FROM THE RETOR :

Dear Ones,

As the season of Lent approaches, Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry invites Episcopalians and people of faith to turn and pray on behalf of our nation:

“In times of great national concern and urgency, people of faith have returned to ancient practices of repentance, prayer and fasting as ways of interceding with God on behalf of their nation and the world. This is such a moment for us in the United States. On Ash Wednesday I will join with other Christian leaders observing this Lent as a season of prayer, fasting and repentance on behalf of our nation, with continued fasting each Wednesday until the Wednesday before Advent begins.

Our appeal comes during a time of profound division and genuine crisis of national character. This is not a matter of party or partisanship, but of deep concern for the soul of America.

The group of religious “Elders” who share this commitment – the same group that over a year ago published the “Reclaiming Jesus” statement – includes Evangelical, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant leaders. While we hold diverse political affiliations and positions on many issues facing our country, we find common ground in two shared convictions:

• First and foremost, we are committed to Jesus Christ as Lord, and his way of love as our primary loyalty.

• Second, because we love our country, we are concerned about its moral and spiritual health and well-being.

For me, this call is rooted in my personal commitment to practice Jesus’s Way of Love, by which I turn, learn, pray, worship, bless, go and rest in the way of our savior. Especially now, drawn together by love, hope and concern, and recalling the wisdom of our ancient traditions, I am grateful to join others in the spiritual practice of prayer, fasting and repentance for our nation. If you feel called to join us in this practice, the invitation is attached. The full text, together with the “Reclaiming Jesus” document can be found on the Reclaiming Jesus website: (www.reclaimingjesus.org)

Let us pray.

Almighty God … We humbly pray that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of your favor and glad to do your will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in your Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to your law, we may show forth your praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in you to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

Your brother,

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MARCH LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Cyril of Jerusalem

We will mark the Feast of Cyril of Jerusalem on Wednesday, 18 March at our 10:00AM Said Mass. Cyril lived from 318 to 386, spending nearly his whole life in Jerusalem. He became bishop of Jerusalem in about 349, living during the time of the first Ecumenical Councils of the church in 325 (Nicea) and 381 (Constantinople). These were the formative years of the Nicene Creed which we say each Sunday. Cyril was a teacher and wrote *Catechesis, or Catechetical Lectures* on the Christian Faith which still survive. Perhaps his most lasting contribution is the Triduum liturgies that we celebrate today. These were painstakingly documented by a 4th century Spanish pilgrim named Egeria.

Saint Joseph

We will remember Joseph at a Said Mass at 12:10PM on Thursday, March 19. Joseph was a pious Jew. He is counted as a descendent of King David and a carpenter by vocation. Joseph is considered to be the patron saint of working men and women. What we know of him is that he trusted in God, even when what God asked was to be a challenge to his daily life.

The Annunciation

The Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary will be celebrated on 25 March at 10:00AM. This celebration commemorates the visit of the angel Gabriel to Our Lady and her assent to God’s request to be *Theotokos*, or God-bearer. Her answer, like that of Abraham, was “Let it be to me according to your word.”

EASTER LILIES

*Easter Lily sign up cards will be in the Narthex and the Great Hall by Sunday, March 15.*

*Cards are due by Palm Sunday, April 5.*

Memorial Donations

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

- Shirley Couey
- Bob & Paula Ross
- Bobby Caldwell
- Bob & Paula Ross
- Jim Akridge
- Marilyn & Eddie Ralls
- Mary Gieseler
- Connie & Budd McLean
- James Christiansen
THE REVEREND DEACON MARY IRENE MORGRET GIESELER

Our sister, Mary, entered new life early in the morning of 3 February. Mary had been slipping away for some weeks. Daughter Kathe and I had mused that she would finally let go when I was in Israel. Not so: early in the morning that I was to leave. After years of being stay at home mom and church organist, Mary entered nursing school. She liked to tell stories of being the ‘old person’ of her class; all the others were more than 20 years younger. As a late vocation, Mary trained for and was ordained Deacon in the Diocese of Mississippi. As a member of the clergy, she couldn’t officially be a member of Saint John’s, but that didn’t stop her from volunteering in the office, singing in the choir and getting involved in whatever struck her fancy. One of the things that I treasured about Mary was her quick mind, sharp wit, and sarcastic comebacks. It was very hard to watch as the bright light that she was slowly but steadily went out. Her funeral will be Saturday, 7 March at 11:00 AM. The Bishop of Mississippi will be participating. I’m glad of that.

Lenten Study and Simple Supper

As part of our observance of the Lenten season Saint John’s will once again be having a study series and simple meal on Wednesdays during Lent. The meal will start at 6 PM and be followed by discussion led by Fr. Heard comparing the passion narratives. Don’t worry, choir members, we’ll be finished in time for rehearsal at 7.

The meals will have a meatless entree and include salad, bread and dessert. We will need volunteers to bring/prepare parts of the suppers. There will be a sign up sheet on the bulletin for bringing meal items.

Donation for the meals will be $5.00 each or (if you purchase them all at once) five for $20.00. See Connie McLean for payment and meal tickets. The money raised will be matched by the Outreach Committee and donated to the Ozanam Charitable Pharmacy.

The Ozanam Charitable Pharmacy is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that serves the needs of the community through prescription assistance. Ozanam Charitable Pharmacy focuses primarily on maintenance medications for chronic illnesses – such as heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. Each year, over 1600 patients rely on Ozanam to get their medications so they don’t have to choose between feeding their families and managing their illnesses. None of the patients pay for their medication, so the pharmacy relies on support from the community.

In order to make sure we have enough food for the meals we will have “I’m coming...” sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.

Lenten Suppers Schedule
Wednesday, March 4, 2020
Wednesday, March 11, 2020
Wednesday, March 18, 2020
Wednesday, March 25, 2020
Wednesday, April 1, 2020
The Wardens and Vestry of Saint John’s Church met in retreat at Saint John’s on Sunday, 16 February 2020.

The Agenda was approved as submitted. James Christiansen and Geri Moulton were absent and excused. The minutes of the 12 January meeting were approved as submitted.

The Vestry discussed its organization and norms for conduct. It was observed that it is generally the same people doing almost all of the committee work of the parish. No redirection of structure was adopted.

Fr. Heard outlined the anonymous $4,900 per month pledge that we have received from a non-member. This person has challenged the congregation to increase its pledging. An article will be included in the March newsletter.

The Vestry took up the 2020 Budget. It was voted that the Outreach budget be set at $4,500, rather than the 3% of Plate & Pledge that has been allocated previously. It was voted that 3% raises be included for all employees and the rate change to be retroactive to 1 January. The 2020 Budget was adopted unanimously.

It was noted that there are several regular pledges that have not been made for 2020. Fr. Heard will follow-up.

Janet Buckley reported that the Lenten Suppers will begin on 4 March. The committee will be putting together a calendar of efforts that can be made to help the environment. A collection for food boxes for Spring Break will happen in March.

Bootsie Cieutat reported that the ECW has set the February 4th Sunday Potluck theme to be Mardi Gras. They have also created note cards that will be a fundraiser for the ECW.

Fr. Heard reported that there has been no contact by Terminix concerning the damage in the church. He also noted that there is a new or worsening leak in the church roof adjacent to the bell tower.

Fr. Heard requested that the Vestry consider authorizing the removal of the railings to the baptistery and chapel. This was approved unanimously.

Janet Buckley reported that material from Thee Store was sold at diocesan convention, yielding $226.

2020 Pledge Summary

As this newsletter goes to print, we have received financial commitments from 38 pledge units for 2020 totaling $180,061. In 2019, we received 42 pledges totaling $139,334. There are 5 families who pledged last year who haven’t turned in a pledge card for this year.

If you plan to pledge to the 2020 operating budget or would like to increase your current pledge to match the anonymous donor’s challenge issued below, please turn in a pledge card as soon as possible. Extra cards are available in the church office.

Pledge Challenge

Saint John’s has received an anonymous pledge from someone who is not a member of the congregation. He/she is concerned about the long-term viability of Saint John’s, feels we are an important benchmark in Mobile and wants to see us grow and thrive.

A challenge has been laid down for us: To carefully consider our existing pledges with an eye toward increasing them to match the anonymous gift of $58,000. Will we make it? I don’t know.

How many of us have the same pledge we had 10 years ago? I know that my 10% has remained the same, but the amount has increased over the years. Can you say the same?

No one person can match this, but if we all take this challenge seriously, we can make an impact, reduce our deficit and look forward to a brighter future.
Lenten Food Drive: Food Boxes for Families in Need

Our Lent Food Drive will have a specific goal: we are going to fill sixteen boxes with non-perishable food and have them delivered to sixteen families with young children who are in need.

The Outreach Committee will be providing a ham and fresh fruit to go in each box. The families have been chosen by Mobile Community Action, a social services agency that serves low income clients. All of the families have young children; many are grandparents raising their grandchildren.

The MCA social workers will be picking up and delivering the boxes to the families on Thursday, March 26th. We want to have the boxes filled by Sunday, March 22nd. You can start bringing your contributions to the church any time during the next three weeks.

Our goal is to provide a box of food that will help them out for the week their children will be home for the Spring Break holiday. All of the children normally eat breakfast and lunch in school. Take this shopping list to remind you what we want to provide in each box.

Thank You
Outreach Committee

March Scrip Orders

Orders will be taken on Sunday, March 8. The cards will be available the following Sunday.

Don’t forget that scrip cards are great for:

- Wedding and baby shower gifts—many people register at Target and Amazon.
- Graduation gifts—what graduate wouldn’t love gas gift cards to fill their tanks?
- Teacher appreciation gifts—order Starbucks or Panera Bread gift cards for your favorite educator.

Ask Bootsie Cieutat for a retailer list and check out all of your options with the St. John’s scrip program!

Daylight Savings Time begins at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, March 8. Set your clocks forward one hour before you go to bed Saturday night.
Episcopal Relief & Development is continuing to support the Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches (FMEEC) as they provide critical cold-weather supplies to 1,200 vulnerable families in Syria this winter. Since 2013, the organization has supported FMEEC in caring for people who have been displaced by the ongoing violence and resulting economic instability.

According to the UN, the Syrian conflict remains the world's largest displacement crisis. Despite increased stability in some areas of the country, most Syrians continue to experience as much hardship as they have at any point in the nine-year conflict. This is primarily due to the country’s economic conditions. The harsh winter months, with heavy snowfall and temperatures below zero degrees Celsius in some areas, present additional challenges to already vulnerable communities.

With the support of Episcopal Relief & Development, FMEEC is responding to these challenges by providing critically needed blankets, electric heaters, heating fuel and winter clothing to 6,000 individuals in the western part of the country. As-Sweida, Damascus, Homs, Aleppo and Lattakia have been particularly impacted by the conflict and insecurity, and have high levels of need due to extremely cold conditions in the winter months. FMEEC is an association of the Protestant Evangelical churches of the Middle East, whose members include the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. FMEEC’s volunteer network has assisted communities in Syria since the conflict began in 2011 by providing food, clothing, rent assistance, heaters, fuel, hygiene kits and other relief supplies.

**THE THEME FOR MARCH:**

**STORMS**

Why are storms important to us? The people and churches of the Diocese of Central Gulf Coast have certainly had to deal with storms throughout our 50 years. From deadly and devastating hurricanes to Christmas tornadoes, floods, and fires we have suffered much loss to our communities, our church buildings, our homes, and our livelihoods. In March we want to reflect on the storms we have experienced, what do we learn from them, how do we recover, how do we express thanks for those who have helped us, how do we prepare for storms to come, and how have we been changed by the storms we have weathered? Most of all, where is God in these storms?

But not all storms can be tracked on a weather map. Certainly the people of our churches have faced other storms. Your church community may want to reflect on those - things like economic downturns, oil spills, a major employer leaving town. Storms in our church communities may include strained relationships over politics, arguments over human sexuality and race, prominent deaths in the church family, including clergy, and the like. The same questions asked above can be helpful in looking at these "unnatural" storms. Suggestion for congregational participation: Review your church’s emergency preparedness plan. Make changes as necessary.
For healing grace and continued strength, we pray for our members:
Jean Brown, Ashley Garris, Jerry Fulford, Mary Bonner, Boosie 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 Catherine Warren.

For our Family and Friends:

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

February Birthdays

Celebrating February birthdays at St. John’s with Lisa Chestang, Thomas Heard, Mary Sheffield and Lee Dorsey. (Photo by Irene Yeager)

Contact Us

Staff:
The Reverend Thomas Heard, rector
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Organist & Choir Director
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Lella Lowe
Financial Secretary
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Jack Ruppe
Sexton

Vestry:
Janet Buckley

James Christiansen, junior warden

Boosie Cieutat, treasurer

Jan Joseph

Geri Moulton

Nikki Shaw, clerk

Mary Sheffield

Kristen Turner

Ron Waites, senior warden
Saint John’s Episcopal Church
1707 Government Street
Mobile, Alabama 36604

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.