



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

July/August 2023

A Reflection on Pysanky Eggs

The April 1972 edition of *National Geographic* magazine included an eight-page pictorial on the making of Pysanky eggs, describing them as an Easter greeting to the world. I kept our family copy of that issue for years, being immediately captivated by the beauty created with objects as close as my refrigerator and the idea that faith could be represented figuratively and symbolically. I pored over images of hot wax drawn across the surface of eggs so that they would resist dye-baths, eventually covering the full surface, hiding the bright colors until the whole design was attempted, until they were finally revealed. I have tried my own hand at works of art featuring stories of and encounters with the Holy, and trace that impulse back to my introduction to the crafting of these elaborate eggs.

Ukrainian people have been making this art since before the time of Christ, and have adapted symbolism throughout the centuries, adjusting the geometry and colors to reflect theology and concerns of the moment.

Fifty years later, when the people of Ukraine were pushed again into the forefront of global politics because they had been invaded by Russia, I thought of those eggs again and the way that a design is planned and drawn out with increasingly opaque layers of wax and dyes until finally, the covering layers are melted off and the design emerges. Surely there are experienced artists who can plan and execute their designs, controlling the flow of wax and mixing of colors perfectly. I have never attempted this particular craft, but have used paint and enamel and fabric as art media, with greater and lesser success. Something made exactly according to plan can be both exquisite and lifeless, even as something asymmetrical or imperfectly wrought can be mesmerizing.

The plans I make for many aspects of my life can feel similarly covered over with layers of real-life factors I do not control, so that things "do not go to plan." When the melting-of seasons comes, whether it is revelation in a moment akin to wiping away melted wax or the slow dawning of realization that comes with repeated swipes of a polishing cloth, rarely does the actual design match my original plan: circumstances or opportunities have changed along the way, interest in a particular direction has waned or become more urgent, and others interpret the blueprint differently than I do.

When Catherine Dubas at St. Patrick's proposed hosting a Pysanky workshop there, I was reminded that I had never tried to do that which looked both magical and impossible to my adolescent eyes. Now is the chance to try.

The Pysanky workshop scheduled for Saturday, July 15, from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. at St. Patrick's (3241 Brush Drive, Falls Church, VA, 22042) will provide an opportunity to join the conversation not only with the medium and its symbolism, but with the people who have been expressing joy and wonder with this craft for centuries, people who now find themselves under fire again and seeking to protect their faith and their land. As of July 9, a few slots for the workshop were still open. The cost is \$30 per person, with an additional opportunity to offer financial support to partner organizations working throughout Ukraine. To check on remaining availability to register, please email stpatsepiscopal@gmail.com. I hope to see you there!

Julie +

Communion Protocols

While COVID-19 continues to be a health concern, many congregations have shifted their patterns for distributing Communion back toward use of a common cup for sipping and have stopped using masks for those preparing and distributing the elements. Bishop Stevenson has indicated that he plans to issue revised directions shortly. Please consider which practices you feel strongly about retaining for the well-being of yourself and those you know to be most vulnerable to contagion, and be ready to raise those concerns. When St. John's receives the Bishop's revised protocols, it will be time for the congregation to consider adjusting the current practices.

Changes in Facility Use at St. John's and St. Patrick's

The Vietnamese Gospel Baptist Church and Ethiopian Orthodox congregations that had been meeting for worship at St. Patrick's and St. John's, respectively, both concluded their use of these facilities as of June 30. Because both congregations have the gift of available spaces for worship and for meetings of young people and adults for any number of purposes, this presents us with an opportunity to seek other congregations or groups to use the facilities. If you have interest or experience in planning or drafting or promoting agreements for the use of common space, we would love to hear from you. Likewise, if you know of individuals or groups who might be interested in meeting at either St. John's or St. Patrick's, we would love to know that too. The donations from such groups help us to continue our mission and ministry as well as to strengthen our common purpose of providing for the community's needs.

Please be in touch with Senior Warden Sandy Winger at St. John's, Senior Warden Kathy Oliver at St. Patrick's, or me. Thank you!

Julie +

Mark Your Calendar for a Joint Service at St. Patrick's on September 10

Mark your calendar now for Sunday, September 10, and plan to attend the joint worship service that St. John's and St. Patrick's will hold at St. Patrick's at 10 a.m. (3241 Brush Drive, Falls Church, VA, 22042). The usual 9 a.m. worship service will not be held at St. John's. Stay tuned for more details!

Join the AFAC Packing Party

The second Friday evening of each month, members and friends of St. John's gather at the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) for an hour of "whatever needs doing" to prepare bulk food items for distribution to families and individuals. This can mean bagging and heat-sealing dried beans, repacking onions, or examining and sorting produce so that overripe food is composted rather than distributed. The work requires focus, but allows for conversation and encouragement among those working, so that friendships are also nurtured along the way. Faye and Bill Pritchard coordinate the monthly teams — please let them know if you would like to join in!

AFAC partners with a number of business and philanthropic entities in the region, and also offers young people the opportunity to work against pervasive hunger. There are many additional ways to volunteer, including collecting produce at the close of local farmers' markets, assisting with canned food drives, packing bags for direct distribution, and soliciting donations from local vendors and supportive businesses.

The need is greater than many imagine, and meeting that need is fundamental to our common survival and well-being. To learn more about AFAC's mission, visit <https://afac.org>.



St. John's volunteers bagged more than half a ton of potatoes at AFAC in September 2022.

St. John's Staff and Leadership

Staff

Rector: The Rev. Julie D. Bryant
Minister of Music: Lynn Robinson
Organist: Judith Marcinko
Parish Administrator: Virginia Pearson
Sexton: Julio Sorto

Parish Leaders

Peter Olivere, Treasurer
Eileen Tallent, Chair, Altar Guild

Vestry

Sandy Winger, Senior Warden	Diane Henderson
Dave Dunlap	Peter Olivere
Bryan Harbin	Lisa Pope

Words on Hymns: *Shall We Gather at the River*

Our processional hymn for July 9 was *Shall We Gather at the River*. It was originally called *Beautiful River* and subsequently titled *Hanson Place*. Written in 1864 by American poet and gospel music composer Robert Lowry (1826–1899) the title “Hanson Place” is a reference to the original Hanson Place Baptist Church in Brooklyn, New York, where Lowry, a Baptist minister, sometimes served.

The primary images of the text are drawn from Revelation 22:1-2: “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

1864 was a difficult year in New York City, as it was everywhere in the North and South. During the “draft riots” of the previous summer, Confederate sympathizers in the city had ransacked the homes of abolitionists and free African American people and burned down two Protestant churches and the Colored Orphan Asylum in the heart of Manhattan. It was a summer of oppressive heat and humidity. Fever swept the city, confining hundreds to sickbeds. It was also a summer of high anxiety and relentless misery.

Lowry describes the genesis of the hymn:

One afternoon in July, 1864, when I was pastor at Hanson Place Baptist Church, Brooklyn, the weather was oppressively hot, and I was lying on a lounge in a state of physical exhaustion. ...My imagination began to take itself wings. Visions of the future passed before me with startling vividness. The imagery of the apocalypse took the form of a tableau. Brightest of all were the throne, the heavenly river, and the gathering of the saints. ...I began to wonder why the

hymn writers had said so much about the “river of death” and so little about the “pure water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.” As I mused, the words began to construct themselves. They came first as a question of Christian inquiry, “Shall we gather?” Then they broke in chorus, “Yes, we’ll gather.” On this question and answer the hymn developed itself. The music came with the hymn.

Lowry studied theology at the University of Lewisburg (now Bucknell University), graduating in 1854 and then teaching literature there from 1869–1875. He became known for his gospel songs while ministering in Brooklyn, collaborating often with William H. Doane in producing gospel song collections. His famous gospel compositions also include *Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*. He also composed tunes for texts written by others, such as *Marching to Zion*, a camp meeting version of Isaac Watts’ text, *Come, We That Love the Lord*, and *Need*, a tune for Annie Hawks’ hymn, *I Need Thee Every Hour*.

When asked about writing a hymn, Lowry said, “It must be readily apprehended by the Christian consciousness, coming forth from the experience of the writer, and clothed in strong and inspiring words.”

Shall We Gather at the River has been used in an astonishing number of genres throughout the world. Aaron Copland included it as part of his *Old American Songs*. The song was often used in the soundtracks of Westerns, particularly those of director John Ford (as it was one of his favorite hymns), and it is featured in many of Ford’s most famous films, including *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers*. It is also featured prominently in numerous other movies, ranging from *Cat Ballou* to *Elmer Gantry*.

In Sweden, an 1876 hymn set to the same melody was one of the most popular songs of the widespread Swedish revivalist movement. A song

that used the same melody, partly mocking the religious message of the Swedish original, became one of the most popular drinking songs at Swedish universities.

In Germany, the melody of the hymn became a well-known Christmas carol. In 1937, the tune was adapted in Japan for a popular song, and then parodied in a juvenile song. The parodied version of the song remains popular among Japanese children and adults to this day. The University of

Antioquia in Medellin, Colombia, uses the melody in its official song.

The song was sung live at the 1980 funeral of American Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. There have been many recordings of the hymn over the years, including ones by Patti Page, Burl Ives, and Willie Nelson.

Carol Dunlap

Odeon Concert Series Schedule

The Odeon Concert Series offers the community beautiful music and outstanding artistry, featuring both local and international musicians. All concerts are held at St. Patrick's (3241 Brush Drive, Falls Church, VA, 22042). Although tickets are not required, a suggested donation of \$20 helps to defray the costs and enable the concert series to continue. Please note the following concert schedule for 2023–2024 and mark your calendar for performances at 4 p.m. on the following Sundays:

September 17, 2023

October 15, 2023

November 19, 2023

January 7, 2024

April 14, 2024

May 5, 2024

June 16, 2024

Start Shopping for the Annual School Supply Drive

While it may seem as if school just finished for the summer, students will be heading back next month! Knowing that many families struggle to provide all that students need, St. John's will continue its tradition of collecting supplies to support local schools and help alleviate the strain on families.

Start shopping now for pens, pencils, glue sticks, notebooks, folders, crayons, highlighters, pencil boxes, and other supplies, as well as backpacks for younger and older students. In mid-July, collection boxes will be put out at the church. St. John's also plans to offer a blessing for the students and staff who will use the supplies over the coming year. The Blessing of Backpacks will be part of the August 13 worship service, so that backpacks and supplies can then be delivered to schools and students before schools reopen on August 21. Thank you for participating in this important outreach project!



Parish News

Upcoming Events:

➤ Linda Simmons' planned presentation for St. John's Juneteenth Commemoration had to be postponed last month. Watch for an announcement of the new date in mid-to-late July. Meanwhile, check out arlingtonhistoricalsociety.org and fairfaxhistoricalsociety.org to plan your own tour to local sites important to African American and Civil Rights history in the area.

➤ The St. John's Book Club is on a summer hiatus until **Tuesday, September 12**. At the September meeting, participants will discuss *Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr. This imaginative novel tells the tale of Anna, Omeir, Seymour, Zeno, and Konstance, dreamers and outsiders whose lives span different centuries, countries, and galaxies but are still gloriously intertwined. Pick up a copy over the summer and plan to attend in September!

Thank You to:

➤ Everyone who helped with St. John's Glencarlyn Day activities on June 3.

➤ All those who brought refreshments and attended the Longest Day celebration on June 21. Although the weather did not cooperate, a good time was still had by all!

We celebrate with all who have birthdays in July and August:

Marshall Adair, Nolan Baynham, Carolyn Corlett, Chelsea Kaufman, Elise Kaufman, Nathan Lewis, Virginia Pearson, Bill Pritchard, Lynn Robinson, Christian Tallent, Jones Tallent, Sawyer Tallent, and Christine Williams.

We celebrate with those observing anniversaries in July and August:

Michelle and Nathan Lewis; Lisa Pope and Justin Cohen; and Jones and Sharon Tallent.

LOGOS

LOGOS is changing to a bi-monthly publication schedule.

Lisa Pope, LOGOS Editor

Email articles to logos@stjohnsarlingtonva.org. The deadline for the September/October issue is August 25.

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.