

THE MISSISSIPPI EPISCOPALIAN

The Official Magazine of the Diocese of Mississippi

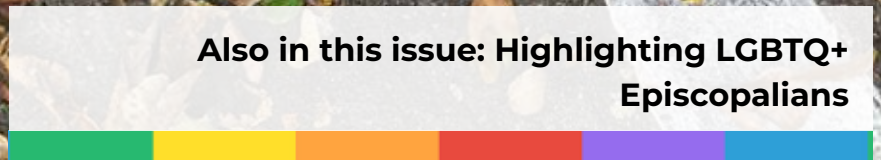


Volume 151
Issue No. 10
October
2026

Tails & Trails

Fall brings Pet Blessings and Pumpkin Patches to the Diocese of Mississippi

Also in this issue: Highlighting LGBTQ+ Episcopalians



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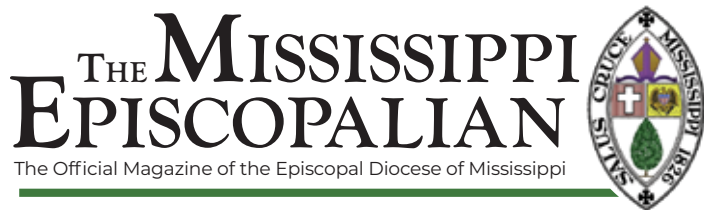
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On the cover: The parking lot at All Saints', Tupelo, was full of cats, dogs, and even a rooster on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi! All across the diocese, churches held their annual Blessings of the Animals in October. To see more photos, see page 5. Photo by Tommie Moore.



Bishop's Journal

September 2026

This far by faith

143 years of St. Mark's, Jackson

Tails & trails

Fall brings Pet Blessings and Pumpkin Patches to the Diocese of Mississippi

Reeling in the years... with Pride

A personal reflection on same-sex marriage, adoption, and acceptance in Mississippi

Serving a meal, sharing God's love

Redeemer, Greenville, fills a sacred space with food and fellowship

Deployment Report Faithful Departed

Diocesan Calendar



Bishop's Journal

September 2026

- 1 Province IV Bishops Call
- 1 Staff Meeting
- 1 Meeting with Staff Member
- 1 Meeting with Staff Member
- 1 Smaller Churches Collaborative
- 2 Meet with Diocesan Altar Guild Board
- 2 Meet with Susannah Grubbs Carr, Millsaps College
- 2 Meet with Discerner
- 3 Consultation with Counsel
- 3 Meeting with Parish Vestry
- 3 Meet with Sewanee Church Support & Relations Committee
- 3 Meet with Communicants
- 4 Consultation with Counsel
- 4 Consultation with Counsel
- 4 Meeting with Potential Health Ministry Partner
- 4 Telephone Conversation with COM Chairperson
- 4 Telephone Conversation with Clergy person
- 4 Meeting with Clergy person
- 4 Consultation with Forvis Mazars
- 6 Visitation, Church of the Creator, Clinton

- 7 Conversations with Clergypersons and Wardens
- 8 Staff Meeting
- 8 Meeting with Wardens
- 8 Meeting with Staff Member
- 8 Meeting with Staff Member
- 9 Consultation with Forvis Mazars
- 9 Sewanee – Feasibility Study Phone Call
- 9 Consultation with Counsel
- 10 Finance Committee Meeting
- 10 Consultation with Office of Communication at The Episcopal Church
- 11 Visit to Mississippi Christian University in preparation for workshop
- 11 Conversation with All Saints School Trustees
- 12 Workshop – Mississippi Christian University
- 13 Visitation, St. Elizabeth's Church, Collins



Preached, confirmed 4 and received 7.
A wonderful Sunday visitation at Creator Episcopal Church, Clinton. We were joined by worshippers from St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Raymond, Mississippi! Welcome to the new confirmands and the newly received from both worshipping communities! Engaging Bible study preceded our worship, and an amazing lunch followed.



Preached, confirmed 5.
What an amazing and full weekend! Sunday's visitations included St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Collins, Mississippi, where the Rev. Brenda Hatten McClendon and all the St. Elizabeth's parish family extended such great hospitality! Welcome to the newly confirmed (including two persons from St. Columb's Episcopal Church, Ridgeland!). A delicious lunch and a great Mission Committee meeting followed our lovely worship!

13 Visit to St. Mary's Church, Bolton for 150th anniversary



Preached.

Was honored to be at St. Mary's Episcopal Church Bolton MS, for the celebration of the church's 150th anniversary! It was wonderful to see so many friends from throughout the diocese who had come to join in the celebration - with beautiful music (from the Tyler Kemp Trio), as always! [And super thanks to Tyler Kemp for letting me have a turn at singing, as well!]

- 14** Bishop's sabbath
- 15** Staff Meeting with church
- 15** Diocesan Staff Meeting
- 15** Vestry Meeting/Zoom
- 15** Vestry Meeting/Zoom
- 15** Meet with Staff Member
- 15** Meet with Staff Member
- 16** Meet with Clergy person
- 16** Meet with Clergy person
- 17** Executive Committee Meeting
- 17** Consultation with Forvis Mazars
- 17** Board Meeting
- 18** Travel to Vicksburg
- 18** Meet with All Saints School team
- 18** Travel to Jackson
- 20** Visitation, St. James' Church, Port Gibson



Preached.

A great visitation today at St. James Church, Port Gibson! Lovely worship and fellowship in a lovely setting! I was missing Hampton, our canine greeter, when I arrived, but he made it in time for our photos and the delicious lunch!!

- 21** Bishop's sabbath Spiritual Direction
- 22** Travel to House of Bishops meeting, Camp Allen
- 23** House of Bishops
- 24** House of Bishops
- 25** House of Bishops
- 26** House of Bishops
- Visit to Seminary of the Southwest
- 27** House of Bishops
- 28** House of Bishops



Hearing from the Archbishop of Canterbury Sarah Mullally stands out as a highlight of my time at House of Bishops. What an inspiring leader!

- 29** Travel to Jackson
- 30** Standing Committee
- 30** Meeting with Staff Member
- 30** Meeting with parish team

For 143 years, our church has been a committed presence in the Jackson community. On October 3rd and 4th, the level of energy, involvement, and enthusiasm at St. Mark's was exciting and invigorating. It was in this spirit that we enthusiastically and joyfully celebrated the blessings of our parish ministry.

We began our anniversary celebration on Saturday, October 3rd, with a luncheon at Char Restaurant. Our keynote speaker was the Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray III, former Bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi. Mrs. Gray was also one of our special guests. Bishop Gray reminisced and resounded the theme "We've Come This Far by Faith" as all recalled the experiences of trial and tribulation mixed with a drive of endurance that sustained our parish to commit to exist in trying times and still survive as a beacon living our vision—"a warm and inclusive place of worship and outreach where all are welcome."

Three of our youngest members (all coincidentally 15-year old 10th graders) were recognized for their dedication in outstanding, active youth service as lectors, acolytes, and ushers. Camille Cole, Ashleigh Mason, and Kamden Thompson, along with others, are our hope for the bright future and continued ministry at St. Mark's.

The weekend activities culminated with an afternoon service of Holy Eucharist on October 4th,



This far by faith

143 years of St. Mark's, Jackson

with long-term Supply Priest, the Rev. William R. Boyles, serving as celebrant. The choir, led by Carol Dear, the parish Director of Music, rendered joyful music and resounded the theme, "We've Come This Far by Faith," as the closing hymn. The choir was comprised of five Jackson State University scholars and our Junior Warden.

After service, a reception was held in the parish Keeling Center, where all gathered for great food and fellowship,

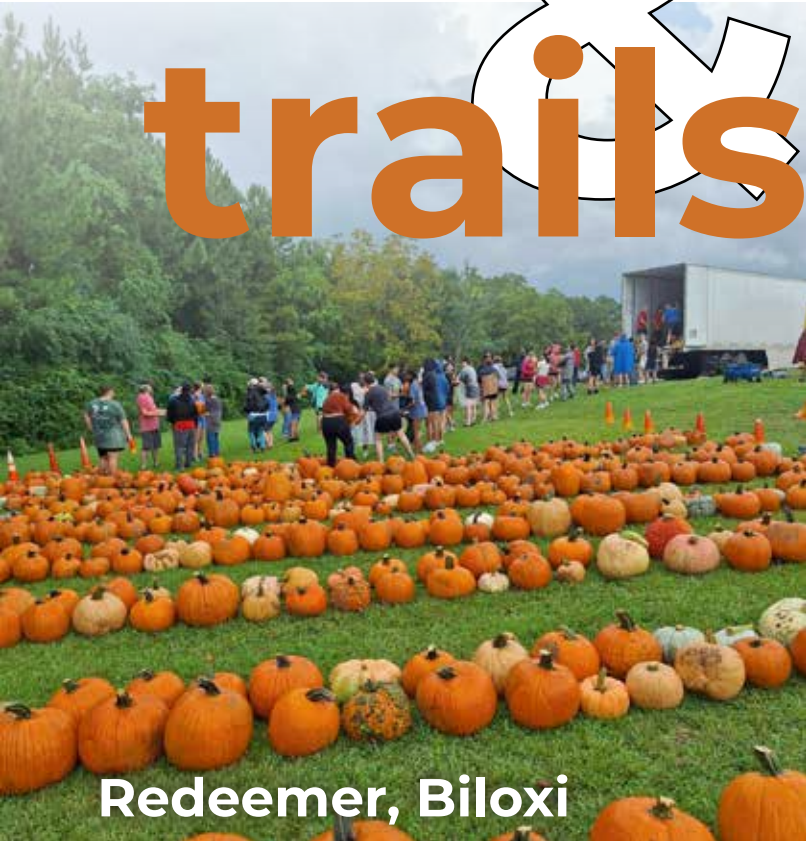
departing afterwards with a heartfelt sense of blessings and peace. The 143rd year anniversary was indeed a celebration of Glory to God and Thanksgiving. 🙏



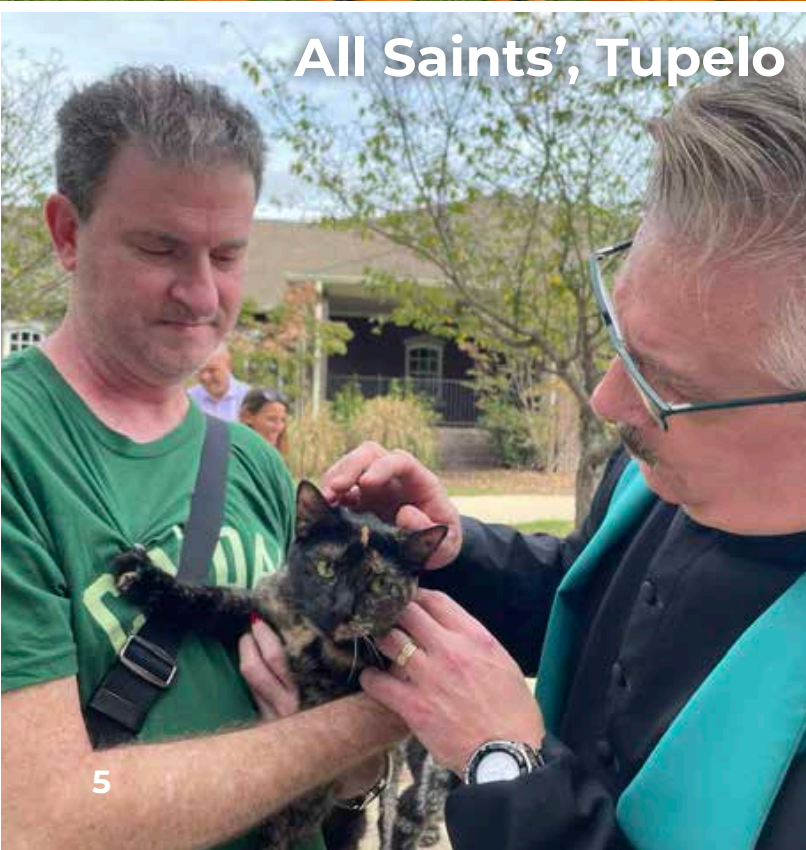
ST. MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
JACKSON, MS

Tails & trails

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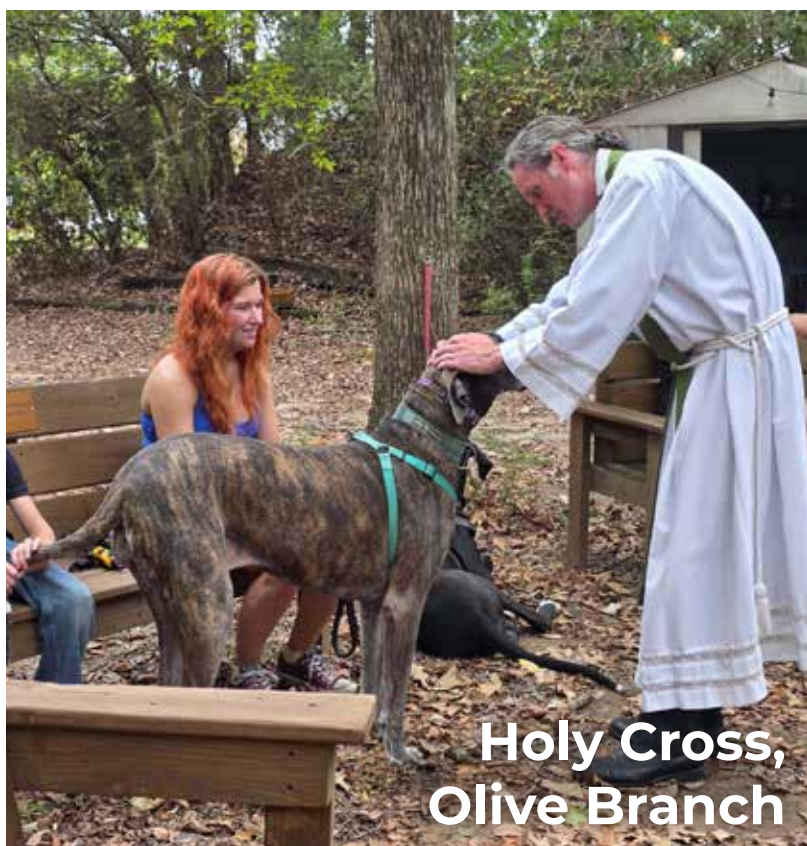
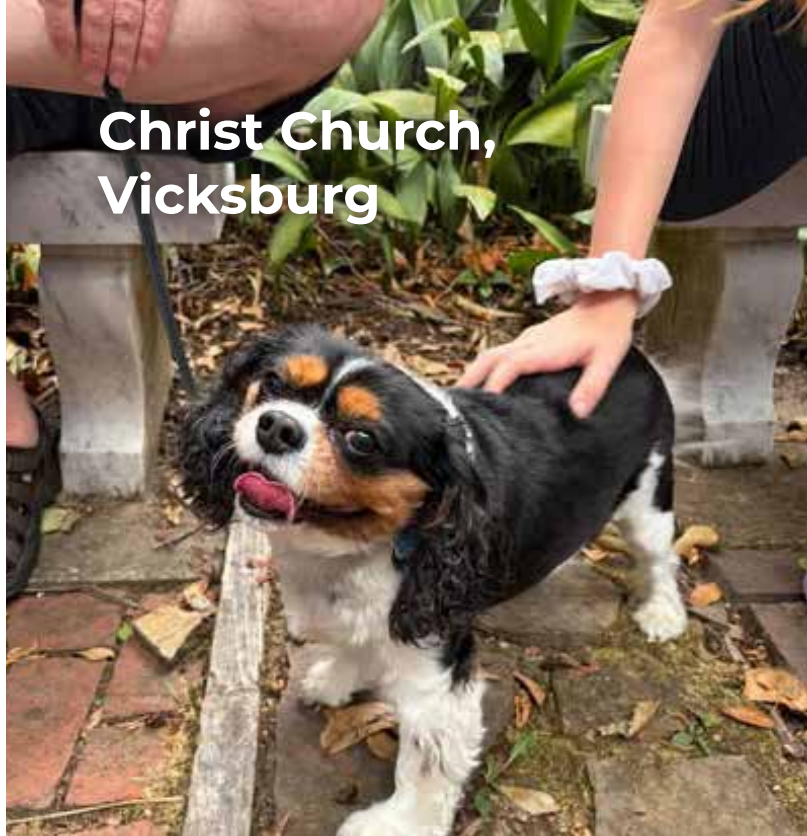
Redeemer, Biloxi



All Saints', Tupelo



**Christ Church,
Vicksburg**



**Holy Cross,
Olive Branch**



**St. Andrew's
Cathedral,
Jackson**



**St.
Timothy's,
Southaven**





**St. Elizabeth's,
Collins**



**St. Paul's,
Columbus**



**St. Peter's,
Oxford**



**St. Philip's,
Jackson
and...**

**St.
Columb's,
Ridgeland**



**St. Stephen's,
Indianola**



**St. Thomas,
Diamondhead**



**Trinity,
Hattiesburg**



**Trinity,
Pass Christian**



Reeling in the years... with Pride

A personal reflection on same-sex marriage, adoption, and acceptance in Mississippi

by **Kathy Garner and The Reverend Dr. Susan Hrostowski**

For almost forty years, Susan and I have chosen to make Mississippi our home. In the late 1980's, with one of us a newly ordained priest and the other a government employee, making that choice was not an easy one but one that we both were committed to: being a part of change in our state. I was a native of Hattiesburg and Susan, an Air Force brat whose father's career ended at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi when she was 7, had both been involved in social justice advocacy for most of our lives. However, on a personal level, it was too dangerous—personally and professionally—to advocate for ourselves. I grew up as a Roman Catholic, attending parochial school and was very active in the church. Susan, on the other hand, was a cradle Episcopalian and, as a young adult, was in the church whenever the door opened it seemed. We both struggled with our sexual orientation, leading each of us to suppress those feelings in our own ways. Her calling to the priesthood was overwhelming and, with the help

of the Reverend Al Mead, she came to understand that all God has for priests are human beings with a variety of gifts and struggles.

For several years, we were good friends and then realized that there was much more there. In 1989, Susan was leaving for a clergy position in North Carolina and had decided that she “just would not be attracted to women.” I had about done the same after a

traumatic breakup. Not a convenient

time to decide you love each

other, but that is exactly

what happened. After

nine months, Susan

moved back to

Mississippi and

became non-

parochial,

understanding

that the

Church in

Mississippi

at the time

would not

allow her to be

at an altar. As do

many lesbians, we

moved in together

and had a loving

household with dogs and

cats. After about three years,

a good friend—a priest—asked

us if we felt we wanted to be joined in

marriage. At that time, this was an act that could

have ended with that priest being defrocked. A “House

Blessing” at our home with about a dozen friends ended

with the sacrament of marriage. This priest's generous

yet precarious gift was one of love that we will forever

cherish.



Kathy Garner and The Rev. Dr. Susan Hrostowski

Then life happened. I was received into the Episcopal Church by Bishop Gray. We became active in the local church in Hattiesburg, participating in Hallelujah Housing and other community outreach work. Susan went back to school... twice, once to earn a Masters of Social Work and later for a Ph.D. in social work, ultimately becoming a full professor at the University of Southern Mississippi. This provided her the opportunity to fill some of the holes left in her vocation, but not all. I am not prejudiced at all but she was and is a fine priest and supply work helped her meet those needs. I worked as a planner and community developer first for a municipality and then as a consultant. We were fairly closeted but out to our closest family and friends.

As we grew as a couple, I wanted to have children. Susan was reticent because, well, we were in Mississippi and she worried that any child with two moms would be treated poorly. After seven years of prayerful persuasion, Susan and I decided that we would give it a try. Without going into too many details, our son Hudson McLaughlin Garner was born in 2000, and there have never been more blessed parents. Of course, then there we were—two women with a child, and there was no longer a closet that would hold us. Mississippi had, the year prior, passed a law that banned people of the same sex from adopting, so Susan was not able to adopt our son, as was our plan. This was incredibly painful, but our attorney told us to “just love him” which we did wholeheartedly. Our church family at Trinity took us into their hearts and loved our boy too—of course, the best way into mothers’ hearts! Being parents and raising Hudson in the Church made us even stronger in our belief that we made the right decision to stay in Hattiesburg. When Hudson was five, I was blessed to become the Executive Director of the AIDS Services Coalition, a nonprofit working with homeless persons and people living with HIV (PwH) throughout Mississippi. For 20 years, I was incredibly fortunate to work in the areas of my passions—HIV, homelessness, and my church. I became the Chair of the Mississippi Episcopal AIDS Commission and the Mississippi Registrar for the Province IV Ministry on HIV/AIDS, which sponsored an annual retreat for PwH at the Kanuga Retreat Center in North Carolina. For more than 20 years, the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi

provided sponsorship of this incredible ministry that provides respite for 60-70 Mississippians annually. We both became board members of the first LGBT center in Mississippi, The Spectrum Center, and joined in the first Pine Belt Pride Celebration. We never thought that this would be a part of our lives.

After being a non-parochial priest for more than 10 years, Susan was shocked to be offered the position of Vicar at St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church in Collins. Given the diocesan policy on gay clergy at that time, she didn't believe that would be possible, but the bishop approved. At Council that year, when Bishop Gray announced Susan's appointment as the first openly gay and married priest in our diocese, her welcome was full of joy and many tears by those who had been waiting for such a moment. Susan served in that capacity for eight years before leaving St. Elizabeth's in the Reverend Brenda McClendon's very capable hands.

During Susan's tenure at St. Elizabeth's, two major Supreme Court decisions brought profound changes to the Episcopal Church nation-wide and to our little family in particular. Obergefell v. Hodges and US v. Windsor gave gay and lesbian couples all the rights and responsibilities of marriage. The legal recognition of same sex marriage was, of course, met with mixed opinions in society as a whole and especially in the church. Many Episcopal congregations spent hours studying scripture, praying, listening, and arguing to discern the will of God on this question. Trinity Hattiesburg met the question head on, and there were some very painful and emotional meetings until they reached the conclusion that God's love supersedes all else. All people are accepted, affirmed, and included in our church family.

This all happened when Hudson was 14. In the middle of the Windsor case, I on a whim had become a Facebook friend to Edie Windsor's attorney, Roberta Kaplan. I asked her if adoption bans would fall with the win, she messaged back saying that they should, but if they didn't, she'd take that case. And... she did. Mississippi was the last state with a ban on same-sex adoption. We asked Hudson if he wanted to do this to help other families like ours and he said yes. We received nothing but support from our diocese, St. Elizabeth's, and Trinity, our home church. It made national and international news cycles.

Though most people in our state were supportive, there were also those who made comments that do not deserve to be mentioned here. But we won! Hudson was always Susan's child, but almost 15 years after he was born, it became legal. Very shortly thereafter, we flew to Washington DC, where we were married in the National Cathedral Bishop's Garden by Susan's classmate, with Hudson as our best man. We were full!

Several state legislatures at this time were passing "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" (RFRA) laws—also known as wedding cake laws, but they proposed much more harm than cake. Susan became a plaintiff in the case against HB 1523, Mississippi's version of this awful legislation. In making this decision, her priesthood was her shield and, again, the support of our church family was critical.

Weaving through our thirty-seven years together, memories have been painful in some ways and joyful in others. Throughout, the Church has been there. Not always as we hoped, but over the years, we have found most of what we need. Hudson has grown into a kind, intelligent and prosperous young man. He and his wife, Trinity, are blessed with faith in God and a strong sense of social justice.

Susan and I are now retired and are continuing, if not increasing, our parish activities. Susan is 68 and I am 66. Our lives began together at 31 and 29, respectively. Though we have both struggled at times with our place in the Church, we have always felt God's presence working on us... and the Church! I am Senior Warden at Trinity in Hattiesburg; Susan provides supply work and works with the Calling and Caring Committee. As for how we are fighting for equality in Mississippi, we consider just living our normal day to day lives our biggest contribution, trying to dispel societal myths about gay people. We have lived through an amazing amount of change with regard to our rights as human beings as well as members of the Episcopal Church. Recently, we were overwhelmed to attend a beautiful, huge wedding in the church that was joyfully celebrated without one whiff of controversy. Just a lot of love. It's incredibly gratifying to see so many families like ours living full and open lives in the community and in the church, something we didn't think we'd live long enough to see. Thanks be to God! 🍷

Pride Eucharist

In conjunction with Capital City Pride, the diocese held a Pride Eucharist at St. Philip's, Jackson on the evening of Thursday, October 15th. The Eucharist included prayers and thanksgivings for LGBTQ+ Episcopalians and the larger community.



Serving a meal, sharing God's love

Redeemer,
Greenville, fills a
sacred space with
food and fellowship

by Barbara Moton

There is something special about coming together as a church family to serve others—Church of the Redeemer's congregation had the opportunity to do just that at Sacred Space in Greenville.

Sacred Space combats homelessness, offering transitional shelter, meals, clothing, and facilitating mental and emotional health activities to support those in need.

Before the meal everyone gathered in the Chapel to acknowledge God for his provisions (recorded in all four gospels): Matthew 14: 13-21, Mark 6: 30-44, Luke 9: 10-17, and John 6: 1-14. Also, we remembered the best-known bible verse about feeding the hungry and clothing the poor, Matthew 25: 35-40.

Our members came together with willing hearts and helping hands to provide a meal for more than 250 men, women, and children. From purchasing the food and preparing the meal to serving it with smiles and warm conversation, every step was a labor of love.

Redeemer worked together to make sure there was plenty of food for everyone and each received a hearty serving. The kitchen was filled with the sounds of preparation, laughter, and fellowship as the Redeemer

family (plus one, a sister of one of the members) shared their time and talents for a meaningful purpose.

We are most grateful to be of service in our community where the need is great. We are most thankful for putting our faith into action by feeding our neighbors at Sacred Space.

Assisting Sacred Space is one of Redeemer's community projects for the 2026 calendar year. We also donate clothing and nonperishable food items. Special thanks to the Rev. Joe Porter for his prayers and support with our community outreach. The greatest blessing in this is to serve in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. 🙏



Faithful Departed

Please submit Faithful Departed notices to your church for submission.

The Rev. Ernest Eugene Hall, 93, Canonical Resident of the Diocese of Springfield, formally of Mississippi, died on January 12, 2026.

Henry Gene Snipes, 96, communicant of St. Peter's by-the-Lake, Brandon, died on September 15, 2026.

James Kenneth Bell, 84, communicant of St. Peter's by-the-Lake, Brandon, died on September 19, 2026.

Diana May Ewing Nutter, 87, communicant of Trinity, Natchez, died on September 26, 2026.

Tucker Lightfoot Henley, 73, communicant of Holy Innocents', Como, died on July 24, 2026.

Eugenia Jones Lagrone (Jeanne), 86, communicant at All Saints', Tupelo, died on August 14, 2026

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118 N. Congress Street | P.O. Box 23107
Jackson, Mississippi 39225-3107

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Dorothy Sanders Wells, XI
Bishop of Mississippi, Publisher

Wil Oakes, Oakes Creative Agency, Editor & Art Director

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

The Mississippi Episcopalian (USPS 024755) is
published monthly online and annually in print by the
Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi, 118 N. Congress Street,
Jackson, MS 39201.

Deployment Report

Churches seeking full or part-time clergy

Redeemer, Biloxi
St. Alban's, Bovina
Redeemer, Brookhaven
St. Thomas, Diamondhead
St. Pierre's, Gautier
St. James, Greenville
All Saints, Grenada
Ascension, Hattiesburg
St. Mark's, Jackson
St. Paul's, Meridian
Trinity, Natchez
Resurrection, Starkville
Epiphany, Tunica
Holy Trinity, Vicksburg
Church of the Nativity, Water Valley

Questions about deployment should be directed to
The Rev. Canon Gary Meade, Canon to the Ordinary,
gmeade@dioms.org; 601-948-5954 x114.

Churches seeking supply clergy

Good Shepherd, Columbus
All Saints, Jackson
Calvary, Michigan City
St. James, Port Gibson

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.

**Submission deadlines (always available
at msepiscopalian.com/submissions)**

December 2026 issue

November 16, 2026

January 2027 issue

December 15, 2026

February 2027 issue

January 15, 2027

March 2027 issue

February 15, 2027

April 2026 issue

March 15, 2027

March 2026 issue

April 15, 2027

Diocesan Calendar

October

- 18** Bishop Wells visits Calvary, Cleveland
- 18** Bishop Wells visits Grace, Rosedale
- 19-21** Clergy Conference, St. Philip's, Jackson
- 22** Trustees Meeting, Allin House, 1:00–4:00pm
- 22** Lay Worship Leaders Workshop, Zoom, 6:00–7:30pm
- 23** Deadline for submissions, *TME-News*, 12:00pm
- 24** Cemetery Dedication and Homecoming,
Christ Church, Church Hill, 11:00am–12:00pm
- 25** Bishop Wells visits Christ Church, Church Hill
- 25** Bishop Wells visits Trinity, Natchez
- 28** *TME-News* published
- 29** Standing Committee, Allin House, 1:30–5:00pm

November

- 1** Bishop Wells visits All Saints', Jackson
- 3** Small Churches Collaborative, Zoom, 2:00–3:00pm
- 4-6** Diocesan Leadership Summit,
Church Pension Group headquarters, New York City
- 6** Deadline for submissions, *TME-News*, 12:00pm
- 8** Bishop Wells visits All Saints, Tupelo
- 11** *TME-News* published
- 13-14** A. C. Marble Convocation, Solomon Center
- 15** Bishop Wells visits St. James', Greenville
- 16** *The Mississippi Episcopalian* December deadline
- 18** Finance Committee, Allin House, 10:00am–12:00pm
- 20** Deadline for Lay Leadership Relicensing
- 20** Deadline for submissions, *TME-News*, 12:00pm
- 22** Bishop Wells visits St. Stephen's, Columbia
- 24** *TME-News* published
- 25-27** Allin House closed for Thanksgiving
- 29** Advent begins

December

- 1** Deadline for Submission of Budget Requests
- 1** Deadline for Submission of Reports to Annual Council
- 1** Voluntary Proportionate Giving % due
- 1** Small Churches Collaborative, Zoom, 2:00–3:00pm
- 4** Deadline for submissions, *TME-News*, 12:00pm
- 6** Bishop Wells visits Trinity, Hattiesburg
- 9** *TME-News* published
- 10** Finance Committee, Allin House, 11:30am–2:30pm
- 11-12** A. C. Marble Convocation, Solomon Center
- 13** Bishop Wells visits St. John's, Laurel
- 15** Deadline for Pre-filed Nominations for Annual Council
- 15** Deadline for Submission of Resolutions for Annual Council
- 15** *The Mississippi Episcopalian* January deadline
- 17** Executive Committee, Allin House, 12:00–3:00pm
- 17** Standing Committee, Zoom, 1:30–5:00pm
- 18** Deadline for submissions, *TME-News*, 12:00pm
- 20** Bishop Wells visits Grace, Canton
- 23** *TME-News* published
- 24-26** Allin House closed for Christmas
- 27-1** Winter Solstice, Camp Bratton-Green

January

- 1** Allin House closed for New Year's Day
- 3** Bishop Wells visits Holy Trinity, Crystal Springs
- 3** Bishop Wells visits Good Shepherd, Terry
- 5** Small Churches Collaborative, Zoom, 2:00–3:00pm
- 8-9** A. C. Marble Convocation, Online
- 8** Deadline for submissions, *TME-News*, 12:00pm
- 10** Bishop Wells visits St. Paul's, Hollandale
- 13** *TME-News* published
- 15** *The Mississippi Episcopalian* February Deadline (for the Annual Council Special edition, we will only accept small pieces such as sidebars/ads, as we will print the most popular articles of 2026 alongside reports from Council)
- 18** Allin House closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 22** Deadline for submissions, *TME-News*, 12:00pm
- 24** Bishop Wells visits St. John's, Aberdeen
- 24** Bishop Wells visits St. Bernard's, Okolona
- 24** Bishop Wells visits
Canterbury Mississippi State University, Starkville
- 27** *TME-News* published
- 29-31** 200th Annual Council, Vicksburg



The Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi

dioms.org

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Jackson, Mississippi 39225-3107

The Mississippi Episcopalian is published at msepiscopalian.com monthly, and in print annually in February of each year. For more information, visit the website or email the editor at msepiscopalian@dioms.org.

Bishop Duncan M. Gray, III, poses for a photo with members of St. Mark's, Jackson, during a celebration of the parish's 143rd anniversary. To read more about the event and about St. Mark's, see page 4.

