

CREATOR

Chronicle



January 2017

"As a congregation named for our Creator, we are children of the Living God, beloved brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, selflessly living out our faith in worship, fellowship, giving, education and outreach."

Restoring the Promise of Public Education The Case of Clinton, Mississippi

By Danielle Elliot

July 28, 1970, is a date that Virgil Belue will never forget. That morning he defended his doctoral dissertation, and that afternoon he started the job that would become his legacy to generations of students and to his native state of Mississippi.

On that day, Belue became the first superintendent of the schools in Clinton, Mississippi, a district that did not exist until a few weeks before. In 1954, with the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court had declared the segregation of schools in the South to be unconstitutional. Sixteen years later, Mississippi was still in court, and it remains so today, with 44 desegregation cases still active. The fact that no one is suing Clinton can be traced to decisions that Belue began making that summer day 46 years ago, sitting alone in a nurse's office in a district that had as yet no office for him, no budget, no school buses, no maintenance equipment, and just four weeks before students would report to school.

"Don't ask me why I decided to take the job," he said not long ago. Eighty-four years old now and long since retired, he remembered thinking it was a great challenge. "And another thing I thought was, 'Well, heck, I can't fail at this place.'"

He was wrong about that. Many have failed where he succeeded, then and since. Public schools in the U.S. are by some measures as segregated now as they were at the time of *Brown v. Board*.

What Belue did was both very simple and extremely difficult. Over time, carefully keeping local parents in the loop, he managed to rid Clinton of the "neighborhood school" concept, which allowed districts to redraw their boundaries street by street in order to maintain white and black schools as racial composition shifted. He designed a single school system for the whole Clinton district, so that students move through the schools together, from kindergarten through high school, regardless of where they live. Belue did, in other words, what many school districts have not done to this day: He eliminated not only the South's *de jure* segregation, which the Supreme Court had outlawed, but also the *de facto* segregation that continues to enforce segregation in many if not most of the nation's public schools.

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Rev. Robert M. Blanton, Priest-In-Charge * office hours: Monday—Thursday, 9:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.

Please call the church office, 601-924-2261, to schedule an appointment.



Prime Timers

Wednesday, January 4

12:00 - Healing Service

12:30 - Prime Timers' Pot Luck Lunch



The Divine Dance: Trinity and [Our] Transformation

What if changing our perception of God has the potential to change everything?

God is not what we think. Visions of an angry, distant, moral scorekeeper or a supernatural Santa Claus handing out cosmic lottery tickets to those who attend the right church or say the right prayer dominate our culture. For many others, God has become irrelevant or simply unbelievable.

In *The Divine Dance*, our old friend Fr. Richard Rohr (along with my new friend Mike Morrell) points readers to an unlikely opening beyond this divinity impasse: the at-times forgotten, ancient mystery of the *Trinity* . . . God as utterly one, yet three.

Drawing from Scripture, theology, and the deepest insights of mystics, philosophers, and sages throughout history, Fr. Rohr presents a compelling alternative to distant and fairytale versions of God:

One God, belovedly in communion, as All-Vulnerable, All-Embracing, and All-Given to you and me.

The Divine Dance makes accessible and practicable the Christian tradition's most surprising gift . . . *God as Community* . . . as *Friendship*... as *Dance*.

Come join us on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.



Creator Outdoor Work Day

8:30am - 11:30am

January 21



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

TROOP 345 2017 CALENDAR

- JAN 5 Eagle BOR
9 1ST Troop Meeting
10 Adult Roundtable
13-15 VOLT (Volunteer Outdoor Leader Training), Hood
21 HSR Camp Staff Interviews (8:30-Noon)
28 STEM Weekend (8:30-4:00)
OA Lodge Banquet
- FEB 2 Eagle BOR
3 Eagle Banquet, Jackson Hilton Hotel (6:30 pm)
12 Scout Sunday
14 Adult Roundtable
17-19 Spring Camporee, 4 Rivers District
24-26 6th Annual Mississippi Indian Seminar
- Mar 2 Eagle BOR
Apr 6 Eagle BOR
May 4 Eagle BOR
June 1 Eagle BOR
July 6 Eagle BOR



Scoutmaster, Troop #345

Franklin Nored

601-260-3166

Email: ffnored@comcast.net



Prepared. For Life.®



Pack 345

Cubmaster: Mike Milone

Pack Committee: Jim Brantley, Chairman, Edie Hill, John Fox,
Richard McMullan



Calendar - 2017

January, 2017

- 20 - 22 Cub Scout Polar Weekend (Hood Scout Reservation)
- 26 Pack Meeting, 6:00 pm

February

- 12 Scout Sunday (@ church @ 10:00 am)
- 23 Pack Meeting, 6:00 pm (Pinewood Derby)

March

- 30 Pack Meeting, 6:00 pm
- 31 Cuboree Weekend

April

- 1 Cuboree Weekend
- 2 Cuboree Weekend
- 27 Pack Meeting, 6:00 pm

May

- 25 Last Pack Meeting, 6:00 pm (Blue & Gold Banquet)
Graduation



VESTRY DIGEST

The December 19 meeting of the Vestry of Creator:

Present: Bob Blanton, Priest in Charge, Joyce White, Senior Warden, Frank Hennington, Jr. Warden, Vicki Donaho, Chuck Runyan, Mimi Bussell, Deborah Runyan, Clerk of the Vestry

Absent: Andrew Wilder

Junior Warden Report:

- The men's commode seat was replaced
- Lights have been replaced in the Narthex
- Odds and ends were handled as they came up.
- Discussion held regarding LED light replacement in the Nave.
- Communication needed with church cleaners regarding cobwebs in the church windows and extra cleaning tasks which need to be completed. Beth will speak to cleaners on this subject.
- Discussion was held to allow the junior warden to call David Landrum as needed for extra work around the property. Chuck Runyan moved to allow the junior warden the authority to do so, and the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- A clean up day list will be developed and posted in the parish hall in January for 2017.

Treasurer Report:

- Mike Piazza sent the treasurer report to the vestry since he was unable to attend the meeting.

Old Business:

- There was no update on the murder mystery dinner theatre other than the fact that further discussion on the subject was postponed until later in the year.
- Youth Sunday School: John Lanford would like to talk to our youth on a 1:1 basis to determine where their interests are and what kind of programs would best suit them.

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New Business:

- John Lanford looking into speakers for the nursery, so adults can hear the service when they are in there.
- John will work with Frank and Mike on this project.
- A contact letter from Bill Hannah regarding his work here was received. A meeting for the Outreach Committee will need to be scheduled.
- Discussion of Valentine Dinner was held. Vicki Donaho is investigating catering costs and date availability.
- Effective January 1st, Chuck Runyan will be the new scoutmaster for Troop 345 and he will be unable to attend the January Vestry Meeting due to his new role.
- Vicki Donaho volunteered to complete the final year of Jane Kany's term, which is currently being filled by Mimi Bussell. Conversation was held on potential new vestry members for 2017.
- A new clerk will be needed effective February 1st, 2017. Deborah Runyan will no longer be able to serve in this position.
- Ezra sent information regarding organist fees in the Episcopal Church, which are based on experience, degrees, and hours of work. Mike Piazza has recommended \$1,000 a month for our organist. Chuck Runyan moved to allow Ezra the discretion of negotiating up to \$1,000 a month for our organist. The motion was seconded and passed.
- Jennifer Wilson and Will Duncan's wedding will be on January 1st.

Minutes of vestry meetings may be found on the bulletin board outside the administrator's office following their approval and correction if needed. If you would like a copy, please call the office and a copy will be provided to you via email.

CREATOR *January Calendar*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:00 am: Mass 9:00 am: Sunday school 10:30 am: Mass Wilson-Duncan Wedding Reception following	2 6:30 pm: Boy Scouts 7:30 pm: DOA—Big Book Group	3 12:00 pm: AA Meeting OFFICE CLOSED	4 7:00 pm: Adult Choir	5 12:00 pm: AA Meeting 6:00 pm: Cub Scouts Worship Committee Meeting 11:30 am	6  EPIPHANY	7 5 pm: AA / Al-Anon Meeting
8 8:00 am: Mass 9:00 am: Sunday school 10:30 am: Mass Baptism of our Lord	9 6:30 pm: Vestry 6:30 pm: Boy Scouts 7:30 pm: DOA—Big Book Group	10 12:00 pm: AA Meeting	11 7:00 pm: Adult Choir	12 12:00 pm: AA Meeting 6:00 pm: Cub Scouts	13	14 5 pm: AA / Al-Anon Meeting Parish Hall Rental 9 am - 1 pm
15 8:00 am: Mass 9:00 am: Sunday school 10:30 am: Mass FOOD PANTRY for the 4 C's	16 6:30 pm: Boy Scouts 7:30 pm: DOA—Big Book Group MLK Day OFFICE CLOSED	17 12:00 pm: AA Meeting	18 7:00 pm: Adult Choir	19 12:00 pm: AA Meeting 6:00 pm: Cub Scouts	20	21 5 pm: AA / Al-Anon Meeting Outdoor Work Day 8:30 am - 11:30 am
22 Annual Parish Meeting & Luncheon 8:00 am: No Service 9:00 am: No Sunday school 10:30 am: Mass	23 6:30 pm: Boy Scouts 7:30 pm: DOA—Big Book Group	24 12:00 pm: AA Meeting	25 7:00 pm: Adult Choir	26 12:00 pm: AA Meeting 6:00 pm: Cub Scouts	27	28 5 pm: AA / Al-Anon Meeting
29 8:00 am: Mass 9:00 am: Sunday school 10:30 am: Mass	30 6:30 pm: Boy Scouts 7:30 pm: DOA—Big Book Group	31 12:00 pm: AA Meeting	1 7:00 pm: Adult Choir	2 12:00 pm: AA Meeting 6:00 pm: Cub Scouts	3 Annual Council 3rd- 5th	4 5 pm: AA / Al-Anon Meeting

January Servers

	1	8	15	22	29
	Wilson-Duncan Wedding		Home Communion	Annual Parish Meeting	
Chalice	Mike Milone Bob White	Richard McMullan Chuck Runyan	Mike Milone Wendy Brantley	Bob White Tori Meyers	Mike Milone Joyce White
Lectors	Chuck Runyan Deborah Runyan	John Lanford Joan Blanton	Deborah Runyan Mimi Bussell	Michael Piazza Max Lanford	Fred Shirley John Richard
Prayers	N/A	Chuck Runyan	Janie Fields	Fred Shirley	Wendy Brantley
Acolytes	Maddie Gray Braley Landon Daniel	John Richard Ruby Lanford	Landon Daniel Max Lanford	Maddie Gray Braley Rowan Braley	John Richard Rowan Braley
Ushers	Frank Hennington Bettye Sue Hennington	Vicky Donaho Abby Donaho	Richard McMullan Rivers McMullan	Beth Braley Stone Braley	Doug George Tristan McMullan
Altar	Joyce White	Katy Lanford	Rhea Estes	Larry Estes	Beth Braley
Home Communion			Mimi Bussell, Edie Hill		
Vestry Person of the Day	Joyce White	Vicky Donaho	Chuck Runyan	Frank Hennington	Mimi Bussell



Birthdays & Anniversaries



Birthdays

- 2 Lonnie Carlton
Jeremy Randall
- 13 Bill Singletary
- 17 Doug George
- 20 Donna Corkern
- 21 Rivers McMullan
- 22 Elisabet McGahey

- 24 Edie Hill
- 27 Alexx Shirley

Anniversaries

- 11 Jim & Wendy Brantley

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He also created what is by any measure a great school system. In what was once the most racially conflicted bastion of the Deep South, Clinton's schools are fully integrated—57 percent black, 34 percent white, 9 percent “other”—and its high school graduation rate is substantially outperforming that of both the state and the nation. As black families were drawn into the district by the excellence of the Clinton schools, there was none of the “white flight” that filled the suburbs and established the ghettos of Northern cities. The schools were too good, and as integration increased, they just kept getting better.

There is a lesson here.

Belue was born during the Great Depression, and he grew up in a three-room house with dirt floors. The family didn't have electricity until he was in 10th grade. There were no African Americans in his neighborhood or even close by. In fact, he says, he didn't know any black people until he enlisted in the 1950s Air Force, which by that time was desegregated. Because he grew up in a strictly white area with no overt racial conflict, he was not confronted by the everyday racism then so common in the South. As the son of a church-going family, though, he did embrace a deep faith that for him, he says, comes down to a single principle: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. To him, “others” has always meant everyone.

At his first meeting with Clinton's teachers and administrators, he did not announce a master plan for integration. He wasn't yet clear on it himself. But he did announce that the Clinton school system would live by certain principles, beginning with the golden rule, which meant equal opportunity regardless of the color of a child's skin. He also declared that everyone—students and teachers, black and white alike—would be measured strictly on the basis of merit, and that teachers would be accountable for holding students to increasingly high standards.

“Whether we are good, better, or best,” he remembers telling them, “we shall not rest until the good becomes better and the better becomes best. If you're doing a good job, or whatever, let's try to do a better job. Then, after we're doing better, let's see if we can do the best job.”

By the time he met with them again the following summer, he had his plan ready: Students in the district would no longer go to the school nearest home but to the one dedicated to his or her grade. All first and second-graders would go to one school, third- and fourth-graders to another, and so on. He called it a “community school system,” which doesn't sound as revolutionary as it was. For all practical purposes, it locked in integration at all of Clinton's district schools. The school board agreed to his plan, he says, because it made the best use of resources. The district didn't have to buy duplicate equipment for different schools. Principals would need to know three grade levels at most rather than entire curriculums for elementary, middle, and high school. It also helped that in Clinton, the superintendent and school board members are not elected, so no one had to worry about losing votes.

Though a few white families moved their children into private schools, most stayed. The district was less than 15 percent black then, but even so the move from segregated to integrated schools came, to some, as a shock. So, to some, did the result: The Clinton schools' record of academic achievement, slowly at first and not without setbacks, began going up. In 1981, Clinton incorporated two of Hinds County's all-black schools, a high school and an elementary/middle school. The high school building became the district's ninth grade, the lower school took all the sixth graders—and the Clinton schools, now even more diverse, continued to improve.

The following year, when President Ronald Reagan created the National Blue Ribbon award to recognize “schools where students master challenging content,” the Clinton school district was the first to receive it. Belue traveled to Washington, D.C. to accept the award, and he treasures his picture of the moment when the President shook his hand.

No one should have found Clinton's continuing success surprising, since an abundance of research could have predicted it. As Stanford University professor Sean F. Reardon put it last year in *The Atlantic*, a school's socioeconomic diversity or lack of it “is the best predictor of the racial-achievement gap.”

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Clinton is a middle-class community now, where median income is well above the state average, but more than 40 percent of its students still qualify for the federal free- or reduced-price lunch program. The Clinton schools prove that diversity works to all students' advantage, but we knew that, or should have known.

Across the country in the 1970s and 1980s, when school integration reached its all-time high, the achievement gap between white and black students was cut almost in half, not by bringing down the best students but by raising up others to meet them. The country's black and poor kids kept improving just as their white classmates did, only faster.

During the reaction of the late 1980s and 1990s, that changed. As affirmative action gave way to the "colorblind" theory of racial justice and the sustained assault on "forced busing" took its toll, the number of high schools with a 99-percent black student body began a steep and steady rise, from 2,762 in 1988 to 6,727 in 2011. In those years, wherever federal oversight ended, 60 percent of the progress that had been made against the achievement gap was reversed. Black students closest to graduating high school were hit the hardest.

In part because they remained integrated, the Clinton schools defied that trend. Their rankings and graduation rate kept climbing. Today, Clinton High School graduates 92 percent of its students, about 10 points higher than the national average, 17 points higher than the state's. In test results, CHS is on par with the area's most rigorous private academies. According to rankings by Niche, a Pittsburgh-based company that runs data analytics on every school in the U.S., Clinton's teachers are the best in the state.

"Our success has to be that we work together, get along together, and have respect for one another," says Belue, who still visits the district regularly and sits in the same seat at the stadium for every Friday-night football game. "We just tried to establish an atmosphere where it didn't matter whether you were black or white. You need to perform according to what we expect."

TV monitors in the hallways at Clinton High flash school news all day long. On one day recently, it reminded students that CHS is the top-ranked district in the state, that the girls' track team would be awarded its state championship rings for the fourth consecutive year on Friday, and that its undefeated football team would be playing a cross-county rival that night. The final message in every day's rotation, however, is always the same: "Excellence is the only option."

Everyone at CHS knows that message is meant for her and him, for students and teachers in regular-level classes and remedial intervention courses as well as those in one of the high school's 11 AP classes. It's taken personally at the separate career campus, too, where more than 400 CHS students take advanced electives in subjects from mechanical engineering to graphic design. Clinton students start hearing about excellence in kindergarten, and alumni say they keep thinking about it long after graduation day.

"They expect a whole bunch," says Cameron White, a senior who transferred into CHS last year and felt that pressure immediately. "Here, you got to get yourself together. They're not going to let you fail. They want the best out of everybody. They're going to be on you all day."

High expectations are the whole point, says Anthony Goins, who has been principal of CHS since 2012 and spent 14 years before that as head of the school for seventh and eighth grades. "Kids will rise to whatever you expect for them. If you set the bar low, they'll give you that. If you set the bar high, they'll achieve that. The biggest thing is to keep the standards high, and not just for some but for all." Clinton schools don't teach to the middle.

They don't skimp on resources either. "I think you'd be hard-pressed to find schools that offer more than what we offer our kids here—the fully equipped science labs, art labs, even our athletic facilities," says Goins. In a state known for some of the worst schools in the nation and a school system that is fifth lowest in per-student funding (roughly \$8000 versus \$20,000 in first-place New York State), every CHS student carries a personal laptop. In lower grades, every student has a tablet. PTA fundraisers and an annual \$50 student fee cover the funding gaps. The amount of financial support Clinton gets from its parents is typical of more affluent districts, but Clinton's parents get the message about excellence too.

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The minority students score well above state averages, but the Clinton schools are still working hard to close a persistent achievement gap. In 2009, for example, 85 percent of Clinton's white students met the standard for proficiency on the state's English exams, but only 52 percent of their black classmates did. The district responded by doubling the length of regular-level humanities courses. By 2012, they cut the gap by two-thirds, which still left an 11-point difference. They've almost closed the gap in math, but they're still working on the sciences.

Teachers also say that while their honors and AP courses have become significantly more diverse than they were just five years ago, the numbers still don't reflect the makeup of the student body. "How do you get the numbers to not skew? That's one of those nationwide questions that if I had the answer to it, I promise you I will write the book and sell it," Goins says with a laugh. "I wish I could say that it was a situation where just based on data it's going to be a 50/50 split. It's not." Still, he refuses to reserve a certain number of places in any class for blacks and whites. At CHS, all students have to earn their seats. "The goal is to increase our numbers of kids participating, period. When our numbers increase, more African Americans will be in those classes."

There are still white parents in the district who decide to send their children to private academies, but it's a bad bet: They'll be paying tuition just to pull their children out of one of the best schools in the state. Last year, only 19 districts out of the state's 148 earned an "A" grading on the state's A-F ratings scale. Clinton was one of them. Only one of the other 18 has a large minority population, and, in 15 of the rest, whites represent more than 70 percent of the population. If nothing else, Clinton shows it doesn't have to be that way.

Teacher Zach Osborn warns against the notion that "just because we're a diverse school we live in a post-racial dreamland. Race is still messy, and it's an issue, and things come up. But I've talked to too many people who assumed that we are achieving at such a high level and succeeding despite our diversity. In reality it's partly because of our diversity. I think we're onto something here."

There was a time, years ago, when Clinton was divided by a two-lane road that marked a boundary called the "Natchez Trace." Blacks lived on one side of it, whites on the other. Since Belue took over the Clinton schools, however, the general population of the Clinton district has more than tripled, with black families moving in, not whites moving out. To accommodate that growing population, large housing developments went up on both sides of the Trace. Blacks and whites live there together now. That would never have happened, says Belue, if Clinton had stuck to "neighborhood schools."

Elsewhere in Mississippi, there are districts that have been fighting integration for more than 40 years. In Cleveland, a hundred miles north of Clinton, a group of black parents filed a lawsuit demanding integration in 1965. The U.S. District Court sided with them in 1969. Since then the historically white high school has been integrated, but there are no white students enrolled fulltime at the historically black school. This year, a federal judge ruled that Cleveland's high schools must finally merge. Much like Clinton, the school will be about 70 percent minority.

There are miles to go in Cleveland, especially if its merger prompts white flight. If not, the rewards could be great. Research has long shown that integrated schools help all their students. White students show more empathy and less racial prejudice; they work harder and perform at least as well as they do at segregated schools. Black students become more likely to graduate, to attend college, to graduate college, and to lead successful careers. Just five years of integrated schooling correlates with 15 percent more lifetime earnings. But those in Clinton don't need academic studies to tell them there are benefits. They're living it, and have been for 40 years.

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“How’s it at your school, boo?” Roberta Calloway asks her granddaughter Michaela, an eighth-grader at Clinton Junior High. Michaela doesn’t answer, so she asks again. “You don’t know? Come on,” she says. “You know. How they treat you?” Michaela just shrugs.

Roberta graduated from an all-black high school in 1978, the one Clinton later took over from Hinds County. She went on to study at a historically black college. Like Belue, she can’t remember spending any time at all with another race when she was growing up, or even since.

She turns to her daughter Aubrey, Michaela’s mother, who graduated from Clinton High. Aubrey knows what her mother is feeling. “I think it’s better this way,” Roberta says. “Spending more time together. I would’ve liked to have that.”

Still, she won’t give up on Michaela. “How y’all sit at the table, blacks on one side, whites on the other? Is that how y’all sitting at lunch?”

At that, Michaela turns around and gives Roberta a look that every parent and grandparent knows, the arched-eyebrow stare.

She has no idea what her grandmother is talking about.

Article submitted by Rev. Bob Blanton

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Episcopal Church of the Creator

Church Office Hours:

9:00 am—2 pm, Monday—Thursday

Presiding Bishop

The Most Reverend Michael Curry

Bishop

The Very Reverend Brian Seage

Priest-In-Charge

The Reverend Robert M. Blanton

Administrator

Beth Braley

ecreator@bellsouth.net

Choir Director

Ezra Wall

ewallmedia@gmail.com

Senior Warden

Joyce White, 601-924-3796

Junior Warden

Frank Hennington, 601-924-3056

Treasurer

Vacant

Vestry

Chuck Runyan, 601-925-0829

Andrew Wilder, 601-842-0058

John Lanford, 601-708-4374

Mimi Bussell, 601-924-7066

Vicky Donaho, 601-924-5107

Contacts

Church Office

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Pastoral Emergencies

Rev. Robert M. Blanton, Cell: 601-291-0652

Polly Marshall, Cell: 601-953-2980

Acolytes

Mike Milone, Cell: 601-473-6305

Adult Christian Education

Rev. Robert M. Blanton, Cell: 601-291-0652

Altar Guild

Larry & Rhea Estes, Cell: 601-813-3859

Choir

Ezra Wall, Cell: 601-454-4811, Text preferred

Children's Christian Education

Rev. Robert M. Blanton, Cell: 601-291-0652

Columbarium

Wendy Brantley, Home: 601-924-1695

Flower Guild

Becky Wright, Cell: 601-940-4861

Betty Sue Hennington, Cell: 601-955-9970

Funeral Guild

Chuck Runyan, 601-925-0829

Parish Lunches & Special Events

Janie Fields, Home: 601-922-2759, Cell: 601-624-8614

Scouting Committee Chairman

Jim Brantley, Cell: 601-940-1962

Wedding Coordinator

Kathy Milone, Home: 601-925-6009



Episcopal Church of the Creator
1445 Clinton-Raymond Rd.
Clinton, MS 39056

*We are part of the Worldwide Anglican Communion and in communion with the
Archbishop of Canterbury.*

“We are a congregation of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi: One church in mission, inviting, transforming, and reconciling. We seek to serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being.”