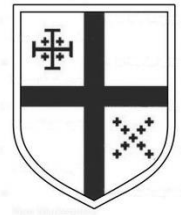


# Glad Tidings



The Newsletter of the United Episcopal Church of North America

Advent 2021

## SOUTH & OZARKS CONVOCATION

Clergy and lay representatives of the Missionary Diocese of the South and Ozarks met on September 15-16, 2021, in Branson, Missouri for their annual Convocation. All eight parishes/missions within the Diocese were represented, either by physical attendees, or by designated representatives, for certain critical votes. Father Jim McTaggart and the people of St. Joseph of Arimathea Anglican Church hosted the two-day event.



*L to R:*

*Dcn Christian Dove, Dcn Kenyon Bunch, Fr Jerry Ellington, Fr Tom Hiter, Chaplain Dan Sparks, Fr Jim McTaggart, & Lay Reader Don Holland.*

A social event “kicked” it off on Wednesday evening, hosted by the McTaggarts, and attended by not only out-of-town representatives, but also many members of the St. Joseph’s congregation. The formal meeting began on Thursday morning with Morning Prayer followed by a service of Holy Communion. Following that, the first Business Session convened in the Parish Hall, and the first order of business (after insuring that a quorum was present) was the election of a new Bishop of the District by the Council of Advice. Elected was Father Daniel Sparks, who in addition to being a UECNA priest, has of late been a VA hospital Chaplain. Bishop-elect Sparks, a native of Alabama, served as a U. S. Army Chaplain for several years before leaving active duty to go to work for the VA. Currently assigned to the Veteran’s Hospital in Columbia, Missouri, Bishop-elect Sparks anticipates transfer to the Veteran’s Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, in the near future.



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After lunch, provided by the ladies of St. Joseph's, the second Business Session was held, consisting mostly of parish reports and plans for next year's convocation, which is expected to be located in Alabama. The likely relocation of the Bishop, while certainly convenient, was not the primary argument in favor of that location!

Several members of the clergy in the Diocese are sick, including Fr Rodney Jackson of All Saints Anglican, in Boaz, Alabama, Bishop emeritus Glen Hartley in Ava, Missouri, and Canon Tom Bradshaw in Heber Springs, Arkansas, and special prayers and greetings went out to them all. Father Jerry Ellington, who recently returned to the Missionary Diocese after several years in Mexico and Arizona has also been ill, and a special short service of healing and laying on of hands was held after Holy Communion. Fr Ellington and his wife, Edith were present, though not yet formally transferred back into the MDSO.

Fr Keith Bernarducci, was unable to attend the Convocation because, as was announced at the Business Meeting, his long labors in western Florida have recently been rewarded by the planting of a new UECNA Mission there, St. Michaels, in Pea Ridge, FL, and their first organized worship service was scheduled for Saturday immediately following the Convocation, and travel time being what it is, there just wasn't time. ~ Fr Tom Hiter



**Bishop-elect Rev. Daniel J. Sparks** is a native of Alabama, where he was reared in a Christian family, the youngest of six children. He was fostered in the faith in early childhood through the diligent guidance of his mother, especially in daily Bible reading and prayer around the kitchen table with his siblings. Weekly Sunday school instruction at his childhood church also had a great impact on his early life. At 12, he expressed interest in ministry and began lay preaching in his country church at 17.

He completed undergraduate studies in U.S. history and political science at The University of Alabama (B.A.). In college, Rev. Sparks was active in a campus ministry, and he served as a student leader of a small discipleship group. In his senior year of college, he began a process of discernment for ministry, and he matriculated in seminary a month after university graduation.

Rev. Sparks completed seminary at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University (M.Div.) in Birmingham. While there, he benefited from instruction by noteworthy Anglican professor Gerald Bray. During his seminary years and early parish ministry, he was a chaplain candidate in the U.S. Army Reserve. He served as a deacon in Birmingham and later as curate in South Alabama. As a presbyter, he worked in university campus ministry in Tuscaloosa and, later, as an assisting pastor for a mission in Birmingham.

From 2006 to 2011, Rev. Sparks worked as an active-duty chaplain in the U.S. Army, completing combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. Ministry in the military left a lasting impression upon him, and he continues to minister to military veterans. After leaving active duty, he was an assistant pastor of a Texas parish and interim headmaster of the parochial school. He then served as vicar of a mission in Indiana. He completed a year of residency in clinical pastoral education (CPE) at a Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in Georgia. Afterward, he ministered as a chaplain at the Columbia, Missouri VA hospital. Recently, he accepted a transfer to the VA hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, where he currently ministers.

Rev. Sparks is an Advanced Practice Board Certified Chaplain in Hospice and Palliative Care. He has completed additional training and experience in crisis and trauma ministry and pastoral counseling. He is a member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He is also a writer and editor of digital and print publications. He has been in ordained ministry for 19 years.