Companion Diocese:
Consider a Parish to Parish Relationship

By The Reverend Judy Quick, Deacon, Chair, Companion Diocese Commission with the Dioceses of Alaska and the Virgin Islands (jgquick@bellsouth.net)

O ur Companion Diocese Relationship with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands is flourishing. Over the past year and a half, we have welcomed our friends from the Virgin Islands to Alabama and they have welcomed us there.

We have walked the Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage together. We have discovered that we want to enrich clergy and lay leadership development, engage our youth in shared experiences and shared mission, and deepen our spiritual formation. Through meetings in Alabama and with parishes in the Virgin Islands on all three dioceses (convocations), through fun and fellowship at a clergy retreat at Camp McDowell, through visits to parishes throughout Alabama, we are deepening our bonds of affection.

Virgin Island and Alabama youth enjoyed Summer Camp at Camp McDowell and served together at Bethany Kids and as counselors at Sawyerville. 2017 will see youth exchanges to the Virgin Islands and a return of the Virgin Islands youth to Alabama.

As we dreamed, more groups are partnering with groups in the Virgin Islands. The Advent School has been working with Episcopal Schools on St. Thomas and Tortola. Leadership from the Episcopal Church Women of Alabama plan to attend the ECW Conference in the Virgin Islands. The Daughters of the King are exploring prayer partnerships. Some women clergy from Alabama will lead a spiritual retreat for women clergy in the Virgin Islands this summer. Clergy exchanges are in the planning.

Parish to Parish partnerships are a wonderful way to become more deeply engaged. As you get to know the congregation, you may discover similar interests and gifts for all ages. Mission projects may emerge as you engage each other in your shared missions. There are opportunities for small, medium, and large parishes.

Here are the 14 parishes in the Diocese of the Virgin Islands:

USVI:
- St. Thomas: Cathedral Church of All Saints (with school)
  - St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church
  - St. Luke’s Episcopal Church
  - Nazareth by the Sea
  - Church of the Holy Spirit
- St. John: St. Ursula’s Episcopal Church
- St. Croix: Holy Cross Episcopal Church
  - St. Peter’s Episcopal Church
  - St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
  - St. John’s Episcopal Church
  - San Francisco Episcopal Mission (Spanish speaking)

BVI: (Passport Required)
- Tortola: St. George’s Anglican Church
  - St. Paul’s Episcopal Mission
- Virgin Gorda: St. Mary’s Anglican Church

Pray about this additional possibility to discover the joys of walking with Christ together.

And continue to pray for our Companion Dioceses of Alaska and the Virgin Islands:

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we ask your blessings and favor upon our Companion Diocese Covenant among the Diocese of Alabama, the Diocese of Alaska, and the Diocese of the Virgin Islands. May we fully commit to praying diligently and unceasingly for the success of all of our missions, that through this relationship we are bound to share our love of Christ and of each other, to share our knowledge and resources, to further the understanding of the reconciliation of all Christians to God, to support and to help those who are in need, and to nourish the spiritually deficient for the furtherance of God’s kingdom. Amen

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The Anglican Communion
An 86-million-member worldwide community of 36 provinces.

The Episcopal Church
A community of about 2.4 million members in 119 dioceses in the Americas and abroad. Established in 1789

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Episcopal Church in the United States
About 34,000 baptized members in 92 parishes and worshipping communities and 8 college campus ministries. Established in 1892.

In the Diocese of Alabama
- Bishop: The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan
- Carpenter House 312 North 20th Street Birmingham, AL 35203
  - 205.715.2660

In the United States
- Bishop: The Most Rev. Michael Curry
- Episcopal Church Center
  - 815 Second Avenue
  - New York, NY 10017
  - 212.867.4800

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Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

I've got the timer going; if any of you are in a pool, I hope you went long.

I want to thank you again for being here, for your devotion and dedication to this part of God's Church that brings you to take a day off of work and come and sit here and spend some of your precious weekend listening to a long boring bishop's address.

As our Lord has now seen fit to call his servant Santosh to be an apostle to the Frozen North of Easton in Maryland, we have been talking for some time about finding another bishop who would be just as good to help us out. But we've run into two problems with that plan: one is, there just aren't many bishops as good as Santosh; and the other is, the budget, which Seth and Harry have already talked about. Despite the wonderful and continuing generosity of the parishes all over the Diocese, we had to cut the budget, so we are not able to hire a second bishop. There are reasons for this, some better than others: tight budgets in most of the parishes, uncertainty about the political situation, disagreement with the Episcopal Church's policy on same sex marriage, rising insurance costs, casual efforts about stewardship, and perhaps in some quarters an erroneous assumption that the Diocese of Alabama has plenty of money. We don't.

I don't want to make this sound bleaker than it is. We are able to fund what we need to fund, and we are able to do what we need to do. We rely on all of your generosity, and we are well supported as a diocese. It's a voluntary system; we don't assess or we don't charge. We invite you to give what you think is right for you to give, right for your parish to give. Being an Episcopalian means being part of a parish, part of a diocese, part of the larger church, part of the Anglican Communion, part of God's one holy catholic and apostolic Church — we're all connected. And what we give as individuals or as parishes is sort of an outward and visible sign of those ties that hold us together.

It was a difficult decision for the council to make, not to hire a second bishop. We've been used to that system for a long time. The alternative, if we had decided to go ahead and hire another bishop, would be to cut some of the ministries we really value and love, like Camp McDowell, like Sawyerville, like college chaplaincies, like youth programs. It would be, in short, eating our own seed corn. And we decided not to do that.

I have to admit that I'm not happy about the decision not to have a second bishop: partly because it makes my job more difficult, but mostly because I don't think it's the best for us as a Diocese, or for the work we have been given to do in this part of God's holy Church. We are a diocese built on the love of God in Jesus Christ and held together by relationships and hospitality. For years, a large part of that has been that a bishop comes to visit every parish and worshipping community every year. With one bishop instead of two, we'll need to adjust our assumptions, and expect that the bishop will come every other year. I think this diminishes the web of connections between us, between the parishes and the Diocesan office, but between the whole family of the Diocese together.

I wouldn't be doing my job here if I didn't also say that I hope next year's budget will allow us to reconsider this decision. We all know that can only happen as we increase stewardship in the parishes so that every parish can give more money to the diocese. For the sake of the parish and the diocese I call on all of our parishes to focus on stewardship in the coming year, not just when it comes time to build the budget, but throughout the year; to encourage, invite, educate us how we can be better stewards of the gifts we have been given. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with Danielle Dunbar who works for your diocesan office, our Director of Mission Funding, for help or ideas about stewardship.

Every parish and worshipping community should be going home from this convention with a new schedule of visitations. Judy Hall, my long-suffering assistant, and I worked for hours trying to put this schedule together. I'm almost sure that someone will be distressed about how it worked out. It's hard to plan on the bishop's visit, and how many confirmation classes you have, and get all that lined up, and now we are rearranging your schedules, and all I can do is ask for your patience and understanding. In addition, we'll be working with our friends at Camp McDowell to come up with some dates for Sunday afternoon confirmations, so that people can come to the common ground we hold together and be confirmed, and you can always send someone from your parish to be confirmed at another parish nearby when the bishop comes to visit.

We're grateful for all of the good work of all of our deacons all across the Diocese. They are remarkable people, who have given themselves fully into the love and service of our Lord in hundreds of different ways, not just on Sunday morning but in all their lives and work. Being a deacon is distinct and different from being a priest or a bishop — not better, not worse, but not the same. When we began to restore the diaconate in 1999, there were provisions made to ensure that people would understand that deacons and priests are different orders, not different levels of clergy, as if deacons were sort of priests with training wheels. One of those provisions had to do with the place of deacons at our Diocesan Conventions. There were some who said that deacons shouldn't vote at all since they are not charged with the governance of the church; others thought that they shouldn't be excluded from voting in this gathering; some were apparently concerned that the deacons would all vote as a block, and since they are under the direct supervision of the bishop, the bishop could use this voting block unfairly to muscle through his agenda. The compromise we came up with was that the deacons should elect from voting in this gathering; some were apparently
Convention, and I ask that next year we entertain a resolution calling for every deacon to be able to vote when we gather.

Yesterday I recognized the deacons who have been elected to give a vote in this Convention, and asked them to stand. Let me ask you to stand, and continue to stand for a minute – those seven deacons who are given a vote in this gathering. We’re grateful to you. Now would all the other deacons who are here please stand? You’ll continue to stand up for just a second. And there are others who are not here for several reasons, but because they could not vote they were less a part of our Convention than I think they ought to be. Thank you. Y’all can sit down now. Thanks.

We are also grateful for the continuing life and ministry of our retired clergy. I want to recognize and acknowledge Doug Carpenter who was our retired clergy chaplain for many years. Please stand, Doug. I always feel safer when I see Doug Carpenter out in the crowd. And we also want to thank Bill King who has recently become the chaplain to the retired clergy. Please stand, Bill. With the oversight of the Church Pension Group every diocese in the Episcopal Church in the United States has at least one chaplain actively serving our retired clergy. We have 95, Bill gave me this piece of paper, we have 95 canonical retired clergy, priests and deacons, and another 22 who are non-canonical living in this diocese. So we have a total of 117 retired and pension clergy in the Diocese of Alabama. There are more retired clergy in the diocese than non-retired clergy. If you add it all up, Bill King tells me, I haven’t checked the math but I’m sure he’s right, these 117 retired clergy represent over 2500 years of active pastoral work within our church. Twelve of our priests have been ordained for 50 years or more. And I want to recognize and thank all of these good folks.

You might remember that last year when we had the bishop’s address, I invited you to pop up and celebrate when I mentioned a ministry that you had been involved in or something that has touched you, something in the diocese or in your parish. It was so silly fun, and I was amazed at how long it took to go through that list. And even then, after I named fifty-one ministries and activities, you folks kept adding more and more – some I’d forgotten, and some I’d never heard of. We have so much to be grateful for, so much to celebrate as a diocese – you might be relieved to hear that I’m not going to try to name them all again, but in the course of this Convention, we have seen reports from some of those and we have some yet to go, and we’ve just passed a budget that helps to support many of them. I do believe that all of those things were started and now continue because of the deep and abiding love we have in God and for each other in Jesus Christ our Lord—‘If we are not guided by the love of Jesus we will surely be lost.’

Our nation has now survived the most contentious political season I can remember. We’ve survived, but it’s left a mark. It’s a troublesome, quarrelsome time in our nation, and there’s a lot of anxiety, anger and fear all around, broadcasted in living color into our homes twenty-four a day. Some of us believe that the Church should speak out about what we see as injustice, others believe that the Church should stay out of politics altogether. I believe that anxiety, anger, and fear are contrary to the message we have been given to share about the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

When I was younger and foolish, I thought I saw things so much more clearly than I do now: things were either black or white, and I didn’t need to pay attention to all those shades of gray. I used to, when I sat out there, be able to disagree and love and respect each other. I think this is a moment for us to share that gift with those around us, and let people who feel like they’re being pushed off to one edge or the other know that there are still some sane people in the middle.

We will have a chance to practice this skill later this afternoon as we address some of the resolutions before this Convention. You might remember that I discouraged contentious resolutions at Diocesan Convention for several years; and I did not miss them in the few years that we were able to escape them, but we do have one or two this year. And I expect that we will be careful in our deliberations today, and in our conversations and our actions when we get back home. You and I need to shine the light and not add to the darkness. Reducing complicated issues to black and white never tells the whole story. We can’t just assume that people who see things differently are stupid or selfish or faithless. Those people with whom we disagree are our sisters and brothers in Christ, and the children of God whether we like it or not. If we are not guided by the love of Jesus we will surely be lost.

For several years now we have experimented with our diocesan conventions, where to have them, how long they should be, where they should be held. Our Diocesan Council has decided on a plan to use a three-year rotation: every third year in Birmingham, the next year somewhere else in the Diocese, and the following year at Camp McDowell. The Conventions at Camp will involve two nights, and the other two will be like this one, with one night. The expectation is that the ones at Camp will be a little bit more relaxed and a greater emphasis on hospitality.

The theme for this 186th annual Convention of the Diocese of Alabama is Evangelism. On the official Convention logo, the part of the Trinitarian symbol pointing up is a shell, referring to baptism, making new disciples. Next year we’ll rotate the symbol clockwise, so that the clasping hands will be on top, and our theme will be Reconciliation. The following year, at Camp, the plant sprouting from the Earth will be our symbol, and we’ll talk about the Stewardship of Creation. That’s pretty fancy stuff, huh? I got a button, some of y’all have seen this button. All of you will get a button, just like this with that logo and the words “Why Jesus?” on it. You are encouraged to wear it proudly, and I dare you to wear it to church tomorrow.


Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”
And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:13-18)

People were saying that Jesus was something from the past, something old and familiar, one of the great ones come back to life – John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, a prophet. And Peter knew; this was something new. “Who do you say that I am?”

Who do you say Jesus is in the first part of the twenty-first century? Who do I say Jesus is?

I’ll tell you a story.

I grew up at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Vicksburg, Mississippi. They are especially and appropriately proud of their beautiful stained glass windows, several of which were made by the Tiffany Studios in New York City. Mom and Dad herded their four children to church every Sunday of the world without exception; we all sat in the same pew every Sunday. And every Sunday the priest would stand up in the pulpit and say, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart ... something something something”—that’s where my attention would invariably run out. I knew, from past experience, that the sermon would have nothing to do with me – it never did – so I would start to look for something else to think about, so I didn’t get into trouble. For me, that was the whole point of church: not getting into trouble.

So I found the oldest hymn in the hymnal; I counted the boards in the ceiling; I invented life stories for some of the more interesting people sitting there in the congregation, and I tried to imagine the people in the stained glass windows all around, who they were, how long ago they lived. They all looked back at me, Sunday after Sunday, and eventually some of the stuff I was exposed to in Sunday School penetrated my defense of boredom, and I began to know some of their stories and who they were. Some of the windows had Jesus in them; one was a woman playing the organ, and my favorite had St. Michael the Archangel, his face shining with triumph. But the ones that really caught my attention were the ones who knew Jesus: St. Mary, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John. They knew Jesus, talked with Him, had lunch with Him, laughed with Him, cried with Him. I started off wondering what that must have been like, and wound up being deeply envious – how wonderful it must have been to have seen, to have heard, to have known Jesus not by faith but face to face.

We got a new priest when I was thirteen, and he was so kind and patient with me that I told my Mom and Dad that I wanted to be a priest, too – actually, I just wanted to be like Father McInnis; I still do. When I was fifteen, his son Cliff talked me into going to Camp Bratton-Green, the Episcopal church camp in Mississippi, for a summer camp session, and while I was there a college girl who was fair to look upon invited me to come back for a Special Session for campers with mental and physical disabilities, and that sense of being called to the priesthood got stronger. I went all the way through junior high and high school telling people that I wanted to be a priest in the Episcopal Church – you can imagine that the girls could hardly leave me alone when they heard that – and I started to think that since I’ve dedicated my life to the Lord and all, surely I would see a sign of some sort. A guy I knew at school said he was called to preach in the Baptist Church, and he’d had all kinds of signs. I wasn’t really looking for a Road to Damascus strike-me-blind kind of thing, but something more subtle, nothing that would draw undue attention, something private, but unmistakable, maybe a little bolt of lightning, a voice in the night, a fiery apparition of some sort. Really, I didn’t think it was too much to ask. Then one Sunday, I went to church, and I wanted; I prayed; I listened; I really wanted a sign. Faith is fine, and I believe all this stuff we say we believe, but I wanted to know. Like the people in the stained glass windows, I wanted to know.

The Earth continued to spin and make its way around the Sun, again and again and again – I served four different congregations in Mississippi; I did some good things, made some mistakes, learned a lot, had a lot of fun. I was asked to direct the Special Session at Camp Bratton-Green in 1983 – I met Tina there in 1986 and my life got a whole lot better, and a little bit more complicated – and the Special Session was the last thing I did in the Diocese of Mississippi before coming to St. Thomas in Huntsville in 1993.

Before that, I was the chaplain at Ole Miss. We had a service for the students on Sunday afternoons, and then a supper provided by some of the people in the parish there, and then either a program or just time for us to talk. One Sunday, in the sermon I’d told a story about a Special Session camper who wanted to smooch with his girlfriend. Some of y’all have heard that one. He taught me how important it is for people of faith to be able to say “I could be wrong.” The sermon seemed fairly well-received—it’s hard to tell with college students sometimes.

By the time I took off my vestments and wrote in the book and got to the supper they’d already started. There was a memory there, at the tables, apparently with a young lady that he was interested in, so I sat at that table right opposite him. I remembered that I took a bite of lasagna, maybe a bigger bite than I should have, and this guy said — a little too loudly — “What do you mean, you could be wrong? How can you preach if you could be wrong? It’s your job to know this stuff!” I chewed my lasagna a little bit more quickly; some of the others at the table tried to come to my defense, but he ignored them.

I swallowed and said that we live in faith, that none of this can be proven, that the best we can do is to believe. He said that at his church his preacher knew, because he’d studied the Bible, and all their faith was to be found in Scripture. I assured him that I loved the Bible, too, but that I don’t think it’s a magic book, I think it’s a collection of stories and other writings collected by the people of God through the centuries. He said, “You don’t believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God!” By this time everybody in the room had stopped eating. I told him that I agreed with Madeleine L’Engle who said, “I take the Bible too seriously to take it all literally,” and he said he didn’t know who Madeleine L’Engle was. And it all sort of went downhill from there. After a while, he gave up and got up and left in a huff and all the students around my table said it was good riddance but in my heart I thought I had failed this young man. I wish I had a better answer.

Five or six years later, I was at my office at St. Thomas in Huntsville and the phone rang and the receptionist in the other office answered. She came and said it’s a young man from Ole Miss. I said good. She told me his name; I didn’t recognize the name. I said I would talk to him anyway. He told me he was the young man who’d made such a big fuss about me saying I could be wrong, and I remembered him instantly.

I asked him how he was and what he was doing now; he’d graduated from Ole Miss and then went to law school and graduated, he’s practicing law in Jackson, married with a little girl. I told him I was glad for him, and waited for him to tell me why he was calling me after all these years. He bumbled around a little bit awkwardly and then he said “Well, I just thought I’d...
call.” I told him I was glad he did, and then there was one of those long drawn-out long-distance pauses, and I finally said, “What’s going on?”

He told me his mother had died, the day before, and he needed somebody to talk to about it. He’d called the church in Oxford and found out that I had moved and gotten telephone number. I told him I’d be glad to talk, but I couldn’t imagine why he’d want to talk to me. He said he’d talked to his preacher but all he got were slogans and worn-out sayings — he wanted to talk to me because he thought I would be real with him. I told him I believe his mother is in heaven now with Jesus, and that’s what our faith teaches us. He said, “So you know that for a fact?” I said that’s what I believe. He said, “But I need to know. I need to know.” And I could feel his pain; it was a pain familiar to me, something I’d struggled with for a long time. So I told him a story, the story of Charles going off the high dive.

This is one of my favorite stories, and it may be that you’ve heard it before. Some of you were even there when it happened. But as my grandfather said, “Any story worth repeating is worth improving a little bit.”

So don’t get excited if my telling doesn’t completely match up to your memory of it — it might have improved it, just a little bit.

Every summer, at the Special Session at Camp McDowell, most of the campers have been there before — they wouldn’t miss it for the world. But every year we have two or three new campers. One year, one of the new campers was a young man who was born without optic nerves. Charles has never seen any shade of light or dark. He is as intelligent as anybody; he types in Braille; plays the piano, swims well, gets along well with others — he just can’t see. The challenge for the director of the session is to figure out which counselor goes with which camper. I have some help doing that; we figure out which counselors are experienced and can handle a challenge and which are really scared, and we need to go easy on them. We figure out which of the campers will require a seasoned hand and which can kind of take care of themselves. We knew that Charles would need someone to stay with him all the time; there’s some tricky terrain at Camp, and we didn’t want him to get lost or to go plummeting down into Clear Creek. One of the people helping me make the assignments suggested that we could put Zach with Charles. Zach is not his real name, so I feel like I can safely say what I said at the time: “Oh no, not Zach — he’s a knucklehead!”

In fact, he is a sweet kid who’d been a counselor the year before. He wasn’t somebody who went looking for trouble, but when it came looking for him, he wasn’t going to put up much of a fight. The summer before, he’d had two easy campers who were no challenge at all, so that his mind could wander. Somewhere in that wandering, apparently one of the girl counselors must have batted her eyes at him and he was lost in that kind of romantic zeal that only a fifteen-year-old boy can generate. It got so bad that I had to sit him down and tell him that if he didn’t pay his campers some attention, we’d have to send him home. He got a little better, at least to get to the end of the week, and then he snuck out after curfew on the last night and we had to talk about that. He worried that I’d tell his parents; I did not discourage him from worrying about that. And so I was a little surprised when Zach applied to come back the next year. And now we were talking about putting him with Charles, new camper, totally blind.

The staff person who’d suggested it said, “Zach was a knucklehead last year because he didn’t have enough to do. He didn’t have enough to keep him out of trouble. Put him with Charles, and he’ll have to stay with Charles.” I didn’t think it was a good idea, but I let them talk me into it.

The next day, the campers arrived and I introduced myself to Charles, perfectly lovely young man — somebody took him to his cabin to meet his counselor, Zach the knucklehead. The next morning, I saw Zach at breakfast and asked him how it was going, and Zach said, “Charles is awesome!” So I decided I didn’t need to worry about that anymore, and found other things to worry about.

A few days went by and everything seemed to be going pretty well. In the middle of the session, I usually just notice only campers that are having a lot of difficulty or who are having a spectacular time, or counselors who are just not doing their job. Charles and Zach were quietly having a wonderful week, both of them coming into their own — and I almost missed it.

The last full day of the session, one of the young female counselors came running down the hill to the dining hall to find me. She said, “Charles is about to go off the diving board!” I said, “Okay, remain calm.” The young counselors get all excited about little things. She went on to say, “The high dive!”

Well a lot of you have been there and know the high dive is like seventy feet up — if you measure it, anyway. I think the knucklehead was doing all right, but that’s still way on up there. And that’s a remarkable thing; this blind guy is going to go off the high dive. So I sprinted up the hill — well, I waddled with some difficulty or who are having a spectacular time, or counselors who are just not doing their job. Charles and Zach were quietly having a wonderful week, both of them coming into their own — and I almost missed it.

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By the time I got there, Charles was climbing up the ladder to the high dive, with his counselor Zach, the knucklehead, right behind him. It seemed like the whole camp was there to see it, and most of them were chanting “Charles! Charles! Charles!” I could see that Zach was talking to him the whole time; I couldn’t hear what he was saying because of everybody chanting Charles’ name, but in my imagination I could almost hear him say, “Okay, Charles, you’re doing great. Take another step up, good, you’re doing fine, two more steps to go, one more, now hold on to the rail, good, now you are up on the platform, the diving board is straight ahead, hold onto the rail with both hands, just like that, good, now step up onto the diving board, take another step straight forward, I’m right here, I’m right behind you, take another step, now another step. Now Charles, let go of the rail, take a step straight forward, you got about two more steps to go, you’re fine, one more step. Now stop. Can you feel the edge of the board with your toes? Can you feel it? Now when you’re ready, jump in.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine being up on that diving board? You know you are way up there because you’ve just climbed this ladder. A hundred people are chanting your name. You are pretty sure that the water is down there — you can’t really prove it — but it was there when you started. And all you’ve got is this knucklehead behind you. Who tells you he has done this before, and that you’re going to be okay. And the choice is whether you trust that guy or not.

A few seconds later, Charles jumped into the darkness, and then a second or two after that his head came up out of the water, shining with triumph as bright as Michael the Archangel. We all yelled “Charles!” Zach, formerly a knucklehead, jumped off the side of the board just like we always tell people not to do, with a story to tell for the rest of his life, about being trusted, how precious and humbling it is to be trusted. And I ... I stood off to the side, with tears running down my cheeks — for Charles, and for Zach, and because I finally understood that faith is not about what you know, what you understand or what you can prove: it’s about who you trust. Faith is about who you trust.

Who do you say Jesus is? Who do I say Jesus is? Jesus is the One that’s up there with me when I can’t see what comes next. Jesus is the One who’s always with me, when the sun is shining and on those darkest days, who’s been there before so I know it’s going to be all right, through life and beyond death and into life everlasting. We have those dark days, when things don’t make sense, when all we can do is trust God in Jesus Christ or imagine that we’re standing up there all by ourselves. There are a lot of people that we know who imagine that they are going through this all by themselves. What a horrifying prospect to live without hope, to live without Jesus. Because Jesus is, at the same fully human and fully divine, he shows us what God is like and what we should be like — because we can see ourselves in Jesus and we can see God in Jesus, the incarnation is God’s bridge, inviting us to reconcile with our Father in Heaven and with each other. Jesus is the perfect revelation of God whose love and grace is beyond our understanding or imagining. We can trust our lives to Jesus, even on the darkest day, because He has been there, and beyond, and He invites us to follow Him in hope, in faith, and in love.

This is the message you and I have been given, the message we have to share with the world. Who do I say Jesus is? Jesus is the One that I trust with my life, and the lives of those I love. Jesus is why I can find hope in the world even when it looks like it’s all messed up. Jesus is the Light you and I are given to shine into the darkness.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. But the darkness is still there, all around us and in us. Hatred, despair, fear, selfishness, this is the darkness we need to shine the light of Christ. And so we need to be able to say what we think and believe about Jesus. We need to be able to say it out loud, especially when we come across somebody who feels like they are standing up there all by themselves, in the dark, alone.

Why Jesus? Because there are people all around us who are desperate to hear the Good News of the love of God in Jesus Christ. This is evangelism. This is God’s mission for the Church, this is the work you and I need to focus on: shining the Light of Christ into the darkness, and shining it in love. If we are not guided by the love of Jesus we will surely be lost.

I want to thank you for all that you do. I want to thank you for shining the Light of Christ in your lives and in your parishes. I want to thank you for all of your support, financially, spiritually, and emotionally. It is a great honor to serve as your Bishop. Thank you all, friends in Christ, and may God continue to bless us as his beloved children.

Thanks be to God. Amen.
The 186th Diocesan Convention: “Why Jesus? Telling the Compelling Story of God’s Love”

T

he 186th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama met in Birmingham, Alabama, at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center on February 17-18. The hosts for Convention were the Birmingham churches of St. Andrew’s, St. Mark’s, and Grace. Convention is the annual business meeting of the Diocese, but it is also where folks from across the Diocese spend time together in fellowship and worship. Convention is also a time to learn. Prior to the business session, folks had a chance to attend workshops on Special Session, Beam and Race Ministry, Solar Energy, Christian Formation, Funding our Mission, Young Adult Ministry, Human Trafficking, and Evangelism. At tables and in between meetings, folks had a chance to chat about the work and ministries going on at their parish and to learn more about the shared ministries of the Episcopal Churches in Alabama.

The discussion of shared ministries was at the forefront of Convention. The Rev. Seth Olson, in giving the report for Diocesan Council, noted that “we are called to strengthen parish-diocese connections, so that the ministries accomplished together as a diocese are owned by parishes and parishioners.” Olson went on to say that a ministry such as Camp McDowell “is not just a ministry of the Diocese of Alabama, and it is not just a ministry of a few parishes, it is a ministry of all the parishes. And to take it to its fullest extent, the ministries that we do together are ministries of every single parishioner, whether you are intimately connected to it or just can point to it.”

While 2016 presented budgetary issues and challenges, finances are in good order. The Treasurer for the Diocese, Mr. Harry Hargrove, reported that in 2016 the Diocese had an operating deficit, which was the first for the Diocese in more than two decades. The end of the year deficit was mitigated by efforts of diocesan staff to control costs and by the departure of the assistant bishop; and the deficit was absorbed by the operating cash reserves. Both the Diocese and Camp McDowell had clean financial audits for 2015. The pooled investment fund had a 6.85% return on investments.

The theme for convention was “Why Jesus? Telling the Compelling Story of God’s Love.” On the Thursday evening before convention, delegates were invited to a “Sharing Faith Dinner” hosted by St. Andrew’s Birmingham.

Deacon Sloan stated in his address: “if we are not guided by the love and support he received here. In his remarks, Bishop Murray stated that the diocese prepared he and his wife, Lin, for their new call, and that he was here to say, “thanks to each and every one of you for what you have done for Lin and myself.” Bishop Murray reminded the convention that “a risen Savior is incompatible with a dying church, for the gates of hell shall not prevail.”

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Dr. Callie Plunket-Brewton, chaplain at the University of North Alabama and Associate Rector at Trinity in Florence. The exercise again began with a video story from Kim Bell of St. Michael’s and All Angels in Millbrook. Following the video, delegates were tasked with considering how they would share their faith in two minutes or less. As an invitation to the exercise, Plunket-Brewton explained that if Episcopalians don’t talk about Jesus, people will only “know that we do good work in the world, but they are not going to experience us as anything but that wonderfully involved church, that has some strange practices…And a lot of folks will remain spiritual but not religious, and miss out on the beautiful rich meaningful life-giving faith that we all get to share and enjoy.”

In addition to passing a budget, hearing reports, and practicing evangelism, the Convention was called upon to consider other resolutions. Informational hearings were held on Saturday morning. Convention voted to adopt resolutions to continue to offer anti-racism training for clergy, leaders, and members; to recognize the ending of the ministry of St. John’s for the Deaf in Birmingham; to call on churches in our diocese to work with community and faith organizations to offer hospitality to refugees, migrants, and immigrants and to offer resources as needed; and to call on parishes and institutions to remove the “box” on employment applications that asks about prior convictions.

All of the work of Convention was based in prayer and worship. Hymns were sung in the business sessions, with music provided by Noel Beck of Trinity Florence. Before the gala on the first night, we closed our work with Choral Evensong, led by host parishes, St. Andrew’s and Grace. On the second day, we were energized by music and dance, led by the Youth Department. The final day was closed by a Jazz Eucharist led by host parish, St. Mark’s.

In his address, Bishop Sloan discussed that this convention was the first of a three-year cycle, based on the mission priorities of the Jesus Movement outlined by Presiding Bishop Michael Curry. The 186th Convention’s theme was Evangelism. Next year, Convention will be hosted by St. John’s Decatur, beginning February 9-10, 2018, and the theme will focus on reconciliation. The following year, we will have a three-day convention at Camp McDowell with the theme of Stewardship of Creation. All of these themes are based in what we should remember, and what Bishop Sloan stated in his address: “if we are not guided by the love of Jesus, we will surely be lost.”
New Clergy Introduced at Convention

Clergy present, who were new to the Diocese of Alabama since last year's convention, were introduced to the gathering by the dean of their convocation.

Birmingham Convocation

The Rev. Wes Sharpe, Holy Cross Trussville
The Rev. Judy Neil, Deacon, Grace Woodlawn
The Rev. Tyler Richards, St. Andrew’s Montevallo
The Rev. Susan Southwick, Deacon, Holy Cross Trussville
The Rev. Dave Lambert, Deacon, Epiphany Leeds
The Rev. Charles Venable, Deacon, St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands
The Rev. Rich Webster, Dean
The Rev. Mark Forbes, St. Stephen’s Birmingham (Not pictured)

Black Belt Convocation

The Rev. Pearl Slay, Deacon, Trinity Demopolis
The Rev. Trey Kennedy, St. Paul’s Greensboro
The Rev. Pam Payne, St. Michael’s Fayette
The Rev. Dr. Tommie Watkins, Jr., Canterbury Chapel Tuscaloosa
The Rev. David Meginniss, Dean
The Rev. John Stewart, Deacon, St. Matthias

East Alabama Convocation

The Rev. Andrea Peacock, Deacon, St. James Alexander City
The Rev. Rob St. Germain-Iler, Dean

Mountain Convocation

The Rev. Michael Goldsmith, Dean
The Rev. Lisa Busby, St. Luke’s Scottsboro
The Rev. Carl Saxton, Holy Comforter Gadsden

Tennessee Valley Convocation

The Rev. Paul Pradat, Dean
The Rev. Don Smith, Grace Sheffield
The Rev. Jeanne Randall, Deacon, St. Thomas Huntsville
The Rev. Bob Serio, Deacon, Church of the Nativity Huntsville

Elected to Serve

The following members of the diocese were elected to serve on Diocesan Council, Standing Committee, Disciplinary Board, and as delegates to General Convention in 2018.

Diocesan Council
Northern District - Tom Heffin
Middle District - Jennifer Boylan
Southern District - Larry Johnson

Standing Committee
4 Year Term Clergy - The Rev. Jayne Pool
4 Year Term Lay - Julia Sanford
1 Year Term Clergy - The Rev. Michael Goldsmith

Disciplinary Board
The Rev. Anna Russell Friedman
The Rev. Bonnie McCrickard
Ginger Mayfield

General Convention
Northern District
Clergy Deputy - The Rev. Evan Garner
1st Clergy Alt. - The Rev. Andy Anderson
2nd Clergy Alt. - the Rev. Carl Saxton
Lay Deputy - Shari Harrison
1st Alt. - Bingham Edwards
2nd Alt. - James Harris

Middle District
Clergy Deputy - The Rev. Donna Gerold
1st Clergy Alt. - The Rev. Judy Quick, Deacon
2nd Clergy Alt. - The Rev. Stephen Hood
Lay Deputy - Virginia Hillhouse
1st Alt. - Brad Lamonte
2nd Alt. - Gene McCall

Southern District
Clergy Deputy - The Rev. Candice Frazer
1st Clergy Alt. - The Rev. Dr. Tommie Watkins, Jr.
2nd Clergy Alt. - The Rev. Donna Gerold
Lay Deputy - Anne Kimzey
1st Alt. - Betsy Stullworth
2nd Alt. - Jim Jolly

At Large
Clergy Deputy - The Rev. Lee Shafer
1st Clergy Alt. - The Rev. Tyler Richards
2nd Clergy Alt. - The Rev. Charles Youngson
Lay Deputy - Mark Smith
1st Alt. - Brian Denton-Trujillo
2nd Alt. - Larry Parton
The Diocesan Council began work on the 2017 operating budget for the diocese in October of 2016 meeting with the leaders of the various ministries which receive funds and receiving information from staff officers. No one at that time anticipated that a $350,000 shortfall of funds would make preparation of a balanced budget a significant test of priorities. With parish pledges running 3.7% lower than in 2016, the Council sought the help of staff members to reduce the requested allocations in a manner that would not create disruptions within the programs and commitments of the diocese.

When the possibility of a shortfall first emerged in late November, plans to call an Assisting Bishop to replace Bishop Marray, who was elected Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of Easton, were put on hold. With the consent of Bishop Sloan, the Council, with much regret, made the “hold” permanent removing $170,000 from the proposed budget. Feeling that some adjustment in compensation was appropriate the Council moved to retain the proposed 1% cost of living adjustment for staff but declined any raises for 2017. Compensation costs for the diocesan staff which includes the college chaplains is down by $4,000 when compared with the same positions in 2016. The total cost for compensation and benefits is 51% of the budget which compares favorably with the proportion devoted to compensation and benefits in the larger parishes in the diocese and with a national survey of congregations in all denominations. In that survey the average for all sizes of congregations was 49%.

A major contributor to the success of the Council in presenting a balanced budget for consideration by the Convention was the lack of any increase in the employer cost of medical premiums in 2017. Although the diocesan group received a 12% increase from our insurer, the Council in September restructured the premiums and employer contributions to individual employee Health Savings Accounts so keep premiums level with the costs in 2016. These same adjustments were made available to parishes which were encouraged to begin premium cost-sharing with their employees on the most expensive of the medical plans offered. These adjustments allowed the Council in 2017 to make additional funds available for ministries and programs at the diocesan level.

In a reflection of their priorities, the Council presented a budget that commits spending 39% of the budget in programs and ministries which serve the larger Church and community when our college chaplains are included. Ministries such as Special Session, Sawyerville Day Camp, The Yellowhammer Literacy Program, The Abbey, The Companion Diocese relationship, and our contribution to the program of the Episcopal Church USA were sustained or strengthened. This percentage does not include the significant impact that the environmental and farm education programs at Camp McDowell are having with school children in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee.

The Council also increased the allocation for direct support of congregations in Alabama increasing the allocation for Parish Development from 6.77% in 2016 to 8.42% in 2017. These funds are enabling several parishes to benefit from full-time, ordained leadership at a time when funds raised locally would fall short. The intent is that through sustained, effective leadership these parishes can soon grow enough to forego these grants from the diocese allowing the funds to assist other congregations.

In a move toward increased transparency the Council began a process of working Sawyerville Day Camp and the Yellow Hammer Literacy Program fully into the Operating Budget. Prior to 2016 the programs, supported by direct gifts from parishes and grants from community organizations, operated outside the budget. Partially in the 2016 budget and fully in the 2017 budget, this growing ministry of the churches in the Diocese of Alabama was included in the budget document and associated accounting procedures, recognizing its growth and the need for better reporting. The inclusion of Sawyerville in the budget also provides a format for future inclusion of other ministries currently supported largely through direct contributions such as Special Session, the Campus Ministry Centers, KrikKrak, and The Companion Diocese Relationship.

In adopting the budget the Council expressed appreciation to the 55 parishes that had made their pledges in support of the diocesan ministries prior to the budget meeting in January. They were most grateful to those parishes that included increases in their proportional pledge in 2017 and, of course, to those parishes who anticipated an increase in the dollar amount of the pledge over 2016.

The 2017 Budget began life with a shortfall between income and needs of $350,000. Parishes have pledged 7.9% of their income in 2017, down from 8.4% in 2016 and 9.03% in 2007. Support for ministries beyond our church doors makes up 39% of the budget. Support for congregational development within the diocese increased from 6.7% to 8.4%.

Personnel costs are lower in 2017 position for the same positions as 2016. Support for congregational development within the diocese increased from 6.7% to 8.4%.

Personnel costs are lower in 2017 position for the same positions as 2016.

We invite you to learn more about diocesan finances and how we support shared ministries by visiting www.dioala.org/finance.
Rites of Spring Registration and Staff Applications are now open

Are you looking for an awesome weekend at Camp McDowell filled with fun and fellowship? Then Rites of Spring is the event for you! Rites of Spring is an event for 9-12th graders that is put on by the Youth Department (YD) and it is especially important because it is when we elect the new Youth Department for the year! You are more than welcome to come and enjoy this time together with friends and worship God even if you do not plan to run for YD. It will be held March 24-26th at Bethany Village at Camp McDowell and the cost to register is $120, with scholarship assistance available.

Sign up today at http://www.dioala.org/youthevents.html
Contact Kathleen Lynch, event registrar, with questions: kathleen.lynch011@gmail.com

Save the Date!

THE ONE CONFERENCE * MAY 4 *
#WHAT WOULD JESUS TWEET?

The One conference May 4th 2017 sponsored by the Diocese of Alabama’s Dept. of Christian Formation #WWJT: What would Jesus Tweet? A Digital Toolbox for Churches

Mark your calendars for Thursday May 4- and come learn how the digital world and churches can work together

Learn how to use your church’s website for more than service times- how about as a formation tool and for evangelism?

Learn how to use social media to its fullest for your church and its ministries

Learn all the basics as well as things specific to your parish

Learn holy practices for using social media

Program will begin at 10:00 am and end at 1:00 with an optional hour from 1-2pm for hands-on one-on-one or small group instruction based on your needs and interests.

Join us on May 4th at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham.
Register online at http://bit.ly/2JrE0tw
The cost is 25.00 which includes lunch.

Pilgrimage to Ireland 2018

Join fellow Episcopalians on a journey to the roots of Celtic Christianity.

Visit St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin, Saint Brigid’s Shrine and Well and the village of Foughart. . . Tour Kilkurry church which purports to have a piece of St. Brigid’s skull! See ancient Downpatrick Cathedral . . . See Neolithic ruins over 5,000 years old (even older than Stonehenge by 1,000 years!)

Our group will travel to Galway and visit the extensive ruins of Clonmacnoise, a monastic site overlooking the River Shannon. Next, we will trek across Ireland to Headfort, a village rich in archaeological monuments, Norman Castles, and monastic sites. We will see the church of St. Fursa, then visit the Ross Errilly Friary, the best preserved monastic ruin of its period in all of Ireland. We will see the Cliffs of Moher, and the Rock of Cashel, which are Ireland’s most visited natural attractions. A journey to Powerscourt House, originally a 13th century castle will take us through fast flowing streams and deep lakes and wooded valleys, making this a truly wondrous place. And just when we think it can’t be anymore wondrous, we will take a trip to Glendalough, one of the most beautiful sites in all of Ireland.

A pilgrimage is quite different from a tour. We will be following the lives of three important saints to the life of the Church in Great Britain—Sts. Fursa, Brigid and, of course, Patrick.

Ten days . . . May 21-20, 2018.

For those registering by June 1, the price is only $3,876! This includes airfare, ground transportation, all entrance fees, lodging and most meals.

Please contact the Rev. Scott Arnold fscott@stmarksal.org if you would like more information.
2017 Lenten Meditations: 

Love, Togetherness, Community

“Lent can be a time of lone introspection, but there is also tremendous power in joining together in community to examine our lives and consider what we can do to become reconciled to God, to one another and to Creation,” said Sean McConnell, Senior Director of Engagement for Episcopal Relief & Development.

“Under the theme of ‘Together We Can…’, this year’s Lenten Meditations explore how strong relationships and strong communities enable people of faith to share God’s love with each other and with the world around us.”

Written by a diverse group of faith leaders and produced by Forward Movement, the 2017 Lenten Meditations reflect the spirit of Lent by focusing on love, togetherness, and community.

This year Bishop Sloan has appointed the third Sunday in Lent, March 19, as Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday, however each parish may choose its own convenient time to honor Episcopal Relief & Development. Let us offer prayers and almsgiving to people around the world struggling with poverty, hunger, and disease, for those who seek refuge from the tragedies of their circumstances. Bulletin inserts are available for your use.

“Focusing on Episcopal Relief & Development during Lent puts Episcopalians in spiritual solidarity with people of faith in nearly 40 countries around the world,” said The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, President of the House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church.

“Their well-loved meditation booklets give us the opportunity each day during Lent to pray and reflect about how we can seek and serve Christ in all people.”

Please order your Lenten materials early (by February 15) so that you will receive them by Ash Wednesday, March 1. Meditation booklets will be available at Diocesan Convention. To place orders, contact the Episcopal Media Center (EMC) at 1.866.937.2772, or http://episcopalmarketplace.org, or sales@episcopalmedia.org.

If you would like more information or a presentation on the work of Episcopal Relief & Development, contact the Reverend Judy Quick, Deacon and Diocesan Coordinator, (jgquick@bellsouth.net; 205.669.6862) or Ms. Marilyn Lands at marilynlands@gmail.com. You may also want to visit the website: www.episcopalrelief.org.

EPISCOPAL ASSET MAP

Showcase Your Parish Ministries:

Complete the Episcopal Asset Map!

The Episcopal Asset Map, a joint project between The Episcopal Church and Episcopal Relief & Development, is an online tool for showcasing where and how we are the hands and feet of God in the world. Episcopalians are doing incredible work in a variety of ministries, and we need to tell our story!

The Diocese of Alabama boasts at least 17 beans and rice ministries, community gardens, community kitchens, literacy programs, clothing ministries, homeless ministries and shelter programs such as Family Promise and Room in the Inn, Jubilee Ministries, and so much more.

Parishes participate in diocesan ministries such as Sawyerville and Foothills Day Camp and Special Session. Parishes have youth, young adult, and seniors’ activities, men’s groups, women’s groups, such as ECW and the Daughters of the King, and Cursillo.

Many parishes have global mission efforts, working with our Companion Diocese of the Virgin Islands, and have forged relationships with Honduras, Haiti, Malawi, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, India, or Kenya, to name a few.

The Episcopal Asset Map is a wonderful way for our congregations to tell their sacred stories of ministry. It is also a useful tool to capture all of the assets of your parish for disaster preparedness.

So take a few minutes to complete your Episcopal Asset Map Survey at www.episcopalassetmap.org and follow these steps:

1. Click on “Explore my Diocesan Map” and the Diocese of Alabama is the very first selection.
2. Find your pin on the diocesan map and click on your pin. Click on the highlighted name of your parish, school, or other Episcopal ministry.
3. The ministry page will open. Click on the Take the Survey button and fill in your information.
4. After you prove you are not a robot, hit the Submit button. The Diocesan Map Administrator will review your submission and approve it for the Asset Map.

Need help? Contact the Reverend Judy Quick (jgquick@bellsouth.net) or Ms. Marilyn Lands at marilynlands@gmail.com.
Circle of Friends

Danielle Dunbar, Director of Mission Funding

McDowell. Through their monetary pledges and gifts, they declared that Camp McDowell is a place to establish one’s faith and build one’s hope in Christ.

Thanks to the expansion of camp at Bethany, many more can attend a variety of camps and retreats at Wonderful, Wonderful Camp McDowell. It is now a place for people of all ages and physical abilities to reconnect with God and friends in a faith community. My home parish of St. Stephen’s recently held a women’s retreat where young women and the more mature who walked with canes could gather to discuss Jesus’ parable of the True Vine, practice yoga, and laugh together well into the evening. Our hope in Christ was flourishing thanks to the physical space available to all of us at Bethany.

In 2016 friends joined each other to honor the lives of loved ones who had passed away, to celebrate Cursillo reunion groups or summer camp staffs, and to simply come together as vestries, bible study groups, and more to complete the covenant to build Bethany. Our friends were very generous and, all told, raised approximately $700,000 in 2016. What a success! We anticipate the last of the funds to complete the covenant will be gathered in 2017.

Perhaps our apostolic action, which is defined as, “the giving of self to another for the purpose of sharing Christ with others” will include joining a Giving Circle this year. For more information, please contact Danielle Dunbar, Director of Mission Funding at 205.358.9234, ddunbar@dioala.org or danielle@campmcdowell.com. The Kingdom of Heaven is near!

Global Episcopal Mission Network
Proclaim, Inspire, Ignite the Joy of God’s mission

Why Jesus? Why Global Mission?
By The Reverend Judy Quick, Deacon
“This Jesus is a game changer who can show us the way away from the nightmare and into something close to God’s dream for all of us.” (The Most Reverend Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop, at the 2016 GEMN Global Mission Conference)

At the 2016 GEMN Global Mission Conference, one participant tweeted: “Being inspired by some of our missionaries serving around the globe. This crew is truly on the frontline of the #JesusMovement.”

Yes, global mission is vital for living into Bishop Curry’s call for us Episcopalians to be revived by the transformative love of Jesus, to love and to serve and to witness the joy of our faith throughout the world.

Get energized! Get connected!

Come join us for the 2017 Global Mission Conference in God’s backyard at Camp McDowell, May 24-26, 2017!

This year’s theme reflects God’s urgent call to the Church in a time of division and conflict: “Reconciliation: God’s Mission-and Ours”

At our 2017 conference you will:
1. Enjoy keynote presentations by and conversations with:
   a. The Right Reverend Mark Mac-Donald, National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Anglican Church of Canada
   b. Ms Heidi Kim, The Episcopal Church’s Staff Officer for Racial Reconciliation
   c. The Reverend Paul-Gordon Chandler, author, Episcopal priest, mission partner with the Episcopal Church, Interfaith Advocate, and Founder/President of CARAVAN, an international peace-building arts non-profit

2. Participate in hands-on mission workshops that will give you tools to bring back to your diocese, church or mission organization, including mission budgeting & fundraising, planning & leading short-term mission trips, mission best practices, short- and long-term mission engagement, building global partnerships, applying Asset Based Community Development and Indaba in your ministry, discerning a call to mission.

3. Have the opportunity for mission education programs, meeting mission partners and current missionaries, networking, small group discussion, mission displays, and more.

4. Explore in depth the theme of reconciliation in our mission engagement including restorative justice, interfaith, racial, and environmental reconciliation, art as reconciliation.

For those who want to delve more deeply into global mission, consider the Global Mission Formation Program, which will be held on Tuesday, May 23, from 9am-3pm. The cost of the program is $75.

Conference fees, per person, include meals (Tuesday dinner-Friday lunch), All Materials and Activities, Wednesday, May 24, 8:00am-Friday, May 26, 1:00pm.

Register now for the GEMN Global Mission Conference:
$395 before March 15; $435 March 15-May 12
Local fees are available for the Diocese of Alabama:
1. Three-Day Local Fee: $295 before March 15; $395 March 15-May 12
2. Two-Day Local Fee: $205 before March 15; $215 March 15-May 12
3. One-Day Local Fee: $115 before March 15; $125 March 15-May 12

Cost of lodging at Camp McDowell is $110 per night (Single rate) / $120 per night (Double rate, $60 per person).

Learn more about GEMN and its resources at www.gemn.org. Discover the joy of God’s mission!

For more information on the Global Mission Roundtable, contact the Reverend Judy Quick, Deacon, (jgequick@bellsouth.net) or consult www.dioala.org/globalmission.
Can you imagine the enthusiasm of about 20 teachers who get to explore and investigate the woods, streams and farm at Camp McDowell for a few days? Well, it is contagious! Thanks to a grant from the Kaul Foundation of Birmingham, McDowell Educational programs hosted a retreat/workshop recently that helped educators experience firsthand the fun and excitement of inquiry based learning, just as they are being asked to teach in their own classroom. It was more like play than work!

That is typical for one of our McDowell educator retreats. We have more coming and you can help to share these opportunities with friends and family who are educators...whether in a classroom, homeschool or working in an informal educator role. We are almost all teachers in some way.

Here is a list of some opportunities to experience the wonder of the natural world with our experienced teacher naturalists.

June 12-14 – Southern Roots: The Edible Garden and Culinary Arts in the Classroom
We will explore where our food comes from by gathering vegetables and fruits in season on the McDowell Farm and preparing or preserving them in our new Teaching Kitchen. We will look at ways to understand food systems and how they connect to the natural world. Mostly, we will have fun on the Farm!

June 19-21 – Rocking Inquiry Based Science (RIBS): Helping Teachers Make Geology Place based and FUN!
We will hike into the sandstone canyons of Camp McDowell and use inquiry based learning to explore and gather facts about what created them. Educators will not only learn the geology of Alabama, but how to transform their classroom into a more creative and fun environment!

June 26 – 28 – Exploring Alabama’s Living Streams with Alabama Water Watch (AWW)
We partner with AWW on this one to not only get out and explore our Camp McDowell streams and creeks, but help teachers become more comfortable with taking their students out into local streams. Teachers go home with a copy of the AWW classroom curriculum, Exploring Alabama’s Living Streams.

June 25- July 2 (yes 8 days!) – Mountains to the Gulf Expedition!
This is our fifth Mountains to the Gulf (M2G) event. Many past participants have called this the most amazing 8 days of a teacher’s professional life!
Camp McDowell partners with several other organizations in an amazing teacher expedition called Mountains to the Gulf. A group of twenty teachers from across Alabama is selected to travel the state of Alabama for a week with some of the Southeast’s top experts on geology, watersheds, herpetology and ecology. Some of the experts who participate are Dr. Jim Lacefield, author of Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks; Dr. Bill Deutsch, founder of Alabama Water Watch, Heather Montgomery, author of many children’s books, and Jimmy Stiles, herpetologist. They guide the teacher group through all ecoregions of the state.

Stops are made along the way at Little River Canyon, Cheaha State Park, Lake Martin, and Dauphin Island. We gather fossils from roadside cuts and stream beds in Southern Alabama. The final two days are spent at Dauphin Island Sea Lab where we explore salt marsh estuaries and go out on their research vessel to trawl and learn about the living species in our gulf waters. We stay in hotel style lodging along the way and travel in a charter bus.

The partners for M2G included Legacy, Partners in Environmental Education (www.getthetag.com), Environmental Education Association of Alabama, Georgia Alabama Land Trust, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Alabama Water Watch and, of course McDowell Environmental Center.

For more information about any of these, please contact Maggie Johnston at maggie@campmcdowell.com with “2017 educator workshops” in the subject line.
Dabney McKenzie surprised her family with the new rainbow tie dye shirts (pictured left to right: Emeline McKenzie--St. John’s, Montgomery, AL, Rowan Covert & Dabney McKenzie--Holy Comforter, Montgomery, AL, Holland McKenzie--St. John’s, Montgomery, AL, Rick McKenzie--Holy Comforter, Montgomery, AL, Adair McKenzie--St. John’s, Montgomery, AL & Raleigh Covert--Holy Comforter, Montgomery, AL)

Camping McDowell is blessed to share many learning experiences with folks all over the Southeast. Camp McDowell’s newest education program, Magnolia Nature Preschool, shares a joyful early childhood in nature with folks in our own backyard. We hope to turn childhood’s natural curiosity into a lifelong love for learning and stewardship. Magnolia is the very first Nature Based Preschool in the state of Alabama, where students learn to care for themselves, each other and nature as they grow and learn in God’s backyard.

We are excited to share with you that Magnolia has recently partnered with Head Start to make nature accessible for all children regardless of family income and help 3-4 year olds in Winston County get Kindergarten ready free of cost! This summer, Magnolia Summer Day Camp will serve 4-6 year olds wanting a fun summer playing in the shade of the McDowell forest and splashing in its many creeks and streams.

Magnolia has received support and generosity from communities near and far. The McDowell community loves and nurtures Magnolia preschoolers, often volunteering their time to show preschoolers the farm, the reptiles, or just helping teach a new lesson in nature. Families from the neighboring towns generously donated class materials and cold weather clothing and we’ve received a grant from Boggs Boots to outfit Magnolia with high quality waterproof boots for every child! We hope you’ll keep up with us on this journey as our program grows. It is truly unique and wonderful to see young children play, grow, and be inspired by their time in the great outdoors. Please like us on Facebook. For more information please visit or send us a message at magnolianatureschool@campmcdowell.com.

Have you been in the Camp Store lately?

Mark Johnston stays warm by the store’s wood burning stove in his new Camp fleece sweater top.

Lori White from St. John’s, Montgomery was the first to purchase the new green tie dye shirt.

The new drinkware has proven to be a big hit with camp visitors.
The gates are always open and the doors always unlocked at the Camp McDowell Conference Center. In our little corner of the Bankhead National Forest there is no shortage of rocking chairs, awesome views, or beautiful natural surroundings. You’ve all heard the saying “Camp McDowell is the way the world could be.” At the Conference Center we take this seriously, trying our best to create an environment where there is limited disparity between the real world and the ideal world. We are always trying to give our guests something truly wonderful, and our increasingly maxed-out calendar is a validation that we are continually succeeding in this. All businesses have a product to sell, our product just happens to be the intangible reward of a life-sustaining respite from the stresses of everyday life. This is our ministry, we are blessed to take part in it, and we relish the opportunity to welcome you, the supporters and friends of Camp McDowell, back home to God’s Backyard. In the words of Matthew 12:6, “something greater than the temple is here.” We hope you’ll come and see it.

McDowell Environmental Center

By Lee Auman; Guest Services

W e had great success in 2016 at the McDowell Environmental Center. Through Camp McDowell, we hosted over 7,500 students, teachers and chaperones from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. Thanks to our outreach animal program, we reached another 4,500 people in church retreats, public libraries, farmer’s markets and classrooms all over Alabama.

According to our hard-working Assistant Director, Carrie Evans, 2017. Many schools return each year for our outstanding outdoor, hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for students, making it a generational tradition. Since we have been operating for 20+ years, we are now seeing many children of past students coming through. What a thrill to have parent chaperones coming back to relive the magical moments in the McDowell woods with their children!

During the spring season of this year, we will have 15 educators coming in from all over the United States (and Alabama!) to teach our students and teachers about the beauty of the Alabama streams, forests, and wildlife. In addition to our wonderfully educated human instructors, we have 3 federally protected, rescued raptors (soon to be 6), and 9 rescued reptiles/amphibians that are trained and cared for by our Animal Program Manager and Outreach Coordinator, Kendra Burnis. We are so pleased that this program has grown tremendously in 2016.

If you know any group of people that would benefit from the powerful knowledge that comes from a live bird of prey or a peaceful walk through the woods with a naturalist, please contact us at 205-387-1806 ext. 109 or on our new, completely revamped website: www.mcdowelllec.com. Additionally, if you are interested in supporting our bird program, visit our wishlist: https://www.myregistry.com/public/mcdowelllec.

McDowell Farm School Growing Strong

By Ali Papp, Director of the MFS

The McDowell Farm School’s mission is to inspire curiosity, teach problem solving and empower community connections through sustainable agriculture. We encourage students, parents, teachers and anyone else that visits the farm, to ask questions, be curious, wonder, and never stop learning. This gift teaches one to observe, to notice the details, and to be grateful for the immense beauty we find in even the smallest of places.

One of the most beautiful aspects of the farm can be found amongst the relationships that are formed and strengthened while at camp. Even as staff, many of us learned this special place through a friend who had worked at McDowell before us. They invited us to see, experience and share the mission of Camp McDowell. The relationships, friendships, and community we have formed with our students, teachers, summer campers while learning and playing create the heart of the McDowell Farm School.

One way we are working to build new relationships is with our local community. Camp McDowell is located in Winston County, one of the most distressed counties in the state. Our team worked hard and was awarded a grant from the Appalachia Regional Commission to bring 150 local students to the farm school on 50% scholarship. These students will participate in two STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) projects while they are here, in addition to the standard farm classes. Some students will help complete our electric Jeep by connecting the batteries we are now able to purchase through this support, and another group will help expand our sustainable watering systems on the farm. The jeep, and an electric tractor, will be charged by the solar panels that were installed in 2016 that took our goat systems off the grid! Students will experience a new relationship between technology, each other, and the natural world and take a new perspective back to their classrooms and communities.

This new connection was built through an old friend and staff member that lives in our local community. She invited a teacher she knew well to experience the Farm School. It is those teachers, new and old, the ones that can speak to others of the change they see in their students, that have helped MFS to grow. During our Spring 2017 season, the sixth official season of our program, we will host over 23 schools and 1500 students. We have added over 20 new schools to the 2017-2018 school calendar and we continue to grow!

We are working to expand our community connections by building more relationships with school teachers, campers, and any future tiny farmers of the beautiful southeast.
Young Professionals Experience Arts Administration at the Alabama Folk School

The Alabama Folk School at Camp McDowell started a new internship program designed to introduce young professionals to arts administration within a non-profit camp and conference center work environment. Interns at the Alabama Folk School acquire valuable professional skills during their service period and make contact with potential future employers within and outside of the arts community.

The 2017 intern is Robert A.W. Dunn. Rob graduated from Emory University in May 2016 with a Bachelor of Art in History and minor in Music. He worked for Emory’s Center for Digital Scholarship where he digitized sound recordings and scanned books, pamphlets, etc. for historic preservation. Rob has prior experience with concert production, as well as event promotion and graphic design. He is a sacred harp singer and is eager to participate in Camp Fasola at Camp McDowell and shape note singing in Walker County.

The 2017 internship program has been made possible by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Walker Area Community Foundation.
The Rev. Eric Mancil has been called to serve as Rector at St. Catherine’s in Chelsea. He will begin his ministry at St. Catherine’s on January 2, 2017.

The Rev. Dr. Norbert Wilson, Deacon at St. Dustan’s in Auburn, has accepted a position as Professor in the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts. A special service honoring Wilson and his family was held on December 9, 2017.

The Reverend Bill Blackerby accepted a call to serve as the part time Interim Rector for Holy Spirit, Alabaster beginning January 8, 2017.

The Reverend David Dill has accepted a call to serve as Priest in Charge at the Chapel of our Saviour, Colorado Springs, CO. He will begin his ministry there February 1.

The Commission on Ministry has approved the following persons as postulants for Holy Orders:

- Drew Brislin for priesthood.
- Kevin Burke for diaconate.
- Nate Darville for priesthood (to complete a year of Anglican Studies).
- Sally Herring for priesthood.
- Susan Oakes for priesthood.
- Lucy Strandlund for priesthood.

In memoriam

The Rev. Ray Pradat passed away on January 10, 2017. A celebration of Ray’s life was held on January 13, 2017, at Christ Episcopal Church, Tuscaloosa, where he served as rector for 25 years.

The Rev. David Stricker of Huntsville (canonical in Upper South Carolina) died on January 27th.

The Rev. Thomas H. White died on January 1, 2017 at his home in Palisade, Colo. He was a canonical priest in the Diocese of Alabama in the 1980’s and early 1990’s and last served as rector of St. Stephen’s, Eutaw.

May their souls and all of the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.
In Light of the Gospel: Solar Energy and the Stewardship of Creation

Charles Scribner

“Solar energy is a potential win/win for churches everywhere,” Elizabeth Scribner noted at a Diocesan Convention workshop. “Christians can help heal God’s creation while saving their churches money that would be better spent on ministries than utilities.”

As a member of the Diocesan Task Force for the Stewardship of Creation, I had the pleasure of introducing Elizabeth—who is also my wife—at the Task Force’s workshop on solar energy for churches. Elizabeth’s father, Sam Yates, our fellow parishioner at Cathedral Church of the Advent, founded Eagle Solar & Light in 2016 to provide solar energy and LED lighting to residences, businesses, nonprofits, and churches. While pursuing her PhD in Mathematics at UAB, Elizabeth serves as Eagle Solar & Light’s Technical Adviser.

At our Task Force’s workshop, Elizabeth demonstrated ways solar energy is already becoming pivotal to a sustainable future. First, she explained how solar energy works, on and off the grid. Next, she provided ideas for how churches might move toward solar energy.

Elizabeth not only “talks the talk” but also “walks the walk” as our home is powered by the sun! As readers ponder whether solar might be worth pursuing for their home, business, or church, I will illuminate the reasons our family decided to go solar.

As the executive director of Black Warrior Riverkeeper, I constantly witness fossil fuels polluting Alabama’s water, air, wildlife, and communities. Switching our home to solar was a natural reaction to that ubiquitous problem, as well as a way of saving money over time. Far more than professional or financial considerations, however, our faith was the main factor.

Elizabeth and I have been enriched by many Bible verses relating to the care of God’s Creation. Restoring Eden, a Christian environmental organization, has compiled a helpful list at restoringeden.org/bibleverses. But above all, we were inspired by God’s grace, that undeserved gift surpassing all others. Our gospel focus finds the cross and resurrection of Jesus ever and only at the center.

What does stewardship of creation mean to us in light of the Good News? How do we keep Jesus Christ our redeemer as the focus of this endeavor?

Being good stewards of creation is an example of bearing the fruits of the spirit. As we live in light of the gospel, we are increasingly concerned about the two great commandments that Jesus gave us: love of God and love of neighbor. As the poet Wendell Berry says, “Do unto those downstream as you would have those upstream do unto you.”

Humanity was not called to maintain creation in entirely original, pristine form. God created us as a part of nature, so we will have an impact on it. What kind of impact should we have? In my humble opinion, we are called to utilize the great gifts God has given us for our own survival and enjoyment in ways that do not diminish our current and future neighbors’ opportunities to do likewise.

Gethryn Giles, past president of the Alabama ECW, passed away peacefully on January 4, 2017, at her home in Black Mountain, North Carolina. She was a dear friend and mentor to many women throughout the state.

She was born in Decatur, Alabama, on July 11, 1936. She attended both Huntington College and the University of Tennessee. At the University of Tennessee, she obtained her Masters of Social Work in 1968, receiving the Rhoda O’Meara award for exhibiting the most promise for contributions to her field.

Gethryn pursued her career as a social case worker in Tuscumbia, Huntsville, and Talladega, and “retired” in 1996 as Assistant to the Commissioner for the Alabama Department of Human Resources in Montgomery. After retirement, she and her husband Gene moved to Mentone, where she continued her service with Alive Hospice in Scottsboro.

In addition to her career in social work, Gethryn served as past President of the Alabama Conference of Social Work; President, Church Periodical Club Chair, President-elect and Parliamentarian of the Episcopal Church Women in the Diocese of Alabama; and on the vestries of Holy Comforter Episcopal Church, Montgomery; St. Joseph’s, Mentone; and St. James, Black Mountain, NC.

Gethryn’s life was one of service to her family, to her employers, and most of all, to the church and God. At the 2015 ECW Fall Conference, she was honored as one of the ECW saints. She wrote that her involvement with the ECW began at the request of another past president, her dear friend, Olivia Weingarten. In her words, “In 2004, Olivia Weingarten, the Diocesan ECW President talked with me about the annual ECW Conference which was to be held in the Mountain Convocation in 2005. She said she really would like to have it in Mentone and wondered if I would work to see if we could have it there. As it turned out we did have the conference there and as a result I was hooked on ECW at the diocesan level.”

During her tenure as the president-elect of the Alabama ECW, she chose as the theme for that year, “St. Anne, Grandmother of Our Savior.” She chose the theme because most of the ECW were either mothers or grandmothers and she wanted to honor them. Bishop Parsley wrote in his introduction to be included in the 2009 calendar, “Thank God for Saint Anne and for all our grandparents. Pray that in our loving we might be more like them.”

Gethryn exemplified the example of St. Anne in her own life. She was kind and supportive to all. Thank God for Gethryn and her love for all of us.
Around Our Diocese

January/February/March 2017

Special Session 2017

Lindsey Mullen, Executive Director

For the first time, this year we will have TWO Special Sessions in Bethany Village at Camp McDowell. Special Session is a summer camp session for people with physical and/or intellectual disabilities, staffed by youth and college aged camp counselors. We also have a robust volunteer adult staff that comes to support our counselors and campers.

Staff dates for Special Session I are June 10-17; Special Session II is June 18-25. The theme of both camps is “A World of Pure Imagination,” based on the story of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

Here are some ways your parish can be involved in Special Session:

Create Welcome Packs
These are backpacks we give to our campers filled with their basic needs from coming to camp, as well as a prayer letter from someone in our diocese who is praying for them. We are looking for 13 parishes to create 10 welcome packs each.

Host a Happy Hour
This involves preparing a small snack and drink for our campers and counselors (about 120 people), and then coming to camp to serve. This is a great way to meet our campers and staff and show them some love. We are looking for 10 parish groups to host Happy Hour. Happy Hours happen daily on June 12-16 and June 20-24.

Send a Team of Angels
We need help transitioning from Session I to Session II, and we need help cleaning up and closing down after Session II. We are looking for a couple of groups who would be willing to come and help us clean up and set up.

Volunteer to Come to Camp
The more people we have on staff, the more attention and love we can show all of our campers. Please encourage your youth to sign up, and consider attending! We are especially in need of nurses!

Encourage Your Youth to Serve as Camp Counselors:
As we grow into two sessions, we need more youth and young adults to help us serve more campers. If it’s helpful, our camp director, Lindsey, would love to visit your parish to talk about special session. You can reach her at lmullen@diosa.org.

Applications to attend, and more information about Welcome Packs, Happy Hour, and Angel Teams are available at www.specialsessionalabama.org.

Special Session 2017

A WORLD OF PURE IMAGINATION

Staff Dates: Session I: June 10-17, Session II: June 18-25
VISIT SPECIALSESSIONALABAMA.ORG TO SIGN UP!

4th Annual Young Adults Retreat

April 28 – 30, 2017

The Young Adults Retreat is a spiritual retreat for young adults age 23 and older at Camp McDowell. This retreat offers a weekend of community, relaxation, and contemplation as we explore themes of identity, place, and belonging with our program “Finding Home Again.”

Many of us in our 20s and 30s find ourselves searching for a place to belong and put down roots. We’re no longer grounded in the place we grew up in, and if we have found a place to “settle down,” our roots are not yet deep. In some cases, we’ve settled in the place we grew up and our roots are deeper than we might like. Our program directors Rev. Daniel Strandlund and Jennifer Manning will use the biblical heroine, Ruth, as our guide as we discuss where we have come from, where we are going and where we belong.

The event begins Friday evening at 8pm and ends Sunday after lunch. Participants also have the option of just joining us during the day Saturday. More information and registration is available at http://bit.ly/2l7hFod.
Person 2 Person: SDC Staff Talk About Race

By: Claire Cotten

The first ever Person 2 Person was held in Montgomery over Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend. Sawyerville Day Camp staff talked about race during the three-day event. One of Sawyerville Day Camp’s goals is to help improve race relations in Alabama; this event did just that.

Over the course of the weekend, the group traveled to the Rosa Parks Museum, the Equal Justice Initiative, and the Freedom Rides Museum, and worshipped at Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King, Jr. was once the pastor. Outside of the field trips, we talked about the difference between stereotyping, discrimination, and racism; unpacked privilege and internalized oppression; told stories of times when we experienced or witnessed discrimination; and learned about the current situation in Standing Rock, ND and how indigenous people have been oppressed in the past. Together, we had deep conversations, revisited history, prayed, and dreamed.

During worship on Saturday night, the group took some time to reflect on Dr. King’s dream as well as our own. Here are some of the responses:

What’s your dream for Alabama?
- To take responsibility for our past and intentionally work together towards a more open, loving, and accepting state.
- To openly talk about our past and work towards a more inclusive future.
- For Alabama to become a place known for how well we welcome strangers and how gracefully we admit our wrongdoings and change our ways.

What’s your dream for your hometown?
- Racially and economically diverse school systems so that every student has equal opportunities.
- To understand our privilege and learn how we can eliminate that privilege by empowering other communities in our state.
- More diverse political beliefs, increased open-mindedness, progress in racial issues and others.

What’s your dream for Sawyerville Day Camp?
- A permanent facility/institution that can continue to educate, help, and grow both staff and campers.
- Our own space, integration, and continue spreading love amongst each other and the Black Belt community.
- A permanent facility and more diverse staff.
- More intentional race-based discussions.

This group had a great conversation about ways to make the staff community at camp even more inclusive. We’re looking forward to putting their ideas into action this summer.

If you weren’t able to participate in Person 2 Person this year, don’t worry, the event will happen again next year. Go ahead and mark your calendar for MLK weekend!

We’re so thankful to all of the people and groups who helped make Person 2 Person possible! Thank you to:
- St. John’s Episcopal Church, Montgomery
- St. Michael’s and All Angels Episcopal Church, Millbrook
- The Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Montgomery
- Carol Kendrick
- Neely McKenzie
- Rev. Dr. Tommie Watkins
- The Rosa Parks Museum
- The Equal Justice Initiative
- Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church
- The Freedom Rides Museum
- New South Books
- Person 2 Person Staff: Tye Edwards, Elliot Spillers, Allison Kendrick
- Person 2 Person Planning Committee: Tye Edwards, Kristin Blackerby, William Blackerby, Jermaine Cole, Emily Thornton, Allison Kendrick

Volunteer staff applications are open now through March 11, 2017! Apply here: bit.ly/SDCstaff2017.

Applicants must be at least 16 by September 1, 2017, and there is no maximum age! Since this is a youth event of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, if you are age 16 to 18, you must have a parent or guardian present when you fill out this application and that person needs to fill out the parental release portion and give permission for you to staff.

All high-school volunteers serve as small group leaders who guide 8-10 campers through daily activities. Adults interested in volunteering can also serve as activity leaders, teachers, or kitchen helpers. No matter the role, every volunteer should apply through the online form. Come pray, play, and learn with us!

For more information please contact Crystal Jones at cjones@dioala.org. Staff selections will be made mid-March and applicants will be notified at the end of March so there is plenty of time to plan your summer schedule.
Meals and Supplies for Summer 2017

By: Claire Cotten

Would your parish, small group, or Sunday school class like to donate a meal or gather supplies for Sawyerville Day Camp? Let us know!

We need meals for groups of either 20 or 100, bathing suits in children and adult sizes, pool towels, pool noodles, books, and snacks for the staff. Please contact Claire Cotten at c cotten@dioala.org to volunteer.

SDC Junior Board Update

By: Tim Callahan

Sawyerville Day Camp is thrilled to announce the latest installment of this ever-growing ministry: the Sawyerville Day Camp Junior Board! This board features members from all over Alabama who have participated in Sawyerville for years as well as those who are brand new to SDC.

Liza Lee Tweedy, Tim Callahan, Jermaine Cole, Lydia Allison, and Lindsay Joe will serve as the key leadership for this group which consists of four subcommittees: Event Planning, Fundraising, Marketing/Social Media, and Presentations/Awareness.

This Junior Board strives to create innovative ways to spread awareness of the mission of Sawyerville Day Camp and the Learning Program: serving Christ through outreach, improving race relations in Alabama, broadening the horizons of children and counselors, and enriching the lives of those living in poverty in Hale County and surrounding areas.

Yellowhammer Learning Program Needs Teachers

By: Crystal Jones

This summer, the YLP will teach 30 rising third-grade students and hopefully help them vastly improve their reading comprehension and math skills. Are you a teacher? Do you have some free time this summer? We’d love to talk to you about joining our team of volunteer teachers!

We welcome all kinds of teachers - elementary school, middle school, high school, retired, reading, math, science, history, anything! Those who would like to learn more should fill out this quick online interest form: http://bit.ly/YLPTeachers
The Youth Department planned and facilitated a spirited and Spirit-filled Christmas Conference at Camp McDowell on December 28-30, 2016. There were 180 campers and staff, including the amazing college age adults who always bring great energy and love giving back to something that has been vital to their own formation and sharing the unconditional love we all want and need. The Rev. Tommie Watkins from Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa directed our program, “Let There Be Light!” and it was fantastic. One of the highlights of the program was the Taize service on the last night, which is pictured. Our long-time friend, Fran McKendree, served as our music director and empowered many of the youth to join in leading the music for the event. Following are a few reflections offered by some of our YD members that will provide a little more insight into the power and presence of the Spirit who lives and moves through our youth events.

Christmas Conference at Camp McDowell is consistently one of my favorite weekends of the year. Over the span of three days that feel somehow both painfully short and wondrously long, a community is formed. We like to throw the word “community” around a lot at YD events, maybe even a little too much. But that’s because it fits; it’s what we are when we’re together. You can hear it in the laughter and the songs. You can see it in the smiles, and in the goofy dances, and in the nodding head of the quiet listener. You can feel it in the moment you realize your small group is no longer just a small group, but a group of friends. Every year, the camper evaluations have one request in common—a longer event. But when I think back on the weekend, on the people I’ve met and the relationships I’ve formed, I realize that maybe three days is all the time we need. ~Hayden Dunbar, Merchandise Designer and Member at Large

Christmas Conference 2016 was, in my opinion, a great success. The weekend was an opportunity for the hard work of the Youth Department to manifest itself in a great event. Games were played, songs were sung, friends were made, and in all of it a community was built. It is this community, built over the short span of three days, that made Christmas Conference such a great success. Like each previous camp session, this community was one of inclusion, faith, and tolerance, which is the reason I and so many others keep returning to camp. Needless to say, this event set lofty expectations for Christmas Conference 2017. ~Nic Parmer, YD Music Coordinator and Member at Large

There’s a saying that God is in everything, sometimes you just have to look a little harder. I’ve never felt that I’ve had to look very hard at Episcopalian or Youth Department events. I quickly learned that I wasn’t the only one that felt this way. Christmas Conference this year held a Taizé Christmas service. The whole camp entered with their unlit candles and sat in a gigantic circle in the middle of Saint Francis. The service held thought provoking songs and stories from the birth of Jesus. Earlier in small groups and throughout the event campers and staff alike were encouraged to write down their shames and fears on strips of paper. In this service the strips were passed back out and everyone processed outside to throw them into a fire pit while praying and reflecting. Once the camp was seated back in the circle, Father Tommie Watkins Jr. went outside and lit his candle from the fears and shames. He came back inside and lit another’s candle and the process continued until the everyone’s candle was lit. Sitting surrounded by so many in St. Francis provided a feeling of comfort and unity but at the same time you can feel a sense of being alone with just “The Big Man.” We sang the songs “O Lord Hear My Prayer” and “Stay With Me.” These two songs ask for God to come and listen and to watch. The comfort, unity, and presence asked for was held by many. Once the service ended an invitation to stay was offered. More than expected stayed, listened, prayed, reflected, or just soaked it all in. Surely the presence of the Lord was in that place. ~Ava Claire Mattox, Worship Leader and Youth Department Southern District Rep
Youth Ministers Reflect on “Why Jesus?”

Since the Diocesan Youth Ministers do not normally submit a video report at Diocesan Convention, we thought we would participate in answering the question of “Why Jesus?” through the newsletter. We decided that this simple question is actually not as simple as it sounds and for some of us was hard to answer very concisely. And we also decided that it’s a great exercise and question for each of us to attempt to answer. So here goes, these are thoughts shared by youth ministers from around our great diocese about Why Jesus?...

Claire Mosley, St. Paul’s in Selma

Jesus is the greatest gift there is. The Bible says that the reason we would love God is because he first loved us. Jesus died in our place so we could be forgiven. Jesus proves a divine heart of love, meeting our needs, drawing us to himself. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, he offers us a new life today.

Emily Linton, St. Mary’s on the Highland’s, Birmingham

Jesus’ ministry helped turn the world upside down. He came to us in so many unexpected ways, and still continues to do so today. I think it’s those unexpected moments that really break through the minutia of our everyday lives. He is constantly reminding us to love justice, peace, and mercy, and, above all else, to put God and our neighbors ahead of ourselves. In today’s world, such a reminder is so important and absolutely necessary.

Kevin Yates, Holy Comforter in Gadsden

Why Jesus? I’m not sure I understand this short question. Why air? Why water? To question the why of some things is baffling because they always are. I was born into the same air breathed by others for a million years. I bathe in the same water that soaked dinosaurs. I worship a living savior that gives peace to all blessings, comforts in all sorrow and leaves us one firm commandment, to love one another. Our faith is simple, really. Because Jesus.

Bartlee Linton, St. Mary’s on the Highland’s, Birmingham

There are many words that are apt to describe our Christ: king, rabbi, shepherd, preacher, healer, lord. History is full of men and women who have sought out power seeking to be able to attach some of the more glamorous of these titles to their name. However, there are also several other ways to talk about Jesus, words that are not ones commonly associated with: splendor, baby, carpenter, prisoner, defendant, condemned, victim. It’s not in our human nature to seek out these labels, and may seem strange to worship someone who embodies them so fully. But beyond these earthly labels, there is one that transcends and unites all others into a fuller, more complete picture: Christ. Why Jesus? Because Jesus is the only way to understand the love of God and the only bridge we can use to cross the gap between glory and grace, sacrifice and resurrection.

Shelley Lackey, Holy Trinity, Auburn

Because Jesus is God’s only plan for our eternal salvation. Because Jesus is the solution to our sin. Through Him, we are forgiven and eternal life is assured. Jesus is our offer for new life and new hope. He provides a one-way, unconditional, unequivocal love for all who believe in Him. We aren’t forgiven because of what we do, we are forgiven because of what has already been done through Jesus Christ our Savior.

So I ask you….why NOT Jesus?

Sarah Watts, Nativity in Huntsville

Because when we enter into Jesus’ story, when we live deeper into his life and passion, we discover that we belong and that we are loved with a love which is wider, deeper and more encompassing than anything we could have ever imagined. We discover that no matter how hard, crazy, painful, or joyous our lives may be, no matter who we are, where we come from, what we’re good at, what triumphs we’ve experienced or tragedies we’ve endured, we belong just as we are. And we discover that we are called to be a part of that love, to live deeper into it and share it with those who are on the path next to us.

Doss Cleveland, All Saints’ in Homewood

In today’s fast-paced society I think we have become conditioned to have complex questions answered instantly but I believe since this is the most important question one can ask also means that it deserves much more than a clear-cut answer, quite frankly because I don’t think there is one. In a journey to prove that you’re a functioning, self-sustaining member of society, why not have reassurance that there is always a figure you can collapse into? In a world where we are technologically more connected but arguably more socially disconnected than ever before, why not have the confidence that there is in fact at least one person that unconditionally loves you?

Katie Carroll, Cathedral Church of the Advent

Thinking of an answer to the question “why Jesus” makes me feel like an adult when a kid asks why the sky is blue…it just is! And it defines how I experience every moment of every day. Its importance can’t be overstated, but it’s hard to put to words. Jesus is my savior, friend, and safe place. Only in Jesus is my imperfection met with open arms…all striving to earn favor & to be enough comes to an end as I rest in the perfect work of Him who is fully God & fully human. No other faith can boast such a free gift with no strings attached. Ultimately, Jesus is the reason we have hope in our lives, both personally and as a ministry. I pray that this truth of why Jesus matters is tangibly felt in every moment of programming and activity in our ministries!

Shelly Hardin, Epiphany in Gunterville

Why Jesus? Jesus is concrete. Jesus was human like us. Jesus showed us love and how to love. Jesus’ parables used everyday items and people to help us understand how God intends us to live and treat each other. Some parables can be used today as hands on activities to help us experience their meanings. And last but not least, Jesus is Love!

Joleen George, St. John’s in Montgomery

Although this is a loaded question there is a simple answer, and that answer is love. Jesus was and is love in our everyday lives. He taught us love through his interactions with people and how he died on the cross to save our souls. 1 John 4:8 “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love” The youth here in the Episcopal Youth Community serve to love everyone and while supporting one another they grow bigger than themselves.

Olive Thompson, Church of the Ascension in Vestavia Hills

Why Jesus? For hope, love, security, and comfort. Working with the youth in our congregations and providing these things, as Jesus provides them to all of us, makes church a welcoming and safe place to be. I work to ensure a strong connection with the youth today in the hope that when my own children are older they get this connection with the youth ministers and leaders and choose to spend free time at the church in fellowship, stewardship, volunteer work, and walking as Christ walked. If you want to get involved with the youth, just show up, be consistent, and lead with love.

Tim Callahan, St. John’s in Decatur

Whenever I think of Jesus my mind automatically is directed to the word sacrifice and the weight that word holds when mentioned with Jesus. Along with the immense learning that comes with a first job out of college is learning how to sacrifice aspects of life that until now were a given. Whether that is being surrounded by friends and family, being able to spend without a budget in mind or staying up late, all of these things must eventually be sacrificed. I am not saying the Jesus’ sacrifice is on the same level as these but to answer the question of “Why Jesus” the meaning of sacrifice holds; Jesus came to save all of us from sin and was able to accomplish this by sacrificing himself and thus allowing us to be forgiven and experience eternal life. So when I hear the question “Why Jesus” I believe the answer is found in Jesus offering himself as the perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

Olivia Hill, St. Luke’s, Birmingham

Why Jesus? Wow, what a big, important question; one that I should ask myself every morning. Jesus is the ultimate role model for our youth (and the people say, duh). If we look at Jesus’ life alone, separate from the church as a whole, we see a human of radical kindness, hospitality, unconditional love and extreme courage: the traits we continuously strive to bring out of our youth (and humanity). Extreme courage is the catalyst for all goodness. We must have courage to speak out for our estranged neighbors or to hold our closest brothers and sisters accountable in Christ. I charge all of the youth to take a page from Jesus’ life and have some extreme courage to actively participate in their youth group and share the love of Christ with all of those around them!

Ben Smith, Church of the Resurrection in Rainbow City

Why Jesus? Because why not Jesus? Looking into who Jesus is and not by what he does, we are capable to learn how to become followers, witnesses, worshipers, forgivers, neighbors, and stewards in our day-to-day lives. Through Jesus we are invited to ministry as leaders in a Christian community by way of discipleship and vocation.

Susan Oakes, Diocesan Youth Ministries Coordinator

I choose Jesus because of His embodiment of God’s call to us to love and serve, because he shaves things up and challenges us in our thoughts, words, and actions, and because Jesus shows me the way to love, truth, justice and reconciliation. I choose Jesus because his life, death, and resurrection show me the greatest love of all. And after wandering away from Jesus for a long time, I choose Jesus because He chooses me and, in fact, never lost me, and that fills me with gratitude, peace, compassion, and a desire to love and serve in return.

January/February/March 2017

THE ALABAMA EPISCOPALIAN • 17

Around Our Diocese
Preserving God’s Back Yard

Bea Strong

Because the Rev. Mark Johnston champions sustaining and conserving natural resources, he promotes the construction theology of building things in the way we believe God is calling us to be. Camp already employs ecological efficiencies such as, geothermal technologies as well as on-site growth of foods which can be served in camp dining halls. As planning progresses at Camp McDowell, Mark and the staff want to get off the grid and produce all electricity from renewable resources. To work toward these goals, Mark submitted a 2016 grant request to the Diocesan UTO Committee. The focus of the grant is designed to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain/renew the life of the earth-UTO’s Fifth Mark of Mission. Since the UTO committee deemed his grant as the best fit to the Mark of Mission, it was selected as our grant for submission to the National UTO Board.

So, what does all that mean? Basically, his grant requested funding for a recycling center at Camp McDowell. The camp presently serves 25,000+ guests and houses 80+ staff members each year. This population presents a wonderful opportunity for teaching about recycling and waste reduction. To move in the direction of zero landfill or zero-carbon footprint, a recycling facility was necessary. To achieve this goal, Mark’s grant requested $68,120 to construct a building with a baler to be used after material is sorted and stored.

Imagine how thrilled Mark and the committee were to learn that the grant had been funded. Once the center is operational, it will produce enough revenue to cover its operational expenses and generate approximately $1,700 per month. After expected arrival of essential equipment in March, 2017, the center will be fully operational. Mark is 100% dedicated to achieving a zero-landfill goal. The center will help somewhat in carbon footprint reduction but will significantly reduce what we have to transport to the landfill. Material which is retained will be raw material for manufacturing and reuse. The grant is helping camp strive toward our zero-landfill goal for camp trash/garbage. We are excited that the Rev. Heather Melton (Staff Officer to the National UTO Board) and the Alabama ECW Board will visit camp and the Camp McDowell Recycling Center on the weekend of February 25. During this visit, we will dedicate the facility. We are extremely grateful to the UTO for providing the funds to help us strive toward obtaining our ecological goals. Camp McDowell really is “God’s Back Yard”.

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CHRISTIAN FORMATION CONFERENCE
JOIN US JUNE 12-16, 2017

CONFERENCE STAFF

COORDINATOR
Kerri economic is the coordinator for Lifelong Christian Formation in the Diocese of Alabama and a former director of Christian Formation in two parishes. With a master’s degree in early childhood education, Kathy began her career in formation while the thinking was that this training was what a teacher was all that was needed. She quickly learned otherwise, and through training and theeced (on-going) continuing, she learned skills and grew in her ministry. She began attending the Conference when her youngest was in 1st grade, but now a young college junior. She has been a 25 and 32 year old.

CHAIRMAN
The Rev. Alison Canty grew up in Christiansville, Tennessee and graduated from UT in Knoxville with a degree in early childhood education. After her marriage, she taught for a few years and then stayed at home to raise her two daughters. When they first moved to Birmingham, Alison transferred her membership to St. Luke’s Episcopal Church and became very involved in women’s activities in the parish. Over time, Alison drew others to serve at the altar and eventually was appointed for activation by the Diocese. Alison attended the KEGS (Theological Seminary) in 2000 and has served on staff at St. James in Homewood, St. Stephen’s and Church of the Holy Spirit.

MUSICIAN
Vicky Farrow has a musical background since her legs were long enough to reach the organ pedals. She’s directed both adult and children’s choirs and she is the proud owner of a well used karaoke machine! Vicky loves it all—guitars, drums, bass, wah-wahs, violins and other hard to name. She is also a visual artist and uses different forms to express himself. He is color blind. One of Vicky’s favorite expressions is that of playing music is her passion. Vicky has always felt God’s presence whenever he was making music. It’s her passion and she loves to share; whether it’s a song, a story or a prayer.

CONFERENCE RATES
$480 = Double Occupancy program, lodging & meals
$770 = Single Occupancy program, lodging & meals
$390 = Commuter program, lunch & supper
$430 = Non-participating Guests lodging & meals
$250 = Youth ages 10-19, lodging & meals
$500 = Child (ages 3-9), lodging & meals
$180 = Infant under age 3, lodging & meals
$50 = OPTIONAL EARLY ARRIVAL JUNE 11th
*Gregg Almy, instructor available.
*Any meals
*There is a $200 refundable fee for those who participate in Kanuga’s annual writing program during the previous year and have not been accepted.
*10% discount applied through Feb. 12th!

2017 CHRISTIAN FORMATION CONFERENCE
JUNE 12-16

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE
Every day we experience the reality that we are living, not only in a time of change, but in a change of eras. We need a new vision of forming faith—an ecosystem of intergenerational relationships including faith experiences at church, family faith at home and missional formation to the unchurched. All of this is supported by digitally enabled and digitally connected faith formation to reach anyone, anywhere, anytime.

Make this week a mountain vacation for the entire family! While parents attend plenary sessions and workshops, young people participate in their own programs directed by our carefully selected staff in a safe and fun Christian environment.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
John Roberto is president of Lifelong Faith Associates and serves as a consultant to churches and national organizations, teaches courses and conducts workshops on faith formation. He has authored numerous books and program manuals on faith formation, including this latest, Families at the Center of Faith Formation (editor and co-author, 2016) and Seasons of Adult Faith Formation (editor and co-author, 2015).

LEARN MORE & REGISTER AT kanuga.org/christianformation

January/February/March 2017
Episcopal Place Gumbo Gala is April 22, 2017 - Sloss Furnaces

It's Gumbo Gala time! Please join us for a day of great food and great family fun from 11 am to 2 pm, Saturday, April 22 at Sloss Furnaces in downtown Birmingham.

This year marks the 12th anniversary of Gumbo Gala, an annual cook-off event benefiting Episcopal Place, presented by Wind Creek Casino and Hotel Wetumpka. The event started as a backyard party in Caldwell Park for the residents of Episcopal Place, but soon grew more popular than anyone ever imagined. With over 50 teams and thousands of participants, Gumbo Gala is now one of the largest gumbo competitions in the Gulf Coast states.

Cook teams will compete for 17 awards and cash prizes in the Professional, Backyard Cooks, and Teen Krewe divisions as they serve up delicious gumbo for judges and guests to sample. Guests will also enjoy live Cajun music and dance, the Muskrat Art Ramble featuring local artists, Pogo's Play- ground for children, a Second Line Parade, food trucks, and ice cold beverages.

Adult admission is $15 in advance, $18 at the gate, $5 for children ages 6-12. Children under age 6 are admitted for free.

Gumbo Gala is always seeking new teams to participate in the fun. Teams registering before March 15 receive a $50 early-bird discount. To register a team or purchase tickets, please visit the Gumbo Gala website at http://gumbogala.swellgives.com or call Episcopal Place at 205-939-0085.

Proceeds from the event will be used to provide supportive services to the low-income seniors and adults with disabilities who live in Episcopal Place’s affordable housing community. For more information about Episcopal Place, visit www.episcopalplace.org

Registration is now open for Young People Paint Birmingham 2017! Youth entering 7th-9th grades are invited to join us for a weekend work experience in Birmingham’s West End neighborhoods. We will be scraping and painting houses for homeowners, and during the evenings, we will participate in a program that will help youth learn more about poverty and what they can do to help. Rising high school seniors and recent high school graduates are invited to join us at CITs! Please contact Emily Collette (Emily@stmarysoth.org) with any questions! Register at: Summer Opportunities at http://www.dioala.org/youthevents.html

The Christian Spiritual Journey
X. Theory - for everyone.
All of us - no matter where we are or not journeying.

The Spiritual Journey
March Nights 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm in Ridley Hall
Led by: Matthew Bridges & Esther Brany
Book: “Stepping into the Mystery of the Christian Journey: The Pilgrim”
• Join us as we explore the mystery that the whole of life is sacramental and that mystery multiplies its grace and journey in manifold ways as we grow into becoming who we truly want to be.
• Please read chapters 1 & 2 prior to the first class.
• Books are to and available in the church office
Querent: Matthew Bridges: mbbridges94@gmail.com

CONTREMPATIBLE OUTREACH BIRMINGHAM 24TH ANNUAL GATHERING

March 18, 2017
Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church 3775 Overton Road
Birmingham, AL 35223
9:00-4:00 $60. Registration: centeringprayeralabama.org

“Thomas Merton’s Desert Spirituality”
Speaker, Dr. Bonnie Thurston, Merton scholar, educator and writer.

Our contemplative day will focus on the ambiguous space between the moment and the mountain. Thomas Merton, for example, focuses on the mountain of the holy as the resolution of the moment. This Holy Friday invites us to explore the mountain of the holy.

In the early morning we will participate in a program that will help youth learn about poverty and what they can do to help. Rising high school seniors and recent high school graduates are invited to join us at CITs! Please contact Emily Collette (Emily@stmarysoth.org) with any questions! Register at Summer Opportunities at http://www.dioala.org/youthevents.html

Lenten Retreat: Renewed Life - Seizing the Promises of Christ
Camp McDowell, March 31-April 2
Presented by the Commission on Spirituality
Led by the Rev. Dr. Deborah Meister

How do we cross the gap between the faith we have and the living faith we truly desire? How do we enter into Christ’s promises, not only in heaven, but here; today, in this world? What does it really mean to love Christ and to accept his love for us? Join us for this interactive retreat that will include ancient Christian conversion stories and hands-on practices to help you learn to live resurrection. There will be opportunity for rest, massage, spiritual direction, and you will leave with practices to incorporate at home.

Deborah Meister is an Episcopal priest with a Ph.D. in English literature and has strong interests in adult spiritual formation and in social justice work. She served at St. Luke’s, Birmingham, then as Rector of two different parishes. She and a colleague developed an innovative two-year curriculum of spiritual formation, and is currently living in a monastery in New York State.

Register at bit.ly/lentretreat or kgraham@dioala.org

Holy Apostles, Hoover, Seeks Part-Time Youth Coordinator

The EYC Coordinator is a part time staff position that focuses on the ministry to/of the youth of the parish. It involves forming the faith of our young people and providing a safe place for our young people to explore and ask faith questions. We want to hear from you! The job description is available online at http://bit.ly/2k16SPx, or call the Church Office at 205-988-8000 for more information. Send resume and references to the Rev. Blake Hutson at bhutson@holyapostleshoover.org.
Suggestions for Your Lenten Reading and Study

Kathy Graham, Lifelong Christian Formation Coordinator

Available from http://www.leaderresources.org/

CreateHeart

Creed- What Christians Believe and Why- Exploring the Apostles’ Creed by Adam Hamilton

We’re used to answers popping up on a screen right in front of us. But when the questions examine the truths that give meaning and purpose to life, finding the answers takes more than simply typing a few words and pushing a button. Adam Hamilton believes that powerful answers to many of our complicated questions are contained in the Apostles’ Creed, an early statement of foundational Christian beliefs. In Creed, he explores not only what Christians believe, but also why they believe, and why it matters, which in turn leads readers to confront and examine their own core beliefs and go beyond reciting the Creed’s familiar words. The book is part of a six-week church wide program for Lent, Easter, and beyond that includes a Leader Guide, DVD, youth and children resources, and a Leader Kit (includes “I Believe” card pack). Available at www.Cokesbury.com.

ONLINE

Formation: Activities & Ideas for Lent: Year A

http://bit.ly/2kBiNoI

Ecclesiastical Teacher Special Issue: Youth Confirmation

http://bit.ly/2kQHCM0

The Five Marks of Love

This six-week series provides the opportunity to observe and to reflect on the ways in which the Divine Life expresses itself in and through us; individually and in our faith communities, as well as in the world around us. Each week will explore the Anglican Marks of Mission (Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure) through videos, questions and exercises so we can speak more clearly and act truthfully, motivated always by hearts marked by God’s love. The Marks of Love are not simply a list of tasks to be checked off one after the other; they are signs that our life is rooted and grounded in the Being of God. The Brothers of SSJE will draw on their own monastic spirituality to help us balance action with contemplation, so that our words and deeds proceed from the deepest places of our hearts, where God dwells. The resource encourages us to reflect on how we should live, not what we should do. This series is designed for use by individuals or small groups. In small groups, facilitators will guide the growing process as participants discuss and learn together. For individuals, daily videos and reflections will lead them through a similar process. Ultimately participants will learn to offer themselves, body and soul, to God’s Mission, and to live for God’s glory. Materials and videos are free online and as downloads. (http://ssje.org/ssje/5markssoflove/)

Lent Madness


Lent Madness - from Forward Movement www.lentmadness.org

Lent Madness, inspired by college basketball tournaments, pits 32 saints against each other in a bracket, as each saint seeks to win the coveted Golden Halo. Throughout Lent, fans vote for their favorite saints at www.lentmadness.org. Pick up your very own Saintly Scorecard, the definitive guide to Lent Madness, to learn all about the 2017 lineup of saints. Follow Lent Madness on Facebook and Twitter to stay up-to-date.

WayToLead.org - FREE print-ready resources for worship & reflection

This year’s theme is Let the Living Water Lead Us. Using texts from the Revised Common Lectionary, the resources include: Weekly bulletin with liturgy and prayers (in both color and black & white versions), Weekly images to color, Prompts for engaging in a simplified form of Ignatian Contemplation suitable for all ages. Also available on this site: Five contemplative Lenten liturgies and accompanying coloring pages in a variety of formats. The resources are designed to be used by all ages and have been particularly meaningful for intergenerational groups. This year’s theme, Let the Living Water Lead Us, looks at the water flowing through the Gospel texts: Week 1 – Temptation of Jesus, Week 2 – Nicodemus Visits Jesus, Week 3 – Jesus and the Woman of Samaria, Week 4 – A Man Born Blind Receives Sight, Week 5 – The Death of Lazarus. Available at http://waytolead.org/portfolio-item/lent-2017/

Journey to the Cross 356D.org

A meditative thought and prayer for each day of the Lenten season. The daily devotional website for Lent returns to d365.org on Ash Wednesday, February 10, through Sunday, April 3. Journey to the Cross is part of the year-round devotional site, d365.org, which hosts daily devotionals and three seasonal series for Lent, Advent, and the beginning of the school year, as well as over two million visitors annually. Daily devotionals are available on the web and through the free iOS app http://d365.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/JTTC_BulletinInsert_2016.pdf

January/February/March 2017
but also to prompt and encourage Christians as they tread an important corpus of inspiring devotional literature.

The strength of Puritan character and life lay in prayer and meditation. In this practice the spirit of prayer was regarded as of first importance and the best form of prayer, for living prayer is the characteristic of genuine spirituality. Yet prayer is also vocal and may therefore on occasions be written. Consequently in the Puritan tradition there are many written prayers and meditations which constitute written prayer. Consequently in the Puritan tradition there are

you can move from defeat to victory, starting today. 

faith and our amazing God. She says, “It is so easy for our lives to become easy for our lives to become

WHAT’S NEW/NOTEWORTHY AT THE ADVENT BOOKSTORE

By Susan Yates
(Loyal Arts Media, paperback)

How can we walk in the faith that keeps us focused on God in the midst of the hard circumstances life never stops throwing in our path? Where do you find faith like that? Susan Yates takes readers on a journey of renewed understanding and vision to walk in the confidence of a God so much bigger than the challenges we often face. With Risky Faith you can move from defeat to victory, starting today.

The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions
by Arthur Bennett (Banner of Truth, paperback or bonded leather)

The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions

In this encouraging collection of reflections, Jensen offers warm encouragement to live by God’s word in every aspect of our lives – from generosity to grief, and from morality to motherhood. Each reflection is followed by a Bible passage for further thought and prayer.

The Ology
by Marty Machowski, illustrated by Andy McGuire (New Growth Press, hardback)

Truth is for kids, not just for adults! So The Ology gives kids of all ages a beginners theology book to help them understand who God is and how we, as his children, relate to him. Arranged within a traditional systematic theological framework, each truth in The Ology is also connected to the larger redemptive story of Scripture. The doctrine of God, for example, is presented in the larger framework of creation, where the attributes of God are on display and easier to understand. Designed for six-year-olds through preteens, this flexible resource includes built-in adaptations for use with younger or older children, so that entire families can enjoy it together.

By God’s Word: 60 Reflections for Living in God’s World
by Phillip D. Jensen (Matthias Media, hardback)

When we look through the glasses of Scripture, we see God and his world and his people and ourselves in clearer focus.

By God’s word the world was made. By God’s word it is sustained moment by moment. And by God’s word we can know God through Jesus Christ, and live each day to please God.

In this encouraging collection of reflections, Jensen offers warm encouragement to live by God’s word in every aspect of our lives – from generosity to grief, and from morality to motherhood. Each reflection is followed by a Bible passage for further thought and prayer.

The Beginner’s Bible
Come Celebrate Easter
Sticker & Activity Book
by Zonderkidz (paperback)
The Easter story comes to life through age-appropriate puzzles, activity pages, and stickers in this friendly and fun activity book featuring classic art and simply written content from The Beginner’s Bible. Ages 4-8.

PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW HOURS - We are open Monday through Thursday (10am to 3pm) and Sunday (8:15am to 12:15pm).

For information about these and other books, or to have us research and special order a particular book, please contact the Advent Bookstore, 2015 Sixth Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203; 205/323-2959; E-mail: bookstore@cathedraladvent.com. Or visit the bookstore online at AdventBirmingham.org/bookstore

Grab a rake, a paint brush or fishing pole and join the fun…..

G raceWorks is preparing for its 5th year of summer adventures, painting, gardening, building, exploring nature and God’s presence. We are looking for a few green thumbs to help us plant and harvest vegetables and landscape our labyrinth. We are also searching for mentors with artistic skills to help us paint an outside mural in Woodlawn. The summer program begins June 5 and lasts until July 21. We start each day with breakfast at Grace Church Woodlawn at 7:30. After breakfast our days are filled with outdoor projects, spiritual time, cooking, creative painting, community projects and adventurous trips, ending at 3:00 after reflection and prayer time.

Volunteers, ages 16 through adults, willing to spend a few hours a week with preteens are encouraged to contact Kay Williams (205) 305-4179 or Grace Church Woodlawn (205)995-4636 email at 2cor915@live.com or graceworkskids@outlook.com Any amount of time you can commit to volunteering is welcomed. Learn as you mentor and come grow with us this summer. Applications are available at Grace Church Woodlawn and Grace-Works websites.
St. Mary’s, Jasper: A Small Parish Making Huge Difference

Kate Murphy

St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Jasper distributed over 300 Christmas bags for families from the Walker, Winston & surrounding areas on Tuesday December 20, 2016, more than doubling the number of families that were helped last year through St. Mary’s Food Bank.

St. Mary’s Food Bank has grown consistently over the past few years and, with the help of the caring and generous people of the community, will continue to do so. “The turnout on December 20th was amazing. Almost everyone in the church participated. The workers were able to distribute the meal bags to the families who needed them within about two hours. Those meals ensured that about 1,000 people received a good, hearty Christmas meal this year,” said Mike McClendon, who spear-headed the distribution.

“The St. Mary’s Food Bank is our main outreach program and we’re thrilled at the tremendous growth it has experienced in the last few years, which translates into thousands of people being helped,” said Father Tim Murphy, St. Mary’s Rector.

Tremendous growth could be an understatement. In 2014, approximately 800 bags of groceries were distributed to serve over 2,700 people compared to more than 1,800 bags for over 4,000 people in 2016. This represents a 130% increase in the total amount of food given out over a 3-year period.

Once a week every week of the year, members of St. Mary’s come together to distribute bags of food to people that need it for themselves and their families. In 2016, an average of 153 bags per month was given to serve approximately 340 people, which is a 53% increase in the number of bags and a 61% increase in the number of people served from 2015. Each bag weighs 30-40 lbs., which means about 20 tons of food were distributed this past year.

“We built a separate building this past year to accommodate the Food Bank because it outgrew the church building,” said Dowell Freeman, who headed up the construction of the new Food Bank building.

“We could not do what we do with the Food Bank without the generosity of the people in our community. It is incredible when you think about how generous people are,” said Alton Aycock, a member of St. Mary’s Food Bank team.

St. Mary’s spent approximately $10,000 on the food for the Christmas Meals. All the food was acquired from Son’s Groceries (a local store in Jasper) while T.J. Maxx and Belk’s contributed Christmas bags. Hundreds of toys were donated from in and around Jasper as well so that families with children could add something under their Christmas trees.

Funding for the Christmas Meals and for the weekly, year-round Food Bank comes from contributions from St. Mary’s church members and the community. St. Mary’s Food Bank was recently awarded a generous grant from the Walker Area Community Foundation to help with funding for 2017. Additionally, all money raised during St. Mary’s annual Valentine’s Luncheon is ear-marked for the Food Bank.

“The Valentine’s Luncheon has become a crucial event that helps raise significant funds needed to run St. Mary’s Food Bank. We have been very fortunate and are so grateful to all the businesses, groups and individuals who donate and attend this event and we’re hoping that 2017’s Luncheon will break all previous records,” said Becky Nelson, chairperson of the event & member of the St. Mary’s Episcopal Church Women’s group, which sponsors the event.

This year’s Valentine’s Luncheon is scheduled for Tuesday, February 14th. Father Murphy noted, “St. Mary’s is thankful for everyone’s support of this outreach program and we hope to see it continue to thrive.”