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Holy Week Schedule

April 2

Palm Sunday, 10:00 am service

April 5

Wednesday in Holy Week, Noon service

April 6

Maundy Thursday, 7:00 pm service

April 7

*Good Friday, Noon Stations of the Cross
7:00 pm service*

April 8

*Holy Saturday, Noon service
8:00 pm Great Vigil of Easter*

April 9

Easter Sunday, 10:00 am service



Power Play | Rev. Lisle Gwinn Garrity



Ashes to Go

By the Rev Dr Hilary Smith, Rector

We had around 25 people for Ashes-to-Go. That is the most since I have been doing Ashes-to-Go. A mom brought her two young sons who had been disappointed to miss the noon service that their mom attended. A man brought a van full of people who were deaf and one in a wheelchair. We had a woman



who works at the Girl Scout office nearby and she asked if we offer services in Spanish, adding that is her first language. I told her in Spanish that we do, and that we also have a Girl Scout troop. She was excited to hear about the service and the troop. Before giving the ashes, I always ask if the person would like to pray with me, and often they do, sharing with me challenges that they have. Ashes-to-Go is a community building experience and an amazing experience of God's grace for me, and based on what others say, also for the people who come. Thanks be to God.



Annual Parish Meeting March 5th

By Hilary Smith

On Sunday, March 5, we will hold our annual parish meeting in the church immediately following our 10:00 am service. If you would like a ministry report to be in our annual meeting booklet, please send your reports to me at hbsnocclergy@gmail.com. I need the reports by Wednesday, March 1. Thanks.

An annual meeting is a time to come together to hear about the state of our church, celebrate our community, and conduct business. We will be electing new vestry members. Many thanks to those willing to stand for election: Susan Boze, Jamey Hooks, and Jerry Scholder. We will elect three persons for three-year terms.

Standing for Election to the Holy Comforter Vestry



Susan Boze



Jerry Scholder



Jamey Hooks

all for three-year terms

Remaining on the vestry



Gayle Turner
Rotates off in 2024



Steven Van Voorhees
Rotates off in 2024



Emily Chilton Souder
Rotates off in 2024



Julie Edwards
Rotates off in 2025



Evan Herr
Rotates off in 2025



Lian-Marie Munro
Rotates off in 2025



Lenten Program - Empty Altars

By Hilary Smith

For Lent we have a program entitled, *Empty Altars: American Saints in a Cynical Age* with Diana Butler Bass and Tripp Fuller. Join us on Wednesdays in Lent. You do not need to sign up since we have access to the material already that will be shared during our Zoom class. Learn more about the program at <https://theonlygodordainedsurvey.com/emptyaltars/>.

Other Side of the Story’ and ‘The Homebrewed Christianity Guide to Church History: Flaming Heretics and Heavy Drinkers’ to see where we are starting.”

Join us Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m. starting on March 1. The Zoom link is <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84376998441>.



About Holy Week

By Hilary Smith, Rector

This year Palm Sunday is on April 2 and begins a week of great importance and high drama as we journey with Jesus. Have you ever come to a Maundy Thursday service or Stations of the Cross or the Great Vigil of Easter? These once-a-year services are an opportunity to go deep into the heart of God's love for you and our world.



Empty Altars

We live in iconoclastic times. All around us, saints and heroes are being knocked off or taken down from public altars. It seems that nearly everyone we once admired or held in esteem has failed us. We've stripped the altars of both state and church. America's spiritual landscape is now marked by empty altars everywhere.

2 Taking down statues is nothing new, especially in Christian history. Cynicism and anger at failed institutions and flawed heroes is nothing new. But human beings rarely leave altars empty very long — there's almost a pressing need to re-sanctify the geographies we inhabit. People always put statues back up.

2 But of who? And to commemorate what? How do we move ahead with new saints and a less troublesome iconography? What "saints" can inspire us to address the hurts of our hearts, the brokenness of our communities, and the pressing issues of our times?

Shouldn't we just give up on the whole idea of saints anyway? Why bother?

Join Diana and Tripp this Lent as they explore "sainthood" for an American — and global — future. We'll share stories that need to be told of "saints" you know and those you need to know in a quirky learning journey through American religious history.

The leaders write “Diana and I are excited to have y’all joining us this Lent. This year we decided to focus on one of the biggest historical challenges the church in the West faces — our contested history. Much of what we plan to present in the lectures is new material, but for those that love to read along with us, check out Diana’s ‘A People’s History of Christianity: The

Hoco Birthdays* *For the month of March:

***Nathaniel Milligan, 2nd; Lori Anderson, 3rd;
Craig Hamblin, 4th;
RoseMarie Germanis, 6th; Claire Kunz, 7th;
Mary Falterman, 9th; Caroline Smith, 11th;
Donald Craghead, 14th; Mary Maxwell, 16th;
Patsy Jones-Hubert, 18th;
Joella Rhoades, 18th; Mike Geipel, 20th;
Gallegos Donnie, 21st; Diane Gilkenson, 26th;
Dr. Drew Munro, 26th; Waveney Joseph, 29th***



March Book Club - Haven

By Stephanie Roberts-Turner

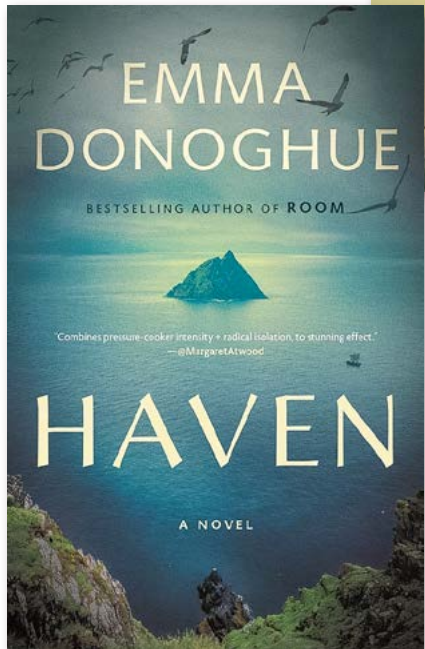
On March 21st at 7pm we tip our hat to the Irish in honor of St. Patrick's Day with the selection of *Haven* by Emma Donoghue, best-selling author of *Room*. This is a quiet and beautiful book and one that raises questions about both blind faith and survival.

“The year is 600, so Christianity is, relatively speaking, still fresh out of the oven.

Artt has received orders from God - in that most reliable of forms, the dream - to establish a monastery in Ireland’s western sea. For this he recruits two monks: Cormac, an elderly but competent builder and gardener who bears the scars of war and of the plague that took his family, and Trian, a spindly youth with a complementary talent for hunting and scavenging.

“Flattered by Artt’s invitation, they need no convincing. And they will go, quite literally, wherever the wind blows their flimsy boat, Artt assuring them he’ll know their destination when he sees it.

“The bird-ruled island where they land (Skellig Michael off the coast of County Kerry) has a fierce beauty, but it is far from Edenic. This, for Artt, is part of the point, fleshly comforts and pleasing the Big Guy being at opposite extremes of his priority list. And so before they build a shelter they must build a cross ... from stone. He continually imposes limitations on their already limited situation. He deems, for instance, the island’s abundant shellfish unclean and therefore not OK to eat. To the monks’ practical, survival-related concerns he invariably responds with a



‘God will provide’.” - Emily Donaldson, *Toronto Star*, August 24, 2022

“Told with the clarity of a fable, Haven

transports us into territories unknown, where ‘fog makes an island of every man.’ Donoghue’s men of the cloth confront challenges that rattle not only their faith in God, but their faith in each other and in the natural world. This is a patient, thoughtful novel with much to say about spirituality, hope, and human failure, and about the miracle of mercy.” - Esi Edugyan, Giller Prize-winning author of *Washington Black* – Courtesy. Amazon.com

We will be using our old link to access the meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/99461451877>.



Liam Davis-Vojta to Take Part in Aerospace and Aviation Academy

Excerpts from *WorldStrides* press release - see more [here](#)

Parishioner and frequent crucifer Liam Davis-Vojta is spending the summer at Rice University in Houston in the “Aerospace and Aviation Academy.”

From the press release:

“Liam, a junior in the Advance College Academy at J. R. Tucker High School, was invited to attend the program by the College Board. At Tucker he has enjoyed many activities including drama club, musicals, chess club, and the Ramps volunteer organization. He was also accepted

into the National Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta (math honor society), and National Society of High School Scholars. Outside of school, Liam has participated in the Henrico Interscholastic Mountain Bike Team and is an acolyte at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter. He also enjoys playing soccer, gaming, snowboarding, and sailing in his spare time. He hopes to attend



college and study engineering after graduation. Liam is looking forward to this exceptional opportunity with Envision's Aerospace and Aviation Academy where he will study rocket design, visit Space Center Houston, and launch a satellite.

“If you would like to help Liam with his tuition and travel to Houston, please visit his fundraising page at <https://gofund.me/6e538a7b>. Any amount helps! Contribute by May 1, 2023 before final tuition is due.”



Side by Side Meal Program Returns!

By Peggy Hombs

After an extended hiatus due to COVID, Holy Comforter will again be providing a monthly meal to LGBTQ+ youth attending support programs at Side by Side. We will provide an entrée, salad, bread and dessert meal for approximately 15 young people. We will begin Thursday April 27th--preparations will begin about 4:00pm, and we will leave to deliver the meal around 5:15. As before, this meal support will occur on the 4th



Thursday of each month - same day, time, and prep location (HoCo kitchen) as our Vets' Feeding Program. Unlike the Vets' meal, which HoCo volunteers deliver and stay to share with the folks,

this meal is just delivered to Side by Side - for the privacy of those attending, we are asked not to stay.

Holy Comforter has been a long-time supporter of Side by Side (formerly known as ROSMY). Side by Side is dedicated to creating supportive communities where Virginia's LGBTQ+ youth can define themselves, belong, and flourish.

If you are interested in helping with the on-site prep, providing dessert, etc. , please contact me.

Of course, the Vets' meal folks can always use more hands - and that contact is Bruce MacAlister.



Adult Formation Updates

By Peggy Hombs

Sunday Morning Class: We will conclude our current DVD-based curriculum Jesus and His Jewish Influences with Professor Jodi Magness on Sunday, March 19th. The class will be on break until after Easter and resume on Sunday, April 16th. We will then begin a 6-week DVD-based course with Dr. Amy-Jill Levine entitled Signs and Wonders: A Beginner's Guide to the Miracles of Jesus - more on this in the April Messenger. This class will conclude on May 21st; we will then be on break for the summer.

Monday Evening Class: The class continues with the DVD-based course The World of Biblical Israel with Professor Cynthia R. Chapman. As we have the last several years, this class will pause during Lent, while our Wednesday Night Lenten Program is offered. We will resume after Easter on April 17th until the curriculum is concluded on May 22nd. The class will then be on break for the summer.





March Men at the Movies - Life of Pi

By Steve Van Voorhees

Men at the Movies will resume on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, when we will be celebrating National Pi Day. (Remember ‘pi’ from math class? 3.1415 ...) We will be viewing the film *Life of Pi*. We will experience a life-threatening, yet life-affirming, journey with the film’s titular character,



Piscine Molitor Patel. Piscine, named after a famous swimming pool in France, chooses “Pi” as his name after being hounded and bullied by others in school because they pronounce his name in English, not French.

As it was with January’s movie, we are going to sea in a boat, but this time it is a very small boat - a lifeboat with a zebra, orangutan, hyena, Bengal tiger, and Pi, a 16-year old boy. The Japanese freighter carrying Pi Patel, his family and the remnant of their family zoo to Canada, has sunk in a terrible storm. Pi, the only human survivor and the animals escape in a lifeboat. The hyena kills and eats the injured zebra, then does the same to the orangutan; Richard Parker, the Bengal tiger kills and eats the hyena, then retreats under the tarp at the end of the lifeboat. The rest of the incredible survival story told to the insurance agents details the ways that

the tiger and the young man negotiate their mutual needs to live.

At one point, Pi Patel admits. “Without Richard Parker, I wouldn’t be alive today to tell you my story.” And, at another point, he says, “I could not abandon Richard Parker. To leave him would mean to kill him. He would not survive the first night.” What we see is that these two creatures work out a symbiotic existence that keeps both of them alive and well, and also

smarter and stronger, and able to live successfully in a lifeboat for almost eight months. For 227 days, Pi and the tiger will drift across the Pacific until they finally landing on a beach in Mexico.

We will be told the story of this miraculous adventure by a middle-aged Pi Patel, as he is interviewed by a writer in Canada. He actually gives two versions of the story with the same astounding ending for Pi Patel - his survival. He tells the second



story because the insurance agents for the Japanese freighter that sank, leaving him and the tiger adrift don’t believe the first version he

gives them. The insurance agents don’t like either of the versions Pi gives them, but they do record them, and one of the insurance men says that the animal version is better.

Roger Ebert awarded the movie four out of four stars, declared it one of the best films of the year, and said that the title could have been shortened to “Life.” This 2012 film got an 86% fresh rating at Rotten Tomatoes and 7.90/10. Metacritic gave it a 79/100 and Cinemascore assigns an A- on an A+ to F scale. The Academy Awards process produced 11 nominations with 4 Oscar wins - Best Director, Best Cinematography,

Best Visual Effects, and Best Original Score. The theme song, Pi's Lullaby, in Tamil is written by Mychael Danna and Bombay Jayashri, who sang it. Ang Lee, famous for the movies, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon; The Wedding Banquet; Eat, Drink, Man, Woman; Sense and Sensibility; and Brokeback Mountain*, was applauded for his poetic insight and artistically wonderful choices for images and actions. This film was an international production, involving several countries for locations and crew, and it received world-wide acclaim, grossing over \$609 million with a huge payback. It was a monumental artistic triumph and a cult favorite in the 10 years since it was released. This is extremely rare for blockbuster movies.

Two more things that are notable are "Richard Parker" Bengal tiger and the life, faith, truth, and perception aspects. The film is based on the book, *Life of Pi*, by Yann Martel, that won the Man-Booker Prize. Apparently, the Bengal tiger was captured by a hunter named Richard Parker, who nicknamed him "Thirsty." Later in the report of the incident, the hunter's name was transcribed as the tiger's name. But, just as the two versions of the story that Pi Patel tells to the insurance investigators, Richard Parker's name has another meaning equating to the human name for God in history - Jesus. Which brings us to the second item: Life, Faith, Truth, etc., Pi Patel declares that he is Hindu, Christian, and Muslim together and all at the same time. Pi says, "Thank you, Vishnu, for introducing me to Christ." His perspective is revealing and a great lesson for us: Religion is not an end, but a way to understand deeply and personally this world and beyond. If Truth is stranger than Fiction, it should not be discarded because it is strange. And what about God? Is God knowable? Is God a mystery? Is God Richard Parker? At that moment when Pi is safe on shore in Mexico, Richard Parker walks away without looking back. Pi is left crying.

There we are. As always, there are more questions. We will have an opportunity to talk about them on March 14th. As always, we will gather at 6:00pm in the Parlor for fellowship; the film rolls at 6:30pm with discussion to follow.

Bring your friends; bring your snacks and drinks. See you at the movies!



Turn Toward the Love

By Ellen Hall

Gold Chicken is just moments away from happening and you can be there! The cast of this year's show, "Be Kind," has been working hard since December to produce a joyful evening of music. Gold Chicken is a collaboration between the L'Arche Metro Richmond Community and People International, as well as performers of all abilities from



around Richmond. Along with all of your favorite Gold Chicken performers you'll also get to see dancers from Miracles in Motion, the music group The Comets, and Susan Greenbaum. The show will be Saturday, **March 18 at 4pm**, at River Road Church Baptist at the corner of Forest Ave and River Road. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$13 at the door. Go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gold-chicken-show-be-kind-tickets-524753932137>. If you'd prefer paper tickets, [email](#) me. Can't make the show? You can still donate to provide support for our group homes. You can also donate to L'Arche Metro Richmond. This is an evening you won't forget. **And** you'll get to see many HoCo friends on stage. See you there.



Mardi Gras Monday
By Hilary Smith, Rector
What fun we had! Around forty people attended our first big social gathering in a long time. (HoCo is a polling place and there was a special election on Shove Tuesday, Mardi Gras, so we did it on Monday.)







Social Justice and Outreach 2022 Report

***By Phoebe Winter and various
ministry leaders***

[Each year we pick a report from one of the ministries to include in the Messenger. Social Justice and Outreach is second to Worship in the number of parishioners who volunteer, editor.]

Social Justice and Outreach – caring for those outside our parish – continues to be one of Holy Comforter’s core values. The Social Justice and Outreach Ministry (SJ&O) is actively recruiting new members. If you would like to help guide how Holy Comforter expresses its social justice and outreach aspirations, please contact me. The ministry meets every other month and welcomes your ideas.

Social Justice and Outreach concentrates on five areas: advocacy, local food and shelter, health, refugee and immigration support, and local community. Our advocacy work includes providing funds for Pridefest. Loose plate donations on holidays, sometimes supplemented by SJ&O funds, are used to support Side by Side, the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. SJ&O organizes the choice of an organization and collection of donations for ONE Sunday.

Local food and shelter is the largest part of Social Justice and Outreach’s ministry. We supported ACTS both financially and with person-hours; CARITAS and Shalom Farms financially; Christ Families both financially and with guidance and encouragement; and Side by Side, the homeless veterans shelter, and our local community with meals and fellowship.

Our activities in health, refugee and immigration support, and local community are more focused. Loose plate donations on holidays, supplemented by SJ&O funds, are used to support Cross Over Ministry and the Health Brigade. We supported Episcopal Migration Ministries in 2022, and we began a relationship with a Girl Scout troop that includes both financial and human support.



Descriptions of Selected Ministries

The ACTS Mission is closing the door on homelessness. They work with people to help them before they become homeless. Holy Comforter has a financial assistance hotline people can call that is managed by Vera Limn and Maria McGranahan-Turner. They check the hotline several times a week and respond to messages from people requesting help; the hotline averages two to three calls a week, and some calls come directly to HoCo’s office. The volunteers request enough information to determine whether the person should be referred to ACTS and also offer information about other resources such as the Salvation Army, Goodwill Employment, our food pantry, and the Feed More hotline.

The Community Meals group served 20 to 25 servings of soup with a roll and dessert once a month. The food has been all volunteer contributions, but we did ask for a \$500 budget for the year 2023 just in case grocery prices continue to climb. If we do not use this money it will revert to the Food Pantry to help with Thanksgiving Food Basket costs.

The Christ Family budget was set for \$1500 but we actually spent \$2100. We currently have 6 families. Our funds were used to pay for home heating oil for one family, \$300. The two families with 5 children got \$100 Back to School shopping gift cards. All six families received a \$100 Kroger gift card for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. The remaining expenditures were to pay for groceries and medicine from Kroger for one family who was twice hit with COVID; the mother has heart damage and is a COVID long hauler.

The Veterans Shelter Dinner Ministry is led by Bruce MacAlister as chief cat herder. Ten months a year a hardy band of slicers, dicers, and assemblers gather in the parish house kitchen to fix dinner for the 30 to 35 homeless veterans who reside at the Liberation Veterans Services shelter on Hull Street. The Executive Chef is Sue Taylor. The kitchen crew varies but generally Helen

Reese, Siyano Prach, Peggy Hombs, Steve Van Voorhees, and Bruce. Gary Steffey then brings the delivery truck by, we load up and go to the shelter. Those in the delivery team serve vets and then we serve ourselves and eat with them. Since all of the residents served in the military, they are a worldly group, and we enjoy our time with them.

The vets are temporarily homeless. Some are having outpatient treatment at the Veterans Administration hospital nearby, some are recovering from substance abuse, some ran out of income and jobs and need a hand up. The shelter provides food, shelter, and counseling to get them out of the shelter and into their own housing.

The Food Pantry had an eventful 2022. We began the year distributing pre-packed bags of groceries to our guests and ended it with a return to our pre-COVID choice procedure, where guests choose the groceries they need. Volunteers and guests are still wearing masks, but everything else is back to being relatively normal, with friendly interactions and conversations among guests and volunteers. I think that's what many of us missed most when we distributed pre-made bags to people in their cars.

The Pantry relies on its volunteers to keep things running. We have more than 40 active volunteers, with 6 who are new this year. Several volunteers come from outside the Holy Comforter congregation, attracted by the pantry sign on Monument and Staples Mill. The Rev Frank Castellano joined the pantry crew and checks our guests in on Saturdays. His proficiency in Spanish helps our guests feel more comfortable, and there are often conversations in Spanish among Frank and the guests as they wait to shop. In 2023, Frank is going to help interested volunteers understand the various cultures represented by our Spanish-speaking guests and learn enough Spanish so we all can interact better.

In 2022, the Pantry provided groceries for 241 households, up from 180 in 2021. About two-thirds of our guests are between 18 and 59 years old, and the rest are 60 and over. We had a total of 928 recorded visits, with some households coming multiple times throughout the year, compared to 623 in 2021. Since many households feed more

than one person, we provided food for almost 2,000 people, counting return visits. About one-fourth of the people receiving food were children under 17 years old.

This year we distributed Thanksgiving food baskets to our guests. These consisted of nonperishable or frozen Thanksgiving staples – stuffing, pie filling and crusts, vegetables, rolls, gravy mix, etc. – and \$20.00 Kroger gift cards. The baskets included a description of American Thanksgiving traditions in Spanish for people newly arrived in the U.S. We had some leftover baskets and gift cards which we donated to CARITAS. We have also begun (slowly) to provide recipes and samples for some of our less-recognized foods such as vegan ground “beef” and pigeon peas.

Feed More, the food bank for central Virginia, is our primary source of food. The food bank reduced the cost of donated food sold to partner agencies from \$.19/lb. to \$.09/lb. because of the pandemic, and they increased their supply of discounted bulk food. Fresh vegetables are about \$.04/lb., and some food such as bread is free. While Feed More provides food at a bargain, the variety is sometimes limited, and we rely on donations from others to fill in the gaps. On the first Sunday of every month, and at other times, HoCo congregation members donate food for the Pantry. Periodically, St. Mark's Methodist Church drops off food they have collected for the Pantry. This year, St. Mary's Hospital and the Virginia Department of Aviation donated food from their holiday food drives. St. Paul's monthly Family Worship Service has begun donating food they collect, and HoCo's neighbors also drop off donations. Finally, Panera Bread at Willow Lawn donates leftover bread and pastries.

Thanks to the generosity of people and organizations donating food, we spent only approximately \$5.25 per Pantry visitor. That covered at least two full bags of groceries for each guest, often with an extra bag to carry the overflow.

[See the full report with financial information in the Holy Comforter Annual Report that will be handed out at the March 5 annual meeting.]

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 - *ends March 19.*
 - ◇ 8:45am Sunday Morning, Choir practice in the choir room (through January 1st).
 - ◇ 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
 - ◇ 4:30pm Story Time, in person on the 3rd Sunday of the month, 4:30pm
 - ◇ Noon Holy Communion, in person in the church
 - ◇ 7:00PM Lenten class via Zoom
 - **Thursdays:**
 - ◇ 7:30am Morning Prayer, Facebook
 - ◇ 4:00pm Lectionary Study, Zoom
 - ◇ 7:00-8:15pm Weekly choir rehearsal
 - **Segundo sábadó de cada mes:**
 - ◇ 11:00am Misa en español
- 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 in HoCo kitchen, 5:00pm
 - Fourth Thursdays, delivery to the shelter, 5:45pm
- **Mondays:**
 - ◇ 7:00pm Adult Class via Zoom - *pauses for Lent*
 - **Tuesdays:**
 - ◇ 7:30am Morning Prayer, Facebook
 - **Wednesdays:**
 - ◇ 11:30am Centering Prayer, in person in the in the church

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

The April Messenger will be available Sunday April 2nd.

The deadline for that edition is Friday March 24th.

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

