



AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

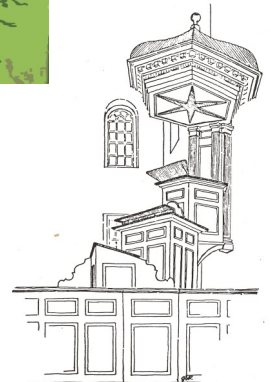
Cross Section

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



**May the Lord direct
your hearts to the love
of God and to the
steadfastness of Christ.**

2 Thessalonians 3:5





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

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

When We Can Gather Again

You already know all too well the many changes required by the coronavirus pandemic and the many restrictions imposed by the commonwealth or by the diocese for the sake of public health. For starters, everyone has learned about physical distancing, and lots of events have been postponed or cancelled. Some folks are even predicting the disappearance of certain social customs like handshaking and hugging as a precaution against contamination.

While some changes have been difficult to accept, not every change has been painful or horrible. When is the last time you got stuck in traffic on I-95 or US-1? Have you been facing ridiculously long lines lately at the store? Have you had more opportunities to take care of tasks around the house or to reconnect with relatives and friends? Even if your everyday routines and special plans have been altered, have you found yourself blessed in other ways?

As much as our parish life together has changed, there have been some remarkable developments during this pandemic. Our electronic approaches to worship and faith-formation are having a wide impact, at least in terms of the number of participants able to join our broadcasts. Plenty of folks are mailing their financial contributions to the church office or making donations electronically while we cannot pass the offering plates around the pews. We have needed to think more ‘outside the box’ and to engage in more entrepreneurial forms of ministry, in ways that might strengthen our parish whenever we can reconvene in person.

Once we can see each other face to face again, how will your personal ministry change? How will the gradual re-opening of our church affect your involvement in our parish? As you look for ways to become reunited with fellow parishioners, are there opportunities for ministry that you might undertake? Suppose, for instance, that you enjoy the beauty of flowers. Did you know that all of our flower arrangements for Sunday worship are designed not

by professional florists, but by parishioners who volunteer? Our flower guild members, including co-chairs Sheryl Colliver and Betsy Husser, would be happy to show you how easy and refreshing they find floral arranging. Or suppose that you want to find some familiar faces or make some new friends. Could you devote some hands-on help with Aquia’s Table or Aquia’s Pantry in making food and fellowship available to neighbors in our midst, or some time with our men’s breakfast group (second Saturday morning of each month) or with our Episcopal Church Women in promoting fellowship and hospitality? The camaraderie in these ministry groups is life-giving, and their members can help you find joy in your new role there.

During this pandemic, when we have not been able to gather in person for our usual occasions at church, we have tried to support each other from a distance with creative uses of technology, largely in such areas of ministry as worship and faith-formation for all ages. But other forms of ministry have suffered significantly from our inability to gather physically—especially the areas of fellowship and service to others in the Name of Jesus Christ. We miss sharing meals together, and we miss time spent together in joyful labor for the Lord. The time is approaching when we can gather again (we trust and we pray!), and our return will create some new opportunities for you. So I encourage you to consider prayerfully how you can show your gratitude to God for the many mercies He has provided during these difficult days by renewing your commitment to Christian fellowship and service whenever we can reconvene.

Jay Morris



FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

The Beauty and Scandal of Social Media

Dear Family in Christ,
Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give
thanks to our God for you, especially for
the gentleness with which you typically
engage each other. Such is the way for us
to live as an example of the faith to the
world around us. Because that gentleness
is so important, I want to encourage that
gentleness to extend to the use of social
media. To put it more clearly: I have seen
some sniping on Facebook in recent days,
and it is often directed at non-parishioners.
That is concerning enough. But I have
even seen some of this concerning behav-
ior directed at fellow parishioners. Neither
case is acceptable, but showing disdain and
anger and sarcasm for brother and sister
Christians on social media (which is about
as public as we can get right now) is dan-
gerously counter-productive to our com-
mission as followers of Jesus. It fuels dis-
dain for the church. It encourages non-
Christians to stay that way. I implore you,
as a brother Christian and as one of your
clergy: Cut it out.

The various social media have become today's version of the diary. People write very personal thoughts up there. They write political opinions. They post articles that they think are helpful, and they post articles that they think are unhelpful. I am not innocent of this. In ages past, I was not careful with what I put online. But I am

now, and you should be too. I am not saying that you need to keep a totally anodyne profile. But I am saying that you should be careful about what you put on social media. Be careful how you respond to others. Think about what you are sharing. Think about how you are saying things. Ask whether what you are posting will bring glory to God or whether it will just make you feel better. As a follower of Jesus Christ, you are enjoined—just like I am—to share the Good News of God in Christ. That good work could be hindered when people reflect on what we say online. Be careful.

Social media can be a gift from God, if we use it to bring him glory. An example of this could be to post a verse of Scripture on which people can meditate. You can ask your Facebook friends how you can pray for them. You can share articles and links that are edifying instead of ones that only intend to tear down someone else. A professor of mine from college uses his Facebook profile to post videos of animals and articles filled with hope. When I talked to him about it, he said that there was entirely too much negativity on Facebook. He wanted to use his account to spread a more positive outlook. And yes, he is indeed a Christian. Here are two questions that I want you to ask of your presence on social media: Will someone find hope from what I say, and will I be willing to share with them the hope that I have in Jesus (1 Peter 3:15)?

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). Use your social media platform to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world. Seek to imitate our Lord and God Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us and our salvation. 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*



**AQUILA 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

VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

April 21, 2020 meeting

Clergy in Attendance:

Rector: The Rev. Jay Morris, Assistant

Rector: The Rev. James Rickenbaker

Vestry in Attendance:

Treasurer: Chris Arey, Senior Warden:

Bill Hoffman, Junior Warden: Ron

Korth, Charlie Bingay, Dickie Boes,

Chris Bowie, Bob Brandon, Carrol

Frederick, Michael Golasz, Patty Mont-

gomery, Patricia Springer, Kit Stoltz,

Chris Wanner.

Business Session:

Called to order by The Rev. Jay Morris and opened with prayer. The Rev. Jay Morris directed discussion regarding previously sent clergy notes. Resolution 2020-04 was discussed. Use of virtual meeting platform Zoom was discussed.

Treasurer's Report:

- Treasurer Chris Arey reported that March was somewhat financially stable regarding contributions. Online contributions were stable with pledging members who are using the software package Realm.
- The online category options for giving through Realm may be expanded at a later date to include an "other" category that might suffice for giving to specific categories such as "flowers" that is unavailable at this time through the other, more generic categories.
- Churches renting the old parish hall from us are generally not paying rent during the coronavirus pandemic, as agreed at last month's vestry meeting.
- St. Herman of Alaska Orthodox Church, meeting at Clifton Chapel, continued to pay rent.

New Business:

- The vestry voted to approve Resolution 2020-04, which involved accepting a proposal from Performance Home Improvements for

repairs to the Rectory. This company's bid was a bit more inclusive than the two other bids considered. The Building and Grounds Committee requested the total \$7700.00 to include probable repair of additional areas of the Rectory. The question was called by Chris Bowie at 7:37 p.m. and unanimously approved.

- Gutters and gutter guards for the Rectory were discussed, and it was decided that the need for gutter guards would be examined at a later date.
- A new matching grant challenge was offered by an anonymous donor(s) willing to match funds from a guarantee of \$50,000.00 to possibly \$100,000.00. The matching grant challenge will be offered through the end of 2020. A larger capital campaign will be postponed in light of the financial difficulties posed by COVID-19. The matching grant challenge was approved unanimously by the vestry.
- The parish continues to follow safety guidelines from government officials and the Diocese regarding the current outbreak of COVID-19. Congratulations were made to our Rector and Assistant Rector for their orchestration of virtual worship and their effective use of social media platforms to keep the parish united in prayer and worship, and maintaining the sanctity of worship during Holy Week. Thanks went out to Trystan and Caitlin Bennett for their virtual musical performance of sacred music and assistance with conducting Good Friday's Stations of the Cross. A thank-you was also mentioned for our Director of Christian Education, Kristen Morgan, for Sunday School support while the children of the parish are following stay-at-home guidelines. Additional thanks were extended to Michael

Golasz as he continues to operate

Aquia's Pantry.

- The parish continues to wait for the lifting of Executive Order 55, which is in effect until June 10, 2020, which will then allow the parish to determine next steps to reinstating regular worship in the church building.

Committee Reports:

- The Building and Grounds Committee reported that finishing exterior painting at Clifton Chapel is being considered for the near future. Window sill painting in the historic church continued, as well as repairs to the Rectory.
- The Administration Committee reported that a vestry handbook is in the process of being compiled and written. Hourly wage earners, which are specifically Aquia's nursery attendants, were excluded from state-level funding, so the Administration Committee requested vestry approval to eliminate that item from a previous goal. The vestry approved dropping that goal.
- The Finance Committee authorized Charlie Bingay to perform duties as a counter.
- The Rector and the Treasurer proposed to take \$50,000.00 in hand and apply it to the principal of the loan for the CFFB. These funds will be recuperated through the new matching grant challenge. The vestry passed the proposal.

Reports from Senior Warden and Junior Warden:

The Junior Warden, Ron Korth, stated that he was working with Pioneer Roofing for a quote to repair and restore the cupola on the historic church. More information will be forthcoming. The Senior



Vestry Highlights

Continued on next page ...



Finances and Faith

Many of us are aware of the dreadful impact that COVID-19 has made on the physical and economic health of the country. Churches have not been spared. CBS News reports that between 12,000 and 13,000 of the 17,000 Roman Catholic churches in the U.S. applied for pandemic-related loans from the Payroll Protection Program, and that nearly 9,000 applications for these loans were approved. In the Diocese of Virginia within the Episcopal Church, the number of churches that applied is not being tracked, but this topic has been of great interest within the diocese. (The diocese itself, incidentally, did not apply for a PPP loan.)

Aquia Church did not apply for a loan, because we believe that our balance sheet and the faithfulness of our parish can sustain us through these difficult times. Your steadfast support, in prayer and in resources, is evidence of God's grace and our resilience. With the support of the diocese, we have joined with many other parishes in applying to the Church Pension Group for a waiver of two months' worth of clergy pension assessments. At the time of this note, the status of our request is unknown, but we are optimistic that it will be approved.

However, the pandemic has not left our finances untouched. Without the benefit of worship services on our grounds, we have received less pledged income than originally expected; but so far, the decline has not been severe.

Without actual services, we have no 'loose plate' collection (that is: cash given anonymously) and little Sunday School collection. The churches that rent space in our 1960 parish house—who are unable to hold services, just like we are—are not paying rent for the time being, as authorized by the vestry.

Continue to pray for your Clergy and your vestry as they navigate these choppy waters, and seek to do the work of the church in uncertain times.

The great hall has been unavailable to rent. The Aquia's Table Golf Tournament, the major fundraiser for that vital ministry, has already been postponed and might have to be cancelled. The spring craft fair, a fundraiser for our outreach ministry, was cancelled. Even the feasibility of holding our Fall Fest is not guaranteed. On balance, some of our expenses have decreased, though the preponderance of our monthly expenses—including employee compensation, our mortgage payment, and most utilities and normal maintenance services—continue with little change. The vestry will conduct a mid-year budget review in July, with an eye towards reducing

expenses, in order to ensure that we maintain a balanced budget, which is a condition of the construction loan.

In April, in addition to our normal mortgage payment, the vestry approved the payment of an additional \$50,000 towards the reduction of the principal of our construction loan. This is in addition to the \$350,000 additional payment towards the principal that was made earlier this year. The status of a renegotiated mortgage payment structure with United Bank, at a lower interest rate, remains a work in progress. As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, we have an additional opportunity to lower our principal balance with a matching challenge donation of up to \$100,000 that will run through the remainder of 2020.

Yet we do not put our trust in our own resources, for that would be vain and foolish. As Paul writes to Timothy, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" (I Timothy 6:17-18). Continue to pray for your Clergy and your vestry as they navigate these choppy waters, and seek to do the work of the church in uncertain times.

Christopher M. Arey, Treasurer
treasurer@aquiachurch.org

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Warden, Bill Hoffman, reported that work in the cemetery continues involving leveling gravesites.

Report from the Rector:

The Rev. Jay Morris discussed the addition of the bronze plaque commemorating parishioner David Wirman's work at Aquia Church. This commemo-

rative sign is mounted on the fence at the front of the church. The Rector also led the vestry in a comprehensive assessment of where the parish stands in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Upcoming Dates and Information:

Most events have been cancelled or postponed until restrictions due to COVID-19 will be lifted.

Good of the Order, Closing Prayer and Adjournment:

Treasurer Chris Arey postponed scheduling the 2019 financial audit for the church due to COVID-19 concerns.

The Rev. James Rickenbaker concluded the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol F. Korth, Register



EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

As May moves into June and forward into this year, our perennial flowers in our gardens are finishing their cycle, perhaps in blooms or leafing out. I find a correlation between that and what is happening in our daily lives. We are experiencing several renewals in our lives, including our faith, our creativity, and our connectedness with each other. We are renewing connections with each other in our parish life through creative ways such as attending weekly services electronically and continuing service in some of our ministries.

Over the past weeks, we have been blessed to share time (daily and weekly) through the many innovations of social media, newsletters, announcements, and

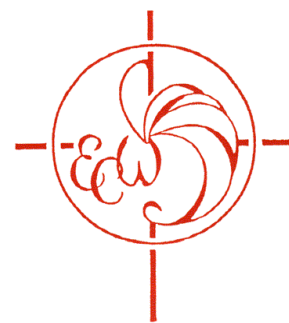


even written words. Our Rector and Assistant Rector and other members of our parish continue to inform, announce, and share what is happening daily at Aquia. The ECW has taken these opportunities to communicate as well. All of this has served us well, so that the seeds sown during this time of separation will blossom for our parish as we serve our church, our families, and our community.

While a disappointment, the cancellation of Heritage Sunday this May has by no means put a damper on the many other scheduled activities of the ECW for the rest of 2020. We have penciled in the date of May 16, 2021, for next year's Heritage Sunday.

We are looking forward to presenting our Anne E. Moncure Scholarship to a graduating senior soon. We will coordinate the presentation during a worship service within the parameters of the guidelines to be set by the Diocese of Virginia and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

It is not too early to think about Fall Fest and how it may or may not look in October. This is a time of year when we typically look to start the detailed planning for our annual event. We continue to have support from



members of our parish family with ideas and offers of help.

As we slowly come back together, we may face fears and challenges together. As Episcopal women in the service of our God, we continue prayers for strength, support, and love in his name for everyone. I pray for the time when we will be together, as this pandemic challenge will pass.

Briget Kane
President

The Episcopal Church Women of the Diocese of Virginia, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, share the love of God by making Christ known in the world through prayer, education, concern for others, and joyful service

STS. MARY AND MARTHA

Worship, Service and Fellowship

As we begin the month of June, members of the Sts. Mary and Martha Guild continue to thank God for His protection and many, many blessings. Praying Morning Prayer together as a guild every Thursday morning at 9:30 has become our primary focus as we wait for God to unveil His plan for us.

Many of us enjoy Daily Morning Prayer offered by our assistant rector each weekday. However, on Thursdays we worship 'together' virtually by praying through the lessons, etc., at our appointed meeting time while

each of us remains safe at home. In our intercessions, we lift up by name many of our friends and family, members of our parish and community, and others beyond who need prayers. By setting aside this special time, we continue to stay close even though we cannot yet physically gather for our meetings.

Do you have a prayer group or a prayer partner? Would you like to join us on Thursday mornings? If you would like to join us in prayer during this quiet month, then please reach out to us, so that we can include you on our e-mail

list. In the e-mail, 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, send a note to Mary Jane Cole (maryjane@cfsw.biz) or Carolyn Hendrickson (cvhendrickson35@gmail.com).

Mary Jane Cole



Sts. Mary and Martha Guild



News & Observations

Outreach

The chili cook-off has been postponed until the sometime in the fall. A collection of shoes will possibly occur in the July/August time frame. The outreach ministry group has decided to not participate in the National Night Out event in August; so if another ministry group would be interested in taking on that event, please get in touch with the outreach ministry group, and they will be glad to pass on the guidelines. Two of the vendors from the spring craft fair, which was cancelled, donated the funds intended for their table spaces, and that was greatly appreciated. Our outreach ministry group was able to donate some funds to the Stafford Junction project.

Flower Guild

Thanks to our wonderful flower guild for arranging the beautiful palms that adorned the church doors and pick-up table at Palm Sunday and for keeping our flowerpots at the entrance of the church looking nice.

Daughters of The King

DOK members have been able to drop off folders with introductory materials and study guides to three ladies who are in the discernment period before becoming inducted as Daughters of the King. There is much excitement and hope for seeing them becoming Daughters.

Patricia Springer



Flower Guild members Sheryl Colliver and Betsy Husser provided a beautiful arrangement of palms for Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020. While the church was closed due to the coronavirus, members of the congregation picked up palms at the front of the church, mindful of the required social distancing.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Vacation Bible School:

This summer Aquia Church will offer a virtual VBS (instead of our usual in-person/on-campus format as was planned for June 8-12). This major change is due to uncertainties about restrictions for the coronavirus pandemic. Details about this summer's online program will be provided in the coming weeks via church announcements, our website, and our Facebook page.



Sunday School:

Sunday school materials will be e-mailed to everyone enrolled in our program through June 7.



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

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 (540-659-4007) 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

If you would like to arrange for someone in your family to be baptized, please contact the church office, so that counseling with the clergy can be scheduled.

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Funerals: “*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord; and let the light perpetual shine upon them.*”

Raymond S. “Jeff” Davis (1934—2019).

Robert “Butch” Bradley (brother of Rick Bradley).



<https://www.facebook.com/AquiaEpiscopalChurch>

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(540) 659-4007

Aquia Church Prayer List – June 2020



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



New Matching Challenge Grant

Thanks to an anonymous pledge, we have a new opportunity to help retire the construction loan debt on our Christian Formation and Fellowship Building even sooner than planned, and for less money overall. Every contribution that we receive for the new building between April 21, 2020, and Dec. 31, 2020 (unless otherwise specified) will be matched dollar-for-dollar, up to a total of \$100,000.00, with all such contributions plus the matching amount being used to pay down the principal on the construction loan. The sooner we can pay off the principal, the sooner we

can pay off the entire loan, and the less we have to raise for our total expenses on the loan (thanks to reduced interest payments). Even amidst the current economic uncertainty, you might be able to donate for this special opportunity at some point between now and year's end. Your gift should have "New Building" marked on the check or on the envelope for your gift, and every gift will be welcomed. For information

Construction Loan Payments



about how to transfer investments in tax-advantageous ways for this purpose, please contact Sue Selz in the church office sue.selz@aquiachurch.org.

Jay Morris

Confirmation Changes

Because of coronavirus restrictions, we will not be able to hold a service for confirmation as planned on June 21, and we do not yet have a new date from the Diocese of Virginia. Even so, this delay gives Aquia Church a chance to issue a new invitation for those who are already baptized but have not yet made a mature, public profession of faith to do so with the direction and support of our clergy.

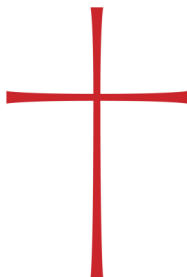


If you want to be confirmed for the strengthening of your faith, to be received officially into The Episcopal Church from another Christian tradition, to reaffirm the promises made at your baptism, or to know what any of this involves, then please contact Father Morris (540-659-4007 or morris@aquiachurch.org) so that you can begin the necessary preparations that will begin in early June.

AQUIA'S TABLE



After much discussion, it is with heavy hearts that we announce the cancellation of the 2020 golf tournament benefitting Aquia's Table. We are already looking forward and planning for 2021. Thank you to everyone and our community for your understanding.



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



For Doctors and Nurses

Sanctify, O Lord, those whom you have called to the study and practice of the arts of healing, and to the prevention of disease and pain. Strengthen them by your life-giving spirit, that by their ministries the health of the community may be promoted and your creation glorified; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 460



The Aquia Church congregation recognizes the dedication of all who serve during this pandemic.

We pray for their safety and continued health and well-being. Thank you for your sacrifice.

Whenever I lead a Bible study on material I have led before—such as I am doing right now with our Wednesday evening Bible study on the Gospel of John—I try to read something new in the way of biblical commentary, background information, or other perspective. I have been studying the Fourth Gospel seriously since the fall of 1990, when I took a graduate-level course on the Gospel and Letters of John; and each time I return, I always find something that is new to me, and the discoveries are often remarkable. St. Augustine reportedly said about John's Gospel that it is deep enough for an elephant to swim in it yet shallow enough that a child would not drown in it. It is in certain respects a rather straightforward Gospel, while its theological and spiritual depth prompts many readers to benefit from guidance. Two books from which I have been learning a lot on our current tour of the Fourth Gospel have already been very helpful for our discussions, and you will surely gain some new insights by reading these same volumes.

The first book is *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* by Craig L. Blomberg (IVP Academic, 2001). This volume is, in a sense, a two-for-one book. The first 50 pages of text address historically oriented questions like these: Why have so many scholars in the past assumed that the Gospel of John involves more fiction than fact about Jesus? Why have they supposed that the Fourth Gospel has less historical accuracy than the other three Gospels in the New Testament about Jesus' life, ministry, and so forth? What can we know about the original source or sources of John's Gospel and about the complex process of writing, editing, and transmitting this document? What about the many substantive differences between the Fourth Gospel and the other three—how significant are these differences, and how should we understand the four Gospels in relation to each other? The next 250 pages of text is a stand-alone commentary on the Fourth Gospel, helping readers understand this biblical book section by section, with large ideas and specific details covered carefully, but with a very keen eye focused on answering the historical questions Blomberg had raised earlier, including these: What does archaeological evidence from the Holy Land indicate about how accurate John's Gospel is? Are there clues within the text of John that could help us recognize its veracity more readily? What tools do we need for appreciating the historical reliability of this Gospel? Most commentaries on any Gospel in general, and most commentaries on the Fourth Gospel in particular, do not wrestle at length enough with the historical issues that have been raised about the Gospel of John; in fact, until recent years, historical questions about this book of the Bible were often dismissed or largely ignored. Yet to his credit, Blomberg uses an array of resources inside this Gospel and outside the Bible in order to bolster our trust of this text as an impressive accomplishment with reliable roots and a credible preservation of eyewitness accounts, rather than leaving us so underwhelmed that we might mistake the Fourth Gospel instead for a kind of campfire concoction. Blomberg holds the title Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, and he has successfully brought many skills together in addressing these questions. What he has written about the historical trustworthiness of John's Gospel is prompting me to turn soon to his similar work in other books in related areas: *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (IVP Academic, 2007) and his more recent *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs* (B&H Academic, 2016).

A likewise dependable guide that is aimed to be even more user-friendly for folks navigating the Fourth Gospel is Andreas J. Köstenberger's *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, 2013). This commentary breaks down John's Gospel into its major thought-units and sub-units, and the author explains how each one serves as a crucial building-block in explaining who Jesus was, what Jesus did, and why that matters. As the Gospel proceeds, Köstenberger clearly and patiently explains every step along the way. What makes this book particularly helpful for beginners, I think, are the supplements he provides to his discussion about each chapter and verse: point-by-point outlines that help readers get themselves oriented for what lies ahead, study questions that help readers focus their attention as they travel, and sidebars that help readers understand pertinent background information or key themes and topics that stand out as features not to be missed in this Gospel. Whenever one finds technical terms or concepts with which one might not be familiar, those words appear in boldface for emphasis and with ample explanation immediately afterward. This is an insightful book, and I highly recommend it especially for those who want to study this biblical book for the very first time. Köstenberger writes with considerable clarity, which is a bit remarkable when you realize that English is not his first language, nor is biblical scholarship his first expertise. A native of Austria with a doctorate in socio-economics before his second doctorate in New Testament, and a specialist in the Fourth Gospel and in biblical theology, Köstenberger currently teaches at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City. He has written several major books on John's Gospel that can take readers even further into its riches.