



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

January 2022

Stepping with Faith into the New Year



Welcome 2022! Stepping into the New Year, the St. John's family continues to pray for each other, our community, an end to the global pandemic, and God's plan for our future rector.

As reported by Dave Dunlap at the Sunday, January 2, worship service, the Search Committee is reopening the joint search for a rector with St. Patrick's due to an inability to agree on terms with the previous top candidate. The Search Committee will continue to provide regular updates on its progress. In the meantime, Rev. Larry Packard will continue to serve as St. John's Supply Plus Minister and provide pastoral care. You may contact Rev. Larry at minister@stjohnsarlingtonva.org or 703-425-8315 or 703-606-3109 (please note this is a cell phone number without voicemail).

As of early January, services are being held in-person at St. John's at 10 a.m. on Sunday and simultaneously livestreamed on Zoom. If there are any changes to the service plans, updates will be provided. Please join the service in the format that is comfortable for you.

If you have any requests for Sunday prayers, intercessory prayers, or a card for someone who is sick, please contact Barbara Olivere at prayers@stjohnsarlingtonva.org.

Thank you for being a part of the St. John's family and your continued faith and service!

Words on Hymns: The Story of the Magi

Who were the Wise Men who followed the star celebrated in the season of Epiphany? “We saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him.” First of all, they didn’t see the “star in the east” unless they were in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea (unlikely). Maybe the author meant “We saw his star *when we were* in the east and have come from the east to worship him.” Several traditions place the Wise Men’s number at three, based on the idea of three gifts from three givers: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (the standard gifts for honoring a king). But some earlier traditions make quite a caravan of their visit, setting their number as high as 12. The entourage would have included cooks, servants, and probably several hundred soldiers for protection.

The term “Magi” comes from *magoi*, the plural of the Greek word *magos*. It is usually translated to mean wise men, astrologers, or magicians. Indeed, the word “magic” comes from the word *magi*. “The East” has been variously identified as any country from Arabia to Media and Persia, but usually no farther east than Persia. The Magi became known as kings in the traditional story during the third century approximately.

What we know about their background suggests either a Mesopotamian or Persian origin for the Magi, who were known to be an old and powerful priestly caste among both the Medes and Persians. These priest-sages who were exceptionally well-educated for their day were specialists in various disciplines, including medicine, religion, astronomy, astrology, divination, and magic, and their caste eventually spread across the East. Much of our information about the Magi comes from Herodotus, often called the “Father of History.” As one studies the Magi in Herodotus’s work, it is clear that their key skill was dream interpretation rather than astrology. The Persian Magi at least were credited with

higher religious and intellectual attainments, while the Babylonian Magi were sometimes considered impostors.

The Magi were a hereditary priesthood among the Medes. King Nebuchadnezzar put Daniel (a former Jewish captive) in charge of the Magi and bestowed on him the title of Governor (one of three appointed in Daniel 6:2) because Daniel had gained favor with him by interpreting a dream. One can only imagine how that was received by the “hereditary priesthood.” This event, as well as Daniel’s refusal to stop praying to his God, is probably what led to the plot against Daniel that resulted in the lion’s den incident in Daniel 6:7–28.

The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was built in the 4th century by Emperor Constantine’s mother, St. Helena, on the site where Jesus is traditionally said to have been born. It is the only major church in the Holy Land that survives intact from the early Christian period. In 614 C.E., the Church of the Nativity had a narrow escape. A Sassanian army from Persia had invaded the Holy Land and proceeded to destroy all the churches. However, they desisted at Bethlehem because they recognized the images of their ancestors, the Magi, above the entrance to the Church of the Nativity in Persian headdress. This account makes sense because the Magi were traditionally represented in early Christian art as Zoroastrian priests.

According to the liturgical calendar, the Magi’s feast day is January 6, also known as Epiphany. This date marks the end of the 12 Days of Christmas or Christmastide.

The Gospel of Matthew is the only source for the story of the Wise Men. Because some find too many difficulties in the tale, the meaning of the story is generally considered to be the revelation of Jesus to gentiles.

Carol Dunlap



Ed and Kathi Martin celebrate being received into the Episcopal Church on Sunday, Dec. 5, with Bishop Porter Taylor and Rev. Larry Packard.

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. The deadline for the February issue is Jan. 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

Vestry

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

Parish Leaders

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

Diane Henderson
 Peter Olivere
 Lisa Pope

Parish News

Upcoming Events:

➤ St. John's Book Club will meet on **Tuesday, February 1**, at 7 p.m. in the undercroft to discuss *Anxious People* by Fredrik Backman. This novel about eight anxious strangers who find they have more in common than they ever imagined is also a story about the enduring power of friendship, forgiveness, and hope. All are welcome!

Thank You to:

- Eileen Tallent and the Altar Guild for decorating the sanctuary so beautifully for Christmas.
- Maddie Harbin for serving as livestream coordinator for the December 26 worship service.
- Everyone who continues to bring contributions for the Arlington Food Assistance Center.

We celebrate with all who have birthdays in January:

Patricia Broida, Keelyn Del Gallo, Don Hess, Tony Kollath, Mary Mackin, Cynthia Todd, and Vlad Wien-Kandil.

We celebrate with those observing anniversaries in January:

Robert L. Rawls, III, and Harriet Sheehan Rawls; Anna and David Scherer.

