



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 12

December 2019

FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

I write this in the octave of Christ the King, as we are about to begin the season of Advent.

Advent is a time of anticipation: the anniversary of the birth of Our Savior Jesus Christ. There is so much wrapped up in Christmas (pun intended), that it is far too easy to forget that the message of Christmas is both salvific and subversive. Our Salvation comes through the saving love of God shown to us in the gift of God's son, Jesus. Jesus preaches a gospel that demands the inversion of norms, upending to the existing social and political structures. This is the ministry of the Church

Re-establishing relationships that have been fractured;
Caring for the poor, the widowed, the orphaned;
Visiting the sick, the dying, and those who are incarcerated;
Proclaiming the love of God for all people;
Actively caring for all of God's creation.

This inversion was threatening to the society of that era. It meant that wealth was no longer a measure of power. It meant that social or political position was no longer a measure of power. It meant that property was no longer a measure of power.

Those that believed they had power didn't want to be on an equal footing with those they felt had less power. Apparently, they'd neglected their obligations of reading torah, haftorah, and the writings. They'd forgotten what Psalm 62 says:

13 God has spoken once, twice I have heard it, *
that power belongs to God.

In Jesus' examination by Pilate in the Gospel according to John (19:11), he says "...Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.'"

Saint Paul says similar things. In Romans, "...it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith."

If power resides with God, humans having power must be an illusion. What we have from God, then, is Grace because of our discipleship.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book The Cost of Discipleship, writes,

"Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

By contrast, Bonhoeffer writes of "costly grace". He says,

"Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy for which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him."

Discipleship is costly. Doing the ministry of the Church isn't supposed to be free. It is supposed to require something from us. It is supposed to cost something. It might be money. It might be inconvenience. It might be sharing resources.

We exercise the ministry of the Church because it is our vocation as Christians. We do this because we are called to make a difference in the world.

-- Thomas

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DECEMBER LITURGICAL CALENDAR

John of Damascus

We will commemorate John of Damascus at our Said Mass on Wednesday, 4 December at 10:00 AM. John lived in the early 700s, son of the tax collector for the Mohammedan Caliph of Damascus. He became a monastic in 715 and was ordered priest in 726. That year also saw an edict against Holy Images issued by the Byzantine Emperor. John wrote three treatises against the Iconoclasts, arguing that pictures were not idols and what they represented was worthy of respect. John is known to 21st century Anglicans as the author of Easter hymns: “Come, ye faithful, raise the strain,” and “The day of resurrection.”

Saint Thomas the Apostle

Thomas, called “the twin” will be commemorated at a Mass on Saturday, 21 December at 5:30 PM. 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 7:00 PM, the 7:30 PM Procession and Solemn Mass will welcome the Babe of Bethlehem. The Wise Men will begin their journey this night as well. On Christmas Day at 10:00 AM, 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 Thursday, 26 December with a Said Mass at 12:10 PM.

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

We will commemorate Saint John, the patron of our parish, at a Said Mass on Friday, 27 December at 12:10 PM. 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 Saturday, 28 December at a Said Mass at 5:30 PM. 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.



Bishop Russell Kendrick will join us on Sunday, December 8 at our 10AM service. Meet in the Great Hall at 9AM for a conversation with the Bishop.



THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH Sunday, December 22, 2019

It’s time for our annual “Greening of the Church”. We’ll be decorating the church for Christmas on the 4th Sunday of Advent. This year that will be on Sunday, December 22nd. We’ll spend some time after the morning service on the 22nd to “deck the halls” of the church so that our first Christmas service of the Christmas season on Christmas Eve will be beautifully decorated. We’ll need willing hands, creative talents, and some magnolia leaves...cookies and cider after we are finished.

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 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 that 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 15th**, 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(s) 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

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 29th, 2019

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.



COOKIE EXCHANGE—DECEMBER 15

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 15th**, during fellowship time, 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!

CHILI & JAM—DECEMBER 17

A group known as the Café Jammers will be at St. John's on Tuesday, December 17 from noon until 2PM to entertain the McKemie ladies with holiday songs. We will be providing a lunch of chili and cornbread for both the ladies and the jammers. If you would like to help with this event, please contact Lella Lowe (251-455-5073). We would love to have people bring desserts or even a musical instrument and join the Jingle Jam!!





Saint John's, along with Redeemer and All Saints, has applied for a grant from The Episcopal Church Task Force for the Care of Creation and Environmental Racism to provide seed money for an Interfaith Creation Care Action Coalition. The inspiration for the coalition came from several folks reading the book *Climate Church, Climate World*, by Jim Antal, and feeling moved to do something further in our community.

We are going to study that book at Saint John's beginning in January. Paperback books will be available for a discounted cost of \$17.50 per copy from the publisher, or \$14.10 for the Kindle download. If you would like to participate in the book study and want to order a discounted book from the publisher, please let Fr. Thomas know by Sunday, December 8.



December orders are due Sunday, December 8. Gifts cards will be available by Sunday, December 15.

Find holiday gifts for everyone while raising money for our church. Whether you buy gift cards as presents or use them to buy gifts, your order immediately raises money for Saint John's. Share the "giftspiration" with others—the more people that order, the truly merrier.

Get the Holiday Gift Guide at ShopWithScrip.com/GiftGuide and explore many of the 750+ brands to shop. Or simply pick up an order form at church.

SHINING OUR LIGHT

2020 PLEDGE SUMMARY

As this newsletter goes to print, we have received financial commitments from 28 pledge units for 2020 totaling \$94,666. In 2019, we received 42 pledges totaling \$139,334.

If you plan to pledge to the 2020 operating budget, please turn in a pledge card as soon as possible. Extra cards are available in the church office.

2019 CONTRIBUTIONS

For donations to be included in your 2019 contributions statement, they must be physically received in the church office or postmarked by December 31, 2019.

November Birthdays



Celebrating November birthdays at St. John's with Michael Burnham, Nikki Shaw, and Louis Daniel. (Photo by Irene Yeager)



ONE THOUSAND DAYS OF LOVE

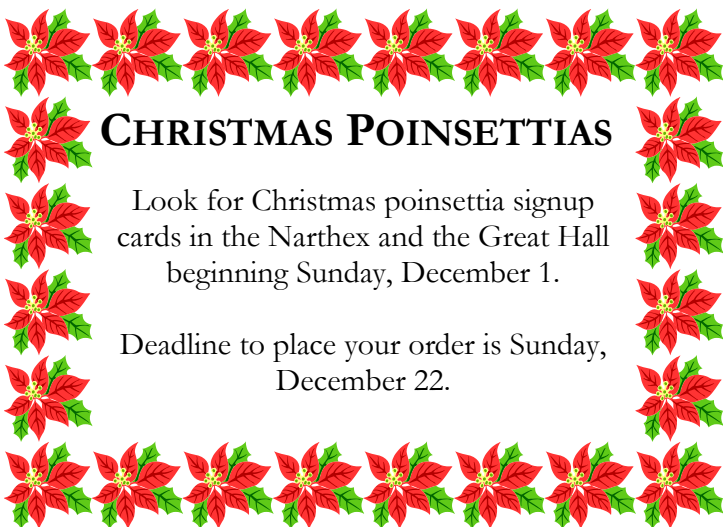
The first years of life are critical to a child's future success. Episcopal Relief & Development is committed to partnering with parents and caregivers to nurture children up to age six so they are learning, growing and thriving in their communities.

In Burundi, natural disasters such as floods and droughts are a constant threat and are worsened by increasing deforestation. Dwindling land and natural resources, coupled with high population growth and persistent political and ethnic conflict have resulted in poor education and health outcomes, trapping many Burundians in a cycle of poverty. In fact, 90% of families rely on subsistence farming to meet their food and income needs, often living on less than \$2 per day.

Episcopal Relief & Development is partnering with the Anglican Church of Burundi on an integrated strategy focusing on agriculture and nutrition programs. Working with local families, over 3 million trees were planted to help reverse the trend of deforestation and kitchen gardens were planted to:

- Provide a variety of high nutrient crops like eggplant, spinach, and amaranth
- Increase diet diversity, access to healthy food and battle hidden hunger
- Ensure growing children get the nutrients they need to achieve their full potential

Your partnership empowers more families, in more places, to support more children.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Look for Christmas poinsettia signup cards in the Narthex and the Great Hall beginning Sunday, December 1.

Deadline to place your order is Sunday, December 22.

FLOWER CHART SIGN-UP

It's time to sign up for flowers for 2020! Please use the cards on the bulletin board to begin signing up to supply altar flowers for Sundays in 2020. As Sundays are covered we will update the flower chart and post it for all to see. Altar flowers cost \$55 per Sunday.



Becoming Beloved Community: Racial Reconciliation Sacred Conversations



Hosted by:

Commission for Racial
Justice & Reconciliation
of the Episcopal Diocese
of the Central Gulf Coast

Description

Join us for an interactive workshop which will provide insights into the causes and effects of racism. We explore unconscious bias, prejudice, white privilege, and ways to work together to Become the Beloved Community. This offering is required for those in parish leadership (such as vestries) and at the diocesan level (including serving on commissions, committees, agencies, boards, etc.). It also qualifies for 8 hours of clergy training/education for those who complete the day course. There is no fee to participate but it requires the commitment to be engaged the full day. Limited to not more than 30 participants.

- 7:30am Light breakfast and check-in
- 8:00am Worship begins
- Lunch provided
- If you have dietary restrictions or accessibility issues, please let us know ASAP so that we can make accommodations
- Questions before Dec. 5 - 251.928.3311 or psalm82.3and4@gmail.com -Gary Moore

When: Saturday, December 7, 2019

Where: Trinity Episcopal Church
1900 Dauphin Street
Mobile, AL 36606

Time: 7:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Register: Eventbrite -
<https://tinyurl.com/y48prfcu>

<https://www.diocgc.org/racial-justice-and-reconciliation>



Jon Barbour	12/02	Marie Brown	12/12
Pat Pritchard	12/04	Bailey James	12/14
Craig Hall	12/05	Sue Dyess	12/20
Jack Ruppe	12/08	Chris Delaporte	12/23
Marie McPhail	12/10	Jan Joseph	12/23
P. L. Pritchard	12/10		



Bob & Connie Anderson	12/07
Brian (Cully) & Meagan Clanton	12/09
Thomas Heard and Cheryl Winters-Heard	12/11
Mike & Fran Barbour	12/24



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

Caitlyn Bryan, Jerry Fulford, Mary Bonner, Bootsie Cieutat, James Christiansen, Bill Duke, 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:

Eddie Hun, David Clothier, Donnie Chestang, Georgia Morrison, Katelynn Tillman, Solomon Thompson, Karen Twilley, Lucas Hembree, J.E. Ryland, Nancy Payne, Lewis Johnston, William Dorsey, Donna Pigg, Fred Lloyd, Robert & Dorothy Johnson, Sue Sheffield, David Shippee, Robert Levy, Connor, David Green, Tiffany Matthews, Betty Williams, Latecia Cushion Knight, Evia Daniel, Charles Geck, Mary Jo Vinson, Bonnie Jernigan, 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:

Ryan Hurt, 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

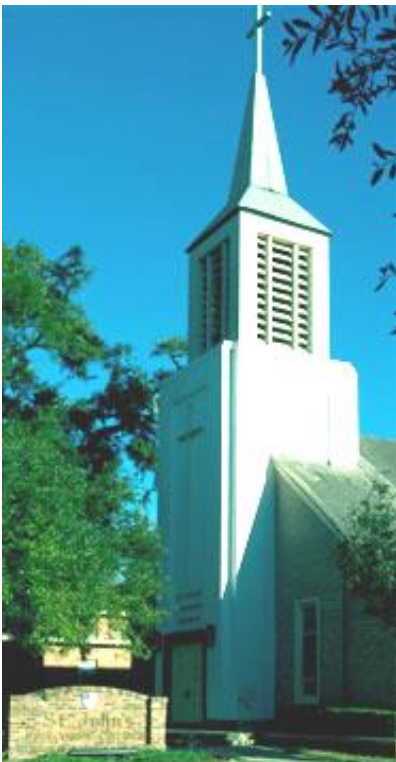
Kristen Turner

Ron Waites

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

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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.