



AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

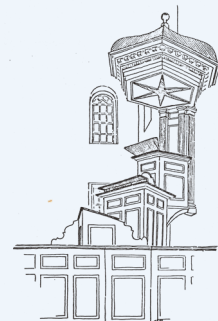
Cross Section

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

...SO THAT
THROUGH THE
CHURCH
THE
MANIFOLD
WISDOM OF
GOD

**MIGHT NOW
BE MADE
KNOWN...**

EPHESIANS 3:10, ESV





CROSS SECTION

Aquia Episcopal Church

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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

Assistant Treasurer

Charlie Bingay

Music Director

Trystan Bennett

Dir. Christian Education

Kristen Morgan

Parish Administrator

Dennise LaBarre

Executive Assistant

Sue Selz

Nursery Supervisor

Dawna Spaulding

FROM THE RECTOR

Regarding Our Wounds

In your body, whenever there is a wound, there will also be some kind of stain and sore and scar. Once you have fallen down, been hit, experienced surgery, or suffered in some similar way, there is usually visible discoloration like a bruise, an interior effect with sensitivity to pain, and rough places where your skin doesn't look or feel quite right after being cut or scraped—especially when the wound does not heal properly. My own body still shows wounds from falling out of a crib, undergoing two life-saving operations, and tumbling down a brick staircase, all of which occurred decades ago.

The same is true of our nation and our world, wounded and broken as it is from so many forms of racism. Economic and political enslavement on the basis of race and ethnicity was as wrong in our nation's past as it was for the children of Israel in Egypt during biblical times. Ethnic hatred and a false sense of racial superiority have caused harm in countless situations. The legacy of racism has displayed itself despicably in education, sports, culture, and other spheres of life—even in religion and in the Church. The social unrest so evident in recent weeks is an unfortunate consequence of our even more unfortunate history. And the complexity about our wounds and our brokenness on these matters might deter us from having any prospect of hope for our future together.

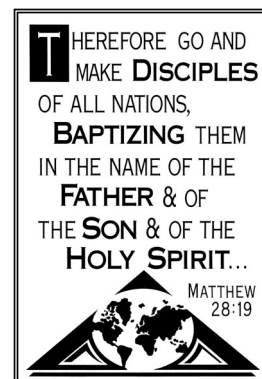
As I said plainly in my broadcast for worship on June 7 (which is accessible electronically at our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AquiaEpiscopalChurch), racism is a sin. Let there be no question about that. Even so, not all of the knee-jerk reactions to racial prejudice, police brutality, and past cases of mistreating one another have been appropriate, much less constructive. The Lord has not called me, nor has this parish called me, to be a political leader offering political platitudes and political solutions for what many people think are political problems, and I am not going to comment on our current situation simply for the sake of mentioning the

matter and moving on. Yet I also believe that our Christian faith can and must have implications for the political arena—along with economic, educational, cultural, and other implications—and our Christian witness there should be faithful and thoughtful.

As a spiritual leader and as one of your pastors, I have something to offer for your consideration. What truly ails us is ultimately a spiritual matter that is far deeper, more widespread, and even more gruesome than what has happened in our nation about race-based slavery, Jim Crow laws, and all the subsequent legacy. Ultimately the problem is sin—sin of which we all are guilty, and sin of which racism is just one instance. How we respond (and not merely react) to it can be sinful too. In my judgment, there is little chance of making real and lasting progress in our current situation until we all bow down at the foot of the Cross of Christ in humble repentance and receive “the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit” (BCP 42/63).

We need to listen carefully and thoughtfully to one another and to engage in self-examination. We need to spread the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ: living faithfully as Christians, witnessing to him in our wounded and broken world, and sharing that good news with all nations and all ethnic groups (see Jesus' Great Commission in the final paragraph of Matthew's Gospel). We need to have the Lord heal our many wounds with the transforming peace and curing balm of Jesus himself.

Jay Morris



FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Baptism Bible Study

Dear Family in Christ,
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank our God for you, especially for the fact that you desire to learn both about our identity as Christians as well as Anglicans. An important way that we do that work together is in studying Scripture together. Our sacramental theology as Anglicans is deeply rooted in Scripture. As such, I led a Wednesday morning Bible study series about a year and a half ago on the Eucharist. I shall begin a new, companion series on the sacrament of Holy Baptism on July 1st.

The catechism in the back of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* says this regarding baptism: "Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God" (BCP 858). Baptism is one of the two great sacraments of the church. But where do we get this baptismal theology?

The scope of the baptism series spans both the Old and New Testaments. The references from the Old Testament provide some foundation and inform what baptism would have looked like initially. The main focus will be on the New Testament. We will cover what it would have meant to the first people who were baptized. We will look at how the understanding of baptism was codified in the earliest church. We will cover such questions about the biblical text as these: What is the difference between John the Baptist's baptism and the baptism that Jesus mandates for the disciples in the Great Commission (Matthew 28)? Why does Peter relate baptism to the flood in Genesis (1 Peter 3)? What does baptism mean for Paul? These questions will be addressed specifically. I am confident more good questions will come up as the series goes on.

Our purpose is to hone in on the biblical foundation of baptism. Our goal is to

arrive at a conclusion to the question why we view it as a sacrament. Like with the Eucharist series, our intent is to walk through the Bible and learn about how baptism came about, how the disciples and Paul saw it prefigured in the Old Testament, and what baptism means for us today. Along the way, we will look at some rubber-meets-the-road questions like these: Why do we pour water over the head instead of immerse? Why do we baptize children? Again, as with the Eucharist series, it is my intention for us to cover enough ground so that (1) we have a sense of why we do what we do, and (2) we have are able to speak knowledgeably about why we view the two great sacraments of the Church as central to our life together.

Please note that, for the foreseeable future, we will continue to meet via Facebook Live on Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Because we will be doing the series over Facebook Live, it will be hard for us to have the same kind of interaction that we normally do when we meet in-person. Please do feel free to email me questions in advance of our sessions together. Here is my e-mail address: (rickenbaker@aquiachurch.org). That way, I can respond to any questions you might ask in advance and thus help the series to be more beneficial for you. I do hope that you will join us for this series. The Lord bless you. See you soon.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

*In Christ+,
Fr. James*



AQUIA CHURCH VESTRY

Chris Arey

Finance Committee

Charlie Bingay

Finance Committee

Dickie Boes

*Finance Committee Chairperson
Building & Grounds Committee*

Chris Bowie

Administration Committee

Bob Brandon

Building & Grounds Committee

Carrol Frederick

Administration Committee

Michael Golasz

Building & Grounds Committee

Bill Hoffman

*Senior Warden
Acting Chairperson of
Administration Committee*

Ron Korth

*Junior Warden
Building & Grounds
Committee Chairperson*

Patty Montgomery

Building & Grounds Committee

Patricia Springer

Administration Committee

Christopher "Kit" Stoltz

*Youth Representative
Administration &
Finance Committees*

Chris Wanner

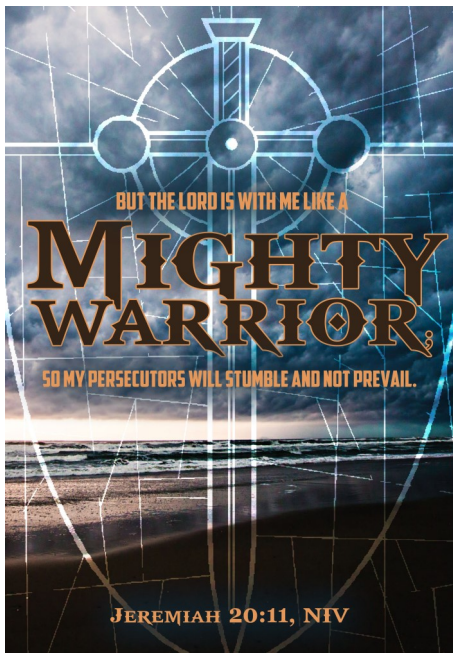
Buildings & Grounds Committee

Biblical Plagues and Anapestic Tetrameter

For the non-English majors (I am one of those), anapestic tetrameter has nothing to do with ‘pests’; rather, it is a poetic meter, which provides the rhythm of the line. More on that, anon. It is peculiar that when events are wont to be described as ‘ginormous’ (a silly portmanteau) or cosmic, writers frequently trot out the phrase ‘biblical in proportion.’ Disasters, floods, disease outbreaks—all are often granted the ‘biblical’ honorific. Would that we would talk about ‘biblical’ justice, mercy, or salvation with equal vigor.

But the Bible does contain accounts of events, most prominently in Exodus, of plagues and diseases wrought on Pharaoh’s Egypt for his obduracy; and, being ordained by God, these are rightly biblical in nature. Less well known, but no less biblical, is the account of the invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Sennacherib. The king of Judah, Hezekiah—a righteous king who restored the worship of Yahweh to a wayward people, and who is also listed in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus—had witnessed the earlier destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. He faced a punishing invasion and watched as many cities in his kingdom were gobbled up by the brutally cruel Assyrian army.

As related in II Kings 18-19, the Assyrians laid siege to Jerusalem, challenging the ability of God to protect the city. The prophet Isaiah foretold Jerusalem’s deliverance, and—this is where the anapestic tetrameter starts—Jerusalem was saved. Lord Byron, a well-known English Romantic poet, put the events of the 701 B.C. siege of Jerusalem to verse in 1815, into anapestic tetrameter (think “The Night Before Christmas” by Clement Clarke Moore) as follows:



The Destruction of Sennacherib

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride:
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Lord Byron

Byron’s poem became popular for memory and recitation, and there are several parodies of it about the British Commonwealth. The archeological record of this event is interesting. An artifact in the British Museum, the Taylor Prism, was found in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 1830. Deciphered, it recounts the deeds of Sennacherib, including his receipt of tribute from King Hezekiah (which the Bible records). There are two other prisms similar to the Taylor one that tell of the same events of Sennacherib’s invasion. Curiously, there is no mention of the destruction of his army and withdrawal without capturing Jerusalem. Perhaps he was not eager to memorialize a stinging defeat. As II Kings records, not long thereafter, he was murdered by two of his sons, as he prayed to his false god.

Chris Arey



STS. MARY AND MARTHA

Worship, Service and Fellowship

As we write this article for the July newsletter, we still do not know when our guild can once again gather together in the parish hall. Therefore, Sts. Mary and Martha Guild will continue to meet together spiritually for Morning Prayer weekly at 9:30 on Thursdays through July. This time together has kept us close to each other as well as given us a chance to thank God and praise Him for His protection and his many, many blessings. We have shared our cares and concerns for the world, our nation, our parish, and our family and friends through prayer. We will continue to do this until we are able to reopen the doors of the parish hall. When we can return, we will joyfully let you know; our guild's fellowship is important to all of us and is truly missed.

Do you have a prayer group or a prayer partner? Would you like to join us on Thursday mornings? If you would like to be with us in prayer during these quiet times, please reach out to us so we can include you on our email list. In the weekly email, you will find an attachment with the prayers, readings and intercessions for the upcoming Thursday. For further information, or to be added to our email list, please send a note to Mary Jane Cole (maryjane@cfsw.biz) or Carolyn Hendrickson (cvhendrickson35@gmail.com).

Mary Jane Cole



We thank God and we praise Him for His protection and his many, many blessings.

FROM THE TREASURER

Sincere thanks to the many parishioners who have adopted our on-line giving capability through Realm. This is especially welcome during the absence of public worship, and it contributes significantly to the 'ballast' of our financial posture. Through June 15, 2020, we have received a total of \$26,040.00 in on-line contributions, 86.9% of which was devoted to pledged offerings. Of that total amount, \$2,400.00 has been given to the finances of the CFFB, and the remainder to other church ministries. It is particularly helpful if you are willing to absorb the minor transaction fee. To do this, just check the box "Contribute an extra \$__ to help offset costs" in the "How would you like to give" window. Please keep up the great work and take advantage of this contactless way to contribute.

Christopher M. Arey
Treasurer



<<https://onrealm.org/AquiaEpiscopalC/Give>>

Or

Click on the GIVE link at
<<https://aquiachurch.org>>



EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

Traditionally, I would open my July newsletter with good news about 2020 Fall Fest. While I do not currently (mid-June) have news about 2020 Fall Fest, there is much good news! After several months of COVID-19 quarantine and alternate worship, we are slowly moving to what may or may not be our new normal for several more months. Now we are out and about safely and our ministries are working together, using social media, e-mail, and snail-mail to keep in touch and to support our parish family.

Our graduating high school seniors have experienced graduation in ways that are unlike any other I can recall in history, and they will certainly remember their unique ceremonies. In June of each year, the ECW honors one or more graduating seniors on Youth Sunday. As our worship has changed to meet the requirements of diocesan and state mandates, we were unable to present the Anne E. Moncure Scholarship during a service on Youth Sunday in June.

CONGRATULATIONS



Cristina Amador

It is with great pleasure that I announce ECW's selection for 2020: Cristina Amador. Cristina's application included her scholastic honors, school activities, as well as her church ministries and activities. Cristina's letters of recommendation and reference spoke to her community and church activities during her high school years. She graduated *summa cum laude* from Colonial Forge High School. As a teenage leader among the youth here at Aquia, Cristina attended mission trips and served as a devotion leader.

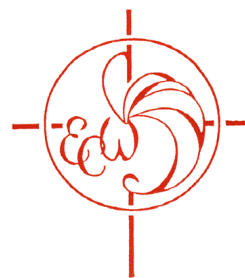
I have included a few words from Cristina Amador's application. As you read her words, I am sure you will see why the ECW board selected her. Congratulations, Cristina!

The following is a question we ask each applicant, and I have included Cristina's answer.

"How will I carry my faith forward as I graduate from high school?"

My faith has always been an important part of my life, supporting me through my lowest lows and guiding me through success and failures. I truly don't know where or who I would be without it. My hope is to go into college with a strong foundation, on which I can strengthen my beliefs. I want to explore my faith as much as I want to continue my education, and plan to do so by continuing to attend church and participate in Christian organizations on Grounds at the University of Virginia. I have already begun participating in the Christian community in Charlottesville, having just joined the Christian Study Formation. I found my roommate through the foundation, and we plan to continue our journey with Christ together. Specifically, as I did in high school, I plan on continuing my practice of volunteering in Charlottesville in the school tutoring center, as an alumna member of the Teen Council with Mental Health America, and whatever activities put together by the new church I will call my home. It is my faith that has always guided me through new and uncertain times, and as strong as it has become during this pandemic, I plan on holding onto it just as much as I begin a new chapter in my life away at college. Lastly, no matter what, Aquia Episcopal Church will always hold a special place in my heart as the place where I spent most of my childhood learning and growing with the Lord.

I am sure many of you have heard the phrase "as we enter this new phase." The ECW will be looking at how our



events for the fall may be impacted. We will keep everyone posted through the weekly announcements and the monthly newsletter.

Aquia's Care TeamS (ACTS): "Serve one another in love" (Galatians 5:13)

Celebrating the Holy Spirit's presence in our midst, Aquia Care TeamS (ACTS) serve one another in love by coordinating services to help meet the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of Aquia Church members. Services are provided in a loving and respectful manner. The identified teams are visiting, coordinating/communication, providing transportation, and delivery (meals, flowers, and medications). There is a place for anyone who seeks to serve one another in love. We welcome participation in our Aquia Care TeamS from all members, including our youth.

We invite you ladies to join the ECW and to share in the activities and ministries in our parish, local communities, the Diocese of Virginia, and worldwide needs, so please contact me for more information bkwings_n_things@yahoo.com.

Briget Kane
ECW President



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms: *"sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever"* (BCP 308):

Hunter Jameson Evans

Deaths: *"Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord: And let light perpetual shine upon them"* (BCP 486/502):

Debbie Smith

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT AQUIA CHURCH

New Babies: Thanksgiving for the birth of a child will be offered as part of the service on the second Sunday of the month (youth Sunday). 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 who are deployed in the service of our country.

FUTURE BAPTISMS

The next scheduled date for a baptism is Nov. 1, 2020. 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.



www.aquiachurch.org
office@aquiachurch.org

(540) 659-4007



Aquia Church Prayer List – July 2020

Faye Andrews, Linda Beville, Rhett Blythe and Family, Julie Burgess, Debbie Byers, Jackie Chichester, Elijah Colliver, Richard Craven, Donnie Davis, Paula Davis & Family, Becky Dixon, Brian Driscoll, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, Robert Garrett, Christopher, Shawna & Oliver Gray, Larry Hartzler, Chris Hundley, John Jackson, Lori, Ken Luehrs, Pat Moncure, Patty Montgomery, Rebecca Poole, Linda Raisovich-Parsons, Kenny Reilly, Arnie Schwartz, David Smith, Scott Smith, O.D. Taylor, John & Pam Tompkins, Gayle Tompkins, Kenneth Tompkins, Beth Tremper, Tom Tremper, Patrick Weber, Walt & Elizabeth Yager.



VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

May 19, 2020 MEETING (via Zoom)

Fr. Jay Morris, Rector, Fr. James Rickenkaker, Assistant Rector (and acting Register for the meeting), Bill Hoffman, Sr. Warden, Ron Korth, Jr. Warden, Chris Arey, Treasurer, Charlie Bingay, Dickie Boes, Chris Bowie, Michael Golasz, Patty Montgomery, Patricia Springer, Kit Stoltz, and Chris Wanner were present.

Business Session

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Treasurer's Report



Chris Arey relayed the report to the vestry:

- \$50,000 was paid on the principal for the construction loan, as directed by the vestry at the April meeting.
- Aquia's portfolio suffered an 11% dip in March, with April being a bit better.
- The April 2020 Financial Health Check document indicated that the cash balance for the general fund had improved slightly. Chris juxtaposed that with the reminder that the church ought to have three months' worth of money to pay for necessary expenses, should there be an emergency. He indicated that at the moment, that is true. The church has about fourteen months of payments in the bank for the mortgage.
- Two of the booths at the craft fair allowed Aquia to keep their deposit as a donation; the remainder have been refunded since the craft fair was unable to happen because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Over \$4,000 was paid for repairs to the rectory, including the installation of two new windows, all new gutters, and the wrapping of the fascia boards.
- Chris is in the process of setting up the monthly automatic withdrawal for the mortgage payment.

Minutes from Previous Meeting

Three amendments were proposed and approved for the minutes.

- Fr. Jay proposed an amendment to the minutes, page two, line two, that said, "The matching grant challenge will be offered through the end of 2020," so as to make clear that the matching challenge grant does have an end date.
- Chris Arey proposed an amendment to the minutes, the top of page three, under the heading "Good of the Order," to change the date of the audit from 2019 to 2020, so as to make clear that the audit spoken of will take place in 2020.
- Chris Wanner proposed a third amendment, in the clergy report section, from "a bronze plaque" to "the bronze plaque" to reflect appropriate specificity. The minutes were approved as amended.

New Business

Two items of new business were addressed: 1) the Peyton Society's desire to place a memorial plaque for John Peyton in the cemetery, and 2) an assessment of the parish during COVID-19 pandemic.

Fr. Jay outlined the idea offered by the Peyton Society. They would like to put up a plaque on the cemetery fence near the grave of John Peyton, their family's progenitor, indicating that he was a patriot in the American Revolution as well as a member of Aquia Church. They brought the idea to the vestry seeking its approval. After much conversation, some parameters were established for the plaque: 1) the plaque should be no larger than the plaque for



Vestry Highlights

David Wirman (24 inches wide by 18 inches high), 2) the plaque should be bronze, 3) the plaque should not be welded on the fence, but rather affixed in some other way, 4) if the fence cannot bear the weight of the plaque, an acceptable alternative would be to erect a pole outside of the cemetery fence, 5) the person or persons applying to display a plaque may also offer to replace an existing section of the fence with a new section of the fence and have the plaque affixed to the new section, 6) contingent upon the need for number four, the pole and plaque combination would be no taller than the top of the cemetery fence, and 7) the wording around Mr. Peyton's status as patriot reflect that he *was* a patriot, rather than he *served as* a patriot.

In light of the conversation, Fr. Jay indicated that it would be in Aquia's interest for the cemetery committee and the building and grounds committee to work together to develop a policy to propose to the vestry regarding how to handle any future plaques that may be proposed to Aquia Church.

Fr. Jay's assessment of the parish was offered in the written clergy report with some small exceptions. He indicated that there will be checklists issued by the diocese for reestablishing in-person worship. Those checklists will almost certainly include major changes to worship. Online services will still be offered when in-person worship is reestablished.

Continued on next page ...



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL:

Join us for Aquia Church's first Virtual VBS during July 13-17! This summer we will "splash in God's word" using Spark Summer from the same group that creates our wonderful Sunday school materials. Our virtual VBS can be accessed at your family's convenience that week. Craft bags will be available for pick-up prior to VBS.



Daily videos with music, Bible study, activity & coloring pages, and parent hand-outs will be provided online. Families need to register for VBS, so that we can send you information on how to access this summer's program. Registration forms can be found on the church website <https://aquiachurch.org/events/vacation-bible-school-2020> and should be e-mailed to Kristen Morgan christianed@aquiachurch.org.



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Our Sunday school ministry has begun its annual break for the summer. We encourage children and their fami-

lies to continue tuning in to our worship broadcasts via Facebook Live until we can reconvene for public worship in person.

... Vestry, continued from previous page

Reports from Committees

The committee reports were sent out electronically.

Reports from Junior Warden and Senior Warden

Jr. Warden Ron Korth mentioned that there was nothing major to report, outside of the fact that the painting at Clifton Chapel was completed.

Sr. Warden Bill Hoffman had nothing else to add.

Upcoming Dates and Information

6/16: Vestry meeting (likely via Zoom), 7 p.m.

Fr. James closed the meeting with prayer.

*Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. James R. Rickenbaker
Acting Register,
Aquia Episcopal Church*



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.





Aquia Episcopal Church
Post Office Box 275
Stafford, VA
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



—STAYING— CONNECTED

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDIES: Fr. Rickenbaker will begin a new Bible study series on Holy Baptism on July 1. Fr. Morris's new Wednesday evening series on the Gospel of John in the New Testament (starting electronically at 7 p.m.) will run through July 22. You are welcomed to join in these video-based Bible studies at any time. If you want to be added to the e-mail list for updates about the Wednesday Bible studies, please contact the relevant member of the clergy: morris@aquiachurch.org or rickenbaker@aquiachurch.org.

OFFERING OF WEEKDAY MORNING PRAYER: Fr. Rickenbaker will offer weekday Morning Prayer on at 8 a.m. for Morning Prayer, Rite Two, on Facebook Live. Simply type www.facebook.com/AquiaEpiscopalChurch into your browser's address bar. You can join in by watching the video even if you don't have a Facebook profile. The readings for the day will be posted in the comments section of your screen. You may submit your prayer requests via the comments section or via e-mail rickenbaker@aquiachurch.org.

SUNDAY WORSHIP ONLINE: Morning Prayer with a sermon will be offered on Facebook Live each Sunday morning, with occasional offerings from our music ministry added from time to time, at <https://www.facebook.com/AquiaEpiscopalChurch>. Even if you do not have a Facebook account, you can still access the videos archived there for worship and for faith-formation by clicking on the video for the given day. Also, you do not have to join in the worship live; the videos will be stored there for your viewing at any time convenient for you. If you want to receive a copy of the worship brochure that will be used for online worship (best sent by e-mail, but snail-mail can be arranged), then please contact Fr. Morris (morris@aquiachurch.org or 540-659-4007). You can make an uplifting difference in the lives of others by letting them know about our online broadcasts, so please share the news.

July 2020 **READING ROOM** by Jay Morris

Earlier in June, Father Rickenbaker and I engaged in some clergy continuing education. Just as there are programs for continuing education in other lines of work—after all, we want our physicians, accountants, attorneys, teachers, and people in other professions to be aware of the latest news and research, procedural changes, and best practices for everyone’s benefit—so clergy need that updated training, too. During most summers, that means leaving our families and the parish for a week or two and studying elsewhere. With the coronavirus pandemic, however, this summer our continuing education has been conducted online through a combination of reading extensively, watching videos, and participating in online discussions. Father Rickenbaker and I audited one class on the Gospel of Mark and another class on catechesis (a particular kind of faith-formation for adults). As we discovered, one of our online classmates already knew about Aquia Church because she has a relative buried in our cemetery—what a small world! In any case, the course on Mark’s Gospel required our reading a book that I want to recommend to you. ***Crucifixion*** (Fortress Press, 1977) by Martin Hengel is a little gem. In about 90 pages of informative text, it will tell you most anything you would want to know about the form of capital punishment the Romans used for killing Jesus and so many other convicts. While the Romans did not invent this method of torture and execution (that notorious distinction apparently belongs to the Persians), they perfected its application as an instrument of shame and as a deterrent for future activity by prospective criminals, and that is what this author reports with remarkable detail. Hengel begins by addressing what St. Paul meant in the first chapter of First Corinthians by describing Jesus’ death on the cross as a scandal to Jews and as folly to Gentiles and how it is nevertheless one of the central tents of our faith, and he continues to set our understanding of crucifixion within its ancient context. Hengel explains not only the variations in form about different types of crosses (including whether or not crossbeams were always used for stretching out the arms, whether or not seated positions were available, and so forth) but also the types of physical punishment (such as flogging) used in advance of the criminal’s being affixed to the cross. Other details covered include the range of crimes for which crucifixion was used in the ancient world, the status of the prisoners to be so punished (how the Romans, for instance, frequently used crucifixion against slaves while the Carthaginians often crucified their own military leaders who had suffered defeat in battle), and the kind of social stigmas of shame and reprobation that would have been felt by any victim and anyone passing by. A native of Germany, Hengel was a Lutheran pastor and one of the most brilliant scholars of early Christianity and Judaism at the time of Jesus.

Another book that some parishioners are reading with me is ***Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*** (HarperOne, 2008) by N. T. Wright, the likewise distinguished and prolific New Testament scholar and now-former Bishop of Durham in England. This book has been the basis for the Facebook Live series I have conducted recently for adult formation on Thursday evenings. Wright acknowledges that just as many people in the wide society have muddled thoughts and expectations about what happens at death and afterwards, so too do many Christians suffer from the same lack of clarity and limited hope. He also observes rightly that some Christians even have assumptions about these matters that are contrary to the Bible (you know what happens when you assume, don’t you?). So using resources from the Old Testament and the New Testament alike, he tries to present as calmly and as clearly as possible what Christians should believe about Purgatory (he doesn’t favor this popular notion from outside the Bible), Paradise (he thinks this is the Scriptural view of ‘where’ one goes upon death), Hell (he has some explanations about the Hades of Greek mythology, about the New Testament place-name *Gehenna* that is usually translated as ‘Hell’ but has more to do with the ever-blazing trash-dump outside Jerusalem during Jesus’ day, and about what eternal punishment might actually involve—all of which you are likely to find rather remarkable, even if somewhat startling), and Heaven (with his emphasis on what the Book of Revelation means by the ‘new Heaven and the new Earth’ and the eventually close proximity of the two) that should wipe away the cobwebs that have cluttered our everyday understandings of these notions and thus should set us back on a better biblical foundation. Particularly helpful, I think, is how Wright contrasts our typical approach to ‘life after death’ with what he prefers instead to describe as “life *after* life after death.” He also discusses in very helpful ways how Jesus’ resurrection as it actually happened sets the stage and sets the standard for what we may reasonably expect for our own resurrection—alongside Jesus’ return to earth for Judgment Day at his Second Coming—and how all this shapes a wholesome Christian approach to problems of evil. What else Wright explores in the more speculative closing sections of this book is what Jesus has called his followers to do right now, filled with hope as they are by his resurrection but also sent out into the world as they are to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and all people-groups, baptizing them and teaching them to observe everything that Jesus taught and lived (see the Great Commission in the last paragraph of Matthew’s Gospel), even while we await the end-times. So Wright’s book has something inspiring to say about life here and now in terms of justice, beauty, evangelism, and other forms of hope—all of which would surely benefit our present situation more than ever.