The Episcopal Church of the Ascension
Montgomery, Alabama
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## Parish Profile

2018
Our Mission

We seek to glorify God in Christ by experiencing His Word in worship, communion, and study; by living out His Word in fellowship, healing, and love; and by proclaiming His Word through teaching and outreach.

Who We Are

The Ascension is a diverse community of individuals and families who participate in a variety of ministries within the Church, the City of Montgomery, the Diocese and the world. Corporately and individually, we pray, worship, study God’s Word, and pursue opportunities for service. We strive to be welcoming; seeking commonality with those who share other viewpoints. Our beautiful facilities and inspiring music programs provide us with the opportunities to experience God’s abiding grace through traditional worship in a profoundly personal and fulfilling manner. We are deeply committed to, and continue to be blessed by, outreach programs and other opportunities that stretch our individual gifts and even make us uncomfortable.

During the transition, we have not lost momentum but have been actively engaged in our ministries and mission resulting in many blessings:

- Increasing the percentage of members pledging and the amount pledged during our 2018 stewardship campaign
- Performing more baptisms than funerals
- Renewing and creating pastoral care programs
- Hiring a youth minister
- Planning and funding the choir’s residency at Wells Cathedral
- Ensuring that our staffing aligns with our vision of a bolder future: including the creation of an administrative staff position
- Better managing of our facilities, gardens, and monies
Greetings, prospectiveRectors:

I am praying, and trusting, along with the rest of the congregation, that the Holy Spirit is guiding the decision on who will become the next Rector of the Church of the Ascension. And, that each of you, as candidates, are carefully discerning this call. There are numerous strengths in this congregation upon which the successful candidate will be building. The church runs like a top, with a large and strong cadre of volunteers. There is a newly formed group of young people in their 20s and 30s – the Bread of Life ministry – that is growing. The music program is the best I have ever worked with. Ascension is in good financial health. The sanctuary, the grounds, and the facilities are breath-taking. Ascension Day School is a major asset and will also grow significantly in 2018.

There is so much more that could be said about the goodness and beauty of Ascension. The Youth program is growing, the church adopted the TENS Stewardship program with good success, and we have restarted our Latino ministry program. Our associate priest, along with a wonderful lay team, is implementing a renewed pastoral care program.

This ministry requires someone with exceptional administrative skills. There are loads of volunteers, active committees and a staff of ten. In addition to the reasons we love being priests - worship, preaching, pastoral care and teaching – the next Rector, hopefully, will love being a maestro, orchestrating a team of volunteers and program staff to advance the mission of the church.

With so much going on we are making it clearer what staff, vestry and volunteer roles and responsibilities are. Through this work the staff has a much clearer understanding of their core responsibilities, those things for which they are accountable. We expect that significant progress will be made before the arrival of the next rector. God’s blessing on your desire to serve this wonderful church.

The Rev. Charles C. (Chris) Starr

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Preparing to call the ninth rector to the Church of the Ascension provides an opportunity for our parish family to examine ourselves and our expectations for our new rector. As part of that process, we conducted a survey of the parish in 2018.

Based on that survey and confirmed in listening sessions, the Ascension membership has a strong desire for a person who has demonstrated skills in the areas of Preaching, Administration and Pastoral Care. The next two, at a lesser level but still important, are Liturgy and Spiritual Guidance.

The rector we seek

**Preaching**

We desire someone who clearly communicates from the pulpit God’s love through Christ; someone whose sermons will make the Gospel relevant in our lives and inspire us to walk more closely with Christ. We also value our worship services, and we hope that our new rector will plan and lead worship services steeped in a rich and meaningful traditional liturgy.

**Administration**

As a church community, we need effective leadership in the administration of our staff, volunteers and programs. Additionally, we hope for someone with the ability to identify and include for ministry, the diverse talents of our congregation.

**Pastoral Care**

We are looking for an individual who is compassionate, open-minded, and approachable; someone who is truly interested in the lives of other people and who will listen with his or her heart. Our new rector should be a strong communicator who is good with one-on-one relationships, placing the utmost value on pastoral care.

*We seek a rector who will challenge and lead us to:*

- Grow our strengths of worship, music, hospitality and outreach
- Further develop the talents and involvement of our laity in ministries and Christian formation at all levels, especially encouraging the continued development and growth of our youth and young adult programs
- Be better stewards of our resources
- Engage more with the Episcopal deanery and the community, including making our facilities even more available to the community
- Increase membership with a focus on welcoming all those seeking a closer relationship with God and desiring to be the hands and feet of Christ alongside us
- Continue to promote a loving spirit among ourselves and a policy of inclusion in all aspects of church life
- Foster good communication and fellowship within the parish
- Further strengthen our financial position, including even greater participation in pledging

**Most importantly we trust that our new rector will sense a call from God to become a part of the Church of the Ascension family.**
## History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>The Church of the Ascension begins as a mission church of St. John’s Church to provide a place of worship in the growing Cloverdale area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>The first vestry is elected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Groundbreaking occurs. The church is designed by Ralph Adams Cram of Boston, the architect most responsible for the Gothic revival in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>The cornerstone is laid. The first service in the completed nave is on Easter Day, March 27, 1910. The Rev. Frederick du M. Donnell becomes the first rector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Ascension is admitted to the Diocese of Alabama as a parish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>The Rev. Francis J.H. Coffin serves as rector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>The Rev. Peerce Naylor McDonald becomes the third rector, serving until his death. Facilities are greatly expanded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>The Rev. Thomas Robinson Thrasher assumes the role of rector. The parish house is completed and All Saint’s Church in east Montgomery is started as a mission sponsored by Ascension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>The Rev. Mark Edward Waldo is called to be rector, serving until his retirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>A fire causes severe damage to the church building. Through the use of insurance funds and a successful $2 million “Moment of Opportunity” capital campaign, the church is not simply rebuilt, but expanded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>The Capital Stewardship Campaign funds a $4.5 million expansion project, adding a 6,000 square foot freestanding youth facility along with a 3-story addition to the original building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>The Rev. van Dyke and his followers split from Ascension to form a new church under the Anglican Church of North America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>The Rev. John Charles Coleman is called as rector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>The Church of the Ascension celebrates its 100th anniversary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>The Rev. Thayer announces his departure to accept a call to become the Rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in New Orleans. The Rev. Charles Chris Starr is called to serve as our interim rector.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Commitments

### Christian Faith
As a community of faithful believers, we acknowledge that only through the redeeming love and grace of Jesus Christ can we receive the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life.

### Worship
The Church of the Ascension offers traditional liturgical worship that instructs, comforts, renews and challenges us. Everyone who worships with us is invited to experience God’s presence and to be drawn closer to our Lord through prayer, preaching, communion and music.

### Discipleship
We are committed to bringing individuals into a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, and making our members disciples of Christ through worship, education and ministry; equipping them to bring the good news of Christ’s love to all people.

### Stewardship and Outreach
We remain steadfast in our commitment to minister to and serve those in spiritual, emotional or physical need, using our time, talent and resources to reach out to the least of those in our community, the nation and the world. We are faithful stewards of God’s gifts and we use them to His glory and to expand His kingdom.

### Fellowship
Our members experience true joy in companionship with one another. Our lives are blessed and enriched by the many opportunities we have to receive God’s love through Christian fellowship, teaching and example.
The core of our parish life is worship, with services that allow us to focus on our faith as we come together as one Body in Christ. We welcome all to our services and to share in the Holy Eucharist.

We celebrate the Eucharist at two services on Sunday mornings and also in a service on Wednesday evenings. Services are traditional in style. Using the 1982 Hymnal and Alleluia II, music is an important part of our services.

Worship is enhanced by the participation of lay ministers, including vergers, lectors, paten and chalice bearers, acolytes, ushers and Altar Guild members. Sermons are audio-recorded for those who cannot attend.

We encourage families to bring their children to all our services; however, parents and youth volunteers, along with paid nursery workers, care for infants. Children attend their own service during the Word of God portion of the 10:15 service and rejoin their parents for Eucharist.

Worship is integral to our worship at Church of the Ascension. Not only does it enhance scriptural teaching in services, creating space and inspiration for ascribing worth to God, but it provides meaningful ministry opportunities for parishioners.

The Ascension Choir is the keystone of our music. Faithful, talented and committed choir members have enabled the Choir to provide a constant presence to the church through both stable and changing times. Their repertoire includes the great traditional anthems from centuries of the Anglican Communion, as well as diverse music from other traditions and cultures, including spirituals, gospel, contemporary and classical music. In addition to Sunday morning services, the Choir offers services from the wealth of Episcopal liturgy and traditions, including Evensong, Compline, Lessons & Carols, and Twelfth Night Celebration.

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There are two choirs for Ascension children based on grade level. They not only sing in services during the year, but spend time developing singing and personal skills, praying for each other, and learning to use the Hymnal.

Ascension’s music serves not only the parish, but also the community, as staff and choir members participate in services, concerts, teachings and other events in the Montgomery area. The Choir has taken Ascension’s worship to the world through a week-long residency at Salisbury Cathedral in 2014, and is planning a similar residency at Wells Cathedral in July 2018.
The Church of the Ascension has a strong, grace-filled tradition of providing pastoral care to those in our congregation who face life’s challenges and hardships. For a time, the nationally-recognized “Stephen Ministries” program anchored our pastoral care efforts. More recently Ascension struggled to resource this kind of ministry and there was little communication across different pastoral care ministry teams. It became clear we had to develop a better-fitting set of programs.

First, a Pastoral Care Steering Committee was formed to ensure immediate pastoral care needs were being met. A longer term goal has been to provide integrated, sustainable ministry in a variety of situations and needs. At this time we are rolling out a comprehensive approach based on Caring Congregations and the needs we have identified in the community that were not yet being met. This program is organized around 4 areas: Prayer, Life Event Support, Visiting the Sick, and Death and Loss. We have built on programs that were already working well and have added several new ministries (in bold in the graphic below) that will be up and running by the end of 2018.

Classes for children and youth (ages 4 through high school) are taught each Sunday during the school year. Parishioners teach the classes, as well as VBS, which is a joint effort among area Episcopal congregations.

A variety of adult Sunday morning classes, in addition to book studies, Bible studies and other classes, are taught throughout the year, led by clergy and laity. The newest class, Bread of Life, was started by young adults and is a growing and evolving group. Education for Ministry (EFM), a Sewanee School of Theology course of study, has a long rich tradition at Ascension with a new class forming each year.

The Ascension has active participation in Cursillo, sending pilgrims several times a year to Camp McDowell in northern Alabama. In addition, we have introduced Discovery Weekend that brings elements of Cursillo to a parish-focused spiritual encounter.

**Christian Formation**

**Pastoral Care**

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The Church of the Ascension was born over a century ago as a mission church of St. John's Parish, Montgomery's oldest Episcopal church. The first offering taken at Ascension was given to a church in Union Springs, Alabama, which had been devastated by a tornado. From these roots, our outreach program began. Our members value outreach ministries and support them with their time, talents and tithes. Our budget provides funds to the Outreach Committee, the Diocese of Alabama (including the support of seminarians), and the Clergy Discretionary Funds. Additional monies are contributed by the Vineyard Bookstore through its profits, the EYC, the Holy One Golf Tournament, individuals and other fundraisers for special projects.

LOCAL PROJECTS
- **Beans and Rice Ministry** — food security for our neighbors
- **Community Church Services** — Lessons and Carols, Twelfth Night, Thanksgiving, Blessing of Animals
- **Family Promise's Interfaith Hospitality Network** — lodging and meals for temporary homeless families
- **Holy Cross Episcopal School** — scholarships
- **Lord's Pantry** — food boxes
- **Meals on Wheels** — meals for seniors
- **Milton Lewis Children's Christmas Program** — gifts for underprivileged children
- **Montgomery Area Food Bank** — money and food donations
- **New Beginnings** — tutoring and mentoring for disadvantaged students from a nearby government-subsidized housing community
- **Proper Funeral Services for the City of Montgomery**
- **Reality & Truth** — meals for homeless
- **Renascence** — re-entry program for non-violent male offenders

NATIONAL PROJECTS
- **Camp McDowell Scholarships for Children and Adults Attending the Special Session**
- **Mission Trips to Other Locations, such as Mississippi, West Virginia, Washington, D.C., and a Native American Reservation in the Dakotas**
- **Red Cross Disaster Efforts**
- **Sawyerville** — a day camp serving disadvantaged children in Alabama Black Belt region

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS
- We have completed 3 mission trips to offer Bible School and help construct an Episcopal Church (“Little Ascension”) in Costa Rica.
- We sponsor a school in Honduras through the Lunches for Learning Program, which feeds hungry children in rural schools.

Outreach Education is a vital part of our ministry here, and ADS has been a part of our parish since 2011. Over 90 children from infants through pre-kindergarten now attend ADS. Spiritual development is fostered through chapel, special events and yearly programs including ADS Sunday. This wonderful outreach ministry allows us to share Ascension with a variety of families, both members and non-members alike.
The Vestry believes that the Church is called by God to be hospitable to all those who attend the Church. In the last several years we have experienced a large growth in our Latino population and have determined the need for a Latino ministry. A priesthood candidate, who is also a member of Ascension and is experienced in interactions with this community, leads this ministry. In the past, Spanish-language services – for instance, Los Posados – have been offered, as well as outreach activities such as medical and legal interpreting. Ascension is currently exploring a Baptismal preparation program for our new families.

We complement our work of ministry and mission with fun and fellowship. The Ascension is a friendly and welcoming parish where families and singles, youth and seniors, new and old-timers all find communion with Christ among His people. There is a spirit of community in our parish that we believe is like no other. Everyone who enters the Church of the Ascension comes as Christ’s own with a place at our table. No one leaves as a stranger.

PARISH LIFE IS VIBRANT AND INCLUDES:

- Advent Recitals and Luncheons
- All Saints Evensong and Reception
- Altar Guild
- Ascension Day Celebration
- Ascensionaires
- Bible Studies
- Blessing of the Animals
- Blessing of the Backpacks
- Bread of Life Ministries
- Brotherhood of St. Andrew
- Cursillo
- Daughters of the King
- Episcopal Church Women (ECW)
- Education for Ministry (EfM)
- Episcopal Parties
- Episcopal Youth Community (EYC)
- Lay Eucharistic Ministers (LEMs)
- Men’s Prayer Breakfast
- Ministry Fair
- Prayers and Squares Quilt Ministry
- Shrove Tuesday Supper
- Supper Clubs
- TLC Meal Ministry
- Wednesday Night Meal and Activities
LEADERSHIP

Our laity is strong, dedicated and compassionate. Our Vestry of twelve elected parishioners strives to work as one in their commitment to the well-being of the parish. A third of the members rotate off annually. The vestry elects the senior and junior wardens. There are numerous other leadership positions in the parish through ministries and committees.

MEMBERSHIP

The Church of the Ascension Parochial Report for 2017 shows the following:

- BAPTIZED MEMBERS = 752 (UP FROM 744 IN 2016)
- AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE = 270
- BAPTISMS = 45
- CONFIRMATIONS = 7
- BURIALS = 14

Approximately 25% of our members are 23 years of age or younger; 37% are between 24 and 60 years of age; and 38% are 61 or older.

MEMBERSHIP BY AGE GROUP

Approximately 53% of our members are female, and 98% of our members live in Montgomery County. As to the length of membership, almost half have been members of Ascension for 10 years or less, and a third have been members for more than 20 years.

FINANCIALS

For 2017, income totaled $1,094,728 and our total expenses were $1,047,969.

Recent trends for our revenues and expenses are shown in the following table:

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<tr>
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We know that we are deeply blessed. We have breathtakingly beautiful and useful facilities; the means to have both a full-time Rector and an Associate Rector; a growing and energized congregation; a top-notch music program; and a deep commitment to both in-reach and outreach. Yet we know there is more work to be done. During this transition, the Vestry has made a series of decisions to move from maintenance management to best practices, and a balanced budget has been adopted for 2018. We anticipate this will provide more stable funding for ministries and missions in the future.

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Using The Episcopal Network of Stewardship (TENS) approach for the first time, our 2018 pledges resulted in more pledges and more money than the prior year even though fewer pledge packets were distributed. Moreover, the percentage of members pledging rose.

We focused our giving on being proportional (tithing or working toward the tithe), sacrificial (the gift should be considered holy, a sacrifice), and transformational (giving as a spiritual experience, in partnership with God).

We have 36 new pledges, 60 increased pledges, 51 pledges remaining the same, and only 32 decreased pledges. The table below provides comparative data for the past 3 years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLEDGED AMOUNTS</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to $1,000</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,001 to $5,000</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,001 to $10,000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,001 to $20,000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001 to $40,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,001 to $50,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total # of Pledges:** 186, **Total $ Pledged:** $935,277

**FACILITIES**

Situated on approximately 2.5 acres, we enjoy the use of two stand-alone buildings. The older building contains the sanctuary with chapel, large meeting/dining room (Ascension Hall), kitchen, library, bookstore, various meeting rooms and classrooms, choir rehearsal room, children’s chapel, staff offices, and a dedicated space for Ascension Day School. Joshua House, the newer building containing a large recreational room, classrooms, lounge, kitchen, and bathrooms with showers, is used for the youth and outreach ministries. The grounds contain a memorial garden and a columbarium, along with a playground and two parking lots. The church buildings have maintained their magnificent Gothic structure throughout the years including additions and renovations. The nave seats 375.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR BUILT</th>
<th>BUILDING NAME/SECTION</th>
<th>FLOOR LEVELS</th>
<th>APPRX SQUARE FOOTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>MAIN SANCTUARY (NAVE)</td>
<td>1 + BASEMENT (MECHANICAL)</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-1926</td>
<td>CROSSING, TRANSEPTS, CHANCEL, PARISH HOUSE, TOWER WITH 3 BELLS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>SOUTH WING</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>RESTORATION OF NAVE; NEW CHAPEL, LIBRARY, ASCENSION HALL, KITCHEN</td>
<td>1; 2 FOR ASCENSION HALL</td>
<td>22,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>SOUTHEAST WING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND OFFICES</td>
<td>3+ ATTIC</td>
<td>32,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>JOSHUA HOUSE</td>
<td>1; LOFT AND PARTIAL 2ND LEVEL</td>
<td>7,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>101,675+/- GSF</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Located in the Garden District of Montgomery, the Church of the Ascension sits approximately a mile from the Interstate 65 and Interstate 65 interchange and 1.5 miles from downtown. We are an hour drive from Lake Martin and 3 hours from some of the prettiest beaches in the world.

Our community

Montgomery was the site of many key events in the American civil rights movement. Rosa Parks’ stand against segregation on a public bus led to the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. The Freedom March for civil rights from Selma ended in Montgomery in 1965.

As the Capitol City, Montgomery is home to several thousand state government workers as well as nearly as many military and federal employees, many of whom work at Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base. Maxwell AFB is home of the Air University, one of the nation’s premier education facilities. Gunter serves as the USAF-lead for software program management under the U.S. Department of Defense.

Montgomery’s Alabama Air National Guard 187th Fighter Wing was recently selected as the site to operate and maintain the new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Jets.

Montgomery is also home to Hyundai American Motor Manufacturing with a workforce of over 3000. Opened in 2004, this was Hyundai’s first North American manufacturing plant.

On the education front, Montgomery is home to 6 colleges and universities. The magnet schools in Montgomery include LAMP, a top-10 high school nationally. And we offer excellent private schools, including the Holy Cross Episcopal School.

Important historical sites and entertainment venues in Montgomery include:

**History**
- Alabama State Capitol
- Civil Rights Memorial
- Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church
- First White House of the Confederacy
- Freedom Riders Museum
- Hank Williams Museum
- Legacy Museum
- Museum of Alabama
- National Memorial for Peace & Justice
- Old Alabama Town
- Rosa Parks Library & Museum

**Entertainment**
- Alabama Dance Theater
- Alabama Shakespeare Festival
- Montgomery Ballet
- Montgomery Biscuits (Minor League Baseball)
- Montgomery Performing Arts Center
- Montgomery Symphony Orchestra
- Montgomery Zoo
- Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail

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- Montgomery Symphony Orchestra
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- Montgomery Ballet
- Alabama Dance Theater
- Alabama Shakespeare Festival
- First White House of the Confederacy
- Freedom Riders Museum
- Hank Williams Museum
- Holy Cross Episcopal School
- LAMP Magnet School

Our mayor describes Montgomery as the city of “Civil” beginnings.

**Civil War** - Jefferson Davis took the oath of office as President of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery.

**Civil Aviation** - Orville Wright began training students at a site that later became Maxwell Air Force Base.

**Civil Rights** - Montgomery was the site of many key events in the American civil rights movement. Rosa Parks’ stand against segregation on a public bus led to the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. The Freedom March for civil rights from Selma ended in Montgomery in 1965.

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**The Diocese of Alabama**

The Diocese of Alabama finds its roots and best expression in the mission of Jesus Christ. We see ourselves as a missionary people, committed to spreading the Gospel and sharing in the ministry of Jesus Christ for the reconciliation and healing of the world.

The Diocese is healthy and strong, with 89 parishes, 4 campus centers and 3 worshipping communities. As a witness to our growth, we have had 2 very successful capital campaigns in the last 20 years; the first raising over $6 million for ministry development and expansion throughout the Diocese, and the second raising $10 million to expand Camp McDowell (which serves as host to summer camp sessions, various youth gatherings, Cursillo, retreats, conferences, workshops, and a wide array of educational and renewal opportunities) to allow for more camp sessions and programs for people with disabilities or mobility issues, expand our Environmental Education program to include a Farm Education component, and provide a home for the Alabama Folks School.

Currently the Diocese has a growing baptized membership of over 32,000 parishioners. We have started a new worshipping community in a coffee shop, a fresh expression of the Episcopal Church in a trendy area in Birmingham. The Abbey serves coffee, sandwiches and snacks through the week, and offers a “third place” for those seeking a new way to engage in Christian community and for those who have been turned away from the Church but still yearn for a safe and engaging place to explore their spirituality.

We have recently launched the Alabama Integrative Ministry School, a program to train bi-vocational and non-stipendiary priests and deacons. Another focus of formation and renewal with the Diocese is Cursillo and Happening, renewal weekends for adults and young people. Vocare, similar to Cursillo, is for college students and young adults and offers time to look at what they believe and serves to empower young leaders to share their walk with Christ.

Youth ministry is a valuable priority in the diocese, and we have employed a coordinator since the 1990s. Life-long faith formation is understood to be an ongoing process for all baptized Christians, and the Diocese has employed a coordinator to assist parishes with resources, workshops and conferences.

Since 1969, the Diocese has had a high commitment to the Companion Diocese Relationship Program, and over the years has had formal relationships with the Diocese of Namibia in Southern Africa, the Dioceses of Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Sao Paolo in Brazil, the Diocese of South Dakota and Haiti. Most recently we have started a companion diocese relationship with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands and are hoping to extend that relationship to the Diocese of Alaska.

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The Right Reverend John McKee Sloan

Bishop of the Diocese of Alabama
Almighty and everlasting Father, we stand in your presence, awed and silenced by your goodness and wisdom. We rejoice in the outpouring of your Spirit on the Ascension and our ministries. Help each of us to remember that we are walking in your sight, and that you are present with us at every moment. Through your Holy Spirit, guide us in our prayers and enable us to focus our thoughts on you, so that we may be filled with the knowledge of your will. Grant us the wisdom to ask what you would have us do; the strength and courage to carry out your work; and the grace to show our gratitude through good stewardship of your gracious gifts. We ask all things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.
The Episcopal Church of The Ascension

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