

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

April 5, 6 & 7 • Office closed for Easter Respite

April 15 • Executive Meeting — 5:15 p.m.

April 20 • Vestry Meeting — 5:15 p.m.

Join Us for Holy Week Services

Maundy Thursday

April 1, 2021 at 6 p.m.

Good Friday

April 2, 2021 at 12:05 p.m.

Easter Day

April 4, 2021 at 8 a.m.

with Holy Eucharist

9:30 a.m.

with Holy Eucharist, brass & organ

11 a.m.

with Holy Eucharist, brass, organ & incense

April 1 • Maundy Thursday • 6 p.m.

Nursery provided

April 2 • Good Friday • 12:05 p.m.

No nursery provided

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

Nursery will be provided for all services

End of an Era

When someone is one of the best youth directors in the diocese — and right here at St. Paul's — it is very hard to see that person leave the position. I regret to say I have accepted Claire Hasselle's resignation as our Youth Director.

To say she has been a light to our young people over nearly the past decade is an understatement. As the Bishop said to me when I first came to St. Paul's "You realize you have one of the best youth directors in the diocese, right?" And how right he was! Claire now will shift her focus to teaching in the school system and we are so grateful she helped us part time while she transitioned out of her position as Youth Director at St. Paul's. But we are happy she is still one of our parishioners!

We will thank Claire by creating a purse for her. Please contact the parish office if you would like to contribute. Well done, our good and faithful servant!

—Fr. Austin

*Alleluia! Christ is risen.
The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!"*

I know I am a few days premature when it comes to proclaiming it, but it feels right. We did not officially bury our Alleluias this year, but we've all buried plenty haven't we? We are all so ready for Easter morning and beyond.

I wonder if you have ever considered the tense of the verb in these sentences. We proclaim the Lord is risen. We use the present tense. We proclaim that God is alive and present in our midst. We often get so distracted by the busyness; the needs and wants that come at us from all directions. Even if we are looking for the presence of the Risen One, we may have a hard time recognizing their presence alongside us the whole time.

I was asked recently what my favorite verse in the Bible was. Of course, as an Episcopalian, I immediately said "I can't have a favorite verse but a favorite story." Context is everything. And the more I read the Bible, the more everything connects together so it's hard to pick a favorite.

But yes, I have a favorite Easter story. It's one that we won't hear this year during Eastertide and is often the Gospel reading for Easter evening, which, I don't know many parishes, or priests for that matter, who would offer such service.

My favorite is the road (or way) to Emmaus. It is the longest resurrection story we have so Luke must have thought it was particularly important. What I love about this story is we have two disciples — both of whom are unfamiliar to us and we never hear from again. They are walking on the road leaving Jerusalem and a stranger begins to walk alongside them and listens as they tell the whole story from the cross to an empty tomb.

These two disciples are trying to figure out what to do now. The one we put all hope into was given the death penalty for speaking the truth in love to society. They are afraid the same fate would happen to them. Then, they recount that this morning women went to the tomb and it was empty. It is not

until they stop for dinner with this stranger who walked with them and invite him in — ask him to break the bread — that they recognize the Risen Christ, who was there all along.

These disciples receive the greatest gift and we don't even know who they are. They are unable recognize Christ despite having spent a long walk talking alongside him. They are distracted by their fears and misunderstanding of why God came into the world. It prevents them from recognizing the Risen Christ in their midst.

This is a challenge for us today as well, is it not? So often we get stuck in our understanding of how church should be, pandemic time or normative time, how we are to come together to love one

another, that we often can't see the new things that God is doing in our midst. We want to welcome others into our parish family so that they can become like us, but we often fail to see that perhaps we are being called by God to become like them.

In reality, God is challenging us, walking alongside us, as we tell the story of the transforming love of Jesus Christ. It is a love that changes us. It changes us so that we can see Christ in the hungry and thirsty, see Christ in the poor, see Christ in the sick, in the prisoners and captives, and see Christ in those who seem the most lost and broken. Then we allow their transforming love to change us, as we share the love of Christ with all of them. This is where we find the presence of the Risen Christ if we look hard enough. We will find him in each other. For we are beautifully made in the image of God, sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism, and marked as Christ's own forever!

As we come to the other side of this pandemic — and as we come to an empty tomb — we are invited to see the Risen Christ all around us. Certainly, it will be in the stranger walking alongside us. This is the way we are present for each other too; walking alongside one another so that together we may all grow in faith with a capacity to love as Christ loves us, now and always.



Austin



Smiles all around! This group of kids had fun putting together treat bags and making posters for the Lauderdale County Health Department. Like everyone during the pandemic, we are so thankful for everything they do!



We Remember in our Prayers

Our Parish family: DJ Wells, DeAnne Hester, Dixie Pigford, Edgar Morrison, Jackson Florey, Jerry Greene, Jo Van Devender, Kay Milhorn, Jackson Florey, Mary Dunn, Mike Reich, Norma Veach, Peggy Carrico; Rick Farr and Terry Ivy.

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

Extended family and friends: Amanda Rainey, Betty Harris, Beverly Bryson, Bill Selman, Bob Hill, Brooke, Brooks Moore, Chance, Chuck Fishburn, Clancy, Cory Gaylord, David, Diane Dunn, Diane Honeycut, Edesser "Dess" Reid Ward, Rob & Aislinn Ward, Emily Chancellor, Frank Baker, Frank Barrett, Freddie Bea Watson, George Farr, Helen Valentine, Jada Dooley, James, Jim Bateman, John, Josh, Joy Richardson, Karen, Katie, Ken Fisher, Kylie Temple, Lee Davis Thames, Less Nichols, Lou Dubose, Mac Thigpen, Martha Mazingo, Mary Halliwell, Michelle Nelson, Mike Covert, Nell Nichols, Norman, Rick, Roger, Rosemary Kahlmus, Sandra Nicholas, Sandy Carrier, Sally Buntin, Steve Plier, Tom Schram, Tony Sansone, Wanda Farr, Wanda Scott, Willie Spencer, Wilma Kangery and Zack Martin.

We pray for those who have died especially; Gary Dawkins; Mike Lundy; William Godwin; Linda James; Patty Narro, sister of Kathy Pigford; Kerri Learlead Kelley; and Hardy P. Graham Sr.

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

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| April 2David Hamilton, Robert Loeb | April 19Connie Arline, Cheri Barry, |
| April 4Sarah Slade | Patsy Moran |
| April 5Rob Calcote, Brooks Holladay, | April 20Terry & Sabina Ivy, Liam Tucker |
| Randy Pool, Brooke Winstead | April 21Jean Anderson, |
| April 6Gloria Chancellor | Gil Graham Carmichael |
| April 8Scott & Kelly McQuaig, | April 22Britton Dunn |
| David Roberts | April 23Judge Little, Margaret Van Dyke |
| April 9Jon Sanders Holladay | April 24 D. Jean Anderson, Nancy Davis |
| April 10Chris Burchfield, | April 25Claire Hanschke, |
| Jacqueline Hogan, | Jerome & Lisa Kittrell, Suzie Pool |
| Phyllis Nuckolls | April 26Catherine Little |
| April 12Chris & Perrin Burchfield, | April 28....Libby Davis, Will Simmons, |
| Cara Ivy, Steven Ivy | Kelly Watson |
| April 14Robin Hall, Rose Marie Hudson | April 29Sellers Breaux |
| April 16Janet Chalk, Joane Mackey | |
| April 17Lindy Deen | |
| April 18Jennifer DuPont, Mardi Page | |

Mission and Music Festival is Back!

Although the festival will be modified due to COVID-19 concerns, the Mission and Music Festival is back and set for Saturday, May 1, from 10 a.m. to 2 -p.m.

Things will look a bit different this year, but we will have a full-tilt take-out service! Since we won't be able to gather on the grounds, there won't be any kids activities or music this year.

It's a wonderful opportunity for us to come together to raise money for outreach with all proceeds again going to L.O.V.E.s Kitchen and Care Lodge.

What will we feature? Fried fish plates will be pick up or curbside and we will deliver orders of 10 or more.

Children's plates with pizza and a drink will be offered and we are hoping to be able to give out activity bags for kids to take home.

There will be a freezer and baked goods sale, which was a great success last time with Melissa Love (601.604.2163) and Sara Mason (601.604.2162) agreeing to head this up again. Please contact them to sign up for what you would like to contribute so that we have a nice variety. We found that frozen meat dishes were a big hit and also items like cheese straws, pimento cheese, etc. as well as baked goods. Because of the time of year, soups are not as popular. We have disposable containers in a couple of sizes we would like you to use and can be picked up at the church or from Melissa or Sara.

Tickets are \$10 and can be obtained from Missy Bailey (601.938.3381) or Ann Compton (601.527.1284). Tickets will be available after our 8 a.m. service and before the 10:30 a.m. service for those attending church. If possible, it's helpful if the tickets can be paid for when they are given out.

Also, please contact Bobbie if you have a tailgate tent we can borrow for the day of the event.



Mission and Music Festival

Easter

by Devon Balwit

Keep your eyes on your work. Looking at a dogwood does not make you blossom. Nor can a bridge of sighs span an ocean of despair. For that, you need oars and strong arms. Labor as long as it is still called today. Yes, Faith could have worn other metaphors, but instead it rose from the dead and asked questions: Why are you crying? Who are you looking for? Do not fear. Answer. The Risen One speaks your language.

Get Ready for Vacation Bible School

St. Paul's Vacation Bible School will take place the week of June 28 - July 2 and feature the theme, "The Very Best Days." These really are and we hope to have many volunteers for the event. Please contact Mallory mallory@stpaulsmeridian.com or 601.513.1775 for more information.

Fresh Paint for Spring

Were' going to kick-off Spring with a Paint Party! The Sunday School rooms and hallway upstairs need brightening up. Help us fill them with your beautiful artwork! Join us April 11 at 4 p.m. to create your masterpieces. Location to be determined.