDowell’s farm and facilitation of farm programs. Every position on the Summer Staff - whether in Clear Creek or Bethany Village - requires constant energy, enthusiasm, integrity, patience, and perseverance. We welcome young adults who are seeking to live into their own potential in this way.

Details & Requirements:
Online applications accepted Nov 7 - December 15. Participation in Summer Staff Interview Day. Summer Staff Interview Day for 2017 will be on Monday, January 2nd, 2017. The location will be made public well before that date. Please plan to be with us the entire day. If you are unable to join us on that day, you should let us know ASAP.

Applicants must be out of high school at least one year by May, 2017.
Staff Training will begin at camp on May 17, 2017. Attendance is mandatory for all staff.
The last day of summer employment is Monday, August 7, 2017.

Additional requirements and details may be found on www.campmcdowell.com

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.
Stratt Byars
Summer Camp & Retreats Coordinator for Clear Creek @ Camp McDowell
stratt@campmcdowell.com
205.387.1806 Ext 6

Susann Whitsett
Faith-based Programs Developer for Bethany Village @ Camp McDowell
susann@campmcdowell.com
205.281.1903

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Summer Staff at Camp McDowell serving two wonderful, wonderful locations!

The Alabama Folk School will be in session:
February 17-19 (From Scratch)
March 17-19
April 17-20 (Bluegrass & Gee’s Bend)
May 15-19
June 26-29 (Youth Folk Camp)
August 3-6 (Wooden Boat Building)
September 15-17
October 12-15 (Old Time)
October 22-27
November 2-5
Visit http://www.alfolkschool.com/calendar/ to see the full list of workshops, classes, and special events.

Dear Friends,
Interested in helping Camp McDowell with the maintenance of the labyrinth? Did you even know they had one?
In September, 1998, 10 intrepid souls from throughout the Diocese and an Eagle Scout, along with Reverend Mark Johnson and his work boys, hauled rocks from the river and built a classical seven-circuit labyrinth between the main road and Miller Commons, in the woods on an old house site at Camp McDowell. Reverend Mark even had a dowsing rope help us pick the exact spot where the labyrinth should be built.
As a Veriditas Trained Labyrinth Facilitator, it has been a joy to see so many labyrinths being built by many different church denominations throughout our state since 1998. You can find them and others throughout the world by going to the website www.worldwildelabyrinthlocator.com.
A labyrinth is an ancient walking meditation tool. It is not a maze. Just one way in, to the center, and then the same way back out. The beauty of the labyrinth is in its simplicity. There are no rules, no right way. Just show up and walk. The path becomes your journey that day, and each time you walk it, the experience is new.
Camp McDowell has grown tremendously since 1998. The outdoor labyrinth is used frequently and needs constant care. With the blessings of Assistant Director Whitney Moore at Camp McDowell and Head of the Diocesan Commission on Spirituality Kathy Graham, I am asking for any group or individual to contact Whitney to volunteer one to two hours to help with the maintenance of the labyrinth. This means to weed, clear out sticks, replace rocks that have moved, clear both paths into the labyrinth (from Miller Commons parking lot and from the main road), cut low-hanging branches, and possibly get rid of poison ivy with some environmentally friendly Camp McDowell approved substance. It just depends on the season and condition of the labyrinth.
We would love to have this done each month, so 12 to 24 individuals or groups per year need to service the labyrinth. I am thinking individuals, boy scout groups, reunion groups, Cursillo staff, families, friends - anyone who loves Camp McDowell - to volunteer a couple of hours per year to help with the project of maintaining this sacred place. If you or a group are interested or have any questions, please contact Whitney Moore at whitney@campmcdowell.com or Mary Ellen Cahoun at mecalhoun11@gmail.com. Please consider this as part of your service to our beautiful facility “Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord.”
Mary Ellen Cahoun, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Birmingham
“It is solved by walking.” St. Augustine
At the Fork in the Road? Enneagram Weekend at McDowell Offers a Map for Conscious Living

How do we make tough decisions? How do we know God’s will for our lives? During those pivotal times, wouldn’t it be nice to have a roadmap to guide us? Fortunately, there is one. It’s called the Enneagram, and applying its divine wisdom can — and does — provide solutions to life’s many questions. By learning the principles of this life-illuminating spiritual tool, we discover a map to God and to the answers we seek, and — most of all — to become the people God created us to be.

Feb. 10–12, 2017, The Institute for Conscious Being (ICB) will present an intensive weekend of self-exploration and study led by Joseph B. Howell, Ph.D., clinical psychologist and author of Becoming Conscious: The Enneagram’s Forgotten Passageway. Through lectures, dynamic presentations, music, video, prayer, group work, and more, this weekend conference invites participants to learn how the Enneagram can become a map to guide them to the answers they seek, to reclaim peace in their lives, and to rediscover the path to their most authentic selves.

“The fork in the road is a wonderful metaphor, but the larger-than-life fork stands for the monumental and sometimes overwhelming decisions that stand before us,” Howell says. “Personally and collectively, we stand at an important crossroads today. Do we move forward in fear or in faith? The Enneagram offers a way to actualize our spiritual faith by pointing us in the right direction.”

The conference fee (including meals) is $175 to $375, depending upon your choice of lodging. For details and registration, go to http://campmcdowell.com/opportunities-to-come-to-camp.

The Institute for Conscious Being offers workshops and conferences, as well as in-depth intensive weekends and conferences, as well as in-depth intensive weekends providing certification in Conscious Being Through the Spirituality of the Enneagram. To find out more go to instituteforconsciousbeing.org.

Bethany at Camp McDowell

OUR TIME grief retreat for children and adults: Giving thanks for those we love, but see no longer
March 2-5, 2017

Being thankful for the life of a loved one is one of the therapeutic exercises facilitated at OUR TIME grief retreat. This weekend is for kids (6th-12th gr) who are healing from loss. It also includes a concurrent and separate program for an adult caregiver (for example, a grandmother and granddaughter might attend this weekend following the death of the mother). Participants spend time recalling their loss in a safe and supportive environment and engage in healing activities that involve small group discussion, artistic expression, and planting. It is a time for caregivers to share and receive support and a time for kids to connect to other kids who have experienced the death of a significant person in their lives. It gives the adults a time to rest and relax; it gives the kids a chance to express their grief and also enjoy the fun and fellowship of a camp setting.

When a significant loss occurs, grief is inescapable. Camp McDowell is thankful to be able to provide a setting where the resources of the Church and our facilities may offer support and healing. OUR TIME IS PROVIDED AT NO COST TO PARTICIPANTS.

For more information on registration or to make a donation, please contact Susanna Whitsett susanna@campmcdowell.com or 205.281.1903.

Save the dates in 2017 for...
Jan 13-16: Winter Weekend - camp-style retreat for grades 7 & 8
March 3-5: Our Time - grief retreat for 6-12th graders and an adult caregiver
April 21-23: Mother/Daughter Retreat for all combinations and interpretations of mothers & daughters
Grace Church Anniston Begins Church in the Park Service

Grace Episcopal Church in Anniston began a new ministry with their first “Church in the Park” on Saturday, October 2, at the pavilion in Zinn Park. Thirty people gathered to share the Gospel and the Eucharist. The Reverend Dr. Lee F. Shafer was joined by the Rev. Deacon David Whetstone in delivering the service, along with parishioners from the church. A new “abbreviated” service was used, and music was shared from the Alleluia III songbook. Grace Church plans to continue their ministry of taking the Gospel into the community with services in the park every month. The service will be held on the first Saturday of the month, and will provide an opportunity for those that visit Grace Church for Beans and Rice to worship as well.

This service was begun as a way of reaching out to those in the community who might not find their way through the doors of a church. It is also an opportunity for members and others to have a more casual worship experience outside the doors of the church. Welcoming newcomers and inviting all to participate in the life and worship of Grace and encouraging folks to join us on our journey as followers of Christ is the primary purpose of moving outside the doors of our church and into the world.

Birmingham Convocation Completes Habitat Build

For the second year, the Birmingham Episcopal Convocation has sponsored a Habitat for Humanity home. This year the home being built was in Calera, Alabama, for the Coates family. Britney and Demetrius Coates have four children, ages 3, 5 (twins), and 7. “This (homeownership) will positively change our lives because we will finally have a place to call our own home,” says Britney. “There is a God. He has sent angels for my family. We are forever thankful that you’re blessing us.” The Coates qualified for a Habitat home and a zero percent interest mortgage through a downpayment, performing 300 hours of volunteer work, and completing classes on household budgeting and home maintenance.

The groundbreaking for construction was on Saturday, September 16. Over six weeks, volunteers from Birmingham area churches worked to complete construction. Parishes providing volunteers included Church of the Advent, St. Francis of Assisi, Holy Spirit, All Saints’, St. Mary’s, Epiphany, Ascension, St. Luke’s, and Holy Apostles. The Episcopal Convocation has raised over $13,000 for the build.

On October 22, a house dedication was held. The Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan was present, with other clergy, to offer prayer and blessings for the new home. The Coates family was presented gifts for the children, a Bible, a cross, and house keys. Following the ceremony, those present toured the new home and shared lunch together.
“If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old is passed away, behold the new has come.”
2 Corinthians 5:17

In December 2015, after six years, our Diocese ended the official Companion Relationship with the Diocese of Haiti. Several years before this time, individuals from Alabama parishes began planting seeds for a new and continued relationship with our Haitian partners Pere Valdema and his wife, Carmel.

As the official end approached, I heard comments of “How can we abandon them, the poorest people in the western hemisphere.” Others said, “We have done enough, spent a lot of money and now we must move on to something new.” These views led me to re-examine my journey with our partners. This was a journey that began by asking “What is wrong with you?” or “How can I fix it?” As the official relationship came to a close, I realized the questions were now “What is right with you? What gifts do you have to improve your life and community? How can we all work together in a new way?”

Over this past year, parishes and individuals from North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Missouri and Alabama, who shared the vision and helped build Lepswa Timoun, came together with Pere Valdemar and Carmel to rebirth a new non governmental organization (NGO) from the former Christian Haitian American Partnership (CHAP). From this partnership, Light from Light, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit was created. There is also a new board of directors, which Mike Hubbard from St. Mary’s on the Highlands, is a member.

This year, teams from our diocese from Holy Trinity, Auburn, and Nativity, Huntsville, have continued to visit to provide medical mobile clinics. Other opportunities included education, building, and projects for older youth. Light from Light also supports the community in Crochu and the work of Krik Krak. Recently a medical team from Lepswa Timoun Clinic, which included Bishop Johnston from South Carolina, responded to the hurricane. Lead by Carmel, they endured great challenges as they served the victims in Jeremie with food, water and medical care.

Information about Light from Light can be found at their website: LightfromLight.me. Parishes and individuals that make donations and will receive documentation for tax purposes. If individuals or parishes wish to know more about projects or being part of a team, you may contact the Rev. Dn. CJ Van Slyke at 205-914-3866 (cjjenkmsro46@gmail.com).
A Reflection on the Singing River
A reflection by Lindsey Mullen

On September 10-11, the Young Adults’ Ministry Steering Committee hosted the Singing River Retreat in Florence and Muscle Shoals. Lindsey Mullen was the organizer and a participant. For more information about Young Adult Ministries, please email Austin Cook at austinkendrickcook@gmail.com.

As I keep up with the ongoing protests of native people against the Dakota Access Pipeline, I hold in my mind the story of a native woman who was born in North Alabama, named Te-lah-nay. Te-lah-nay was a member of the Yuchi tribe that lived in the Tennessee Valley, just outside of Florence. Along with thousands, she walked the Trail of Tears to Muskogee, Oklahoma. Remarkably, Te-lah-nay didn’t stay; she walked back to the banks of the Tennessee River.

Decades later her great grandson, Tom Hendrix, built a monument to commemorate her journey. It is the largest unmortared stone wall in North America, and one of the most sacred places I’ve ever experienced. In September, a group of young adults from the Episcopal Church in Alabama visited Te-lah-nay’s wall, and listened to her story. He described how the river was her sister, how she traveled on foot for five years to get back to her. He pointed to the rocks in the wall and said that our grandmothers were there, too. Our group walked the wall quietly together, touching the stones as we passed.

My faith felt complicated in this space. There is a grounded holiness; I want to be a part of that space. I want my grandmothers to be in the wall and I want to be in the wall, too. I want to be a part of this story of persistence, and survival, and goodness. But also tugging at me is the reality of my heritage. I’m aware that as a white Christian I reap the benefits of a history of brutal colonization and appropriation. I believe that the story of Jesus is in the story of Te-lah-nay; I’m afraid that the story of the church is in the story of her exile. I don’t know where to find myself in either story.

I have some hope and guidance weeks later, when I heard presiding bishop Michael Curry say to the people of Standing Rock that “The way of Jesus honors the water.” He is speaking of the water of Standing Rock. I am thinking of the water of Te-lah-nay’s beloved river. In statement of solidarity, Bishop Curry went on to say, “I want to now suggest that Standing Rock may be the new Selma. This may well be the moment when nations come together, when peoples of goodwill come together to transform this world from the nightmare that it often is into the dream that God intends; so that clean water is available to everybody, so that every man, woman and child knows the peace and the goodness that God intends for us all.”

I believe that all of us in the church today, and especially young adults, have a call and a responsibility to live into a faith that honors the story of Jesus, a political minority who stood on the side of the oppressed. I believe that we have a call to hear the brokenness in our own Christian story, to mourn the times when we have stood with oppressors, and to step together into the story of solidarity with the marginalized. I believe that we are called to sit quietly in places like Te-lah-nay’s wall, and to let the holy spirit move us to be a part of her story. I am grateful that I’ve been given this experience with other young adults this fall.

The Journey: A Recovery Ministries Event
By Kathy Graham, Department of Recovery Ministries Diocesan Staff Liaison

“What can we do and offer the church and the larger community to raise awareness, support and hope?” This was the question the Department of Recovery Ministries asked itself at it’s meeting in early 2016. After much thought and discussion, an event day was planned titled “The Journey: A Day on Addiction and Recovery.”

The event was held at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham on Saturday, October 15. A crowd of nearly 170 people, including a few of our youth groups, heard from two keynote speakers. The first was Michael O’Keefe, a professional actor and writer for over 30 years, who is known for roles in Caddyshack and The Great Santini, as well as numerous other films and theater productions. O’Keefe shared poems from his book Swimming From Under My Father. His story was about being a child of an addict as well as his own journey with addiction and recovery. The second was Travis Meadows, a singer and songwriter from Nashville. Meadows shared his story of addiction and recovery through his music, offering additional stories between songs. Meadows has songs that have been recorded by DeRicks Bentley, Eric Church, Jake Owen, Randy Houser, Blackberry Smoke, Hank Williams Jr., Wynonna Judd, and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

The day also featured four workshops, including: “Addiction 101” by Dr. Terry Alley, “Out of the Shadows” with Steve Moore, “Social Media and the Drug Culture” by Angela Camp, and “It’s A Family Affair” presented by Tish and Will Fuller. Several treatment centers were present with information, along with information about AA and Al-A-non, Campus Recovery centers, and the Addiction Prevention Coalition with information about their programs for schools and communities. A Recovery Eucharist celebrated by the Rev. Paul Pradat and the Rev. Robin Hinkle with music by John McAndrew closed the day.

Those that attended the event described the keynote speakers as “really engaging and helpful,” and many appreciated the use of poetry and music. Another attendee described the day as “a revival for my recovery. Everything was incredible.”

In his remarks in the program for the event, Bishop Sloan stated, “It is especially meaningful and appropriate for the Church to address [the problem of addiction] and offer support and direction for those who struggle, as the disease affects not only the mind and the body but also the spirit of a person. We offer the Good News of the love of God through Jesus Christ to all people. No matter what messes we make of our lives, the love of God is unfailling, and it is the sacred task of Christ’s holy Church to invite all people into God’s grace and mercy.”

The Department of Recovery Ministries gives tremendous thanks to the Rev. Paul Pradat who serves as a clergy representative to the department and gave numerous hours and drove many miles to make this day possible. The Planning team of the department led by Raymond Osdun, chair of the department, Squire Gwin, Jim Alford, Rachel McKenzie, Tish Fuller, Cindy Gilliom, Kay Laumer, Karyn Zweifel, and Kathryn Hollifield, met monthly and worked many hours planning. We appreciate the staff of St. Stephen’s for being present and helpful during our planning and our event. We also thank the staff of St. Thomas Huntsville for all your work in helping with preparations.

For more information about the Department of Recovery Ministries contact Kathy Graham Diocese of Alabama staff liaison kgraham@dioala.org

THE ALABAMA EPISCOPALIAN • 13
November/December 2016

Around Our Diocese
From the very beginning, Sawyerville Day Camp has been a collaborative effort. It takes hundreds of people from different backgrounds, hometowns, and faith communities to make this ministry possible—we run on teamwork! Having two directors feels like a natural next step. Crystal Jones and Claire Cotten will share the role and combine their gifts and talents to lead Sawyerville Day Camp and the Yellowhammer Learning Program together.

Crystal will oversee all aspects of the programs, from the pool to transportation, staff to housing, and will ensure that both the day camp and the learning program are efficient and effective. Claire will manage all communication outlets and encourage individuals, parishes, foundations, and corporations to become partners in the ministry. With the help of hundreds of volunteers, Crystal and Claire will continue to promote the mission of Sawyerville Day Camp which is to broaden the horizons of campers and counselors, improve race relations in Alabama, and serve God through outreach.

New Directors

This Christmas, consider sending Sawyerville Day Camp Christmas cards to your friends and family. Each card represents a donation to the camp, and it’s a perfect way to wish your loved ones a Merry Christmas.

We can send the cards on your behalf or mail them to you so you can write your own personal notes. We recommend a donation of $10 per card. To order your cards online, visit http://bit.ly/SDCcards. To order over the phone, call Claire Cotten (205) 358-9237.

Sawyerville Day Camp now has a Junior Board! The Junior Board will support and promote the mission of SDC by building awareness for both the day camp and the Yellowhammer Learning Program throughout the state of Alabama, boosting involvement among staff alumni, and raising funds through the planning and execution of events.

Young people ages 21-35 are encouraged to apply online by December 15, 2016. We’ll notify new Junior Board members in early January, and the Junior Board will begin their work later that month. Apply here: http://bit.ly/SDCJuniorBoard

Junior Board Leadership • Liza Lee Tweedy, Chair
Lydia Allison • Tim Callahan • Jermaine Cole • Lindsay Joe

Thank you!

Thank you very much to all of the individuals, parishes, companies, and foundations who gave so generously and worked so hard to make this summer a success. The day camp and the learning program would not have been the same without each staff member, each donor, each parish. Thank you all for being a part of these amazing programs, and thank you for loving these children!
When the Saints Go Marching In: Parish Giving for Summer 2017

This summer, the Yellowhammer Learning Program grew to include not only rising fifth-grade students, but also rising sixth-grade students. Thirty students completed the four-week program which was held at the Boys and Girls Club of Greensboro and Greensboro Middle School.

Each day started with a lesson on a different positive character trait like respect or courage. The mornings were devoted to traditional instruction in literacy, grammar, creative writing, and reading skills. After lunch, students spent the afternoon engaging in enrichment opportunities like chess, computer coding, math games, art, engineering, and science experiments.

Fridays were set aside for special activities and field trips. Students visited Greensboro City Hall to meet the mayor and the local library to get their own library cards. Students also made two trips to Birmingham to visit the McWane Science Center, the Civil Rights Institute, and the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. By the end of the four-weeks, the students showed tremendous improvement in their reading skills. All 30 students grew by at least one reading level. Fourteen students, almost half of the group, grew by four reading levels! We are so proud of the students, their families, the teachers, and teaching assistants for all of their hard work this summer!

In our twenty-fourth summer, we offered three weeks of day camp at Greensboro Elementary School for children and youth ages 6-14. Over the course of the summer, we registered 751 campers! Most of our campers come from Greensboro, Sawyerville, Newbern, and Akron. The campers are evenly divided between boys and girls, and the most active age group is 9-11 year olds. Session 3 was our largest session ever with 274 registered campers!

With all those campers, we needed plenty of staff! A total of 369 volunteers gave their time and energy to help the camp run smoothly. Of the staff, 134 were new to SDC and 113 were from the local community. Thirty-one individuals served on staff the entire summer. Twelve of the summer-long staff were college-aged interns.

“Finding My Way” was our theme this summer, and each session the campers considered being lost and being found. They learned about Biblical figures like Ruth, Zaccheus, and Jonah who found their way. Campers answered questions like, “What does it feel like when you’re lost?” “Who is your hero?” and “Why do we call God the Good Shepherd?”

In addition to the program, campers also participated in arts and crafts, group games, journaling, music, and swimming. All campers received a hot breakfast and lunch as well as a snack. We served 16,740 meals to campers and staff this summer!

We are so grateful to count the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama and many, many parishes among the supporters of SDC. For years, roughly 60% of the Diocese’s parishes have supported the camp. Imagine what we could accomplish together if 100% of parishes were involved. What if the saints went marching into Greensboro?

With this question in mind, for Summer 2017, we’re looking at parish giving in a new way, and we’re asking parishes to give together to sponsor one day of camp. For example, we’ll ask all three parishes named St. Mary’s (Birmingham, Jasper, and Childersburg) to pool their resources to support St. Mary's Day at Sawyerville Day Camp.

The day your parish sponsors will be the perfect opportunity for parishioners to tour the camp and the learning program or to volunteer to serve a meal to the staff. We’ll celebrate your parish’s day with the campers and post a special “thank you” on social media.

To learn more about how your parish can support Summer 2017 at Sawyerville Day Camp, please contact Claire Cotten at ccotten@diosa.org.
Youth Department
District Day

by Ellen Waller, YD Central District Representative

This past September, the Youth Department hosted their inaugural event, District Day, to kick-off the year. All 3 districts across the state held a separate gathering, inviting youth from all around to come participate in fun activities and meet those from other parishes. Each event had record turnout. In the Central District, participants were asked to wear their best sports attire and come ready to play Olympic-themed games. Meanwhile, the Southern District held a pleasant luau on the banks of the Alabama River. Up North, participants enjoyed an exciting Harry Potter themed evening. With such high energy surrounding the youth events already, it will be fun to see how the year progresses and what the youth have in store for Diocese. Stay tuned.

Christmas Conference at Camp McDowell
December 28-30, 2016
Sponsored by the Youth Department
“Let There Be Light!”

Let’s time to register for Christmas Conference 2016! Registration for this event opened on October 1 and there is still plenty of space for boys and only a few spots left for girls. Please register to join us today!

The Youth Department has been planning this event with the Rev. Tommie Watkins from Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa as our program director and chaplain. Our long-time friend and amazing musician, Fran McKendree, will offer a short concert and involve youth in leading music throughout the event.

The event cost is $115, with scholarship assistance available.

Registration is open till space is full or no later than December 19: http://bit.ly/2foY0aR

Staff applications are open till November 11: http://bit.ly/2foXMMt
Around Our Diocese

November/December 2016

In Thanksgiving for Diocesan Youth Ministers

If you want to see a good example servant ministry, here are the faces of some of our Diocesan Youth Ministers who organize engaging and formational programming, equip volunteers to share in ministry, share their faith walk, explore questions with teenagers, provide pastoral support to youth and their families, challenge youth to own their beliefs and live into the Baptismal Covenant, and develop life-long disciples of Jesus. One of the most important things they give is their precious time to be with youth and their families, both in the parish setting and all around the diocese throughout the year. Youth ministers are expected to play numerous roles and be in many different places; it’s a job that requires leading by serving. We serve in youth ministry because we love Jesus and desire to walk alongside young people in their faith formation during this vital developmental stage of life. The Diocesan Youth Ministers gather five times throughout the year for networking, peer support, and professional development.

Our next Diocesan Youth Ministers meeting is on Thursday, December 8. We will have a quiet morning of reflection, followed by a festive lunch at the Birmingham Museum of Art. If you would like to join us, please contact Susan Oakes at soakes@dioala.org.

Birmingham’s Got Potential

By Lindsey Mullen, Executive Director of Special Session

On September 24, over 200 people gathered in at Good People Brewery in Birmingham to watch and participate in “Birmingham’s Got Potential,” a talent competition benefiting Special Session at Camp McDowell.

Special Session is a summer camp session held for people of all abilities, staffed by teenage and college-aged camp counselors every June. Each year since 1998, Special Session has ended with a talent show, with every camper performing. The talent show is an opportunity for everyone to be celebrated. Talents vary from the usual singing and dancing to more unusual talents like making a bed or “extreme sitting.” The event is participatory for all people; the crowd goes wild for every performer who takes the stage.

The host, judges, and crowd at Birmingham’s Got Potential aimed to create a similar atmosphere for this September fundraising event. The crowd showed up to cheer on everything from spoken word poetry to interpretive yoga. Two Special Session campers, Judy Warnock and Calina Burst, stole the show with performances of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” and “Someone Like You.” A panel of judges, including Bishop Kee Sloan, reviewed each performance and concluded that Birmingham does indeed have potential.

Birmingham’s Got Potential is an annual fundraising event for Special Session, held in September. This year there will be two Special Session talent shows, put on in June at Camp McDowell and open to the public. Details about both events can be found at www.specialsessionalabama.org.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Introduction to Centering Prayer
January 13-15, 2017

Introduction to Centering Prayer. Benedictine Sisters Retreat Center, Cullman, AL. This retreat is designed for those new to Centering Prayer. Private rooms and the ability to maintain silence are required. The Rev. Katy Smith and Joe Mahar are presenters. Joe Mahar will present Centering Prayer as the 11th Step in one session for those in 12 Step programs. See Sacred Heart Monastery website: shmon.org Or call 256-734-8302.

Supported by Contemplative Outreach Birmingham

Winter Weekend
January 13, 2017 - January 16, 2017

Winter Weekend is a 3 night retreat open to all 7th and 8th graders. If you are missing Summer Camp, need a break from the school-year routine, or are just curious about what Summer Camp is all about, this is the retreat for you. There will be a fun, thoughtfull program centered on knowing who God is calling you to be in the world. The Reverend Jamie McAdams from Grace Episcopal in Cullman will be our Director. We will have all the exciting camp activities such as hikes, canoeing, arts and crafts, hay rides, s’mores and much more! Come and see what is waiting for you at Winter Weekend at Camp McDowell.

Price: $145 (Scholarships available upon request)
Registration: Opens November 4, 2016
Drop off: 5-6pm, January 13
Pick up: 9:00am for Closing Eucharist, January 16
For more information: http://bit.ly/2emptio

SAVE the DATE!

Episcopal Place 26th Annual Gumbo Gala
April 22, 2017 - Bossier Parish, Louisiana

Calling all Cook Teams!
Professional and Backyard Chefs

Dust off your pots, sharpen your knives, and tie on your aprons!
Gumbo Gala has become one of the southeast’s largest gumbo competitions, with BIG prizes, lots of fun, and only $300 early bird entry fee.

Think YOU got what it takes?
Then watch your inbox and Gumbo Gala Facebook for upcoming registration information!

2017 Honorary Chair: Chef Jim Smith
Executive Chef of the State of Alabama and Chairman of the Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission

NAPADS Participates in Gumbo Gala as one way to serve gumbo to the double-duty adults and busy families who volunteer at Episcopal Place Extension through their hands-on independent and productive volunteer hours.

Around Our Diocese

November/December 2016
Behold the Lamb of God: An Advent Narrative by Russ Ramsey (Rabbit Room Press, paperback)

Drawing from the pages of Scripture and with an eye toward both wonder and ground-level detail, Behold the Lamb of God brings to life the people, the places, and the earth-shaking significance of the greatest story ever told—the true tale of the coming of Christ.

A Christmas Journey: Filled with Wonder Marked by the Cross by Douglas D. Webster Clements Publishing Group Inc, paperback

It is easy to celebrate the mood of Christmas without Jesus. But it is impossible to celebrate the meaning of Christmas without Jesus. A Christmas Journey explores the meaning of God’s movement toward us and our response to God’s love. The message of Christmas can be summed up in four words: “God sent his Son.” The Gift we celebrate at Christmas was not wrapped, it was crucified. It was not under the tree, it was sent his Son. “The Gift we celebrate at Christmas was not wrapped, it was crucified.”

Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical by Timothy Keller (Viking, hardback)

We live in an age of skepticism. Our society places such faith in empirical reason, historical progress, and heartfelt emotion that it is easy to wonder—Why should anyone believe in Christianity? What role can faith and religion play in our modern lives? Keller invites skeptics to consider that Christianity is more relevant now than ever. As human beings, we cannot live without meaning, satisfaction, freedom, identity, justice, and hope. Christianity provides us with unsurpassed resources to meet these needs. Written for both the ardent believer and the skeptic, Making Sense of God shines a light on the profound value and importance of Christianity in our lives.

Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth Behind the Birth of Christ by Timothy Keller (Viking, hardback, and Penguin Audio books, read by Sean Pratt)

Even people who are not practicing Christians think they are familiar with the story of the nativity. In his new book Keller takes readers on an illuminating journey into the surprising background of the nativity. By understanding the message of hope and salvation within the Bible’s account of Jesus’ birth, readers will experience the redeeming power of God’s grace in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Love Letters from God: Bible Stories by Glenys Nellist (Zonderkids, hardback)

What child does not love to receive mail? What if that child could receive, open, and read his or her own personal mail from God? The Love Letters from God will invite them to do just that! Accompanying each story in this unique children’s Bible story book is a very special and encouraging letter, each tucked away in its own lift-the-flap envelope, just for them. Written for children ages four to eight. This book will culminate in an invitation for the children to write their own RSVP to God.

The Plot to Kill Hitler: Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Spy, Unlikely Hero by Patricia McCormick (HarperTeen, hardback)

McCormick provides a very readable account of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life, from his wealthy childhood in Berlin to his death at the hands of the Nazis in 1945. Readers learn of Bonhoeffer’s family, childhood, talent as a piano prodigy, and eventual calling to become a minister. He traveled to Spain, the United States, and England as he tried to reconcile his deep faith with the growing Nazi threat at home. Ultimately, though he had pacifist views and Bonhoeffer joined the German effort to assassinate Hitler. For Grade 5 and up.

Prepare Him Room: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus Family Devotional by Marty Machowski (New Growth Press, hardback)

This brand new, four-week devotional guides your family on an unforgettable Advent journey, exploring some of the most wonderful prophecies in the Bible and how God fulfills them in Christ. From Bible devotions to an original short story called Bartimaeus, Prepare Him Room helps you build family Christmas traditions around Christ. So gather them to watch the amazing gospel story unfold every December for generations to come!
The Abbey Becomes “Luke’s Diner” For a Day

Margaret Franks joined The Abbey in September 2016 as the lay missioner. She was excited to bring her ten years of experience in retail and management to The Abbey, and utilize that experience, alongside her faith, to help create an environment of hospitality, faith, and welcome. Shortly after beginning at The Abbey, Franks received a phone call from Netflix. While she was certainly surprised that Netflix would call a small coffee shop in Birmingham, Alabama, she was excited about what Netflix was calling about. In honor of the 16th birthday of the TV show The Gilmore Girls, and to promote a new season of the show, Netflix was asking over 200 local coffee shops to transform into “Luke’s Diner,” a location featured in the show. Netflix would provide coffee cups, cup sleeves, hats, and aprons, so that The Abbey could take part in the October 5th event. Franks answer was “yes.”

On the morning of October 5, Franks arrived to open The Abbey and was amazed to find a line of customers waiting. The staff had spent the week preparing for the event, so they were ready for the excited customers when the doors opened. The staff was dressed in “Luke’s Diner” hats and aprons, and many were wearing flannel shirts like the character from the show. Once the doors were opened, the line continued to grow, and at one point wrapped around the building into the back parking lot. The full staff was on hand, including The Abbey’s vicar, Katie Rengers, to welcome the customers to “Luke’s Diner” and The Abbey.

While the Netflix promotion called for The Abbey to give away cups of brewed coffee, they also sold plenty of lattes, pastries, and sandwiches throughout the day. Over 300 customers came to The Abbey the morning of the event, and customers continued to come throughout the day. Following the event, Franks has been excited that many of the new customers that came for the event have now become regulars.

Franks says that what she strives for as the Lay Missioner is “to give the best customer service out there along with her staff, so that customers can sense a place of deep faith and connection to people.” She describes The Abbey as “a place where both Episcopal friends and everyone else can come for delicious food, comfort, and coffee. It’s all about community.” Franks added “if you haven’t experienced The Abbey for yourself, come treat yourself this week to a latte and a panini.”

The Abbey is a coffee shop and Episcopal Church in the Avondale neighborhood of Birmingham. The Abbey features local coffee, espresso drinks, pastries, sandwiches, and soups. The Abbey is open Monday–Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Abbey has a weekly Eucharist at 4 p.m. on Sundays. The Abbey has space available for meetings and small groups, and is available for catering orders. For more information please call The Abbey at (205) 703-9538 or visit www.theabbeybham.com.

St. Michael’s Fayette Joins in Frog Level Festival

In the early 1900’s, Fayette, Alabama, was known as Frog Level. It got this name because of its location in a low lying area that was frequently swampy, and was said to be at frog level. Fayette now holds an annual community festival the first weekend of October called the “Frog Level Festival.” This year St. Michael’s Fayette took part in the festival by having an entry in the Frog Decorating contest. Karen Griffiths, a St. Michael’s parishioner, decorated their frog as a bishop. Bishop Sloan visited St. Michael’s on October 29 to bless the church’s newly acquired rectory, and took a moment to pose with his amphibian counterpart.