

THE Messenger

SEPTEMBER 2025

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



C.S. Lewis Made All the Difference

A long time ago, I was introduced to a Robert Frost poem that ended with this thought:

*Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I—I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

This line and what it stirs in my thoughts continue to shape my life; a single decision, action, or choice has made a significant difference in my life.

One choice I made was to become familiar with the work of **Clive Staples Lewis**. Although some of this exposure was forced upon me, I also willingly engaged with his words and thoughts. As a child, Lewis introduced me to Narnia and Aslan. As a young adult I consumed *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters*. His writing in *Mere Christianity* challenged, shaped, and encouraged the awakening of my Christian witness. In worship and in seminary, I heard many great preachers and teachers reference C. S. Lewis. These experiences have made all the difference in my life as a Christian. The voice of C. S. Lewis helped make my faith and witness to Christ a real and joyful experience.

Among the many blessings of Birmingham is a good friend, **Norman Jetmundsen**, who has had similar experiences with Lewis' writings. His life as a Christian has been shaped by a quote attributed to Lewis, "I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else." Here, Lewis describes the power of faith that opens one's eyes to the realities of God.



The Rev. H. Huey Gardner



C.S. Lewis



Norman Jetmundsen

As we continue our discussion about personal faith, **Norman will join us this month for Adult Christian Education on Sunday mornings**. He will lead us in a conversation and learning about Lewis's faith. This opportunity could make all the difference for you.

C. S Lewis Facts:

- His faith was shaped by the horrors of WWI – he served and was wounded.
- He was a teacher at Magdalen College, Oxford
- J.R.R. Tolkien (author of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*) was a friend who encouraged the Christian faith of Lewis. They both shared the horrific memory of WWI.
- Lewis wrote more than 30 books; those books have been translated into more than 30 languages, and more than a million copies have been sold.
- During World War II, Lewis was the second-most recognized voice on the radio behind Winston Churchill.

Without question, the most popular and effective Christian writer for the past century is C.S. Lewis. How did this college professor and former atheist become so acclaimed?

His many Christian books have remained in print, which is itself both amazing and a testament to his enduring appeal. Do you want to learn more about Lewis and his writings? Then come hear Norman Jetmundsen speak to

Continued on page 7

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 Begins September 7

9:30 AM- 10:30 AM



The Life and Works of C.S. Lewis

Led by Norman Jetmundsen in Randolph Memorial Hall

September 7, 14, and 28

(On September 21, Richard Ahlquist will lead our discussion.)

Norman Jetmundsen will lead a discussion on one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century. Norman, a local attorney, was the vice president and associate general counsel for Vulcan Materials Company in Birmingham, and he is the author of *The Soulbane Stratagem* and *The Soulbane Illusion* (both a follow-on to C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*). He graduated from the University of the South where he majored in English literature. He then obtained his law degree from The University of Alabama. As a result of gaining a Rotary International Scholarship, Norman attended Magdalen

College, Oxford, where he completed a M.Litt. in Law.

Hidden Treasures

September 7-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

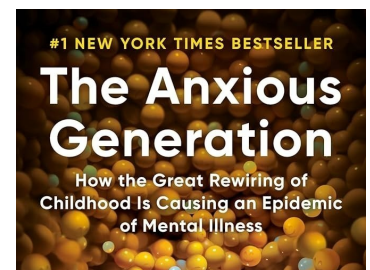
Offerings Later This Year:

The Anxious Generation

October 5, 12, and 19

Led by Richard Ahlquist and Cindy Wiley in Randolph Memorial Hall

Cindy and Richard will lead a discussion on this New York Times #1 best seller by Jonathan Haidt. While not an explicitly religious book, the chapter "Spiritual Elevation and Degradation" is particularly interesting. We'll consider how the Church can be part of the solution to help us and our children navigate these issues.



Called: A Short Course On Finding God's Purpose For Your Life

October 26

Led by the Rev. Cameron Nations in Randolph Memorial Hall

Join us as we explore how to identify God's specific call on your life and how it relates to the universal call of every Christian.

Study and Pastoral Opportunities

Who Knew???

About Your Emergency Checklist

Thursday, September 18
12:30-2:00 PM ~ Living Room

Do you have a flashlight when the power goes out? How about a list of medicines in case you need to go to the hospital unexpectedly?



Join us for our next "Who Knew?" meeting when we will learn more from **Christy Baynes** about how to prepare for the unexpected, especially if we are older. Christy, the founder of **LifeCare for Seniors**, has dedicated herself and her career to helping seniors and their families. She has also cared for members of her own family with dementia and other chronic illnesses. **A light lunch will be provided, so please contact Dianne Matheson (dianne.h.matheson@gmail.com).** We will socialize starting at 12:30 PM and begin the program at 1:00 PM. Come to learn and bring your questions.

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

October 16: Your Last Word Part 2
November 20: Making Cards
December: Carol Singing (date TBA)

The "Loving Well" Group Tuesdays: September 9 and 23 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.

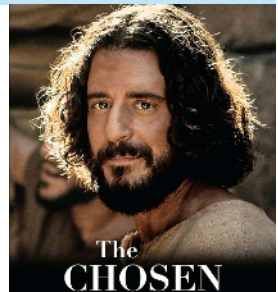
Rector's Bible Studies Resume This Month Huey Gardner

This fall, we will explore several writings of Paul. We will start with what is considered the earliest of the epistles, Galatians. Then we will move on to Thessalonians, and eventually, we will examine the conflicted Christians of Corinth. I hope we can approach these writings with the same enthusiasm as the earliest readers. Galatians was written within 15 years of the resurrection. Imagine being among the first to learn about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

- **The Women's Study** will begin on **Wednesday, September 10**, at 10:10 in Randolph Memorial Hall.
- **The early morning Men's Study** will start at 7:10 on **Tuesday, September 16**.
- Both will also be offered via Microsoft Teams.

Email Melodie Elam (melodie@stmarysoth.org) to be added to the distribution list for study notes and Teams link. And please invite your friends! Sharing the text of Holy Scripture is one of the best ways to deepen understanding of God's hope.

The Chosen Viewing and Discussion Thursday Mornings 10:15 AM - Noon / Living Room



This popular gathering returns! Join us to watch the latest season of *The Chosen* followed by a discussion facilitated by Kaki O'Flinn.

Devoted Small Group for Women Tuesday Mornings 9:15-10:30 AM / Room 307

Please join us for a women's small group study from a range of sources- scripture, devotional material, books. We'll begin our studies with **Tim Keller's *The Prodigal God***.

Please contact Kaki O'Flinn at kaki@stmarysoth.org for more details!



The Joyful Discipline of Giving: Stewardship at St. Mary's on the Highlands

Cheryl Brakefield, Stewardship Chair for 2026



As we enter this season of stewardship, I invite you to reflect on Jesus' words: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

By the grace of God, the treasures we have in this life are many. Many of us have financial treasure that sufficiently – or even amply – meets our earthly needs, and God delights in how we use these gifts He has entrusted to us. But He also calls us to look beyond our earthly blessings, which can fade and leave us wanting more. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus invites us to place our treasure in heaven, where it is eternal – just like God's love for us. He invites us into the joyful discipline of giving.

In the Episcopal Church, the discipline of giving has a name: Stewardship. Stewardship simply means "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care" – in this case, the work of God's kingdom here and now. As Episcopalians, we understand stewardship as a spiritual discipline, much like prayer, worship, and service. It is an opportunity to invest in something eternal and abundant: God's love and work in the world.

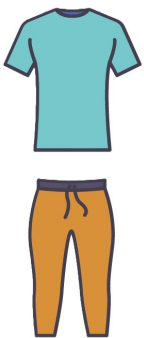
This year, our stewardship theme is "The Joyful Discipline of Giving." It reminds us that giving isn't meant to be transactional or driven by guilt, obligation, or concern over the church's finances. Instead, it is a joyful opportunity to store our treasure in heaven so that our hearts may follow.

As we move through this season together, I invite you to prayerfully consider how you might participate in the joyful discipline of giving. Whether through financial gifts, time, or talents, your stewardship helps sustain the life and mission of St. Mary's on the Highlands. May your giving be a reflection of where you want your heart to be, rooted in gratitude and guided by faith. And – most of all – may it be joyful.

Important Dates: **Blessing of the Pledge Cards - Sunday, October 5**
 Stewardship Sunday - October 19

Outreach Ministries

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).

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)



**Be Part of the Fun!
Volunteer at
Parish Events!**

Our parish gatherings wouldn't be the same without helping hands and joyful hearts. Whether it's **setting up, greeting guests, serving food, or cleaning up**, there's a spot for everyone to pitch in. Share your time, meet new friends, and help make our events welcoming for all!

You can find all volunteer opportunities listed on St. Mary's website under "SERVE". (www.stmarysoth.org/serve)

**Parish Fellowship Breakfasts Resume
Sunday, September 7
8:45-9:25 AM
Randolph Memorial Hall**

Join us in RMH for delicious food and even better company! Suggested donation: \$5 per person ages 6+ / \$20 family max.

Interested in joining a Breakfast Team? Contact Melodie Elam at 205-881-1261 or melodie@stmarysoth.org.



Music Ministry News



**Dinner and A Show!
Choir Fundraiser
Sunday, September 7
5:30 PM**

Randolph Memorial Hall

An evening of Pasta, beverages, and entertainment from the St. Mary's Choir and Friends. **Suggested donation: \$20pp / \$45 family max.** All proceeds will benefit the scholarship fund for the 2026 Choir to Wells Cathedral.

Visit www.stmarysoth.org/events to make your reservations!

Music Events on Sunday, September 28



**Organ Concert
4:30 PM
A. Mitchell Stecker (Pittsburgh, PA)**

**Reception following the 5:00 service!
Join us in Randolph Memorial Hall**



**Choral Evensong for the Eve of
The Feast of St. Michael and All Angels
5:00 PM**

featuring The St. Mary's Choir and
The Music of Macolm Archer, Greg Evans,
Samuel Wesley, Harold Friedell, and Ernest Bullock

Children's Ministries

Where Children Go on Sunday Morning

Nurseries: Open at 9:15 AM and remain open until the end of the 10:30 AM service.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Begins Sept. 7

All children ages 3K-6th grade are invited on Sunday mornings from 9:30 AM-10:15 AM.

- 3K-5K: Level One Atrium (Room 205)
- 1st-3rd Grades: Level Two Atrium (Room 206)
- 4th-6th Grades: Level Three Atrium (Room 105)

Kids' Word for 3K-5K (during 10:30 AM worship): Returns Sept. 7

Bring your child to Room 203 before the 10:30 AM service. Children will join their families in church at the peace.

Children's Chapel for Grades 1-3 (during 10:30 AM worship): Return Sept. 7

Children begin the service with their families in the church. After the Gospel reading, they follow the Crucifer and Katie out of church and into the chapel for a children's liturgy. They then return to their families at the peace.

SAVE THE DATES FOR SUMMER 2026!

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



Youth Ministries

A New Year of EYC!

Sunday School Starts September 7

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

EYC Kickoff and Worship Night

Sunday, September 14 at 5:00 PM

Randolph Memorial Hall

Join us for Taco Mama, worship, and fun to start the new school year!

EYC Outreach

Sunday, September 21 at 5:00 PM

Randolph Memorial Hall and Kitchen

Help us make breakfast casseroles and blessing bags for the Highlands United Methodist Church food ministry! This is a great way to have fun and get those service hours!

EYC Weekly Email

Is your student an upcoming 7th grader? Please subscribe to our weekly EYC email but signing up on the "Youth Education" page on St. Mary's website.





St. Mary's LADIES GATHERING

Ladies, save the date!

Thursday, September 25

We'll meet at Magnolia Point at 5:30 p.m. for some fun and fellowship.

Magnolia Point
2234 Magnolia Ave. S.



SAVE
the
DATE

Glen Iris Christmas Bag Packing Saturday, December 13

We are excited to partner again with Cathedral Church of the Advent and St. Luke's to support Glen Iris Elementary students during Christmas. **Currently we are soliciting funds to buy food for the bags.** This is a big effort, and we rely on St. Mary's parishioners. Watch for a QR code to donate online or send a check to St. Mary's with "Glen Iris bag packing" in the memo.

We will pack bags on Saturday, December 13, 1:00-3:00 PM at Randolph Memorial Hall. Volunteers are welcome to help organize food that morning. Details will be sent closer to the date.

Thank you to everyone who has helped before; we're excited for another successful year! !



ST. MARY'S

Men of the Church



Meet us at
Otey's (Mtn. Brook)
Thursday, September 4
5:00 PM

ALSO



Watch your emails and the
Sunday announcements for
details on our
STEAK COOK-OUT
Thursday, September 18!

Transitions

Baptisms

Anne Betts Kontomitras
Daughter of Carolyne and Alex Kontomitras
Granddaughter of Lee and Dean Nix
August 17, 2025

New Members

Ron Green

Rest In Peace

Marion T. Plylar
July 25, 2025

William Henry Putney
Father of Melissa Hooker
August 10, 2025

Cameron McLaughlin
Sister of Lee Gewin
July 22, 2025

Dr. Ralph F. Johnson
Father of Cherie Johnson
August 12, 2025

C.S. Lewis: Continued from cover

our Adult Sunday School class at 9:30 AM on September 7, 14, and 28 in Randolph Memorial Hall. He will also be our guest preacher on Sunday the 14th.

Norman attended Magdalen College, Oxford, where Lewis had been a professor, and became enthralled with Lewis's books. In fact, he was inspired later to write a response to *The Screwtape Letters* with his own book, *The Soulbane Stratagem*.

Preaching Schedule

September 7: The Rev. H. Huey Gardner

September 14: The Rev. Deacon Kaki O'Flinn (8AM & 5PM)
Guest preacher at 10:30: Norman Jetmundsen

September 21: The Rev. Richard Ahlquist

September 28: 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.*



ST. MARY'S

ON THE HIGHLANDS
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Dr. John T. Lowe, Jr.
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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