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Happy Easter



(and April Fools Day)



Caregivers are not alone

By Bonnie Atwood

Approximately 43 million people provide unpaid care to an adult or child. Many of us at Holy Comforter are among these family caregivers. Some are here every Sunday, and some are shut-ins. Some of us care for the oldest of the old, or younger people who need us, or both at the same time. I think this is the hardest, and yet the most important work in the world. We can view it as drudgery. Our human frailties can so easily pull us into a downward spiral of loneliness and despair and exhaustion. It is then that we rely on God, on our church, on our community, and on our inner strength to bring us back. When we get good, positive support, we can see caregiving as a privilege in so many ways.

I was a family caregiver for many years. Some of you may remember when my mother, Dee, moved here to Richmond to live with me and my son on the street behind the church.

At that time she was 90 years old, and quite independent. She was a Methodist all her life, and we visited probably a dozen Methodist churches in Richmond, but she felt more at home at Holy Comforter. She made many friends: Bonnie and Gary, Roberta, Edna, and more. She walked to church by herself. In a few years, she needed me to go with her, and I, too, felt nourished at church. We always sat in the front row because she could see and hear better there.

Before I had responsibility for my mother, I was the caregiver for my father, my aunt, and my grandparents. I had a baby to care for also, so, as so many of us are, I was part of the “sandwich generation.” With a frazzled brain, I took five minutes here, and 10 minutes there, and started writing notes about my experience. I have put those notes into a book. It’s not a how-to book; rather, it’s a book of contemplation about how to



make a tedious routine meaningful. Day after day was pretty much the same. My sweet companions were slowly losing some abilities, and it was hard to watch. I saw the world moving on without me. Women were not applauded for caregiving. They were rewarded for breaking so called glass ceilings. And there I was in the basement. I was jealous.

I am sharing an excerpt from my book. It is a passage that I wrote about my father. He was a wonderful man, who lived to age 91. He was a cabinet maker who always wanted to be an architect. One of his great joys in his old age was admiring the magnificent architecture of Holy Comforter. I think about it every time I attend church. I look at the spotless white ceiling set

off by the well-placed brown beams of wood, and I think of him. I run my hands over the smooth, cool wood of the pews.

“His hair is now a white fringe around the back of his delicate macadamia nut head, with delicate white curls rising like a gentle cigarette smoke out the top. I give Daddy haircuts because now he’s old. He’s beyond the jaunty title of ‘senior citizen’ - he is very, very old—and I take care of him. That’s what we do, many of us, when our loved ones get old. And sometimes we find ourselves taking care of the young and the old at once. We are the liverwurst between slices of rye bread. We’re cut so very thin as to be almost invisible, getting squashed and then consumed.”

When I look up at the ceiling beams and stained glass, I listen for words or signs from God. God told me what he is telling all of you. The rewards of your work may seem elusive, but they are real. And you are not alone.

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A Message from Hilary+

Dear Friends and Companions in Ministry,

Happy Easter! Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

We had a hard Lent, beginning as it did on Ash Wednesday with the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The reality of sin, brokenness,



vulnerability, and mortality came crashing into Ash Wednesday between our services; by the 7:00 pm service, many of us were aware of the shooting, but none of us could be aware of the response. Almost immediately, we saw the youth of our nation demanding change, and we

saw them be the change they demand. In these teenagers, we see what resurrection can mean; we see the Reign of God among us. New life has come from death, and it is powerful. Do you sense the hope that things can be different? Moments of resurrection in the midst of what is broken or dead give us hope.

Joan Chittister writes in her meditation for Easter: “Jesus in the tomb is one proof we have that darkness is not the enemy. Our greatest enemy is the unwillingness to believe in the dawn, in resurrection. Hope is what keeps the soul alive in bad times; hope gives us strength to go on despite the darkness of the moment.”

Easter transforms the tomb from the place of death and the end of the story, to the place of birth and the beginning of a new story, a story of hope. Hold on to those moments of hope, those moments of resurrection, knowing that God’s life with us did not end in the tomb but has opened to us a life of hope even in the midst of death. Our connection with God through the Risen Christ gives new life now and life eternal.

Chittister suggests that our response to Easter could come from completing this sentence, “I will celebrate Easter hope by....” When we respond to the grace of God that we have known, our sense of God’s love is deepened and our relationship

with God is enlivened.

Our church gives us many ways to respond during April. Coming to church on Sundays is a great way to respond and celebrate our Easter hope. Let’s celebrate together! Join us every Sunday at 10:00 am and for our Story Time service on Sunday, April 15th at 4:30 pm. Wednesday contemplative services at 12:15 pm begin again on Wednesday, April 11th. We respond to our Easter hope when we encourage and teach our children to know this hope that we have in God. Join me on Saturday, April 7th, at 2:00 pm, in the parlor for a Vacation Bible School planning session. We celebrate our Easter hope when we learn about our faith and about how to be about God’s work in the world; join us for a Sunday Forum on April 15th, at 11:30 am, with Aisha Huertas who is the Director of Mission, Outreach, and Diversity for our diocese. Learn what we as a diocese are doing and how we can be involved.

Wishing you great hope and joy this Eastertide,
Hilary+





Rams in Recovery & HoCo support

By Denise Carl

In the spring of 2015, I was desperate to find resources and figure out how to help a college-age friend who was spiraling out of control. He was drinking way too much alcohol, way too often, and had completely alienated his friends and family. He had no place to go. He was in danger, and his needs were urgent. I did not know where to turn, and it was time-consuming, confusing and daunting trying to unearth local resources and figure out available options.

Serendipitously, I remembered an article



from the *Times-Dispatch* about VCU's Rams in Recovery (RIR). I googled RIR and worried as I called the number, wondering how long it would take to speak to someone who might be helpful or if I would be able to discover anything useful and/or applicable at all to my friend's situation. Fortuitously, Tom Bannard, RIR's Program Director, answered the phone. He suggested I come to his office that day, and when we met, he gave me names, addresses, and phone numbers of local treatment facilities, providers, sober living facilities, etc. In twenty minutes, I got more information than I would have gleaned in weeks of digging on my own.

I began attending RIR's weekly Family Education Program (FEP) to better educate myself and soon realized I knew almost nothing about Substance Use Disorders (SUD) and addiction. In particular, the statistics surrounding the opioid crisis were a complete shock and hard to comprehend (see chart). On a regular basis, I met



parents, siblings, and others who had either lost a loved one to an overdose or had a loved one who had survived an overdose only because of the availability of Naloxone. The more I learned, the more I realized I did not know. When the City of Richmond received funding for its Richmond AmeriCorps Healthy Futures Projects, I was honored in October 2017 to join the team working on site at RIR.

Late last fall, I met with the Holy Comforter Outreach ministry to discuss funding assistance. After a discussion, HoCo decided to contribute \$2,500 a year (and HoCo's donation was doubled, thanks to a matching grant from the John Henry Watkins Foundation)! This is such a big help to the program.

RIR was founded in 2013 and provides a welcoming on-campus community that supports and celebrates recovery while fostering academic success. It is based on the belief that students should not have to choose between recovering from addiction and a college education. The program supports VCU students (both undergrad and grad), parents and family members (through outreach programs), and college applicants. RIR offers:

- 15 weekly support meetings & 2 weekly Family Education Programs
- On-Campus Recovery Clubhouse with food, coffee, and tea
- Science of Recovery Coursework
- Local Recovery Housing resources
- Coursework with students and residents in the Richmond Jail
- Weekend Trips throughout the year
- Spring break trips
- Day trips; hiking, theme park, etc.

- Recovery Housing On-Campus
- Yoga and Meditation for recovery
- Monthly speaker series
- Individual support from peers and certified counselors
 - Sober meet-ups at concerts and social events
 - Graduation ceremony with an emphasis on the co-achievement of recovery and graduation
 - Naloxone training for students, faculty and community members

As Tom says: “What we want to do is make our campus recovery ready. That means, when someone reaches out for help, they can get it, quickly, without stigma, at a level that is appropriate for them. As they enter recovery, they are well supported and their growth is celebrated.”

(Note that below, there is reference to a chart and a flyer. Please click [this](#) to find them on our Outreach web site page.)

RIR as a program, as a community, and as a local recovery resource has grown rapidly over the past three years (see chart). Regular use of the RIR clubhouse grows by the month. The FEP programs provide information and training on subjects that range from hands-on Naloxone training to facilitated discussions on subjects like “10 Things Your Loved One Wishes You Knew About Substance Use,” and are free and open to the public (see flyer). The generous support of Holy Comforter has helped make it possible for RIR to support this growth and serve the needs of the students and prospective students who seek the safe haven RIR offers and to offer recovery information and support throughout the greater Richmond area.



Lines in the Street – What goes?

by George Collier

You may have noticed that we now have diagonal parking lines on Staples Mill, both sides of the street. Depending on your driving habits, it might help to know the reason for the way they were applied.

I spoke with a Richmond traffic engineer about why they were added and the reason they run in the direction they do. They were added to provide more parking space, requested by the church 2 or 3 years ago. As the signs (added more recently) indicate, the intention is for folks to back into the spaces. This would be best done coming from the Monumental St. end, from a safety perspective.



The primary consideration for the engineer is safety in pulling out, rather than entering the space, as pulling out is when approaching cars are least visible to the driver. The lines are set up so that when pulling out into the street toward the stoplight at Monument and Staples Mill, the driver is placed in the optimum position for visibility, being able to see cars coming from Monumental St. When pulling head into the spaces, coming from Monument, we are forced to cross the lane of oncoming traffic, and then when pulling out, are least able to see cars coming from Monumental St., which is what the engineer wants to avoid.

The picture here, from Google Maps, shows the correct way to park. We may not all be comfortable backing into parking spaces, but it really is the intended way to use our new ones.

And, lately, some have noticed that the spaces are a bit tight for most cars. I’m going to ask about that too.



April Book Club - “Killers of the Flower Moon”

By Stephanie Roberts-Turner

In April we are turning to non-fiction: *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a gripping story about the Osage Murders in 1920’s Oklahoma and the birth of the FBI. Read more below and come to mingle and discuss! We meet Tuesday, April 10, 6:30 pm in the Parlor.

From a *New York Times* review:

“In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Indian nation in Oklahoma. After oil was discovered beneath their land, they rode in chauffeured automobiles, built mansions, and sent their children to study in Europe.

“Then, one by one, the Osage began to be killed off. The family of an Osage woman, Mollie Burkhart, became a prime target. Her relatives were shot and poisoned. And it was just the beginning, as more and more members of the tribe began to die under mysterious circumstances.

“In this last remnant of the Wild West—where oilmen like J. P. Getty made their fortunes and where desperadoes like Al Spencer, the “Phantom Terror,” roamed—many of those who dared to investigate the killings were themselves murdered. As the death toll climbed to more than twenty-four, the FBI took up the case. It was one of the organization’s first major homicide investigations and the bureau badly bungled the case. In desperation, the young director, J. Edgar Hoover,

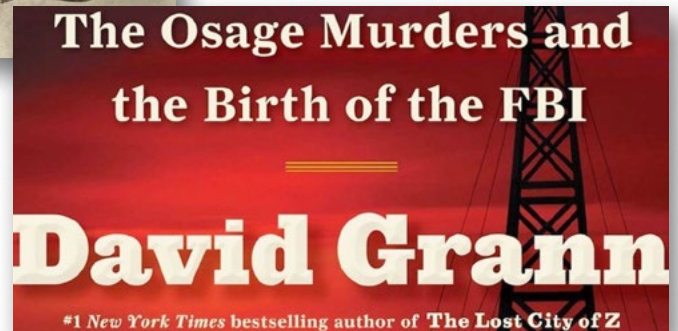


turned to a former Texas Ranger named Tom White to unravel the mystery. White put together an undercover

team, including one of the only American Indian agents in the bureau. The agents infiltrated the region, struggling to adopt the latest techniques of detection. Together with the Osage they began to expose one of the most chilling conspiracies in American history.

“In *Killers of the Flower Moon*, David Grann revisits a shocking series of crimes in which dozens of people were murdered in cold blood.

Based on years of research and startling new evidence, the book is a masterpiece of narrative nonfiction, as each step in the investigation reveals a series of sinister secrets and reversals. But more than that, it is a searing indictment of the callousness and prejudice toward American Indians that allowed the murderers to operate with impunity for so long. *Killers of the Flower Moon* is utterly compelling, but also emotionally devastating.”



It is a New York Times Bestseller and National Book Award Finalist.

“Disturbing and riveting...It will sear your soul.” —Dave Eggers, *New York Times Book Review*.



Men at the Movies, April By Steve Van Voorhees

The April Men at the Movies will feature the final winner in the earlier 4-way tie vote for viewing, *Juno*. This film might be seen as different from our usual choices—a 2007 movie that has been classified as a comedy, a

drama, an ‘indie,’ and a romance. Some might call it a ‘girlie movie,’ but we will indulge our sensitive sides this month! Nominated for a slew of awards, it received an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay. It features Ellen Page as the title character, an independent-minded teenager who finds herself with an unplanned pregnancy and facing the pressures of adult life as a result. The wise-cracking young woman is shown to be a



well-constructed character as deeper feelings and buried themes are revealed. The movie also features great supporting performances from



Michael Cera, Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman, Allison Janney, and J.K. Simmons. Amazingly, the film received praise and criticism from both the pro-life and pro-choice communities.

We will gather as usual on Tuesday, April 24th, at 6:00pm for fellowship and movie viewing and discussion will begin at 6:30pm in the Parlor. Bring a friend, bring your dinner. Popcorn will be provided.



Seminarian Kristin Wickersham receives award ***Union Presbyterian Seminary press***

Richmond, VA (March 9, 2018) —Union Presbyterian Seminary celebrates with students who have been recognized by the faculty with the following Fellowship Awards for further study and professional development. Through these awards, the faculty recognizes outstanding academic work by students who also show exceptional promise for effectiveness in ministry.

The Sallie Shepherd Perkins Fellowship to Kristin Wickersham, Richmond Campus

This award is given to a student who has demonstrated superior academic achievement and possesses outstanding qualities of Christian commitment to pursue further graduate study to enhance the student’s ministry.



Photo by George Collier



Sunday Forum on April 15th with Aisha Huertas

Aisha Huertas has been Director of Mission, Outreach, and Diversity for our Diocese since the fall of 2017. She began her career with the Diocese of Virginia in 2015 as Director of Communications and she was later appointed by Bishop Shannon Johnston to lead the Diocese’s first Office of Intercultural Ministries. She is an experienced nonprofit executive, having worked for a variety of organizations, including Donate Life American and the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia. Aisha is a longtime Episcopalian and is actively involved in her parish, Grace & Holy Trinity, Richmond.

Aisha will be with us on Sunday, April 15th, following the 10:00 am service to offer a Forum on her work for the diocese and us.

Reported by Hilary Smith



Diocesan Photo



Wound Treatment Centers

By Richard Rose

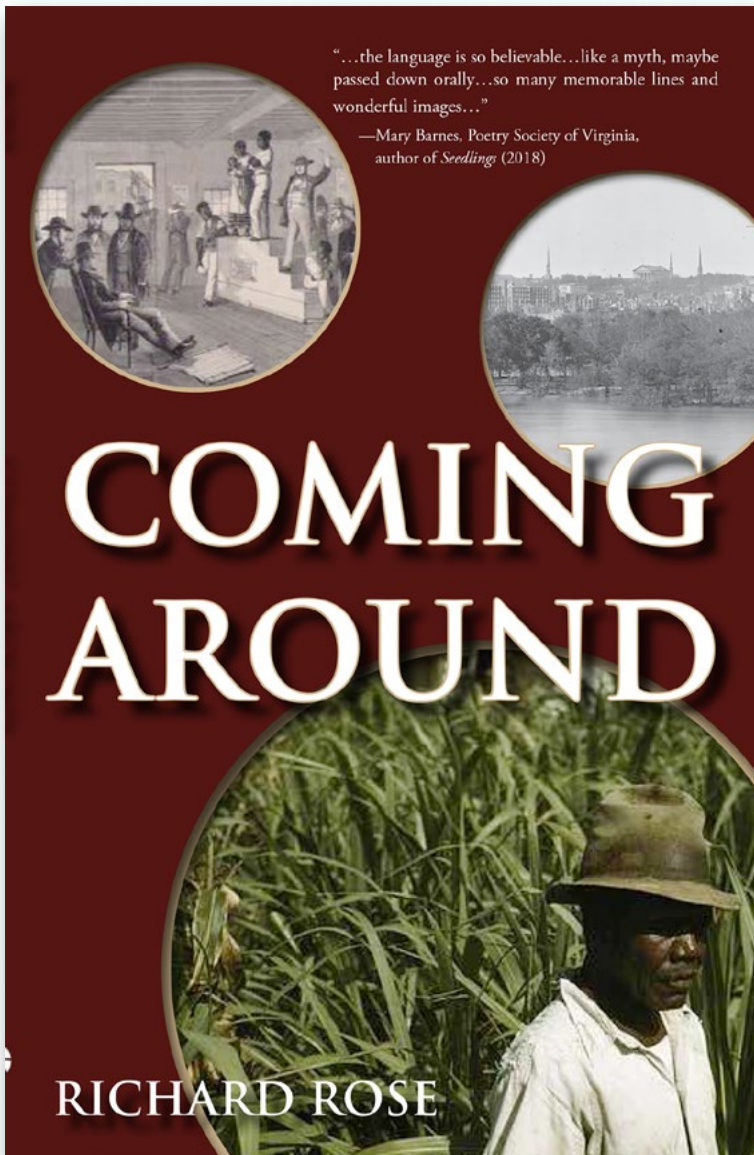
You may have heard it said that for the many puzzling issues confronting human beings, each of us holds a piece of the picture. I think that the pieces you hold belong to a puzzle that only you can assemble. We work on ourselves in our own studios. We master our own materials first, piece by piece. How do you keep turning back to the center of your being? It's easier to accept the customary as necessary, the pleasing as beautiful, the established as true. But those who work on themselves with arts and sciences are not easily satisfied. How does what you make embody what is central to your experience? I look for recurrent patterns of words, behavior, tempos, and diction because in my work

I fashion words and music. What do you look for to embody what is central to your experience? You know what you are suited to do because doing it gives you joy and strength. To find and employ this gift is to work in your own studio, slowly delving to your own roots. If, as W.E.B. DuBois said, the problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the color line, perhaps the concern of our time is to treat the wounds that do not go away—racism, exploitation, injustice, and denial. Such treatment is not heroic medicine but palliative care: showing attention to each other and the world we inseparably inhabit and showing persistence in the effort. This wound-treatment may be as much as humans can ever accomplish. I offer these five assertions for your consideration and my writing and narrative music as a focus for your meditation.

1. Humans are born into worlds of pre-existing enmities, racism, war, ignorance, inequity, exploitation, unavenged wrongs, and violence of all kinds. These distorted relationships are wounds awaiting our attention and care. As others before us, we will both alleviate and aggravate them, but we can also use our imaginations to become opportunists for compassion and peace.

2. There are many worlds because a “world” is a frame of reference to other humans and to the Earth and countless frames are possible. Frames of reference are settings of scale which reveal different levels and kinds of details. Facts at one level may be grouped satisfactorily in one way, but at another level, different concepts are required. What is true at one level may be irrelevant to the issues and concepts at another level.

3. Frame-shifting is a practice of readily and imaginatively changing frames of reference to discover more and more appropriate orientations to the worlds we can know. In frame-shifting, one deliberately accepts even discomfort to escape fixation on a familiar frame of reference. Curiosity, exploration, playfulness, improvisation, and imaginative efforts of all kinds, including prayer, meditation, introspection, and investigations of nature, derive from frame-shifting.



“...the language is so believable...like a myth, maybe passed down orally...so many memorable lines and wonderful images...”

—Mary Barnes, Poetry Society of Virginia, author of *Seedlings* (2018)

COMING AROUND

RICHARD ROSE

4. To attend to wounded relationships, particularly those of long standing, requires perseverance and frame-shifting. The task is comparable to the work of a wound treatment center, where ailments are managed rather than immediately cured. Heroic medicine, such as heart-transplant surgery, is the work of an operating room, not of a wound treatment center. Treating a deep abscess, for example, requires many visits to drain the wound and many rehearsals of instructions and encouragement. At best, the wounds are maintained and gradually healed, but often complete healing is not possible.

5. Distorted social and environmental relationships are not resolved by heroic measures but by gradual perseverance and attention. Frame-fixations impede improvement; frame-shifting keeps us curious and exploring. Limiting harm may be the only outcome, but if the effort to repair relationships can be sustained, new frames of reference will become increasingly acceptable. Wound treatment begins with human beings doing work on themselves to overcome the self-delusion of separation. As imagination gets in stride with how things are—reality, or the deep integrity of all being—then we can more easily shift to frames of reference suited to the issues confronting humans and other life on earth: our biotic family.



This month, as part of our common task to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, I offer two works, a musical narrative about the wounds of war and racism and a companion book in which I embody my experience, delving into my own family roots, of trying to imagine and understand our people, free and enslaved. These works grow out of our ministry, so I welcome your attention to them.

For information about the book, *Coming Around*, available later this spring, the musical narrative, *Strike the Rock*, and for ongoing information from my studio, see frameshifts.com/2018/02/17/strike-the-rock-comes-around-to-richmond/

The musical narrative, *Strike the Rock*, is being performed on the following dates:

March 31, 2018 - 2:00 pm

Gellman Room, Richmond Public Library
Selections from “Monte & Pinky” and “Amber”
Free Public Event

April 7, 2018 - 2:00 pm

Black History Museum
“Monte & Pinky”, Concert and Discussion
Suggested donation of \$12 at door

April 10, 2018 - 7:00 pm

Firehouse Theatre
“Amber”
Suggested donation of \$12 at door

April 22, 2018 - 2:00 pm

Church of the Holy Comforter
“Monte & Pinky” and “Amber”, with full chorus
Suggested donation of \$12 at door





Six months in an English Country Parish (Part 3)

By Laura Hunt

A Celebration of Women: Lady Day and Mothering Sunday

On March 25, 2017, I traveled with nine other members of the Mothers' Union of St. Mary's, Bucknell, to the nearby town of Church Stretton to celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation. The service honors the visit of the archangel Gabriel to Mary, to tell her of the conception of a child who would be born 9 months later, December 25.

In England the Annunciation is called Lady Day and until the late 18th century, marked the start of the New Year. It actually makes more sense to begin the year in the spring, rather than the dead of winter. The idea possibly originated with the Hebrews when God instituted the Passover feast in the month of Nissan (March-April): "The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 'This month shall be for you the beginning of months, the first month of your year.' (Exodus 12:1-2)



I was the youngest of the ladies, whose ages ranged up to 94. I had joined the Mothers' Union partly because it was an English tradition, founded in 1856 with Queen Victoria as its patron, but mostly because it is now a global movement using social outreach to help communities overcome violence and empower women. Over a million members work in African dioceses, nearly half in [Tanzania](#).



We arrived in Church Stretton, a dramatic spot at the foot of a mountain called the Long Mynd. The service in the medieval church of St. Laurence highlighted Mary's faith, obedience, and courage. Sitting amid Norman arches and Gothic tracery, we prayed for God to strengthen us to walk with Mary her joyful path of obedience to God's call. We then processed our Mothers' Union banner to the altar, along with banners from many other parishes.



At the luncheon afterwards, a group from the town of Bishop's Castle invited me to come speak to them about life in America, which I did a few weeks later, talking of my experiences in New York City (where I was raised and educated),

Texas (where I moved when I married), and Virginia. Later, when I returned to the U.S. and joined the Altar Guild at HoCo, I learned that Leslie Smith had visited her aunt (and godmother) several times in Church Stretton and knew the area well.

Related to Lady Day is Mothering Sunday. Whereas our American “Mothers’ Day” is in May, the English celebrate it on the fourth Sunday of Lent, and it is more a religious holiday than a secular one. Children in school and in church weave together floral posies for their mothers. Besides honoring one’s mother, it is customary to visit the church in which one was baptized.



The church service that day focuses on God our Mother. The Song of Anselm, an 11th century Archbishop of Canterbury begins,

*“Jesus, like a mother,
you gather your people to you;
You are gentle with us as a mother
with her children.”*

The congregation then thanks God “for the patient care and concern of our mothers, for the joys they have shared with us and the pains they have borne for us, for their service without limit.”

The experience made me extremely proud to be a mother.

Photos by Laura Hunt

Church of the Holy Comforter, Richmond

a parish in the Diocese of Virginia under the Episcopal Church in the USA
which is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion

Monument Avenue at Staples Mill Road

web - www.hoco.org; e-mail - office@hoco.org;

phone 804-355-3251; fax 804-355-0049

Coming Events at the Church of the Holy Comforter
See the [Hoco web site calendar page](#) for detailed calendar and rota

- **Sundays**, 8:45am, Adult Formation, Hayward Parlor
- **Sundays**, 10am, Choral Eucharist
- **Sundays**, about 10:15am, Children's Chapel, starts in the Church, moves to Parish House Children's Chapel
- **Third Sundays**, 4:30pm, Story Time

Food Pantry Hours:

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

Side By Side & Vet Shelter Meal Preparation

- Fourth Thursdays, 4pm Side by Side, 5pm Vet Shelter

*Editing of the Messenger is done by Bruce MacAlister, the layout by George Collier.
The May Messenger will be available Sunday, May 6th, 2018. The deadline for that edition is Friday,
April 27th, 2018 (but earlier submission is encouraged).*

Please send your submissions to editor@hoco.org

*A full color (and much more attractive) version of the Messenger is available on our web site -
www.hoco.org*

Hoco Birthdays for the month of April:

***Charles Forman, 1st; Kathryn MacAlister, 1st; Samuel Menchel, 3rd; April Cooke, 5th;
Joseph Klenzmann, 9th; Laura Hunt, 11th; Michael Vaughan, 15th;
Sarah Howard, 16th; John Kerr, 19th; Steven Van Voorhees, 22nd;
Donna Brodd, 23rd; Lucille McAllister, 24th; Carrie Vandervelde, 26th;
Bonnie Atwood, 27th; Carli Nelson, 28th; Sage Goode, 29th; Chele Miller, 29th***

