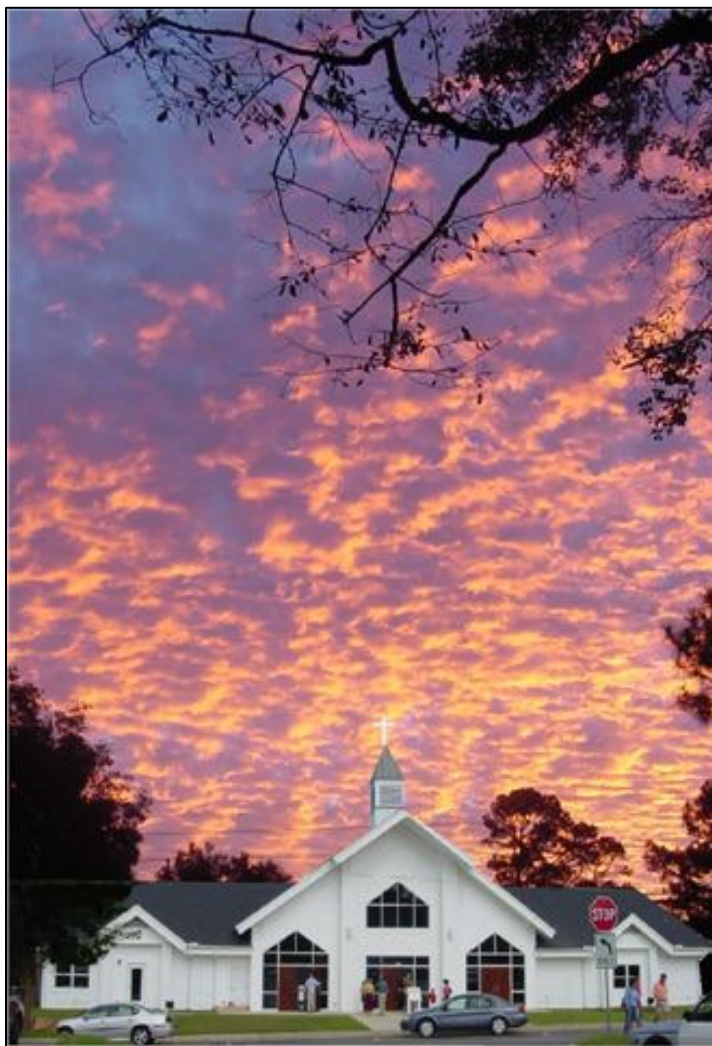


Holy Comforter Episcopal Church

Annual Report 2024



RECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024

It is hard to believe that I have now been at Holy Comforter for two full years. It has been an honor and a joy to serve you all here, as part of such a loving church community. We have much to be thankful for as we look back on God's provision for us this past year!

Dedicated servant leadership

2024 saw some significant additions to our staff team. In March, **Madison Natschke** was hired to serve as our new Office Manager. Her administrative and organizational skills have brought much-needed order to our daily operations. It was a joy to be able to re-hire **Alpha Holmes** as our Sexton in August, following his recovery from a long illness. Alpha is a dedicated, long-term worker with invaluable knowledge of our grounds and facilities. **Hannah Shelly** began in December as our new School Chaplain and Director of Children and Youth Ministry. Through her many chapel services, teaching, special events, and outreach, we are making an enormous difference in the lives of our youth. We also appreciated the help of **Arianna Brinson** and **Ashley Grimes**, who were brought on to serve as nursery workers on Sundays.

Three others have made vital contributions as members of our clergy team. In October, the **Rev. Deacon Joe Scheff** joined us. In addition to his liturgical role in our worship services, he has preached, helped to restart our men's ministry, encouraged our connections with Cursillo and Ultreya, and taught courses on spirituality. **Fr. Jim May** and **Fr. Michael Henderson** are retired priests who continue to serve faithfully as our Pastoral Assistants. Fr. Jim is our Chaplain for Community Care, ministering to those in local independent and assisted living communities like Westminster, The Grove, Allegro, and others. Fr. Michael, meanwhile, offers services of Holy Communion and pastoral care to residents of The Grove. Between the two of them, we are effectively meeting the spiritual and pastoral needs of these older parishioners.

Meanwhile, God has also strengthened our lay pastoral care team. The team was led by **Dr. Melanie Salsgiver**, whose ministry to the sick, the hospitalized, and those in recovery has been outstanding. She also oversaw our "Walking the Mourner's Path" grief ministry program and our team of Stephen Ministers, and she taught our "Last Gifts" course. Melanie did all this as she continued her seminary studies in preparation for ordination to the priesthood. The team also consisted of three wonderful lay ministers: **Ruth Roaza** as a representative of our Stephen Ministers, and **Judy Shipman** and **Suzy Young** as representatives of Daughters of the King. Both of these groups were essential to our pastoral outreach, together with our Lay Eucharistic Visitors team of **Lannie Cardona**, **Bill Reineking**, and **Julianne Chester**.

John-Mark Schacht continued to serve as our Director of Music. He did a tremendous job of choosing our service music, directing the choir, and making our worship both

beautiful and meaningful. We were also blessed to have such a committed and capable organist in **Patty Herrington**. In addition to her playing, Patty did vital work preparing for each service beforehand. We also enjoyed a highly committed group of choristers and instrumentalists who greatly enriched our music.

If you've enjoyed watching any of our services and events online, then you can thank **Fred Chester** for making that possible. As our audio-visual wizard, Fred oversaw the sound booth for all our Sunday services, concerts, and special events. Several others joined him on the audio-visual team, including **Jason Johnston, John Hill, and Randy Desilet**. The technical assistance of **Paul Fitzgerald** was also essential.

One of the unsung heroes of our office staff was our Administrative Assistant, **Judi Kendrick**. In addition to preparing all of our service bulletins, Judi helped with communications and took on several special projects. The same is true of **Gina Resavage**, who played an essential role handling payroll, emitting checks, keeping track of our finances, and creating our annual budget.

In addition, we were blessed with a very strong Vestry team. Special mention should be made of our Senior Warden, **Rick Wagner**, and our Junior Warden, **Robert Efthim**. The rest of the Vestry team—**Susan Robinson, Jenna Brown, Corinne Johnston, Amy Johnson, and Bill Reineking**—all made major contributions, guided us faithfully in all the decisions they made, and were a joy to work with. In addition, **Andy Granger** and **Patricia Trom** supported the Vestry's work as our Treasurer and Clerk, respectively. Their monthly reports ensured that everything was in good order and operating smoothly.

I would be impossible to name all of the many volunteers who helped to make 2024 such a success. As you look through the rest of this Annual Report, you will notice that almost all of our ministries were led by lay volunteers, often backed up by a whole team of other volunteers. When it comes to church services and events, special mention should be made of **Dawn Lynch**, head of the Altar Guild; **Rosetta Efthim**, Lectors and Servers Coordinator; **Carolyn DiSalvo**, leader of the Flower Guild; **Dr. Paul Robinson**, Coordinator of Ushers and Greeters; **Nancy Rubin**, head of the Hospitality Committee; **Tom Gray**, leader of the Men's Cooking Crew; **Julianne Chester**, Food and Fellowship Club Coordinator; **Robbie Brunger**, head of the Book Club; **Judy Shipman**, head of Daughters of the King; **Bill Reineking**, leader of Cursillo; **Jan Calvin**, head of the Prayer Angels; **Pat Horn**, leading the Spiritual Journey group; **Sandra Cartwright**, overseeing the Banner Committee; **Sandi Jacobsen**, head of the Card Ministry; **Lannie Cardona**, leading our Lay Eucharistic Visitors; and **Randy Desilet**, chair of the Safety and Security Committee. For social outreach, we give special thanks for **Fred Kinch**, head of our Food Pantry; **Susan Robinson**, overseeing our Creation Care Committee, the Garden Guild, and the Capital Area Justice Committee; **Nancy Daniels, Ernie Roaza, and Susan Crawford**, our liaisons with Grace Mission; and **Julie Sullivan**, our leader for missions to Cuba.

Communal Worship

You may be surprised to learn that, over the course of 2024, we held 213 Holy Eucharists and 117 Daily Office services. Our average Sunday attendance was 112 (93 in-person and 19 online). Attendance at mid-week services, including our regular Wednesday Holy Eucharist and other special Eucharists, averaged 41 people. Total attendance for our Easter services was 243, and for Christmas it was 242. We also confirmed one person, received four, and did four funerals.

Spiritual Formation

2024 saw the reestablishment of our small group ministry, which we call “Shepherd Groups.” Three new groups were established, led by **Lannie Cardona**, **Judy Shipman**, and **Susan Robinson**. We also had Spiritual Journey and Centering Prayer groups, led by **Nancy Daniels** and **Pat Horn**. Several courses were also offered (Walking the Mourner’s Path, Confirmation Preparation, Last Gifts, etc.).

Fellowship

The Hospitality Committee, led by **Nancye Rubin**, beautifully decorated and prepared the church to host weddings, funerals, parties, and other special events. They also prepared coffee, lemonade, and snacks to be served in the narthex every Sunday after services. Every other Sunday, the smell of bacon rose through the sanctuary as we enjoyed our Buck Breakfasts. These were cooked by our talented Men’s Cooking Crew, led by **Tom Gray**. Our Book Club continued to meet under **Robbie Brunger**’s direction. In addition, several Food & Fellowship groups met regularly.

Local Outreach and Missions

The highlight of our outreach here in Tallahassee was our Food Pantry ministry. Under the direction of **Fred Kinch**, a large team of volunteers engaged in a multitude of tasks ranging from inventory and placing orders to operational tasks, setting up and dismantling the distribution center each week. Our Food Pantry was one of the largest in the city, serving approximately 235 households (or 645 people) every month.

Holy Comforter had a very strong partnership with Grace Mission, an outreach ministry of the diocese serving those in need in the historic Frenchtown neighborhood and downtown Tallahassee. Its Vicar, **Mtr. Rachel Hill**, preached regularly at Holy Comforter and I returned the favor at Grace Mission. Many of our parishioners volunteered on a regular basis at Grace Mission, preparing and serving food, sorting and distributing clothing, helping with those who need showers and laundry, assisting in the worship, and more. We also made a substantial financial contribution to Grace Mission’s ministry.

On several occasions in 2024, we sent teams of parishioners to do clean-up work at nearby Hickory Hill cemetery. This is the main burial ground for African American families that lived and worked as tenant farmers on Welaunee Plantation. Since our church was built on land that was once part of that plantation, we regularly engage in service projects to maintain and protect this historic grave site. This is simultaneously a hands-on activity related to environmental care.

This concern for the environment is taken up by our Creation Care team. Through both education and hands-on activities, the team advocated for environmental concerns, sustainability issues, and conservation. The work of the Garden Guild overlapped with this, maintaining our Labyrinth Garden and caring for the landscape surrounding the church.

In addition, vestry member **Susan Robinson** represented Holy Comforter at meetings of the Capital Area Justice Ministry (CAJM), a faith-based organization that champions local policies to address the root causes of poverty and injustice in Tallahassee. In 2024, CAJM was focused particularly on curbing gun violence and providing affordable housing for low-income families.

Overseas, our focus was on our partner diocese, the Diocese of Cuba. One of our own parishioners, **Julie Sullivan**, is the Chair of the Diocese's Cuba Committee. Since 1998, we have been in a companion relationship with two churches in Cuba: St. Michael and All Angels in Ceballos and St. James the Apostle in Baraguá. In March, we sent a mission team there to minister to those churches. The team was able to take a large collection of items donated by our parishioners. Throughout the year, the parish collected these donations in a large box in our church office. In addition, we set up an Angel Palm Tree in the church foyer with coconuts on it, where each coconut had a request written on it to fulfill a specific need in Cuba. We also celebrated a Cuba gala fundraising dinner to help support that ministry.

Our missionary outreach was also strengthened by a special visit in October from **Bishop Todd McGregor**, the former bishop of Madagascar. Bishop Todd gave a series of teaching sessions on "Missions in the Gospels," culminating in a missions-based sermon on Sunday.

Special Events

Some of the special event highlights of the year included: our celebration of the anniversary of the first women ordained within the Episcopal Church with the screening of "The Philadelphia Eleven" documentary; a well-attended Lenten Fish Fry dinner; several successful Potluck lunches; the "New 76ers" concert; a highly successful summer Vacation Bible School; the dinner in honor of Mtr. Beth Pessah; the Blessing of the Animals service; our Global Missions training course and Cuba dinner; our "Trunk or Treat" Halloween party; our watch party for the installation of our new Presiding Bishop;

a mission team sent to Cuba; our youth “Christingle” service; and Christmas caroling at The Grove.

Church-School Relations

The partnership between the church and school is probably the most essential relationship we have. For that reason, I met every week with **Peter Klekamp**, the Head of School, to discuss how we can best support one another. In addition, the Church-School Committee, which consists of representatives from both church and school, met monthly to support and enhance the relationship between the two. In particular, the group encouraged cooperation on various social outreach activities and community building events and assisted with staff appreciation and student gifts.

Several of our parishioners (**Chris Corum, Frank Fincham, Rick Wagner, and Tricia Culbertson**) also served with me on the school’s Board of Trustees, which meets monthly. What’s more, all the members of our Vestry—which is the legal corporation of the school—met to approve the school’s annual plans. **John and Joy Green, Janice Mazza, Tricia Culbertson, and Jim and Joan Maddox** were especially active volunteers at school-related events.

Scouting

We also enjoyed an effective partnership with the Cub Scouts and a Girl Scout’s Daisy Troop, who met regularly in our outbuildings.

Buildings and Grounds

A great deal of work was done on our Buildings and Grounds under the oversight of our Junior Warden, **Robert Efthim**; our Office Manager, **Madison Natschke**; and our Sexton, **Alpha Holmes**. In particular, significant repairs were made when we suffered a major water leak that infiltrated the closets and bathroom downstairs. New floors were installed, ceiling frames and tiles were replaced; the walls were painted; a French drain was installed; and waterproofing was completed on both the interior and exterior.

You will find more about the work God enabled us to do in the following pages, in each group report. Thank you for joining with us as we seek to grow in the knowledge and love of Christ and to reach out to others in His name. We are grateful to be your spiritual home and family!

Father Allen Hill

WORSHIP MINISTRIES

The Altar Guild - The Altar Guild is composed of teams of parishioners who have chosen to serve God by preparing the altar for the Eucharist. The teams follow a rotating schedule. One team serves from Saturday to Friday and is responsible for any services that occur during the week. 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 weddings, funerals, and more formal services such as those during Holy Week and Christmas.

Due to attrition, the Altar Guild would really welcome new members, both men and women, to help the church prepare for services. Hands-on training will be provided.

Dawn Lynch

Acolytes & Lectors - There are a total of 40 laypersons trained as acolytes, servers, and lectors to assist with worship services contributing to the beauty and order of the liturgy. There are 2 children and 11 adults that carry the cross and lead the procession in and out of the church and during the reading of the Gospel lesson. They also carry the Gospel book in the procession in and out of the church and hold it open during the reading of the Gospel lesson. The 11 adults serve during the Eucharist to assist the clergy and serve as chalice bearers. The adults also light the candles on the altar prior to the service and extinguish them at the end of the service. There are 27 adults and children trained in reading scripture to the congregation and lead the prayers of the people. We are blessed to have them answering God's call to serve. There is a need for more to be trained to serve especially for the 8 a.m. Sunday service and the 5:30 p.m. Wednesday service.

Peace, Rosetta Eftim

Choir & Music - The choir ministry strives to provide foundational support for congregational singing during Sunday morning and other worship services. Musical selections reflect a blended range of traditional hymns along with contemporary praise songs. We remain blessed with a talented array of instrumentalists including guitarists, a bassist, and chancel organist, Patty Herrington. Performance highlights throughout the year have included The Great Litany during Lent, Christmas Caroling at The Grove retirement community, and a Service of Advent Lessons and Carols. Choir membership remains open to anyone eager to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord" (Psalm 100:1).

John-Mark Schacht, Director of Music

Flower Guild - The flower guild's mission is to glorify God's house at Holy Comforter with fresh flowers and greenery created by His own handiwork. Guild members design a beautiful flower arrangement for behind the altar every Sunday morning except during

the Lenten season. Church members are encouraged to sign up to sponsor the flower arrangement on one or more Sundays during the year to celebrate a special blessing, an important date, or the life of a dear departed loved one. To help defer the cost of the flowers, the church requests a \$50 donation from the sponsoring family. The family's dedication will then appear in that week's E-Dove and Sunday bulletin so that the whole church family can share in the special observance. Parishioners may also wish to sponsor the poinsettias that decorate the church at Christmas and the lilies that are displayed at Eastertide. Prior to the start of the Advent season, we use fresh greenery to design the lovely "Advent wreath" on a beautiful brass stand.

We could really use new members! God delights when His family joyfully serves Him in ministry, and maybe the flower guild is that ministry for you. If you love flowers and enjoy working with them, please consider this your personal invitation. If you feel inadequate or intimidated, please know that experience is not required! You can shadow a more experienced member until you feel comfortable. God blesses our efforts, imperfect though they may be.

Carolyn DiSalvo

OUTREACH

Community Care - Fr. Jim May has been appointed *Chaplain for Community Care* with special responsibility for providing pastoral care ministries to those living in local independent and assisted living communities. In addition to weekly pastoral visits and phone calls, Fr. Jim offers Holy Communion at Westminster every Wednesday.

In addition, Fr. Michael Henderson, who lives at The Grove, offers Holy Communion weekly there. Thanks to Fr. Jim and Fr. Michael, we are successfully reaching this elderly population with spiritual and pastoral care.

Food Pantry - The Holy Comforter Food Pantry, one of the largest in Tallahassee, is among the few open every weekend in Leon County. Through partnerships with Second Harvest, Ample Harvest, and the USDA, we distribute frozen goods and fresh produce to those in need. Volunteers are essential to our mission, helping bag food during the week and assist with Saturday morning distributions, which include client check-in, USDA paperwork verification, and food handout. Your donations of time, food, and funds are invaluable to sustaining this vital ministry supported by a dedicated team.

Church/School Committee - The church/school committee spent time discussing how to bridge the gap between the church and the school. Through volunteer opportunities in both the church and the school the relationship continues to grow and develop for the betterment of both communities!

The Cuba Ministry - This past March (2024) I was able to take my 30th trip to Cuba along with Jackie Watts, Judy Shipman and several others. As you may know, my first trip down there was in 1998 with Cynara Miller and at that time we had decided that we wanted to adopt the church of San Miguel y Todos los Ángeles in Ceballos. The church needed to be torn down and rebuilt. Cynara and I looked at one another and said, "We got this!". So, after fundraising for a couple of years we were able to send down a grand total of \$13,500 and the church got rebuilt under the excellent diligence and administration of Fr. José Ángel, the rector of that church. It was rebuilt over the course of about 5 years. Since then, there have been other priests, namely Mtr. Cristina Burgos and the present Mtr. Haydée Lugo Marrero. Under the care of Mtr. Haydée, the church has flourished. She has since had a wall built to surround and protect the church as well as plant gardens all around the church. In 2017 we went down there and with the help of several members of St. John's in Tallahassee we installed a water purification system which has been a huge draw for the church since people from all over the community come for water. Since all that work has been done, our most recent visit was more of a social visit. Of course we were loaded down with donations of much needed items, thanks to our most generous HCE parishioners. We were also able to visit our other companion church of St. James the Apostle in the town of Baraguá and take another couple of suitcases of items for them. Which brings me to my next plan for our churches in Cuba. After consulting with Fr. Allen, he suggested the date of Saturday, October 19th of this year to have our next Cuba dinner fundraiser. At that time, we are celebrating Global Missions Weekend with Bishop Todd McGregor, former bishop of Madagascar as our special guest.

Grace Mission - This past year has been full of blessings at Grace Mission, and we want to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to Holy Comforter for your incredible support!

We were honored to serve hundreds a delicious Thanksgiving Dinner at Grace Mission, complete with turkey, stuffing, green beans, roasted pineapple, and traditional desserts - making it a truly memorable day. We are so grateful to Second Harvest, our amazing cooks, and everyone who served and cleaned up. Thank you to all who generously donated clothing, bedding, and shoes, which have been invaluable to our community.

Grace Mission continues to serve as both a loving church community and a vital resource center, offering weekly breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, monthly clothing giveaways, showers and laundry assistance, and various services to support physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. This work wouldn't be possible without our dedicated donors and volunteers. The donation box at Holy Comforter has been a consistent source of generosity, overflowing with much-needed items such as clothing, bedding, food, and shoes. We are deeply grateful to all who contribute.

During Advent, we prepared Angel Trees for local Episcopal churches, including Holy Comforter. These trees help provide essential items - warm clothing, gloves, hats, scarves, blankets, tents, and boots - to keep our neighbors warm during the cold months. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this meaningful effort!

Your ongoing support and kindness enable us to continue serving those in need, and we give thanks to each of you.

Social Justice Ministry - The Social Justice Ministry group encompasses our collaboration with the Capital Area Justice Ministry as well as other social justice movements affecting our broader community. The goal of the Capital Area Justice Ministry (CAJM) is to make social justice change in the Tallahassee area by training diverse congregational leaders and building a powerful community voice to set the agenda in the local public sphere. Members of Holy Comforter met with the co-leader of CAJM recently and participated in CAJM's Nehemiah Action in March. Local leaders are being encouraged to work to reduce gun violence and improve access to affordable housing. In addition, we are invited to help research the next focus of the group, food insecurity. For more information on CAJM, visit <https://www.capitalareajustice.org>. The Social Justice Ministry will share information and offer new opportunities for involvement for Holy Comforter members feeling called to this work.

Susan Pourciau

Disaster Relief - The Disaster Relief Ministry was established in 2018 after Hurricane Michael devastated several neighboring communities. We assisted multiple families as they began to clean up and rebuild their lives. Recently the committee has not been active, but funds remain so that we will be able to address any small event(s) that may occur. We know that if we, or any of our neighbors are impacted by a storm or other disaster that the member of Holy Comforter will step up to offer not only financial contributions, but other supplies and manpower to help those in need.

Nancye Rubin

CHURCH CARE

Buildings & Grounds - The committee remains committed to providing a safe and welcoming space for worship and parish events, with a focus on necessary repairs and improvements. This year, we successfully addressed a variety of projects, including the re-keying and lock installation throughout the building, consolidating the number of loose keys in the hands of parishioners or former individuals. We also completed the hospitality closet renovation, which involved repairing a long-standing leak, new flooring, ceiling replacements, waterproofing, and the installation of a French drain in the front garden to help manage runoff. Key plumbing, appliance, and A/C issues were resolved, and all annual tests and inspections passed, confirming everything is in good working order. These efforts, along with ongoing maintenance and support from Alpha Holmes, have kept the church running smoothly. We're looking forward to upcoming projects and continuing to enhance our facilities in the year ahead.

Creation Care – The Creation Care Ministry has continued its mission of sustainability and stewardship with meaningful initiatives throughout the year. We hosted a well-attended Blessing of the Animals on St. Francis Day, celebrating the bond between parishioners and their animal companions.

Last year, the ministry introduced recycling and composting stations, as well as energy-saving practices, and these have been working wonderfully. Composting collection bins in the kitchen and larger outdoor bins behind the Food Pantry portable are being used regularly for kitchen and plant scraps, with clear instructions posted for easy participation. Recycling stations have also helped reduce waste, and the shift to biodegradable coffee cups and stir sticks has supported our efforts to eliminate polystyrene products.

Energy conservation reminders placed throughout the building have encouraged parishioners to turn off lights and use thermostats wisely. Additionally, the dishwasher remains available for groups as an alternative to disposable items. These measures have fostered a culture of environmental care, reinforcing our commitment to sustainable practices as a church community.

Susan Robinson

Garden Guild – The Garden Guild is dedicated to maintaining and beautifying the church's labyrinth garden and the flower beds in front of the church, creating welcoming spaces for prayer, reflection, and community. Through regular gardening workdays, Guild members work together to plant, prune, weed, and care for these areas, ensuring they remain vibrant and inviting. All parishioners are encouraged to participate, whether they are seasoned gardeners or simply willing to lend a hand.

Greeters & Ushers - The greeters and ushers play a vital role in welcoming worshipers, especially visitors, to our Sunday services. A greeter is assigned to each service, with team members rotating regularly. Greeters' responsibilities include welcoming attendees in the Narthex before the service, identifying and engaging with visitors, providing each visitor with a welcome bag, and encouraging them to fill out and return a contact card.

In addition to greeters and ushers, one person assists during communion by standing at the front to guide participants to the communion rail. This team ensures that everyone feels welcomed and supported during their time at our church.

Paul Robinson

Office Volunteers - The office volunteers play a crucial role in keeping things running smoothly. They answer phones, cover the desk when I'm away, make name tags, and call people when checks are ready. They also handle mailouts, help different ministry leads and office staff, accept packages, set up snack plates, sort mail, file invoices, and keep the office organized and clean. Each person has their own tasks on their designated day, and their consistent support helps make my job so much easier.

I am incredibly thankful for our volunteers: Mary, Sandra, Bonnie, Anne, Barbara, Marci, and Ruth. They each bring something special to the table, and I could not do this job without their help. Their dedication and kindness make all the difference, and I truly appreciate everything they do.

Madison Natschke

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Holy Comforter's **Centering Prayer** group, although small, continued to meet for an hour every other week and experienced valuable spiritual lessons in ministry. The basic format of meditating for 20 minutes and then studying a Bible verse for the remaining time continued. The group read the chosen verse three times, reflected on its meaning, and shared individual insights. Each session provides deep spiritual nourishment to its participants.

The **Spiritual Journey** group also continued to meet every other week. Our discussions are based on books selected by the group. The group is not a traditional book club as we generally discuss one chapter at a time or as the spirit moves. The books are enlightening, and the discussions and personal sharing are a large part of our make-up. Most of our meetings were in person, though a few early in the year were via Zoom. We meet every other week in Mercy Lounge. Group members often volunteer to lead the discussion. Everyone is welcome.

Banner Committee - We made banners for baptisms and completed, blessed, and distributed prayer shawls. Team members choose to meet as a group or separately to discuss the banner project, then each person takes home the materials needed to make a banner. We were so pleased to be able to continue this tradition.

Sandra Cartwright

Card Ministry - We are a team that sends out birthday & anniversary cards to HCEC parishioners. We are a team of 5 besides me. They are Nancy, Rosetta, Brenda and Mary. Karen & I do anniversary cards. No meetings are needed. This year we had 350 BD cards and 92 anniversary cards. We have occasional sympathy cards and "Thinking of You". The purpose of this ministry is to celebrate our HCEC family on their special days. We are always grateful to have anyone interested in joining our ministry.

Sandi Jacobsen

Cursillo - Cursillo for our parish is active. This year we have two parishioners whom are scheduled to go for the fall retreat weekend at Camp Weed Cerveny Conference Center. We have two parishioners who have expressed an interest in attending and possibly complete applications to go on a weekend. Our parish has hosted two Ultreyas for the Apalachee Region. I will be giving a presentation at Camp Weed Cerveny Conference Center March 21 22, 2025 on behalf of the Apalachee Region to the Diocese. This year we have seen more activities and growth.

Respectfully, Bill and Pat Reineking 

Daughters of the King (DOK) - The Daughters of the King is a worldwide order for women in the Episcopal Church (and others). Members pledge themselves to lives of prayer, service and evangelism.

The Mary and Martha Chapter of the Daughters of the King at Holy Comforter meets monthly. This year we are studying Bible Women: All Their Words and Why They Matter by Lindsay Hardin Freeman. Contributions are made regularly to the funds of the organization which support missions, education and the work of the Order. Recently, Daughters contributed items for gifts to the women who attended the Episcopal Women's Convention in Cuba. We are working with Daughters of the King in Cuba to start a chapter in Holy Comforter's companion diocese in Ceballos. Our most important ministry is prayer, and we continue our ministry of prayer for members of the congregation and the community.

We hope to hold a discernment class in 2025 for women of the parish who wish to join the order. To learn more about the Daughters of the King and the discernment process, contact Judy at judyshipman4@gmail.com

Judy Shipman

Order of St. Luke - OSL is an international, inter-denominational, Christian healing organization. We are made up of healing communities dedicated to offering healing prayer in Jesus' name to all who are in need. We are a Christian community of faith, prayer and service. We are a network of individual believers who come together to learn more about God's healing love and the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives and bring wholeness. Once trained, we offer healing prayer in our communities. This is our unique mission and ministry. OSL is a multi-denominational Christian organization that accepts the Scriptures as our guide for our healing practice. In Jesus, we meet God as God really is, the way God has revealed himself to be, as the God who is for us, because we are in Christ and are his children. We find that the Father loves us unconditionally. He sent Jesus not out of anger or a need to punish, but out of his immeasurable love and his unbending commitment to our redemption. The love we see in Jesus is none other than the love of the Father; the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father and they are one. This means that when we know Jesus Christ, we know the Father. Therefore, in the

healing ministry, we value grace, and want to be living expressions of the grace, the Love of God. This is our starting point in all we do. We seek to demonstrate this love of God every time we pray or engage in our ministry. We seek to carry on what Jesus began. In the gospels, we see that Jesus radiated the love of the Father and the power of his Spirit which cured people. He often offered these cures in order to invite people into an eternal relationship with the Father, which scripture calls the fullness of life or salvation. When Jesus sent out his disciples to continue his ministry, he ‘gave them power and authority to drive out demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them out to proclaim the reign of God and to heal the sick.’ The belief of OSL is that his commissioning is still very relevant and important to Christians today. The gift of healing and the ministry of healing is available to those who will ask God; who seek the anointing of the Holy Spirit and is open to all the gifts of the Spirit. OSL affirms the medical and behavioral health ministries, as they are also instruments in which God’s healing power is manifest. The power of Jesus’ love augments and goes beyond the human means of healing to bring people to the fullness of life.

Deacon Joe

Children’s Ministries - Sunday School classes for preschoolers, elementary students, and middle schoolers took place in the Education Center, with teachers and shepherds rotating weekly to deliver exciting lessons and activities. In July, instead of classes, we offered fun pew packets to keep the kids engaged during services.

This past year marked a significant period of transition and growth for our children and youth ministries. The nursery, which had been closed since COVID, was reopened to care for our littlest ones, providing a safe and welcoming space for infants and toddlers to play and explore. At the same time, we bid a fond farewell to Mother Beth Pessah as she embarked on a new chapter in a different diocese. Her compassionate leadership and dedication to fostering the faith of our children in both the school and church settings have been a true blessing to our community. In addition, after years of dedicated service, Julianne Chester retired from her role in children's ministry. Her warmth, creativity, and tireless commitment left an indelible mark on our community, and we are deeply grateful for the many ways she nurtured and guided our youngest members. Amid these changes, we are also thrilled to welcome Hannah Shelly to our team. Her enthusiasm, fresh perspective, and years of experience bring new energy to our ministry, and she is excited to see what the future holds for the children and youth ministry here at Holy Comforter.

As we move forward, we remain committed to fostering a supportive and vibrant environment where every child and young person feels valued and encouraged in their faith journey.

Hannah Shelly

CHURCH COMMUNITY

Pastoral Care is fundamentally about relationships. It is made up of various ministries that provide for times of compassionate presence. We have many examples of Jesus meeting people in their time need, especially those who were hurting, lonely or ill. Pastoral care creates an opportunity for healing and growth, both for the person being cared for, and for the caregiver.

One last thought respectfully submitted - communicating needs in the parish is foundational to Pastoral Care, as is timely hand-off to the right ministry support, and - likely this is the most important - discerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the ongoing evaluation of our ministries at HCEC. We would ask for any and all of your input and prayers. Thank you, and God's peace be with you.

Melanie Salsgiver

Stephen Ministry - Stephen Ministers provide confidential, one-on-one Christian care for individuals who request support. Usually, a Stephen Minister meets with their care receiver for about an hour each week. We pray, listen, empathize, encourage, help process feelings, and connect the person with God's love. We supplement, but do not replace the pastoral care provided by our clergy.

Holy Comforter is committed to providing Christian care to people in the parish and community. In 2024, the Vestry approved and provided funding to train a new Stephen Leader in our parish. Our Stephen Leaders join the clergy for Pastoral Care Team meetings to connect potential care receivers with Stephen Ministers. Our Stephen Ministers also help with grief support during funerals and other services.

Currently, we have four Stephen Ministers available to support new care receivers. If you or someone you know might benefit from meeting with a Stephen Minister, please contact any of our clergy or Stephen Ministry Leaders (Ruth Roaza and Melanie Salsgiver).

Grief Ministry is where we care for our Parish as they begin to think about & experience the last days of their life here on earth. Among the services within this ministry are Adult Formation/Education sessions focused on End-of-Life planning and decision-making, as well as burial considerations. When the death of a Parishioner or their Loved One is imminent, our Clergy & Pastoral Care Team provides needed support for Prayers at the End of Life and funeral gatherings, as appropriate and desired. During their period of mourning, a series of visits and intercessory prayer contacts is made as part of our Grief Ministry. We continue to join in ministry partnership with St. John's Episcopal Church to offer *Walking the Mourner's Path*®, a Christ-focused grief recovery workshop, each Spring and Fall; we continue to hear powerful stories about the impact of this joint ministry. *Contact: Melanie*

L.E.A.F. Ministry (a.k.a. Love Extended through Altar Flowers) is where flowers from our Celebrations on Sunday made into smaller arrangements for delivery to Parishioners. This could be those who are receiving a visit for a specific reason - such as an illness or grief care - or simply those who need to have their day brightened - a birthday, an anniversary, or any other reason the Clergy might guide the Team toward. Those called to participate in this ministry will be threefold: 1) those who allow their Altar Flowers to be donated, 2) those who rearrange the weekend's flowers into smaller arrangements, and 3) those who serve as delivery drivers to drop off the arrangements. More details on this ministry will be forthcoming. *Contact: Melanie*

Book Club - Since our founding by the late, great Chris McMillan back in 2000, I have an (almost!) complete record of about 230 books, both fiction and non-fiction, that we have read over the years. We typically meet in the church lounge at 5:00 PM on the second Sunday of each month. On two occasions, we met downstairs in the Parish Hall in order to watch a DVD movie that was associated with the book-of-the-month; these were popular, and it is likely we will do that again sometime.

Book selections are made three months in advance by group consensus, and everyone is kept informed by regular e-mails from me. Those e-mails provide the title and a short description of the selected book-of-the-month well ahead of time. The church office provides relevant information about book choices to the rest of the Parish via the e-Dove or bulletin.

Recently, most of our choices have been drawn from current published fiction lists, but there are occasional non-fiction choices and classics to be found in the mix as well. Discussions are generally well focused, and there is clearly a pleasant social atmosphere that everyone enjoys.

I maintain an e-mail list of 36 potentially interested individuals. I use the bcc function for distribution to minimize the incidence of e-mail addresses being spammed. Actual attendance during 2024 averaged 9.2 people per month, with a range from 5 to 13 in any given month. There were a total of 18 individuals who attended at least once in 2024, including one non-parishioner. (I can think of at least one example of a current regularly attending church member who first appeared at Holy Comforter as an invited guest of a book group attendee!)

Robbie Brunger

Hospitality Ministry - The hospitality ministry has continued to provide coffee after both services and snacks after the 10:30 service. This is provided from January to May and September to December. We also provided cake and punch after Confirmations/Reaffirmations in December.

Other events that the hospitality ministry assisted with:

- Decorations for the Good Friday Fish Fry

- Decorating and providing food for Easter Brunch
- Provided candy for Mother's Day
- Provided cookies for Father's Day
- Decorated and provided punch and snacks for the New 76ers Concert
- Decorated and organized going away party for Mother Beth
- Decorated and organized going away party for Julianne Chester
- Provided brunch between services for two parish meetings
- Decorated parish hall for Bishop Benhase's visit
- Decorated parish hall for the Stewardship potluck lunch
- Decorated and provided special treats after the Kings Day service
- Decorated parish hall for Cuban Ministry dinner

Nancye Rubin

Men's Fellowship Group - The Men's Fellowship Group had their first meeting on March 15, 2025. It was well attended. Eleven guys discussed possibly meeting in about a month. We want to have meetings with a structure for devotional possibilities, and then a time for business and social action both in the church and in the community. Everyone attending agreed to the establishment of a Men's group and to it's further development for the men of the church. Next meeting will be in April with a specific date and time to be set by myself.

Bill Reineking

Food and Fellowship Clubs - The Food and Fellowship Clubs enjoyed a robust year with at least six different groups holding gatherings ranging from Classic Supper clubs, to popular Out to Lunch groups meeting at various dining locations, to the Lively Lunch Bunch enjoying the St. John's café offerings, and the Lunch and a Movie Club feasting on Mexican food at Cinco de Mayo prior to attending movies at the CMX Theatre on selected Tuesdays.

Julianne Chester

Youth Commission - The Youth Commission is dedicated to fostering youth engagement through meaningful initiatives. In 2024, we held several meetings where children actively participated in discussions on how to involve current church families and warmly welcome new ones. These gatherings generated many creative and inspiring ideas.

2024 Highlights:

- **Crafts and Festivities:** Children of all ages enjoyed Advent Wreath making, a Christingle activity, caroling, and rosary crafting, bringing joy and creativity to the season.

- Advent Candle Lighting: Holy Comforter families took part in lighting the Advent candles and reading passages during the holiday season. Many children read the passages and lit the candles with their parents' assistance, making the tradition even more special.
- Family-Friendly Movie Nights: Special thanks to Jason and Corrine Johnston for hosting two fantastic movie nights (January and May) on a giant outdoor screen. Attendees enjoyed not only movies but also some friendly Nerf wars! Many church members invited friends, making these events a wonderful opportunity for fellowship.
- Youth Training for Church Involvement: In March, the Youth Commission hosted a training session to prepare young members for roles as greeters, ushers, readers, and crucifers. The training was a great success, and now youth take turns serving at the 10:30 AM service each week.
- Nursery Opening: We are thrilled to announce the reopening of the nursery. This provides a warm and nurturing space for infants, toddlers, and young children during the 10:30 AM service, reinforcing our commitment to growing the church family.
- Vacation Bible School (VBS): From June 3-7, our church was transformed into *Camp Firelight* for VBS. The 23 children who participated enjoyed Bible stories, creative crafts, exciting science experiments, recreational activities, and delicious snacks. Nearly two dozen volunteers, including 9 teen guides, helped make VBS a success.
- Blessing of the Backpacks: On August 11, children, teachers, and school staff are encouraged to bring their backpacks, briefcases, or satchels to the service for a special blessing and prayers for a successful academic year.
- Children-Led Church Service: we are excited to bring back our children-led church service! Kids took turns on key roles, including greeters, ushers, crucifers, and readers. Due to the overwhelming success of this initiative, we have decided that the last 10:30 AM service of each month in 2025 will be youth-led.
- Trunk-or-Treat: Our first-ever Trunk-or-Treat event, held the Friday before Halloween, was a huge success! Despite minimal advertising, a dozen church members decorated their trunks in festive Halloween themes, welcoming many children, including friends of church members and students from Holy Comforter.
- Hiring of Chaplain and Director of Youth & Children's Ministries: We are excited to welcome Hannah Shelly as Holy Comforter's Chaplain and Director of Youth & Children's Ministries. Under her leadership, we anticipate many exciting events

and opportunities for spiritual growth among our youth.

Our vision for the future is to create a church environment where families and children feel welcomed, engaged, and inspired. We envision a place where children joyfully worship with their families, make new friends, actively serve the church, and participate in activities beyond Sunday services. We are well on our way to making this vision a reality!

Jenna Brown

Concert Series - In 2024 the Holy Comforter Concert Series had two awesome concerts. On May 17th we had a very well attended concert by The New 76ers. Their warm three-part harmonies created a wonderful family vibe nestled inside of their excellent soulful, country folk instrumental style and expertise. A video of the show can be viewed on our website underneath the concert series playlist drop down menu.

On December 3rd, we enjoyed the lovely Christmas handbell concert by Capitol Bells. If you weren't there, you missed a very uplifting, listening experience as the church was filled with melodic bells of all shapes and sizes masterfully presented by the large group of volunteer participants. Due to copyright issues, the video is not listed on our website under the concert series.

Fred Chester

FINANCE

Fiscally speaking, the calendar year 2024 was challenging: we incurred a deficit.

To briefly summarize: For the year, total income was approximately \$543,400.00. (Generally, all amounts in this report are rounded.) The pledged income received was \$463,300.00, which was 101% of the amount members had pledged. Holy Comforter also received other income primarily from unpledged giving and donations to the food pantry.

Because total expenses of the year amounted to \$563,200.00, and our total income was \$543,400.00, we sustained a deficit of \$19,800.00.

Fiscally, the calendar year 2025 will be better. We do not anticipate a deficit. In fact, our budget for 2025 anticipates revenue to exceed expenses by \$42,100.00. This favorable outlook is driven by two factors. First, earlier this month, March 2025, we received a gift from a decedent's trust in the amount of \$85,800.00. Second, the total of our pledges for 2025 is \$23,000.00, over the pledged income received in 2024. (486,300 vs. 463,300)

In terms of its cash position, in its operating account, Holy Comforter had a deposit of

\$32,606.10. The Church also maintains designated funds for amounts that have been set aside by the Vestry for extraordinary items or have been received from individuals who have requested restricted usage, such as the Building Fund and the Food Pantry Fund. The total of cash on deposit for all of the Designated Funds was \$172,484.14.

2025 Narrative Budget - Our Parish financial stewardship is more than an exercise in meeting a budget. It is one of the most powerful ways that we make our faith visible, viable and active in our Parish, our community and our world. Our Parish is committed to a faithful response to support its Christian missions and ministries. This Narrative Budget is an attempt to show how the treasures we give are put to work to build the Kingdom of God. (All amounts are rounded.)

Anticipated Income: \$ 617,500

This income comes from the generosity of our pledging members, as well as from our unpledged members and donors, and other miscellaneous sources, including fund raising.

Estimated Expenditures

Supporting the Wider Mission of the Church: (\$ 75,800)

Our Parish's work extends far beyond our own community to the ends of the earth. Through our support of the Episcopal Diocese of Florida we provide support for: Our Bishop and the Diocesan staff in their ministry to our Diocesan family; ministries for newly ordained seminarians, fixed cash benefits for retired clergy and their spouses; Camp Weed and its many youth ministry initiatives; campus ministries at Florida State, The University of Florida and The University of North Florida; urban ministries in Jacksonville (Church Without Walls and St. Mary's Mission to the Homeless) and Tallahassee (Grace Mission); support for the Wounded Warrior's Retreats; 16 jail and prison ministries. From our Parish's Outreach budget, we also provide direct funding for our companion churches in Cuba.

Reaching Out to Serve Our Community: (\$89,400)

We provide a Food Pantry to feed the hungry among us. We provide funds to support Grace Mission in Tallahassee. We also support the Christian education and ministry at Holy Comforter School. Our Priests visit non-members, provide counseling services to residents of our community and participate as our representative in several community organizations.

Preparing for Conducting Worship: (\$82,900)

Our worship is central to the life of our congregation. Our Parish's services on Sundays and Wednesday evenings give us the grace to go forth in our missions and ministries. Planning for Sunday morning worship, preparing meaningful sermons, preparing for and conducting weddings, funerals, baptisms, and other special services require a significant part of our Priests' time. Our Music Director,

Organist, Audio Visual Assistant, Altar Guild members and many other volunteers work tirelessly to provide prayerful liturgy. This category also includes costs for music, bulletins, candles, communion supplies, and seasonal decorations.

Educating Our Children, Youth and Adults: (\$52,600)

We continue to develop an excellent Sunday school and Youth program. Curriculum materials and other supplies, expenses for Vacation Bible School are also included here as well as funds to support our Youth Group. We regularly offer a Bible Study program. We also prepare youth and adults for Confirmation and for reception into the Episcopal Church. Our Priests provide chapels, Holy Eucharist, and participate in the life of our school.

Care for Our Church Family: (\$113,300)

Pastoral care is a vital part of our work, especially for people who are ill, hospitalized, bereaved, preparing for marriage, going through divorce, or facing other personal crises. Along with providing direct pastoral care by our Priests, we also provide for the training of Eucharistic Visitors. Our office staff provides information and other services to members such as preparing annual reports for our congregational meeting. They also assist the hungry by responding to countless calls concerning our Food Pantry and other needs. Our seasonal publication of the *Dove* newsletter and our weekly *E-Dove*, Parish website and other publications, Parish campout, campfires, and the many ministries of our Hospitality committee (receptions after funerals, coffee hour, and many more too numerous to name here) are within this category that enables us to sustain our common life together.

Equipping and Maintaining Our Platform for Mission: (\$161,400)

Our Sexton keeps our facilities clean and in good order so that we may perform the work God is calling us to do. Our Finance Manager keeps our financial records. Our worship space, Mercy Lounge, and offices that provide the room for performing the administrative framework that supports our various ministries are included in this resource area. Utilities, insurance, employment taxes and related costs to providing facilities to carry on our work are also found in this category.

Total Resources Required to Perform & Carryout Our Mission: \$575,300

Excess Revenues Over Expenses: \$42,200

DIOCESAN UPDATE

In 2024, the Diocese of Florida still did not have a Diocesan Bishop following its failure to successfully elect a new one in 2023. Therefore, ecclesiastical authority rested instead with the Diocesan Standing Committee. For the first part of the year, the Standing Committee's President was the Rev. Teresa Seagle; after completing her term, the Rev. Sarah Minton took on that role. Meanwhile, episcopal sacramental and pastoral duties were covered by two retired bishops, Bishop Scott Benhase (former Bishop of the Diocese of Georgia) and Bishop Chip Stokes (former Bishop of New Jersey).

The diocese continued to engage in a "Listening Process" to help heal divisions among us and restore unity and trust. The Rt. Rev. Mary Gray-Reeves, the former bishop of the Diocese of El Camino-Real and a highly trained mediator, was contracted to facilitate this process. Three "listening sessions" were held at Camp Weed over the first six months of the year, and Holy Comforter was represented at these by me, Melanie Salsgiver, Judy Shipman, and Amy Johnson. These sessions contributed to an environment of greater psychological, spiritual, and relational health across the diocese.

At the same time, the two Title IV cases brought in 2023 against the former Diocesan Bishop, John Howard, continued. These cases, in which allegations of discrimination and of a financial nature were investigated, were referred to a hearing panel. Since no resolution had yet been reached on these matters, they continued to be a source of division and sadness for many.

Nevertheless, progress was notable at our Annual Diocesan Convention, held in September, at which some encouraging business was conducted. For the first time, delegates were able to vote electronically, and this greatly improved the process. All of the required reports were approved, all elections were successfully completed, and all proposed resolutions passed (with the exception of one that was tabled). The Convention was held in conjunction with a joyful celebration of Camp Weed's 100-year anniversary.

Although the timing is not yet certain, the diocese intends to restart the search for a new Diocesan Bishop in the fall of 2025. In the meantime, I ask for your prayers for the Standing Committee as it leads the diocese; for our Bishops Assisting, Scott Benhase and Chip Stokes; for the rebuilding of trust and unity in the diocese; and for the eventual election of a new Diocesan Bishop to lead us forward in the future.

Father Allen Hill

2024 VESTRY

The Vestry met monthly in 2024. Father Allen appointed Rick Wagner as Senior Warden, and the Vestry elected Robert Efthim as Junior Warden. Patricia Trom continued to serve as Clerk, and Andy Granger remained in the role of Treasurer. A Vestry member was assigned as a liaison to each ministry group to facilitate two-way communication about accomplishments and needs.

Each Vestry meeting began with a scriptural reflection and prayer. The agenda included a review and approval of the minutes from the previous meeting, prepared by Clerk Patricia Trom, followed by a financial report presented by Treasurer Andy Granger, which highlighted any significant variances from the norm. Afterward, Father Allen provided updates on past and upcoming events or issues as appropriate.

The remainder of each meeting focused on items requiring Vestry review, discussion, or action, as well as concerns brought to Vestry members by parishioners. The parish Annual Meeting was held in October, following the Diocesan Annual Meeting. Additionally, the Vestry attended a retreat at Camp Weed for Vestry members across the Diocese, which proved to be a very informative experience.

Vestry meetings are open to parishioners, except for occasions when an executive session is required.

Rick Wagner

Holy Comforter Episcopal Church

The Reverend Dr. Allen Hill, Rector
The Reverend Jim May, Chaplin of Community Care
Dr. Melanie Salsgiver, Seminarian
Hannah Shelly, Chaplain and Youth Director
Madison Natschke, Office Manager



VESTRY

Rick Wagner, Senior Warden
Robert Efthim, Junior Warden
Amy Johnson
Susan Robinson
Jenna Brown
Corinne Johnston
Bill Reineking
Andy Granger, Treasurer
Patricia Trom, Clerk

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