

Deadline to submit articles for "The Epistle" is the 15th of each month.

Dec. 15 • Vestry Meeting • 5:15 p.m.

Parish Office will close at noon Dec. 23 for the Christmas holidays and reopen Monday, Dec. 28.

We will also close at noon Dec. 31 for the New Year holiday and reopen Monday, Jan. 4.

Please finish out 2020 Contributions • All 2020 contributions will be due in the office by noon, Dec. 31 to receive credit.

Pledge Cards • If you haven't returned your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible. Budget planning for 2021 is just around the corner.

Advent Wreaths and Candles along with Advent literature are available for pick up in the hallway by Parish Office.



Celebrating Christmas Together

Yes, in spite of the pandemic, we have plans to celebrate Christmas together in a big way (barring any late changes from our Governor). We can accommodate approximately 150 people at each service.

Christmas Eve • December 24, 2020

Both services feature music by Mississippi Brass & Percussion

3 p.m. & 5 p.m.

Midnight Compline

This will be our virtual offering for Christmas 2020. Father Austin will begin at 11:30 p.m. and lead us into the midnight hour and the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Music and hymns will accompany this streaming service on the St. Paul's YouTube channel.

Care Lodge Wishlists Now Available

Each year we have the opportunity to share the joy of Christmas by providing wishes and needs for the Care Lodge residents. And a big thank you to our Parish Family that has responded thus far. However, we still have needs to be met. During these pandemic times, you can actually receive a wish list via email! Joane will email you the wishlist — send her a request or just call the Parish Office 601.693.2502. Items should be brought unwrapped or in gift bags to the Parish Office by Monday, Dec 7. And you can help us out by bringing gift wrapping paper, scotch tape, bows, etc., as separate items. Why do we do this? Recipient parents like to wrap their children's gifts and children are assisted by Care Lodge staff in wrapping their parent's gift.

Lift Up Your Voice With Strength

"Advent is a coming, not our coming to God, but God to us. We cannot come to God, God is beyond our reach. But God can come to us, for we are not beneath God's mercy... We do not rise to God, but God descends to us, and dwells humanly among human creatures, in Jesus Christ." -Austin Farrer

The season of Advent is here! It is the beginning of a great many things at a time when we all crave it. Most of all, we are reminded that we await the return of Christ, and the fulfillment of God's promises. These promises help us prepare for the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ in the coming year.

Isaiah invites all of us to "lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear." What a powerful metaphor for us as we start our journey through this new church year. All of us together, in this wonderful community of faith we call St. Paul's are invited to be a herald of good tidings, in an exceedingly difficult year. We are called to lift up good tidings and do not fear. God will guide us to help others be heralds too.

Part of this new year is recognizing that some things will look different during this pandemic. This means our Christmas schedule will look different as well as our nativity pageant. We believe we have found a way that we can socially distance and celebrate Christmas. And I hope after this is over, we can all agree that this sacred season is unique and memorable.

My prayer this Advent and Christmas is that we all keep being the heralds for all. That all of us are children of God made in the image of God. We can recognize all the wonderful creation God has made. We are the ones to sustain life and spread love especially when it seems the darkest days. As the song goes "We don't know what the future may hold, but we know who holds the future."

We will get through this. We will do it together. Always remember who holds the future and continues to hold us all. Embrace the story of God coming into the world for love in whatever form. May God continue to bless each of you. You bless me and my family every day.

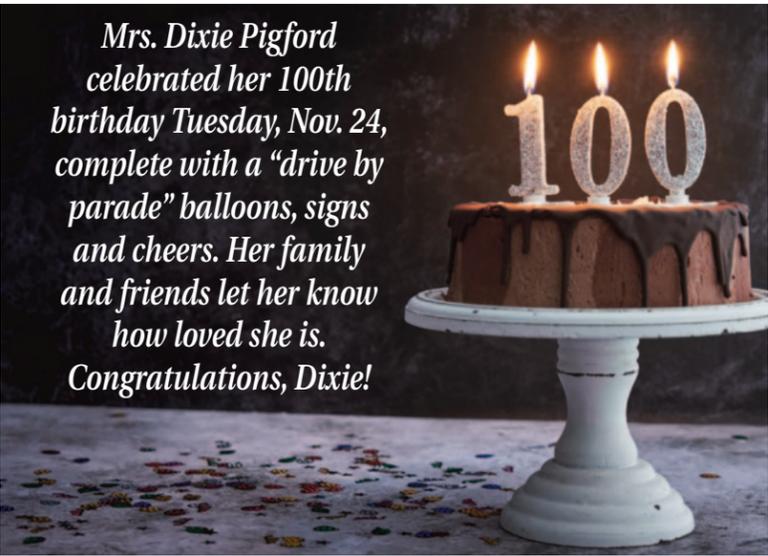
Faithfully,

Thanks to our Stewardship Committee

Our hats off to all the hard work from our Stewardship Committee — Chairman Katie Simmons, Sally Gray, Laura and Clay Holladay, Patrick Lewis and Edie Simmons. Also many thanks to Kim Gianakos and Tim Hanschke for their talents in getting the "information" to everyone! From letters to all the wonderful videos, this has been a great enthusiastic campaign.

Poinsettias & Special Music

It is a tradition at St. Paul's to place poinsettias on the altar in memory or honor of loved ones at Christmas. Flower forms are available in the bulletins or you may call the Parish Office 601.693.2502 to make your dedication. You can also make a dedication for special music. Any excess funds received will assist in beautifying the altar and our worship. Dedications must be received by Monday, Dec. 14, to be printed in the Christmas Eve bulletins.



Mrs. Dixie Pigford celebrated her 100th birthday Tuesday, Nov. 24, complete with a “drive by parade” balloons, signs and cheers. Her family and friends let her know how loved she is. Congratulations, Dixie!

EYC and Covid-19 Update

Due to the rise in case numbers, and with the support of our Bishop, EYC will be gathering virtually until we see a drop in cases in our community. Please rest assured I am looking for creative and innovative ways to keep our youth community together. It is my vision that our community is strong and ready to roll when we are able to meet in person once again. Please reach out to me with any concerns or ideas you may have! *Peace, Claire Hasselle*

Unique Christmas Pageant Planned

This year’s Christmas Pageant provides an opportunity for families to experience the Christmas story in an interactive way. You will have costumes, a director, a videographer and use of St. Paul’s campus to bring the Christmas story to life. You will receive a script prior to your filming day. Once you know your role, you can begin to enliven your character and explore the meaning of their story within the larger story of Christ’s birth.

Note: Your family will be videotaped without close contact with other families to allow social distancing. Please email Mallory (mallory@stpaulsmeridian.org) to register before December 4.

Don’t Miss Gingerbread House Party

All children and EYCs are invited to a Gingerbread House party at the home of Mallory and Reid Davis on December 13 from 3 p.m. - 4 p.m. Join us for fellowship, hot chocolate and cookies. Everything will be outside and socially distanced. Formal invitation to follow. See you there!

Fun Activities Will Be On Doorstep



The children of St. Paul’s should be on the lookout throughout the month of December for fun activities delivered to their doorsteps to celebrate the season. Advent and St. Nicholas Day will both be highlighted, so keep your eyes peeled!

Vestry Reports Lots of Things to Fix

The Vestry is still meeting by Zoom! We are sorry to report that Anne Chalk, who has been our Clerk of Vestry, submitted her resignation due to increased work responsibilities. Lynne Taleff was appointed clerk for the November meeting. Father Austin will seek a replacement Clerk and bring to the Vestry in December.

As of October 30, we are at 66.1% of our 2020 budget. There are many who complete their pledges at years-end, so we are hopeful that we will meet our budget this year.

The Compensation Review Committee Report received recommendations that were approved unanimously. There will be no salary increases for staff this year. Health insurance, for those employees who are in our plan, will increase 4.5% in the coming year.

The Junior Warden (who was absent due to illness) has been addressing multiple maintenance issues at the church. The boiler coil that broke is the one that handles the unit to All Saints and The Chapel. The coil must be manufactured and will cost \$3,000 to make, with another \$2,000.00 for installation. Rob has given the company the go-ahead to begin this repair. The roof leak that damaged the upstairs (former) library, children’s chapel and on down to the acolyte room has been looked at by the roofing company and Rob is waiting on the estimates. Repairs to ceiling tiles, insulation and damage to walls will also need to be bid out. The outside doors leading to the office are sticking badly when the weather is damp and the recommendation from the vendor is that we replace both doors, as they are beyond repair. There is a magnetic lock system as part of this door system which complicates repairs. We thank Rob for all his diligence to our church home and rectory. He has certainly earned that big salary we pay him ha!).

Father Austin shared an article from The Mississippi Episcopalian regarding Annual Council, Annual Meetings and how to conduct them: hybrid of physical and virtual presence. Please read your issue for information.

The church doors will be locked on Sundays following the 8 a.m. service while Father Austin is conducting the online service. They will remain locked until 10:15 p.m. for the 10:30 service. Our health guidelines are to keep in-person meetings under one hour for the safety of everyone. It is also a safety issue for all of us.

Although we have tentatively moved our Annual Meeting to March 7, 2021, it is not too early to begin thinking about those members who may be called to serve as Vestry Members and Wardens. The Vestry approved the nominating committee for the Senior Warden. Nominations for Vestry Members may come from any parishioner. There is a form in the office for the candidate to fill out and for the sponsor to sign. Please call the office for this form if you would like to serve, or if you would like to nominate someone to serve. Be in prayer for those whom the Spirit may be forming for leadership.

The Vestry approved Voluntary Proportionate Giving percentage to the Diocese of MS. The desired percentage is 13%, and we have given 11% the past 2 years. Due to the uncertainty of the economic climate, the vestry approved maintaining our giving at 11% in 2021.

We were reminded by the Senior Warden of the exhaustion we are all feeling, but how much that is magnified in the life of our Rector. He is unable to share his gifts of liturgical worship that he has been called by God and this Parish to conduct. Please be kind to each other and support Father Austin with our prayers and words of encouragement.

We have so much to be thankful for in these turbulent days. Let us count our many blessings.



We celebrate the birth of Robert Starr Stump Nov. 19. Robert Starr weighed 7 lbs. and was 20 inches long.

Proud parents are Chris & Julie Stump; siblings are Reese, Remy and Rosemary.



We celebrated the baptism of Amanda

Joyce Ray Nov. 7. Parents are David & Anne Elise Ray; and grandparents are David & BJ Ray.

We Remember in our Prayers

In our Parish: DJ Wells, Edgar Morrison, Jane Weems, Jerry Greene, Jo Van Devender, John Carrier, Ivy Jane Sutton, Milo Joseph Sutton, Joe White, Mike Reich, Norma Veach, Patty Vinson, Peggy Carrico, Scott Carmichael, William Godwin and William Davis.

In our senior living communities: Dixie Pigford, Joyce Welsh, Linda James, Lora Jones, Mary Scott and Nita Neville.

Extended family and friends: Alice Miller, Ally Gressett, Amanda Lockey, Amanda Rainey, Anita Sumrall, Anna Meyers, Barbara Hopper, Barbara Robinson, Baston Geiger, Beverly Bryson, Bill Selman, Bob Hill, Brooke, Brooks Moore, Charmin Edwards, Chelsie Abston, Christina Harris, Chuck Fishburn, Cory Gaylord, David, Diane Dunn, Delroy Ming, Edesser “Dess” Reid Ward, Rob & Aislinn Ward, Emily Chancellor, Frank Baker, Frank Barrett, Freddie Bea Watson, Gary Dawkins, George Farr, George Ferguson, Harrison McClain, Helen Valentine, J.T. Lee, Jada Dooley, James, Jane Wacaster, Jim Bateman, John Joey Hutto, Joy Richardson, Ken Fisher, Kim Lovette, Kylie Temple, Lee Davis Thames, Lillie Alford, Lou Dubose, Margaret Hadley, Marilyn Mohr, Martha Mazingo, Mary Hallwell, Michelle Nelson, Mike Covert, Mike Lundy, Mike Stanton, Nell Nichols, Norman, Rick, Sandra Nicholas, Sandy Carrier, Sallie Gercens, Sally Buntin, Hannah Thompson, Seth Thompson, Theodore, Tom Schram, Tony Sansone, Wanda Farr, Wanda Scott, Wilfe Manning, Wilma Kangery and Zack Martin.

For those who have died, especially Lillie Alford; Leigh Ann Key; and Mary Frances Ponder, mother of The Rev. Canon J. Brian Ponder.

For those serving in the Armed Forces, for all who serve overseas and their families, especially Andrew Behm, Shum Benson, Connor Covert, Graham Ford, T. J. Melton, Nick Mullen and Zack Thomas.

For our Bishop Brian and our Rector Austin and his family.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

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| Dec. 1Bob Covert, Lee Graham,
Henry Hiatt | Dec. 17Chandler Hogan,
Bryan & Rosilyn Holladay, |
| Dec. 2John Breaux | Karli McGinnis |
| Dec. 3Bob Deen, Michael Hasselle | Dec. 21David Robert Batchelor III, |
| Dec. 4Bonnie Allen, Sandra Hill | Carlyle Breaux, |
| Dec. 6Annie Martin | Jerry & Marilyn Greene, |
| Dec. 7Paige Watson | Tiffany Benson Kelly, |
| Dec. 8Sharon Davis, Dawn McCormick,
John Michael McDonald | Ralph & Martha Young |
| Dec. 11Kelly & Paige Watson | Dec. 24Harriet Simmons |
| Dec. 12Ann Revere Davis, Reid Perry,
Jane Weems | Dec. 27Dotty Graham, Laura Holladay |
| Dec. 13Bob & Polly Covert | Dec. 29Hemi Gaddie |
| | Dec. 30Melissa Calcote |