Bishop Kee Sloan preaches at the diocesan wide Confirmation Service held at St. Francis Chapel on February 4, 2018.

See article on page 24.
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The Alabama Episcopalian
Kelley Hudlow, Editor
Miles G. Parsons, Art Director
Denise Servant, Circulation Secretary
Volume 103, Number 1
January/February/March 2018
USPS 070-910
ISSN 1041-3316

The Alabama Episcopalian is published four times a year (March 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1). For the most current news about recent and upcoming events, please visit our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org.

Please send stories and photographs (full color, at highest resolution possible) to Editor Kelley Hudlow at khudlow@dioala.org or 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203-2682; the submission deadline for each issue is February 1, April 1, July 1, October 1. Postmaster, parishes, and individuals, please send all address changes or additions to Circulation Secretary Denise Servant at dservant@dioala.org or Carpenter House, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203-2682.

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POSTMASTER: Please send address corrections to Denise Servant, Circulation Secretary, The Alabama Episcopalian, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203-2682.

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Cover photo by Kelley Hudlow
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Question, from the Book of Common Prayer:
“What is the mission of the Church?”

Answer:
“The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.”

Question, from me to you:
“How are we doing?”

How are we doing with this whole restoring all people to unity with God and each other business?
How are we doing with all those people out there, all those non-Episcopalian?
How are we doing with all these people in here, all these Episcopalians?
Bishop’s Address to 187th Diocesan Convention

The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan

It will surprise no one in the room to learn that I want to tell you a story. Before I graduated from seminary way back in 1981, I had to take the General Ordination Examinations, an effort by The Episcopal Church to standardize evaluating seminarians from all over: the dreaded G.O.E.’s. We called them God’s Own Exams. The seniors ahead of me had griped and complained and approached the week with great trepidation, and now it was my turn.

Now I confess to you, sisters and brothers, that by this point in my seminary career, I might have been just a little tiny bit disengaged. It was still winter, but Sewanee was showing signs of springtime. I was tired of sitting and listening, and wanted to get out and do. So, to mangle the famous line from Lord Tennyson: ‘In the Spring this young man’s fancy lightly turned’… away from preparing for the G.O.E.’s. I rationalized, as we do: I’ve always been pretty good at taking tests and as you may have noticed that I have been blessed with a certain knack for blarney, so I was good at writing short essays. I figured those who’d gone before were probably just hazing us be exaggerating about he exams, and I assumed my reader would have a sense of humor and pick up on my lighthearted sense of the joy of life.

Somewhere in there, somewhere in all that preparation, I picked up a little tidbit of information that seemed trivial at the time: the coordinator for the whole General Ordination Examination program was a priest in Alabama. Still, that had nothing to do with me – I was going back to Mississippi. So the weeks flitted by, and I enjoyed being on the Mountain, and then God’s Own Exam rolled in like an unstoppable tide. Yeah buddy – Roll Tide Roll.

Some of the tests were multiple choice; others were subjective, papers to be read by different priests all over the country. Somebody had encouraged me to relax, so I tried to have fun with it, and hoped my reader would, too. One of the answers I was particularly proud of was in answer to a hypothetical coffee hour question about how baptisms actually works, the efficacy of baptism. I told the imaginary mother asking the imaginary question to remember how the Wizard of Oz helped the Scarecrow by giving him a diploma, a doctorate in Thinkology. The Wizard wasn’t really a wizard, and the diploma wasn’t magical; it was just something that but helped the Scarecrow realize a gift he already possessed but didn’t know he had. I reminded her in my answer that it was the Scarecrow who figured out how to help Dorothy get off the pole in the cornfield, and it was the Scarecrow who figured out how to get into the castle of the Wicked Witch. He had a brain all along, he just thought he didn’t. I wrote in my paper that baptism isn’t magic, but something meaningful and precious that helps us realize that the person being baptized is a child of God – outward and visible signs of God’s inward and spiritual grace. I thought it was pretty good.

When the results came in, I quickly realized that my reader had apparently not been gifted with a sense of humor, and that all my boyish charm and light-hearted irreverence had missed its mark, badly. On the single sheet of paper I’d typed out my Wizard of Oz answer, my reader had written a big ‘F’ in bright red magic marker. It hurt my feelings real bad. I was judged to be Insufficient in five of the seven canonical areas, and either Sufficient or Marginal in the other two – Church History and Old Testament.

Now this was serious. This could end my career before it even got started. I was hurt and embarrassed, and stressed and angry, and everything seemed to be falling apart. Mostly I desperately wanted it to be somebody else’s fault. Maybe my joyless reader was to blame. Or maybe, I thought, it was all the fault of that priest in Alabama, the coordinator of the G.O.E.’s. Most of us are quick to find somebody else to blame, especially when it’s our own fault.

Well, I had to meet with the Bishop and the Examining Chaplains of the Diocese of Mississippi, and I was assigned to read a couple of books and write some papers. That all worked out all right, and I was ordained a deacon in May of 1981 and a priest in May of 1982, and life went on.
In 1983 my grandfather died, and Mom called and asked if I would do his funeral, which was going to be at St. Stephen’s in Eutaw, Alabama. He would be buried at St. Mark’s in Boligee. Lots of people came from all over, many of them related to me somehow or another. There was an older man at St. Stephen’s wearing a collar; I assumed he was a friend of the family.

The funeral service went well, but when we assembling in the cemetery behind St. Mark’s, it started to rain. Just before we started the graveside service the older priest came up and told me that he had known and loved my grandparents for a long time, and wondered if he could say something at the graveside. He was a small gentle man, and I could tell he was a humble servant of our Lord. I told him that I’d be glad for him to speak.

When the appropriate moment came, I nodded to this priest, and after a while I realized he was reciting the words to hymn which he’d committed to memory. It was just perfect for that moment, and for those of us gathered together in the rain. We were all touched, and I was grateful to know that this man had been Grandpa’s friend.

After the service was over, and people were getting into their cars and out of the rain, I went and found this priest and thanked him for his words. Well, some of y’all have already figured out where this is going, but I was completely undone when he told me his name. It was none other than the wicked mastermind of the G.O.E.’s: the Rev. Emmitt Gribbin.

Well, what do you say when you meet the villain of your melodrama? How many times had I thought ‘if I ever meet that dadgum Emmitt Gribbin, I’m really going to let him have it?’ And here was my chance, there in the graveyard at St. Mark’s, there in the steady rain – my chance to tell him about my horrible experience with his wretched examination. But if I was going to do that, I’d have to tell him about how I flunked five of the seven areas, about the big red ‘F’ over the Wizard of Oz answer, and about my own careless lack of preparation. I would have to admit, to him and to myself, that it really was my fault, and not his at all. I decided I didn’t need to burden this kindly old priest with all of that – I shook his hand warmly and told him that it was an honor to meet him. And it was.

What do you do when you meet the bad guy and he turns out to be not a bad guy at all?

What if all those people we give ourselves permission to hate or to look down on or to ignore turn out to be God’s children, too?

Unless you object convincingly, I want to tell you another story, this one maybe a little shorter, maybe a little closer to home.

I am fortunate and grateful to serve as your bishop, and for the work and dedication of all the people who have made this such a wonderful diocese. I inherited all that, and have tried to be a faithful steward of our goodly heritage, and to add a little to it.

I also inherited a strained and painful relationship between the Diocese and the Cathedral Church of the Advent. I’m not sure how far the disconnect goes back, and I’m not sure how much good it would do for me to learn how far it goes back. While it is certainly more fun to blame somebody else, it’s usually more accurate and more helpful to realize that there’s more than enough fault for everybody to have a share. By the time I bumbled into the middle of it, the lack of trust and communication had become something of a cold war, with the people of the Advent content to think it was Bishop Somebody’s fault, and others just as content to cast Dean Somebody Else as the bad guy.

When I became your Bishop Diocesan in 2012, Frank Limehouse was the Dean of the Cathedral. I’d known Frank for years by then, certainly long enough to know that while his theology and mine were the same at most of the major points, there were some significant important differences in substance and points of emphasis, too. I also knew that even though Frank has very real concerns, he is loyal to The Episcopal Church. And much, much more importantly, I knew that he loves our Lord without reservation or condition, and that he was a faithful steward and servant of the congregation he served. I hoped he knew that about me, too.

It occurred to me that neither one of us had started this cold war, and I wondered whether it was all that important to
him that we continue it. So I asked him to go to lunch with me, and he graciously accepted. We had a long conversation about the Diocese and the Advent and The Episcopal Church and the issues that caused us tension and grief. We didn’t solve any of the issues that we’ve all allowed to become wedged between us, but we knew that before we got there. We talked and talked, and listened and listened, and I don’t think either one of us convinced the other of anything at all. Finally, over coffee and key lime pie (skinny Frank skipped the pie and I ate mine with great pleasure and a little guilt,) we decided that it wasn’t so important that we agree about all the issues as it was that we agree to trust each other. He assured me that the Advent was not looking to leave The Episcopal Church, and I assured him that I wanted the Advent to be who they are.

A few years passed and relationships began to thaw out a little, slowly: reconciliation is hard work. Then Frank left, and Andrew Pearson became the new Dean of the Cathedral. After I forgave him for being such a snappy dresser and his colorful pants and youthful good looks, I asked him to lunch, too, and discovered that he is much more liberal than I am! Just kidding. (You didn’t quite know what to do with that, did you?)

But I did discover that like Frank before him and I’m sure other deans who’ve come and gone from the Cathedral, Andrew has a deep and abiding love for our Lord and this part of God’s Church, and that turns out to be much, much more important than all those things that we can find to disagree about.

I am so grateful to Frank and to Andrew, to the clergy and staff of the Cathedral Church of the Advent and to all the members of that great parish, for hanging in there, for continuing in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship and breaking bread with us, and for teaching me again to value God’s unity in our diversity.

Now Andrew may tell this story differently, but he’ll have to do it on his own time – this is the Bishop’s Address after all. But still, maybe you’d like to talk to him, or to somebody else who’s here from the Cathedral. I hope you will. Clearly that will be a better use of your time than the forty-five minutes remaining in this address.

Just kidding. I hope.

We’re not done rebuilding trust between the Diocese and the Cathedral; we’ve got a ways to go. But we’ve agreed to walk together, and we’ve started along. I don’t agree with all of the Advent’s theology. Some of their liturgical assumptions drive me crazy. The English Reformation that Deborah was talking about is just not that important to me as it seems like it is for them. They do and say things there that I wouldn’t do or say. I probably do and say things that they’re not real keen on either.

But that’s probably true in some degree for every congregation in the Diocese. If I was the rector of your parish, I’d probably find something I’d like to do differently – all that incense at this parish, choirs without vestments at that parish, some places that are too loose with the rubrics and other folks that need to loosen up a little. And still, when I come to visit, by God’s grace I know and feel that you’re all doing things just about the way they’re supposed to be done there.

We’ve all struggles with changes in this part of God’s Church, and in the world, and we’re all still together – thanks be to God. I sure wouldn’t want to do it without all of you.

We are not made to march in step – we’re Episcopalians. Part of what that means is that we are united in the Lord, in the faith, in the Book of Common Prayer, and that we accept the fact that we don’t all have to do things exactly the same. Thank God. Some of us are more Catholic, some of us are more Protestant, some of us are progressive, some are conservative, some are formal, some are casual – just like we’re supposed to be.
So what do you do when you meet the bad guy and he turns out to be not such a bad guy after all?

Well, the first and most important step is to meet him or her. The first step has to be that we can put down the blame and shame and recognize that we’re just talking to another person, a child of God, just as beloved, just as sinful, just as forgiven as you and I are. This is the mission of the Church, “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.”

So what are we doing? Should we be doing more?

There are a lot of things that we do very well. I don’t think I need to brag about all of that, but I do want to thank people for the work and love that makes these things happen.

We have thousands of committed lay people involved in thousands of ministries and programs that serve our Lord and this part of God’s Church with energy, passion, imagination, compassion and love. Some of you are in this room, but many, many others are not: thank you all.

We have an incredible group of talented and dedicated clergy, who are loved and supported and forgiven much by their equally incredible spouses. Some of our clergy are deacons, who serve their parishes and this Diocese in a hundred different ways. Later on today we will consider an amendment to our canons to extend voting privileges to all of our deacons, having realized that they’re not out to take over the Diocese, they’re not going to become a voting block under the bishop’s command. These are people who I see modeling servant leadership among us in the Church and in the world, and I believe our deliberations and decisions will be enriched for them to be fully represented.

Without exaggeration or hyperbole, the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Alabama has the very best Camp and Conference Center in the whole Episcopal Church. The summer camping program, parish and diocesan programs and retreats for young and old, at Stough Lodge, Miller Commons, and Bethany Village, the environmental center, the farm education program, the folk school, the nursery school, Bethany’s Kids, the Special Sessions – restoring people to unity with God and each other. I want to join all of you who thank the Rev. Mark Johnston for his many years as our Executive Director. He did a wonderful job, and we are grateful. Well done, good and faithful servant. We also want to thank Whitney Moore-Shea who has stepped in as Interim Executive Director, and she’s done a wonderful job as well. Thank you, Whitney. There are too many people involved in this to thank them all, but I hope you’ll find some of them and pat them on the back. Mary Yancey is the Chair of the Department of Camp McDowell; she and John Hicks and a great committee have been hard at work to find our next Executive Director, and I’m pleased to announce that … we’re almost ready to make the Big Announcement. Stay tuned.

We have the best Cursillo program and community in The Episcopal Church. This has been and continues to be a vital tool as we go about the mission of restoring people to unity.

We have wonderful programs and events for our young people, and enthusiastic and energetic youth ministers, both paid and volunteer, helping us raise up the next generation of God’s Church, and helping us to realize that they are already leaders right here and now.
College ministries and chaplains continue to be important to us in the Diocese of Alabama. We are grateful to all of our chaplains, and to the parishes and individuals who support this important work.

Sawyerville is celebrating twenty-five years of invited reconciliation between white and black, old and young, rich and poor in rural Alabama. I hope you know this story, and that if you don’t you’ll find somebody to share at least a little taste of it. We thank all the people who do an unimaginable amount of work to bring about the Kingdom of God in this rich, powerful ministry. The Foothills Day Camp in Anniston, largely patterned after Sawyerville, brings people together in much the same way.

And on and on and on it goes. There are hundreds of things I’m leaving out, too many to name: ministries and programs and groups who are about the work of reconciliation in some form or another. So are we doing enough? What more should we be doing?

One of my earliest memories is a Sunday School teacher trying to help me arrange my clumsy fingers so she could teach me something important. Maybe you learned this one, too, and maybe you can do it with me: “Here’s the church, here’s the steeple, open the doors and see all the people.” The lesson to be learned is in the fourth line, of course, that it is the people that make the church, and not the building. But more recently I figured out the whole thing depends on the third line: open the doors. We need to work really hard to be more welcoming, especially to people who are not like us. It’s not just that we are too often opening the doors and seeing empty pews—the real problem is that by not opening the doors, by not being intentionally welcoming to all of God’s children, by not offering worship and programs that are inviting and engaging for all sorts and conditions of people, by not going out where they are and bringing God’s love to them, we are not pursuing the mission of God’s holy Church, “to restore all people to unity with God and each other.”

For us here in Alabama, a large part of the reconciling mission of the Church often focusses on race relations. We can’t minimize this in the least—the problem of race relations has torn us apart for generations. I think we’ve come a long way in racial reconciliation, and I know we’ve got a lot further to go. Reconciliation is hard work. Many of us grew up believing that Those Other People are our enemies somehow or another, and even when we know it’s not true, it can be hard to overcome. But by God’s grace, we shall overcome, someday. It will take some work, but we will get there, with God’s help.

Our brokenness goes deep, and cuts us to the quick. It’s cultural, it’s class warfare, it’s herd mentality, it’s tribal, it’s Us versus Them, it’s original sin, it’s “We are better than fill in the blank.”

So if we’re going to overcome, if we’re going to restore all people to unity with God and each other, if we’re going to mend the brokenness, we have to ask some hard questions, and face difficult answers.

Who are we better than, Christians? Who does our Lord give us permission to ignore or disregard? Who is not a child of God, beloved and forgiven and cherished? Who should we not invite and include in the part of God’s holy Church that you and I serve as stewards?

Who are you better than, Christian? Who can you ignore, who should you not invite? What do you do when you meet the bad guys, and they turn out to be not such bad guys after all? What if they all turn out to be children of God?

I don’t think we can really be about the reconciling mission of the Church if we only preach to the choir over and over and over. We’re going to need to go out there and establish relationships with people who are not just like us. Let me tell one more story, and I’ll be about done. I didn’t make up this story, but I like it a lot.

[Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.

All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:1-10)

The people who loved Jesus hated the tax collectors. Jesus showed them they could not hate them and love him. We can hate people or we can love Jesus, but we can’t do both—we have to choose. Sometimes I’m afraid I’m one of the people that saw what happened and began to grumble, the truth is that we are all of us the lost Jesus came to seek out and save. If we love Jesus, we’re going to have to love God’s children, too. All of them.

Call us down from our high places, sweet Lord; call us down and let us welcome you into our homes and hearts. Give us strength and courage to do what you’ve called us to do: to open the doors of our churches and our minds and go out among all of your people, bringing all to greater unity with you and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Thanks be to God. Amen.
187th Diocesan Convention:

“Called Together in God, Love, & Joy to Worship, Serve, & Play”

Deacon Kelley Hudlow, Communications Coordinator

On February 9-10, the 187th Convention of the Diocese of Alabama gathered in Decatur, Alabama. Decatur is a city that spans Morgan and Limestone Counties in the Tennessee Valley Convocation of the diocese. Decatur is located in Northern Alabama on the banks of Wheeler Lake, along the Tennessee River. Workshops and caucus elections were held at the DoubleTree Hotel, while the business sessions and Gala, featuring food from Big Bob Gibson’s Bar-B-Q, were held at the Ingalls Harbor Pavilion on the river.

The convention was hosted by St. John’s Episcopal Church of Decatur. St. John’s was founded in 1890 in “New Decatur.” Construction of the church was completed in 1893. While the church is in its original location, in the 1940’s the building was physically turned to face east. St. John’s is part of the “North Alabama Hallelujah Trail of Sacred Places,” a driving tour of 32 churches that are at least 100 years old, stand on their original sites, still hold services and are accessible to the public. For more information, visit www.northalabama.org/trails/hallelujah.

The theme of the convention was “Called Together,” and was the second year of a three year cycle based on Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s three foundations of the Jesus Movement. This year, the convention was invited to consider how we are called together in the Church’s mission of reconciliation.

Delegates were invited to arrive a day early to attend “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other” a day-long interactive workshop that provides an insightful look into the causes and effects of racism. It provides practical ways to combat unconscious bias and ways to work to see the face of God in each other, regardless of race, creed or color. This workshop is facilitated by Deacons Carolyn Foster and Tom Osborne, co-chairs Commission on Race Relations. The work of this training, and the requirement for all ordained persons, professional staff, those elected or appointed to positions of leadership on vestries, committees, commissions, and boards to complete this training was renewed at the previous convention.

Day One

Friday morning, delegates were invited to attend workshops on a variety of topics, including starting a church garden, ACS REALM database, the companion relationship with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands, stewardship, Sawyerville, Special Session, and spiritual direction. Following these workshops, hearings were held on the six resolutions that were pre-filed for consideration at the convention.

Following these hearings, clergy and delegates were invited to the Princess Theatre in downtown Decatur. The Princess began in 1887 as a livery stable. She was transformed into a silent film and vaudeville playhouse in 1919, and in 1941 was renovated in the art deco style that remains today. The Princess was again transformed to host the clergy and delegates to celebrate the opening Holy Eucharist. Music was provided by Foster Bailey, organist at St. John’s, with the offertory anthem sung by the Choir of St. John’s. Bishop Sloan was the celebrant. The Venerable Marti Holmes was the Gospeler. The Youth Department delegates, Will Hamlett and Cricket Powell, served as lectors, and June Howard Barr led the Prayers of the People. The flow- ers were given to the glory of God and in thanksgiving for the ministry of all the people of the diocese by the people of St. John’s, and the offering was designated for the companion Diocese of the Virgin Islands.

Reflecting on the Gospel and the theme of reconciliation, Garner preached:

Something happens inside of us when we hear Jesus’ call. And something else happens inside of us when we hear him call those people who, in our judgment, don’t belong in his company. No one likes the Bartimaeus of our day. No one wants the important work of the church to have to stop and turn aside to address the cries of one blind beggar, one angry protestor, one radical diocese, one cause-happy parishioner or rector or bishop. But the call that Jesus issues to us is the same call that he speaks to them. None of us is called because of who she is but because of who Jesus is and because of who God is. God is the one who loves us with no regard for who we are or what we think or how we act. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the nature of his call. And, when we hear it, spoken both to us and to those whom we find most threatening, we discover that, in Christ, covered by God’s unconditional love, we are all one.

The first business session began at 4 p.m. on Friday, February 9, at the Ingalls Harbor Pavilion, with song and prayer. We were welcomed by Squee Bailey, of St. John’s Decatur, and Melinda Dunn, a member of St. John’s Decatur and President of Decatur Morgan County Tourism. The session began with many introductions of those seated at the dais with Bishop Sloan — the Rev. John Mark Ford, diocesan Secretary; Phyllis Hall, diocesan Treasurer; the Rev. Candice Burk Frazer; appointed Chair Dispatch of Business; and Jim Hancock, Chancellor and appointed parliamentarian. With 68 parishes and 107 canonical priests present, Bishop Sloan declared a quorum and that convention was open for business.

Bishop Sloan introduced diocesan staff and recognized Diocesan Council members, members of the Standing Committee, non-canonical licensed clergy present, and delegates from the Youth Department — Cricket Powell and Will Hamlet. Those currently in formation for ordination were also introduced. Polly Robb, middler at Sewanee and member of the Board of Trustees, spoke about the variety of programs at Sewanee and the “Stronger Truer Sewanee Campaign” that will allow the School of Theology to return to its original location on central campus in renovated space and to grow its financial assistance to seminarians. For more information, please visit http://www.sewanee.edu/stronger-truer/, or Danielle Dunbar, ddunbar@dioala.org.

Bishop Sloan designated four worshipping communities, each allowed one delegate and alternate: St. Dunstan’s Auburn, The Abbey Birmingham, Christ the Redeemer Montgomery, and St. Martin’s in the Pines Birmingham. Sloan also recognized the campus ministries,
also allowed one delegate: Birmingham Episcopal Campus Ministries (Trinity Commons), Canterbury Chapel Tuscaloosa, UNA Campus Ministries Florence, St. Dunstan’s Auburn, and Jacksonville State. Bishop Sloan introduced the deans of the convocations, and invited the deans to introduce new clergy in their convocation.

**Keynote Address**

Bishop Sloan introduced the keynote speaker, the Rt. Rev. Robert C. Wright, the 10th Bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta. Bishop Wright’s remarks centered on the familiar invitation from Ephesians 5:2, “Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God.” He reminded the gathering that when this invitation is given, things start happening — people start walking, reaching for their offering, singing the anthem, and preparing the altar for Holy Communion. He stated “walking in love, which means practically, taking up the ministry of reconciliation as individuals and collectively.” Bishop Wright pointed to the many ways that we are sent to walk in love — to places of division in politics, to difficult places that Jesus sends us, to people of different faiths, to young people, even to generous giving in gratitude. Bishop Wright reminded us that we should be encouraged in these times of division, as they are a “wonderful precondition for our light to shine.”

To hearten us to walk in love, Bishop Wright reminds us that the love at the center of the Jesus Movement is not a syrupy sentiment, but instead is “the most durable substance in the universe.” He described walking in God’s durable love:

To walk in love is to be surrounded by God’s love. To walk in love is to be in something that has no bottom, something infinite. So encompassing, so elastic is God’s love that even when we fall — we don’t break, we bounce. Even when our days are finished on earth, God’s love is forever and ever and ever and forever and ever. Flip to the back of the Bible, I double-dog dare you. Hate and division lose. Love Wins. In God’s love, there is no lack of love. Why is all of that important? I’m glad you asked. If you and I are immersed in a love that has no borders, limitations, or litmus tests, then you and I have all that we need to go to the places that appear to be loveless for Christ’s sake. Remember Paul said walk, take the show on the road. Remember, with all due respect my brothers and sisters, that Jesus never said “wait and welcome,” Jesus said, “go and make.”

**Day 2**

The second business session began with the ratification of the caucus elections of representatives to Diocesan Council, followed by the Rev. Deborah Leighton, Canon at the Cathedral Church of the Advent, who presented the council report. Phyllis Hall, Diocesan Treasurer, presented on the budgets for the diocese and Camp McDowell. Following this presentation, all budgets (Resolutions 1-2) were approved by convention.

Bishop Sloan addressed the convention. Following the Bishop’s address, the convention approved the chairs of the Departments, Commissions, and Agencies of the Diocese (http://bit.ly/2BqCTZY). The Convention also approved the Nominations from the Chair, which include positions such as the chancellor, treasurer, secretary, and Commission on Ministry (http://bit.ly/2BWAsAh3). Bishop Sloan thanked Jim Hancock for his service as Chancellor and congratulated Rip Britton, who was elected to replace him. As the Convention adjourned for lunch, the clergy spouses were invited to Whisk’d Cafe for the Clergy Spouse Luncheon.

As Convention resumed, the youth attending the Lock-in at St. John’s energized the gathering through dance for the final business session. The final session centered on the election of clergy and lay representatives to the Standing Committee and the Disciplinary Board, as well as introduction and discussion of proposed resolutions. Resolutions 5 and 6 were introduced and voted on without discussion. Both resolutions called for changes to the diocesan canons and were approved by more than 75% in both Orders.

Resolution 4 proposed a change to the canons that allowed deacons a representative vote at the convention, with one voting representative for every seven deacons. The proposed resolution would allow each deacon a vote. After the resolution was introduced, a motion to amend the resolution was made and passed. After brief discussion from the floor, the resolution, as amended, was voted on by orders and was approved by more than 75% in both Orders.

Prior to the closing worship, Mary Yancey, Chair of the Department of Camp McDowell, was invited to address the convention about the search process for the next executive director. Yancey thanked the Rev. Mark Johnston for his service as executive director and thanked those that served on the search committee. She then introduced the next executive director of Camp McDowell, John Campagna, who gave the invitation for the 188th Convention of the Diocese of Alabama to gather at Camp McDowell February 8-10, 2019.

Special thanks to the clergy and people of St. John’s Decatur, the staff of the DoubleTree Hotel, the Princess Theatre, and the Ingalls Harbor Pavilion. Also special thanks to John Hoerner; Gene Lawson, Chris Allison, McKee Sloan, the Rev. Rob Morpeth, and Deacon Dave Drachlis for their work on the audio/video team.
New Clergy Introductions

**Birmingham Convocation:** the Rev. Cameron Nations (St. Luke’s Birmingham), the Rev. Corey Jones (St. Francis of Assisi Indian Springs), the Rev. Worth Stuart (Holy Apostles Hoover), and the Rev. John Burress (St. Stephen’s Birmingham)

**Montgomery Convocation:** the Rev. Jamie Osborne (St. John’s Montgomery)

**Tennessee Valley Convocation:** the Rev. Danny Whitehead (St. Bartholomew’s Florence) and the Rev. Katherine Harper (St. Thomas Huntsville)

Election Results

**DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

**Southern District** - The Rev. Jack Alvey, St. Paul’s Selma, (2021)

**Middle District** - The Rev. Katie Rengers, The Abbey Birmingham (2021)

**Middle District** - The Rev. Huey Gardner, St. Mary’s on the Highlands Birmingham (2019)

**Northern District** - The Rev. Aaron Raulerson Epiphany Guntersville (2021)

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

The Rev. Andy Keyes, Trinity Florence (2022)

Ms. Katie White, St. Thomas Birmingham (2022)

**DISCIPLINARY BOARD**

The Rev. Evan Garner, St. John’s Decatur (2021)

Mr. Hank Poellnitz, All Saints’ Birmingham (2021)

**Resolutions**

**Resolution 1:** Diocesan Budget — Covenants (Approved)
**Resolution 2:** Diocesan Budget — Trust & Designated Funds (Approved)
**Resolution 3:** Camp McDowell Budget (Approved)
**Resolution 4:** Full Inclusion of Deacon at Diocesan Convention (Approved as Amended by more than 75% in both Orders)
**Resolution 5:** Canonical wording change referring to Unsecured Debt (Approved by more than 75% in both Orders)
**Resolution 6:** Canonical wording Change referring to Group Insurance (Approved by more than 75% in both Orders)

Resolutions amending the canons approved by more than 75% voting in both Orders became effective at the close of Convention.

For complete coverage of the 187th Diocesan Convention, including video reports, live stream, and photos, visit http://dioala.org/dfc/newsdetail_2/3189769.
It is hard to believe that our Haiti-Alabama connection has been in existence for ten years. With our partners, Carmel and Pere Valdema, we have shared their visions for a better Haiti, shared disappointments, and tears of both sorrow and joy. Most importantly, we developed relationships that came out of challenges (I like to refer to these as the potholes of life) and always hope.

From the first visit by Bishop Henry Parsley, we learned of the extreme poverty existing in Haiti only 600 miles from the U.S. mainland. We learned that access to water, nutrition, and health care were not easily accessible or did not exist. From this encounter, the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama joined in a companion relationship with the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, working with our partners Carmel and Pere Val until December 2015. During that time, we supported ministries that helped to create a permanent health clinic, provide mobile health clinics to remote villages, and develop and prenatal programs. We helped to provide water, latrines, and rebuild schools following the earthquake of 2010.

But we were not done! Along the way, we formed relationships with other parishes across the southeast who also worked on the same projects and thus LIGHT from LIGHT, our new non-governmental organization, was born.

This past January a medical team from Alabama made the trip to Lepswa Timoun (Hope for the Children) clinic in Croix des Bouquet, Haiti. This team was made up of both medical and non medical members: Camille Cornett, RN and Angela Hammon, CRNP, from Canterbury Chapel Tuscaloosa; Deacon Gerri Aston from St. Andrew’s Birmingham; Mike Hubbard and the Rev. Danielle Thompson from St. Mary’s on the Highlands Birmingham; and Deacon CJ Van Slyke, Dr. Mike Moore, and Libba Sanders from St. Stephens Birmingham. The team was housed on the second floor of the clinic, which also included two large bathrooms with actual warm water for the shower. This is a miracle created by the sun warming the cistern on a high tower.
Another miracle was to see how efficient the clinic was run by the Haitian staff. Two doctors, nurses, lab technicians, pharmacy workers, and other support staff provided primary care, nutrition and hygiene education classes. Ten years ago this was a field in the middle of nowhere, but Carmel had a vision that one day they could offer a better life through better health care. What started on the back pews of St. Simeon Church, seeing sick mothers with sick babies was now a gleaming, white cinder block structure, a beacon of hope for the 1200 patients who are seen every month.

Four years ago we began a prenatal midwife training program with the indigenous midwives in the mountains of Crochu. Haiti has one of the world’s highest infant mortality and prenatal deaths reported. A miracle has happened. This past year for the first time no deaths were reported by the midwives in the Crochu area.

Our Alabama team conducted clinics in Crochu, Boukan Boyer, and Canaan. Canaan had never had a medical clinic before and it was easy to compare how different their illness complaints were from the places who had received medical attention over the years from the mobile clinics. This team saw over 400 patients in four clinics, prepared and provided medications for many more, and offered VBS activities for the children while they waited with their families. It was a challenging week, but so enriching as we renewed relationships and made new ones. Sometimes miracles are slow to reveal themselves especially to those who are seed planters, if at all.

All of this could not have happened without the prayers, hard work and support of many, not only from Alabama, but parishes from Missouri, Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and countless individuals who believed they could help make a difference. Archbishop Oscar Romero in his prayer “A Step Along the Way” encourages us to step back and take a long view. We plant the seeds that one day will grow, knowing that they hold a future promise we may never see. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities, we cannot do everything, but we can always do something. Perhaps realizing we make room for God’s grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but we are but the workers, not the master builders.

Our work needs your support to continue what we have started. If you are interested in being part of a team: medical, dental or vision, or if you are interested in nonmedical programs such as fostering a child through school, being part of a construction team, or providing financial assistance for all programs offered by the Lepswa Timoun clinic and Light from Light, please contact CJ Van Slyke (cjenkinsro@aol.com).
St. George’s Church on Tortola, BVI

Deacon Judy Quick, Abagail Nelson, Bishop Ambrose Gumbs, and Jay Rollins.

Deacon Judy Quick, Abagail Nelson, Nate Churchill, and Lyle Hohnke.
Our Companion Relationship with the Virgin Islands has truly been providential as we (the Diocese of Alabama with parishes and individuals) continue to partner with Episcopal Relief & Development and the Diocese of the Virgin Islands (and its parishes) for the long-term recovery and rebuilding of churches and communities on all five islands of the Virgin Islands: St. Thomas, St. John, St. Croix, Tortola, and Virgin Gorda.

In December, the Diocese of Alabama sent licensed contractor, Nathan Churchill, and experienced builder and missioner, Lyle Hohnke (St. Mary’s on the Highlands), to assess all church properties for the Diocese of the Virgin Islands. Their thorough report is helping the Diocese of the Virgin Islands make difficult decisions concerning these properties and is also guiding the focus of the rebuilding/remodeling efforts.

Also in December, I traveled to St. Thomas to meet with Bishop Gumbs and his leadership teams and with Abagail Nelson, Senior Vice President, Episcopal Relief & Development, and Jay Rollins, on site Coordinator for Episcopal Relief & Development. We listened to the stories from all three deaneries (St. Thomas/St. John, St. Croix, and the British Virgin Islands). We learned of their pain and grief. We learned about their hope for the future.

The Virgin Islands Disaster Recovery Committee is engaged with the Long Term Recovery Groups on each island to provide a more coordinated response and use of resources for rebuilding. Episcopal Relief & Development has provided emergency funds and supplies and now is providing financial and staff resources to assist the Diocese of the Virgin Islands for their long term recovery.

I delivered a check to Bishop Gumbs from the Diocese of Alabama (from the generous donations from so many in our diocese) and also from St. Dunstan’s Auburn and Epiphany Tallassee, who have a parish relationship with St. Ursula’s on St. John.

A number of parishes throughout the diocese are partnering with parishes in the Virgin Islands in a variety of ways such as youth engagement, clergy relief, health clinics, Cursillo, or school support. The generous donations to the diocesan hurricane fund for the Virgin Islands as well as a number of parish-led fundraising efforts for parishes in the Virgin Islands will sustain the rebuilding effort and help support missioners on their journey with our Virgin Islands partners. Construction and Care/Relationship Teams are now being scheduled to be present with our partners in the Virgin Islands. Christine Mercer is coordinating these teams, so please contact her if you are called to serve in this capacity. (cvmercer@gmail.com)

A Clergy Initiative has begun where clergy from the Diocese of Alabama are scheduling visits to parishes in the Virgin Islands to preach and lead services to offer some respite for the Virgin Islands clergy.

In summary, there are many ways you can be involved in our Companion Relationship:

- Pray for our Virgin Islands partners
- Join a Rebuilding and Relationship team
- Develop a parish to parish/school relationship
- Support Virgin Islands youth for Summer Camp at Camp McDowell and/or as Counselors for Sawyerville/Foothills Day Camps
- Support Virgin Islands Cursillistas as pilgrims or staff
- Join clergy initiative to become supply clergy to give our Virgin Islands clergy a bit of a respite
- Pray without ceasing for all the dimensions of our relationship

Thank you for your kindness and care for our Virgin Islands friends who radiate hope and resilience after such a traumatic time. They are ever grateful for our love.

For More Information on Episcopal Relief & Development or the Companion Diocese Relationship with the Virgin Islands, contact the Reverend Judy Quick (jgquick@bellsouth.net) or visit www.episcopalrelief.org
Those that stayed until the very end of the 187th Diocesan Convention became the first to meet and welcome the new Executive Director of Camp McDowell. Mary Yancey, Chair of the Department of Camp McDowell, thanked the Rev. Mark Johnston for his years of service as the executive director and thanked Whitney Moore-Shea for her work as the interim. After some brief biographical information, Yancey introduced John Campagna as Camp’s next executive director.

John Campagna brings over three decades of professional, community, and spiritual-based work and experience to Camp McDowell. Professionally, he is a senior level executive who has worked in a variety of positions within corporations, NGO’s, and community groups to address social, environmental, and economic needs across the country.

For the past fifteen years, John has focused on creating innovative public/private partnerships in order to successfully tackle complex and large-scale environmental conservation and restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay region and nationwide. John’s professional background also includes leadership roles within the Youth Conservation Corps, managing an organic farm, and running a church-owned retreat center.

Recent community work in John’s current home of Baltimore includes being an active member of the Church of the Redeemer Episcopal Church, co-chair of the Green Committee for the Diocese of Maryland, task force chair for West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, President of Baltimore Green Works, Market Master at DC’s Dupont Circle Farmers Market, and serving on the endowment committee for the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. John also helps manage his family’s working farm and timber holdings in West Virginia, and his love of the outdoors includes hiking, canoeing, gardening, and being a lifelong avid equestrian.

John is married to Vivian Miller Campagna, daughter of the late Bishop Robert Miller and Peggy Miller Douglass. They have a 12-year-old daughter, Lila. Vivian attended the Alabama School of the Fine Arts in Birmingham, trained in New York with the Joffrey Ballet, and danced with various contemporary dance companies. Vivian also worked as a community organizer in New York working to preserve the network of community gardens in the Bronx, Harlem and the Lower East Side. She is now a yoga and mindfulness teacher whose practice includes working with inner city youth in Baltimore. All members of the Campagna family are grateful for this opportunity and look forward to becoming part of the Camp McDowell family.

Campagna spoke briefly, and while holding a Camp McDowell hat explained, “I am very thankful to be not just in this role [as executive director], but to live at Camp McDowell. I cannot believe how lucky I am. I’ve been wearing this hat for twenty years. When my wife’s family introduced me to Camp McDowell, I got this hat. I’ve worn it out. So I love this place. I’m very thankful for that.” He closed his remarks by inviting everyone to the 188th Diocesan Convention at Camp McDowell in 2019.

The work of selecting the next Executive Director of Camp McDowell began after the Rev. Mark Johnston retired. Bishop Sloan appointed a search committee made up of people from the Department of Camp McDowell: Department Chair Mary Yancey, Bob Hennagin, Harrison Smith and Pam Parker; Camp staff members: Interim Director Whitney Moore-Shea, Stratt Byars and Jody McSpadden; and Diocesan Council members Jennifer Boylan, Tom Heflin, Jeff McCormack and Seth Olsen. Bishop Sloan also invited the Rev. Rob Morpeth and John Hicks also assisted with the hiring process. In reflecting on the search process, Bishop Sloan said, “Our Camp and our Diocese have been well served by this committee, which did a lot of hard work very well. We have also been well served by Whitney Moore-Shea, who has provided Camp with direction and stability during this time of transition, and has done a phenomenal job!”

Campagna will begin as Executive Director on May 1, 2018. Moore-Shea will continue as the interim until that time, and then will resume her duties as assistant director.
LET THERE BE LIGHT!

By A Friend of Camp McDowell

A revolution has happened in the past few years in the use of electricity for lighting. The first practical incandescent bulb, invented by Thomas Edison in 1879, was replaced by a fluorescent one (CFL), then by one using light emitting diodes (LEDs). Each evolution drastically cut the energy required to produce a given number of lumens (units of light) – going from 60 watts, to 14, to 7 for the most common size bulb.

LEDs come in all shapes and sizes from flashlights to street lights. They illuminate smartphones, microwave ovens, and running lights on automobiles – with much less electricity than their inefficient predecessors – at much less cost. Where we Episcopalians can realize the economic and environmental benefits of low cost lighting is at home or at work or at worship or at Camp McDowell.

Recently, someone contributed $530, enough to replace the CFLs in Phiher Hall with LEDs. (When Bethany Village was designed CFLs were the most efficient and cost effective choice. By the time it was completed, LEDs were making significant inroads in home and commercial use.) The expected annual savings from the retrofit for Phiher Hall is expected to be as much as $87.00, meaning it will pay for itself in about six years.

Camp McDowell has begun its plan to become energy independent with the installation of solar electricity generation; a significant expression of its calling to be more like the world God intended. Efficient use of the electricity produced is part of this calling as well. Solar is being made possible by a large gift ($120,000) and Phiher Hall’s retrofit by a much smaller gift. Both are already making a difference!

There are some 50 or so other buildings in the Camp and each is waiting for the latest in lighting. Will you consider helping it happen? Contact Camp McDowell at 205-387-1806 to see how you can help.
As the only residential farm school in the southeast, McDowell Farm School offers a unique and individualized educational opportunity for Alabama students, teachers, and parent chaperones to connect with their community and be empowered to become lifelong agricultural advocates through kinesthetic, inquiry-based learning strategies. McDowell Farm School is rapidly growing and is now serving around 3,000 students per year, traveling from across Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia.

For nine months during the school year, McDowell Farm School hosts students, teachers, and chaperones in grades Kindergarten through twelfth grade to participate in an interactive and fun 3-day program rooted in experiential learning. Participants see first-hand the correlation and interconnectedness between food growth and production, as well as the resources it takes to provide sustainable food options. Participants are given the opportunity to be hands on throughout their entire program.

From planting lettuce in the fields, collecting warm eggs from the coop, and working with one another on projects around the farm, every participating student is given an up-close and unique agricultural experience. Experiential classes allow both students and adults to enhance their understanding of the natural world, leading them to a stronger sense of responsibility for their community. McDowell Farm School firmly believes learning is endless, and both students and adults alike benefit from the experiential and differentiated classes offered through our program. The standards-based curriculum, which focuses on the origin and life cycle of the food grown on the farm, is student centered and differentiated for each grade level to enjoy the fun and excitement on the farm!

As we look forward to the 2018 Spring season, the farm will be hosting the most participants it has ever seen and is excited about the challenges ahead! Looking for a school program that is educational and fun? Check out our farm and sign up today at www.mcdowellfarmschool.com, or call Kelsey Evans, Farm School Director at 205-387-1806 ext. 106 to reserve your spot!

Ice Ice Baby!

Magnolia Nature Preschoolers were thrilled to be back at school after a long Christmas break. Icicles crashing into Clear Creek and even a few to eat have kept us busy. We have had fun listening to the sounds made by ice landing on the frozen creek! Just as exciting is noticing all the buds that are waiting to burst forth this spring. Teacher Melissa left us to do some backpacking through Europe, but we are thrilled that Lauren Herman has joined our staff. Ann Emerson Sorrell, now in her third season with the preschool, can safely be considered full time. Grab a warm coat, hat and gloves and come join us!
MEC Makes Way for 2018!
By Trish Smrecak

The McDowell Environmental Center is excited about what’s happening in 2018! Right now, we’re gearing up for an exhilarating spring season. We have six returning and eight brand new seasonal staff coming to McDowell the first week of February. After two full weeks of training and an opportunity for the new staff to shadow returners for a school visit, we’ll turn them loose in our giant outdoor classroom to teach the young people of Alabama! We especially love the spring season because we get to teach a wider range of youth, from 3rd to 12th grade, which gives our seasonal staff amazing opportunities to hone their teaching abilities.

Speaking of staff and teaching...We’re so excited to announce and introduce our newest addition to our animal ambassador program! Kendra Burns, our Animal Program Manager/Outreach Coordinator, was hard at work all Fall Season building a new bird enclosure, and we were finally able to welcome our new animal ambassador, Black Vulture, late in November. Kendra and other staff have been working hard since Black Vulture’s arrival to train him to help us educate people on how to protect our wild animals. We call him Black Vulture because he’s a representative of his species and not a pet. He was rescued by the Alabama Wildlife Center as a human imprint, and therefore cannot be released to the wild. When a young bird is raised and imprinted by humans, it learns to identify with humans rather than its own species. The bird will not be able to properly communicate with or be accepted by its own kind. We’ll teach with him at Camp to discuss the importance of not adopting wild animals. Lots of exciting things are happening at the McDowell Environmental Center! If you want to keep up with vulture training, new staff training, or anything else we’re doing, follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

We’re excited to welcome Trisha Smrecak as the new MEC director. She’s been working with MEC to modernize our curriculum for the past year, and we’re happy to have her in this new role.

UPDATE: 2017 Camp McDowell Scholarship Fund

The Numbers are In...

The 2017 Camp McDowell Summer Scholarship Campaign raised more money than ever - all due to the outpouring of support and generosity from YOU, our Friends of Camp McDowell. The $67,152 given during the 2017 campaign reflects a whopping 77% INCREASE over what was contributed in 2016 ($37,990). Thank you for helping us in enabling more youth to experience the magic of God’s Backyard at Camp McDowell!
The following is an excerpt from a letter Sarah Coleman Hornsby sent to Camp following her experience attending Winter Weekend, a camp-style retreat for 7th and 8th graders:

As I am writing this I just got back from Winter Weekend and I had the time of my life. Each time I go, I am reminded why I love camp so, so much. While I was at camp I was in St. Mike’s with AG [Passey]. On the second night at program, Lee and AG did an “Interview.” AG got a question about her mom and explained how when she was in 9th grade her mom got breast cancer. Immediately I connect with her because at the moment my mom is getting chemo for ovarian cancer. After the interview, I wanted to go ask AG about her mom but I wasn’t sure if she would mind or not. Finally, I got up the courage and asked her if I could talk to her. She said “of course” and we turned around and sat on a bench. At first, I was nervous but then I became more comfortable with it because she didn’t mind talking about her mom. When I told about my mom I just broke down and started crying. I told her about my mom and about what is going on. And that whole time she did not say “I know how you feel” she said “I am not going to say I know how you feel because I don’t know how you feel and I know when someone says that it makes it feel like everyone goes through this and you feel stupid for feeling like this. And the real answer is that no one can know what you feel like because you all feel something different. But I do know God is watching down on you and you are loved by him. I will keep you and your family in my prayers.” Then she gave me tons of hugs and calmed me down. I will remember what she said forever.

I can’t explain how much I love camp so here are just a few reasons why I love camp so much:

1. Friends
2. You can be yourself
3. My favorite counselors (Erin McAdams, Brett Young, AG Passey, Anne Smith Reeves, the 3 Bens, and so many more)
4. The Swinging Bridge
5. You can talk to anyone at camp and they will listen and care like they have known you your whole life
6. The memories you will never forget
7. If you mess up everyone forgives
8. You never want to leave
9. You are never ignored
10. Each time you go (no matter how short of a session) you always have someone/something to talk about when talking about camp.
11. When you are at Camp McDowell you always feel close to God, even if you are on the Swinging Bridge or swimming or hiking or eating canteen, you feel close to Him.

Over the course of a year, Camp McDowell offers 22 faith-based camp sessions and retreats. To learn more about offerings at Camp McDowell, please visit https://campmcdowell.com/summer-camps-retreats.

Sarah Coleman Hornsby is a 7th grader at Randolf School in Huntsville. She attends The Episcopal Church of the Nativity in Huntsville with her parents, Betty and Ralph Hornsby and sister, Caroline, who is also a camper at Camp McDowell.
A life-changing event may come in many different forms. For some people, it’s obtaining a house that they can finally afford. Shawnkitta Moore and her three children found their place to call home, thanks to Habitat for Humanity of Greater Birmingham.

Nearly forty years ago, Millard Fuller had a vision of building affordable housing, and Habitat for Humanity was formed. The organization quickly gained recognition when former U.S. President Jimmy Carter became a Habitat partner a decade later.

Today, Habitat for Humanity builds affordable – not free – housing throughout the world. Every Habitat homeowner has a mortgage; volunteers help build every house alongside the homeowner. That labor, along with monetary and materiel donations, are what makes the houses affordable.

Three years ago, the Birmingham Convocation revived the annual “Episcopal Build,” gathering volunteers and donations from all the metro parishes to build homes in Adamsville, Calera, and most recently in Montevallo. After ten weeks of work, the house was completed. More than 350 volunteers participated, many wielding hammers, caulking guns and paintbrushes several days each week. Others who were not comfortable working with tools were “gofers” or provided lunch for the volunteers.

One feature of this house is a solar panel installation – a first for a Habitat house in metro Birmingham. Sam Yates, a member of Cathedral Church of the Advent, donated the system. His company, Eagle Solar and Light, installed seven rooftop panels with built-in micro inverters. The panels produce alternating current that connects directly to the house’s electrical system. There are no storage batteries. This system works in conjunction with the power company to offset power usage, and can be monitored with a smartphone.

At the dedication on November 18, 2017, a volunteer gave a new Bible and the keys to “Kitta” and her children during a brief ceremony. Afterwards, volunteers toured their new home and enjoyed a cookout.

St. Catherine’s in Chelsea, the youngest parish in the diocese, has begun the work of building its first worship space. For ten years, St. Catherine’s has occupied a temporary location in Chelsea. During this time, the parish has continued to grow and anticipates outgrowing the current building. “Chelsea is the second-fastest growing city in Alabama, and it is located in the most ‘unchurched’ county in the state. In other words, the potential for growth is tremendous,” remarks St. Catherine’s rector, the Rev. Eric Mancil.

In order to meet its needs, the parish has embarked on a three-year capital campaign entitled, “Growing in Christ.” The goal of the campaign is $1.2 million. Raising this amount will allow the completion of the first phase of building, to include an open Narthex; the Nave, which will be used for both worship and fellowship events; and space for Nursery and Children’s Atrium.

Reflecting on beginning the campaign, Mancil said, “This is a defining moment for St. Catherine’s. Building our first worship space is probably the most important step that our parish will ever take. Our need is great, but our resolve to meet that need is even greater.” To learn about St. Catherine’s plans and campaign, please visit https://stcatherinesal.com/stewardship-and-giving/growing-in-christ-capital-campaign/ or email the Rev. Eric Mancil at rector@stcatherinesal.com.
News from our Parishes

Exhibit Tells the Story of Canterbury Chapel During the Civil Rights Movement

On January 26, the Betak/Frangoulis Art Gallery at Canterbury Chapel Tuscaloosa hosted an opening reception for the exhibit “Restoring the Narrative: Canterbury’s Response and Action during the Civil Rights Movement.” The show’s purpose was to document Canterbury Chapel’s involvement during the Civil Rights Movement. The gallery was arranged in chronological order, tracing the narrative of Canterbury’s response to integration and the threats and event that followed.

The show featured photographs of the clergy, students, and parishioners at that time, as well as newspaper articles documenting the events of the late 1950’s and 1960’s, including Canterbury’s response to the riots following the attempted integration of the University of Alabama with the enrollment of Autherine Lucy in February of 1956, as well as visits by the Ku Klux Klan in May of 1957 and April of 1961.

The archive of historical photos and documents was collected by Deacon Kelley Hudlow in her time as a parishioner at Canterbury Chapel. Molly Ingram, the Rev. Tommie Watkins, and Stephanie Ray digitized, framed, and established a narrative to exhibit.

Within the Canterbury archives is a letter from the Rev. Emmet Gribbin to the parishioner that gave information to the White Citizen’s Council that resulted in the KKK coming to Canterbury in April of 1961. In the letter, Gribbin writes, “But what’s done is done. Now let’s pick up the pieces. One thing I’ve learned as a Christian is to disagree with peoples ideas but still care for them as people . . . In any case the Episcopal Church is wide enough and big enough to include people with widely different opinion and to hold them together in mutual concern for each other, no matter how divergent their views.”

To learn more about Canterbury Chapel’s history, visit http://canterburychapel.dioala.org/About%20/history.html.

Confirmations at Wonderful, Wonderful Camp McDowell

In 2017, the schedule of bishop visitations was adjusted in response to our diocese having one bishop. Under the new schedule, parishes will be visited by Bishop Sloan every other year. In response, Bishop Sloan scheduled a Confirmation Service at St. Francis Chapel at Camp McDowell. This would allow parishes from across the diocese to present persons for confirmation and reception.

The first service was held on Sunday, February 4, 2018. During the weekend of the service, a retreat was held for youth confirmands. This retreat was led by Deacon Jeannie Randall, the Rev. Katherine Harper, Sarah Watts, Polly Robb, and Liam Ayers. During the weekend, the Rev. Tommie Watkins celebrated at the instructed Eucharist, and Angie Pradat prepared meals for the participants.

At 3 p.m. on Sunday, February 4, folks from eleven parishes gathered at St. Francis Chapel for the service of Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. Melanie Payne, organist at St. Thomas Huntsville, played piano. Parishes represented were Epiphany Guntersville, Good Shepherd Decatur, Holy Spirit Alabaster, Nativity Huntsville, St. John’s Decatur, St. Mary’s Jasper, St. Thomas Huntsville, St. Timothy’s Athens, Trinity Clanton, Trinity Florence. Twenty-eight people, youth and adults, were confirmed or received by Bishop Sloan.

Save the date for the next Youth Confirmation Retreat at Camp McDowell, July 27-29, and for the next Confirmation Service at St. Francis Chapel, July 29 at 3 p.m.
If you’ve ever visited Mentone atop Lookout Mountain, you’ve likely noticed St. Joseph’s, just steps from the four-way stop in the heart of town. This “little church with a big heart” just keeps getting better. St. Joseph’s leadership and members have put thoughtful, creative energy into upgrading its facilities, which are available for small group events, such as vestry or other church leadership retreats, community group meetings and workshops.

“Recently, St. Joseph’s has undergone a total renovation, from the nave to the kitchen to the gathering rooms,” said church spokeswoman Jan Newhoff. “The space is warm and comfortable, reflecting the rustic and charming ambiance of its mountain surroundings.”

The renovation lovingly honors the historic 1870s cabin in the center of the church while offering practical features such as a spacious, fully equipped kitchen; beautifully furnished parlor with large-screen TVs and other presentation equipment; private conference room; and a spacious parish hall with tables and chairs for dining, meetings or seminars. Recent adjustments have made the entire church handicap accessible. Warm hardwoods, plenty of natural light, and cozy furnishings make for a relaxed, at-home feeling.

Groups can complement their time at St. Joseph’s with a hike to nearby Desoto Falls or a drive along Little River Canyon. Brow Park, less than a 5-minute walk from the church, is a place for reflection and even an outdoor lunch with mountain views. For those who want to make a weekend of it, the area offers B&Bs, cabin rentals and the Desoto Lodge. Celebrated restaurants (some of which cater local events) and antiques stores will tempt even the busiest visitor into staying an extra night or two. Or three.

For more information about reserving the church facilities and about area attractions and lodging, call 256-634-4476 or email stjom@centurytel.net.

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Members and friends of Saint Mark’s in Prattville recently enjoyed a Silent Auction at the Prattville Country Club. The fundraiser was organized by Senior Warden Sandy Fowler and vestry member Barbara Gaston to help support the mission and ministries of the parish, including helping AICC (Autauga Interfaith Care Center), the local food bank and emergency needs center for Autauga County. The parish was one of a number of churches in Prattville that helped found AICC a number of years ago along with other churches in the community. “A large part of the proceeds are going to AICC,” said the Rev. Scott Arnold, St. Mark’s rector for the past 13 years. “The remainder will help our parish fund a variety of ministries and programs.”
On January 19, the Alabama Integrative Ministry School (AIMS) met for its first session of 2018. Joining the returning third years were six new students. Students and faculty met at the property that formerly was St. John’s for the Deaf in Cahaba Heights, Birmingham. The new location provides better space for two classes running simultaneously, and provides a worship space for students to learn and practice leading liturgies. The faculty and students of AIMS are grateful for the people and staff of St. Mary’s on the Highlands that hosted AIMS for its first two years.

AIMS is a non-residential formation program for ordained ministry. Postulants and candidates for both the priesthood and diaconate approved by the Commission on Ministry participate collaborative formation over three years. To learn more about the AIMS program, please visit http://aims.dioala.org.

Everyone belongs at camp. Special Sessions at Camp McDowell are weeks of summer camp for adults with disabilities, staffed by volunteer counselors (ages 16-24) and adult support staff. Our campers are ages 19 and up, with physical and/or intellectual disabilities.

In 2017 we grew from one week of camp to two summer sessions and a fall weekend retreat. The need for this ministry is clear; we have a waiting list of campers every year. In 2018, we hope to build relationships with even more people and parishes in our diocese to keep creating space for more people to be a part of camp.

Session I is June 9-16. Session II is June 17-24.

Ways to be a part of Special Session this summer:
1. Recruit youth for our staff. Our most urgent need is young people (16-24) who will serve as camp counselors. It’s hard work, and it’s a life-changing experience.
2. Serve on our support staff. We need adults to help make camp happen. We are especially in need of nurses, lifeguards, and musicians to serve on our staff.
3. Come host a Happy Hour. Every afternoon at camp, our campers and staff come together to have a snack, listen to music, and hang out. We ask parishes to “sponsor” happy hours by bringing snacks and drinks and coming to camp to serve.
4. Create Welcome Packs for our campers. One of the ways that we welcome our campers to camp is by giving everyone the things they will need for the week. We could use your parish’s help in collecting supplies like toothbrushes, bug spray, etc, and assembling them into welcome packs for our campers.
5. Let us tell you more about what happens at Special Session. We would love to send a Special Session staff member to tell your Sunday School class, ECW group, youth group, or whole parish about the ministry of Special Session. Call or email Lindsey (205-530-0685, lmullen@dioala.org) to arrange for a speaker. Information and registration forms are available at specialsessionalabama.org.
The Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF) provides assistance to Episcopalians in a variety of ways, including investment and philanthropic vehicles for the benefit of your parish. In this edition of the Alabama Episcopalian, we will look at Charitable Gift Annuities.

Charitable Gift Annuities
A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is a simple contract between you and the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF). In exchange for your irrevocable gift of cash or securities, ECF agrees to pay one or two annuitants whom you designate a fixed annuity for life, and you will be entitled to an income-tax deduction* in the year you make the gift.

At ECF the minimum age to start receiving annuity payments is 55. However, you can establish a charitable gift annuity at a younger age and defer the start of annuity payments to age 55. The minimum amount to establish a charitable gift annuity at ECF is $5,000.

You will receive an immediate income-tax deduction for a portion of your gift, and your annuity is backed by all of ECF’s assets.

--from the Episcopal Church Foundation’s website: http://bit.ly/2BWW7aG

*This deduction is now based on new tax laws, please consult your accountant or other financial professionals.

Is there a benefit to setting up a charitable gift annuity besides receiving fixed payments for life? Yes, when the annuitants pass away, the remainder of the gift will go to the Episcopal church they have designated. This is a savvy way to receive a potential tax benefit, income payments, and ensure your parish’s mission and ministry remain strong well into the future.

For more information, contact Danielle A. Dunbar, Director of Mission Funding, at (205) 358-9234 or ddunbar@dioala.org. Please contact your attorney, accountant, and/or financial planner as you begin or revise your legacy gift planning and consider making a legacy gift to your parish and ministries of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama.

Reflection on Youth Department’s Christmas Conference

Will Hamlet

This year’s Christmas Conference was a great success. We enjoyed a high turnout with kids from all over the diocese, and a large amount of those attending were freshman or first timers with Youth Department events. One of the major highlights was a concert by Fran McKendree. Each year, Fran performs a lineup of his favorite songs and some requests. Fran’s musical talents made the weekend even more enjoyable, and we are glad to have him with us every year. Another highlight was the many activities that the campers could participate in during the weekend, such as: arts and crafts, music with Fran, soccer, hiking, and much more. These activities were run by Youth Department representatives along with help from the adult staff. This weekend could not have been a great success without the hard work of my fellow Youth Department representatives and the adult staff. We are looking forward to the year to come, and hope that our fellow youth are as well!

Save the Date!

Maurice Branscomb first came to Alabama as an Episcopal Priest in the 1970’s and although he moved to the Diocese of South Carolina for a brief two years, he never really “left” Alabama nor his connection with the Diocese of Alabama. Retiring in 1997 and eventually moving to Baldwin County, his connection with Grace Church, Woodlawn and St. Andrew’s, Birmingham southside continued for the rest of his life.

Father “B,” as he was called by many, was well known for his artistic touch about everything within church space. In 1993, he was invited to be a liturgical art consultant at All Saints’ in Homewood for the purpose of assisting with the design of a new cross to be placed directly over the high altar. He began by commenting to the “cross committee” that he had counted over 200 crosses already in the church. He wondered, in a somewhat humorous tone, why the committee needed to have another cross placed in the worship space.

His concern for the hungry, the poor and the homeless was and remains well known from the Birmingham southside to the Woodlawn area of the same city. Ministries with names such as “Southside Ministry,” Grace by Day, Community Kitchens and 55th Place Thrift Store all had his creative mark on them. The two Birmingham area parishes where he served as rector were known for their “Anglo-catholic” liturgical worship and for their community ministries as well as their welcoming embrace of everyone. He never met anyone who was outside of the embrace of God and his own embrace.

The Rev. Mary Ann Akin, a retired priest of the Diocese of Alabama, upon hearing of his death, commented: “I knew him for 41 years. He was there for me from the beginning of my ordained ministry. He was my mentor and beloved friend and accepted me into the structure and ritual of St. Andrew’s, Birmingham. At that time, he was the only parish priest in the city willing to invite an ordained woman to celebrate Holy Eucharist or preach. I am so grateful for having been in his presence, up close and far away, lo these many years.”

“I see every day and every week the footprints of “Fr. B.” in and around Grace Church and all of the Woodlawn neighborhood in all of the ministries that he birthed there,” stated Frank Romanowicz, food ministry and 55th Place Thrift Store advocate. “We do not miss him because he is still present with us.”

Father “B” died on Saturday, January 13 at the age of 92 in Spanish Fort, Alabama. On Saturday, January 20, Bishop Kee Sloan placed the ashes of “Fr. B” next to those of Joan, his wife, in the courtyard of Grace Episcopal Church, Woodlawn-Birmingham. May they both now rest in peace eternal.
Transitions
The Rev. Paul Elliott, of the Diocese of Atlanta, accepted a call to serve as Interim Rector of the Church of the Ascension Birmingham, beginning November 2018.
The Rev. Steve Gruman accepted a call to serve as Interim Rector for Grace Cullman, beginning November 2018.
The Rev. Virginia Monroe accepted a call to serve as Interim Rector at the Church of Nativity Huntsville, beginning November 2018.
The Rev. Tyler Richards accepted a call to serve as rector of Transfiguration Episcopal Church in Indian River, beginning January 2018.
The Rev. Chris Hartley accepted a call to serve as rector for St. Matthew’s, Madison, beginning January 2018.
The Rev. John Burruss accepted a call to serve as rector for St. Stephen’s, Birmingham, beginning January 2018.
The Rev. Bentley Manning accepted a call to serve as rector for the Church of the Incarnation, Highlands, NC, beginning January 2018.
The Rev. Jeff Evans accepted a call to serve as rector at St. Stephen’s, Huntsville, beginning February 2018.

Ordinations to the Priesthood
The Rev. Jamie Osborne, November 11, at St. John’s Montgomery. Osborne will serve at St. John’s as an associate rector.
The Rev. James Gardner, November 18, at Calvary-St. George’s Manhattan, NY. Gardner will serve at Calvary-St. George’s as an associate rector.
The Rev. Katherine Harper, December 2, at St. Thomas Huntsville. Harper will serve at St. Thomas as a curate.
The Rev. Worth Stuart, December 9, at Holy Apostles Hoover. Stuart will serve at Holy Apostles as a curate.

New Postulants for Holy Orders
The following have been approved by the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee as postulants for Holy Orders: Jose Fernandez, priesthood; Michael Straus, priesthood; Sarah Watts, priesthood; Lee Wilkins, diaconate; Kay Williams, diaconate; and Sara Willis, priesthood.

In memoriam
The Reverend John Woolfolk Cruse, died on November 20, 2017, in Birmingham, Alabama. A memorial service and celebration of his life was held on November 27, at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, where he was ordained to the priesthood. A lifelong Episcopalian, John attended seminary at the University of the South and was ordained to the priesthood in 1973. He served in parishes throughout the Diocese of Alabama, was active in the ministry of Camp McDowell, was Chaplain at Auburn University, and retired after serving as Chaplain at St. Martin’s-in-the Pines in Birmingham.
The Reverend William Maurice Branscomb, Jr., passed away on January 13, 2018. He was 92 years old. Branscomb served Episcopal churches in the Diocese of Alabama and the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. A Memorial Service was held at All Saints’ Episcopal Church in Mobile, Alabama, on January 18, 2018. An inurnment service was held on January 20, 2018, at Grace Episcopal Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Please see the article by the Rev. Bill King on facing page.

Bishop’s Visitation Schedule

March 4, 10:30 a.m., St. Joseph’s, Mentone
March 18, 11 a.m., St. Andrew’s, Montevallo
March 25, 10 a.m., Ascension, Birmingham
March 31, 7 p.m., St. Andrew’s, Birmingham
April 1, 10 a.m., St. Paul’s, Selma
April 8, 10 a.m., St. Dunstan’s, Auburn
April 15, 10:30 a.m., St. Luke’s, Birmingham
April 15, 5 p.m., St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands, Birmingham
April 22, 8:45 and 11 a.m., Christ Church, Tuscaloosa
April 29, 10:30 a.m., St. Thomas, Huntsville
May 6, 10:30 a.m., St. John’s, Montgomery
May 13, 10 a.m., Nativity, Huntsville
May 16, 6 p.m., St. Mark’s, Prattville
May 20, 10:15 a.m., Ascension, Montgomery
March 9-11 Experiencing the Christ through Native American Spirituality

Join The Commission on Spirituality at Camp McDowell as we experience the Christ through Native American Spirituality presented by the Rev. Dr. Bradley Hauff with music by Bude Van Dyke, Will George, and Herschel Van Dyke. Register: bit.ly/2Drv34v.

April 6-8 Rites of Spring

Rites of Spring is a combination of EYC Convention and a weekend retreat at Camp McDowell. Members for the 2018-2019 Youth Department will be elected over this weekend! If you are interested in running for the Youth Department, you can access the requirements to run on the diocesan website or you may contact Betsy Fetner, bfetner@dioala.org, or your Youth Minister to find out all you need to know. Register: http://bit.ly/2EmcLOh.

April 11-13 Global Episcopal Mission Network Conference

Join the Global Episcopal Mission Network and the Center for Anglican Communion Studies at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, VA to explore what it means to be followers of Christ in a time of polarization and rapid social change by building connections in mission engagement. The conference will place a special emphasis on creation and nurture of strong communities, both spiritual and practical. More info: http://www.gemn.org/2018-global-mission-conference/

April 14 Wardens, Treasurers, and New Vestry Members

This meeting is open to all Wardens, new Vestry Members and Treasurers of our Diocesan Parishes and is an opportunity to learn from and connect with your Diocesan leadership. We hope you will be able to join us at Ascension in Birmingham from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. More info: http://bit.ly/2sweUpn

April 21 The Gumbo Gala Benefiting Episcopal Place

Episcopal Place invites you to the 13th Annual Gumbo Gala on Saturday April 21, 2018, at Sloss Furnaces! Gumbo Gala is one of the largest gumbo competitions in the Southeast, as well as the largest Episcopal event in Alabama. Over 3,500 guests and 50 cook teams are expected to fill Sloss Furnaces for this family friendly event. More info: https://www.episcopalplace.org/aboutgg

April 21 2018 Annual Spring Assembly of the Daughters of the King

The Order of the Daughters of the King (DOK) of the Diocese of Alabama will assemble on April 21, 2018, from 9:00am to 3:00pm, at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit in Alabaster, Alabama, for the 2018 Annual Spring Assembly. More info: http://bit.ly/2ErzJYI.

April 25-27 Clergy and Spouse Retreat

Please mark your calendars for our annual Clergy and Spouse Retreat at Camp McDowell. Clergy will receive information about registration by email.

April 27-29 Young Adult Retreat

Join us for the Young Adults Retreat at Camp McDowell! Our theme this year is “Becoming Peacemakers,” and our program facilitator will be the Rev. Allison Liles. She will help us connect seeking justice and peace to living into our Baptismal covenant. There will also be lots of hiking, canoeing, resting and playing in God’s back yard! Register: http://bit.ly/2Eo9y0S.

April 27-29 Small Parish Retreat

The Ultimate Parish Retreat is designed to offer a weekend of FUN and fellowship for parishioners who want to experience a weekend, overnight, or day at camp that is filled with good food, music, playtime, relaxation, worship and all the best that camp has to offer. More info: http://bit.ly/2ECPYkF

May 3 The ONE Conference

The Department of Lifelong Christian Formation invites you to the ONE Conference on May 3, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at St. Stephen’s in Birmingham. This conference is for all clergy, Christian formation, communicators, volunteers, vestry, youth ministers, and all who want to seek and serve God in all persons. More info: http://bit.ly/2F18Qb1
Upcoming Events

June 8-10 Diocesan Homecoming at Camp McDowell
Diocesan Homecoming is a weekend retreat for all members of the Camp McDowell and Diocese of Alabama families! More info: http://bit.ly/2solVlw

July 9-13 Young People Paint Birmingham
Young People Paint Birmingham is a diocesan wide junior high service project. Youth entering 7th-9th grades are invited to join us for a work experience in Birmingham’s West End neighborhoods. Through a partnership with Urban Ministries and The Joe Rush Center for the last 20 years, young people in our diocese have had hands on service experience scraping and painting houses for homeowners who cannot afford to pay for this work to be done. During the evenings, the youth participate in a program that will help them learn more about poverty and how we are called to respond as Christians. St. Stephen’s, Birmingham will serve as a home base for meals, program and sleeping. More info: http://bit.ly/2EqlAuN.

Share Your Stories & Events!

The Alabama Episcopalian is published quarterly (March 1, May 1, August 1, November 1), with the deadline for submission being the first day of the preceding month.

Submissions should be sent via email as Word documents. Submissions should be a minimum of 500 words and be written in news style. A limited number of first person reflections may be accepted.

The DioAla News Update is published semimonthly on the first and third Monday of the month and features current news and events. The deadline for submission is the Friday preceding publication.

Submissions should be sent via email, and should include links to the event, job/volunteer posting, or announcement hosted on submitting organizations web or social media site.

Website & Social Media is updated regularly. Please like/follow us on social media for updates on events and news around the diocese.

If you have an event, job/volunteer opportunity, or other announcement, please submit it via email, including appropriate links you your content.

Photos or artwork should be submitted as separate files at the highest resolution possible. Please include information for captions and photographer/artist credit.

For more information about submission requirements and style guides, visit www.dioala.org/communications.

For questions, or to submit an article, email khudlow@dioala.org.
We’re excited to announce that all of the programs we offer in Hale County will now be known collectively as Sawyerville. Sawyerville is the name of the town where the ministry began in 1993. Though the day camp has evolved and new programs have been added, the name Sawyerville still reflects the purpose of this ministry, the thing that has never changed—the mission of Sawyerville is to serve God, broaden the horizons of campers and counselors, improve race relations in Alabama, and enrich the lives of those living in poverty. That was true in Sawyerville, AL in 1993 when 75 campers and staff began a new day camp, and it’s true today. We’re honored to carry this name, and we’re thrilled to bring all of the programs under its banner.

Head to the Sawyerville blog to read more and see the whole design: http://bit.ly/NewLook18.