



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. XXX, Issue 12

December 2020

FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

Wow. It's Thanksgiving time; where has the year gone? That seems especially odd, since we've been in pandemic mode for most of it. My sense of time has been truly befuddled. It has been a wash - rinse - repeat sort of year. One way that I've kept my sanity (my better half might challenge that) has been the Facebook Live of Morning Prayer on weekdays. It always starts with the day, the calendar date, the liturgical date, and special commemorations if we have one. It has enabled me to keep track without resorting to x-ing off squares on a calendar.

So, why would that be bad? I think it would lead me to a sense of marking-off-until-done, but then I have no idea when this peculiar season we've been in will really be over.

On that score, I have to give you props for your way of living. You have been so conscientious about protecting yourselves from exposure to the virus. Would it be bad for me to say that I'm proud of you for taking it so seriously? It has enabled us to have very few cases of COVID in the parish and no spread within the parish. Bravo, but don't stop now! While we don't know what the end of this will be, it certainly feels like it is getting closer.

As I was getting ready for our Thanksgiving Day mass, I stumbled on the Psalm appointed for Year B. It is Psalm 126 (printed later, so it can be all together.) It is part of a series of psalms (120-134) that are known as "Songs of Ascents". One theory of this arrangement is that it was to keep them together for use by pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem. But let's look at it from a structural perspective. I see verses as a 2-2-3 arrangement based in the ideas they contain.

Verses 1 through 4 are a remembrance, a recollection of the people's history with God. The first pair of verses recalls something that happened in the past that changed the course of the psalmists history. It seems

like it took them by surprise. For me, this seems most likely to have been the repatriation of Israel from Babylon. The second pair sees the nations of the world acknowledging what God did for God's people, and their own recognition and celebration of it.

Take a moment and read Psalm 126 to yourself.

- 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, *
then were we like those who dream.
- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, *
and our tongue with shouts of joy.
- 3 Then they said among the nations, *
"The Lord has done great things for them."
- 4 The Lord has done great things for us, *
and we are glad indeed.
- 5 Restore our fortunes, O Lord, *
like the watercourses of the Negev.
- 6 Those who sowed with tears *
will reap with songs of joy.
- 7 Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, *
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

The last three verses (5-7) are a prayer to God. It is a prayer to do something extraordinary as God has done in the past. It recalls what happens when there are torrential rains in the dry Negev desert: the channels overflow with over-abundant water. The last two verses envision planting seed in a season where a failing harvest is predicted, but being filled with thanks to God for an abundant harvest that was not expected.

We still have some time before this pandemic ends. We don't really have control over it, we can only mitigate it. That doesn't mean that our prayers can't call for relief, can't foresee us as being joyful once we can all be together again. Perhaps we should make Psalm 126 our prayer for our future. And be surprised by joy.

— Thomas

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DECEMBER LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Channing Moore Williams, Missionary Bishop in China and Japan

A native of Richmond, Virginia, Channing Moore Williams became a missionary to China in 1855. He was ordained priest there and two years later sent to Japan. Williams began his work in Nagasaki and his first convert was baptized in 1866. He served as Bishop of both China and Japan. Bishop Williams concentrated his work in Japan and helped to form the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*, the Holy Catholic Church of Japan and translated part of the Prayer Book into Japanese.

Saint Thomas the Apostle

Thomas, called “the twin”, will be commemorated on Monday, 21 December at 12:00 PM.

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 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 10:00 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 Saturday, 26 December with a Said Mass at 5:30 PM.

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

We will commemorate Saint John, patron of our parish, at a Said Mass on Monday, 28 December at 12:00 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 Tuesday, 29 December at a Said Mass at 12:00 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.

Frances Joseph Gaudet

From an early age, Frances devoted her life to prison reform. A Mississippian of African American and Native American origin, she organized ministry among prisoners in Louisiana. Through her efforts toward rehabilitation of young misdemeanor and vagrancy offenders, the idea for a Juvenile Court came into being. Taking her energies toward education, she founded the Gaudet Normal and Industrial School, succeeded by the Gaudet Episcopal Home. We will commemorate Frances on Wednesday, December 30 at 10:00 AM.





Vestry

The regular meeting of the Wardens and Vestry of Saint John's Church was called to order at 11:35 AM by Fr. Heard on 8 November 2020. The proposed agenda was approved and the minutes of the meeting of 11 October were approved as submitted.

Geri Moulton and Bootsie Cicutat were excused.

A brief review of the October financial reports was led by Fr. Heard. Connie McLean reported that Regions is still waiting for approval for its portal from the SBA.

Janet Buckley reported for Outreach that the Thanksgiving Food Boxes will be assembled next Sunday. She is in contact with Azalea Gardens to get gift lists for the annual Angel Tree.

Fr. Heard reported that we are still waiting for a repair estimate for the Crucifixion window.

Fr. Heard reported that the Office HVAC unit was replaced due to the failure of the condenser unit. We are still waiting for the proposal for replacement of the chiller.

Concerning the BSA Bankruptcy Proof of Claim, after speaking with Scott Remington (Chancellor for Florida), Fr. Heard has decided to file a claim, even though we don't believe we have any exposure.

Additional equipment acquired through the Alabama Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant is being installed.

A discussion of our public worship practices covered the topics of returning to singing during the service and receiving communion at the altar rail. Fr. Heard will research the singing topic. The vestry approved returning to altar rail for those that wish to, utilizing proper physical distancing and traffic flows.

The Vestry called a meeting of the parish on Sunday, 6 December 2020, for the purpose of electing officers. It is highly likely that we will utilize some sort of remote voting mechanism.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM with prayer.

OUTREACH

SAINT JOHN'S ANGEL TREE

The Saint John's "Angel Tree" is up again this year. The gifts will be going to residents of *Azalea Gardens Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center* (formerly Kindred Nursing Home).



As in previous years, 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. Christmas presents will be especially important this year since, because of COVID-19, the residents cannot have visitors.

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 13th**, 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 want to shop during this COVID-time or don't come to in-person church? The Outreach Committee is providing "shopping service;" just send a check to the office (don't forget to note "Angel Tree" on the check and an Outreach Committee member will do your shopping for you.

-Outreach Committee

Parish Meeting

Sunday, December 6

11:00 AM

Stay tuned for details and phone/Zoom options to participate.

FLOWER CHART SIGN-UP

It's time to sign up for flowers for 2021! Please use the cards on the bulletin board to begin signing up to supply altar flowers for Sundays in 2021. As Sundays are covered we will update the flower chart and post it for all to see. Altar flowers cost \$55 per Sunday.



2020 CONTRIBUTIONS

For donations to be included in your 2020 contributions statement, they must be physically received in the church office or postmarked no later than December 31, 2020.



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

Mary Bonner
 Connie & Bob Anderson
 Irene & Howard Yeager
 Joyce Lee
 Martha Hitch
 Jason, Stephanie,
 Weinman & Ann Thomas
 Marcia Prewitt
 Katherine Tatum
 Paula & Bob Ross
 Mike Baker
 Paula & Bob Ross

November Birthdays



Celebrating 2019 November birthdays at St. John's with Michael Burnham, Nikki Shaw, and Louis Daniel. (Photo by Irene Yeager)

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE *of the* CENTRAL GULF COAST

JUST - JUST

MERCY JESUS

DECEMBER 3 - 5, 2020 | 50 JUBILEE CELEBRATION

ONLINE VIRTUAL EVENTS

December 3, 2020 at 6pm

Evening Prayer Service with Recitation of Bishop West's 1970 Sermon

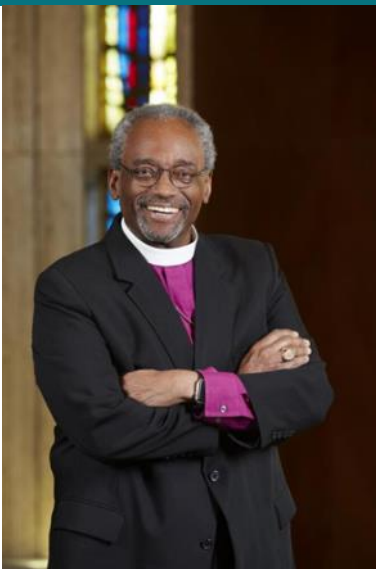
December 4, 2020 at 6pm

Jubilee Revival with Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and Bryan Stevenson

December 5, 2020 at 9am

Revival Roundup Coffee Hour for Fellowship and Conversation

www.diocgc.org/just-mercy-just-jesus



Jubilee Revival featuring:

The Most Reverend Michael Curry,
Presiding Bishop and
Primate of The Episcopal Church.

Bryan Stevenson,
Founder and Executive Director of
the Equal Justice Initiative

Link to watch events available here:
<https://www.diocgc.org/just-mercy-just-jesus>



EPISCOPAL DIOCESE *of the* CENTRAL GULF COAST



DECEMBER: CELEBRATE!

Why is “Celebrate” Important?

This month is about celebrating all that we have been focusing on this past year. Our hope is that by honoring the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast over the course of our 50th Jubilee Celebration year, we have initiated the catalyst to “Go Forward” into all that Christ calls us.



EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT’S YEAR-END MATCH CHALLENGE

Episcopal Relief & Development launched the organization’s annual Year-End Match Challenge on November 5. Thanks to a generous group of donors, all donations to the agency between now and December 31 will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to a total of \$765,000.

“As Episcopal Relief & Development has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic this year, we have remained fully committed to our ongoing development efforts,” said Robert W. Radtke, President & CEO, Episcopal Relief & Development. “This matching opportunity comes at a moment when it is deeply needed and I am immensely grateful to the generous donors who have offered it.”

The Year-End Match Challenge will benefit the organization’s Global Needs Fund, strengthening key programs in three priority areas: women, children and climate. Donations will enable work around the world with local partners, helping communities overcome

poverty, hunger, disaster and disease. Matched gifts will also help as Episcopal Relief & Development continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic with financial and technical support in the United States and around the world.

Contributions made to Episcopal Relief & Development before the end of the year 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 included in the Year-End Match Challenge.

Between November 5 and December 31, eligible contributions up to \$765,000 will be matched. Donate online at episcopalrelief.org/match, or call 1.855.312.4325. Gifts can also be mailed to Episcopal Relief & Development, PO Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058.



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



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:

Carolyn Pearce, Mary Jones, Connie Anderson, Cookie Rich, Bob Ross, Jean Brown, Ashley Garris, Jerry Fulford, James Christiansen, Bill Duke, Audrey Garner, Joyce Lee, Marian Boykin, Ron Brown, Jayson Chestang, Budd McLean, Mary Catherine Warren.

For our Family and Friends:

Patsy Christiansen, Gwendolyn Carey, Helon Jones, Helen Guthrie, Eddie Hun, Donnie Chestang, Katelynn Tillman, Karen Twilley, Nancy Payne, Donna Pigg, Robert Levy, Tiffany Matthews, Betty Williams, Latecia Cushion Knight, 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, Jacob Hester-Heard, Marcus Rich, Ross Hussmann, Ellis Garner, Eric Mattoon.

Contact Us

Staff:

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Lella Lowe
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 Sexton

Vestry:

Janet Buckley

James Christiansen, *junior warden*

Bootsie Cieutat, *treasurer*

Jan Joseph

Geri Moulton

Nikki Shaw, *clerk*

Mary Sheffield

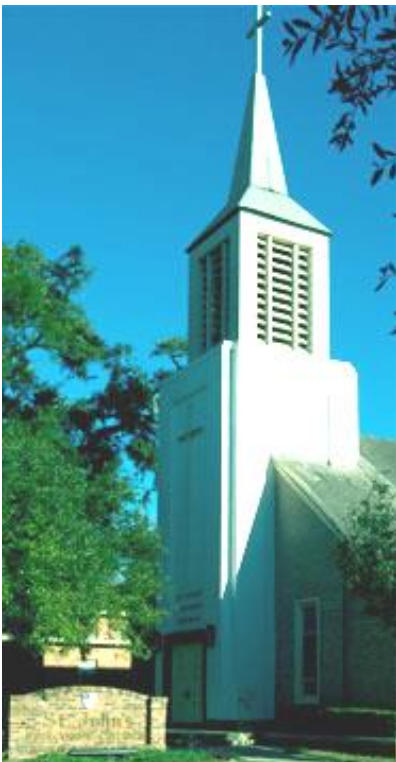
Kristen Turner

Ron Waites, *senior warden*

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

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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.