Diocese to observe Day of Repentance at cathedral

By Scott Lemoir

Bishop Gray III announced at the 184th Annual Council in Jackson last February that he would form a Disaster Preparedness and Response Team through the diocesan structure that is independent of Lutheran Episcopal Services in Mississippi (LES M).

“With the leadership of the Lutheran Episcopal Services of Mississippi, there is extensive experience of responding to disaster. Through our planning, we can work to achieve a viable plan to help parishes and missions through the next disaster that we will face,” said Bishop Gray. “We are committed to working through the diocese and the BASS Season to prepare for the disasters that may come.”

The idea according to Spencer is to use the convocation structure that the Bishop’s Address was formed to work with the diocesan leadership in coordination with the diocesan mission and outreach teams to provide even more support if we’re successful at our efforts.”

During the past month, the BASS Season team has visited several sites. “The site visit is to provide us with the information we need to merge our efforts and come up with a comprehensive plan. To that end the team will send a list of volunteer contacts to other congregations that are willing to share their contacts with us at any time. We do not need to make up a whole new plan; we will just take the resources available to us and build on what will work for us in Mississippi.”

For example, in his role as Director of Mission on the Bay in St. Louis, a ministry of LES M that closed in 2010, Butch Jones brings a database of more than a thousand contacts to the table which Spencer and the team will use to further develop a viable plan to help parishes and missions through out the diocese better respond to crises as they arise.

Bishop Gray stated that the diocesan service is a part of the broader observance of the State of Mississippi and the City of Jackson. “This is also the first of several iconic moments for both the state and the Episcopal Church as we go through the 50th anniversaries of major civil rights milestones over the next few years,” said Gray.

Disaster prep and response team has first meeting

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“Our partnership with Lutheran Episcopal Services of Mississippi has served us well, especially in the post-Katrina rebuilding. However, I believe it is now time for us to find better ways to resource local congregations. Thus, several of our cooperative ministries of LES M may be reincorporated into our diocesan ministries. The first and most visible of which will be our disaster preparedness coordination efforts,” said Gray in his Bishop’s Address.

Bishop Gray tapped the Rev. Deacon Carol Spencer to lead the seven member team under his guidance. Spencer currently is the Coordinator for Outreach and Mission at St. Andrew’s Cathedral in Tupelo. Spencer was the point person for the diocese when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005 and has been involved with disaster relief and response for several years including working for LES M.

“My hope for the diocese is to have a structure and a team of ‘Go To’ persons ready to respond at any time, under any set of disaster demands we can imagine. This will take being prepared on the personal, congregational, convocational and diocesan levels,” said Spencer.

At the team’s first meeting Spencer recognized that it wasn’t necessary to ‘re-invent the wheel’ as many of the preparedness and response strategies have already been shaped through recent disaster responses which faced Mississippians.

“We have experiences and a wealth of resources available to our diocese because of what we experienced through Katrina and the recent tornadoes. We are in touch with other faith traditions through our national Episcopal Relief and Development office and we are in touch with numerous other Episcopal dioceses that have wonderful experienced personnel and plans which they are willing to share with us at any time. We do not need to make up a whole new plan; we will just take the resources available to us and build on what will work for us in Mississippi.”

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February 11 - At Gray Center with Canons Johnson and McCormick in our quarterly planning session. Ice and snow gives this place a beautiful covering.

Late afternoon meeting with Mr. Jack Conway.

February 12 - Most of the day spend at St. James, Jackson where Canons Johnson, McCormick and I lead a workshop and training session for newly elected vestry. These sessions continue to get good reviews and attendance is increasing each year.

February 13 - Drive to Greenville early in order to meet with the Mission Committee of the Church of the Redeemer. At worship following I preach, celebrate and bless new linens and a newly renovated entrance way to the church. A great lunch follows. After lunch I offer prayers at a blessing and dedication of a new Habitat for Humanity home in Greenville.

Drive to Leland for a good meeting with the Mission Committee of St. John’s. Later I preach, celebrate and receive one within the eucharist. Dinner follows - always bountiful in this community.

Return.

February 14 - Board an early flight to Washington, D.C. - the first leg of a life-long dream to the Holy Land. This trip is being coordinated by the Rev. Canon David Johnson and under the auspices of our Center for Formation and Mission. Canon Johnson is a veteran traveler to the Holy Land and offers one of these trips (Holy Land and Celtic Britain) each year.

On board the plane to Washington, I have an opportunity to speak to fellow passengers Congressman Bennie Thompson and Congressman Gregg Harper about the impact of proposed budget cuts to the AmeriCorps Program at All Saints’ School. During our layover in Washington, I make more phone calls to the Mississippi Congressional delegation to express my concern.

Conference call in the airport re Title IV revisions, then board plane for New York and, ultimately Tel Aviv, Israel.

February 15 - Arrive in Tel Aviv early evening. We travel by bus to Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee where we will stay for three nights. After dinner, I retire early and sleep soundly.

February 16 - In the morning, we take a boat across the Sea of Galilee. The boat turns off its motor and I celebrate the eucharist with our traveling group - very special moment. Push on and land at museum that houses a boat that is 2,000 years old (recovered from the Sea of Galilee) and similar to one that Jesus and disciples would have used. Travel to Caesarea Philippi and the headwaters of the Jordan River. This very cosmopolitan town was where Jesus posed the question to his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” that prompted Peter’s confession of faith. Lebanon and Syria are but a stone’s throw away.

Lunch near ancient route from Nazareth to Capernaum in an area from which Mary Magdalene came. Afternoon visits to the Church of the Multiplication (loaves and fishes), Capernaum (amazed at how small the village was) and the Mount of the Beaitudes.

Home for dinner in Tiberias.

February 17 - Travel through Cana (first miracle) to Nazareth. Surprised to see that this area is largely Arab. Visit the Church of the Annunciation built above a grotto that tradition says was where Mary encountered Gabriel. Walked up the hill to St. Joseph Church, again built atop a cave-like dwelling that, by tradition, was the home of Joseph. Old town of Nazareth being excavated under the Church of the Annunciation. Travel to site of Zippori, a much larger city than Nazareth in the time of Jesus, only 2-3 miles away. Very likely that Joseph (and possibly Jesus) did carpentry and stonemasonry work in Zippori.

After lunch to Mt. Carmel, site of Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal. Monastery on site provides beautiful views of surrounding region including the Mediterranean Sea.

Then to Megiddo, a major site on major trade route dating to 3,000 BC. Excavations now at level of King Solomon. Even more remarkable view looking on Canaan.

Last stop of the day at the Baptismal Center on the Jordan River at Yardenit. Very crowded, but in the midst of large and noisy crowds, we reaffirm our baptismal vows and I anointed the group with water from the Jordan River. Back to Tiberias.

Received call early morning from home on deteriorating condition of my Mother. Emotional time.

February 18 - In the morning, we leave Tiberias to cross into Jordan. Some difficulty getting through customs. Travel to Jerash, a beautiful 1st century city of thousands of columns. Mentioned as site of one of Jesus’ miracles (Mark 5). En route pass over River Jakob, site of Jacob’s wrestling with the angel. Lunch in Jerash, then on to Mt. Nebo, where Moses is shown the “Promised Land” but told he would not enter. Powerful moment for me as I continue to stay in touch with family re my mother’s health.

Overnight in Amman, Jordan.

February 19 - Spend most of the morning traveling south from Amman to our destination for the day - Petra. Evidence of inhabitors in this area back to at least 10,000 BC. Magnificent carved temples, churches, tombs, etc. in sandstone cliffs that are as dramatic as they are beautiful. Major surprise for me, as I knew nothing of Petra before this trip.

Overnight in Petra in hotel that looks out over the traditional burial site of Aaron, Moses’ brother.

February 20 - Another long bus ride –this time in Jordan. A brief visit to a Greek Orthodox Church in Madaba that houses the oldest known mosaic map, then past Mt. Nebo again as we descend into Canaan in some ways paralleling the travels of Joshua and the Hebrew people down into the Jordan Valley after the death of Moses.

Travel to the traditional site of the baptism of Jesus at Bethany-beyond-the-Jordan. It is much more isolated than our first excursion to the Jordan River. Though three different churches have been built over the traditional site of the baptism, the river is at least 100 yards from the site as a result of dramatic increase use of the water from the river upstream.

Special moment at the river for all of us as armed guards on both sides of the river speak to the current political realities.

February 21 - Leave Jerusalem for Qumran, the site of the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. This community could have been very influential in the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus. Very special moment imagining that reality as I walked through the excavated ruins.

Drove further south to the fortress of Masada, palace of Herod the Great and last point of resistance to Roman authority by Jews in 1st century. Powerful story of resistance and ultimate suicides of last combatants told by our guide.

Views of Dead Sea in this area are spectacular. Lunch in En Gedi, the area where David hid from Saul.

Afternoon swim in the Dead Sea - a remarkable experience of buoyancy! Made my skin very soft.

Return to Jerusalem in the evening.

February 22 - Travel outside Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Very strange feelings as our Jewish tour guide leaves the bus just prior to the wall that separates Israel from the West Bank and our Arab Christian guide joins us on the other side.

Very large crowd at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Church is jointly controlled by Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian Churches. Despite crowds I was moved by this traditional site of the birth of Jesus.

Return to Jerusalem and enter the Old City. Spend some time at the Western (Wailing) Wall. The holiness of this place overwhelms me. We are taken through the excavated tunnel around the ruins of the Second Temple. Remarkable experience. Again moved by the prayers of a small group of women in the tunnel who are positioned in the closest possible way to the Holy of Holies in the Second Temple.

Spend a brief time on the Via Dolorosa, then to site of one of Jesus’ healing miracles at the pool of Bethesda. Brief moment with song at St. Ann’s Church, built over the traditional site of the birth place of the Virgin Mary.

February 23 - Up early for eucharist on my own at St. George’s Cathedral - the headquarters for the Anglican ministry in the Holy Land. Morning visits to the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane and Dominus Flevit, the sanctuary of Jesus weeping. Lunch in Jericho.

Walked a significant portion of the Via Dolorosa before lunch. In the afternoon we travelled to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher - traditional burial site of Jesus. Enormous crowds. Very meaningful, nonetheless.

Final stop was at the Israel Museum where we viewed original portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls. A breathtaking view of a large scale model of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. The size of the temple and its dominance of everything else was a new insight. Viewing this model from 360° was a wonderful way to put in context all that we had done and seen in Jerusalem.

We pack, eat dinner, then load onto the bus to drive to Tel Aviv.

We leave the Tel Aviv airport shortly after midnight for return flight home.

February 24 - Finally arrive in Jackson late afternoon. It’s been a wonderful journey!

February 25 - In the office in the morning then travel to Gray Center for overnight meeting of the Board of Managers. Informal gathering with the Gray Center staff before the board begins its work. A nice addition to our schedule.

February 26 - Gray Center Board of Managers meeting finishes after lunch. I go across the road to join with the Division of Youth (DOY) weekend where I celebrate the eucharist and confirm one at the outdoor chapel at Camp Bruton-Green. Very special moment for us all.

February 27 - Up early to drive to Starkville. Arrive in time to have a nice visit with the vestry of the Church of the Resurrection before the service in their recently purchased office building. At the eucharist, I preach, celebrate, confirm 7 and receive 2 in an overflow church that is full of young children. What a joy! I have a good visit with the congregation following the service.
ORDINARY CONCERNS

New EFM coordinator appointed

[MS] Dr. Barbara Jones of St. Timothy’s, Southaven accepted Bishop Gray III’s appointment as the next Diocesan Education for Ministry Coordinator. Jones is a former college administrator who now does consulting work throughout the southeast for colleges and universities.

“Basically my job as EFM coordinator is to provide training opportunities for mentors,” said Jones, who noted that the next EFM mentor training is July 7-9th at Gray Center.

Jones takes the place of Dorothy Byrd who served for many years as EFM coordinator for the diocese. Byrd, a longtime member of Redeemer, Biloxi, recently moved to Chicago.

To register for the mentor training in July, email Dr. Jones at dbhjones@bellsouth.net.

Deployment Report
For the
Mississippi Episcopalian
March 29, 2011

New Calls/Appointments

The Reverend Sam Godfrey, to be Rector, Christ Church, Vicksburg

Seminarian Appointments

Van Bankston, from General Seminary to be Curate, Trinity, Hattiesburg
Don Chancellor, from Sewanee to be Deacon-in-Charge, Holy Innocents, Como
Watson Lamb, from Sewanee to be Deacon-in-Charge, St. Francis’, Philadelphia
Clelie McCandless, from Sewanee to be Curate, St. Timothy’s, Southaven
Seth Walley, from Virginia Seminary to be Chaplain, Episcopal Church at Ole Miss

In Transition

St. Elizabeth’s, Collins
St. Paul’s, Columbus
St. Philip’s, Jackson
St. Paul’s, Meridian
Holy Trinity, Vicksburg

The Reverend Tom Hastings

The Reverend Tom Hastings, retired and longtime priest of the Diocese of Mississippi, died Friday night, March 25, in Tupelo. Visitation were held at All Saints’ Church, Tupelo and Holy Innocents’, Como followed by the Burial Office and Eucharist at 2:00 p.m. Interment was after the service at Rose Hill Cemetery in Sardis, Mississippi.

Tom is survived by his wife, Carolyn, and four adult children. Please keep them all in your prayers.

Rest eternal grant to him, O Lord: And let light perpetual shine upon him.

FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Patricia Kelley Coates, 79, communicant of St. Timothy’s, Southaven, departed this life on December 3, 2010.

James Carl Thorell, 70, former Senior Warden of St. Timothy’s, Southaven, departed this life on December 10, 2010.

Luther W. “Stu” Stewart, 75, communicant of St. Timothy’s, Southaven, departed this life on December 15, 2010.

Jerry Bryant Dlugach, 71, communicant of St. Timothy’s, Southaven, departed this life on December 23, 2010.

Catherine A. Samples, 51, communicant of St. Timothy’s, Southaven, departed this life on January 8, 2011.

Kerry Fellman, 58, communicant of St. Pierre’s, Gautier and member of the Daughters of the King, died December 21, 2010.

Thomas Marian Jones, Jr., 75, communicant of St. Pierre’s, Gautier, and in the Brotherhood of Saint Andrew, died January 15, 2011.

Louise Miller Burwell, 91, communicant of St. James’, Jackson, died on February 23, 2011.


The Honorable Charles Clark, 85, communicant of St. James’, Jackson, died March 6, 2011.

Lib York, 83, communicant of St. Philip’s, Jackson, died March 13, 2011.

H.E. (Harry) Raddon, Jr. 81, communicant of Mediator-Redeemer, McComb, died March 16, 2011.

Look with mercy, O God our Father, on all whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace, give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help; and, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

10% over cost for weddings, fundraisers, and altar wine.

MADISON CELLARS
(601) 856-0931
Madison, MS

April 2011
Little League program begun with help of local parish

[MSE] St. Thomas members Nick and Susan Palisi, and the Rev. Bill White, have been working with the Diamondhead Property Owners Association and others in Diamondhead to start a local Little League program. There has been no youth baseball in Diamondhead since Hurricane Katrina. Opening day was March 26 at the Diamondhead East Recreational facility. Fr. Bill umpired two of the games, and POA president, Marshall Kyger, also a member of St. Thomas, threw out the first pitch, which Fr. Bill called a strike. About ninety boys and girls have signed up to play on three 4-6 age teams, two 7-9 age teams, and two 10-12 age teams. There will be some games with Pass Christian and possibly other neighboring youth baseball programs. The success of this year’s program points toward the possibly of having an entirely self-contained Diamondhead Little League next year.
ST. ANDREW’S CATHEDRAL participated in the Stewpot annual fund raiser A Taste of Mississippi, serving farm raised Mississippi catfish. Tim Magandy, Dawn Flannes, Mike Flannes and Bobby Lacoste helped feed the crowd that gathered in Highland Village in Jackson last month.

DELTA CHURCHES SPONSOR WALK-A-THON FOR HAITI

In response to Bishop Gray’s announcement that the Diocese of Mississippi will raise funds to help rebuild the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, the Episcopal Churches in the Delta have come together to sponsor a Walk-A-Thon May 21 at Hartly Park in Greenville. The goal is $10,000.

The Walk-a-Thon will begin at 8 a.m. Each walker recruits sponsors to walk the track and collect donations for rebuilding Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port-au-Prince. The suggested donation is $10 per mile. All walkers will receive a Haiti Walk-a-Thon T-Shirt.

But if you don’t live in The Delta or you’re not a “walker” or runner, you can still help us make the cathedral bells ring again in Haiti. Just register as a “No Show” Walker. For a donation of $50, you’ll get a T-Shirt and the satisfaction that you have made a contribution to help the people of Haiti. “Mississippians know the importance of helping our neighbors. After Katrina, we were able to rebuild our churches on the coast because so many donated dollars to support our efforts,” said The Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray III, bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi.

Delta Convocation churches are: St. Stephen, Indianola; St. James, Greenville; Nativity, Greenwood; Calvary, Cleveland; Trinity, Yazoo City; Chapel of the Cross, Rolling Fork; St. Paul, Hollandale; Redeemer, Greenville; St. John’s, Leland; Grace, Rosedale, St. Thomas, Belzoni; Advent, Sumner; Grace, Carrollton; St. Mary’s, Lexington.

Register by calling St. James’, Greenville at 662-354-4582 or email susan@stjamesgreenville.com

The Rev. Susan Crawford is the rector of St. James’, Greenville.
Walk In A Relaxed Manner: Life Lessons From The Camino

By Janet C. Nail

When a friend told me that she and her sister planned to walk the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, I began to find support for her: guide books, Spanish courses, a call to my daughter-in-law to translate words that did not show up in the Spanish dictionary, even a juvenile book about the pilgrimage. I also offered her a lot of admiration, emotions, support, and a cheering section.

Their mother kept me posted about their progress, and she told me they were having a marvelous time.

When my friend returned, she brought me a scallop shell, a cd-rom of pictures, and a book: WALK IN A RELAXED MANNER: LIFE LESSONS FROM THE CAMINO by Joyce Rupp (Orbis Books, 2005).

When I settled down to read the book, I was expecting an enlightening armchair pilgrimage. Instead, I found a guide for living.

Joyce Rupp is a Sister in the Order of Servants of Mary, a retreat leader and spiritual writer. As she approached sixty, she became restless. She had always insisted that she would mark her sixtieth year by taking a load of books and hiding out for six months at some oceanside getaway and bask in solitude and silence. But at the back of her mind, a remark of C.G. Jung that much we resent them, resist them, ignore them, that. She invited an old friend, Father Tom Pfeffer, to accompany her and his enthusiasm seemed to validate her decision. It also revealed their undeveloped selves room to emerge and grow.

The preparation is as important as the journey!

One of the lessons of the Camino told Joyce to experience homelessness. When the ATM at a bank wouldn’t accept her credit card when she wanted to get Spanish money, she went into the bank. An expensively dressed man came over and asked how she could assist her. When she explained, he said he needed to see her passport. She found her passport, and he managed to get the money for her, with a thin, patently fake smile pasted on his face. She was grateful to leave!

But she reflected on the experience, and she realized that the smile on his face was the one she often wore when she encountered a homeless person, when she didn’t quite meet that person’s eyes. It changed her life.

What the Camino did was to pare life down to the basics and make her and Tom dependent on the kindness of strangers. Joyce found that kindness everywhere, but especially on one occasion. Before setting out everyday, she rubbed Vaseline on her feet and put tape on places that were tender. After she and Tom had been on the trail for a few hours, she suddenly remembered that she had left her supplies at the refugio they had left. Horrified, they debated turning around. But a pair of pilgrims from the same refugio caught up with them and told them that Carlos, a young pilgrim who had been quietly derided because he was such a poor physical specimen, had found her supplies and would bring them to the next refugio.

When they reached that refugio, the hospitaler said nothing about a package for her. She thought Carlos had forgotten to bring it, but later the hospitaler received a phone call. He brought her a note that Carlos had passed that refugio and would have her things at the next one. Imagine, she said, he went to the trouble of finding out what the place was, finding a telephone number, and calling to reassure her. And then she thought, when I am obsessed with my business, I miss these kindesses.

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Now, being in a strange country and moving constantly, she had prudently put her passport at the bottom of her backpack. As she groped around to get it, she found, to her horror, that she couldn’t feel it. She began taking things out of her pack, and suddenly a wave of strong odor enveloped the bank: goat cheese, a portable, handy food for the journey but rather how shall we say it—strong. She looked up to see the banker staring at her in horror, a look of total contempt on his face; she suddenly saw herself, dressed in rumpled clothes, sweaty and smelling a bit, surrounded by her bits and pieces and enveloped in the smell of goat cheese. She found her passport, and he managed to get the
EVENTS

DIOCESAN CALENDAR

APRIL
13-14  • Bishop’s Annual Stewardship Summit (BASS), Gray Center, Canton
14  • Gray Center Board - 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Gray Center, Canton
15  • Bishop Gray visits: St. James’, Jackson - 8:40 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
16  • Bishop Gray visits: St. Paul’s, Columbus - 6:00 p.m.
17  • Fresh Start - 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Trinity, Hattiesburg
18  • Diocesan Trustees - 2:00 p.m., Allin House, Jackson
19  • Fresh Start - 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., All Saints’, Tupelo
20-22  • Seeds of Faith Conference, Mediator, Meridian
21  • Day of Repentance Service - 2:00 p.m., St. Andrew’s Cathedral, Jackson
22  • Bishop Gray visits: Grace Church, Canton - 10:00 a.m.
23-24  • Presbyter Post-Ordination Consultation, Gray Center, Canton
26  • Diocesan Finance Committee - 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., St. Andrew’s Cathedral, Jackson
27-29  • Bishop’s Barbecue Weekend, Gray Center, Canton
28  • Bishop’s Barbecue, Gray Center, Canton with Silent Auction, Cardboard Regatta, Kids Korner & much more!
29  • Bishop Gray celebrates at Closing Eucharist of the Bishop’s Barbecue - 10:00 a.m.
30  • Allin House closed in observance of Memorial Day
30-June 4  • CBG Special Session I (ages 40+), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
5  • CBG Pioneer Camp A (Cycling), Tennessee

JUNE
2  • Diocesan Executive Committee - 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. - St. Andrew’s Cathedral
4  • Ordination to the Diaconate for Mr. Van Bankston, Mr. Don Chancellor, Mr. Watson Lamb, Mrs. Clelie McCandless and Mr. Seth Walley - 10:30 a.m. - St. Andrew’s Cathedral
5  • Bishop Gray visits: St. Paul’s, Woodville - 10:30 a.m.
6-8  • Province IV House of Bishops - Kanuga, Hendersonville, NC
8-10  • Province IV Synod - Kanuga, Hendersonville, NC
11-13  • Youth Gathering, CBG Pioneer Camp B - Mississippi Gulf Coast
14-16  • Camp Musicians Weekend, St. James’, Jackson
17-22  • Deacons’ Council - 11:00 a.m. - Allin House
23-26  • Standing Comittee - 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., St. Andrew’s Cathedral, Canton
27-29  • CBG Regular Session I (grades 7-9), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
30-July 6  • CBG Regular Session II (grades 3-4), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
7-11  • CBG Regular Session III (grades 5-6), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
12-14  • Camp Musicians Weekend, St. James’, Jackson
15-17  • CBG Pioneer Camp C - Mississippi Gulf Coast
18-20  • Camp Musicians Weekend, St. James’, Jackson
21-24  • Deacons’ Council - 11:00 a.m. - Allin House
25-29  • CBG Regular Session IV (grades 7-9), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
30-July 3  • CBG Regular Session V (grades 10-11), Camp Bratton Green, Canton

MAY
1  • Cursillo #120, Gray Center, Canton
2-3  • Young Adult Conversations, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., St. Andrew’s Cathedral
28-30  • Presbyter Post-Oordination Consultation, Gray Center
28-May 1  • Allin House closed for Easter
29-31  • Camp Musicians Weekend, St. James’, Jackson

JUNE
1  • Cursillo #120 Closing Service - 2:30 p.m., Gray Center, Canton
5-7  • Diocesan Discernment, Gray Center, Canton
10-12  • Gray Center Work Weekend, Gray Center, Canton
20-22  • Standing Comittee - 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Allin House, Jackson
21-23  • Seeds of Faith Conference, Mediator, Meridian
24  • Day of Repentance Service - 2:00 p.m., St. Andrew’s Cathedral, Jackson
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19-24  • CBG Regular Session III (grades 5-6), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
25-July 1  • CBG Regular Session IV (grades 7-9), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
26-28  • CBG Regular Session V (grades 10-11), Camp Bratton Green, Canton
29-June 5  • CBG Regular Session VI (grades 12-13), Camp Bratton Green, Canton

Seeking Silent Auction Offerings
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Ring Around the Collar
By Dennis Allman

As all baseball fans know, “Every team is a pennant winner in April.” I think that something similar might be said of our observance of Lent. On Ash Wednesday all of us are going to repent of our sins and be much better persons on Easter Morning. Well, as we are about two-thirds of the way through the Season (at the All Star break to continue the metaphor), I am sure reality has hit many of us. We’re not going to be as good as we thought we were on Ash Wednesday. However, as with baseball teams, it is not too late to start a streak. Perhaps it is time to review what we set out to do. Fr. Dennis Ryan, Rector of St. John’s, Passacagoula has these thoughts on Lenten basics.

Jesus turns down the power offered by that personification of evil — the tempter — the devil. Rather than being weakened by forty days of fasting in the desert he was strengthened. Rather than allowing his extreme hunger to drive him to turn away from God and inward upon himself Jesus turns toward God in obedience. Rather than seek power of his own — Jesus understands that the only power he can ever use for right comes from God as he moves closer to God in worship. Forty days in the wilderness — fasting — fasting and thus praying — reflecting in self-examination — worshiping — meditating.

On Ash Wednesday — the beginning of our forty days - we are invited to the observance of a holy Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word. We are invited to look deeper into ourselves than the ego level at which we mostly live. We are invited to reflect and examine ourselves at the level of our soul at that place where we are ultimately connected to God and to each of our brothers and sisters.

It is there — if we have courage enough to look — that we will find any inconsistencies in our relationship with God that may be within us. Have we tried to turn stones into bread — perhaps tried to change another person into what we want that person to be? It is within our soul that we will be faced with those thorns growing and growing on the inside. Have we sought power of our own through controlling others — perhaps even manipulating others to achieve our own will — centered ambitions or goals? It is there — at our spirit level — that we will be able to recognize how we may have turned inward upon ourselves and away from God and each other. It is at the level of our soul — our spirit — at the surface level of our ego — that we will find whether or not we have truly followed the great commandments:

“The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Love God and love each other. When we do some self-examination at the deepest level possible, that is where we will find that for which we need to repent- and to receive God’s forgiveness and grace. It is from that place deep — deep inside us — that we will turn back toward God in loving obedience and worship — and back toward each other reflecting God’s love which we receive.

Faithfully,
Dennis +
Consultants have been helping congregations learn how to best speak to others about what, why and to whom we give our time and talents—in ways that are both visible and invisible.

An essential foundation is this understanding: God has given this world to us and to be stewards of all those gifts that we have received. It is our responsibility and should be our joy to speak in ways that will both benefit our churches and honor God by being good stewards of our resources. This means financial commitments, prayers for the church and the world, and being participants in the ministries of our congregations so that God’s work can be accomplished.

Keynoter Jeremy Lucas is a gifted speaker and one who is passionate about stewardship education. He is currently an appointed missionary from the Episcopal Church to the Anglican Diocese of Namibia and was most recently the Associate Dean and Rector of St. George’s Anglican Cathedral in Windhoek, Namibia. He currently serves as the diocesan consultant for training and development in the Diocese of Namibia. The Reverend Mr. Lucas is a stewardship consultant and mentor for the National Episcopal Church, a member of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS) and was former Chair of the Diocesan Stewardship Commission in the Diocese of Alabama.

The Rev. Mr. Lucas’ enthusiasm for stewardship education is described as being transformational. Listeners are drawn into his passion for looking at generational influences, and his ability to center very quickly on questions about how to teach and preach about stewardship. He is an unequivocal advocate for all those who are seeking guidance and support, along with fresh ways to approach stewardship education in congregations that promote engagement and enthusiasm.

All lay and ordained leaders are encouraged to make plans to come to BASS on May 13-14th. Registration details including double occupancy, lodging, meals, refreshments, and all programs is $115.00 per person. Single occupancy registration is $130.00. Additional registration details will be coming soon via newsletters and emails.

“I can’t sing...so why should I?”
By Ted McNab, reprinted with permission of The Anglican Digest

How many times have I heard this one over the decades I’ve been leading worship music! In every congregation on Sunday mornings while worship songs are being sung I look around and see a number of people, men mostly, standing with mouths clamped shut, padlocked, looking like stoic bumps on a log. “I can’t sing...so why should I? Don’t want to mess up the unfortunate people around me that would be forced to hear my monotone drone.”

When I used to go around the country doing conferences and “teaching concerts” there was always a point in the teaching where I’d try to answer this question. I’d start by telling a story...giving a witness, actually, to a little congregation in the Mississippi Delta where I once was the rector.

In the mid 1980s Church of the Advent, Sumner, Mississippi in Tallahatchie Country was positioned along a row of pines on the edge of a sprawling cotton field and had an average Sunday attendance of about 50. (Still does, I think.) Most of the congregation were cotton plantation owners or otherwise closely connected to the agrarian way of life still alive in the Delta. I always used to say (and still say) that when I first moved to the Delta from Memphis I came to a stunning realization: the famous writer William Faulkner was not the brilliant character creator I once thought. It quickly became clear to me that all he did was hang out in the Mississippi Delta and just learn to take good notes!

In Sumner two “characters” were Bubba Graham and Mike Mills, both related to the Buford family in some way. Mrs. Ada Gwin Buford was one of the several exceptionally gifted and strong-minded matriarchs of the parish. In her younger years she had been a beauty queen who possessed a “Met” quality voice and after she married T.C. Buford dedicated much of her life to being a first-rate church musician. She knows her stuff. Church of the Advent did not lack for talent! But when it came to music, Bubba and Mike had none...no talent that is. Neither of them could carry a tune in a washtub. No matter. When they were growing up Ms. Gwin taught them to “sing anyway”, participate, worship, don’t just sit or stand there! And folks, when Ms Ada Gwin speaks, people listen! And because of this while I was there at the Church of the Advent I witnessed a remarkable thing and learned a valuable lesson.

In worship on Sunday morning the little congregation filled the space with themselves. Obviously with but 30 in the church I’m not talking about standing room only. I speak of an entire community for whom it is standard operational procedure to “give themselves” to the worship. No bystanders. And I learned the ones who made the most difference, the ones who really helped the community (and any guests) “turn the corner” when it came to actual personal involvement in all aspects of the worship were Mike and Bubba. They had grown up being taught and therefore became accustomed to “just give what you’ve got” when it came to worship. Participation trumps perfection. And full-hearted participation is expected. Half-hearted won’t do. These two grown men “got it.” And each Sunday they gave it. And here’s what I saw. Every Sunday I saw it. And it was especially obvious when new people came into our worship...they always commented to me after the worship. If Bubba and Mike can “sing”, then anybody can sing! It’s not about performance. It’s about us giving ourselves. Those two monotones “set the tone” for worshipping “in spirit and in truth.” There was a sense of freedom and a spirit within the worship that just felt like you were home. The tone set was one of a lack of self-consciousness so rare in liturgical churches where the flow of worship through the Prayer Book requires some learning and familiarity and no one wants to be caught “out of place.” But it was Bubba and Mike and their participation that helped an entire community keep the main thing the main thing, especially guests hyper-sensitive to “how things are supposed to go”. The result was a consistent, relaxed warmth to the worship. It was “real.” And, finally, that’s what I believe people all over the country are searching for in worship...and, for that matter, what the Lord most desires. The Lord wants the worship to have heart. Music can be perfectly in tune and still be heartless. A congregation can easily shift from a standard of allowing the choir or worship team to “lead it” to letting the choir or worship team “do it” and that won’t do, will it.

I’ll end with this. Charlie Baldwin, our new minister focused on pastoral care, reminded me of an old maxim that’s worth repeating. “He (or she) who sings prays twice.” This is true. Music carries the speech of the heart “too deep for words.” It is a vehicle for the soul that goes right along with the power of words yet carries more than language can bear. In short, music helps you give your all. And that, my friends, is all the Lord asks!

The Rev. Ted McNab is on staff at St. Michael’s, Charleston, South Carolina.