

THE STEEPLE

The Episcopal Church of the Nativity

November 2020



where faith holds wide the door

• HUNTSVILLE, AL •

• THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY •

• NATIVITY-HSV.ORG •

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The Rev. Susan Sloan

Priest Associate

The Rev. Worth Stuart

Priest Associate

The Rev. Robert A. Serio, M.D.

Deacon

The Rev. Rose Veal Eby

Deacon, Outreach Missioner

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Coordinator

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Property Manager

Mary Coe

Children's Formation

Austin Cook

Finance Manager

Christian Crocker

Choirmaster and Organist

Vicky Hinton

Communications

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Worship & Ministry Assistant

Regina Milton

Weekend Sexton

Emily Rodgers

Administrative Office Assistant

Sally Stockton

Kitchen Coordinator

Lane Tutt

Adult Christian Formation

Prentice White

Verger/ Wedding Coordinator

Marlin Wilder

Sexton

EMERGENCY CALLS

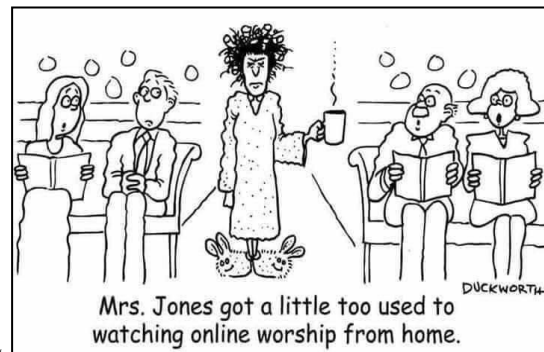
A member of the clergy is *always* on call. If you need assistance from a priest outside office hours, the number to call *In Case of an Emergency Only* is 256-533-7007. All other calls including church or building and grounds issues should be directed to the main phone 256-533-2455. Leave a message for a priest to respond.

God's family at the historic Church of the Nativity is joyfully and energetically committed to sharing Christ's love and healing by proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel through worship and service to the world.

THE STEEPLE

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Thank you Darlene Ehinger for sharing this hilarious cartoon with our staff !

On the cover...

Rev. Susan Sloan offers a blessing to one of the Fleming family's furry friends at the Drive by Pet Blessing on St. Francis Day.

Send your pictures from Nativity activities and events to: vhinton@nativity-hsv.org.

Keep us in the know!

Do you have a change of address, email, phone or perhaps major life event?

Contact Emily Rodgers 256-533-2455 ext.204 or erodgers@nativity-hsv.org.

A BIZARRE YEAR FOR A BAZAAR

This has been a bizarre year! So many things that we are accustomed to doing have been put on hold, cancelled or rescheduled due to COVID, and unfortunately the annual Nativity Bazaar is one of them. Due to the complications of COVID-19 we will not be having our traditional Bazaar Luncheon or Bake Sale this year, but fear not! Plans are already in progress to bring both back better and stronger next year.

So how do we still give back to the community without the funds raised through the Bazaar? We are a resilient parish and won't let this deter us from continuing our tradition of giving back to our community. This year we are asking everyone to consider purchasing a virtual plate for First Stop. Plates are \$15, and all donations will go to First Stop, Inc. to help to cover meal costs for their clients. First Stop, Inc. is a non profit organization that paves a continuous path from homelessness to independent, sustainable living for members of our community. First Stop serves 2 meals a day, lunch and breakfast. On average a breakfast can be served for \$1 per person and lunch \$1.50, and depending on the time of the month they serve anywhere from 50 to 90 people. Your \$15 donation will go a long way in feeding members of the First Stop community!

We also want to have a little bit of fun! Starting in November we will be releasing a special video series on YouTube called *Who's in the Kitchen with Sally & Emily*. This lighthearted series will feature Sally Stockton, Emily Rodgers and a cast of Nativity Bazaar characters who are cooking some of your favorite Bazaar recipes and sharing their favorite stories from the past. Tune in each week and enjoy a trip down memory lane and learn how to cook your favorite Bazaar recipe. Videos will be released on YouTube weekly and links to the videos will be provided in service emails and on the Nativity website, nativity-hsv.org.

[Click here to purchase a virtual plate for First Stop!](#)

First Stop has given me the ability to maintain my self dignity and provided hope in the hardest time. I've been shown tenderness and respect and concern for any issue that I have. The staff here goes above and beyond to help anyone that asks. They are truly special people. AGAPE! Andrew H., First Stop Client

Having a pastor here has been good. It's nice being able to talk about spiritual stuff with someone, also she keeps everyone behaving and lifts our spirits. It makes a big impact. Gary J., First Stop Client

SPECIAL THANK YOU!

We would like to say thank you to everyone who ordered Holiday Greenery this year. The money raised from those sales will also benefit First Stop. Greenery orders will be available for pick-up the first week in December. You will receive more information as the pick-up date approaches.



Children's Ministry

Get your pumpkin carving knives sharpened and get out your Pinterest password—Halloween is coming! We'll be celebrating with Drive-By Trick or Treating and Pumpkin Carving Contest on October 25 from 4 to 5. Put your costumes on and load up the car! Drive by along Eustis and Greene street for Trick or Treating; vote for your favorite pumpkin by driving around the traffic circle off Greene Street. We will also be collecting items for the HAP food pantry!

For the pumpkin contest: bring your carved or decorated pumpkin to church before 4.00. we'll set up voting around the traffic circle. Drive through and vote for your favorite. Sign up to bring your pumpkin at tinyurl.com/2020pumpkin. Fabulous prize TBD. Can't wait to see you there!

2020 STYLE
HALLOWEEN FUN
4.00 - 5.00
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25
EUSTIS AVENUE & GREENE STREET

**DRIVE BY
TRICK-OR-TREAT &
PUMPKIN CONTEST**

Wear your costumes!!
You drive by, we'll toss in the candy
Show off your pumpkin carving skills! Bring your carved/decorated pumpkin to church; fabulous prize TBD
Everyone is invited to vote for their fave. Drive by voting at the traffic circle off Greene Street.
Pumpkin contest sign up:
tinyurl.com/2020pumpkin



Questions, mcoe@nativity-hsv.org

Photo by David Marshall on Unsplash

Prayer Station

Join us on November 14 for a Thankfulness Labyrinth walk. Our labyrinth will be out on Greene Street Lawn along with donations bins for HAP and coat and blanket drive. The labyrinth will be available all day Saturday by signing up for a time slot on Sign-up Genius. Please look for the Sign-up Genius link in weekly service emails in November.



NATIVITY YOUTH

Nativity Youth are meeting weekly!

EYC 7th-12th grade and JYC 5th-6th grade are currently meeting via Zoom.

JYC-Wednesdays at 5:30pm

EYC- Sundays at 5pm

Zoom links are sent weekly via newsletter.

**We will continue to monitor the Covid situation in our area and will resume in-person meetings when safe.

Contact Amy: abrooks@nativity-hsv.org with questions



Got your license or permit in the last year?

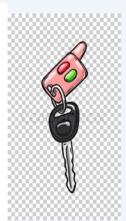
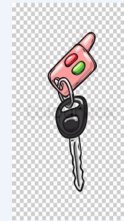


**Drive Up
Blessing of the Keys
Sunday, November 1st
2-3pm**

Greene Street Parking Lot

***Drive in and bring a lawn chair (or hop up on your hood)**

**** Face Coverings required. Let Amy know you are coming- abrooks@nativity-hsv.org**



Holiday Farmers Market

Sunday, November 22

1 pm -4 pm

Church of the Nativity, Downtown Huntsville

LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE

FARM FRESH FOODS

FRESH BAKED GOODS

LOCAL ARTISANS

www.greenestreetmarket.com



the
**Greene
Street
Market**
at Nativity

SOCIAL DISTANGING AND MASKS ARE REQUIRED WHILE AT THE MARKET

REMEMBERING SAINT FRANCIS

ASSISI ON FEAST DAY

By Terry Clevenger

Saint Francis today is known to us as the Patron Saint of Animals, the Patron Saint of Ecologists, and has a Feast Day in his honor. For 2020 the Feast Day of Saint Francis was 4 October where we celebrate and contemplate the spirituality of creation and our gift of nature. Saint Francis of Assisi abandoned a life of luxury for one of poverty devoted to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.



Who Was Saint Francis of Assisi?

Born in Assisi, Umbria Italy circa 1181, Saint Francis of Assisi came from a privileged family and indulged in his luxury as a youth. He became skillful in archery, wrestling and horsemanship and daydreamed of becoming a war-hero as a knight. By age 19 he became involved in a conflict between Assisi and Perugia, a neighboring Italian duchy. As fate and his lack of any military training would have it, Francis was quickly captured, taken prisoner, and held for ransom, since he was recognized as someone with connections to upper society.

He was imprisoned for nearly a year awaiting his father's ransom payment. During this time, Francis transformed. He began hearing the voice of God and experienced visions. His ransom was finally paid and, weakened by his captivity, he returned to Assisi. Yet after his return he continued to hear the voice of Christ. Francis began turning his focus toward God. Now in his early 20s, instead of working, he spent most of his time at remote mountain hideaways and in old, quiet churches around Assisi, praying, looking for answers, and helping nurse lepers. A legend holds that during this time Francis encountered a leper. Before this time, Francis would have avoided the leper, but now, he viewed the leper as a symbol of moral conscience, embraced and kissed the leper, describing the experience as a feeling of sweetness in his mouth and feeling an indescribable freedom. His past was behind him now. While praying before an old Byzantine crucifix at the church of San Damiano, Francis heard the voice of Christ, who told him to rebuild the Christian Church and to live a life of extreme poverty. Francis obeyed and devoted himself to Christianity. He began preaching around Assisi and was soon joined by 12 loyal followers.

Francis and his followers embraced the Christ-like virtue of charity and poverty, a radical notion, at the time and they travelled throughout the territory, teaching, and spreading this philosophy. Francis mission was to restore Jesus Christ's own, original values to the church. Generally, his sermons and teaching were enthusiastically accepted as many countryfolk felt the church had deviated from the long-held apostolic ideals. Through his charisma and devotion, Francis drew thousands of followers to him. His preaching was emotional and personal. As people listened, they joined in his way of life; his followers became known as the Franciscan friars. As his movement gained in significance, the Order of Poor Clares (an order for women) and the Third Order (locals who were faithful to his teachings but remained in their communities) soon followed.

Not only did Francis care for the poor and sick, but he interwove into his sermons that Creation was a gift of God granted to his people and that everything—all nature, humankind, animals, on Earth, including humans, to be treated as equals under God. He exhorted that Creation and all the creatures within it are brothers and sisters under God. Francis frequently prayed in natural settings to discover more about God and himself through the practice of contemplative prayer in nature.

Francis died on October 3, 1226, at the age of 44, in Assisi, Italy. He was canonized as a saint just two years after his death, on July 16, 1228, by his former protector, Pope Gregory IX. Today, Saint Francis of Assisi is the patron saint for ecologists — a title honoring his boundless love for animals and nature. In 2013, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio chose to honor Saint Francis by taking his name, becoming Pope Francis. In 1979, Pope John Paul II declared St. Francis the Patron Saint of Ecologists. Saint Francis of Assisi is considered by many as the original Earth Day advocate. The Catholic Church recognizes St. Francis with a Feast Day celebrated worldwide on October 4th.

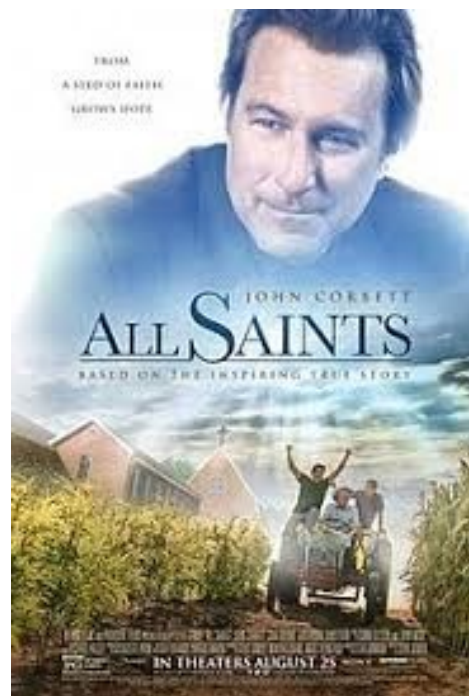
What Has Saint Francis Given Us, Why Should We Care

Today with all our modern comforts and conveniences, we tend to be alienated from the earth and from ourselves. Yet, as part of Francis' spirituality to develop a deep love of nature and creation, he remains with millions of us. This October, many animals the world over are blessed on his feast day. Creation has changed since the beginning. Global issues with poaching, climate change, unsustainable agriculture, and rampant deforestation, all contributing to habitat loss for wildlife around the world, are messages to us. The Earth and all creatures upon it, depend upon our care for the environment as Francis showed us in the way he taught us to respect and honor nature as a gift of God's creation. Saint Francis was a pious figure who cared about the environment and wildlife and made it his mission to spread awareness through his sermons. He taught us the intimate relationship to creation helps us grow more fully into the mystery of God. We are in desperate need of internalizing this relationship today, as we frequently alienate ourselves from the earth and in doing so alienate ourselves from Divinity. For this October, let us remember Saint Francis' message and celebrate our gift of Creation of our island home, Earth.

MOVIE NIGHT INVITE

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church would like to invite you to the Drive-In for a special showing of the movie *All Saints* Sunday, November 15. The show will begin at dark so probably about 7:30 at the Cinemagic Theatre located at 1702 S Jefferson St SE Athens, AL 35611.

There is no charge for this event, however we will be taking up a special offering for the Episcopal Migration Ministries. <https://episcopalmigrationministries.org/> Drinks and Snacks can be purchased at the concession stand and mask are required when you leave your vehicle. We hope you can join us for this event!



A NOTE FROM THE TRAVELERS' ALTAR

By Rosie Veal

During my time at First Stop I met a woman named Geraldine. She stayed at the Salvation Army and came to First Stop during the day. Word had gotten around that she was trying to get back up north to live with her granddaughter. She needed a suitcase for the trip, I went and spoke with her to see if I could help.

It turned out she needed a bit more than the suitcase, but that was ok. Over the next few days I coordinated with Ms. Geraldine about bus routes, suitcases sizes and her granddaughters work schedule and finally we had a plan in place. The bus left at 5am from downtown and she would need a cab from the Salvation Army to be called at 3:30 so she could be there in time for pre-boarding. She did not have an alarm clock or phone so she had to work with another friend who was staying at the Salvation

Army to set an alarm on her phone and who would call the cab. I have to say I was very nervous about the trip for Ms. Geraldine. There were a lot of moving parts. According to her friends from the Salvation Army she had left to go to the bus Station, but I had no idea if she had made it to New York State where her granddaughter lived, until today when I got her thank you letter. This letter is addressed to me but it is very much to everyone at Nativity who contributes to my discretionary fund and pledges, this is what outreach ministry is doing, this is what WE are doing:

"Hello and God bless Pastor Rosie, thank you ever so much for everything you had done for me. I am so very pleased as well as safe and happy at my grand kids home. It's a bit cooler up here. I feel cared for and loved always. I'm grateful of everything that you had done to help me return to my family and friends. May all you do keep you and your family safe and feel loved. Am sure the Lord is with you always. I hope that all your holidays are great and pleasing and loving for you as well as your family and friends. May God be with you all as He keeps everyone safe and feel loved. Have a great, safe and loving Halloween, Regards always, Geraldine

PS Just Last Sunday we had gone to a Pumpkin Patch Farm, Everyone had a great time. We all picked a pumpkin to carve next week. The children really had fun visiting the animals and feeding them. Also they went on slides and we went on hay rides and ate lunch!" -Geraldine

Thank you for putting me out in the world to be a presence and for helping to get Ms. Geraldine home to her family.



ETOWAH VISITATION PROJECT

I am seeking pen pals for the men in ICE detention at the Etowah County jail. I have an updated list of men who would like to establish contact with the community. This list was graciously (and courageously) developed by one of the men in ICE detention who coordinated with fellow detainees. This list is invaluable because the Sheriff's Office no longer provides the men the opportunity to request visits or pen pals through sign up sheets. With suspension of the EVP in November 2019 and the curtailment of visits at the facility in March 2020 due to the pandemic, continuing contact with the men is more important now than ever.

Language skills needed are primarily English and Spanish. There has recently been an influx of approximately 25 men from Cuba requiring Spanish language support as well as a continued number of Spanish speakers individuals from Central and South America. Please let me know of your interest and language skills so I can match you with individual(s) on the list. Please share this with others in your network. Also, let me know if there is someone you visited or corresponded with previously and I will be happy to match you with that person if he is still at Etowah. If you have questions, please contact me at 256-883-7124 (land line) or 256-683-8832 (mobile). Thanks so much.

Katherine Weathers
Etowah Visitation Project

VIRTUAL CHORAL EVENSONG FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY



November 1, 2020 5:00pm

Magnificat and Nunc dimittis "Mount St. Alban's Service"-David Hogan

Nativity Choir

O thou sweetest source-Charles Wood

Christian Crocker, Director of Music and Organist

Psalms 148-Herbert Howells

The service will be live on our Facebook page beginning at
5:00pm "The Episcopal Church of the Nativity"

Church of the Nativity

208 Eustis Ave., Huntsville, AL 35801

256-533-2455

VESTRY NOMINATIONS

By Margaret Devenish

The vestry nomination process is underway and will be completed by November 1st. The committee appreciates the thoughtful responses from Church of the Nativity parishioners who are offering their time and talents to serve our parish. Because we must propose a slate of eight (8) parishioners to the parish, we are asking that you, too, consider joining this wonderful group of individuals that are representative of our loving and diverse parish.



Vestry Retreat at Camp McDowell January 2020

Please read the [informative questionnaire provided](#) and then consider offering your gifts of time and talent to Nativity by serving on the Vestry. The nomination period will end November 1st, 2020. If you would like to be considered for the 2021 slate of vestry nominees please complete the questionnaire. You can also download a printable PDF form [HERE](#) or pick up a paper copy at the office Monday-Friday from 9:00 am until noon.

All nominees who have already submitted a questionnaire should have received acknowledgements for their submitted forms. Please contact Margaret Devenish (256-683-1028) if you have not received an acknowledgement or have any questions or concerns.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER DEDICATIONS

Every year the Nativity Flower Guild fills the church with beautiful flowers and greenery as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. These Christmas dedications are offered to the Glory of God in memory, celebration and thanksgiving of loved ones by family and friends. Dedications are \$20 each and can be made by anyone. All dedications must be turned in no later than Sunday, December 19th. To make a dedication please complete the form below and return with a check made payable to Nativity Flower Guild to Andrea Vandervoort or Amy Kennedy in the Church office. If you have questions, please contact Andrea Vandervoort, 256-539-2673.

2020 Christmas Flower Dedications



Christmas dedications are \$20 each

Please complete this form with your check made payable to Nativity Flower Guild and return it no later than **Sunday, December 13th** to:

Andrea Vandervoort, 434 Locust Ave. Huntsville, AL 35801

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION. If you have questions, you may call Andrea at 256-539-2673.

Your Name as it is to be listed in Christmas service leaflet (if you do not wish your name listed, please indicate)

Phone #: _____ Name for this dedication: _____

Please check the box next to the dedication you desire. All dedications read *To the glory of God and....*

☐ In loving memory of...

☐ In thanksgiving for...

☐ In celebration of...

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PORCH

By Vicky Hinton

My family and I have spent hours on our front porch during this pandemic. It is where we share stories about the missing events and chatter that used to fill our days that are slowly coming back. It is where we talk about disappointments, joys, fear, hopes. We have used it as a space to talk with neighbors passing by that we have never met. We have invited guests to come bring a chair and sit safely away in the yard for a visit. We have waved from a distance to friends driving by to wish our 9 year old “happy birthday” because hosting a large gathering just seemed selfish at the time. It is also where we watch the birds: cardinals, robins, blue jays, crows, Carolina wrens and even a family of red tail hawks. Perhaps the most welcomed guests to the porch however, have been the golden finches.

Early on in the pandemic a family friend lost a loved one. This family is like a second family to my husband Chad so he went to the family home to pay an outdoor visit and help with a few things. While he was there he noticed a group of brightly colored birds in the yard and asked what they were. She explained “they are golden finches– they will come if you just hang a Thistle sock out for them”. Chad immediately ordered a thistle sock, hung it from the Coosa Dogwood out front, and then he waited. We checked every morning while having coffee, and one day, there they were, beautiful bright yellow Golden Finches there for the Thistle.

We laugh about Chad’s new fascination with the birds. My girls think it is funny that he calls them by name. Mr. Robin, Miss Bluebird, pretty little finch. The simple joy he gets, we all get, from the sitting on the porch watching and listening has been so unexpected.

While reading a reflection the other day I was reminded why our porch time and the birds have come to be such a gift to my family these last few months. Becca Stephens, priest, author, philanthropist and founder of Thistle Farms in Nashville wrote: “I arrived at the chapel on Vanderbilt campus just as the sun was rising. Since the pandemic I come in early on Mondays and throw away all consecrated bread because we can’t keep it to share. I scatter bits of the wafers into the garden, imagining animals taking part in a holy communion. Just as the first cool breezes were rolling in on a somewhat abandoned campus scattering the bread this week felt different. The birds around the chapel were waiting for me with baited breath, eager to taste the body broken for the world. As I flung bits out into the dirt, I felt their hunger and was grateful to be their pastor. I was grateful to commune with sparrows, starlings, cardinals and mockingbirds. This week we celebrate St Francis, a radical leader of peace building a community that has lasted 1,000 years. He stirred up trouble, confronted injustice, was sent to prison in his twenties, prayed for peace, and preached to the birds. We all have moments when we can preach to the birds like St. Francis, and we all need moments of sweet communion between the grief and trouble circling around us in 2020.”

I believe her words spoke to me for several reasons, but mostly because we are preparing to go back into the building and celebrate Eucharist, to be in communion with one another, something we have missed so much. We are the birds around the church waiting and eager to taste the body for the broken world. Finding peace and joy in the last 6 months has been hard, but I am grateful for the time to slow down on the porch. The porch has become our place to preach to the birds, to each other, to strangers and friends walking by and has given us the gift of “sweet communion in the form of time between the grief and trouble circling around us”.

We would love to hear your reflections and invite anyone who would like to submit a piece for the Steeple to please send it in either Word or PDF to vhinton@nativity-hsv.org.

REFLECTING ON CHILDHOOD HAPPENINGS

By Dave Gallaher

I had the occasion to attend Little Richard's burial service at Oakwood University recently, and that inspired this memory.

Fall, 1955.

My family moved from Amarillo to Dallas, Texas and I attended the first day of 4th grade knowing no one. The Dallas school had us attending classes, not just sitting in one room all day. Besides the 3 R's on my schedule were two periods entitled Physical Education and Play.



Play was all boys outdoors and involved an hour of kickball played on a baseball diamond.

P.E. was different: it was co-ed and held in a dance studio-sized room with a worn wooden floor. Seated at a desk at one end was a smiling slight woman in cat eye glasses. Sitting next to her was a Califone record player and a stack of 78s. She gathered us all in a circle, boys and girls, and produced a rolled bundle of newspapers tied at the center with a rope which was about twenty feet long. She dropped the paper just inside the circle, and brought a boy into the center, handing him the other end of the rope.



She walked to her desk, turned on the Califone and lowered the arm on a spinning record.

A WOP BOP A LOO BOP, A LOP BOP BOP!

She ran back to the center of the circle with her smile even bigger, her brunette curls bouncing as she grabbed the rope, swinging the rolled paper pendulum around the circle, beckoning the kids to step in and jump above it as it reached their spot. Before the record was over, everyone was jumping. If you missed and stopped the pendulum, you went to the center and swung it for everyone else until the next person tripped it.

We were all laughing, and I wasn't alone anymore. Then

A WOP BOP A LOO BOP A LOP BAM BOOM. It was over.

What kind of singing was THAT?

She ran back to the Califone: GONNA TELL AUNT MARY ABOUT UNCLE JOHN -- HE CLAIM HE HAS THE MIS'RY BUT HE HAS A LOT OF FUN OH BABY! It was that same voice. Jump, everybody! Then SLIPPIN AND A-SLIDIN'. And a bunch of other wildly energetic records followed.


On the way out of the class, I stopped at the desk and looked at the stack of records. I started to pick one up, but she stopped me, smiled, and picked them up for me. I said A WOP BOP BOP BOP BOP BOP. She held up a record with a wavy-split black & white label with large yellow script letters on top: Specialty.

She said "Little Richard. Isn't he wonderful?" I could only nod.

I wasn't alone any more.

Today Little Richard gets buried right here in my hometown, on the campus of Oakwood University, from where some of the most gifted and felt music heard anywhere on Earth emerges.

Some things just work out.



North Alabama Coalition for the Homeless

ANNUAL BLANKET & COLD WEATHER GEAR DRIVE

Most of us are blessed with a warm place to sleep during the cold winter months. Let's help those who aren't as fortunate. Please donate these items to warm both their bodies and their hearts.

October – through winter months

Collecting for the Homeless:

*Gently used or new
Adult sizes only, please*

**Blankets
Coats/Jackets
Gloves/Socks
Thermal underwear**

**Sleeping bags
Toboggans
Sweat shirts/pants
Warm scarves**

Donations may be dropped off at these locations:

In Huntsville

Please call to confirm office hours before dropping off donations.

Progressive Union Missionary Baptist Church
1919 Brandontown Rd. 256-539-1070

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
8020 Whitesburg Dr. 256-881-7223

Latham United Methodist Church
109 Weatherly Rd. 256-881-4069

Manna House
2110 S. Memorial Parkway 256-503-4848
(Mondays, Wednesdays & Thursdays 4 - 7pm)

Stand Down Together Huntsville
2007 Poole Rd. Suite B 256-527-9643

The Rock Family Worship Center
3401 Holmes Ave. NW 256-533-9292

Faith Presbyterian Church
5003 Whitesburg Dr. 256-881-4811

Church of the Nativity, Episcopal
208 Eustis Ave. 256-533-2455

First Christian Church
3209 Whitesburg Dr. 256-881-0150
(please use bin at the side entrance)

Monte Sano United Methodist Church
601 Monte Sano Blvd. 256-533-6083

First Stop Homeless Day Center
206 Stokes St. 256-533-3391

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

In ordinary times the Spirituality Development Committee would be gearing up to present to the parish its Wednesday night supper series with a lineup of spiritually nutritious speakers. Alternatively, we will try to adapt to the times with other arrangements. Here, we offer to you these words from Presiding Bishop Curry in a sermon so that it is more easily available to you. His words, as always, are poignant, but these are especially timely and worth a read. The video of his delivery is even better and linked below. The following is a Word to the Church from Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, and is also the text of his sermon at The Episcopal Church House of Bishops, which met virtually September 16, 2020.

A WORD TO THE CHURCH What Did Jesus Do?

And now in the name of our loving, liberating and life-giving God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

This November, the people of the United States will elect a president and many others to public office. This election occurs in a time of global pandemic, a time when there is hardship, sickness, suffering and death. But this election also occurs in a time of great divisions. Divisions that are deep, dangerous, and potentially injurious to democracy. So what is the role of the church in the context of an election being held in a time such as this? What is our role as individual followers of Jesus Christ committed to his way of love in such a time as this?

Allow me to offer a text from the Acts of the Apostles. The introduction to the Acts from the first chapter. Luke writes, “In the first book,” referring to the Gospel of Luke:

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up into heaven. “In the first book . . . I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught.” All that he did, all that he taught.

In a powerful sermon preached at the July meeting of the House of Bishops, Bishop Scott Hayashi of Utah said something that might be helpful to us. He made mention of the little acronym, what would Jesus . . . WWJD, What Would Jesus Do? And he said that can be a helpful way of discerning what we might be being called to do at any given time. But he offered another alternative. He said, "What would happen if we began to ask the question, not what would Jesus do, but what did Jesus do? What did he do? What did he teach? What do Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell us that Jesus did and taught?" I want to suggest that addressing that question, “What did Jesus do?” and summoning the Spirit to help us apply it to our lives and to our times may mean the difference between the church simply being another religious institution that exists for its own sake and the church being a Jesus movement that courageously follows the way of Jesus and his love, not for its sake, but for the sake of the world that Christ gave his life for and rose from the dead in.

As you know, The Episcopal Church does not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates for elective office. And there is good reason for that. First, in the United States, tax exempt, religious, and charitable organizations are by law prohibited from such endorsement, support, or opposition to candidates. This does not prohibit churches from engaging in voter education, voter registration, helping people get to the polls to vote, or even advocating for issues of public policy reflective of the tenants of our faith. And every citizen, including those of us who are members of the church have our rights and responsibilities as well.

Secondly, there are good and faithful followers of Jesus Christ who are Episcopalian. Some are Republican, some are Democrat, some are independents, some liberal, some centrist, some conservative. And just as we must respect the right of every citizen to cast his or her own vote according to the dictates of their conscience, so we must do so in the church, the body of Jesus Christ. And that is how it should be. The Bible says we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, not one political party. But it's important to remember that partisan neutrality does not mean moral neutrality. Partisan neutrality, bidden to us by

human civil law does not mean moral neutrality, because we are bidden to obey the royal law of almighty God. And this may be where our text helps us.

"In the first book Theophilus, I wrote all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until he was taken up into heaven." When Luke says, "The first book," he's referring to the Gospel, but notice what he does so skillfully. Ancient tradition says that Luke was a physician. And we know that this Luke was the author of both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles and tradition says he was a physician. You can see elements of that throughout both books. But in this text, Luke the physician sounds more like Luke the lawyer. In this text, Luke is suggesting that the Jesus we see in the Gospel, what he did and what he taught, is precedent. It is the precedent for how those who would follow him will act and live in their days and in their times. Just as precedents are critical to the law, the precedent of Jesus is critical to the life of those who would follow him in the first century or in the 21st century.

When Jesus says that the entire law and will of God is summed up in the words, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself," that's precedent. When Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan about somebody, who as that old song says, "If I can help somebody along the way, then my living will not be in vain." When he tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, of somebody who helps somebody else even though they were a different religious tradition, even though they were of a different ethnic group, even though they may have differed in their politics, differed in their worldview, differed in virtually everything except the fact that they inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Even with all of those differences he helped him because that person, that man was a human child of God created in the image of God. Jesus says, "Now, who was neighbor to the man?" This is what loving your neighbor looks like. And then Jesus says, "Go and do likewise." That's precedent.

When, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "blessed are the poor and the poor in spirit"; "blessed are those who are compassionate and merciful"; "blessed are the peacemakers"; "blessed are those who hunger and thirst and labor for God's righteous justice to be done on the earth for all"; "do unto others, as you would have them do unto you"; "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you"; my sisters, my brothers, my siblings, that is the precedent for what it means to follow in the way of Jesus in the first century or the 21st century.

Saint Paul heard and knew these teachings of Jesus. And he summarized their meaning. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, all spoke of this as the nonviolent way of love.

The task of the church in the first century or 21st century is to live by the precedent, to bear witness to the precedent and lift up the values of the precedent of Jesus in our time. Because as the book of Hebrews says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." What would Jesus do?

So what can we do? Well, we can vote as individuals. We can vote, and we can help others to register and to get to the polls and cast their vote. We can encourage others to vote as their conscience leads them. And I know someone is probably thinking, that's true but what does that have to do with Jesus Christ?

What does voting have to do with the Gospel? What does voting have to do with being a Christian? An election for public office is not a popularity contest between two or more people. It's a contest of ideas about how to shape the future of a community, nation and maybe even a world. It's a contest, a debate, a discernment of moral values and their relationship to public policy. Voting is an act of moral agency. It is an act of moral discernment and decision. It is how a community or a nation decides how the moral values that it holds and shares shape public policy and the lives of people. The children of God. It is salutary to remember that partisan neutrality does not mean moral neutrality.

The vote is so sacred and important for all people, regardless of your religious tradition or your politics or your nationality. The vote, as an act of moral humanity, is so important that people have given their lives for it. If you don't believe Michael Curry, ask the people of Belarus right now. Ask the American martyrs who sacrificed, gave their lives, gave that last full measure of devotion so that people might have the right to vote. Ask Michael Schwerner, ask James Chaney, ask Andrew Goodman in Mississippi, ask the martyrs of Selma, of Viola Liuzzo, Jimmie Lee Jackson, Jonathan Daniels.

America's soldiers have fought to defend freedom. Many of them have given their lives. And many of them live with wounds and the scars of war. And one of the freedoms they defended was the freedom, the right, and the responsibility of the vote.

John Lewis in his last published writing before his death said, and I quote, "The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent that you have in a democratic society," end quote. There actually is in the New Testament an example of this model of living for followers of Jesus. You'll find it in the writings of St. Paul in the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters of Romans. I don't mean to suggest that Paul voted, he didn't. He was a Roman citizen, but he lived not in the time of the Roman Republic, but in the time of the Roman Empire. But Paul in Romans 13 specifically identified the teachings of Jesus with how he would live his life in both civil society and in Christian community.

In the 13th chapter of Romans, he speaks about the role of government. And then he quickly shifts from speaking about the role of government to the role of the citizen. And then the role of the Christian, who is a disciple in the empire. He says, "You have to pay taxes to whom taxes are due, and an honor to whom honor is due." And then he says, "But owe no one anything except to love one another. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." The commandments, you shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not covet; and in any other commandment, are summed up in this word, love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Partisan neutrality is not the same as moral neutrality. It was not in the first century and it is not today. The royal law of love is the fulfillment of the law and the will of God. It is the ultimate standard, norm and guide for following the way of Jesus in any society, in any time. With grace to aid and conscience to guide, each of us must discern and decide what love of neighbor looks like in our lives, in our actions, in our personal relationships and in our social and public witness. What did Jesus do?

The vote is vitally important, but it's not enough. The wounds and the divisions in American society are so deep that even an election by itself cannot heal them. The murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others has exposed the death-dealing depth of racism and white supremacy deeply embedded in the soil and in the soul of America. We can't go on like this.

Just this past weekend, two deputy sheriffs in Compton, California were deliberately shot as they sat on duty in their car. And then a group of people tried to block the entrance to the hospital where they were being taken, shouting, "Let them die." Those two sheriffs are children of God. George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor are children of God. We cannot go on this way.

In 1858, as divisions in this nation over slavery, born of racism, would lead to a civil war, Abraham Lincoln gave a speech warning the nation quoting the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "A house divided against itself, cannot stand." I am not suggesting that we are on the verge of a civil war, but we must not underestimate the danger of the divisions that we are in. These divisions are dangerous, injurious to democracy itself. We must, and I believe we can, find a better way.

I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, because I believe he has shown us that better way. I believe that the way of unselfish sacrificial love can show us the way of repentance, the way to repair the breach. The way of reconciliation that ultimately can lead us to the beloved community, but it's not easy. And this is long distance work. There are no quick fixes because the wounds are so deep, but we need not feel enslaved by fate. We are not people of fate. We are people of faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. Nothing can defeat God or stop God's cause of love. The way will not be easy, but we can do this.

I've included some links to resources that may be helpful to you:

- One is an online curriculum titled, “ [Make Me an Instrument of Peace: A Guide to Civil Discourse](#) ,” prepared by our Office of Government Relations.
- Another is titled, “ [Learn, Pray, Act: Resources for Responding to Racist Violence](#) ,” curated by our staff for racial reconciliation and justice and the Office of Government Relations.
- Another contains [Resources from the Center for Racial Healing and the Diocese of Atlanta](#)
- And another contains resources titled, “ [With Malice Toward None](#) ,” an ecumenical nonpartisan program designed for churches and faith communities and groups of all kinds to provide a way of understanding and healing for those on any side of the political spectrum, both before and after the November elections.

On March 10th, 2016, then presidential candidate Donald Trump spoke at a campaign rally in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The rally was disrupted by protestors, which happened around the country to both Trump and Clinton campaigns. Eventually law enforcement officials led the protesters out. As they did a 79-year-old Trump supporter named John McGraw, who is white, jumped out from the crowd and punched Rakeem Jones, one of the protesters who is black. Punched him in the face. Afterward McGraw said, and I quote, "He deserved it. The next time we see him, we might have to kill him. We don't know who he is. He might be with a terrorist organization" end quote.

McGraw was arrested and charged with assault. Months later, the two men met again, this time in court. McGraw pleaded no contest, apologized and was sentenced to 12 months' probation. Afterward, the two men faced each other and shook hands. McGraw said, and I quote, "If I met you in the street and the same thing occurred, I would have said, 'Go home. One of us will get hurt. That's what I would have said. But we are caught up in a political mess today, you and me, we've got to heal our country.'" Sometime after that, at the request of Rakeem Jones, John McGraw and Rakeem Jones went out and ate lunch together. There is the sign of hope. They went to lunch together.

There's an old spiritual created and sung by slaves of antebellum America that said,

I'm going to come to the welcoming table one of these days. I'm going to eat at the welcoming table one of these days. I'm going to drink milk and honey at the welcoming table one of these days. I'm going to cross the River Jordan one of these days. I'm going to eat. We're going to eat at the welcoming table one of these days.

We can, we will, we must learn to eat at that welcoming table. Jesus has shown us the way, it is the way of unselfish, sacrificial love. And that way can make room for us all.

So walk together, children. Don't you get weary because there's a great camp meeting in the promised land. Amen.

VIDEO LINK CAN BE FOUND HERE:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckOexitOVIM&ab_channel=EpiscopalDioceseofNewJersey



A MESSAGE FROM OUR FRIENDS AT McDOWELL

I hope you are all doing well and staying healthy during this incredibly challenging time. In the effects of COVID19, Camp McDowell has restructured our way of hosting groups. At our newly created Family Camp Getaway, families can enjoy socially distanced activities such as hayrides, guided hiking, canoeing, Raptor Program, and more! Meals are served buffet style and tables are spaced 10 feet apart. You might be surprised to find some new things on our menu! For more information please email wonderful@campmcdowell.org or call our office at (205) 387-1806.



I hope to see you at wonderful, wonderful soon!

Jordan Smith

Conference and Retreat Center Director

Jordan@campmcdowell.org

(205)387-1806 ext 116

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE GARDEN GUILD

A huge thank you goes to the Garden Guild! I can't get over how faithful and dependable they are. These ladies and gentlemen volunteer every month of the year, and sometimes more. Through this entire pandemic they have worked to keep the gardens pretty so we can all enjoy! It is amazing what they accomplish: pruning the shrubs, hauling off the debris, mulching all the areas of the gardens, fertilize and planting the flowers, weeding and watering every week from May through October. And they keep coming back!! Thank goodness! They have given us a delightful gift, so lots of love and hugs to this dedicated group. And they are: Melanie Aldag, Gay Baird, Jane Brocato, Pattie Cline, Jennie Coe, Nancy Crunkleton, Sharon Darty, Lynne Evans, Sarah Gessler, Kana Goldsmith, Carole Sue Goodwin, Alice Lanier, Virginia Monroe, Suzy Naumann, Laurie Noojin, Emily Rodgers, Michael Shipley, Kitty Simmons, Sherry Vemmer, Susan Welstead, Pat Goodson, Don Wheeler, Kay Wheeler.



Love to all of them and all of you who so graciously support the gardens.

Lane Tutt

Parish News

BIRTHDAYS

OF OUR CHILDREN:

Tessa Dollman
 Macie Meyer
 Aubrey Ritchie
 Eliza DeFiore
 Louise Corley
 Carter Proud
 Anne Crosby Reddy
 Phoebe Duncan
 Beirne Spragins V
 William Keener
 Sam Reddy
 Waring Cantey
 Evan Brown
 Ethan Dawes
 Piper Smith
 Davis Manning
 Grace Molloy
 Charles Warren II
 Katie Banish

Gus Goldsmith
 Julius Plucker, VI
 Holland Ray
 Zoe Church
 Rowan Gafford
 Maura Berman
 Caroline Hornsby
 Sarah Coleman Hornsby
 Elle Webber
 Penelope Brown
 Lyla Brown
 Evans Bryant
 David Keith Dieterich
 Freddie Fortner
 Rowan Hendrickson
 Vivian Hinton
 Ernest Artrip
 Macy Baker
 Wren Bryant
 Ronan Goeke
 Ella Rozar
 Hayden Wilson

PARISHIONER UPDATES:

Mollie and Taylor Ramirez
 216 Summerbranch Road
 Madison, AL 35756

MARRIAGES:

Katherine Whitfield and Justin
 Baker. Granddaughter of Martha
 Joffrion.

Alicia Taylor and Regina McGee

DEATHS: Bruce Wingo, Winston
 Walker

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Jim Brown
 89 Hillcrest Avenue
 Huntsville, AL 35806

Sherry and Royce Boyer
 2103 Raincreek Trail, NE
 Huntsville, AL 35811

Mary Cooke Wiley
 7831 Horseshoe Trail
 Huntsville, AL 35802

Parish Financial Report

	<u>Budget for Period</u>	<u>Actual for Period</u>	<u>Budget YTD</u>	<u>Actual YTD</u>
Pledges Received	\$103,736.93	\$92,939.74	\$933,632.33	\$892,640.05
Plate	\$10,391.61	\$6,705.81	\$93,524.42	\$62,594.20
Other Revenues	\$10,606.84	\$4,844.37	\$95,461.48	\$320,696.36
Total Income	\$124,735.38	\$104,489.92	\$1,122,618.23	\$1,275,930.61
Diocese & Missions	\$13,695.42	\$11,957.47	\$123,258.74	\$114,628.15
Outreach	\$11,412.88	\$8,661.64	\$102,715.36	\$113,642.64
Personnel	\$65,933.76	\$66,155.67	\$593,403.83	\$597,098.62
Other Expenses	\$33,693.69	\$27,661.56	\$303,238.93	\$256,804.70
Total Expenses	\$124,735.75	\$114,436.34	\$1,122,616.86	\$1,082,174.11
Net	-\$0.37	-\$9,946.42	\$1.37	\$193,756.50



2021 Altar Flower Dedications

Your Name: _____
 Phone #: _____
 Dates requested: _____
 Name(s) for dedication: _____



Please choose one:
 ___ in loving memory of... ___in thanksgiving for...
 ___in celebration of... ___in honor of...

Will you share this dedication? ___YES ___NO Can we list your name in the bulletin? ___ YES ___NO

Dedications are \$40 each or \$20 if shared.
 Make check payable to:
Nativity Flower Guild and mail your check along with this form to:
 Andrea Vandervoort
 434 Locust Ave. Huntsville, AL 35801
 Questions? Call Andrea: 256-539-2673