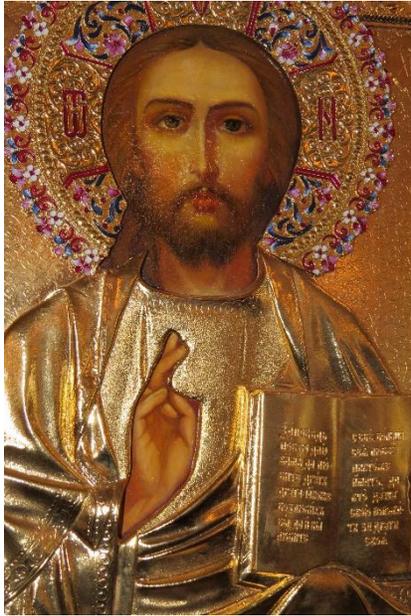


Reformed Episcopal Church of the Covenant
6429 Merriman Road
Roanoke, VA 24018

New Religious Russian Icon Donated to Local Church

Mr. Bryan Cull, owner of I and E Restoration and Remodeling, Inc. in Roanoke, has generously donated a golden Russian Icon to the Reformed Episcopal Church of the Covenant in Cave Spring.

George Cull, the father of Bryan, acquired the contemporary icon from his associates in Russia during the early 1990s. Recently, while doing some construction and repair work for the Church of the Covenant, his son, Bryan, decided to donate them the small icon to enhance the church's interesting art collection he saw during the work.



The Russian Icon is an image of Christ Almighty, or “Pantokrator”. This is one of the earliest and most common images in Eastern Orthodox Churches, and it is frequently used in church iconography and in church religious and educational decorations. This is the image of Christ, shown with a halo, holding a copy of the New Testament or the four Gospels, and with his right hand he is giving a sign of teaching or of benediction.

In this icon, Christ is shown as a humble man, looking out from the golden robes and gilded glory given to him by men. The gold surrounding him is both deep and luxurious, showing how much humans venerate the risen Christ. In addition, looking out to all the world from behind the gold and glory, Christ is also shown as human.

However, in an unusual manifestation of his humanity, the image in the icon looks directly at the viewer, and indeed, is cleverly painted so wherever you go or stand in front of the icon, the eyes of Christ himself are always upon you. When this artistic attribute of light, shadow and linear perspective was demonstrated to the youngest daughter of Bryan Cull, she immediately walked in front, and then went back and forth to either side, to see the image. No matter where she stood, up close or distant, right or left, the calm and loving eyes of Christ the Pantokrator remained on her, and she thought it was “Cool.”



Engraved in the gold are some Russian verses of scripture and poetry from the Gospels.

The Reformed Episcopal Church separated from the Protestant Episcopal Church of the US in 1873, over the issue open communion to all Christians. The Reformed Episcopal Church also retains the traditional Book of Common Prayer (either from 1662 or the 1928 editions) and traditional hymnals for worship of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Holy Communion.

The Covenant Church in Roanoke (established in 1985) is noted for other artwork in the otherwise rather austere church and parish hall, including some religious calligraphy, painted windows in both the Muslim and Jewish traditions of worship, and with some local artwork from Jessamine Shumate. This Anglican church also has a framed antique English military Ensign flag which was used as a decoration during the victory parade for the returning allied World War I servicemen in London from 1918.

The church that stands opposite Starkey School on Merriman Road is a small rural parish, and the Reverend Richard Workowski admits (with a smile!), that the only flaw in the church are there are too many single men in the congregation.

Captions: Close up of the image of the Pantocrator on the icon.
 Bryan Cull and the Rev. Richard Workowski in front of the Russian icon.