

The Peace

A Newsletter from the
Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee

WINTER 2023 | ISSUE 6



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ON THE COVER

Maggie Schaumleffel and students involved in Barth House Episcopal Campus Ministry were on hand at Diocesan Convention, sharing with attendees ways they can get involved and support Episcopal college ministry in West Tennessee. Photo courtesy of India Rose.



The Peace is the official publication of the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee.

We encourage the submission of articles and images. We reserve the right to edit materials offered for publication. Please submit content to Emily Austin: eaustin@episwtn.org.

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Ms. Susan Kenny
The Rev. Paul McLain*
Ms. Ebet Peoples*
Mr. Steve Smith
The Rev. Sandy Webb

The Diocese gratefully acknowledges the commitment of outgoing Bishop & Council members Ms. Ann Duncan, the Very Rev. Gary Meade, the Rev. Richard Fletcher, and the Hon. Elijah Noel, Jr.

*Term begins on January 1, 2024

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The Coming of God

Ann Weems

Our God is the One who comes to us
in a burning bush,
in an angel's song,
in a newborn child.

Our God is the One who cannot be found
locked in a church,
not even in the sanctuary.

Our God will be where God will be
with no constraints,
no predictability.

Our God lives where our God lives,
and destruction has no power
and even death cannot stop the living.

Our God will be born where God will be born,
but there is no place to look for the One
who comes to us.

When God is ready
God will come
even to a godforsaken place
like a stable in Bethlehem.

Watch ...
for you know not when
God comes.

Watch, that you might be found
whenever
wherever
God comes.



In December 2023, the Rev. Canon Sharon Alexander (ROW 1), a valued member of the diocesan leadership team over the past four years, concluded her tenure as Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of West Tennessee. In January 2024, information will be provided about the persons who will assume interim responsibility for key areas that the Canon to the Ordinary oversees, including the ordination process, congregations and clergy in transition, Safe Church issues, and the small church initiative. Additionally, Elise Patterson (ROW 2) retired from the Diocesan Administrator role in November 2023. Over the past three and a half years, Elise has supported our diocesan ministries in many ways. The Diocese of West Tennessee is pleased to welcome Carol Jones (ROW 3) as the Diocesan Administrator. She brings with her an engaging and welcoming presence — as well as over twenty years of experience in church administration and communication. Carol splits her time between her new administrative role at St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral and her ministry with us at the Diocese.



Diocesan Convention 2023

On Friday, November 17, 2023, delegates and guests from across West Tennessee gathered at Saint John's Episcopal Church in Memphis for the 42nd Convention of the Diocese of West Tennessee. The theme - *Do Good & Share What You Have* - encouraged attendees to meditate on the things our faith communities can do to share of their bounty, and the final activity of Convention included an onsite service project wherein attendees assembled care packages for unhoused people served by Memphis-based nonprofit Community Alliance for the Homeless.

But first, there was Convention business that needed to be covered! Remarkably, Convention business - elections, presentations, and parliamentary procedures - went extremely smoothly. Much work goes into the planning of Convention each year, and the efficiency of this year's gathering was due in large part to the hospitality of host congregation Saint John's and volunteers.

Elections

The following were elected during Convention:
Secretary: **Steve Smith** (Immanuel - LaGrange)
Treasurer: **Margaret McLean** (Calvary)

Bishop & Council

Paul McLain (Clergy, 4-year term, Calvary)
Ebet Peoples (Lay, 4-year term, Calvary)
Patty Easley (Lay, 3-year term, Grace - Paris)

Disciplinary Board

Jay Biedenharn (Clergy, 3-year term, Saint John's)
Jeff Marx (Clergy, 3-year term, St. Andrew's)
Ben Adams (Lay, 3-year term, Holy Communion)
Randy McCloy (Clergy, 2-year term, Holy Communion)
Nedra Wick (Lay, 2-year term, Grace-St. Luke's)

Trustee, University of the South (Sewanee)

Lisa McIndoo (Clergy, 3-year term, Holy Apostles)

West Tennessee Endowment Corporation

Jim Vogel (Lay, 3-year term, St. George's)

Resolutions

All three resolutions presented at Convention were approved.

Resolution WTN 2023-1 Amendments to the Rules of Order
Approved with no additional amendments. Access them at <http://tinyurl.com/2023WTNROO>

Resolution WTN 2023-2 Amendments to the Constitution of the Diocese
Approved upon a second reading with no additional

amendments. These amendments to the Constitution will become effective January 1, 2024 and will be available on EDWTN.org at that time.

Resolution WTN 2023-3 Amendments to the Canons of the Diocese

Approved. These amendments to the Canons will become effective January 1, 2024 and will be available on EDWTN.org at that time.

Save the Date!

Observing that the traditional timing of our Convention (the Friday preceding the Thanksgiving holiday) limits who can participate, the timing of Diocesan Convention 2024 will instead take place on

Saturday, November 16, 2024 at Holy Apostles Episcopal Church (Collierville).

Staging Convention on a Saturday will enable more participation from parishioners whose work, school, or family commitments make attending a Friday meeting difficult.



OPPOSITE PAGE. Convention attendees including the Rev. Mimsy Jones in the foreground, assemble care packages that will be distributed to unhoused people in Memphis by Community Alliance For the Homeless.

ROW 1. Delegates from Church of the Holy Apostles discuss Convention proceedings during a break in the program. **ROW 2,**

LEFT. The Honorable Andy Cobb, Bishop Phoebe Roaf, and Mr. Steve Smith make sure that all Convention proceedings run in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of West Tennessee and The Episcopal Church. **ROW 2, RIGHT.** The 2023 Bishop's

Cross Award was presented to St. Columba Episcopal Camp & Retreat Center for its outstanding resilience and creativity during the difficult pandemic years. Allison Pace, the current chair of the St. Columba board of directors, received the award at Convention on behalf of the ministry. **ROW 3.** Saint John's Parish Life Center was a versatile, inviting setting for the Convention. Saint John Rector Jay Biedenharn welcomes guests and attendees. **ROW 4.** The opening Eucharist of Convention was a special time to gather together and worship as one body. Left to

Right: The Rev. Jay Biedenharn, Bishop Phoebe Roaf, the Rev. Deacon Debbie McCannless, and the Rev. Donna Gerold.

Photos courtesy of India Rose.



Journey to the Mountaintop: A Farewell to DuBose Conference Center

By the Rev. Hester Mathes

This past Spring, I found myself, power drill in hand, gazing down a long hallway of DuBose Conference Center lined with generations of Camp Gailor-Maxon photographs. My task was to free each set of photos from their handmade frames so that they could be scanned and archived for generations to come. Each small room off of this hallway had a designation: The first contained items to be returned to each of the three dioceses in Tennessee, the second contained artifacts and articles to be safely archived by the University of the South, and the third was stacked with prayer books, Bibles, and plaques that would be given to those attending the service scheduled for the end of the month to officially deconsecrate and close the conference center as the final act of preparation for its sale to new owners.



The Rev. Hester Mathes

I was a latecomer to DuBose, being invited by a friend to attend a high school youth retreat called Wintermission, later renamed Winterfest, in the winter of my sophomore year. To this day I have trouble finding the words to explain it, but it was during that retreat that my faith first became my own and not just that of my parents. Fast forward to the following summer when I attended Camp Gailor-Maxon for the first time, having lost the very friend who had introduced me to this place in a tragic car wreck. I was angry at God and angry at the world, but again on the sacred grounds of this conference center, God found a way to open my heart to his presence and his peace.

As I dismantled each of the frames and gazed at the faces of countless campers, I found myself wondering about each of their stories. The photos moved from black and white to color, and I started recognizing some of the smiles gazing back at me. I saw my favorite priest as a young counselor, far before any of us knew him as “Reverend,” and started counting others I knew had entered ordained ministry. I counted up to seven, but I know there were more whose faces I did not know. I found elementary campers who are now serving on vestries across Tennessee, middle school campers who went on to serve on the board of St. Columba Camp & Conference Center, and at least a dozen high school campers who later became youth

ministers across the state and the country. I saw the faces of General Convention deputies, Sunday school teachers, and founders of nonprofit organizations, all as young campers.

I’d be lying if I didn’t admit that some tears accompanied my journey through the decades of DuBose that day. The passage of scripture that became my saving grace is from the Gospel of Matthew:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Years of deferred maintenance had taken its toll on DuBose. Leaky roofs and mildew were her moths and rust. There were attempts to sustain this beloved conference center, but the historic buildings needed far more investment than any diocesan budget could provide, and it became apparent that we had to let them go, a decision that no one took lightly.

But it was never about the buildings, was it?

These particular buildings allowed a space for me and

many others to be drawn into deeper relationship with God, and for that I will be forever grateful. That gratitude will be the driving force as I double down on my support of St. Columba and other conference centers that continue to defy the odds and find creative ways to thrive in their ministries of hospitality and sanctuary.

No, it never will be about the buildings or grounds themselves, no matter how beautiful they are or how many memories they contain. But it most certainly will be about our commitment as people of faith to create and nurture sacred places that raise up the next generation of leaders committed to building God's kingdom together, and I look forward to seeing how the Diocese of West Tennessee allocates our portion of the funds from the sale of DuBose to carry on her important ministry.

As I stacked the photos neatly in the second room, I thought about the countless groups and people touched by DuBose, not only these campers, but Episcopal Laymen, Province IV Christian Educators, Quilters, Happeners, Vestries, and that really nice group from the Baha'i faith that I met one winter, because we all came to the mountain in search of time away, time together, time with God.

I loaded the portrait of Bishop Barth in the backseat of our truck, bound for his next home in the Barth House, along with about a dozen needlepointed kneelers bearing names of churches throughout West Tennessee. They will be our reminders of this great place.

As I closed the big red doors of Claiborne Hall, I heard the comforting words of Maya Angelou, from her poem "When Great Trees Fall":

**And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.**



A Statement from the DuBose Conference Center Board Regarding the Sale of the Property (December 2023)

The DuBose Board has been in the process of winding down the DuBose Conference Center business for the better part of two years. We were recently able to close on the property, with the sale being finalized with a Nashville-based developer. While the Board cannot speak directly to their plans with the property, we took great care to make sure that we were selling DuBose to someone who would be a good steward of the property and would take the appropriate measures to preserve the historic buildings we all know and love.



DO GOOD & SHARE GRANTS

Small Church Ministry Grants from the Diocese of West Tennessee
Application Period: January 1, 2024 - March 1, 2024

The Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee is focused on supporting vitality and sustainability in all of our congregations. Every church has the potential to increase its engagement with the surrounding community, and the Do Good & Share Ministry Grants program is designed to facilitate greater involvement.

About

The purpose of the Do Good & Share Ministry Grants program is to encourage small congregations to try new ways of getting to know their local communities through shared ministries and engagement. As relationships are developed through discourse and cooperation, we will become more aware of the work God is already doing and how we can assist in tangible ways.

The Ministry Grants program is part of our diocesan small church initiative, which began in 2020. A total of \$50,000 has been allocated for the 2024 grant cycle. Lessons learned in the first cycle will be presented at the 2024 diocesan convention. Another round of grants will be awarded for the 2025 grant cycle.

Eligibility

Twenty-one congregations in the Diocese of West Tennessee are eligible to apply for grants: All Saints (Memphis); Christ Church (Brownsville); Good Shepherd (Memphis); Emmanuel (Memphis); Grace (Paris); Holy Trinity (Memphis); Immanuel

(La Grange); Immanuel (Ripley); Ravenscroft (Brighton); St. Anne's (Millington); St. James (Bolivar); St. Joseph (Memphis); St. Mary's Cathedral (Memphis); St. Matthew (Covington); St. Paul (Mason); St. Thomas (Somerville); St. Thomas (Humboldt); Trinity (Mason); plus St. James (Union City); St. Mary's (Dyersburg) and St. Philip (Bartlett).

Criteria

Applications will be accepted from January 1, 2024 through March 1, 2024. Decisions will be made and recipients notified by April 1, 2024.

Factors that the Ministry Grants Team will consider when making decisions include a congregation's:

- Development of initiatives that are relational, participatory and cooperative
- Outreach into local neighborhoods and communities to form new partnerships or build upon existing partnerships
- Willingness to try new things
- Openness to creativity

Funding will be prioritized for programs aimed at strengthening and facilitating contextual awareness and community engagement. In some instances, great ideas may not fit the granting purposes or guidelines.

The types of programs or ideas that **DO NOT** qualify for the Ministry Grants program include:

- Internal programs or ministries of a congregation that only serve parishioners
- Funding for the congregation's operating budget, including staff costs
- Capital improvement projects, such as landscaping, roofing repairs or other building maintenance

Grant Types

Experimental Grants are grants of \$500 to \$1,000 for the purpose of engaging in a learning experiment. Experimental Grants allow a congregation to learn about the surrounding neighborhood and become more comfortable engaging the work God is already doing by trying something new.

Sustaining Grants are grants of \$1,000 to \$5,000 for those congregations that have already begun working with the community surrounding the church. Priority will be given to efforts involving one or more community partners.



OPPOSITE LEFT. Congratulations to the Reverend Christian Senyoni and son JP Senyoni who became United States citizens on November 16, 2023! During a naturalization ceremony conducted at the Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library in Memphis, friends and colleagues from across the Diocese of West Tennessee including Canon Sharon Alexander, Rev. Jeff Marx (St. Andrews), Rev. Hester Mathes (Holy Trinity), Rev. Paul McLain (Calvary), Bishop Phoebe Roaf, and Maggie Schaumleffel (Barth House) gathered to congratulate Father Christian and JP. Father Christian serves as associate rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Collierville, and JP is a University of Memphis student active in Barth House Campus Ministry. **Pictured L to R:** Fr. Christian Senyoni, JP Senyoni, Canon Sharon Alexander, and Bishop Phoebe Roaf. *Photo courtesy of Maggie Schaumleffel.*

2024 MIDDLE SCHOOL
SKI & SNOWBOARDING TRIP
 HIDDEN VALLEY SLOPES, MISSOURI

FEBRUARY 16-18TH
 LEAVE AFTER SCHOOL ON FRIDAY AND
 GET BACK SUNDAY NIGHT!

TIERED PRICING
 INCLUDES LIFT TICKETS, RENTALS, SOME MEALS, AND LODGING

TIER 1: \$540
 TIER 2: \$520
 TIER 3: \$490

FOR MORE INFO OR QUESTIONS: EMAIL [ADAM@SAINTCOLUMBAMEMPHIS.ORG](mailto:adam@saintcolumbamemphis.org)

ST. COLUMBA EPISCOPAL CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER

2024 HIGH SCHOOL
SKI & SNOWBOARD TRIP 2 CINCINNATI

JANUARY 12-14, PERFECT NORTH SLOPES
 LEAVE AFTER SCHOOL ON FRIDAY AND GET BACK SUNDAY NIGHT!

\$585 + \$560 + \$535
 Tier 1 Tier 2 Tier 3
 Includes lift tickets, rentals, some meals and lodging

For more info email: adam@saintcolumbamemphis.org

3 opportunities in February 2024

to hear from the recent recipient of
the President Joseph R. Biden
Lifetime Achievement Award

CATHERINE MEEKS IN MEMPHIS



THURSDAY

Feb. 15, 2024 @ 7 p.m.

Grace-St. Luke's

Episcopal Church

Memphis Theological Seminary's

Barbara A. Holmes Lecture

1720 PEABODY AVE., MEMPHIS

FRIDAY

Feb. 16, 2024 @ 12 p.m.

Calvary Episcopal Church

102 N. SECOND ST., MEMPHIS

SUNDAY

Feb. 18, 2024:

Teaching & Preaching
at Idlewild Presbyterian
Church

*during the Sunday morning
services*

1750 UNION AVE., MEMPHIS

ABOUT

Catherine Meeks, PhD, is Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to the center's opening she chaired its precursor, Beloved Community: Commission for Dismantling Racism for the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta. A sought-after teacher and workshop leader, the core of Dr. Meeks' work has been with people who have been marginalized because of economic status, race, gender or physical ability as they pursue liberation, justice and access to resources that can help lead them to health, wellness and a more abundant life. This work grows out of her understanding of her call to the vocation of teacher as well as her realization that all of humanity is one family which God desires to unite.



I remember how, as a child, I felt like November and December were the most tedious months of the year. From the moment I stuffed my Halloween costume in the back of my closet, the countdown would begin.

Christmas was coming.

The time leading up to December 25 was intense for me as I waited for Christmas to come. The days progressed at the pace of molasses, and I felt like the harder I waited, the slower the moments went by.

Still, I look back on those days with fondness because now, as an adult, I see how my anxious childhood anticipation of Christmas maps onto my adult understanding of what it actually means to wait.

There is a sacredness to waiting, to be suspended in an unresolved holding pattern. This is that liminal space wherein I must truly reside and proactively engage with faith. Each year during Advent, I must trust that just as God prepared a humble place for Mary to give birth to our Savior, God is making a place for us as well.

The waiting of Advent is not passive. It's teeming with promise and quiet preparation.

I love the symbolic, spacious language of John's gospel:

*The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness
did not overcome it.*

I'm a word person, so I notice how the first clause of John 1:5 is presented in the present tense – the light *shines* – and how the second clause is presented in the past tense – darkness *did not overcome* it. As I occupy this uncertain time of waiting, I find peace in the unwavering light that still shines today. The Light is eternal.

My anxiety, worry, and – if I'm being completely honest – hopelessness feel so imminent during periods of waiting and transition. Do you ever feel this way during this season of Advent? Our American culture tends to ignore Advent and moves directly into the wholesale joy of Christmas. We don't often leave space for anything other than saccharine bliss during the winter holiday season, despite the fact that we're confronted with injustice, grief, and vitriol each day.

WAITING, NOT WILTING AT ADVENT

By Emily Austin, Director of Communications & Community Engagement

I wonder how Mary felt as she waited for our Savior to be born. Surely that time for her was one of both great joy and anxiety. These two emotions are not mutually exclusive. We can hold them both. Perhaps, in naming that tension between joy and anxiety, we can develop greater empathy for the full, beautiful spectrum of humanity Jesus came to save.

I have a graphic tee shirt I bought a few years ago from a Memphis-based artist at a popup market. It's an army green tee sporting a simple black design of a magnolia blossom and the text **Waiting, Not Wilting**. If you saw it, you probably wouldn't think of it as a seasonal item of clothing like intentionally ugly Christmas sweaters or fleece pajamas adorned with snowflakes and reindeer. But it's my Advent shirt. I wear it and remember that Christmas is coming, that Christ came two thousand years ago and never really left.

The discomfort we experience during the waiting period is already resolved by our Savior.



The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS) invites you to attend a FREE conference in collaboration with the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee

STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE



Friday, January 26, 2024 10AM – 3PM
St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral
700 Poplar Ave., Memphis
Lunch Provided



Whether you are a veteran Stewardship practitioner or a recent recruit to your Stewardship committee, we have a day of workshops and motivation to help you create programs, enliven your generosity and gratitude formation, teach and preach the theology of abundance, and raise more money for mission in your congregation!

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

The Rev. Debra Q. Bennett, Rector, Our Saviour, Akron
The Rev. Cn. Karen Davis-Lawson, Rector, St. David's, Cambria Heights
The Rev. Charles L. Fischer III, Vice-President of Advancement, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
The Rev. Sabeth Fitzgibbons, Rector, Trinity, Seattle
Cn. J. Davey Gerhard, TENS Executive Director
The Very Rev. Julia McCray Goldsmith, Dean of Trinity, San Jose
The Very Rev. Mark Strobel, Dean of Gethsemane, Fargo
The Rev. Dina VanKlaveren, Rector, St. Andrews, Glenwood
The Very Rev. Matthew Woodward, Dean of Trinity, Sacramento

WORKSHOPS

10 – 10:45 a.m. Keynote: Preaching and Teaching a Culture of Generosity
11 – 11:45 a.m. Pledge Campaign Best Practices
1 – 1:45 p.m. Recruiting and Retaining Millennial and GenZ Members
2 – 2:45 p.m. Breaking Through the Pledge Plateau

REGISTER:

tinyurl.com/WalkInLoveStewardship