



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. XXIX, Issue 9

September 2019

FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

As I write this, we are two days away from the State of Alabama redefining how a couple are married. I might even go so far as to say that the state is destroying the institution as we have known it.

Legislation was passed and signed by the governor that takes effect on 29 August. After that date, you can no longer go to the Probate Court of your county and apply for and receive a Marriage License. Instead, a couple acquires a copy of an Alabama Marriage Certificate, fills it out, signs and dates it, has their signatures notarized, and files it with the Probate Court.

Anybody see anything wrong with this? Did you notice that there is no mention of a place for an officiating person (minister or judge) to sign the certificate?

What we have known as marriage custom only dates to about 1550. The Council of Trent in 1563 stipulated that a marriage had to be performed by a priest with two witnesses present. It was about this same time that the church began keeping registers of marriages as there was no civil authority to do it. Marriages were a multi-part ceremony, much as we are used to: a legal agreement, mutual vows, and a nuptial blessing.

In many places, a civil ceremony (covering the mutual agreement and vows) is all that is legally required. That used to work here in Alabama, too. If there was to be a religious ceremony, it would occur after the civil ceremony, perhaps on the same day or later.

Anyone who has spent time with me around a wedding knows that I (along with many of my clerical colleagues) would be happy if the church stuck to its part of the marriage business, rather than having clergy act as agents of the state. Sometimes the state's rules can conflict with the church and *vice versa*.

So, why wouldn't I be happy with what the State of Alabama has done? Doesn't this put us in a similar place as most countries in Europe? Well, sort of, but not completely.

What Alabama has done is make marriage "self-reporting". Fill out the form, have it signed, notarized and file it. Boom. Marriage complete.

There is no requirement for residency, no verification of identity, no one checks to see if either of the parties is already married, no check for competence, only one parent required to consent to a minor's marriage, and only one person has to appear at the Probate Court to file the document. Also, there is no voluntary assent to the marriage and there are no vows.

Do you see any problems with this? Can you see any ways that the process might be abused? Imagine someone filling out the form, getting it notarized and filed without the other party even being aware. There is no corresponding change to divorce laws, so unwinding a fraudulent or non-consensual marriage would be an ugly affair. The impact of this law will have far-reaching consequences for generations.

What concerns me the most is not the exclusion of the church. My concern is for the preparation and understanding that has to occur for a marriage to have even a half of a chance to succeed. What we're talking about is the joining of two lives, equal partners in a common life. Part of that comes in ensuring that there is openness and intimacy in the relationship, that there is mutual regard and love. All of these are expressed through the vows, the promises made to each other for how they will live their new life together. Even the civil marriage has vows. I'll still bless them, but I'll make them exchange vows first.

--Thomas

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEPTEMBER LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Paul Jones

Bishop Paul Jones was an advocate for peace and became Archdeacon of the Missionary District of Utah in 1914. He was elected bishop in 1916. World War I was raging and Bishop Jones was outspoken, saying, "I believe that the methods of modern international war are quite incompatible with the Christian principles of reconciliation and brotherhood." He was forced to resign his see in 1918 by his colleagues in the House of Bishops because his stand was unpopular. He continued to advocate for peace until his death in 1941. We will commemorate his life of service at our 10:00 AM Mass on 4 September.

Holy Cross Day

On Saturday, 14 September at 5:30 PM, we will celebrate the Feast of the Holy Cross. Eusebius tells us Emperor Constantine's mother, Helena, discovered the True Cross buried at Golgatha. She was entrusted by the emperor to build suitable housing that would inspire and attract veneration of the relic. Helena's work stands today as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This day, we honor the implement of execution that brings us life and salvation.

Edward Bouverie Pusey

Edward Bouverie Pusey was the acknowledged leader of the Oxford Movement, reviving High Church teachings and practice in the Anglican Communion. Pusey, along with John Keble and John Henry Newman produced *Tracts for the Times*, discussions of the rationale for the catholic revival and practice. We will commemorate him at our Said Mass on 18 September at 10:00 AM.

Saint Matthew

Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, will be commemorated on Saturday, 21 September at a Said Mass at 5:30 PM. Legend holds that Matthew the Tax Collector became a disciple of Jesus and later wrote an account of the life and works of Jesus. We know this today as the Gospel of Matthew.

Sergius of Moscow

Civil war in Russia in the 1300s forced Sergius' family to move to a farm outside Moscow. At 20, he and his brother took up a secluded life which became the foundation of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity. He became a national hero for supporting Prince Donskoi in the overthrow of the Tartar overlords. Sergius is remembered by Anglicans as a namesake of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, which promotes closer relations between Anglican and Russian churches. We'll remember Sergius of Moscow on 25 September at our 10:00 AM Said Mass.

Saint Michael and All Angels

One of the Major Feasts of the Church, we will celebrate the Feast of Saint Michael and All Angels at our Said Mass on Monday, 30 September at 12:10 PM. Angels have found a place in contemporary society with many identifying a personal guardian angel. But angel comes from the Greek "*Angelos*" which means "messenger". This day we commemorate all the messengers and agents of God throughout the course of history.



August Birthdays

Celebrating July birthdays at St. John's with David Jones, James Christiansen, Kathe Gieseler, and Bootsie Cieutat. (Photo by Irene Yeager)



Vestry

The regular meeting of the Wardens and Vestry of Saint John's Church was called to order by Fr. Heard at 11:32 AM.

The proposed agenda was adopted. Darren Anderson was absent due to his work schedule. The minutes of the 14 July meeting were approved as corrected.

Connie McLean reviewed the financial reports, noting that we have received \$6,000 for the re-roofing of the Great Hall.

Janet Buckley reported that the Head Start books will be completed and distributed to the children in the first week of September. Outreach has proposed soliciting for new or gently used luggage for the St. Mary's Home children to use for their transitions to other homes. The vestry approved the proposal.

Jan Joseph reported that the first mailing of new mover post cards will happen shortly. Our Facebook page and website will cross-link to each other.

Parish Life will be coordinated by the ECW. Bootsie Cieutat will be the liaison to the vestry.

Fr. Heard reported that the Standing Committee has approved our loan request. Activities should begin in two weeks

A small committee (Gieseler, Anderson, McLean, Buckley) will meet with Fr. Heard to conduct a review of his Letter of Agreement with the parish. It hasn't been touched since 2007.

Fr. Heard reported that the dedication of the bowl for the Baptismal Font will happen during the service on 13 October.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 12:42 PM.

PARISH LIFE

4TH SUNDAY

SEPTEMBER 22ND

TAILGATE PARTY TIME!

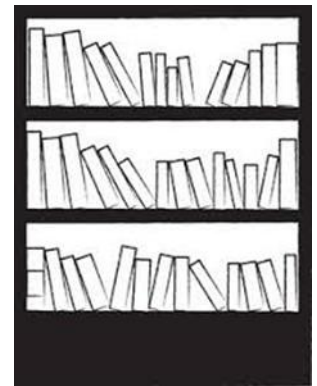
It's time to wear your team colors and bring your favorite tailgate food; our 4th Sunday Potluck for September will have a "tailgate party" theme. We'll cheer for our teams and enjoy good food, good fellowship, and good friends. 4th Sunday is always a good time to invite family and friends to St. John's—the more the merrier!



BOOKCASES FOR SALE

Continuing the sale of all the items from Thee Store: the bookcases, fixtures, pegboards, stands are all on sale! The books too! We'll open up the store and have everything priced. You are responsible for "hauling" them off but there will be willing helpers.

All proceeds go to the Roof Fund. You need a bookcase!!



ShopWithScrip®

Powered by Great Lakes Scrip Center

September orders due Sunday, September 8. Gifts cards available by Sunday, September 15.

Please take a close look at your scrip order form, as it has been updated for recent additions and deletions. New retailers offering gift cards through the program include Cost Plus World Market, P. F. Chang's, and Zaxby's.

SHINING OUR LIGHT

STEWARDSHIP BEGINS WITH GOD'S ABUNDANCE & OUR RESPONSE TO IT

I was recently sitting in a meeting of stewardship and development leaders in the Church. In the midst of this meeting, it became clear to me that we as the Church too often see the words 'stewardship', 'development' and 'fundraising' as synonyms. **By doing so, we do a disservice to ourselves and to the important work of all three.**

As we are an organization that defines ourselves with the word 'stewardship', I hope to parse out at least my understanding of what is distinctive about 'stewardship' ministry. Stewardship includes aspects of development and fundraising, but the work of stewardship is much more expansive.

Stewardship is living out our lives with the belief that all we are and have is God's, entrusted with us to share.

- Stewardship includes vocational discernment.
- It includes care of creation.
- It includes formation of our young people.

Yes, stewardship does include aspects of development and fundraising. But the starting point for the stewardship conversation is the individual recognizing that we need to share what God has given us. The starting point for stewardship is not the need and mission of the institution.

I often say that I will not see TENS as meeting our mission if we only get people giving more money to their churches. We are about generosity. We are about

encouraging people to live with their money in a way that is rooted in our faith, and our understanding of God's abundance. We do teach, and financial stewardship leadership must include, compelling statements for the Church's needs, fiscal transparency, and treating givers with respect. But...

Stewardship begins not with the mission of the church, nor the needs of its institution, but rather with God's abundance and our response to it.

By J. R. Lander, for The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS)

As a faith community, Saint John's must shine the light of Christ through our worship, welcoming, pastoral care and ministry to the wider community. How we use our time, talents, and treasure determines how brightly we are shining our light.

At Saint John's we shine our light in the community through use of our building as a day center for McKemie Place, through the actions of our clergy as chaplain to the MPD and MFRD and leadership of various community religious organizations, and through the actions of our various members who are involved in many outreach activities. How are you shining your light in your own life?

The annual commitment campaign will be conducted in October, when pledge cards will be mailed to all members. Please consider what God has given you in your life and commit to sharing that abundance with the work that your church is doing in the world.

OUTREACH

BAGS FOR KIDS

Do you have a piece of gently used luggage you don't use any more? Would you like to provide a new roller-bag or a rolling gym bag to someone who would otherwise be using a black plastic garbage bag to move their belongings?

St. Mary's Home is a residential treatment facility for boys and girls facing serious conflict, abuse, neglect and abandonment. The children who live at St. Mary's Home suffer emotional, behavioral and educational problems because of family circumstances.

Children at St. Mary's Home transition to their own home or to a traditional foster home when they no longer need the clinical support they get at St. Mary's Home. The Outreach Committee is collecting luggage for St. Mary's Home residents to pack their belongings when they transition to their next home.

Luggage can be brought in anytime during September. We will have the final in-taking on the first Sunday in October. As always, the Outreach Committee will shop for you, or if you just want to make a contribution to this project see Janet Buckley or Lee Dorsey.



BAKELESS SALE

*****REMINDER*****

It's not too late to send your gift for our Bakeless Sale. This is our only fundraiser and your contribution helps us to help others in our church family and beyond. Please make your check payable to St. John's and designate "Bakeless Sale" on the memo line.

The ECW voted at their last meeting to make donations to the church in memory of Neil McPhail and Peter Pearce. They continue to pray for members and friends who are facing illness and difficulties.

-Irene Yeager, ECW President



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

Thomas S. (Boogie) Dabney II
 Fran & Mike Barbour
 Neil McPhail
 James Christiansen
 Joyce Lee
 Connie & Bud McLean
 Susan Callahan & Stephen Callahan
 Connie & Bob Anderson
 St. John's ECW
 Peter Pearce
 Joyce Lee
 St. John's ECW

Thank
you

To our St. John's Church Family...a sincere thank you for all of the prayers, love, phone calls, cards, and food we have received.

-Marie and Ron Brown



REMEMBERING HURRICANE MARIA TWO YEARS LATER

Two days after Hurricane Maria touched down in St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, I already had cabin fever. I had stayed indoors the entire day before, and immediately after the storm – because, frankly, I was scared. I live at the corner of two intersecting streets—one of which is a major traffic artery—and traffic was practically nonexistent just before and right after the storm. The governor had made announcements on the radio asking citizens to stay off the roads, and a curfew had been instituted. We could all see the devastation the storm wrought just by opening our windows or doors, so there was compliance with the governor’s request for the most part.

There was also an aura of sadness that permeated the community because, in addition to the condition of St. Croix, our sister islands, St. Thomas and St. John had gone through a similarly harrowing experience just one week prior with Hurricane Irma. Such back-to-back occurrence of two major hurricanes devastating the US Virgin Islands could not be recalled by anyone living in recent history.

Several days later, I learned that the major roads had been cleared of debris and saw that vehicles and pedestrians were back on the road, except during curfew hours. I took a trip to my church, St. John Episcopal. Our priest informed me that our companion diocese, the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama had contacted us. They let us know they would be sending down water, food and toiletries to help with

immediate needs. As Senior Warden, I arranged for several women from the congregation to gather and assist with unpacking, packaging and distributing the donated supplies.

We received assistance by way of an Episcopal Relief & Development emergency grant just a few weeks later so that we could continue to address the need for fresh food for the neediest people in our community. This was a welcomed gift, as many of the seniors found the Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) that were being distributed by the government difficult to consume for two or three meals daily. We distributed gift certificates so that the recipients could purchase fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as dairy and small portions of fresh meat. These were prized commodities during the first month or two following the storms.

Today, I am the Director for the Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands Long-term Recovery Program. We have come a long way since those first few weeks after Maria, but there are still many with unmet needs. In continued partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development, we are mobilizing case managers for both the US and British sides of the Virgin Islands to serve elderly people and low-income families, establish a Disaster Risk Reduction & Management committee

and to increase our resiliency by creating preparedness plans and practicing them.

—Tina Beazer





Thomas Creel	09/02	Lavelle Ollhoft	09/19
Ron Brown	09/06	Jeremy Anderson	09/20
Jayson Chestang	09/08	Mary Bonner	09/20
John Creel	09/08	Thelma Lomers	09/22
Barbara Vann	09/12	Rhett Barbour	09/23
Jim Hayward	09/15	Ashley Garris	09/26



Jan & Mark Joseph	09/02
Regina & John Molyneux	09/02
Jan & Mark Joseph	09/02
Jeanne & Eddy Velaski	09/08
Erin Nelson & Chris Delaporte	09/12
Irene & Butch Yeager	09/29



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

Bootsie Cieutat, James Christiansen, Cookie Rich, Bill Duke, Marie Brown, Audrey Garner, Joyce Lee, Marian Boykin, Ron Brown, Jayson Chestang, Budd McLean.

For our Homebound:

Joan-Marie Elam, LaVerne Foster, Mary Gieseler, Mary Catherine Warren .

For our Family and Friends:

Bryan Logan, Lucas Hembree, J.E. Ryland, Nancy Payne, Lewis Johnston, William Dorsey, Donna Pigg, Fred Lloyd, Robert & Dorothy Johnson, Paul Kreamer, Jerry Wigfield, Glenda Evans, Ouida McNider, Kara Reynolds Hall, Sue Sheffield, David Shippee, Abigail Harrison, Robert Levy, Connor, David Green, Tiffany Matthews, Betty Williams, Kay Barnes, Latecia Cushion Knight, Evia Daniel, Charles Geck, Mary Jo Vinson, Bonnie Jernigan, Kaye Turner, Britney Butler, Neal Tourné, Sandy & Ray Michel, Connor Crist, Paul Nelson, Krystal Hiatt.

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

Alicia Logan, Jacob Hester-Heard, Marcus Rich, Ross Hussmann, Ellis Garner, Eric Mattoon

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:

Darren Anderson, *junior warden*

Janet Buckley, *clerk*

Bootsie Cieutat

Kathe Gieseler, *senior warden*

Jan Joseph

Connie McLean, *treasurer*

Mary Sheffield

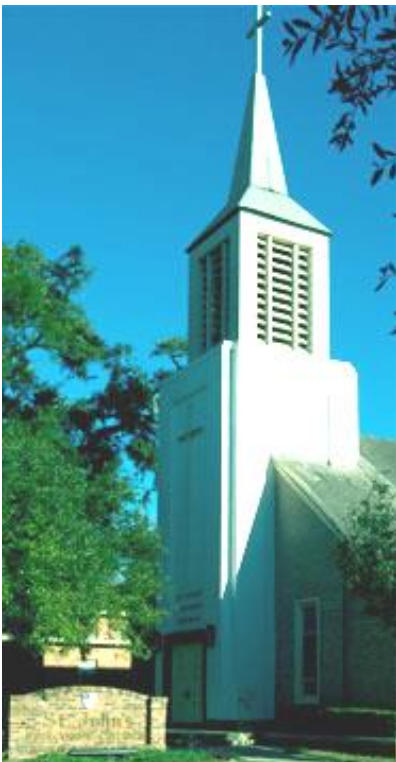
Kristen Turner

Ron Waites

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

Nonprofit Organization
 U.S.POSTAGE PAID
 Mobile, Alabama
 Permit No. 607

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.