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Holy Comforter Vestry 2022 Newly Elected Members



Ron Cox
1-year term



Gayle Turner
2-year term



Evan Herr
3-year term



Steven Van Voorhees
2-year term



Emily Chilton Souder
2-year term



Lian-Marie Munro
3-year term



Julie Edwards
3-year term

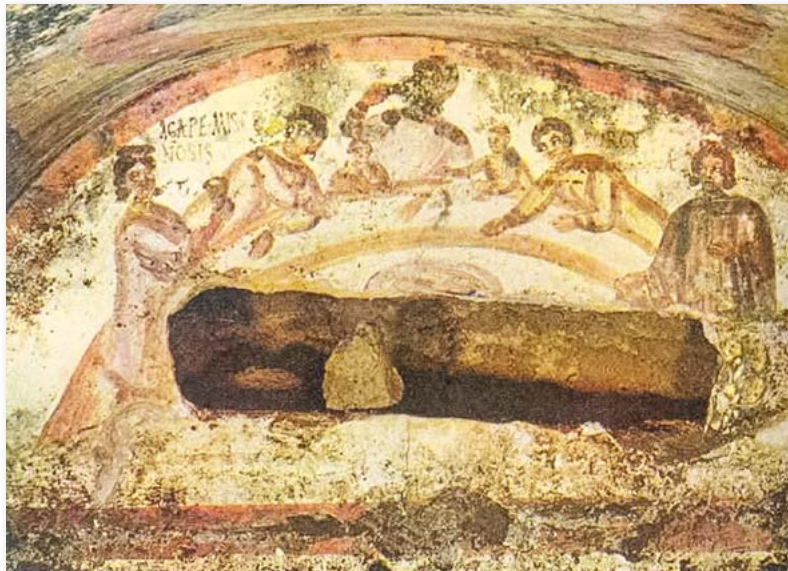


Shrove Tuesday Agape Meal via Zoom

By the Rev Dr Hilary Smith, Rector

Join us at 6pm on Shrove Tuesday, March 1, for an Agape Meal. In addition to having a fun meal together, we will also have a liturgy that, while not a service of Holy Communion, has symbolic elements common to it, such as the bread and the wine. The Zoom link and the order of service will be sent out in our weekly eMessenger and will also be found at hocostream.org closer to the date.

For your Shrove Tuesday meal, you may wish to have pancakes, sausage, bacon, and stewed apples, or maybe a more Mardi Gras focus with Cajun shrimp, red beans and rice, and king cake. The idea behind what is also called “Fat Tuesday,” is to eat all the rich foods before Lent begins the next day. Eat whatever you like and join us for a fun time, a spiritual time, and an educational time as we learn about what an Agape meal can be. Have a bit of bread and wine or grape juice; we will bless them as part of the Agape Meal. See below for more information from the Diocese of Massachusetts:



“The Love Feast, or Agape Meal, is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry and expressing the community enjoyed by the family of Christ.

“Although its origins in the early church are closely interconnected with the origins of Holy Communion, the two should not be confused with each other. Holy Communion has been practically universal among Christians throughout church history, whereas the Love Feast has appeared only at certain times and among a few branches of the

Christian family tree.

“The modern history of the Love Feast began in Germany with the Moravians (with whom the Episcopal Church is in full communion) in the early 1700s. John Wesley, founder of Methodism and an Anglican priest, experienced the Love Feast among the Moravians during his time in Georgia, and it quickly became part of early American Methodism.

“The Love Feast has often been held when celebrations of Holy Communion are not appropriate, or in our case in these days, impossible.” Courtesy of the Diocese of Massachusetts, see www.diomass.org/.

Hoco Birthdays

For the month of February:

Caroline Nichols, 1st; Paris Ball, 2nd; Shawn Sthreshley, 3rd; Nan Ottenritter, 5th; David Baggett, 6th; Lorraine McCarthy, 7th; Mary Mitchell, 7th; Kathy Hayfield, 10th; Heather Baggett, 11th; Fritz Doran, 11th; Joy Feminella, 11th; Stephen Herr, 14th; J. Ronald Cox, 15th; Deb Love, 16th; Elizabeth Lowry, 16th; Peggy Boyd, 17th; Melvin Alvarez Del Pilar Dyer, 19th; Reid Hall, 19th; Carol Gibbs, 21st; Hilary Smith, 21st; Julie Turner, 23rd; Bonnie Weber-Lehman, 24th



A Message from Hilary +

Dear Friends and Companions in Ministry,

My message to you this month is part information, and, I hope, part inspiration. We will continue to have our Zoom Sunday 10am service through at least February. The Omicron variant spreads from person to person inside even



among the vaccinated and boosted, and even with masks. Part of what drives my thinking is what I'm hearing from you. A number of you in the last week told me that you had been exposed to someone who has covid. Thankfully, testing has shown

that these church members are negative, but the disruption to life, the need for quarantining, has been extremely stressful and disruptive. Had we been meeting in person, many of us would have needed to isolate and get tested. We do not want HoCo to become the place where the infection spreads. As well, honestly, I much prefer Zoom to worshiping in person with masks because I can see your beautiful faces! The vestry and I will continue to monitor the situation closely and adjust as we are able based on infection rates. Depending on how long we are on Zoom, it may be that we add an afternoon outdoor service once the weather works for that, for the purpose of receiving Holy Communion and having that time in the same space with each other. Of course, we all miss being together in person.

I miss many things that we enjoyed before the pandemic. I miss many things about the way church used to be and the way that I could be as a priest. Some days, I'm really sad about it all. One of the ways that I am able to stay positive and hopeful comes from spiritual practices. Seeing you and worshiping with you via Zoom is one such practice that supports my life, my faith. As well, the Centering Prayer group on Wednesdays, via Zoom, at 11:30am, grounds me. Those who

practice centering prayer, sitting in silence, letting all thought go (as much as possible), aware that we are in God's loving presence, attest to the benefit of such prayer with many things in life. In centering prayer, we let go of the idea that we are in control.

I read a daily reflection before we start our time of silence on Wednesdays from the book *Jesus Calling*, by Sarah Young. The reading for a day in January focused on the fact that life is never perfect; there are many times that we are not happy with the circumstances that we are in. People often wonder, where is God when times are hard or how to connect with God. The idea of the book is that Jesus is talking to you directly: "Give up the illusion that you deserve a problem-free life. Part of you is still hungering for the resolution of all difficulties. This is a false hope!" The reflection goes on to say that our hope cannot be linked to problem-solving. There are so many times that we cannot know the answer or fix the problem. But we can find our hope in God, through spiritual practices, through prayer, and in the faces of each other, as Christ dwells in us and among us.

God bless you and may God's love fill you,

Hilary+





HoCo Pantry Volunteer Roles

By Kipley Herr

The food pantry is always looking for folks to be part of this important mission. Here are some ways you can share in our mission.

- Distribute food. We are open on the **1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month from 5:30-6:30 and on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays from 11:00-12:00**. Volunteers typically come in a half hour early to help set up and stay about a half hour after to clean up and close. Volunteers help guests with their groceries and distribute frozen meats and extras (e.g., shampoo).
- Receive and unload deliveries. We receive food from Feed More once a month, on **Wednesdays between 9:00 and 11:00**. Volunteers are needed to bring the food (typically over 1,000 lbs., with boxes

weighing around 30 pounds, some a little more) from where it's dropped at the curb into the pantry.

- Pack bags of food for distribution before each opening. Until we go back to having guests 'shop' for their own groceries the food is pre-packed and ready to go.
- Cut Panera bread and pastries and put them in bags for distribution before our Tuesday openings. The bread is received on Sunday evening.
- Take inventory and update food needed lists.
- Periodically, straighten up the shelves, do general cleaning.



Food pantry in the dark

By Kipley Herr

Team Work!

The pandemic has kept the food pantry



On a cold winter night a parishioner waits for the Food Pantry guests to arrive.

Photo;Kipley - Model;Nancy

workers hopping. As we navigate this moving target, we have held our distributions inside, outside, and drive by. We had a brief couple of times when we went back to normal allowing folks to 'shop' for their groceries. Then the Delta variant reared its ugly head. Sigh. We are now doing a mix of drive by and walk up - both outside due to the latest Omicron surge. What a way to learn the Greek alphabet. This month we are working in the cold. And dark. And the cold and dark. "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

We love our guests and sometimes we go the extra mile to make sure they get their groceries. Food was distributed on New Year's Day - the sleep latest day of the year. Our workers have walked guests to the bus stop with their food, and walked with them many blocks to assure their safe arrival at home.

Team work is the name of the game. The distribution is just the tip of the iceberg, and the most visible of our efforts. There is a laundry list of tasks that keep the food pantry up and running. Some can be done on one's own schedule, and most with social distancing. Reach out to Phoebe Winter if you feel moved to be part of this mission. See the previous article for places to plug in.

We are the ones that get the most out of the food pantry. I, for one, feel God's love is moving me forward in this work.



Annual Report for ACTS RVA at Holy Comforter

By Judy Dyer Harris

Area Congregations Together in Service (ACTS, <http://actsrva.org/>): I have been Holy Comforter's representative since 2014. Cameron Hunt and Patrick Taylor preceded me. HoCo

acts 2021
closing the door on homelessness
ANNUAL REPORT

.....Celebrating 15 years.....

Outreach pays ACTS in order to offer professional response to clients in need of financial assistance and guidance. It is to avoid homelessness and to continue to be self sustaining when facing a crisis. Case management a part time office manager cannot do. Through Federal Covid Relief funding ACTS has increased its staff to remotely and safely assist clients. Through Federal Covid Relief funding ACTS has increased its staff to remotely and safely assist clients. Grants also came from the city of Richmond, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Chesterfield County. My job as

Holy Comforter's representative is to screen calls to the HoCo Financial Aid phone line and refer those eligible to ACTS, who acknowledge receipt of the information. The client must have a source of income and a crisis that puts them at risk. I have enjoyed this opportunity to serve this very worthy cause and will be turning it over to Marie McGranahan-Turner in February 2022.



Ash Wednesday - March 2, 2022

By the Rev Hilary Smith

What will life be like on March 2? I wish that I knew. Will we be able to have a service inside that day or will it be on Zoom?

We will have to wait and see, but no matter what happens, we will observe this important holy day. Hoping that the infection rate is somewhat lower, we will have Ashes to Go outside, in front of the church at the corner. If it is raining or very cold, we may be just inside the Monument doors and will come out to you when you arrive. We will offer Ashes to Go from Noon until 2pm We will have a worship service at 7:00pm either via Zoom or in person. We will let you know as we get close to the date.

Once again for Lent, we are using art and resources from our friends at Sanctified Art. Here is their image for Ash Wednesday.





Surprise! Lent starts March 2th!

By Bruce MacAlister

Lent starts March 2nd. It ends April 14th. In between you can take breaks from donning your sackcloth and rolling in ashes by playing Lent Madness each day. Snap the QR code or click www.lentmadness.org/ and sign up for your daily dueling-saints voting invitation. (It's delivered by email.) That way you can do your part to pick the saint who gets the coveted Golden Halo for 2022.

The next edition of the monthly *Messenger* comes out March 6, four days after Ash Wednesday so be prepared. The same organization that brings us the Lent Madness games has other offerings you can order in advance. From the website www.lentmadness.org/resources/:

"If you want something a bit less silly than Lent Madness to accompany your journey through Lent, Forward Movement (the official sponsor of Lent Madness) publishes a new book of Lent meditations every year. This year's book is called *Meeting Jesus on the Margins: Meditations on Matthew 25*. Where do you meet Jesus? In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus urges us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit the prisoners. And in doing so, we meet Jesus. These daily reflections for Lent, offered by well-known faith leaders, provide boots-on-the-ground stories of serving and being served by 'the least of these.' The meditations also explore our own hunger, our vulnerabilities, and the times we are imprisoned, either self-imposed or by circumstance. Authors include Mike Kinman, Becca Stevens, Allison Duvall, Bo Cox, Hugo Olaiz, Lee Anne Reat, and Richelle Thompson.

"You can order *Meeting Jesus on the Margins* as a print book or soon as an ebook for your Kindle, Nook, or Apple iOS device. Just five dollars."

See www.amazon.com/Meeting-Jesus-Margins-Meditations-Matthew/dp/0880284145.



February Book Club - The Best of Me

By Stephanie Turner

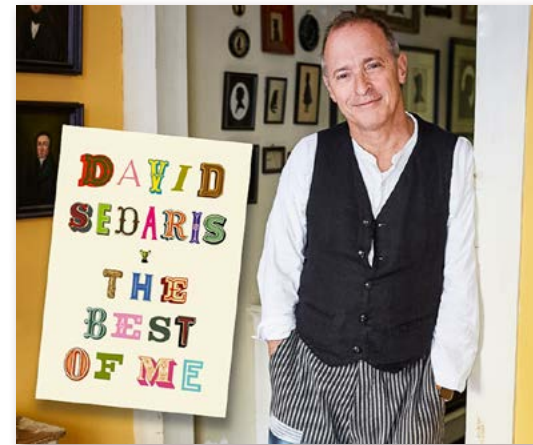
Our February selection is *The Best of Me* by David Sedaris. This promises to be an enjoyable read and looks like it will give us lots to discuss when we meet on February 15 at 7pm. Our Zoom link is zoom.us/j/99461451877. Please let me know if you have questions. Details and excerpts from reviews are below.

"Genius... It is miraculous to read these pieces... You must read *The Best of Me*."
- Andrew Sean Greer, *New York Times Book Review*.

"Longtime fans and astute readers will understand that the title doesn't refer entirely to the author; he has chosen and arranged works to highlight his funny, often dysfunctional and always loving parents, siblings and partner, Hugh - the people he believes are the best of him."
- Bethanne Patrick, *Washington Post*.

"For more than twenty-five years, David Sedaris has been carving out a unique literary space, virtually creating his own genre. A Sedaris story may seem confessional, but is also highly attuned to the world outside. It opens our eyes to what is absurd and moving about our daily existence. And it is almost impossible to read without laughing.

"Now, for the first time collected in one volume, the author brings us his funniest and most memorable work. In these stories, Sedaris shops for rare taxidermy, hitchhikes with a lady quadriplegic, and spits a lozenge into a fellow traveler's lap. He drowns a mouse in a



bucket, struggles to say “give it to me” in five languages, and hand-feeds a carnivorous bird.

“But if all you expect to find in Sedaris’s work is the deft and sharply observed comedy for which he became renowned, you may be surprised to discover that his words bring more warmth than mockery, more fellow-feeling than derision. Nowhere is this clearer than in his writing about his loved ones. In these pages, Sedaris explores falling in love and staying together, recognizing his own aging not in the mirror but in the faces of his siblings, losing one parent and coming to terms - at long last - with the other.

“Taken together, the stories in *The Best of Me* reveal the wonder and delight Sedaris takes in the surprises life brings him. No experience, he sees, is quite as he expected - it’s often harder, more fraught, and certainly weirder - but sometimes it is also much richer and more wonderful.” - Courtesy [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



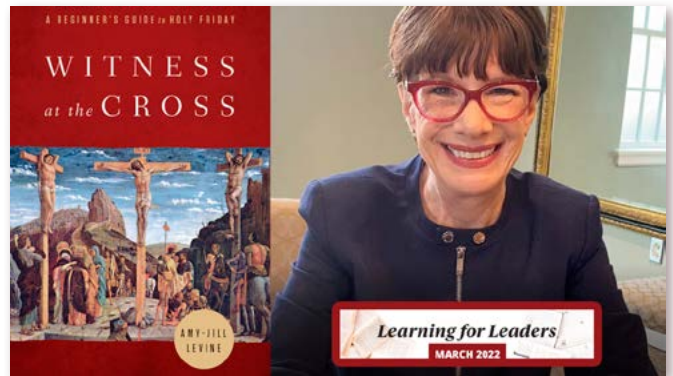
No Wednesday Lenten suppers - Yes a program via Zoom

By Peggy Hombs

Many do not like Good Friday and try to avoid it - understandably so. But this year, take the Holy Comforter Lenten Challenge and join us on Wednesday nights to explore a whole new way of looking at Good Friday! Our program is based on [Witness at the Cross](#) by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine. Read more!

"In *Witness at the Cross*, Dr Amy-Jill Levine (she prefers to be called “AJ”) offers readers an uncommon and fascinating approach to studying the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ crucifixion.

“Rather than focusing immediately and directly on Jesus - as much Christian preaching, liturgy, and devotion do - AJ invites readers to see the Crucifixion and consider anew its significance through the eyes and ears of those who watched it happen and heard what was said by Jesus and those around him, according to the four New Testament Gospels. When we consider Jesus’ death from these people’s unique and diverse points of view, we may well discover it means not less but even more than Christians often consider.



AJ’s approach allows readers to experience in fresh and frequently surprising ways the Crucifixion’s power to shake preconceptions about who we are, who God is, and the shape our life in God’s presence takes¹."

On Wednesday evenings, March 2nd through April 13th, from 7-8pm via a provided Zoom link, we will explore the possibilities such an approach offers, using the *Witness at the Cross* guidebook and DVD. We will view short (12 minute) video presentations by AJ, followed by discussion of material from the guidebook, in six sessions: “**Bystanders and Scoffers,**” “**The Other Victims,**” “**The Soldiers,**” “**The Beloved Disciple,**” “**The Women,**” and “**Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.**” The sessions will be led by Rector Hilary Smith and me.

If you are intrigued and want to participate, please:

- Send an email to me or Hilary to register.
- Purchase *A Beginner’s Guide to Holy Friday for Witness at the Cross* by Amy-Jill Levine. The guidebook is available from Amazon in paperback (\$16.14) or Kindle (\$9.99). If you need assistance in purchasing the guidebook, contact me or Hilary.
- Prepare for each week’s session by reading the guidebook material. You may find it helpful to have a Bible at hand (both Old and New Testaments, any translation) as well.

You will receive a weekly email that includes the week’s reading and the Zoom link.

Contact: me or Hilary Smith.

¹Levine, Amy-Jill, *Witness at the Cross Leader Guide* (p. 7), Abingdon Press Kindle Edition

Church of the Holy Comforter, Richmond

a parish in the Diocese of Virginia under the Episcopal Church in the USA
which is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion
Monument Avenue at Staples Mill Road
web - www.hoco.org; e-mail - office@hoco.org;
phone 804-355-3251; fax 804-355-0049

Coming Events at the Church of the Holy Comforter
See the [Hoco web site calendar page](#) for detailed calendar and rota

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

- **Sundays**, 10:00am service via Zoom and streaming on Facebook and YouTube
- **Sundays**, 4:30pm Story Time, a service for children, their families, and friends of all ages on Facebook
- **Tuesday**, 7:30am Morning Prayer, Facebook
- **Wednesday**, 11:30am Centering Prayer via Zoom
- **Thursday**, 7:30am Morning Prayer, Facebook

Food Pantry Hours:

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

Veterans' Shelter Dinner

- Fourth Thursdays, prep between 5pm
- Drop off at shelter between 5:30 and 6pm

Editing of the Messenger is done by Bruce MacAlister, the layout by George Collier.
The March Messenger will be available, Sunday, March 6, 2022. The deadline for that edition is Friday
February 25th, so you might want to do it earlier in the week!
If you feel that you have something you'd like to contribute, please contact Bruce MacAlister at
editor@hoco.org

