What is a “Companion Relationship”? The Companion Diocese Program was first formed in 1968 with a two-fold purpose.

The Program was aimed at strengthening the Anglican Communion through shared experiences across cultural and geographical boundaries within the Body of Christ. The second purpose is to strengthen one another for mission by building a relationship in which each partner is both “giver” and “receiver”.

Almost fifty years later the Program has evolved into a global call to share our cross-cultural experiences and God-given gifts with others. We are called to find out what others are experiencing in different parts of God’s vineyard and, most importantly, to find out how we can help each other.

A Companion Relationship requires the total commitment of the Bishop and the Diocesan Convention, the focus of which is the Whole People of God, not simply church leadership. The decision to enter into a Companion Relationship must be mutual. Partners are encouraged to draft an agreement or covenant to include the length of the relationship; program activities; financial arrangements and an evaluation process.

Having closed its six-year relationship with the Diocese of Haiti, the Alabama Discernment Team prayerfully considered and searched for other dioceses with which to partner. Led by the Holy Spirit, the Discernment Team chose the Dioceses of the Virgin Islands and Alaska to enter into its next companion relationship.

Sanctioned by its Convention, the Virgin Islands accepted the call and agreed to the partnership with hopes of enriching all participants through mutual companionship in common mission and prayer.

Individuals from parishes in each diocese were selected to be the companions. The Companion Relationship Commission met via conference calls almost monthly since May, 2015.

In August, a five-member delegation from the Virgin Islands travelled to Alabama to meet and fellowship with their companions. At this meeting, the framework of the Covenant was crafted.

**Inside this Issue:**
- The Diocese of Alabama
- The Diocese of the Virgin Islands
- The Companion Relationship Commission
- Virgin Islands Delegation In Alabama/Companionship Prayer
- Photos: VI In Alabama
- John Daniels Pilgrimage
- Thanks And Gratitude
The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama is located in Province IV of the Episcopal Church. The Diocese, led by its 11th Bishop, the Right Reverend John McKee "Kee" Sloan, serves seven convocations located throughout North and Central Alabama: Birmingham, Cheaha, East Alabama, Montgomery, Mountain, and the Tennessee Valley. Within the seven convocations are 89 worshipping communities with a membership of over 30,000. The Diocese is greatly diverse in every aspect of life: Socio-Economically; racially; educationally; age; sexual orientation; politically; professionally.

Each church in the diocese is self-supporting and self-governing. The Congregations are Rural-Urban; Large-Small; Liberal-Strong lay leadership.

As with its membership, the Ministries vary. There is a strong, vibrant Youth Ministry and Campus Ministry in the Diocese. The Women’s Ministry is active as well with the presence of Episcopal Church Women and Daughters of the King in most parishes.

The Diocese is involved with and financially supportive of outreach ministry in the community. They are involved in such domestic missions as Hunger; Community Garden programs which exist throughout the diocese; Fresh Markets programs of fruits and vegetables; Meal programs; Shelter (the Birmingham Hospitality Network; Family Promise in Montgomery; and First Stop in Huntsville); Housing for the elderly, [Episcopal Place (HUD housing) and St. Martin’s, both in Birmingham]; Literacy and Job Training programs.

The Diocese of Alabama is a Healthy diocese which works together well with a relaxed, family feel; they enjoy each other and play well together. It is an All-Inclusive and Welcoming Diocese with a membership filled with dreamers who make dreams happen and are open to new dreams, new ideas and new needs.

Bishop Sloan is assisted by The Right. Reverend Santosh K. Marray, D.Min, D.D. Bishop Marray has served five dioceses (Guyana, Bahamas, Florida, Seychelles and East Carolina) including three provinces of the Anglican Communion (West Indies, The Episcopal Church and Indian Ocean) including three provinces of the Anglican Communion (West Indies, The Episcopal Church and Indian Ocean). Prior to his call to be Assistant Bishop of Alabama, he served as Bishop Assisting in the Diocese of East Carolina. He has the distinction of being the first West Indian of East Indian ancestry to be elected and consecrated bishop in the Anglican Communion, and to serve as bishop in the eastern and western hemispheres. Bishop Marray is a convert to Christianity from Hinduism.
Located in Province II of the Episcopal Church, the Diocese of the Virgin Islands embraces the flags of two countries, the British and the United States, and spans the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. The Episcopalian presence is felt on five islands. Fourteen churches and three schools comprise the Diocese.

In the United States Virgin Islands there are six churches: four on St. Croix; five on St. Thomas and one on St. John. There are three in the British Virgin Islands; two on Tortola, the capital of the BVI, and one on Virgin Gorda, the third largest island in the BVI. The total membership of the Diocese is 3,894.

The diocese is a melting pot of various diverse backgrounds as immigrants from Eastern Caribbean islands such as Anguilla, St. Kitts, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, as well as the indigenous Virgin Islanders all dwell and worship together. In describing the diocese, use of the word “multicultural” is an understatement when speaking of its colorful membership. And, yes, it is a challenge for those who love and serve the Lord in this Caribbean section of God’s Kingdom.

The Diocesan Bishop, The Right Reverend E. Ambrose Gumbs, was born on the island of Anguilla and is the fifth, and first locally elected, bishop in the history of the Diocese. He was consecrated as a bishop on June 11, 2005. Prior to his election, Bishop Gumbs served as Curate, then Priest-in-Charge and finally Rector of St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church.

The Bishop sees his priorities in the Diocese as fostering unity among the churches and to bring all people to God’s table for discussion. Bishop Gumbs urges churches to think about bringing Outreach ministries to their communities in order to be an example to others, thereby drawing people into the church. He has a special passion for Music, Health and Youth Ministry.

The diocese is divided into three deaneries: the British Virgin Islands Deanery, St. Thomas-St. John Deanery and St. Croix Deanery.

The Deanery of St. Thomas – St. John, located in the United States Virgin Islands, is comprised of the Cathedral Church of All Saints (founded in 1848); St. Andrew’s Church (December 9, 1956); St. Luke’s Church (1970); the Church of the Holy Spirit (December 24, 1971); and Nazareth By the Sea — all located on St. Thomas. St. Ursula’s Church is situated on the nearby island of St. John.

The Cathedral Church of All Saints is located on Garden Street, across from the Bishop’s office. The Cathedral Church founded All Saints School in 1929. It is located adjacent to the Church.
The Deanery of St. Croix is comprised of five churches in the town of Frederickstead (St. Paul’s Church, founded 1812) and the town of Christiansted (St. Peter’s Church, April, 1970; Holy Cross Church (1906); St. John’s Church (1760); and San Francisco Episcopal Mission (1977).

The British Virgin Islands is a forty-five minutes by sea and twenty minutes by air from St. Thomas. Fifty-three islands and cays comprise the BVI, the capital of which is Road Town.

There are three churches in the BVI Deanery. St. George’s Episcopal Church (founded 1745) is located on Main Street, in the heart of Road Town, Tortola. St. George’s Church founded two schools, the Primary School, located next to the church and St. George’s Secondary School in September 2004.

Founded in the same year as St. George’s Church, St. Paul’s Mission (1745) is located in Sea Cow’s Bay. St. Paul’s Church has a vibrant congregation and an active Youth Ministry. The Youth of St. Paul’s share in the ministry of the church by participating in all aspects of the monthly Youth Sunday Eucharistic service and in the Music Ministry. Several of the youth play the steel pan drums at the church.

The third church in the BVI Deanery of St. Mary’s Church on Virgin Gorda. St. Mary’s Church — a chapel school consecrated in 1844. After being destroyed by two hurricanes and rebuilt (1867 and again in 1871) the present St. Mary’s was built and consecrated on February 2, 1876. It remains the only Anglican church on Virgin Gorda.

St. Mary’s school, located next to the church, was the center of education for many Virgin Gordians over the years, for Anglicans and other denominations as it was the only school on the island. The school closed temporarily in 2015.

St. Mary’s Canon Emeritus, Canon J.N. Keith Gibson, “through all these years God has used St. Mary’s people for the extension of his Kingdom, the conversion of many sinners and the saving of many souls, preparing the faithful for that heavenly sanctuary of which St. Mary’s Church is the pattern.

A resilient congregation, St. Mary’s continues to be a beacon of light and a presence of hope to many.
Mr. Roger Holliday serves as president of the Secretariat, the governing body of Cur- sillo in Alabama. He worships in Alexan- 

Deacon Reverend Kathi Jacob

Rev. Bentley Manning

Rev. Judy Quick

Mr. LeRoy A. Claxton Sr.

The Reverend Sandra Walters-Malone

Ms. Laurie Turnbull is a member of Church of the Holy Spirit; a member of the Bishop’s Committee and is the Secretary of the Diocesan Board of Episcopal Church Women.

Ms. Eveth Vialet is a member of St. Andrew’s Church and serves on St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church Armor Bearers Committee.

Ms. Denise R. Reovan is a member of St. Mary’s Church on Virgin Gorda and is a Delegate to Convention.

Ms. Laurie Turnbull

Mrs. Eveth Vialet

The Right Reverend Santosh Marray

Rev. Mary Catherine Akama- matsu is an Associate Recto- 
a member of the Commission on Spirituality.

Rev. Mary Catherine Akama- matsu

Ms. Laurie Turnbull

The Right Reverend Santosh Marray

of Mission and Congregational Development.

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The Right Reverend Santosh Marray

of Mission and Congregational Development.
With great enthusiasm and high hopes for a successful meeting, five members of the Virgin Islands Delegation visited Alabama in August 2015. The Virgin Islands Delegation, led by Bishop Ambrose Gumbs, were Mrs. Irose Payne Chalon; Ms. Riise Richards; Ms. Alecia Wells; Ms. Marisa Gibson and Reverend Sandra Malone.

The Delegation members are thankful to Lee and John Hoerner of Alabama, who graciously hosted them and generously offered their home as the Retreat Center on August 13th. This is where the companions gathered to explore common interests, share the gifts of each diocese and discern the many ways the dioceses can lift each other up in mission and support. It was a time of fellowship and hard work. At the end of this retreat, there was a meeting of the minds and spirit for the drafting of the Covenant which will be the guiding light for the Dioceses of the Virgin Islands and Alabama in their new found relationship.

The Companions crafted the framework for the Companion Relationship Covenant.

In affirming that our Lord Jesus Christ called us into relationship with one another and that through the love of God we are all made one in the Body of Christ, the companion dioceses agreed on:

**MISSION:** Create and develop opportunities to engage one another and work side by side in service to God’s people.

**SPIRITUAL/FELLOWSHIP:** Create opportunities for the clergy and laity to participate in programs and retreats that will deepen relationships between youth and adults.

**CLERGY AND LAY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:** Create opportunities to enhance the skills and talents of the clergy and lay leaders to equip them to carry out the mission of the Church.

**PARISH TO PARISH RELATIONSHIPS:** Create opportunities for parishes to foster relationships and mutual support of the ministries within local parishes and communities, through prayer, shared ministry and shared monetary and in-kind support.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** Recognizing that financial resources are one way to achieve the mission of God’s Church, the companions agreed to work to ensure that resources, whether monetary or in-kind, are utilized to help in their common mission.

The covenant is for an initial period of three years and may be renewed for an additional three years.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we ask your blessings and favor upon our Companion Covenant among the Diocese of Alabama, the Diocese of Alaska and the Diocese of the Virgin Islands.

May we fully commit to praying diligently and unceasingly for the success of all of our missions. That through this relationship we are bound

To share our love and of each other,

To share our knowledge and resources,

To further the understanding of the reconciliation of all Christians to God,

To support and to help those who are in need, and

To nourish the spiritually deficient for the furtherance of God’s kingdom. Amen

[The Companions Relationship Prayer was authored by Ms. Riise Richards of St. Thomas and will be made part of the Prayers of the People in the churches of each Diocese.]

Volume 1, Issue 1
At the home of Lee and John Hoerner. Pictured above from left to Right are: Mrs. Lee Hoerner; Bishop E. Ambrose Gumbs; Ms. CJ VanStyke; Ms. Alecia Wells; Ms. Katherine Tooker; Ms. Riise Richards; Mrs. Irene Chalon; Ms. Marisa Gibson; Reverend Deacon Judy Quick and Bishop Santosh Marray.

**DEES LECTURE**

The Morris Dees Lecture took place in Montgomery Alabama. Mr. Dees, co-founder and chief trial counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center, addressed the visitors on Friday, August 14th. Mr. Dees is noted for his work in integrating the Alabama State Troopers and desegregating the Montgomery YMCA.

After the Lecture, the visiting bishops and distinguished guests attended a Dinner in their honor, sponsored by the Bishop of Alabama.

The following day, August 15th, the group journeyed to Hayneville, Alabama for the Jonathan Daniels Pilgrimage and Holy Eucharist Service and Lunch.

**JONATHAN DANIELS PILGRIMAGE**

Jonathan Myrick Daniels, an Episcopal seminarian and civil rights activist, was murdered in 1965. On the tragic day, Mr. Daniels and three others — a white catholic priest and two black female activists — entered a store for soft drinks. Barring the doorway was a trigger-happy unpaid special deputy who aimed his rifle at one of the female activists, seventeen-year old Ruby Sales. Mr. Daniels pushed Ms. Sales downward and, in doing so, caught the full blast of the shot gun killing him instantly.

Upon learning of Daniels’ death, the Reverend Martin Luther King said that “one of the most heroic Christian deeds of which I have heard in my entire ministry was performed by Jonathan Daniels”. Mr. Daniels’ death ignited additional support for the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama. Twenty-six years later, in 1991, Mr. Daniels was designated as a martyr in the Episcopal Church and is recognized annually in the place where he was assassinated.

This was a moving and emotional experience for the Virgin Islanders who attended. It provided a chance to experience a part of black history in the United States.

Reflecting on the Pilgrimage, Ms. Riise Richards of St. Thomas said that it was “life changing”. The youth representative, Ms. Marisa Gibson, remarked that “it was truly an enriching experience for someone my age especially the Jonathan Daniels March and being able to be so close to where a great bit of the history unfolded.” The reenactment of this historic event impacted all who attended.

Jonathan Myrick Daniels
The second face-to-face meeting between dioceses occurred on the weekend of January 15–19, 2016 when eight Alabamians traveled to the Virgin Islands. Though one might think of the weekend filled with sun, fun and sand in the beautiful Virgin Islands, it was not. The main focus of the weekend was to deepen the Companion Relationship in pursuit of Youth exchanges, Spiritual Enrichment and Clergy Development.

The Alabama Team — Bishop Santosh Marray; Rev. Dn Kathi Jacob; Rev. Dn Judy Quick; Ms. Katherine Tooker; Ms. Caitlin Lollar; Mr. Roger Holliday and Rev. Mary Katherine Akamatsu — arrived on St. Thomas, Virgin Islands on Friday, January 15th. Shortly after their arrival, the St. Croix Team — Rev. Dn Judy Quick and Bishop Santosh Marray — departed St. Thomas for St. Croix, where their host, the Reverend Amonteen Doward, met them.

The British Virgin Islands Team — Rev. Dn Kathi Jacob; Ms. Caitlin Lollar; and Mr. Roger Holliday — left St. Thomas by ferry destined for Tortola. Their hosts, Linda and Nels Hagenson; Anne and Jack Husbands; and Judith and Lambert DeCastro, met their respective guests.

The St. Thomas Team — Rev. Catherine Collier; Rev. Mary Catherine Akamatsu; and Ms. Katherine Tooker remained on St. Thomas. The hosts for the St. Thomas Team were Mrs. Edith Haynes Lake and Ms. Lyda Callwood.

The respective deaneries welcomed each team at a Reception held on Friday evening, following which the Teams retired and prepared for the hectic schedule planned for the next day.

The Workshop began in each Deanery the following Saturday, January 16th. It was a day filled with fellowship, sharing, giving and receiving.

On Sunday, the companions worshipped at churches in their respective deaneries. Mr. Roger Holliday travelled to Virgin Gorda early Sunday morning to worship at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church. The guests toured their resident islands and departed in the afternoon for St. Thomas.

On St. Thomas, the guests gathered at Nazareth By The Sea for a service of Prayer and Praise, followed by an Agape Meal.

The following day, Martin Luther King’s birthday, the guests and those who could attend from nearby islands gathered at Magens Bay Beach for the Holy Eucharist performed by the St. Thomas Team. The Virgin Islands hosts continued the introduction of VI culture to the Alabama guests — the traditional foods and beverages of the Virgin Islands (ole wife fish, fungi, curried dishes, maubi and sorrel); and steel pan music. The guests were overwhelmed. What a fellowship!

Amidst the merriment, the companions found time to meet, reflect on the weekend’s activities and planned the next steps forward in this relationship.

Mission accomplished, the Alabama team returned home the following day, January 19th.

**SHARED EXPERIENCES**

The companions found time to reminisce about the weekend and share experiences and chart the way forward for 2016. Youth Engagement and Spiritual Formation were of utmost importance to the participants. All were in agreement that Youth Engagement is a necessary component to revitalizing the interest of youth and young adults in the Church. The Teams discussed various ways to accomplish this task.
who attended the Workshop. The Teams spoke about the Cursillo Movement—an opportunity to grow in faith and in spirituality. There is a dire need and interest in reviving Cursillo in the Virgin Islands. Reunion groups for Cursillistas must be encouraged. Alabama has several Cursillo weekends and invited the Virgin Islands to participate as staff and pilgrims at Alabama Cursillo in September and October of this year.

To assist with the spiritual formation, the Virgin Islands was encouraged to:

- use the Alleluia III Songbook for some worship services
- Explore Spiritual Retreats/Rule of Life (Enneagram, Labyrinth, Contemplative Prayer and Centering Prayer)
- Utilize alternative worship experiences (Taizé worship, Rite III, Spanish language worship, new song books)
- Share Bible Study, among churches in a deanery and among partners in Alabama
- Singspiration (on St. Croix) – All churches gather to sing
- Shared outreach (prayer/Eucharist with home/shut-in visitsations, nursing homes, hospitals, the homeless)
- For Immediate implementation all diocese should exchange the 2016 Diocesan Cycle of Prayer so we can pray for each other, including the prayer for our Companion Relationship for all three dioceses.

The Teams also discussed and explored the topic of Clergy Development. Both Teams will explore the clergy exchange process and implement Clergy Exchange within the diocese and Clergy Exchange between the Virgin Islands and Alabama, where clergy can exchange pulpits and serve as supply priests or a bilingual Priest (English/Spanish). Alabama invited the Virgin Islands Clergy to the Alabama Clergy Retreat, April 27-29, at Camp McDowell.

Clergy are encouraged to develop themselves in the areas of personal development through continuing education. A wide array of topics is available, including Conflict Resolution, Emerging/Agile Church, Church Pension Fund, etc. Also, skill development opportunities, such as serving all age groups, engaging lay leadership, inviting youth participation, developing choirs, managing a parish, and more are available.

Other spiritual formation ideas included: Congregational development through encouraging lay leadership/engagement; Christian Formation curricula and music; discernment for the clergy; and Seminary for clergy/ AIMS (Alabama Iona Ministry School)/Mentoring.

So much was accomplished; all were enlightened and alerted to the tremendous amount of work to be done.
Morning Prayer and Workshop at St. Paul’s Church, Sea Cow’s Bay, Tortola
The Rt. Rev. E. Ambrose Gumbs at Magens Bay Beach, St. Thomas, USVI Monday, January 18, 2016

Holy Eucharist with Bishop Gumbs and Rev. Dn Judy Quick at Magens Bay Beach

The Team discusses and assesses the weekend’s events and plans the way forward during the picnic at Magens Bay Beach on Monday, January 18, 2016.
Above, Beautiful Mages Bay, St. Thomas

To the left, the guys enjoy a game of dominoes.

The youth display their talents on the steelpans.
Mr. Roger Holliday enjoying some coconut water.

Lee and John Hoerner enjoying some coconut juice at Magens Bay too.
**OUR COMPANIONS** Newsletter is a quarterly publication with distribution available throughout the Dioceses of Alabama and the Virgin Islands.

**OUR COMPANIONS** is the means by which the mission, ministry, activities and events will be made known in the Anglican/Episcopal Communities. Should you wish to be included in our mailing list, please provide us with your email address.

We welcome your comments, queries and input. If you desire more information about the Companion Relationship and the work being done, please contact:

**The Reverend Deacon Judy Quick**  
Diocese of Alabama

and/or  
**Mrs. Irose Payne Chalon**  
Diocese of the Virgin Islands.

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**THANKS AND GRATITUDE**

To God be the Glory for the good work He has begun with this relationship. We extend our thanks and gratitude to those who labored to make it a success:

**ON VIRGIN GORDA:** Mrs. Veneta Chapman; Mrs. Joyce Ephraim; Mrs. Licette Flax; Ms. Coralie George; Mr. Jermaine George; Mrs. Juliette Hazelwood George; Mr. Ken Millington; Ms. Vanessa Rhymer; Elton and Lincoln Sprauve; Mr. Darius Stevens; Mr. Floyd Stevens; Flora and Franklin Walters; Mr. Leonard Paul; and the St. Mary’s Congregation.

**ON ST. THOMAS:** Mrs. Edith Lake; Ms. Lyda Callwood; Nazareth By The Sea; St. Andrew's Church and its Armor Bearers Committee; and Mr. John Hoerner.

**ON ST. CROIX:** The Rev. Amonteen Doward; St. Peter’s Church.

**ON PORTOLA:** Linda and Nels; Anne and Jack Husbands; Huberta Todman; Iva Todman; Sybil Hodge; Rev. Esther Georges; and the congregation and the Youth of St. Paul’s Church.

**ON VIRGIN GORDA:** Mrs. Veneta Chapman; Mrs. Joyce Ephraim; Mrs. Licette Flax; Ms. Coralie George; Mr. Jermaine George; Mrs. Juliette Hazelwood George; Mr. Ken Millington; Ms. Vanessa Rhymer; Elton and Lincoln Sprauve; Mr. Darius Stevens; Mr. Floyd Stevens; Flora and Franklin Walters; Mr. Leonard Paul; and the St. Mary’s Congregation.

The entire Alabama Delegation:  
Bishop Santosh Marray; Rev. Dn. Kathi Jacob; Rev. Dn Judy Quick; Rev. Mary Catherine Akamatsu; Ms. Caitlin Lollar; Mr. Roger Holliday; and Ms. Katherine Tooker.

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**2016 UP - COMING EVENTS**

**CLERGY RETREAT**  
April 27-29, at Camp McDowell

**SUMMER CAMPS**  
Camp McDowell
  
Session One: June 10 - 18, 2016
  
Session Two: June 24 - July 2, 2016
  
Session Three: July 8 - 16, 2016

**FOOTHILLS DAY CAMP**  
July 11-15, 2016

**2016:**

Presentation of video, workshop, and Covenants to respective Diocesan Conventions; beginning clergy exchanges and spiritual retreats/Cursillo and the congregation and the Youth of St. Paul’s Church.