

THE Messenger

OCTOBER 2025

ST. MARY'S-ON-THE-HIGHLANDS EPISCOPAL CHURCH



What's in Your Wallet?

I believe most of us have heard this phrase and thought of a particular credit card and its purchasing power. It is a good ad, and it makes me do exactly what it's meant to do – think about which credit cards I use to support my lifestyle as the world changes.

The church's culture also experiences changes. There are new people, new programs, and different preachers. Hopefully, these aspects of the church challenge and encourage all of us to think about what truly matters amid the rapid changes of the world. The church and its desire to please God act as an anchor and a strong tower that we can cling to in a world full of change.

There are many reasons I believe this is true. One is my personal experience. Another is a simple passage embedded in the text of Isaiah and alluded to in I Peter. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." This concept is echoed in I Peter, which states, "The word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word that was preached to you." This world, with all its issues—both good and bad—will eventually pass away. God's promises are the only "things" we can rely on, and I believe those promises are salvation, atonement, and eternal life. I like how Thomas Merton described it: "you will not leave us alone to face our perils."

Beyond this reality, I believe there are four aspects of the Christian life that support one's growth in recognizing the eternal nature and desires of God. These four fundamental components of the Christian faith are all vital. There are times in everyone's life when one or two may play a more prominent role, but all four are necessary for a balanced Christian witness:

Worship: Showing up and participating in regular weekly worship. Allow the prayers, hymns, readings, and sharing in the Eucharist to be more than just a Sunday morning event. How we start the week is important! Begin the week with the act of corporate worship; let what happens in worship shape the entire week. Besides Sunday services, St. Mary's offers the daily office of Morning Prayer. It is read Monday through Friday at 8:40 AM in the chancel.

Prayer and Study: These two foundational practices begin to unlock Holy Scripture and shape one's daily life. Study can open the text of Holy Scripture, and prayer can deepen our faith as we grow in the act of listening to and talking with God. St. Mary's offers many tools for study. There are large and small Bible studies. Irene is currently involved in the Devoted class (Tuesday mornings) and enjoying a book by Tim Keller. The Rev. Deacon John Kennedy facilitates a group on Tuesday, made up of people participating in Centering Prayer. Prayer can be a wonderful opportunity to simply sit still and listen for God.

Giving: The ministries of every church rely on the financial gifts from its members. The people of St. Mary's are traditionally generous and take this aspect of the



The Rev. H. Huey Gardner

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VISION OF ST. MARY'S-ON-THE-HIGHLANDS

St. Mary's will offer a wide range of worship, education and outreach experiences that draw people closer to Christ.

MISSION OF ST. MARY'S-ON-THE-HIGHLANDS

St. Mary's mission is to serve God by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the Parish and into the world by worshiping in the Anglican tradition, by faithfully administering the sacraments, and by ministering to the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of our Parish family and our community.

Adult Christian Education

Adult Sunday School / 9:30 AM- 10:30 AM

Hidden Treasures

Continuous through November 16

Led by Dave Drescher, Micki Haralson,
David Cain, and Cheryl Brakefield in the Living Room

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.” – Matthew 13:44

Jesus’ parables are treasures in their own right. He uses these unique stories to teach us some of the most important lessons in scripture. Many of us have a favorite parable. We might also have a parable that we’ve never fully grasped. These short and simple stories contain limitless wisdom that grows with each encounter. If you thought you understood “the meaning” of a parable, you’ll have a chance to share your insights. But come prepared to hear these stories with fresh ears, and uncover what hides below the surface.

“Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden since the foundation.’” Matthew 13: 34-35

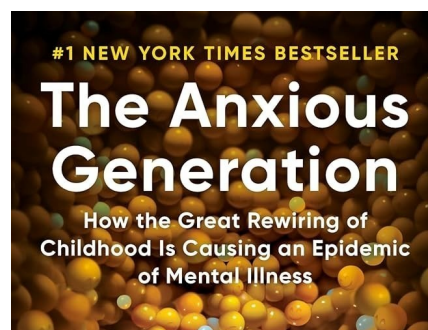


The Anxious Generation

October 5, 12, and 19

Led by Richard Ahlquist and Cindy Wiley in Randolph Memorial Hall

There is a lot of discussion about screen time, social media, smartphones, and their impact on our lives and mental health - especially concerning our children’s lives and well-being. Alabama recently adopted a “phone-free schools” policy in response to recent research. Cindy Wiley and Richard Ahlquist will lead a discussion on *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. While not an explicitly religious book, the chapter “Spiritual Elevation and Degradation” is particularly noteworthy. We will explore how the Church can help address these issues and support us and our children in navigating them.



Called: A Short Course On Finding God’s Purpose For Your Life
October 26

Led by the Rev. Cameron Nations in Randolph Memorial Hall

Everyone longs to live a life of consequence—a life brimming with meaning and purpose. Yet often we get caught up in the day-to-day and don’t take the time to listen, discern, and respond to the things that will make a difference. Join us as we explore how to identify God’s specific call on your life and how it relates to universal call of every Christian.

Weekly Study Gatherings

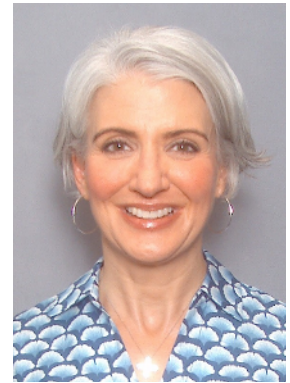
- **Devoted Small Group for Women: Tuesdays, 9:15-10:30 AM / Room 307** We are currently reading and discussing Tim Keller's *The Prodigal God*. Please contact Kaki O’Flinn at kaki@stmarysoth.org for more details.
- **“The Chosen” Viewing and Discussion: Thursdays, 10:15 AM-Noon / Living Room** Watch the latest season of “The Chosen” followed by a discussion facilitated by Kaki O’Flinn.
- **Rector’s Bible Studies:** This fall, we are exploring several writings of Paul.
 - **The Men’s Study:** Tuesdays at 7:10 AM in Room 309.
 - **The Women’s Study:** Wednesdays at 10:10 AM in Randolph Memorial Hall.
 - Both are offered via Microsoft Teams. Email Melodie Elam to be added to the distribution list for study notes and Teams link (melodie@stmarysoth.org).

The Joyful Discipline of Giving: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

Cheryl Brakefield, Stewardship Chair for 2026

In September, we introduced our 2026 Stewardship Campaign theme—The Joyful Discipline of Giving—and took time to reflect on the spiritual discipline of stewardship as a sacred opportunity to invest in something lasting and abundant: God's love and work in the world.

Here at St. Mary's, our vision is to "offer a wide range of worship, education, and outreach experiences that draw people closer to Christ." This vision comes alive each and every day through the generous offerings of time, talent, and treasure by our remarkable clergy, amazing staff, and each of you—our devoted parishioners. Together, we are investing our earthly gifts in treasures that endure, storing up riches in heaven by the way we serve one another and our wider community.



As we journey through this stewardship season, I warmly invite you and your loved ones to join us at any of our services on the following Sundays:

- **October 5:** We will offer a special **Blessing of the Pledge Cards** during each worship service, setting apart our intentions with prayer before they are even written. Pledge cards will be mailed to your homes on Monday, October 6th.
- **October 19: Stewardship Sunday.** We invite you to bring your completed pledge cards on this day and join us in a joyful celebration of God's abundant grace.

Whether you have been pledging faithfully for decades or are discerning your commitment for the very first time, please know that your offering matters deeply. Your generosity is a reflection of where you hope your heart will be—rooted in gratitude, shaped by faith, and overflowing with joy. May this season inspire each of us to give joyfully and with open hearts, trusting that God will use our gifts to do more than we can ask or imagine.

Parish Engagement

Ladies: Mark Your Calendars!

St. Mary's Women's Retreat is right around the corner! **Join us January 9–11, 2026, at beautiful Camp McDowell** for a weekend filled with hiking, fellowship, rest, and plenty of fun. This retreat is open to women of all ages in our parish, and there will truly be something for everyone—whether you're seeking spiritual renewal, meaningful connection, or simply time to recharge.

Registration opens November 1, so keep an eye out for the announcement and sign-up link. Don't miss this special weekend to nurture your soul and connect with an amazing community of women!



Want to Volunteer?



We are a lively parish always seeking volunteers. Each month, we will showcase opportunities to volunteer at St. Mary's. It's a wonderful way to become more involved, meet new people, and connect with our parish community.

October Opportunities

- **Pet Blessing: Sunday, October 5 at 4:00 PM**
Contact Cindy Wiley at cindy@stmarysoth.org
- **Bluegrass BBQ Choir Fundraiser: Sunday, October 12 at 5:30 PM**
Contact John Lowe at john@stmarysoth.org
- **All Saints' Reception: Sunday, October 26 at 6:00 PM**
Contact John Lowe at john@stmarysoth.org

Outreach Ministries



Winter Ware Collection

This month, we will collect **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.

GED Lunch 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.**

The Mercado-2026

Calling All Crafters, Knitters, Seamstresses, Cooks, Bakers, and Other Creatives!

On February 1, 2026, St. Mary's will host the Mercado (market) and silent auction to benefit Amistad Mission in Bolivia. **We are seeking contributions from all of our creative parishioners to sell at the market or include in the auction.**



If you would like to be involved in the planning or have items to contribute, please contact any of these individuals:

- Monica Sargent (monica@stmarysoth.org)
- Cindy Wiley (cindy@stmarysoth.org)
- Jessica Hall (jessica@stmarysoth.org)
- Ann Jones (annwjones@icloud.com)

Clothing Collection for Highlands UMC

Highlands United Methodist Church manages a clothing closet for our neighborhood friends in need. We are collecting the following items to support this ministry: **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, and new men's and women's underwear and socks.** All donations can be left in the St. Mary's Outreach office.

Questions? Contact Monica Sargent (monica@stmarysoth.org or 205-913-4689).

Pastoral Opportunities

Who Knew???

Your Last Word, Part 2

Thursday, October 16

12:30-2:00 PM ~ Living Room

Who are the people, and what are the experiences that shaped your personal journey of faith? How would you share those names, places, and events if you were writing your legacy for the next

generation? **Longtime educator Mary Evelyn Hollaway** will join us on Thursday, October 16, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. in the Living Room as we explore together.



Future gatherings for Who Knew? are set for the following Thursdays:

November 20: Making Cards for Others with Lee Stayer
December 11: Carol Singing with John Lowe

Contact Emily Rushing

(emilyjonesrushing@hotmail.com) or Kaki O'Flinn (kaki@stmarysoth.org) to learn more about our monthly gatherings or to suggest a topic.

The "Loving Well" Group

Tuesdays: October 7 and 21

2:00-3:00 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 shared community. The Loving Well group is an invitation to journey, as companions along the same road, in prayer, experience, and compassion.

The group is facilitated by Cler Watkins and Kaki O'Flinn. Contact Cler (clerweaver@gmail.com) or Kaki (kaki@stmarysoth.org) if interested.

Music Ministry News



CELTIC EVENSONG & HOLY COMMUNION

*A service of readings, reflection, and Celtic music
featuring local Birmingham musicians*

Sunday, October 12 / 5:00 PM

Be sure to attend this service - unique to Birmingham - of readings, reflection, and Holy Communion, with Celtic music provided by local area musicians. Come and bring a friend!



BBQ & Bluegrass

**Sunday, October 12 at 5:30 PM
Motorcourt**

An evening of BBQ, beverages, and Bluegrass entertainment, raising scholarship funds for the 2026 Choir Tour to Wells Cathedral, England!

Seating is limited...please RSVP by scanning the QR code to the right.

Suggested Dinner Donation \$20/person or \$45/family max.



Don't forget to give to our Tour Scholarship Fund as well, if you are able!



A Concert of Remembrance for All Saints' Day

Sunday, October 26 at 5:00 PM

featuring Bradley Ellingboe's "Requiem"
The St. Mary's Choir, soloists,
and chamber orchestra

Reception in Randolph Memorial Hall immediately following.

Continued from cover

Christian life seriously. Holy Scripture and traditions guide this fundamental practice. I have learned that it is a joy to give and to share what we have received. Discovering that God invites us to participate in building up the Christian witness is exciting. St. Mary's offers ways to give that are local, national, and international. Sometimes giving relates to specific situations, such as the tragedy in west Texas. We also share our buildings and resources with many. All of this stems from the belief that we are blessed, and through sharing, we gain a deeper understanding of the gifts we have received.

Service: Hands-on service includes providing lunch for the GED program, driving youth to events, serving on the Altar or Flower Guild, and creating gifts through the Creative Arts Ministry—all ways to serve. Serving helps make worship, prayer, study, and giving more meaningful. St. Mary's is like a train station: many trains offering service begin here. Boarding one of those trains depends on the individual and how much growth and challenge they are ready for.

When you wonder how to build your Christian life, consider what you are doing and how you are exposing yourself to all that the Christian life offers. Philips Brooks, a famous preacher of the American church, said in a series of talks at Yale, "in a world with many things to offer, the Christian has the very best to choose from, they get to tell the world through their lives about the enduring word of God, that will stand forever."

What are you building your Christian witness upon? I hope that it is built on the enduring word of God!

Children's Ministries

Blessing of the stuffed animals

Saturday, October 4
10:30-noon
Overton Park
HOMewood

Questions?
Contact
Katie@stmarysoth.org



4TH-6TH GRADE GIRLS

CREATIVE ARTS MINISTRY

Sunday, October 19
3:30-5:00 pm



Headband Making

We'll make headbands with
cute fabric to style with any
outfit!

\$10 for supplies

Register on the St. Mary's Website

Baptism Banner Workshop & Lunch

Thursday, October 23
Noon
Randolph Memorial Hall



Join us for lunch and banner making. We'll be cutting out letters and shapes for baptism banners and enjoying fellowship! All materials will be provided.

RSVP to Katie Dewees at
katie@stmarysoth.org or
205-881-0704.

SAVE THE DATES
FOR SUMMER 2026!

Vacation Bible School: June 8-10
Created for a Purpose: July 20-24

You are invited

Club 456

Service Project

Monday, October 13

11:00 am-1:30 pm

Kitchen @ St. Mary's

Join us as we prepare a festive Halloween-themed
lunch for the GED program to enjoy on Tuesday!

RSVP to
Katie@stmarysoth.org

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

Youth Ministries

**EYC Outreach
Horizons School Fall Carnival
Sunday, October 26
12:30-2:30 PM ~ Motorcourt**

**Sunday School for Youth
9:30 AM
Ground Floor of Drennen House**

- Jr. High (grades 7-9): The Bible's Big Story
- Sr. High (grades 10-12): Rooted: A Biblical Worldview

Women of the Church

October
Women of the Church Lunch

**Monday, October 6 / 11:30 AM
Portraits of Hope Gallery
2801 6th Avenue South**

An inspirational luncheon inside the Portraits of Hope gallery, showcasing renowned artists who painted Lovelady Center Graduates.

Behind each portrait is a beautiful story of redemption and victory over the chains of addiction. **Mary German will share her journey, which is featured in the book, *Portraits of Hope*.** And gifts handcrafted by Lovelady Center graduates will be offered for purchase.

RSVP to Pam Stone by Thursday, October 2: 205-612-3773 or pamelalstone@aol.com. Childcare is available if you make a reservation by Friday, October 3, with Kate Dewees: katie@stmarysoh.org. \$15 per person for boxed lunch.



Pet Blessing Service

**Sunday, October 5 at 4:00 pm
in the Garden**

Pets of all kinds are welcome and must be on a leash or in a carrier.



Preaching Schedule

October 5: The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn
October 12: The Rev. Richard Ahlquist
October 19: The Rev. H. Huey Gardner
October 26: The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn
(8 and 10:30 AM. All Saints' Concert is at 5PM.)

St. Mary's On-Call Clergy Number:

205-881-3278

This number is only active on the weekends. Weekday Pastoral Emergency Calls should be directed to 205-933-1140.

Transitions

Baptisms

Chapman MacClary Hollingsworth
Son of Will and Jackie Hollingsworth
Grandson of Bruce and Jackie MacClary
September 14, 2025

Rest In Peace

Sara Moody
August 26, 2025

Eleanor Hassinger
September 15, 2025

C. Lynn Strickland
Brother-in-law
of Lisa Venable

Linda Mahan
Mother of Miki Heaton
September 18, 2025



ST. MARY'S

ON THE HIGHLANDS
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(205) 933-1140 x110



The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn
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(205) 933-1140 x397



Dr. John T. Lowe, Jr.
Director of Music and Organist
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(205) 933-1140 x103



The Messenger is a monthly newsletter of St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands to inform readers about what is happening in and around our parish community.

Visit us on-line at stmarysoth.org