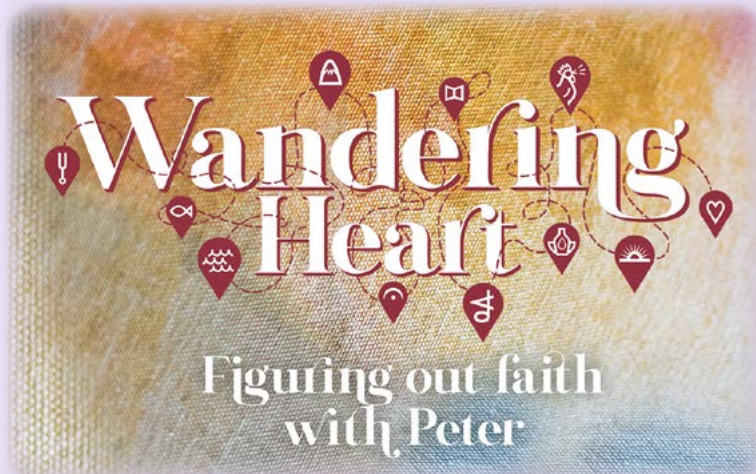


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Lent 2024



See pages 14 & 15 for Laura Hunt's article and information about the Lenten Program for 2024



A Message from Hilary +

Dear Friends and Companions in Ministry,

As we enter Lent this year, which starts with Ash Wednesday on February 14, we enter a season of the church year that is very real when it



comes to the harder things in life and the journey of faith we are taking, with all its ups and downs. We will journey with Jesus and all of his friends through the weeks of Lent, beginning with Mark's account of Jesus in the wilderness: "And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He

was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him." Mark does not give a lot of detail, but what he does share is rich with meaning. Right after Jesus' baptism, the same Spirit that came upon him with God's love drives Jesus into the wilderness. Jesus encounters Satan, but at the same time the angels were there too, helping him.

One of the most misunderstood aspects of our Christian faith is that all will be well in this life if we are ____; fill in the blank, faithful or good or... we can go on and on. Is it the human need to control that leads us to think that God's blessings depend on us? And how do we decide what is blessing and what is not? Wilderness time was difficult for Jesus, as it is for us, but Jesus needed that time to prepare him for what would come.

Lent, and particularly Good Friday, show that the love of God and the power of the Spirit are with us and known in the difficult times as well as the good times. God came to us and even died to be with us in all of our pain. Our resources from Sanctified Art for this Lent invite us to journey with St. Peter. About the theme for Lent, Wandering Heart, they write: "This Lent, we are focusing on the life and faith of one of Jesus' most famous disciples. In Peter, we see a person who is both steadfast and unsteady, a dear friend and a

betrayed, a follower and a wanderer. In Peter, we often see ourselves. By following Peter's journey, we watch the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a very normal human trying to figure it all out—just like us." Our Lenten program will make use of these resources and invite us to be with each other in this Lenten journey in what I think will be a creative and engaging way. May your Lenten journey be filled with a sense of God's love and companionship.

Wishing you God's peace,

Hilary+



Un mensaje de Hilary +

Queridos amigos y compañeros en el ministerio,

Al entrar en la Cuaresma de este año, que comienza con el Miércoles de Ceniza el 14 de febrero, entramos en una temporada del año eclesial que es muy real en lo que respecta a las cosas más difíciles de la vida y el camino de fe que estamos tomando, con todos sus altibajos y bajadas. Viajaremos con Jesús y todos sus amigos a lo largo de las semanas de Cuaresma, comenzando con el relato de Marcos sobre Jesús en el desierto: "Y inmediatamente el Espíritu lo empujó al desierto. Estuvo en el desierto cuarenta días, tentado por Satanás; y estaba con las fieras salvajes; y los ángeles le atendieron a él". Marcos no da muchos detalles, pero lo que comparte es rico en significado. Inmediatamente después del bautismo de Jesús, el mismo Espíritu que vino sobre él con el amor de Dios lo llevó al desierto. Jesús se encuentra con Satanás, pero al mismo tiempo los ángeles estaban allí también para ayudarlo.

Uno de los aspectos más incomprensibles de nuestra fe cristiana es que todo estará bien en esta vida si somos ____; Complete el espacio en blanco, fiel o bueno o... podemos seguir y seguir. ¿Es la necesidad humana de controlar lo que nos lleva a pensar que las bendiciones de Dios dependen de nosotros? ¿Y cómo decidimos qué es una bendición y qué no? El tiempo en el desierto fue difícil para Jesús, como lo es para nosotros, pero Jesús necesitaba ese tiempo para prepararse para lo que iba a venir.

La Cuaresma y particularmente el Viernes Santo muestran que el amor de Dios y el poder del Espíritu están con nosotros y son conocidos tanto en los tiempos difíciles como en los buenos. Dios vino a nosotros e incluso murió para estar con nosotros en todo nuestro dolor. Nuestros recursos de Arte Santificado para esta Cuaresma nos invitan a caminar con San Pedro. Sobre el tema de la Cuaresma, Wandering Heart, escribe: “Esta Cuaresma, nos centraremos en la vida y la fe de uno de los discípulos más famosos de Jesús. En Pedro vemos a una persona a la vez firme e inestable, un querido amigo y un traidor, un seguidor y un vagabundo. En Pedro, a menudo nos vemos a nosotros mismos. Al seguir el viaje de Pedro, vemos cómo se desarrolla la historia de Jesús a través de los ojos de un ser humano muy normal que intenta resolverlo todo, como nosotros”. Nuestro programa de Cuaresma hará uso de estos recursos y nos invita a estar juntos en este viaje de Cuaresma en lo que creo que será una manera creativa y atractiva. Que tu viaje de Cuaresma esté lleno de un sentido del amor y el compañerismo de Dios.

Deseándoles la paz de Dios,

Hilary+



A Vestry is...

By Bruce MacAlister, former Vestry member

Many of us have been elected to committees and boards for clubs, non-profits, or corporations. We know what they are and what they do. Most have ultimate authority over most everything and every one in the organization.

Vestries are also elected (by parish members) just like the committees and boards where many of us have served. But Vestries are part of a more complex set of authorities. Quoting from the Constitution and Canons of the Diocese of Virginia, “Section 6. Each Vestry, as the constituted agents of the Church, shall transact all its temporal business, e.g.: (a) providing for the appointment of Trustees pursuant to the laws of the Commonwealth

of Virginia to hold title to the property of the Church; (b) making and executing all contracts for erecting, furnishing, and preserving the Church edifice and other property; (c) regulating the use of any graveyard or columbarium; (d) establishing a Finance Committee. . .”

If this sort of thing interests you, in the quoted publication are:

Canon 11. Election and Organization of Vestries, and Call of Congregational Meetings.

Canon 12. Duties of Vestries, Wardens and Parish Officers.

Canon 13. Business Methods in Church Affairs.

Canon 14. Creation of Church Debt.

Canon 15. Church Property.

See https://www.episcopalvirginia.org/Customer-Content/www/CMS/files/Constitution_and_Canons/CC_2023_English_Final.pdf.

The Rector also has specific roles that do not include handling the money. Indeed, if a Vestry and a Rector are not getting along, all sorts of bad things happen to a parish since neither has absolute authority over the operation of the parish.

After the revolutionary war, as the Episcopal church rose from the ashes of the Church of England in the American colonies, a major issue was how it was to be governed. One proposed model was top-down: bishops who picked priests who give limited authority to laymen (women were not allowed in such roles, they could not even vote). The model that got adopted was different. It is a divided one with bishops having certain specific authority, rectors having some specific authority, and elected lay parishioners – the Vestry – having its specific authority. At the time it was very appropriate and more democratic than the new United States. It has worked pretty well.

See the next two pages for the pictures and biographies of Holy Comforter's 2024 newly elected vestry members.

Vestry



Angie Palmer, brief biography

By herself

I was born and raised in Parkersburg, WV. I graduated from Judson University, a small American Baptist College in Elgin, IL. I moved to Richmond, VA for the first time in 1993 and have moved away and returned numerous times. I found Holy Comforter almost ten years ago when looking for a welcoming and diverse Christian community. I have served on the vestry (2016-2019) and participated in adult formation, property concerns, the food pantry ministry, the annual yard sale, meal preparation for Vets and Side by Side, and youth ministry.



I graduated from Union Presbyterian Seminary in 2021 with a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts in Christian Education. I work most weekends as a chaplain at the MCV campus of VCU Health. During the last three summers, I have served as a chaplain at Shrine Mont Camps for the Diocese of Virginia in Orkney Springs, VA.

Deborah Stewart Taliaferro, brief biography

By herself

I have always considered it a duty to serve my church as part of my stewardship obligation. A member of the vestry is a particular honor and privilege. I have been called to sit on a vestry three times and enjoyed the challenges both large and small. I served once in the late nineties at Trinity Episcopal Church (now closed) and twice in the early 2000's at St. Luke's Episcopal Church

both in Montclair, NJ and members of the Diocese of Newark, NJ.

Since moving to Richmond, I have served as President of Region XI (now the Central Richmond Region) and sat on the Executive Bd. of The Diocese of VA. I worked at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Richmond, as Administrative Assistant to The Rt. Rev. Phoebe Roaf before she became Bishop of The Diocese of West TN. During my time with her, I learned many more details of church operations and history. I left shortly after she departed to Memphis.

Since I was a child, I enjoyed learning about the doctrine of the Episcopal church as well as Theology. I completed Education for Ministry (EFM) in 2015. This is where I decided my

ministry was Girl Scouts.

After working 30 adventurous and very fulfilling years for The Port Authority of NY & NJ, I spent the last 10 years of my career as Airport Operations Manager at Newark Liberty International



Airport, Newark, NJ. I came to Richmond 12 years ago to be closer to my family in the Tidewater area, especially my very active and independent 95 year old Mom. I was born and raised in the Episcopal Church. I have one son, Russell (35), who lives in Midlothian, VA. I live with my cat, Oliver (aka Kitty) and dog, Beauregard (Beau). I graduated from Montclair State University with a BFA. I am a Life Member of both Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Girl Scouts of the USA. I enjoy all crafts as well as planning/designing weddings and special events.

I look forward to working for and with the HoCo community.

Don Ellison, brief biography

By himself

My wife, Tracy Councill, and I have been attending Holy Comforter since early last year. We moved to Richmond from Takoma Park, MD in June of 2022. We both went to college here, had friends in RVA, and wanted a slower paced daily lifestyle.



We had attended St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Capitol Hill DC since the 1980s, and had been very active. I served as treasurer, junior warden, and co-chair of the endowment committee. In addition, I taught several adult education classes.

Although raised Methodist, I was attracted to the Episcopal Church through 2 college classmates who ended up at Virginia Theological Seminary a year after graduation. I joined in numerous dinners and parties with seminarians and was impressed with their openness to any idea and any topic. My relationship with St. Mark's resulted from those experiences.

What being an Episcopalian means to me is that each of us is on our own spiritual journey. Only we can define our journey. The community is there to support us by serving as a sounding board and source of ideas and knowledge. Our St. Mark's community provided this and also embraced our family and supported us when we faced our own difficulties and challenges. I see the same at Holy Comforter, which is why we have made it our spiritual home.

Holy Comforter also cares about the surrounding community and seeks different ways to connect with it. As a member I fully embrace this goal and will work to support it as a Vestry

member. My professional life taught me that, while I might have an answer to a problem, the best solutions come from collaboration across the group. And so, I spent more time listening than talking; asking questions than giving answers. I will bring that same approach to my efforts on the Vestry.

Ernie Irby, brief biography

By himself

Ernest B. Irby, Jr., born in 1934 at Sheltering Arms Hospital, Richmond and educated at Richmond public schools, (except 2 years at Benedictine).

I attended RPI now VCU, have been married and divorced, and have three children.

I managed Advertising Production for Richmond Newspapers, owned and operated a clothing store, and was appointed Magistrate/



Wedding Celebrant, Tuckahoe District, Henrico County. I am presently retired.

I have attended three different Episcopal churches in western Henrico, served on the vestry in two, have been a member at HoCo off/on for 20 years.

I hope to serve on HoCo Vestry because I believe HoCo is a progressive faith community, and its programs of social outreach, and inclusion, is the right direction for a Christian community that I'd like to be a part of.

Hoco Birthdays

For the month of Febuary:

Shawn Sthreshley, 3rd; Nan Ottenritter, 5th; David Baggett, 6th; Lorraine McCarthy, 7th; Mary Mitchell, 7th; Kathy Hayfield, 10th; Heather Baggett, 11th; Debi Taliaferro, 12th; Steve Herr, 14th; Ron Cox, 15th; Deb Love, 16th; Melvin Dyer Alvarez Del Pilar, 19th; Reid Hall, 19th; Carol Gibbs, 21st; Hilary Smith, 21st; Bonnie Weber-Lehman, 24th



Parishioner Ed Deane has passed away

By Bruce MacAlister, Editor

Ed Deane has died unexpectedly. At Holy Comforter he was variously Vestry member,

Senior Warden, Treasurer, member of the Finance Committee, Foundation Trustee, and Usher. Ed did a lot. He loved fly fishing, bluegrass and jazz music and played mandolin with the Itty bity HoCo Band. Ed



grew up in West Virginia, attended Marshall University and West Virginia University. A policy analyst, he worked for the state of Virginia for 30 years. He is survived by one sibling, his sister, Judy. He leaves his wife Nancy, also very active in the work of Holy Comforter. As Nancy said “he was a kind, caring, and honorable man.” That describes the man most of us knew.

The celebration of his life has not been scheduled so check for an eMessenger email for that.



There’s a lot going on in the Food Pantry Biz

By Kipley Herr

The Church of the Holy Comforter hosts many guests each month at our food pantry. Once housed in the two tiny closets at the top of the stairs in the parish house, we have moved and grown to occupy the entire room across from the parlor... spreading into the conference room when we are open.

The effort it takes to operate this mission is impressive! The shopping our guests do 4 times

a month is the most visible part, but most of the work takes place out of sight. Let’s take a peek behind the scenes.

What sort of activities will we see?

Double up Bags - Volunteers make double bags to be ready for each distribution, typically a day or two before the distribution date. Benefit to the food pantry: saves so much time when it’s time to shop. Benefit to you: light exercise, flexible work hours (minutes)

Picking up Panera Donations - Panera donates their leftovers to a variety of organizations. We are there two Sundays per month. Volunteers pick up donations from Panera, Willow Lawn, and deliver it to the church where...



Cutting and Bagging Panera Donations - Volunteers cut and prepare donated bakery items into appropriately sized portions. Benefit to the food pantry: delicious bread and pastries to those in need. Benefit to you: the aroma!

Picking up and Unloading Food from Feed More - Much of the food we distribute is purchased from our local food bank - Feed More, located near the SPCA. On two Thursdays each month, volunteers meet there, load our vehicles, deliver the food to HoCo, and unload it into the food pantry. Benefit to the food pantry: FOOD. Benefit to you: physical exercise, friendly working conditions, and you’ll get to meet the mastermind of Feed More - 90 year old Miss Sydney.

Taking Inventory - Twice a month, volunteers take inventory of pantry stock and submit a report. Benefit to the food pantry: we keep track of what we have and what we need. Benefit to you: Flexible work hours, visiting with Vera’s baby Livy and your inventory partner.

Shelving Donations on Good Samaritan Sunday - On Good Samaritan Sundays, the first Sunday of each month, volunteers assist with shelving donations. Benefit to the food pantry: organization! Benefit for you: light exercise, working with others, and you see the wonder that

is our food pantry.

Distribute the food - Distribution volunteers assist when the pantry is open, 4 times per month. They help set up, register guests, assist guests with their shopping, and help close. Benefit to the food pantry: This is what it's all about! Benefit to you: an amazing experience meeting and getting to know a plethora of very grateful people, and working with a great group of people while you do it.

For more details and to take part in this remarkable ministry contact Phoebe Winter, Marie Mcgranahan-Turner, or Cindi Hanayik.



Story Time returns to the 10am Service

By Ellen Hall

This Sunday, January 21, we will resume incorporating our monthly Story Time into the morning service. Our children will still process out at the beginning for their Chapel time, but they will return and participate more in the prayers, Eucharist, and music, and maybe do a little drumming. Come celebrate the kids in our church family. There is no greater joy.



ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

SERVICES

THE RT. REV. SUSAN E. GOFF, PRESIDER

11:00 AM

7:00 PM

ASHES TO GO

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

THE REV. JOSEPH G. KLENZMANN



Becoming a Christ Family
By Patty Galdun

There is a process for becoming a Christ Family. The first requirement is not being a member of our congregation as that is considered “in-reach” rather than “outreach.” Inreach has separate funding. The second requirement is that the leader of the Christ Family ministry meet with the head of the family to collect information such as living arrangements, contact information and other such demographics. Part of the process includes what types of family support they might have. Employment and budget information is also part of the data collection. Health status and type of insurance, and social services support assistance are also included. The family is provided with lists of resources that they can access and they are apprised of the availability of our Food Pantry hours.

Each family is assigned a mentor, a member of Holy Comforter, who keeps in touch with the



Christ Family and communicates needs to the Ministry leader. The amount of support that the mentor gives varies depends on her-his comfort level. For example, some families are comfortable getting groceries from our Food Pantry and taking it to their home while others are not.

Where do Christ Families come from? Parishioners discover them at the food pantry, they come out of the shared-church ACTS operation, and individual parishioners come upon someone in need that they want to care for. Besides some expense reimbursement, the Christ Families mentors share dialog and assistance with their fellow-mentors.



Needed - New Christ Family Leader
By Patty Galdun

At this time, I feel the need to pass this Ministry on to a person with more energy to devote to it. I hope that many of you will prayerfully consider a call to this type of service.

The history of Christ Families goes back at least to the 1950s when Dottie Stockdon and a group of older members purchased clothes at Christmas for families who needed them. In the 1960s, when the Rev Canon Fletcher Lowe was rector, it added care for families who needed more than just food and clothing. They needed a pastoral companion who would help them, guide them, and find them resources through some tough parts of their life. Patty McKellar, a retired social worker, led this ministry for years. On her passing, Anne Cullison took on this ministry. It has evolved over the years.

I have served as the leader since Anne Cullison stepped down a number of years ago. When Anne was the leader she often had “wish lists” at Christmas for the children of our Families. In addition to

that, support was provided to these families by occasionally helping them keep their electricity on and their water running. Mentoring help was available to connect these families with other support services available in the Richmond area. It does help people who struggle, through no fault of their own, either because of health problems or low income jobs.

We currently have 6 families on our list. In the past few years we have allotted money in the Social Justice and Outreach Ministry to provide people with our support and in the past few years the majority of these funds have provided them with Thanksgiving and Christmas gift cards.

I will work with the new leader during the transition. I'm in the HoCo directory so call or send me a note and we will get together.



***Appointment of
Diocesan Registrar and
Historiographer
From Diocese of Virginia
Communique***

Bishop E. Mark Stevenson has announced the appointment of Nathan Madison as Registrar and Historiographer of the Diocese of Virginia.

“Serving as Registrar and Historiographer of a Diocese that is more than 235 years old is no small feat,” said Bishop Stevenson. “Nathan’s wealth of experience in a wide range of organizations and his skills in managing and maintaining archives as vast as ours will serve him, and all of us, well in this endeavor. Virginia is fortunate to have him as a partner in ministry.”

Nathan has previously worked as a Historical Researcher for the American Civil War Museum at Historic Tredegar and, prior to that, as an Archival Digitization Specialist for [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

He has served as a consultant for many documentaries, including productions on AMC and BBC. He co-produced the 2018 PBS documentary *How the Welsh Changed The World: A Tale of Two Tredegars*.

“The history of the Diocese itself -- its origins, its growth, its organization, the role it plays in its

parishoners' lives -- is infinitely fascinating,” said Nathan. “It also touches on so many other topics, such as social, cultural, and national history, that amalgamate together to create a single, captivating tapestry.”

“Knowing that I am serving to preserve, research, and disseminate such a history is truly a blessing,” added Nathan. “Being able to do so for an institution that affects so many lives, so deeply, only adds to that feeling for me.”

Nathan is the author of several books, including *Richmond Locomotive and Machine Works – Engine of the Old Dominion*, and *Tredegar Iron Works – Richmond’s Foundry on the James*. He is also a contributor to several academic collections covering literary history, including *The Routledge Companion to British and North American Literary Magazines (2022)* and *Comics Through Time – A History of Icons, Idols, and Ideas*.

Nathan began his ministry in the Diocese on January 22. He will be based at the diocesan offices at Mayo Memorial Church House in Richmond.





Episcopal 101 Class starting soon

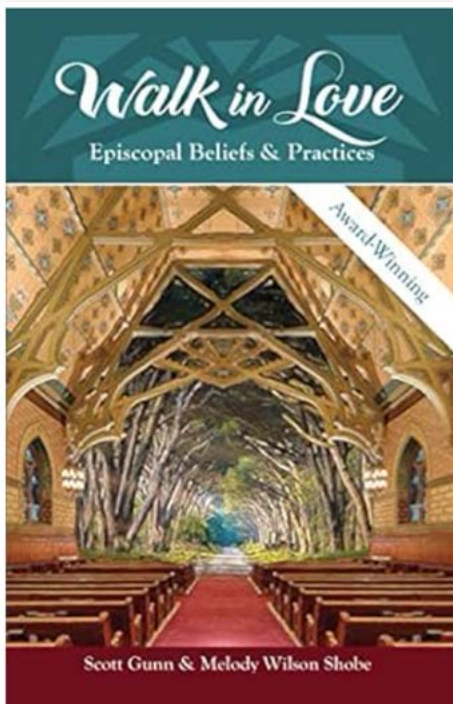
By the Rev Dr Hilary Smith, Rector

This is also for those who would like to be Confirmed or Received into the Episcopal Church.

If you would like to join the class, which is for general review and understanding of our Episcopal Church and traditions and basics of Christian faith and theology, please let me know. The day and time of the class will be based on who is interested and when you can attend. We will read the book, *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*. About this book we read

on Amazon: “Winner of a 2019 Illumination Book Award for Theology. Take a journey through *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Christian life, and basic beliefs of our faith, guided by two Episcopal priests - Scott Gunn and Melody Wilson Shobe. Walk through the liturgical year, the sacraments of the church, habits

of daily prayer, and the teachings of Anglican Christianity. See how our prayer shapes our belief and our lives and how our beliefs lead us into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.”



February book club - The Island at the Center of the World

By Peggy Hombs

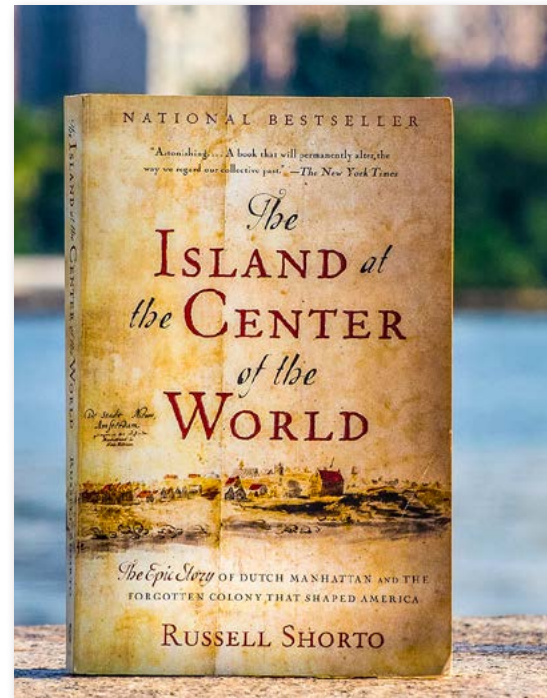
Our consensus pick was to go with *Island at the Center of the World* - description follows. It's a tome (416 pages!) (or a door stop!), so get reading! . We will next meet via Zoom on Tuesday, February 20th at 7PM.



The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America by Russell Shorto; 4.6 out of 5 stars 1,851 ratings; 4.2 on Goodreads; 9,997 ratings

In a riveting, groundbreaking narrative, Russell Shorto tells the story of New Netherland, the Dutch colony which pre-dated the Pilgrims and established ideals of tolerance and individual rights that shaped American history.

When the British wrested New Amsterdam from the Dutch in 1664, the truth about its thriving, polyglot society began to disappear into myths about an island purchased for 24 dollars and a cartoonish peg-legged governor. But the story of the Dutch colony of New Netherland was merely lost, not destroyed: 12,000 pages of its records—recently declared a national treasure—are now being translated. Russell Shorto draws on this remarkable archive in *The Island at the Center of the World*, which has been hailed by *The New*



York Times as “a book that will permanently alter the way we regard our collective past.”

The Dutch colony pre-dated the “original” thirteen colonies, yet it seems strikingly familiar. Its capital was cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic, and its citizens valued free trade, individual rights, and religious freedom. Their champion was a progressive, young lawyer named Adriaen van der Donck, who emerges in these pages as a forgotten American patriot and whose political vision brought him into conflict with Peter Stuyvesant, the autocratic director of the Dutch colony. The

struggle between these two strong-willed men laid the foundation for New York City and helped shape American culture. *The Island at the Center of the World* uncovers a lost world and offers a surprising new perspective on our own.

The Zoom link is <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/99461451877>. For some this link has been problematic, so suggest you can go to the HoCo website (www.hoco.org) and on the home page, click on the section that says Zoom links and scroll down to the link for Book Club.

Happy Reading!



Cracked Pots

By Gayle Turner

On March 23rd Mark Binder will perform his show *Cracked Pots - Tales of daring, adventure, failure and success* at Holy Comforter. Mark Binder is the author of more than two dozen books and a professional storyteller, he has toured the world.



Mark Binder more than two audiobooks. As storyteller, he has



Planning for the Future: Wills and Legacy Giving Info Session

By Art Raymond, Trustee, Holy Comforter Foundation

Please join us at 11:30am after church on Sunday, February 25th to learn about wills, trusts and legacy giving. Bill Davidson, a parishioner at St. Matthews Episcopal Church, will be our presenter.

Please send an RSVP to me at artraymond3@aol.com, so that we can plan for food provisions! When you RSVP, please include a question that you might have for Mr. Davidson.

Once we have determined the number of attendees, we will let folks know if we'll be in the parlor or the Cary Montague room.

We look forward to seeing you on February 25th at 11:30am.

HEARTS AFIRE
Storytelling Series
an off-NCECA show

Mark Binder

Saturday, March 23, 2024
1:00 PM

Church of The Holy Comforter
4819 Monument Avenue,
Richmond, VA



You'll smile and laugh, but only if you join us. Click here for tickets <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/788178421877> or scan the QR code.



Men at the Movies - Deep Cover

By Steven Van Voorhees

“What would you do?” February’s men at the movie asks this question.

Once again, the hero/protagonist of our January film *Deep Cover* is talking to us. As we saw in *Ship of Fools* and *The Opposite of Sex*, one of the people in the movie is narrating while playing a part. In this case, it is one of the leading characters, acted by Laurence Fishburne. This question comes at the end of the movie, and we are left to answer it. We will in our discussions on Wednesday night, February 7th, 2024.

“What Would You Do?” could be a question for all of us in these times. It may even be a good theme for us in



2024 and our Men at the Movies gatherings. This question is posed to us by Russell Stevens, Jr./John Hull, who is the undercover cop, drug dealer, rogue cop, survivor now looking at his future. He is a Black man, son of a junkie, a cop, and a survivor of the racism that encompassed him all of his life. I resonate with this man who is of my two sons’ generation. He benefits from being a professional law enforcement officer, but because he is Black, he has to deal with all the micro and macro aggressions of a white male dominant system. I grew up knowing this system existed; my sons confronted a good deal of its evils and structures, thanks to school desegregation and the general civil rights movement effects still being experienced by all of us today. (Note what happened here in Richmond when the “Lost

Cause” monuments came down.) What my sons did not experience is what it felt like as Black men. But from what they told me, what I read, and what my Black male friends said, coupled with my own experiences of the last fifty years, I think I can understand at least some of what Russell Stevens, Jr., is feeling, thinking and saying.

So, we have a Black man fighting racism and a criminal drug network as an undercover cop. He



discovers that the “War on Drugs” is a sham and that civil rights has a long way to go, and that he is pretty much alone in both fights. *Deep Cover* has

so many layers and so many different things going on that we will only scratch the surface in one viewing.



This is a film noir, police procedural, morality tale, psychological essay, crime caper, biographical study, and a general sociological expose of 20th-21st century life in America. A movie this complex is rare and deserves our rapt attention.

The movie’s story is derived from a non-fiction account of the Drug Enforcement Agency-Central

Intelligence Agency's undercover operations against the on-going Latin American drug trafficking cartels and networks. Interestingly, it is told from the perspective of a Black man realizing that the "Anti-Drug War" (with an office in the White House) is actually a sham war with no real victories and with corrupt government and dark private and international players reaping proceeds from it. The antagonist in the story is David Jason, played by Jeff Goldblum, who is a white, Jewish lawyer for the drug network. He's drawn into dealing drugs, and he partners with John Hull, Russell Steven, Jr.'s undercover personality. They are essentially frenemies. Two other notable characters in the story are the DEA boss of Russell Stevens, Jr., the racist Gerry Carver, played by Charles Martin Smith to perfection, and the LAPD Detective Tate played by Clarence Williams III, as a Christian crusader against the sins of drugs and violations visited on the Black and Latino communities.

Our perennial movie raters give us these scores: Rotten Tomatoes - 87%; Metacritic - 67/100; Entertainment Weekly - "B- and the movie peels away every layer of hope, revealing a red-hot core of nihilistic despair"; Roger Ebert - 3 ½ stars out of 4. Not everyone loved the film, partly because of its frenetic pace, bordering on cartoon-like violent action. The sound track achieved its own fame. Performed by Hip Hop icon Dr. Dre, introducing Snoop Dog, and containing R&B, Hip Hop and Reggae tracks, it hit #9 for Hip Hop, R&B, Reggae albums, and 166 of the Billboard 200.

Join me and the other movie junkies for this multi-faceted noir film in deep color. It will be a southern California trip, a treat during the winter cold of the "Right Coast." We will gather in the Parlor at 6:00pm, the film will roll at 6:30pm with discussions before and after. Bring a friend, bring food and drink.



Movies as an Art Form

By Steven C. Van Voorhees

At Christmas 2023, my sharp-minded sister-in-law, Mary Ellen Hombs, gave me a book sure to please any film buff. She

does really know me! This book goes on my very eclectic shelves of books and articles about movies. *Opposable Thumbs - How Siskel and Ebert Changed Movies Forever* by Matt Singer (Putnam 2023) is a delightful story with an appendix titled "Buried Treasures That Siskel and Ebert Loved."

It turns out that not only Siskel and Ebert loved these overlooked or forgotten movies. Many other thoughtful writers and commentators liked them too. March's movie will come from that Siskel and Ebert list. These films were made between 1979 and 1998, and do not include blockbuster action flicks made for males between the ages of 18 and 59 and/or their dates. I know, aren't these movies so last century, lacking in fast scene cutting, CGI, and pyro-technic special effects? Instead they include dramas and comedies and are all over the map of film genres. That is very attractive for your local film buff and cinemaniac.

Of course, I tend to think that everyone will love the movies just like they love pictorial art, music concerts, dance, and so-called straight plays staged in theaters all over the country and on TV streaming, cable or broadcast. For a kid who still recalls the post WWII Sunday TV cultural ghettos and the Canadian Broadcast Corporation anthologies and dramas, movies and DVDs, fictional or documentary, are like candy or more relevant - popcorn for me to relish.

It turns out that Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert weren't just film buffs, they were also people buffs:

Roger - "When you ask someone for the truth about themselves, you may get the truth, or part of the truth, or none of the truth, but you will likely get what they would like you to think is the truth."

Gene - "If they are going to claim to be truthful and try to impress me, I'm going to challenge them on being truthful."

Jesus - "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

My hope is that your film buffdom will blossom and flourish. See you at the movies with Jesus and your friends.



A Holy Lent

By Laura Hunt

Lent begins on Valentine's Day this year. That creates quite a few paradoxes: chocolate and ashes, love and death, joy and repentance, indulgence and abstinence.

Lent, of course, commemorates the 40 days Jesus spent fasting in the desert before beginning his public ministry. Precedents from the Old Testament include Moses' fasting and praying for 40 days and nights before receiving the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34).

The word Lent actually refers to Spring. It's a shortened form of the Old English word *lencten*, meaning originally, lengthening, referring to the days in spring, and thus eventually to springtime itself. By February 14, we in Richmond enjoy 1¼ hours more daylight than at the winter solstice. Other languages refer more specifically to the details of the religious observance: The Spanish name is *cuaresma*, meaning forty; while Germans call it *Fastenzeit*, fasting time.

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, the 40th weekday (including Saturdays) before Easter, and ends six weeks later on the evening of Holy Saturday. In the Western church, the six Sundays are excluded from the fast of Lent.

The day before Lent is known as Shrove Tuesday, derived from the word *shrive*, meaning to absolve. Christians are expected to repent of their sins, and finalize their decision about what Lenten sacrifices they will make.

The custom of British Christians eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday dates to the 16th century. Pancakes are a way of using up rich foods, such as eggs, milk, and sugar, which were not to be eaten during Lent.

Also, as part of the community celebration,

many English towns held traditional "mob football" games, dating back to Renaissance times. These archaic forms of football involved an unlimited number of players on opposing teams, struggling to drag a ball by any means possible (excepting manslaughter) to markers at each end of a town. Today, some towns have maintained the tradition, often called the Royal Shrovetide Football.

In Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese-speaking countries, Shrove Tuesday is known as Carnival, a word that derives from Medieval Latin *carnelevamen* ("the putting away of flesh"). It refers to the custom of abstaining from meat and is often celebrated with street processions and fancy dress. In France and New Orleans, it is Mardi Gras ("Fat Tuesday") and is seen as a last opportunity for excess before Lent begins.



Illustration by Amy Schisler. (We thought so much of this image that we placed it twice in the Messenger.)

On Shrove Tuesday, churches burn the palms distributed during the previous year's Palm Sunday Liturgy, to provide ashes for the next day.

The purpose of Lent is to prepare for Easter through prayer, repentance, almsgiving, and self-denial, particularly the giving up of unnecessary indulgences in imitation of Jesus' sacrifice during his time in the desert. Lent used to require abstinence from all animal products, including chicken, fish and dairy.

Now, however, we are more likely to interpret the Lenten fast not as renunciation but as a season of reflection and introspection, a period of quiet and solitude, fostering spiritual growth and a deeper connection with God. We read and meditate on scripture, give thanks, and ask for forgiveness. Outwardly, we help others, give to the poor, stand against injustice, and focus on environmental stewardship. For the good of the earth, we try to carpool, take public transportation, or walk; we give up single-use plastics, and lower our heat by a degree or two. In addition, we make a commitment to ourselves and the HoCo

community to attend worship every week. We give ourselves the gift of a time of shared prayer, singing, and communion. It's springtime for the soul.

The Sunday liturgy changes, using more phrases of penitence and forgiveness, beginning with the Decalogue and confession. The Alleluia, associated with joy, is omitted. The color of vestments and altar cloths turns to purple, a reference to the purple robe and crown of thorns with which the Roman soldiers clothed Jesus (Mark 15:17).

My favorite bit of advice for self-denial during Lent comes from St. Thomas Aquinas, who allowed for the consumption of candy, because "sugared spices" were, in his opinion, digestive aids on a par with medicine rather than food. So we needn't give up chocolate, after all.



Lenten Program returns to being in person

By Hilary Smith, Rector

Join us on Wednesday February 21, 28, March 6, 13, and 20 for a simple soup and bread meal at 6:00 pm followed by a program from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm about St.

Peter's journey of faith using material from Sanctified Art and the series, *The Chosen*.

There will be a Zoom option to join the in-person group.

Please let me know if you would make use of childcare if we offer it.

Can you help provide a meal of

soup and bread one night? Or set up or clean up? Sign up will be available soon.

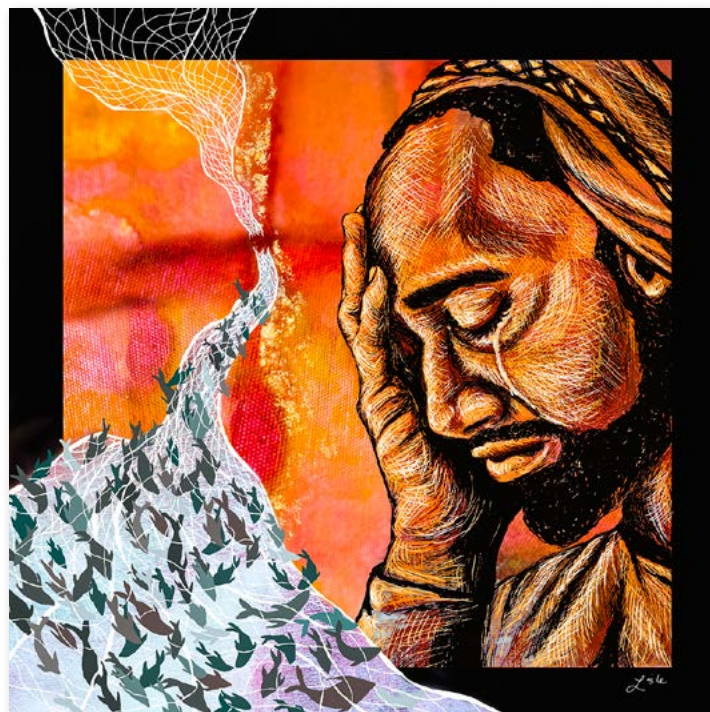
Sanctified Art Lenten Theme - Wandering Heart

About the theme, they write: This Lent, we are focusing on the life and faith of one of Jesus' most

famous disciples. In Peter, we see a person who is both steadfast and unsteady, a dear friend and a betrayer, a follower and a wanderer. In Peter, we often see ourselves. By following Peter's journey, we watch the story of Jesus unfold through the eyes of a very normal human trying to figure it all out - just like us.

In this series, we want to affirm that faith is a constant journey of steadfast pursuit, one that ebbs and flows. We want to affirm that wandering is exploration, not necessarily distance from God. We want to affirm the ways Peter keeps going: he drops his nets, he walks on water, he runs to the empty tomb, he swims to the shore to meet the risen Christ. He keeps searching and yearning and loving, even after missteps or mistakes. Ultimately, in Peter's story, we are reminded that God loves imperfect people - in fact, time and again, that's precisely who God claims and calls.

This Lent, we will look for ourselves in the stepping stones of Peter's story. We will reflect on the stages of our own faith journeys as well as who and what has shaped us along the way. As we wander, let us tune our hearts to sing God's grace. May we rest in streams of mercy, never ceasing.



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[Hoco web site calendar page](#)

Schedule of church events following the Covid-19 period (still evolving)

- **Sundays:**

- ◇ 8:45am Adult class in the Parlor
- ◇ 9:00am Sunday Morning, Choir practice in the choir room
- ◇ 10:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II, in person with nursery available; the service is live-streamed on Facebook and YouTube and posted following the service

- **Mondays:**

- ◇ 7:00pm Adult class, Zoom, except during Lent

- **Wednesdays:**

- ◇ 11:45am Centering Prayer, in person in the in the church
- ◇ 12:15pm Holy Communion, in person in the church
- ◇ 6pm Lenten Program starting Feb 21

- **Thursdays:**

- ◇ 4:00pm Lectionary Study, Zoom
- ◇ 7:00-8:15pm Weekly choir rehearsal

Food Pantry Hours:

- ◇ First and third Saturdays, 11:00am to noon
- ◇ First and third Tuesdays, 5:30 to 6:30pm

Veterans Shelter:

- ◇ Fourth Thursdays, prep in HoCo kitchen, 5:00pm, delivery to the shelter, 5:45pm

Side by Side Dinner:

- ◇ Fourth Thursdays, prep in HoCo kitchen, 4:00pm, deliver to Side by Side, 5:15pm

Community Meals:

- ◇ First Tuesdays, 5:30 to 6:30pm

Editing of the Messenger is done by Bruce MacAlister, the layout by George Collier.

The March Messenger will be available Sunday March 3rd.

The deadline for that edition is Friday February 23rd.

Earlier submission would really help the volunteers who put it together.

If you feel that you have something you'd like to contribute, please contact Bruce MacAlister at editor@hoco.org

