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Christmas 2023



Image from Sanctified Art.

In this painting, Black Mother God has asked her daughter Mary to hold the role of surrogate for the pregnancy of infant Creator. Mary has carried the child to term. She has given birth. God embraces Mary as well as the Holy Infant in gratitude. For without Mary's surrogacy, the incarnation could not be. - Hannah Garrity

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



A Message from Hilary +

Dear Friends and Companions in Ministry,

On Sunday, November 19, at 4:00 p.m., we held a service with the members from St. Mark's, choir members including their Director of Music, and their Rector. St. Mark's is located on Arthur Ashe Boulevard, and we share many of the same concerns about our city and a desire to be about inclusion and justice. This joint Thanksgiving service was held at HoCo, and I was so thankful to be with our St. Mark's friends and worshipping together for the first time



since Covid. Being together with them felt so good. On Christmas Day, at 10:30 a.m., we will worship with St. Mark's at St. Mark's, and have this opportunity for togetherness with them once again.

When I think about Christmas, feelings of connection and togetherness fill my soul. At Christmas, we celebrate that God came to be with us as one of us. God chose to come and be with us, not as a powerful warrior but as a vulnerable baby. We welcome the Christ Child every year and celebrate God's desire to be together with us, long ago, now, and always. In this newsletter, you will find information about our Advent services that will prepare us to celebrate Christmas. The Advent theme from Sanctified Art this year is, "How does a weary world rejoice?"

Our world is weary: we are tired of war, violence, injustice, climate change, ongoing concerns about Covid, and much more. In our lives and in our families, we may be weary from grief, sickness, or something else. My weariness is lessened through my relationships, with you, my family, and my friends. Relationships with others can strengthen us and give us hope.

God's desire for relationship with us has been made known in many ways and certainly through

the Incarnation - God with us. I pray that into whatever weariness you may be experiencing, Christ will be born anew for you. We don't know exactly what the birth of Jesus was like, but Christmas is a story that is more true than whatever the facts may be. Into a dark night, the light of a star pointed the way to a light for all the people in the person of baby Jesus. It was a very weary world into which Jesus was born, and the birth brought hope and joy. Hope and joy burst into human history on a dark night long ago. Each year, Christ is born anew into every situation that humans experience, the good but also the difficult.

I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and know the Christmas blessing of God's great love for you,

Hilary+



Un mensaje de Hilary +

Queridos amigos y compañeros en el ministerio,

El domingo 19 de noviembre, a las 4:00 p.m., realizamos un servicio con los miembros de St. Marco's, miembros del coro, incluyendo su Director de Música y su Rector. St. Mark's está ubicado en Arthur Ashe Boulevard y compartimos muchas de las mismas preocupaciones sobre nuestra ciudad y el deseo de velar por la inclusión y la justicia. Este servicio conjunto de Acción de Gracias se llevó a cabo en HoCo y me sentí muy agradecido de estar con nuestros amigos de San Marcos y adorar juntos por primera vez desde el covid. Estar junto a ellos nos dio mucho placer. El día de Navidad, a las 10:30 a. m., adoraremos con San Marcos a San Marcos y tendremos esta oportunidad de estar juntos con ellos una vez más.

Cuando pienso en la Navidad, sentimientos de conexión y unión llenan mi alma. En Navidad celebramos que Dios vino a estar con nosotros como uno de nosotros. Dios eligió venir y estar con nosotros, no como un guerrero poderoso sino como un bebé vulnerable. Damos la bienvenida al Niño Jesús cada año y celebramos el deseo de Dios de estar junto a nosotros, entonces, ahora y siempre. En este boletín encontrará información sobre nuestros servicios de Adviento que nos preparan para celebrar la Navidad. El tema de

Adviento de Arte Santificado de este año es:
“¿Cómo se regocija un mundo cansado?”

Nuestro mundo está cansado: estamos cansados de la guerra, la violencia, la injusticia, el cambio climático, las preocupaciones constantes sobre el covid y mucho más. En nuestras vidas y en nuestras familias, podemos estar cansados por el dolor, la enfermedad o cualquier otra cosa. Mi cansancio disminuye a través de mis relaciones contigo, mi familia y mis amigos. Las relaciones con los demás pueden fortalecernos y darnos esperanza.

El deseo de Dios de tener una relación con nosotros se ha dado a conocer de muchas maneras y ciertamente a través de la Encarnación: Dios con nosotros. Oro para que en cualquier cansancio que puedas estar experimentando, Cristo nazca de nuevo para ti. No sabemos exactamente cómo fue el nacimiento de Jesús, pero la Navidad es una historia que es más cierta que cualesquiera que sean los hechos. En una noche oscura, la luz de una estrella señaló el camino hacia una luz para todas las personas en la persona del niño Jesús. Era un mundo muy cansado en el que nació Jesús; y el nacimiento trajo esperanza y alegría. La esperanza y la alegría irrumpieron en la historia de la humanidad en una noche oscura hace mucho tiempo. Cada año, Cristo nace de nuevo en cada situación en que vivimos nosotros los humanos, no solo las buenas, sino también las difíciles.

Espero que tengas una maravillosa Navidad y conozcas la bendición navideña del gran amor de Dios por ti.

Hilary+



Spanish-Language Ministry Update

We will not hold our Bilingual service in December or January. Plans are underway for something new starting in February. Stay tuned for updates. Many thanks to all who are helping with this ministry.



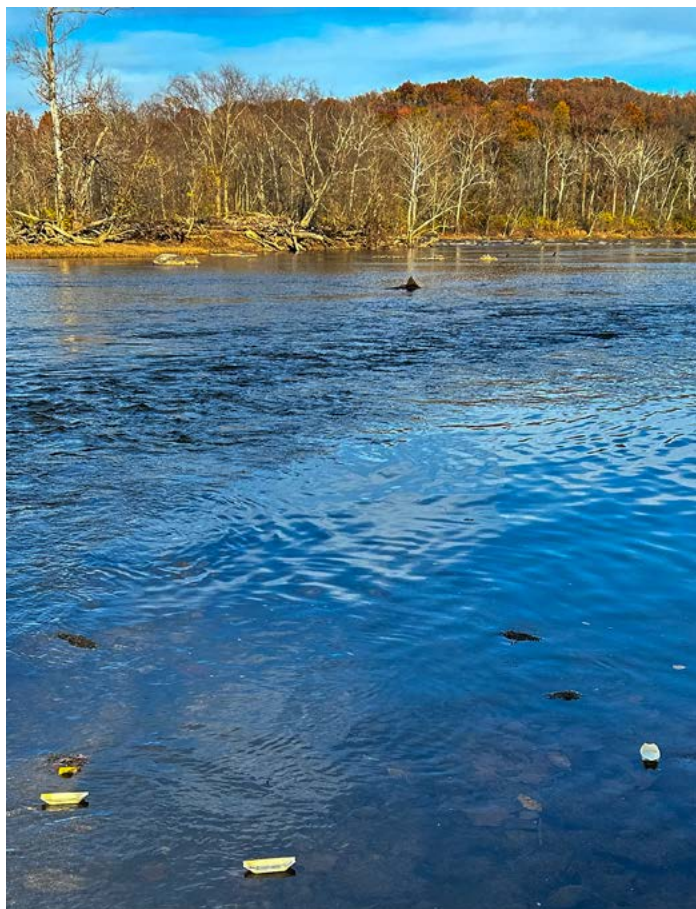
Actualización del Ministerio en Español

No celebraremos nuestro servicio bilingüe en diciembre o enero. Hay planes en marcha para algo nuevo a partir de febrero. Estén atentos a las actualizaciones. Muchas gracias a todos los que están ayudando con este ministerio.



We released the boats ***By Dr Hilary Borbón Smith, Rector***

On November 20, our resident seminarian Lucius, his wife Elizabeth, and I released the boats that people made during our Grief Gathering on November 12. On the boats we had written the names of our loved ones who have died. Lucius read a poem and said a prayer before we placed the boats in the James River. Watching them being carried by the current of the river gave me a sense of peace and a sense that we have entrusted them to God, who carries and guides them.





Advent and Christmas Services, 2023

By Hilary Borbón Smith, Rector



*First Sunday of
Advent, December 3,
10:00 a.m. service*
*Wednesday of Advent,
December 6,
Noon service*

*The Second Sunday
of Advent, December
10, 10:00 a.m. service*
*Wednesday of
Advent, December 13,
Noon service*



*The Third Sunday of
Advent, December 17,
10:00 a.m. service*
*Wednesday of Advent,
December 20,
Noon service*



*The Fourth Sunday
of Advent, December
24, 10:00 a.m. service*
*Christmas Eve
Service, December
24, 3:00 p.m. with
Children's Pageant*



*Christmas Day
Service, December 25,
10:30 a.m. at St. Mark's*



We will not hold a service Wednesday,
December 27

The First Sunday after Christmas, December
31, 10:00 a.m. service, Lessons and Carols



Christmas Pageant 2023

By Lian-Marie Holmes Munro

Hello everyone! I will be directing our little Christmas pageant this year at the 3 PM Christmas Eve service on December 24. If you are interested in helping out in any way, please let me know! It will be a simple traditional one this year and I'm happy to incorporate any children who would like to be involved! I plan on having a very brief rehearsal December 23 at 11 AM and then just ask that everybody show up by 2:30 PM (at the latest) on the 24th. If you can't attend the rehearsal on the 23rd just let me know and we'll tell you what to do on the 24th! Please contact me (asap) at Lianmarie@aol.com if you or your little ones are interested! Thanks everyone and happy Advent!



Christmas Caroling With a Purpose

By Julie Edwards

The Visitation Team Ministry, a part of Pastoral Care, is organizing **Christmas Caroling and Gift Basket Delivery** for our home-bound members on December 10th from 2:00 to 4:30. We will gather in the Parish Hall, divide up, and go to the homes or facilities for our at-home members 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 we do not get to see, but who are a part of HoCo. Once everyone has returned, we'll have a good time sharing with each

other our experiences while we munch on snacks and drink hot beverages!

Please sign up to help out! Click on Sign up genius to sign yourself up: https://bit.ly/hoco_carolling

Here's what we need:

1. Seven (7) drivers to take carolers in their vehicles;
2. Carolers;
3. People to provide snacks, such as cookies and popcorn and hot beverages like hot chocolate or apple cider;
4. People to set up
5. People to clean up

If you would like to contribute an item for the baskets, feel free. Your item can be practical or fun and will need to fit into a tote bag along with the gift basket. Although we'll have 12 baskets, you do not have to provide 12 items. We'll have a collection box in the narthex of the church on December 3rd and 10th.

For more information contact me or Anne Snyder.



Holy Comforter's new (online) directory By Bruce MacAlister

Are you old enough to remember when you gathered the family, put on "Sunday clothes," and came to the parish hall to have your picture taken for the church directory? You got a free 8x10 print and an immediate sales pitch to buy various extra prints to send to family and friends. You usually did because the photography was excellent. Eventually you got one free directory with the option to buy some extras.

No more! It's online; of course. You can download it onto you phone or tablet; of course. It



can be changed easily; of course. You can change it; of course. You will have to come up with yet another password; of course.

- To view the directory online, go to members.InstantChurchDirectory.com and follow the prompts under "Sign In" to "Create a login now." Please remember, you must confirm your email address before you can sign in.
- There is also a free mobile app available for download at the Apple® App store in iTunes®, Google Play™ store and the Amazon Fire App Store.
- Simply search for "Instant Church Directory" to get the download. You will need to use your email address as listed in our directory to create a log-in the first time you use the directory online and via the mobile app.
- Need help or have questions? Contact Kipley Herr or Tracy Councill.

Hoco Birthdays

For the month of December:

Samuel Gage II, 3rd; Bruce MacAlister, 5th; Barbara Rose, 8th; Ian Sthreshley, 9th; Leslie Smith, 11th; Stephanie Roberts-Turner, 14th; Art Raymond, 15th; Barbara Crowder, 16th; Jerry Scholder, 17th; Kath Ruggeri, 18th; Patty Sheldon, 18th; Tracy Councill, 22nd; Arden Griffin, 23rd; Lindsey Smith, 25th; Deborah Westin, 27th; Brenda Crouch, 29th; Joy Bressler, 30th; Terry Long, 30th



Annual Convention - Diocese of Virginia

By Terry Long, Lay delegate

*229th Annual Convention of the Episcopal
Diocese of Virginia*



This year the convention met somewhere different - in Fredericksburg. They have a convention center. It was a good size for us and had hotels conveniently located. The official convention began on Friday, November 3-4; however, four workshops were held Thursday afternoon. Hilary attended one on church finances and Joe attended one on the discernment process. I on the other hand was at registration with the other two members of the Credentials Committee. And, this year I thought we wouldn't be busy because everything had to be submitted electronically. Ha! Shouldn't even have thought that!

As for the workings of the convention, the schedule was changed up a bit. Thursday night was a service of Evening Prayer (dare I say this - it seemed too formal for a convention center). Saturday began with an address by Bishop Stevenson and a stirring presentation on racial justice and healing by Dr. Catherine Meeks, founding Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVZ9L7kPWRw> followed by an address on discipleship by Dr. Chanta Bhan, Canon for Discipleship and Heidi Kim, consultant. There was something new on Friday afternoon - a Q&A with the bishops and presentation leaders. We ended the session with a service of Holy Eucharist.

Saturday morning, we had guided table discussions which I thought were a great way to talk to our table-mates. There were various reports made and resolutions passed. We concluded the convention with prayers and a blessing by Bishop Stevenson. This convention was so pleasant. It is always good to meet and talk to other Episcopalians, share our stories and get new ideas. You knew the Holy Spirit was in that place!

Oh, I forgot to tell you. The Diocese has rebranded <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xrqRhzaDSio>.



Christ Family Ministry

By Patty Galdun

You will notice on the Christmas Memorial Donations form the term "Christ Family Ministry." The Christ Family Ministry was formed a long time ago to provide Christmas presents for children in need. It gradually evolved to providing family support to those who live in the margins of our society. The Fund helps people on, the phone and their bills when beyond their them to need Anne Cullison ministry for a long time, but it is a function of our Social Justice and Outreach Ministry and the Ministry's budget covers our expenses. At Christmas, the families used to get \$200 worth of gift cards from two different stores, but for the past two years they have received \$100 Kroger card at Thanksgiving and \$100 Kroger card for Christmas. Most of our families came recommended for the need by Richmond Public Schools or parish members. The families with children do get gift cards for Back to School shopping. At other times we have helped by supplementing rent payments, paying for home heating oil, water bills, and extra groceries. This is a very worthy cause and those of us who are on the the Social Justice and Outreach Ministry appreciate your support.



Two Concerts

***By Jim Bennett, Holy Comforter
Director of Music***

Concert of Seasonal Choral Music

A Light for the World

The James River Singers featuring works by Cristobal de Morales, W.A. Mozart, Dan Forrest, Gerd-Peter Munden, Reena Esmail, and others, see thejamesriversingers.org.

Friday, December 8th, 7:30 p.m., Church of the Holy Comforter



A Special Program of Baroque Music

Everyone knows the famous Four Seasons by Antonio Vivaldi, the “Red Priest,” but what lies beyond spring, summer, fall, and winter? The Chamber Music Society of Central Virginia returns to Holy Comforter with a special program of Baroque music exploring the beauty and spectacular virtuosity of some of Vivaldi’s less well-known music. Concertos inspired by a hunt, echoes, and a storm at sea are complemented by the world premiere of a piece commissioned for Baroque strings from American composer Kenyon Duncan.

The concert is on Monday, December 18, 7:00pm. Discounted tickets are available to the community - \$10 adults, and free for students.

To access this discount, visit our event page (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fifth-season-tickets-622786419947?aff=oddtcreator>)

Click “Get Tickets”, enter the promo code HOCO” and click apply. Your discount should now be applied.



One year as Director of Music

By Jim Bennett

Mine is the church where everybody’s welcome...

So begins the song we’ve been singing recently in our worship services. It describes Holy Comforter quite well. With the frightening turn that some in our nation have taken to exclude and condemn others and actively turn back the clock on hard won rights, being a truly welcoming place is more important than ever.

I know it’s true ‘cause I got through the door...

I have experienced that welcome and I have seen how lovingly and whole-heartedly our community embraces everyone. It’s hard to describe what your welcome—your absolutely loving and wonderful welcome—has meant to me. It has allowed me to trust that where the Spirit leads me, it’s ok to follow. Your welcome has allowed me to flourish in ways I’ve never felt able to before. I am grateful!

We are a dazzling bouquet of every kind of flower...

Groups from the community are welcome at HoCo. Our church is truly a wonderful space for music - and those that come here to perform know it. See this page for two such performances in December, and pass the word - I hope to see you at one or both events. These groups need and deserve our support - and they never disappoint.

The music ministry of Holy Comforter welcomes those who want to offer their gifts in worship. Voice, guitar, violin, mandolin, bass, and more help enliven and enrich our worship. Please speak to, or email me jimbennett@piano@gmail.com if you want to join in.

Jump in the vase, ‘cause we’ve got space for more.





Next book club meeting is January 2024

By Stephanie Roberts-Turner

Our book club will be taking a holiday break during November and December. This is such a busy time for us all. But we have a great selection for January 2024: *Lady Tan's Circle of Women* by Lisa See.

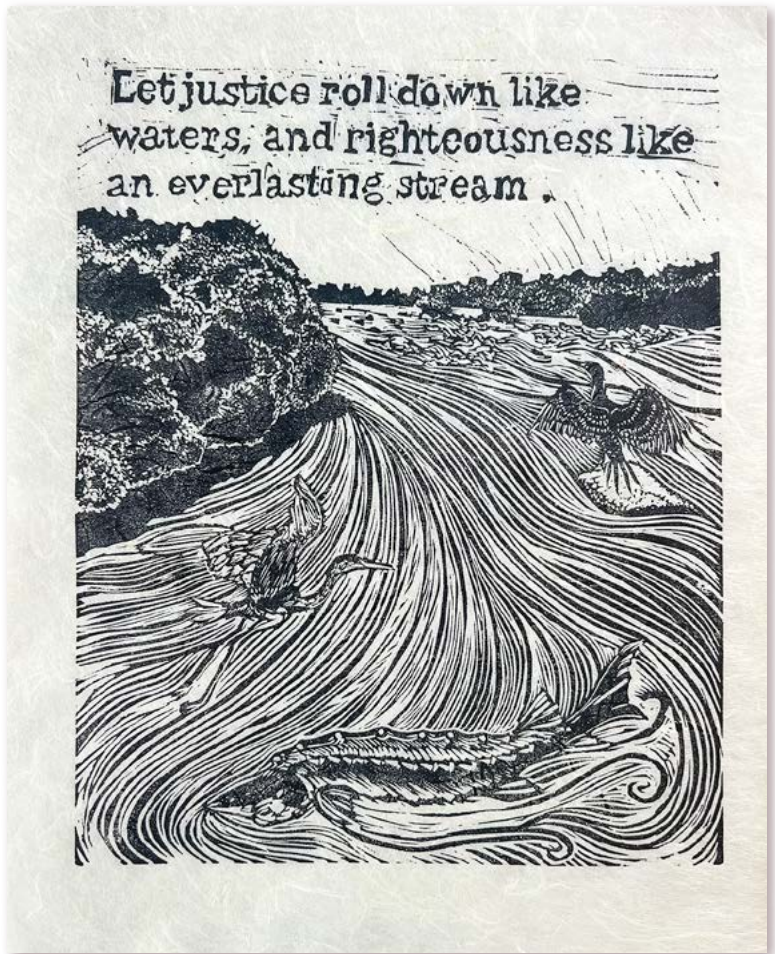


Woodcut fund raiser for HoCo

By Tracy Councill

I was talking with Hilary about creative ways to raise funds for Holy Comforter. Being a painter and printmaker, I offered to create a print. Beginning in late October, an edition of 100 hand pulled linocut prints will be offered for a minimum contribution of \$25 to Holy Comforter.

Hilary suggested I focus on the quote from the prophet Amos, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everlasting stream." When I thought about the metaphor, Richmond's own James River came to mind. Habitat restoration has led to thriving populations of wildlife in the James, so I included three major species - the cormorant, the great egret, and the sturgeon. As climate change forces us to acknowledge the impact we have on our planet, we must open ourselves to God's call to repent and care for creation. In this print, the James moves with freedom and power, because we have begun to repair some of the damage inflicted by the last two centuries of human exploitation and neglect.



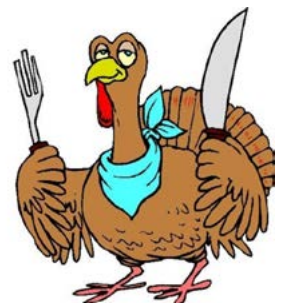
The prophet Amos's vision speaks to the power and freedom of a just and righteous world, where no person and no creature is denied what it needs to live. My print is intended to remind us that, just as the River can be nurtured back to life, we can lend our hands and hearts to repair the world.



Holiday Community Meal Returns

By Patty Galdun

The Community Meal returned to seated service in June of this year after a long COVID hiatus. On December 5, 2023 beginning at 5 p.m. we will return to serving our Annual Holiday Meal. The meal will be complete with Turkey, Dressing, Ham and the usual Thanksgiving and Christmas side dishes. Normally we have been serving 7 to 8 quarts of soup per month and mostly to our Food



Pantry visitors. We would like to invite anyone in the congregation to join us. It will provide an opportunity to get a free and delicious meal and give our parish an opportunity to serve as friendly faces for our usual guests. The only thing we ask is that you wear a mask in the serving line, as we do not have a “sneeze hood” to prevent the spread of germs. We hope to see you there!



Our Christmas donations go to Crossover Ministries

By Bruce MacAlister, Editor

How would you like a health care clinic with “comprehensive ... services ... including primary care, specialty care, pediatrics, HIV/AIDS testing and care, women’s health and prenatal care, mental health, dental, eye and vision care; medications and medications management?” Thanks to the donations of Holy Comforter parishioners and many others, Crossover Ministries provides that full service to those who cannot otherwise get medical care, see <https://www.crossoverministry.org/>. It offers two clinic locations. One is just south of the Lee bridge and the other near Regency Square. Both are on the bus line and both are near communities likely to need their care.



For Christmas, our donation not otherwise designated goes to this ministry. You can donate online by pushing the yellow “Donate Now!” button at the bottom of www.hoco.org. You can donate by making a check to Holy Comforter and putting “Crossover Ministries” in the message area of the check. You can simply put a wad of cash in the collection plate at the 10am or 3pm Christmas Eve service. We will see that Crossover Ministries gets your donation.



Recycle Right

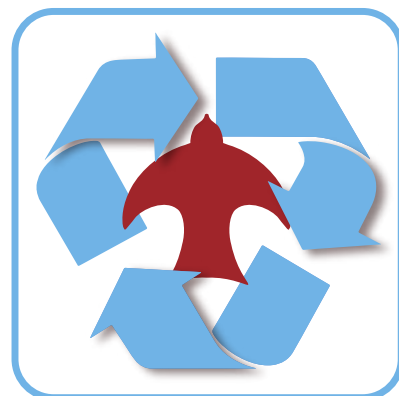
By Kipley Herr

As we fine tune our recycling program please note that only the following items are accepted. Adding ‘forbidden’ items contaminates the entire bin/truck rendering all items unfit for recycling.



Collection bins can be found in the Narthex, Choir Room, and Kitchen.

- Glass bottles and Jars - no caps
- Plastic bottles only - with lid
- Cartons - with lid
- Paper and flattened cardboard
- Aluminum and Steel Cans





Men at the Movies - Silent Night

By Steven Van Voorhees

Wednesday December 20, 2023 - (note change)

World War I, for a long time called the Great War, killed 5.7 million military service members, including 2 million German, 1.8 million Russian, just under 0.9 million from the United Kingdom, 1.5 million French and Belgian. These death



numbers do not include civilians, or Americans who entered the war in 1917. It was called “Great” because it had the highest number of military deaths in history and was the final chapter of the “Great Power Game,” pointing to the end of the colonization and domination age.

Our December movie (note the changed day and date) is a French/British//German product brought back by popular demand. We showed this movie some five years ago. At that time almost no one knew about it, and the media ignored it. The film received a 74% Rotten Tomatoes score, 70/100 Metacritic rating, and a 7.7//10 IMDb score. Since then, this story has attracted a lot of attention and research resulting in several books and articles, an opera, a stage play, and a 2022 television movie, Christmas Truce, 1914. There are some actual people portrayed; Germany’s Crown Prince, two famous opera singers (one of them given a fictional name) and their



protagonists that we end up cheering for. The historical facts are true and the story of Christmas Eve 1914 is now told and known generally, especially in Europe. This Christmas Truce was a singular event, any news of it was censored by the Generals and their Staffs. This particular movie opened up a flood of interest in the story over 90 years later.

The significance of this film is twofold. It is a story of brotherly love long suppressed and unknown for generations, and it is also a story of the real meaning of Christmas. Here are author Joseph Tomastik’s comments:

“To my knowledge, there has never been a story that better shows (how powerful) the holiday in and of itself is than Joyeaux Noel...because of how it shows the holiday altering the characters’ perceptions and emotions in a setting where such change is so difficult to bring about.” (His emphasis.)

My uncle and Peggy’s grandfather both went to the Great War, fought and returned. In my uncle’s case, he never recovered. You can ask about him in our discussions. Peggy’s grandfather fought on every front, was hospitalized and had life-long health issues from being gassed. In many ways, the so-called Great War is still having a major effect on World History, particularly in the Middle East.

So, on Wednesday, December 20th, we are going to start a Christmas tradition - if you do the same thing twice on a special event, it becomes a tradition! As usual, we will gather in the Parlor at 6:00pm for fellowship, the film and discussions commence at 6:30pm.





Pastoral Care Ministry Teams

By Julie Edwards, Pastoral Care Committee Chair

Pastoral Care at HoCo is alive and well. We are in the process of setting up teams to provide the various ministries under the Pastoral Care umbrella. Coming early in 2024 will be a Pastoral Care Ministry Fair during Connections in order for you to see what the teams do, let us know if you would like to offer any of your time with these ministries, and learn how to connect a need with a ministry.



A benefit of ministry teams is working with others in order to support one another and prevent burn-out. Most of our teams have been around a while and we are blessed to have people passionate to take care of each other at HoCo. We are continuing with our Email Prayer Ministry, Meals

Ministry, and Card Ministry. Our Pastoral Care Team is working on formalizing a Transportation Ministry, a Telephone Ministry, and a Visitation Ministry. New at HoCo will be a Fix-It Ministry! And, we are working to eventually continue the Eucharistic Prayer Ministry. It was a Team effort to hold our annual Holiday Grief Gathering on November 12th (I'm liking the term, "gathering" over the word "workshop." Thank you, Lucius!).

Whenever a HoCo need comes to your attention, or if you have need of one of our ministries, please let us know. Contact the church office and leave a message, contact our clergy, or contact me via information in the church directory.



Treasurer's Notes

By David Lehman, Treasurer

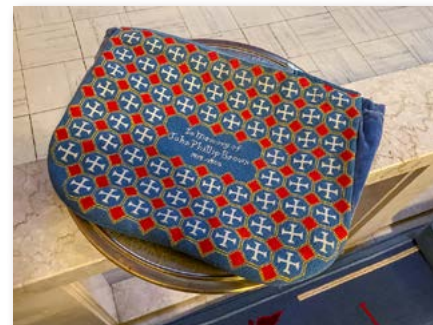
In November we started a new financial services arrangement here at Holy Comforter. The driver for the the decision, which was a difficult one to make, was the savings it brings in the budget. With this change we are pulling in-house a number of financial related tasks. Jamey Hooks, Vera Limn, and I will be responsible for completing these. We also have

hired an online bookkeeping service to track the income and expenditures of the budget, and also provide us with monthly financial reports.

During this change in the financial service processes I will be informing the Finance Committee and the Vestry on how these changes are going. Both groups will provide guidance and support to help make this a smooth transition.

On another note, as Treasurer I am able to see the weekly and monthly giving that provides the financial backbone that helps Holy Comforter meet its financial commitments. This solid week-in and week-out giving, which may seem routine, is vitally crucial to our financial well being. Along with this, I have seen the generous and gracious giving done by parishioners that is above and beyond. This provides a financial boost that helps Holy Comforter meet its financial obligations and also to fulfill its larger vision.

Here are several examples of the extra above and beyond generous giving that was done recently by parishioners: A generous gift made it possible to install HVAC systems in the second floor of the Parish Hall, which then made it possible for the Rowan Academy to locate their pre-school program here; Another gift was the directing of Required Minimum Distribution to be given to Holy Comforter; Another was the generous gift from the proceeds of an estate settlement; Another gift was the donation of the Virginia Tax Rebate proceeds; And another as a very generous gift for the Thanksgiving Food Pantry provisions to the community.



All the generous and gracious giving, which includes our ongoing pledge giving and the extra and beyond giving, helps our church community to make a difference in our lives and also in the lives of those around us.

Thank you.



About the banners...

By Carol Gibbs, your sister in Christ

About the banners... why, I don't know, but the day Jim Bennett first played at HoCo it came to me during the service that we needed to look like we knew we were in the 21st century not looking backward into the 20th.

I began to let that roll around in my head and in my prayers.

The "You are called by Name" banner is what spoke to me the strongest on my first visit to HoCo in 2002. It has great meaning for me and for many of us so I began to ask for inspiration to update the banners without losing the meaning.

I decided to use the HoCo logo banner as my guide.

The new banners emulate both the geometric graphic design of the HoCo banner and the general colors it uses. I had never noticed before starting this endeavor that the colors of the HoCo banner reflect the color theme of every season in



the church year. So attempting to hold true to those colors became a priority. It is my hope that by doing so it will present a unified appearance in the Nave.

The silhouettes of the various "families" more clearly represent real people of today and the instruments on the Tintinnabulum celebrate those we hear in almost every service. By the way those are authentic sheep bells used on the ribbons. I like the meaning. George Collier was a huge help in donating the silhouette shapes.

The Creation Care banner is a new creation. It reflects several of the same design elements as the others but it is an entirely new design that I hope speaks for its self.

This empty frame represents the third banner for Creation Care, still in production. We hope you will see it with these others when they are installed on December 3rd.

We have had many meaningful examples of liturgical art at HoCo through the years and I think we can expect even more in future. It is my prayer that these banners will hold as deep a meaning for us as their ancestors.

Oh and in case you're worried, the vintage Tintinnabulum will be hung in the music room and the "called by name banner" is looking for a good home.



Lent Madness Bracket Set ***By Bruce MacAlister, Editor***

In case you missed the monumental announcements, the candidates for the Golden Halo have been announced. The 2023 Golden Halo went Episcopal saint Jonathan Daniels who took a shotgun load to his chest to shield a young

girl in 1965 in Alabama. From such famous saints as Zita, Thomas Cranmer, Barbara, and Bridget, we get to pick the holy one of 2024. You can see the candidates in an enlarged and colorful graphic at www.lentmadness.org.



Adult Formation Classes on Holiday Break

By Peggy Hombs

The **Sunday Morning Adult Class** will not meet on Sundays, December 24th and 31st. The group will resume its course of study on Sunday, January 7th, at 8:45am in the Parlor with "The History of Christianity II: From the Reformation to the Modern Megachurch." The presenter is Dr. Molly Worthen, associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a freelance journalist.

The **Monday Evening Adult Class** will not meet on Mondays, December 25th and January 1st. The class will resume on January 8th, from 7:00-8:00 pm. via Zoom. (The Zoom link is found on the Holy Comforter website homepage.) The class curriculum is "The Fall of the Pagans and the Origins of Medieval Christianity." The lecturer for this 24-session course is Kenneth W. Harl, Professor of Classical and Byzantine History, at Tulane University.

All are welcome: join us in the New Year to 'taste and see'!!





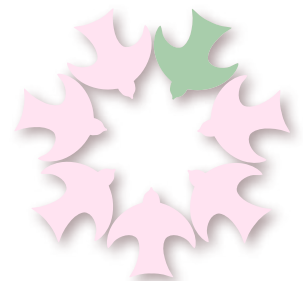
HoCo Workday in October

By Rox Cox, property

On Saturday, October 28th, a group of parishioners spent the morning working on the grounds along the Monument Avenue side of the sanctuary. The work day was the first



step in preparing the beds there for new plantings in the spring. Thanks to Jim Bennett, Susan Bose, Tracy Councill, Nancy Deane, Evan Herr, Steve Herr, Briggett Keith, and David Lehman. Thanks, also, to Bill Smith for getting the mulch delivered. Work is underway on the design for the beds. Interested in working on the beautification of our grounds? See Susan Bose, Tracy Councill, or Laura Hunt.





Church of England General Synod approves a test of prayers for same-sex couples

***By Catherine Pepinster, Episcopal News Service
(church-of-england-synod-same-sex)***

[Religion News Service – London]

The Church of England will test-run stand-alone services for blessing same-sex couples after its ruling body, the General Synod, voted to move ahead with implementing special prayers of thanks and dedication for gay couples. The vote to go ahead with the pilot program followed hours of emotionally charged debate about the church's pastoral responsibilities toward LGBTQ+ people.

The synod's vote on Nov. 15 follows the House of Bishops' agreement last month to commend "Prayers of Love and Faith," a collection of prayers and readings for same-sex couples, for use in existing church services. The bishops also approved the prayers as the basis for stand-alone services.

Two days of debate began with synod members - bishops, clergy and lay representatives - considering a motion put forward by the bishop of London, the Rt. Rev. Sarah Mullally, the third most senior bishop in the Church of England, in which she highlighted the uncertainty and tensions in the church over the issue and especially over the content of prayers for same-sex blessings.

Thirteen amendments were offered to her motion, from those who wanted to recognize further the distress the issue had caused to gay people to those who wanted to abandon the work on same-sex blessings altogether.

On Nov. 15, the synod voted to accept an amendment from Steven Croft, the bishop of

Oxford, to test stand-alone services, a significant move that some synod members pointed out might affect the "optics" surrounding the blessings, suggesting that they are weddings in all but name.

The Croft amendment passed the House of Laity by just one vote.

Support for the prayers for same-sex blessings came from the Church of England's leaders, the archbishops of Canterbury and York, at the start of the special session of General Synod.

But tensions remain so strong that the archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, told the synod on Nov. 14 that the disagreements "appeared to be stretching us to breaking point." But he also said that "there should be no place for homophobia in our church."

Those who opposed the experiment with the prayers for same-sex blessings pointed out that once they had been tried, they would be hard to retract. "Trial services could never be withdrawn," said the bishop of Chichester, the Rt. Rev. Martin Warner. That would be too divisive, he said, while

saying the idea of accommodating same-sex couples needed more study.

"Like all doctrine, the doctrine of marriage is practical, but it is more than that," he said. "It shows that what we do now is linked to eternal reality. How we use our bodies matters

- they are temples of the Holy Spirit. This is more than devotion. The rationale for using these prayers needs far more elucidation."

The vote is not binding across the rest of the Anglican Communion but it will be noted with interest, especially among those who have been highly critical of Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby for being too tolerant of gay believers.



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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[Hoco web site calendar page](#)

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

- **Sundays:**

- ◇ 8:45am Adult class in the Parlor
- ◇ 9:00am Sunday Morning, Choir practice in the choir room
- ◇ 10:00am Holy Eucharist Rite II, in person with nursery available; the service is live-streamed on Facebook and YouTube and posted following the service

- **Mondays:**

- ◇ 7:00pm Adult class, Zoom

- **Wednesdays:**

- ◇ 11:30am Centering Prayer, in person in the in the church

- ◇ Noon Holy Communion, in person in the church

- **Thursdays:**

- ◇ 4:00pm Lectionary Study, Zoom
- ◇ 7:00-8:15pm Weekly choir rehearsal

Food Pantry Hours:

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

Veterans Shelter & Side by Side Dinners:

- ◇ Suspended during November & December, to resume fourth Thursdays in January

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

The January 2024 Messenger will be available Sunday January 7th.

The deadline for that edition is Friday December 29th.

Earlier submission would really help the volunteers who put it together.

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

