Episcopal team visits Volunteer Reception Center in Smiths Station following tornado

See article on page 6
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Archbishop of Canterbury
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Lambeth Palace, London
England SE1 7JU

The Alabama Episcopalian
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Miles G. Parsons, Art Director
Georganne Perrine, Circulation Secretary
Volume 104, Number 2
April/May/June 2019
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 Georganne Perrine at gperrine@dioala.org or Carpenter House, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203-2682.

Keep up with the latest news from around our diocese between issues of The Alabama Episcopalian on our diocesan Web site, www.dioala.org. If you are not already receiving our “DioAla News Update,” you can sign up to receive a weekly e-mail containing headlines with links to the latest news, photos, and videos about and from around your diocese. Simply send an e-mail with your name and e-mail address to khudlow@dioala.org and put “Headlines” on the subject line. You can “opt out” anytime.

All address corrections or additions should be sent to Georganne Perrine at gperrine@dioala.org or Carpenter House, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203-2682.

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

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Cover photo: Pictured (L-R) Bill Eyke, Junior Warden St. Stephen’s Smiths Station; Deacon Andrea Peacock, Diocesan Coordinator for Episcopal Relief & Development; Deacon David Wheistone, Diocesan Disaster Relief Coordinator; Don Sorjonen, Senior Warden St. Stephen’s Smiths Station.
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“Lift Up Your Hearts”
On December 23, 2018, I said something that startled me. I’d said this same thing thousands of times in the past, and it startled me that I’d never really paid attention to what I was saying before. I was at St. Mark’s in Boligee for their annual night-before-Christmas Eve service, which has become a huge part of my own celebration of Christmas. If you’ve never been fortunate enough to go to St. Mark’s in Boligee, it is a beautiful old white wooden church with a cemetery behind it. Their Christmas Eve service is very sweet and very simple and has become a community event. The people of God who gather there for that sacred night are from all different denominations, and probably a few who aren’t generally much interested in church at all.

My grandparents attended this little church before they moved to the big city of Eutaw, eleven miles to the east. They are buried in the cemetery there, along with my mom and dad and quite a few other members of my mother’s mother’s family. I’d done the service at St. Stephen’s in Eutaw that morning and enjoyed a grand lunch after the service, and with nothing much else to do, I’d gone out to St. Mark’s for a visit with the communion of saints. I thought maybe I could tend the graves a little, but my cousin Thed and his family keep the graveyard very well, and there wasn’t really anything to do but to sit there for a while. I talked to Mom and Dad, and Grandma and Grandpa, and was grateful again for how much they loved me. Then I sat there whistling into the quiet, watching as the sun pushed along its inevitable procession toward the horizon. I don’t allow as much stillness into my life as I should, and I wished the sun would slow down so the quiet could last a little longer. I think I sat there for more than two hours.

Then Thed and his wife Judy arrived and unlocked the doors, and I went in, already missing the silence but at the same time glad to have someone living to talk to. My time in the graveyard had put me into an odd frame of mind, though – and as the congregation began to gather in their Christmas cheer, I realized that I was melancholy. Not sad or downhearted, not depressed, but melancholy, pensive, full of somber thought. This is not the way I usually am, before Christmas or at any time – it was unusual, but it wasn’t unpleasant.

The service began – we sang, we prayed, we all survived the sermon, Thed invited the entire congregation to a fine barbecue supper, and we started the Eucharistic Prayer. “The Lord be with you,” I said, and the congregation answered, “And also with you,” and then I said it: “Lift up your hearts.”

What an incredible thing to say! “Lift up your hearts,” out of the gloom, out of the noisy busy-ness we surround ourselves with every day, out of the practical mundane humdrum to which we’ve narrowed our existence; “Lift up your hearts” into the glorious mystery of larger life, into the magical miracle of existence, into the love and grace of God the author of life. Lift up your hearts, out of the pain and frustrations that are surely there for all of us, into hope, into joy, into the presence of God. Lift up your hearts, out of our preoccupation with ourselves, out of our griping and petty grudges and hurts, into the yearning for the face of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Lift up your hearts out of the crushing reality that we all fall short of the will of God for us in our lives; we lift them up into the assurance that God loves us all anyway, not because we deserve it but because that’s who God is.

The next day I was at the Boutwell Auditorium Christmas Eve service for homeless people and their friends. As I was giving out communion and saying, “The Body of Christ, the Bread of Heaven” over and over, I thought – “What an incredible thing to say!”
Loving Your Neighbor: an Update on Recovery Work in Lee County

Deacon Andrea Peacock

“I can’t remember when I came to realize that all of humanity is my neighbor and that I am commanded to love them as I love myself. Wonderful miracles come from responding to the needs of our neighbors, like the miracle of people coming together after a disaster to love, help, and support each other through the diversity of community. The Rev. Larry Williams, priest-in-charge at St. Stephen’s in Smiths Station, calls it a very special kind of infrastructure; loving your neighbors as you would have them love you.

On March 4, 2019, the day after the Lee County tornadoes hit, Episcopal Relief & Development wasted no time in responding to the needs of their neighbors. Lura Steele, Program Officer for the US Disaster Program, called the Rev. Rob Morpeth and practically got him out of bed offering to help and send financial support. On Shrove Tuesday, Williams and others from St. Stephen’s came together to offer immediate relief in the form of preparing meals for the first responders. This is my first year as Episcopal Relief & Development Coordinator for the Diocese, and as Bishop Ambrose Gumbs told me, “Andrea, it is a baptism by fire, and you have hit the ground running.” You can say that again!

On March 7, I met with Williams, St. Stephen’s senior and junior wardens, and Deacon David Whetstone, Diocesan Disaster Coordinator, to talk about what was needed in Smiths Station and Beauregard, and what St. Stephen’s, the Diocese of Alabama, and Episcopal Relief & Development could do. Rapid response agencies were doing their jobs of rescuing those most affected by the tornadoes. We would not be allowed into the area until all residents had been found and tended to, and the roads clear of debris and electrical lines. We had time to formulate and pray about what our response would look like in the long term. Many ideas were offered at this gathering, but the one thing we knew that we could do was good old-fashioned hospitality in the form of meals.

We also wanted to give immediate assistance. We visited the Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) at Smiths Station and Beauregard and witnessed a beehive of activity with many volunteers and officials coming and going. After asking what we could do, we chose the most pressing need: lunches for the volunteers. St. Stephen’s Smiths Station, along with Holy Trinity, Auburn, and St. Thomas, Columbus, worked together to provide almost 1,000 meals to first responders and volunteers. At this point we discovered a drawback to being a “boots on the ground” volunteer; while you bring resources that can be used to help survivors, you might also be in the way of help getting to them. The desire to help others is God-given; we are made to be in community and care for each other. When we see images of people suffering, we want to do something. I am learning that this is a delicate dance to respond in a way that is actually helpful and appropriate. It is essential to wait for the rescue phase to finish, before offering relief. We take

Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it; ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:36-40

St. Stephen’s provides a meal to the first responders at Smiths Station Fire Station.
our lead from those affected most, as they indicate what they need and when. Understanding the phases of a disaster can be very helpful in determining how you can help. There are three phases in times of a disaster: rescue, relief, and recovery. Disaster preparedness should be an ongoing process before the other three are needed.

So, how can we best be prepared for future disaster events in our diocese? As we are seeing, these events will happen more frequently with the changing climate. Everyone in every parish should also be prepared, to respond and provide what is needed to those in need. Episcopal Relief & Development’s US Disaster Program works at home in areas affected by disasters. They offer resources and training to help communities prepare for disasters and provide emergency support so that vulnerable people can make a full and sustained recovery. The organization’s church partners are an integral part of these communities; because of ongoing relationships, Episcopal Relief & Development is there before others arrive and stay with them long after the news cameras have gone. Our Episcopal churches in the area will play a part in the long-term recovery strategy with local agencies and the support of Episcopal Relief & Development. And as such, a total of nine visits were made to two Volunteer Reception Centers in Smiths Station and Beauregard as we continue with our response to the long term.

What can you do? First, donate money to Episcopal Relief & Development’s US Disaster Response. Then become involved by becoming part of a disaster response team at your church, and if you don’t have one, start one. Next, sign-up to volunteer at volunteer.episcopalrelief.org/; and make sure that all of your parish’s information on the Episcopal Asset Map has been completed. Get involved in the work of disaster preparedness for your home, your parish, and the Diocese. Resources and information for all of these can be found on the Episcopal Relief & Development website: www.episcopalrelief.org. If you need to talk to a real live person, I welcome phone calls and emails as well. Please become involved in a part of this disaster response process: Preparedness, Rescue, Relief, and Recovery.

Going forward, a celebration of life is being scheduled at later date for the survivors and first responders, with food, activities, pastoral care, and a service for prayer and blessing. Please keep everyone in your prayers.

Deacon Andrea Peacock is the Diocesan Coordinator for Episcopal Relief & Development, and she can be reached at andreapeacock60@gmail.com.
October 11, 2018, Hurricane Michael hit the Central Gulf Coast. The area especially devastated—east from Panama City through Mexico beach, Port St. Joe, Cape San Blas, and St. George’s Island—was sometimes known as the “forgotten coast” because of its lack of commercialization.

On February 21, a six-member recovery team, made up of four local Episcopal parishes from the Birmingham area, went to Port St. Joe to work with a family trying to rebuild their home. While many on the team had experience with recovery work, we were still shocked at what we saw four and a half months after this event. Many roofs were still tarped, trees were on houses, piles of debris lined the roads, houses in ruins sat unattended, trailers sat on slabs where there were once homes. It appeared this area had indeed been forgotten.

We stayed at the Oak Grove Assembly of God Church and were graciously welcomed late at night by Jimmie, one of their lay leaders, who gave us a key to the church. This location had also served as a Red Cross headquarters and shelter.

The next two days we spent with the Peek family. This included the father Mathew, a deputy sheriff canine

Meghan, holding her son, James, stands with her daughter, Julia, in their backyard.
officer working 12-hour shifts, his wife Meghan, five year old Julia, and two year old James. They were all, including police dog Brix, in a FEMA trailer in front of their roof tarped home. During the hurricane, Mathew’s family evacuated twice while he was out rescuing other families. The ocean surge reached 56 inches inside their house and the wind knocked down 16 large trees in their back yard, amazingly none fell on their home.

Our work included cleaning out a large shed that had been untouched since the hurricane, removing and replacing all the windows in the house, removing and replacing doors, repositioning some framing, cleaning out and organizing items that had been stored in various areas. The house still had no drywall, ceilings, and only concrete floors. Wiring was still in progress and the new roof shingles arrived while we were there after many weeks on order. We also continued to clean up debris on their large lot removing part of a twisted chain link fence.

In addition to our physical labor, we heard their stories, met their extended families, broke bread together and listened as they described their community, the challenges in their recovery, and the ongoing needs in their community. As Meghan and I walked through what was left of her backyard, we spotted this rising sunflower. She had no idea where it came from but we both felt it was a sign of a new beginning for her family. We are grateful to Diana Burkett, community coordinator, and this family for allowing us to come into their lives, and together experiencing God’s love in ways we could never have imagined.
In the Examination at the Ordination of the Deacon, each deacon makes a lifelong vow “to serve all people” – there is no distinction made between those who are members of the faith community and those outside the walls of the church. Deacons serve all – with special attention to “the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely.” Reflecting upon that promise helps identify those individuals to whom that special attention is to be directed. In looking at the statistics for 2018, it is clear that deacons do not have to look long or far before discovering that the needy are where we “live, and work, and worship.”

The life of the deacon is one of “word and example” in “life and teaching,” and this is what we discover is taking place in Alabama. In analyzing the annual quantitative reporting from currently active deacons, we find that deacons actively participate in ministries not only in their community, but in their parish and in the Diocese. Deacons have assumed leadership in ministries through commission and committee work at the diocese. Additionally, they are increasingly tapped for their abilities to inspire, prepare, and call to action the parish laity through formation, liturgy, leadership, and example. In their ministry of calling and inspiring the laity, God’s ministry to the world is continually expanded, serving more and more of our brothers and sisters in need.

In 2018, 26 active deacons reported driving 118,643 miles while completing 22,751 hours of non-stipendiary
ministry on behalf of the Church and its people. This is an average of 875 hours per deacon, or 42% of one full-time paid position. The national average value per hour of volunteer time is $24.69 (according to Independent Sector, www.independentsector.org). Deacons’ ministry in 2018 represented a contribution of $561,722.19 in service to the diocese.

Even more significant, though, is the actual impact of change that deacons make in the lives of others through Christian formation, social justice, worship, pastoral care, organizational/advocacy work, and the many other areas of service and ministry. This impact by the Deacon Community in the care and transformation of people is beyond our ability to measure.

The role of the deacon in the Diocese of Alabama continues to evolve toward its theologically complete fulfillment, as deacons take their place in actively contributing to ministry to all people. Deacons consistently serve in the areas of pastoral care (“care of the sick, weak, lonely”), preaching (proclaiming the Gospel), and teaching (“interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world”), in addition to the focus of the early years on efforts to serve the poor in the secular community through parish and diocesan charitable and social justice outreach efforts.

To learn more about the Deacon Community in the Diocese of Alabama, contact Archdeacon Marti Holmes at mholmes@holyapostleshoover.org or visit www.dioala.org/deacons.
Episcopal Peace Fellowship names Melanie Merkle Atha as new Executive Director

Deacon Kelley Hudlow

In January 2019, Melanie Merkle Atha began as the executive director of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship (EPF). EPF is a national organization “connecting all who seek a deliberate response to injustice and violence and want to pray, study and take action for justice and peace in our communities, our church, and the world.” Atha is a member of St. Andrew’s in Birmingham, and also serves as the executive director of the Global Collaborative Law Council.

On the Feast of the Epiphany Atha and her husband, Steve, joined the folks of St. Andrew’s for a blessing of a camper van that would serve as their home for the next few months. When Atha was interviewed for the position, she presented the idea of her traveling around the country, visiting with parishes and youth groups, and attending diocesan events, recruiting new members and re-establishing connections to EPF. After this interview, Atha received the copy of a history of EPF, The Voice of Conscience: A Loud and Unusual Noise? The Episcopal Peace Fellowship 1939-1989. In 1965, when the organization was searching for its first executive director, they were searching for someone that could travel, organize, and interpret, someone with “the missionary’s spirit of dedication, zeal and patience.” Atha was struck by this passage and reflected that she “was returning [EPF] to our well-established roots” and she describes herself on this journey as a “missionary for peace.”

I reached out to Atha while she is on this journey and asked her to reflect on her most powerful moment of the trip so far:

I love this question because this work is such a rich experience, I have a different answer each time I get asked! Today I am going to share this one – standing with my feet in the Rio Grande river back in February. From where I stood in the shallow, brown muddy water in Texas, I could hear children laughing and burros braying just beyond the hill on the Mexico side. I could see rabbits and butterflies and birds and the tracks of cloven-hoofed creatures from where I stood. I was intimately, acutely aware of the connection of all life to all other life – human, plant, animal, spirit. I felt great grief at the folly of putting up a border wall along this sacred place – which would interrupt the oneness of all of God’s creation. I felt in that moment as sure of my call to pursue social justice as ever I have.

When asked how folks in the Diocese of Alabama could get involved in the work of EPF, Atha replied “most parishes in Alabama are already involved in social justice ministries to a large degree. Whatever we do to welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, create justice for the oppressed—this is the work of EPF and of us baptized Christians.” For folks interested in becoming connected with EPF, information is available at www.epfnational.org or you can contact Atha at epfact-now@gmail.com.
Holy Cross Episcopal School is historically, lovingly supported by the parishes in the Montgomery area. But, in the early spring, there is a combination of much love, support and heavenly aromas coming directly from three Episcopal church kitchens preparing container after container of a vast variety of delicious soups. The fundraiser for Holy Cross Episcopal School is called “Loving Spoonful’s Soup Sale” and is enthusiastically anticipated each year. Quarts of soup sold during Coffee Hour at all three churches help Holy Cross Episcopal School each year - with a quite impressive profit. Men and women of all ages gather together in their church kitchens, and at home as they partner and stir up the most delicious recipes of soup that are highly anticipated each year by a very enthusiastic fan base of excited customers.

St. John’s, Ascension, and Holy Comforter come together each year to plan, cook and sell quarts of soup from delicious time-tested and beloved recipes that comfort and warm the chilly early days and nights of spring. Families have made it a cherished tradition to gather around a cozy warm fire and enjoy delicious bowls of soul-soothing, comforting soup together. The sale boasts one of the most profitable fundraisers for the school each year and contributes substantially to the success of the only Episcopal school in central Alabama, with this year’s fourth annual sale raising over $10,000. Many heartfelt thanks go out to the many volunteers who worked to plan, prepare and sell all the delicious varieties and to all who supported this sale with their purchases.

The Rev. Rosa Lindahl, the rector at Holy Comforter, commented, “Holy Comforter has a long tradition of supporting Holy Cross School -- the school began here at our church and parishioner, Melanie Kelley was its first director. No wonder then, that our congregation, though one of the smaller in the area, takes its work for Loving Spoonful’s on with great determination, verve, and joy. Stacks of soup appeared in our freezer and grew and grew. The sale Sundays saw the whole parish scurrying around organizing, delivering and carrying...
out soup. We raised a bit over $2,200 for Holy Cross in the process.”

Parishioners at St. John’s gathered together in the kitchen at the church and prepared quart after quart of their delicious soup that has become a tradition. One in particular, “Mike’s Vegetable and Beef Soup,” must be ordered well in advance because that is perhaps the most popular variety and most in demand each year. This year, one day, in particular, was very enjoyable to the preparers in the kitchens at St. John’s when they made their annual much-anticipated Gumbo. Loving Spoonful’s organizer Katie Keller, Parishioner of St. John’s in Montgomery explained, “Loving Spoonful’s soup season is always a special time at St. John’s. It becomes a time of experiencing a renewed community in action from our volunteer cooks, to our office staff support, to our wonderful group of purchasers. We love our weekly gatherings with Holy Cross School.”

The Rev. Jaime Osborne, Associate Rector of St. John’s stated, “St. John’s loves Holy Cross and the soup sale is a great way to work together and offer support to a wonderful school informed by the Episcopal tradition. My family and I enjoy the soups that are made and order several each year.”

Church of the Ascension Loving Spoonful’s organizer Patricia Rutland commented, “To make delicious soup on a cold, winter day is a cozy activity. To make soup with friends you love, in the kitchen of a church you love, to benefit a school you love is a precious memory.” In early January 2019, thirty-five Episcopal Church Women volunteered to make soup to benefit Holy Cross School. They gathered the ingredients for Lentil & Conecuh Sausage; Mulligatawny; and Linda’s Potato Soups and made them in their own homes or in small groups in the Church of Ascension kitchen. When the soups were in their labeled containers, they were stored in every available freezer in the church and prepared for our Loving Spoonful’s Sale Days in mid-February. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew cooked three delicious soups: Clam Chowder, Tomato Artichoke, and Italian Sausage-Spinach & Bean.

The Rev. Candice Frazer commented, “Church of the Ascension loves the Holy Cross Soup Sale. It gives us the opportunity for a number of our different men’s and women’s groups to come together and cook a variety of soups to sell for Holy Cross. The sale is always at the start of February
News from our Parishes

on cold Sunday mornings before and after church to encourage increased demand, so sales go up! And sales are always good—this year alone, Ascension raised over $3,000 through our soup sales!"

So, as English novelist and playwright Marge Kennedy once said, “Soup is a lot like a family. Each ingredient enhances the others; each batch has its own characteristics, and it needs time to simmer to reach full flavor.” Similarly, local Episcopal parish families bless our Holy Cross family beyond measure each year, doing so with one comforting spoonful of soup at a time.
In the early 1950s, a group of seven confirmed Episcopalians and other interested parties met at the home of Charles and Betty Tigner to organize a congregation in Seale. The initial meeting places were homes, the Seale School, other churches and the old Russell County Courthouse.

By 1954, the church had its own building with a name selected by the bishop, the Rt. Rev. George M. Murray, as St. Matthew’s-in-the-Pines. It was constructed by members and friends beginning in 1954 and completed for services in 22 days. Originally a concrete block structure, over the years it has been upgraded with wood siding and 12-inch-wide heart pine interior paneling milled in Russell County.

Fast-forward to 2018. Using a generous donation by Charlotte Rhodes Tigner in memory of founding member Kenneth Charles Tigner as seed money, the members embarked on a capital campaign for the purpose of building a parish hall—the first for St. Matthew’s. In February of this year, ground was broken and the project is well underway. A late spring completion is expected.

The St. Matthew’s family is eagerly awaiting the day when it will have a place to gather for meals, fellowship and Christian education. It’s been a long time coming.
We have been facilitating the Anti-Racism Training of the Diocese of Alabama since 2003. This training is required of all clergy and diocesan staff as well as members of diocesan commissions and committees and is also available to all in leadership positions, parishes in the search process and interested members of the church. The history of the anti-racism commitment of The Episcopal Church goes back to the General Convention of 1991, and in 1996 the first version of a training manual was published under the title “The National Dialogues on Anti-Racism.” In 2000, the General Convention recommitted the Church to another nine years of work on eliminating racism and required all dioceses to offer this training. In 2003, Title III of the Canons was revised to require everyone in the ordination process to take the training.

We were trained as facilitators in 2003 and have been doing this work ever since. But there have been some important changes in the past 15 years. When we started, the National Dialogues on Anti-Racism were supported by an Office of Anti-Racism and Gender Equality at The Episcopal Church. A few years later, the original manual was significantly revised and renamed “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other.” Then, in 2009, the General Convention eliminated the Office of Anti-Racism and Gender Equality from the national budget, in effect freeing each diocese to adapt the training to its own needs. But this also ended the process by which we and all the early facilitators had been trained and certified to do this work. Here is what began to happen in this Diocese.

While the obligation of all ordained persons and other leaders to take the training remained, we were free to revise the original approach. We retained the emphasis on the central importance of dialogue, but we added some new methodologies and exercises, many coming from the work of Eric Law and his Kaleidoscope Institute. We adapted the content of each training to what we knew of the composition of the group attending, such as its racial and gender makeup and the balance of lay and clergy participants. We added new video resources and became more flexible in scheduling. And an interesting thing began to happen. The people coming to our training began to expand beyond The Episcopal Church in Alabama.

First, we had people from other denominations such as the United Methodists and the Christian Church Disciples of Christ. Church Women United brought us to its convention in Nashville. We were excited to be asked to train future trainers in the Diocese of Central Gulf Coast, who are now on their own and doing great work there. We began to get requests for our training from completely secular groups interested in combating racism in places like Selma. The City Council of Anniston asked us to assist them with race relations there and we worked with health professionals at UAB. Most recently, the Christian Church Disciples of Christ have asked us to assist them in training their trainers in this work. We ask participants in every training we do to evaluate the experience, and we are pleased to report that these evaluations are overwhelmingly positive.

We are grateful for how God has expanded our ministry in the Church and the world, which now also includes the planning and coordination of the annual Jonathan Daniels and the Martyrs of Alabama Pilgrimage in Hayneville, AL. Members of the Commission on Race Relations sensed it was time to change our name to reflect where God has been leading and directing this important ministry. Therefore, after prayerful consideration, we are now the Commission on Truth, Justice and Racial Reconciliation. This more appropriately reflects our work today as we continue to move forward in our calling to be racial reconcilers and to promote equity and transformation.

If you are concerned about the state of race relations in our country and our state, and how The Episcopal Church works in this important sphere, we invite you to consider signing up for an upcoming one-day workshop in “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other.” It is not what you may think it is. It is not a lecture or a guilt trip; it is a dialogue conducted with respect and the love of God in Christ.

Participants in sharing stories with each other.
Most people assume that becoming the new Executive Director at Camp is a lot to handle, and they are not wrong. As I write this, I’ve been on the ground at Camp for about three weeks and I have learned something new every day—multiple things per day. Some people like to explain an experience like mine as if I were eating an elephant one bite at a time or carrying a very big and heavy load or that I was taking a drink from a firehose. Those are not totally inaccurate, but they also assume a certain amount of resistance.

I think a more accurate description is a free solo climb. It’s like Alex Honnold’s free solo climb of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, over 3,000 feet without any rope. Free solo-ing is a style of climbing with no ropes. It’s just you and the rock. That is a little bit of what it feels like to come in as the new Executive Director. At first, glance, looking up at the peak and thinking, “That’s a long way up there.”

As the new Executive Director, I have an enormous amount of humility and a respectable amount of confidence, just as you would need to climb a 3,000-foot mountain with no ropes. In both scenarios, there’s a certain amount of anxiety and awe of the bigness of the task at hand. But there is also the drive of fully giving yourself to something that you believe in and know can be done. Being around people at Camp who are doing the things they love and are passionate about is inspiring and it encourages me to do the same. There is an atmosphere of passion and dedication. Which leads to another connection to Alex’s ascent up El Capitan. Though he climbed the mountain that day with no ropes, he had climbed it many times before, tied in, and with friends. It was a group effort. Alex’s success was not solely dependent upon his own abilities. Just like Camp.

I have been surrounded by so much support from Camp staff and supporters of Camp McDowell over the past few weeks that it would be nearly impossible to thank them all properly. But I am very thankful. Thankful for the opportunity to take on this role. Thankful for the support and guidance, especially from the good people who call Camp McDowell home.

As most of you know, the Green Street Market Goat Barn burned down the night of Ash Wednesday. Losing the barn and the equipment in it was sad enough, but it was devastating to learn about the animals that were lost in the fire. My wife, Crystal, and I drove up the next day to see the remains of the barn and to be present with the staff. We all decided it would mean a lot to recognize what had happened in that space and all of the things that were lost that night. I put together a small service that I hoped would speak to the sadness of the loss and the gratitude for the care of those things which we have been so gratefully charged. So, the following Sunday, we all gathered together in the midst of the remnants of the Goat Barn and had a small liturgy in which we prayed and sang and offered up our grief and prayers and memories to God, each in our own way.

It was a pivotal moment. The moment in which we turned from the intentional and meaningful grief and sadness to the power of hope and the vigor of new life. We are after all a people of redemption and restoration. It is a powerful experience to see people come together, whether it is in sadness or in joy. It is a powerful reminder of the way we were put together by our Creator. It happens at Camp McDowell a lot. Almost immediately, people responded with a variety of generous donations. Support, money, connections to people who can help. Right now, in pledges and collections, we have about $40,000. That is just shy of where we need to be. The good people that work at the farm are already hard at work replacing equipment, tending to students, critters, and crops, and formulating plans to raise a new barn.

The outpouring of love and support is a humble reminder of the ways that Camp McDowell is like a family. I look forward to the ways in which we will come together soon.

Almighty God, you hold all things in your merciful embrace: we give you thanks for entrusting all of these animals to our home, our love, and our care; for the joy of their companionship and the blessing of their presence and purpose; and for opening up to us through them a wonder and delight in your creation. And we pray that, though their lives have ended, we may offer them back to you from whom they came, through your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (Prayer offered for loss of animals and barn.)
Not long ago, each time I sat in the church pews, I would wonder if my wife and kids saw me as an example by which to define their relationships with God. I would wonder if my relationship with God needed to change so that my family’s own relationships with God could move forward. I was hesitant to give up my time and invest emotionally in something that had let me down so many times. So many times things happened in my life that were without explanation, from losing relatives to cancer to losing friends in the military. If I was going to make any headway, I had some ground to cover, and God had some explaining to do.

I have always believed that there was something out there greater than us. For me to feel some relief when my grandfather passed, I chose to believe his soul went somewhere. Like many of us, he struggled with his own personal demons during his life. With no boundaries, no terrain, and nothing holding him back, he would rage like a storm off the coast. Then he would hit the coast, begin to settle, and eventually find peace. I remember napping on Grandad’s belly as a child as he would sleep off the day’s bender. He was a retired Air Force Chief Master Sergeant. I have to assume that some of his life experiences led him to the bottle, and to the daily pack of Winstons that eventually took his life. As much as I loved him, I had to convince myself that Grandad was not dead and that his spirit was on a trip to somewhere better. For that to be true, I had to believe in God.

During my own life journey, I found myself in the United States Marine Corps. I trained, prepared, and said goodbye to my friends and family as I deployed to Iraq. I had orders to live in a forward operating base (FOB) on the Euphrates River called Haditha Dam. When I walked in the door of my barracks at the border of the FOB, I realized very quickly that this was not a game, and I needed to take this deployment very seriously. Over the next couple of months, I became very close with my new roommate. He was six years older, from Boston, and had a wife and two kids. I admired him for being strong enough to make a promise to go and fight for his country while married with kids. He was a role model for me.

Once our time was coming to an end at Haditha Dam, my detachment needed to convoy back to our main base at Al Asad. Possible convoy dates were considered, and we were told our return convoy would be in two weeks. A few days later, during a standard resupply convoy, I randomly heard someone tell me to load up and head back to Al Asad with my unit. When I arrived in Al Asad, my platoon sergeant asked why I was there a week early. I had no explanation. I knew someone had told me to get on the truck and come back. But, I couldn’t find my name on any manifest.

It was the middle of the rainy season in Iraq, and there had been persistent rain the week my entire detachment was scheduled to return to Al Asad. The route to the FOB crossed a bridge over a ravine, which had been supplemented with a built-up dirt bridge because the actual bridge had been destroyed by improvised explosive devices. The lead truck, the same truck I was in a week earlier, was sent to test the dirt bridge while water was flowing rapidly through the ravine toward the river. The river disintegrated the dirt bridge. The lead truck flipped, and all 13 occupants drowned including my roommate. When I heard about the incident, I knew it was my grandfather who got me on the truck a week early. This proved to me there was a God; there had to be! Still, I could not shake the thought of being the 14th person in that truck. I kept thinking it should have been me. My roommate had a wife and kids to take care of. How could I have been the one who needed to come home? Why did you spare me, God?

I made it home from Iraq. After my deployment ended, my mother brought me to church. Following communion, our priest had the entire congregation welcome me home. I
was relieved to have made it home, but I didn’t feel worthy of being home. I felt guilty for receiving God’s Grace. Imagine the words “Welcome Home” being an anchor that locks you in place. That’s what happened to me. The feeling of guilt snowballed into me, shutting off my faith. After this, I randomly attended church with my family. I wanted to be closer to God, but I couldn’t shake the feeling that God’s Grace was wasted on me. I never made my faith a priority. I believed in God and I knew He spared me. I didn’t know what to do with that.

During my Cursillo, I heard the words, “God’s Grace flows like a river.” I immediately knew that He was telling me it was time to make Him a priority. It was time to be an example for my family. It’s now time to share my story and begin my journey as a faith-driven man. It’s now time be a light in the darkness. I have traded guilt for Grace, and thanks to Cursillo I have the foundation on which to rebuild my faith.

Grace does flow like a river. How else do you explain the times we doubt ourselves? How do you explain the abundance of love you feel from time to time in our lives? Grace is in everything; you just have to recognize it. Anchors away, and remember … the best is yet to come.

Resources for Creation Care Formation

The Rev. Danny Whitehead, Chair of the Taskforce for the Stewardship of Creation

At our recent Diocesan Convention Dr. James McClinlock encouraged delegates to take a pledge to talk to at least one person a week about climate change. This fall, our taskforce is hoping to host a workshop centered on the Nature Conservancy’s “We Need to Talk” Pledge. (Learn more about this pledge here: https://bit.ly/2I4X7sQ)

In the meantime, we strongly encourage everyone who has not already done so to check out a powerful resource called Creation Care: Loving, Liberating, Life-Giving Relationship with God’s Creation, available at www.episcopalchurch.org/creation-care. There are two inspirational videos featuring Presiding Bishop Michael Curry. As Episcopalians we are called to take this Creation Care Pledge: “As the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement, we long to grow loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with the whole of God’s Creation. Together, we pledge to protect and renew the Earth and all who call it home. Together, we are living the Way of Love and make this commitment to specific actions.”

The website provides formation resources to grow one’s relationship with all the Creator has made. The Taskforce is asking parishes to prayerfully consider utilizing the Creation Care Reflection Guide and other educational materials during this year’s Easter season and asking parishioners to sign the pledge.

Celebrating the “Wonders of Creation,” developed by Kirby Pool and presented at our recent Diocesan Convention, is also available for use in Christian formation. Another resource that we suggest parishes consider is Watersheds and Warming: A Christian Education Curriculum Guide prepared by the Taskforce for the Stewardship of Creation in 2007. For more information contact anyone on the taskforce, talk to your parish liaison, or check out our website at www.dioala.org/creation.
News from Our Shared Ministries

A ministry of being “with”

For campus ministers, ministry is about being with—and that with is an important word. Each day can bring a new experience to encounter someone in conversation, even in a conversation that happens in passing or is more intentional to sit to share thoughts, hopes, and feelings. Being with others in mission and outreach takes us out of familiar places, which means being present, available and attentive on campus and in the world.

At Trinity Commons in Birmingham (the student center for UAB, Samford, and Birmingham Southern) mission and outreach meant hospitality for those on the go on the streets of Birmingham. This February the annual Mercedes Marathon took the runners around Trinity Commons, and students were on 11th Ave. South early to meet the marathon and half-marathon runners as they passed by shortly after 8am; the full marathon runners made a second trip by a couple of hours later. Students provided the runners with cups containing gummi bears, water, and Gatorade as way to show support for the community and to help those running the race. So many runners would tell the students “thank you” as they passed by that it was easy to understand the impact of a kind gesture and encouragement for those on a mission to run a race before them.

At Canterbury Chapel in Tuscaloosa the Rev. Marc Burnette sees their ministry to college students and its connection with life at the University of Alabama as “an opportunity always to be ‘enrolled’ in the world-wide ‘school of love.’ We are all students in God’s school: the lesson is love, and we are learning. It takes a patient, forgiving, and disciplined community to make it real and to make it fruitful. Being this kind of community is both our chief goal and God’s dream.” Each year the Student Forum donates money to outreach organizations, such as Sawyerville, Bethany’s Kids, or Habitat for Humanity. The organizations and amounts of money are chosen in community, by careful and prayerful discussion and discernment. Additionally, the Student Forum is working to address difficulties faced by fellow students, specifically hunger. Burnette explains some “students have enough resources to stay enrolled, to get to classes, even to have pots and pans in their kitchens, but little-to-no food. To
help meet this need, Canterburians are putting together emergency boxes filled with non-perishables, gift cards, and contact information for service organizations.”

At **Holy Trinity, Auburn**, the college ministries began a new worship service in Auburn, Night Prayer. This service has grown out of a series of collaborations with St. Luke’s Birmingham and their service “The Word,” and offers a new way of hearing the Gospel to students in the area, particularly those who have not experienced Episcopal liturgy before. It involves the use of Evening Prayer with folk/praise/hymns from Auburn University students. The service began at Holy Trinity, with dinner after the service, and Holy Trinity is looking to host the next one at Ross House Coffee in downtown Auburn.

Holy Trinity seeks to support the discipleship of its student parishioners in worship, both at Night Prayer and in Sunday morning Eucharist; through service, with the Relational Mission committee’s partnership with the residents of Kings Trailer Park and the Mobile Food Bank; in leadership, as peer ministry team members and on parish committees; in prayerful reflection, on retreats and pilgrimages throughout the year.

**Canterbury at UAH** comes to the end of its first year as a group, and they have been active and busy in a year of firsts: the first Canterbury UAH group to Vocare, the first camping retreat to the Smoky Mountains, the first Ashes on the Green, the first Dinner and Compline and more. As Canterbury UAH began they were unsure what their calling was: Popcorn and Theology was fun, and they could always count on a free meal at Dinner and Compline, but it was always a question of what our message would be. They found that message as God’s love and that is at the heart of UA Huntsville; to remind students that God is Love and that God’s love surpasses all human understanding. They have taken that love as a call to walk in love which has guided them as they develop and grow their campus mission and connect that love to projects with Alzheimer’s Alabama and the Huntsville Assistance Program. If you walk with love, people will understand you through that sincere love and will follow. As they finish this first year and look forward to year two they’re encouraged to remember that love and how it bonds all of us together.

*To learn more about our campus ministries, contact the Rev. Thomas Joyner, Chair of the Department of Ministry in Higher Education (DMHE), thomas@trinitycommons.org, or visit www.dioala.org/college.*
The weekend of April 5-7, young adults from around the diocese gathered at Camp McDowell. The annual Young Adults Retreat provides an opportunity for folks to gather, to share meals and stories, to enjoy the beauty of Camp, and to learn and worship together. This year’s retreat program invited participants to consider how their faith informs their romantic relationships. Program time was spent in Bible study and discussion centered on being created in the image of God, Christian ethics and relationships, and fidelity. Free time was spent hiking and enjoying Camp, including a concert by the instructors of the Folk School. There was also time for Auburn basketball, hospitality, and a few rounds of the card game “A Game for Good Christians.” The retreat was concluded on Sunday morning with a prayer service centered on the gift of wholeness in our relationships with each other and God.

The Young Adult Retreat is held each year in the spring. You can find out more about Young Adult ministry events on Facebook: www.facebook.com/dioala.young.adults.
Looking Forward to Summer 2019 at Sawyerville

Things are busy in the Sawyerville office as we prepare for Summer Camp and Summer Learning! The summer-long interns will begin their work mid-May, and we can’t wait for them to join us. This summer’s crew is made up of young people from all over the state, and they are amazing:

- Liam Ayres, Summer Camp Camper Registrar
- Nick Belt, Summer Camp Lower Camp Co-Coordinator
- Laura Doody, Summer Camp Middler Camp Co-Coordinator
- Mary Stewart Drummond, Summer Camp Communications Assistant
- Thomas Goldsmith, Summer Camp Middler Camp Co-Coordinator
- Tiara Harris, Summer Camp Camper Registrar
- Emily Hooker, Staff Registrar
- Garrison Lackey, Summer Camp Meals and Supplies Assistant
- Lila Meadows, Summer Learning Communications Assistant
- Nancy Kate Nicrosi, Summer Learning Student Registrar
- Abby Poole, Summer Camp Upper Camp Co-Coordinator
- Gil Self, Head Lifeguard and Office Assistant
- Jordan Smith, Summer Camp Upper Camp Co-Coordinator
- Lucy Smith, Summer Camp Lower Camp Co-Coordinator

As we get closer to the summer, there are lots of ways that parishes and individuals can help us prepare. We still need meals for groups ranging in size from 20 to 130. We also need specific supplies like bathing suits, gummy fruit snacks, and crackers. If you, your parish, or your small

The staff wear prayer bracelets to remind them that they are wrapped in prayer from people from all over the diocese.

St. Francis of Assisi always makes a delicious meal for the staff.
group are interested in providing one of these needs, please contact Claire Cotten, claire@sawyerville.org, to choose a meal or an item.

Another easy way to contribute is to send things from our Amazon Wishlist, bit.ly/SvilleList. The list includes everything from clipboards for the Summer Learning students to beads for the staff prayer bracelets.

Remember that we are happy and willing to visit your parish or group to share Sawyerville’s story. This can be a great way to build excitement around your meal or supply drive. If you’d like to schedule a visit from Sawyerville staff, please contact Claire Cotten.

As always, we hope that you’ll join us in prayer for this summer: Loving God, we ask that you bless Sawyerville Summer Camp and Summer Learning. May this summer’s programs enrich the lives of the children we meet, heal relationships strained by race or other differences, and bring neighbors closer to you and to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Youth Department Elections

Newly elected District Representatives (L-R): Siras Keyse (Northern); Connie Tapia (Southern); Connor McLemore (Southern); Isaac Burnette (Central); Sam Wilson (Central); Canon Tidwell (Northern).

Newly elected At Large Representatives (L-R): Jacob Letson, Detryck King, Evan Dunbar, Katie Ray, Emmie Neely.
February 17, 2019, the Celebration of New Ministry, Nativity Huntsville. After being presented golf balls and being instructed to “be among these wonderful people as one who plays,” the Rev. Michael Goldsmith embraces his father, the Rev. Rusty Goldsmith. Photo by Donald Christian.


Transitions

The Rev. Trey Kennedy has accepted a call to serve as Interim Rector for Church of the Resurrection, Rainbow City. He began his ministry at Resurrection on March 1st.

The Rev. Worth Stuart has accepted a call to serve as Priest Associate at Church of the Nativity, Huntsville. His final Sunday at Holy Apostles will be April 28, and he will begin his ministry at Nativity on May 20.
Clergy News

Ordinations

Randy Sellers will be ordained to the transitional diaconate at St. Luke’s Birmingham on May 18, at 11 am.
Polly Robb will be ordained to the transitional diaconate at St. Thomas Huntsville on May 22, at 6 pm.
Paul Goldman will be ordained to the transitional diaconate at St. Mark’s Birmingham on June 8, at 11 am.

March 23, 2019, Pam Long was ordained to the transitional diaconate at the Church of the Ascension Montgomery.

April 12, 2019, Mark Likos was ordained to the transitional diaconate at St. Stephen’s Birmingham.

Seminarians

The following Middler seminarians were approved as candidates: Drew Brislin, Seminary of the Southwest; Emily Collette Linton, Virginia Theological Seminary; and Lucy Strandlund, Seminary of the Southwest.

Bishop’s Visitation Schedule

| May 5, 9 & 11 am, Advent, Birmingham | June 16, 11 am, St. James, Livingston |
| May 12, 10 am, St. Mary’s-on-the-Highlands, Birmingham | June 23, 11 am, St. Paul’s, Lowndesboro |
| May 19, 10 am, St. Stephen’s, Huntsville | June 23, TBA, Los Santos, Montgomery |
| May 26, 9 am, Holy Comforter, Gadsden | June 30, 10:30 am, Grace, Anniston |
| June 2, 10:30 am, St. John’s, Decatur | June 30, 4 pm, The Abbey, Birmingham |
| June 9, 9:30 am, St. John’s, Forkland | July 7, 10:30 am, St. Paul’s, Greensboro |
| June 12, 9 am, St. Paul’s, Greensboro | July 14, 10 am, Emmanuel, Opelika |
| July 14, 10 am, Emmanuel, Opelika | July 28, 10:30 am, Epiphany, Tallassee |
Upcoming Events

May 4 Gumbo Gala
The 14th Annual Episcopal Place Gumbo Gala will be held at Sloss Furnaces in Birmingham. To learn more, please visit https://bit.ly/2DgTBKo.

May 9 The ONE Conference
This conference is designed for formation leaders, children, youth and adult, clergy, parish administrators, communications coordinators, and vestry members. Sarah Stonesifer, Digital Missioner, Lifelong Learning at Virginia Theological Seminary, will be the featured speaker. The event will be held at St. Stephen’s Birmingham. To learn more or to register, please visit https://bit.ly/2Bpp25k.

May 9-11 EfM Mentor Training
Education for Ministry Seminars will be held at the Church of the Ascension Montgomery. For more information, please visit https://bit.ly/2OKYYuX.

March 11 Acolyte Festival
This festival will be held at St. Luke’s in Birmingham. Acolytes of all ages are invited to attend. To learn more or to register, please visit https://bit.ly/2GeeNEY.

June 1 BBQ & Bluegrass
The fifth annual BBQ & Bluegrass event will be hosted at the Church of St. Michael’s and All Angels, Anniston, and will benefit St. Michael’s Free Medical Clinic. For more information, please visit https://bit.ly/2CWetax.

June 8-23 Special Session 2019 Dates
Session I will be June 8-15 (Staff) and June 10-15 for Campers. Session II will be June 16-23 for staff and June 18-23 for campers. For more information, please visit www.specialsessionalabama.org.

June 12-16 Cursillo #218
Cursillo is an opportunity to grow in faith and in spirituality. To learn more, please visit www.alabamacursillo.org.

June 12-14 Invite Welcome Connect Summit 2019
The fourth Invite Welcome Connect Summit will be held at the University of the South in Sewanee, TN. For more information, please visit https://bit.ly/2FWwCad.

June 13-15 Missional Voices National Gathering
The 2019 Missional Voices National Gathering will be held at Christ Church Cathedral in New Orleans, LA. For more information, please visit https://bit.ly/2UeLY2F.

July 15-17 Volunteer Disaster Chaplaincy Training
Clergy and lay spiritual caregivers of all faiths are invited to take this disaster chaplaincy training at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. For more information, please visit https://bit.ly/2FWxdbX.

July 28-August 2 Young People Paint Birmingham
YPPB is a Junior High Mission Trip for all entering 7-9th graders in the diocese. YPPB will be hosted by St. Stephen’s Birmingham. For more information, please visit https://bit.ly/2K0zRkZ.

August 10 Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage
The 23rd annual Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage will be held in Hayneville, AL. The pilgrimage will begin at 11 am and conclude with a Eucharist in the Lowndes County Courthouse. For more information, please visit www.dioala.org/digital_faith/events/3180776.

September 11-15 Cursillo #219
Cursillo is an opportunity to grow in faith and in spirituality. To learn more, please visit www.alabamacursillo.org.

CAMP MCDOWELL RETREATS AND SUMMER CAMP
Visit www.campmcdowell.com for more information and registration for Camp McDowell events.

May – August Summer Camp Sessions

September 6-8 Father/Son Retreat
Quality time and camp activities for all combinations and interpretations of fathers and sons. Recommended for 1st grade and up.
Upcoming Events

Educator Workshops
For all the teachers in the diocese -- spread the word that teachers can receive AMSTI credit by attending these unique and popular workshops at Camp McDowell! To learn about and register for our workshops please visit: www.campmcdowell.com and click on “Upcoming Events.”

Alabama Folk School
To register or for more information on any of these sessions, visit www.alfolschool.com.

May 10-12 May Session
Blacksmithing: Tools for the Forge, Watercolor Workshop, Twisted Sister Basket Weaving, Farm to Table Workshop, Pottery

May 24-26 Community Dance & Recreation Weekend
This weekend will be whatever you make of it with a relaxed approach to a typical Alabama Folk Workshop, craft facilities in Bethany Village will be open for use. Jam sessions, open to all, will be going on throughout the weekend with the Red Mountain Yellowhammers joining us for organized Old Time Dancing both nights!

July 28-31 Youth Folk Camp
Youth Folk Camp is a unique combination of summer overnight camp, community and folk school instruction in fiddle, guitar, mandolin, pottery, painting, and more! This program is designed for youth grades 5th through 12th.

August 30-September 1 Farm Folk Weekend
Farm and folk workshops, traditional camp activities, jam sessions and more will be featured during this Labor Day weekend getaway for individuals and families at Camp McDowell!

September 13-15 Acoustic Guitar and Crafts
Save the date and visit www.alfolschool.com for more information.

September 27-29 Fiber Arts Workshop
Save the date and visit www.alfolschool.com for more information.

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Our latest news & 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 dioala.org/communications

For questions, or to submit an article, email khudlow@dioala.org.
THE ONE CONFERENCE

CASTING OUR NETS... WIDER

May 9 at 10 AM
St. Stephen’s, Birmingham

Informative, engaging, & fun!

Bring your CF & Youth Leaders, Communicators, Vestry, Clergy

Keynote Speaker:
Sarah Stonesifer
Digital Missioner at Virginia Theological Seminary

Workshops will include:
Curating Resources for Ministry
50+ Digital Tools and Resources
Communication and Formation
Hybrid Faith Formation
Safe Church and Social Media
Video Production
Facilitating Small Groups
and more!