

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2024






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ST. JOSEPH'S DREAM

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





MESSAGE FROM HILLARY +  
THE REV. DR. HILARY BORBÓN SMITH

Dear Friends and Companions in Ministry,

Our stewardship program for this Fall has been focused on our Baptismal Covenant. The promises made at baptism invite us to consider how our relationship with God is both personal and about being part of a community. We are part of the human community, and as Christians, we are part of our church community. The theme for this stewardship program came to me as inspiration in a way that makes me think it was from God. God is always about more than just one thing, and the idea that Stewardship is also all about Discipleship led me to focus on our Baptismal Covenant. Since the election, on November 5, I have thought that thinking about discipleship, how we live our faith and follow Jesus, is an especially good focus for my attention and, I hope, for yours.

Sometimes clergy or churches are accused of being political, as if politics should be separate from our faith. Polity, the way we order our lives as people in a particular society with a particular government, was of great concern to Jesus. Living under the domination of the Roman empire, the people of Jesus' time, most of the people, had no power and were subject to the demands of a government that cared not about them but about maintaining order and being financially strong. The people were taxed to support the rich and powerful. Jesus called people to a different way of living that cared for the poor and welcomed the stranger as the prophets

did before him. To have the vision of Jesus, the divine point of view, challenges much of how we order our lives. Given the circumstances, who is in power, and how the government orders the structures of society, we, as Christians, are always called upon to question policies and programs that do not support the poorest and the neglected or demonized among us.

Many of our HoCo members are worried, scared, or at least concerned about what 2025 will bring with the change of government. What gives me great hope and helps me stay grounded, is that for us, nothing can change that will take away our mandate. We have our Baptismal Covenant to guide us and to help us remember that God is with us and we are part of a community of faith. God strengthens us; we support each other. Together we will reach out in love and peace to influence all that God puts into our care.

Soon we will celebrate Christmas. We will celebrate that God was born into our world as a vulnerable baby. The incarnation was and is God's word of love to us. God loves us so much that God suffered as we do. God loves us so much that God wanted to be close to us and know us, not to discount things like politics but to show how all of human life is of concern to God. I pray that baby Jesus will be born anew for you this Christmas in a way that grounds you so that come what may, you will know the companionship of Christ in every aspect of your life.

Blessings for Advent and Merry Christmas,

HILARY+





MENSAJE DEL RECTOR  
THE REV. DR. HILARY BORBÓN SMITH

Queridos amigos y compañeros en el ministerio,

Nuestro programa de mayordomía para este otoño se ha centrado en nuestro Pacto Bautismal. Las promesas hechas en el bautismo nos invitan a considerar cómo nuestra relación con Dios es tanto personal como parte de una comunidad. Somos parte de la comunidad humana y, como cristianos, somos parte de nuestra comunidad eclesial. El tema de este programa de mayordomía me llegó como una inspiración de una manera que me hace pensar que proviene de Dios. Dios siempre se trata de más de una sola cosa, y la idea de que la Mayordomía también tiene que ver con el Discipulado me llevó a centrarme en nuestro Pacto Bautismal. Desde las elecciones del 5 de noviembre, he pensado que pensar en el discipulado, en cómo vivimos nuestra fe y seguimos a Jesús, es un enfoque especialmente bueno para mi atención y, espero, para la de ustedes.

A veces se acusa al clero o a las iglesias de ser políticos, como si la política debiera estar separada de nuestra fe. La política, la forma en que ordenamos nuestras vidas como personas en una sociedad particular con un gobierno particular, era de gran preocupación para Jesús. Viviendo bajo el dominio del imperio romano, el pueblo de la época de Jesús, la mayoría del pueblo, no tenía poder y

estaba sujeto a las exigencias de un gobierno que no se preocupaba por ellos sino por mantener el orden y ser financieramente fuertes. La gente pagaba impuestos para apoyar a los ricos y poderosos. Jesús llamó a la gente a una forma de vida diferente que se preocupara por los pobres y acogiera al extranjero como lo hicieron los profetas antes que él. Tener la visión de Jesús, desde el punto de vista divino, desafía gran parte de cómo ordenamos nuestras vidas. Dadas las circunstancias, quién está en el poder y cómo el gobierno ordena las estructuras de la sociedad, nosotros, como cristianos, siempre estamos llamados a cuestionar las políticas y programas que no apoyan a los más pobres, abandonados o demonizados entre nosotros.

Muchos de nuestros miembros del HoCo, muchos de nosotros, estamos preocupados, asustados o al menos preocupados por lo que traerá el 2025 con el cambio de gobierno. Lo que me da una gran esperanza y me ayuda a mantenerme firme es que, para nosotros, nada puede cambiar que nos quite el mandato. Tenemos nuestro Pacto Bautismal para guiarnos y ayudarnos a recordar que Dios está con nosotros y somos parte de una comunidad de fe. Dios nos fortalece; nos apoyamos unos a otros. Juntos extenderemos la mano en amor y paz para influir en todo lo que Dios pone a nuestro cuidado.

Pronto celebraremos la Navidad. Celebraremos que Dios nació en nuestro mundo como un bebé vulnerable. La encarnación fue y es la palabra de amor de



Dios para nosotros. Dios nos ama tanto que sufrió como nosotros. Dios nos ama tanto que quiso estar cerca de nosotros y conocernos, no para descartar cosas como la política, sino para mostrar cómo toda la vida humana le concierne a Dios. Rezo que el niño Jesús nazca de nuevo para ti esta Navidad de una manera que, pase lo que pase, conozcas la compañía de Cristo en cada aspecto de tu vida.

Bendiciones para Adviento y Feliz Navidad,

HILARY+



## SPECIAL ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SERVICES

BY THE REV. BRADLEY PEYTON,  
CLERGY IN RESIDENCE

Join us for two special services this season. I will be Officiant and have a brief homily at each.

- December 8, Second Sunday of Advent, 8:00 a.m., **Rite One** Holy Eucharist
- Monday, January 6, 2025 at 7:00 p.m., Eucharist for the **Feast of The Epiphany**, one of the seven principal feasts of the liturgical year (see BCP preface Calendar)



## A BLUEPRINT FOR SERVICE

BY ARNALDO CARDONA

**Service** is what a Christian life should focus on. Service to your community, your church parishioners, your elders, and the new generations. Service, giving your areas of expertise to those who are underrepresented. For this reason and as a retired teacher, I decided to volunteer with the K-12 Outreach Committee of the American Institute of Architects – Richmond, a field of study related to my first college degree, Architecture. They award a \$10,000 scholarship to a high school student from the Richmond area pursuing a career in Architecture.

As chair of the K-12 Outreach Committee, I worked collaboratively to promote that scholarship among public and private schools and to expand the offerings of our committee. I was glad to bring to the table the importance of developing the promotion of STEAM and Design Education in K-12 education.

**Sharing** what you know and what can empower others can be seen as a universal Christian value. This has made me put my energy into volunteering to do read-alouds in schools during career days to expose students to pursue STEAM professions like Architecture and Landscape Architecture. I am also facilitating after-school programs at the elementary level in which students can pursue a STEAM career while gaining literacy skills such as word recognition, decoding, retelling and vocabulary development.



**Giving** is an action that can give us all lots of satisfaction, especially when a reward is not expected. For this reason, I volunteer my time to work on mini grants that provide school libraries in the RVA area with books about Architecture to promote literacy skills, as well as to develop an educational display to promote the awareness of global warming and sustainability. After retiring as a teacher in 2020, I believe that working with children will get you closer to the goal of a Christian life, because to go to Heaven you better have the soul of a child!



ARNALDO CARDONA SPEAKING ON THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

the joint retreat. We had 30 people attend, which was double the number than we had on our own the previous year. Multiple sessions were held by a number of leaders so that people had a choice between topics on several occasions. Prayer was the focus, with the Rector of St. Mark's, Benjamin Badgett speaking about the prayer services found in the Book of Common Prayer, I spoke about Ignatian prayer, and Maria and Karen from St Mark's led a discussion on books about or related to prayer. Our former seminarian, Lucius and his wife Elizabeth led a discussion of personality types and how our personalities, based on the Myers-Briggs, determine how we like to pray. The Rev. Sarah Kye Price led a group in making prayer beads. There were so many options! St. Mark's didn't have a Shrine Mont weekend and I asked them if they would like to be part of ours. What a great partnership! We are hoping for 50 people next year!



PARISHIONER MARIA SCOTT AT THE SHRINEMONT RETREAT



## A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE PARISH RETREAT

BY HILARY SMITH

Many thanks to Maria Scott who worked with people from St. Mark's to plan and lead





## A LOSS IN THE GARDEN: DEAN EMERITUS OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL HAS DIED

BY LAURA HUNT

First thing every morning during the pandemic, I opened YouTube to hear the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral's Morning Prayer. Seated amid the trees and flowers of the Deanery Garden, the Very Rev. Robert Willis shared his reflections—on the Gospels, poetry, artists, writers, and composers—with a global audience of hundreds of thousands whose local churches were closed.

On March 25, 2020, the Feast of the Annunciation, Fletcher Banner, Rev Willis' partner in life and ministry, suggested that since the cathedral was locked down, they should say prayers in the garden, so that "the

1400-year tradition of the Daily Office at Canterbury would not be broken." Against a background of birds singing, fountain water splashing, a rooster crowing, and a menagerie of cats, guinea fowls, hedgehogs, piglets, and butterflies, Fletcher filmed and edited Robert's talks, supplementing his words with music, paintings, and the beauty of the natural world. Thus the Garden Congregation was born.

Dean Robert's talks were frequently disrupted by impromptu appearances of his cats, Leo and Tiger. When Leo disappeared under his cossack, local headlines announced "Priest does magic trick in garden." When Tiger dipped his paw into the creamer to steal the milk for the Dean's tea, the video went viral. When Tiger later had surgery, losing a paw to cancer, thousands of get well cards arrived from people around the world "who came for the cats and stayed for the catechism." Even my atheist husband began watching. Nor did Tiger's disability dim his



DEAN WILLIS ENJOYING TEA IN THE GARDEN WITH HIS BELOVED CAT



shenanigans. On Shrove Tuesday, he stole an entire pancake. He was “the purr-fect pandemic star,” as a British newspaper put it.

Sadly, the beloved leader of the Garden Congregation died of heart failure last month at Berkeley Divinity School, Yale, where he was a resident Fellow. Since his retirement, Dean Robert had traveled worldwide, responding to invitations from friends and colleagues to give sermons—from Santiago de Compostela to Oklahoma City. His last broadcast was 2 days before his death.

A Requiem Mass was held at Christ Church, New Haven, CT on November 13, with recently-retired presiding bishop Michael Curry celebrating; the Very Rev Randy Hollerith, Dean of the National Cathedral in DC, preaching; and Brother Geoffrey Tristram, SSJE, as the eulogist.

Since his ordination in 1972, Robert Willis was inspired by both St. Francis and his own profound love for the Benedictine rhythm of life in prayer. He served at Salisbury and Hereford cathedrals before becoming Dean of Canterbury and for over 20 years, he and Fletcher maintained their home at the Deanery as a place which spoke of God's embracing love to all.

P.S. You can access the videos at <https://youtube.com/@gardencongregation>.



THE MISSION OF ACTS – AREA  
CHURCHES TOGETHER SERVING  
BY MARIE MCGRANAHAN-TURNER,  
SOCIAL JUSTICE & OUTREACH



Keeping our neighbors at home. Help us close the door on homelessness in the greater Richmond region. This is the mission of ACTS, Area Churches Together Serving.

Housing is connected to every aspect of our lives: Employment, Family, Education, Transportation, Physical and Mental Health, and more. ACTS partners with a number of Richmond area organizations to prevent homelessness – keeping kids in school, keeping workers in jobs, and creating a healthier community. HoCo is one of those partners. We answer the ACTS hotline messages several times a week. We’ve recently added the option to help our food pantry clients.

Serving the Greater Richmond Area since 2006, ACTS serves the City of Richmond and the counties of Henrico, Hanover, Chesterfield, Goochland, Powhatan, Charles City, and New Kent. Our services have, unfortunately, only grown in demand with no end in sight: in Central Virginia, eviction filings are well above 2019 pre-pandemic levels.

Last year, ACTS provided more than \$1 million in financial assistance to hundreds of individuals and families in the greater Richmond area. ACTS is also a City of Richmond MetroCare water assistance partner. For more details, [www.actsrva.org](http://www.actsrva.org).

We have responded to 158 phone calls so far this year. The ACTS organization does their best to call back within 7-10 business days. HoCo is one of contacts for this initial interaction. We also have information about other organizations who may be able to help. It includes our food pantry information and FeedMore information as well as other potential financial assistance, mental health, physical health, household items/furniture, employment resources. We are glad to continue to help keeping our neighbors housed, one household at a time.



## ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

### ART PROJECT

BY CAROL GIBBS

To remind us that the Christmas season is **not** about rampant consumerism, our Advent Art Project will repurpose the avalanche of advertising that overwhelms our mailboxes into the most recognizable images in all of Christendom.

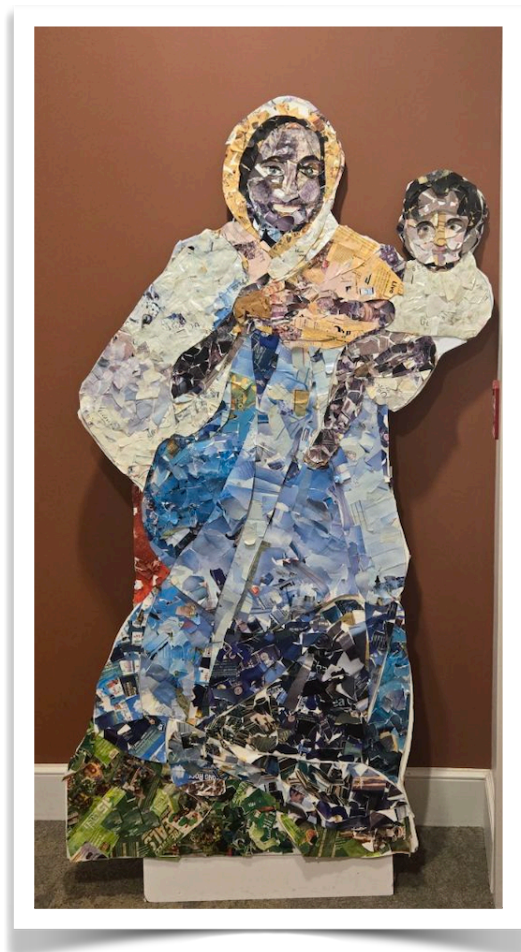
We're asking you to gather the myriad of colorful catalogues, magazines, and advertisements that seek to entice us to want more and spend more and to deposit them in

a crate we have marked for this purpose in the Narthex.

Then, beginning on December 1, and on each of the next two Sundays of Advent, we invite the entire congregation to take part in transforming these messengers of materialism into a reminder of God's **gift** to all humanity.

Think you don't have the artistic skills for such an undertaking? If you can tear paper, discern one color from another, and know how to use a glue stick, then you have the skills we need. We hope you'll be a part of this parish wide event that is sure to bring us all joy this Christmas.

From your HoCo crazy artists in the Tuesday UFO group: this project was designed by Tracy Council and the rest of us were just crazy enough to go along.







## ADVENT PRAYERS

FROM THE EPISCOPAL PEACE FELLOWSHIP

O God, you inspired your servants the prophets with visions of a new earth, where wolf and lamb dwell together, where cries and weeping are uttered no more, and where elders are healthy and infants live in safety; inscribe your hopes in our hearts that casting away the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light, we may seek first your reign on earth, and prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, our Deliverer. **Amen.**

That nation will not war against nation, that they will beat their swords into  
plowshares and their spears into  
pruning hooks  
**Let us cast away the works of violence**  
**And put on the armor of peace**

That the fruits of the earth will be distributed so that each will have their own  
vine and fig tree and none shall  
make them afraid  
**Let us cast away the works of greed**  
**And put on the armor of justice**

That our city will no more be called forsaken or desolate,  
but will be a place of light and  
glory  
**Let us cast away the works of neglect**  
**And put on the armor of passion**

That the Church will fulfill our mission to be ambassadors of reconciliation  
and emissaries of truth  
**Let us cast away the works of indifference**  
**And put on the armor of the Spirit**

That those who are ill will feel Jesus' healing hand, those who hunger will  
taste the Bread of Life, and those  
scarred by violence will be given the  
balm of Christ's wounds  
**Let us cast away the works of anguish**  
**And put on the armor of love**

That we may be blessed to be Christ's hands, to share Christ's feast, and to soothe Christ's people; and that

the blessings already in our lives and those yet to come will awaken us to your grace

**Let us cast away the works of anxiety**  
**And put on the armor of joy**



## AN ADVENT OF HOPE

BY BISHOP SUSAN GOFF

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in the midst of the horrors of apartheid in South Africa, said, "Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness."

During our Advent of Hope Retreat, we will seek hope in the darkness of these times of uncertainty and impending change. I will present meditations on three themes:

**Hope and Lamentation**

**Hope and Intercession**

**Hope and Praise**

Following each meditation, I will invite us into periods of quiet reflection.

If you keep a written or visual journal, I invite you to bring it with you. We will also provide other ways to express your reflections in words or visual art, or in quiet conversation with a trusted other.

Above all, we seek hope in community with one another and with God who created us and loves us fiercely. Come and be part of a community of hope during An Advent of Hope on Saturday, December 14, 9am to 12 noon.



## BISHOP SUSAN GOFF'S BOOK RELEASED

VIA NEWS RELEASE, DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA

After more than four decades of service to the Church, Episcopal Bishop Susan E. Goff has released a memoir.

The Desert Shall Rejoice: Psalms from the Wilderness of Breast Cancer recounts her breast cancer journey in the form of 130 original psalms, reflecting on her experiences, diagnosis and treatment while working during the pandemic.

Bishop Goff, who had always enjoyed good health, admits being shocked by her invasive ductal carcinoma diagnosis in March

2020.

“Just as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, I received a life-altering diagnosis. Within days of my routine mammogram, I joined the 12.5% of women facing breast cancer in their lifetime. My husband and I found ourselves part of a club we never wished to join, as one in eight families encounter breast cancer with a loved one.”

Despite her diagnosis, Bishop Goff did not take a medical leave. She said being able to manage dual responsibilities of her health and ecclesiastical duties through virtual means was a blessing as it provided a distraction from focusing solely on cancer.

“Maintaining my diocesan work during my cancer journey proved to be a gift, as it allowed me to focus on more than just the





disease. Engaging in full-time diocesan responsibilities, such as weekly calls with clergy and staff, provided a sense of balance and purpose. This dual focus ensured that my life wasn't solely defined by cancer, which I found to be a blessing."

Bishop Goff said she channeled her emotions into a personal project, opting for an introspective approach and transforming her experiences into a powerful testament of resilience and faith.

"I experienced a whirlwind of emotions – shock, denial, annoyance, and fear. Despite the high incidence of breast and related cancers in my family, it still felt surreal. Memories of loved ones who faced cancer fueled my determination to transform this daunting challenge into a personal project, embracing curiosity alongside my emotions."

"I envisioned myself navigating through a challenging wilderness, allowing myself to fully experience the emotions and lessons that fear, hope, pain, patience, disruption, and opportunity would bring."

The journal she kept through a series of surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation became the blueprint for her book. The psalms range from emotions of distress and anger to joy and praise, authentically reflecting her emotions.

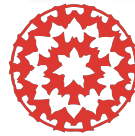
"Reviewing my journal after the final surgery, I noticed that many entries naturally resembled psalms in their emotional honesty and form. This realization led me to transform the raw material into poetry and song. As I shared my work with friends and small groups, their responses of empathy, gratitude, and understanding inspired me to compile

these psalms into a book, hoping to reach and resonate with readers."

Bishop Goff said she believes that sharing her story is a way for her to encourage others to communicate and find support for their painful experiences. The book, she said, is both a personal journey and public sharing of an intimate process she conducted openly with the diocese.

The book, published by Bold Story Press, is available from Amazon in paperback and e-book.

The full 900-word release can be seen at <https://episcopalvirginia.org/news/bishop-goff-psalms/>.



## BLESSING THE DOGS AT RIR



Blessing the dogs at the Raceway meant, in a way, blessing the people too. I was moved by the many people who brought their dogs to

me. Being in the setting, I felt like I was on a very short but meaningful mission trip. I was blessed to meet the people and their dogs. I connected with the organizers of this major event when I did the pet blessing at Toby Town.

HILARY +



## CAROLING WITH A PURPOSE

2024

BY JULIE EDWARDS, PASTORAL CARE

Christmas Caroling and Gift Basket Delivery will take place on Saturday, December 14th from 1:00–4:00 p.m. The purpose is to carol for people who are usually unable to get to church for whatever reason, like health issues. We will gather in the Parish Hall, divide up, go to our destinations to sing and provide a gift basket. We hope you will join us, even if you can't carry a tune in a bucket, to share good cheer to people whom we do not often see but are a part of our community. Once everyone has returned, we'll enjoy refreshments.

Please sign up through Sign-up Genius to join in. Here's what we need:

1. Seven drivers to take carolers in their vehicles
2. Carolers (as many as want to go – we just need an idea of how many)
3. Five people to provide snacks, such as cookies, popcorn, and hot beverages like hot chocolate or apple cider
4. Three people to clean up afterwards

We had such a good time last year! Hoping to see all of you there this year!



## CELEBRATING "ALL BRACKETS' DAY" FOR LENT MADNESS

BY THE REV. TIM SCHENCK & THE REV. SCOTT GUNN, SUPREME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Following the heady days of Nominationtide, and the submission of hundreds and hundreds of saintly nominations, the Supreme Executive Committee (SEC) is pleased to release the highly anticipated 2025 Lent Madness bracket. Following their Spring Retreat, held in a secure, undisclosed coffee shop where vast amounts of single-origin black coffee fueled their discernment, the SEC whittled down the field to 32 saints who will compete for the coveted Golden Halo.



All Brackets' Day completes the Autumn Triduum (which will surely appear in subsequent Prayer Book revisions), consisting

of All Saints' Day (November 1), All Souls' Day (November 2), and All Brackets' Day (November 3). By longstanding tradition, it also marks the day that people leave comments complaining that "it's way too early to think about Lent because it's not even Advent yet!"

Full article: [www.lentmadness.org/2024/11/happy-all-brackets-day-4/](http://www.lentmadness.org/2024/11/happy-all-brackets-day-4/)



## CHRISTMAS DONATIONS - MAKE IT TWO

BY BRUCE MACALISTER, SOCIAL JUSTICE &  
OUTREACH MINISTRIES

On four religious holidays each year we make a special deal about contributions to external organizations doing God's work in the world.

For the Christmas season it is the **Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP)**. Put bluntly, it the lobbying organization for Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, etc. faith communities. Money and non-religious causes get the most attention by the state legislature. The volunteers at VICPP intensely lobby our legislators from December through the legislative season. Although all the faiths do not agree on certain issues, there is substantial agreement on fair treatment, vocational training for the poor and vulnerable, care for children, etc. for the VICPP to take positions before our representatives.

Make a contribution at church or using the DONATE button at the bottom of [hoco.org](http://hoco.org). Then contact VICPP at <https://>

[virginiainterfaithcenter.org/get-involved/volunteer/](http://virginiainterfaithcenter.org/get-involved/volunteer/) and get active.

Now write your second check for **Side by Side**. The results of the November election put the LGBTQ+ youth community in danger. Even if the officials don't target them, their sanctioned bullies will. Your financial contributions will enable Side by Side to continue to provide safe places, professional support services, and other resources (e.g., our monthly meals) for our local LGBTQ+ youth. We also need to be prepared to defend them in person. Show our love and commitment to this threatened community. For more on Side by Side, check out their website at <https://www.sidebysideva.org/>.



LOCAL FAITH LEADERS AT THE UNION HILL RALLY





## DIOCESE RECEIVED A \$1-MILLION GRANT FROM LILLY ENDOWMENT

FROM DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE, ABRIDGED

The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia has received a \$1,248,768 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish the Pathways to Prayer and Practice Initiative.



**Lilly Endowment Inc.**  
A Private Philanthropic Foundation

The program is funded through Lilly Endowment’s Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative, a national initiative designed to help Christian congregations more fully and intentionally engage children in inter-generational corporate worship and prayer practices.

The Pathways to Prayer and Practice project involves the creation of a framework, roadmap or pathway that guides congregations, and subsequently families, on meaningful engagement of children in corporate worship in churches across the Diocese of Virginia. Likely, these pathways will look less like hard structures of curriculum and more like the soft connective tissue that binds us together in strong yet flexible faith communities. A training laboratory will be established, The Pathways Institute, where dozens of participating congregations will intentionally experiment with systems to invite families to church, recruit leaders, welcome the marginalized, and shift their church culture towards the full embrace of children in

worship. Scripture, prayer, Eucharist, music, and sacred spaces are the five primary areas of worship around which new practices will be ideated and employed. Congregations will be incentivized for their participation in institute cohorts with sub-grants to assist in the implementation of their concept in their own church. The collective learnings from these experiments will culminate in the creation of a Pathways Guidebook for congregations, online resources, and visual material that can be shared broadly and reach across the diocese and beyond.

The Rt. Rev'd E. Mark Stevenson is excited for the impact that the Pathways to Prayer and Practice Initiative will have for the Diocese of Virginia. He says, “For far too long, the church has underinvested in building disciples of Jesus Christ, deeming the nursery and age-segregated Sunday School as sufficient formation for our children, resulting in multiple generations (and a declining number) of parishioners loosely practicing the faith. The Diocese of Virginia is serious about faith formation, and I wholeheartedly believe this work must begin with children and their families. Just as Jesus Christ incarnate did many radical things, even turned the world upside down when he came to save the world, we too, need to think creatively, collaboratively, and downright radically about how our diocese is equipping and training our 173 congregations to raise disciples. This grant is an incredible opportunity to help us do this work.”

The entire news release is at <https://episcopalvirginia.org/news/grant-pathways-prayer-practice/>.



## DON CRAGHEAD HAS PASSED AWAY

Donald Lee Craghead, 72, of Midlothian, VA, departed this life on October 19, 2024 after a lengthy illness. Don was born March 14, 1952, in Roanoke, VA, the second of three children born to Robert Eugene Craghead and Edith Hogan Craghead. He spent most of his younger years growing up in Pennington Gap, VA. He was a 1970 graduate of Pennington High School and attended Elon College and the University of Virginia at Wise. During his youth he was very active in Scouting and was an Eagle Scout and Scout leader. Don worked for C&P Telephone Co. for many years and retired in 2019 from American Airlines as Customer Service Supervisor in Richmond. He was also in the past a very active member of the Church of the Holy Comforter, serving on many committees, ministries and on the Vestry.

Don is survived by his loving husband and life partner of 41 years, James Craig Hamblin, and his brother, Michael Eugene Craghead (and Kevin Michael). He is also survived by his nephew, Jared Hollis Scott; great-niece, Brittney Nicole Scott; and great-nephews, Ty and Graysen Scott. Don was predeceased by his parents, Edith and Gene Craghead, and his younger sister, Julia Anne Craghead.

Don was a loving and caring person who was loved and admired by all who knew him.

The funeral service was held on Saturday, October 26, at the Church of the Holy Comforter. Burial followed in Blandford Cemetery, Petersburg, VA. In lieu of flowers, friends were asked to consider a memorial contribution to the Richmond SPCA, the Church of the Holy Comforter, or a charity of their choice.

-CRAIG HAMBLIN



## ELECTION DAY BAKE SALE: TASTY TREATS FOR HUNGRY VOTERS

BY MARY DAVIS



SOME OF THE TASTY TREATS ON OFFER AT  
THIS YEAR'S' ELECTION DAY BAKE SALE





Our Election Day Bake Sale was a huge success! This congregation is full of talented bakers. It was truly a modern-day version of the story of the loaves and fishes – minus the fish. I asked for a few things to sell, maybe some banana bread or cookies, and we ended up with dozens upon dozens of brownies, spice cookies and cakes, pumpkin bread, muffins, bagels, mini-pies and bundt cakes, rustic loaves, cornbread – you name it, it was on the table. The lemon blueberry pound cake was the first to sell out. You see, when we come together, five loaves really can become many. Our final earnings were \$738, but that’s not the real win of the day. The real win was connecting with our neighbors who came out to vote. Several people said they contribute to our Food Pantry; several more gave extra

donations beyond the price of the baked goods and a few expressed interest in checking out our services. Congratulations, HoCo Bakers!



ΕΙΠΗΑΝΥ

BY LAURA HUNT

The word Epiphany comes from the Greek word for manifestation or showing. Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of God to the world and is one of the oldest feast days of the Christian church. It's also called



Three Kings' Day; in Spanish, Día de Los Reyes.

Matthew tells us the familiar story: wise men follow a star, pay homage to a child who is also a king, and offer gifts. Elements of Matthew's story appear in the Old Testament readings for Epiphany. Isaiah speaks of kings from other nations coming to offer precious gifts: "Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. The wealth of the nations shall come to you. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD." (Is. 60:3-6) And Psalm 72: "The kings of Arabia and Saba [will] offer gifts. All kings shall bow down before him, and all the nations do him service."

Matthew's Greek text calls the men who arrive on Epiphany "μάγοι" (magoi) or Magi from the Persian word for priests. It used to be translated as "kings" (perhaps because Isaiah mentions "kings"), but in recent times it's more likely to be translated as "wise men". Since they study the stars, the magi are probably astrologers.

According to the Book of Common Prayer, their visit to the infant Jesus is the "first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles," the Magi representing all the Gentiles. The story reveals that the Jewish Messiah has come for the salvation of the whole world, not just Israel.

The carol we sing 'We Three Kings of Orient are' interprets the gifts as symbols of three aspects of Jesus' life: gold represents his status as "King of the Jews"; frankincense, which was used in Israelite temple worship,



K + M + B + 2009 WRITTEN ON A DOOR OF A RECTORY IN A CZECH VILLAGE, TO BLESS THE HOUSE BY CHRIST, JUAN DE VOJNÍKOV VIA WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

indicates his divinity; and myrrh signifies death and mourning. After the Crucifixion, Nicodemus wrapped Jesus' body in linen spiced with myrrh before placing him in the tomb.

Later tellings of the story give the magi names and identify their homelands: Melchior



from Persia, Caspar from India, and Balthazar, who was Black, from Arabia.

Epiphany originated in the Eastern Orthodox Church. It commemorates not just the arrival of the Magi but also the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan and the revelation of his divinity when God says, "this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased." Similarly In the Episcopal church, Jesus' Baptism is celebrated on the First Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epiphany follows the Twelfth Night of Christmas, which you might celebrate by reading or watching Shakespeare's play of that name, or just by indulging in topsy turvy misrule when the servants become the masters. At Holy Comforter we last celebrated Twelfth Night Revels in 2020, when parishioners sang and performed.

Customs for the day of Epiphany include baking a "Three Kings Cake." Whoever finds the figure of baby Jesus in their slice of cake gets to be king for the day. Another is to make the punch called wassail, of hot mulled cider. You could even revive the tradition of wassailing. People used to go door-to-door a-wassailing (singing Christmas carols). I particularly like the orchard-visiting wassail, an ancient custom of visiting orchards and singing to the trees to promote a good apple harvest. The carol to sing is "Here We Come a-Wassailing, Among the leaves so green," with its refrain,

"Love and joy come to you, And to you your wassail too;

And God bless you and send you a Happy New Year."

A final custom is to write with chalk on the doorway of a house or building the

numbers of the calendar year (2025) and the letters C, M, and B for Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, separated by crosses. So this year would be "20+C+M+B+ 25." My son Cameron did this here at HoCo in 2015 in a ceremony with a few parishioners. This action represents the hospitality of the Holy Family to the Magi and invites a blessing on the building. You can still perhaps make out the chalk symbols to the right of the door into the church.

A last note: It's considered unlucky to leave Christmas decorations up after Twelfth Night, so remove them by Epiphany.



## FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

BY MARIE McGRANAHAN-TURNER, CO-LEADER OF THE FOOD PANTRY

Sadly, Phoebe Winter and Eric Watterson are leaving Holy Comforter. Phoebe has steered the Food Pantry for the last 10 years – maybe more. She has seen us through many changes – from using the closet under the stairs (inside the Staples Mill Rd. entrance), to a quarter of the room we are now in, then then the whole room now overflowing into conference room 4 days a month.

She oversaw the pantry adding a new freezer and a new refrigerator. The refrigerator was paid for by a grant which allows us to offer 2 of 3 basic dairy products; 1 stick of butter, a quart of milk, and 6 eggs. The glass front refrigerator allows our guests to decide on their 2 of 3 dairy options before opening the doors. This keeps these foods colder which is safer for our guests. It allows us to offer more

“extras” like cheese, juice, and yogurt while supplies last.

During their time, the number of guests we serve has almost doubled; we now average 35–40 families four times a month. Our pantry setup for our guests went from specific food categories to grouping them by type of food: baking, dessert, fruit/vegetables, grains, proteins and more. This updated setup allows our guests to have more options of what they choose to better match their needs. Phoebe and Eric saw us through the pandemic – remember drive through food pantry!? In the dark?

Eric has also been a stalwart volunteer – serving at the food pantry and a vital part of procuring food from FeedMore. He was the physical backbone of our FeedMore Pick up/Delivery Days. He could always be depended on to fill whatever hole Phoebe needed filled.

Both Phoebe and Eric gave their heart, ideas, money, muscles, and soul to HoCo’s food pantry. They will both be missed. Their commitment to HoCo and all served through the food pantry is more than 1 person can replace. That is why Cindi Hanayik and I are working together to keep our food pantry changing and thriving. Please see our bulletin, the list on the pantry door in the parish hall and/or the list on <http://www.hoco.org/> for food items and extras. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.



CINDY (LEFT) AND PHOEBE BRINGING IN THE LOAD FROM FEEDMORE



## HOLIDAY CONCERTS AT HOCO

BY LAURA HUNT

On Monday, December 16 at 7 pm at HoCo, the **Chamber Music Society** of Central Virginia will present **Bach by Candlelight**, an evening of J. S. Bach’s solo cello suites and violin partitas. This intimate music, perfect for a winter’s night, will be performed by violinist Johnny Gandelsman and cellist James Wilson. Gandelsman has been an artistic collaborator with CMSCVA since 2017 and is a recipient of a 2024 MacArthur "Genius Grants."

Celebrating 20 years of creativity, innovation and cultural leadership in Richmond, the CMSCVA is a not-for-profit arts organization devoted to inspiring, entertaining, and moving our communities, through a combination of unique venues, world-class musicians, thought-provoking content and eclectic classical music. It strives



to promote interest and diversity in the musical life of Richmond and beyond.

Tickets cost \$5 to \$30, but discounted tickets are available for the Holy Comforter community: \$10 for adults, free for students. Advance tickets can be purchased through [our online box office](#). Click on the "Get Tickets" button and enter the promo code "HOCO." Or you can purchase tickets at the door on the evening of the concert; just let our box office know that you are a member of the HOCO community.

On Friday, December 6th at 7:30 p.m. at HoCo, the James River Singers will present Carols & Songs of Beauty, continuing their tradition of "giving voice to the human spirit". The concert will feature The Nativity by Patrick Hawes, along with works by Josquin des Prez, Gustav Holst, Ēriks Ešņvalds, Ola Gjeilo and others. Our own Jim Bennett performs with them. Tickets: \$20 General Admission, \$10 Seniors (55+) and Students. Tickets can be purchased at the door the night of the concert or ordered in advance through Eventbrite by clicking here: [December 6th Tickets](#)



## MY CONFESSION

God, I can't for the life of me figure out how to pray for him

who mocks your beloved and seems to think he's you.

I can't for the life of me figure out how to pray for him

whose god is power, whose currency is cruelty.

I know, I know, he is also your child, made in your image.

I know, I know, I have promised to be faithful in prayer.

I know, I know what you want me to do.

I just don't know how. And I really, really don't want to

when his name tastes sour on my lips.

God, the best I can do right now is name this aversion.

The best I can do is want to pray better.

Please hear this stumbling confession of mine.

Please make something of my willingness to try.

Please help me speak his name to you until I can do it without flinching.

Because although I can't for the life of me figure out how to pray for him, praying for him is for the life of me

- and the life of the world -

as much as it is for him.

Amen

- SUSAN GOFF, EPISCOPAL BISHOP, RETIRED



CHERYL GROCE-WRIGHT, HOCO ALTERNATE DELEGATE, HILARY OUR, RECTOR, AND TERRY LONG, HOCO DELEGATE



## REPORT ON THE 2024 DIOCESAN CONVENTION

BY TERRY LONG, HOCO LAY DELEGATE

230TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA

Two days after Election Day I went with Hilary, our rector, and Cheryl Groce-Wright, our alternate lay delegate to Fredericksburg for the annual meeting of our diocese. It was a pleasure to represent Holy Comforter. Also, I chair the Credentials Committee. We certify that the lay delegates are properly

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credentialed and registered. If there are changes in status, we take care of certifying the change is proper.

The usual order of the convention was changed a bit from last year. We began with Evening Prayer at St. George's with shuttle buses available to take us to and from the convention center. (If you've ever been to downtown Fredericksburg you will understand how helpful this was.) It was at the service that Bishop Stevenson gave his annual state of the diocese address, rather than the next day as had been done in the past.

On Friday morning we convened



formally at the convention center for two sessions with the Rev. Dr. Luke Powery, Dean of Duke University Chapel and Professor of Homiletics and African and African American Studies. He punctuated his messages with songs and sometimes we joined in. The afternoon brought a multitude of workshops. I went to one with Dr. Powery that was a conversation around the themes in his book, *Becoming Human*, and another was on church records. The day concluded with a service of Holy Eucharist.

We began Saturday morning with Morning Prayer and then got down to business. Heidi Kim led us in an interactive activity requiring our phones and having table conversations on Shrine Mont, the diocese and our parishes. We elected new members of the Standing Committee and heard from the treasurer. A consent agenda was approved which shortened the business portion of the meeting. We were able to adjourn before noon!

It was a very pleasant convention. I so enjoyed seeing people I have only seen at the conventions in the past, meeting new people and learning new ways of doing things. I picked up some good ideas for the Altar Guild. And I met two other librarians who were also delegates.



## THE INSTRUCTED AND GUIDED EUCHARIST

BY ANNE SNYDER

On January 12th, 2025, we at Holy Comforter will travel back in time as our clergy renew and refresh our understanding of our liturgy and our heritage. Using information contained in the Book of Common Prayer, they will lead us through history so that we can better remember or perhaps learn for the first time the components of our worship service.



The first component, which is inherited from Jewish tradition, is the use of our Book of Common Prayer. Jewish services are guided by the *Siddur Lev Shalom*, a prayer book. This part of the service is called “The Word of God.” Here we will focus on prayers and readings to further our understanding of God’s interaction with the world; how His word relates to our lives. It is here we also offer prayers for forgiveness and focus on strengthening our intimate relationship with God and ask for God’s peace.

The second component, on January



18th, is focused on our uniquely Christian practice which celebrates the presence of Christ in our midst by remembering Him in our sharing of the bread and wine symbolizing the sacrifice of His body and blood. Prayers are said and as we share His sacrifice, we also celebrate our unity, that is, our communion.

Liturgy and ritual create a common consciousness, but it is so easy to lapse into concentrating on the words and actions (bowing, making the sign of the Cross, etc.) and not focusing as much as we should on what we are truly receiving and pledging.

Let us strengthen our faith muscles together.



TRUNK OR TREAT AT HOCO





## MESSENGER ANNOUNCEMENT

THE LENT - EASTER ISSUE OF THE MESSENGER WILL BE PUBLISHED MARCH 2ND.

ARTICLES FOR THIS ISSUE MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE EDITORS NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 21ST.



## YARD SALE + GALA = \$8,500 FOR HOCO

BY KIPLEY HERR

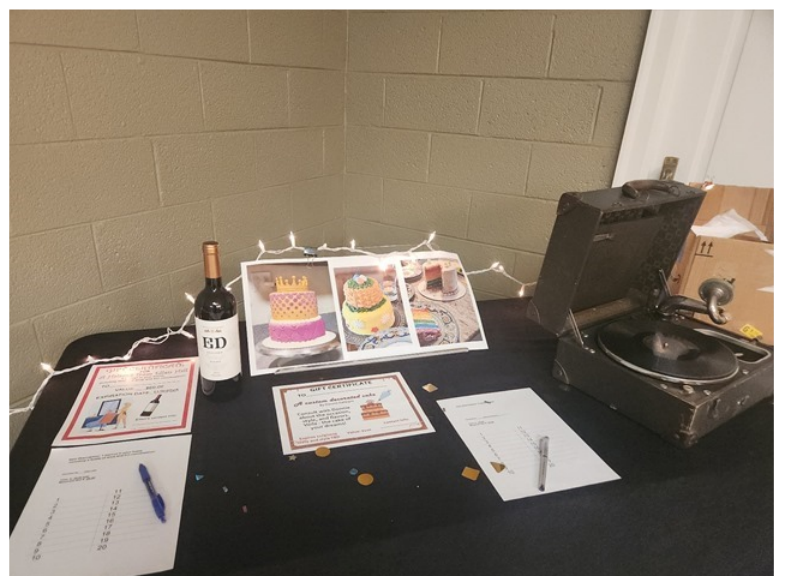
Way back in 2005 someone suggested we hold a yard sale. So, we did. We did again, and again. We even added an event the night before and called it the Gala. The Gala featured a presale of the yard sale, sometimes a silent auction, sometimes an art show, sometimes a live auction – but ALWAYS a fun event! The two events are called SpringFest (when we hold it in the fall we call it FallFest—we are flexible!).

The leadership has changed over the years, and we have taken a break occasionally. One big break in the action came about due to the pandemic... but the phoenix keeps rising from the ashes.

This year we held the yard sale in September, and the Gala in November. This allowed us to focus on each event, giving them individual attention. The yard sale has a reputation in the thrifting community as evidenced by the line that stretched down the sidewalk of folks waiting to get in to shop. People started waiting at 6:30 a.m. for an 8:00 start time! It was nonstop action for several hours.

The Gala included a silent auction, live music and a variety of special items for sale left over from the yard sale. Heather Baggett donated her handmade prayer beads for sale as another attraction. We served dinner and handed out door prizes. A great big fun time was had by all.

Generating income is our primary goal each year of course, but the camaraderie, friendship, and getting to know each other, plus building our HoCo/neighborhood community puts the icing on the cake.





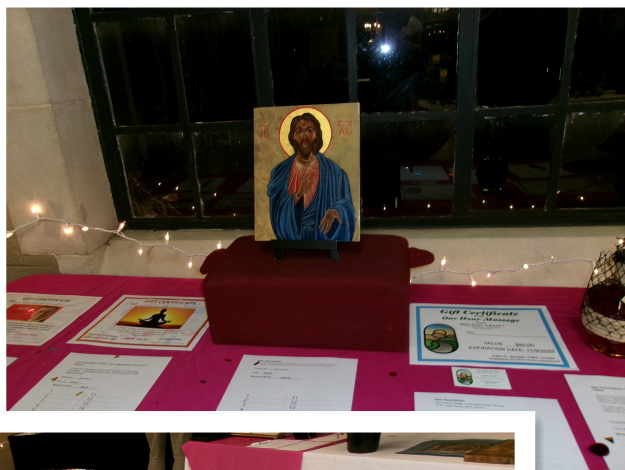




Friendships are built, bonds are formed.

The first year we held the yard sale we raised \$3,400. We were thrilled! The most money we have raised from this event so far is \$5,200.

This year the combined yard sale and Gala hit a new high, bringing in a total of... drum roll please... \$8,500! And the income continues to trickle in as several of the larger leftover yard sale items are being sold online.



## HOCO BIRTHDAYS

FOR THE WINTER MONTHS

### DECEMBER:

Samuel Gage II, 3rd; Bruce MacAlister, 5th;  
Barbara Rose, 8th; Ian Sthreshley, 9th;  
Leslie Smith, 11th; Art Raymond, 15th;  
Barbara Crowder, 16th; Kath Ruggeri, 18th;  
Patty Sheldon, 18th; Tracy Councill, 22nd;  
Lindsey Smith, 25th; Rev. Bradley Peyton, 26th;  
Deborah Westin,  
27th; Moises Cabedduque Jr, 28th;  
Brenda Crouch, 29th; Joy Bressler, 30th;  
Terry Long, 30th; Melisse Menchel, 30th

### JANUARY:

Marion Wells, 2nd; Maria Hayman, 10th;  
Ernie Irby, 13th; Catherine Rey, 13th;  
Norm Marshall, 17th; Bonnie Steffey, 20th;  
David Lehman, 22nd; Phyllis Dawson, 23rd;  
Craig Anderson, 26th; Hillary Raymond, 28th;  
Abie Richardson, 30th

### FEBRUARY:

Susan Boze, 3rd; Shawn Sthreshley, 3rd;  
Nan Ottenritter, 5th; David Baggett, 6th;  
Lorraine McCarthy, 7th; Mary Mitchell, 7th;  
The Rev. Dan Griggs 7th; Kathy Hayfield, 10th;  
The Rev. 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; Jim Bennett, 23rd  
Bonnie Weber-Lehman, 24th; Fred Boze, 28th

# 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.

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