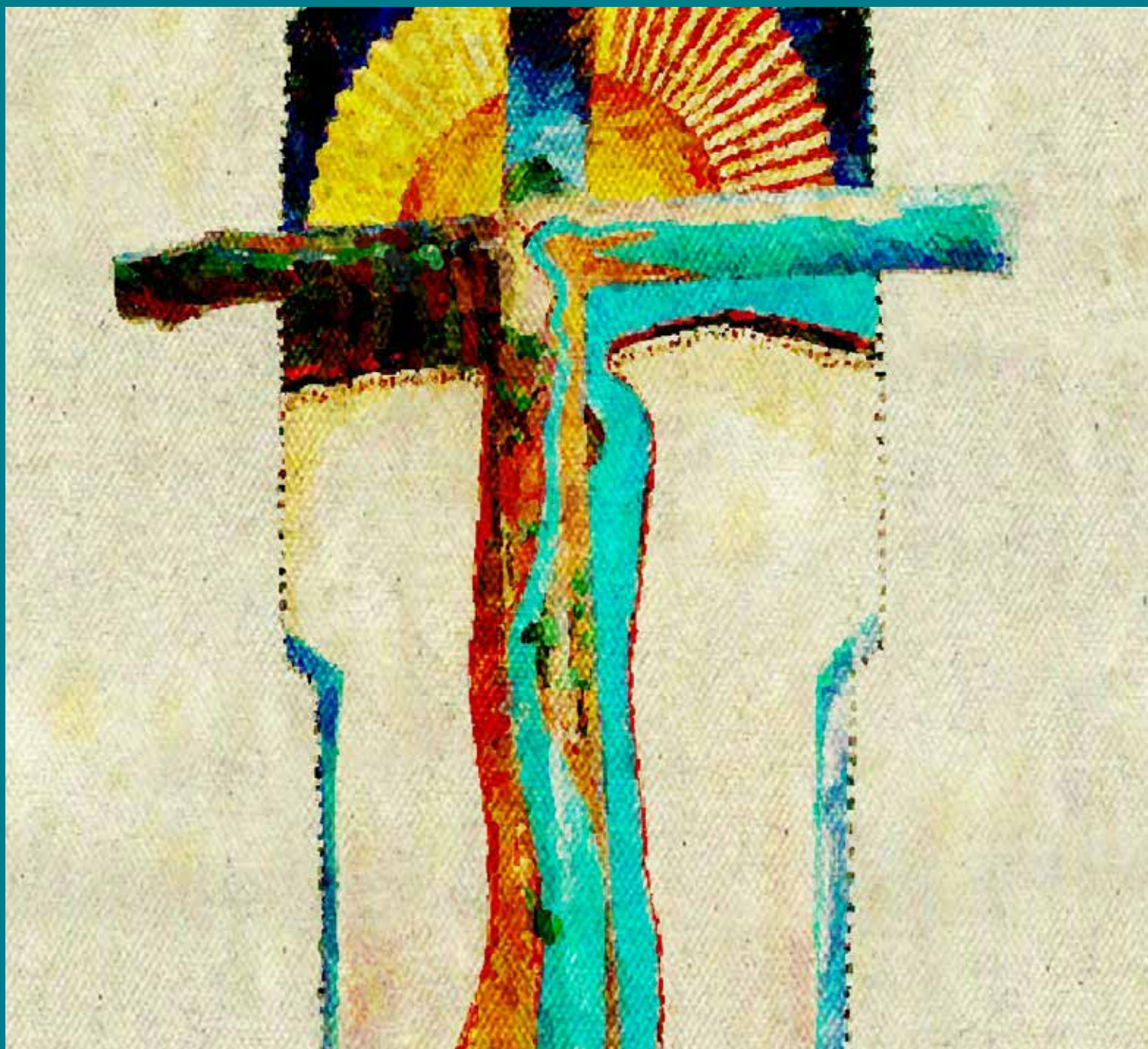


DISCIPLESHIP | DISCERNMENT | DEVELOPMENT

EASTER 2017  
NUMBER 2

# FAITHMATTERS



The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

**FAITH MATTERS**  
Easter 2017

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

**BISHOP OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST**

The Rt. Rev. Russell Kendrick

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Jenn Johnson. The cross, created by artist Sherry Cook ([www.sherrycook.net](http://www.sherrycook.net)), hangs in Bishop Russell's office.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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For most of us, the pace of a typical year can quickly get out of hand. Working for a religious organization is no exception, especially during the time of Advent through Easter. There is always much to be done, or as Bishop Russell once saw on a license plate of a car zooming past him, "LOTS2DO." However, even with all of the tasks that go along with our liturgical seasons, celebrations, and ceremonies...and life...I hope you pause daily, even if briefly, to remember that you are God's beloved...breathe it in, and exhale it out to the world. Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Peace to you,  
Jenn Johnson  
Missioner for Communications

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EASTER

# TURNING THE PAGE

by the Rt. Rev. Russell Kendrick

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**EASTER IS NOT THE RESULT OF  
OUR FAITH IN GOD. EASTER  
IS THE ETERNAL ABSOLUTE  
PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S  
FAITH IN HUMANITY.**

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A few years ago, my son Aaron interrupted my evening ritual of surfing the news on my iPad. He was stomping around and mumbling about something, so I asked him about it. "It's this book I'm reading. It's depressing," he said. "What's the title?" I asked. "The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe." "What's so bad about it?" I asked. "Dad, I'm not sure I want to finish this book. The lion, his name is Aslan, they just killed him off. What's left to read if the hero is already dead?" He grumbled at me when I hinted, "Just turn the page and see what happens."

As I returned to the news, I felt a sudden kinship to my son's despair. I write this on the morning after a horrific senseless chemical attack in Syria. That story is just one story in a seemingly endless litany of pain, loss and death. For each story in the news, there are our personal stories of pain and death. Loss is a part of life. We all know that. Sometimes, we can get to a point when we see so much loss that, like my son, we are unable to turn the page.

It is true today, and it was true on that dark morning when Mary made her way to the tomb. Loss was all she knew. Loss was all she felt. As far as Mary knew, Jesus' story was over. What Mary could not know, is that at some point before she arrived, God had made an eternal and absolute decision. God turned the page, and opened the way into an entirely new reality that we know as Easter.

Easter is not the result of our faith in God. Easter is the eternal absolute proclamation of God's faith in humanity. On Easter, God has made a choice about you and for you. To paraphrase Psalm 139:

*"God believes in you; God will not give up on you.  
there is nowhere you can go that God is not there;  
there is nothing you can do that God cannot redeem;  
there is no life too lost to be beyond the reach of love."*

Because of God's decision, there is more to your story than what you think there is.

What, then, are we asked to do with Easter? Believe? Maybe, but then again, what I think is being asked of us on Easter is not if we believe, but rather if we will be surprised. That is the one constant response of all the Easter stories---surprise. As much as some try to convince us that being a follower of Jesus is about being certain, being a follower of Jesus is being open to the uncertain. It is about being open to more; it is about being surprised.

Easter does not guarantee that life is free from death and loss, but it affirms that there is a "deeper

magic," as C.S. Lewis put it, that is stronger than death. Because of that love, there is more to your story still to be imagined, and still to be lived. Being willing to be surprised means entertaining the idea that the story is rarely over when we think it is. It means letting go of our judgments and assumptions about people; it means giving up some of our anxiety and bitterness and sarcasm about the world. It is about letting go of being so certain that life is pre-determined and the world is fixed. Easter is about being surprised even when we do not understand.

It's about being surprised by the forgiveness from someone you have written off; it's about being surprised to find new love after losing someone you love; it's about being surprised that you find yourself laughing when all you have known are tears; it's about being surprised that you can feel something after months of being numb; it's about being surprised that the past truly is the past, and you strangely feel set free.

*The Sunrise of Wonder* is a book composed as a letter from a priest named Michael Mayne to his grandchildren. It opens with these words: "If I could have waved a fairy grandfather's wand at your birth and wished upon you just one gift, it would not have been beauty or riches or long life. It would have been the gift of wonder."

A few days after Aaron's moment of despair, he came running down the stairs with great surprise in his step. "Dad, guess what, Aslan is alive!" He returned to the story, and he muddled through his pain. He turned the page, and to his great surprise, there was more to the story than he had ever imagined.

Because of Easter, there is more to your story than you know. Receive the gift of joy and wonder, and keep turning the pages of your life. See what happens when you do, and be ready to be surprised.

The following prayer is used on the day of every Baptism. I wonder if it is a prayer for every day. Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sin, and have raised us to the new life of grace. Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give us an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen.*

# WHAT WILL YOU GIVE UP FOR EASTER?

by the Rev. Marshall Craver

Most Christians I know, including myself, are more committed to observing the forty days of Lent than the Great Fifty Days of Easter. We “give up” or “take on” things for the season of Lent, only to drop these disciplines, with a sigh of relief, when Easter Sunday arrives. Could it be that this pattern of relating to these two seasons of the church year by compartmentalizing them reveals something deeper about our understanding of God? Are we more comfortable with a God who demands and applauds our efforts at self-improvement, than with a God who declares that when it comes to justifying ourselves “our good works are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6)? Do we relate more readily to a God whose mercy consists in giving us another forty days to prove ourselves worthy, than to a God who invites us to “rend our hearts and not our garments” (Joel 2:13)? And what is it that keeps us stuck in this “try harder” mode of religious disciplines and practices

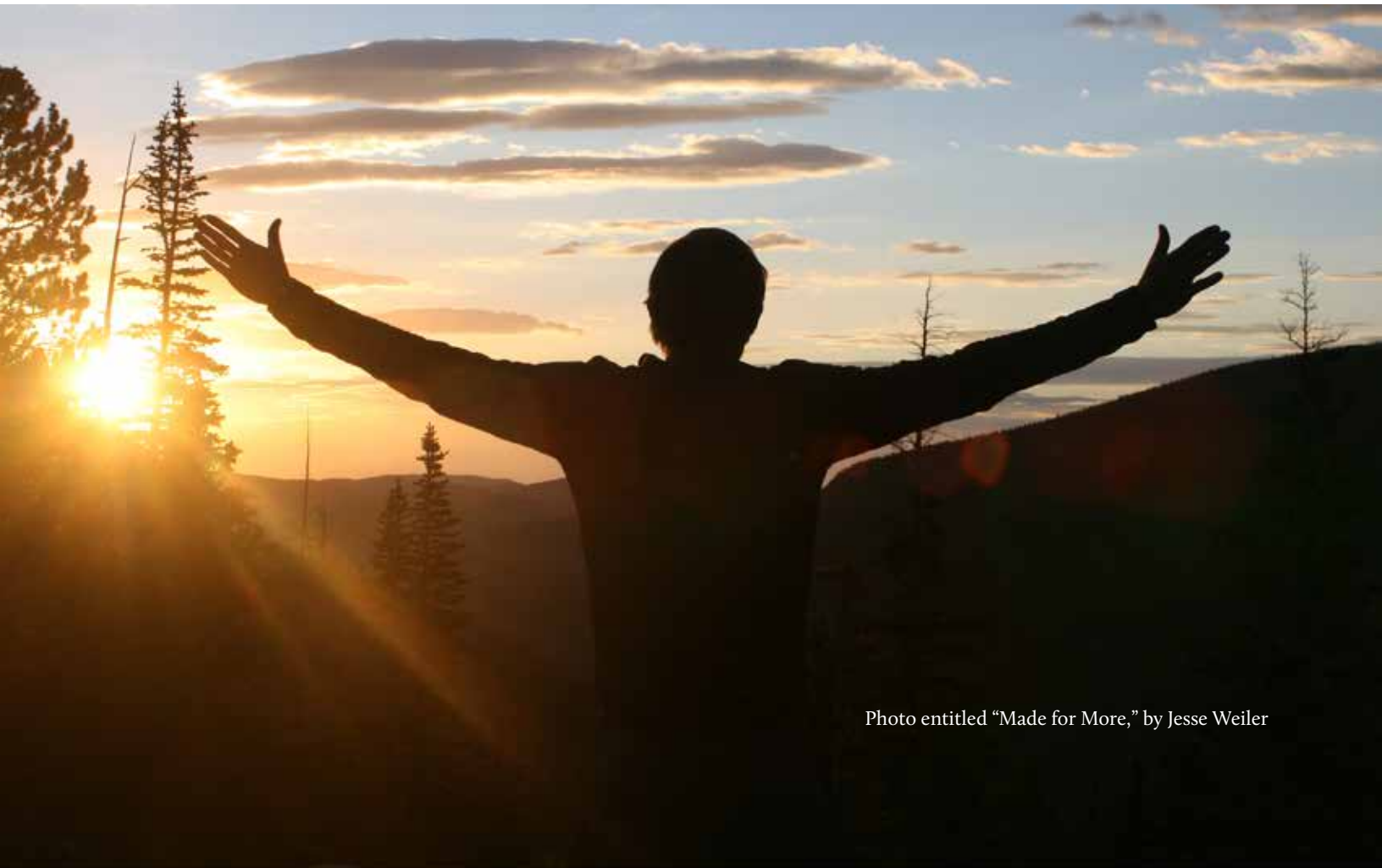


Photo entitled “Made for More,” by Jesse Weiler

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## CHRIST IS ALIVE! LET US BE RAISED TO OUR NEW LIFE, BY HIM, WITH HIM, AND IN HIM!

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instead of the freeing practice of admitting our powerlessness? When is it and how is it that we begin to trust more in God's power to resurrect, to make all things new, than in our feeble efforts to perfect our lives and our world? When is it and how is it that we begin to experience for ourselves the reality of what our Lord spoke to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:7)?

The Articles of Religion in our Book of Common Prayer encourage us to drown "justification by works" and "works of supererogation" in the graceful waters of our baptism (See Articles XI-XIV, Book of Common Prayer, p. 870). But it has been my experience that these two "demons" are good swimmers, popping up quite frequently during Lent and coming toward us disguised as "angels of light." Thus, it is crucial that we begin Lent by hearing the words of Jesus in our Ash Wednesday gospel (see Matthew 4:1-11), whereby he warns us not to do the right thing, i.e., engage in spiritual disciplines, for the wrong reasons. Said differently, Lenten disciplines often turn out like New Year's resolutions, revealing to us that human willpower may produce an outward show of righteousness for the short haul, perhaps even forty days, but eventually the brokenness of our inner condition surfaces.

But what if—what if the spiritual disciplines, listed in our Ash Wednesday liturgy (self-examination, prayer, fasting, reading and meditating on God's Holy Word, along with a countless number of other prayer forms and spiritual practices) are understood and practiced not with the intent of

pleasing God but as a means of surrendering our broken, blind, and bound selves to the Risen Christ and the power of his resurrection? What if we break this bread and drink this wine, meditate on this passage of Holy Scripture, pray this breath prayer, walk this labyrinth, serve in this soup kitchen, show hospitality to this stranger, and work for justice among all people with the clear intention that "he may dwell in us and we in him?" What then?

It has been called resurrection, a new creation, eternal life. St. Paul describes it this way: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). It has happened. It can happen. So by God's invitation, let us give up self-justification for Easter and feather out our Lenten disciplines into the Great Fifty Days in order to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. Christ is alive! Let us be raised to our new life, by him, with him, and in him!



The Rev. Marshall Craver serves as spiritual director to the active clergy of our diocese. Reach him at [marshallcraver@bellsouth.net](mailto:marshallcraver@bellsouth.net).





# Enthusiastic Communicant

## The Episcopal Church through a Special Child's Eyes

by Michelle Crawford

My son Will is the sweetest four-year-old you could meet. In many ways, he is a typical boy, but he also happens to have autism spectrum disorder.

As a toddler, Will didn't develop the skills his peers were gaining, and we noticed sensory processing issues. Now he's attending a disability pre-kindergarten program and receiving therapy. His diagnosis might not be obvious at a glance, but when people try to engage him in conversation or ask questions, he doesn't respond.

At our parish, St. Jude's Episcopal Church in Niceville, everyone already knows and loves Will, but I can imagine how difficult it must be for a special-needs family brave enough to try out a new church. 1 in 68 individuals in the U.S. are on the autism spectrum, and sadly, it's easy to find stories about churches that haven't been accepting of fami-

lies who have tried to bring their children with special needs to worship.

Many of Will's quirks in church could be expected from any small boy, not just an autistic one. He has trouble sitting still and wants to play and eat snacks. But he also clamps his hands over his ears when he's experiencing sensory overload. Sometimes he needs to be removed from the service. Most of the time, though, he's able to at least stay in our pew and be relatively quiet, probably because church is part of his routine and he's familiar with the service. One benefit of attending a liturgical church is that there are no surprises for those who aren't comfortable with change.

I've told our rector, Fr. Greg Hein, that Will is his most enthusiastic communicant. Will literally runs up the aisle to the altar rail to wait his turn. He eagerly snatches the wafer from

Fr. Greg's fingers. We haven't let him have any wine yet, because he hasn't perfected the art of drinking from an open cup. But just getting the communion wafer fills him with joy. Other parishioners comment on how Will's face lights up when he is about to receive communion and how excited he is to be able to join everyone. "Let's go eat the food, mama!" he'll sometimes tell me before it's our turn.

When Bishop Kendrick visited St. Jude's in October, he talked about what it means to be an Episcopalian. He emphasized the importance of having small children share in receiving communion with everyone. "The most important thing about that table is not that piece of bread [rather] the foretaste of heaven that we say this meal is about is all of us there together. In the eyes of God, we're all equal." If parents pull their children's hands



back from receiving communion, “what you’ve just taught that child is that something about them is not the same as every other set of hands.” Instead, by allowing them to partake, we’ve taught them that “grace is grace, and they are equal in the eyes of God.” For parents of children with special needs, those words are more moving than Bishop Kendrick probably realized. Allowing special children to participate in all aspects of worship with their peers is a simple way to help them understand that they are, as Dr. Temple Grandin says, “different, not less.” Will is going to have a long road ahead, but I am so thankful he belongs to a church where everyone learns from the beginning that in spite of our individual differences we are all equal in God’s eyes.

As churches, we need to remember Jesus’ command to “let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:4). This is easy to do with most children, but a poor reaction to children who present special challenges may cause us to “hinder” their relationship with Christ. Even the wrong words spoken with good intentions may drive a family away. All children deserve the same chance to know Jesus through his church, and we should do whatever it takes to accommodate them.

Churches can improve

pastoral care to special needs families by connecting with them and asking how they can help. Ensure parents know their child is welcome to attend children’s programs. If a child needs extra help, enlist additional volunteers so that parents can focus on their own spiritual renewal. Educate the congregation, and ensure that parents are not judged by the behavior of their children. If the family was late, thank them for showing up; they probably



surmounted enormous obstacles just to get out the door. Let them know they and their children are genuinely welcome, and show it through action. Most of all, pray for those families. They need your support and love.

One mark of autism is the repetition of words and phrases. On a recent Sunday, our congregation was praying together: “Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the

Sacrament of his Body and Blood.”

That morning Will heard the words “spiritual food” and excitedly repeated to me what he thought we said: “the special food, mama! The special food!” The wonderful thing is that he isn’t wrong. The Eucharist is not only spiritual food, it is special food. The invitation to communion equalizes us and shows each one of us that we are special to God, and worthy of special food that sustains us as we leave worship

and go into the world to love and serve God. When I see how excited Will is to take communion, I pray that I can see the sacrament in the same way. May we open our church doors and our hearts to all God’s children, so that everyone has the opportunity to be filled with childlike joy at the prospect of receiving the special food the Lord has given us in remembrance of him, making us one body in

Christ, equal in God’s eyes.



Michelle Crawford is a member of St. Jude’s Episcopal Church in Niceville, Florida. Reach her at michellemariacrawford@gmail.com

The cross coming off the top of Christ Church, Mobile, on January 24, 2017.  
Photo taken by site foreman, Neil Arnold.





# A RESURRECTION PEOPLE

## A NEW STEEPLE BECOMES A LASTING SYMBOL OF GROWTH AND LIFE FOR CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

by the Very Rev. Beverly Gibson

Christ Church Cathedral recently engaged in a whole church assessment conducted with the services of Ministry Architects. Their report contains a strong affirmation of what we know to be true of the Cathedral Family at the present moment. This is a loving, joyful, deeply friendly cathedral church that is yearning to grow, in every sense. Most strongly, and importantly, the listening sessions reflected the desire to experience spiritual growth at Christ Church. The Cathedral Family expressed a yearning to be formed in our faith. Note that I did not say informed, but formed. We're talking about transformation, not education.

Our desire for transformation is a clear sign that we are a resurrection people. The faith given to us in our baptism has implanted the belief in and desire for transformation, new life, and growth "from strength to strength" deep within us. The "happy morning" that we will great this month on Easter Day is our defining moment. It is the spiritual reality in which we live, even when life's challenges

and our doubts may seem to overpower our belief and us.

The sign of who we are as resurrection people will be appearing during the week after Easter. The restoration of Christ Church's steeple, absent since the hurricane of 1906, will finally take



Old photograph for the original Christ Church steeple. Photographer unknown.

place. As the massive steeple rises high above the tree canopy that surrounds our historic building, Mobile (and travelers by Mobile) will be able to see our belief in the restorative power of God's love. Its shining dome top and cross in the daytime and its light at night will make it a beacon for those who long for that love. I believe that the steeple will bring many more people to our doors to see Christ Church, to learn about our history, to enjoy the beauty contained in our walls, and to experience our worship. In all of this, they will find our loving hospitality embodying God's love in this time and place.

And I believe more than that. I believe that the presence of this steeple above us will be part of our transformation. It will be a powerful sign of who we believe we are called to be, and as such it will have the power to form us into such a people. The Christ Church Steeple is the first phase and the lasting symbol of what is now a complete Master Plan for growth and life at Christ Church Cathedral for the third century

we will soon begin. Our work with Ministry Architects will help us to develop and realize a plan for programs in formation and evangelism for all ages. Our capital campaign will help us to refine and realize the plan for creating and maintaining a facility that will house and facilitate those ministries. The two go together to form a total plan to lead us into our bicentennial and beyond. This total Master Plan can help us to become a strong leader in downtown Mobile and in our diocese, as its Cathedral.

Twenty-first century technology makes it possible to construct a steeple, of the same design and dimensions as the original steeple constructed in the 1830s, from materials of considerably less weight, with much greater wind resistance, and without significant maintenance requirements. The original bell, now located on the north side of the front steps to the church, was one of the largest of its kind in the United States. It will remain in its present location, where we can continue to enjoy its voice in relative safety.

The steeple is being manufactured and installed by Campbellsville Industries, Inc. of Campbellsville, Kentucky (the “Steeple People”). The total height of the finished steeple, including the base support and lower level pilasters will be 64’8”. The steeple will be equipped with a digital carillon, which will be equipped with programed hymn tunes, as well as a keyboard for additional recordings and a remote control.

It will be transported in pieces from Kentucky during the week of April 3, 2017 and stored in a secure location until after Easter. Then, from April 17 to April 28, Church Street will be closed for assembly and installation of lights and other features before it is lifted by crane to its place atop the front of Christ Church Cathedral. We hope to dedicate the steeple to the glory of God and the mission of this Cathedral and diocese during our annual Cathedral Celebration on May 7. We will plan a diocesan wide celebration for a later date.



The Very Rev. Dean Gibson serves as the dean and rector of Christ Church Cathedral in Mobile, Alabama. She can be reached at [deangibson@christchurchcathedralsmobile.org](mailto:deangibson@christchurchcathedralsmobile.org).



# One Woman, Two Worlds

by Sarah McCarren

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## I WEAR THEM TOGETHER TO REMIND ME BOTH OF WHO I AM, AND WHOSE I AM.

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I wear this necklace every day.

It is my emblem for the Benedictine order of Episcopal Women, of which I am a member. I also wear a sterling silver Star Of David/Christian cross combination pendant that I bought years ago.

I wear them together to remind me both of who I am, and Whose I am.

The motto of my order, The Episcopal Community, is “Marked as Christ’s Own Forever.” We take vows to do our best to live according to the Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia in our daily routine.

The small Star of David reminds me daily that millions of Jewish men, women, and children were martyred by the Nazis. Although those horrid events happened long before my birth, I carry in my DNA the pain of the Jewish Holocaust.

Growing up the child of two hippies who happened to be Irish-Catholic and Eastern European Jewish, I was not baptized until the age of 20. My parents’ religious training for my younger brother and me was to “treat others the way you would want to be treated.”

We celebrated both Christmas and Hanukkah in December and I remember a book Mom gave to us entitled *My First Holiday Dictionary*. This little picture book gave an alphabetized introduction to all the major feast days in Judaism,

In spite of my brother and I being the only Jewish-American children in our circles, my Jewish heritage is something that I have always worn with pride. My Jewish background has augmented my walk with Christ; because of my heritage and the stories of the Jewish people that Mom told me, I can appreciate the world in which Our Lord walk on Earth. Like me, He has a Jewish mother.

I am completely and totally a follower of Jesus Christ, yet I retain the Jewishness of my mother’s people. As I mature on this walk of faith, the more I appreciate the divine gift which God has bestowed upon me.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

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Sarah McCarren is a parishioner at St. Francis of Assisi in Gulf Breeze, Florida. Reach her at [sarah.mccarren@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.mccarren@gmail.com).

FAITH MATTERS  
Easter 2017

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF  
THE CENTRAL GULF COAST



Above, from left to right: Molly Payne-Hardin, Bishop Russell Kendrick, Curtis Kennington, and Mike Dickey. Photo courtesy: Cindy McCrory/Blue Room Photography.

## MEET OUR **RECENTLY ORDAINED** TO THE TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE

On December 3, 2016, in a service filled with the Holy Spirit, three seminarians were ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons in Christ's Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church by the Rt. Rev. Russell Kendrick at Christ Church Cathedral in Mobile, Alabama. Bishop Kendrick's lighthearted sermon carried a weighty message to the ordinands: to bring the power, grace, and glory of the gospel—the language of Heaven—to the world, where he likened being a deacon to standing on the threshold of the Church—one foot inside inviting the world in and the other foot outside, bringing the Church out into the world. No easy task to be sure. Bishop Kendrick's story about a young girl, Mia, saying to him, "I'm the gospel, who are you?" caused the congregation to smile, but also to pause in thoughtful reflection. He closed his sermon with this advice to the ordinands, "Be the Gospel, have fun!" The recording of the service can be found on Christ Church Cathedral's Facebook page.

The seminarians were Mike Dickey, Curtis Kennington, and Molly Payne-Hardin. They share their stories on the pages that follow.



## Reverend Guinea Pig by the Rev. Mike Dickey

You had to sort of figure that my call story would be a little unusual. I can specifically recall the days I was baptized, when I was eight years old, and confirmed in the Episcopal Church at twelve, because those were two of only a handful of times the Dickeys darkened the door of a sanctuary. I had a dog-eared, paperback Bible in my room, and reading it felt almost seditious in a household where the prevailing attitude toward organized religion was disdain.

So it was with some surprise that I found myself six years ago, after a stint flying F-15s and years of trying cases as a lawyer, talking with the bishop about a call to ordained ministry. Bishop Duncan sent me into formal discernment, and after months of meandering through that process, looking for a “burning bush moment” to decide whether I was called to be a deacon or a priest, or maybe just a lawyer, I became a postulant clutching a list of approved seminaries and trying to figure out how to transition out of a busy law practice and move a house full of teenage boys.

I watched my friends Curt and Molly leave for seminary, and worked on tying up loose ends here. I was admitted to General Theological Seminary, and as we made plans in that direction our youngest boy went from a worrisome stumbling habit to full-blown epileptic seizures in the space of a few months. We tried to soldier on with plans for seminary all the same, but after a visit to GTS with Sean that spring, realized that raising a child with seizure disorder in Manhattan was a risk we were not willing to take.

That seemed to be the end of the discernment walk, and I drafted a letter to that effect for the bishop in May. Our rector, Steve Bates, counseled patience, and suggested another opportunity might present itself eventually. His advice proved prophetic with Russell Kendrick's selection as a bishop. We met in the drink tent the night before his consecration, and he asked that I get in touch with him about an alternative path to ordination that might work in my situation, with me serving as a “guinea pig” for the diocese.

A few months later, I was nervously finding my seat in a classroom at Sewanee, there for my first week in the Non-degree Theological Studies Program. Over a two-year span, I spend four weeks annually on the Mountain,

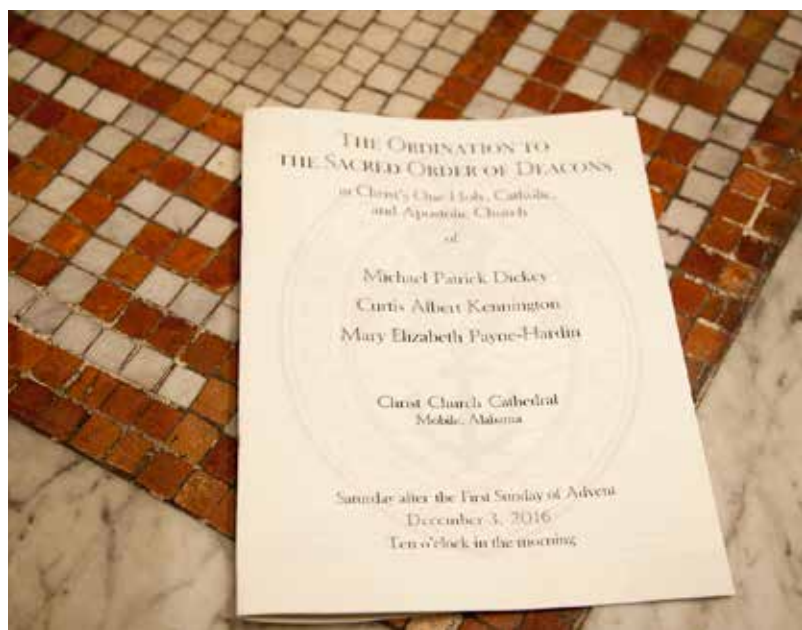
taking compressed classes on all of the areas tested on the GOE (General Ordination Exam). Toward the end of my first year I was ordained as a transitional deacon with Molly and Curt, and took the GOE last month. We will keep it between ourselves that the exam for which the classes are preparing me is in the rear-view mirror now—I sort of like going to Sewanee, and hope the bishop lets me finish.

In the midst of all this, I completed a CPE program (Clinical Pastoral Education) developed by Tom Weller and Ed Richards, making rounds weekly at Bay Medical Center for a semester, and enduring verbatims with those two experienced pastoral ministers. I have also preached, run a stewardship campaign, mentored EfM, helped administer a food bank and a food program for underprivileged children in Bay County, and taught adult Sunday School. Somehow I managed to bill a full year as a partner in a very busy law firm, trying cases and arguing appeals from here to Atlanta, and served as president of two civic organizations. It's been a busy time.

The end of this path, God willing, is a non-stipendiary, bi-vocational pulpit, so my busy days are probably just beginning. That said, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity, for God's ability to fashion good out of adversity, and for all of the people who stuck with me on this faith walk.

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Mike was sponsored by Holy Nativity in Panama City, Florida, and plans to serve as priest-in-charge at St. Matthew's in Chipley, Florida.



## The Gift of Affirmation by the Rev. Molly Payne-Hardin

For most of my life, people found it both odd and admirable that I'd use a full week of vacation to accompany EYC (Episcopal Youth Community) on out-of-state mission trips. "You spend the week with sixteen year olds? Voluntarily?!" they'd ask. "On top of a roof in the summer heat?" But when I told them that 40-year-old parents of kindergarteners (meaning parishioners who didn't even have teenaged EYC members) also went on these trips, then my co-workers really didn't know what to make of the Episcopal Church.

I could sort of understand their point. Most twenty-somethings my age used their vacation to go to the beach with friends (and I did those things too). But I'd been raised in an Episcopal Church that showed the width, depth, and breadth of the church. If only parents of EYC members chaperoned the EYC mission trips, how wide is our church? If only the young, energetic twenty-two year old Service Corps member chaperones the mission trip, what's the breadth of our church? I was raised in an Episcopal Church where grandparents of young children wanted the EYC to thrive and so that meant volunteering to help with EYC. And let's be honest: this meant running around the parish hall playing games with middle school kids who play to win, even if their EYC leaders are grandparents and great-grandparents. Those adult men and women who wanted our fledgling EYC to thrive—including one retired bishop!—remain my inspiration.

Not surprisingly then, my call to the priesthood included the width, depth, and breadth envisioned by God for Christ's church. The Episcopal Church believes that both individual and community perspectives are equally essential in discerning a call to ministry. In my twenties, probably while chaperoning a mission trip, I was told that I had the gifts and skills of a priest. I remain grateful for this gift of affirmation. That said, I was not experiencing a deeply personal call to ministry in my twenties. It would take another ten years before I would discern both an internal working of the Holy Spirit, combined with my parish priests' affirmations of that call, combined with a discerning community's experience (including

the experience of some middle schoolers) that I am called to the priesthood.

So I ought not to have been surprised that seminary brought me a greater sense of the width and breadth of our denomination's daily prayers. Like most seminaries in the Episcopal Church, we gather for Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer as a community. We use the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer and in *Enriching Our Worship*. What I'd rarely appreciated about these forms of prayer is how fully they direct us toward God—to God's saving acts for God's people, to the work of God in Christ, and to the ancient witness of God's people. Which is to say rich prayer enfolded in the diverse, creative, expansive, loyal and loving richness of God. This has, in turn, expanded my understanding and practice of my personal time of prayer to God.

As I prepare to graduate from seminary, I could not be more excited to join Mother Margaret Shepard and the people of St. Andrew's in Panama City! Although I don't know them well yet, they strike me as a people who continually desire the depth and breadth of God—the depth and breadth that forms wide and creative expression of Christ's church in the Central Gulf Coast.

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Molly was sponsored by Christ Church, Pensacola. She will serve as curate of St. Andrew's in Panama City, upon graduation from University of the South at Sewanee.





## Ordinary Diversity by the Rev. Curtis Kennington

There is a lot of waiting in New York City. . . for trains, for fancy coffee, for springtime. The discernment process, too, is waiting—listening to God’s call, looking towards uncertainty, leaning into the uncomfortable. Since leaving Fairhope to attend General Seminary in New York a couple summers ago, our family has waited and listened and stretched. All four of us have shared growing pains, joys, and a sense of wonder in what God has in store next.

There are joys hidden throughout the country’s largest city. The string trio playing at the Columbus Circle subway station are members of the New York Philharmonic, so they’re pretty good. The spider web playground in Washington Square is a favorite. Walking along the Hudson River early in the morning. . . drinks with friends and classmates. . . Evensong in the seminary chapel. . . picnics on the Clove—perfectly ordinary moments.

When friends ask the most important discovery about my time in New York, I talk about diversity. People are all kinds here. I never experienced the idea of “melting pot” until I lived in Chelsea. I don’t just mean hair color and sexual orientation. Diversity is

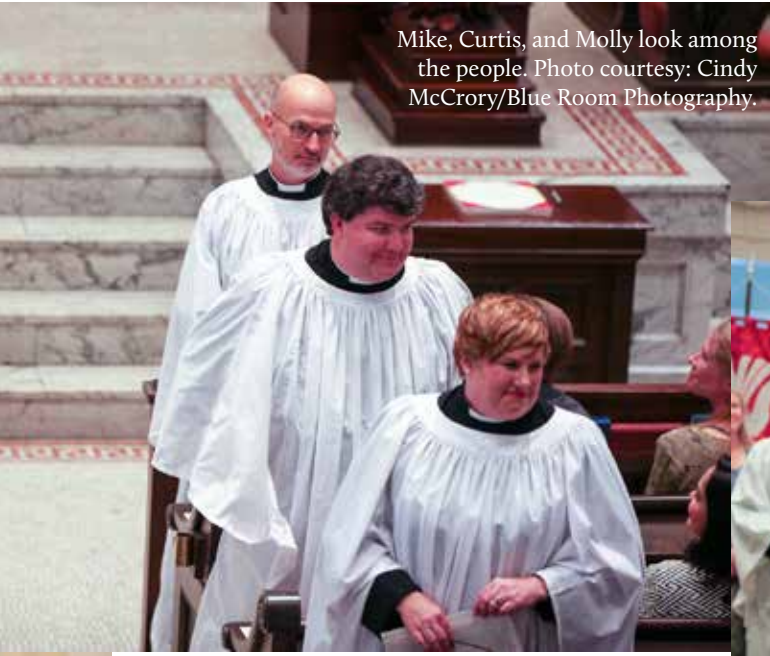
in how someone raises their children, in how you get your groceries. Diversity is in what someone puts on their bagel and their favorite hymn. And yes, there is social diversity. There are choices of who you spend your time with. There are opportunities to share, to walk alongside neighbors you adamantly disagree with, and to love.

What I once called diversity I now call community. My gratitude for this opportunity to walk the ways of priestly formation in New York runs deep. I have changed. My family and I have changed. We’ve learned about love in a new and brilliant way. Through perfectly ordinary moments and the most peculiar people—the tattooed, the refugee, the LGBT, the Republican and Democrat—all children of a God of love and His Son who offers life abundant. The Kenningtons are blessed to live in such a pluralistic world of love and struggling and gratitude.

We are grateful for our people home along the Gulf Coast. We look forward to returning to serve our community with full and open hearts.

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Curtis was sponsored by Holy Spirit in Gulf Shores, Alabama. He will serve as rector of St. Mark’s in Troy upon graduation from The General Theological Seminary in New York.



Mike, Curtis, and Molly look among the people. Photo courtesy: Cindy McCrory/Blue Room Photography.

Left: banners representing Christ Church Cathedral, the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Holy Spirit Gulf Shores, Holy Nativity Panama City, and Christ Church Parish Pensacola. Photo courtesy: Cindy McCrory/Blue Room Photography.



Left: Vocational deacon Terry Goff (Trinity, Mobile) bears the gospel book. Photo courtesy: Cindy McCrory/Blue Room Photography.



# YOUNG & YEARNING

**MILLENNIAL SPIRITUALITY  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

by the Rev. Mary Alice Mathison

## Finding Wholeness in a Chaotic World

Recently in an Education for Ministry class, our group began talking about wholeness. As one might imagine, the topic has a wide range, but general consensus was that wholeness included, but was not limited to, finding balance in our spiritual, religious, relational, vocational, physical, mental and emotional well-being. As different insights were shared it reminded me that finding wholeness is usually not easy, and that often for young adults, particularly in today's culture, it can be rather difficult.

Sometimes in articles or conversations, the pervasive theme is that young adults today should just suck it up. They should quit complaining, find regular work, get off their phones, and live life how those

before them have—settle down, get married, have kids, live in the burbs, and go to church. Other times, articles make their way through my newsfeed that blame the Boomers and Generation X for all the perils millennials face today. Both ends of the spectrum love to offer their solutions, but rarely, (in my experience anyway), do they capture the real essence of struggle many young adults might face today.

Wholeness may not be at the forefront of one's thoughts, but time taken to self-examine, might reveal that the struggle to find wholeness underlies a great deal of life choices and experiences. Previous generations have tried to define how we should dress, which job sectors or degrees will make us the most money, who we "should" love, our sexuality and gender identities, and that owning homes or cars, or being married with a baby by 30 is considered successful. Social media tells us that followers and likes define our value. The church wants us to be present, but seems perplexed as to how to reach us. In all that comes our way, we have done that of generations before—we have set out to define for ourselves how we want to live in this world. Unfortunately in all of that back and forth, things like

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## **WHOLENESS MAY NOT BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF ONE'S THOUGHTS, BUT TIME TAKEN TO SELF-EXAMINE, MIGHT REVEAL THAT THE STRUGGLE TO FIND WHOLENESS UNDERLIES A GREAT DEAL OF LIFE CHOICES AND EXPERIENCES.**

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finding wholeness can be thrown to the wayside.

For a fair portion of my 20's there were two things I thought would lead to wholeness—figuring out what to do with my life and finding a husband (or at least a serious relationship that would lead to marriage). Answering the call to priesthood did not make me whole, gaining confidence in being single did not make me whole, but learning to truly love myself as a child of God in the process of study, self-reflection, worship, and prayer while in seminary and in my vocation has certainly helped in the process. While finding balance in my relationships, job, physical and mental health, spiritual life, and passions certainly helps in finding wholeness, learning to love myself has by far been key to being at peace.

Take some time to reflect on the many things that shape you, and be reminded that first and foremost you are a well-

beloved child of God—let that be the place you return to when you feel less than whole, let that be the place that guides and directs your journey in this life. I am a single female priest, with an awesome dog, best friend, loving parents, great job, who lives to travel, and has deep faith in a loving and grace-filled God. And most days I love myself unlike I was able to in the past, and that has made all the difference.



The Rev. Mary Alice Mathison serves as curate for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Daphne, Alabama, and as the Missioner for College & Young Adult Ministries. Reach her at [maryalice.mathison@gmail.com](mailto:maryalice.mathison@gmail.com).

**FAITH MATTERS**  
Easter 2017

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

# SACRED CONVERSATIONS



Photo by Gary Moore, taken at first Racial Reconciliation workshop. Participants were asked to fully listen, without comment, to their partner's story. Art rendering by Jenn Johnson.

## Encouraging Racial Reconciliation

by Gary Moore and Joe McDaniel, Jr.

When you think of this topic is your first response something like this? "I don't want to think about the past because it fills me with shame and guilt. As a matter of fact, why do we even need to have these workshops? Don't we live in a post-racial society? After all, we just had an African American President!"

On a recent Saturday at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Gulf Breeze, a gathering of 30 parishioners and clergy from across our diocese addressed the topic through "Sacred Conversations," facilitated by The Rev. Deacons Carolyn Foster and Tom Osborne of the Diocese of Alabama, and co-facilitated by Gary Moore (St Paul's, Daphne) and Joe McDaniel

(Christ Church, Pensacola). The workshop participants agreed the purpose of such conversations is not to make others feel guilt or shame for the wrongdoings of past generations. The Episcopal Church is using the terminology of "Beloved Community of Christ" to reflect that we are one body, coming from all walks of life, into a reconciled community. To help create this community, we must acknowledge the wrongdoings of the past: namely, the sin of racism. Each person is encouraged and challenged to take the initial step in identifying the evil of racism. As Anne Frank once said, "How wonderful it is that no one needs to wait a single moment to improve the world."

Bishop Russell Kendrick began the workshop with Holy Eucharist, in which was exhorted: "... When you heard the cry and saw the affliction of your people in Egypt, you placed a burning bush on the holy mountain as a sign of your unending presence in the midst of our suffering. You called your servant to deliver us from the oppression of slavery and injustices. . ."

We are all called by our Baptismal Covenant to respect "the dignity of every human being." That includes reconciliation among the various afflicted people. The redemptive work of reconciliation begins by opening a dialogue between each other. After all, how can we tear down



the barriers that divide us if we don't know one another? Our Sacred Conversations were initiated by sharing one thing about ourselves that someone would not know by simply looking at us and judging us by appearance alone. Some of the findings were startling and the result of the exercise was that we realized we truly "can't judge a book by its cover." Each of us has a unique story that together creates a beautiful tapestry of diversity in the Beloved Community.

Many of the attendees did not know what to expect, so we asked all to express their hopes for what would come from the gathering and their concerns about attending. The theme that emerged from the "hope" segment was for an understanding of the healing process necessary to address the wounds of racism that divide our society. Conversely, the theme that emerged from the "concerns" segment was one of not being blamed for the past wrongful actions of previous generations. The participants then engaged in active, intentional listening to the other's perspectives on the awareness of racism. The participants came away from the exercise with mixed feelings. Some were astonished by what they heard, some were moved to tears by what they heard, and some were not at all surprised by what they had heard. However, we all gained a deeper understanding of why each participant felt the way he/she did about racial issues. Active, intentional listening is key to Sacred Conversations. When truly listening to another's expression of their life experiences we can empathize with each other and become reconciled to each other.

Conversation then turned to the concepts of white privilege and internalized oppression. Some of the participants had never thought about these concepts and were bewildered at the idea that their success in life could be traced to the concept of "white privilege" or opportunity structures. Yet others were not surprised by the adverse impact of white privilege and internalized oppression, but came to see it as a natural result of hundreds of years of systemic racism and injustice. The atmosphere in the room dramatically changed, as if a suffocating cloud hung overhead, while people shared stories about their white privilege and others gave examples of their internalized oppression.

The final conversations of the day, however, lifted both the cloud and the spirits of the participants as they visioned a perfect parish where there were no barriers to inclusion in the life of the parish. This participatory conversation was conducted in a non-judgmental, non-debate framework, which created a spirit of unity and hope for what might be as we engage in the redemptive work toward being the Beloved Community.

The workshop concluded with the participants being commissioned to be voices to resist and overcome injustice and oppression wherever encountered.

**"I hope to use what I learned to make our community a better place. One conversation at a time."**

**"Our diocese can benefit from the info provided and discussed at this workshop; even if it is one person at a time."**

**"Privilege and internalized oppression are concepts I had not given much consideration, if I am being totally honest. Recognizing both these things in myself and in others has been uncomfortably enlightening."**

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Look for additional workshop opportunities in the near future as we continue Sacred Conversations. In the meantime, search [www.episcopalchurch.org](http://www.episcopalchurch.org) for Resources for Racial Reconciliation and Justice.

Please contact either Joe McDaniel (415.225.9066 or [mcdanieljoe43@yahoo.com](mailto:mcdanieljoe43@yahoo.com)) or Gary Moore (251.928.3311 or [psalm82.3and4@gmail.com](mailto:psalm82.3and4@gmail.com)) for more information or to volunteer to support these continuing efforts.

## Psalm 23

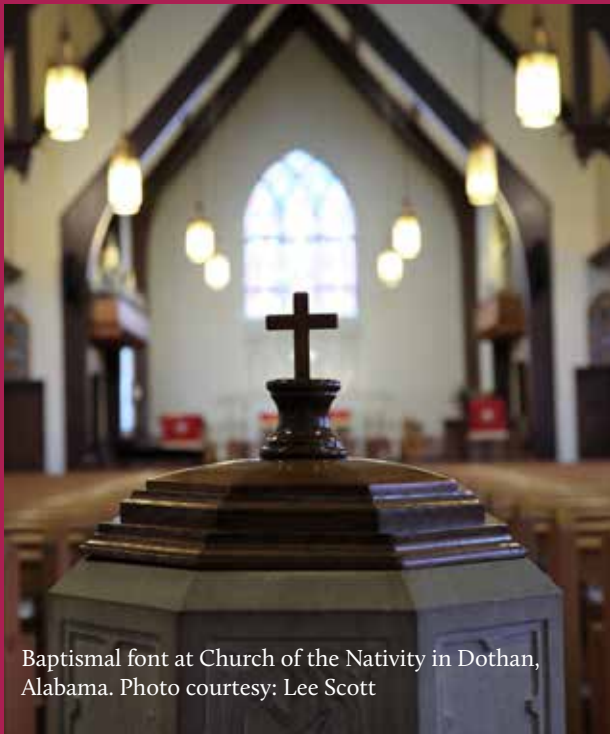
The 23rd Psalm is one of the most familiar and popular Psalms in the Bible. The words have perhaps been sung, spoken, prayed, and quoted more than any other passage of Scripture. The 23rd Psalm was written by David, not as a young shepherd boy, but many years after he had been sitting on the throne. The Psalm reflects the experiences of a man who had gone through many valleys but knew, in the end, he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

This Psalm creates a strong visual image of a shepherd, loving and caring for his sheep. It is said that sheep are dumb animals. Sheep need to be in sight of their shepherd or they will get lost or fall victim to wily predators. Just like the shepherd tends to his sheep, the Lord provides and protects us. Our needs are provided for in abundance. Like the shepherd who leads his flock to pastures of green grass, the Lord leads us through the pressures and stress of daily life and quiets our hearts. He restores us when we realize we cannot do it alone.

He protects us in times of need. Our faith and trust in Him sustains us through difficult times -- "the valley of the shadow of death" -- without fear. God never promises we won't "go through the valley", but he does promise that he will go with us. Our confidence is in the fact that the Lord is with us. When we trust in the Lord, we have the assurance that His mercy and goodness will go with us all the days of our lives. We will dwell with him forever, not because of our own goodness, but because we are His sheep and our trust is in Him.

Let us remember that Jesus is the Lamb of God and also our Shepherd. These words from a beautiful anthem by Mark Hayes titled *The Shepherd Became a Lamb* speak volumes. "Gentle guide, tender shepherd, caring for his sheep, now a cross upon his back, he stumbled through the street; perfect love and sacrifice shown by the Son of Man, when the Shepherd became a Lamb."

May we allow God to be our Shepherd all the days of our lives,  
Cathy Griffing,  
St. Francis of Assisi, Gulf Breeze, Florida



Baptismal font at Church of the Nativity in Dothan, Alabama. Photo courtesy: Lee Scott

The following line from a hymn  
is Easter to me:

*The strife is o'er, the battle done.  
The victory of life is won;  
The song of triumph has begun: Alleluia!*

Deborah+  
The Rev. Deborah Kempson-Thompson

# Overcoming Adversity with Love and Hope

by Sally Greene,  
Executive Director of  
Wilmer Hall Children's Home



Hannah moved into Wilmer Hall during her junior year in high school. In addition to adjusting to living in a new and strange place, she also had to attend a new high school. Rather than being bitter and rebellious, Hannah was very thankful for a place to live. She began classes at Davidson High School where she did very well and graduated in May 2016. While in high school Hannah found part time jobs and began to save her money.

In the fall of 2015, Hannah enrolled at the University of South Alabama where she is studying nursing. In spite of a rigorous curriculum, Hannah has continued to work, usually working 2 jobs and attending classes. Her house parents say that she is extremely careful in managing her money and has always made every effort to save as much as possible. She has saved rather than indulging herself with things most young people want – clothes, games, phones, eating out, etc. In spite of difficult circumstances, Hannah chose to do everything within her power to succeed. Because of her discipline, hard work and saving, Hannah just purchased her own vehicle! She bought a 2002 Jeep Cherokee and paid cash for it! Not only is Hannah very excited to have her own transportation but she feels a great sense of accomplishment.

Hannah's story of overcoming adversity with determination and discipline is inspirational to all of us. Rather than losing hope, Hannah chose to embrace the love and support she found at Wilmer Hall and move forward with her life in a meaningful and positive way. It is truly remarkable for all of us to witness what Hannah and all of the young people at Wilmer Hall can accomplish when they are given a safe home to live in and they are surrounded by people who love and support them.



# God Bless Terry McGill

by the Rev. Mark McDonald

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## ***THROUGH A SIMPLE HUG, TERRY REMINDED ME I WAS A BELOVED CHILD OF GOD.***

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Terry McGill is the person who had the most significant spiritual influence in my life. Terry was not a priest, author, philosopher, artist, musician, teacher, therapist, or spiritual director. He was the last person anyone would think as the type who could make a spiritual impact on another living soul. Terry was a hardworking Vietnam veteran and was also a recovering drug addict and alcoholic. What made Terry unique was his authenticity, and he used his spiritual gift to help others.

When I was a young man, I found myself in the grips of alcoholism and drug addiction. Thankfully, I have been sober since 1987 and my brief time with Terry was the key that opened the door to the rest of my life. Terry led a recovery group helping young adults learn to live a sober life. Through God's grace I was in this group, and my life has never been the same since. He led our small group like no other I have ever experienced. We shared our struggles and victories, and we all felt our weekly meetings helped us immensely. Eventually, we trusted each other enough to dig deep and share, in an honest way, our perception of

God's activity in our lives. Terry's leadership worked because he was an authentic person. He got every single one of us to open up and become vulnerable. This group had an extraordinary effect on me, and I am still close friends with several members.

Terry's life as a young adult was tragic. He was lost as a young man, rebelled against authority, drank a lot and dropped out when he was a junior in high school. As soon as he turned eighteen, he was drafted into the Vietnam war and saw heavy combat. While in Vietnam, Terry started using drugs, and later became addicted to heroin. After his service in Vietnam, he continued to struggle with his addiction, and floated around the country doing odd jobs and barely getting by. Eventually, Terry ended up on the streets with no money, no family, and no place to call home. Somehow he survived on the streets for three years before he landed in an emergency room almost dead, but Terry was able to detox. Through God's grace, he ended up in a state-run treatment center/halfway house which successfully started him on his road to recovery.

Terry relinquished his

hard turtle shell and allowed others to help him. After many years of living close to death and doing things his way, Terry decided he had nothing to lose; he might as well listen to others who were not dying, drug-addicted, trying to steal from him, or wanting to kill him. Terry realized his willingness to follow God was all he had. In fact, Terry was not sure where sobriety would lead. But with nowhere else to go, he stopped resisting getting help and miraculously realized living in a relationship with God was a pretty good deal. It was much better than his hell on earth, or his certain death.

When I met Terry, he was in his sixties, and he had been clean and sober for over fifteen years. Terry's remarkable story and his extraordinary group leadership made what I am about to share possible. It was his simple action which opened my eyes and heart ever so slightly, making space for God in my life.

In my twenties, I was searching for meaning and trying to find my way. I spent a year in weekly meetings with Terry's group. But as with all things, our time together came to an end. Unfortunately, after I moved

back to my hometown, I began reverting to my old mindset and losing my perspective. I was still sober, but I was having a difficult time finding my way, and I became angry at God. My life seemed very different than how I thought it should be. I could not deal with my vulnerability as a person. I was afraid I was not good enough to be valuable to any future employer, girlfriend, or wife. I was hiding from others and from myself. Most importantly, I was hiding from God. I did not believe I had any value to God. It was as if I was curled up in a hard turtle shell and was not letting anyone peek inside.

Two years later, I was attending an AA convention in Shreveport. I was sitting in the lobby of the hotel, and I distinctly remember I was feeling anxious and afraid. I was in no mood to talk with another living creature. My self-esteem was low, and I did not feel worthy to do much of anything. It was a dark time for me.

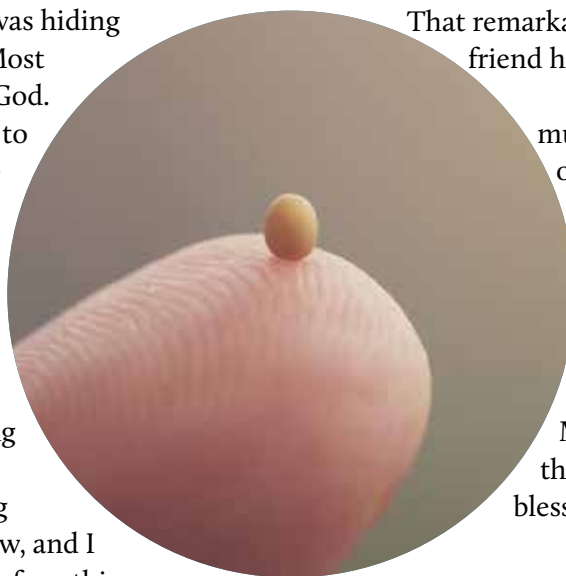
I remember getting up from my chair in the hotel lobby, turning around the corner, and unexpectedly, Terry was standing right in front of me. Terry noticed me first, looked me in the eye and, while saying my name enthusiastically, gave me

a great big hug without giving me a chance to back away or turn to my side.

I will never forget that hug from Terry. It was as if I was a dragon—a greedy, tight, puny and confused dragon. And when Terry hugged me, my scales were washed away. Through a simple hug, Terry reminded me I was a beloved child of God.

That remarkable, genuine hug from my friend has stayed with me to this day.

Terry and his hug were the mustard seeds which started me on my spiritual journey. I firmly believe God, through Terry McGill, laid the foundation eventually leading me to the priesthood thirteen years later. Sadly, he passed on to his greater reward some time ago. May his soul and the souls of all the departed rest in peace. God bless Terry McGill.



The Rev. Mark McDonald is vicar of Episcopal Church of the Advent in Lillian, Alabama. He can be reached at [mark.adventchurch@gmail.com](mailto:mark.adventchurch@gmail.com).

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FAITH MATTERS  
Easter 2017

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF  
THE CENTRAL GULF COAST



# BEFORE NOW...

## SHORT STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

by the Rev. Albert Kennington

The names of Anna Macy and James Jarratt are likely unknown to most readers. Both are special saints and home folks. I invite you to meet them.

Anna Elizabeth Macy is the “St. Anna” of the Episcopal church in the Poarch community. The Creek Indians who began this congregation knew Anna as a loving, holy person in their midst, and chose to name the church after her as a special way of honoring her Christ-like love for them. She and her husband, Dr. Robert C. Macy, were both 65 when, in 1930, they moved from south Baldwin county to live in near Poarch and share ministry with the Rev. Edgar van Edwards of Trinity, Atmore, in sharing the gospel with these impoverished, ostracized Native Americans. Dr. Macy was a missionary-minded physician who provided otherwise unavailable health care as well as instruction in better farming methods,

carpentry, and stories of Jesus. Before their marriage, Anna was set apart as a deaconess in the Episcopal Church. Offering her varied gifts, she became a trusted and beloved friend in the congregation as well as teacher and encourager. After her husband’s death in 1931, she continued to share her life and love with her Creek friends. In 1937, she reluctantly retired.

“It is very unusual to name an Episcopal Church for a living person, but the Indians chose for the name of their little church at Perdido Hills (now Poarch) the Christian name of Mrs. Anna Macy, whom they loved. The name was chosen in her honor before they even began building in 1931—St. Anna’s—in love and appreciation for the woman who with her husband, the good doctor, had done so much for them.” *(from an unpublished manuscript in the diocesan archives)*

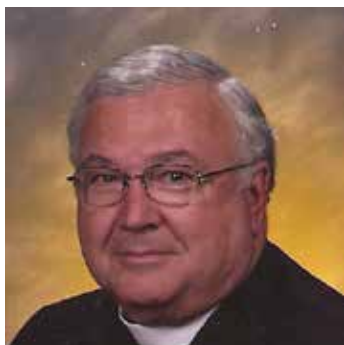


James S. Jarratt was the first rector of St. Thomas', Greenville, and of St. Mary's, Milton. Ordained deacon (1858) and priest (1860) by Bishop Cobbs, he began as missionary for Butler and Lowndes counties in early 1859. His time in Greenville included growth and loss through the ordeal of the Civil War. The first service in a small wood church was in Advent 1861. After the war, new growth was experienced, and he reported substantial growth by May of 1866.

The next year, he resigned in order to take up a new ministry in Milton, Florida—a ministry that became St. Mary's Church. He moved there on July 24, 1867, knowing that yellow fever was in the small waterfront town. He officiated at his first service on August 4 in the Masonic Hall. He died of yellow fever thirteen days later. Most southerners knew the fearful risk of going where there was yellow fever. In this knowledge, and with an unshakable faith, at the age of 39, he joined his people in Milton. Greater love has no one.

The pulpit in St. Mary's is a memorial to him. His body was later returned to Greenville and buried beneath the altar of the church he had helped build. His remains, with a tombstone, still rest in the earth beneath the present church. Stained glass windows above St. Thomas' altar are memorials to him.

The names of Anna Macy and James Jarratt came to me a few weeks before this writing because one of my parishioners in Immanuel, Bay Minette, asked if we might use our Lenten Wednesday evenings to learn more about saints and martyrs—especially southern ones. In my pondering, I thought of these two holy people. I've known St. Anna's Church a long time. I've worshiped there many times. I've listened to stories about "Miss Macy" there. As to Fr. Jarratt, Nancy and I were married in St. Thomas beneath his memorial windows and near his resting place. I served as vicar and rector of St. Mary's, Milton, and preached many time from his memorial pulpit. They, and the essence of theirs stories, have been a part of me for a long time. I'm thankful that my memory was prodded to think of them again and to share them with you.



The Rev. Albert Kennington is vicar of Immanuel Episcopal Church in Bay Minette, Alabama and serves as the registrar-historiographer for the diocese. He can be reached at [revsak@gmail.com](mailto:revsak@gmail.com).



# FAITHMATTERS

The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

## LOOKING AHEAD | *full calendar at [www.diocgc.org](http://www.diocgc.org)*

### April 19-21

Spring Clergy Retreat  
Beckwith

### April 26

Commission on World Mission meeting  
Duvall Center

### April 27

Commission on Diocesan Missions meeting  
Duvall Center

### May 6

Racial Reconciliation Workshop  
St. Cyprian's, Pensacola

### May 12

Episcopal Night at the Ballpark  
Blue Wahoos Stadium

### May 18-June 1

College and Young Adult Ministries pilgrimage to  
Santiago, Chile

### May 19-21

Clergy Spouse Retreat  
Beckwith

### June 8

Beckwith Board meeting  
Duvall Center

### July 10-14

Episcopal Youth Event (EYE17)  
University of Central Oklahoma

### September 14-18

Cursillo #159  
Beckwith

### September 29-October 1

BayLights  
Beckwith