



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. XXXI, Issue 12

December 2021

FROM THE RECTOR:

Dear Ones,

It's the day after Christ the King, and it's three days before Thanksgiving. That means it's about to be the First Sunday of Advent, the start of a new liturgical year.

We will be using the "C" cycle of our lectionary. It is characterized by most of the Gospel readings being taken from the Gospel According to Luke. It has some unique characteristics. That's where I want to spend most of our time in this column.

The Gospel According to Luke is generally agreed to be the third written of the four canonical gospels. I say "canonical" because there are others, but none of them made the cut when the content of the Bible was established. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are believed to have been a single document. The division between them makes logical sense: Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension, followed by the events that led to the expansion of the church. There is a "new" beginning in Acts, and it recognizes the first part, but diverges slightly from Luke's account. That's the kind of evidence that biblical scholars pay attention to: it gives them clues.

We don't know precisely when the Gospel according to Luke was written. It is clearly after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. We don't really know who the author is, other than what the text tells us: Luke a physician, and companion of Saint Paul. His writing style is quite classical, a real pleasure to read in its original Greek. In fact, Luke starts with a dedication and a preface, a hallmark of Greek literature. The writer is educated and, while not Jewish, he has a solid command of Judaism of the first century. Luke's Gospel contains material that is not found anywhere else. Some of the most beloved parables are unique to Luke: the Prodigal Son, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the Rich Fool. Luke begins and ends the gospel in the Temple in

Jerusalem. Angels figure in Luke's Gospel prominently. Remember how Matthew is always citing texts to prove that Jesus is the messiah? Luke's knowledge of the Old Testament is broad, but he uses it to construct parallels rather than proofs. For example, Mary's *Magnificat* parallels Hannah's song in I Samuel.

I think the most important feature of the gospel according to Luke who he saw as his target audience: it is everyone. The birth narrative has shepherds, not the most respected people in first century Judea. There is Herod the Great, client king of Judea for the Romans. There are lepers, folks with diseases, folks possessed by demons. And there are women.

While Luke keeps the all-male list of disciples, coinciding with Mark and Matthew, his story tells of many women who were part of the disciples of Jesus. Some of them were important to the enterprise, providing resources, 'food for the journey' so-to-speak. Others brought an emotional intelligence that was missing in the men. So what we see in Luke's Jesus is a mixing of all the social levels of first century Judea.

Luke's Jesus is about good news for the poor and outcasts, those living on the margins of society. Sure, he comes into criticism from Pharisees for mixing with Tax Collectors and sinners. They can't hear Jesus' good news because of their bias and self-importance. Jesus is all about seeing each other through God's eyes.

Luke's Gospel is about joy. What do the angels sing to the shepherds? What is the reaction of the shepherd who finds the lost sheep? How does the widow react when she finds the lost coin? Each is joyful, each is how God desires for us to be.

Finally, The Gospel According to Luke is about inclusion. There are no boundaries between people; all have equal access to God and are loved by God equally. And that's how we're supposed to live with each other.

-- Thomas

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DECEMBER LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Nicholas Ferrar, Deacon

Ferrar founded a religious community at Little Gidding, Huntingdonshire, England in 1626. The community survived only nine years after his death in 1637. Ferrar was devoted to the life outlined in the Book of Common Prayer, observing the Daily Office in its entirety. He was remembered by Izaak Walton in his Life of George Herbert. T.S. Eliot titled the last of his "Four Quartets" 'Little Gidding'. Ferrar will be commemorated at a Said Mass at 10:00 AM on Wednesday, 1 December.

The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Resurgence in Marian devotion throughout the Anglican Communion keeps the mother of Our Lord firmly in view through the Conception, Annunciation, and Assumption observances. Conception will be observed Wednesday, 8 December at 10:00 AM.

Saint Thomas the Apostle

Thomas, called "the twin", will be commemorated at a mass on Tuesday, 21 December at 12:00 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 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 Monday, 27 December with a Said Mass at 12:00 PM.

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

We will commemorate Saint John, the patron of our parish, at a Said Mass on Tuesday, 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 Wednesday, 29 December at a Said Mass at 10:00 AM. 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.



THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH

Sunday, December 19th, 2021



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 19th. We'll spend some time after the morning service on the 19th "decking 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.



Vestry

The regular meeting of the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of Saint John's Church was called to order at 11:40 AM on Sunday, 14 November 2021 by Fr. Thomas Heard.

The proposed agenda was adopted and the minutes of the 10 October 2021 meeting were approved as submitted.

Connie McLean reviewed the financial reports for the month of October.

Mary Sheffield, reporting for Outreach, said that the Thanksgiving Food Boxes would be distributed the following week.

Reporting for Stewardship, Mary reviewed the pledge report, noting that we expect six more pledges for 2022, which will bring us to 38.

Bootsie Cieutat reported that Fourth Sunday Potlucks will resume in November. The ECW will be sending Thanksgiving cards to Murray House.

Fr. Heard reviewed his infrastructure maintenance project report. A few things of note that are not in the report. Campbell Law has terminated the local attorney with whom we have worked. That attorney has been in touch, as well. We will face a decision to stick with one or go to the other. An independent estimator and entomologist were on-site on 11/7. They found live termites and additional areas that have been damaged. The bid from Rellim Contracting to repair the termite damage has been approved by Terminix. We have not yet seen the scope of work. Fr. Heard will ask the diocese if we can extend our loan from the Congregational Loan Fund to cover the re-roofing of the Parlor.

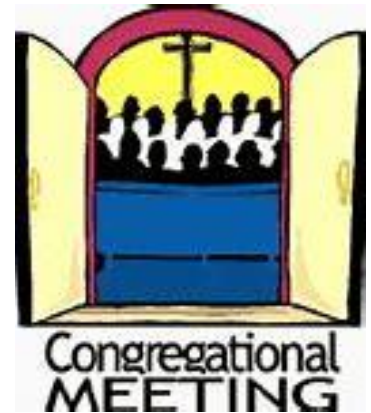
The Vestry voted to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing Vestry and Diocesan Convention Delegates for 12 December 2021 at the end of mass that day.

PARISH LIFE

CALL FOR MEETING

The Vestry of Saint John's has called a Meeting of the Parish for Sunday, 12 December 2021 for the purpose of electing new members of the Vestry and Diocesan Convention Delegates and Alternates. The meeting will be held in the Nave after Mass. This year, we will be electing 3 persons to 3-year terms on the Vestry. We will elect 3 delegates to Diocesan Convention and alternates, as well.

Please contact a member of your nominating committee—Bootsie Cieutat, Mary Sheffield, Kristen Turner —or Fr. Thomas if you are interested (or know someone who is interested) in running for vestry or diocesan convention delegate.



SAINT JOHN'S PARISH CHRISTMAS PARTY January 2, 2022

Mark your calendars: for Sunday, January 2nd. It will be time to put on those Christmas sweaters and ties one more time and celebrate the Christmas season at Saint John's (and maybe a little Happy New Year, too!) at our annual parish Christmas party. Invite your family and friends to church and stay for the Parish Christmas Party.

The ECW is providing the main meat dish but we need all the "fixin's" and (of course) desserts.





SAINT JOHN'S ANGEL TREE

The Saint John's "Angel Tree" is going up on Sunday, November 28th. 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.

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 19th**, wrapped or in a gift bag with the angel tag on it. We will be delivering the gifts on December 20th.

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 year 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



Every Perfect Gift

2022 PLEDGE SUMMARY

As this newsletter goes to print, we have received financial commitments from 33 pledge units for 2022 totaling \$120,751. In 2021, we received 37 pledges totaling \$124,655.

If you plan to pledge to the 2022 operating budget, please turn in a pledge card as soon as possible. Extra cards are available in the church office.



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

Rachael Holmes
 Thomas Holmes
 Robert Meaher
 Roger & Susan McConnell
 Pat Meaher

2021 CONTRIBUTIONS

For donations to be included in your 2021 contributions statement, they must be physically received in the church office or postmarked no later than December 31, 2021.

November Birthdays



Celebrating November birthdays at St. John's with Brother Jacob Taylor, Cindy Gass, Nikki Shaw, Michael Burnham, and Louis Daniel. Photo by Irene Yeager.



Don't forget!
 Parish Meeting to elect vestry and convention delegates:
 Sunday, December 12,
 following the service.

CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATE

December 2021 Directory correction:

Neva Bache
 Delete home phone number.



EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT LAUNCHES YEAR-END MATCH CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT TRANSFORMATIVE WORK IN PRIORITY AREAS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND CLIMATE

Episcopal Relief & Development is kicking off its annual Year-End Match, offering supporters the opportunity to transform lives with twice the impact this holiday season. Thanks to a very generous group of donors, contributions that Episcopal Relief & Development receives between now and the end of the year will be doubled, dollar for dollar, up to a total of \$650,000.

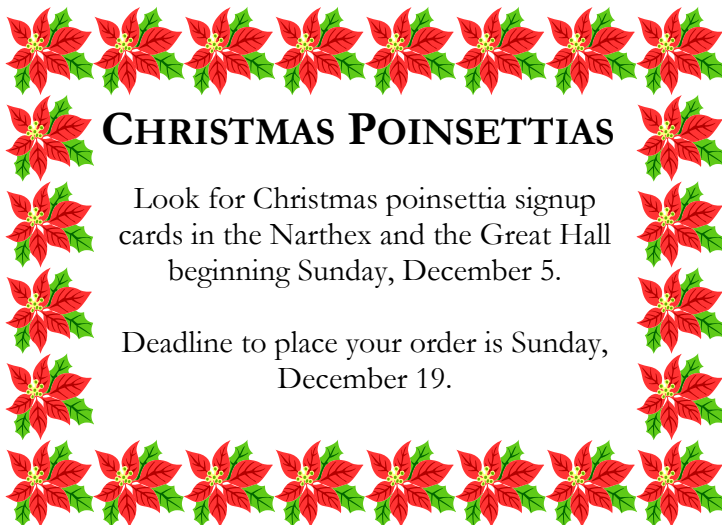
“One of the wonderful things about our work at Episcopal Relief & Development is that it’s a shared effort. By working together, our efforts multiply to transform lives,” said Rob Radtke, President & CEO, Episcopal Relief & Development. “I am deeply grateful to the generous donors who have stepped up to match donations and to every donor who partners with us to create lasting change.”

The Year-End Match will benefit the organization’s Global Needs Fund, supporting key programs in three priority areas: Women, Children and Climate. Gifts will bolster work promoting the health and wellbeing of children, empowering women and helping communities adapt to our changing climate. They will also strengthen the organization’s continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic in marginalized communities 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 *Gifts for Life*, the organization’s alternative giving catalog, and direct contributions online, over the phone, or by mail. Gifts of stock or from an IRA are also included in the Year-End Match Challenge. This year’s stimulus package extended provisions on charitable deductions until December 31. Donations may qualify, even if donors don’t itemize deductions.

“Each year, during this matching gift period, thousands of generous donors – individuals and churches – answer the challenge to contribute, said Mike Smith, Major Gift Officer. “It is a strong financial partnership, and it’s what makes the global work of Episcopal Relief & Development possible.”

Between now and December 31, eligible contributions up to \$650,000 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.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Look for Christmas poinsettia signup cards in the Narthex and the Great Hall beginning Sunday, December 5.

Deadline to place your order is Sunday, December 19.

FLOWER CHART SIGN-UP

It’s time to sign up for flowers for 2022! Please use the cards on the bulletin board to begin signing up to supply altar flowers for Sundays in 2022. As Sundays are covered we will update the flower chart and post it for all to see. Altar flowers cost \$55 per Sunday.





Jon Barbour	12/02	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
Marie Brown	12/12		



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:

Mary Jones, Marie Brown, David Rich, Jeff Anderson, Tina Cieutat, Carolyn Pearce, Bob Ross, Jean Brown, Ashley Garris, Jerry Fulford, James Christiansen, Audrey Garner, Joyce Lee, Marian Boykin, Ron Brown, Jayson Chestang, Budd McLean, Mary Catherine Warren.

For our Family and Friends:

Dave Snow, Pam Garner, Kathy Tatum, Alice Robbins, Karl Gieseler, Keith Matthews, John Ike Atchison, Randy Dunn, Sharon Lee Nolan, Willie Douglas, Gail Savage, Daniel Day, Jeff Pelham, Shirley Cochran, Peggy Sheffield, Cliff Federle, Patsy Christiansen, Gwendolyn Carey, Helen Guthrie, Eddie Hun, Katelynn Tillman, Karen Twilley, Nancy Payne, Donna Pigg, Robert Levy, Tiffany Matthews, Betty Williams, Latecia Cushion Knight, Bonnie Jernigan, Britney Butler, Neal Tourné, Sandy Michel, Connor Crist, Paul Nelson, Stephen Campbell (*priest*), Andrew St. John (*bishop*).

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

Joshua Maddox, Ryan Hurt, 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
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Lella Lowe
 Financial Secretary
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Jack Ruppe
 Sexton

Vestry:

James Christiansen, *junior warden*

Bootsie Cieutat

Cindy Gass, *senior warden*

Connie McLean, *treasurer*

Gerri Moulton

Nikki Shaw, *clerk*

Mary Sheffield

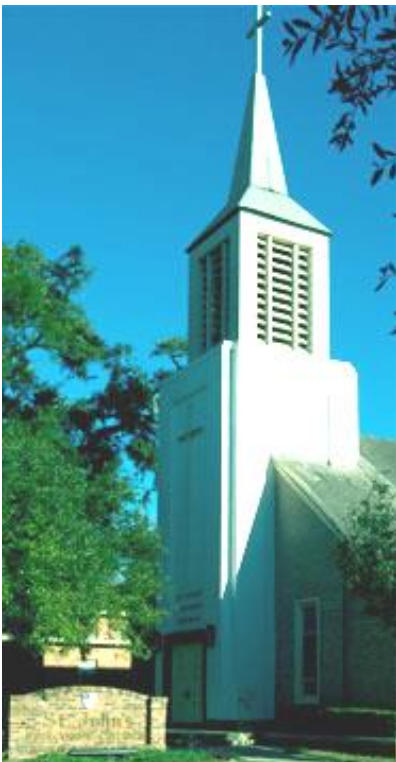
Kristen Turner

Butch Yeager

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.