

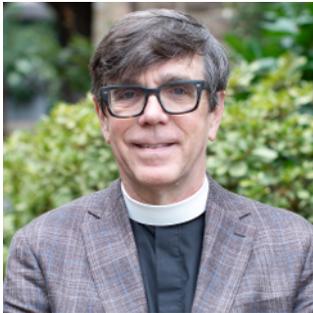
THE Messenger

MARCH 2026

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



Do You Volunteer or Do You Serve?



The Rev. H. Huey Gardner

The Christian tradition is described as built on the ministry of Christ. Every Christian generation takes this “foundation” and adapts it to particular cultural needs. I believe this is part of the human struggle. Every Christian wants to be able to say that they somehow understand the desires of God more fully than another.

Looking back at the history of

the Christian tradition can help us understand this complex reality: the church of the Middle Ages endorsed indulgences, another generation understood slavery as a way to create Christians, and the Crusades ushered in an age of conquering the unchurched. Within these generational actions and conduct was the attitude that the church exists to build schools, hospitals, and care for the orphan and the widow. The church has reflected both God’s glory and the condition of human sinfulness throughout history.

Irene and I are both lifelong churchgoers. It was what our grandparents, our great-grandparents, and our own families did. We were there on Sunday, and we attended church when we traveled as well. Our parents made sure we volunteered in the life of the church, and we grew up in worship and serving in soup kitchens. Our parents guided us in offering leadership as well as a portion of our financial resources.

Recently, this whole approach that was handed down to us was cast in a new light. I attended a presentation and heard the presenter describing the value of worship, study, prayer, and giving. Then this particular word was added to the list of basic Christian characteristics- “SERVING.” The presenter then said, “We should never fool ourselves; the witness of the church is built upon the lives of the

servant and not that of the volunteer.” This line of thought continued,

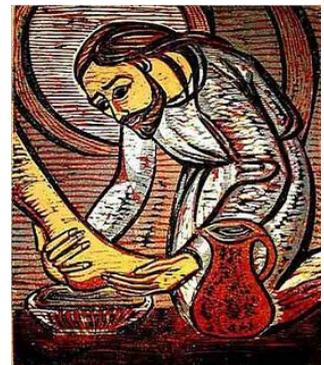
“Volunteers are seasonal, and servants serve regardless of the season.”

This statement shattered my understanding and was also freeing at the same time. Those memories I had understood as “volunteering” were really experiences my

family offered to help me understand the role of the servant. It was exactly what I said in a recent sermon. I can tell someone my title. “I am the Rector of St. Mary’s on the Highlands.” I can hear others describe their roles: member of a firm, physician, parent, architect, professional volunteer, nurse, retired.... The list is long. The real job of all Christians is “servant to the living God.”

The witness of the church is not built on the availability of volunteers’ schedules. The church’s witness is built on reflecting God’s willingness to be a servant to us. Being a servant is at the heart of the matter. God came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45). The church will exist as long as a few folks are willing to serve the living God.

I hope this season of Lent will be a time of self-examination, prayer, worship, study, and a chance to consider the role God has already demonstrated, that of a servant. God has led the way to understanding the role of those who follow Christ. God stands ready to serve us with the gift of salvation through his son, Jesus Christ. The reality that Christ came to serve casts the church’s witness as a servant, certainly not a volunteer.



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

St. Mary's 2026 Lenten Lecture Series



February 22
The Rev. Dr. Rob MacSwain



March 1
The Rev. Dr. Reed Carlson



March 8
Scott McWaters



March 15
The Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan

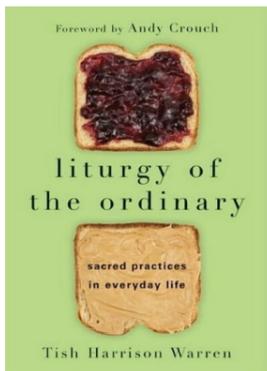


March 22
The Rev. Russ Levenson, PhD

Sundays through March 22
9:30 AM in Randolph Memorial Hall

We are pleased to present an outstanding lineup of speakers for this year's Lenten Lecture Series. Each will offer a unique perspective on theology and the shared journey of faith. During this reflective season, we invite you to join us for thoughtful conversation and spiritual growth. This series is also a wonderful opportunity to invite a friend to experience the welcoming community of St. Mary's!

- **February 22: The Rev. Dr. Rob MacSwain** Saints as Divine Evidence: The Hagiological Argument for the Existence of God. *Rev. MacSwain will also be our guest preacher at the 10:30 AM service.*
- **March 1: The Rev. Dr. Reed Carlson** Does God Pick Favorites? The Challenge of Election in Scripture
- **March 8: Scott McWaters** Genesis and the Art of Inversion
- **March 15: The Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan** Shaping Our Faith with Storytelling and Imagination. *Bishop Sloan will also be our guest preacher at the 10:30 AM service.*
- **March 22: The Rev. Russ Levenson, PhD** The Best Tool in the Disciple's Toolbox



Book and Bible Study for Women
Tuesdays / 1:00-2:00 PM / Level 3 Atrium

Are you looking for a group to
join for weekly Bible Study?

Join us in the Level 3 atrium (Room 105, on the same level as the offices) on Tuesday afternoons.

This is a discussion-based gathering. Currently, we are studying *Liturgy of the Ordinary* by Tish Harrison Warren. Questions? Contact Katie Dewees: katie@stmarysoth.org.

Holy Week 2026

Palm Sunday: March 29
8:00 AM, 10:30 AM*, and 5:00 PM*
Liturgy of the Palms/Holy Eucharist

Monday-Wednesday: March 30-April 1
12:05 PM Holy Eucharist in the chapel

Maundy Thursday: April 2
5:30 PM Foot Washing/Holy Eucharist *

Good Friday: April 3
12:05 PM Good Friday Liturgy & Communion
from Reserved Sacrament*
Immediately following: Stations of the Cross
5:00 PM Good Friday Service for Youth

Holy Saturday: April 4
4:00 PM Holy Baptism
6:30 PM The Great Vigil of Easter*

EASTER SUNDAY: April 5
7:00 AM Holy Eucharist
8:15 AM Nursery opens
8:40AM The Music of Easter
9:00 AM Holy Eucharist- Family Service
10:40AM The Music of Easter
11:00 AM Holy Eucharist

* Nursery provided.
Complete schedule at stmarysoth.org/holy-week



Music Events

JAZZ VESPIERS

Sunday, March 8
5:00 PM

CONCERT & CHORAL EVENSONG
SUNDAY, MARCH 22

Trevor Kahlbaugh, organist
in concert
4:30 PM

followed by

Choral Evensong
with the
St. Mary's Choir
*Music of Philip Stopford, Greg Evans, Joseph Barnby,
Harold Friedell, and Gilbert Martin*
5:00 PM



A reception in Randolph Memorial Hall follows
the service. Please join us!



Who Knew???

Third Thursdays
12:30 PM ~ Living Room

Your Own Easter
Basket!

Tuesday, March 19
12:30-2:00 PM
Living Room



Join us as we enjoy the beauty of flowers and celebrate the approach of Easter. Dianne Matheson and other parishioners will provide flowers, baskets, and sparks of creativity and encouragement. The result will be a bouquet or basket to brighten your home!

Please RVSP to dianne.h.matheson@gmail.com
so we can make sure we have enough supplies.

Children's Ministries



Created for a Purpose: July 20-24

Created For A Purpose is a creative arts camp for girls rooted in Scripture and the Gospel. Campers (rising 3rd-8th grade girls) are led by high school, college, and adult women from the parish. Each day

includes hands-on activities and biblical teaching, emphasizing that God has gifted everyone with talents to be used for His glory. The ministry offers a space where girls can be themselves - creating, singing, laughing, and learning about Jesus in ways that shape their lives.

Interested in Serving? We are seeking volunteers for these positions:

Counselors: Rising 9th-12th grade girls and college women. Rising 10th graders and older will receive a \$200 stipend.

Adult Volunteers: All women of the parish are invited to sign up!

Visit the Events page of our website for application links.

Easter Angel Choir for Children 3k-3rd Grade

Rehearsals will be on
four Sundays during
Lent:

March 1, 8, 15, 29

9:00-9:25 AM
in the Chapel



* On Palm Sunday, March 29, rehearsal will be during the 10:30 service.

The children will sing at the 9:00 AM Easter service. Sign up at www.stmarysoth.org/events.

Baptism Banner Making Session

Sunday, March 1

11:45 AM-1:00 PM

Randolph Memorial Hall

Lunch Provided!

Join us for lunch and banner making. We will cut out letters and shapes for baptism banners and enjoy fellowship! All materials and lunch will be provided. RSVP to Katie Dewees katie@stmarysoth.org or 205-881-0704.

CALLING 4TH-6TH GRADE GIRLS

junior CREATIVE ARTS MINISTRY

Sunday, March 29

3:00-4:30 pm

Room 208

(Multi-purpose Room)



Come learn how to make decorative barrettes!

Register at www.stmarysoth.org

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

JUNE 8-10 / 9:00-12:30

We know you've got great ideas to share, so reach out to Katie Dewees at katie@stmarysoth.org or our VBS chairs Emily Rich at emrlewis@gmail.com or Laura Beale at Laurabeale@hotmail.com to join the steering committee!

Registration opens on Monday, March 2.
Scan the QR code!



Club 456 Easter Basket Project for St. Andy's Pantry

No child should be without an Easter Basket on Easter morning. With food shortages and rising prices, this will be a reality for many families who rely on Andy's Pantry for food every 2 weeks. **Once again this year, we ask for help donating or creating Easter Baskets for these children in need.**

Contributing to this cause is super easy! **An Amazon Wishlist has been created to order the items for these baskets (see below),** which will go to children ages 2-12 in need.

We are once again partnering with St. Luke's! Together, our goal is to create 100 baskets for God's children in need! Please share the list with anyone who wants to help! Grandparents, aunts, and uncles - we can do it! Amazon makes it easy to order and ship directly to:

The Easter Basket Project
St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands Episcopal Church
1910 12th Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35205

- **Monday, March 9:** Last day to order from Amazon Wishlist
- **Sunday, March 15, at 12:30 PM:** Basket assembly line at St. Mary's in Randolph Memorial Hall
- **Saturday, March 21 at 8:00 AM:** Volunteers needed at Andy's pantry for food and basket distribution.

Thanks for any help you can provide! Questions: contact Elizabeth Moss at helloelizabethmoss@gmail.com or Katie Dewees katie@stmarysoth.org

Scan for Amazon Wish List:



Solemn Communion

Fifteen children celebrated Solemn Communion on February 15. These children spent six weeks in study and prayer, reflecting on the great love the Good Shepherd offers and what it means to be in communion with Jesus. A Saturday retreat included the Rite of Reconciliation, a great feast, decorating baptismal candles, embroidering prayer shawls, and a service where they renewed their baptismal vows.

Solemn Communion is part of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, the approach to children's Christian formation used by St. Mary's on the Highlands.



From The Editor

A New Chapter for Our Parish Newsletter!



Beginning with our June 2026 issue, St. Mary's will transition The Messenger to a primarily e-newsletter format. This change reflects our commitment to being good stewards of church resources while continuing to share timely and meaningful information with our parish community.

As printing, production, and mailing costs continue to rise, moving to an electronic format allows us to reduce expenses and direct more of our resources toward ministry, outreach, and parish life. An e-newsletter also enables us to share news and announcements more quickly, helping everyone stay informed and connected.

We recognize that email is not the best option for everyone. **If we do not have an email address on file for you, you will continue to receive a printed copy of the newsletter by first-class mail.** In addition, the digital version will be available as usual on our website, and a limited number of printed copies will be placed around the church building for anyone who would like to pick one up.

If you need to update your contact information, please contact Melodie Elam at melodie@stmarysoth.org or 205-881-1261. Thank you for your understanding and support as we take this step together in faithful stewardship and communication.

ladies happy hour!
tuesday, march 17
5:30-8:00 pm



Grab a friend and join us on the patio at Magnolia Point! Enjoy a relaxed evening—buy your own drinks, and St. Mary's will treat everyone to light appetizers.

No RSVP needed; just come as you are and enjoy the company.

Youth Ministries/EYC

Family Outreach at Brother Bryan Dinner and Chapel Service
Sunday, March 15 / 4:30 PM
(1616 2nd Avenue N.)

The whole family is invited to join us in serving dinner to the men at Brother Bryan. We will have dinner followed by an EYC-led chapel service.

Parent volunteers are needed! We will need several people to volunteer to make chocolate pies- the recipe is super easy and can be made in advance and frozen.

Good Friday Worship Night
Friday, April 3 / 5:00-6:00 PM
Randolph Memorial Hall

We're organizing a special contemporary worship night for 7th-12th graders and any college students who are home for Easter. The service will include music, Scripture readings, and prayer. We have invited students from Advent, St. Luke's, St. Stephens, and All Saints to join. Please invite any friends!

Mark Your Calendar!

April 19: Confirmation Sunday 10:30 AM
May 3: Youth Sunday at 10:30 AM service

The "Loving Well" Support Group for Caregivers

Tuesdays: March 3 and 17
2:00-3:00 PM / Chapel

We invite you to join our support group held on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. 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 group is facilitated by Cler Watkins and Kaki O'Flinn.

Outreach Ministries

Continued Support for Highlands UMC Homeless Ministry

- **Clothing Collection for Highlands UMC:** We are collecting the following items to support HUMC's clothing closet: **gently used men's and women's clothing (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.
- **Highlands UMC Breakfast Ministry:** Four days a week HUMC prepares and serves a hot meal and a sack lunch to those in need. St. Mary's provides volunteers for its breakfast service on Thursdays, 8:30-10:00 AM. To volunteer, visit www.stmarysoth.org/outreach.
- Questions? Contact Monica Sargent (monica@stmarysoth.org or 205-913-4689).

Preaching Schedule

- March 1: The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn (8AM, 5PM)
VTS Dean Ian Markham (10:30 AM)
- March 8: The Rev. H. Huey Gardner
- March 15: The Rev. Richard Ahlquist (8AM, 5PM)
The Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan (10:30 AM)
- March 22: The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn
- March 29: The Rev. Richard Ahlquist

Holy Week:

Maundy Thursday, April 2:
The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn

Good Friday, April 3:
The Rev. Richard Ahlquist

Easter Vigil, April 4/Easter Day, April 5:
The Rev. H. Huey Gardner

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.

Directory Pictures
March Dates

Realm, our online parish directory, is more than a collection of names and phone numbers—it's a way to strengthen our sense of community. Including your photo helps us put faces with names, welcome new members, and stay connected as a church family. **Please drop by Randolph Memorial Hall on the following Sundays between 8:45 and 9:15 AM so we can get your picture.**

March 1 March 22

Help us make our directory a true reflection of the people who make our parish home.

Transitions

Births

George Bradley Morris
Son of Maggie and Henry Morris
Grandson of Julia and Steve Rowe

William Robert Koebley
Son of Virginia and Sam Koebley
Grandson of Gail and Deak Rushton
Born February 9, 2026

Baptisms

Edmond Whittlesey Hoffman
Son of Murray and David Hoffman
Grandson of Allison and Duncan Manley
Great-grandson of Allison Murray
February 8, 2026

Marriages

Mary Claire Brakefield
Connor Douglas Mendelson
January 24, 2026

New Members

Suzanne and Craig Vincent
Anna, Adele, and Trey

Elizabeth and Jim Noles

Rest In Peace

Charles (Chuck) Wesley Edwards, Jr. (Chuck)
Father of William Edwards
January 23, 2026

Alice Marks Nan White
January 31, 2026 February 2, 2026



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ON THE HIGHLANDS
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Birmingham, AL 35205

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huey@stmarysoth.org
(205) 933-1140 x109



The Rev. Richard Ahlquist
Associate Rector
richard@stmarysoth.org
(205) 933-1140 x110



The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn
Deacon
kaki@stmarysoth.org
(205) 933-1140 x397



The Rev. John I. Kennedy, Jr. MD
Deacon / Episcopal DIOALA
Chaplain to UAB Medical Center
UAB.episcopal@gmail.com
(205) 386-7076



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