

Annual Report 2021



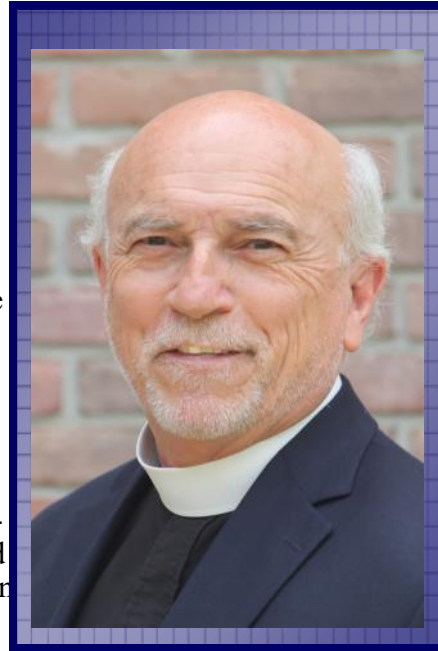
A Message from The Reverend Canon Dr. Jerry Smith, Rector

Mother Beth has this habit of quoting songs in her sermons. I would like to attempt to quote one with obvious hiccups.

“2021 same as the first, a little be better, a whole lot worse”

We would have never guessed 2021 being a repeat of the Covid lockdowns of 2020 and anticipating 2022 might actually promote increased frustration and anxiety if we are not careful.

Most all of the year has been spent perfecting skills learned in 2020, and then attempting to move back into more personal ministry environments and in-person worship. Attempting to interpret exactly what the federal and state guidelines are determining these gatherings has been a full-time job.



Fortunately you are a patient and cautious people and for that I am grateful.

We did reinstate in-person worship in the summer of 2021 and although many have chosen not to return, some have, and for that we are grateful.

Christian formation cannot really happen on Zoom! We can teach on this medium but formation happens by engaging others and learning what it means to be as Jesus to them. Frankly, it is far too easy to switch channels or shut off a live stream completely, which you are less likely to do sitting in the pew beside someone.

We are fortunate to have the technology and the tech operators we do and thanks to them we have made it this far successfully, but don't be fooled into thinking that couch church is as good as actually being together. It's not!

Fortunately, we have made it this second year and as the records will show, we are (using my accounts term) still keeping our head above water.

Christian churches in the USA have taken a real hit during this pandemic. Almost 48% have indicated serious financial difficulty as a result, and many just won't survive.

We need to offer thanks today for the faithfulness of the People of God in this parish.

Our records show that well over 90% of our community who made pledges last January, have kept those commitments. A hearty thanks to you all.

What the pandemic is helping us realize is that some people attend church out of habit as much as to gather, worship and grow. It takes about 27 days to solidify a new habit and it seems that some worship habits have changed significantly. This understanding might be necessary to inspire our imagination to find ways that might encourage parishioners new and old, to find their way back into some new habits.



I would encourage all of the ministry and fellowship groups in our faith community to use your God-given imaginations in this regard as the future of the church depends upon it.

Bishop John Bothwell, one-time bishop of Niagara, reminded his diocese that the church is always one generation from extinction. Sad as this sounds, it is true. We need to be in constant mission mode looking and praying for ways to be expanding our walls and being a welcoming community to old and young alike.

The church is often guilty of valuing the institution of the church more than people. Be careful of that. A friend sent me this quote; “when the institution values the institution more than people, the institution needs to change”. If this were on Facebook I would be using the heart emoji!

What can we do to be a safe and welcoming place for everyone? How can we provide meaningful, inspiring, and challenging ministry to those who pass by our doors regularly and don’t perceive the way of Jesus would add any value to their lives?

We get excited about going to lunch or dinner with friends. We gather as family regularly. We don’t hesitate to attend activities that we understand will add value to our lives but the faith as perceived is not always on the radar screens of many.

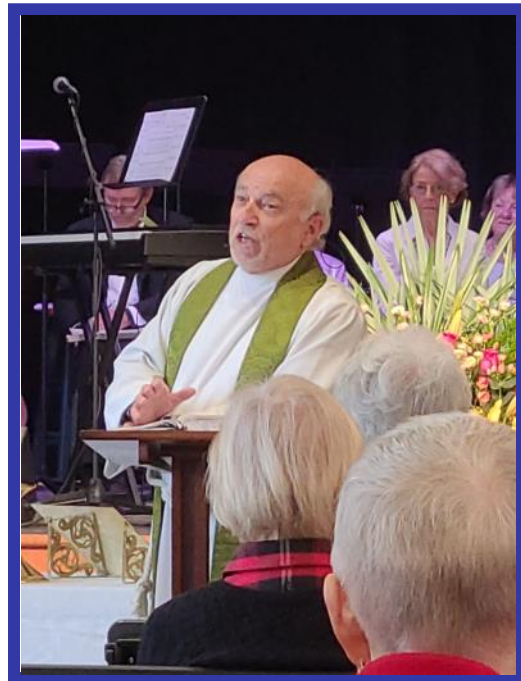
I wonder if it might not be time to engage in a major “back to church” campaign of some sort where we encourage absent parishioners, as well as adherents to our parish AND folks not practicing any faith, to come and join us?

Our buildings and finances are in terrific shape, other than a few plans to improve the access and regress from our nave.

The finance committee and the building and grounds committee have not slowed down during the last two years of the pandemic at all. They are to be commended for their good work.

Some of our committees are in need of new volunteers but by and large, those that have kept busy have been doing a terrific job. Some have laid dormant for the last two years so we need to rightly ask if they need new life breathed into them, or should we move on without them?

A good friend challenged me with his mantra “we don’t need meetings that don’t meet needs” and this might also be interpreted we don’t need committees that don’t have an actual, identifiable purpose!





You are all aware that this will be my last annual meeting. The search for a new rector gives a congregation the opportunities to ask some important questions, the foremost of which is “What does God really want us to be doing?”

This is not a plebiscite question that gets voted on rather a prayerful inquiry of God seeking His direction for the community. God does have a purpose for Holy Comforter and new leadership will help make that a reality.

Marjie and I have enjoyed our time here. You have opened your hearts and lives to us even though on the front end you knew we were only to be here 18 months.



Now it's time for younger and enthusiastic leadership that will help guide the parish into the future. As I was able to build on Fr Ted Monica's leadership and he on those who have gone before, so the next rector will build on a solid foundation.

I can't begin to say thanks to everyone who have stood alongside us as we have engaged in ministry here, lest I forget someone, but I can assure you that ministry is a team effort, and you are all part of that team.

I am grateful that the vestry has decided, after consultation, to stay put for another year to

help you through the transition. But they will need your help.

Fortunately, God longs to use us all in the unfolding of His Kingdom. There is an important place and work for all of you to do. There is no pass. Accomplishing the work most effectively requires the full participation of all baptized believers.

St Paul makes this quite clear as we read a few weeks ago on Sunday morning. We are the body of Christ and need each other to do the work we have been assigned to do. If you don't share your load, someone will step up and do it but it will cause an unnecessary strain on the whole community.



As this congregation moves forward I would encourage each and every one of you to recognize that Christ is counting on you.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement over the past number of years.

Fr Jerry+



A Message from The Reverend Beth Pessah, Associate Rector and Holy Comforter School Chaplain

Second Verse Same as the First

Year two of Covid teaching that is. From January to May of 2021, I continued to teach religion classes for grades 4 through 7; we were mostly in-person although from time to time various students were learning from home and so zoom was somewhat consistently used while I taught in person and broadcasted the lesson plan to those in other locations.

Ash Wednesday brought some creative thinking about how to impose ashes in a “Do not touch” and Socially distanced community. We began with a modified Ash Wednesday service. My homily was live streamed from the chapel and then Father Jerry, Deacon Jeanie and I took ashes to the classrooms to impose upon students and teachers. To avoid skin to skin contact we used q-tips dipped in oil and ash to create crosses on each forehead. We administered ashes on approximately 500 students and many teachers. Because I very rarely go into all the classrooms, this year Ash Wednesday was an exciting time of recognizing each and joyously receiving “this special kind of blessing” as one of the Lower School teachers called it.

As part of my Lenten teaching, I gave each lower school classroom a seed planting kit which students used to plant seeds and watch for signs of the hope of new life. The Church and School committee sent out a mailing to each of the school families that included a lenten calendar with daily meditations and also a packet of seeds (generously donated by Esposito Lawn and Garden Center). This mailing was very happily received. Many teachers and parents commented on the joy they had planting the seeds and



waiting for the growth. I want to give special thanks to the faithful group of volunteers who come from Westminster Oaks to collate and pack the mailings. I also want to thank Beth Thielen who sorts the mailings according to zip code, Julianne Chester who coordinates the collating and mailing “parties” and Doty Wenzel who makes sure to deliver the mail to the post office having packaged it for a reduced postal rate. Many hands are involved in the process and I appreciate it.

Although the Grade 8 trip to Camp Weed was not possible, I wanted to make sure that Holy Comforter Church provided some sort





of special treat for the graduates. After much discussion about what might be suitable, we provided Ice cream sandwiches for each graduate at the Graduation barbecue. I distributed each sandwich personally with a few words of encouragement and congratulations. These relationship building moments continue to be important touchstones for myself and the individual student.

During the summer, I managed to visit family and friends in Canada for almost a month. It was a trip that I am thankful to have taken. I had been missing home especially because COVID protocols had kept the border closed for so long.

When the new school year started in August 2021, the decision was made to welcome students back to in-person chapel. Parents, students and teachers were happy to be back and I was excited to be preaching to an in-person congregation again! A set of 60 new hardcover bibles were purchased for use in religion class and those classes were moved into the nave of the church so that I could be face to face with a whole grade level at one time. The students have enjoyed getting the opportunity to read at the lectern as we study the Old Testament in Grade 4 and the New Testament in Grade 5.



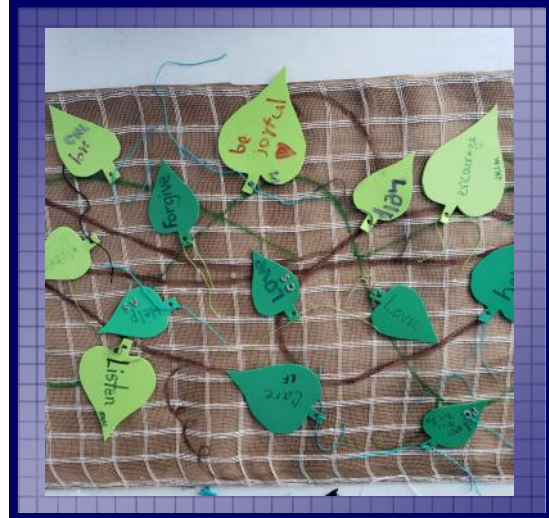
Knowing that we were all languishing from the heavy year and a half of the pandemic, I offered Parents, Teachers to join me in reading through the whole book of the Psalms. 29 people have joined me to read five Psalms a week. At the end of each week I write and send out Reflections and Prayers based on the previous week's readings. By December we had made it halfway through the Psalms. We continue reading until the end of the school year.

In October of this year we moved Episcopal Schools Celebration from a Sunday in the church event to Friday evening outdoor service as the kickoff to Fall Festival. There were a couple of reasons for this. First it meant that we could invite and expect more families in attendance because it would be outside (no need for masks) and it would not conflict with their regular church attendance. Moving Episcopal Schools Celebration to the Friday night in the Outdoor Chapel was a great success. We had the biggest attendance from School Families that we have ever had and it was the largest fifth grade choir, as well. At the Church and School display table we worked together on creating two 8 foot banners of a vine with leaves or branches. I asked each student or family to think of one word to describe an act of kindness that they would commit to do during this year. They were then asked to take a foam leaf (pre-cut by Jim Bob, Joan, Joy and John Green) and write that word on the leaf. The leaf was then tied onto the banner. Working together on a project was symbolic of the interconnectedness that the



vine and the branches represent. Again I offer special thanks to Julianne Chester and the many volunteers from the Church and School committee who worked with Parents and Students to create two beautiful hangings.

For Advent, I focussed on the “Names of Jesus” for my chapel talks and my annual Advent Mailing including a paper chain the strips of which offered the various names with a scripture and a prayer. I continue to be encouraged by each and every one of these opportunities that allows me to build relationships with Students, Families and Teachers, to pray and to speak about the Good News of the gospel. Thank you all for your encouragement and ongoing support. I am happy to be here and blessed to be given the opportunity.



I have tremendously enjoyed working with Father Jerry and Deacon Jeanie. It has been so much fun to encourage each other, tease each other, pray for each other and support each other. I cannot begin to express how thankful I have been to be a part of this amazing team at Holy Comforter Episcopal Church. As many of you know I would not have



even considered this role as Associate and Chaplain had it not been for Father Jerry’s encouragement and support. Coming into a new role knowing that I did not have to build a brand new relationship with a colleague was a godsend and I will always be thankful for that. A good leader empowers others and lets them run with their ideas. This sums up what my time at HCES and HCEC has been like. So, Special thanks to Father Jerry for letting me run with so many ideas and providing opportunities for me to officiate and preach. I have loved every sec-

ond... well not every second. Haha. Godspeed to Father Jerry and Marjie. May God bless you and keep you now and always.

Mother Beth Pessah



WORSHIP MINISTRIES

PASTORAL CARE The Reverend Deacon Jeanie Beyer, Archdeacon

Gratefully, this past year has allowed us to visit our sick and shut-ins with more regularity than in the past two years. However, the pandemic continues to be an obstacle to providing the quality of care that we would like to provide. Facilities continue to open and close to the public as the CDC recommendations change.

We have a group of dedicated **Eucharistic Visitors** who join me in taking the sacrament to those who are unable to join us in person for Worship. This last year we provided Eucharistic Services to 79 people. It is a holy ministry to be allowed to bring the Body and Blood of Jesus to our parishioners.

Our **Grief Group** has been able to meet in person monthly in the Narthex. And we were able to reinstitute our **Longest Night** service in Advent for those who have experienced recent or not so recent loss.

I continue to provide care thru phone calls, notes, in person visits. I listen, counsel and provide a ministry of presence as best as I can.



READERS AND ACOLYTES The Rev. Dn. Jeanie Beyer

During much of 2020, services were provided online. Morning Prayer was online at 8:30am Monday through Friday. Sunday service was on line at 10:30am. The service during the week was so popular that it has been continued even after in Church services resumed.



In the fall of 2020, all three services resumed with fewer restrictions. Lay readers were reinstated. We have 21 readers covering all three services. At the beginning of 2021, we restarted Youth acolytes and Servers at the Altar to assist the Deacon in the setting of the table. We have 4 youth acolytes and 12 servers. It is a delight to see people being able to resume their ministries.

Byron Greene, who is often at the Altar or preaching, is discerning a call to Holy Orders and is with us as he learns more of the sacramental responsibilities of the Clergy. It is a joy to have him working along side of us at the Table.



USHERS Dr. Paul Robinson

Regular ushering returned in 2021 with in person services. In 2022, a normal team of two ushers will be assigned to each 10:30 service. One usher will remain in the Narthex during service to assist late arrivals, provide some security and maintain noise levels. In addition, ushers helped with nine (9) burial services throughout the year. Most of our ushers have also been trained on the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), basic first aid care and fire safety. As always, the ushers try to recognize any special needs such as assisting with a congregant's ingress/egress, seating or receiving Eucharist.



THE ALTAR GUILD Dawn Lynch

The Altar Guild is composed of five teams of women who have chosen to serve God by preparing the altar for the Eucharist. Each team is currently responsible for one week out of five. The team serves from Saturday to Friday and is responsible for any services that occur during the week. Our responsibilities include setting the altar, cleaning up afterward, maintaining the linens, and polishing the brass and silver. Altar Guild members also ensure the sacristy is kept stocked with wine, wafers, gleam lights, candles and oil.

In addition to the regular church services, we also prepare for school Eucharists several times a year, as well as weddings and funerals and more formal services such as those during Holy Week and Christmas.



In part due to the pandemic and the health of its members, several people rotated off the Altar Guild during the 2021 year. Therefore, the Altar Guild is currently seeking new members, both men and women, and especially needs someone who can help with the 8:00 service. We are also looking for someone who loves to iron, even if that's the only way they can serve!



CHOIR & MUSIC John-Mark Schacht

Throughout 2021, our choir and music ministry were visited by both blessings and challenges in which the corona virus continued to play a key role. With the return of springtime, we celebrated a reunion of vocalists and instrumentalists by presenting “Parking Lot” Services at the beginning of Lent and Easter Sunday morning.

In mid-May, with the uptake of corona virus vaccination among our community, we were thrilled to resume choir and instrumentalist weekly rehearsal and Sunday morning Service participation. Key to this endeavor remained the implementation of social distancing and masking measures. The necessity to implement social distancing presented an opportunity to position choir members along the Nave’s perimeter walls, thus also providing the choir with the ability to “lead the congregation” in weekly communal song and praise. This formatting lovingly serves our community and is likely to remain our default pattern.



FLOWER GUILD Laurel Hall

The flower guild has the unique opportunity to glorify God by using the beautiful flowers He created for us to make our church more beautiful and to honor and bring joy to our friends and fellow parishioners.



Weekly flowers for Sunday services is the primary service the flower guild provides. In addition, on Christmas and Easter we place the poinsettias and lilies in the church and keep them watered. Prior to the start of the Advent season, we design and build the fresh wreaths for the gorgeous brass stand Tony donated in memory of his wife Mary Perry. Once in a while there may be an event when some added flowers here and there add a special touch to welcome any and all.



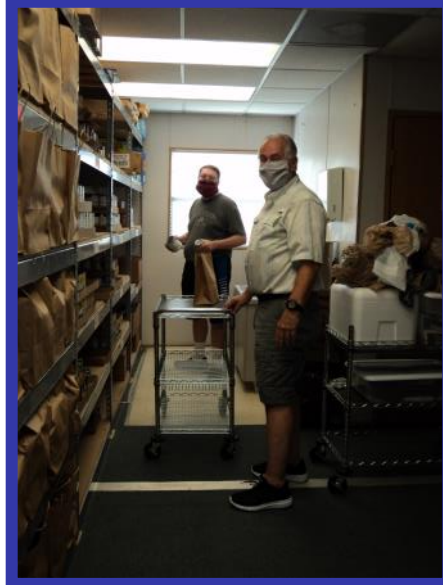
OUTREACH

The Holy Comforter **Food Pantry Ministry** has been a tremendous success and blessing to our neighbors here in Tallahassee. We are one of few food pantries supported by Second Harvest of the Big Bend who are open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. We average close to 100 families served every week.

This past year, we were able to move our weekly distribution back to behind the church. With this move we incorporated better and safer methods of distributing food in this ever-changing COVID world.

We continued to serve the needs of our community by distributing over 88,400 pounds or over 44 tons of food to 2738 families. This represents over 7200 individuals. These numbers are slightly above the number of clients served last year.

We continue to be blessed with an excellent group of volunteers who assist on weekends with distributing, work during the week to make sure bags are prepared for Saturday and help with putting away the deliveries from Second Harvest. HCES students are part of our volunteers.

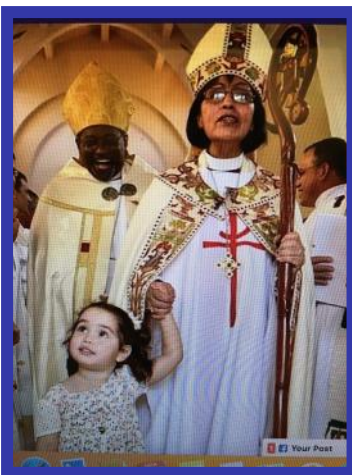


On a somber note, the Food Pantry lost a great friend this year in Wayne Makin. For years, Wayne was the face of the Food Pantry for our clients. He had a great rapport with them and always made the clients feel welcome. Submitted by Food Pantry Staff

Cuba Ministry by Julia Sullivan



It seems like forever ago that Cuba has been opened for visitors and indeed my last trip there was in March of 2020, just before the shut-down. At that time I was there to attend the reunification ceremony at their annual convention. This was the convention at which the Church in Cuba was once more brought back into the fold of the Episcopal Church of the US and at which our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry attended and gave the most rousing sermon I think I have ever heard. It was glorious. But shortly after that, as I mentioned, the country shut down and I do not know of anyone that went down to Cuba since, although I have been in touch with a great many Cubans in the meantime. That country has been extremely hard hit by the pandemic in both economic and mortality terms. They were able to develop their own vaccine and virtually all of its citizens rolled up their sleeves for it, but the death toll was devastating before they managed to get out the vaccine. In fact, our own José Antonio Huguet (for whom we



prayed every Sunday) and his mother both succumbed to the virus within 2 weeks of one another. At present there are serious food and medicine shortages, everything from antibiotics to even the most basic pain relievers. I have been recently gathering a box of supplies of both food staples and OTC meds to send down but need to contact the agency that does that. This weekend I will be chairing the meeting of the Diocesan Cuba Committee which met the last time after Convention in 2020. I am happy to report that Bishop Griselda will be attending both the Convention and be our special invitee at the Cuba Committee meeting. She will be there thanks to the fact that she was just granted a 10-year visa to travel to the US. It certainly took her a while to be able to procure that and a lot of expense and effort. She finally was granted the visa

from the US Embassy in Bolivia, where she is from. My goal this year is to be able to make a trip to Cuba and to take a group of folks with me. The members of our church in Ceballos and Baraguá are most anxious for our visit. I have not decided when that will be because the last time I checked, ticket prices from Miami to Havana were at \$1300. But stay tuned. I will be making an announcement for my upcoming trip for anyone who is interested as soon as the ticket prices become more reasonable.

Grace Mission's Ministry to the poor continued in 2021 as our new Vicar, Deacon Rachel Hill, began her service in August, 2021. The full array of church services, meals, showers, and education had been curtailed due to Covid before her arrival, but Deacon Hill has slowly and steadily resumed the Sunday church services, bagged lunch days, clothes giveaways, and other compassionate services to Grace Mission's population. The giveaway of bagged lunches on Thursdays includes peanut butter and jelly sandwiches prepared by our loyal Holy Comforter sandwich team every other week. Grace Mission staff and a team of volunteers headed by Nancye Rubin are also sorting and organizing clothes, shoes, winter coats and other items for the periodic clothes giveaway events. All in all, Grace Mission has rebooted, reorganized, and gone back to work to spiritually nourish, feed, and clothe the poor of our city, and we look further to further expansion of our services in the year ahead. Grace Mission ended the year with profound thanks for the search process and hard work that went into finding the right person to lead Grace Mission forward. Submitted by Nancy Daniels.





Disaster Relief Ministry

After hurricane Michael struck our area 3 years ago, the members of Holy Comforter stepped up to help those who were impacted by the storm, both in Tallahassee and neighboring counties. Financial contributions allowed us to help with cleaning debris, tree removals, roof and home repairs and even helped one family secure a new mobile home. We were also able to get work groups together to assist with making some of the repairs. Since then we have been blessed that there have not been any disasters in our immediate area. When hurricane Ida hit the New Orleans area last year, Holy Comforter collected nearly \$5,000 to send to the Episcopal Diocese in Louisiana, New Orleans area for relief efforts in honor of Fr. Jerry's 70th birthday. The Disaster Relief ministry has been greatly blessed by the generosity of the congregation. At this time, we have a reasonable balance to address any small event(s) that may occur. We know that if we, or any of our neighbors (neighboring counties) are impacted by a storm or other disaster that the members of Holy Comforter will step up to offer not only financial contributions, but other needed supplies and man power to help those in need. Submitted by Nancye Rubin.

Technology/Concert Series

In 2021 online streaming was our best outreach asset. 58 sermons were streamed "live" with an average of 30 to 50 devices watching live and an average of 125-200 additional views over each following week or two. These were separate from morning prayer and compline videos uploaded by Fr. Jerry and others. Also these were in addition to the weekly Wednesday streaming videos from Fr. Jerry.

Several "live" parking lot services were also broadcast on FM radio to parishioners' cars during the Covid protocols along with the weekly HCES chapel services which were streamed to online participants over the Internet and also back to the classrooms for the on-campus students. During the week of VBS, songs were played and fun videos were shown on the wall in the sanctuary for the kids.



Five "memorial celebrations of life" were also streamed to the Internet to allow family and friends who could not attend in person due to distance or Covid protocols, to participate. Due also to Covid, our concert series was again put on hold except for the one free "Rockin' Organ" live concert in December that was streamed and paid for with a few donations. A copy of the video recording was given to the artist as partial compensation. Our "Interviews from the Pews" video series was also put on hold due to Covid.

Thanks to the generous donations from several parishioners, we were able to add a third camera to our in-house production system, new headphones, and a new wireless system for Fr. Jerry, were also much appreciated upgrades. God was very good to us in 2021. Even in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis we have been truly blessed. Submitted by Fred Chester.



CHURCH CARE

The **Building and Grounds Committee** chaired by Jackie Watts, provides a safe and suitable facility for worship and parish events with an emphasis on painting, repairing and replacement projects. This year, they replaced bearings in a noisy AC unit, repaired the electric motor in the church organ and painted the cross on top of the steeple. As part of our on going project to convert to more efficient and economical lighting, LED lights were changed out on the roof and sanctuary ceiling. All GFCI electrical receptacles in the Parish Hall and Kitchen were replaced and new Church front doors were ordered with an estimated shipping date of April 15. Plans for adding a side emergency exit door in the sanctuary continues and is in the design stage.



The **Creation Care Committee** chaired by Susan Robinson, answers God's call to stewardship of His marvelous creation through protection and conservation and is responsible for sustainability, including recycling and conservation efforts. The group held an Earth Day service this year and articles were provided for the Dove on Creation Care topics. The Church continues to participate in the Tallahassee Solar Program to support the transition to the use of solar power in our community. The Committee is associated with the Tallahassee Green Faith Alliance (TGFA) which is an interfaith

group representing Creation Care teams from many congregations in town. There are monthly zoom meetings in which Creation Care ideas are shared. One project that has grown out of TGFA is the Divine Dirt group who help with the Dent Street garden in Frenchtown every Monday morning. These vegetables are distributed to low-income residents in the 32304 zip code of our community.



service, four trees were planted in collaboration with the Plant It Forward Leon group. The children in our children's program have adopted the southern live oak near their portable. The labyrinth garden continues growing with new butterfly friendly additions (passionflower plants, milk weed plants, a bottlebrush tree, and others). Lemons from our Meyers lemon tree, tomatoes and peppers were grown in the summer and collard and mustard greens in the winter. The produce was shared on a first come, first served

The **Garden Guild** chaired by Susan Robinson, maintains the Labyrinth and vegetable garden. During an outdoor Earth Day



basis on the Food Pantry distribution days. An enthusiastic group of volunteers weed and mulch the gardens twice per year.

The **Lawn Care Committee** works with the Church staff to maintain the church grounds including mowing, weeding, trimming and general lawn cleanup. Saturday Church Workdays in March and October provided the extra seasonal labor to maintain and enhance our Church grounds.



The **Safety & Security Committee** chaired by Tricia Culbertson, coordinated the training of staff and ushers on the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), basic first aid care and fire safety. The ushers were trained on security measures during worship services. Plans for adding a side emergency exit door in the sanctuary continues and is in the design stage.



EVANGELISM

Last year we began offering outreach to our parishioners in Westminster Oaks due to COVID restrictions. Volunteers pick up and deliver Sunday bulletins to those members who are unable to attend in person. This activity has reached many members who watch our online services with a weekly bulletins. We had such a great response that we continue to serve our Holy Comforter residents.

Greeter Ministry

The Greeter Ministry restarted on June 20, 2021 after a long break due to COVID restrictions. One greeter is assigned to each of the Sunday morning services. For several months, greeters were asked to man the sign-in sheet that could be used for contact tracing.

Currently we have four greeters for the 8:00 service and four for the 10:30 service. Greeters serve on a rotating basis, and a schedule is sent out every few months. Greeters' duties include greeting in the Narthex before the service, identifying and making personal contact with visitors, giving each visitor a welcome bag, and encouraging visitors to fill out and return a contact card. Submitted by Frances J. Fincham.



SPIRITUAL LIFE

Our **Spiritual Life** is critically important to the overall health and well-being of our congregation, and the broader community with which we engage and in which we live. Despite the continuation of the pandemic and its restrictions, many ministries have been able to transition to meeting virtually and revert in person events as conditions warranted. Electronic media has allowed us to expand our footprint to reach outside our city, state and nation, and many out-of-town individuals have become faithful members of our community. Unfortunately, we have also lost some in-house participation from those who have been physically or emotionally impacted by Covid, those who prefer to participate only on-line and several who have moved.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with his own blood. ~ Acts 20:28

We encourage and support the spiritual lives of our members through our Card ministry, Grief Group, Children and Families and Youth programs, Men's Brotherhood, Banner Committee, Cursillo, Centering Prayer, Prayer Angels, Daughters of the King and Spiritual Journey discussion group. This year continued to offer the opportunity for participation on-line in the Daily Office and Compline, reading and discussing Matthew for Everyone, Part II by N.T. Wright, and on-going Bible study programs including the Gospel of John, I Corinthians, and Psalms. Monthly prayer meetings and intermittent quiet day programs have been curtailed for health safety reasons. The Vestry has carried on in Christian leadership studies prior to each meeting.

The **Centering Prayer** ministry met sporadically in early 2021 but began to meet more regularly via Zoom in fall. Our 2022 schedule will begin January 9, 2022 at 9:00 and we will meet every two weeks via Zoom. We have a small but loyal group of five who attend regularly, and others join from time to time. Our greatest accomplishment is that every single time we meet, we are enriched with 20 minutes of peaceful mediation and 40 minutes of insightful Bible study, discussion, and reflection.

OUR Spiritual Journey



The **Spiritual Journey** group meets every other week in between the Sunday morning services. We've been meeting by Zoom ever since the Covid lockdowns began. That fortunately allowed us to have a couple of new members from out of town, raising our usual membership to 14.

We discuss books that have been suggested by members of the group. This year, these have been the works of Marcus Borg (*Convictions*), Richard Rohr (*The Universal Christ*), and our own Phil Beyer (*A Soul*



Walkin' Home) with the author leading discussions of his book. Some groups discuss the whole book in one session; we dig through, taking longer, chapter by chapter.

In 2022 we will begin a marvelous book, *The Five Invitations*, by Frank Ostaseski. If anyone is interested, feel free to look up the reviews in Amazon or call a group member. The group is open to anyone of course. If you'd like to be included on the Zoom link, send a note to Tony Sturges at tonyt3@mac.com. Our intention is that it be a group discussion, but if you wish to stay quiet no one is required to speak.

The **Banner Committee** had limited activity this year. We made banners for a confirmation class of 6 people. Since this year saw the continuation of COVID, we felt it best not to meet as usual in a whole group. Several team members chose to meet separately to discuss the banner project, then each person took home the materials needed to make a banner. Jo Deeb made two, Carolyn DiSalvo and Brandy Luce each made one, and we had two banners previously started that I finished. We were so pleased to be able to continue this tradition. Sandra Cartright, Chairman



The **Grief Support Group** continued to meet during the pandemic. We met each month on the first Tuesday of each month, at first by Zoom meetings for the majority of the year until cleared to meet in person while following CDC safety guidelines. Attendance ranged from four participants to ten. We are not a therapy group. Our goal is to support each other in our journey through grief. Although most in our group have lost a significant person in their lives, others have lost pets or experienced a different type of loss.

We will continue to meet in person unless the pandemic directs us to return to Zoom. Please join us if you have experienced a loss of any kind and would like to know the support of others who are going through a similar experience. We are a warm and loving group. Watch for announcements in the E-Dove and Sunday bulletins for the next meeting date. We hope to see you there.

Card Ministry

There were 369 birthday cards and 102 anniversary cards sent this year. No meetings are held. The team consists of seven people, 5 write birthday cards and two prepare anniversary postcards. Occasionally someone will write a sympathy or thinking of you card. The purpose of the card ministry is to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries and to let the Holy Comforter Family know we are thinking of them. Some people have said this is the only birthday card they receive.



Prayer Angels

We are fortunate to have a large group of church members that are interested in and willing to support anyone who chooses to submit a request for prayer. This request can be submitted by the individual in need of prayer or a family member or close friend, and resubmitted if the desire for prayer is ongoing. The reason for the request can remain confidential, as designated by the person making the request.

Cursillo of the Apalachee Region

Since the onset of the pandemic restrictions in the Dioceses of Florida, many Cursillo Ministries have had to adjust plans. One attempt was made last year to hold a retreat at Camp Weed, but the event had to be suspended due to an increased number of infections around the state. The Cursillo Council has recently announced they are considering another attempt to convene a retreat this March 24-27, 2022, #143. Should approval be given to go ahead, Shelton Armour

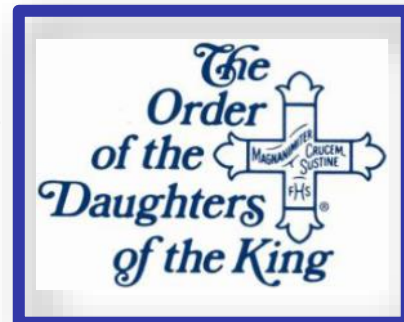


will be the designated Rector for the event. If anyone from our congregation has attended Cursillo and would like to work on this upcoming weekend, please reach out to me, Bill, or Pat Reineking. Also, if there is any-

one within the congregation who has not yet attended a weekend and is interested in doing so, please reach out to me, Pat, or any member of our clergy. Be a friend, make a friend and bring a friend to Christ.

Daughters of the King (DOK)

The women of the Daughters of the King, Mary and Martha Chapter, continued to meet virtually through the pandemic. Continuing their ministry of prayer, outreach and service, Daughters prayed for members of the congregation and community. They assembled Christmas goodie baskets for the staff of Grace Mission and sponsored a Lenten Quiet Day, featuring a web presentation by the Presiding Bishop.



Four women are currently in the discernment process to join our order; we are excited to welcome them. Judy Shipman, President, DOK

Brotherhood

The Brotherhood is a spiritual and social group open to all men of the Parish. In 2021, the Brotherhood had limited activities due to the ongoing pandemic. We plan to host quarterly gatherings for all men of the church and host the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper in 2022.



Our wonderful **Children and Families** assistant teacher volunteers rose to the challenges presented in 2021 beginning with the continuation of Zoom classes until early Spring and then returning to Zoom once again for two months from late summer into early fall. 25 of the 46 classes were taught via Zoom and there were a total of 162 Sunday School student contacts for the year.

We were fortunate to be able to conduct in-person Vacation Bible School by spreading out into additional areas and reducing the number of participants to 24. Over two dozen people volunteered in roles ranging



from decorating, to teaching, preparing snacks, providing technical/ media support and puppeteering.

Since the return to in-person Sunday School, attendance has fluctuated and the nursery and preschool classroom have yet to reopen. In the meantime, pre-K through 5th grade meet in the education center with age specific materials.

This year, our **Blessed Blanket Youth** were fortunate enough to be able to bring things somewhat back to normal. We certainly had to jump



through some unexpected hoops due to the pandemic continuing longer than expected, but we had fun while doing it! Ever since most of our youth group graduated a year or so ago, we are finally getting regulars that are able to fit us into their busy middle school schedules. Once school began again in August, we moved from our weekly Zoom meetings to coming together Wednesday afternoons at Holy Comforter. Over the year, I have learned I'm frankly terrible at most board games... though I still have my theories about some regulars pulling some sneaky tricks (I'm looking at you, Logan, you can't be *that* good at "Shut the Box"). Along with our weekly meetings, we also joined together on Sundays in the back pew for the 10:30 service. We had a myriad of Sunday lunches afterwards as well (Walk-Ons on Capital Circle has become a favorite of ours!). Randy and I also attended our attendees' football and basketball games and we look forward to the spring season. We also were able to do our first project of sorts this past Christmas season. In our Christmas video "A Simple Question", Randy and I asked many an interesting question: if you were at the birth of Jesus Christ, what would you say? By recording friends, family, church staff and patrons, BB youth attendees, and even a bishop or two, we were able to compile a myriad of responses, some heartfelt and others hilarious. Props to Randy for the excellent



editing! We are looking forward to bigger and better things for 2022, but for the time being, you will find us in the back pew on Sundays. Feel free to say hi! Submitted by Sella Kinch, Assistant Youth Director.

CHURCH COMMUNITY

Holy Comforter has always had a strong sense of community and the Ministries under the umbrella of Church Community Ministries has always played an important role. The ongoing global pandemic has affected these ministries in a number of ways. Since most of these groups are in-person gatherings, groups have had to alter and rethink how they operate and function. That process is ongoing and will continue in the foreseeable future. With God's help these groups will continue to support the body of Christ in the persons of Holy Comforter Episcopal Church.



Connect Women is a group that holds both spiritual and social events for women of the parish. Two events were held this year and leader Mary Nielsen hopes to safely increase that number going forward.

Supper Club is a social ministry that provides an opportunity for bridging church pew acquaintances into something deeper. Groups meet and dine together, breaking bread in the most literal of ways. With the advent of the pandemic Supper Club was not held in 2021, but plans to safely re-

launch in 2022.

The **Holy Comforter Book Discussion Group** (aka "the book club") was initially formed in November 2000, and the mission was simple: to provide a forum for discussion of interesting books, as selected by the participants. The book choices have constituted a wide range of titles, authors, and topical subjects over the years, although fiction is preponderant. They continued to meet throughout 2021 on the second Sunday afternoon of all 12 months. The club is open to all and Robbie Bruenger is the facilitator.

The **Men's Cooking Crew** normally provides the beloved Buck Breakfast on specified Sunday Mornings and also assists for special events. The crew hopes to resume Buck Breakfast on an ongoing basis in the upcoming year. Tom Gray, Bobby Maddox and Randy Winton are contacts for the Men's Cooking Crew.

Holy Comforter serves as a host site for **Boy Scouts Pack 3**. Pack 3 continues to be a very active Scout Pack. The Pack meets at the church and is largely comprised of Holy Comforter Episcopal School families. Holy Comforter Episcopal Church is the Chartered Organization for the Pack. The **Girl Scouts** have resumed meeting on a limited basis.





The **Hospitality and Bereavement** teams serve as hosts for a variety of events at our Parish. Joan Maddox and her capable team are renowned for their food, decorations and warm, caring accommodations. The pandemic curtailed nearly all such events in 2021, but the team stands ready to meet the challenges going forward. This past year, like last year, was not a busy one for Hospitality due to Covid. We did one Easter Lunch with a food truck in our parking lot for safety. Maybe this year we will begin to see things start to go back to normal.



Bereavement was the same. Only one funeral with a reception happened and only at family's request. We were outside for the reception and the food was very safe, as no one ate from the same bowl. Finger foods only.

The **Home Meals** ministry provides meals to parishioners who are ill or otherwise in need of food. Submit a request through the clergy, then it goes to Jan Calvin for coordination. We had no requests in 2021.

The **Communications Team** oversees the transmission of news and information of activities at our Parish. The group oversees the weekly eDove, Social Media postings and the Quarterly Dove Magazine. Considering the Greater Church's call is to spread the Good News we are very much in the communication business. Chris Jester is contact for the Communications Team.

FINANCE

Holy Comforter Episcopal Church closed the year of 2021 in strong financial position.

Total income received for the year was approximately \$612,000. Pledged income received was approximately \$487,000, which represents 97% of the budget for pledges. Other income received represents primarily unpledged gifts, including a large estate gift, and donations to the food pantry.

Total expenses for the year were \$602,000. The operating results for the year, resulted in a small surplus of approximately \$10,000, despite budgeting a projected shortfall of over -\$55k.

The cash on hand at the end of the year was a total of approximately \$70,000 in designated and undesignated cash.

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.~

1 Chronicles 29:14



The **Stewardship Committee** coordinated the gathering of pledge cards from active families. This activity was kicked off with a Stewardship Breakfast in the parish hall followed by Eucharist November 14th, held in the HCES Commons. A total of 101 pledge cards have been received in order to develop the budget based on income for the 2022 year.

The **Fundraising Committee** had to put on hold any gathering due to COVID. Should those limitations be lifted for 2022, the committee will carefully and thoughtfully resume those activities.



Bishop Coadjutor Election Transition Committee by Amy Johnson

I am honored to be serving on the Transition Committee for the Bishop Coadjutor. The Nominating Committee is currently reviewing applications, conducting interviews, and completing background and reference checks.



Once the slate of nominees is announced in early March, the process is turned over to the Transition Committee. The Transition Committee has met twice to make preliminary plans. We will meet again in mid-March and April to finalize the planning. A major task for the Transition Committee is facilitating the Meet and Greet sessions that will happen between May 3 and 6. These sessions will be held around the Diocese with several sessions being live-streamed and recorded. The Meet and Greet sessions will be the opportunity to hear from the candidates on topics of interest to all of us. Please note that the Transition Committee

will be asking you to submit questions to be asked of the candidates. The current plan (which is subject to change) is to hold two of the sessions in Tallahassee.

The Electing Convention will be held at St. John's Cathedral in Jacksonville on May 14. The ordination for the Bishop Coadjutor is scheduled for October 15 at St. John's Cathedral in Jacksonville.



You can see the timeline and learn more about the process at <https://www.floridabishopsearch.org/>.



2021 VESTRY

The Vestry met eleven times in 2021. Each meeting was preceded by a Scripturally based study on Christian leadership led by Fr. Jerry. Following prayer, each meeting included a review of the 2021 budget led by Finance Committee Chair Hollie Maddox, with special attention paid to any significant variances. (Minutes of the meetings are prepared by our Clerk, Carolyn DiSalvo.) We were blessed by a generous undesignated donation to the Memorial fund and fortunately only a few unanticipated expenses. Several times members of the parish stepped up to help cover costs when an urgent need arose. Major projects are outlined in other sections of the annual report.

With the departure of the Thomsen's in late Fall, the Vestry had the option to fill or allow Bill's seat to remain vacant. The members chose to fill the remaining one-year term. Judy Shipman graciously agreed to take on this responsibility.

Fr. Jerry's announced resignation at the January 2022 meeting required the Vestry to decide whether to freeze membership or proceed with the election of two new members. The voting members, which excluded the Wardens, decided to forgo the election in order to provide for maximum continuity during the search for a new Rector.

At that same meeting, the Vestry met via Zoom with Rev. Canon DeFoor to review the search process. Information gathering began immediately and initial planning discussions will take place in the near future.

Respectfully submitted, Tricia Culbertson, Sr. Warden

Randy Desilet, Jr. Warden

Chris Jester

Sterling Luce

Bill Thomsen

Jackie Watts

Mary Whitmire

Hollie Maddox, Treasurer

Carolyn DiSalvo, Clerk

Revised February 3, 2022



Holy Comforter Episcopal Church

The Rt. Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard, Bishop
The Rt. Rev. Charles Keyser, Assisting Bishop
The Reverend Canon Dr. Jerry Smith, Rector
The Reverend Beth Pessah, Associate Rector
The Reverend Dn. Jeanie Beyer, Archdeacon

STAFF

Doty Wenzel, Director of Administration
Julianne Chester, Director of Children & Families Ministry
Gina Resavage, Finance Manager
John-Mark Schacht, Director of Music
Randy Winton, Youth Director
Bonnie McHugh, Verger
Fred Chester, Audio-Visual Engineer

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