

LENTEN SEASON 2025

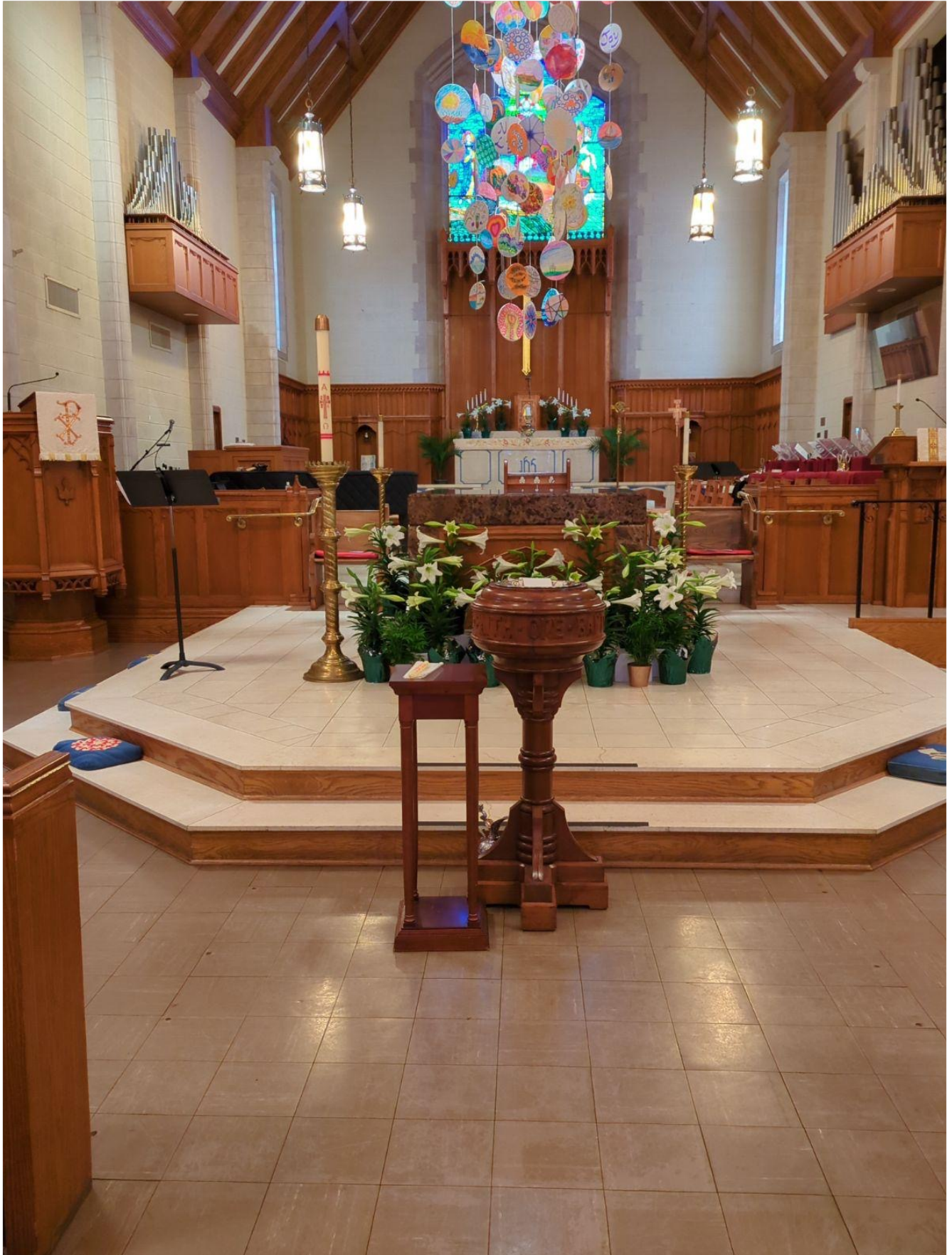
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HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

- April 13
Palm Sunday, 10:00 am service
- April 14
Monday in Holy Week, 12:15 pm service
- April 15
Tuesday in Holy Week, 12:15 pm service
- April 16
Wednesday in Holy Week, 12:15 pm service
- April 17
Maundy Thursday, 7:00 pm service
- April 18
Good Friday, Noon Liturgy for the Day
Followed by Stations of the Cross
7:00 pm Women of the Passion
- April 19
Holy Saturday, Noon service
8:00 pm **Great Vigil of Easter**
- April 20
Easter Sunday, 10:00 am service

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





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

Dear Friends and Companions in Ministry,

On February 9th, Bishop Susan Goff, who is a member of our HoCo community in her retirement, gave a sermon that speaks to our times with passion, clarity and encouragement. Given the power of her words, I am sharing Bishop Goff’s sermon with you rather than writing my own message to you for this newsletter.

God’s Blessing be among you, now and always,

HILARY+



MENSAJE DEL RECTOR
THE REV. DR. HILARY BORBÓN SMITH

Queridos amigos y compañeros de ministerio: En su sermón pronunciado el 9 de febrero, la obispa Susan Goff, quien es miembro de nuestra comunidad HoCo en su jubilación, dio un sermón que habla de nuestros tiempos con pasión, claridad y aliento. Dado el poder de sus palabras, en lugar de escribirles mi propio mensaje para este boletín, comparto el sermón de la Obispa Goff con ustedes. Que la bendición de Dios esté entre ustedes, ahora y siempre,

HILARY+

A SERMON FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE
EPIPHANY

“Do not be afraid,” Jesus said to the people at the lakeside. “From now on you will be catching people.” In past weeks, “fishing for

people” has taken on another layer of meaning as ICE agents “fish” for undocumented immigrants, as new, young, inexperienced federal hires “fish” for government employees to fire, as the president “fishes” for policies that obliterate past relationships without offering a new vision.

How do we live in these days of chaos, conflict, and turmoil? How do we love our neighbors as ourselves? I offer five responses as a follower of Jesus.

Number 1. Don’t let them steal your joy. Jesus said, “I have come so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” Jesus chose joy when he danced at a wedding and when he laughed with children. We follow him by choosing joy every day. Doing what gives you joy is not escapist. It is not selfish. It is necessary. And it is subversive. As we hold onto joy, we stand firmly in opposition to the chaos all around us. We affirm that beauty and goodness and pure delight are worthy of pursuit. Choosing joy is choosing to following Jesus.

Number 2. Stay informed, and take care of your soul as you do. Jesus knew the news of his time. He spoke of current events when he taught. He understood the politics of his time and he knew history, so he knew the price he would pay when he resisted injustice. And still, he chose that road.

We need to know what is happening around us without allowing it to overwhelm us. So, frame your intake of the news in prayer. Pray before turning to the news. Take in the news in an amount you can safely ingest. Then turn it off and pray again.

Number 3. Pay attention to what is happening to vulnerable populations.

Jesus knew the suffering of the vulnerable ones in his time – orphans and widows, lepers and other outcasts, foreigners and strangers. And he acted concretely on their behalf. He didn't heal every single person in need, but did what he could in the time he had.

No one of us can do everything for everyone in need, but each of us can do something. We start by paying attention to those who have already been targeted – transgender persons, undocumented immigrants, federal workers. As we pay attention, we might remember the poem by Martin Niemöller, a German Lutheran pastor, written in 1946.

First they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist. . .
Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me

We can do things differently. We can make our poem,
“First they came for transgender persons and immigrants, and I spoke out – because I know the poem and I know how it ends.” We can each find the one person or the one need to which we can respond in concrete ways.

Number 4. Double down on reading the Bible, especially the Book of Exodus, the Gospels and the books of the prophets.

Jesus knew the story of the Exodus and how God choose the side of the oppressed. He quoted from the Psalms and read aloud from the Prophet Isaiah. He was saturated with scripture. We follow Jesus faithfully when we read scripture every day.

That reading is needed now because there is a lot of bad theology being spouted out there by politicians and religious leaders. Really bad theology. Like the idea that everything that happens is God's will. Like the notion that there is a hierarchy of love and we don't have to love people beyond our community or nation. Like the proclamation that the president is our savior. Knowing what the Bible really says empowers us to recognize bad theology and to oppose it with the truth of God's love.

Number 5. Stay in community with others. Jesus built a community not just of twelve men, but of ever-widening circles of men and women. In his name, Christians still build communities.

What will we as a community here at HoCo do to resist injustice in Jesus' name? Specifically, what will we do if ICE shows up on a food distribution day? What will we do as providers of a polling place if free elections are threatened? What will we do to support transgender persons if their medications are

denied? How will we be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” as Jesus taught?

Following Jesus is not about living a certain way so that we as individuals can get into heaven; it’s about loving others in concrete action so that everyone can catch glimpses of heaven right here on earth. In Jesus name, we grapple with these questions as we choose to be “an avalanche of hope.”

The full text of the sermon is available online:

https://www.hoco.org/pdf/sermons/sermon_20250209.pdf



LENTEN PROGRAM 2025: CHRISTIAN
NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE
BY THE REV. DR. HILARY BORBON SMITH

Many thanks to Bishop Susan Goff for coming up with this great idea for a Lenten Program. After speaking with several people and considering that (1) turnout was not that great for Wednesday nights during Lent last year, (2) everyone can't drive at night, and (3) some live far away from church, [we have decided to have our Lenten Program after church \(11:30 am to 12:30 pm\) on Sundays during Lent.](#) We have been having a great turnout for forums and conversations after church, and I hope many more will attend if the Program is not at night. See you there!

Sundays, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. beginning March 9th:

- Non-Violent Resistance in Early Christian Theology and Practice

- The Confessing Church and Bonhoeffer
- Christian Resistance to the Civil War
- Christian Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement
- Christian Resistance from the Vietnam War until Today



STORY TIME IS BACK!

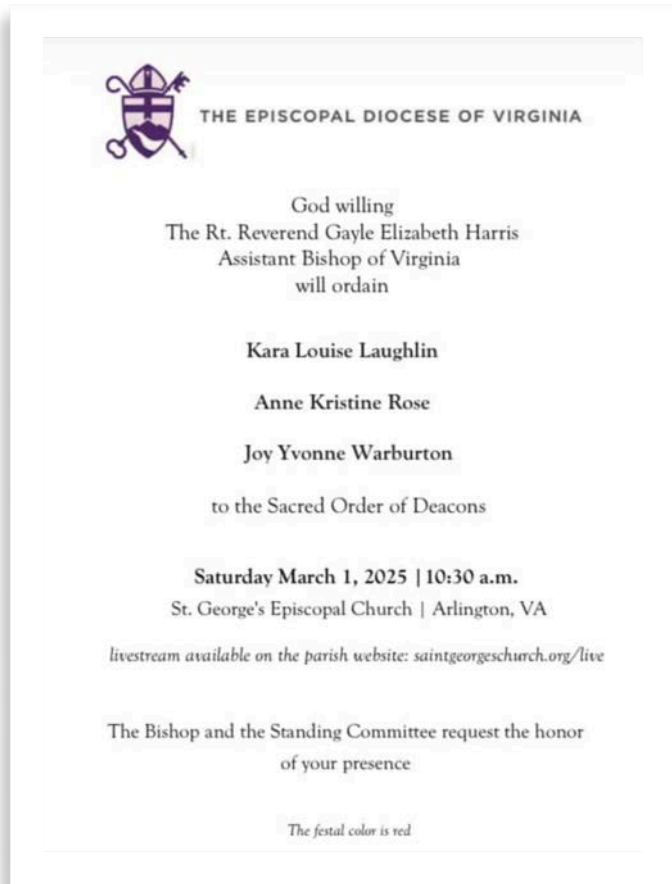
BY ELLEN HALL

Our beloved monthly Story Time worship service is back after a long post-Covid hiatus! It is the most fun you can have at HoCo! For those who have never experienced the service, we meet at 4:30 pm on the 4th Sunday of the month. It's very casual. The kids, and adults who want to, sit on pillows on the floor around the altar table. We all have drums and play them with gusto! We sing songs and Hilary tells us a Bible story and the story of communion. We have free-form prayer time, where kids and grownups can pray for anything they want. Then we gather for Eucharist around the table and sing some more. Finally, we move to the Parish House for dinner. The service lasts about 30 minutes, and the kids are free to ask questions and make comments throughout. This month the service will be on March 23rd and we'll have a big community dinner afterwards. Come hang out with us!



KRIS ROSE'S ORDINATION

BY THE REV. DR. HILARY BORBON SMITH



Kris Rose was an intern with HoCo during Summer 2023. I was proud to be one of Kris's presenters for ordination at the service on March 1st.

From Kris, via Facebook:

"I am happy to announce that God willing and the people consent I will be ordained to the transitional diaconate. In the Episcopal church we are ordained first as deacons and serve the church in this capacity for at least six months before being ordained as a priest. One does not arrive at this place alone. I am grateful for my family and friends who have walked beside

me in this journey both the highs and lows. I am grateful for all the prayers that have been lifted up on my behalf during discernment, seminary, and continued formation. Thank you! With God's help may we join together in serving Christ in all persons, striving for justice, peace and making sure the dignity of every human being is respected. I hope you will join me in this work of prayer and service."



HOCO'S FOOD PANTRY – A VERY BUSY PLACE!

BY BRUCE MACALISTER

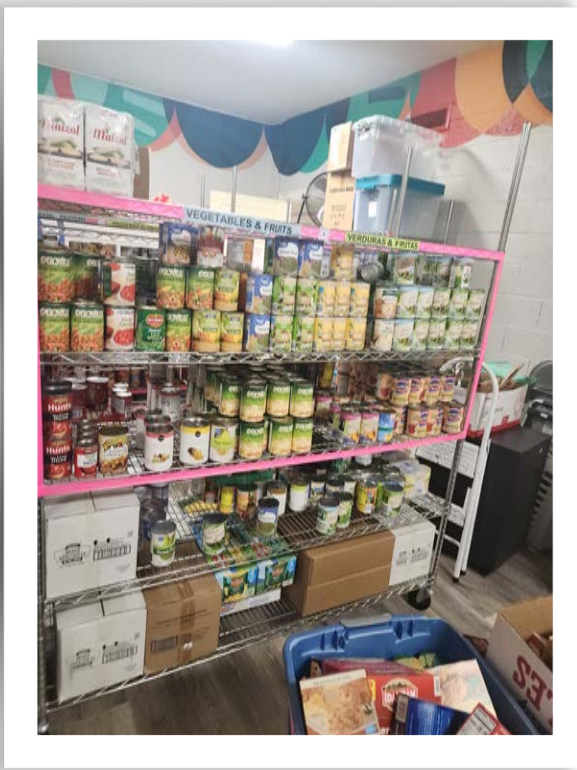
From Cindi Hanayik who shares the Food Pantry ministry chair with Marie McGranahan-Turner:

In January we were only open three times due to the weather. We served 224 people, 106 families.

February had the normal four openings where we served 321 people, 143 Families.

We have about 35 volunteers, but it varies month to month. It takes 6-8 volunteers each Tuesday evening or Saturday morning to have everything run smoothly.

One group of volunteers picks up food from



Panera and another group cuts and bags in time for a Tuesday opening (leftovers are frozen for the next Saturday).

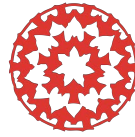
Four to five volunteers are needed to pick up and unload our Thursday FeedMore pickups; this happens 2-3 times a month depending on timing.

There is a steady Friday group that shelves items brought in from FeedMore.

As spring comes, we are losing volunteer families (usually a parent and child) to spring sports. They will be missed.

It says something about Holy Comforter that we have about as many volunteers for the Food Pantry as we have for worship duties. I think Jesus would approve.

To volunteer, please contact Cindi or Marie whose phone numbers and email addresses are in the parish directory.



HEW STITH HAS DIED

BY BRUCE MACALISTER

Long time members of Holy Comforter remember Hew Stith fondly. He and his wife Regina were members of the parish for years. With his newspaper background he transformed the then-monthly Messenger, bringing class and professionalism to it.

As the Rev. William Hewlett Stith, Jr., he would occasionally serve at the Eucharist. Ordained in the Methodist church, Hew was assistant director of United Methodist Information and assistant editor of Virginia United Methodist Advocate. From 1972-82, he was director of communications for the Virginia [Methodist] Annual Conference and editor of the award-winning Virginia Advocate. He retired as a Richmond Times-Dispatch editor.



Writing, editing, acting, and photography were among Hew's many talents, going all the way back to his days at Norview High School and University of Richmond. He earned a Master of Divinity degree from Duke University. A big,

imposing man with a resonant voice, he moved naturally to his adult communications career. He started in Richmond as Methodist campus minister for area universities. In the 1960s he was host of "Religion in the News," which aired 900 programs on WFLS and WRVA until 1980.

Hew was active in community groups promoting interdenominational understanding, accessibility for people with physical disabilities, criminal justice and ethnic minority opportunities.

Recently a newsletter called Newbreak, published by WTVR CBS 6 put out an article about this mission. Read it here:

https://local.newsbreak.com/richmond-va/3760782303261-backpacks-for-the-homeless-works-to-keep-richmonds-most-vulnerable-warm-and-fed?s=dmg_local_email_bucket_3.web2_fromweb&emailId=Rp4rJMK

You can find out more information about what they do by looking at their Facebook page.



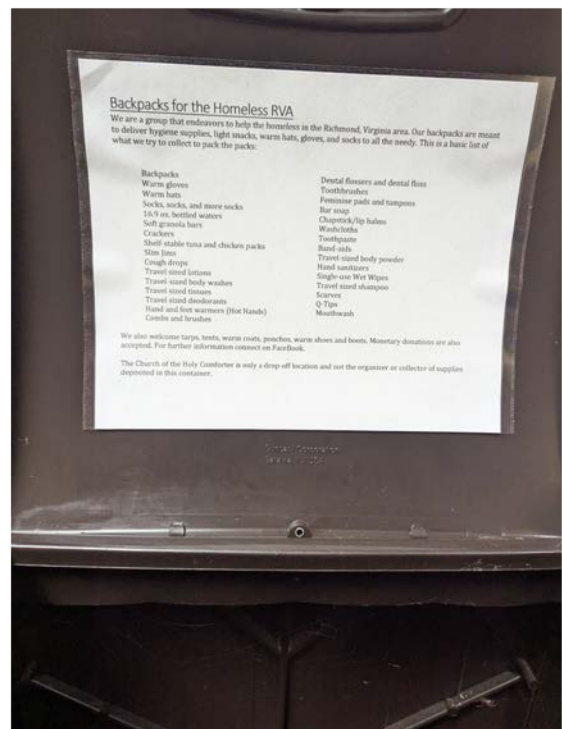
BACKPACKS FOR THE

HOMELESS

BY KIPLEY HERR

For over a decade, Earnie Taylor and the team at **Backpacks for the Homeless RVA** have dedicated their efforts to aid some of Central Virginia's most vulnerable populations. The nonprofit has distributed hundreds of backpacks, tents and blankets each month to those in need.

The Church of the Holy Comforter has had a collection box in the breezeway between the church and the parish hall since April of 2024. We have collected backpacks, sundries, hats and scarves...someone donated 3 or 4 crocheted plastic sleeping mats (made from grocery bags!). In addition to backpacks they accept a wide variety of items – too many to list them all but Warm Gloves, Warm hats, socks, socks, socks, travel size toiletries, and hand and feet warmers (Hot Hands) to name just a few. Check out the collection box, the list is taped to the inside of the lid.



Search for: [Backpacks For The Homeless/ RVA](#)

Homelessness is on the rise in RVA and elsewhere.

Proverbs 31:20 She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.



CAROLING WITH A PURPOSE

BY JULIE EDWARDS

Christmas caroling and gift bag delivery took place on Saturday, December 14th. We visited people who are usually unable to get to HoCo for whatever reason. After gathering in the Parish Hall, we divided into five groups of



three or four to go north, south, east, farther east, and west from HoCo.

There were 17 of us carolers who visited 11 recipients and their family members to sing, listen to stories, and give hugs. Waiting back



at the church were snacks and drinks and the ability to share experiences of the day. Upon returning to the church, person after person related how uplifting their experiences were for the recipients as well as for themselves.

David Lehman wrote to me this week, "I do have fond memories of caroling. One memory is of how delighted Bonnie Steffey was to see us. She then offered to accompany our singing by playing the piano flawlessly and with full four-part harmony. Then we went to sing for Mark, Deborah's husband. He was so welcoming and he remembered my name without prompting. He gave each of us a small art drawing he had done specifically for us. He also joined in on the singing."

We had such a good time this year! Thank you to all who participated. We're hoping to see all of you there next year!



SHROVE TUESDAY SUPPER

BY PATTY GALDUN

Shrove Tuesday began as a way to use up the butter, eggs, sugar and cream in the pantry before Lent began. Lent was a time of fasting and prayer and many foods were to be avoided during the Lenten season. Some people will refer to Shrove Tuesday as "Fat Tuesday" because they are getting rid of their high-calorie foods.

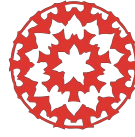
This year our HoCo "Pancake Supper" will be combined with the soup meal provided monthly by the Community Meals Ministry. It will be held on **Tuesday, March 4** from 5:30–6:30 pm. The menu will include pancakes, donuts, assorted pastries, dinner rolls and a variety of homemade soups.

There will also be lively music provided by members of the HoCo community.

Another tradition of the church is to refrain (fast) from singing Alleluia during worship. To that end, we'll symbolically bury our Alleluia during the Shrove Tuesday gathering.

Everyone is invited to help decorate an Alleluia banner, which will be rolled up and put away (buried) for Lent. It will re-emerge on Easter as the starting gate through which the children will burst as they begin the annual Easter Egg Hunt.

So come enjoy a time of fellowship, food, music, and a mini art project. And please see Patty Galdun or Susan Boze if you would like to help with making pancakes. We hope to see you there!



YOU'RE INVITED: PRAYING WITH THE SONGS OF TAIZÉ

BY JIM BENNETT

You are invited to a time of praying the songs of Taizé, scripture reading, and silence in a candlelit space.

Sunday March 16 at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary

A word about singing as prayer: We sing short repetitive songs based on scripture passages. The repetition has a way of quieting our minds and allowing the words to seep in. It is not necessary to read music to participate; most of these songs are simple enough that they may be learned by ear.

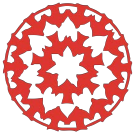
A word about silence: At times prayer becomes silent. Peaceful communion with God can do without words. "I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother." Like the satisfied child who has stopped crying and is in its mother's arms, so can "my soul be with me" in the presence of God. Prayer then needs no words, maybe not even thoughts. How is it possible to reach inner silence? Sometimes we are apparently silent, and yet we have great discussions within, struggling with imaginary partners or with ourselves. Calming our souls requires a kind of simplicity: "I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me." Silence means recognizing that my worries can't do much. Silence means leaving to God what is beyond my reach and capacity. A moment of silence, even very short, is like a holy stop, a sabbatical rest, a truce of worries.



(www.taize.fr)

Editor's Note: Taizé is an ecumenical Christian monastic community founded in France in 1940. Over 100,000 young people from around the world make pilgrimages to Taizé each year for prayer, Bible study, sharing and communal work. (Wikipedia)





MY DAD, PHILIP F. YOSWAY

BY KIPLEY HERR



So many of you know my dad.

So many of you ask about my dad. I love that. Steve and I have been members of the Church of the Holy Comforter since 2000. My parents have participated in so many of our activities and services supporting our family through baptisms, confirmations, dinner groups, and most importantly - the (semi-)annual yard sale! Being part of our church life was easy for them as HoCo is such an open and welcoming community.

My mother, Frances Donnelly Yosway, passed away in 2017. She now rests peacefully in our

memorial garden. She participated in the yard sale, special events - my children's baptism, etc.

Dad, Philip F. Yosway, loved (loved, loved) working at the yard sale! He knows how to work a room.

Mom and Dad, and then Dad alone, joined in with our dinner groups and other church activities.

Dad celebrated his 94th birthday where he resides in the assisted living part of a large continuous care facility in Williamsburg. He drives his mobility scooter to the gym, where he spends 1-1.5 hours on the treadmill and other equipment. He was issued a "speeding ticket" and cautioned to slow down after being observed taking corners on two wheels! He participates in several tournament activities - corn hole, bocce ball, and a putting event. He continues to enjoy meals with his friends, activities, a weekly prayer service, and visits from me, Steve, Emily, August, Evan, and Katie Herr.

Thank you to those who remember and ask about my dad. He remembers the good times and welcoming community that is the Church of the Holy Comforter.



A RICHMOND FOOD PANTRY THAT DELIVERS

BY DALE DAVIS

What to do when you receive a call at HoCo asking if our food pantry delivers? Well now

you can refer the caller to Project Reach, a Richmond-based nonprofit working to provide food and essential services to people in need. Their telephone number is **804-464-2444**.

"A lot of people don't have transportation," said Timothy Glenn, a driver for the pantry. "When they can't get down to us... we get to them."

The organization has been operating since 2020 under the leadership of Renee China, who has helped oversee the program since its inception. China, a former single mother who benefited from similar support programs, understands firsthand the impact that Project Reach can have on those facing hardship.

"It's people who have homes, it's people who work 9 to 5 and they just don't have it," she said. "We are one blink of an eye being in that situation."

In addition to delivering groceries seven days a week, the program distributes clothes and hot meals every Saturday. The pantry is also open 11:00 am-1:00 pm for walk-ins and clothes are distributed from 10:00 am-5:00 pm.

"If we can take that edge off just a little bit, that's what we're going to do," Ms. China said. "We're making sure people have clothes, making sure people have the food they need."

While Project Reach primarily serves the Richmond area, Ms. China says the organization has aspirations of expanding its reach, hoping to spread love, care, and compassion far beyond the city limits.

"We are difference makers, we believe in restoring families, we believe in helping people who are battered, helping single

parents, with all the things going on in the world we are here to serve," she said.

Currently, the program needs both volunteers and donations to continue its work. Those interested in helping can contact the organization at 804-464-2444.

Thanks to Reporter Joi Fultz and WTVR CBS 6 for allowing us to reprint information from her 11/8/24 article. Check out their video, "There's a group in Richmond delivering free food and clothes to people in need" on YouTube.



DROP THE "T"

BY CAMERON HUNT

Three days after Valentine's Day, there was a small change to a sign outside a park in New York City. Formerly it had read "Stonewall National Monument commemorating the fight for LGBT rights." It now reads "...the fight for LGB rights."

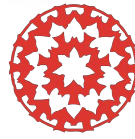
Trans people like Storme DeLarverie, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera were—until recently—upheld as pivotal figures in the Stonewall Riots in particular and the Gay Rights Movement in general. In fact, the police raid that provoked the riots in June 1969 was specifically targeting those we now call transgender for wearing "gender-inappropriate" clothing. But this isn't the first time trans people have been specifically

targeted. In fact, the first book burning in 1933 was at the Institute for Sexual Science, the first place in the world that offered gender-affirming care.

While many hatemongers still chafe at their loss on same-sex marriage, they have moved on to attempting to divide the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual community from the Transgender community, known as the “LGB drop the T” movement. Already, passport offices have refused to give the “X” gender marker or honor people’s legally changed gender, withholding their documents, potentially preventing them from travel or outing them in foreign countries. Recently, the federal government, pursuant to Trump’s executive order, threatened to remove all federal funding, including Medicare and Medicaid, from any medical institution that provides gender-affirming care. You may have heard that VCU Health and UVA Health paused care for this reason. That executive order, along with many others, including a military ban, a limit to trans healthcare even for those over 18, and a blanket ban on trans women in youth sports are under judicial review, but with a packed Supreme Court this is of limited comfort.

We know why they are doing this, of course: distraction. There were a half-dozen executive orders targeting the trans community and dozens more that affect other marginalized communities. As we learn of dozens of organizations attempting to fight them, it's exhausting to try and keep up, even if we will do our best. But the truth of the matter is dark: the hatemongers’ real motivation is to keep those who wish to just live their lives, overwhelmed and on the verge of giving up—

and those who wish to fight, so distracted from the cruelty to the most vulnerable, that they don’t have any fight left to stop the already rich and powerful from amassing more.



STAGEHANDS FOR JESUS

BY MARIA SCOTT

When I was about 12 years old, a woman from our church called our house, and I picked up. People always used to remark how much I sounded like my mother on the phone, and this lady apparently assumed she was talking to Mom. She launched into an enthusiastic invitation to join the Altar Guild at Christ Church, describing how great the fellowship was and how important the work. I was sold.



At some point, however, the mix-up became apparent, and the lady, very embarrassed, suggested I was perhaps too young to participate and could she speak to my mother.



Spoiler: my mother did not join the Altar Guild.

As a theatre person, I have the annoying habit of analogizing most things with theatrical performances and, let's face it, the line between a church service and a theatrical performance can be very blurry. In the production of a church service, the props, set-pieces, and furniture are essential to the overall effect. The Altar Guild members are the (mostly) invisible stagehands who set up before and clean up after the main event. They're the ones who ensure that the corporal (sort of like a placemat) and the purificators (the napkins which wipe the chalice) are snowy white a week after being dunked in wine. Those candles in the single cups that we light on Christmas Eve and during the Easter Vigil do not just appear magically. Do you ever

notice how the paraments (hangings) change color on a regular basis? How do the hymn numbers get up on the hymn boards, and how do the crosses get shrouded for Palm Sunday and Good Friday? Have you watched the stripping of the altar on Maundy Thursday and reveled in the symbolism of the last act, washing the Holy Table? All of that is the work of the Altar Guild.

Like theatre, liturgy is a kind of magic. It isn't "real," but it's Real. It happens in Real Time. And as with a play, there are far more people involved than those you see on the "stage." A regular Sunday just takes two or three stagehands; the big productions (Christmas, Easter) take the full complement, all hands on deck (now I'm really mixing my metaphors, but you take my meaning).

I'll be honest: when I was 12, the phrase "Altar Guild" always brought to mind fussy old ladies with white cotton gloves (that's probably why my mother turned them down). Now, at HoCo, most of us are old(ish) ladies, but today there are old(ish) men, too, and younger people. I suppose that lady from Christ Church thought that a person my age would not be reverent enough, or responsible enough to join the Altar Guild, but I think she was wrong to rescind her invitation. Because the fellowship is great, and the work is important, and we fussy old ladies (and old dudes) shouldn't be climbing ladders anymore. So come be a stagehand for Jesus; we make the Magic happen.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT

HOCO

BY LAURA HUNT



Members of our community came together to offer unique experiences to deepen our joy, wonder, and peace during this holy season. First, the Rev. Bradley Peyton officiated at a Rite One Eucharist, inspiring us with the traditional language of the ancient Prayer Book. Three extraordinary events followed:

Praying with the Songs of Taize

As we approached Advent and the start of a new church year, Jim Bennett, our musical director, offered a special Sunday evening service. The chancel was adorned with icons and lit with blue votive candles arranged on a wooden cross. Participants sat facing the high altar, chanting simple mantra-like melodies and meditating on readings from Scripture. It was a beautiful experience of quiet joy, calling us to dwell on Christ's presence around and within us, and allowing the Spirit to suffuse our souls.

Advent of Hope

Equally restorative was this three-hour Retreat, during which Bishop Susan Goff shared ways to cope with fear and darkness, ways to protect our spiritual and emotional health, ways to seek hope in this time of great uncertainty. Using her book, *The Desert Shall Rejoice: Psalms from the Wilderness of Breast Cancer*, Bishop Susan presented meditations on three themes: 1. Hope and Lamentation, challenging us to cry out our laments to God, honestly inviting God into our deepest darkness.

2. Hope and Intercession, bidding us to confess to God our anger and despair, our inability to love and forgive, our sinful desire to respond in kind to heartlessness. 3. Hope and Praise, suggesting we praise God despite our sorrows, knowing that praise can arise out of lamentation and intercession, as we move on to celebrations of Hope.

Inviting us to journal in words and images, Bishop Susan reminded us that prayer doesn't need words; we can pray a sound or a color. She stressed the power of forgiveness, both forgiving others and seeking God's forgiveness for ourselves.

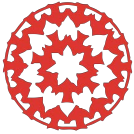
Above all, she stressed the Hope we find in community with one another and with God "who created us and loves us fiercely."

Devotional Art Project

Every Sunday during Advent, parishioners, led by Tracy Councill, gathered to cut swabs of color from printed advertisements and paste them on cardboard to create a lifesize Nativity. The result was a mosaic of color, like stained glass, forming the fabric of the Holy Family with shepherds and magi. HoCo artists thus transformed a focus on commercialism into a focus on worship and spirituality. The figures were set up in front of the High Altar on Christmas Eve and displayed throughout the Christmas Season

Christmas Pageant by Lian-Marie Holmes Munro, director

The Christmas Eve service began with James Munro singing "Once in Royal David's City" from the balcony. The pageant was narrated by Mary Davis and starred Sam Badgett and James Munro as Mary and Joseph respectively. Thomas Munro portrayed the Angel Gabriel, accompanied by Hannah Banton and Lily Hawes as Angels. August Herr was a sheep with Evan Herr as his Shepherd, and Drexel Rayford was a Donkey. The Choir, adorned in halos, backed up our Angels, and the Congregation bravely portrayed the voices of the Sheep, Donkey, and Shepherds. All of this came together because of the invaluable aide of our "backstage helpers" Cindi Hanayik, Ellen Hall, Mel Rayford, and Heather Baggett.



A PLEA FOR MERCY FROM BISHOP MARIANN BUDE BY THE REV. TOM HOLLIDAY

Before writing this article about the Rt. Rev. Mariann Budde's plea to President Donald Trump to show mercy to undocumented immigrants and other vulnerable persons, I listened again to her sermon at the Washington National Cathedral. It was of interest to me that, for a while, the President was leaning forward in his seat with his eyes on her, listening closely to her words--until she said, "A unity that serves the common good... is the threshold requirement for people to live together in a free society; it is 'the solid rock,' as Jesus said, in this case, upon which to build a nation." Immediately following these words, Mr. Trump sat back in

his seat, closed his eyes, and turned to Melania to make a comment. In short, it appeared that President Trump turned Bishop Budde off in his mind as soon as she made the connection between Jesus and "the solid rock upon which to build a nation." His eyes went blank, and he began flipping through the program as if he might find some confirmation that her words were to be ignored.

A few minutes later Bishop Budde spoke directly to the President and reminded him that in his inaugural address he said he had "felt the preferential hand of a loving God." Then Bishop Budde said, "In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon people in our country who are scared now." She then named gay, lesbian and transgender children from families of all political parties who fear for their lives. She also named workers in low-paying jobs who provide needed services upon which all Americans depend but who may not be citizens or have proper documentation, people who pay taxes and are good neighbors. Finally, Bishop Budde pleaded with President Trump saying, "I ask you to have mercy, Mr. President, on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away. And that you help those who are fleeing war zones and persecution in their own lands to find compassion and welcome here. Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger, for we were all once strangers in this land."

Let us Praise God for the courage of Marianne Budde who, despite her fear, spoke boldly and with wisdom to the newly inaugurated President of the United States, asking him to give mercy to the most vulnerable among us.



She did not speak to him with a tone of criticism or accusation, but rather in humility, pleading with him to have mercy on others. Let us Praise God that when he demanded she apologize, she responded with perfect confidence and courage, “I will not apologize for asking for mercy for others.” Let us all pray that in these fraught times God will bless, watch over and protect Mariann Budde from all harm.

Micah 6:8, my favorite Bible passage, sums up in one verse all of what Mariann Budde said. “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love (mercy) kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Three more biblical passages are important in affirming Mariann Budde’s plead for mercy to the vulnerable:

1. Luke 4:16–21 where Jesus spoke at the synagogue in Nazareth, reading first from the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor....”

2. Luke 10:25–37, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which affirms the love of God and teaches us that our neighbor is anyone and everyone who

needs our help, and that we are good neighbors when we respond to needs with mercy and kindness.

3. Matthew 22:34–40, Jesus teaching of the Greatest Commandment, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,’ and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments, all the Law and the Prophets depend.”

Together, these three passages make it indelibly clear that all people are our neighbors. They remind us that, in truth, it is not unusual at all to discover that even those against whom we hold prejudices may turn out to be merciful, caring and full of the love of God for us.

On a personal note, since my elementary school class in United States history and my

high school government class, I have always prided myself on being a citizen of this nation whose Declaration of Independence affirms the Biblical teaching above with the words, “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that [we are all] created equal, and are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these Rights are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Susan and I feel divinely blessed now to count ourselves as part of the fellowship of HoCo, for here at HoCo we cherish and seek to live out both the biblical mandate to “welcome the stranger” and the Declaration of Independence affirmation, as it is indisputably clarified in the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S Constitution, that all are created equal.



EASTER – A MOVABLE FEAST

BY LAURA HUNT

The first Sunday following the first Full Moon following the vernal Equinox; that’s the simple description of how Easter is calculated.

In actuality, it’s much more complicated, but it’s still all about the moon. Technically, a Full Moon is only “full” for a single moment in time, the exact moment when the Moon is directly opposite the Sun in the solar system, irrespective of the view from earth.

This year the first Full Moon after the spring Equinox will occur on **April 12th** at 8:22 PM in Virginia, but that’s 1:22 AM on April 13th in Britain. Because of all our differing time zones,

the church had to choose one specific day for the ecclesiastical Paschal Full Moon, independent of time zones. Today, this date is determined by astronomical calculations and a complicated algorithm.

In the Middle Ages, however, church authorities decided that the Paschal Full Moon would fall on the 14th day of Nisan, the 1st month of the Hebrew calendar. Nisan begins on the day of the New Moon closest to the Vernal Equinox (Exodus 12:2 “This shall mark for you the beginning of months, the start of the new year.”)

In 2025, Nisan begins on March 30. Fourteen days later, **April 13** is the official Full Moon, and Easter is the following Sunday, April 20. Now you know.

Orthodox Easter

Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, doesn't use the Gregorian calendar, which the Catholic Church has used since 1582 and the Anglican Church since 1752.



Instead, it uses the older Julian Calendar to calculate Easter. Last year Orthodox Easter was celebrated 5 weeks after ours.

Lent is also different in the Eastern Church, which does **not** observe Ash Wednesday. Instead, Orthodox Lent begins on “**Clean Monday**,” two days before our Lent. “Clean” refers to the leaving behind of sinful attitudes and non-fasting foods.

The previous day, called the “**Sunday of Forgiveness**,” includes a special ceremony at the end of the service, in which all the faithful approach the priest and one another, asking for mutual forgiveness. It stresses the fact that we don't travel the road of Lent alone, but as members of a community. There can be no reconciliation with God unless we are also reconciled with one another.

Orthodox Lent runs for 40 continuous days, without interruption for Sundays, and ends on **Lazarus Saturday**, which celebrates the raising of Lazarus, a foreshadowing of the Resurrection of Christ. Unlike in the West, Palm Sunday and Holy Week are not considered part of Lent.

The Naming of Easter

The English word Easter comes from Eastre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of the dawn (rising in the East) and fertility (Spring). She was often depicted with a hare since rabbits are a symbol of fertility due to their prolific breeding habits. April was called *ēastre*-month in Old English because feasts were held in Eastre's honor. Later, early English Christians began referring to the Feast of the Resurrection as “Easter” because it occurred during that month.



Another name for Easter is “**Pascha**,” used in both the Eastern and Western ecclesiastical traditions, a transliteration of the Aramaic

word for “Passover” (Hebrew Pesach), representing Jesus’ sacrifice. Paul is the first to refer to Jesus as the “paschal lamb” sacrificed for his people’s salvation (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The word Lent actually refers to Spring. It’s a shortened form of the Old English word *lencten*, meaning originally, lengthening, referring to the days in spring, and thus eventually to springtime itself. By March 1, we in Richmond enjoy nearly 2 more hours of daylight than at the winter solstice.

Special Lenten Days

Anglicans observe **Mothering Sunday** (Mother’s Day) not in May, but on the fourth Sunday of Lent, which marks the halfway point between Ash Wednesday and Easter. This occasion for honouring mothers originated in a 16th-century celebration of Mother Church, in which people returned to the church in which they were baptized.

It is also referred to as **Laetare Sunday** (meaning “rejoice” in Latin) because of the traditional Entrance Antiphon, “Rejoice, O Jerusalem.” Priests have the option of wearing rose-colored vestments instead of purple.

During the week before his crucifixion, Jesus stayed in Bethany with Lazarus’ sisters, Mary and Martha. Mary anointed him with oil on Holy Wednesday, also known as **Spy Wednesday** because it commemorates the Bargain of Judas with the chief priests to act as a spy and hand Jesus over. The service usually held on Spy Wednesday is “**Tenebrae**” from a Latin word meaning darkness. It involves the gradual extinguishing of all candles until the church is left in complete darkness.

Easter symbols

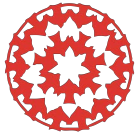
The Easter lily is a symbol of the resurrection. Jesus of course mentioned the flower, saying

that even Solomon was not clothed as beautifully as the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28). After Jesus’ death and resurrection, lilies were found growing in the Garden of Gethsemane. Legend has it that these flowers sprung up where drops of Jesus’ sweat fell as he prayed before his arrest.

Eggs were a traditional symbol of fertility and rebirth, and represent the empty tomb. Decorating Easter eggs derives from an ancient tradition of staining eggs red in memory of the blood of Christ. It began among early Christians in Mesopotamia and from there spread into Eastern Europe through the Orthodox Church and later into Europe. Eating eggs was prohibited during Lent, so eggs were a welcome part of the Easter celebration.



Indeed, the Easter bunny, brought to America by German Lutherans, was known for bringing a basket full of colored eggs and candy to good children.



NEW VESTRY ELECTED

At the Annual Parish Meeting on February 2, new members were elected to the Vestry.



Mary Davis
for a two-year term

Dale Davis

Bill Dennis
all for three-year terms

Melissa Irby

Mary Davis

I am a cradle Episcopalian, having been raised in a small, country church on Virginia's Eastern Shore. I started singing in the choir at an early age and haven't stopped. I came to Holy Comforter in 1992 and almost immediately joined the choir. I believe worship would not be complete without music. But there is also more!

In the past, I have been a lay reader, member of the worship committee, children's chapel coordinator, children's choir director, food pantry volunteer, and member of the HoCo Eco committee. I also served as a member of the Diocesan Committee for Stewardship of Creation.

For work, I provide geospatial and mapping services for an ecological restoration company called RES, short for Resource Environmental Solutions. RES restores streams, wetlands, and species habitat across the U.S. It's a mission that speaks to my heart. If elected, this will be my first time serving on the vestry. I hope to bring a fresh voice

and an open mind to the table.

Dale Davis

I was born and raised in Richmond but left soon after graduating from VCU (1980, BA in English) for New York and a career in advertising. There I met Arnaldo (2000) and we were married as soon as it became legal (2014). Three years and many visits later, we decided to retire in Richmond (2017). We had five wonderful years taking my mother shopping and to doctors' appointments, and watching "TV church" on Sunday mornings with her before she passed in 2022. That's when we decided to explore churches in the area and, happily, fell in love with the first one we visited – Holy Comforter, where, last year, I was baptized at the Easter Vigil service and confirmed by Bishop Stevenson two weeks later.

In addition to serving as an usher, acolyte, reader and junior editor of the HoCo newsletter, I see the opportunity to serve on the Vestry as a way to give back to the church that has meant so much to us these past few years. Thank you for considering me for the honor to serve in this way. Glory be to God on high!

Bill Dennis

Born in Florida, a cradle Episcopalian, raised in North Carolina, but I consider myself to be a Virginian having lived here for most of my adult life. I am the son of a hospital chaplain from Richmond and an English mother. A graduate of James Madison University, I worked as a radio announcer before moving into administrative roles for the Commonwealth of Virginia and then VCU. My wife June and I have been at Holy Comforter for about a year and a half. We came to HoCo because of the open-door policy that welcomes all people; we enjoyed helping to organize Neighborhood Night Out and connecting with people who live near our church. HoCo's welcoming spirit is something that I would like to foster as a member of the vestry.

Melissa Irby

I am a Henrico native and have worked in education for over 30 years. I attended Holy Comforter twenty years ago and have been a recent member for one year. I enjoy attending church regularly with my parents, Shirley and Ernest Irby. Through being an active volunteer, serving the church community in Connections, Trunk or Treat, the yard sale, and the Gala, I have learned about our ministry and met great people.

I love Holy Comforter for its clergy and its mission – to love and serve. Everyone is welcomed here, everyone is loved, everyone can serve in this community that is inclusive, safe, and a haven for friendships and connecting with a loving God. If chosen to be a member of our vestry, I would work to support these values.

Remaining on the vestry

Rotate off in 2026



Susan Boze Jamey Hooks Angie Palmer

Rotating off in 2027



Don Ellison

Debi Taliaferro

Officers Elected

- Senior Warden – Angie Palmer
- Junior Warden – Don Ellison
- Treasurer – David Lehman
- Registrar – TBD

New Ministry Area Assignments

Having already distributed My Personal Vocation document to help members determine ministry areas in which they may feel called to serve, we discussed who would like to focus on which area. Angie and Hilary invited vestry members to choose an area based on their passion for ministry.

Adult Formation/Education – Melissa Irby

Children and Youth Formation/Education – Mary Davis, Debi Taliaferro

Finance – Jamey Hooks, Dale Davis

Parish Life – Susan Boze, Bill Dennis

Pastoral Care – Hilary Smith

Property – Angie Palmer

Social Justice and Outreach – Bill Dennis, Dale Davis

Worship – Hilary Smith



HOCO BIRTHDAYS

FOR THE SPRING MONTHS

MARCH:

Lori Anderson, 3rd; Craig Hamblin, 4th; Claire Kunz, 7th; Mary Falterman, 9th; Caroline Smith, 11th; Mary Maxwell, 16th; Patsy Jones-Hubert, 18th; Joella Rhoades, 18th; Donnie Gallegos, 21st; Arnaldo Cardona, 21st; August Herr, 22nd; Diane Gilkenson, 26th; Drew Munro, 26th

APRIL:

Kathy MacAlister, 1st; Lizeth Cabedueque, 5th; Mike Rey, 8th; Joe Klenzmann, 9th; Gloria Ruggeri, 9th; Laura Hunt, 11th; Steve Van Voorhees, 22nd; Donna Brodd, 23rd; James Munro, 23rd; Bonnie Atwood, 27th; Rev. Frank Castellon, 28th

MAY:

Melissa Irby, 1st; Dr. William Stewart, 3rd; Rev. Dr. Douglas Thorpe, 3rd; Charlie Souder, 5th; Nathalie Clara-Marie Bowles, 6th; Christopher Richardson, 8th; Barbara Davis, 10th; Briggett Keith, 13th; Patty Galdun, 13th; John Stork Maddox, 15th; Dustin Dyer, 17th; Tom Holliday, 17th; Maria Scott, 17th; Byron Hensley, 20th; Betty Vineyard, 20th; Martha Kelly, 23rd; Christopher Hall, 26th; Keyan James Herron, 26th; Patti Castellon, 28th; Joanna Suyes, 30th; Shirley Irby, May 31st

MESSENGER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Summer-Pentecost Issue of The Messenger will be published June 1

Articles for this issue must be submitted to the editors no later than May 23.

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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