



ST. MARY'S
ON THE HIGHLANDS
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

December 14, 2025

Holy Eucharist

10:30 AM

Welcome to St. Mary's! We are glad that you have joined us for worship. If you are visiting today, please fill out a visitor's card and place it in the offering plate when it is passed to you.

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent. During the season of Advent the Church prepares with hope to greet the coming of Christ at his birth in Bethlehem; to meet him at his second coming; and to receive him as he comes into each believer's heart. The Advent season was once a time of preparation for Baptism at the Feast of the Epiphany. Its themes, therefore, are both penitential and joyful. In Advent at St. Mary's, we use seasonal prayers, hymns, and choral anthems that emphasize God's mercy and steadfast love for humankind.

Holy Eucharist begins on page 355 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Hymns are found in *The Hymnal 1982*, also located in the pew rack in front of you. "S" numbers are found in the front of the hymnal.

Children are welcome in worship! Nursery is available for children younger than 3K. Children in 3K-5K begin the service in Kids' Word, room 203. Children ages 1st-3rd grades begin in church and follow the crucifer to Children's Chapel after the Gospel reading. All children will return to their families at the peace.



The nave supports those with hearing impairments via an audio induction loop. Please set your hearing aid to "T" (Telecoil) setting.

O come, thou wisdom from on high who madest all in earth and sky, creating us from dust and clay: to reveal to us salvation's way. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

—O Wisdom, an antiphon (refrain) used during Advent in music and prayer

The moments before worship are a special opportunity for silence, for reflection, and to come before God in prayer. "Be still, then, and know that I am God" *Psalms 46:11*

Voluntary – Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, BWV 569

Johann Sebastian Bach

Hymn in Procession 640 – Watchman, tell us of the night

Aberystwyth

THE WORD OF GOD

Celebrant Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

People **His mercy endures for ever. Amen.**

The Collect for Purity

BCP 355

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

The Cain Family

Song of Praise 56 (*sung by all*)

Veni, veni, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

The Celebrant says to the people

The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us pray.

The Collect of the Day

BCP 212

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The First Lesson

Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall

break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 146:4-9 (*read responsively by whole verse*)

4 Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help! *
whose hope is in the LORD their God;

**5 Who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; *
who keeps his promise for ever;**

6 Who gives justice to those who are oppressed, *
and food to those who hunger.

**7 The LORD sets the prisoners free;
the LORD opens the eyes of the blind; *
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;**

8 The LORD loves the righteous;
the LORD cares for the stranger; *
he sustains the orphan and widow,
but frustrates the way of the wicked.

**9 The LORD shall reign for ever, *
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.
Hallelujah!**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

The Second Lesson

James 5:7-10

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See,

the Judge is standing at the doors! As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Reader The Word of the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God.**

Sequence Hymn 75 – ‘There’s a voice in the wilderness crying

Ascension

The Gospel

Matthew 11:2-11

Minister The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.
People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Minister The Gospel of the Lord.
People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Children ages 1st-3rd grades follow the crucifer to Children’s Chapel.

The Sermon

The Rev. H. Huey Gardner

The Nicene Creed (*Standing*)

BCP 358

The Prayers of the People (*Standing*)

BCP 388

The Peace (*Standing*)

BCP 360

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People **And also with you.**

All children return to participate in Holy Communion.

Parish Announcements

Mary and Joseph will be sent home with the Cain Family to continue their Advent journey.

THE HOLY COMMUNION

The Offertory

Ascribe to the Lord the honor due his Name; bring offerings and come into his courts.

In addition to the alms basin, St. Mary's offers several ways to give electronically. You may "Text to Give" by texting the keyword 'SMOTH' to 73256. Text giving saves your payment method so you can quickly give the next time. For more information on other methods of giving, please visit www.stmarysoth.org/give/waystogive/

Offertory Anthem – Advent Message

Martin How

Come Lord, Jesus, O come quickly. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert, a highway for our God.

At the Presentation (*sung by all*)

Old 100th

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Great Thanksgiving

BCP 361

Sanctus – S130

setting – Franz Schubert

The Breaking of the Bread

BCP 364

Agnus Dei – S164

setting – Franz Schubert

Any baptized person may receive Communion. Those who choose not to receive Communion may wish to receive a blessing, indicated by crossing one's arms over one's chest. Gluten free wafers are available by request.

Movement is from the center aisle to the altar or Communion station to receive the bread and wine.

Return to your pew by way of the side aisle. Ushers will be in the center aisles.

Music during Communion

Choir Motet – Never weather-beaten sail

setting – Charles Wood

Never weather-beaten sail more willing bent to shore, never tired pilgrims limbs affected slumber more, than my weary sprite now longs to fly out of my troubled breast: O come

quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soul to rest! Ever blooming are the joys of heavn's high
Paradise, cold age deafs not there our ears nor vapour dims our eyes: Glory the sun outshines;
whose beams the Blessed only see: O come quickly, glorious Lord, and raise my sprite to
Thee!
Thomas Campion

Hymn 72 – Hark! the glad sound!

Richmond

Postcommunion Prayer

BCP 365

Blessing

Hymn in Procession 444 – Blessed be the God of Israel

Thornbury

Dismissal

BCP 366

Minister Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Voluntary – Fantasy on ‘Winchester New’

Lloyd Webber

**The arrangements on the altar are given to the
glory of God and in loving memory of**

Lynn Fillmer Dresher
Robert Lee Glasford
Phillip Yarnell

John Richard Dresher
Aline Glasford
Shirley Yarnell

The arrangements in the narthex are given in thanksgiving for the marriage of
Cler Watkins and Jim Layton

ASSISTING IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY

Preacher

The Rev. H. Huey Gardner

Celebrant

The Rev. Richard Ahlquist

Deacons

The Rev. Kaki O'Flinn

The Rev. John I. Kennedy Jr., MD.

Musicians

The St. Mary's Choir

Dr. John T. Lowe, Jr., *Director of Music and Organist*

Assisting in Worship

Fred Blackmon, Jr.

Chalice Bearers

Stan Bradley

Hugh Rushing

Vivian Terry

Lay Readers

Melodie Elam

Phil Black

Prayers of the People

Stuart Johnson

Acolytes

Fred Blackmon, III

Webb Hawley

Bibb Wahl

Alex Wahl

Ushers

Alex Goldsmith

Brian Wahl

Clint Thompson

John Dorlon

Greeters

Kyle Anderson

Susanne Esdale

Altar Guild

Michele Hill

Andy Hardesty

Claire Hardesty

Carolyn Long

St. Mary's Flower Guild

Interesting comparison – Denominations in Haiti and America

| Church in Haiti - Largest denominations in 2025 | Church in America – Top three in 2025 |
|--|---|
| Protestantism 16-19% Including Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists | Protestantism 45% |
| Catholicism 66-80% | Catholicism 22% |
| Vodou – often practiced alongside Catholicism | Unaffiliated around 21% Including atheists, agnostics, and those with no religious ties. |

Churches in Haiti often serve as community support systems in impoverished areas, whereas American churches may focus more on individual spiritual growth and community outreach. The worship in Haiti is often vibrant and expressive, incorporating dance and music, while American worship styles can range from traditional hymns to contemporary praise music.

VISITING ST. MARY’S?

Welcome! Please pick up a visitor packet from the table in the narthex. We also encourage you to fill out a Visitor Card (found on the back of the pew in front of you) and drop it in the offering plate. You can also scan the QR code to the right to complete the visitor card online. And please introduce yourself to one of the clergy after the service. Thank you so much for worshipping with us.



St. Mary’s Building Access

Please keep the motor court beneath RMH open for drop-offs or for those needing access to the elevator. To reach the worship space without using stairs, enter Drennen House from the motor court or from 12th Avenue and take the elevator to level 3R.

Parking at St. Mary’s

Monday-Saturday: Parking is available in four places.

- The motor court.
- The lot below the garden (Take steps to the garden and doors to Parish Office.)
- The lot on 12th Avenue behind Ramsay High School (“St. Mary’s West Lot”)
- Street parking

Sunday:

- **The motor court is reserved for handicapped parking SUNDAYS ONLY.**
- The small lot at the AT&T building- This lot is available on SUNDAYS ONLY.
- Street Parking on both sides of 12th Avenue

Please note:

- *The lot across 12th Avenue behind Mellow Mushroom is a private lot to which we do not have access. Violators will be towed.*
- *Make sure you have a parking decal on your car to avoid being towed from a St. Mary’s lot. These are available in the Parish Office.*

Wheelchairs Available!

Wheelchairs are available at the Parish Office reception desk, the entrance to Drennen House, and the connector. Please feel free to use them if needed.

City Action Partnership (CAPS) Service Available

CAPS is in the 5 Points South neighborhood. They are available to assist with dead batteries, locked cars, and the unhoused. Please feel free to call them for assistance or to report a concern: 205-251-0111.

Stewardship for 2026

The Joyful Discipline of Giving

Thank you to everyone who has made a pledge for 2026! Whether you've pledged for years or are considering your first commitment, your support truly matters. Your generosity shows your heart—rooted in gratitude, shaped by faith, overflowing with joy. **Reminder: You may also pledge online at <https://www.stmarysoth.org/online-pledge-card>** or by scanning the QR code to the right



Pledge Online

~*Cheryl Brakefield, Stewardship Chair*

Campaign Update

As of 12/9/2025:

Pledge cards mailed: 605

Pledges received: 261

Total Amount Pledged: \$2,219,082

Online: 99

New: 24 (for \$77,800)

unchanged: 129 (for \$1,011,576)

increased: 91 (by \$182,915)

Pending: 54 (for \$353,660)

decreased: 17 (by \$26,880)

This pending number references pledges we received for 2025 but have not yet received for 2026.



Events Page

PARISH EVENTS

*Scan this code for quick, easy access to the **EVENTS PAGE** of our website to see all event info and registrations!*

Parish Fellowship Breakfasts

Sunday Mornings / 8:45 to 9:25 AM / Randolph Memorial Hall

On any Sunday with Christian Education, we also offer a hot breakfast. Join us in RMH for delicious food and even better company! Suggested donation: \$5 per person ages 6+ / \$20 family max.

Today is our LAST gathering for 2025. Fellowship Breakfast and Christian Ed will take a Christmas break from December 28 through January 18. We will resume on Sunday, January 25.

Advent Adult Christian Education
Sunday Mornings / 9:30 AM to 10:15 AM

- **TODAY:** Alan Seelinger, Executive Director - Light From Light
- **Christian Ed and Fellowship Breakfast** will take a Christmas break from December 28 through January 18. We will resume on Sunday, January 25.

Weekly Study Gatherings

- **Devoted Small Group for Women:** We resume on Tuesday, January 13.
- **Rector's Bible Studies:** We resume the week of January 26.

Advent Lessons and Carols

TODAY at 5:00 PM

This beautiful annual service features music of G. P. da Palestrina, Robert Walker, G. F. Handel, Herbert Howells, Stephen Caracciolo, Thomas Ravenscroft, Peter Latona, and Harold Friedell, and is presented by the St. Mary's Choir, soloists, and Dr. John T. Lowe, Jr. ***A reception in Randolph Memorial Hall follows!***

Christmas Music and Flowers

Deadline for Donations: Wednesday, December 17

Every year at St. Mary's, Christmas is remembered with special music and decorations funded by donations honoring loved ones or giving thanks for those who enrich our lives. To donate to a memorial or thanksgiving gift for Christmas worship, visit our website's Events page to complete the form and pay online. **Information received by Wednesday, December 17, will be printed in the Christmas Eve service.** Thank you!

Reverse Advent Calendar

An Advent calendar counts down to Christmas by opening boxes or doors to find ornaments or items related to the Advent journey. A reverse Advent calendar emphasizes giving over receiving, aligning with Christmas's core of God's gift of Himself as a baby. The concept involves choosing a sturdy box and filling it with daily donations during December. **Bring your filled box to St. Mary's anytime**

between December 24 and January 4 Collected items will be donated to our GED Program and the Blessing Box. To access the calendar with the suggested item for each day, please scan the QR code to the right



Christmas Angel Choir Rehearsals

Sundays, December 7, 14, 21 / 9:00 AM / Chapel



Children in 3K-3rd Grade are invited to sing at the 3:15 PM service on Christmas Eve. Rehearsals will be 9:00-9:25 AM in the Chapel on the following Sundays: December 7, 14, and 21. **Sign up by scanning the QR code to the left. ** PLEASE NOTE: On December 21, the Angel Choir will rehearse during the sermon at the 10:30 AM service.**

Hope Tree
Through Sunday, December 14 / Randolph Memorial Hall

We will assist the elderly, adults, and children from agencies and organizations throughout our community, including Glen Iris Elementary, Episcopal Place, and our GED Program. Please return gifts to RMH by Sunday, December 14.

Epiphany Pageant
Sunday, January 4 at 5:00 PM

On Sunday, January 4, we will share the story of Jesus' birth at the evening Epiphany service. Children 3K through 6th grade will come to church in costume and sit with their families. The printed order of service will indicate when each group is to come to the front of the church and sit by the manger. Costumes can be as simple or elaborate as you want. Homemade is great!

Costumes are available to borrow on the children's hall. Here are the age group assignments:

| | |
|------------|--|
| 3K: Angels | 1 st and 2 nd Grades: Donkeys and Cows |
| 4K: Sheep | 3 rd Grade: Shepherds |
| 5K: Stars | 4 th - 6 th Grades: Lead Roles |

Questions? Contact Katie Dewees: katie@stmarysoth.org or 205-881-0704.

ONGOING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Weekday Morning Prayer
Monday-Friday / 8:40 AM / Church

All are welcome to join us for this lay-led daily office. Enter Drennen House **via the motor court door** and take the elevator to Level 3R.

Loving Well Support Groups
Tuesdays, December 2 and 16 / 2:00 PM / Chapel

This group places a much-needed focus on the caregivers, known and unknown, within our parish. Although we are called to love one another as Christ loves us, at times it can be lonely, frustrating, and confusing. Often, support and relief come in the form of a shared community. The Loving Well group is an invitation to journey as companions along the same road, in prayer, experience, and compassion. Cler Watkins and Kaki O'Flinn facilitate the group which meets on the first and third Tuesdays of the month.

Clothing Collections

- Our community ministry partner, Highlands United Methodist Church, manages a clothing closet for our neighborhood friends in need. **We are collecting the items listed below to support this ministry:** *All donations can be left in the St. Mary's Outreach office.*
 - Gently used men's and women's clothing (such as t-shirts, tops, sweatshirts, jackets, belts, and pants)
 - Gently used men's and women's tennis shoes
 - New men's and women's underwear and socks

- **Winterwear Collection:** We are collecting **new or gently used coats, hats, and gloves** for Grace Episcopal Church to distribute to the Woodlawn community. Please bring donations to the Outreach office.

Opportunities to Serve

- **GED Food Volunteers:** St. Mary's GED program needs lunch and snack volunteers! This is a fun, easy, and flexible way to serve an amazing and growing ministry. For more information or to sign up to help, please contact Allison Manley at 205-266-1199 or Allison.manley@gmail.com.
- **Highlands United Methodist Church Breakfast Ministry** St. Mary's provides volunteers on **Thursdays, 8:30-10:00 AM**. Questions? Contact Monica Sargent (205-913-4689 or monica@stmarysoth.org). To volunteer, please visit www.stmarysoth.org/outreach.

Pastoral Care Ministries

- **Home Communion:** If you or someone you know is unable to worship in person and would like to receive a home communion visit, please get in touch with The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn at kaki@stmarysoth.org or 205-881-1532.
- **Hospital Visits:** If you would like to specifically request a visit from the clergy or Pastoral Care Team member, please contact Kaki O'Flinn.

2025 Year-end Giving Guidelines

Please remember that for contributions to be deductible for 2025, they must meet one of the criteria:

- By mail: postmarked on or before December 31, 2025.
- Hand delivery: received at the church office by noon, December 31, 2025.
- Or for additional details, please visit our website <https://www.stmarysoth.org/give>

Thank you for your continued generous support of the life of St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Rhea Pelekis at (205) 933-1140 or rhea@stmarysoth.org.

2025 ADVENT and CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 21 / Advent IV

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist

10:30 AM Holy Eucharist*

** Nursery provided*

No Parish Breakfast or Sunday School

No 5:00 PM service

Wednesday, December 24 / Christmas Eve

3:00 PM Family Christmas Carols * (*Doors open at 2:45 PM.*)

3:15 PM Family Service *

5:00 PM The Music of Christmas with the St. Mary's Choir and the Montevallo Brass *
(*Doors open at 4:45 PM.*)

Livestream begins at 5:00.

5:30 PM Holy Eucharist *
10:00 PM The Music of Christmas with the St. Mary's Choir and the Montevallo Brass
10:30 PM Holy Eucharist

** Nursery provided*

Thursday, December 25 / Christmas Day

11:00 AM Holy Communion from the Reserved Sacrament

Friday, December 26

Parish Office Closed

Sunday, December 28 / The First Sunday after Christmas

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist

10:30 AM Holy Eucharist *

** Nursery provided*

No Parish Breakfast or Sunday School

No 5:00 PM service

Thursday and Friday, January 1 and 2

Parish Office Closed

Sunday, January 4 / Celebration of The Epiphany

8:00 AM Holy Eucharist

10:30 AM Holy Eucharist *

No Parish Breakfast or Sunday School

5:00 PM Children's Epiphany Pageant and Holy Baptism (no Eucharist) *

PRAYERS FOR OUR PARISH

You may email prayer requests to cissy@stmarysoth.org or call (205) 933-1140.

In an effort to stay current, names will be kept on the list for a month after the date given. If you wish to continue beyond that, please contact us.

For those who await the birth or adoption of a child:

Charles and Olivia Lewis, Maggie and Henry Morris, Katherine and Jamie Justice, Ellie and
Bradford Kidd

Please pray for our parishioners and staff:

John, Ann, Margaret, Bill R., Linda V., John, Jean, Gavin, Carolyn, Pat, Lee, Bill T.

For our families, friends, and neighbors:

Donna, Sarah, Heydon, Amanda, John, JP, Holden, Linda G.M., Alyssa, Memily

For those who are grieving:

Family of Gerald Blount, Family of Wesley Davies, Family of Bruce MacClary, Family of Mike
Howe

For those who experience ongoing challenges:

Linda M., Sue, Patty, Sherry, Judy, Patrick, Todd, Norma, Carley, Andy, Betty, Bart, Natalie,
Marilyn

And for those serving in the Armed Forces:

Alex, Brian, Steven, Daniel, Marjory, Jack, Jesse, Richard, Jonah, Robert, John, Isabelle, Frank

ST. MARY'S ON THE HIGHLANDS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1910 12th Avenue South, Birmingham, Alabama 35205

205-933-1140 / www.stmarysoth.org

CLERGY

The Reverend H. Huey Gardner, Rector

The Reverend Richard Ahlquist, Associate Rector

The Reverend Kaki O'Flinn, Deacon/Pastoral Care

The Rev. John I. Kennedy Jr., MD., Deacon/Episcopal DIOALA Chaplain to UAB Medical Center

The Reverend Grady Richardson, Associate Clergy

The Reverend Gates Shaw, Associate Clergy

LAY STAFF

Emily Ball – *Asst. Children's Minister*

John Bryant – *Facilities Assistant*

Katie Dewees – *Children's Minister*

Melodie Elam – *Director of Communications and
Hospitality Ministries*

Jessica Hall – *Youth and Young Adult Minister*

Cissy Hartz – *Ministries Coordinator*

Dr. John T. Lowe, Jr. – *Director of Music and
Organist*

Anne Morgan – *Asst. Children's Minister*

Evan Pezant – *Asst. Youth Minister*

Rhea Pelekis – *Director of Finance*

Monica Sargent – *Outreach Ministries*

Blair Trotter – *Technical Support*

Matt Watson – *Facilities Manager*

Cindy Wiley – *Parish Engagement/Spirituality
Ministries*

VESTRY

Clint Thompson – *Sr. Warden*

Cheryl Brakefield – *Jr. Warden*

Kathy Clayton

Meg Krawczyk

Clay McCollum

Dean Nix

Lora Blalock

David Cain

Gordon Martin

Clayton Trotter

Camille Epps

Emily Holmes – *Clerk*

Jeanie MacKenzie

George Newton

Larry Sedar

Michael Schilleci – *Treasurer*

Bentley Sloan – *Asst. Treasurer*

Meade Whitaker – *Legal Counsel*



ST. MARY'S
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