

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

Noon Eucharist and Healing Service each Wednesday in The Chapel of our Lady and All Saints'

March 7 • St. Paul's Annual Parish Meeting • 9:30 a.m.

March 14 • No Children's Church/Spring Break

March 23 • Vestry Meeting • 5:15 p.m.



Bishop Seage has opened our church to 50% capacity, along with allowing formation classes to resume.



**April 1 • Maundy Thursday • 6 p.m.**

*Nursery provided*

**April 2 • Good Friday • Noon**

*No nursery provided*

**Easter Day • 8 a.m. • 9:30 a.m. • 11 a.m.**

*Nursery will be provided for all services*



**March 4 • First Baptist Church**

**March 11 • Central United Methodist Church**

**March 18 • First Presbyterian Church**

**March 25 • First Christian Church**

*Each service is starts at noon and will last 30 minutes. There are no meals this year*

*due to the pandemic.*

*"Peter stood up among the believers and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus — for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry... So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias... And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles."*

—From the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter One

## **"You did not choose me, but I chose you..."**

Imagine almost everyone in our parish family has a story of being the one not chosen. It feels... awful. Not being chosen can leave emotional scars that never really go away. Maybe it was not being chosen for a team in school or a desired part in a play... not getting into a desired college, or fraternity and sorority.

I find it is also easier to name those times of not being chosen when they happened a long time ago. It is much, much harder to speak about not being chosen in more recent times. Even if we try and forget about these moments in time, or however long ago or recent, not being chosen is a crucial part of our spiritual journey. We certainly remember how we feel.

There is a reason Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, is not someone we hear from much in scripture. This was the disciple that was "not chosen." When it came time to replace Judas, the one who betrayed Jesus, the lot fell on Matthias. Now casting lots was more than luck. It was considered a holy decision-making process for the Hebrews. However it happened, Joseph of Barsabbas was the one who was not picked.

On one hand, I wonder if there was some relief. "Whew! I don't have to take up my cross and go all in like the upper room disciples. I can stay on the sidelines and be out of the spotlight."

But really, I wonder if what happened to Joseph after he was not picked was the same thing that happened to us. He felt the lowest of the low. But, as we know, Christians are not free of suffering, we just respond differently.

It is crucial in understanding this story to know that there were specific qualifications to be eligible to fill the open vacancy of that twelfth disciple. The disciple candidate had to have been a follower of Jesus from the beginning. That beginning was deemed to be the moment Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by

John and began his ministry of showing us how to live, love and heal. The candidate had to have been a part of the larger community of disciples right up to the time Jesus was crucified. Finally, the candidate had to have witnessed Jesus ascending into heaven. Joseph was qualified for these things. He had put in all the time and work. Yet he was not chosen.

After losing out to Matthias, Christian tradition says that this Joseph went on to become the Bishop of Eleutheropolis. Never heard of it? Me neither. This was in modern Palestine territory and once part of the Kingdom of Judah and later became a thriving Roman colony.

The town was renamed over the centuries. Its original Aramaic name Beth Gabra, translates as the "house of the mighty one." The Romans gave it the Greek name, Eleutheropolis, meaning "City of the Free." It was during this period that the Roman Emperor granted the city municipal status and exempted its citizens from taxes — thus the name "City of the Free." The city flourished under the Romans, who built public buildings, military installations, aqueducts and a larger amphitheater.

This is all to say that Eleutheropolis was a very important city. And it was this thriving Roman colony, the administrative hub of the region, where Joseph spent much of his ministry. Consider this... someone who was not chosen for what they probably wanted later became the Bishop of "The City of the Free." Not bad Joseph. Not bad at all.

And this journey speaks to us right now. I admit, with a year we have just had, I have wondered at times if God has chosen something else for all of us. If the lot no longer falls on this wonderful community and our luck is gone. We have done so much adapting and changing, even ceasing in-person worship, the wine and congregational singing. To top it off, Mississippi gets an ice storm. "Come on God. Give us a break."

*Continued on inside*

## A Real Bed Makes a Difference

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a series of articles highlighting St. Paul's Outreach Ministry. The "hands on" part of our ministries has been curtailed due to the pandemic, so our budgeted giving has been of primary help in 2020.)*

Sleep in Heavenly Peace Inc. (SLP) is a national, non-profit 501©3 charity that builds bunk beds for needy children. Since their founding in 2012, they have worked with numerous agencies from across the country, all of which helped build more than 2,000 bunk beds for 4,000 children. This was accomplished through donations from local organizations, individuals and corporate donors.

The Meridian chapter was formed in 2018 with the motto and mission statement: "No kid sleeps on the floor in our town."

Laura Hester, local staff leader said: "When we founded the first Mississippi chapter of SLP, we had lofty goals for 2020. We started strong and completed a great winter build in partnership with MS Power and Leadership Lauderdale. It was wonderful to partner with a group of caring citizens from both a corporation and that of a volunteer group. Together, we built 40 beds and were able to partner in teams to deliver all over Meridian.

"Although our core team is now accustomed to seeing the living conditions we often see, it was eye opening for many on this team. For example, a family of nine in a small, three-bedroom apartment — their only furniture before our arrival consisting of a double bed for the parents and a table in the kitchen. The kids who were not sleeping with the parents were on air mattresses on the floor, two of which had holes. The kids would take turns in the night blowing it back up with a bicycle pump. Although we do not have hard data, we cannot help but wonder how a tired child can be impacted at school, both academically and socially. If we can meet basic needs by showing love to them, will they be more likely to accept our Father's love? How can this change our community?"

Many of the build days and deliveries that were planned for 2020 by SLP had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. They did complete a few smaller builds. One proud moment came when they were able to participate in a national program, Bunks Across America. This is a partnership with SHP chapters all across America to bring awareness to their program. Thanks to the \$2,000 St. Paul's provided, this build was deemed a "public" build. This is significant because SHP-Meridian pulls together anyone in the community, not specifically in a group or business, to come together for a common goal. Most important, the bed recipients can help give back by participating in a build day.

Laura reports that they are excited for the possibilities that 2021 can offer. Thank you to Lloyd Gray and the Outreach Committee for finding and recommending our support of this worthy ministry.



*We rejoice in the Birth of Thomas "Toddy" Edward Holladay, who was born January 6 in Dothan, AL. Proud parents Bryan & Rosilyn Holladay & big brother Jon Sanders Holladay. Grandparents of the new baby are Clay & Laura Holladay; great grandparents are Tom & Joy Greer and the late Eddie & Ann Holladay.*

### Special Music for Easter and Christmas

It is a tradition at St. Paul's to offer special brass music for Easter and Christmas services. We are seeking special funding to provide the brass and musicians for these most celebratory and sacred services. Please consider giving and designate your gift to the "Holiday Music Fund."

### Chosen

*Continued from front page*

We all know that this is not how God works in this world. Life is not about being chosen or not chosen. We know in God's eyes all of us are chosen in the waters of baptism. We are all eligible to be disciples, like both Matthias and Joseph. We have followed the one from the Jordan. We know the journey to the cross, the silence of Saturday and the journey to Easter morning.

We know St. Paul's is just as chosen now as it was from the very beginning. As Jesus said on that final night with his friends, "You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name."

During this season of Lent, perhaps don't use fasting to dwell in the disappointment of not being chosen. Instead, take on considering how godly people respond when the lot is not cast on us. We may find, even as those wounds don't heal, that we are headed to the "City of the Free" even if we don't know it yet. Take on exploring what else might be possible for us. This just might be how our generation of the Church is remembered; how St. Paul's will continue to be relevant years from now.

You are so loved. Austin+

### We Remember in our Prayers

*Our Parish family:* DJ Wells, DeAnne Hester, Dixie Pigford, Edgar Morrison, Hardy P. Graham, Sr., Harriet Simmons, Jan Wayton, Jerry Greene, Jo Van Devender, Kay Milhorn, Ivy Jane Sutton, Milo Joseph Sutton, Jackson Florey, Mary Dunn, Mike Reich, Norma Veach, Peggy Carrico, Scott Carmichael, Scott Hudson and William Godwin.

*In our senior living communities:* 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, Carey Eldridge, Charmin Edwards, Chelsie Abston, Christina Harris, Chris Keipe, Chuck Fishburn, Cory Gaylord, Danny Waddle, David, Diane Dunn, Diane Honeycut, Delroy Ming, Edesser "Dess" Reid Ward, Rob & Aislinn Ward, Doris Lewis, Emily Chancellor, Frank Baker, Frank Barrett, Freddie Bea Watson, Gary Dawkins, George Farr, Harrison McClain, Helen Valentine, J.T. Lee, Jada Dooley, James, Jim Bateman, John, Joey Hutto, Josh, Joy Richardson, Katie, Ken Fisher, Kim Lovette, Kylie Temple, Lee Davis Thames, Lou Dubose, Mac Thigpen, Margaret Hadley, Marilyn Mohr, Martha Mazingo, Mary Ann Howell, Mary Halliwell, Michelle Nelson, Mike Covert, Mike Lundy, Mike Stanton, Nell Nichols, Norman, Patty Narro, Rick, Roger, Sandra Nicholas, Sandy Carrier, Sally Buntin, Hannah Thompson, Seth Thompson, Steve Plier, Suzanne Benson, Theodore, Tom Schram, Tony Sansone, Wanda Farr, Wanda Scott, WilfeManning, Willie Spencer, Wilma Kangery and Zack Martin.

*We pray for those who have died, especially Gary Eldridge*

*We pray 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.*

*We pray for our Bishop Brian and our Rector Austin and his family.*

### Birthdays & Anniversaries

March 1.....Rob Arline, Caroline Lewis

March 2.....Hannah Hamilton

March 8.....Nick Perry

March 11....DJ Wells

March 12....Mary Lee Long/Bowen

March 13....Graham Martin

March 16....Claire Calcote,

Robby & Sylvia Dreyfus

March 17....David Benson, John Compton,

Sara Mason, Shep Sanders

March 18....Linda Denney, Jerry Wayton

March 19....Arlyn Grace Sanders

March 20....Garry & Dana Lawyer

March 21....Judy Dohan

March 22....Kenan Hamilton

March 23....Jeffrey & Andrea Carver,

Harriet & Bill Simmons

March 24....Jo Benson, Ed Broome, Gene Wood

March 25....Tom Greer

March 27....Lee & Peggy Carrico

March 28....Patty Vinson

March 29....Mackenzie Carver

March 30....Justin & Jamie Smith

*Five people have been nominated to fill Vestry openings for 2021. Ballots have been mailed to church members; please vote for three candidates. If you can attend our Annual Meeting March 7, please bring your filled-out ballot with you. Otherwise, send or bring them to the parish office by noon on Friday, March 5. The numbers on each ballot are simply to know how many ballots are sent out to baptized members of St. Paul's. Each ballot will remain confidential. If we have a need for a runoff, you will receive a second ballot in the mail.*

## Lloyd Gray

Lloyd has been a member at St. Paul's since 2015. This is his third membership stint; he grew up in the parish from 1965 until 1974 and then returned when living again in Meridian in 1990-92.

He is employed as the Executive Director at The Phil Hardin Foundation.

Lloyd has been a member of the Vestry at St. Peter's, Gulfport, 1984-89, and also serving as Jr. Warden there.

Serving on the Vestry at All Saints Tupelo, from 1994-97, 2000-2005 and 2014-2015 Lloyd was Sr. Warden for one partial term and one full term.

Lloyd feels his gifts to bring to the vestry will be his knowledge of and extensive experience with parish leadership; his ability and willingness to listen, to collaborate and to help build consensus; and ability to speak candidly but respectfully on matters of disagreement.

Lloyd's special interests at St. Paul's are serving as a choir member, Lector, Outreach Committee Chair, previous Rector Search Committee Chair and Stewardship.

He is married to Sally and they have three adult children and two grandchildren.

## Stacey Harwell

Stacey has been a member at St. Paul's since 1964. She is employed as a Staff Accountant at Rush Health System.

Stacey has served on the Vestry at St. Paul's from 2012-2015. She currently serves on the Altar Guild, Worship Committee and as an Acolyte "Mom." Her area of special interest is Outreach and Community Development.

Stacey feels her gifts to offer the Vestry are a lifelong commitment to the parish, a love for history and traditions and an institutional memory.

She currently she serves on the Board and is President of Illuminations Center for Dyslexia.

Stacey is married to Chip and they have two adult children, Michael and Avery.

## Kelly McQuaig

Kelly has been a member at St. Paul's since 2015 and she is employed as a Corporate Secretary at The Yates Companies.

She said the gifts she would bring to the Vestry are a personal desire to serve and learn; experience with community organizations with limited resources; strategic planning and working in teams. "I am good at listening to those around me to gain an understanding of needs and concerns," she said. Kelly is experienced in problem-solving in her position at work and thoughtful when identifying solutions; she is a team-player.

She has been involved in the community in the past as a member of the Boards of the United Way of East MS; Vice President, Jimmie Rodgers Foundation; State Games of Mississippi; PNC Community Development Partnership; and as President, Philadelphia-Neshoba County Chamber of Commerce.

Kelly is married to Scott and has one adult stepdaughter.

## Jamie Smith

Jamie Smith has been a member at St. Paul's since 2018 and while at St. Paul's she has served on the Mission and Music Festival - Kids Activities Committee. She is currently the leader of the COVID-19 Outreach Committee and served as a delegate at the Annual Council of the Diocese in 2021.

Employed with Employee Benefits, Jamie feels her gifts would be to bring a passion for the church and strong opinion, to have the courage to make an independent decision and follow through with it.

Her special interests at St. Paul's are supporting the children's ministries by growing kids roots and instilling in them a love for God, their church, the world and their community.

Jamie is a lifetime member of Junior Auxiliary of Meridian, current Board member for Community of Hope, past Executive member of the Young Professionals of Meridian and a graduate of Leadership Lauderdale.

She is married to Justin and they have three children.

## Christopher Stump

Chris Stump has been a member at St. Paul's since 2018. He is employed as an Army Aviator/Executive Office.

Chris currently serves on the Administration and Communication Committee at St. Paul's.

He feels the gifts he would bring to the Vestry are a Juris Doctorate and Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, plus his experience in the Mississippi Army National Guard as an officer and aviator for 12 years, with two overseas deployments.

As a field-grade officer, he has led and organized more than 500 people to be ready and capable to respond to local, state and national situations. He also has worked with children, previously volunteering as a coach for youth sports

As a vestry member, Chris said he would bring leadership experience to support the parish in carrying out our mission statement.

His special interest is in Outreach and Welcoming/Newcomers. And he would like to bring his assistance to organization and administration at St. Paul's.

Chris is married to Julia and they have four children, ages 2-months-old to 10.



# Holy Week Family Conversation Starters

Here are some good questions to start conversations about Holy Week.

## Palm Sunday

- Waving palm branches was a symbol of the love and respect people had for Jesus. What are symbols of great love and respect in our culture?
- Who do you have a lot of love and respect for? How do you show it?
- Who would you be very excited to see? How would you welcome them?

## Maundy Thursday

- We often connect special foods with certain events or feelings. For example, we connect cake to birthdays, which gives cake a special meaning. What foods have special meaning for you? What is a special meal you have shared with others? Who did you share it with? What did you eat?
- How do you remember people you love but don't get to see?

## Good Friday

- We all go through times when we are very sad or struggle to have hope. Share a time when you have felt this way. What helped you get through?
- How does your family or faith tradition help you deal with difficult times?
- Pilate made a decision he didn't agree with to please other people. Have you ever done something you didn't agree with to please other people? How did it feel? Would you do things differently if you had the chance?

## Easter

- Share a time when you felt enormous joy. What made that so special?
- Where have you seen "new life" happen?
- What do you think the world would be like if everyone got to live in God's peace and justice now?