St. John's Episcopal Church
Parish Profile
2019
In preparation for choosing our new rector, we have taken an honest and thorough look at ourselves. Overall, the responses from our survey and listening sessions have reassured us that we are, indeed, a healthy and vital parish. Admittedly, some of that vitality will be put to good use as we address the challenges that have also surfaced. We believe these pages will reveal a committed and faithful congregation, growing in spirit, if not always growing in numbers. St. John’s looks forward with great anticipation to welcoming a new rector who will enliven, lead, and unite us with an energetic spirit of innovation and tradition.

Prayer for a New Rector

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mission Statement

The mission of St. John’s is to worship God and to make disciples for Jesus Christ.
at a glance

1834  ST. JOHN’S FOUNDED
1,250  BAPTIZED MEMBERSHIP
950    ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP
101    BAPTISMS IN THE PAST DECADE
11     CLERGY AND STAFF
15     RECTORS SINCE 1834
$122,500  OUTREACH DISTRIBUTION IN 2019
$1,445,689  PLEDGED IN 2018
History of the Parish

St. John’s Episcopal Church is the oldest Episcopal parish in Montgomery, Alabama, with parishioners proud of its rich and storied history. Many of the family names mentioned in the telling of its early story are the same names you hear in its present day membership. It has often played a significant role in historical events, but that is not to say it’s a parish resting on its past glories. Today’s St. John’s is a vibrant church family committed to spreading the Gospel, growing in numbers, reaching out to the community, and making disciples for Jesus Christ. St. John’s was organized in 1834 by pioneer settlers who met in homes and in the worship spaces of other denominations. It might have actually been the influence of ladies’ sewing circle that led to the construction of the first church building, a small red brick structure with only 48 pews on the corner of Jefferson and Perry Streets. Pews were sold or leased to raise money for its construction and a wandering minister was retained to lead its congregation. Montgomery became the capital of Alabama in 1846. Church membership grew steadily and the little church soon became too small. Slaves, who made up half the congregation and whose labor had built the church were given sole use of it in 1855, at which time construction on the present-day church began on a different corner of the same lot. Former slaves worshipped in the red brick church until 1869, when it was torn down to fund the new church building. St. John’s is a replica of an ancient church in Coventry, England. The 100-year old shingles were replaced on the very steeply pitched roof of the sanctuary, the kitchen was modernized, and the women of St. John’s kept sewing. Not clothing or bandages this time, but beautiful, hand-designed needlepoint kneelers. 1984 marked the church’s grand Sesquicentennial celebration with special services, a commemorative dinner, festive gatherings, and even the planting of a time capsule.

July of 1861 found St. John’s comfortably settled in the new Gothic church and hosting the historic Secession Convention of Southern Churches, where it joined other southern parishes in voting to establish the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America (CSA). President Jefferson Davis attended services at St. John’s with his family for the short while he was in Montgomery. Church women stayed busy sewing clothing and making bandages for the war effort. The church was closed for an entire year in 1865 by order of the Union Army and parishioners met in each other’s homes. In 1866, St. John’s was once again the site for an important meeting – this time, to return the Diocese of Alabama to Montgomery. While St. John’s was a mission church in re-activating one of its earliest mission churches, the Chapel of the Annunciation. This historic church on Plum Street was restored, moved, and positioned on the campus of Montgomery’s newly established Holy Cross Episcopal School, serving as the school’s chapel and the predominant force behind its evolving architecture.

During the period of Reconstruction following the Civil War, beginning in about 1869, many major church projects were undertaken. The chancel was added to what had previously been just a narthex and a nave. Beautiful ceiling tiles were designed and painted by the rector, Dr. Horace Stringfellow, who was quite the handyman. Brass angels were put in place by the chancel railing and work on the parish hall was begun. At around the turn of the century, St. John’s welcomed a rector, Edgar Gardner Murphy, who was to become nationally known as an inventor, astronomer, labor and civil rights activist, educator, and author. He was the driving force behind the completion of Montgomery’s Church of the Good Shepherd in 1900. 1906 found St. John’s parishioners relinquishing ownership of their pews, as numbers greatly increased and the chancel had to be doubled in size. As many of these people moved south of the city into “the suburbs”, the need for another Episcopal church was realized and St. John’s helped found Montgomery’s Church of the Ascension.

Streetcars pulled right up to the front doors at St. John’s to drop off soldiers stationed at nearby Camp Sheridan during the WWI years. These same soldiers enjoyed their free recreation time in St. John’s parish hall on Sunday afternoons. Eventually, services had to be cancelled for several months in 1918 due to a severe influenza pandemic. Shortly after reopening its doors in November of 1918, the newly built John Farley Chapel (or Lady Chapel, as it was often called) was consecrated by the Bishop. St. John’s rode out the challenges of dwindling membership and mounting bills during the Great Depression, thinking up creative ways to raise funds by featuring famous musical celebrities in concert, for example.

The WWII years found St. John’s caught up in the third war to which some parishioners were called to serve. The parish hall was once again the site for entertaining soldiers on Sunday afternoons. Additionally, the iron fence surrounding the church was melted down and donated to the war effort. When the war ended, the resulting baby boom and increase in membership led to the need for a new education building at St. John’s. Ground was broken in 1951, and in 1953, the St. John’s School was opened, Montgomery’s first non-Catholic parochial school. It opened with 60 students in Kindergarten through first grade, and second and third grade classes were soon added. The school flourished until 1962, at which time it had to close its doors due to increasing competition from other local private schools.

The mid-1950’s brought Montgomery to the forefront of national news when Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her seat on a city bus and the Civil Rights Era was born. Although not directly involved in the movement, civil rights leaders and members of St. John’s met with civil rights leaders and city officials to help mediate discussions. During the same period, St. John’s hosted The Rev. Dr. Billy Graham and his integrated planning committee as they prepared for a week-long crusade in Montgomery. And the women of St. John’s kept sewing. Not clothing or bandages this time, but beautiful, hand-designed needlepoint kneelers. Began in 1970, this ministry resulted in over 460 kneelers by the early 1990’s. 1984 marked the church’s grand Sesquicentennial celebration with special services, a commemorative dinner, festive gatherings, and even the planting of a time capsule.

As St. John’s ushered in the 21st Century, it began the most ambitious building project since the construction of the 1855 church. Many new facilities were added, including a library, administrative offices, a large walled parking lot, a porte cochere, meeting spaces, classrooms, and a library. The 100-year old chandeliers were replaced on the very steeply pitched roof of the sanctuary, the kitchen was modernized, gardens were planted, the parish house was completely overhauled, stained glass windows were restored, and a new organ was installed. A lovely columbarium was built on the Perry Street side of the church. The entire project was completed by 2005 after nearly 10 years of planning, fund-raising, and work. Meanwhile, St. John’s took a leading role in re-activating one of its earliest mission churches, the Chapel of the Annunciation. This historic church on Plum Street was restored, moved, and positioned on the campus of Montgomery’s newly established Holy Cross Episcopal School, serving as the school’s chapel and the predominant force behind its evolving architecture.

St. John’s just retired its rather significant debt from the building campaign undertaken in 2003. Also retired from use in 2019 was a period pew associated with CSA President Jefferson Davis when he attended services here in the spring of 1861. It has been moved to the Archives hallway in the Education Building. St. John’s Archives is a group of interested parishioners which meets weekly and maintains all documents and artifacts pertaining to the parish’s nearly 165-year history. Sally Millspap, a life-long parishioner, who wrote the parish’s definitive history, “The Life of St. John’s Parish”. One of St. John’s many strengths is its ability to couple a reverence for this rich history with an excitement for the events to come and a desire to assure a vibrant future of worshipping God and making disciples for Jesus Christ.
buildings and grounds
St. John’s occupies a full city block in downtown Montgomery on the corner of Madison Avenue and Perry Street. This historic structure, part of a thriving and revitalized business, entertainment, and residential community, is a spiritual anchor to all who enter or pass by.

The building we worship in today is a masterpiece of Gothic Revival architecture. Its stuccoed exterior features a soaring bell tower surmounted by a gilded cross. The building was consecrated on December 9, 1855. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. While many additions have been made over the past 164 years, the original 1855 nave remains at the heart of the spiritual life of the parish.

In 1869, the nave was extended and the current chancel built. The nave’s wood plank ceiling was stenciled with distinctive and symbolic medallions. The designs incorporate both Old and New Testament symbols, alternating between a sunburst motif and the six-pointed Star of David. 1885 saw the church’s original 1855 bell replaced by a 9-chime carillon, which is still in use today. In 1889, the reredos, a striking Italian painting of clouds and cherubs, was placed above the altar. There are beautiful brass tablets on either side of the altar, inscribed with the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments. Lovely Italian mosaic floor tiles were laid in 1906. Angels keep watch over all these elements: marble ones flanking the altar, brass ones located at the top of the steps into the chancel, and hand-carved wooden trumpeting angels on organ pipe housing in the choir loft.

The spirit of St. John’s is reflected in the colorful light from the many stained-glass windows installed as memorial gifts between 1855 and 1925. These include works by Louis Comfort Tiffany of New York, Charles Connick of Boston, and J&R Lamb Studios of New York. Many of the windows in the sanctuary illustrate Biblical stories or allegories. The magnificent Ascension window over the altar was installed in 1900. The Crucifixion window in the choir loft, given in 1895 by the Sunday School, is an impressive part of the church’s front façade. Equally impressive are the windows that adorn either end of the parish hall – one depicts Jesus’ birth and the other is a magnificent rose window of grand proportion.

St. John’s grounds encompass nearly an acre in downtown Montgomery. Arched, leaded-glass windows in breezeways look out upon lovely gardens. The Polly McQueen Garden contains a fountain and glazed artworks in the della robia style. The Biblical Garden contains herbs and fruit trees indicative of ancient times, and the Hutchinson Garden, with its rose bushes and stone benches, is a space conducive to contemplative pauses.
In the 1990s, a landscaped columbarium was designed and built along the west side of the nave, creating a meaningful resting place for parishioners whose lives have been blessed by this holy house of worship. The outdoor labyrinth which was added in 2003 on the Madison Avenue side of the property offers yet another way to worship.

As a result of these additions and renovations over the years, St. John’s enjoys a campus that includes extensive facilities for education, administration, formation, fellowship, and worship. In addition to the historic areas previously mentioned, we also have a beautiful library, choir rehearsal studio, bookstore, brides’ room, and parish archives. The sacristy, flower room, and vesting rooms are all conveniently located near the nave and sanctuary. The centrally-located administrative suite, comprising eight offices, a conference room and a workroom, provide a place for clergy, program staff, and administrative staff to work together collaboratively.

A large, light-filled children’s nursery provides safe and attentive care for our smallest members during services and other parish events. More than two dozen classrooms and meeting rooms located throughout the facility are used by children, youth, and adults on Sundays and during the week. The spacious and comfortable youth area, comprising the entire third floor of the education building, is a welcoming place for teenagers and their friends to enjoy fellowship with one another and to grow in the faith. Younger children can spend a part of the Sunday 10:30 Eucharist worshipping in the Children’s Chapel.

The many features of St. John’s we enjoy today have been inspired by the efforts of those who have gone before us and, through their example, we strive to continue their work both as stewards of the property and as members of the body of Christ.
St. John’s is located in the heart of downtown Montgomery -- seven blocks from Alabama’s State Capitol, four blocks from the Alabama River, and not far from Maxwell Air Force Base and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

The City of Montgomery, currently celebrating its bicentennial, has played an integral role in state, national, and international history. Founded in 1819 by the merger of two adjoining towns, Montgomery rapidly grew and had a population of 12,000 by 1850. In 1846, Montgomery became Alabama’s capital. Montgomery first came to the forefront of the national and international stage in February 1861 when it hosted the constitutional convention of the seceding states and served as the first capital of the Confederate States of America until May 1861. Although devastated by the effects of the Civil War, Montgomery embraced modernization and in 1886 became the first city in the Western hemisphere to have an electric streetcar system. Due to its central railway hub and its strategic location on the Alabama River, Montgomery became an economic center of the Deep South.

In 1955, Montgomery was again thrust to the forefront of our nation’s history when Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery city bus to a caucasian passenger. The ensuing Montgomery Bus Boycott, led by a young Montgomery pastor named Martin Luther King, Jr., resulted in a United States Supreme Court decision declaring segregation on public transportation systems to be unconstitutional and sparked the modern-day Civil Rights movement. Montgomery played another pivotal role in the Civil Rights movement on March 21, 1965, as the Selma to Montgomery March made its way through the Capital City, ending at the foot of the steps of the Alabama State Capitol.

Montgomery has been associated with aviation since the earliest days of flight. In 1910, the Wright Brothers established a civilian flight school in Montgomery. Beginning with World War I, the United States Army and subsequently the United States Air Force has had continual presence in the Montgomery area. Maxwell Air Force Base is home to the Air University, the intellectual and leadership center of the United States Air Force that educates countless military personnel of the United States and its Allies. The Gunter Annex, also located in Montgomery, is home to the Air Force’s Business and Enterprise Systems Directorate.
Today, Maxwell Air Force Base and Gunter Annex are home to more than 12,500 active-duty, reserve, civilian, and contractor personnel and have an annual $2.6 billion impact on the Montgomery economy.

In 2005, Hyundai opened its first North American automotive manufacturing facility in Montgomery. The Hyundai Sonata, Elantra, and Santa Fe are all manufactured at the $1.7 billion Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama plant.

Higher education plays an important role in the life of Montgomery. Montgomery is home to three public 4-year institutions of higher learning -- Alabama State University, Auburn University at Montgomery, and Troy University at Montgomery, 3 four-year church-affiliated colleges -- Huntingdon College, Faulkner University, and Amridge University, and a public 2-year college - Trenholm State Community College.

Montgomery is also a cultural and entertainment center for central Alabama. The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, housed at the world-class Carolyn Blount Theatre, is one of the ten largest Shakespeare festivals in the world. Numerous nationally-acclaimed artists and bands perform regularly at the Montgomery Performing Arts Centre. Montgomery is also home to numerous museums including the Museum of Alabama, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, the Hank Williams Museum, the Civil Rights Memorial, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and the First White House of the Confederacy.

With a population of 198,218, Montgomery is the second-largest city in Alabama. The population is 60% African American, 34.1% Caucasian, 3.5% Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian. Thirteen percent of the population is age 65 or older, and 24% of the population under the age of 18 years. Eighty-five percent of the population over the age of 25 has graduated high school, and 31.8% of the population over the age of 25 holds a bachelor's or advanced degree.

Located in the heart of the Bible Belt, faith plays an integral part in the life of Montgomery. Baptist and Methodist are the predominant denominations in the community. Montgomery also has a strong Episcopal presence with 6 parishes located in the City of Montgomery and a total of 10 parishes in the River Region.

Montgomery, like many midsize and larger cities, has its challenges. In the past decade, some Montgomery residents have relocated to adjoining towns and suburbs, causing Montgomery's population to decrease by 3.5%. Montgomery struggles with the ramifications of its segregated past. Its schools have reverted to a mostly de facto segregated status, with most African-American children attending public schools and most caucasian children attending private schools. Due to poor student academic achievement and financial failings, the Alabama State Department of Education recently intervened in the operations of the school system. Increased crime also is an issue facing the city of Montgomery.

Although it has many challenges, the future is bright for Montgomery. A revitalized downtown has brought life back to the city's historical center of commerce. The development of loft condos and apartments encourages more people to move downtown and in proximity to St. John's. Montgomery is becoming a tourist destination with an increased interest in its Civil Rights history. Montgomery's magnet schools are recognized as some of the best and highest achieving schools in Alabama, and a new school board is working to rectify the issues with the other public schools. Working together, Montgomerians are moving forward to a bright future.
The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

The Diocese of Alabama finds its roots and best expression in the mission of Jesus Christ. We see ourselves as a missionary people, committed to spreading the Gospel and sharing in the ministry of Jesus Christ for the reconciliation and healing of the world.

The diocese is healthy and strong, with 88 parishes and four campus centers and three worshipping communities. As a witness to our growth we have had two very successful capital campaigns in the last ten years. The first raised over six million dollars for ministry development and expansion throughout the diocese, including funds to purchase land for new parishes, a chapel for our conference center at Camp McDowell, an expansion of the campus ministry at the University of Montevallo, create a staff position for communications, and a lay ministry certification program. We have completed the second campaign which raised ten million dollars to enhance and expand Camp McDowell, a new facility called Bethany Village. The new area will allow for more camp sessions and programs for people with disabilities or mobility issues, expand our Environmental Education program to include a Farm Education component, provide a home for the Alabama Folk School, and offer more facilities for our ministries. Camp McDowell is known as the heart of the diocese, and serves as host to summer camp sessions, various youth gatherings, Cursillo, retreats, conferences, workshops, a wide array of educational and renewal opportunities to support people as they strive to live out the Baptismal Covenant.

Currently the diocese has a growing baptized membership of over 32,000 parishioners, and we are hopeful that growth will continue well into the 21st Century. We have started a new worshipping community in a coffee shop, a Fresh Expression of the Episcopal Church in a trendy area in Birmingham. The Abbey serves coffee, sandwiches and snacks through the week, and offers a “third place” for those seeking a new way to engage in Christian community and for those who have been turned away from the Church but still yearn for a safe and engaging place to explore their spirituality.

The diocese has vigorously encouraged and supported local parishes in outreach ministry, and sought to address some of the underlying problems of hunger, unemployment and racial tension with initiatives, both locally and internationally. The Black Belt area of the diocese, named for its rich dark soil, is one of the most impoverished areas of the state, and has served as the backdrop for two successful ministries, the Sawyerville Day Camp and the Jonathan Daniels pilgrimage. Since 1969, the diocese has had a high commitment to the Companion Diocese Relationship Program, and over the years has had formal relationships with the Diocese of Namibia in Southern Africa, the Dioceses of Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Sao Paolo in Brazil, the Diocese of South Dakota and Haiti. Presently we are in a partnership with the Diocese of the Virgin Islands.

In 2000, the order of Deacons was reestablished in the Diocese of Alabama; we now have over 43 deacons serving across the diocese. We have recently launched the Alabama Integrative Ministry School, a program to train bivocational and non-stipendiary priests and deacons with a minimum of disruption, without sending them away for a more formal seminary education. The students will still have to go through our ordination discernment process, but will be able to keep their homes and jobs as they respond to God’s call to ordination.

A major focus of formation and renewal with the diocese is Cursillo. This lay led movement was begun in the diocese in 1979. With the full support and encouragement of the bishops, this program for spiritual renewal has reached into almost every parish, and has greatly helped the sense of affection and community across the diocese. Happening, a renewal weekend for young people is similar, as is Vocare for college students and young adults; both of them provide a time for young people to look at what they believe and serve to empower young leaders to share their walk with Christ.

Youth ministry is a valuable priority in the diocese, and we have employed a coordinator since the 1960’s. Lifelong faith formation is understood to be an ongoing process for all baptized Christians, and the diocese has employed a coordinator to assist parishes with resources, workshops and conferences to nourish and support teachers and students seeking a deeper relationship with our Lord.

Since 1981 the diocese has relied on a voluntary program of giving from the parishes rather than imposing assessments. While maintaining the standard of voluntary giving, in 2001 the Diocesan Convention established guidelines requesting parishes with annual income of more than $150,000 to commit to giving 15% to the work of the Church through the diocese, and parishes with annual income of less than $150,000 to pledge 10% to the diocese.

Mindful of the importance of unity, the diocese has been a strong supporter of the ministries of the entire Episcopal Church, and continues to support our part of God’s Church by paying the apportionment asked of us and participation at all levels. We assign this high priority to the supporting the budget of General Convention because of its mission and ministry both within the United States and throughout the Anglican Communion. At the same time, the diocese strives to maintain realistic growth in compensation of its clergy and full time lay employees, along with the most recent benefits mandated by the General Convention.

In summary, the Diocese of Alabama is at its heart a community of faith centered in mission. We offer ourselves into the grace of almighty God, striving to live into the Baptismal Covenant, and to equip God’s people to do the work of the Church as we proclaim by word and example the Good News of Jesus Christ our Lord. Our bedrock belief is that we are called to live the gospel of grace in hope and joy, as we share the blessing of life with all of God’s creation.

God’s Peace,

The Rt. Rev. John McKee Sloan
Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Alabama
Worship and Spiritual Offerings

Most parishioners connect to St. John's through liturgy and worship. Sunday and Holy Day liturgies at St. John's are joyful celebrations in the Episcopal tradition of our Triune God.

Sunday worship is comprised of two distinct services. At 7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist following Rite I is celebrated without music. At 10:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist is celebrated with the use of traditional hymns and enriched with the music of the St. John's choir and the musical offerings from the 44-rank Wicks organ and wind, brass, and string instruments. The 10:30 a.m. Eucharist alternates between Rite I and Rite II.

Worship at St. John's has been described as formal yet not high church. Our worship experience is grounded in the *Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal 1982*. The Eucharist is celebrated from an eastward-facing altar. The celebrant typically chants only during the Eucharist in the Christmas Eve and Easter services. Likewise, the use of incense is reserved for services related to principal feasts. The Great Litanies are sung at the beginning of Lent. Although our worship is formal, St. John's is not an Anglo-Catholic parish.

Lay involvement is integral to the worship experience at St. John's. Numerous parishioners volunteer their time and talent, serving as acolytes, lay Eucharistic ministers, lectors, Eucharistic visitors, and altar and flower guild members.

The worship experience at St. John's does not end on Sunday. Eucharist is observed throughout the week. During the 2018 calendar year, there were 106 Sunday services and 152 weekday services offered.

Although our worship experience is grounded in the *Book of Common Prayer*, St. John's also uses *The Book of Occasional Services* as the basis of some of its services. For example, St. John's holds a weekly healing Eucharist based on the order of worship for a Public Service of Healing. Likewise, *The Book of Occasional Services* is also used for seasonal worship services at St. John's.

A rather unique practice established by St. John's current rector is the parity of preaching opportunities for all clergy. At St. John's, the sermon is prepared and delivered by each clergy member on an equal rotating basis without regard to seniority or experience.

In addition to traditional worship services and Sunday School classes, St. John's offers various opportunities for further spiritual development.

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Every Monday, the priest scheduled to preach the following Sunday holds a Noonday Bible Study in our dining room. Parishioners are invited to bring a sack lunch as they reflect on the lessons appointed for that Sunday and glean insights into the sermon writing process.

Our library is a beautiful and comfortable room and hosts several spiritual groups. On Tuesday mornings at 8:30, a Contemplative Prayer Group meets. There, they weave poetry, labyrinth walking, and other meaningful practices into their prayer life. Wednesdays at 11:30, the Centering Prayer group meets. They reflect and share experiences and insights before
entering into a period of silent prayer. On the first Thursday evening of each month, a Dream Group meets to explore dreams and other areas of their lives where meaning and synchronicity occur.

Outside the church, facing Madison Avenue, is our peaceful Labyrinth Garden. Flanked by benches and open to the public, it has become a respite for the downtown community, as well as our congregation.

Those who have attended Cursillo weekend often participate in reunion groups, as they continue to grow and form closer bonds. Many of our congregants have been enriched and helped by spiritual direction, provided by our clergy. St. John’s also has a parishioner who has completed the Spiritual Direction Program and is continuing the good work of this ministry.

The healing service at St. John’s is held on Thursdays at noon and is a source of comfort to many parishioners at difficult times in their lives. Twice a year, Taize’ service is held on Sunday evenings and has become more popular with our congregation as a deep and meaningful way to worship.

Finally, every year different parishioners are asked to contribute reflections for our Lenten Meditation guide, published in booklet form and posted online. Our congregation draws closer as we reveal ourselves to one another and share our perceptions. St. John’s is an energetic and active church, with deep resources and a rich inner life.

Music

St. John’s is blessed with an outstanding music program, the focus of which is to enrich the Sunday morning worship at 10:30 am Eucharist. Our talented organist plays a three manual combination Wicks pipe and digital organ with primarily German baroque voicing. The organ, designed by Harald Rohlig, former organist and choirmaster of 50 years, is located in the choir loft to the back of the nave, along with all the musicians and choristers. The organ and our music program are both beautiful additions to St. John’s ministry.

The adult choir is made up of auditioned singers from the community and members of the church. It is a mix of approximately 16 staff and volunteer singers. The choir sings for the 10:30 a.m. Sunday Eucharists, as well as at Ash Wednesday, Christmas Eve, and Good Friday liturgies. The children’s choir, formed in 2018, is made up of a small but growing number of children who both process and sing with the adult choir from time to time.

The church has historically maintained an involved instrumental program utilizing Montgomery Symphony musicians. The musicians play every Sunday at the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist, primarily during communion. They are comprised of a combination of various classical instrumentalists who play at the highest levels.

Outside of Sunday morning worship, St. John’s choir also sings Choral Evensong, usually twice a year, and often presents choral or instrumental concerts performed with other arts organizations. St. John’s also offers at least one organ recital each year. Our church strongly supports its music ministry. According to the recent parish survey data, 86% of parishioners deem this very high caliber program an integral and indispensable part of the worship experience.

“After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music”
– Aldous Huxley
Lifelong Learning

At St. John's, Christian Formation is a lifelong endeavor. Opportunities for Christian Formation combine aspects of worship, fellowship, and study, accepting the fact that people are drawn to St. John's for different reasons. Some are attracted to our style of worship, and some are attracted to our fellowship opportunities, but all will discover deep and meaningful Christian Formation opportunities as they become more involved in our parish. St. John's incorporates both worship and interaction among those participating in Christian Formation, creating a rich, full and worthwhile experience for those wishing to grow deeper through study of our faith. Blending worship, fellowship, and learning to create a well-rounded and rich experience happens in all Christian Formation age groups at St. John's - Children, Youth and Adult.

Children's Christian Formation at St. John's

Age appropriate Sunday School lessons are offered for all children of St. John's during the 9:15 Sunday School hour. The curricula breaks down as follows:

+ Toddlers: Stories in a Box curriculum
+ Pre-K: Hands-on Bible curriculum (uses Duplo Legos, crafts & Bible Big Books)
+ K-2nd: Weaving God's Promises Episcopal curriculum
+ 3rd-5th: Building Faith Brick by Brick II curriculum (a creative way to explore the parables using Legos)
+ 6th: Confirmation Class, Episcopal Diocese of Alabama curriculum

Dedicated lay volunteers faithfully lead all these areas of formation for our children.

At the 10:30 a.m. service our children process to Children's Chapel before the Gospel reading and sermon, in order to hear their own reading of the Gospel and sermon. Here our children engage in a worship service that prepares them for Confirmation, worship in the church with the entire congregation, and gives them an understanding of our Episcopal traditions. The children set a prayer table, light candles, say their individual prayers to the group, and read the prayers of the people and a creed. The children return to the larger parish during the passing of the peace and delight in serving in the church worship service as oblationers.

During Wednesday nights in October and Lent, our children are invited to a Eucharist worship service, a family dinner, and Christian Formation programming. Led by our Director of Children's Christian Formation, creative and engaging learning opportunities are offered to our children. Wednesday night program examples include:

+ Mysteries of the Bible-A mystery manor themed study, discussing mysteries in the Bible such as the Trinity and Jesus on the Walk to Emmaus.
+ Keeping the FIZZ in Your Faith- An interactive science themed study in which science experiments were incorporated with scripture lessons.
+ Monsters- Children learn to give their fears to God.
+ The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss
+ The Gospel According to Harry Potter

The other major component of Children's Christian Formation at St. John's is a Vacation Bible School (VBS) that St. John's shares with other Montgomery area Episcopal churches. This VBS alternates hosts each year between Church of the Ascension and St. John's. Our Director of Children's Christian Formation often co-creates the curriculum for the 4-day event with the Director of Children's Christian Formation at Ascension. VBS begins with a message from the clergy from the different Montgomery area Episcopal churches, and incorporates games and activities geared toward developing fellowship, as well as, scriptural understanding within the group.

VBS program examples include:
+ "BFF" ("Building Faithful Friendships") VBS focused on The Lego Movie and its main character, Emmett. Emmett is the Christ figure, risking his life for the well-being of others. Children learned about friendships in the Bible: Ruth & Naomi, David & Jonathan, Moses & Aaron, and Jesus and ourselves.
+ Life Star VBS was based on the Star Wars movies and focused on the story of Paul in the Bible.

Sunday morning classes and Children's Chapel, Wednesday night programming, and VBS account for the major components of Children's Christian Formation at St. John's. All weave together worship, fellowship, and learning, teaching our children how to live an abundant Christian life.

Youth Christian Formation at St. John's

St. John's Youth Christian Formation, for those in grades 7th through 12th, continues the pattern set with our children. The youth of our parish gather in their own space on the 3rd floor of the education building during the Sunday School hour. Here they read and discuss the Gospel lesson for that Sunday. Participation from everyone is encouraged and helps to build confidence with our youth's understanding and interpretation of the Gospel and builds a sense of safety and community among this group. This instruction, led by St. John's Youth Director, serves our youth well as they leave Sunday School to participate in the 10:30 worship service as acolytes, choristers, lay Eucharistic ministers, and lectors. And when Youth Sunday and the Feast of Lights services roll around, our youth take the reins by leading these services as preachers, usher, greeters, and other crucial roles in the service.

Sunday evenings are also an important time of Christian Formation for our EYC (Episcopal Youth Community). Our EYC gathers at the church and at other area locations for their programs. Sunday evening EYC programs at St. John's incorporate things like quiet, reflective nights to journal and visit prayer stations, or more boisterous nights spent watching movies and discussing how God is evident in the movie's plot. EYC evenings often close with a Compline service.

EYC programs away from St. John's are fun activities for our youth, such as Laser Tag, Go Karting, or hanging out at a local coffee shop. All of these activities serve as opportunities for St. John's youth to learn greater responsibility publicly as they represent St. John's in the wider Montgomery community.

There is also a focus within this group on engaging our youth on a diocesan level as our youth are encouraged to attend Diocesan-wide spiritual weekends such as Awakenings and Happening.

Major emphasis is placed on participating in outreach during EYC. Our EYC sponsors and participates in our RISE Against Hunger event, they sponsor an Angel Tree family by purchasing Christmas presents, and they make and serve dinner to homeless guests staying at St. John's as part of the Family Promise program. Worship, play, and learning again happens simultaneously and naturally within this group as our youth grow in independence and responsibility in parish life.
Adult Christian Formation at St. John's

Adult Christian Formation at St. John's is rich and diverse. Our Sunday morning classes occur during the 9:15 Sunday School hour, between our 7:30 and 10:30 services, and after a time of fellowship at our Sunday morning parish breakfast. Offered by our clergy and lay leadership, there is something for everyone during the Sunday School hour. Examples of past classes include: lecture-oriented classes, and smaller, more discussion-oriented classes; history lessons related to St. John's in particular or to the larger Church; classes devoted to Biblical studies; classes on secular poetry, or classes on the poetry found in the Psalms. St. John's is known for its diverse and intellectually stimulating Adult Christian Formation classes, leading one survey participant to comment that it was this aspect of St. John's that brought him or her to our parish.

Another benchmark of Adult Christian Formation at St. John's is our Wednesday night programs in October, and our Wednesday Lenten teaching series. During October, our clergy leads a program in the evening after a Eucharist service and supper together. Past program examples include:

- Being an Episcopalian in the South: Challenges and Opportunities
- Just War Theory

Another noteworthy Adult Christian Formation program is the Lenten teaching series hosted by St. John's. Every Lent, St. John's invites guest clergy speakers, from both our area and from around the country, to preach a sermon before lunch is served to the community in our Parish Hall. The guest speaker then celebrates the Eucharist at a Wednesday evening worship service, followed by dinner and teaching on a topic of the speaker's choosing. The Lenten series is attended by both St. John's parishioners and the Montgomery area Episcopal community.

Despite a reputation for diverse and meaningful Christian Formation on the behalf of our parish. When asked "Are you satisfied with the St. John's Adult Christian Formation offerings," 205 people answered the question, of which 56% answered "yes," 7% answered "no," and 37% answered "I do not participate." When asked "Do you find Adult Christian Formation offerings varied, relevant, and interesting," again 205 people answered the question, and 56% responded "yes," 4% responded "no," and 40% responded "I do not participate." While the majority responded positively to Adult Christian Formation at St. John's, it is not an overwhelmingly positive response, with close to half of those answering the questions stating that they do not participate in Adult Christian Formation at St. John's. Despite the interesting and relevant topics covered, and the depth and scope with which these topics are discussed, and despite the excellent teachers we have, St. John's lacks participation in Christian Formation programming. This is true in all age groups - children, youth and adults. St. John's seeks a rector that will help us with this discrepancy. Other areas for Christian Formation improvement, stated repeatedly in our survey are:

+ A desire for a Young Adult Sunday School class
+ A desire to hold Sunday School classes somewhere other than the Parish Hall
+ A desire for year around Sunday School classes

("Currently, St. John's does not always offer Sunday School classes during the summer months.")

Adult Christian Formation, like Children's and Youth Christian Formation, is incorporated into the fabric of our overall parish life of worship, fellowship and study. Our Adult Christian Formation programs are part of what draws people to St. John's to worship with us, to gather with us in Christian fellowship, and to learn and grow in our midst.
Outreach

Outreach at St. John’s has long been an important ministry and in recent years has developed into a large and very vital area of the parish. In 1990, Outreach was officially included as a line item in the annual budget with an increase in the financial commitment to programs outside St. John’s. With the leadership of the Outreach Committee, 2019 was the most generous to date with distribution of $122,500 in grants to 55 local non-profit organizations. Results from our recent parish survey indicate that 75% of respondents support and agree with the amount of outreach financial involvement. Also, numerous respondents voice a strong call for increased volunteerism within the organizations we support financially.

In addition to the Outreach Committee, our members support many pursuits benefiting our surrounding community, national and international organizations. Highlighted below are programs that have become particularly significant in St. John’s outreach life.

**Honduras Medical Mission**

From its inception in 2002 as a construction project mission and small Bible School in Tela, Honduras, with 12 St. John’s volunteers, the Honduras Mission group has developed into a strong and vibrant team. In 2004, the pursuit transitioned with the addition of a separate medical mission, which currently provides care and support to those who lack basic medical services in and around the Tela community. A dedicated corps of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other medical professionals from the Montgomery area and surrounding states partner with St. John’s non-medical support team, comprised of adult members. Each summer, this team spends a week in Honduras working with students and members from Espiritu Santo, the local Episcopal church and high school. These students act as translators, guides, and medical assistants to our team and provide an invaluable service to the mission. For the entire medical team, each new day starts at daybreak in a different village and brings many challenges ranging from distributing vitamins to counseling on proper nutrition and from dressing wounds to providing care for the terminally ill. In some instances, the Espiritu Santo students seek advanced medical training and return to the community, providing much-needed services. The members of the Honduras mission have developed long-lasting relationships with many of their patients and continue to serve them each year.

**Family Promise**

This ecumenical ministry, brought to Montgomery by our current rector and other local clergy, is comprised of fourteen area churches. The program includes providing shelter and meals to families transitioning from homelessness into permanent housing. St. John’s welcomes families once each quarter for a seven-night stay, asking volunteers within the church membership to provide evening meals and act as overnight hosts.

**Hope Inspired Ministries (H.I.M.)**

Located in Montgomery, this ministry serves individuals through a 9-week training program targeting those with particular educational and life-skill challenges. Instructors help guide students who have struggled with unemployment by offering mentoring, 360+ hours of specialized training, and daily group lunches provided by partners around the city. St. John’s is one of these partners. Each quarter, a dedicated group of church members provides lunch to the students, eats together, and learns about their life stories. Many of the Family Promise participants have also been students in the H.I.M. program.

**RISE Against Hunger**

Current at Hunger St. John’s programming staff brought this important opportunity to our door three years ago and our members have responded with much enthusiasm. Rise Against Hunger has one central goal – feed a hungry world. Each year, at least 100 St. John’s volunteers gather in the parish hall to make and pack 300 backpacks, individually wrapped, non-perishable foods. These backpacks, which contain healthy protein, snacks, and beverages are distributed to 30 students at Carver High School who are at risk of going without complete meals while home on the weekends. The backpack program runs each day during the school year calendar. With increased funding during the 2019-2020 school period, this program hopes to expand, providing a service to more students in need.

**Annual Bazaar**

This beloved tradition has been a highlight in downtown Montgomery for 67 years. Preparations begin months in advance of the late-November event, when scores of very talented St. John’s volunteers begin planning, preparing, sewing, painting, cooking and organizing their way toward the big day. A very carefully planned luncheon is included in the festivities and the fare is always a delicious addition to the program. Proceeds from the sales of the various rooms, featuring pantry items, arts and crafts, silent auction offerings, treasure attic items, and items in the bookstore are given to local non-profit organizations.

St. John’s also supports other local agencies through our twelve monthly in-gatherings; Lenten mite boxes for United Thank Offering; Christmas Angel Tree, which assists families with gift lists; and Samaritan’s Purse, an international Christian disaster relief organization. Other efforts supported by St. John’s include Habitat for Humanity, Rebuilding Together, S.T.E.P (Strategies for Elevating People), Respite, Montgomery Area Council on Aging, and Kairos Prison Ministry, to name a few.

**Carver Backpack Group**

Originating as a grass-roots pursuit within the last decade, this program is experiencing growth and new interest among our parishioners. A small, dedicated group of St. John’s volunteers meets weekly and packs 30 backpacks with individually wrapped, non-perishable foods. These backpacks, which contain healthy protein, snacks, and beverages are distributed to 30 students at Carver High School who are at risk of going without complete meals while home on the weekends. The backpack program runs each day during the school year calendar. With increased funding during the 2019-2020 school period, this program hopes to expand, providing a service to more students in need.

**Diocesan Involvement**

St. John’s is also committed to supporting several outstanding diocesan programs benefitting young people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The support we give is both financial and hands-on. These ministries are Camp McDowell with its Bethany Village and Sawyerville Summer Camp.

The McDowell Camp and Conference Center is the largest Episcopal Camp and Conference Center in the United States. It has been in existence since 1923 and has been at its present location on the edge of the Bankhead National Forest in Winston County, Alabama, since 1947. It comprises 1,140 acres of canyons, trails, streams, and waterfalls. It features Summer Camp, the Environmental Center, the Farm School, the Alabama Folk School, and the Magnolia Nature School. The Summer Camp Scholarship Fund ensures that everyone can attend. St. John’s parishioners camp, serve on staff, participate in Cursillo events, and attend Vestry retreats and Diocesan Conventions at Camp McDowell.

Bethany Village at Camp McDowell, opened in 2015, enabled the Diocese of Alabama to realize its dream of providing for campers with special needs. It also created job opportunities for individuals with physical and mental challenges. Special Session has grown to include two summer sessions and one fall program. Bethany’s 40 new buildings and other facilities are universally accessible, including its zero-entry swimming pool, which was furnished in its entirety by St. John’s.

Sawyerville Summer Camp is located in Hale County, Alabama, one of the state’s most rural and impoverished areas. It began as a day camp and has now grown to include three summer camp sessions, a summer learning program, and a mentoring program. St. John’s sends youth there each summer to serve on staff. Sawyerville also offers a program for staffers entitled Person2Person, which strives to improve race relations by inviting participating to pilgrimage across Montgomery, visiting civil rights venues, and equipping young people with tools to effect positive change.
Clergy, Vestry, and Staff

St. John's Episcopal Church is served by the following:
- Rector (full-time)
- Associate Rector (full-time)
- Priest Associate (part-time)
- Executive Assistant to the Rector
- Communications Administrator and Youth Director
- Financial Administrator
- Director of Children's Christian Formation
- Organist and Choirmaster
- Sexton and two Custodial Staff

The Vestry of St. John's Episcopal Church consists of 21 members. The members of the Vestry are nominated to stand for election at the Annual Meeting. Seven people are elected and join the 14 others previously elected. Vestry members serve for a term of three years. A Senior Warden is selected to lead the Vestry and is supported by a Junior Warden. A Clerk serves the Vestry.

The Vestry takes on the responsibility of considering and studying matters that concern the congregation as a whole. Vestry roles are held temporarily and by election. Different people, over time, serve in roles of responsibility. Their job is to make decisions for the parish with an eye to the future.

Communication

Parishioners are kept abreast of the happenings in and around St. John's through the weekly Eagle newsletter in print and electronic forms, highlighting our rector's message and news concerning our members and upcoming events. For up-to-the-minute information, This Week at St. John's emails and regular email blasts keep us informed. We also have Facebook and Instagram pages, which are updated daily. The website is updated frequently to reflect current sermons and new activities.

by the numbers

Parish statistics over the past 8 years reveal a stable, but somewhat declining, membership and lowered attendance. Total membership numbers reflect a sizeable group calling St. John's their church home while not attending or supporting the parish financially. Among those active, financial giving by parishioners has remained more consistent than Sunday attendance, but has been basically flat for this time period.

Of the members in our current database, 619 have provided birthdates. The age breakdown of those respondents is:

- 0 – 5: 14
- 6 – 10: 27
- 11 – 18: 83
- 19 – 30: 79
- 31 – 40: 56
- 41 – 50: 76
- 51 – 60: 95
- 61 – 65: 42
- 66 and older: 147

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<td>Total Baptized Membership</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>1,419</td>
<td>1,406</td>
<td>1,412</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>1,399</td>
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<td>Active Membership</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>1,070</td>
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<td>1,110</td>
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<td>Average Sunday Attendance</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>305</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Pledging Units</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>285</td>
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<td>$323,099</td>
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<td>$308,474</td>
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The following pages represent a snapshot of St. John’s at this moment in time and contain data derived from the recent 2019 Parish Survey and follow-up listening sessions. Of the approximately 950 active members, 255 responded to the survey and their answers are represented accordingly. Pages devoted to strengths, challenges, survey data and new rector qualities all include information directly derived from the parish survey. The parish profile committee has included pertinent information concerning topics about which our parishioners feel most strongly, along with other interesting statistics.

Overall, we are a vibrant, varied group of individuals with a great love of our parish. We see ourselves as a strong, cohesive group, but recognize the challenges we face when encountering complex decisions affecting our parish. We seek to transcend these challenges and embrace the future with hope, faith, and renewal.

For the parishioners who responded to the survey:

- 58% work full/part time, 28% are retired, 14% volunteer/are not employed
- 92% regularly attend 10:30 a.m. Sunday Holy Eucharist
- 90% appreciate experiencing both Rite I and Rite II liturgies
- 49% partake of and enjoy our Sunday morning breakfasts in the parish hall
- 66% would like to see more intergenerational programs
- 36% have no age preference for our new rector, 35% prefer someone 40-50 yrs. of age
- 87% pledge, 45% tithe

Immediate Goals
Respondents recognize the following as important and immediate goals for St. John’s:
+ Increase membership (especially young people and young families)
+ Unify the parish and rebuild trust among all members and leaders
+ Be more welcoming and inclusive, build diversity

Current Climate
An area of great concern to many respondents is the current morale of our parish. Though 39% respond that morale is high or very high, an almost equal 37% feel it is neither low nor high and 24% respond as low or very low. Transparency within St. John’s leadership is another area of concern. A small margin separates the 56% who feel conflicts in our parish are addressed openly and directly and the 44% who disagree. We look to a new rector to help rebuild a level of confidence within our congregation and lead with a relational rather than issue-oriented approach.

Parish Participation
Of the respondents, 86% feel the atmosphere at St. John’s is conducive to participation in events and activities and that we have sufficient opportunities in which to participate. However, a strong concern exists that more effort is required from parishioners to strengthen involvement in activities outside of Sunday worship.

Welcoming Newcomers
A closely related topic concerns newcomer participation. While many respondents express the opinion that St. John’s is a warm and welcoming parish, others report feeling a coldness that supports our old epithet of “the frozen chosen.” While St. John’s deliberately offers opportunities for extroverts and introverts, not all our parishioners believe we have struck the right balance. One suggestion encourages developing a more personalized mentoring program for new members and visitors.

Financial Strength
Overwhelmingly noted, a unifying sense of pride for the parishioners of St. John’s is our beautiful Education Building, the extensive renovation of our existing structure, including new appointments in all major areas, and the very recently completed payment of the construction loan. As of today, St. John’s is debt free. The overall cost of $15,000,000 was paid off in mid-2019. This massive undertaking was financed by the congregation at large and none of the capital was taken from the general fund. Our diocesan and outreach obligations were unaffected, as well. These beautiful facilities were designed with future growth in mind. The members of St. John’s greatly enjoy the fruits of this challenging enterprise and are gratified to have joined together in completion of this commitment.
Challenges:

- Increase attendance and participation in services and programs
- Heal division within the church
- Encourage more diversity in the membership
- Attract and retain new members, especially young families
- Coordinate our many forms of communication

Strengths:

- Strong leadership of our clergy and staff
- Liturgy and services
- Relationships among parishioners
- Quality of our Liturgical music
- Beauty of our facilities and grounds
- Outreach in the community
- Sense of tradition
- Historical influence in the community
- Financial stability and lack of debt
Twenty-five years have passed since our last parish profile. St. John’s is accustomed to long tenures and has been privileged to spend these years with a spiritual leader who has enriched us with unwavering guidance, friendship, and dedication. As with any lengthy relationship, the path has not always been straight, winding between stretches of harmony and moments of dissonance. The passing of time has inevitably brought us to this point of reevaluation and renewal. At the center of this renewal lies a sense of anticipation. The members of St. John’s affectionately embrace this long relationship, but recognize and welcome the opportunity to reenergize. We are poised to build a new spiritual relationship with a leader who will affirm and strengthen our future.

Ours is a parish of healthy resources and a strong history. Our church community has flourished, yet, in recent years, has experienced a decline in morale. We seek an innovative rector who will honor this history, reinvigorate our spirituality, and lead us with confidence. Applying these attributes with the following, we anticipate someone who:

+ Is a good communicator
+ Creates an atmosphere of trust
+ Demonstrates and imparts to persons of all ages a disciplined understanding of Biblical and historical revelation, the perceptions of God’s activity in the world, and the Christian faith
+ Is an effective parish administrator who efficiently manages the affairs and resources of the parish including programs, personnel, and finances
+ Provides and encourages consistent pastoral care
+ Is a sympathetic listener, assisting persons facing problems or important decisions
+ Encourages outreach programs and community involvement
+ Is optimistic and equipped with a healthy sense of humor
+ Is open to different viewpoints and allows them to be expressed