



*News of The Church of the Holy Comforter
in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia
Richmond, September, 2022*

- The Sorting - Serving the Hungry Behind the Scenes
- Youth group is coming to HoCo
- A Message from Hilary
- September Book Club - *The Sweetness of Water*
- Pridefest 1984 and 2022
- Even adults go back to school - Part 1
- Even adults go back to school - Part 2
- The Blessing of the Animals Moves Back Inside
- Men at the Movies Returns September 13th
- Organ Series 1 - Why the Pipe Organ?
- Ellen Johnston - Friend, Mentor, Inspiration
- The Back Page (current schedule information)

Spanish Service at Holy Comforter

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER (LA IGLESIA DEL ESPIRITU SANTO)

4819 Monument Avenue, Richmond, VA 23230
en la Diócesis Episcopal de Virginia

Anuncio Especial

- La Rev. Dra. Hilary Borbón Smith, va a celebrar misa
- en español todo los segundos sábados del mes.
- Empezando el sábado, 10 de septiembre
- A la 11 de la mañana
- niños pequeños son bienvenidos
- mascararas son necesarias independientes del estado de vacunación (habrá mascararas disponibles)

Vengan a conocer nuestra comunidad cristiana

Todos son acogidos



<http://hoco.org/newsletter.htm>



The Sorting - Serving the Hungry Behind the Scenes

By the Rev Briggett Keith

On most Friday mornings you can find two or three of us (Helen Reese, Nancy Deane, and me) sorting your donations and the food pantry's purchases from Feedmore. We enjoy the time



we spend doing easy but necessary work to stock the shelves for those who visit the pantry. Occasionally one of us actually remembers a joke and we have a good laugh. We try to place the foodstuffs in a neat and orderly way that will make the experience of our clients just a little more like shopping in a grocery store. We are a good team and we get the job done. There is one thing you can do to assist us: **donate food!**



Youth group is coming to HoCo

By Emily Souder

The HoCo Youth Group is **back!** All 6th through 12th graders are invited to our Youth Group Kick-Off Pizza Party Sunday, September 18 at 4:00 at St. John's Episcopal Church in Church Hill. We are returning to our Youth Group program of collaborating with like-churches and alternating hosting monthly. Need more information? Email me (eschilton@gmail.com) or Evan Herr (herrea@alumni.vcu.edu) with your questions.



Hoco Birthdays

For the month of September:

*Gary Steffey, 2nd; Keith Everton, 4th;
Sara Shelton, 5th; John Woodward, 6th;
Jennifer Woodward, 7th; Brian Davis, 9th;
Lou Oatts, 9th; Christa Marshall, 10th;
Sheila Wilson, 10th; Charlotte Nelson, 13th;
Ellen Hall, 14th; Emily Herr, 15th;
Sharon Brownlee, 17th; Lisa Sanderson, 18th;
Amy Sthreshley, 21st; Susan Carvell, 23rd;
Liz Scholder, 23rd; Steve Keller, 24th;
Liam Davis-Vojta, 25th;
Lian-Marie Holmes Munro, 26th;
Christine Garcia, 28th*



A Message from Hilary +

Dear Friends and Companions in Ministry,

God willing, we are going to resume ministries this Fall that we have not done since the pandemic started. Much time, planning, and energy has gone into organizing for: the youth group; Children's Chapel (Sunday School); going to PrideFest;



welcoming new members when we have our Welcome Back Sunday on September 18; and more. Rather than having a Ministry Fair on Welcome Back Sunday, we have decided to feature a ministry a month. September

also sees the resumption of ministries that continued through the pandemic but have had a summer break, such as our 8:45 am Sunday Morning Class for adults in person at church and our Monday Night Class, which has found greater attendance on Zoom and therefore, will continue on Zoom. In this newsletter, you can learn about many other activities and ministries that are resuming in September at HoCo.

As we begin anew some things in September, we find ourselves saying goodbye and transitioning in other ways. On Sunday, September 11, we will celebrate and thank Ellen Johnston for her six years with us as our Director of Music. In her retirement, she and her husband, Bishop Shannon, will continue to live in Richmond, and I expect that we will see Ellen from time to time. However, we must say goodbye to her and the relationship that we have enjoyed. Please join us for her last Sunday with us; we will also resume Connection Time on September 11 and have a reception in Ellen's honor.

I find the start of the school year and the church program year to be grounding. We resume schedules and activities that may have not happened in the summer. As wonderful as summer is, renewing and energizing, the energy of

Autumn can be centering. As John Keats describes the season in his poem "To Autumn": "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun..." (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44484/to-autumn>)

I pray that the autumn is a wonderful and blessed time for you and your family.

Wishing you the blessing of autumn,

Hilary+





September Book Club - The Sweetness of Water

By Stephanie Turner

The Book Club selection for September 2022 is *The Sweetness of Water* by Nathan Harris. This one looks very good! It should spark a lively discussion at our September 20th meeting. Our Zoom link remains <https://zoom.us/j/99461451877>.

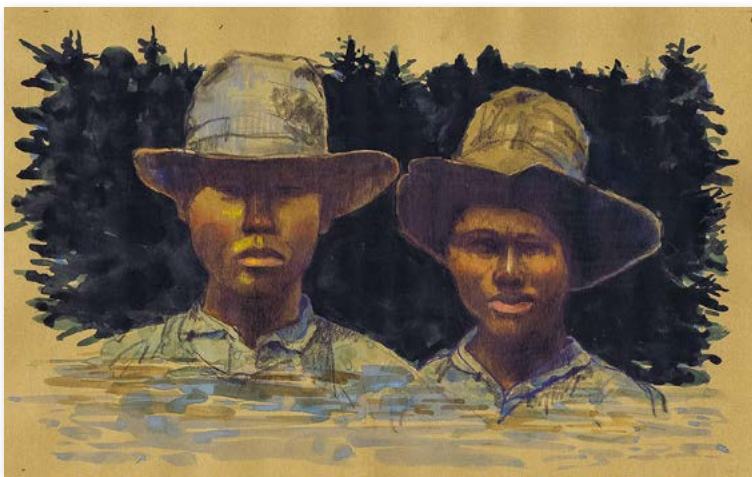


"A Best Book of the Year: *Oprah Daily*, *NPR*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Boston Globe*, *Smithsonian*, *Chicago Public Library*, *BookBrowse*, and the *Oregonian*."

A *New York Times* Book Review Editors' Choice

In the spirit of *The Known World* and *The Underground Railroad*, an award-winning "miraculous debut" (*Washington Post*) about the unlikely bond between two freedmen who are brothers and the Georgia farmer whose alliance will alter their lives, and his, forever

In the waning days of the Civil War, brothers Prentiss and Landry - freed by the Emancipation Proclamation - seek refuge on the homestead of George Walker and his wife, Isabelle. The



Walkers, wracked by the loss of their only son to the war, hire the brothers to work their farm,

hoping through an unexpected friendship to stanch their grief. Prentiss and Landry, meanwhile, plan to save money for the journey north and a chance to reunite with their mother, who was sold away when they were boys.

Parallel to their story runs a forbidden romance between two Confederate soldiers. The young men, recently returned from the war to the town of Old Ox, hold their trysts in the woods. But when their secret is discovered, the resulting chaos, including a murder, unleashes convulsive repercussions on the entire community. In the aftermath of so much turmoil, it is Isabelle who emerges as an unlikely leader, proffering a healing vision for the land and for the newly free citizens of Old Ox.

With candor and sympathy, debut novelist Nathan Harris creates an unforgettable cast of characters, depicting Georgia in the violent crucible of Reconstruction. Equal parts beauty and terror, as gripping as it is moving, *The Sweetness of Water* is an epic whose grandeur locates humanity and love amid the most harrowing circumstances." - *Courtesy Amazon.com*



Pridefest 1984 and 2022

By Bruce MacAlister

"The Richmond Lesbian/Gay Pride festival of 1984 at the Byrd Park Carillon Pavilion was Richmond's first formal pride event and the beginning of annual pride festivals." A Brief History of Gay Pride in Richmond, <https://www.qvirginia.com/home/2018/9/18/a-brief-history-of-pride-in-richmond>.

Holy Comforter parishioners and clergy agonized over our participation.

Was it appropriate for a church to

be present? What does it say about us? Who will leave the parish because we participated?

Eventually with the blessings of the HoCo

officialdom, a few of us dragged a folding table and chairs to Byrd Park. We put them down on





the uneven grass, put up some sort of backdrop (I don't remember what it was), and sat ourselves down. We had a shift or two



of members. We got some odd looks from "gay" festival-goers. What was a church doing amongst "sinful sodomites"? We also got some of those "thank you for being here" looks. There was some dialog. Most of us left thinking we were glad we came, we needed to be here.

Peggy Hombs remembers, "Steven and I were in attendance at this 1st event. The 'organization' felt so loosey-goosey; no wonder HoCo felt at home! Steven recalls some awkward



conversations with folks who were not at all sure about these older, clearly straight, white, church people (us) and what our agenda might be - and then mutually discovering our human bonds, transcending 'straight' and 'gay.' We also remember how simple and basic our 'display/exhibit' was - each year our set-up, signs, and handouts got better. But our presence, just being there that first year was so powerful to us and to others, once past their skepticism. Over the years we had Eucharists, one year including a Bishop. (Also how ironic having this 1st event in Byrd Park was, given how many arrests were made for soliciting there!)"

"Pridefest 2022 presented by the Virginia Lottery;" how things have changed! It is at Brown's Island on the riverbank Saturday, September 24th.

Holy Comforter will be there as we have

Photos from Pridefest services 2012 and 2013

been from the beginning. There are many churches present now. Planned activities are Eucharist in league with other Episcopal churches.



Even adults go back to school - Part 1

By Peggy Hombs, Adult Formation

The Sunday Morning Adult Class will resume on Sunday, September 11th from 8:45-9:45 a.m. in the Parlor. Social distancing and masks are still required. Over the summer, participants were asked to consider a number of curriculum options and



identify their top five choices. The votes have been compiled, re-counted, and certified; there were no unregistered



voters; the results have not been contested or denied!

The new curriculum will be “Jesus and His Jewish Influences” taught by Dr. Jodi Magness. This DVD-based course focuses on Jesus in the context of his Jewish faith and community.

Presentations will explore the roots of Jesus’ actions and teachings within the traditions and beliefs of ancient Judaism. The lectures draw from various sources including the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the writings of Philo and Flavius Josephus, the New Testament, and rabbinic literature.

The lecturer, Jodi Magness, is a Classical and Biblical Archaeologist and the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a popular professor, a well-regarded and multiply-honored scholar, and a prolific author, who has participated in or led 20+ excavations in Israel and Greece, including Masada, Khirbet Yattir, Yotvata, and Huqoq.

Class participants receive a weekly email with short read-ahead material; on Sunday the class views a 30-minute video, followed by wide-ranging discussion. All are welcome: join us anytime to ‘taste and see’!! Contact me with any questions.



Even adults go back to school - Part 2

By Peggy Hombs, Adult Formation

The Monday Evening Adult Class will resume on Monday, September 12th from 7:00-8:00 pm. via Zoom. (The Zoom link is found on the Holy Comforter website homepage.) Over the summer,



participants considered a number of curriculum options and listed their top five choices. The votes have been compiled, re-counted, and certified; there were no unregistered voters; the results have not been contested or denied!

The new curriculum will be “The World of Biblical Israel” taught by Dr. Cynthia R. Chapman. This DVD-based course traces the history of biblical Israel from its origins in the central highlands villages just west of the Jordan River to its emergence as a nation, and, then a pair of kingdoms. Major topics include life in Babylonian Exile; the history of Israel



from its origins as a nation to its flourishing as two independent kingdoms; life of Israelites and Judeans as they experienced imperial domination, conquest, and ultimately, exile under the Assyrians and Babylonians; the role of literacy throughout Israel’s history; and the period of Judah’s resettlement in the land as ‘New Israel.’

The lecturer, Cynthia Chapman, is the Adelia A. F. Johnston and Harry Thomas Frank Professor of Religion and the Chair of the Jewish Studies Program Committee at Oberlin College. She is a popular professor and a prolific author. Her research has explored the historiography of the Bible considered within the larger ancient Near Eastern environment, and on gender in ancient Israel. Her current focus traces the growing importance of maternally specific kinship categories, including food-based kinship, during the post-exilic period in order to document the origins of defining Jewishness through the mother.

Class participants receive a weekly email with short read-ahead material; on Monday the class views a 30-minute video, followed by a wide-ranging discussion.

All are welcome: join us anytime to ‘taste and see’!! Contact me for more information.



The Blessing of the Animals Moves Back Inside

By Hilary Smith

Sunday, October 2, 10:00 am Service

Bring your animal friends, and furry family members, and join us for our beloved Blessing of the Animals in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, who lived from 1181-1226. St. Francis was known



for his communion with creation and all God’s creatures; his Feast Day is October 4 and services to bless animals, and acknowledge their blessing to us, are often held near or on that day. The legend goes that animals were attracted to him because he exuded love and peace. In our time, every opportunity is precious that we have to celebrate and honor God’s

creation and all created beings. Dogs have been known to sing along with us during the service. We have had chickens, cats, rabbits, and more attend our blessing of the animals. Also, if your animal cannot participate in the service, you are welcome to bring a photo and we will pray/bless you and your animal in that way. All are welcome!



Men at the Movies Returns September 13th

By Steven Van Voorhees

Our first movie viewing for the ‘new year’ will be *WALL-E* on Tuesday, September 13th, two days after the 21st anniversary of 9/11. I bring this up as *WALL-E* is an autonomous robot laboring away to clean up the debris from a mysterious ecological apocalypse on Earth 700 years prior to this story. Why should we care about the *WALL-E* story? It appears to be a



children’s film - an animated tale that’s sweet and funny, a robot love story and an eco-warning for us all. The further question is: this a comedy or a tragedy?

It is 2805 A. D.; WALL-E is the last robot on Earth. He is still going after 700 years because he is autonomous and extremely smart and because he continues to cannibalize other robots. He is sort of alone. WALL-E has a companion in a millennially-evolved cockroach. He also has recreational and entertainment resources including “Hello Dolly” and Rubik’s Cube.

The Earth was destroyed by excessive human consumption and no sustainable waste reclamation, reuse, or redesign of material and food systems. Does this sound familiar? Even climate change figures in the trashing of the planet as virtually all vegetation is destroyed or consumed. What was the system that destroyed



our green island, floating in dark, unforgiving interstellar space? Consumerism married to corporatism results in the using up of everything to satisfy human hubris and greed. The Earth is controlled by BUY N LARGE. BNL builds a gigantic spaceship for the lucky humans. They are told that they will cruise for 5 years. The spaceship has a captain but is essentially controlled by AUTO, a completely automated system with only one override control built-in. But there is a secret code that only the captain can use.

At our film’s opening, WALL-E (Waste Allocation Load Lifter-Earth class) is going about his daily routine. There is only WALL-E and his work. One day EVE (Extra-terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator) flies in to do her work. She has been



sent to see if there is any living thing that would indicate that the carbon-based organisms on the BNL spaceship could build a sustainable environment and return to Earth. EVE is beautiful, efficient, and deadly as an explorer should be. WALL-E and EVE have a confrontation. While being awed and fearful, he relaxes a little and begins to show her around. WALL-E squeaks out her name and we realize he is in love.

Andrew Stanton, the director of *WALL-E* tells us what he based the whole story on, “I don’t have a political bent or ecological message to push. I don’t mind that it supports that kind of view - everything I wanted to do was based on the film’s love story, the last robot on Earth ...the sentence we first came up with in 1994.”

Released in 2008, *WALL-E* is the best-selling PIXAR film made to date. It is considered by many critics as the best film of 2008 and to be among the best animated films ever made. It has been selected for the US National Film Registry by the Library of Congress. It is scored very well by all the critics you normally see in my *Messenger* write-ups.

For an adult who still has that wonder about the Creation, this film is loaded with references and clues that only add to the delight of the story. There is the music that reminds us of past events and other venues; the characters, like M-O (Microbe Obliterator) and GO4, AUTO’s minion, and MOTHER, the spaceship’s computer (voiced by Signourney Weaver) and hundreds of visual clues. One would have to watch this movie several times to get them, but your subconscious mind will note them and your being will recognize them immediately. The first 40 minutes or so of the film is without any dialogue and even the color palette is part of the total effect - use those 40 minutes to record the background music (Do you recognize the pieces being played?) and the color scheme of the Earth in ruins.

WALL-E’s most prized recovered item is a video recording of “Hello Dolly.” He is most happy when he watches two of the leads, holding hands and singing,

*“It only takes a moment
for your eyes to meet and then
your heart knows in a moment
you will never be alone again
I held her for an instant
But my arms felt sure and strong
It only takes a moment
To be loved a whole life long.”*



We will be reminded, while we go through this story, that **love** made us and our world, and that the only answer to that **love** is to respond in like manner toward the Creator and the whole Creation. So, this is a love story after all!

So join us. We will gather at 6:00pm, masked and socially distanced, in the Parlor. The film will start at 6:30 pm with discussion to follow. Contact me for more information.



Organ Series 1 - Why the Pipe Organ?

By Will Jackson

You have to take a lot of piano and be really good to “step up” to the organ right? Actually, that’s just not true. I personally am afraid of the piano and have a particular reverence for pianists. So why is there this unspoken divide between the “organ world” and the “piano world”? They both have keys, so the organ just has more keyboards right? Well actually not really. To begin with, the piano is a percussion instrument. If you look inside, there are a series of hammers that are literally hitting a string thus creating that very forceful striking sound. The pipe organ, on the other hand, is a wind instrument. When you press a key on an organ, you are allowing air, officially termed “wind”, to shoot through a pipe thus allowing that pipe to “speak”. Yes that is the technical term. When you hear a pipe (and organ for that matter) sounding, it is speaking.

When an organist “draws”, or removes, the stops they want, they are literally removing the stops that are stopping the air to that specific “voice” of pipes. So the phrase “pulling out all the stops” does indeed come from the organ. This is literally allowing all pipes to sound at once. But how does this factor back into all those “keyboards?” When you are playing a piano, the way you emote is with the physical force of pushing the key hammers down onto the strings.

Since the organ is a wind and not percussive instrument, pressing a key simply opens the air flow and releasing it closes it. The sound never fades and dies with a key press; rather it’s “on or off”. And so the way you “build” your emotions, and the way you are changing the “volume” and drama of your piece is built upon the pipes and voices you are choosing to use. This has nothing to do with you playing the keys at all. This is why a pianist may be totally lost playing organ “keyboards” and an organist may be totally lost

playing piano “keyboards”, in that while they look the same they are doing completely different things aside from your fingers physically moving across them the same.

Another key difference between a piano and organ is that, while pianos are limited to the physical number of keys they have, organs can actually play from a larger musical range by simply attaching those pipes to a keyboard. On an organ, a family of pipes that plays in the range of a piano is considered an 8 foot “rank”. The octave that a rank of pipes plays in is denoted by its foot. A 4-foot rank is one octave above the normal piano rank; a 16-foot rank is one octave below, and so on. So while a

“normal” piano has 88 keys like the HoCo one, that’s all you’ve got. Organ keyboards, called “manuals”, only have 61 keys. But say I’m playing middle C on one organ manual with not only 8’ but also 2’, 4’, and 16’ stops drawn. Further I haven’t even mentioned that the organ pedalboard is a full bass range “keyboard” of notes to the left of middle C. By playing that one middle C key with those stops drawn on an organ, you are playing middle C plus 3 added octaves. That’s completely excluding your 3rd “hand” of your bass foot keyboard which at

HoCo goes an additional octave lower into a 32 foot rank of pipes.

And thus we have the mighty power of the pipe organ making it the “king of instruments” indeed. Conversely to the piano, there really isn’t much to “see” when the organ is playing. There is a neat video from a mutual friend of Bruce MacAlister and mine’s visit last summer. Mr. John DeMajo is a nationally renowned theatre organist and played the Byrd Theatre’s 90th Anniversary. He was taking pictures of our organ, and I videoed him playing theatre organ music but from the organ chamber. From this rare vantage, you can exactly see that indeed, the only thing “to see” is the movement of big slats or “swell shades” that John controls from one of the



two pedals. The pipes don't move because, well it's all air! From a previous article and onward, I have added said video to the organ playlist video at <http://hocostreaming.org/organ>.

Learning just a bit about why organs really are such totally different instruments than pianos, you may already have a sense of the scale of the palaces these kings reign. And with that you hopefully have come to realize about why the pipe organ is so very different than the piano and why a "keyed instrument" having keys does not inherently make them all the same. Further, you may have more of a sense of the grandeur and complexity to the instrument and why it is so worth keeping them around despite the immense time, effort, skill, money, and a bit of mystery, wonder, and awe they take to maintain. Quite simply, that stunning sound is irreplaceable and worth it; it's one of a kind. And with that, I begin my organ series with you. I'm going to take you into a place that few people at HoCo get to venture: inside our organ. But more importantly; I want to explain and show you to her. Because most importantly, what makes the pipe organ special, and what makes our organ at Hoco special at that, is us. There's a reason we've dragged the "king" through centuries of music history with us. Welcome.



***Ellen Johnston - Friend,
Mentor, Inspiration***
By Will Jackson

When I approached the console before a Sunday Service to ask Ellen if I could start learning on the HoCo organ, I was admittedly quite intimidated. I was pleasantly surprised with the encouragement I received in return as Ellen drew a couple finishing stops to start the service. Fast forward several years later, and not only have I had the honor of working with Ellen in a more formal sense with the streaming and worship aspect of church, but now I even got to play in my first service with her as musical



director! Most importantly, Ellen has become one incredible friend, mentor, inspiration, and rock solid source of support for me. Being an autistic person is not easy and we all have our unique circumstances surrounding our lives that makes them even more challenging. Of all the incredible people in my life, this has never been a hurdle for Ellen. Rather, what makes our relationship empowering is her gift of steadfast trust. I will never forget how scared I was to turn the organ on for fear of breaking the rather fancy and expensive instrument. Ellen was quick to say I wasn't going

to break it and enjoy the dang organ! One of my favorite memories was when I wanted to play "Stay with Me" for Maundy Thursday, my favorite service. I told Ellen I was ready to play for her, and one day after choir practice, I was leaving and she said, "Sit down you're not going anywhere." So I got to

sit with the legendary Ellen Johnston at the organ bench as we reworked the 2019 choir music into an accompaniment while having lots of fun in the process. Later during the actual service, I was planning how I wanted to start the piece with the play over or "intro". Ellen said, "You do what you need to do." Once again, this is one of the most important services - and arguably hymns - and there was Ellen's trust. From my favorite hymn comes, "To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go." This seems quite fitting for a one-of-a-kind-mentor. And it also seems fitting that writing this, after everything in my own personal story, the exquisite score at the end of Titanic when Rose goes to Heaven happened to come on. Further, my favorite score of Lion King came on right after that. While I'm quite happy to say this is not a eulogy at all, and I cannot wait to play "O Come O Come Emmanuel" at Advent for you Ellen, this is bitter sweet to say this least. Ellen said to me a couple weeks ago, "I'm gonna miss you Will." Ellen, I'm gonna miss you too.

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:**
 - ◇ 8:45am Sunday Morning Adult Class, in person in the Parlor - Choir practice in the choir room (not on Thursdays at the moment).
 - ◇ 10:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II, in person with nursery available; the sermon can be found on Facebook and YouTube
 - ◇ 4:30pm Story Time, a service for children, their families, and friends of all ages on Facebook
 - **Mondays:**
 - ◇ 7:00pm Adult Class via Zoom
 - ◇ 8:00pm Compline from the BCP or the New Zealand BCP or from the Northumbria Community, Facebook
 - **Tuesdays:**
 - ◇ 7:30am Morning Prayer, Facebook
 - **Wednesdays:**
 - ◇ 11:30am Centering Prayer, in person in the in the church
 - ◇ Noon Holy Communion, in person in the church
 - **Thursdays:**
 - ◇ 7:30am Morning Prayer, Facebook
 - **Fridays:**
 - ◇ 8:00pm Compline for the BCP or the New Zealand BCP or from the Northumbria Community, Facebook
 - **Saturdays:**
 - ◇ 7:00am Morning Prayer, Facebook
 - ◇ 8:00pm Prayers and a Reflection that previews readings and themes for Sunday, 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 5pm
 - Take to the shelter at 6pm and have dinner

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

The October Messenger will be available Sunday October 2nd.

The deadline for that edition is Friday September 23rd, but earlier is always encouraged.

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

