

The Peace

A Publication from the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee | Winter 2025 | Issue 8





St. Luke's Jackson Calls New Rector

The Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee joins St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Jackson in welcoming the Rev. Jesse Perkins as their next rector. Fr. Jesse, along with his wife, Katy, and their sons, Gaius and Atticus, will join the St. Luke's community this summer. His first Sunday at St. Luke's will be July 6, 2025.

Fr. Jesse comes to St. Luke's with a deep love

for Anglican worship and music, a passion for welcoming those seeking a renewed faith, and a strong commitment to community outreach. His journey to the Episcopal Church was shaped by a desire for a faith tradition that embraces both ancient liturgy and a spirit of hospitality—qualities that resonate deeply with the St. Luke's community.

During his interview process, Fr. Jesse and his family experienced the warmth and welcome that make St. Luke's such a special place. He looks forward to walking alongside the congregation as they continue their mission of worship, fellowship, and service in Jackson.

Clergy Transitions

The Reverend Dr. Noah Campbell, previously College Missioner for the Diocese of West Tennessee and Vicar of Church of the Good Shepherd, is now serving as Vicar of St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Memphis.

The Reverend Rob Courtney joined the Bishop's Staff as Canon to the Ordinary in July 2024. Canon Rob previously served as Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church & School in the Diocese of Louisiana. Learn more about Canon Rob on page 10.

The Reverend Miranda Cully began her call as Rector of the Church of the Redeemer in the Diocese of West Missouri in September 2024. She was previously the Head Chaplain of St. Mary's Episcopal School in Memphis.

The Reverend Gary Meade, previously Interim Dean of St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, is now Canon to the Ordinary of the Diocese of Mississippi.

The Reverend Deacon Nancy O'Shea (retired) died on January 13, 2025.

In September 2024, **the Reverend Tim True**, former Interim Rector of St. Luke's in Jackson, became Interim Dean of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Detroit.

The Reverend Dr. Dorothy White is serving as Interim Rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in Germantown.

On the Cover

At the Absalom Jones Eucharist on February 22 at the Barth House, Deacon Gerri Endicott offers the chalice to Maureen Claybon, a member of St. Paul's (Mason) in a sacred moment of communion. The day's program - offered by the Diocese of West Tennessee in partnership with the Union of Black Episcopalians Demby Chapter - honored the legacy of Absalom Jones, the first Black Episcopal priest, and celebrated faith, resilience, and the beloved community.



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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A MESSAGE FROM

Bishop Phoebe



Dear friends,

In 2021, our diocesan leadership team determined that we should focus our efforts on small congregations, children and youth, and racial healing. The area which has received the least attention during my tenure as Bishop is racial healing. Last January, I convened a group of 10 Episcopalians from our diocese to begin a conversation about how we might approach this complex topic. The population of Shelby County, which is the largest county in the Diocese of West Tennessee, is 40 percent white and 60 percent people of color. However, our congregations do not reflect this diversity.

The work of the task force has been guided by Galatians 3:28: “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

It is important to examine our past not to cast blame but rather to facilitate healing and to create a welcoming environment for people from all backgrounds and walks of life.

The task force members met with Dr. Catherine Meeks, the former director of the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing, in February 2024 to solicit her input. We have been encouraged by Calvary and Grace-St. Luke’s commitment to examining their respective histories. We also reached out to representatives of the Diocese of Tennessee’s Racial Reconciliation Commission to learn about their initiatives.

At the 2024 Diocesan Convention, a resolution establishing a Becoming Beloved Community (BBC) Commission in the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee was approved. This resolution directs the bishop to appoint 12 individuals to serve on the Commission and work together to identify opportunities for all persons in the Diocese to commit themselves in prayer, study and dialogue regarding the ways in which we have failed to respect the dignity of every human being and to recommit ourselves to fully living into the promises contained in our baptismal covenant.

Funds raised as part of the 2025 Bishop’s Missionary Appeal (BMA) will enable the Commission to begin their work. In addition to examining our history, the Commission is considering book studies, film viewings, special liturgies and Bible studies.

Traditionally, a contribution of at least \$1,000 has been requested for the BMA. If you are able to give at that level, please do so. However, no amount is too small and any gift is greatly appreciated. You can send a check to the Diocese or give safely and securely on our website: EDWTN.org/give.

Jesus came to earth to bring salvation to people of every nation, tribe, people and language. Because no group is exempt from God’s love, we have been commissioned to share the love with others. If you are interested in learning more about the work of the BBC Commission, please contact me upon my return from sabbatical in April 2025.

Peace,

Bishop Phoebe

Bishop Phoebe A. Roaf



(ROW 1) In October 2024, Christ Episcopal Church in Brownsville launched their Save the Bell Campaign to support the restoration of its historic bell tower and church building. Built in 1854, Christ Church is the oldest house of worship in Brownsville and has withstood the Civil War, the Yellow Fever epidemic, and generations of change. Over time, water damage compromised the 19th-century brickwork of the bell tower and part of the nave, but thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the Historic Property Acquisition Fund administered by the Tennessee Historical Commission, restoration efforts are underway to preserve this Gothic Revival landmark. The Brownsville community continues to rally behind the project, ensuring that the bell tower—completed in 1867—remains a lasting symbol of faith and resilience. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MARGIE STOOTS. (ROW 2, left) St. Paul Episcopal Church in Mason hosted its 19th Annual Black History program on Sunday, February 23, 2025, under the leadership of Maureen Claybon. The program featured local talent and ended with a parade of fashion. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY ESTHER COCHRAN. (ROW 2, right) On September 29, before the service marking the Rev. Gary Meade’s final Sunday as interim dean at St. Mary’s Cathedral, the congregation gathered for the dedication of the Bishops’ Gate. Andy Pouncey, Kate Pouncey, and Scott Blake formally presented the gate with the words, “We present to you this gate to be set apart for the service of Christ’s holy Church.” This moment honored both the cathedral’s legacy and Interim Dean Gary’s transition to his new call in the Diocese of Mississippi. PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MARY LAYTON. (ROW 3) Calvary Episcopal Church’s children’s formation team, lead by Jocelyn Busby, developed a curriculum for the fall semester titled Exploring the Bible Through Children’s Literature. Each week, children explored a Bible story alongside a well-known children’s book, drawing connections between the two. Pictured here is one of the teaching teams, Dana Sue Percer and Greg Busby, along with Calvary’s 3rd-5th grade class. In a recent lesson, the children compared the story of Jesus in the Temple with Sylvester and the Magic Pebble. The discussion focused on key scriptural themes such as prayer, miracles, and the concept of “ask, and it shall be given.” PHOTO SUBMITTED BY JOCELYN BUSBY.





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Opposite Page
And she's off! Diocesan Convention at Church of the Holy Apostles was one of Bishop Phoebe's final diocesan engagements before she departed for sabbatical on December 1, 2024. During her time of sabbatical, Bishop Phoebe has traveled extensively, including jaunts to the United Kingdom and New Zealand in her journey. Check out the diocese's social media to see video postcards from the Bishop! She will be back from sabbatical on April 1, 2025.



Go Forth & Be Bold

*The 43rd Convention of the
Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee*



The 43rd Convention of the Diocese of West Tennessee convened clergy, lay delegates, and visitors at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Collierville under the theme “Go Forth and Be Bold” (Acts 28:31). This rallying cry inspired participants to reflect on their mission to boldly share the Good News and enact God’s love in the world.

Ministry Highlights

A significant focus of the convention was the Do Good & Share Ministry Grants program, which funds small church outreach initiatives across the Diocese. These ministries exemplify bold faith in action, providing hope and support to communities across West Tennessee. The following projects were highlighted:

All Saints' (Memphis) <i>Pollinator Garden</i>	St. Anne's (Millington) <i>Laundry Love</i>
Christ Church (Brownsville) <i>Teddy Bear Outreach</i>	St. James (Bolivar) <i>Hardeman County Drug Court Support</i>
Good Shepherd (Memphis) <i>U-Park Tennis Festivals</i>	St. Mary's (Memphis) <i>Connecting Neighbors to Urgent Care</i>
Grace (Paris) <i>Loaves & Fishes</i>	St. Paul's (Mason) <i>Gailor Community Bulletin Board</i>
Holy Trinity (Memphis) <i>Camp Firelight VBS</i>	St. Thomas the Apostle (Humboldt) <i>Boys & Girls Club Playground Revitalization</i>
Immanuel (La Grange) <i>Community Arts Program</i>	St. Thomas (Somerville) <i>Front Yard Food Pantry Expansion</i>
Ravenscroft (Brighton) <i>Family Tools for Success Initiative</i>	

Watch videos telling the stories of some of these outreach ministries on our website: EDWTN.org/ministry-grants/

Resolutions

All three resolutions presented at Convention were approved.

Resolution WTN 2024-1: Streamlining Diocesan Governance

This resolution directs the Committee on Constitution and Canons to explore combining the Standing Committee and Bishop & Council into a single body. Findings will be reported at the 44th Diocesan Convention.

Resolution WTN 2024-2: Creation of the Becoming Beloved Community (BBC) Commission

This new commission, comprised of 12 members appointed by the Bishop, will expand on the work of the West Tennessee Becoming Beloved Community Task Force. The WTNBBC Commission is charged with examining the Diocese’s historical involvement in racism and slavery and offering opportunities for prayer, study, and

dialogue on racial healing.

Resolution WTN 2024-3: Resolution on LGBTQ+ Dignity

In light of violence against transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals, this resolution declares the Diocese’s opposition to such violence and its commitment to affirm the dignity and rights of all people, in alignment with our baptismal vows.

Financial Stewardship & Governance

Delegates approved the 2025 Diocesan Budget and affirmed the 2025 Minimum Clergy Compensation guidelines. Both of these documents are available for review on our website.

Elections

Congratulations to the following individuals elected to serve in diocesan leadership roles:

Standing Committee

DONNA GEROLD (Clergy, 3-year term, St. John's)
CHRISTIAN MAN (Lay, 3-year term, St. John's)

Bishop & Council

NOAH CAMPBELL (Clergy, 4-year term, St. Mary's Memphis)
AMANDA MCGRIFF (Clergy, appointed to fulfill a one-year unfilled term, St. George's)
CHRISTIAN SENYONI (Clergy, appointed to fulfill a two-year unfilled term, St. Andrew's)
MARTHA WEBB (Lay, 4-year term, Immanuel Ripley)

Disciplinary Board

LAURA GETTYS (Clergy, 3-year term, Grace-St. Luke's)
BROOKS TERRY (Lay, 3-year term, Calvary)

Trustee, University of the South (Sewanee)

GEORGE CLARKE (Lay, 3-year term, St. Mary's Memphis)

Other Leadership Roles

Secretary of the Diocese: STEVE ANDERSON (St. Andrew's)

Treasurer of the Diocese: MARGARET MCLEAN (Calvary)

West Tennessee

Endowment Corporation:

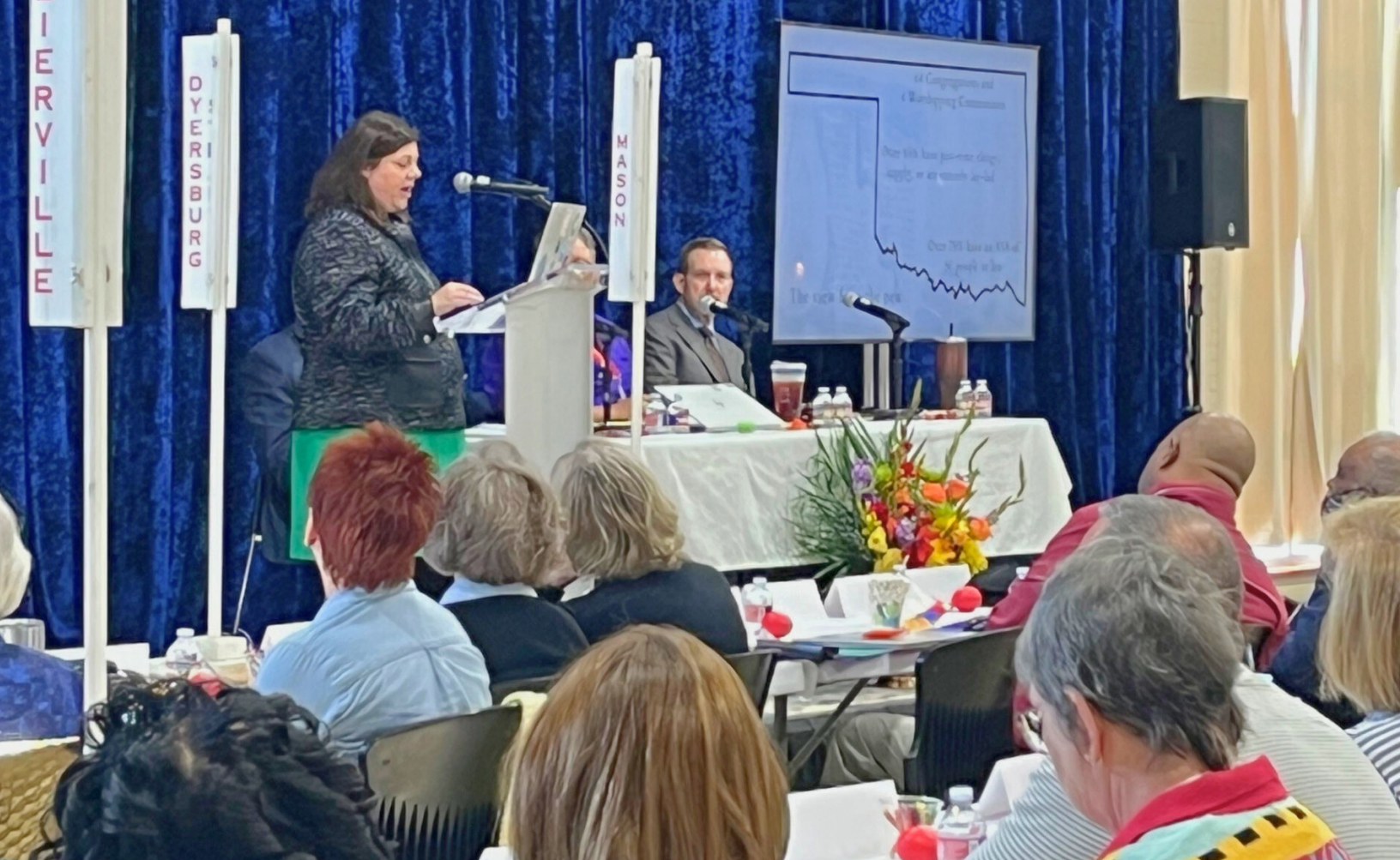
ANNA MCQUISTON AND
GINA MILES

Bishop's Cross Award

The 2024 recipient of the Bishop's Cross Award was announced during the Closing Eucharist: John Owen, outgoing chair of the West Tennessee Endowment Corporation. John was unable to attend, so the Rev. Scott Walters (Calvary) accepted the award on his behalf. A video of the presentation and Bishop's Phoebe's remarks at



Image Credit: Robyn Banks



Kate Bond, Director of Faith Formation and Discipleship for the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma, delivered an inspiring keynote address at Convention, encouraging us to embrace our faith with courage and determination. With a rich background in professional lay ministry, beginning at St. Crispin's Camp and Conference Center, and holding a Certificate in Leadership in Lifelong Formation from FORMA and Virginia Theological Seminary, Kate brings extensive experience to her ministry. She is currently completing her Doctor of Educational Ministry at Virginia Theological Seminary and serves on the board of Forward Movement. Kate also moderated a panel discussion during the convention, fostering insightful dialogue among participants.

Convention is available on our website:
EDWTN.org/diocesan-convention-43-report/.

John, a parishioner of Calvary Episcopal Church, was presented with the Bishop's Cross Award a couple of weeks later during Bishop Phoebe's annual parochial visit to Calvary.

Seminarians

The Convention welcomed the following seminarians, who are each on the priesthood track. We give thanks for their call to ordained ministry and pray for their continued growth and discernment.

Lavonnie Perry Claybon

*St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Mason)
 University of the South ACTS Program*



Dr. Lavonnie Perry Claybon is a seminarian in the Alternative Clergy Training (ACTS) program at Sewanee. She brings a background in education, holding a Ph.D. in Instructional Design and an M.Ed. in Educational Technology Leadership as she mentors students and teaches as an adjunct at the University of Memphis. Lavonnie's ministry includes previous roles on the Commission for Ministry, current leadership in the Union of Black Episcopalians, and founding a youth tutoring program, Project C.A.R.E.S. She is currently posted and serves at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Millington, under the guidance of the Rev. Edgar Freeman.

Pam Evans

*Grace Episcopal Church (Paris)
 University of the South ACTS Program*



A native of Mixie, Tennessee, a small farming community in northwest Tennessee, Dr. Pam Evans graduated from Sewanee: The University of the South before attending medical school at the University of Tennessee, Memphis. She later earned her medical degree from the University of Alabama in 1995 and completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of South Alabama in Mobile in 1999. For the past 25 years, she has dedicated her career to women's health in West Tennessee. Pam is married to Dr. T. Paul Evans, and they are the proud parents of three adult children. Her faith home is Grace Episcopal Church in Paris, Tennessee, where she is an active member. A lifelong Girl Scout, she works with the church's multilevel, sponsored troop. She is also a member of the Daughters of the King.

Zachary Ferguson

*Calvary Episcopal Church (Memphis)
 Virginia Theological Seminary*



Zachary Ferguson has called Memphis/West Tennessee home for the last 13 years but is a native of Martinsville, Virginia. Zach is a member of Calvary, where he previously served as senior warden of the vestry, a Eucharistic



Thomas Meinhart, a member of the Diocesan Youth Council and a page at Convention, reads one of the lessons during the Diocesan Eucharist, which closed the convention. Thomas' home congregation is St. Andrew's in Collierville, which graciously hosted a diocesan youth lock-in following the service. A significant group of middle- and high school students from across the Diocese attended the closing Eucharist, a meaningful moment of worship and community.

Minister, and was an active youth volunteer. For the Diocese of West Tennessee, he was a lay deputy to the General Convention 2024 and served on the Diocesan Leadership Initiative/Diocesan Vitality Initiative team. Over the last 14 years, he has served in various leadership roles in the nonprofit, government, workforce development, and education sectors. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Early American History from the University of Richmond and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Leadership from Duke University.

Michael Johnson

*St. James Episcopal Church (Bolivar)
University of the South ACTS Program*



Michael Johnson is a seminarian in the Diocese of West Tennessee, currently on the bivocational priest track. Recently retired from a 32-year career in federal law enforcement, Michael also served in the U.S. Navy. He now teaches U.S. History at Fayette-Ware Comprehensive High School in Somerville, Tennessee.

Michael and his family began attending St. James Episcopal Church about seven years ago, where he previously served as Senior Warden. He is married, with four children and one grandchild. Committed to his faith and ministry, he looks forward to continuing to serve the Lord in whatever capacity he can.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The 44th Convention of the Diocese of West Tennessee

**NOVEMBER 14-15, 2025
CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
(MEMPHIS)**



CALVARY
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

From Rocking Beats to the Canon's Seat:

A Conversation with the Reverend Rob Courtney

When the Rev. Rob Courtney became Canon to the Ordinary for the Episcopal Diocese of West Tennessee in July 2023, he brought with him extensive parish ministry experience and a deep commitment to the Episcopal Church. In this interview with Emily Austin, Director of Communications and Community Engagement, he reflects on his journey to ordained ministry, the discernment process that led him to West Tennessee, and the transition to diocesan leadership. He discusses the challenges and opportunities facing congregations, the importance of collaboration, and how his role supports clergy and parish life. Rob also shares insights into his personal spiritual practices and how they sustain him in this work.

Emily: Rob, can you summarize your journey to ordained ministry and how you ended up here in West Tennessee?

Rob: In some ways, I never realized this is where I would end up. My path was circuitous. I remember a moment in fourth grade at a Catholic school when the teacher asked if anyone had thought about becoming a priest or pastor. Without much thought, I raised my hand, surprising myself. Church was a central part of my life growing up Southern Baptist, and faith was important to me even as a kid.

But ministry wasn't something I pursued immediately. I majored in music in college, became a rock DJ, and thought radio would be my career. Over time, though, I felt a pull toward something with more purpose. When my wife and I married, I found The Episcopal Church—a meeting place between my Southern Baptist upbringing and her Roman Catholic background. A co-worker suggested we try his church, and I was struck by the beauty of the liturgy, the sense of community, and the openness to questions and doubts. I fell in love with Jesus all over again.

From there, I entered the discernment process, attended Sewanee for seminary, and returned to Louisiana. I served as rector at Trinity Episcopal Church in Morgan City and then St. Paul's Episcopal Church & School in New Orleans for about 12 years. In 2023, I was encouraged to enter the bishop search in Mississippi. Though I wasn't elected, Bishop Phoebe reached out, encouraging me to apply for this position. My wife and I discerned it as part of the same process, and here we are—moving to Memphis last June.

Emily: What drew you and Catt to West Tennessee?

Rob: We were already discerning the possibility of moving to Jackson, Mississippi, so geographically, West Tennessee wasn't too different. But an important factor was Bishop Phoebe herself. We both came from the same home parish, All Saints in River Ridge, Louisiana. We served on the vestry together, went through discernment at the same time, and were colleagues in the Diocese of Louisiana before she moved to Virginia. When she reached out, it felt like no time had passed, and the connection was immediate.

Practically, everything fell into place. Doors kept opening, and the energy—what I identify with the Holy Spirit—was clearly pointing us here. It was a natural extension of discerning a diocesan role, and I was excited about what it might look like to serve in a different capacity.

Emily: How has your transition to diocesan ministry been? What have been the key differences from parish ministry?

Rob: It's definitely a more administrative role. Instead of caring for one congregation, I'm connected to many across the diocese. I visit a different church almost every weekend, which has been a joy. I love meeting people, seeing different contexts, and sharing my own experiences.

I also enjoy working with clergy and those in the discernment process, which I didn't have as much opportunity to do in parish ministry. While I'm not involved in the same day-to-day pastoral care as before, I get to support congregations

and clergy. Being a sounding board, brainstorming, and dreaming with others is something I love.

Emily: You've mentioned thinking of a diocese as a "megachurch." Can you explain that analogy and how it informs your work?

Rob: When people hear "megachurch," they think of a large congregation with an arena-style worship space. But I mean it in terms of organization. Many megachurches have a central campus with satellite campuses, which operate like a diocese. In that sense, dioceses are the original megachurch.

The cathedral is the central campus, with the bishop as the chief pastor. Each parish functions as a "campus" with its own clergy. Seeing the diocese this way emphasizes that we are all part of one church. It helps break down silos and fosters collaboration, reminding us that we're all on the same team.

This idea aligns with our upcoming diocesan convention theme, which will focus on Paul's "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism." It's about embracing our shared identity as one body, made up of many parts.

Emily: With fresh eyes on West Tennessee, what excites you most about the diocese? What confirms this move was the right call?

Rob: The people, without a doubt. Everyone has been incredibly welcoming and supportive. There's a strong sense of community here, which excites me.

I'm also inspired by initiatives like the Do Good and Share grants. Seeing the creative ways congregations are living into their mission gives me hope for the future. Additionally, the diocesan staff and cathedral colleagues are a talented and passionate group. I hope congregations see them as valuable resources because they truly want to help and support our mission.

Emily: What message would you share with congregations that feel isolated or struggle with challenges?

Rob: First, know you're not alone. Many congregations share similar challenges, both within our diocese and across the wider church. Second, there are resources available to support you. Finally, recognize your own gifts. Sometimes we get so used to our own space and struggles that we miss the potential and strengths we already have. Raising your hand and asking for help is a step toward realizing that potential.

Emily: You've spoken about the advantages of being a small diocese. How does our size allow for greater flexibility and impact?

Rob: Our size allows us to be nimble and responsive. We have resources that larger dioceses might not, and we can offer more individualized attention to congregations. Being smaller means we can act quickly on

When people hear "megachurch," they think of a large congregation with an arena-style worship space. But I mean it in terms of organization. Many megachurches have a central campus with satellite campuses, which operate like a diocese. In that sense, dioceses are the original megachurch. The cathedral is the central campus, with the bishop as the chief pastor. Each parish functions as a "campus" with its own clergy. Seeing the diocese this way emphasizes that we are all part of one church. It helps break down silos and fosters collaboration, reminding us that we're all on the same team.

what God is calling us to do, without some of the bureaucratic hurdles larger systems face. It's a unique position, and I think it sets us up for exciting opportunities ahead.

Emily: What's feeding your spirituality right now? What are you reading or reflecting on?

Rob: A friend gifted me the Common Worship daily prayer book from England, which I've been using alongside body-based prayers, silence, and scripture reading. I'm also reading *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes* by Belden C. Lane. It explores prayer

traditions, the difficulties of life, and how biblical metaphors of wilderness resonate with our spiritual journeys. It's been a deeply meaningful book for me.

Emily: Is there anything else you'd like to share before we wrap up?

Rob: Just that I'm grateful to be here and excited about what we can accomplish together as a diocese. If anyone needs support, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're all in this together.



Daughters of the King Fall Assembly: A Day of Fellowship, Learning, and Renewal

By Fairy Waters

On October 26, 2024, more than 60 members of the Order of the Daughters of the King® (DOK) in the Diocese of West Tennessee gathered at St. George's Episcopal Church in Germantown for their fall assembly. The event, co-hosted by the St. George Chapter of St. George's and the St. Mary of Magdala Chapter of St. Andrew's, Collierville, was a day filled with worship, learning, and shared fellowship.

The Order of the Daughters of the King is an international community of women in The Episcopal Church, as well as other Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic traditions, who have taken vows of prayer, service, and evangelism. Members, known as Daughters, commit to strengthening their faith lives through intercessory prayer, spiritual formation, and active ministry within their parishes and communities.

The Rev. Dr. Dorothy White, Interim Rector at St. George's, joined chapter presidents Erika Ewen (St. George's) and Lisa Bailey (St. Andrew's) in welcoming attendees. The keynote speaker for the gathering was Nadine Craig, Diocesan President of Central Florida DOK and a newly-elected member of the Order's National Council.

A Call to Growth and Connection

In her presentation, Craig spoke about ways to grow the Order, using demographic data to highlight trends in membership. She also discussed how communication preferences vary across generations, underscoring the importance of adapting outreach methods to connect with potential new members.

The talk was well received, sparking meaningful discussions among attendees. Reflecting on the event, Lynda Deacon, President of the Joy Chapter at Calvary Episcopal Church (Memphis) remarked, "It was a beautiful fall day for gathering in the welcoming spaces. The guest speaker offered a well-thought-out, professionally delivered, and useful presentation."

For some, Craig's words were a catalyst for new ideas. Debbie Nelson, President of the St. Faith Chapter at Church of the Holy Communion (Memphis), shared, "We left the Fall Assembly motivated and ready to refresh our approach to DOK meetings—moving beyond business discussions to focus more on prayer, deepening our spirituality, and faith-based dialogue. We've even revised our chapter's description on our church website to emphasize inclusivity for women of all ages. Inspired by the speaker, we plan to explore forming a Junior Daughters of the King chapter at St. Mary's Episcopal School."

For newer members, the event was an opportunity to feel connected. A recently admitted Daughter from the St. Mary-St. Martha Chapter at St. Philip's (Bartlett) told Betty Albert, her chapter president, that she "was thrilled to make new friends and experience the diversity of our assembly. The connections she made were her favorite part of the day."

Workshops: Postulant Training & Kindness in Action

The assembly included two workshops designed to strengthen both the formation process and the spirit of service within the Order.

Postulant Training Workshop

Led by Ann Andrews of the St. Faith Chapter, this session explored different approaches to training postulants—the women preparing for admission into the Order. Participants from various chapters shared their methods, highlighting best

practices such as one-on-one mentorship, group study sessions, and structured sponsorship programs. Across the board, attendees agreed that in-person training remains the most effective approach.

Kindness Workshop

The second workshop, led by Beth Pharr, Lisa Carter, and Sarah Walne of St. Andrew's, focused on the power of kindness in daily life. Through moving stories and interactive discussions, participants reflected on how small acts of kindness can make a profound impact.

Attendees received a list of over 30 kindness opportunities, a "Kindness Log", and a seashell pocket reminder to carry forward the message of the workshop. Inspired by the discussion, some created bookmarks and cards with encouraging Bible verses to send to friends and loved ones.

Sarah Walne closed the session with a prayer, reminding all that "there is no better time than the present to be God's light in the world through kindness."

Worship & Recognition

Following a time of fellowship over lunch, the Rev. Paul McLain, DOK Diocesan Chaplain, led the assembly in worship. During the service, several leaders were recognized for their contributions to the Order, including Dana Sue Percer, former Diocesan President; Anne Boykin, former Province IV Membership Chair; and Rebecca Chappelle, former Diocesan Secretary. Each received a Certificate of Appreciation signed by Bishop Phoebe

ROW 1: From left to right: Dana Sue Percer, Joy Chapter member and past West Tennessee DOK Assembly president; Lynda Gayle Deacon, current Joy Chapter president; and Erika Ewen, St. George Chapter President and West Tennessee Assembly treasurer. **ROW 2:** From left to right: the Rev. Paul McLain, West Tennessee Assembly Chaplain; Nadine Craig; the Rev. Jeff Marx, Rector of St. Andrew's; and Fairy Waters, President of the West Tennessee Assembly. Their warm smiles reflect the spirit of fellowship and connection at the gathering. **ROW 3:** Erika Ewen and Beverly Holmgren warmly welcome attendees. Erika serves as St. George Chapter President and Diocesan Treasurer, while Beverly is St. Blandina Chapter President and a past Diocesan Treasurer. **ROW 4:** From left to right: Kit Decker, Pam Toppins, and Rhea Clift of the St. George Chapter share smiles and fellowship at the gathering. Their joyful presence embodies the spirit of community and connection. **ROW 5:** The Fall Assembly is a cherished opportunity for Daughters across West Tennessee to gather in faith, fellowship, and friendship. Over lunch, attendees shared stories, strengthened connections, and celebrated their shared commitment to prayer and service. PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRY WATERS.



Roaf and Rev. McLain, in recognition of their service. The day concluded with a contemplative meditation led by the Rev. Mimsy Jones, guiding the assembly in reflection on the question, "Lord, who would You have us be as members of our West Tennessee Assembly?"

Looking Ahead

The Fall Assembly left attendees motivated to carry forward the Order's mission of prayer, service, and evangelism. As the Daughters of the King in West Tennessee continue their work, they do so with renewed purpose—strengthening bonds of sisterhood, deepening their faith, and embracing the call to serve. The Fall 2025 Assembly will take place on October 18, 2025 at St. George's Episcopal Church in Germantown,



FAIRY WATERS is the President of the West Tennessee Assembly of the Order of the Daughters of the King. Her home congregation is St. Andrews Episcopal Church (Collierville). Contact: DioceseWestTN.DOK@gmail.com

West Tennessee DOK Chapters

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BEVERLY HOLMGREN, PRESIDENT
Calvary (Memphis) *Joy*
LYNDA GAYLE DEACON, PRESIDENT
Christ Church (Brownsville) *All Saints*
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Holy Trinity (Memphis) *Grace*
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JULIE WHITAKER, PRESIDENT
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St. George's (Germantown) *St. George*
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BETTY ALBERT, PRESIDENT



YOUTH

Over Presidents Day Weekend 2025, youth from West Tennessee gathered at St. Columba's Schiebler Lodge for Happening #74, a biannual retreat for teenagers.

Happening has been a part of the Diocese of West Tennessee's youth programming since the 1980s. It is a weekend of fun, fellowship, and games. The experience seeks to bring young people into a fuller level of apostleship and relationship with Jesus Christ.

I had the pleasure of serving as the lay "Rector" of Happening #74. At Happening, the staff is primarily youth, and we are advised by adult leadership. My role as Rector was to oversee all aspects of the weekend, working together with youth staff and adults.

I loved every second, because Happening is so much more than just a weekend to me. It is a cornerstone of my faith and my commitment to The Episcopal Church.

Happening is designed as a "mountaintop experience."

Maybe it is that we put away our phones, forcing us to truly connect with those who we might not have met otherwise. Maybe it is the small group time, where you will become surprisingly vulnerable with a group you met about twenty-four hours ago. Or maybe it is the weekend's surprises that remind us that God's love will always be there.

Participants (we call them Happeners!) climb the mountain together, learning more about what faith, piety, and a life spent with Christ are like in a teenager's life. Happeners engage in these ideas through talks by youth staff and in small group time, where we make new friends and see God in everyone.

For many teenagers, Happening is a chance to experience our faith in a new way. With a meticulously planned out schedule, talks that follow the same format year after year and the generational knowledge recorded in our staff binders, Happening would appear to hold the same appreciation of time-honored tradition that binds The Episcopal Church together. Yet Happening brings something new to the table. Here, we sing camp songs in

camaraderie, worshiping with loud and imperfect voices. The Saturday night Healing Service is deeply emotional, unlike the formality many of us are used to in church. And Happeners learn that God can be found not just on Sunday mornings, but through the open and loving community of teenagers around them. The blend of new and old at my first Happening (#71) was what inspired me to help other youth experience the same.

There is something so deeply moving about the weekend. Maybe it is that we put away our phones, forcing us to truly connect with those who we might not have met otherwise. Maybe it is the small group time, where you will become surprisingly vulnerable with a group you met about twenty-four hours ago. Or maybe it is the weekend's surprises that remind us that God's love will always be there.

As with every Happening, #74 came with an update: The Steering Committee made the decision to open

A Tradition of Transformation

Happen



sign-ups to 9th graders, where we saw many more Happeners. We are hopeful that the new policy will allow youth to get involved in Happening earlier, and that it will more closely align with the time that many teenagers are confirmed.

Overall, Happening #74 was an incredible success. Not even a tornado warning could stop the fun. I had such an amazing time working with the incredible youth we had on staff. I've served on staff for two Happenings before this, and I love seeing the energy, the excitement, and the new friendships formed every time. Though I will miss Happening as I graduate and move away, I am so blessed to have climbed the mountain and grown my faith and the faith of youth around me.

Happening #75 will take place in August/September 2025 at Calvary Episcopal Church. Please direct any questions to happeningwtn@gmail.com.

CORINNE COWAN (Happening #71) is a life-long Episcopalian and senior at St. George's Independent School in Germantown. She attends Church of the Holy Communion, and serves on the Chapel Team at St. George's.

BY CORINNE
COWAN

ing



A group of people, mostly young adults, are working in a garden area behind a wire fence. They are engaged in various tasks like digging and planting. The background shows a line of trees under a clear blue sky. The fence is made of wire mesh, and some green plants are growing through it.

Service In the Garden at St. Columba

BY CANDICE BAXTER

PEAS BE WITH YOU.

Yard-long purple beans hung like streamers from an arched trellis in the raised beds at St. Columba Camp and Retreat Center last season. They tasted like regular green beans, also grown in the one-acre fenced garden, but with a pop of color.

Nurtured and prepared with care, guests may never know how many hands came together in acts of service to bring those beans to their dinner plates.

Groundwork

Funded by the Minkler Howell Grant from Camp Kanuga in 2020, constructing the garden kept employees busy during the pandemic. Staff spread out and completed the effort in sections. Since the area stays consistently saturated, heavy equipment got stuck until a gravel service road was laid to reach the site.

Experienced hands got to work. They harvested cedar posts from the property, peeled off the bark for longevity and secured them in the ground. They ran small gauge wire fencing eight feet tall to surround an entire acre of flat ground in full sun. They installed a water line from the closest pavilion and constructed gates to keep out the critters.

Right when funds depleted, the world opened back up, and all hands returned to hospitality.

For three growing seasons, the garden lay dormant, but all the while God was at work. Honeysuckle vines grew to reinforce the wire fencing. Passion flowers entwined with berry brambles. A cluster of persimmon trees came up volunteer, creating an alcove of shade.

Preparation

Progress continued over a series of youth retreats: a day of adventure fun paired with a service project. In 2023, Mud Camp Jr. High counselors-in-training laid a mulch path down the center, from gate to gate, to provide tread for the tractor to deliver railroad ties.

Last spring, St. George's Independent School seventh graders worked together to build eight raised beds and an herb spiral. A hands-on lesson in sustainable gardening, they constructed the beds, lined the interior with cardboard for weed control, filled them with limbs and sticks, layered with fallen leaves, and topped with soil.

Just in time for the beginning of camp season, last year's counselors-in-training interplanted each bed with marigolds and basil for natural pest control. Over the summer, campers and retreat guests stopped in sporadically as the free seeds provided by the Memphis Public Library sprouted and flowered.

Fruition

Young hands got to learn. They plucked cherry tomatoes and sugar snap peas, tasting them on the spot. They crushed cilantro and parsley leaves between their fingers, smelling the difference. They dug for worms in the ground and added them to the garden beds.

As midsummer brought forth beans, squash, tomatoes and herbs of



St. Columba continued on page 20



BARTH
HOUSE

Open Hearts, Open Doors

Steps from the University of Memphis, Barth House Episcopal Center sits on Patterson Avenue, offering a place of respite and connection amid the energy of campus life.

Located a block from a dorm and directly across from the university's International Center, it's become a welcoming space for students - local or abroad - looking for a quiet study spot, engaging discussion, or just a place to belong. Barth House is open to all, a gathering place where friendships are formed, ideas are exchanged, and faith is explored in an atmosphere of hospitality and acceptance.

A Season of Change and a Gift of Support

In late 2023, Church Home made a generous \$750,000 multi-year grant to support Barth House, providing crucial funding for staffing, programming, and maintenance. That support became even more significant in the fall of 2024 when the Rev. Dr. Noah Campbell, longtime College Missioner, accepted a full-time call to serve as vicar at St. Mary's Cathedral.

Fortunately, Barth House was already in steady hands. Maggie Schaumleffel, who had been serving as Director of Ministries since late 2022, took on expanded programming responsibilities following Campbell's departure. To help facilitate day-to-day operations, Sherrie Lemons joined to provide administrative support, while Mark Henderson was brought on to oversee grounds and maintenance.

A portion of the Church Home grant has also been allocated to a maintenance fund, helping to preserve the beauty and safety of the property. Recently, overgrown tree

limbs were cleared just in time to prevent storm damage, making the lawn, benches, and even the parking lot more inviting. On any given evening, you might find students gathered around the firepit, deep in conversation, or engaged in a friendly game of cornhole. There's always something happening here—whether it's studying, meeting, or simply being together.

More at the Table

For those seeking spiritual nourishment, the Barth House continues to offer weekly Eucharist and noon prayer services on Wednesdays during the University of Memphis academic session. Since Noah Campbell's transition to St. Mary's Cathedral, clergy from across the Diocese of West Tennessee have stepped in to celebrate the Wednesday Eucharist, ensuring that this sacred time of worship continues without interruption.

This rotation of clergy from throughout the diocese has been a gift to the Barth House community, bringing a variety of perspectives and voices to the service. Whether a student is experiencing the Episcopal tradition for the first time or deepening their lifelong faith, these weekly gatherings provide an opportunity to connect with the breadth and diversity of the diocese.

Wednesdays at Barth House aren't complete without lunch. After prayer, students, faculty, and guests gather for a meal that feels more like a family dinner than a casual bite to eat. Conversations flow from theology to pop culture, from the day's challenges to life's big questions. International students, many of whom regularly visit Barth House, often bring their own perspectives and experiences to these conversations, enriching the community even further. It's intergenerational, it's sacred in its own way, and it's open to everyone.

Want to be part of this tradition?

Barth House continues on page 20



ROW 1: Student video game night was a blast. The state-of-the-art AV system of the Great Hall makes marathon sessions of Mario Kart extra exciting. **ROW 2:** Members of the Barth House Guild take a break to socialize at the Advent Arts Market. The Barth House Guild is comprised of people (mostly students) who act as stewards, hosts, and friends of the Barth House. **ROW 3:** Barth House would not be the same without incomparable volunteers such as Bobbie Wonderly-McLaughlin. Bobbie has been a member of the Barth family since before the doors re-opened. Whether it's shopping, Altar Guild, cleaning, setting up the building, inspiring students, welcoming friends, Bobbie has shown up to almost every Barth House service, meal, and event to pour her Fruits of the Spirit into being a servant of Christ and the Barth House mission.

St. Columba continued from page 17

all kinds, the new head chef curated menus to feature the St. Columba produce grown in season. By fall, Memphis University School ninth graders helped with harvest, laid fresh mulch and cleared overgrowth along the fenceline.

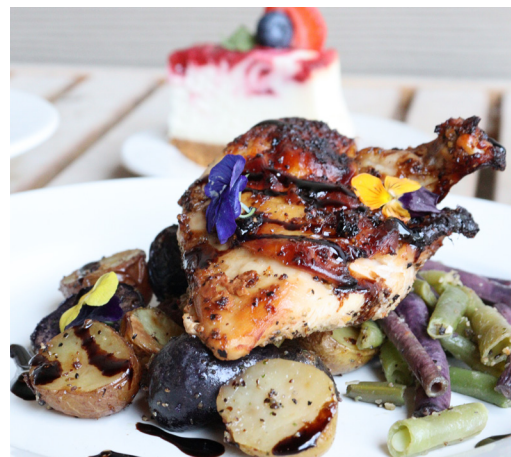
That first crop of beans, green and purple both, put out until the leaves of the surrounding forest started to turn. Several pods dried on the vine and were picked to save over winter. The tiny beans inside will nourish the next season of visitors, people who may never shake hands with those who built the fence or filled the beds or sowed the seeds in the garden. And that is the true meaning of service.

Tarry There

If you have a passion to serve in the garden or find peace with your hands in the warm earth, all help is welcome at St. Columba. Seed start, bed prep, plant, weed, water, harvest. There is always work to do. But feel free also to sit in God's presence.

saintcolumbamemphis.org/contact

CANDICE BAXTER is the Associate Director of Operations, Food Service at St. Columba Episcopal Camp and Retreat Center. She earned her BS in Business and MFA in Creative Nonfiction from the University of Memphis and has published more than 50 cover features in various Memphis-area publications, as well as author interviews in nationally distributed literary journals.



Barth House continued from page 19

Join us! Or, if you feel called to support this ministry, consider providing lunch one Wednesday:



Whether as an individual, a family, or a ministry group, your generosity will nourish not just bodies, but spirits.

**Barth House
Episcopal Center**
409 Patterson Ave.
Memphis, TN 38117
barthhouse@episwtn.org
901-501-6205

A Space that Adapts to Every Need

Barth House continues to serve as a multipurpose space that meets a variety of needs. On any given day, it functions as a quiet study area, a meeting place for campus and community groups, or a venue for events such as lectures, recitals, and game nights. It has hosted everything from worship services to academic discussions and social gatherings.

The center remains available for students, faculty, and organizations seeking a welcoming space.



From Dungeons to Dignity

by the Rev. Paul McLain
Associate Rector, Calvary Episcopal Church

One day, I got a call from Mark, the volunteer coordinator for the jail at 201 Poplar. He asked me to come by to offer communion to an elderly Episcopal prisoner. It was my first time going inside the jail, and it was one of the darkest and dreariest places I have ever been.

I learned that the prisoner I was there to see had been unexpectedly transported to a medical appointment that morning. But Mark said there may be some others who would like to meet me and receive communion. A few moments later, he brought out 15 men, most of them African-American and most of them young. Fortunately, I had put some extra wafers in the communion kit.

The young men sat down in a semi-circle around me, and I could tell they expected and longed for an entire worship service. I added a sermon and prayers to what I usually do for a communion visit. The men joined reverently in offering the Lord's Prayer.

At the end of the service, Mark told me that some of the men wondered if they could say private confessions with me. We set up a makeshift confession space in a dark corner on the side of the room. Nearly all the men came by to pour out their hearts in one of the most profound times of ministry I have ever experienced. Afterward, I spoke to one of the men who felt a deep sense of call to ordained ministry and mission work.

What I felt these men were seeking more than anything that day was the dignity of being free to worship and to be accepted as beloved children of God. They were looking to grasp a glimmer of light within the dark dungeon in which they live. They gave me the gift of light and hope along the way.

Each year, February 13 marks the Feast of Absalom Jones, the first African-American priest ordained in the Episcopal Church. He was a member of St. George's, Philadelphia, a church that included African-Americans and whites. The white members met in secret to plan to add a balcony designed to house the Blacks. But they told the African-Americans to raise funds in their community to support the balcony that would "expand the worship space for all."

When the balcony was completed, Absalom Jones and a fellow Black parishioner were on their knees in prayer downstairs at the beginning of the Sunday service. A white usher came by, tapped them on their shoulders, and told them they would have to go upstairs to the balcony with all the other African-American congregants. Jones asked if it would be alright if he finished the prayer. The usher said no and accosted him to move upstairs. Instead, Jones and the other Blacks walked out. They formed another Episcopal church, St. Thomas, in Philadelphia. We at Calvary were honored to host and meet the amazing folks from St. Thomas when their choir came to sing here a few years ago.

Absalom Jones and his companions were seeking the same thing the prisoners at 201 Poplar were hoping to find – a little taste of freedom and dignity from the physical, spiritual, and emotional dungeon they were placed in. Instead, for Jones, they were tricked into helping build an upstairs dungeon, another dreary place designed to keep them down.

The life and ministry of Absalom Jones summon us to the courage to lift the downtrodden out of darkness, offer light, and embrace them as beloved children of God, the God who wants all of us to be able to finish our prayers.

THE REVEREND PAUL McLAIN

is Associate Rector at Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, guiding and serving pastoral care ministries. Paul is a certified spiritual director and enjoys being a spiritual companion to Calvary parishioners and community members. He serves the Diocese of West Tennessee on Bishop and Council, the Church Home Board, and the Endowment Board.





Diocese Day with the Grizzlies

SUNDAY, APRIL 13 @ 2:30 P.M.
FEDEX FORUM, DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS

GATHER WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY FROM ACROSS
THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WEST TENNESSEE
FOR A SPECIAL DIOCESE DAY AT FEDEX FORUM TO WATCH
THE GRIZZLIES TAKE ON THE DALLAS MAVERICKS!

Special experiences, including:

Pre-Game Shootaround Access
Half-Time Fan Tunnel
Jumbotron Shoutout
Grizz Swag Giveaway



*Purchase tickets from our special
discounted group block:*

TINYURL.COM/DIOGRIZZ

“Gathered As One” Service **Sat., April 26 at 2 p.m.** **Barth House**

Join us for a special worship service as we celebrate the shared ties between The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Since 1999, our two denominations have been in full communion, recognizing one another's sacraments and ministries as we walk together in faith.

Along with Bishop Phoebe Roaf, we are honored to welcome Bishop Kevin Strickland of the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA for this joyful service.

Come and worship with our Lutheran siblings as we give thanks for our unity in Christ. All are welcome!

Barth House Episcopal Center:
409 Patterson Ave.; Memphis

