

THE MISSISSIPPI EPISCOPALIAN

The Official Magazine of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi

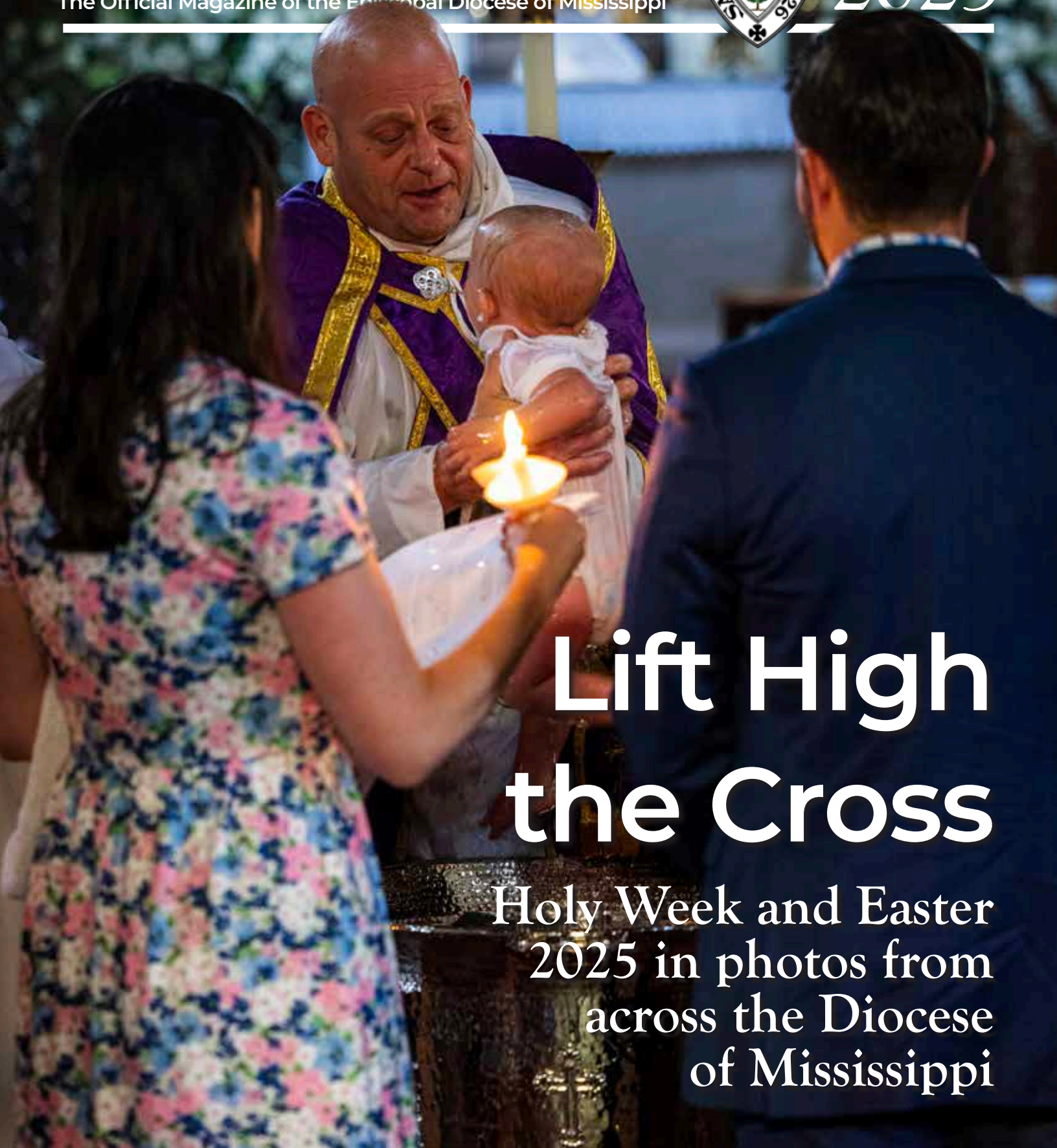


Volume 150

Issue No. 5

May

2025



Lift High the Cross

Holy Week and Easter
2025 in photos from
across the Diocese
of Mississippi

2nd Annual
**CULPEPPER
 COOKOUT**

MAY 24TH, 2025

Join us for a fun-filled day with delicious food, music, water activities, arts & crafts, aerial four square, Silent Auction, and more!!

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 FAMILY TICKET \$120**

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Diocesan Altar Guild

Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendar
**Saturday
 May 31, 2025**
 More info to follow.

St. Columb's
 Episcopal Church

550 Sunnybrook Road
 Ridgeland, MS 39157



Bishop's Journal
 April 2025

A fond farewell

The deconsecration of St. Clement's, Vaiden, brings the opportunity for preservation and new life

Lift High the Cross

Holy Week and Easter 2025 in photos from across the diocese

BISHOP'S CORNER
Mental Health Awareness Month

Resurrection & restoration

Bishop Wells Joins 100 Others to Celebrate Easter at Christ Church

A taste of outreach

Mediator-Redeemer ECW hosts a fundraiser for ministries

**Deployment Report
 Faithful Departed**

Diocesan Calendar

On the cover: The Rev. Jeff Reich baptises a baby during Easter services at St. John's, Laurel.





Bishop's Journal

April 2025

- 1** Province IV Bishops Call
St. Mary's School, Memphis
Spoke
- 2** Call with Chancellor and Church
Warden
- 3** Bishop's Lenten Bible Study
Spoke
- 4** Calvary Church, Memphis
Lenten Preaching Series
Preached



I'm so very grateful to Calvary Episcopal Church for the invitation to join this year's Lenten Preaching Series - and so grateful to the many friends, former parishioners, and former colleagues from my legal world who took time out to share that hour with me. If you weren't there and are interested in the thoughts I shared on that 57th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., you are invited to listen at this link (msepiscopalian.com/calvary).

- 6** St. George's Church, Clarksdale
Preached - 8:30 a.m.
Peached - 10:30 a.m.
- 7** Bishop's sabbath
- 8** Staff Meeting
Meetings with Staff Members
- 9** Travel to Church of the Epiphany,
Tunica
Met with Clergy person
Evening Worship and Fellowship

- 10** Met with Clergy person
Travel to Jackson
Bishop's Lenten Bible Study
Spoke
- 11** Site visit, Jackson Public Schools
Meetings with Staff Members
- 13** St. Mary's Church, Lexington
(Palm Sunday)
Preached
- 17** VA Medical Center, Jackson -
Last Roll Call in Memory of
Deceased Veterans
Spoke
St. Mark's Church, Raymond
(Maundy Thursday)
Preached
- 18** Good Friday - Chapel of the
Cross, Madison
Preached
Easter Vigil - St. Philip's Church,
Jackson
Preached, confirmed 14,
reaffirmed 3
- 20** Easter Sunday - St. Andrew's
Cathedral, Jackson
Preached - 8:30 a.m.
Preached - 10:30 a.m.
- 20** Visit to Christ Church, Church Hill
- 21** Conversation with Chancellor
Conversation with Clergy person
Conversation with Intake Officer
- 22** Staff Meeting
Canterbury Ministry - University
of Southern Mississippi
Preached, confirmed 4



Wonderful evening with the Canterbury Campus Ministry at University of Southern Mississippi - with confirmations!

Grateful for students who have embarked on so many different areas of study! And, very thankful for the Rev. Jenny Newman, who ministers so faithfully to this student community, and all of the parish family of Church of the Ascension, Hattiesburg, who have welcomed this campus ministry with open arms. We were treated to an amazing Sri Lankan meal by our international students, and delicious American dishes from the parish family! Thank you all for a great evening!! Looking forward to worshipping with these young people again soon!

- 23** Visit to St. Andrew's Upper
School, Ridgeland
Preached
- 25** Deconsecration, St. Clement's,
Vaiden



St. Clement's Church, Vaiden, was consecrated in 1881 and served the community well for many years. Worship at St. Clement's ended years ago, and this historic space is now being conveyed to the Town of Vaiden, with plans for it to be restored as a community arts center. Grateful to everyone who joined us for this holy time of deconsecration and visioning with Mayor Stella Washington Bell, members of the Barksdale family, community friends, and our faithful Chancellor, Robert Ireland. Looking forward to seeing how this historic space is preserved, restored and repurposed to continue to serve this community.

continued on next page →

A new cross for Creator



The Church of the Creator in Clinton, Mississippi erected a new outdoor cross in time for Holy Week. The church's original cross weathered years of harsh weather and was falling apart. Thanks to the hard work of junior warden Mike Khadabux, (pictured) wood was purchased, notched, sealed, and erected. May it bless our community for many years to come.

27 St. Peter's Church, Oxford

Preached 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.

Confirmed 19, and reaffirmed 1

Meeting with Vestry

EYC



Definitely not "low Sunday" at St. Peter's Church, Oxford!

Thanks to everyone in this parish family – for beautiful worship, amazing music, for a fabulous reception, for a great lunch with Vestry and a great afternoon with EYC!! See you all again soon!!

28 Virtual Lunch-and-Learn for Memphis Theological Seminary

Spoke

28 Return to Jackson from Oxford

29 Staff Meeting

Meetings with Staff Members

30 St. Peter's by-the-Sea, Gulfport:

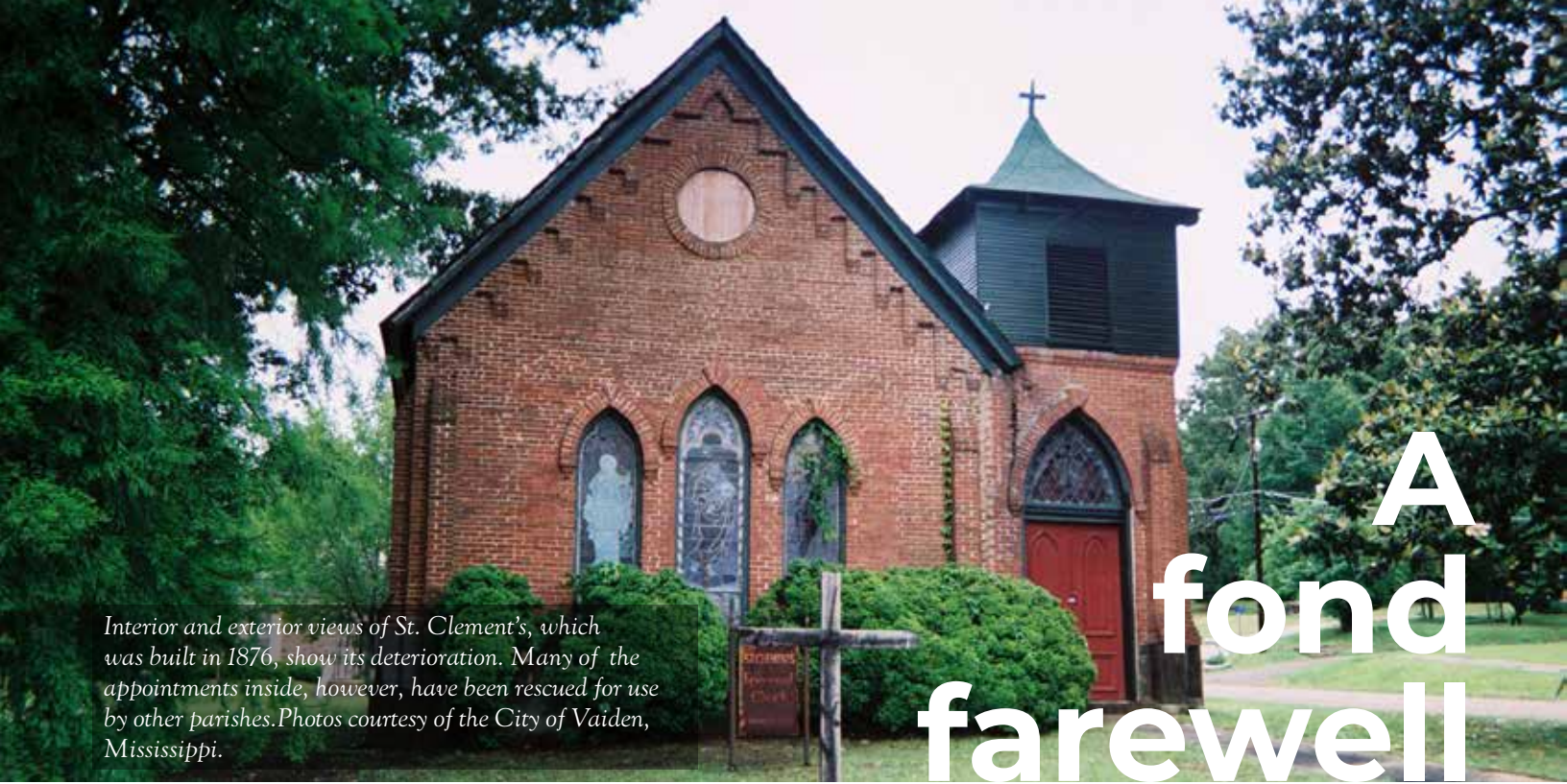
Casting our Nets Ministry

Visitation

Preached, confirmed 20, baptized 2, reaffirmed 5, and received 15



A great evening with the parish family of St. Peter's by-the-Sea, Gulfport! Beautiful worship, with baptisms, SO MANY confirmations /receptions /reaffirmations (!), extraordinary music, a delicious crawfish boil and wonderful fellowship! So grateful for this evening – and for having the chance to see one of the church's ministries in action with its Casting Our Nets afterschool enrichment in aquatics and art! 🏆




Interior and exterior views of St. Clement's, which was built in 1876, show its deterioration. Many of the appointments inside, however, have been rescued for use by other parishes. Photos courtesy of the City of Vaiden, Mississippi.

A fond farewell

Conversations between the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi and the Town of Vaiden have been ongoing for some time now, contemplating a conveyance of St. Clement's Church to the Town for its use as a community center. Because worship and other ministry at St. Clement's ended years ago, its conveyance would not result in the displacement of a worshipping community. Rather, giving prayerful consideration to a conveyance to the Town was a reflection of the Diocese's stewardship of an historic property and exploration of how to best care for it without allowing it to fall into complete ruin. By placing the building in the hands of a party interested in ensuring its preservation in the community, we would also ensure the preservation of its history.

The Trustees of the Diocese and the Standing Committee voted in favor of the conveyance. In furtherance of the conveyance, Bishop Wells officiated the deconsecration (secularization) of St. Clement's on Friday, April 25, at 11:00 a.m. Some of St. Clement's appointments—pews, hymn boards and the presider's chair—were gifted to Chapel of the Cross, Rolling Fork, continuing their holy use in that church as it is rebuilt after having been hit by a devastating tornado in 2023.

We are grateful for the interest of the town of Vaiden in continuing the use of this property to enhance the life and work of the town, and prayerful that the property will continue to serve that community for years to come. 

The deconsecration of St. Clement's, Vaiden, brings the opportunity for preservation and new life





Lift High the Cross

**All Saints',
Tupelo**

*Lighting of the Paschal Candle, The Great Vigil of
Easter. Photos from All Saints' by Tommie Moore.*



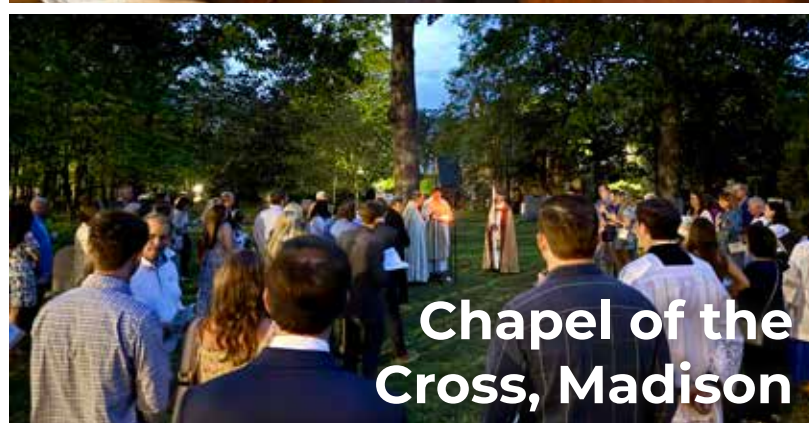
**Holy Week
and Easter
2025
in
photos
from
across
the
Diocese**



**Calvary,
Cleveland**



*Ray Balentine with
granddaughter Millie Balentine
(daughter of Mollie and Will
Balentine)*



**Chapel of the
Cross, Madison**

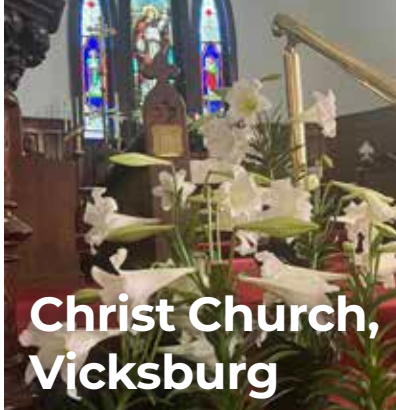


*Patty Godfrey, the Rev. Samuel
B. Godfrey and the Right Rev. Dr.
Dorothy Sanders Wells*

**Christ Church,
Church Hill**



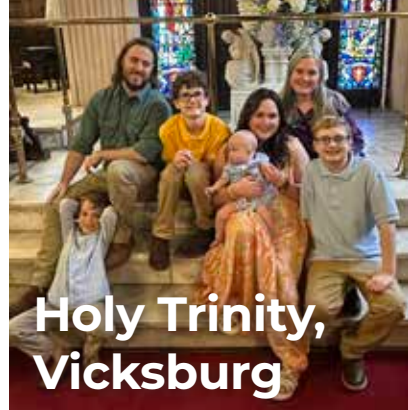
**Christ Church,
Holly Springs**



**Christ Church,
Vicksburg**



**Creator,
Clinton**



**Holy Trinity,
Vicksburg**



**Nativity,
Greenwood**



**Nativity,
Water Valley**



Nativity photos by Robbie Fisher



**St. Alban's,
Bovina**



**Redeemer,
Biloxi**



**St. Christopher's,
Jackson**



**St. Elizabeth's,
Collins**



**St. John's,
Laurel**



St. Mark's, Jackson



*Henry and Lorna Thomas & Family;
above: Ed and Kitty Cole & Family*

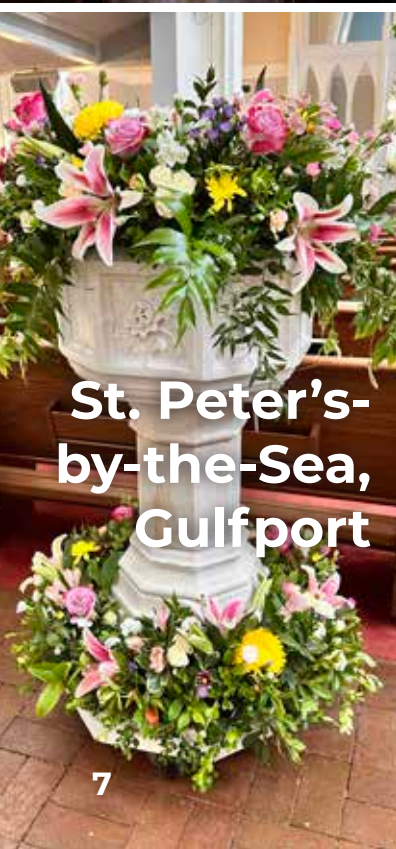


**St. Paul's,
Meridian**



**St. Peter's-
by-the-Lake,
Brandon**

The Lyles/Edwards family



**St. Peter's-
by-the-Sea,
Gulfport**



**St. Philip's,
Jackson**



St. Philips Photos by Bill Burke





**St. Thomas,
Diamondhead**



St. Andrew's Episcopal School



**St.
Columb's,
Ridgeland**



St. James, Port Gibson



**Trinity,
Pass
Christian**



**Trinity,
Yazoo
City**



*Courtyard Cross
flowered with wild
gladiolas planted by
Sonny Baskin, faithful
communicant of TEC
Yazoo for his lifetime.*

Mental Health Awareness Month

About half an hour north of my hometown, Mobile, Alabama, is the small rural community of Mt. Vernon. For nearly 100 years, Mt. Vernon was home to a place whose name alone could strike fear into folks from Lower Alabama: It was a place called Searcy Hospital.

Searcy Hospital was an imposing structure: Built in 1828 as an arsenal, just after 1900, it was repurposed into what then was a hospital for the insane. Patients who exhibited behaviors that were deemed out of the norm and not understood by others were likely to be sent to Searcy, where it seemed that for the most part, patients lived out all of their days; no one seemed to know anyone who had ever been released from Searcy after being admitted. The poor, the uneducated and the isolated—those who had no advocates—were most vulnerable to being committed to Searcy. And when Searcy closed its doors years ago, hundreds of graves—many, unidentified—were discovered in Searcy's cemetery, bearing witness to patients who entered a place where they were cut off from loved ones, work and everything in their community, never to leave.

My mother grew up not far from Mt. Vernon, Alabama and Searcy Hospital. And, according to family members, she first began displaying signs of mental illness as a young person. It's clearly my good fortune that our family members had a fear of Searcy Hospital: Had my mother been sent there, she likely would never have been released, and I would never have been born.

But, my mother's illness did indeed have the effect of cutting her off from family, neighbors, church, coworkers—and pretty much anyone who observed her during one of her “episodes.” My earliest recollection of my mother's struggle with mental illness came when I was quite young. We were shopping at Gayfer's, one of my mother's favorite department stores, when suddenly, she had collapsed in front of a display of dresses, screaming and flailing as if something or someone were attacking her. Ladies who were in the store came quickly to see what was happening,

and I remember someone's hands gently pulling me back.

We exercise some caution around childhood memories—and had I never seen my mother again having that kind of “episode,” I'd be much more concerned about the reliability of the memory. But my mother's “episodes” would be on full public display throughout my childhood and teen years: Retail establishments seemed to offer the kind of overstimulation that triggered the events. In a grocery store one afternoon, she fell to the floor, screaming catatonically, as I tried to reassure the folks who quickly began gathering around us that she would be alright in a minute. I wasn't at all sure of that, but I needed her to be alright, to be able to drive us home, to get out of the environment that was causing her so much stress. She never mentioned any of the episodes, leaving me wondering whether she was even cognizant of them after the fact. And, miraculously, no one ever phoned the police. [In our current environment, too often, police who are not equipped to handle mental health crises respond with deadly force toward a person who may well be unable to perceive that s/he is a threat.]

Between the “episodes,” there was constant paranoia—that someone had come into our house, poisoned food, or taken something that she'd “put away.” She didn't want anyone to touch her—a rather difficult feat in the South where everyone shakes hands or exchanges hugs in greeting. Her paranoia left her reclusive and estranged, and cost her the teaching vocation which she seemed truly to have loved.

Until nearly the end of her life, my mother's illness had no name, because her paranoia wouldn't allow her to visit a physician; she'd not seen a doctor since she was hospitalized for my birth [and, until college, I could count the few doctor's visits she'd allowed me for anything other than vaccinations]. At age 90, her paranoia had left her refusing most foods she had always eaten: no chicken or eggs (bird flu...), no fish or seafood (mercury...), no beef (mad cow disease...), not even vegetables (pesticides...).

Always a very small woman, the refusal to eat even for a short time meant that she lost weight. And when she hit a stretch of a few days in the Mobile heat during which she refused to drink water—tap or bottled (“It’s not clean.”)—she did end up hospitalized, weighing a scant 80 pounds. Only after she physically attacked two doctors and a nurse was I able to insist that the ICU staff call for a psychological consultation.

And, only after the hospital psychiatrist had examined her for an entire morning was her illness given a name: schizophrenia. By that point, I was an employee benefits attorney, well acquainted with these kinds of diagnoses from health care work. But I’d never been able to objectively step back to look at the situation to ask myself any questions; I was too much a part of what was happening.

The diagnosis gave me an explanation for the illness which had held my mother prisoner.

The diagnosis also gave me the gift of knowing that the dysfunction that had ruled in our household was never about me. It was about her illness. My father had succumbed to alcoholism to cope with the dysfunction. Mercifully, I’d begun therapy with a wonderful Episcopal priest (and father of a college classmate) who helped me make sense of my own place in the dysfunction many years before my mother’s illness had a name—and helped me understand, as well, that I am, as we all are, loved by our God.

We didn’t know—so many years ago when my mother first began displaying signs of mental illness—what we know now. We didn’t know then about ways that the quality of a person’s life could be so greatly improved.

We know more now. Mental illness need not cut us off from family and from community.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a time we intentionally set aside to focus on dismantling the stigma surrounding mental illness, because we do know more now. We know now that there are therapists who can help. We know now that medications are available. We know now that support groups can help us find community.


But we need to end the silence. We need to dismantle the stigma. Mental illness is illness. We need to focus on healing, remembering that Jesus encountered persons who struggled with illness of body, mind and spirit—and

who left their encounters with Jesus having been healed. God wants healing for God’s people.

If you are struggling, or if a loved one is struggling, there is help. First, if you are covered under any medical plan, check your plan information to determine what mental health care coverage is available under that plan, as well as network therapists and support groups, and utilize those resources. Check with faith-based counseling groups, too, for potential therapists. If sufficient resources are available in the community, take the time to interview therapists, to help identify persons with whom you can relate well.

Then, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has resources available for adults who are themselves struggling with mental illness, and family members whose loved ones are struggling with mental illness. NAMI’s helpline (1-800-950-NAMI (6264)) can help connect callers with a variety of resources.

Lastly here, if you or a loved one experience suicidal ideations, call or text 988 for the National Institute of Mental Health’s Suicide Hotline, or dial 911 in an emergency. (Please be certain to alert dispatchers that there is a mental health crisis if calling 911)

No one is alone. There is support. Please don’t allow your or a loved one’s unaddressed mental health issues to cut you off from fully experiencing God’s grace and goodness. 



June 2 - 7: Elementary (ages 9-11)
June 9 - 14: Special 1 (age 40 and up)
June 16 - 21: Middler (ages 10-13)
June 23 - 28: Junior High (ages 13-16)
June 30 - July 3: Primary (ages 6-8)
July 7 - 12: Mixed Ages (ages 8-14)
July 14 - 19: Special 2 (ages 18-39)

Summer 2025



Resurrection restoration

Bishop Wells Joins 100 Others to Celebrate Easter at Christ Church

by Carolyn Vance Smith

More than 100 people, including the Right Rev. Dr. Dorothy Sanders Wells, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi, two visitors from Virginia and others from near and far, celebrated Easter at Christ Episcopal Church, Church Hill, Miss., on April 20.

The afternoon began with a free concert of Easter-related classical music by five professional musicians. It concluded with an Easter eucharistic worship service led by the Rev. Samuel B. Godfrey.

Called “Resurrection Sunday: A Celebration of Eternal Life,” the events gave thanks for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb and for the recent multi-year resurrection/restoration of the 1858 Christ Church building.

“The concert was top-notch in every way,” said John Norris, Junior Warden at Christ Church. “And the worship service, with more Easter-related music provided by Dr. Byron Johnson and Dr. Patrick Doherty, was very beautiful and meaningful.”

“I’m glad it worked out for me to be with you all,” said Bishop Wells. “I’m so grateful for the faithful restoration of Christ Church and the dedication of the communicants. I look forward to seeing how Christ Church’s ministry continues to unfold.”

Echoing Bishop Wells’ compliments of the church’s restoration were church leaders David Paradise and

Betty Guedon Paradise, whose Guedon family roots are deep in the church’s history.

“The church is a major example of the renewed vitality of Church Hill,” David Paradise said. “The restoration has exceeded our fondest hopes.”


Davidson Perry-Miller and John M. Nelson, II, of Staunton, Virginia, were also highly complimentary of the church’s restoration. A lover of history, Perry-Miller recently restored Waverley Hill mansion in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

“John and I were driving from Arizona back home to Virginia and decided to stay overnight in Natchez,” Perry-Miller said.

“We saw publicity about the Christ Church concert and the church’s restoration and decided to spend two extra nights in Natchez so we could visit the church on Easter Day.

“We are so very glad we did,” he said. “We’ll definitely be back.”

Also pleased with the Easter events was Fr. Sam Godfrey. “In worship and music with our Bishop, we celebrated Easter and our risen Lord. And we celebrated the renewal of Christ Church, preserved to worship God now and in the future.

“It is a place of worship for all people,” he said. “Everyone is invited. Services are at 2 p.m. on second and fourth Sundays.” 

A taste of Mediator-Redeemer ECW hosts a fundraiser for ministries

The Episcopal Church Women of Mediator-Redeemer, a yoked parish in both McComb and Magnolia, held its 2025 annual Wine Tasting Fundraiser on Thursday evening, May 1. The tasting of the wines, Champagnes, special hors d'oeuvres and mini desserts was spread from the A-B house, thru the shady patio to the parish hall (non-alcoholic beverages were on offer as well). There was much to taste and enjoy at this gala occasion. This event is always attended by the entire community.

All of the ECW ladies and many of the church's men

participated in this fundraiser, one of the most important fundraisers for the ECW Chapter. They support many wonderful outreach ministries in their churches, community and at the Mississippi Diocesan ECW level. This ECW chapter is led by co-chair Virginia Pope and co-chair Virginia Goza. 🍷

Episcopal Church Women Outreach Ministries

LOCAL

- Angel Wings Group Home
- Camp Sunshine Scholarships
- Greater Hope Homeless Men's Shelter
- Guest House of Hope Women's Shelter
- Meals for the homeless
- MICA
- J! White Christmas Party for underprivileged children
- St. Andrews Fig Tree and Medical Clinic
- Uniforms and school supplies for South Pike and Demman school children in need

STATE

- Camp Bratton Green Special Senior Scholarship
- ECW Diocese of Mississippi

NATIONAL

- Children at Risk Fund
- Church Periodical Club
- Diocese of Mississippi Episcopal Relief and Development Fund
- United Thank Offering



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Bishop of Mississippi, Publisher

Wil Oakes, Oakes Creative Agency, Editor & Art Director

The Rev. Scott Lenoir, Liz Evans, & Julia Marks Young,
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Faithful Departed

Please submit Faithful Departed notices to your church for
submission.

Suzanne "Susie" McWilliams Pool, 71, communicant of
St. Paul's, Meridian, died March 27, 2025.

Gibson Smith, 78, communicant of Trinity Hattiesburg,
died April 1, 2025.

Nancy Carole Criswell Abshire, 87, communicant of St.
James, Greenville, died April 6, 2025.

Deployment Report

Churches seeking rectors or interim rectors

Calvary, Cleveland

St. James', Jackson

St. Peter's, Oxford

Trinity, Natchez

Incarnation, West Point

Churches Seeking Supply Clergy

Redeemer, Brookhaven

Good Shepherd, Columbus

Christ Church, Holly Springs

St. Matthew's, Kosciusko

Trinity, Vicksburg

Nativity, Water Valley

Available Chaplaincy (summer 2025)

Canterbury: Mississippi State University

Questions about deployment should be directed to
The Rev. Canon Gary Meade, Canon to the Ordinary,
gmeade@dioms.org; 601-948-5954.

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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 am to 5:00 pm.

May

- 17** Inclusion Eucharist
- 18** Bishop Wells visits Chapel of the Cross, Madison, 8:00 and 10:30am
- 18** Bishop Wells visits Ascension, Hattiesburg
- 21** Seminary of the Southwest 74th Commencement
- 23** St. Andrew's School Graduation, St. Andrew's Upper School, 9:00am
- 24** Culpepper Cookout at Gray Center/Camp Bratton-Green
- 26** Allin House Closed for Memorial Day
- 31** Diocesan Altar Guild Meeting, St. Columb's, Ridgeland

June

- 1** Confirmation of Annual Audits
- 1** Bishop Wells visits Chapel of the Cross, Rolling Fork
- 2-7** Elementary Camp (Ages 9-11), Camp Bratton-Green
- 3** Small Churches Collaborative, Zoom, 2:00pm
- 5** Racial Reconciliation Task Force Meeting, 12:00 noon
- 8** Bishop Wells visits St. Paul's, Woodville
- 9-14** Special Camp 1 (Ages 40 and up), Camp Bratton-Green
- 12** Executive Committee, St. Andrew's Cathedral, 11:30am – 3:30pm
- 15** *The Mississippi Episcopalian* July submission deadline
- 15** Bishop Wells visits St. Francis', Philadelphia
- 16-21** Middler Camp (Ages 10-13), Camp Bratton-Green
- 19** Allin House Closed for Juneteenth
- 21** Ordination of Deacons (Vocational & Transitional), St. Andrew's Cathedral, 10:30am

Submission deadlines—next six months
(always available at
msepiscopalian.com/submissions)

July 2025 issue

June 16, 2025

October 2025 issue

September 15, 2025

August 2025 issue

July 15, 2025

November 2025 issue

October 15, 2025

September 2025 issue

August 15, 2025

December 2025 issue

November 17, 2025

we want stories . . .

about your church, your ministry, your school... or whatever is on your Episcopal mind! Send us fully realized stories, photos, or just ideas at
msepiscopalian@dioms.org.



The Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi
118 N. Congress Street
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Jackson, Mississippi 39225-3107

Watch at the Altar of Repose on Maundy Thursday in the Chapel at All Saints', Tupelo. Photo by Tommie Moore. To see more Holy Week and Easter Photos sent in from around the diocese, see page 5.

