



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 James Russell Kendrick, Bishop

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December 2017

FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

It's curious how things cross over from one area of life to another, one genre to another, one activity to another.

Saturday before Thanksgiving, I was headed for the range for a match. My route takes me up US 45 and into Washington County. Shortly after turning on to US 45 from AL-158, I pass through the little town of Kushla, Alabama. In and of itself, it is an interesting set of contradictions. I digress.

There are two Baptist churches in Kushla, the Kushla-Bethany Baptist Church and the Kushla Assembly of God. Both of them are served by the Eight Mile post office. (A long-time resident of Murray House was a member of Kushla-Bethany Baptist Church and they threw a big party for her 90th birthday.) This congregation was formed through the 2003 merger of Bethany Baptist Church of Whistler and First Baptist Church of Eight Mile. It is a member of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I'm sure we all have our own thoughts about the Southern Baptist Convention. For some of us, those thoughts may even turn into bias. Never a good thing, as what I'm about to share will illustrate.

Anyway, I'm driving past and happen to catch the message on the monument sign next to the highway. You know the type: Name of the church at the top, lots of space and several lines to contain the pastor's inspirational message for the week. This one said:

Thanksgiving isn't just a day,
It should be a way of life.

Wow. The pastor gets it. It is so succinct and yet carries an incredible depth.

Our Prayer Book lists it as one of two "National Days." That makes it "A National Day of Thanksgiving," and that's how it is officially titled. The first one was proclaimed by George Washington in 1789, but similarly themed gatherings had been going on for more than 50 years. It's companion in our liturgical calendar is Independence Day.

The first gatherings, beginning in the 1620s, were like harvest festivals. Crops had been brought in by late September/early November, winter was fast approaching. It was an opportunity to gather and give thanks to God for the bounty of the harvest. I suspect there was also a bit of thankfulness for continued survival, especially in the early days.

Even George Washington's proclamation puts thankfulness to God for life and all that it offers front and center. It seems to me, that we've become distracted, commercialized, and overwhelmed with everything but simple thanks to God for all that we have.

Our lives should be thanksgiving for everything, even our lives themselves. We have so much to be thankful for in our lives and any list will be woefully incomplete.

A few things stand out for me in the eternal scheme of things. As we approach Advent once again, Jesus' coming among us and coming again, we continue to give thanks each time we gather at God's table to share bread and wine in the Eucharist. It is a word that means "thanksgiving". It isn't just a day. It is a way of life.

--Thomas

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DECEMBER LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Nicholas, Bishop Of Myra

Nicholas was Bishop of Myra, near modern-day Demre, Turkey, and lived in the late 3rd to middle 4th centuries. It is likely that he attended the first ecumenical council at Nicaea in 325. We also know that he was imprisoned and tortured during the Diocletian Persecutions. Released after Constantine ascended, Nicholas became renowned for his habit of secret gift giving, which is the basis for his other moniker of Santa Claus. We will commemorate Nicholas on Wednesday, 6 December at a 10:00AM Said Mass.

Saint Thomas the Apostle

Thomas, called “the twin,” will be commemorated at a mass on Thursday, 21 December at 12:10PM. Thomas is recorded in John’s Gospel in several incidents. Seemingly somewhat literal minded and inclined to skepticism, Thomas was a staunch friend. According to Eusebius and others, Thomas evangelized the Parthians. Christians of Malabar, India claim that Thomas brought the Gospel to India.

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 Tuesday, 26 December with a Said Mass at 12:10PM.

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

We will commemorate Saint John, the patron of our parish, at a Said Mass on Wednesday, 27 December at 10:00AM. 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 Thursday, 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.



CALL FOR MEETING

The Vestry of Saint John’s has called a Meeting of the Parish for Sunday, 17 December 2017 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.

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

OUTREACH

SHARING CHRISTMAS GIVING

The Saint John's "Angel Tree" will be up again this year. The gifts will be going to residents of *Azalea Gardens Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center* (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 and, for those residents who have trouble communicating, the staff suggested needed items.

The gifts will be given 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 17th**, wrapped or in a gift bag with the angel tag on it. We will be delivering the gifts on December 19th.

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

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 31st, 2017

Where: Parish Hall after Sunday Service

The ECW is providing the meat but we need all the "fixin's" and (of course) desserts. There will be a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.



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 and we're getting ready to do it again.

On **Sunday, December 17th**, after the service, we will have our annual **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!



Vestry

The regular meeting of the Wardens and Vestry of Saint John's Church was convened at 11:35 AM on Sunday, 12 November 2017.

The minutes of the October meeting were approved as submitted.

Connie McLean reviewed the financial performance, noting that expenses exceeded income by \$932. In addition, we have over \$1,100 in the Scrip account

Kathe Gieseler reported that food collected for the Thanksgiving food boxes will be delivered during the week. The Giving Tree for Azalea Gardens Nursing Home residents will go up shortly. We have received a substantial donation from a friend of the parish to be used for feeding more folks.

Parish potluck will be 26 November with the theme "Anything but turkey".

Fr. Heard reminded the vestry that its retiring members form the core of the Nominating Committee. He asked Butch Yeager to chair the committee and asked that at least two members of the congregation at large be added to the committee. He also asked the Vestry to call a meeting of the parish for the purpose of electing officers for 17 December.

The Congregational Enrichment Venture is the new name for the School for Mission. The parish will be asked to volunteer to participate; if no one comes forward, the Rector will ask folks.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01PM with prayer.

THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH

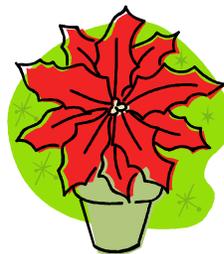
Sunday, December 24th, 2017

Our annual "Greening of the Church" comes late this year: we'll be decorating the church for Christmas on the 4th Sunday of Advent as always but this year that will be on Sunday, December 24th. We'll spend some time after the morning service on the 24th to "deck the halls" of the church so that our first Christmas service of the Christmas season that same evening will be beautifully decorated. We'll need willing hands, creative talents, and some magnolia leaves...cookies and cider after we are finished.



2017 CONTRIBUTIONS

For donations to be included in your 2017 contributions statement, they must be physically received in the church office or postmarked by December 31, 2017.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Look for Christmas poinsettia signup cards in the Narthex and the Great Hall beginning Sunday, December 3. Deadline to place your order is

Sunday, December 17.



November Birthdays and Special Visitors



Above left: Audrey Garner celebrates her 90th birthday.

Above right: November birthday celebrants Cindy Gass, Louis Daniel and Nikki Shaw.

Left: Cheryl Winters-Heard, Thomas Creel, Fr. Thomas Heard, Julia Heard.

Photos by Irene Yeager



The November meeting of the ECW focused on upcoming Christmas projects.

ECW members discussed our church sisters and brothers who are shut-ins and those who are temporarily “out of commission”.

The Sunshine Committee of the ECW received a “donation” of cards from Thee Store to assist them with their ministry,

The ECW’s project of the refurbishing the two chairs located in the chancel is moving forward. An upholsterer has been identified now it is just a matter of choosing fabric that will match the other fabrics in the chancel.

The ECW purchased new Bingo cards for Murray House. The “Bingo Ladies” sent a note expressing their appreciation. ECW members will continue to

collect small prizes for the Bingo activity time at Murray House.

Christmas activities/projects were discussed: the Cookie Exchange on December 17th and the Parish Christmas party on December 31st. The ECW will coordinate with the Outreach Committee to decide which community organizations will receive donations for Christmas.

The next ECW meeting will be Sunday November 17th – please join us.





EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT LAUNCHES \$760,000 HOLIDAY MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

Episcopal Relief & Development is launching its annual Holiday Matching Gift Challenge. Starting now through the end of December, Episcopalians, friends and other supporters have the opportunity to double their donations by participating in this special fundraising opportunity.

A group of extremely generous donors will match all donations dollar-for-dollar up to \$760,000 until December 31. The Matching Gift Challenge will benefit the Global Needs Fund, enabling Episcopal Relief & Development to work around the world with its local partners in overcoming poverty, hunger, and disease, and rebuilding after disasters.

“This match is the largest in the history of the organization,” said Rob Radtke, President of Episcopal Relief & Development. “I’m grateful to our faithful and compassionate friends for their continued support of our critical work with local partners worldwide.”

Donations made to any Episcopal Relief & Development fund before year-end are eligible for matching, including contributions online, over the phone, by mail or through Gifts for Life, the organization’s alternative giving catalog. Gifts of stock or from an IRA are also eligible for the Matching Gift Challenge. For new and existing monthly donors, any scheduled contributions will also be matched.

Between now and December 31, all contributions up to \$760,000 will be matched. Donate online at www.episcopalrelief.org, or call 1.855.312.HEAL (4325). Gifts can also be mailed to Episcopal Relief & Development, PO Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058.



ST. JOHN’S CHRISTMAS SCRIP

This month the St. John’s Scrip program will take up money on the 1st Sunday (December 3) and return the gift cards on the second Sunday (December 10). This will allow you to have gift cards early in the month. Also it will allow us to take advantage of several card bonuses:

- Bass Pro Shop now earns 13%
- Belk now earns 10%
- CVS now earns 8%
- Home Depot now earns 7%
- Lowe’s now earns 6%
- PetSmart now earns 9%
- Starbucks now earns 9%

Get your shopping done early!!! Shop St. John’s Scrip!!!



Gloria Dei Chorale and Chamber Orchestra

Louis F. Daniel, Director

Marshall Ames Richards, Tenor

present

Christmas with the Chorale

Friday, December 15, 2017

7:30 PM

*The Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception
2 South Claiborne Street, Mobile, Alabama*

*All donations at the door will go to
Victory Health Partners*

Happy Birthday

Jon Barbour	12/02	P. L. Pritchard	12/10
Pat Pritchard	12/04	Marie Brown	12/12
Craig Hall	12/05	Bailey James	12/14
Jack Ruppe	12/08	Mae Dunn	12/19
Dana Escobio	12/09	Chris Delaporte	12/23
Marie McPhail	12/10	Roy Duhon	12/25



Bob & Connie Anderson	12/07
Thomas Heard and Cheryl Winters-Heard	12/11
Mike & Fran Barbour	12/24

FLOWER CHART SIGN-UP

It's time to sign up for flowers for 2018! Please use the cards on the bulletin board to begin signing up to supply altar flowers for Sundays in 2018. As Sundays are covered we will update the flower chart and post it for all to see. Altar flowers cost \$50 per Sunday.



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

Carolyn Pearce, Connie Anderson, Joyce Lee, Neil McPhail, Marian Boykin, Ron Brown, Jayson Chestang, Budd McLean.

For our Homebound:

Mae Dunn, Joan-Marie Elam, LaVerne Foster, Mary Catherine Warren, Chick Wohlert, Becky & Art Youngblood.

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

Ross Hussman, Josh Vernor, Ellis Garner, Eric Mattoon.

For our Friends and Family:

Betty Williams, Lee Bert Benbow, David Fowler, Jimmy Douglas, Eddie Chubb, Jeanette Sprinkle, Kelley Lynd, Kay Barnes, Latecia Cushion Knight, Hayley Espey, Evia Daniel, Charles Geck, Jerry Wigfield, Karen Davis, Anna Marie Brown, Mary Jo Vinson, Bonnie Jernigan, Kaye Turner, Katelynn Tillman, Britney Butler, Angie Leon, Johnny Leon, Neal Tourné, Sandy & Ray Michel, Connor Crist, Paul Nelson, Krystal Hiatt, Elias Bates, Bill Jones, Mark Stiber.

Contact Us

Staff:

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Financial Secretary
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Jack Ruppe
Sexton

Vestry:

Darren Anderson

Ron Brown

James Christiansen, *junior warden*

Cindy Gass, *senior warden*

Kathe Gieseler

Connie McLean, *treasurer*

Geri Moulton

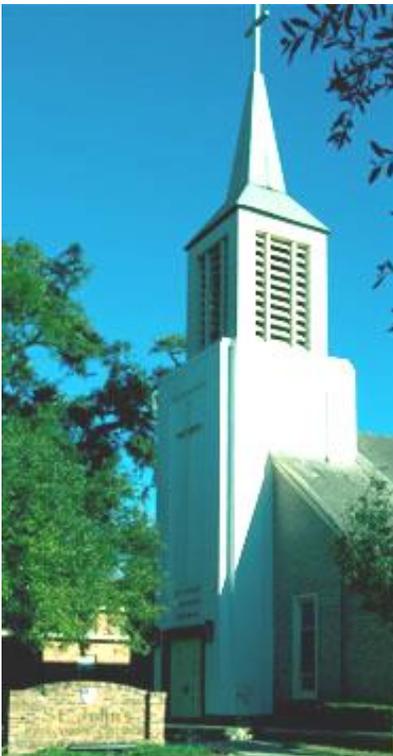
Nikki Shaw, *clerk*

Butch Yeager

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

Nonprofit Organization
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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

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.