

DISCIPLESHIP | DISCERNMENT | DEVELOPMENT

ADVENT 2016
NUMBER 1

FAITHMATTERS



The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

FAITH MATTERS
Advent 2016

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF
THE CENTRAL GULF COAST**

BISHOP OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Thank you for taking the time to read the first edition of "Faith Matters," a brand new digital publication of the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. As with most new things, there is a learning curve. Somethings will be done well, somethings maybe not so much. We value your feedback to help us make this new venture the best that it can be.

It is our hope that you will find this magazine to be a celebration of our communities, an inspiration to go forth and do, and an encouragement to grow deeper in faith. Continue to be disciples, be Jesus in the world: then tell us about it, so we can share your story.

Peace to you,
Jenn Johnson
Missioner for Communications

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SINGING OUR WAY TO BETHLEHEM

by the Rt. Rev. Russell Kendrick

ADVENT

One day, while driving with my son, a song began to play on the radio.

“Dad turn this up!” my son suddenly cried.

“This is a really great song—have you ever heard of it?”

“Yes, I have,” I replied. “It’s called ‘Free Bird.’”

With a voice of surprise, Aaron asked, “You mean you know about Lynrd Skynrd?”

Nothing like a good song to bond you with your son. Neither of us sang very loudly, but for a minute or two that song united us. Music has that kind of power. Songs have the power to unite us; songs can stir us to action; songs can resurrect a memory long forgotten; quite often, songs can comfort our souls more than the spoken word.

A few weeks ago I was on my way to Mobile for a Sunday morning service and I was listening to my usual Sunday morning companion, Krista Tippet, the host of the radio show “On Being.” This particular program was a repeat of a 2014 interview with the historian and theologian, Dr. Vincent Harding. Entitled “Is America Possible,” Harding and Tippet talked about many things, including the power of song during the civil rights movement. Harding explained how songs united and inspired people. One particular song he discussed was “This Little Light of Mine.” I will confess that until that interview I had always thought of that song as a benign tune reserved for summer camp, youth Sunday and children’s chapel. I had no idea that it

was a rallying cry sung in marches and jails. Here is a portion of the interview between Tippet and Harding:

Dr. Harding: *That was so much part of the way in which the songs try to encourage us not simply to be reactors. So that instead of saying, “You governor, you’re no good, and we’re gonna do this or that to you,” the basic, deepest word was, “Whatever you do, we’re gonna let our light shine. God gave it to us. We’re gonna let it shine,” was the way that the words went. That determination to make our own action and our own commitment the focal point rather than a reaction to the moves of others was, I think, one of the most beautiful things about the singing.*

Ms. Tippet (as “This Little Light of Mine” by Betty Mae Fikes plays): *This is the voice of Betty Mae Fikes, a teenager at the time and one of the Freedom Singers — the music arm of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The year this was recorded, 1963, she spent three weeks in jail for singing during the civil rights struggles in Selma.*

THE STORY OF GOD'S SALVATION IS FULL OF SONGS. INDEED, THERE IS A SONG FOR EACH OF US IN OUR OWN LIVES.

As I listened to Fikes belt out her freedom song, I began to think of another teenager who sang a freedom song amid great turmoil. Her name was Mary. Just as I had only heard “This Little Light of Mine” as a gentle children’s lullaby, many have only heard the Song of Mary, or the *Magnificat*, as it is better known, as a classical tune performed by a grand choir and orchestra. In truth, Mary’s song is a freedom song about the power of God overturning the powers of this world. If it had been set to music when Mary first sang, it might have been a first-century blues or rap song:

*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit
rejoices in God my Savior,
For he has been mindful of the humble
state of his servant...
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with
his arm; he has scattered those who
are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their
thrones but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good
things but has sent the rich away
empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful...*

This discovery stirred me to look and hear anew the Bible readings set for the Sundays in Advent. I was struck by how the season of Advent is full of songs. Every year it begins with the rock and roll of the prophets, banging out a message of

righteousness, repentance and a future when lions and lambs lie together in peace. Heaven chimes forth later in Advent with a great choir of angels announcing a new birth—the very dream of God announced in a heavenly symphony. As I have already mentioned, there is young Mary’s ballad of freedom and expectation. Although we are never told that Joseph sings, I imagine him alone on a hollow stage, crying out like Eric Clapton, tears—even fear—about the news Mary has told him. What will he do? Finally there is John the Baptizer, a cross between Bob Dylan and Bono, crooning that God is on the way—“The time is near!”

The story of God’s salvation is full of songs. Indeed, there is a song for each of us in our own lives. While the world will rush on to sing the songs of Christmas, I urge you to listen for the sounds and songs of Advent. Whatever your song this year, you will find good company in the season of Advent. After all, songs have the power to unite us, stir us, and comfort us. And quite often, songs have the power, stronger than the spoken word, to lift our hearts to heaven.

Postscript: With all of that said, I hope you enjoy this first edition of our new diocesan magazine entitled “Faith Matters.” It is full of the songs of the people in our diocese, and I hope you will find that we have much to sing about! May you have a blessed Advent.



You have the right to remain *silent*

by the Rev. Marshall Craver

In the movie “The Apostle,” Pentecostal minister Sonny, played by Robert Duvall, says, “When you are arrested by the Holy Spirit, you have the right to remain silent!” In the context of the movie, which is a must see for any one suffering from Pelagianism, the quote is quite humorous. In the context of the upcoming seasons of Advent

and Christmas, the quote is quite profound, reminding us that silence is at times our most prayerful response to the Divine Presence. As explained in the Outline of the Faith in our Book of Common Prayer, “Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or *without words*.” (My emphasis)

Said differently, there

are moments in our lives when our awareness of God’s Presence leaves us speechless, wordless. At those times, it is important to remember that we have the right to remain silent! Psychiatrist and teacher of contemplative prayer Gerald May describes our responding to God in silence as:

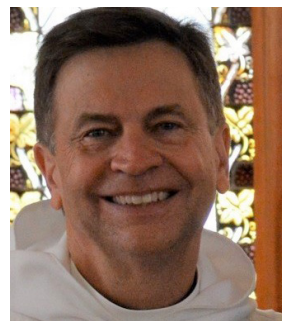
*a place of presence,
a deep region of*

“PRAYER IS RESPONDING TO GOD, BY THOUGHT AND BY DEED, WITH OR WITHOUT WORDS.”

being into which, by grace, one might sink, or drift, or dive. This prayerful response of silence is not the stifled quietude that comes from inhibition or restraint; instead it is an end in itself, this being-in sheer-silence. I keep telling myself that I do not need to understand. There is no mapping to be done of this terrain. The Presence simply finds us; our hearts respond in silence and some delicate mutual surrender happens. (May, “In the Depths of Silence,” Shalem Newsletter: Winter, 2003)

In the weeks to come, our patron saint of Advent, John the Baptizer, will beckon us to “prepare the way of the Lord.” We will do so by thought and by deeds with conversational and liturgical prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. But let us also be open to being arrested by the Holy Spirit in such a way that we find ourselves turning toward the Mystery of the Incarnate One in utter silence. “For the Father spoke one Word, which was His Son and this Word He always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence It must be heard

The Rev. Marshall Craver, who is retiring in January from full time parish ministry, has recently accepted an invitation from Bishop Kendrick to serve as spiritual director to the active clergy of our diocese. For the past 13 years, Fr. Craver has served as associate rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Mobile, ministering primarily in the areas of adult spiritual formation, one-on-one spiritual direction, and leading contemplative prayer groups and retreats. He is an adjunct faculty member of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D. C. and has a Certificate in Spiritual Direction from the Jesuits of Spring Hill College in Mobile. Reach him at marshallcraver@bellsouth.net.



When Christmas feels blue

by the Rev. Cynthia Howard

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY WILL BE COMFORTED (MATTHEW 5:4)

For those dealing with loss or grief, Christmas can be a time of sadness, pain, anger, and even dread. Grief, and the stress that is often already a part of the holidays, can compound one another this time of year.

In 2012, members of St. Mary's Church in Andalusia sought to find a way to provide a time of peace and serenity for those who are grieving and stressed when everyone else seems to be overflowing with joy and happiness. I worked with a group of three parishioners, who had all suffered the recent loss of a loved one, to develop an event which we eventually called "When Christmas Feels Blue."

This event has been held each year at St. Mary's, beginning in 2012, about one week before Christmas. We publicize "When

Christmas Feels Blue" on local radio and in the local newspaper. We also share information about the event with hospice programs and the nursing home in Andalusia.

The service includes scripture, music, and candle-lighting. While the final "product" is our own, we borrowed freely from what had been done in other places. We sing familiar Christmas carols but also include two pieces of music offered by a small group of singers, which provides a setting for personal reflection.

The atmosphere is quiet and welcoming, with the intention of honoring the feelings (whatever they may be) of those who attend. Since we know there may be tears during the service, we discreetly place tissues around

the nave.

Following the "blue" theme of the evening, the lights are kept low, candles are lit in the windows, and there is a Christmas tree lit with small blue and white lights. During the service, we light blue candles as we say prayers together and while we sing "Silent Night." As people come forward to light their candles, we give each of them an unlit blue votive candle to take with them, so they can kindle this symbol of peace and hope at home during the season. Following the service, we have a time of fellowship with simple refreshments.

People from St. Mary's and from the community attend "When Christmas Feels Blue" each year. In 2012, Debra Gamble attended the first of these, and she

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE:

Debra's first experience at St. Mary's led her to return. Since that December evening in 2012, she and her husband have been confirmed, they are active members of St. Mary's, and Debra currently serves as the senior warden.



Photo:
“When Christmas
Feels Blue” service
at St. Mary’s
Episcopal Church.

has described what she experienced:

“It was my first time being at St. Mary’s. Having tragically lost my dad in May of 2009, the death of my mother five months later, and the death of a beloved pet in between, I still had a lot of unreconciled grief. Knowing that, a friend invited me to the service.

The peaceful presence of the Holy Spirit when I entered the nave, for me, was palpable. The quiet calm, the soft lighting, the scripture, the hymns, the candles—all of these elements created a loving atmosphere for honoring, through God’s grace, the grief I still felt

for my loss. This service validated for me, and others, that it was okay to not feel joyous at what is supposed to be, in our society, the happiest time of year.

“When Christmas Feels Blue” is a gift to this community, a safe space and time to respectfully honor our grief and the loss of our loved ones.”

“When Christmas Feels Blue” has become an important part of our parish and, we believe, an important holiday event in Andalusia. This event helps us live out Jesus’ description of God’s kingdom, where those who mourn find comfort, as well as the phrase on the banner that hangs over our parish hall: “Our doors are open to all.”



The Rev. Cynthia Howard is rector of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Andalusia, Alabama. She can be reached at cahoward1229@gmail.com

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ADVENT REFLECTIONS

from parishioners to remind us the season of Advent is a time for preparing
for Christmas and celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ

ADVENT

MARTHA JONES

Trinity Episcopal Church
Mobile, Alabama

I had a to-do list when I retired last year. At the top of the list was a movement to increase my spiritual discipline. Reading, reflecting, meditating, prayer - this was the start. I thought it was a great idea. Little did I know at the time that this was not my decision. God was knocking on my door.

Three unexpected major surgeries later, I thank God that he did. He knew I would need him. And he came.

He came in the form of a godly husband who cooked and cleaned with joy. He came in the form of family, who, though far away, worried and called. He came in the form of amazing friends, who prayed for me and with me. He came in the form of my church family, who showed such concern, that it sometimes brought me to tears of joy. He came in the form of such peace over me, that I am cheered and calmed every day.

He knocks, but we must answer. Somehow I heard his knock and opened the door. I thank God every day that I did.

Jesus tells us to pray in a closet. However, he also tells us to proclaim our good news to others. This is my good news: God is out there; all we have to do is listen for him. Is he knocking on your door?

HENRY LANGHORNE

Christ Church Parish
Pensacola, Florida

How short the days are
how slowly the traffic moves
down over-decorated streets
past the old faces of houses
revived with Christmas lights
and wreaths as winter solstice
returns under gray skies

Choruses of "Jingle Bells"
drown out the hymns of Advent
as children search the sky
for red-nosed reindeer
instead of an infant child
and grownups are content with
a partridge in a pear tree

Pride has replaced humility
and infected many of us
in another Yuletide epidemic
as we come bearing gifts
for family and friends and see
how revered the Christmas tree
how short the days

ELIZABETH JIMENEZ

St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church,
Gulf Breeze, Florida

Several years ago, at the Candlelight service, where the church school children would be performing the Nativity; our granddaughter was one of the angels. As the processional began, our shy granddaughter slipped away to hide. The only one that noticed was Fr. Al Pruitt. As the processional came in, there was a break at the end, with no priest and no granddaughter (this grandmother almost in coronary)...when suddenly in his beautiful white robes, Fr. Al came rushing down the aisle, with our little granddaughter, “the angel,” in her little white robe, hand in his, flying behind him towards the Nativity. It was certainly a sight to see!

RICK S.

Pelham, Alabama
(Recently St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, Milton)

I’m an Alcoholic.
I don’t drink anymore because when I hit bottom, I was put on administrative leave at work. I surrendered to God through AA.
While praying one morning, I was visited by God. I was surrounded by His love, power and perfection.
Briefly I knew and understood all. I saw a perfect place. It was a landscape of trees and pastures. My feeling of peace was wonderful. Then I received a Divine message that many others have. “Everything is going to be okay,” was the simple but profound message. Profound because it came from God! I lost the desire to drink. God is everywhere, including in us. He is our Father. He created us. He gave us our DNA, so He will not hold inborn defects against us. We only need to accept His grace and forgiveness through Christ. Then, “Everything is going to be okay.”

ADVENT comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming”

THE REV. TOMMY DWYER

St. James’ Episcopal Church
Port St. Joe, Florida

Advent always reminds me of my first year in seminary at Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS). Like so many who go to seminary I was struggling some with Advent being its usual time of deep spirituality. I was busy getting a theological education that (feeling) the spirituality of the season was difficult. Well, we went into the District to see the national tree and all the other foofah. It was bitter cold and that made me irritable. We came out of a restaurant and standing there in sub-freezing weather was a homeless man looking for hand-outs. I told him all I had left was the change in my pocket (not exactly true) and I gave it to him. As we started down the sidewalk, I told Lynn that I was regretting the ‘lie’ and how that year Advent just did not feel like Christmas was coming. I wished I could do something to actually help that homeless man. She reminded me that the ski gloves she bought (which were too warm for me to wear) were in her tote and suggested I could give them to him. I beamed, kissed her, grabbed the gloves, and ran back up the hill. He was still there and looked right at me . . . skeptically. I sort of shoved the gloves into his chest and said, “Merry Christmas.” He immediately starting saying, “oooo, oooo, oooo,” and cried. Then, it was Advent!

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LOVE IS AT THE OF WILMER HALL



by Sally Greene

Meet Quinta, and her sons Maurice and DeAndre. Four years ago, they were homeless. They arrived at Wilmer Hall on July 27, 2012. They were the second family to participate in our Transitional Family Program, which we had started in early July, 2012. Quinta was a victim of domestic violence and was referred to Wilmer Hall from the local domestic violence shelter.

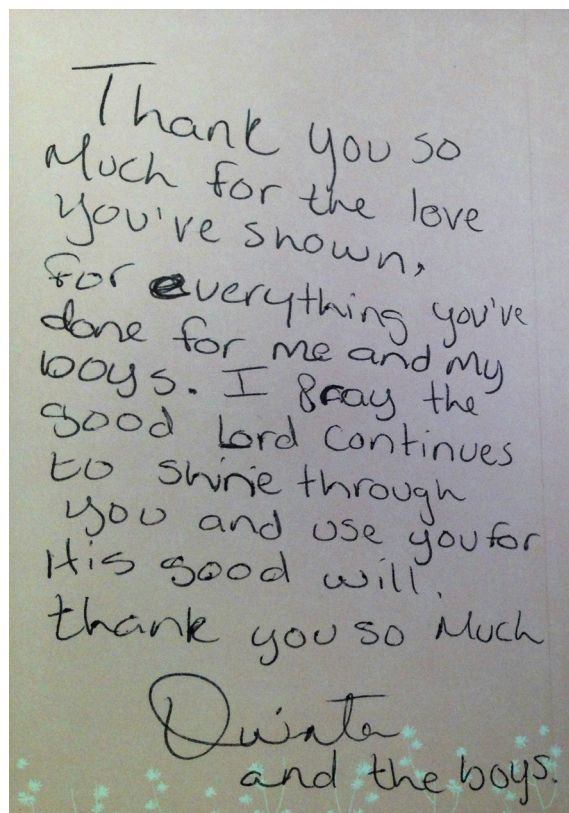
Quinta was very thankful to have a safe home to live in with her boys and to have a community of people who cared for her and her family. Maurice was enrolled in the elementary school across the street from

Wilmer Hall and DeAndre was placed in a daycare so that Quinta could work. Maurice was picked up every afternoon by his housemother and brought home where he participated in our education/tutoring program. Quinta worked very hard at her job, taking overtime when she could get the chance. In addition, she fully participated in the on-campus programs at Wilmer Hall.

After two years of working and saving, Quinta was ready to transition to an apartment of her own. Even though she was not living on campus, she still wanted the boys to participate in the afterschool tutoring program. Today, more than four years later, we continue to help Quinta by picking up both of her boys at school and bringing them to tutoring. We are so proud of their achievements—both Maurice and DeAndre are on the A-B honor roll! Upon leaving Wilmer Hall, Quinta and her boys expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the staff for their love and support. She wrote me a note (shown right) expressing her thanks:

Thank you so much for the love you've shown, for everything you've done for me and my boys. I pray the good Lord continues to shine through you and use you for His good will. Thank you so much.

Quinta
and the boys



Executive Director Sally Greene says, "Wilmer Hall is a joyful place. We are happy because we help young people break out of the cycles of their pasts and truly live into the full potential that lies inside of each of them. Living at Wilmer Hall provides them with a home where they are surrounded by a group of people who love and support them. It is a joy to come to work every day to be a part of their lives and to witness what they can accomplish when given this love and support."

THE DOODLE REVOLUTION

WHAT EXACTLY IS A DOODLE BOOK, AND HOW DOES DOODLING HELP
CHRISTIAN FORMATION FOR YOUTH?

Christ Church Cathedral



Taking a cue from parishioner Johnny Gwin's "Sabbadoodles,"* Cathedral youth are incorporating "doodle books" into their formational experience at Christ Church Cathedral. What exactly is a doodle book, and how does doodling help Christian formation for youth?

Here is how it works: At the beginning of the program year, each young person personalizes a composition notebook, which becomes the "doodle book." The doodle books are placed in the vestibule outside

the nave, and each student retrieves his or her book and pen or pencil before church on Sunday. During the readings and the music and the sermon, students (ideally) listen carefully and make drawings or other doodles that represent the key ideas and images they hear. This is not exactly note taking, but neither is it random drawing and note writing. They will be sharing their content in Sunday School! The idea is that when students shift their focus from passive reception to actively creating their

own visual representations, they have a deeper learning experience. In her book, "The Doodle Revolution," author and creative business consultant Sunni Brown demonstrates the ways doodling can transform the way we think. There is much evidence to suggest that what's really happening when we doodle is not mindlessness but deep and necessary information processing. A doodler is generating insights and making connections, often without being conscious of it. For our purposes, the definition of *doodling* is

“making spontaneous marks (with your mind and body) to help yourself think.” As you know from your own doodling, these marks can be words, letters in fun fonts, word pictures, or images. It is an open, creative exercise: there is no “right way” to do it, only the ways that work for each person. Thus, using doodle books offers freedom to explore questions and ideas in multiple ways. Ideally, by using the doodle books, our young people will be able to make connections between worship and their class lessons, and at the end of the year see the journey they have taken.**

*The idea for the doodle books came from doodles made in church by parishioner Johnny Gwin. Johnny and his wife Stacy Wellborn operate Deep Fried Studios in Mobile. Johnny’s drawings led to a weekly podcast entitled Pulpit to Pew that features a conversation between Dean Beverly Gibson and Johnny Gwin. The conversation is about how

the message translates to the people, and further explores the weekly lessons within the Episcopal tradition and daily life. To follow the weekly conversation go to: www.pulpittopew.com. On the website are the doodles that Johnny creates each week.

**Dean Gibson incorporated doodle books into her presentation at the Beautiful Authority conference in Kanuga this August.

Visit Christ Church Cathedral at www.christchurchcathedralmobile.org

DOCT CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

DOODLE BY:
Johnny Gwin,
Christ Church Cathedral



DIOCESAN SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY

by the Rev. Al Pruitt



The Rev. Al Pruitt is a very active, retired priest serving as the chair for the bishop's School for Ministry Task Force.

A BISHOP'S RESPONSE TO THE NEED OF CONGREGATIONS FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY

Planning is underway for a school for the formation of both priests and deacons in this diocese. The School for Ministry in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast will offer academic curriculum, spiritual formation, and practical experiences in ministry in a once-monthly weekend format. Enrollment in the school is through the established diocesan discernment process; completion of the prescribed program will require approximately three years.

Our School for Ministry is a diocesan response to the needs of congregations for ordained clergy, and the education of those people who have discerned a call to ordained ministry. This initiative not only will provide additional deacons and priests, especially for small congregations, but also will enable congregations to participate in the discernment and formation of aspiring clergy. Congregations will award approval of designated candidates for ordination, and will be encouraged to participate actively in seeking to identify parishioners who may be called to ordained ministry.

A locally based diocesan school offers a major new

opportunity for those who have engaged in the established process of discernment and have been directed toward formation as deacon or as priest. Whereas the education track toward ordination to the priesthood has traditionally required attendance at a residential seminary, a CGC School for Ministry would make it possible for candidates to receive formation within the diocese. Importantly, individuals could continue current employment, avoid family disruptions from relocation, and maintain household responsibilities while preparing for ordination to servant ministry as a deacon or sacramental ministry as a priest.

The proposed curriculum of the school is rigorous and will meet all canonical requirements for clergy who seek ordination, but will offer reasonable flexibility for individual circumstances. Completion will require three consecutive years of course work in fields such as scripture, church history, theology, and ethics. In addition, candidates will also expand their experiences in pastoral care, liturgy, preaching, and leading others in spiritual

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YOUNG & YEARNING

MILLENNIAL SPIRITUALITY
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by the Rev. Mary Alice Mathison

Questions and Belonging: Finding a Place to Explore Spirituality

There are various generalizations and assumptions about young adults, often associated with our phones. While some of these assumptions are unfair, it is true that most young adults, particularly in Western culture, have never known a world without the internet, resulting in changes in how we communicate and interact with one another and the world. Technology has shaped us, and has also shaped our spirituality, but there is more to the millennial faith experience than the internet.

Access to information, especially at our fingertips, has broadened the scope of the young adult worldview. We no longer experience a single perspective of family, faith, or regional culture. Through the

vast array of technology we have the ability to learn about the diversity that makes up not only our American culture, but our global society. This exposure is accompanied by questions—questions that for centuries were often addressed by institutions like the church, but now find authority in a wide range of places. Unfortunately, topics concerning millennials and technology only begin to scratch the surface of who we are, and while important to consider, often overlook valuable nuances of the young adult identity.

The focus on how we use our phones fails to appreciate the depth of our experiences. Personal histories, friends' stories, and questions contemplated at young adult gatherings suggest the millennial experience is varied depending on circumstances, choices, and upbringing. Yes, many of us use smart phones and social media, but our questions, desire for belonging, and yearning for something meaningful in our lives connects us on deeper and more spiritual levels than the surrounding culture appreciates.

While I was considering a column title about young adults and spirituality, friends offered insights, and one, Sam, suggested "Young and Yearning." *Yearning* is "an intense longing for something," and I know the feeling of what it is to long for answers, certainty, acceptance, belonging, and meaning. In our fast-paced, competitive world, which is in constant conflict and flux under the surface, young adults are yearning for more than what this world can give us in "likes" on Instagram. The



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The Rev. Mary Alice Mathison serves as a curate for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Daphne, Alabama, and is newly appointed by Bishop Russell as the Missioner for College & Young Adult Ministries.

Reach her at
maryalice.mathison@gmail.com.

...our questions, desire for belonging, and yearning for something meaningful in our lives connects us on deeper and more spiritual levels than the surrounding culture appreciates.

Church has given me a safe space to explore that yearning for meaning and a sense of belonging; being encouraged by church leadership to explore my spirituality, to question, challenge, and even doubt, has given me assurance that in my yearnings I am accepted for who I am.

Unfortunately, for many young adults that is not always the case. No millennial experience is going to look exactly like another, but our questions about culture, doubts about God or the church, desire for acceptance, hope for meaning in the brokenness of the world, and our yearning to belong

weigh heavy on our shoulders. The Church must always be a safe place of acceptance where young people can explore our questions and be confident that God shares our burdens and does not leave us alone in the yearning.



HAPPENING

A CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

WHAT IS EYE?

Every three years, in accordance with General Convention Resolution #1982-D079, the Episcopal Church convenes an international youth event so "that the energy of the youth of the Episcopal Church can continue to be utilized in active ministry as members of the Body of Christ."

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.diocegc.org/programs-events

YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES TO DIOCESAN CONVENTION

For youth interested in serving as a **Youth Representative** at the next Diocesan Convention, contact your clergy or senior warden.

Bishop Russell will make the final youth representative appointments.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Happening is a spiritual formation weekend presented BY teenagers FOR teenagers with the help of clergy and lay adult leadership. Happening seeks to bring young people to a fuller personal knowledge of and relationship with Jesus, and to a deeper level of commitment and apostleship. During the Happening weekend, there are activities designed for fun and Christian community building among participants including: talks given by teenage staff and clergy, games, music, prayer, and unique worship experiences. Holy Nativity will be transformed over the weekend into a sacred space just for this event.

WHEN AND WHERE IS HAPPENING?

February 3 - 5, 2017, at Holy Nativity Episcopal Church in Panama City, Florida

WHO IS INVITED TO ATTEND?

All 10th - 12th graders in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

WHO LEADS THE EVENT?

Happening is led by a staff of teenagers who have been through a Happening weekend previously. The Lay Rector, Observing Lay Rector and Head Gofer are the key youth leadership for the weekend. Two clergy are selected as Spiritual Directors for the weekend. Alyson Jackson is the Happening Coordinator for the Diocese.

Contact Alyson Jackson at thejacksonvii@aol.com.

SPECIAL MINISTRIES AT BECKWITH

outreach going on 45 years

by Eleanor Reeves, executive director of Beckwith

Excitement fills the air and energy levels are high as second generation campers board the bus at All Saint's Episcopal Church heading to the Special Ministries camp at Beckwith which has been serving at-risk third, fourth, and fifth grade students from midtown Mobile school Leinkauf Elementary, since 1972, the same year Beckwith began its summer camp program. Sponsored by All Saint's, campers from Leinkauf know the excitement that awaits them. Karen McDonald, one of the All Saints' coordinators, says "my favorite moment each year happens when the bus turns onto Beckwith Lane and the campers begin to cheer and jump out of their seats with excitement. It makes everything we do to get them there worthwhile."

Meanwhile, some 60 miles away in Pensacola, Florida, even more jubilant campers from O. J. Semmes Elementary School are eagerly waiting to join Leinkauf campers for a fun-filled week of great camp food, water activities, friendship bracelets, praise and worship, deans program, shaving cream battles, and "announcements, announcements, announcements" (a common sing-song phrase heard daily at every camp session). O.J. Semmes campers have been sponsored for over 20 years by St. Christopher's where Mr. Charlie and Ms. Brenda happily load and drive them to Beckwith each year.

Several years ago Beckwith realized many campers wanted to continue their relationship with summer camp after graduating from elementary school, asking for the opportunity to return to their age appropriate camps outside of Special Ministries. So, the Graduate Program was developed. Today, Beckwith is committed to developing leaders who will grow with Beckwith summer camp by graduating from the Special Ministries program, returning to grade appropriate camp sessions as campers, and, finally, move up to the counselor positions.



Karen, Elizabeth and summer camper

Beckwith summer camp creates an environment that provides these youth with a safe, sacred place where their dignity and potential as leaders are honored and cultivated by teenage and young adult leaders, mentors, and other adults who can serve as role models.

Thanks to grant funding from the MAPP Family Foundation, Beckwith has provided scholarships for 37 of these graduates to attend their age appropriate camp session over the past three summers. We continue to look for resources to grow our graduate program. Summer camp 2017 will provide the opportunity for several of the graduates to attend our Leaders in Training session, which provides youth the opportunity to learn and develop leadership skills, then return later in the summer as Junior Counselors.

If you are interested in learning more about Special Ministries or the Graduate Program please contact Eleanor Reeves
Eleanor@BeckwithAL.com,
Karen McDonald krmcd13@yahoo.com, or Brenda Roose
c_broose@bellsouth.net.



Beckwith

LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY

by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Shepard

“FOR WHO IS GREATER, THE ONE WHO IS AT THE TABLE OR THE ONE WHO SERVES? IS IT NOT THE ONE WHO IS AT THE TABLE? BUT I AM AMONG YOU AS ONE WHO SERVES.” (LUKE 22:17)

We in the church profess to be followers of Jesus and to live in obedience to and in the presence of God, regardless of the context. Our template for this life is the example of Jesus’ original disciples. What was it about the disciples that allowed them to live in such a way? What was it about the call of the disciples that allowed them not to seek power, prosperity, even survival? It was the fact that they listened to God.

The vestry of St. Andrew’s Panama City began to listen, to discern how God was calling us to live out our role as church leaders and obedient followers of Jesus. This listening has led to a journey at St. Andrew’s of re-visioning the role of the vestry over the last several years. Patrick Kiefert, in “We are Here Now: A New Missional Era,” suggests the old

ways of doing things no longer work. Long term strategic plans or never-used mission statements no longer make sense because our community and world changes so fast. What is needed is continual, faithful listening to God’s leading. No longer can vestry members act only as operation managers or advocates for particular committees; instead, the role of a vestry should be to join the clergy in encouraging and engaging the congregation to seek God’s activity in and direction for the church and the neighborhood.

While our vestry, of course, fulfills its canonical responsibilities, at St. Andrew’s we have invited vestry members to understand their role as that of a spiritual discernment team. We moved from the “board room” to the chapel. We begin with a social

time, having a chance to really get to know one another. Then we move from there to the chapel for Eucharist and discernment. We have liaisons who meet with their vestry partners in ministry. We raised up a financial oversight team, which takes operational items off the vestry’s plate so we can focus on those needs beyond our doors. Once we began listening, we began to relate scripture to budget decisions. We knew we were in the right place. We have had fun and feel energized to take our conversation out into the community.

Moving from maintenance to mission on your vestry is a major shift, but any church can do it! So many churches spend their energy internally—every resource is used to keep things going. But in transformational

46TH ANNUAL DIOCESAN CONVENTION

February 23 to 25, 2016

Church of the Nativity, Dothan, Alabama



As it is every year, the 46th Annual Convention of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast is an important one. We will gather in Dothan, Alabama to worship God in wonder, love, and praise. We will enjoy fellowship: renewing old friendships and making new ones. And, of course, we will do the business of the church. This year, as we do every three years, we will elect eight people – four ordained, four lay – to serve as deputies to the 79th General Convention in Austin, Texas. As always, we will elect members of the Standing Committee, the Commission on Ministry, the boards of Beckwith, Murray House, and Wilmer Hall, as well as many other groups that work to do the ministry of Christ in this place we get to call home. Please consider nominating yourself or someone else to serve in these important capacities. Additionally, the Convention will vote to make changes to the Canons and the Rules of Order and we will adopt a budget that highlights our mission priorities for 2017. Finally, we will gather to give God thanks and praise for all the blessings of this life. Plan to join us, to be involved, and to move the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast forward in mission and ministry to the glory of God.

Yours in Christ,
The Rev'd Steven J. Pankey
Secretary

FOR CONVENTION DETAILS VISIT
www.diocg.org/2017-convention

For more ideas see: vestry papers through Episcopal Church Foundation; "Leadership and Listening: Spiritual Foundations for Church Governance" by Donald E. Zimmer (www.alban.org); "The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics" by Israel Galindo

vestries, the energy flows outward, toward mission. Who is God calling us to serve? What can we do to make an impact on the community? Who can we reach? Thus, internal squabbles change to vision, and instead of feeling stuck, you start moving forward as a team—vestry, clergy, and congregation together.

Our world is looking for more than just a place to belong or a place to find peace. People are looking for changed lives. So instead of haggling, at St. Andrew's, we spend our time discovering ministries to help people become transformed. We on the vestry were changed as much as those we go to serve. Mission became our faith multiplier. With this focus, our members feel like they are a part of something truly important. They connect, worship, give, and serve knowing that they are impacting the world for Jesus.



The Rev. Dr. Margaret Shepard serves as the rector for St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Panama City, Florida, and chairs the bishop's Church Development Process Task Force.

You can reach her at
revshepard@knology.net

NEW FACES

MEET THE CLERGY ANSWERING RECENT CALLS TO THE CENTRAL GULF COAST

ST. STEPHEN'S,
Brewton, Alabama



JO POPHAM

Jo is a native of Louisiana, a graduate of Louisiana Tech and Tulane University, and a 2005 graduate from the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest. Prior to seminary she worked in copyright law enforcement at the Motion Picture Association of America, was legal assistant for CBS television and radio stations, set up and ran the district office of her US Congressional Representative, was a medical technologist as Chief of Hematology in a large Army hospital and smaller hospitals and medical offices. After her ordination, she served in several parishes in Alberta, Canada, and the Diocese of Southwest Florida. Jo loves to lead spiritual retreats. She has been married for 30 years to the Rev. Jim Popham, her best friend since high school. Together they have five children – some his, some hers, but all their's, three young grandchildren, and a Scottish terrier. Jo is looking forward to working with “all y'all” in this time when our church has the opportunity to embrace hope of the Gospel for renewal and growth.

ST. JAMES,
Fairhope, Alabama



DE FREEMAN

De previously served as rector of Chapel of Our Saviour in Colorado Springs from January 2011 until August of this year, and prior to that as vicar to Church of the Epiphany in Crestview, FL. He has served on the Standing Committees in Colorado and here in the Central Gulf Coast, among many other committees and commissions. De received his M. Div. from Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas, and his B.A. from Auburn University. His passions and interests vary greatly; from playing and listening to great music, being out on the water, spreading the joy of Christ, supporting his children in all of their endeavors, and walking through life with his wife and college sweetheart, Stephanie. She is a physical therapist, and an avid hiker. They have three school-aged children, Logan, Dylan and Emmie who all share passions in music, sports and being outdoors.

HOLY CROSS,
Pensacola, Florida



ROB DIXON

Rob was born and raised outside of Fairhope, Alabama. He and his wife, Amanda, have three children, share a love for their pets, and enjoy time each summer in the mountains of Colorado. After receiving his Bachelor of Chemical Engineering from Auburn University, Rob worked in sales for Nalco Chemical Company for eight years. He ended his career at Nalco to become the youth minister at Christ Church in Pensacola and to discern his call to the priesthood. Rob served at St. David's in Austin while in seminary, and, after graduation, he became the rector of St. Stephen's in Brewton, Alabama. Most recently he served as the associate rector for Pastoral Care and Outreach at St. Martin's in Houston, Texas.

ALSO WELCOME

Additional clergy movement in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

The Rev. Albert Daviou from the Diocese of Atlanta

The Rev. Deacon Clelia Garrity is serving at St. Simon's on-the-Sound Fort Walton Beach, Florida

The Rev. Deborah Kempson-Thompson from the Diocese of Nevada

The Rev. Deacon Tricia Spencer from the Diocese of Central Florida

The Rev. Winston Rice from the Diocese of Louisiana

The Rev. Beth Hoffmann is now serving as priest-in-charge of St. John's in Monroeville, Alabama

CHRIST CHURCH PARISH Pensacola, Florida



MICHAEL HOFFMAN

Michael recently served as rector for St. Peter's Episcopal Church in McKinney, Texas, where he employed his strengths in stewardship, community outreach, and children and family engagement to elevate the parish. Through these same gifts along with a dedicated preaching style and compassion for his parish family, Michael has been called to do the same here with his new family at Christ Church. He brings over ten years of experience as a rector and vicar to this new calling. In addition, he attended the University of the South at Seawee for his undergraduate degree (B.A. '00, Philosophy), seminary (M.Div. '05), and coursework for his Doctorate in Ministry. Joining Michael are his wife, Amy, who is a middle-school teacher, and their two children. He and his family are excited to become a part of the Christ Church family during this new venture.

ST. SIMON'S ON-THE-SOUND, Fort Walton Beach, Florida



DAVID KNIGHT

David has served as interim for several churches: Christ Church in Pensacola, St. Paul's in Delray Beach, and St. James' in Jackson, Mississippi, the largest church in the Diocese of Mississippi. Before seminary, David worked over 20 years in the banking industry in Information Systems (yes, he's a geek). He is married to Jennifer, an RN and Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. They have three children and two beautiful grandchildren. Ordained to the priesthood in 2002, David served St. James in Greenville, MS as curate, before being called as rector of St. Patrick's in Long Beach, MS, for eight years, including six and a half years after Hurricane Katrina destroyed the church property and surrounding community. He and Jennifer were "boots on the ground" in the recovery and rebuilding of the Long Beach and Pass Christian area. He has served four times as a deputy to General convention from the Diocese of Mississippi and most recently served a three year appointment on the Task Force for the Study of Marriage.

VICAR FOR WEST FLORIDA



JIM POPHAM

Jim comes to the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast from the Diocese of Southwest Florida, where he was rector of St. David's Episcopal Church in Englewood, Florida. Jim was ordained in 2009 in the Diocese of Calgary, where he served three years at Christ Church as a minister of congregational growth and development, a position he shared with his wife, Jo, and later as assistant curate. He then served three years as interim priest-in-charge at Holy Nativity Anglican Church. Born in New Orleans, Jim spent his prior professional life as a lawyer there and in Washington, D.C., focusing on broadcast regulation and copyright. Jim and his wife, Jo, who is rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Brewton, are 2005 graduates of the Seminary of the Southwest. Together they have five children and three grandchildren. For Jim, the Anglican way, rooted in scripture, tradition, and reason, offers a ready path for spiritual growth and, moreover, to bringing God's kingdom alive on earth as it is in heaven.

BEFORE NOW...

SHORT STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

by the Rev. Albert Kennington, Registrar-Historiographer of the Diocese

Advent is a time for deep remembering and courageous hope. In this season of the Church's new year, the Bible stories we hear are of God's mighty acts of deliverance in history, of God's promises in olden days, and of our hope for the ultimate reign of God whose kingdom will have no end. In Advent, we remember. In Advent,

we expect with hope.

Our Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast was formed in Advent. In just over three years, we shall celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our founding during the first week of Advent, 1970. Interestingly, enough, this diocese's connection to Advent has roots even further back in time.

On the first and second Sundays of Advent, 1844, the first bishop of Alabama, the Rt. Rev. Nicholas H. Cobbs, preached his first sermons as the new bishop in the recently established diocese. He had only just arrived in Mobile with his family the week before. He, his wife Lucy, and their nine children had stepped ashore in the new and raw city being built

by King Cotton, and walked through unpaved streets with mudholes and unfettered hogs and cattle, but also lined with stately buildings, some standing tall and others being built. Bishop Cobbs preached in Christ Church, Mobile—the church where the Diocese of Alabama had been formed fifteen years earlier, and which would later become the cathedral church of his successors. That Advent season, Bishop Cobbs encountered the humble beginning of, and hopeful future for, the people of God in the diocese that we now know as the Central Gulf Coast. Was he the first to say “Roll Tide”? Perhaps not, but I bet he would have joined in the cheer.

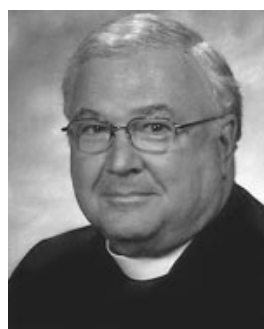
Another remembering...In late 1865, federal troops occupied Alabama, Florida, and other states of the defeated Confederacy. Notable among the Episcopal bishops in these states was Bishop Richard H. Wilmer of Alabama, the only bishop elected and consecrated in a diocese within the Confederacy.

In the late summer and fall of 1865, Bishop Wilmer protested the military occupation of Alabama. Even though he had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States and urged his clergy and people to do the same, as long as there was military rule in Alabama, he refused to use the Morning Prayer intercession for “all in civil authority.”

Because of his stand, the military authority closed all Episcopal churches in Alabama under force of armed guards. Bishop Wilmer protested directly to President Andrew Johnson, a man he later described as “a

drunken Tennessee tailor.” With his churches closed, Bishop Wilmer preached on the first Sunday of Advent, December 3, 1865, in the rectory of Trinity Church, Mobile. Bishop Wilmer knew that closing church doors didn’t mean an end to proclaiming the Gospel. By December 23, 1865, before the end of Advent, President Johnson lifted the military decree, and Episcopal churches were opened.

Advent still calls us to new beginnings. 105 years after Bishop Wilmer preached in the rectory of Trinity church, his successor, the Rt. Rev. George M. Murray, joined his neighbor, Bishop Hamilton West of Florida, in calling together a convention in Christ Church, Pensacola. That convention formed a new diocese, which is still entrusted to us. Within our open doors, the Gospel is still proclaimed, the sacraments celebrated, and everyone is welcome.



The Rev. Albert Kennington is vicar of Immanuel Episcopal Church in Bay Minette, Alabama. He can be reached at revsak@gmail.com.

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growth. To aid to community formation among current students, enrollees on the deacon-track and those on the priest-track will share most classroom and seminar meetings. Since, however, practice of ministry differs for the two orders, the school will also provide separate studies, as appropriate. A goal of this allied method of formation and education is the continuing collegiality between and among deacons and priests in future ministries.

Joint formation/education for deacons and priests in a local, diocesan-based school will offer unique opportunities. Students will learn and practice within the diocese in the same missions, parishes, church and community agencies in which they will later serve as ordained persons. Among the several reasons for developing a CGC School for Ministry, this setting itself constitutes perhaps its chief strength.

Since the enrollment of the CGC School for Ministry is planned for Fall 2017, both congregations and individuals must shortly begin the discernment process. Discernment for an individual requires participation by congregations, their clergy, the Commission on Ministry, and the Office of the Bishop. To learn more, please visit the diocesan website, which provides updated information about discernment and the canonically required procedures.



FAITHMATTERS

The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

LOOKING AHEAD | *full calendar at www.diocgc.org*

December 3

Ordination to the Diaconate

Christ Church Cathedral

January 26

Clergy Study Day

Holy Cross, Pensacola

February 3-5

Happening #53

Holy Nativity, Panama City

February 7

Standing Committee

Duvall Center

February 23-25

Diocesan Convention

Church of the Nativity, Dothan

March 25

Discipleship Day

TBD
