



## ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

### News Release

### **St. Andrew's Flower Festival and its Artistic Director Celebrate 20 Years Gala, bazaar and flowers highlight weekend, Nov. 2-4, in Norfolk**

(Norfolk, Va., Oct. 10, 2012) – Since 1992, Stephen Batten has dedicated each fall to the St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Flower Festival. As the event's artistic director, he oversees the design and execution of more than 75 artfully displayed arrangements that adorn the 100-year-old church in celebration of the [Feast of All Saints](#), held the first Sunday in November. Over those two decades, Batten has created 20 inspired floral designs, each based on a featured hymn. With the help of church volunteers, he has placed approximately 60,000 stems of fresh flowers and greenery and witnessed the festival grow from a modest start to a widely anticipated community event.

This year's festival, to be presented Nov. 2-4 at 1009 W. Princess Anne Road in Norfolk's West Ghent neighborhood, will be Batten's last as artistic director.

"Steve has given so much of himself to this festival over the years," said The Rev. John Rohrs, Rector of [St. Andrew's](#). "He puts such great thought and care into the design that the flowers really become an expression of prayer and thanksgiving to God. I think of Steve as a floral theologian, and we're all grateful that he has shared his gift with us for so long."

An interest in flowers may seem unlikely for a retired nuclear training specialist, but Batten always had enjoyed growing them at his Chesapeake home and garden. It wasn't until the late-1980s, however, that his artistic side blossomed. That's when a St. Andrew's Flower Guild member approached him about handling flower arrangements for a Sunday service. Batten spent hours on the two altar arrangements, but he wasn't happy with the outcome. He took a few design courses and devoted more time to honing his skills. Then a few years later, on a tour of Great Britain, he happened upon a one-room, stone church near the English village of Thetford, in Norfolk.

"I was taking a break from the tour and decided to look inside this little church," said Batten. "The interior was decorated completely with white and blue flowers. I was overwhelmed."

When he returned home, Batten poured over the photographs he'd taken of the small church and researched the tradition of English flower festivals, begun after World War II as a way to raise funds to rebuild churches that had fallen during the Blitz.

In 1992, as St. Andrew's parishioners planned for the church's annual fall bazaar, Batten suggested they decorate the church with flowers as an added feature.

"And that's how we started," he said.

Every year since, St. Andrew's has presented its annual Flower Festival, in concert with the Feast of All Saints, with a bazaar and bake sale, church tours, special music and services. Proceeds benefit St. Andrew's [outreach ministries](#).

This year's theme is "I Feel the Wind of God Today," based on a traditional English melody folk tune called "Kingsfold," arranged by John Ness Beck with lyrics by Jessie Adams. Batten's floral design was inspired by both the song's words and the church itself.

"This is a hymn about getting on a ship, sailing away and how God can help you through times of crisis," said Batten. "The sanctuary of St Andrew's is designed in the shape of an upside down ship, so the arrangements will reflect the provisions required before setting sail – all the things you'd need to sustain your voyage."

Festival-goers will witness a bounty of harvest food and colors – yellow sunflowers, dried grasses, gourds, corn, wheat and pumpkins, adorning each window and pew, in addition to the narthex, altar, lady altar and baptismal font.

Batten is quick to add that the execution of these arrangements is by no means a one-man show. A team of about 15 volunteers reports to work days before the festival to arrange the intricate floral displays. Some have worked with Batten for many years, and he is confident that several could easily take over his duties in the years ahead.

"There are some talented parishioners in the wings, and until I step away, no one else will step up," he said.

Batten won't be far away, though. Friends will find him at church, in his garden and, on occasion, at the [National Cathedral](#) where he serves as "house father" for the flower guild seminars.

He's pleased with what the festival has meant to those who have enjoyed it over the years, and he's excited to think about how it will continue to evolve.

"The wind, we don't know where it comes from, or where it goes, but we do know we feel it. That is how spiritual change is brought," he said. "You don't know when that small voice will come and give you a bright idea."

Located in West Ghent, [St. Andrew's Church Episcopal Church](http://www.standrewsnorfolk.org) is a parish of worship, spiritual growth, acceptance and healing centered in the Eucharist. Services are held Sundays at 8 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. For information, visit [www.standrewsnorfolk.org](http://www.standrewsnorfolk.org) or call (757) 622-5530.

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#### **St. Andrew's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Flower Festival Schedule**

- **Nov. 2**—Festival blessing, opening gala and silent auction (\$20 per person), 6:15-9:15 p.m.
- **Nov. 3**—Church tours, music programs and the festival bazaar, featuring sales of baked goods, gourmet foods, home décor, women's clothing, Christmas tree and wreath orders, flower and garden accessories, jewelry and organic skincare products. A luncheon (\$10) will be served, and concessions are available for purchase. Festival is open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **Nov. 4**—All Saints' Sunday Eucharist at 8 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. An organ concert performed by Dr. James W. Kosnik, of Old Dominion University and St. Andrew's, takes place at 4:30 p.m., followed by a service of Choral Evensong.