



THE FOURTH EPISTLE SAINT JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH MOBILE, ALABAMA

The Reverend Thomas Heard, Rector
The Protestant Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast
The Right Reverend Philip Duncan, Bishop

Vol. XXII, Issue 2

February 2012

FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

At our Vestry Retreat, we considered a set of questions formulated by The Rev. Dr. Gary Nicolosi, rector of Saint James Westminster Anglican Church in London, Ontario, Canada. While Fr. Nicolosi's questions are intended for "denominational" consideration, we took them on to look at Saint John's:

1. What would be lost, and how would the world be worse off, if our church ceased to exist?
2. How does our church add value to people's lives that they cannot live without – whether they know it or not?
3. What challenges in the fulfillment of mission does our church face and what can we do to bring about that new thing God wants our church to be?
4. What are the barriers to seeing reality that our church needs to move beyond?
5. What issues does our church need to face within the next year, so that five years from now we won't have to say, "We wish we had..."?
6. If money were not an issue, where would you like your church to be five years from now?
7. In what ways can we affirm "Jesus is Lord" without appearing to be bigots?

We spent from 9:45 until noon working our way through the questions. I'd like to share some of the insights of your leadership around these topics. The questions "got to" most of us as we were reading through and discussing them.

I think we all heard question one as if it had been rephrased as "What happens if Saint John's was to close?" It was sort of like getting punched in the stomach! But the question was about the effect of Saint John's disappearing – not how we'd feel.

Put another way: Who would notice? Would the absence of ministry by Saint John's make an impact in Mobile? Sadly, we decided that not many would notice.

Rather than go through each of the questions and the thoughts expressed, let me try to summarize what was said, or at least what I heard.

While our disappearance from the Mobile scene might not cause much of a stir, there would be many of our number that would feel cast adrift and abandoned. That seems to be a value we add to our member's lives. Perhaps we are not doing a good job of publicizing what we do; we are a unique manifestation of The Episcopal Church in Mobile. We're not better than any other parish – just a different expression of worship.

Worship is only one aspect of Saint John's ministry and mission. We've been trying to get people involved in mission/outreach activities and had limited success. Perhaps our demographics should have told us that broad participation wasn't going to work. Also, we have folks that are involved with activities that stay below the radar; maybe we need to do something about raising them up? (See elsewhere in The 4th Epistle.)

We are a fine family-sized parish. That connects us closely, but can also make it hard for newcomers to fit in and feel like an important part. Our size challenges our financial viability; we continue to use our savings to fund the imbalance in our budget. We've maintained our pledge to the diocese and our own outreach budget because we believe those are integral to our identity as Christians. We recognize that we need to have a broader support base in membership. In that sense, we're feeling powerless and don't know what to do.

These are not easy questions; the answers make us uncomfortable. That's OK. Maybe our discomfort will help us to figure out what we should be doing.

-Thomas

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FEBRUARY LITURGICAL CALENDAR

The Presentation of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple

We will celebrate the feast of the Presentation on Thursday, 2 February 2012 at a 12:10PM Mass. "Presentation" is a new name for what's previously been known as "The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary" and "Candlemas." In the Easter tradition, this feast is called "the meeting of Christ with Simeon." In Jewish tradition, first-born sons were to be dedicated to God in remembrance of the sparing of the first born of Israel and the exodus from Egypt. In Christian tradition, this marks the recognition by Simeon and Anna that the Messiah, long promised by God, has appeared.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Season of Lent and is a fast day. It gets its name from the practice of the imposition of ashes, made from the palm branches from the previous year. We hold the ashes to be sacramental (not a Sacrament), which serve as reminders of our repentance or turning from old ways to the Lord. In ancient times, dusting with ashes was one way for a penitent to express sorrow and regret for sins and faults.

We will hold the Ash Wednesday liturgy twice on 22 February. The first will be a Said service at 10:00AM and the second a Sung service at 6:30PM. Throughout the day, the church will be open for prayer and imposition of ashes

Saint Matthias

After Judas' death, the disciples met and decided that they must replace him. They met, prayed and finally chose Matthias as the new twelfth disciple. We know nothing more of Matthias, where his mission field was, what he was like, or where he came from. We commemorate his life on Thursday, 24 February at a Said Mass at 12:10PM.



Vestry

VESTRY SUMMARY

The Vestry of Saint John's met in retreat on Saturday, 14 January. We gathered with a bit of breakfast before reading Morning Prayer together. We reconvened in "the Living Room" (the corner of the Great Hall) to take up the discussion points for the day. (Our conversation is summarized in the Rector's column in this month's newsletter.) The conversation was so fruitful that our schedule was set aside to be able to continue.

We did organize committee responsibilities as follows:
Evangelism (including PR and Communications) – Buckley, Shaw, Dabney
Outreach – Yeager
Parish Life – Cieutat, Chris Gass
Physical Plant – Christiansen
Administration – Cindy Gass, Dabney
Christian Education – Yeager
Stewardship – Heard

Bishop Duncan joined us for the last hour as part of his Pastoral Visit to the parish.

On Sunday, 22 January, the Vestry met briefly to elect its officers, as follows:
Senior Warden – Janet Buckley
Junior Warden – James Christiansen
Treasurer – Cindy Gass
Clerk – Nikki Shaw

PLEDGE SUMMARY

As this newsletter goes to print, we have received commitments from 53 pledge units. Our total for 2012 stands at \$128,204. For 2011 we received 56 pledges totaling \$145,908.

If you plan to pledge to the 2012 operating budget, please turn in a pledge card as soon as possible. Extra cards are available in the church office.





Outreach

At our Outreach meeting in early January, our conversation centered around how we can better communicate to you, our St. John's parish, about the good things we have going on. We have a number of outreach activities happening all over, and we need to do a better job of publicizing these.

But, we will need your help with this. In this newsletter, as well as in future newsletters, we will be highlighting local and ongoing outreach efforts. We will also dedicate a bulletin board or a section of a bulletin board to give you information about what is going on in our community, who is doing what, and who might need just exactly what you have to offer. To augment our awareness of needs around the community, our Lenten series will focus on local organizations that try to make life a little brighter for folks in our area. We will have speakers from such diverse places as Penelope House, Habitat, and Winners, along with our traditional meatless meal and a Eucharist.

To help us with this, we'd like to ask each one of you to think about the outside volunteer activities that you are doing, or have been involved in. For example: Do you knit for infants in the NICU? Are you involved in decorating Mardi Gras floats? Do you teach reading, or run in marathons to raise funds? Do you help people with their taxes, or work with after-school programs? Do you prepare food for shut-ins, or deliver meals for older adults? Do you sing in a local choir? It doesn't have to be church-related, or even people-related; if you volunteer at the local animal shelter, we want to know that too.

Below is a short form to simply give us your name, and what it is you do as a community volunteer. Thanks for sharing this with us by dropping it off at the office or in the offering plate during a service. We will take it from there.

-Cheryl Winters-Heard

✂

NAME: _____

Past or present community volunteer activities: _____

VOLUNTEERING AT THE FOOD BANK

We are going to schedule a **volunteer day** at the Food Bank for a Saturday morning during March. Look for the sign up sheet on the bulletin board.

Last time we volunteered we had two different tasks: one group sorted, cleaned and categorized food donations and the other group assisted the staff in getting the newsletter stamped and addressed. This time we may even be packing food boxes—whatever is needed: that's what volunteering is all about!!



We always have lots of conversation, fellowship and fun.

- Since 1981, the Bay Area Food Bank has distributed over 100 million pounds of food!
- Programs of the Food Bank include, Summer Lunch, Kids Cafe, Senior Nutrition, Disaster Relief and Community Food Assistance

-Janet Buckley

ONGOING AT ST. JOHN'S

On a day to day basis, St. John's can be a busy place. There are weekly and monthly meetings that take place on a regular basis, including:

- Alcoholics Anonymous meetings
- Winning Solutions meetings
- Gloria Dei rehearsals
- Education for Ministry sessions
- Venture Crew Scout meetings

St. John's is also the site for other occasional community events such as:

- Piano recitals
- Voting

The Great Hall is available for rent at very reasonable rates for meetings and parties. We also make our facilities available to non-profit groups as a community service. There is a lot going on at our church as we do God's work in the world.



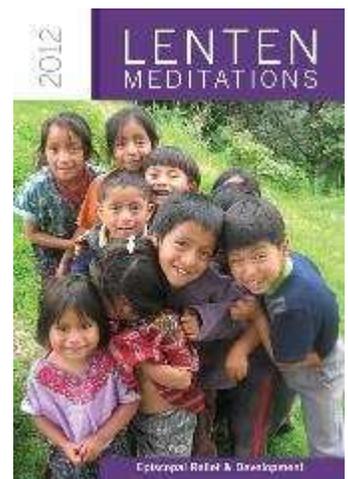
Each year Episcopal Relief & Development offers Lenten Mediations booklets which encourage readers to actively seek a closer relationship with God during the season of Lent.

This year's Lenten devotional provides a particular focus on promoting health and fighting disease while preparing our souls for healing. It was written by a group of leaders from across The Episcopal Church from a variety of backgrounds and theological perspectives. Episcopal Relief & Development is very grateful to these friends for generously sharing their time and thoughts. Reflecting a range of diverse voices, these meditations provide insights on how we might live our lives as we face a world in need. As we consider Jesus' life of healing and sacrifice

2012 LENTEN MEDITATIONS

during this Lenten season, Episcopal Relief & Development asks you to reflect on your faith and how you might take action in responding to a hurting world. The traditional Lenten practice of almsgiving provides an opportunity to renew your commitment to people in need by supporting Episcopal Relief & Development's work.

These booklets will be available at St. John's beginning February 5th.



Parish Life

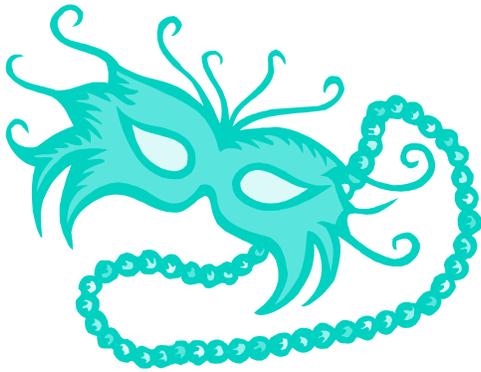
FOURTH SUNDAY IS THIRD SUNDAY IN FEBRUARY...

...AND A MARDI GRAS THEME

Our fourth Sunday potluck dinner will be held on the third Sunday in February, the 19th. We will have a Mardi Gras theme since it is the Sunday before Mardi Gras and the last Sunday before the Lenten season.

Wear your Mardi Gras colors and we will celebrate Mardi Gras Saint John's style: food and fellowship!

Sign up sheet will be on the bulletin board.



Directory Update

Please make the following change to the directory you received in May:

Matt & Margie Mattoon
901 Somerby Dr. #126
Mobile, AL 36695



LENTEN SERIES

This year's Lenten Series will take a bit different approach than in past years. On the five Wednesdays after Ash Wednesday, 2/29, 3/7, 3/14, 3/21, 3/28, we will gather at 6:30PM for a light Lenten Supper, a brief program and Eucharist.

Our presenters will acquaint us with their work providing information, assistance and relief to aspects of the Mobile community.

Join us on Fridays in Lent for Stations of the Cross in the church at 6:00 PM.

LENTEN COOKS NEEDED

As has become our tradition at St. John's, we will have a Lenten program on five Wednesday evenings starting Wednesday, February 29 (the week after Ash Wednesday). The dates planned for 2012 are February 29, March 7, March 14, March 21, and March 28.

As we've done in the past, our Lenten series will include a simple meatless meal followed by a brief program. We've enjoyed exploring the culinary delights of meatless chili, pastas, and quiche in years past, which are accompanied by a salad, bread, and a simple dessert. If you're interested in helping us prepare one of the meals, please contact Cheryl Winters-Heard or Janet Buckley. And, if your talents are more aligned with stopping at the grocery store for a loaf of bread, we can use you just as much as those who have kitchen abilities. A sign-up sheet is also posted on the bulletin board.

For those of you wishing to participate in the program and the meal, we will have tickets available for the entire series of Lenten meals at 5 for \$20.00, or tickets may be purchased weekly at \$5.00 per ticket. Come for the entire series and as a bonus, enjoy a healthy and delicious meal.

EPISCOPAL VISITATION SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2012



The 2012-2014 Vestry with Bishop Duncan.



Bishop Duncan visits with Father Thomas and Deacon Jayne.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW VESTRY MEMBERS



Bootsie Cieutat



Jan Dabney



Cindy Gass

Elsewhere in the Diocese

ST. LUKE'S ECW OFFERING A QUIET DAY FOR WOMEN

The Episcopal Church Women of St. Luke's, Mobile, will begin Lent by sponsoring a Quiet Day of Reflection for women on Saturday February 25, 2012 at St. Luke's. Open Table (United Church of Christ), which meets at St. Luke's, is co-sponsoring the event. The theme for the day is *Transforming the Everyday*; it will be a time to reflect upon God's presence in our everyday experiences. Coffee will begin at 8:30 a.m., with the opening session at 9:00 a.m. The closing

service will be at Noon, followed by a light lunch. Please bring finger food to share. Registration is \$5 and we ask that participants pre-register by Feb. 18. Late registration will be space available. Please contact Kathy Thompson, 251-661-1907, Rev. Ellen Sims, 251-545-1011 or Gail Griffith, 251- 622-7994, ggriffith07@bellsouth.net for more information.

-Cindy McCrory, Coastline Editor



Saint John's wishes to extend a sincere thank you to those who made memorial donations honoring the following:

Ping Duke	
	James Christiansen
Hortense Bruce	
	James Christiansen
Audrey Meador	
	James Christiansen
	Hollinger's Island Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star
Nellie Doyle	
	Nell & Burkhardt Dohm



Geri Moulton	02/01
Bob Sheffield	02/05
Jane Tate Moore	02/08
Mary Sheffield	02/08
Thomas Heard	02/15
Debbie Ollhoft	02/15
David Thompson	02/23



Jennifer & Samuel Tarantole
02/23



For healing grace and continued strength, we pray for our members:

Christopher Shine, Caitlyn Bryan, Joyce Lee, LaVerne Foster, Alice Schablinski, Ashley Garris, Alice Walker

For our Homebound:

Ray Campbell, Mae Dunn, Will Elam, Corinne Faust, Lois Hamby, Gwen Johnson, Nell Kirk, Violet Kosko, Margie Mattoon, Angela McGuire, Jane Tate Moore, Betty Plash, Mary Lou Varnes, Catherine Warren, Dot & Chick Wohlert

For victims of war and their families, and members of our Armed Forces and their families:

Eric Mattoon, Cheryl Garner, Michael Brabner

For our Friends and Family:

Katina & John Vallas, Tom Dabney, Steve & Muriel Donald, William & Barbara Dorsey, Erich Albrecht, Randy Baxley, Steven Garner, Joy Russ, Andrea Murray, Paul & Bonnie Dueitt, Pam Sullivan, Ronald Raines, Emily Steiner, Karen Mullen, Mary Fournier, David Jones, Anna Marie Brown, Jim Owens, John McCormick, Keith Malick, Gloria Berry, Travis McBride, Vernon Faulk, Velma Pearson, Betty & Gayle Chenoweth, Mark Stiber, Maddie West

For those who have died:

Sebra Strong

Contact Us

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Jack Ruppe
Sexton

Vestry:

Ron Brown

Janet Buckley

James Christiansen

Bootsie Cieutat

Jan Dabney

Chris Gass

Cindy Gass

Nikki Shaw

Butch Yeager



Saint John's Episcopal Church
1707 Government Street
Mobile, Alabama 36604

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Come Worship With Us!

Monday—Friday:

8:30AM Morning Prayer

Sunday:

9:00AM Adult and Youth Christian
Formation

10:00AM Holy Eucharist

Wednesday:

10:00AM Holy Eucharist;
Healing on the 1st
Wednesday of the month.

Other Feasts and Holy Days are
observed throughout the year; please
see our website for the latest schedule.

Parish Office

Monday-Thursday

9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Telephone: 251-479-5474

Fax: 251-473-1230

www.stjohnsmobile.org

Thee Store Episcopal Books

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SAINT JOHN'S: THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MIDTOWN MOBILE
Grounded in shared sacramental life and moving into the world
to be the hands of Our Lord.