Many Members, One Body.

1 Corinthians 12:12



The Episcopal Church in Alabama

Dear Clergy and Lay Leaders,

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (12:12). Paul was not an Episcopalian in Alabama, but he could have been. Our diocese is one body, made up of 86 individual parishes and other ministries.

As a diocese, we are able to do things together that no single parish could do alone. Acting as one body, Camp McDowell, Sawyerville, Cursillo, and raising up future leaders for the Church are movements of the Spirit we do together with grace and skill. There are countless examples of how we are better able to recognize and experience the work of the Holy Spirit because we are connected to one another as one diocese.

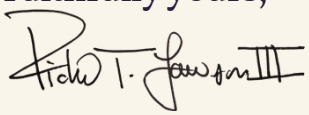
I also deeply appreciate how the Diocese of Alabama connects us to the worldwide Anglican Communion. This tradition of Christianity has its roots in the ancient Celtic churches of Ireland, Britain, and in the mission of St. Augustine of Canterbury in 597 AD. These ancient roots ground us in the Gospel, in Christ's sacraments, and in a form of Christianity, that with God's help, that has a very bright future.

The mission of our diocese is funded primarily through parish covenants. I ask that you give prayerfully and generously.

If you are able, please consider increasing your covenant from last year. The Diocesan Council and I are working on the 2027 budget. It is important in my first year as bishop to understand what staffing levels our covenant commitments will allow us to sustain in order to support our shared ministries.

I am profoundly grateful for all of you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for sharing Christ's unconditional love in word and deed throughout the state of Alabama.

Faithfully yours,



The Right Reverend Richard Lawson



What is a parish covenant?

Every parish is asked to make an annual covenant gift to the Diocese of Alabama to support our shared mission and ministry. These gifts fund diocesan ministries, provide support and resources for congregations, and enable the diocese to fulfill its commitment to the wider Episcopal Church.

This is St. Paul's "Many Members, One Body" in practice: individuals give to their parish, parishes give to the diocese, and the diocese gives to the wider Church. No gift stands alone. Each makes the others possible.

What are the covenant guidelines?

Just as the biblical tithe is set at 10%, there are guidelines for the parish covenant. Congregations with an income below $150,000 are asked to contribute 10%, while those with income above $150,000 are asked to contribute 15%. This percentage is calculated based on the "unrestricted and undesignated income" of each parish. These guidelines were established by our Diocesan Convention in 2000 and reaffirmed in 2003.

How and when does a parish make a covenant?

Parishes are invited to submit their covenant renewal online by **December 15, 2026**. Scan the QR code to access the online form. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Connie Bryson, Director of Finance, (205) 358-9225 or cbryson@dioala.org.

We Walk Alongside

The diocese provides practical resources, guidance, and support to help congregations thrive.



Since 2020, the diocese has awarded 408 grants totaling nearly $1.2 million, helping churches expand ministry, serve their communities, care for creation, and strengthen parish life.

In 2026, 90 grants totaling $249,275 were awarded to parishes across Alabama:

- 25 Outreach Grants ($79,810) supported ministries such as food pantries, backpack programs, ESL classes, children's ministries, meal programs, and other efforts that share Christ's love in practical ways.
- 20 Creation Care Grants ($5,000) funded projects including pollinator gardens, landscaping improvements, and environmental initiatives that help congregations steward God's creation.
- 45 Refresh & Renew Grants ($164,465) helped parishes enhance accessibility, upgrade playgrounds, improve technology, complete building repairs, install signage, and renovate gathering spaces to better support ministry and hospitality.

The diocese also equips congregations with practical tools, expert guidance, and personal support to help their ministries flourish.

- 16 parishes participated in website training and communications workshops in 2026, while diocesan staff continued providing website hosting and technical support.
- 2 congregations received strategic communications consulting to strengthen their digital presence, engage their communities more effectively, and share the Gospel more broadly.
- 12 parishes worked with a diocesan consultant to assess opportunities, navigate challenges, and build plans for a stronger future.

During clergy transitions, the Canon to the Ordinary walks alongside congregations through every stage of the rector search process, from announcing a vacancy to welcoming a new rector.

86 Parishes

Relationships remain at the heart of our shared ministry. In 2026, Bishop Glenda and Bishop Richard made 59 parish visits, participated in 55 diocesan gatherings and events, and celebrated 9 new ministry services.

Through visitations, pastoral engagements, and diocesan gatherings, they strengthened connections among clergy and congregations across Alabama.

Since his consecration, Bishop Richard has prioritized meeting personally with clergy throughout the diocese, deepening relationships and strengthening support for those who lead our congregations.





Our Shared Ministry

The diocese exists to support the work of our congregations. Every Sunday, thousands gather for worship, formation, fellowship, and service.

Together, our parishes are welcoming new members, nurturing faith, and sharing Christ's love in communities across Alabama.

86 Parishes

27,001 Members

7,630 Average Sunday Attendance

565 Confirmations and Receptions

We Support Children, Youth, and Young Adults in their life in Christ

The diocese partners with parishes to help children, youth, and young adults grow in faith, build lasting relationships, and discover their place in the Church. Through Camp McDowell, Sawyerville, diocesan youth events, and campus ministries, we support congregations in forming the next generation of disciples and leaders.

Camp McDowell

For generations, Camp McDowell has been a place where young people encounter Christ, build community, and deepen their faith.

- 834 campers attended Clear Creek Camp in 2026.
- 123 children, youth, and volunteers participated in Bethany's Kids, a ministry supported by volunteers from congregations across the diocese.
- During Special Session, 83 campers, 34 youth volunteers, and 63 adult volunteers spent a week creating a loving, welcoming, and inclusive community where all God's people could experience belonging, friendship, and faith.
- More than 3,215 Episcopalians gathered at Camp McDowell over the last year through youth events, parish gatherings and retreats, conferences, and other diocesan programs.

Camp McDowell not only serves campers, but also strengthens parish life by providing opportunities for retreat, worship, fellowship, leadership development, and spiritual renewal throughout the year.

Formation Beyond Camp

The diocese also partners with congregations to support children, youth, and young adults at every stage of faith formation.

- The Children's Steering Committee representing 12 parishes was established in 2026.
- More than 40 parishes participated in diocesan children's and youth ministry networks.
- 135 youth participated in diocesan events and leadership opportunities.
- 65 college students connected through campus ministry gatherings.
- College and young adult ministries expanded to nine locations across the diocese.







Sawyerville

Sawyerville continues to transform lives through education, leadership development, and community engagement in Hale County.

- More than 300 children attended free summer camp programs.
- Nearly 580 camper experiences were provided through three camp sessions.
- More than 200 volunteers served children and families.
- 99 students participated in summer learning programs.
- 31 pre-kindergarten students participated in JumpStart.
- 15 college students served as summer interns.
- 23 students received $23,000 in scholarships through the Leslie Manning Scholarship Fund.

From Camp McDowell to Sawyerville to campus ministry, the next generation does not meet Christ through one parish alone — they meet him through the whole body, gathered around them. The diocese invests in the future of the Church and equips congregations to share the Gospel with the next generation.

We Raise up Leaders, Lay and Ordained, to preach the Gospel and Share Christ's Sacraments

Helping people discover and answer God's call.

Strong congregations depend on faithful leaders. The diocese partners with parishes to identify, equip, and support clergy and lay leaders who serve their communities and strengthen the Church.

In 2026:

- 10 people are in formation for ordained ministry, preparing to serve the Church as future clergy.
- 7 individuals participated in diocesan discernment, exploring God's call to ordained ministry.
- 27 people completed Lay Ministry Pathways, equipping them for leadership in Preaching, Pastoral Care, and Worship Leading.

Clergy and lay leaders gathered for ongoing formation, training, and support through opportunities such as Vestry Training, Clergy Conference, and other leadership development programs.

By investing in discernment, formation, and leadership development, the diocese helps parishes raise up faithful leaders who can guide, support, and strengthen their congregations for generations to come. Every leader raised up here doesn't just serve one parish — they strengthen the whole body of the diocese.



We Build Beloved Communities

The diocese supports parishes in the work of building beloved community, fostering reconciliation, and creating spaces where all God's people can grow in faith together. In 2026, nearly 250 people participated in the 30th Jonathan Daniels and the Martyrs of Alabama Pilgrimage, while the growing Scottsboro Boys Pilgrimage continued to connect faith, justice, and remembrance.



The diocese also invests in leadership and belonging through initiatives such as the Retreat for Clergy and Lay Leaders of Color, Trauma-Informed Ministry training, and Mental Health First Aid certification for clergy and ministry leaders. This year, the Retreat for Clergy and Lay Leaders of Color welcomed 13 participants. More than 100 Episcopalians from across the diocese participated in the Central Alabama Pride Parade, and 50 participants attended the annual LGBTQ+ retreat, many experiencing their first diocesan event.



Additionally, the diocese is strengthening relationships beyond Alabama through a growing partnership with the Diocese of Honduras, fostering mutual learning, shared ministry, and deeper connections across the Church.

St. Paul's image doesn't stop at unity - it insists every member is necessary. Through pilgrimage, formation, advocacy, and relationship-building, the diocese equips parishes to reflect God's reconciling love in their communities and beyond.



"O God, by your grace you have called us in the Diocese of Alabama to a goodly fellowship of faith. Bless our Bishop and clergy, and all our people. Grant that your Word may be truly preached and truly heard, your Sacraments faithfully administered and faithfully received. By your Spirit, fashion our lives according to the example of your Son, and grant that we may show the power of your love to all among whom we live; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

- Book of Common Prayer, p. 817

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