



# 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 2024/January 2025

**Celebrate Christmas and Welcome the New Year at St. John's and St. Patrick's**



As we celebrate Christmas and prepare to say goodbye to 2024, join the Christmas Eve Service at St. John's at 5 p.m. on December 24 or at St. Patrick's at 7 p.m. for Christmas music, followed by the service at 7:30 p.m. Services will not be held at St. John's or St. Patrick's on Christmas Day. We will gather again on December 29 for Sunday worship at 9 a.m. at St. John's and 11 a.m. at St. Patrick's.

Looking ahead to the New Year, volunteers from St. John's will bag food at the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) on Friday, January 10, at 6:30 p.m. Please contact Faye Pritchard at 703-931-2168 if you would like to join in this community ministry. You can also leave nonperishable grocery items for AFAC at the back of the sanctuary, or write a check to St. John's and include a note in the memo line that the donation is for AFAC. Thank you for continuing to support this valuable ministry!

You can also welcome the New Year with beautiful music at the next performance in the Odeon Concert Series on Sunday, January 26, at 4 p.m. at St. Patrick's. Although tickets are not required, a suggested donation of \$25 helps to defray the costs and enable the concert series to continue. For details on the featured musicians and more information about the concert series, please visit [odeonchambermusicseries.org](http://odeonchambermusicseries.org).

Stay tuned for information on the date for the Annual Meeting in 2025, where we will reflect on the past year and plan for the future.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## Serving the Community Through the Little Free Food Pantry



Thank you to everyone who has supported the Little Free Food Pantry with food and monetary donations since the pantry's dedication in September. The outdoor pantry is available 24/7 at St. John's and sits directly beneath a streetlight for safety. This important community ministry continues to grow. St. John's accepts non-perishable, unexpired food for the pantry that is canned or boxed (no glass containers), in both individual and household sizes, either ready-to-eat or needing to be cooked. Good options for donations include:

- Cans and containers of tuna, soup, vegetables, fruit, peanut butter, and sauces, etc.
- Shelf-stable milk in both plain and chocolate flavors.
- Boxes and bags of pasta, beans, cereal, crackers, and entree mixes, etc.
- Individually wrapped granola bars, snacks, and treats.
- Individually wrapped sets of plastic utensils.
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, deodorant, etc.) in either individual or travel sizes.
- Individual size bottles of water and other beverages (no glass containers).

The pantry now also includes prayer cards that patrons can take, along with blank paper for anyone who wishes to leave a prayer request with the parish. St. John's will include any such requests in its weekly worship services.

Please visit <https://www.paypal.com/ncp/payment/8ASCHW3B7DZ6A> to donate in support of the pantry, or checks can be made out to St. John's (please list "LFFP" in the memo line).

## Words on Hymns: *There's a Star in the East*

Our gradual hymn for Sunday, December 29, will be the spiritual *Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow*, found in *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. The song is sometimes called *There's a Star in the East*. The following is excerpted from C. Michael Hawn's article for the United Methodist Church.

African American author James Weldon Johnson mentions the relative paucity of spirituals devoted to Christmas and suggests this was because enslaved Africans seeking liberation preferred to think of Jesus as a powerful king (*Ride on, King Jesus*) rather than a vulnerable infant.

The celebration of Christmas for enslaved Africans varied from plantation to plantation. Some observed the tradition, while others barely noticed it. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) described the life of enslaved workers between Christmas and New Year's Day:

The days between Christmas and New Year's day are allowed as holidays; and, accordingly, we were not required to perform any labor, more than to feed and take care of the stock. This time we regarded as our own, by the grace of our masters; and we therefore used or abused it nearly as we pleased. Those of us who had families at a distance were generally allowed to spend the whole six days in their society. The staid, sober, thinking and industrious ones of our number would employ themselves in making corn-brooms, mats, horse-collars and baskets; and another class of us would spend the time in hunting opossums, hares, and coons. But by far the larger part engaged in such sports and merriments as playing ball, wrestling, running foot-races, fiddling, dancing, drinking whisky; and this latter mode of spending time was by far the most agreeable to the feelings of our masters.

Douglass goes on to say that slave masters did allow a change from the normal routine for the

benefit of their enslaved workers, but also for their own convenience. He concludes that the result of relaxing the rules and encouraging sporting events and the consuming of alcohol was from the perspective of the masters, “the most effective means in the hands of slaveholders in keeping down the spirit of insurrection.” Indeed, abandoning the established holiday practices would lead to an uprising.

The first known publication of the hymn was a text-only printing in the body of a short story entitled *Christmas Gifts* by Ruth McEnery Stuart (1849–1917) in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. In the story, slaves were participating in a Christmas celebration hosted by their Louisiana plantation owner family. During an entertaining dance, two of the slaves began to sing the spiritual, *Rise Up, Shepherd and Follow*. Stuart was known for her use of dialect, and the spiritual was published in that form.

The spiritual's first appearance with music was in *The Southern Workman*. The hymn was disseminated more widely in a songbook, *Religious Folksongs of the Negro as Sung on the Plantations*, and was subtitled *Christmas Plantation Song*. This songbook, as with other similar books, was a collection of spirituals that were first heard and then transcribed as a manuscript for publication. The spirituals were passed down orally on the basis of memory. There is a challenge in notating any kind of folk music, as the same tune may have numerous variations based on who is singing it. The songs may be recognizable and fundamentally the same, but there will be unique interpretations.

This spiritual did not begin to appear in denominational hymnals—either African American or mainline collections—until the 1980s. The usual second stanza of the hymn refers to the angel's song (Luke 2:14).

Carol Dunlap

## Parish News

### Upcoming Events:

➤ The St. John's Book Club will meet on **Tuesday, January 7, at 7:30 p.m.** to discuss *A Circle of Quiet* by Madeleine L'Engle. This memoir by the author of *A Wrinkle in Time* details her search for meaning and purpose as she considers the roles that creativity, family, and faith play in her life. The selection for **Tuesday, February 4**, is *The Sweetness of Water* by Nathan Harris. The novel tells the story of two freedmen and brothers who take refuge on a homestead in Georgia following the Emancipation Proclamation. Pick up copies now and plan to join the conversation in January and February. All are welcome!

### Thank You to:

➤ Liz White and Lynn Robinson for organizing St. John's community Caroling Party on December 8 and to all those who helped with set-up and clean-up.

➤ All of the St. John's volunteers who check and restock the Little Free Food Pantry regularly.

➤ Peter Olivere and Sandy Winger for continuing to serve as St. John's sound and livestream coordinators.

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

Louisa Bennett, Patricia Broida, Galen Henderson, Barbara Olivere, Camron Tallent, Eloise Tallent, and Vlad Wien-Kandil.

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

Dave and Carol Dunlap.

#### LOGOS

LOGOS has a bi-monthly publication schedule.

Lisa Pope, LOGOS Editor

Email articles to [logos@stjohnsarlingtonva.org](mailto:logos@stjohnsarlingtonva.org).  
The deadline for the February/March issue is January 31.

#### 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.



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