

# **ORGANIST/CHOIRMASTER SEARCH COMMITTEE**

## **Dinetia Newman**

Committee Members:

Dinetia Newman, chair; Bud Nelson; Albert White, Sherrie Black and Cory Jackson

### Background

All Saints' Episcopal Church historically has offered a strong music program and has been blessed with competent choirmasters, organists and volunteer choir members. Due to a generous charitable donation, All Saints' restored and expanded the capabilities of its Moeller organ and was also the recipient of a grand piano for the Parish Hall.

### Where We Are and Why

Jessica Nelson, our talented organist/choirmaster since 2010, in July 2017 became the organist/choirmaster of the Cathedral of St. Andrews in Jackson, one of several parishes that recruited Jessica during her tenure at All Saints'. The senior warden formed the search committee for a replacement organist/choirmaster following Ms. Nelson's departure.

All Saints' is an attractive, energetic and spirit-filled parish that should readily attract and support a church musician. Throughout the last 30 or so years, All Saints' has secured extremely talented musicians, but has never paid for a full time musician. And, the musicians we have enjoyed have uniformly provided services during many more hours than they received compensation due to their love for All Saints' and their vocation. But, musicians, as all of us parishioners, have living expenses and, when paid less than full time wages, must hold down two or three jobs to make ends meet or relocate for better compensation and benefits.

### Status of Search

Since July, the search committee's goals have focused on meeting musical needs for weekly and special liturgies and searching for candidates to fill an interim organist position. Advice to the search committee has been that All Saints' cannot hire a permanent organist/choirmaster until a new rector is in place. What we have found is that organists with current positions are interested in All Saints' but reluctant to interview for or accept an interim position. In addition, most candidates need a full time organist/choirmaster salary or they must try to find second jobs, less available in a community of Tupelo's size.

Based upon "word of mouth" advertising of the All Saints' position, however, we have several promising options that we are exploring.

Future Music Program Needs

All Saints' has the components of a wonderful music program: a superb organ, a faithful cadre of choir members and an updated music library. Volunteers and supply organists have maintained the program. But, to sustain and grow the music program over the long term, All Saints' needs a full time organist/choirmaster. Our children need an opportunity to learn the Episcopal music tradition, our choir deserves a full time director and rehearsals that allow us to sing the beautiful music in our library of anthems and the parish should have the opportunity to experience a variety of liturgies with a musical component – Evensong, Taize and even contemporary services. Without a full time musician, we cannot expect to recruit a musician with the talent, personality and enthusiasm to meet All Saints' current needs and to grow our children's and adults' participation in choral activities.