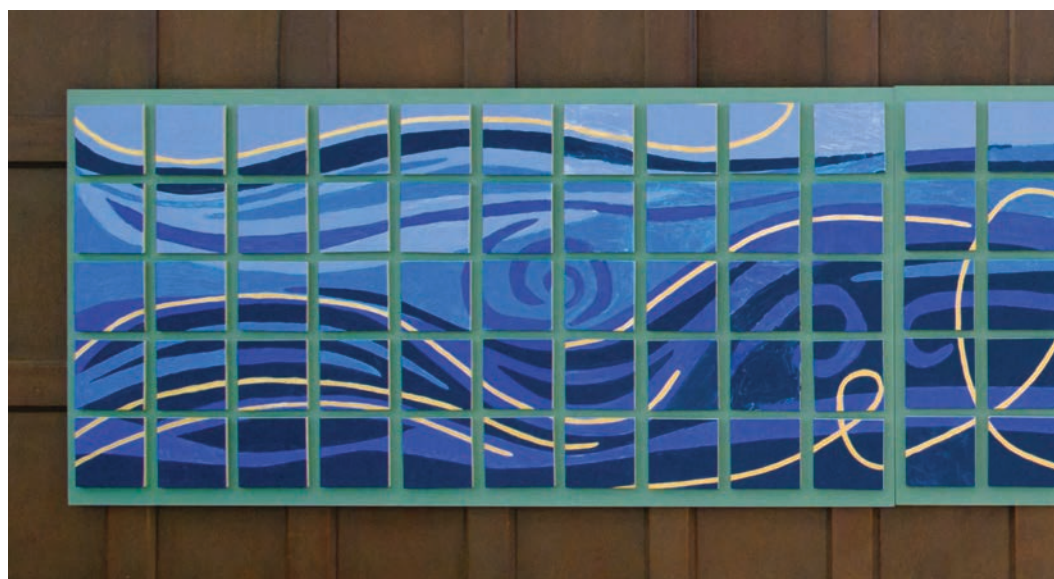




by Wendy Claire Barrie

THIS year, Saint Mark's Cathedral was the recipient of a generous grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship which allowed us to imagine and expand upon the theme of "Cathedral as Pilgrimage." From Cathedral Day on April 17, 2024, through January 2025, we have created different paths for people—long-time parishioners and curious passers-by—to discover sacred spaces here through the embodied experience of spiritual journey.

At Cathedral Day, representatives of parishes from all over western Washington poured water from their local watersheds into the baptismal font just before Bishop Melissa Skelton led the congregation in renewing their baptismal vows, and before more than 150 people were either confirmed, received into the Episcopal Church, or reaffirmed in their faith. We felt the cool drops on our faces from juniper branches dipped in the holy water



and flung joyously toward us with the invitation to remember our baptisms.

Three tours of Saint Mark's—virtual, self-guided, and docent-led—launched on Cathedral Day. From July 8 through August 18, the cathedral hosted open hours on Sunday afternoons, Monday evenings (in conjunction with Cathedral Yoga), and Wednesday during the day, with tours, music recitals, and opportunities for prayer and quiet contemplation.

Throughout the summer, we welcomed current and former members of Saint Mark's, first-time visitors, neighbors, children from Amistad School, residents of Tent City, joggers, and even sailors who noticed the cathedral from Lake Union. The heart of the summer program was a dynamic visual arts component, three installations designed by Sandy Nelson and created with the help of many Saint Mark's parishioners: *Communion of Saints*, *Waters of Baptism*, and *Hands of Pilgrimage*.

Communion of Saints is a multimedia assemblage of gold plates with simple faces painted on them, three clear glass goblets filled with wine-red coiled cord, three baskets of bread made of painted sponges, and screen-printed napkins with the words "Body of Christ, Bread of Heaven" set on three

tables covered with gold embroidery. We are reminded that there's room for everyone at God's table, food enough for all, and a "great cloud of witnesses" join us there.

At least thirty different people painted the 150 wooden squares that make up the mural *Waters of Baptism*. Four different shades of blue paint — royal blue, teal, light blue, and aqua — form an image of flowing water, through which a stripe of gold, symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, dips and swirls.

Several hundred cotton art handler's gloves dyed green and strung on wire with gold safety pins swoop from the cathedral's soaring ceiling in *Hands of Pilgrimage*. Inspired by the bishop's laying-on of hands at Cathedral Day as well as hands held open in love and service, each glove has been shaped by a human hand and holds a folded





piece of paper, many with the single word “eternity” written in pencil; others with words left by visitors this summer, all of them extending over us in blessing.

Other Sacred Spaces offerings will take place this fall. September’s event is “**Remember Your Baptism!**” Dean Thomason was inspired by a similar event in England to host this inter-generational pilgrimage to the cathedral. It’s an opportunity to celebrate and reconnect with godparents, parents, sponsors, and those who are remembering their baptisms and to creatively explore the promises we make to follow in the way of Jesus.

In October, we’re expanding the invitation of our annual **Blessing of the Animals** on the Feast of St. Francis to the broader community including animal shelters and veterinarians’ offices and local dogwalkers. A pet photographer will be on hand to commemorate the occasion.

On Friday, November 15 at 7 p.m., the young and the young at heart are invited to come to the cathedral in their pajamas for a special service called **Cozy Compline**. Milk and cookies will be served, the children’s picture book *Candle Walk* will be read, then the lights will dim and the Schola of

Saint Mark’s Choir School will offer Compline, the Church’s ancient bedtime prayers.

Sunday, January 19 will bring one more opportunity to widen the circle of community at Saint Mark’s with lunch and an **afternoon of service** with several of our ministry partners as we commemorate the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The golden thread woven through these different events and experiences is that spaces become sacred because of what happens in them: we strengthen and deepen our connections to the Holy and each other, in formal worship and informal gath-

erings, through art and music and play and silence. We feel the echoes of people at prayer in this place for nearly one hundred years and those prayers embolden us for the work of being God’s people in the world. ♦

