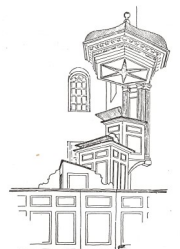
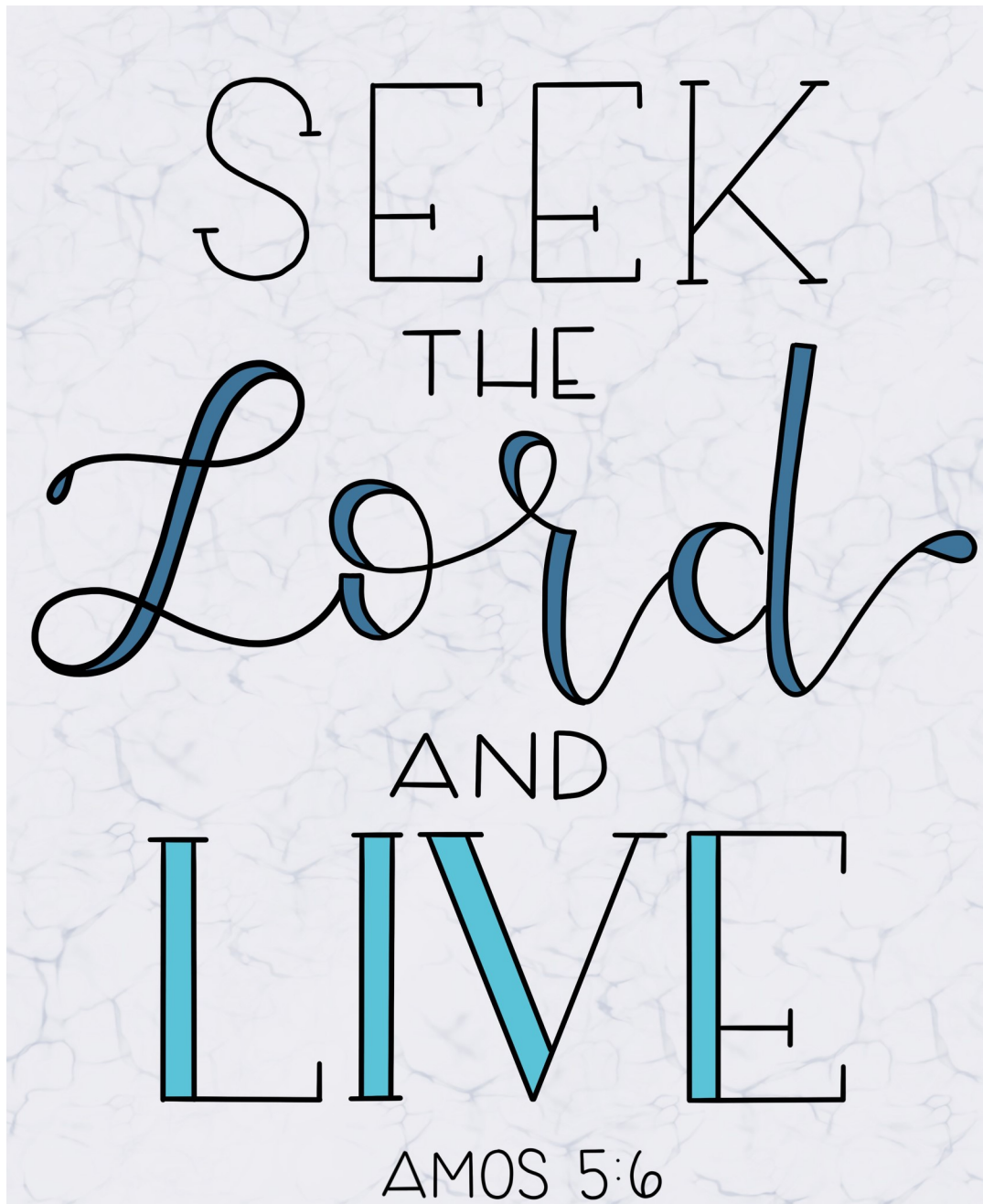




AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Cross Section

All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27





CROSS SECTION

Aquia Episcopal Church

2938 Jefferson Davis Hwy.
P.O. Box 275
Stafford, VA 22555

Contact us:

(540) 659-4007
office@aquiachurch.org
www.aquiachurch.org

Office hours:

8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Monday– Friday,
except Tuesdays (closed)

Rector

The Rev. Jay Morris

Assistant Rector

The Rev. James Rickenbaker

Treasurer

Chris Arey

Music Director

Trystan Bennett

Dir. Christian Education

Kristen Morgan

Parish Administrator

Dennise LaBarre

Executive Assistant

Sue Selz

Nursery Supervisor

Christine Hammer

Nursery Assistant

Dawna Spaulding

FROM THE RECTOR

A Few Good Women and Men

I don't know what you have heard about the work of our vestry, or what you have experienced in your previous service on this vestry or a church board elsewhere, or what you have assumed about what the vestry does. But you know what happens when you assume. And what you have heard or experienced before does not always indicate accurately what will happen in the future.

Some folks suppose that election to the vestry involves campaigning as though for political office, or that all the power and prestige within a congregation centers on the vestry, or that you should avoid serving on the vestry because of some past reports that vestry meetings involve ten-hour business sessions week after week, with lots of contention and disputes keeping members angry. All of that is nonsense here.

At Aquia Church, the full vestry meets once a month, generally on the third Tuesday evening. We start with a meal at 6:30 p.m., which is really handy for folks who are arriving directly from a full day of work or other activity. Vestry members take turns providing the food, so that we can truly serve one another. During dinner, we get to know each other better as friends, not just as colleagues stuck with each other. Our formal discussion begins at 7 p.m. with an opening prayer and the Lord's prayer, followed by updates about the parish's finances, a review of the last meeting's minutes, the consideration of new business, and reports from various leaders. Time flies until the closing prayer occurs around 9 p.m.—sometimes even earlier.

Aquia's vestry is organized into three regular committees: administration (to cover such issues as contracts and employment), buildings and grounds (for managing our main campus, our rectory in Aquia Harbour, and our property at Clifton Chapel in the Widewater neighborhood), and finance. Among our lay leaders are the committee chairpersons, the junior warden (who *ex officio* leads the B&G committee), and the senior warden. Each committee



holds its own monthly meeting in order to conduct preliminary work in advance of the full vestry meeting and make carefully considered recommendations to the whole group.

Over the years I have watched the vestry grow and mature to be less like a legislative body or a corporate board, and increasingly what the vestry should be: a real ministry group of folks seeking God's guidance and learning from each other as they collaborate for the good of the church, the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the advance of his kingdom. That shared ministry is the only way in which we can work together as we should, as partners in the Gospel serving an end greater than ourselves. Even our disagreements inevitably lead to a better solution. Some of our duties are admittedly challenging and tedious, but we manage to find ways to laugh with each other alongside the deeply satisfying joy of being servants of God and his people.

As we prepare to entrust some new vestry members with these important responsibilities at our parish's annual meeting in early January 2019, we are on the lookout for a few good women and men who hear God's call to serve and who respond faithfully to that call. Perhaps you are one such person; perhaps you know such a person and will give him or her encouragement to serve. Any vestry committee would benefit from the talent and wise counsel of such dedicated people. Blue forms for self-nomination will be available for pickup at worship or from the church office later this month.

Jay Morris

FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Thank You

Dear Family in Christ,
Grace to you from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank our God for you, especially for your willingness to care for those in need. The love that you show to others in this parish is truly amazing and is clearly representative of the deep faith that you hold as Christians. As a recent recipient of that outpouring of love, I can say that it is truly a humbling experience. As most of you now know, I developed shingles about four weeks ago. The recovery process has been arduous since the shingles were in the nerve cluster in my right ear. (I can assure you it was as painful as it sounds.) After a three-day hospital stay, lots of meds, and a few weeks to recover, I am almost back to normal. The final things that remain are for the Bell's palsy to subside and for the hearing in my right ear to return. Your prayers have played an important role in that recovery. The meals you brought were delicious and a wonderful gift. The cards were a great reminder of the many prayers that have been sent up for my healing. The emails of concern and love were heartfelt and showed the worry that you have felt for me. For all of this, I thank God for the folks of Aquia Church.

I am reminded in this of a couple of sayings of our Lord. The first saying is, "And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42). The care that the Rickenbaker family received during this ordeal was a gift from God and was inspired by the love that we all have received from our Lord Jesus Christ. Such a love is meant to be shared within the church, so that we can be a beacon of the light and love of Jesus Christ for the world. When the world sees how we love one another, we have an inroad to invite those people into the fold and into relationship with Jesus.

The second saying comes from Matt. 25: "Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry

and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'" When you show love for a brother or sister Christian in any kind of need, you show love to our Lord Jesus Christ himself. As this Parable of the Sheep and Goats tells us, those who show love for fellow Christians in need will enter into the eternal reward that has been won for us in Christ's cross and resurrection. The way that you have cared for the Rickenbakers in our need is how we are all supposed to live as Christians.

As one of your two clergy, I am proud of this Christian response. It is representative of the faith and devotion to the triune God that we have at Aquia Church. Keep up the Gospel work! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

*In Christ+,
Fr. James*

*I thank God for
the folks of Aquia Church.*



AQUIA CHURCH VESTRY

Dickie Boes

Finance Committee Chairperson

Curt Bradford

Bob Brandon

Junior Warden

Building & Grounds

Committee Chairperson

Jackie Chichester

Jean Golas

Administration

Committee Chairperson

Joseph Howard

Senior Warden

Doug McGinty

Register

Mary Nixon

Gary Perkins

Ethan Shoen

Youth Representative

John Sondermann

Assistant Register

Kathy Trevarthen



FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN



Welcome to Worship

Give thanks to the Lord,
for He is good;
His love endures forever.
(Psalm 107:1)

Hopefully everyone is back into normal routine now that schools have started: students are off to college; businesses, military activities and government agencies have everyone on board; and all are getting back into form taking care of necessary work.

At Aquia, as you probably know, once school starts, the activities are numerous and come at you fast and furiously. After Homecoming Sunday, the big-ticket item is Fall Fest on the first Saturday in October. In addition, I just learned that there will be a reception for our retiring bishop, the Rt. Rev. Shannon Johnston, on Oct. 11 at 6 p.m. He officially retires at the end of the annual diocesan convention in November. What an amazing opportunity to showcase our historic campus and our new building!

BOLO, BOLO, BOLO!!! (Be on look out!) for the types of events in which you want to participate this fall. There are numerous opportunities, and we can use the talents of all of the mem-

bers of our parish family to make these events successful and memorable. Everyone has something he or she can contribute to help our parish shine. We are blessed at Aquia to have so many dedicated Christians who take on so many tasks to keep us a vital and vibrant parish.

We are well into the second month of our new worship schedule. Please let Father Jay or Father James know about any comments you may have about this change, or speak with any vestry member. From my personal standpoint, I have been pleased to see additional members of the parish attending the 7:30 a.m. service, which makes it more enjoyable for me, and allows me to get to know parishioners who I have not met or dealt with in the past. This new schedule is similar to worship schedules in other Episcopal churches of which I have been a member in the past. Let's see how this can work for Aquia.

Thank you for all you do for Aquia.

Joe Howard

Increased Use of Parish Hall

As you may recall, in December of 2017, we welcomed a small Hispanic Pentecostal congregation to meet in the parish hall (lower level of the parish house building) for their worship. Iglesia Cristiana el Camino first formed as a church in a home in North Stafford in May 2017 and quickly outgrew that home. Their meeting schedule of Thursday evenings, Saturday nights, and Sunday afternoons fit nicely into our church's calendar without interfering with any ongoing commitments we had for the parish house to other community organizations and Aquia Church ministry groups. This small church is also using the old nursery room for Christian Education for their little ones. They have proven to be good tenants and continue to be very grateful for the space that we offer them.

As of August of this year, we have another small congregation worshipping

in the parish hall early Sunday mornings and meeting on Tuesday evenings for Bible study. The Land of Promise—Stafford is a church plant of its parent church in Fredericksburg. They were offered a six-month lease as approved by the vestry.

Starting last month, Aquia Church's own Cub Scout Pack is meeting regularly in the parish hall on Wednesday evenings. Gentle yoga classes continue every Friday morning. The parish hall's 'dance card' (calendar) is completely full. We are grateful to God for His continued guidance for the good stewardship of our parish house building, which was built to His glory and for the spread of His Kingdom by the members of Aquia Episcopal Church in 1960. For further information, feel free to contact Mary Jane Cole (maryjane@cfsw.biz).

Mary Jane Cole



That All May
Know Him



VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Aug. 20, 2018

Dinner and Fellowship (host: Jackie Chichester). In attendance were Rector Fr. Jay Morris, Senior Warden Joe Howard, Jr. Warden Bob Brandon, Gary Perkins, Jackie Chichester, Jean Golas, Dickie Boes, Asst. Register John Sondermann, and Register Doug McGinty. Also in attendance was the Treasurer Chris Arey. Fr. Jay opened the Business Session with prayer. *[Subsequent events, if any, are italicized and bracketed.]*

Business Session:

Treasurer's Report by Chris Arey. Chris recommended consolidating the pest control contracts for all the church buildings. Presently there is one contract for each building.

Minutes from Previous Meeting by Register Doug McGinty. Discussed and approved.

- R-2018-12: Employee Health Insurance Adjustments (approved 7/17)
- R-2018-13: Adjustments to the 2018 Budget (approved 7/17)
- Covenant for Aquia Church Capital Improvement Fund (approved 7/17)
- Report on 2017 Financial Records and Practices (approved 7/17)
- New Bylaws (approved 7/17)
- Habalis Construction Work in Historic Church (final payment approved 7/17)
- Schedule for Worship Services (approved 7/17)

New Business

- R-2018-14: Elevator Inspection Contract (Administration and Finance). The vestry approved as amended.

Reports from Vestry Committees

Administration, by Jean Golas.

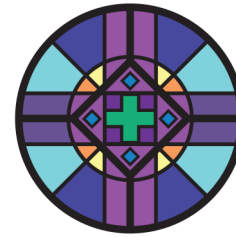
- The coffee pots in the great hall turn off after three hours.
- The big sign for the other church was taken down from the 1960 parish house and two small signs were put up for the other church. *[On Sunday, Sept. 2, 2018, the large sign was posted by the church entrance.]*
- Citrus Sales are lined up with the same company.
- The parish inventory is on-going. The bylaws have been edited.

Finance, by Dickie Boes.

- Initial preparation for the annual pledge drive is underway.

Building and Grounds, by Bob Brandon.

- The Church passed the fire marshal inspection, except that parish hall lacks 3-prong grounds.
- Chris Wanner is repairing the cemetery fence.
- The water main has been repaired.
- Jason Stoltz paid for most of the work and needs to be reimbursed.
- Dennis and Patricia Springer's son-in-law, Morgan, did a great job with the trencher for that project. The committee recommended a gift to show appreciation for his work.
- The Robert B. Payne Company made a bid of \$900 for a thermostat system at the Clifton Chapel.
- Fr. Jay sent a letter to Stafford County some time ago about the \$57K certificate of deposit for erosion control at the Christian Formation and Fellowship Building site.



Vestry Highlights

Reports from Junior Warden and Senior Warden

Jr. Warden Bob Brandon delivered the Building and Grounds Committee report.

Sr. Warden Joe Howard indicated that the committee reports were sufficient and complete.

Report from Rector

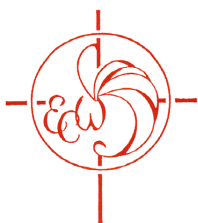
Fr. Jay discussed feedback on the schedule changes. He has received no negative replies so far, and attendance for the 10 a.m. services on August 12 and 19 were both 98. With respect to the \$10K remaining from a recent donation, options were considered such as a speaker system for the church or new furniture for the corner classroom in the lower level of the Christian Formation and Fellowship Building. The third capital campaign will be starting with a \$100K challenge grant. He asked whether a consultant should be hired and about the timing for the capital campaign and annual pledge drive.

Upcoming Dates

- 8/25 All-you-can-eat seafood feast
- 9/9 First Sunday of Sunday school
- 9/16 Homecoming
- 9/18 Vestry meeting (hosts: Golas and Nixon)
- *[Subsequently, a 9/21 Movie Night and Campout was announced.]*

Good of the Order, Closing Prayer by Fr. Jay, and Adjournment





October 11, 2018

Epiphany Episcopal Church

3301 Hidden Meadow Drive, Oak Hill

Faith Journeys

Join us for a day of Fellowship, Education and Holy Eucharist with Bishop Bob Ihloff

Hear UTO Grant recipients, Claire Hitchins and Mark Heisey of Charis Community

Hear "Just Ask" spokesman, Bill Woolf, on Combating Human Trafficking in Virginia

Learn about The Triangle of Hope and Mother's Union Initiatives from

The Rev. Rock Higgins and the Rev. Cayce Ramey

Contact **Briget Kane** for registration information: bkwings_n_things@yahoo.com

Registrations must be received by Oct. 1, 2018

The Episcopal Church Women (ECW) empowers women to do Christ's ministry in the world.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

Fall Fest is Aquia's annual festival which remains the official kick-off to all things fall, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Our departments, which include crafts, food and gardening, invite you to shop, decorate, and find new and old treasures and keepsakes. Those traditions of cleaning out the garage, donating, and supporting the Flea Market and Live Auction are 62 years old this year.

The support you provide to Fall Fest is important. The ECW is able to sustain its works in local, diocesan, and worldwide missions as a result of funds generated. Parish-wide support remains our main ingredient. We enjoy the work,

and, as in prior years, we continue to commit to make each year a success.

We have some exciting additions: PJ the Clown, pre-orders for roasted pork butts (which is just one of the big hits of the kitchen) a micro-brewery, and one of the best Live Auctions anywhere.

We continue to serve with grace and support, and we are grateful for the many returning and new workers and volunteers, including the generous support from the community and from people surrounding Stafford. At the end of the day on that Saturday, we will close Fall Fest for 2018, with notebooks in hand, ready to take on Fall Fest 2019.

Briget Kane



STS. MARY AND MARTHA

Worship, Service and Fellowship

The ladies of Sts. Mary and Martha Guild are looking forward to seeing all our parish family at the Fall Fest on Oct. 6. Please be sure to come to the Craft Room located in the parish house building upstairs beside the Book Nook. We have lots of delightful items to show you: cork pumpkins, fun Porch Ghosts, beautiful wreaths, paper angels, clay pot snowmen and more! This year we are moving our very popular Fall Fest jewelry table in its very own room right next door.

But first, we will be spending Oct. 4 and 5 pricing the crafts and setting up the rooms. Feel free to drop in if you are on the campus.

Yes! We still need gifts of costume jewelry. Any donation will be gratefully received!

All ladies of the parish are invited to join us at any of our meetings. With October arriving, we return to our regular schedule of meeting on the first and third Thursdays of each month in the Parish Hall. These dates fall on Oct. 4 and 18. We begin our meetings with a member of the clergy leading us in Morning Prayer at 9:30 and we finish by noon. This fall we will continue to read together daily chapters of *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. Please come to enjoy a Thursday morning with the ladies of Sts. Mary and Martha Guild.

Mary Jane Cole
(maryjane@cfsw.biz)
Denise Thornton
(neisieb@aol.com)



AQUIA'S TABLE



Help Wanted

Aquia's Table needs your help. If you can help in the kitchen cooking (hours 4 p.m.– 6 p.m.) or serving the food from the steam table (hours 5:45–7:45), please contact Jean Golas (bjgolas@yahoo.com). No experience is needed; we will teach you what you need to know.

If you can help serve the guests in the dining room (hours 5:45–7:45) or if you can help wrap the Panera Bread products or help set up the food for

Aquia's Pantry, please contact Michael Golas (mb_golas@yahoo.com).

Aquia's Table serves a hot, free, nutritious, meal nearly every Wednesday night of the year to anyone who walks into our doors. Aquia's Pantry offers Panera Bread products, fresh produce from the Stafford farmer's market, sandwiches from Wawa, and food donated by Stafford Church of God and St. George's Episcopal Church in Fredericksburg.

Jean Golas



We, as Aquia Church, joyfully respond to the
grace, love and fellowship of
God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit at work in our midst
by celebrating His presence, sharing His abundance,
and proclaiming His word throughout the world.



FALL FEST LIVE AUCTION

October 6 at 11 a.m. — in Great Hall

A huge “Thank You” goes to all the parishioners and merchants who have contributed so generously to the Live Auction! **Below is a list of gifts that have been added since the last newsletter article was written** (gifts received from Aug. 15 through Sept. 14). If you would like a copy of the complete list, check out the poster on the church gate each Sunday or ask Mary Jane Cole (maryjane@cfsw.biz).

New from Fellow Parishioners:

A Truck-load of Seasoned Firewood delivered to your home by the Aquia Church Wood Chucks (8 ft. truck bed)

Chocolate Basket built by the Altar Guild

Two Electric Guitars and Amplifiers given by Dickie Boes

From Merchants and Businesses:

Many of these items will be grouped together into single bidding items so we can keep our list to about thirty offerings.

Inn at the Old Silk Mill: stay one night in a Royal Suite

Massage Envy: one-hour massage

Aquia Harbour Golf Club: four 18-hole rounds of golf plus cart

Wegmans Healthy Eating: gift bag plus \$15 gift card

Forest Greens Golf Club: green fees for 4 players plus cart (Monday thru Friday, no holidays)

Chalk N’ More: two Smart Games plus \$10 gift card

Giant: \$20 gift card

Chick-fil-A on Rt. 610: 10 gift cards

Angel’s Hallmark: three dozen Yankee Candle Tarts Wax Melts

Olde Virginia Gourmet & Gifts: \$10 gift certificate

Ingleside Vineyards: VIP tour and wine tasting for 6

Just to remind you of some more Auction highlights, in addition to the above items, we have:

Grandfather Clock: magnificent, brand new, Windsor cherry finish, triple chime movement made by Howard Miller Clock Company

Mouth-watering Pies: a pie a month for 4 months baked by Pat Moncure

A Beautiful Handmade Baby Quilt of Noah’s Ark: sewn by Cheri Cuff

Professional Interior Design Consultation by Pam Vinso, proprietor of The Blended House

A Scrumptious Dinner Party for 8 Guests prepared and served at his home, offered by Father Jay Morris

Potomac Point Winery: food and wine basket plus dinner for four in the Wine Library

A Night at the Red Fox Inn in Middleburg, Virginia

Redskins Football Tickets: two tickets to the Redskins vs. Atlanta Falcons game on Nov. 4



Virginia Cavalier Football Tickets: 4 tickets to the University of Virginia vs. Liberty University game on Nov. 10 in Charlottesville

A Feast built around a Fall Fest slow-cooked **Pork Butt**

Guided Fishing Trip offered by Bill Hoffman, owner of Aquia Fishing Guide Service, an awesome eight-hour fishing trip on the Potomac River in his boat.

Baskets, Baskets and more Baskets:

Best of Britain

Made in Virginia

A Basket of Baskets

Chocolate Lover

All Things Red, White and Blue

Family Fun Packages

Golf Courses Package

Let's Eat Out! gift certificates and coupons from local restaurants

Saturday Morning Errands: gift cards from local merchants

To My Good Health: gym memberships, massage, and more

A signed **print of Aquia Church** by Bulent Atalay, educator, author, scientist and artist

Sight & Sound Theater, Lancaster Pa.—two tickets to “Jesus” showing from March 9 to Oct. 5, 2019

A Night in Historic Downtown Fredericksburg at Courtyard by Marriott

Tell your friends and neighbors about our awesome list! See our **Facebook** page “**Fall Fest at Aquia Church.**” There are a lot of great auction items that we would like folks to know we are offering. Each merchant who has donated to the auction needs to be thanked. If you see something you like, please hit “Like”! If you think it is worthwhile, please “Share” it. Help us get the word out about Fall Fest 2018. Major credit cards will be accepted at the auction.



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms: "... sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever"

Audrey Cecilia Ballard, Eleanor Frances Rickenbaker.

Funerals: "Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon them."

Carl Craighead Fritsche, 1931-2018.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT AQUIA CHURCH

New Babies: Thanksgiving for the birth of a child will be offered as part of the service on youth Sunday (typically the second Sunday of each month). This will be scheduled as needed. Please call the church office the week prior, if your family would like to be included.

Also, please call the church office after a birth so that a red rose can be placed on the altar in thanksgiving.

Those being deployed: Please call the church office so that we can offer special prayers at a service prior to your departure. Also, we would like to put you on our prayer list for all those in the service of our country who are deployed.

FUTURE BAPTISMS

The next scheduled date for a baptism is Nov. 4, 2018. If you would like to have a baptism on this date, or if this date doesn't work for you and you would like to request another date, please contact the church office so that counseling with the clergy can be scheduled.

PRAYERS FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS

Kristopher and Liz Stanford, Ian and Anna Burns



www.aquiachurch.org

office@aquiachurch.org

(540) 659-4007

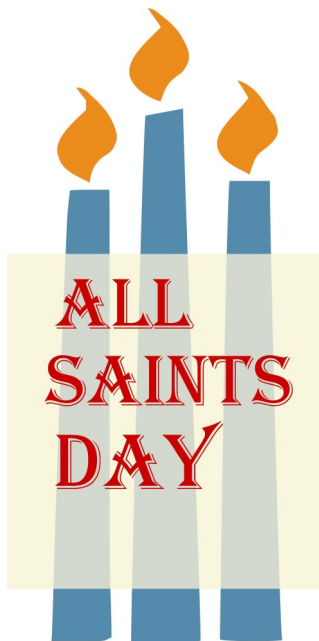
Aquia Church Prayer List – October 2018

Willene Anderson, Faye Andrews, Charles Banks, Rhett Blythe and Family, Alex Bradley, Debbie Byers, Judy Chaplin, Laura Chichester, Elijah Colliver, Jeff Davis, Jodi Evans, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, Drucilla Gosnell, Peggy Hall, Michelle Hanzlik, Patricia Hedger, Michael Houston, Chris Hundley, Suzanne Lanterman, Lori, Ken Luehrs, Frances Marvin, Adelle McCrary, Kenny Miller, Pat Moncure, Vanessa Moncure, Patty Montgomery, Rebecca Poole, Rosalia Pribble, Marian Richardson, Michele, Scott Smith, Donny Stanford, O.D. Taylor, Albert Trevarthen, John & Pam Tompkins, Kenneth Tompkins, Tom Tremper, Patrick Weber.



Farewell Reception for Bishop Shannon Johnston

Our diocesan bishop, the Rt. Rev. Shannon Johnston, will retire by the end of this year's annual diocesan convention during Nov. 2-3, and Aquia Church has been asked to host a farewell reception for him. So we shall gladly open our doors for this major gathering on Thursday, Oct. 11, with the reception officially starting at 6 p.m. and expected to last at least through 7:30 p.m. Please stay tuned to the weekly bulletin announcements and to our parish's Website (www.AquiaChurch.org) in order to learn more details as they become available, including details about how you can support this special occasion.



SUNDAY NOVEMBER 4

Aquia Church will be celebrating All Saints Day on Sunday, Nov. 4. This is the day that we honor all those who have died since last year's All Saints Day; the names will be read at each service on Nov. 4. If you know of someone who has died this past year, email sue.selz@aquiachurch.org or call the church office (540-659-4007) with that person's name.





Aquia Episcopal Church
Post Office Box 275
Stafford, VA
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



BLESSING

of the Animals

October 7 at 2

Each year on or near St. Francis Day, Aquia Church holds its annual Blessing of the Animals. This year the date is Sunday, Oct. 7. Bring your dogs, cats, birds, fish, or whatever animal you have that you would like to receive a blessing. It will be at 2 p.m. over by the St Francis statue in front of the new building (CFFB).

October 2018 **READING ROOM** by Jay Morris

Throughout this autumn, our Wednesday evening Bible study is focusing on the parables of Jesus. He often taught in parables, the Gospels tell us; but that form of teaching did not guarantee that every hearer of his instruction would be able to understand his intention or his meaning, as the Gospels likewise acknowledge (for instance, see Mark 4:33-34). The imagery in most of Jesus' parables is fairly straightforward, taken as it was from ordinary scenes in everyday life. Yet how he uses that imagery in his parabolic teaching was not immediately clear nor always readily persuasive, and many debates remain about how to interpret the parables. Fortunately, however, there are some resources that have proven rather reliable, and in our Bible study this fall we have been learning from them. Perhaps they can be helpful to you too.

A book whose approach I am finding quite impressive is **Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus** by Klyne Snodgrass (Eerdmans, 2018). This book won the 2009 award for books in biblical studies from *Christianity Today* magazine. Let me mention right away that this book is not aimed for every reader. For one thing, because of its 912 pages and its availability only in cloth/hardback (at least in the second edition of 2018), for some folks it would serve better as an expensive doorstep than as a book for enjoyable reading. For another thing, this book is likely to be more comprehensive than the average church-goer might want: Snodgrass provides abundant references to comparable literature from Jewish and Greco-Roman and early Christian sources outside the Bible, along with perspective about 'Q,' a hypothetical source for the New Testament evangelists that cannot be found anywhere but can be reconstructed only from what appears in the Gospels (and therefore is not necessarily a reliable guide to understanding what Jesus is doing in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). But setting aside those caveats, the book is rich, partly because Snodgrass reads the parables patiently and carefully with astute observations and theological sensitivity. He takes into account not only literary considerations about biblical storytelling, but also the biblical-theological themes that support the structure of these stories. After 59 pages of introductory information on the history of interpreting parables, Snodgrass addresses each parable in the Gospels under one of the following categories: parables the sower and the different kinds of ground, about grace and responsibility, about lostness, about the present Kingdom of God, about Israel as a religious community, about discipleship, about money, about God and prayer, and about future eschatology. For every parable in the Synoptic Gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Snodgrass provides the biblical reference (including cases where the parable appears in more than one Gospel), a list of issues requiring the interpreter's attention, references to helpful background material from other parts of the Bible for comparative purposes as well as from other relevant primary sources (such as early Jewish, Greco-Roman, early Christian, and later Jewish documents), cultural background, details about the biblical text, an interpretation of the parable that acknowledges the important contributions from earlier scholars, discussion about adapting the parable for application in Christian living, and a bibliography for further reading. The second edition includes a chapter updating readers on parable research since this volume was first published in 2008. A pastor ordained in the Southern Baptist Convention and active in the Evangelical Covenant Church, Snodgrass taught New Testament at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago for 41 years. This book has become in many cases my first go-to book about what a given parable really means, but admittedly (given the kind of comprehensive book that it truly is) Snodgrass sometimes offers more information or perspective than I want.

A book that will more likely interest you at least by virtue of its comparable brevity (under half the length of Snodgrass, while remaining comprehensive enough for most parishioners) is **Interpreting the Parables** by Craig L. Blomberg (IVP Academic Press, second edition of 2012). A professor at Denver Seminary, Blomberg supplies the reader with nearly 200 pages about the history of interpretation about the parables and the different kinds of biblical scholarship that have been influential for understanding them, yet this scholarly perspective illustrates mistakes from the past that can keep us from wandering needlessly in our journey. I don't find his basic division of parables into parables with one point or two points or three points to be insightful, but what he reports about each parable in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke is often illuminating. The final forty or so pages deal with some major theological issues for understanding the train of thought behind Jesus' parables: Are they more focused on a present Kingdom of God or on some future reality? Are they more concerned with the transformation of individual Christians or with the transformation of society as a whole? What kind of Christology (doctrine about who Jesus is and what Jesus does) do the parables assume and portray? The way that Blomberg arrives at these summary positions after navigating through the complicated waters of the parables serves as a fitting conclusion for a book that rewards its readers with a clearer, sharper understanding of the core messages that our Lord conveys through his parables. I believe that whether you tiptoe into Jesus' parables first with Blomberg or whether you dive head-first into them with Snodgrass, your time and attention to his teaching will surely stimulate your thinking about Jesus and indeed should make you re-think what you have assumed about Jesus as you re-read these parables that otherwise can be confusing for anyone.