FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

In the past, I’ve written a little bit about Family Systems Theory and the work of Murray Bowen and Ed Friedman. It has been a great influence in my life and has helped me to see my own family of origin in a much healthier way and with greater understanding and compassion. Murray Bowen (d. 1990) began his work in the 1950s, developing a theory describing a family as an emotional unit and applying systems thinking to describe the interactions within it. Families have a profound influence on the thoughts of their members.

Ed Friedman (d. 1996) was an ordained rabbi and a family therapist. He was a student of Bowen and used Bowen’s work in his practice. His work as leader of a congregation exposed him to many situations that he recognized through his Family Systems practice and got him to thinking about his congregation as a very large family. He observed the same kinds of behaviors and emotions in both his family practice and at the synagogue.

When starting to look at a family system, one of the first things that happens is that the therapist draws a pictorial representation of the members of the family, their characteristics and issues, as well as their relationships. This might seem like some kind of academic exercise, but it is not. The picture, called a genogram, becomes a graphical model of the family across several generations and allows the therapist to pick up on repeating patterns of behavior.

When I was drawing my own, I was asked to include my generation, my parents, and their parents. I can’t tell you what moved me to do it, but I included the generation of my great grandparents. It turned out to be the key to understanding some of the history of the family, as well as getting a handle on some really mystifying emotional behaviors that I’d experienced over the years. It was an event in the life of my mother’s maternal grandmother that dictated some future relationship issues and explained some crises.

I’ll not say more about that here; if you’re curious, you can ask me.

What occurred in my family of origin is a prime example of what Ed Friedman saw in his congregation. His most significant book, Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue, build on this phenomenon. When there is a significant event in the life of a congregation that goes untreated or even unrecognized, there is a strong likelihood that the emotional system of the congregation will carry the hurt or pain with it into successive generations. That’s exactly what happened in my family! Friedman’s contribution is for congregations and their leadership so that they can recognize and treat issues before they become toxic and debilitating.

Friedman tells leadership to develop three main areas for themselves:

- Being self-differentiated
- Being a non-anxious presence
- Being fully present with those they are leading

There are two concepts that are critical to Friedman’s system: self-knowledge and self-control. These make it possible to be vulnerable, well-differentiated, able to withstand resistance to change, and emotionally stable enough to withstand reactive sabotage.

I think Ed developed this system to help clergy survive in their congregations. I think it could also be helpful to congregations, as a whole and as individual members, to be able to cope with what the prayerbook calls “the changes and chances of life”. Each of us has a family that we came from. Each of us has emotional baggage that we’ve brought with us, even though it probably isn’t our own! Getting our own houses in order might be one of the best things we can do to be completely available to live into our calling to be children of God and workers in God’s Kingdom.

-- Thomas
Channing Moore Williams

A native of Richmond, Virginia, Channing Moore Williams became a missionary to China in 1855. He was ordained priest there and two years later sent to Japan. Williams began his work in Nagasaki and his first convert was baptized in 1866. He served as Bishop of both China and Japan. Bishop Williams concentrated his work in Japan and helped to form the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, the Holy Catholic Church of Japan and translated part of the Prayer Book into Japanese.

Saint Thomas the Apostle

Thomas, called “the twin”, will be commemorated on Monday, 21 December at 12:10PM.

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

We will celebrate the birth of Our Lord at two liturgies. On Christmas Eve, with music beginning at 7:00PM, the 7:30PM Solemn Mass and Procession will welcome the Babe of Bethlehem. The Wise Men will begin their journey this night as well. On Christmas Day at 10:00AM, we will have a Said Mass.

Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

Stephen, one of the first deacons of the 1st century Jerusalem church, was the first recorded martyr for the cause of Christ. His story is contained in the Acts of the Apostles. In it, a certain Pharisee named Saul is standing by. We will commemorate Stephen on Saturday, 26 December with a Said Mass at 6:00PM.

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

We will commemorate Saint John, patron of our parish, at a Solemn Mass on Sunday, 27 December at 10:00AM. His feast is being observed on a Sunday precisely because he is our Patron, as permitted by the rubrics of the prayer book. While historical data is suspicious of the apostle and the writer of the fourth Gospel being the same person, this has been the Church’s view since the second century.

The Holy Innocents

We will commemorate The Holy Innocents on Monday, 28 December at a Said Mass at 12:10PM. This feast commemorates the children Herod the Great slaughtered out of fear of the Babe of Bethlehem. Though not supported by secular history, the Church, since at least the 4th century, has honored these innocents as martyrs.

Frances Joseph Gaudet

From an early age, Frances devoted her life to prison reform. A Mississippian of African American and Native American origin, she organized ministry among prisoners in Louisiana. Through her efforts toward rehabilitation of young misdemeanor and vagrancy offenders, the idea for a Juvenile Court came into being. Taking her energies toward education, she founded the Gaudet Normal and Industrial School, succeeded by the Gaudet Episcopal Home.

2015 CONTRIBUTIONS

For donations to be included in your 2015 contributions statement, they must be physically received in the church office or postmarked by December 31, 2015.
The regular meeting of the Wardens and Vestry of Saint John’s was called to order on Sunday, 8 November 2015 at 11:36 AM.

The minutes of the 11 October meeting were approved as written.

Connie McLean reviewed the financial reports, noting that expenses outstripped income by $6,890 for October.

Janet Buckley, reporting for Outreach, talked about the successful workday at Bay Area Food Bank. She reminded the Vestry of the Thanksgiving Boxes being prepared for distribution by Mobile Community Action. She also reported that Azalea Gardens Nursing Home has provided the names and gift requests for the Angel Tree.

Reporting for Parish Life, Janet reminded that the 4th Sunday Potluck theme for November is “Anything but Turkey”. She announced that the Cookie Exchange will be 13 December and the Greening of the Church will be 20 December.

Fr. Heard reported that repairs to the lightning arrestor system are in progress and that Dobson Roofing has been contacted to perform the repairs to the Great Hall roof. Fr. Heard will be meeting with Alabama Power about our claim on 17 November.

The Vestry voted to call a meeting of the parish on 13 December for the purpose of electing vestry and convention delegates.

Butch Yeager presented the Landscape Plan that Tony Seymour developed for Saint John’s. Butch also reported no leads on the sale of the van, but has taken pictures to be used to advertise it.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 PM with prayer by Fr. Heard.

CALL FOR MEETING

The Vestry of Saint John’s has called a Congregation Meeting for Sunday, 13 December 2015 for the purpose of electing new members of the Vestry and electing Diocesan Convention Delegates and Alternates. The meeting will begin after the Blessing at the Mass. Following the first ballot for these positions, the congregation will retire to the Great Hall for the Cookie Swap.

This year, we will be electing 3 persons to 3-year terms on the Vestry. We will elect 3 delegates to Diocesan Convention and 3 alternates, as well.
**COOKIE EXCHANGE**

Remember lots of yummy cookies laid out across two long tables? Remember the “if you brought you can take” instructions? It was the St. John’s Cookie Exchange: we’re going to do it again.

On **Sunday, December 13th** after the service, we will have our **Christmas Cookie Exchange**: bring two or three dozen cookies (or candy or slices of cake) and we’ll all walk around the table filling up our plates. This is a chance to get a great plate of a variety of goodies and only have to cook but once.

Remember: the more participants, the more variety!

Parish Life

**FLOWER CHART SIGN-UP**

It’s time to sign up for flowers for 2016! Please use the cards on the bulletin board to begin signing up to supply altar flowers for Sundays in 2016. As Sundays are covered we will update the flower chart and post it for all to see. Altar flowers cost $50 per Sunday.

Parish Life

**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS**

Look for Christmas poinsettia signup cards in the Narthex and the Great Hall beginning Sunday, December 6. Deadline to place your order is Sunday, December 20.

Parish Life

**GREENING OF THE CHURCH**

**Sunday, December 20th, 2015**

We’ll spend some time after the service on the 20th to “deck the halls” of the church so that our wonderful Christmas services will also be beautifully decorated. We’ll need willing hands, creative talents, and some magnolia leaves… cookies and cider after we are finished.

Parish Life

**SAINT JOHN’S PARISH CHRISTMAS PARTY**

It’s time to put on those Christmas sweaters and ties and celebrate the Christmas season at Saint John’s. Bring your family and friends to church and stay for our annual Christmas Party.

**When:** Sunday, December 27th, 2015  
**Where:** Parish Hall after Sunday Service

The ECW is providing the meat, but we need all the “fixin’s” and (of course) desserts.

Parish Life
**SHARING OUR NATIVITY SCENES**

Like many of us, a treasured part of your Christmas decorations is your crèche or nativity scene. For some of us it’s the first thing we set up; for others, it goes up on Christmas Eve. It may have been part of your family’s decorations for years; it may have been a gift; it may be you bought it on a trip and has special memories.

This year we are asking you to share your crèche by bringing it to St. John’s on Sunday, December 13th – just for fellowship time. We will set them on tables so that we can all enjoy them. We can share our traditions and enjoy the beauty and diversity of a “decoration” that encapsulates what Christmas is all about.

ECW

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**ANGE TREE**

The St. John’s “Angel Tree” is up. The gifts are going to residents of Azalea Gardens Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center Home (formerly Kindred Nursing Home).

The tags have names and ages of the nursing home residents and requests for specific items. The list of items was given to us by the Activity Director of the nursing home. Some were requested by the residents themselves, for those residents that have trouble communicating, the staff suggested needed items.

The gifts are going to low income, senior, long term residents of Azalea Gardens who do not have a network of family or friends who can provide them with presents that make the holidays special.

Each tag has the name of an individual with a specific request. We are asking that you take a tag (or two or three) from the tree, purchase the specific items requested, and return by Sunday, December 13th, wrapped or in a gift bag with the angel tag on it. We will be delivering the gifts on December 17th.

This year we are asking you to “sign up”: Please put your name next to the tag(s) name you took; that way if you lose or misplace your angel tag we can look it up for you and we can make sure all of the residents we committed to get their presents.

Don’t like to shop? The Outreach Committee is providing a “shopping service.” There will be a basket and some envelopes next to the tree; choose an “angel,” put it in the envelope with the amount you wish to spend (check or cash), and a member of the Outreach Committee will do your shopping for you.

Outreach Committee

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**MAKE NEW FRIENDS! GET MORE EXERCISE!**

You can do both when you join our Outreach Committee at the Bay Area Fodo Bank for a couple of hours sorting packaged foods for redistribution to the twenty+ counties the food bank supports year-round.

No heavy lifting is required, but you get to walk to the “Canned Vegetables” sign or the “Breakfast Foods” sign or the “Soups” sign and put your packages in the right place. While you’re sorting and walking, you get to visit with others young and old who are doing the same thing. You may also run into old friends from other churches or new friends from area schools. For more information, see Janet Buckley.

Mary Gieseler
Memorial Donations

Saint John’s wishes to extend a sincere thank you to Curtis and Cindy Gass for a donation in memory of Leah Betts and to an anonymous donor for a contribution in memory of Corinne Faust.

Don’t forget Episcopal Relief and Development “Gifts for Life” opportunities when looking for gifts for those who have everything...or even for those who don’t, but who appreciate that giving to others in need represents the true meaning of Christmas. Pick up a Gifts for Life catalog in the church office, or visit http://www.episcopalrelief.org/.
Contact Us

Staff:
The Reverend Thomas Heard, rector
rector@stjohnsmobile.org

Louis Daniel
Organist & Choir Director
music@stjohnsmobile.org

Lella Lowe
Financial Secretary
finance@stjohnsmobile.org

Jack Ruppe
Sexton

Vestry:
Connie Anderson, clerk

Ron Brown

Janet Buckley

James Christiansen, senior warden

Eugene Johnston

David Jones

Connie McLean, treasurer

Geri Moulton

Butch Yeager, junior warden

For healing grace and continued strength, we pray for our members:
Mae Pearce, Neil McPhail, Bob Anderson, Ashley Garris,
Fran Barbour, Marian Boykin, Cookie Rich, Budd McLean,
Joyce Lee, Donna Waites, Ben Schmerbauch.

For our Homebound:
Mae Dunn, Nell Kirk, Lorraine Murray, Alice Schablinski,
Mary Lou Varnes, Catherine Warren, Chick Wohlert.

For victims of war and their families, and members of our Armed Forces and their families:
Ellis Garner, Eric Mattoon.

For our Friends and Family:
Harley Grace Partsch, Starley Anderson, Sara Elizabeth Rogers,
Paul Nelson, Barbara Bassett, Krystal Hiatt, Midge Harden,
Robert Cochran, Sr., Irene Barrow, Elias Bates, Donnie Chestang,
Bill Jones, Mark Stiber.

For those who have died:
Douglas Evans
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Come Worship With Us!
Monday—Friday:
8:30AM Morning Prayer

Sunday:
9:00AM Adult and Youth Christian Formation
10:00AM Holy Eucharist

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

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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.