

2023 Annual Report

Church of the Holy Comforter 543 Beulah Road, NE, Vienna, VA 22180

A friend from my former parish recently asked me "How is it going at Holy Comforter?" My joyful response to her was "It feels really synergistic right now; there's a lot of really good ministry going on in a variety of ways." This was after a full weekend of ministry involving welcoming a new refugee family, a fun Chili Cookoff event and 2nd Saturday Church, a mission trip fundraiser, and confirmation retreat.

There is cause to celebrate—the good news on our Capital Campaign (Annual Meeting reveal), our progress on solarization, Becoming Beloved Community work, the health of Pennywise Thrift Shop, our wonderful choirs and worship leadership, the vitality of our children's formation and youth conversations, and the Creation Care ministry among so many others.

On so many levels, the people, staff, vestry and wardens, and clergy of Holy Comforter are serving, leading, and creating in life-giving ways. There is a generosity of spirit here which I am privileged to witness and help lead.

One of my favorite sayings in scripture is "love covers many sins" from 1 Peter. This is about vulnerability. And when I think of Holy Comforter, I think of love filling in the gaps when there is a need. We are able to accomplish much here because of a generosity of spirit.

This upcoming year we will look forward to clarifying our mission and vision again as we seek to develop a new long-range plan. As one of our members said, "the Spirit Window captures our mission so completely." And I would agree, that what we are about is people who are receivers of God's Holy Spirit, who grow and develop in that Spirit, who are called to serve and reach out because of the sacred wind first claiming us in love, then pushing us forward.

Each of us is called to shape this community with our share and engagement of Christ's spirit. Where will we go next because of that Spirit? Gaze at our window in worship and listen to the conversation on your heart.

With much joy and gratitude,



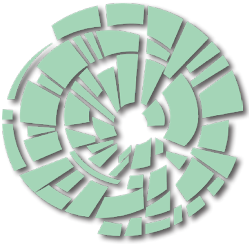
The Rev. Jon Strand
Rector

CELEBRATIONS!

HOPES

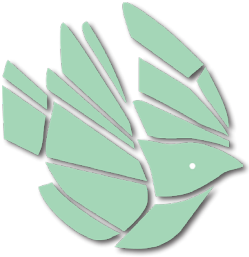


Acolytes, Lay Liturgists, & Vergers



CELEBRATIONS!

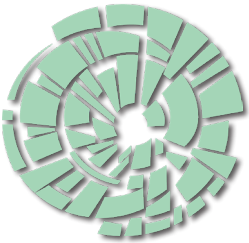
- 5 Vergers, 16 Eucharistic Ministers, and 29 Lay Readers.
- 22 Acolytes, 3 Youth Eucharistic Ministers, and 10 Youth Lay Readers.
- 7 Compline Leaders.
- 174 Services Supported Last Program Year.



HOPES

Despite strong numbers, we can use more acolytes to support the Sunday 9:30 a.m. service. Our numbers have diminished from our pre-pandemic high of 60 acolytes. We also need more Eucharistic Ministers to support all services. We especially need those willing to serve Saturday 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 11:15 a.m. Training provided; no experience needed. Schedules are flexible.

Adult Faith Formation



CELEBRATIONS!

- **Large Events:** "Are Your Affairs in Order?" summer series; *Philadelphia 11* documentary film showing; "Advent Retreat: An Invitation to Wonder" in collaboration with CONOVA.
- **Small Groups:** "Being With," Episcopal 101, Bible Study, and discussion groups.
- **Books/Speakers:** *Crazy: A Father's Search Through America's Mental Health Madness*; *Demon Copperhead*; "First Rites: Young Men Rising" men and boys program; "Finding the Middle Way" discussion group.
- **Wellness and Spirituality:** "Retreat on 2 Feet" at Shrine Mont; Wellness Circles; Summer Yoga.



HOPES

In 2024, we hope to encourage parishioner participation in new and ongoing small groups; arrange events of interest to church members and the broader community (speakers, films, pilgrimages); and offer programs that support the whole person (wellness and spirituality).

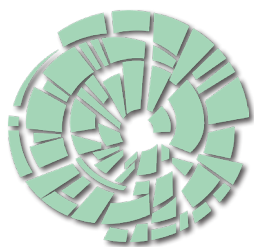


Advent Retreat: An Invitation to Wonder

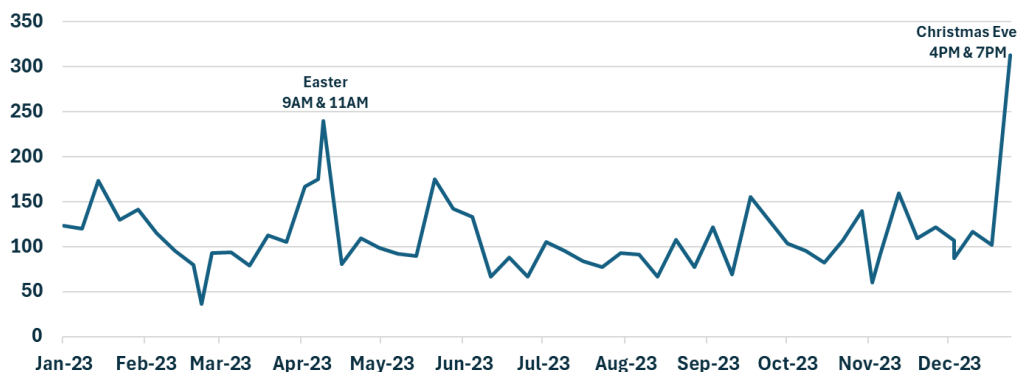


Members of Remnants plant a memorial tree

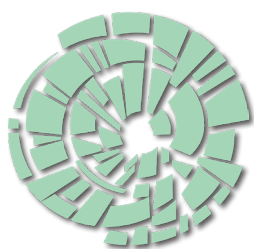
Audio Visual



2023 You Tube Views of Worship Services: Live Stream & Recorded



Blood Drive



CELEBRATIONS!

- From October 2022 through December 2023 we have hosted 12 blood drives, collecting 427 units of blood, helping nearly 1,500 people.
- The blood drives attract people from the local community to the church.
- Every drive has been staffed by wonderful volunteers who welcome donors.
- Our blood drive—the only one in Vienna—has filled a void for the Red Cross.

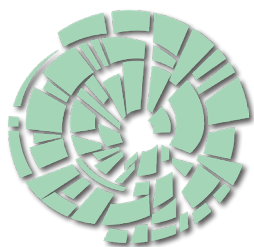
HOPES

Expanding advertising of the drives beyond the *Comfortable Word*, Facebook, Patch, and NextDoor in order to broaden our reach within the community and attract donors, increasing the units of blood collected and people helped.



Rev. Jackie Thomson Giving Blood

Building & Grounds



CELEBRATIONS!

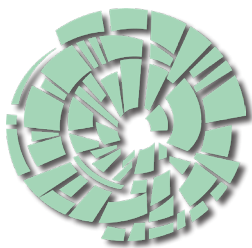
- Replaced the aging Sanctuary air conditioner with a new unit that is quieter and more energy efficient.
- Painted the wood trim of the church building and replaced areas of rotting wood.
- Created a uniform Wi-Fi system within the church building.
- Continued to remove invasive and non-native plants on the church grounds and expand our network of walking trails.

HOPES

- To continue to work on our grounds by removing invasive species, removing trash and debris, and expanding its trail network.
- To refresh our signage, with a new face for our large sign on Beulah Road, new parking lot signs, and new signs in the Narthex.
- To complete our solar energy project, which will reduce our carbon footprint and lower our energy costs.
- To continue to conserve energy and improve our control over our heating and air conditioning.



Children's Ministries



CELEBRATIONS!

- Led a Thanksgiving food collection to benefit a family in need through Fairfax County Family Services.
- Faith in Action (FIA) class assisted with our monthly FACETS meal preparation, sponsored coffee hour, and raised over \$300 to support Five Talents.
- Sunday School teachers led our 4 classrooms with skill, warmth, and humor.
- Additional volunteers assisted with special classes and programs.
- 3 parish-wide events: Pumpkin, Potluck, & Prayer; Advent Wreath Making; and Gingerbread Extravaganza.
- Attendance at Christmas children's services was up (301 at the 11 a.m. service; 395 at the 4 p.m. service).
- Worked on improving our 2nd Saturday Church as a way for families and children to engage more actively in worship. Attendance has grown steadily.



Father Jon Leads Children's Chapel



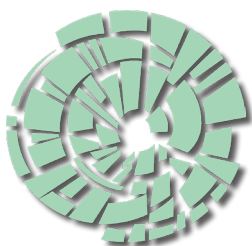
HOPES

Although we have a wonderful group of engaged families, we would love to welcome more to join our community in whatever way supports their families and spiritual lives. This goal will require a renewed focus on communication both within and outside the parish and collaboration with other ministries to support families in a holistic way. We also do not want to overburden our long-term volunteers and are working on ways to add additional volunteers for tasks including event preparation, craft and activity preparation, and occasional in-class assistance.



Pumpkin, Potluck & Prayer

Creation Care



CELEBRATIONS!

- Spread over 30 cubic yards of wood chips, to suppress weeds (mostly Stiltgrass and lesser Celandine).
- Removed a lot of trash from the forest.
- Cleared a lot of invasive plants, starting at the edge of the parking lot, and moving downhill into the forest.
- Worked with the Preschool science teacher to teach students about composting.



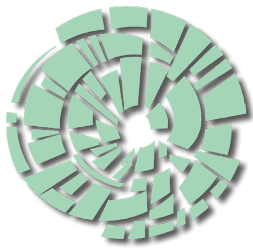
HOPES

- Present an Earth Day event on April 21.
- Continue work on the Meadow.
- Supervise some Eagle Scout projects.
- Continue invasive plant removal, and planting of trees.



Composting

ECW (Episcopal Church Women)



CELEBRATIONS!

- In April, the ladies of the church (ECW) gathered at Shrine Mont for a weekend of peace, meditation, and sharing. A wonderful opportunity to bond with each other and with God.
- On April 23, ECW held its annual Spring Tea and Pennywise Fashion Show at Westwood Country Club. Over 80 people attended, enjoying food and a fashion show from Pennywise Thrift Shop.
- For the Christmas season, ECW again hosted a Christmas Giving Table where parishioners provided gifts to a variety of charities to share God's love.
- An important mission of the ECW is support for funeral receptions held at the church. In 2023, volunteers did a significant job at both small and large events to set up the room, serve food and drink, and clean up. The ECW hosted about 15 funeral receptions.

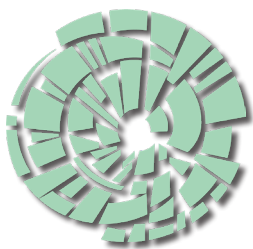


ECW Retreat at Shrine Mont



ECW Spring Tea

Endowment

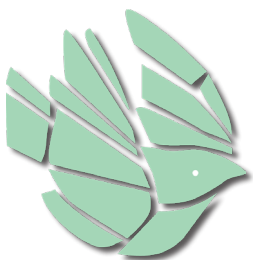


CELEBRATIONS!

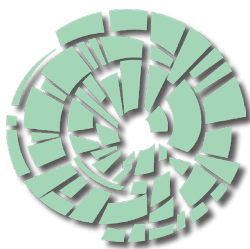
- Endowment passed the \$1M mark for the first time thanks to generous donations towards the end of 2023.
- Endowment Board contributed over \$23,000 to help fund new HVAC systems for the church.
- 10 high school seniors each received \$200 contributions towards their books from the Carol Stock Fund.

HOPES

Continued growth of the endowment through new contributions and continued investment success.



Foyers



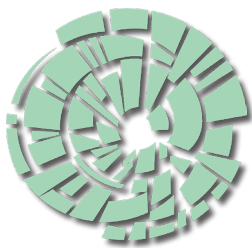
HOPES

Foyers are not intended to do anything, but simply to be what Christians are: groups of people who gather together and "love one another." They share and listen to one another over a meal either in a home or a restaurant. The hope is for participants to get to know each other.



Foyers Group Dining Out

Holy Comforter Preschool & Kindergarten



CELEBRATIONS!

- Celebrated 29th year educating children.
- Welcomed many new families to the school.
- Security updates were made including new doors and locks in order ensure the safety of our students.
- Chapel returned for our students after COVID hiatus!



HOPES

- Make our teachers feel valued and appreciated as we navigate needs of students and families.
- Continue efforts toward security measures.
- Keep our families informed about the many wonderful church events and encourage their participation.



Chapel with Rev. Ann

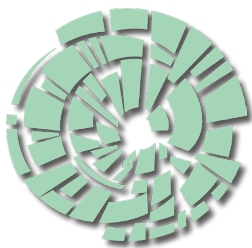


Zero the Hero Celebrates the 100th Day of Kindergarten with Students



Science with Mrs. Malone

Holy Comforter West (Ashby Ponds)



As members of Holy Comforter West residing at Ashby Ponds Retirement Community in Ashburn we celebrate and are thankful for:

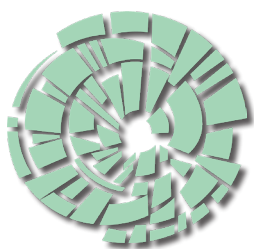
- Being tethered to the larger Holy Comforter Community that nurtures and enriches our lives through monthly Eucharist and Bible Study with Jon and Ann.
- Being bonded as a robust community in our sharing of prayers, study, fellowship, and service to others
- Opportunities to continue learning and growing in faith and sensitivity to and awareness of needs.



HOPES

We hope to show a greater light of Christ's presence in our daily lives, remaining faithful as the People of God in the larger Holy Comforter community and blooming where we are planted.

Newcomer Ministry

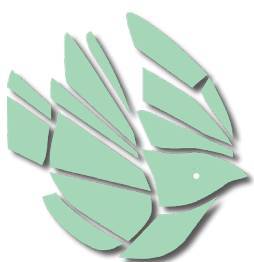


CELEBRATIONS!

- October 1 Newcomers Brunch was a great success with 12 newcomers attending.
- The Newcomers Committee hosted coffee hour during October.
- The Committee began sharing newcomer data with the Youth and Children's Ministries to ensure newcomers are connected and to build communication among the these ministries that frequently encounter newcomers.
- Committee ribbons were acquired, which are now attached to committee member name badges to highlight our role and make us more visible to newcomers in particular.



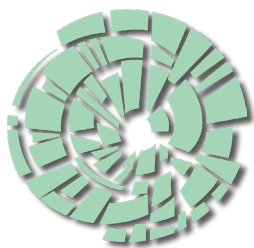
Newcomers Committee members Ellen Kay, Pat Bruce, Christine Brooks, and Harriet Church at the October Newcomers Brunch, all wearing new ribbons to identify committee members.



HOPES

- Integration of Growth and Inclusion into our mission by formulating specific initiatives that demonstrate our welcome to all, including signage around the church campus.
- Identify ways to encourage new attendees by actively reaching out via advertising to residents in the local community.
- Improve capture of newcomer information so our spreadsheet is integrated with other church data and is as accurate as possible.

Music Ministry

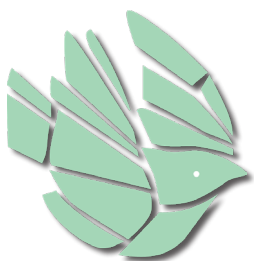


CELEBRATIONS!

- The Adult Choir enjoyed a successful summer choral residency at Lincoln Cathedral, UK.
- The Music Ministry launched the regular publication of a full-length eNewsletter.
- The Adult Choir maintained a full roster, and added two new members.



Ready to Leave for Lincoln Cathedral



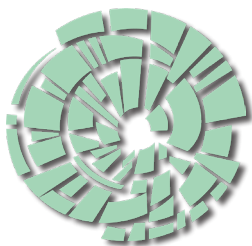
HOPES

Our hopes for 2024 center on growth. We would like to revitalize our Chorister Program, which still hasn't rebounded after the pandemic; we will be featuring their voices in upcoming services. Essential to our growth will be the completion of the new music room, which we hope will happen this year. Finally, we are exploring the opportunity to acquire a small pipe organ for use in the Chapel.



Evensong Procession at Lincoln Cathedral

Pastoral Care Ministries



CELEBRATIONS!

- 11 Baptisms
- Eucharistic Visitors
- Funeral Support
- Grief Ministry
- Healing Prayer Team
- Senior Ministry (Katherine Longhi)



HOPES

Form a Pastoral Care Team



Baptism

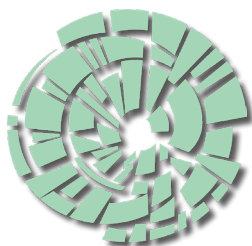


Parishioner Ann Buxton Turned 100



Eucharistic Visitors

Pennywise Thrift Shop



CELEBRATIONS!

- Year to date, revenues increased 26%.
- 14 new volunteers joined the Pennywise family.
- Pennywise volunteers continued to live their faith by offering not only good value to customers, but also by creating a warm and loving atmosphere.
- Pennywise remains a gathering place and a home away from home for so many people.



HOPES

Pennywise continues to need additional volunteers, not only to continue our ministry, but to also to expand our shop hours and reach to the community. We hope to create future leaders to carry on this very important ministry.

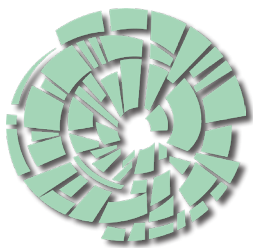


The Pennywise Owl collection watching over the Shop for over 60 years



Pennywise Customers

Prayer Shawl Ministry



CELEBRATIONS!

- 9 Prayer Shawls.
- 50 Pocket Prayer Shawls for the Holy Comfort Boxes that were mailed to students and young members of the military who are away from their families.
- 7 Pocket Prayer Shawls for parishioners.
- Several hats and scarves for the Hypothermia Prevention Shelter.



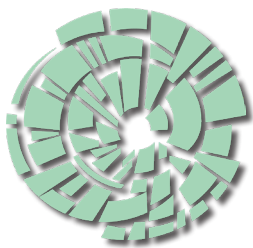
HOPES

We hope more people will join us. If you like to knit or crochet, either in a group meeting once a month or alone, we welcome you, and we have yarn and patterns. Do you know someone who would like a prayer shawl or a pocket prayer shawl? Let us know. Contact the Church Office or Linda Bailey-Becht at lbaileybecht@gmail.com.



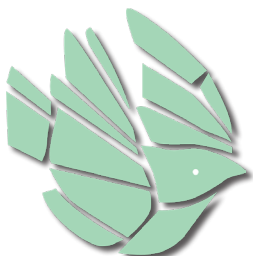
Handmade Pocket Prayer Shawls

Refugee Ministry



CELEBRATIONS!

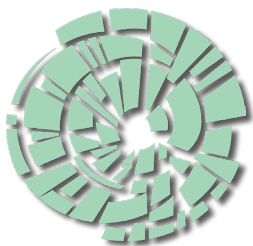
- The two Afghan families we welcomed over 2 years ago reached financial independence.
- Our Venezuelan friends are happy in their new apartment; child in school; father has a job; and mother looking for one.
- A home was made ready for an Afghan widow and 5 children.
- A team of volunteers is dedicated to sharing God's love with displaced persons.



HOPES

In 2024 we hope to provide support—financial, logistical, emotional, spiritual—for both the Venezuelan family and the newly arrived Afghan family as they seek to establish themselves in this country. We also need to discern what else God may be calling us to do in the year ahead.

Senior Saints



CELEBRATIONS!

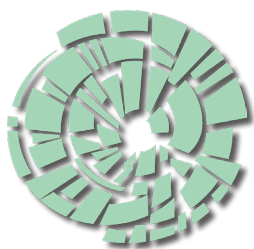
- We celebrate another year of fellowship and support as a group which still has much to give as members of Holy Comforter.
- We have enjoyed our monthly meetings as stimulating our interests and promoting our learning together.
- We continue to celebrate the important project we sponsor to lend items for those with physical limitations who need equipment to support their recovery.
- As individuals we continue to support the broader community of Holy Comforter as volunteers in many of Holy Comforter's ministries.



HOPES

We will continue to need the support of clergy and the broader community at Holy Comforter as we provide for a select community which is still able to participate in a broad range of activities but also has special needs of those who are considered "senior." We appreciate being considered full participants in the mission of Holy Comforter.

Vacation Bible School (VBS)



CELEBRATIONS!

Over 200 children and teen volunteers participated in our Hogwarts Vacation Bible School featuring Christian elements within the Harry Potter stories.

HOPES

This year Hogwarts Vacation Bible School is scheduled for June 24–28. Setup will occur June 17–23 with a special Diagon Alley VBS Preview after the 9:30 a.m. Sunday, April 14 service. All are welcome to participate starting at age 5 through adults. Registration is now open. To learn more and/or to volunteer please contact Linda Lee Malone at vbs@holyccomforter.com.

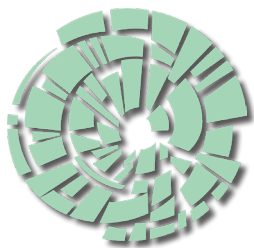


VBS 2023



VBS 2023

Youth Ministries



CELEBRATIONS!

- Increased participation of youth serving as Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers.
- Strong Acolyte program.
- Increased engagement of youth in outreach through our FACETS program and during our annual mission trips to Puerto Rico.
- Strong welcoming and encouragement extended by existing Youth Group members to new Youth Group members.
- Strong support for all Youth Ministries fundraising events by the entire parish—which helps our youth feel part of the church family.

HOPES

Our hope is that youth who belong to our church but do not participate in our youth community will be encouraged by their parents or friends to find an activity that would interest them and try us out. By engaging with other youth of similar values and with loving and caring adults, they will find a deeper meaning to their lives and will develop friendships that can last into adult life.



Youth Lector



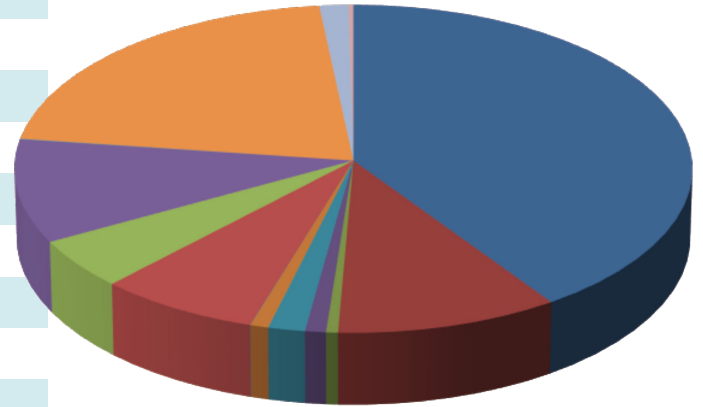
Youth Preparing Food For Those In Need Through FACETS Outreach Program

Resources and Sharing

The following charts were prepared by consolidating ministry reports to give an overall picture of Holy Comforter's income resources and expenses.

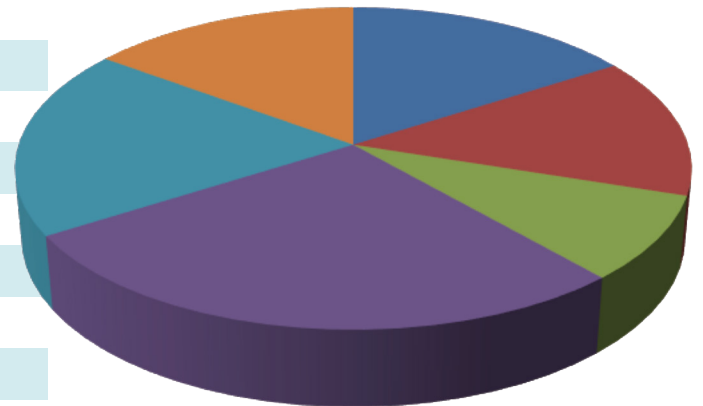
2023 Income

Pledges	41%	\$1,036,267
Loose Checks	10%	\$259,264
Loose Cash	1%	\$13,630
ECW Pledge	1%	\$24,250
Interest & Fees	2%	\$42,851
Rent	1%	\$21,205
Other Income	0%	\$504
Outreach Offerings	7%	\$188,010
Pennywise Thrift Shop	5%	\$124,608
Endowment Fund	10%	\$260,000
Special Events	0%	\$1,157
Tuition	21%	\$540,645
Auction Proceeds	1%	\$37,248
Afternoon Adventures Program	0%	\$6,120
Total		\$2,555,759



2023 Expenses

Worship	16%	\$375,247
Formation	14%	\$332,569
Welcome & Pastoral Care	9%	\$200,532
Outreach	28%	\$649,182
Willing Generosity	19%	\$449,724
Our Church Home	15%	\$351,648
Total		\$2,358,902



Note: Compensation and benefits expenses for all paid staff were allocated to the various categories according to the percentages of each employee's time spent engaged with that category.

Ministry Contact List

Acolytes and Vergers

Andrew Eastman (aeastman@holycorforter.com)

Addiction & Recovery Care

Alexandra MacCracken (alexandram.gpc@gmail.com)

Adult Faith Formation Team

Norma Williamson (williamsonwork@aol.com)

Altar Guild

Lolly Mixer (lollymix@gmail.com)

Audio/Visual

Randy McGuire (rlmav8r@gmail.com)

Becoming Beloved Community

The Rev. Ann Gillespie (agillespie@holycorforter.com)

Blood Drive

Laurie Pedry (laurie@pedry.net)

Book and Movie Club

Peter Brownrigg (peterfromnova@gmail.com)

Britepaths

Susan McGuire (smcguire@holycorforter.com)

Childcare Center

The Church Office

Children's Ministries

Susan McGuire (smcguire@holycorforter.com)

Creation Care

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Education for Ministry (EfM)

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Sharon McGroder (sharon.mcgroder@gmail.com)

Andy Pettigrew (pettigrij@cox.net)

Dianne Stoddard (dlstoddard@orrick.com)

Endowment Board

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Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

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Eucharistic Ministers

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FACETS

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Foyers

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Gestalt Pastoral Care

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Greeters

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Habitat for Humanity

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Healing Ministry

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Hypothermia Shelter

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Holy Comforter Episcopal Preschool & Kindergarten

Linda Meyers (lmeyers@holycorforter.com)

Lamb Center

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Lectors & Intercessors

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Listening Hearts

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Marathon Bridge

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Marriage Ministry

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Memorial Gifts

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Men's Fellowship Group

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Music Ministry

David Kelley (dkelley@holycorforter.com)

Newcomers Ministry

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Open Circles - Church Office

Outreach Team

Zara Harris (zrharris@mac.com)

Pennywise Thrift Shop

Judy Kilkenny (kilkennyjudy@gmail.com)

Prayer List (Sunday Bulletin)

Shelia Creswell (screswell@verizon.net)

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Linda Becht (lbaileybecht@gmail.com)

Refugee Ministry

The Rev. Jon Strand (jstrand@holycorforter.com)

Relationship Recovery Group

Alexandra MacCracken (alexandram.gpc@gmail.com)

Remembrance Reception Chair

Wesley Harrison (wesleyharrison@cox.net)

Samaritan Ministry

Lisa Curtis (lisacurtis001@gmail.com)

Saturday Evening First Saturday Social

Chris & Jeanna Spielmann (chris@spielmannstudio.com)

Second Saturday Church

Susan McGuire (smcguire@holycorforter.com)

Senior Saints

Richard & Barbara Fitzsimmons (rfitzs@gmail.com)

Ushers

Suzie Garrod (suze@kinggarrod.org)

Vacation Bible School

Linda Lee Malone (vbs@holycorforter.com)

Vestry Senior Warden

David Grove (dsgrove@me.com)

Vestry Junior Warden

Kathy DeSanti Paulini (desantikathy@gmail.com)

Youth Ministries

Denis McMullan (dmcmullan@holycorforter.com)