



# LOGOS

The Newsletter for St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington

*"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" John 1:5*

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December 2021

Welcome Christmas at St. John's



Join St. John's this Advent season on Sundays at 10 a.m. in the sanctuary or via Zoom. On Christmas Eve, we will gather at 5 p.m. No service will be held on Christmas Day, but join us again on Sunday, December 26, at 10 a.m. To prepare your heart and mind for Christmas, consider the following Advent readings:

*Celebrating Abundance: Devotions for Advent* by Walter Brueggemann—Copies of this devotional book were distributed on Sunday, November 28. If you have not received a copy, please let Senior Warden Sandy Winger or Rev. Larry Packard know.

*Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen: Daily Scripture, Prayers, Reflections*

*The Inklings Christmastide: Readings for Advent with G.K. Chesterton, George MacDonald, C.S. Lewis, Larry Norman, and the Inklings*

*Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas*

## Words on Hymns: The History of Carols

The history of Christmas carols has been going strong across Europe for thousands of years. It is only in more recent times that this Yuletide singing has been regarded as “caroling.”

Carols in Europe go back to pagan Winter Solstice celebrations. Revelers not singing celebratory songs would usually dance around stone circles. In its original form, the word “carol” had several meanings. Pagans would cite it as a dance. In fact, the word derived from the French word “carole,” which was a type of circular procession of dancers and singers. “Carol” also applies to songs of praise and joy.

Almost immediately after Christianity began to rise and spread through Europe, the older pagan traditions were superseded by Christian observances. One of the earliest versions of a carol was a song titled *Hymn of the Angels or Gloria in Excelsis*. The song details the words of the angels at the announcement of Jesus’s birth to the shepherds. One Roman bishop, Telesphorus, firmly believed that the song should be used during a Christmas service in Rome in AD 129 but strictly by bishops.

Six-hundred years later, Comas of Jerusalem composed another early example of a carol. Written for the Greek Orthodox Church, Comas’s hymn set something of a precedent for composers all across Europe, and other songwriters followed suit with a slew of additional tunes. This trend became popular only for a while, as the novelty quickly wore off. The main problem was that the language of every carol was Latin. Much of the population did not understand or speak Latin. Thus, the Middle Ages saw a drastic drop in the popularity of caroling and Christmas celebrations in general.

The “Father of Christmas carols” was Saint Francis of Assisi. St. Francis created nativity scenes in a cave, complete with live

animals, in Greccio, Italy, in 1223 and invited the villagers to gather around the manger while he spoke about baby Jesus. Worshippers sang hymns, or “canticles,” as St. Francis called them. Only some of the new carols were sung in Latin, and thus the audience was able to participate in the songs of praise. This idea was quickly adopted in France, Spain, and Germany before spreading farther afield in Europe.

Caroling had become more widespread when the first English carols emerged in the early 1400s. John Audelay, an English priest and poet, was a significant contributor to the history of Christmas carols when he composed at least 25 Yuletide hymns in English that he and a group of carolers sang from house to house. Audelay’s songs mostly contained themes of repentance, rather than holiday cheer. And it wasn’t until later that Christmas carol lyrics began to focus more on the story of Jesus.

The tradition of Christmas carols continued in England for another 225 years and only stopped when a new regime came to power. The Puritan Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell outlawed the public singing of carols in 1644. In fact, he banned the celebration of Christmas altogether. However, as most people would take the activity underground and perform in secret, Christmas carol traditions managed to survive this period in history. In 1660, the Restoration of the British monarchy abolished all legislation between 1642 and 1660. At that time, everyone came out from hiding to celebrate Christmas once again with feasts, festivities, and, of course, singing.

Still, public performances would not be seen much on British streets until two men in the 1800s—William Sandys and Davis Gilbert—began collecting old seasonal music from villages all over England. While Gilbert published two small collections of carols,

Sandys' 1833 *Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern* published the lyrics and tunes to over 100 carols from different time periods and places. His compilation is by far one of the biggest contributions to the history of Christmas carols and their resurgence. Not for the first time, carol singing in public became hugely popular. Local leaders appointed prominent people to become official carol singers. Composers created many new carols to cope with the demand, and quite a few of these still exist today.

*The Oxford Book of Carols*, first published in 1928 and edited by the British composers Martin Shaw and Ralph Vaughan Williams,

became a widely used source of carols among choirs and church congregations in Britain and remains in print today. The singing of carols was further popularized in the 20th century when Oxford University Press published one of the most comprehensive carol books in the English-speaking world, *Carols for Choirs*, in 1961. Today, Christmas music performed in the United States ranges from religious-themed carols to popular secular songs and numerous other Christmas carols of varying genres.

Carol Dunlap



**LOGOS**

LOGOS is published monthly at the beginning of the month, except for a combined July/August issue.

Lisa Pope, LOGOS Editor

Email articles to [logos@stjohnsarlingtonva.org](mailto:logos@stjohnsarlingtonva.org). The deadline for the January issue is Dec. 23.

**St. John's Vision Statement**

St. John's Episcopal Church is an inclusive congregation that nurtures Christian spiritual growth and community through worship, education, outreach, mutual care, and fellowship.

**St. John's Mission Statement**

St. John's mission is building a strong spiritual community in Christ; welcoming all who enter our doors, including believers, seekers, and doubters; and reaching out to those in need both within our congregation and around us.

**St. John's Staff and Leadership**

**Staff**

Supply Plus Minister: The Rev. Dr. Laurence K. Packard  
 Minister of Music: Lynn Robinson  
 Organist: Judith Marcinko  
 Parish Administrator: Virginia Pearson  
 Sexton: Julio Sorto

**Parish Leaders**

Peter Olivere, Treasurer  
 John Restall, Pledge Clerk  
 Eileen Tallent, Chair, Altar Guild

**Vestry**

Sandy Winger, Senior Warden  
 Bryan Harbin, Junior Warden  
 Jeff Aitken  
 Dave Dunlap

Diane Henderson  
 Peter Olivere  
 Lisa Pope

## Parish News

### Upcoming Events:

➤ St. John's Book Club will meet on **Tuesday, December 7**, at 7 p.m. in the undercroft to discuss *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman. The selection for the **Tuesday, January 4**, meeting is *Re Jane* by Patricia Park. This novel offers a contemporary Korean-American version of *Jane Eyre*. All are welcome!

### Congratulations to:

➤ Ed and Kathi Martin, who were officially received into the Episcopal Church on Sunday, December 5.

### Thank You to:

- Patricia Broida for organizing the collection of Angel Tree gifts and dropping them off at the Salvation Army. Thank you also to all the individuals who selected a child's name and bought gifts!
- Everyone who contributed to St. John's Thanksgiving food drive for the Arlington Food Assistance Center.
- Senior Warden Sandy Winger for representing St. John's at the 227th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Virginia, which was held via Zoom on November 12 and 13.

### We celebrate with all who have birthdays in December:

Peggy Blount, The Rev. Catherine Campbell, Eileen Flynn, Maddie Harbin, Lori Held, Galen Henderson, Del Hunt, Michelle Lewis, Barbara Oliveri, Angie Rollet, Carissa Russell, Angela Swarr, and Camron Tallent.

### We celebrate with those observing anniversaries in December:

Michael and Teresa Birmingham; Carol and Dave Dunlap; Klaus and Lori Held; Penny and Don Hess; Del and Carole Hunt; Cooper and Mary Mackin.



Colorful handmade creations were on display at the holiday craft fair held at St. John's on Sunday, Oct. 31.