

# THE MISSISSIPPI EPISCOPALIAN

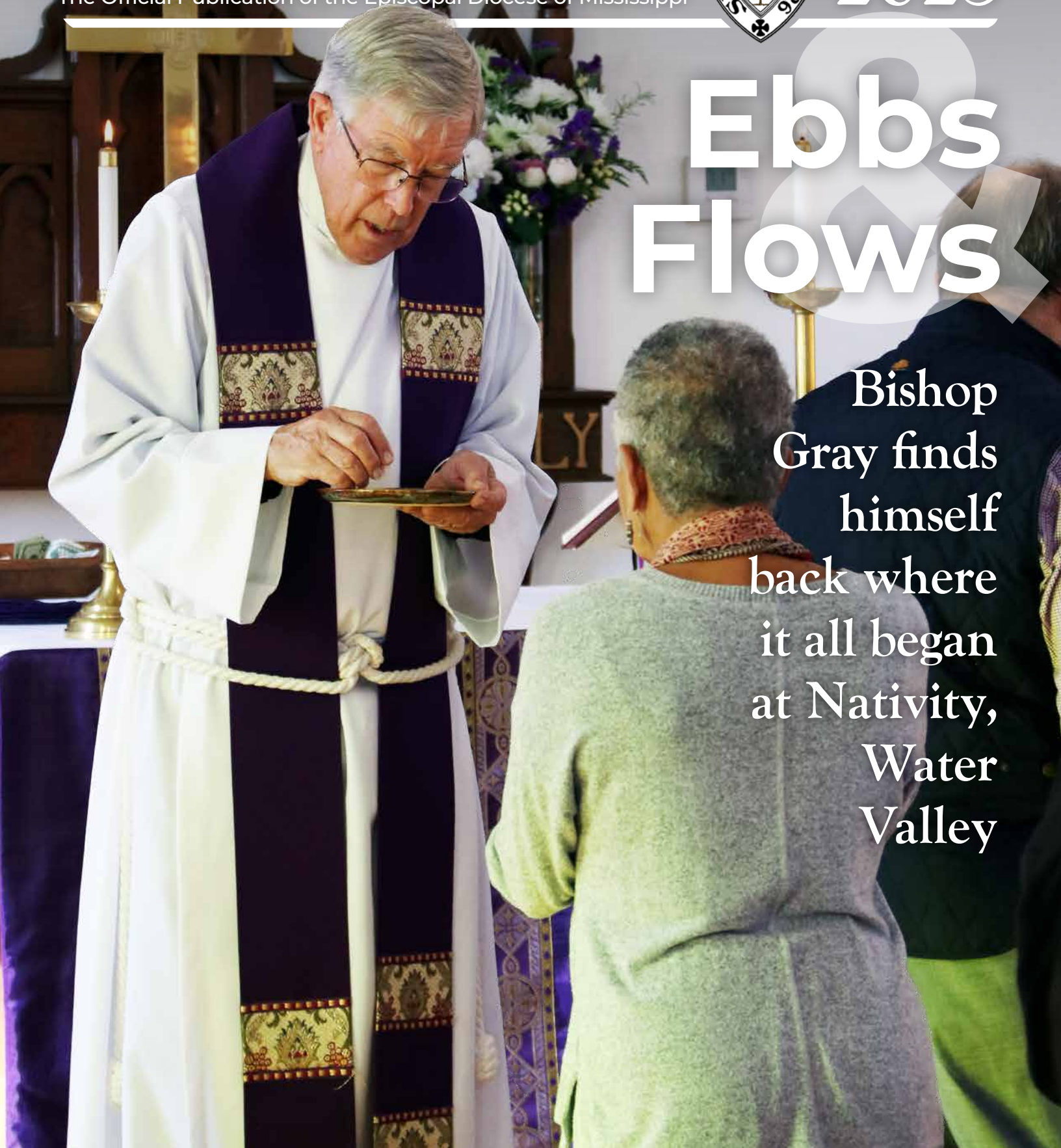
The Official Publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi



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2023

## Ebbs & Flows

Bishop  
Gray finds  
himself  
back where  
it all began  
at Nativity,  
Water  
Valley



# Letter from the editor

It's such an honor to begin serving as editor of *The Mississippi Episcopalian* as this publication prepares to enter its 149th year. Even as a cradle Episcopalian and a child of the 20th century myself, it's hard to comprehend how many devoted members of this diocese have been informed, inspired, and connected by these pages over so many generations.

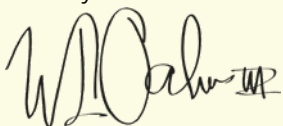
Those who have been readers of *TME* for some time will no doubt have noticed before reading this letter that things this month are not as they were last—my goal as editor & designer is to take an already wonderful newspaper and turn it into a fantastic magazine. I hope you'll send me thoughts and suggestions as to how I may continually improve at [msepiscopalian@dioms.org](mailto:msepiscopalian@dioms.org), and I will do my best to hear your comments.

Two further changes to *TME* are coming over the next couple months, and I hope you'll take time to see how you adjust to them:

1. The print version of this publication, in its new format, will be published bimonthly (January, March, May, July, September, November).
2. The online version will, starting in February, be distributed not as a PDF file, but as a web-based online magazine (if this makes no sense to you, just wait, I think you're going to love it!).

Finally, I want to thank the Rev. Dr. John Switzer, whose stewardship of this publication as its previous editor was stellar and whose assistance to me personally in making this transition has been, and continues to be, absolutely invaluable.

I hope to see many of you at council in February. Thank you for entrusting this duty to me.



William T. (Wil) Oakes, III

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# Bishop Candidate Visitations

## Mississippi Episcopalians invited to meet the candidates, submit questions for sessions

As part of the Bishop Search process, the candidates for the XI Bishop of Mississippi will be visiting the diocese the week of January 15-20, 2024. This includes various meetings, visits to historical sites, and a series of Meet and Greet sessions which are scheduled for that week. The Meet and Greet session schedule is below.



**BISHOP SEARCH**  
Diocese of MS

**Candidate Meet and Greets**

January 17th, 2024  
*St. James, Greenville*  
Check-in: 5:30 pm; Starts 6:00 pm

January 18th, 2024  
*All Saints, Tupelo*  
Check-in: 5:30 pm; Starts 6:00 pm

January 19th, 2024  
*Coast Episcopal School, Long Beach*  
Check-in: 5:30 pm; Starts 6:00 pm


January 20th, 2024  
*Chapel of the Cross, Madison*  
Check-in: 10:00 am; Starts 10:30 am

Registration will begin thirty minutes before the start of the Meet and Greets. The Transition Committee asks that those planning to attend a Meet and Greet please RSVP using the RSVP form found on the Bishop Search website, [msbishopsearch.com](https://msbishopsearch.com).

The Transition Committee is ensuring that a session from each location will be live-streamed so that all may have the opportunity to view candidate discussions.

All Episcopalians throughout the diocese are invited to submit questions to the candidates electronically via a form on the Bishop Search website. The form for submitting questions will be available on the Bishop Search website ([msbishopsearch.com](https://msbishopsearch.com)) beginning December 1, 2023. The form will close on January 8, 2024. The Transition Committee reserves the right to lightly edit questions for clarity and brevity, or combine similar questions into one question.

At the Meet and Greet sessions, after a brief welcome and introduction, participants will be divided into three to four rooms to meet and hear the candidates, who will rotate from room to room. Moderators will ask two introductory questions of each candidate, and will then pose randomly selected questions pulled from questions that are previously submitted electronically. Neither moderators nor candidates will have access to the randomly selected questions before they are asked. Attendees will also have an opportunity to informally meet candidates after the question-and-answer sessions and ask follow-up questions as time allows.

As always, the Transition Committee welcomes questions and feedback regarding the Meet and Greet Sessions and the process generally. Feel free to contact the Committee at [msbishopsearch@gmail.com](mailto:msbishopsearch@gmail.com). 

**Nov. 1** → I swam an awesome early workout. Upon returning home, I opened the email regarding our short list of candidates for bishop. It's a very impressive group! Congratulations to the Search Committee for such fine work! After breakfast, I walked to the office for a meeting with David Martin, our CFO. I spent most of the morning finishing my journal. In the afternoon, I caught up on correspondence before attending a Zoom meeting with leadership from Tougaloo College regarding the Center for Racial Equity. After work, I made my way to All Saints', Jackson, for worship, fellowship, and celebration of All Saints' Day.

**Nov. 2** → I had a couple staff meetings in the morning including time with Canon Ponder and Julia Young. Before breaking for lunch, I met with Whitney Robinson via phone.

**Nov. 3** → After early workout, I made my way to the office for a breakfast meeting with Andy Andrews. That meeting was followed by a schedule check with Peggy Jones. Over lunch, I met with one of our vice-chancellors, Robert Ireland.

**Nov. 4** → It was a relatively quiet morning. After an afternoon workout, I collected my things, including the dog, and drove to Tupelo for my Sunday visit.

**Nov. 5** → I celebrated All Saints' Sunday at All Saints' in Tupelo with two services and fellowship. All Saints' is an incredibly welcoming and friendly parish. It was hard to say goodbye and thank you. After collecting Sophie and changing clothes, I drove home.

**Nov. 6** → After a morning workout, I enjoyed a quiet sabbath day.

**Nov. 7** → The morning was really busy and staff meeting took longer than normal. I met with Canon Ponder for another meeting after staff meeting.

**Nov. 8** → After an early workout and breakfast, I made my way to the office. The morning was spent working with Peggy Jones on calendar and COM. Between meetings with Peggy, I met with our CFO, David Martin.

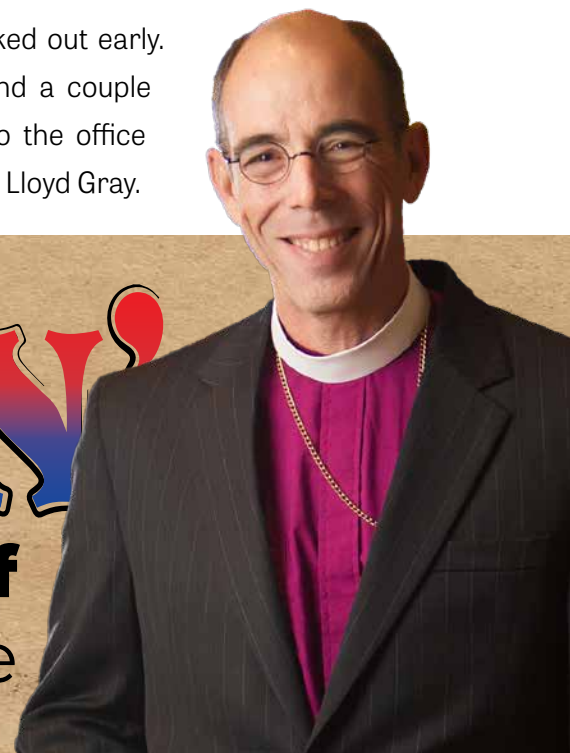
**Nov. 9** → I worked on an article and meditation during the morning. Later, I met with Whitney Robinson for my weekly update on Youth and Christian Education. I took the afternoon off to help my daughter, Katie, move into a new house.

**Nov. 10** → My morning was packed with a workout, breakfast meeting, and staff meetings. In the afternoon, I met via Zoom with John Delancey our Missioner in Honduras. In the afternoon, I attended the wedding rehearsal for the Rev Deacon Sarah Stripp.

**Nov. 11** → I spent most of the morning with household chores and marketing. In the afternoon, I officiated at the wedding of Sarah Stripp and Joshua Stretch.

**Nov. 12** → I left the house early and drove to Enterprise for visitation at St. Mary's. It was a lovely service with great fellowship.

**Nov. 13** → I worked out early. After breakfast and a couple errands, I went to the office for a meeting with Lloyd Gray.



# TRUCKIN'

**The Journal of**  
The Rt. Rev. Brian R. Seage

**Nov. 14** → I attended my normal array of staff meetings.

**Nov. 15** → I worked out early and then went to the office. After meeting with David Martin, I attended a lunch meeting with Working Together Mississippi.

**Nov. 16** → A particularly busy day included two annual consultations with clergy. The day also included a staff check-in and phone call with another member of the clergy. In the evening, I met with the Search Committee from St Philip's in Jackson.

**Nov. 17** → I left the apartment immediately after workout and drove to the coast for a dedication and blessing at Coast Episcopal School. While driving home, I spoke Stu Yarbrough about an Executive Committee matter.

**Nov. 18** → I enjoyed a relaxing and quiet day.

**Nov. 19** → My visitation was at St. Matthew's in Kosciusko. After church we enjoyed fellowship and a great meal. After returning to Jackson, I attended the closing service of Happening at St Philip's.

**Nov. 20** → Early workout was followed by a calm sabbath day.

**Nov. 21** → Staff meetings took place throughout the morning. In the afternoon, I met Granville Tate to discuss a pending sale of some acreage at Gray Center. Kyle arrived for a Thanksgiving visit in the afternoon. Shortly after her arrival, we joined Katie and Jacob for supper. Betsy arrived later in the evening.

**Nov. 22** → We left Jackson around midday and drove to Birmingham for Thanksgiving with Kyle's family.

**Nov. 23** → Happy Thanksgiving!

**Nov. 24** → Drove back to Jackson for a couple days at home with Kyle.

**Nov. 25** → A mostly calm Saturday. Although the Iron Bowl produced great anxiety for Kyle.

**Nov. 26** → This was a rare Sunday with no scheduled visitation. Betsy headed back to school in the afternoon.

Later, we enjoyed dinner at Eudora's with friends.

**Nov. 27** → I worked out in the morning and spent the rest of the day with Kyle.

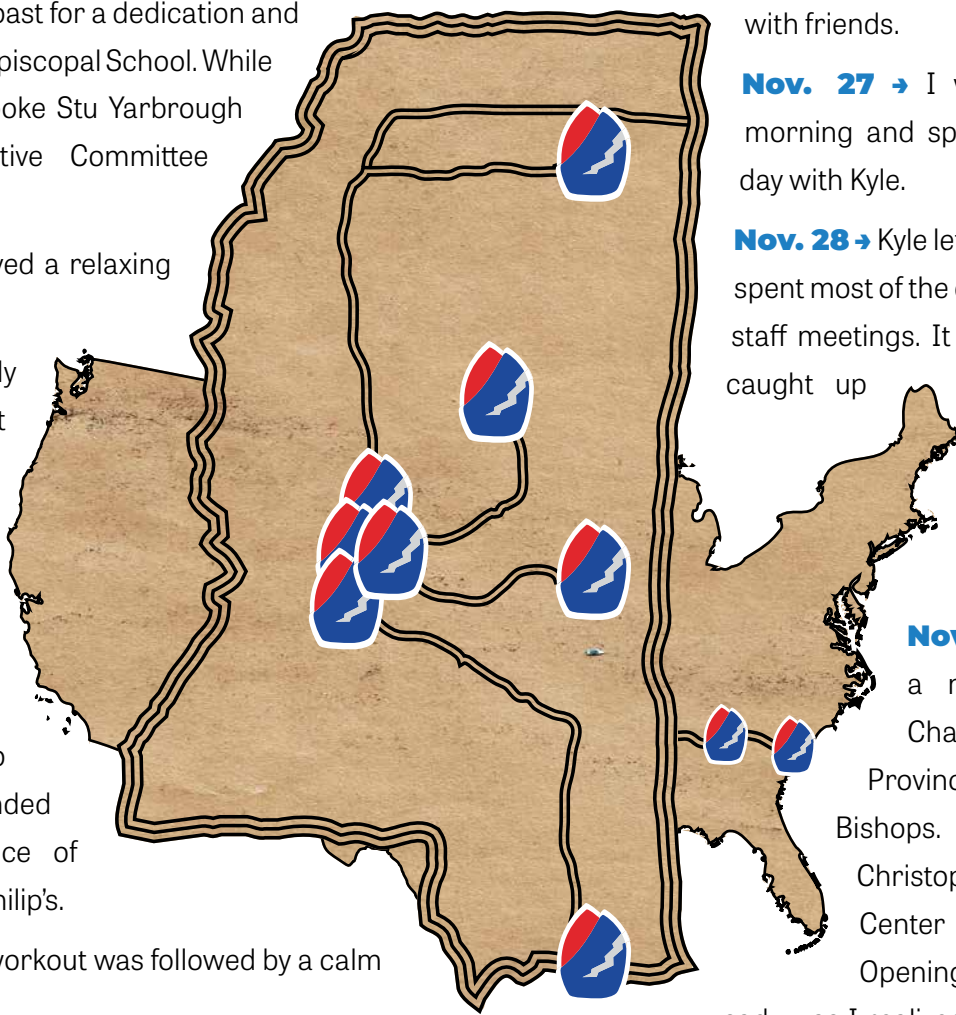
**Nov. 28** → Kyle left on an early flight. I spent most of the day in the office with staff meetings. It took a while to get caught up with emails. In the afternoon, I kept a scheduled doctor's appointment.

**Nov. 29** → I caught a morning flight for Charleston for the Province IV House of Bishops. I arrived at St. Christopher's Conference Center in the afternoon. Opening meetings made me

sad as I realized this will be my last

Province IV Bishops and Spouses Retreat. I am grateful for the friendship and support of these incredible people.

**Nov. 30** → The morning was taken up with meetings and discussion. In the afternoon, we took a break and visited the museum of African American History followed by dinner in Charleston. 🍷



# Ebbs & Flows

## In retirement, Bishop Gray finds himself back where he started at Nativity Water Valley

**E**arly in his career, when The Reverend Duncan M. Gray III took the reins as rector of St. Peter's, Oxford, he got a call from his father, The Right Reverend Duncan M. Gray Jr. The elder Gray was bishop at the time, so he also happened to be his son's boss. Just as they were about to end the call, the bishop interjected with the ominous words "oh, by the way..."

"You know, that's always a bad sign—'oh, by the way,'" says the younger Gray.

What his boss wanted was for him to add to his responsibilities looking after a tiny church in neighboring Water Valley called The Church of the Nativity. With that, a relationship began that would resurface through the rest of his career.

"In those days, we only had two services at St. Peter's," he recalls, "so I'd finish the eight o'clock service and get

in my car, keep my vestments on, and drive like a bat out of hell to Water Valley. And when that service was done I was back in the car to get back to Oxford for another one."

The fortunes of both Water Valley and Nativity went south in the 1990s. As bishop, Gray had to make the sad but necessary decision to close the church's doors in 2003. By the late 2010s, however, the town was on the rise again, bolstered by the steady growth of Oxford and an influx of artists attracted to the affordable and charming community.

With that resurgence came the need for a renewed Episcopal presence in town, and Nativity was reopened by Bishop Brian Seage in 2017. Gray was getting settled into semi-retirement in Oxford by then. After spending a couple years back on the St. Peter's staff, in 2022 he gave



*Bishop Gray and Kathy Gray at Nativity after bidding farewell to congregants.*



*Gray leads a study group in the Salt & Light building directly across Main Street from Nativity. The building serves not only the church but the entire Water Valley community.*

returning to the pew a try for the first time in nearly forty years. That lasted about six weeks.

“Doggone it,” he says, “sitting in the pew knowing that I was not going to have access to celebrating the Eucharist, I just said, ‘that’s not for me.’”

The timing was perfect. Just as Gray informed Bishop Seage that he wanted a post, Nativity came calling again. The Rev. Ann Whitaker, who had sustained the church through the pandemic, needed to retire, so Gray met with the mission committee that spring and was instantly impressed by the values they expressed.

“Everyone talked about, essentially, a way to impact the community,” he says. “They didn’t say, we want to be fifty percent bigger in 10 years, or we want a full-time priest eventually. I was impressed by that.”

That service-oriented spirit made Gray and the people of Water Valley a great match.

“Duncan has helped us focus on what we can do to better serve the people of Water Valley,” says James McCormick, who currently serves as Nativity’s Senior Warden. “We have been invigorated by Duncan’s steady hand and relentless message of love, faith, and hope.”

That mission is perhaps best embodied by the establishment of the “Salt and Light” building across the street from the sanctuary, envisioned by parishioners as not just a parish hall for Nativity, but as a resource center for the entire community. The building hosts meetings for a foster family support group and an Alcoholics Anonymous group. Plans are underway to start a Cub Scout program. And the church’s “Blessing Box”—a “take what you need, give what you can” food resource, serves people in the community facing hunger issues.

And while growth was never the goal, the vitality that has taken hold has resulted in plenty of it—Nativity has seen weekly attendance quadruple over the last two years. Rising membership has led to increased giving, which has expanded the possibilities to serve the community.

“Bishop Gray leads in a very gracious and loving way,” says Treasurer Robbie Fisher. “He inspires, empowers,




and encourages others to make a difference, not only in our little church, but in our local community and the world.”

The impact of Gray’s presence has been undeniable for McCormick.

“Picture this,” he says. “We had a pretty good little neighborhood garage band going, and then Mick Jagger comes along and says, ‘Hey, can I join the band?’”

That difference doesn’t just come in the form of service. Nativity occupies a niche in town as a viable church home for people who’ve settled in Water Valley and might struggle to fit in in very traditional small town churches. One of the first things people notice, Gray points out, is the church’s sign, which proclaims in rainbow lettering “All Are Welcome.”

And Nativity has become a welcome home for Gray and his wife, Kathy, as their journey comes full circle. The couple makes the 25-minute journey to the Valley together Sunday mornings, and she has taken on duties with both the altar and flower guilds. For Gray, it’s exactly the kind of semi-retirement he wants.

“To be able to worship with the community on a regular basis, that’s what I missed, profoundly, as bishop,” he says. “I enjoyed that experience, every Sunday in a different place. Still, there wasn’t the cumulative effect of week after week in the same place, where just the normal ebbs and flows of human life knit you together.” 

by *TME*, reporting by Ellen Hawkins

In June of 2021 St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Columbus, Mississippi experienced a lightning strike to one of the pilasters on its roof. The resulting surge damaged the telephone, lighting, and internet systems throughout the buildings. The most serious damage, however, was to the organ.

The organ at St. Paul's had seen better days even before the strike, but that storm proved to be the death blow. The circuitry was fried. Even after attempts were made to repair it, it was never reliable.

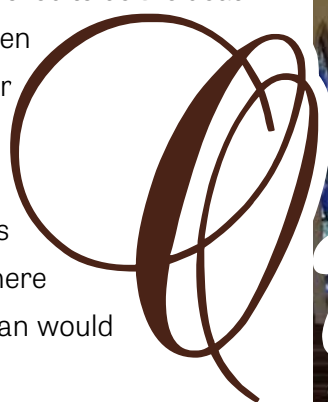
"Glitches continued to crop up over the next several months," says Organist Ellen Hawkins. "In fact, there was no way to know how the organ would behave on any given day!"

Rather than despair, the parish decided to face the music (or lack thereof).

The Music Committee worked with the R. A. Colby Organ Company over the next year, and two options were presented for consideration: restoration of the organ with existing pipes, or conversion to an all-digital organ. Brad Colby invited the music committee to two churches in Georgia to listen to installations of a system by the Walker Technical Company, considered the gold standard of the organ-building world for quality digital sound.

While the committee went into the process certain that pipes would be the overwhelming preference, to their surprise, they found the digital instruments quite impressive. After careful consideration the decision was made to proceed with an all-digital organ.

"I never thought that a lightning strike, seemingly a disaster, could become an impetus to great change," says Marian Hazard, a former Senior Warden. "Realizing that restoration was possible but with many unexpected improvements, our church rallied in support. Insurance money and a Capital Campaign combined





Organist Ellen Hawkins




to transform this vital part of our service into a gift for St. Paul's today, and legacy for the future."

In addition to the new digital system, the console and pedal board were beautifully

refinished. The pipes were left in place for aesthetic purposes and in case the church should desire to transition back to pipes in the future.

After a long journey, the work was completed on November 20, and the new instrument made its debut on November 26.

"After playing piano for several months during the restoration, it is a joyful and fulfilling experience to hear the full sound of the organ filling the space," says Hawkins.

"Mozart said, 'To my eyes and ears the organ will ever be the King of Instruments,'" says The Reverend Andrew McLarty, St. Paul's recently-arrived rector. "We are blessed by this organ and its ability to richly imbue our liturgy with its kingly peals and harmonies. I am so happy for the choir and congregation of St. Paul's. It has been a long process; but the dedication and generosity of many have made this possible." 

## St. Paul's goes digital in the wake of an instrument-destroying storm

*Facing page: components of St. Paul's organ console disassembled as they are prepared for restoration to be repurposed in the new all-digital instrument.*



*Watch a short clip of Hawkins playing the newly installed organ and hear it fill St. Paul's with rich sound.*



**HAPPENING #96**  
A CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

**MARCH 8-10**  
**ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, OXFORD**

OPEN NOW- DUE JANUARY 6  
**STAFF APPLICATIONS**  
(ADULT & YOUTH STAFF)

**HAPPENER REGISTRATIONS**  
(10TH-12TH GRADES)- OPEN JANUARY 1



**Bishop Election Lock-In**  
Chapel of the Cross, Madison

**Drop-Off 8pm Friday, February 2**  
**Pick-Up 8am Saturday, February 3**

Register @diomseyouth by Wednesday, January 31!

# Book Review

*Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most* by Miroslav Volf, Matthew Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz.

*The Open Field: March, 2023. 348 pages.*

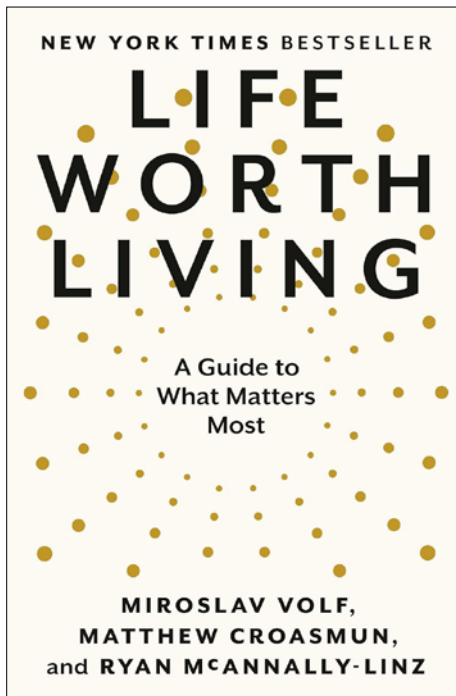
review by Staff Reviewer Carol Mead

In my car I keep a “multi-tool,” a single gadget with two kinds of screwdrivers, pliers, a knife, scissors, and various other items. The pieces are not as good as real tools, but I have access to a lot of options with one gizmo.

At first I thought the book *Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most* was a multi-tool for spirituality and depth: its value in the variety rather than the quality. On reading the book, though, I found it to be a collection of quality tools, not poor substitutes for them. The authors don't try to give the one 'tip' to find happiness. In fact, the chapter “This Book Might Wreck Your Life” warns of its serious challenge to comfortable ways of thinking and being. It describes experiences of painful transformation by the Buddha, the apostle Peter, and Ida B. Wells. The authors say of them, “What their stories share is an experience that put the shape of their lives into question. What had been normal and assumed became questionable. Something—maybe everything—had to change.”

*Life Worth Living* offers effective, lasting tools to examine life and its priorities. It describes Ignatian disciplines, Buddhism, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other sources as helpful in examining and deepening our existence. It concludes that each of us can do the difficult work of self-examination through such familiar tools as meditation, ritual, and community.

This odd but helpful book speaks of four levels of living: reflexive (or autopilot); effectiveness, self-awareness; and self-transcendence. Comfort in life can't be equated to its level of meaning or value. The authors say of the “effectiveness” level of contemplation, “There's also a helpful ruthlessness to reflection in this layer.” The book offers Albert Speer and Oscar Wilde as examples of living the unexamined, seemingly successful life. The life of the Nazi architect teaches us, “It is possible to succeed in our highest aspirations and yet fail as human beings.” Of Oscar Wilde, the book says, “...in getting what he wanted, he had betrayed his own highest ideals. He had failed to live in correspondence with his own best understanding of what kind of human being it was truly worth being.”



To me, those ideas are the core of *Life Worth Living*: the discomfort and importance of going deeper to determine if we are efficiently getting something we should actually want. It is a challenge for any person who wants to live on a different level: one in which God guides us into the places we are specifically called to be. To be honest, I'm a bit scared of taking *Life Worth Living* to heart, of the idea of “helpful ruthlessness.” It might after all, well be the kind of tool that will ‘wreck my life.’

But it contains enough quality tools that it might also allow me to identify, deepen, and make possible the life I want to live in God. 🙏



*The Very Rev. Carol Mead is rector of St. Peter's by-the-Lake, Brandon and serves as dean of the Central Convocation.*

## RESOLUTION ON PROCEDURES FOR ELECTION OF THE ELEVENTH BISHOP OF MISSISSIPPI

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSISSIPPI RESOLUTION ON PROCEDURES FOR ELECTION OF THE ELEVENTH BISHOP OF MISSISSIPPI

October 5, 2023

WHEREAS, on December 27, 2022, The Rt. Rev. Brian R. Seage, Tenth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi ("Diocese"), issued a formal call for the election of his successor to serve as the Eleventh Bishop of the Diocese;

WHEREAS, the Standing Committee of the Diocese appointed a Chairperson and members to serve on a Search Committee to review the life and ministry of the Diocese through prayerful listening and discernment, prepare a diocesan profile for the search, educate the people of the Diocese on the election process and ministry of a bishop, and recruit and receive nominees to discern a slate of bishop candidates for the Standing Committee and diocesan Council to consider;

WHEREAS, the Standing Committee of the Diocese also appointed a Chairperson and members to serve on a Transition Committee to conduct the diocesan listening sessions (commonly called "Meet and Greets or walkabouts") with the slate of nominees; coordinate the Bishop election at Council, work with the diocesan staff, resigning Bishop, Bishop-Elect, Presiding Bishop, Commission on Liturgy and Music, and other appropriate groups around the Diocese to plan and carry out the consecration service and related activities; and arrange for the Bishop-Elect's transition into the Diocese;

WHEREAS, on September 20, 2023, the Standing Committee of the Diocese adopted a resolution setting forth the Petition Process for the election of a Bishop, which resolution is posted on the Bishop Search website and the diocesan website, and which Petition Process will be open beginning November 2, 2023 and end on November 8, 2023, whereby any petition candidates who successfully complete the same background check process required of other Search Committee candidates will be included in the Meet and Greets walkabouts and the names of candidates placed in nomination at Council;

WHEREAS, the Search Committee is completing its work and submitting to the Standing Committee a slate of nominees to serve as Bishop-Elect, which is anticipated to be announced on November 1, 2023;

WHEREAS, the work of the Transition Committee is ongoing and will continue through the transition of the Bishop-Elect;

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee of the Diocese ("Committee"), acting under the authority of Canon 12, Section 1 of the Canons of the Diocese, shall have and exercise, in the interim between Councils, all the powers of Council, except as limited by Canon, and desires to adopt a resolution on procedures for the election of the Eleventh Bishop of Mississippi pursuant to Article XIII of the Constitution of the Diocese, which provides as follows:

THE CONSTITUTION  
ARTICLE XIII  
Election of a Bishop

SECTION 1. The election of a Bishop, a Bishop Coadjutor or a Suffragan Bishop, shall be made in the following manner:

(a) After nomination in open Council, the Clergy and Laity shall ballot by Orders, and a majority of each Order on the same ballot shall be necessary to elect, provided that two-thirds of each Order is present.

(b) If fewer than two-thirds of the members of an Order entitled to vote are present at the Council, the vote of two-thirds of those present in such Order shall be necessary for that purpose.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Committee does hereby adopt the following resolution and refers the same to the 197th Annual Council of the Diocese for consideration and adoption.

Resolution on Procedures for Election of the Eleventh Bishop of Mississippi

BE IT RESOLVED that the following procedures be adopted by the Annual Council, for the nomination and election of a Bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi, at its 197th Annual Council to be held at St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Upper Campus, Ridgeland, Mississippi, on February 3, 2024. If there is no election on February 3, 2024, an additional reconvened Council will be held at St. Andrew's Episcopal Cathedral in Jackson, Mississippi on February 10, 2024.

A. At the beginning of the Saturday, February 3, 2024, business session of the 197th Council, the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi will place in nomination all candidates selected by the Search Committee and all candidates processed through the Petition Process. No additional nominations for Bishop will be allowed.

B. Balloting shall be done in the following manner:

1. The voting members of Council (the clergy and lay delegates, or alternates substituting for delegates), shall sit in a section reserved for them. This will be open seating and not a reserved section for each church.

2. At the time a ballot is called, a ballot shall be electronically presented onscreen within sight of each voting member of Council; clerical and lay ballots will clearly be identified as such, or as announced by the Chair, a single unified ballot may be presented which can be divided by Order (clerical or lay) by means of the assigned electronic voting device.

3. The voting member shall mark the nominee of choice electronically as instructed; and remain seated.

4. Once the presentation of ballots to the voting members of Council begins, no voting member may leave the floor and no change can be made in the certification of lay delegates. At such time as all the ballots have been marked and submitted electronically and the Council awaits the results of the ballot, voting members may leave the floor but will have to present their credentials to re-enter the voting area.

5. The votes shall be tabulated by the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Mississippi and their appointees, who will report the

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 →**

# Faith Seeking Understanding

## Christians & Wine

a theology column by John Switzer

**D**ecember is a month of religious festivals. Christians are celebrating Christmas, the solemnity that recalls the birth of the Savior. And Jews are celebrating Hanukkah, a festival that recalls the reconsecration of the temple in Jerusalem in 164 BC. As part of their celebrations, many Christians and Jews will enjoy wine, “the fruit of the vine.”

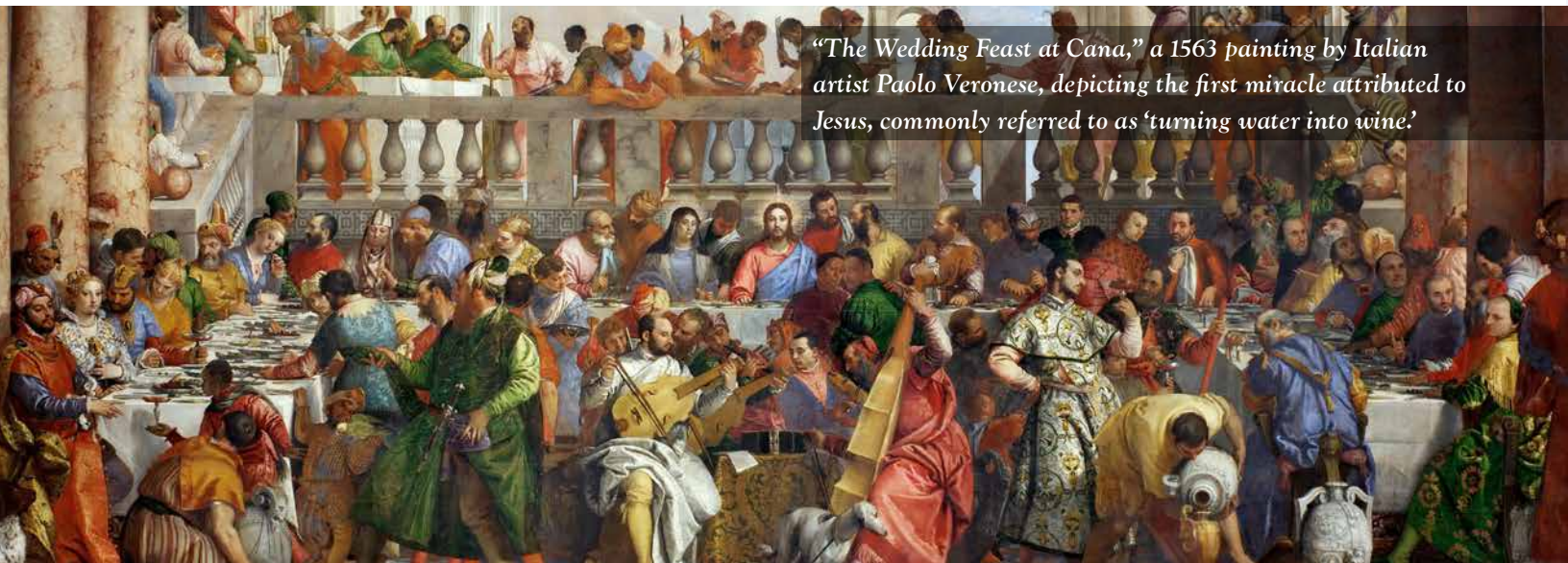
Given the fact that there are religions that forbid the drinking of beverages containing alcohol, it's an interesting exercise to investigate how it is that the Bible does not forbid its consumption. After all, wine was popular among Jews at the time of Jesus, and he clearly enjoyed it. For Christians—as for Jesus—wine possesses both social and religious significance.

Wine serves as a flavor-enhancing, pleasure-giving component of the messianic banquet initiated by Christ. Receiving it in faith, we seek to be “enthused,” filled with the divine reality that is the source of all life. In a sacramental sense we know it as the Blood of Christ when we gather as a community that offers bread and wine to the Lord in holy eucharist. Our word “eucharist” comes to us from the Greek word that means “thanksgiving,” and it's no coincidence that wine and thankfulness are combined in the most significant form of Christian worship.

Historical insight into the consumption of wine and other alcoholic beverages suggests that we humans have been saying “bottoms up” (or its equivalent) for a long time. Along with bread and olive oil, wine has been a staple in the Middle East for thousands of years. The popular red wine known as Shiraz is the oldest cultivated grape and receives its name from a city in southwestern Iran where its grapes were first farmed many centuries ago.

Because grapes ferment on the vine if invaded by a particular bacterium, the pleasurable effects of alcohol consumption were probably discovered by accident. Those effects were undoubtedly experienced by wild animals prior to their discovery by humans! As a cultivated crop, fruit of the vine became an important part of daily life and religious rituals. It had medicinal purposes and was a safe alternative to unsanitary water.

The religious rituals of ancient Greeks and Romans included many uses for wine. It was offered as a libation poured out to the gods, often in honor of the dead. The Greeks understood wine consumption as an actual imbibing of the god of wine into their own bodies while the sense of inebriation demonstrated the deity's control over them. Wine spilled accidentally was considered by the Romans to belong to the gods and it had to be handled in a ritual manner.



*“The Wedding Feast at Cana,” a 1563 painting by Italian artist Paolo Veronese, depicting the first miracle attributed to Jesus, commonly referred to as ‘turning water into wine.’*

A thriving wine trade existed in Palestine and Egypt by 2500 BC and the Egyptian elite considered certain wines a necessary component for a satisfying afterlife. The Hebrews understood wine to be a divine gift for the purposes of bringing joy to the heart, an obvious reference to the effects of fermentation (Psalm 104:15). To this day many Jewish prayers are offered with a glass of wine held aloft, a simple gesture now incorporated in the Christian celebration of eucharist.

Although drunkenness is condemned in both testaments of the Bible, there is no outright condemnation of alcohol consumption. As with all of God's creation, the problem is not with the divine gift but with misuse of the gift. In Judaism and Christianity, the enjoyment of wine has traditionally been understood as a legitimate experience of a blessed life, overindulgence being frowned upon because of the foolishness and impropriety that serve as its byproducts. Perhaps this is why cultures around the Mediterranean have long diluted their wine with water, a practice that was popular in Judea at the time of Jesus.

Though not required by the rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer, many priests add water to the wine before it is consecrated in the eucharistic prayer. This

act may have begun to dilute the alcoholic effects of the wine, but it eventually took on a symbolic meaning signifying the Christian hope of deification in Christ: May we come to share in the divinity of Christ as he humbled himself to share in our humanity. 🍷



*The Rev. Dr. John Switzer is professor emeritus of theology at Spring Hill College as well as rector emeritus and theologian-in-residence at St. Pierre's, Gautier.*

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### 'RESOLUTION' CONTINUED →

results of the same to the Chair of Council, with a copy in writing, together with a record of the individual ballots, which shall be filed with the Secretary.

6. A Nominee may remove his or her name from the ballot at any time during the voting by advising the Secretary in writing, by telephone, text or by email message signed by the Nominee. A wet signature (for notification in writing) or unique, electronic signature (for notification via text or email) shall suffice in fulfillment of this requirement. Once a Nominee has withdrawn, his or her name may not be re-entered on the ballot.

C. At such time as there shall be a declaration of an election according to Article XIII of the Constitution of the Diocese of Mississippi, the Chair shall notify the elected person, obtain the elected person's acceptance of election, and shall make provision to notify the other candidates. All voting members of Council shall sign each of the six blank canonical Testimonials of Election and he or she shall ask that a motion be made from the floor that the Standing Committee

of the Diocese be instructed to forward to the House of Bishops and to the Standing Committees of all dioceses in the Episcopal Church the canonical testimonials and certificates required by the Canons of General Convention evidencing the election, and to do all other things necessary to ensure the ordination of the Bishop Diocesan-Elect before Council shall be adjourned.

D. It is the express intent of the Council that any election of a nominee to be the Bishop Diocesan of the Diocese of Mississippi is made in reliance upon full, truthful and complete disclosures by that Nominee to the Search Committee, Transition Committee, Office of the Chancellor and the Council. If, after the election but prior to consecration, the Council concludes that the Bishop-Elect has failed in any material way to provide full, truthful and complete disclosures, or if the Council concludes that the Bishop-Elect has omitted to disclose material facts, then the Council, acting pursuant to a notice of Council called for such purpose, may take action to rescind such election.

E. A copy of this resolution shall be published in the November 2023, December 2023, and Council editions of The Mississippi Episcopalian.

# Faithful Departed

Please submit Faithful Departed notices to your church for submission

**Miller Payne Holmes, Jr.**, 79, communicant of St. Peter's, Brandon, died September 6, 2023.

**James Richard (Jim) Jensen**, 89, communicant of St. Peter's, Brandon, died October 28, 2023.

**Vickie Jo Culotta**, 53, communicant of Mediator, Redeemer, McComb/Magnolia, died November 4, 2023.

**Patricia Gail Kinder**, 70, inactive communicant of St. Paul's, Columbus died November 9, 2023.

**Jane Hart McMillan Hargett**, 67, communicant of Nativity, Greenwood, died November 24, 2023.

# Deployment Report

## New Calls and Transitions

- In October, the Rev. Elizabeth Graham resigned as interim rector of St. John's, Pascagoula and administrative associate at St. John's, Ocean Springs to be non-parochial. Elizabeth continues to serve as supply at Pascagoula, is honorary associate at Ocean Springs, and serves full-time as chaplain manager at Singing River Hospital System.
- The Rev. Dr. John Switzer retired as the first rector of St. Pierre's, Gautier on October 31 and has been named rector emeritus and theologian-in-residence.
- The Rev. Scott Lenoir is serving as long-term supply at St. Pierre's, Gautier.
- The Rev. Will Compton has been called as rector of Chapel of the Cross, Madison as of December 1, having served previously as interim priest-in-charge and associate/curate.
- The Rev. Tom Fanning has been called as associate rector of Chapel of the Cross, Madison as of December 1, following service as interim associate rector.

## Churches/Chaplaincies in Transition

- St. John's, Aberdeen
- St. Luke's, Brandon
- Redeemer, Brookhaven
- Good Shepherd, Columbus
- St. Andrew's, Jackson (two canon positions) – accepting inquiries
- St. Philip's, Jackson – interviewing candidates
- Mediator, Meridian – self-study
- Canterbury: Mississippi State University / Resurrection, Starkville
- St. John's, Pascagoula – completing profile

## THE MISSISSIPPI EPISCOPALIAN

The Official Publication of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi



## Official News Publication of the Bishop and the Diocese of Mississippi

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# Diocesan Calendar

Diocesan Meetings continue by Zoom unless otherwise noted. Though the Diocesan Staff works in a hybrid model (office and home), the Allin House is staffed daily, M-F, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## December

- 15** Deadline for Submission of Resolutions/Deadline for Pre-filed Nominations
- 17** Bishop Seage visits All Saints', Inverness
- 19** Executive Committee, St. Andrew's Cathedral, Jackson; 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- 22-26** Allin House staff holiday in observance of Christmas
- 24** Bishop Seage at St. Francis, Philadelphia
- 24** Christmas Eve
- 25** THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: Christmas Day
- 27-1** Winter Solstice, Camp Bratton-Green

## January

- 1** New Year's Day
- 1** Allin House staff holiday in observance of New Year's Day
- 2** The Mississippi Episcopalian deadline; 12:00 noon
- 4** Racial Reconciliation Task Force; 12:00 noon
- 7** Bishop Seage visits St. Mark's, Gulfport
- 8-10** Diocesan Discernment Retreat
- 12** Sacred Ground Circle, online
- 12-13** A.C.. Marble School, online
- 13** A Day of Dialogue for Racial Healing, St. Philip's, Jackson
- 14** Bishop Seage visits St. Alban's, Bovina
- 14** Bishop Seage visits St. Mary's, Bolton
- 15** Allin House staff holiday in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 17** Bishop Candidates Meet and Greet, St. James', Greenville; 5:30 p.m.
- 18** Bishop Candidates Meet and Greet, All Saints', Tupelo; 5:30 p.m.
- 19** Bishop Candidates Meet and Greet, Coast Episcopal School, Long Beach; 5:30 p.m.
- 20** Bishop Candidates Meet and Greet, Chapel of the Cross, Madison; 10:00 a.m.
- 21** Bishop Seage visits Redeemer, Greenville
- 26** Sacred Ground Circle, online
- 28** Bishop Seage visits St. Paul's, Columbus
- 28** Bishop Seage visits Mississippi State, Starkville

## February

- 1** The Mississippi Episcopalian deadline; 12:00 noon
- 1** Racial Reconciliation Task Force; 12:00 noon
- 2-4** 197th Annual Council of the Diocese, St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Middle & Upper School Campus, Ridgeland
- 9** Sacred Ground Circle, online
- 9-10** A.C.. Marble School, Solomon Center
- 11** Bishop Seage visits St. Peter's by-the-Lake, Brandon
- 14** ASH WEDNESDAY
- 14** Bishop Seage visits St. Andrew's Lower School, Jackson
- 14** Bishop Seage at St. Mark's, Raymond; Holy Trinity, Crystal Springs; and St. Luke's, Brandon
- 16-18** Junior High DOY, Camp Bratton-Green
- 18** Bishop Seage visits Nativity, Greenwood
- 23** Sacred Ground Circle, online
- 25** Bishop Seage visits St. Stephen's, Indianola
- 27-5** House of Bishops, Camp Allen

## March

- 1** The Mississippi Episcopalian deadline; 12:00 noon
- 1** Annual Parochial Report Due
- 1** Credentials of Delegates/Alternates to Annual Council Due
- 7** Racial Reconciliation Task Force; 12:00 noon
- 8** Sacred Ground Circle, online
- 10** Daylight Saving Time begins - Spring forward!
- 10** Bishop Seage visits Christ Church, Vicksburg
- 15-16** A.C.. Marble School, Solomon Center
- 17** Bishop Seage visits St. Patrick's, Long Beach
- 22** Sacred Ground Circle, online
- 24** THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: Palm Sunday
- 24** Bishop Seage visits St. Mary's, Lexington
- 28** MAUNDY THURSDAY
- 28** Bishop Seage at St. Mark's, Raymond
- 29** GOOD FRIDAY
- 29** Bishop Seage at Chapel of the Cross, Madison
- 30** HOLY SATURDAY
- 30** Bishop Seage visits St. Philip's, Jackson (Easter Vigil)
- 31** THE SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION: Easter Day
- 31** Bishop Seage at St. Andrew's, Jackson



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