



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

Vol. XXVIII, Issue 1

January 2018

FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

For Christmas Eve, my sermon had an ear-worm in it. It was a paraphrase of the first line of a 1968 hit recorded by Dionne Warwick. My version is “Do you know the way to Bethlehem?” I don’t know whether it stuck in other folk’s ears, but it certainly stayed in mine.

It didn’t start out as a song paraphrase. I was thinking about the shepherds in Luke’s gospel account of the birth of Jesus. How did they know that the babe was in Bethlehem? How did they know where in Bethlehem he would be?

From there, I started thinking about the genius in Rome that decided to take a census, but made everyone return to their “hometown” for it. I’m pretty sure that Joseph, who was from Nazareth in Galilee, had never been there. Bethlehem is about 100 miles south of Nazareth. And there was the complication of taking Mary, his betrothed, along with him. She was nearing the end of her pregnancy and it would be a long and arduous journey.

There is often extra stuff “read into” the gospel stories. Doesn’t matter which one; things get “added” to the texts that we have. One of these additions to the text is the inclusion of a donkey for Mary to ride from Nazareth. I guess it kind of makes sense; these days we wouldn’t contemplate asking a mother-to-be to walk any great distance. The realities of the first century, though, were that most folks walked wherever they were going. If you were going by water, a boat would certainly be the conveyance of choice, but on land it would be walking.

So, back to the trip that Joseph and Mary took. Did Joseph know how to get there? How many days did it take to travel that distance: a week? Two weeks?

Luke’s prose paints beautiful pictures in our minds of the various tableaux in the story. It makes us want to be there, to be part of that celebration of our salvation. But to do that, we have to go to Bethlehem.

Do you know the way to Bethlehem?

Each year, we commemorate Jesus birth. Each year we wait for his coming again. For me, I want to make that trip to Bethlehem with the shepherds, to see the incredible thing that has happened for humanity. But how do we get there?

The first century world into which Jesus was born was a pretty tough place. Remember the genius that ordered the census? He was the head of an overbearing government that ruled through fear. The society had very rich who cared about none but themselves and very poor who struggled to survive day to day. Hunger, Disease, Homelessness were an unholy trinity resulting from racism, classism, sexism, violence, hatred, and prejudice. Self-interest, self-aggrandizement, and other-izing were hallmarks. From where I sit, things haven’t changed very much. Do you know the way to Bethlehem?

We get to Bethlehem by taking on those abuses. We use the power of God’s love to change the way the world works. That Christmas night, we were empowered to stand against evil. We were empowered to stand up for justice, for equality, for repentance.

This is our vocation as followers of Jesus Christ. Our calling demands that we be agents of change. We are workers in God’s vineyard, making the path to the Kingdom of God open to all.

—Thomas

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JANUARY LITURGICAL CALENDAR

The Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

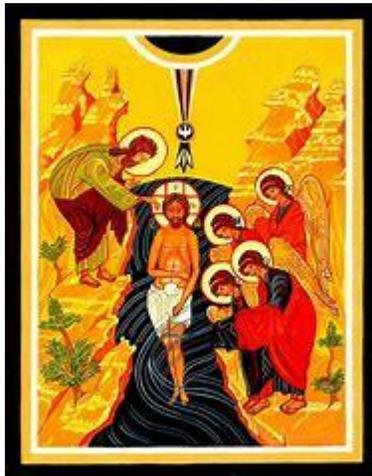
This day we celebrate the naming of Our Lord on the eighth day after his birth, in accordance with Jewish custom. Naming is important to all of us; it establishes our identity. We will celebrate this feast on Monday, 1 January 2018 at 10:00AM.

The Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ

5:30PM on Saturday, 6 January
“Epiphany” comes from a Greek word meaning to manifest or appear. This feast concludes the twelve days of Christmas and marks the discovery of God Incarnate by the gentiles in the persons of the wise men. Join us to celebrate the visit of the Magi to the stable in Bethlehem.

Baptism of Our Lord

10:00AM on Sunday,
7 January
The First Sunday after the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ is also known as The Baptism of Our Lord. On this day, we recount Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan by his cousin John the Baptizer. It is a particularly appropriate day for baptisms.



William Laud

William Laud became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. He was the ecclesial advisor to Charles I, and strongly opinionated. Laud was a bit of a conundrum. While he eschewed ritual practices that had developed during the reign of Elizabeth I, he also believed the church was in direct continuity with the medieval Church. One might say a Protestant and a traditionalist. It was Laud who moved altars back to the East wall and surrounded it with rails. The long frontal that we use on occasion is known as a Laudian frontal. Laud didn’t get along well with people whose opinions differed. He was impeached for treason and beheaded in 1645. We will remember Laud at our Wednesday mass on 10 January.

Antony, Abbot in Egypt, 356

In the 3rd century, a rise in solitary ascetics (anchorites) was seen in reaction to the corrupt and decadent society. Antony was orphaned at a young age. Always a quiet and meditative young man, Antony heard the Parable of the Rich Young Ruler and immediately gave away his land, sold his possessions, and gave the proceeds to the poor. He lived alone for 20 years. He then founded a monastery among the cells inhabited by other ascetics. We will commemorate Antony of Egypt at a 10:00AM mass on Wednesday, 17 January.

The Confession of Saint Peter

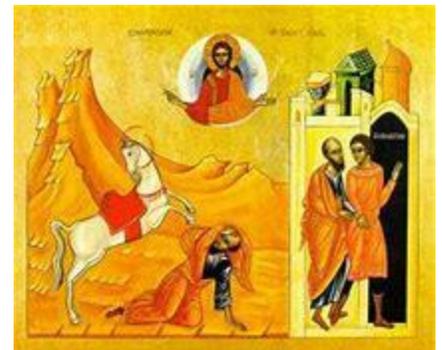
12:10PM on Thursday, 18 January
On this occasion, we commemorate Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ. Of course, we also remember how human Peter is: often bumbling, stumbling, impetuous, intense, and with rough edges. This feast marks the beginning of the annual Week for Christian Unity.

Ordination of Florence Li Tim-Oi

Born in Hong Kong in 1907, Li Tim-Oi was baptized as a student at Union Theological College in Guangzhou, China. She was ordained deaconess in 1941. On 25 January 1944, Bishop Hall ordained her priest. At the end of the war, her ordination became very divisive. She made the personal decision not to exercise her priesthood. All the while, she ministered to her congregations with great faithfulness. We will commemorate her ordination at our 10:AM mass on 24 January.

The Conversion of Saint Paul

12:10PM on Thursday, 25 January
We mark Paul’s acceptance of Jesus as his Lord and Savior on this day. Even though it is referred to as his conversion, the Pauline position seems to be more of enlightenment to a new reality, rather than rejection of his heritage in favor of Christ. This feast concludes the Week for Christian Unity.



In Memoriam

ELIZABETH EDWARDS YOUNGBLOOD

13 September 1935 -1 December 2017

ARTHUR LEE YOUNGBLOOD

9 November 1927–16 December 2017

We lost two longtime parishioners in December: Becky on the first, and Art fifteen days later. They were married at the old Saint John's in June of 1953. Art was chair of the publicity committee for the new church in 1955. Daughter Olivia was the first baptism in the new church in 1956; Susan was baptized in 1958. In 1959, the Youngbloods started a bit of a hiatus as they became part of the mission congregation that founded Saint Luke's--Mobile. There, they remained active and involved. They returned home to Saint John's in 2008. Becky sang in the choir until she couldn't anymore. Art breathed much life and spontaneity into the Peace. They gave much of their lives to the church. It has been my privilege to be their priest.

--Thomas



Saint John's wishes to extend a sincere thank you to those who made donations in memory of the following:

Ella Love Johnson

- Mary Geseler

Irene Highshew Morgret

- Mary Geseler

Art & Becky Youngblood

- Connie & Bob Andersor

- Kathryn Emerson

PARISH LIFE

**JANUARY 4TH
SUNDAY POTLUCK**

The theme for January's 4th Sunday potluck is Mardi Gras. Wear your beads and come prepared to party after the service on Sunday, January 28.

Parish Life

December Birthday



Marie Brown celebrated her birthday in December with her St. John's family.



Vestry

The regular meeting of the Wardens and Vestry of Saint John's Church was called to order at 11:35AM on 10 December 2017. Darren Anderson was excused. Geri Moulton and Ron Brown were absent.

- Connie McLean reviewed the financial performance for November. She also noted that there is over \$1,200 in the Scrip account.
- Janet Buckley reviewed the Outreach and Parish Life activities planned for the balance of the year.
- James Christiansen reported that he is still having difficulty getting bids for the soffit repairs.
- Fr. Heard covered the pledge report: 29 of an expected 38 pledges have been turned in. This accounts for \$106,808 of our anticipated \$132,168 income from pledges.

- Fr. Heard suggested that since no one had stepped forward to be part of the Congregational Enrichment Venture that Saint John's should drop out. The Vestry concurred.

- Fr. Heard asked the Vestry to set the Diocesan Pledge. The Vestry voted to continue our giving to the diocese at 10% of Plate and Pledge offerings.

- Fr. Heard brought to the attention of the Vestry a request for assistance from Deacon Tricia Spencer to aid the Florida dioceses that are assisting refugees from Puerto Rico in the aftermath of the hurricane.

The Vestry received the report of the Nominating Committee.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 12:10PM.

OFFICER ELECTIONS

Congratulations to our new Vestry members and Convention Delegates who were elected at our meeting on 17 December.

Elected to three-year terms on the Vestry are Janet Buckley, Jan Joseph and Ron Waites.

Serving as Convention Delegates are James Christiansen, Connie McLean, and Mary Sheffield. They will be backed-up by Alternate Delegate Janet Buckley.



2018 PLEDGE SUMMARY

As this newsletter goes to print, we have received financial commitments from 32 pledge units for 2018 totaling \$118,968. In 2017, we received 38 pledges totaling \$132,476.

If you plan to pledge to the 2018 operating budget, please turn in a pledge card as soon as possible. Extra cards are available in the church office.



PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

“Ask and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened”.

Matthew 7:7-8

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On Friday, January 26, 2018, Mobile’s Housing First will host the people of Mobile County and the surrounding areas who are homeless and in need. These children of God will gather at the Fair Grounds on Ziegler Road to receive a variety of services such as medical and dental assessments and treatment, replacement of identification cards, laundry services, haircuts, housing interviews for placement, VA interviews and assistance, legal assistance to resolve or clear outstanding legal issues and many other services.

Once again this year I invite you to participate by gathering coats and warm clothing for the many people who will arrive seeking physical warmth as well as spiritual warmth from human interaction. Coats and clothing will be provided to men, women and children who are homeless in our area. Trinity Episcopal Church along with her many friends will provide these warm coats and clothes. In order to do this, I do need your help in collecting coats and warm clothing.



Please search your closets and dressers, ask your friends, neighbors and co-workers to do the same and bring those coats, pants, sweaters and shirts you no longer wear and donate them to this worthwhile project. While you are at the New Year’s sales, pick up a package of new socks or underwear for men, women or children; gloves and hats are also welcome. I ask you please to donate these valuable treasures to friends in need to shelter them from the January cold. I cannot express to you enough the joy our guests receive as they select items for themselves.

Donations can be brought to Trinity Episcopal Church or you may call Rev. Terry L. Goff, Deacon of Trinity Episcopal Church and she will arrange for pickup of your generous donations.

Rev. Deacon Terry L. Goff
Trinity Episcopal Church
1900 Dauphin Street
Mobile, AL 36606
251-473-2997 (Church Office)
251-656-1609 (cell) or email terrylynngoff@yahoo.com



Can you spare a pair?





EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT RESPONDS TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Episcopal Relief & Development is partnering with the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles to provide emergency support to help the most vulnerable impacted by the wildfires spreading across Southern California. This assistance includes gift cards and spiritual care for homeless and undocumented people in Ventura, Ojai and Santa Paula.

“One of the challenges in a situation like this is to figure out a response when new needs become apparent,” noted The Very Rev. Canon Michael Bamberger of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, a member of Episcopal Relief & Development’s Partners in Response team and the Diocesan Disaster Coordinator for Los Angeles. “We used an asset-based approach and identified that there are active Laundry Love ministries in Ojai and Ventura. It was easy to see how the existing ministry could be amplified to meet the needs of a community to clean their clothes of the smoke residue. In the days ahead, when we become aware of more needs, we will do our best to address them.”

California has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the country due, in part, to the lack of affordable housing and shelters with long waiting lists, forcing an increase in the number of people living in encampments and on the streets.

In partnership with St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church in Ojai, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Santa Paula and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Ventura, the Diocese of Los Angeles is providing gift cards to help people who are homeless and undocumented to replace belongings lost in the fires. All three churches have strong interfaith relationships in their communities. Laundry Love, a national program that assists people struggling financially to have the dignity of clean clothes, is working with St. Andrew’s and St. Paul’s in Ojai to provide laundry services.

Canon Bamberger and diocesan leadership are in regular communication with clergy and congregational leaders through AlertMedia, an emergency notification platform, to assess and organize responses.

“Our church partners have deeply engaged ministries,” said Katie Mears, Director of Episcopal Relief & Development’s US Disaster Team. “As the fires continue, we will leverage the expertise of our congregations and diocesan disaster coordinators.”

Donations to ERD’s US Disaster Fund will help those affected by the devastating wildfires in California.



ST. JOHN’S SCRIP PROGRAM IS ONE YEAR OLD!

The St. John’s Scrip is now entering its second year and has been a great success. Almost \$1,800 has been raised for the St. John General Operating Fund. Thank you to all who have participated.

For those who did not participate last year, fear not, the Scrip program will continue. Eugene Johnston was in charge of the program this past year and Bootsie Cieutat will run the program in 2018. This link will send you to the over 730 retailers that participate: <https://shop.shopwithscrip.com/>.

Thank you to the parish financial secretary Lella Lowe, who gave us the idea and places the order each month. Thank you St. John’s for all the support! The program should be even better in 2018.



Happy Birthday



Craig & Shirley Hall 01/31

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Bob Ross | 01/08 |
| Mary Jones | 01/09 |
| Curtis Gass | 01/16 |
| Nicholas Tarantole | 01/17 |
| Irene Yeager | 01/19 |
| Alexandria Harvey-Smith | 01/20 |
| Janet Buckley | 01/24 |
| Mary Frances Chestang | 01/25 |
| Scott Escobio | 01/26 |
| Bill Duke | 01/31 |

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:

Bea Brown, Mae Dunn, Joan-Marie Elam, LaVerne Foster, Mary Catherine Warren, Chick Wohlert .

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

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

For our Friends and Family:

Joyce Baker, 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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Lella Lowe
 Financial Secretary
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Jack Ruppe
 Sexton

Vestry:

Darren Anderson

Janet Buckley

James Christiansen, *junior warden*

Cindy Gass, *senior warden*

Kathe Gieseler

Jan Joseph

Connie McLean, *treasurer*

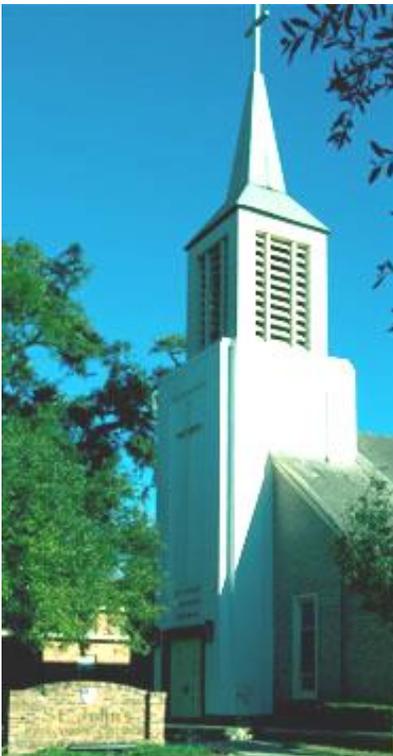
Nikki Shaw, *clerk*

Ron Waites

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

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.