



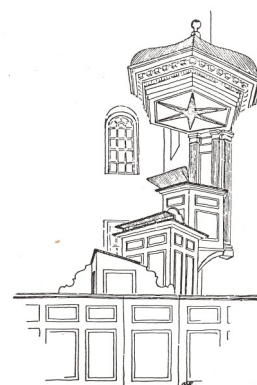
AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Cross Section

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

†
He
is not here;
he has risen!

Luke 24:6





CROSS SECTION

Aquia Episcopal Church

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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

Easter Hope for the Future

After Jesus' crucifixion and burial, there seemed to be little reason for hope. The leadership at the Temple in Jerusalem was effective in preserving the status quo, and Jesus' arrest was no exception. The Romans were effective at torture and death, and Jesus' execution was no exception. People back then died and stayed dead all the time, but Jesus' case was the first exception. What happened in the transformation of Good Friday into Easter Sunday was certainly the exception.

Following the agony of the cross, Jesus' disciples should not have been completely surprised to see their Lord alive again. After all, he had foretold that people could attempt to destroy him, and yet he would rise again. Likewise, there were prophets in the Old Testament who could foresee at least vaguely what resurrection and restoration would look like. Those at Bethany who witnessed Jesus revive the dead and decomposing Lazarus had more than a glimpse of what would happen eventually to Jesus himself.

Yet few of his followers could fathom exactly how Jesus' return from the dead would occur. Those who discovered the empty tomb would have good reason to ask who had removed his remains. Mary Magdalene did not recognize the risen Lord at first, until he called her directly by name. The apostles who gathered behind locked doors in fear were understandably amazed when they saw Jesus standing in their midst again, bidding them peace and instructing them for their mission and ministry in the future.

That is where you and I enter the story. Right now at our moment in history, with all the worry about the coronavirus and

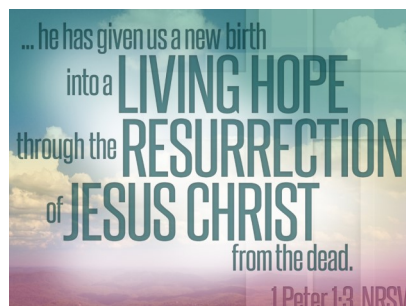
uncertainties about health and finances and so forth, we run the risk of seeming paralyzed. Schools are closed; many businesses are reducing their operations. We are suffering some forms of isolation from each other, and life appears to be placed on hold. While we currently cannot gather in our usual ways for worship, formation, fellowship, and service to others, there are indeed transformations underway.

Aquia Church has moved quickly to offer Morning Prayer, sermons, and adult education via the Internet as one way of keeping connected. Sunday school lessons are being circulated electronically for discussion by families at home, and the youth group has started meeting virtually instead of in person. Parishioners are phoning each other out of love and concern. Aquia's Pantry has resumed its distribution of groceries to neighbors in need with curbside service. We are finding new ways for being the church and conducting our mission and ministry.

These transformations are borne of necessity, and they are at least temporary exceptions to how we usually express our faith. But these uses of electronic communications, discussions over websites, the revival of old-fashioned phone calls, and new styles for delivering food are more than mere exceptions: they are signs of hope, vitality, and love—all of which belong at the heart of our Easter celebrations.

The current health scares will eventually fade, the economy will eventually recover, and more ordinary life will eventually resume. Until then, we shall continue our mission and ministry as best we can, even under changed circumstances. While we cannot observe Good Friday or Easter Sunday in our usual ways this year, we shall still honor Jesus' death for our salvation, and we shall still celebrate his resurrection from the grave. The fact that Jesus was dead but is now alive again shows us why we can reasonably have hope for the future: because the future is already underway, with life being restored, and with the Lord making all things new.

Jay Morris



FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Faith in the Midst of COVID-19

Dear Family in Christ,
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank our God for you that even in the midst of the trials and the tribulation of this COVID-19 pandemic, you have not lost hope. We have been pushed past limits that we once did not think possible. We are not able to be together in the same way on this coming Easter Sunday, the Day of the Resurrection. This is profoundly sad. But we cannot and we must not lose sight of the truth. The truth is that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). The truth is that even in the midst of fear and anxiety, Christ has won the victory over sin, death, and the devil. I know that fear has gripped the heart of this country, but fear is not the final response of the Christian.

As we are in April and are still in the throes of things, I am reminded of a small group of men huddled together in a locked room on a Sunday so many years ago. Fear kept them inside. It was a real fear—much like the real fears that we face today. But then, their Lord and ours entered the room. And he said to them, “Peace be with you.” He sent them out into the world as apostles, as heralds of the Gospel. By no means am I asking you to expose yourself or others to the virus or to be flippant about this. Instead, I am encouraging you, as one of your priests and as a brother Christian, not to let this virus overcome the responsibility that we all have been given as believers in Jesus Christ to make disciples for him. We have to be creative during this time. But we must continue to do the important work of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is our mission. That is our duty. That is our responsibility.

Furthermore, especially during the time of heightened stress and fear, it is tempting to spread only bad news, or to focus only on how many people have been infected or how many have died. While these are facts, they are not the full reality of our situation. There is good news in combatting this illness. By the time of the

writing of this article, human trials have already begun on a vaccine. The number of cases is starting to decrease around the world. There is an end in sight. So be a people filled with hope and faith. This is who God calls us and equips us to be.

So be a people filled with hope and faith. This is who God calls us and equips us to be.... No virus can destroy our relationship with God, won for us through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, whether we contract COVID-19 or not, whether we die from it or not, we are okay. We are okay because of a Good Friday almost 2,000 years ago. We are okay because of that very first Easter Sunday. We have already died in the waters of our baptism, and we truly have nothing to fear. No virus can destroy our relationship with God, won for us through the saving work of Jesus Christ. That is a message that is of such great importance and value that we cannot hoard it for ourselves. It is a message to spread. During this season, spread hope. Spread joy—joy that cannot be kept down by COVID-19 or anything else.

A blessed Holy Week to you. A joyous Easter to you. May God bless you and your loved ones during this time. 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*



AQUA CHURCH VESTRY

Chris Arey

*Finance Committee
Administration Committee*

Charlie Bingay

Finance Committee

Dickie Boes

Finance Committee Chairperson

Bob Brandon

Building & Grounds Committee

Carrol Frederick

Administration Committee

Bill Hoffman

*Senior Warden
Acting Chairperson of
Administration Committee*

Ron Korth

*Junior Warden
Building & Grounds
Committee Chairperson*

Christopher “Kit” Stoltz

*Youth Representative
Administration &
Finance Committees*

Chris Wanner

Buildings & Grounds Committee

VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Feb. 20, 2020

Dinner and Fellowship. Started at 6:30 p.m.; hosted by Chris Arey and Chris Wanner. In attendance were Rector Fr. Jay Morris, Asst. Rector Fr. James Rickenbaker, Jr. Warden Ron Korth, Treasurer Chris Arey, Chris Wanner, Dickie Boes, Bob Brandon, Charlie Bingay, Patricia Springer, Patty Montgomery, Michael Golasz, and Chris Bowie. Fr. Jay opened with a prayer and the Lord's Prayer.

[Subsequent events are italicized and bracketed.]

Business Session started at 7 p.m. Welcome of new vestry members: Chris Bowie, Michael Golasz, Patty Montgomery, and Patricia Springer. *Treasurer's Report* by Chris Arey. Chris A. explained the way the treasurer's report is formatted and presented. Chris A. also pointed out that the church entered the new year with a payable balance of \$556. This was due to an alarm issue and subsequent service call that the church is disputing with Johnson Controls. The issue was in relation to the alarm panel in the Fleurries. Chris A. also indicated that he will now send out the "Income and Expenses" worksheet and the "Budget to Actuals" worksheet in Excel format. *Minutes from Previous Meeting* by Acting Register Fr. James Rickenbaker were unanimously approved in the meeting. Two points were brought to the attention of the vestry. The first regarded property insurance payments: the church did not actually make two payments in January; instead, one payment was made, but double-recorded. Additionally, the new pledged income amount for 2020 is \$421,119.92.

[On 29 February, Fr. Jay notified vestry members via e-mail that his call on Feb. 26 for an urgent electronic vote about accepting favorable new terms for the CFFB construction loan from Union Bank had been approved with at least ten affirmative votes and no opposition.]

New Business

R-2020-01: Adoption of 2020 budget. The resolution was approved unanimously as submitted. Fr. Jay explained how the budget works for the new vestry members, i.e. spending caps for expense lines, etc. Chris A. spoke to the resolution before the vote to indicate the need for the resolution to make the adoption of the budget a matter of record, as it will now be included with the minutes.

Reports from Vestry Committees

Finance Committee: Dickie Boes spoke as the chair of the finance committee. At the finance committee meeting, they discussed goals for 2020. Those were sent in an e-mail attachment from Dickie to the vestry. The finance committee is beginning the process of compiling a book of standard operating procedures for the finance committee. Chris Wanner brought up the question of what the vestry wants to do with the anonymous donation of \$500,000 to be given in the calendar year of 2020. At the time of the vestry meeting, Fr. Jay and Chris A. had not yet heard back from Mr. Brown from United Bank regarding the best options for lowering the church's monthly payments on the construction loan.

Administration Committee: Fr. Jay spoke on behalf of the administration committee. The committee is continuing to work on their 2020 goals. Fr. Jay will send them when they are completed.

Buildings and Grounds Committee: Ron Korth spoke as the chair of the building and grounds committee. They determined that there will be around 5-6 new items for this year's goals. Ron indicated that there is the possibility of adding solar lights in front of the entrance sign to help it be more visible. Michael Golasz indicated that solar lights have not worked well there in the past. Ron also brought up the idea of investigating with Dominion Power



Vestry Highlights

who owns the streetlight that is near the entrance sign. Two new toilets will need to be installed in the parish house, as by the vestry meeting they had been running for two days straight. Ron also discussed fencing in a playground in the back of the CFFB. The cemetery rules sign was set to arrive soon. Ron also investigated the expense for repainting the sign with the rector's name on in front of the church. That would cost \$300. Chris W. is beginning work on repairing the wrought iron fence in front of the church. Ron indicated that there will be eight new concrete bumpers added to the parking spaces in front of the fence. Ron mentioned that there appears to be a roof leak in the historic church and that there are squirrels in the attic, too. Fr. Jay responded that Pioneer Roofing Company came to investigate the roof leak, and that their inspector does not believe initially that it is a roof leak. There will be an update on that as the investigation continues. Ron also brought in a picture of the new rustic fence to be installed to prevent after-hours entrance into the cemetery via car.

Reports from Senior Warden and Junior Warden

Jr. Warden Ron Korth had nothing else to report.

Sr. Warden Bill Hoffman was not present to make a report.

Report from Rector. Fr. Jay reported that his new office floor was installed.

Continued on following page ...



... Vestry, continued from previous page

He also reported on the diocesan visioning tour: Aquia was well represented, and the diocese was very pleased with the turnout. Fr. Jay reported that Boy Scout Matthew Flusche has completed the cemetery benches for his Eagle Scout project. Fr. Jay asked the advice of the vestry regarding the possibility of a new plaque for John Peyton to be designed and installed by the Peyton Society of Virginia. Fr. Jay mentioned the need for electing three parishioners to be the delegation to diocesan convention. He also brought up the possibility of offering some office

space to a local Young Life leader for occasional use.

Upcoming Dates and Information

2/25: Shrove Tuesday pancake supper
2/26: Ash Wednesday worship services
2/27: Start of Lenten dinner-and-discussion series
3/7: Music concert by Washington's Camerata
3/17: Vestry meeting

Good of the Order

New vestry member committee assignments: Chris Bowie and Patricia Springer will be on the administration committee, while Patty Montgomery

and Michael Golasz will be on the buildings and grounds committee. Chris Arey passed out notecards to vestry, inviting members to write personal notes to people with whom they interact as a form of in-reach.

Closing Prayer by Fr. James Rickenbaker, and Adjournment

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

Note From the Treasurer: Stewardship and Church Finances

We find ourselves in uncharted times, but many aspects of church life continue with little change. This applies to our finances, as we have salaries, benefits, construction loan, insurance, utilities and facility maintenance, among other costs that still must be reckoned with. Some ministry costs may be reduced as events are postponed, but the majority of our expenses continue. It is gratifying to see the parish continue to fulfill pledges and make generous contributions to many causes—thank you. Without in-person church services, several methods of giving are open to us. You can continue to mail your check into the church—we still pick up mail. You can give electronically through Realm – the link is <https://onrealm.org/AquiaEpiscopalC/Give>. Also, you can give via text message: text AQUIA

to 73256. You can also drop by the church office, and either drop your contribution through the mail slot, though this probably the least desirable method. If you have questions please feel free to contact the Treasurer @aquiachurch.org.

Chris Arey



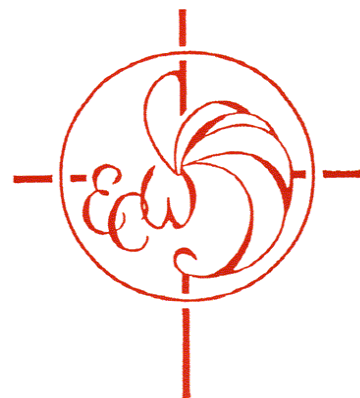
EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

As I sat with my coffee cup in hand early this morning, I heard the spring chirping of a bird outside my window. The morning was overcast and somewhat dreary. The pear tree in bloom was barely visible through the morning mist. The sweet smell of the magnolia blossoms actually hung in the damp air. I was taken back when I also thought I heard a profound whisper: “this too shall pass!” I sat for a long time; most of what I just experienced was tangible, but the words were not, yet they were real to me. Could the meaning in the words be for today, for the future, for me, for the health and well-being of our nation or world?

Over the last couple of weeks, so much information has flooded our nation, our parish, and our ministries. Our traditional activities of Lent have been disrupted with changes in our worship, closures of ministry activities, and self-induced quarantine. We have been asked to put our faith in others, including doctors and the government (both

federal and state). There seems to be some obvious disconnect with our faith with many of the things we are being asked or told to do: put your faith in what we are telling you, they tell us. Yet I am saying, as we are moving through this crisis hour by hour, day by day, that I haven’t heard the words I have so often heard before: “God bless us” or “God bless this nation.”

Our ECW are members of many ministries at Aquia. It has been suggested we should “socially distance” ourselves. Perhaps physically, as we work our way through the next several weeks and months, it is important to remember to socially *connect* in a different way. Those handwritten notes, those personal calls, an e-mail, a card, and even a text-message are all means of social connection. Other means of social connection are our prayers of intercession, our prayers for wellness, and our prayers of thankfulness and gratefulness about the Lenten season. The reminders of what this time means is a connection (call it



spiritual connection, not disconnecting) with God.

Our focus has been detoured from the season of Lent. In repeating the words “this too shall pass” over and over, I was reminded of the promise of the Lenten season, the promise which was made to everyone long ago. I was also reminded of the sacrifice which was made for all Christians—including me!

Briget Kane
President

STS. MARY AND MARTHA

Worship, Service and Fellowship

Sts. Mary and Martha Guild has great plans for the next few months. God willing, the guild will be off and running in April as we plan and prepare for Fall Fest 2020. Fall Fest is on Oct. 3 this year, and although this may sound far away, it will be here before we know it! Stocking the Fall Fest craft room and jewelry room is Sts. Mary and Martha’s largest service project of the year.



We have two announcements to share with our parish. The most important is that Carolyn Hendrickson has volunteered to be the guild’s co-chair starting April 1. We are delighted that Carolyn is stepping up to the plate with fresh ideas and new stamina, and we thank Carolyn for taking on this responsibility.

The second announcement is that we will continue to collect the travel size toiletries from vacation travels, but we will be handing them to Aquia’s Pantry for local distribution. For many years we have carried your gifts down to Micah Ministries in Fredericksburg, which aids the chronically homeless. However, at the time of our last delivery, we were asked to cease because their bins were too full. Fortunately,

Michael Golasz agreed to offer these gifts to our guests who come to Aquia’s Pantry and Aquia’s Table. Please continue to leave your gifts on the picnic table in front of the church. Thank you!

Since our in-person church activities have been suspended due to the coronavirus, we will not be meeting this month. Please watch for announcements about the resumption of Sts. Mary and Martha meetings. For further information or if you have a craft suggestion, send a note to Mary Jane Cole maryjane@cfsw.biz or Carolyn Hendrickson cvhendrickson35@gmail.com.

Mary Jane Cole



OUTREACH

The Outreach Ministry met several times after the 10 a.m. service to plan the chili cook-off. The chili cook-off has now been postponed due to the current coronavirus situation. Keep those crock pots ready and stay tuned for a new date.

We would like to thank the Sunday School students for their help in putting together the March Tide-Me-Over bags for Stafford Junction. We voted to send Stafford Junction a donation in April so

they can purchase food for disadvantaged students in our area.

We will not have a meeting in April. We do have the Craft Show scheduled for Saturday, May 2, and we have 10 crafters signed up so far. Most of them were with us last year. We have been advised, however, that some other craft shows have been canceled due to the current coronavirus situation. We will make a decision on ours soon.

Johanna Jones



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Vacation Bible School will take place June 8-12 from 9 a.m. until noon for children age 3 through those entering 5th grade. Climb aboard for a mountain of fun at *Rocky Railway VBS*. We will go on faith-filled adventure and discover that trusting Jesus pulls us through life's ups and downs. Registration forms are available on the church

website and in the church office. If you are available to volunteer any days during VBS, contact Kristen Morgan at christianed@aquiachurch.com.

Kristen Morgan



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.



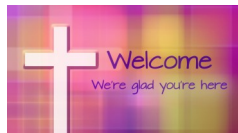
FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Transferred in: “*And the Lord added to their number day by day...*” (Acts 2:47)

Lawrence Dean Hartzler, Sharon Center, Iowa.

NEWCOMERS/VISITORS



“*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares*” (Hebrews 13:2).

Garway Thomas-Johnson and Leachien Ricks.

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 of-

fice 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 April 19, 2020 (subject to possible restrictions about the coronavirus). 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

Patrick and Anna Hedger.



www.aquiachurch.org

office@aquiachurch.org

(540) 659-4007

Aquia Church Prayer List – April 2020

Faye Andrews, Rhett Blythe and Family, Julie Burgess, Jackie Chichester, Elijah Colliver, Richard Craven, Jeff Davis, Donnie Davis, Brian Driscoll, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, 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, O.D. Taylor, John & Pam Tompkins, Gayle Tompkins, Kenneth Tompkins, Beth Tremper, Tom Tremper, Patrick Weber, Walt & Elizabeth Yager.



How to Be the Church During Difficulty

Life has changed in various ways for people everywhere because of the coronavirus pandemic, and the same is true for life in our parish. It is so unusual that we are being prohibited from gathering in groups larger than ten people until May 8 at the earliest, and especially from gathering for worship on Sundays. How ironic it is that we are almost being forced into giving up going to church for Lent—and even for Easter and beyond, too! How ironic, and how deeply depressing. But just as death did not have the final word when Good Friday and Holy Saturday yielded to Easter Sunday and to all the joy and hope that Jesus' resurrection inspires, so too is Aquia Church not shutting down completely during this recent unpleasantness. Far from it!

Our parish had to become innovative and creative in our response to this situation. When directions from public health experts, government leaders, and diocesan officials forced us to forgo for the moment our usual approaches to Sunday worship and Christian formation, we rose to the challenge. Your clergy are leading Morning Prayer with a sermon on Sundays via the Internet, and you can join in live or at a later time for your convenience. Our Sunday school director is e-mailing Sunday school readings and learning activities to families so that they can continue their formation from home. One of our teenagers initiated an interactive discussion online for our youth group, so that these scattered friends can remain connected even at a distance. When our weekly Bible studies and our Lenten dinner-and-discussion series could not meet in person, we continued the conversations electronically. These Web-based offerings are serving a need even beyond our resident membership: former parishioners scattered from North Carolina to Arizona have joined in these opportunities, along with friends in several other states. So have new friends in our area, plus some members who are

unable or are understandably reluctant to venture out. We are exploring options for how these electronic ministries might expand the number of people we can reach, even after the current crisis calms down.



Judy Morris assembles a food bag for Aquia's Pantry guests.

We have become innovative and creative in the area of service to others. On the last Wednesday and Thursday of March, Aquia's Pantry began curbside delivery of groceries to neighbors in need: guests would drive up to the new building, and teams from Aquia's Pantry would place bags of food directly into the vehicles. On the next day, Aquia's Table delivered bunches of bagged lunches and dinners to the homes of some parishioners and friends as a sign of God's grace during these difficult days. Aquia's Table is also developing plans for curbside delivery of meals for the weeks ahead. When one of our bishops asked me recently how our food ministries were being affected by the coronavirus situation, I was thrilled to report that we have barely slowed down but have successfully redirected our efforts. Besides these matters, your clergy have been providing extensive support to folks facing financial struggles through our clergy discretionary funds.

Other kinds of changes are occurring, too. In order to maintain a healthy work environment, our church office has reduced its hours temporarily and our staff is appropriately limiting their physical contact with the public. But our lay employees are working from home as much as possible—as many of you are doing—while still returning phone calls, paying the bills, keeping up with correspondence, and supporting other areas of ministry. The vestry is also working around the current situation. For instance, while our typical activities in the historic church are suspended, the buildings and grounds committee is replacing the floor in the choir loft. That's a wise use of this unexpected time. Like many of you, vestry members and clergy members together are making phone calls even more than usual to check on parishioners, offering help with errands, appointments, and other needs. I am continuing to make pastoral visits as situations require, with appropriate precautions in place for everyone's safety. Of course we still care about each other, even if we cannot see each other as frequently as we wish. I remain grateful that a number of our ministry groups (not only those mentioned in this article) are able to continue their work, often without in-person meetings and events.

There's at least one important lesson here that we all can learn: while it might be difficult right now for us to go to church, we can still be the church. Even when we cannot attend church as usual, we can still carry out our mission and ministry faithfully. Given how much we all miss the fellowship of seeing each other face to face, and given how much I miss the celebration of the sacraments in your midst, I surely look forward to the time when we can reconvene. Until then, let us cherish the blessed ties that bind our hearts in Christian love, say our prayers together, and continue to be the church.

Jay Morris





Aquia Episcopal Church
Post Office Box 275
Stafford, VA
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



O God, the creator and preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially we pray for thy holy Church universal; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Finally, we commend to thy fatherly goodness all those who are in any ways afflicted or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; [especially those for whom our prayers are desired]; that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Prayer #2: For All Sorts and Conditions of Men
(BCP 814-815)

April 2020 **READING ROOM** by Jay Morris

You might remember as I do the marvelous music from Easter Sunday at Aquia Church last year, as part of our fulsome celebration of that most holy and glorious day. Our director of music and organist, our adult choir members, and some guest musicians combined their talents and offered a bevy of music from Part III of Handel's *Messiah*, the great oratorio that depicts so much of what is important about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. What most folks know of Handel's *Messiah* tends to focus on Parts I and II, dealing with the prophecies about the eventual birth of a savior for the world (starting with the opening line "Comfort, ye my people," and continuing through other sections including "For unto us a child is born") and culminating with the famous "Hallelujah Chorus." But the music in *Messiah* does not end with the "Hallelujah Chorus"—not by a long shot!—much as the story of Jesus' gift of salvation for us does not end with his passion and crucifixion on Good Friday. Just as that story continues with his resurrection on Easter Sunday and moves even beyond that, so in *Messiah* Part III Handel extends his musical presentation about who Jesus is by including a considerable emphasis on Jesus' return from the grave and on the hope that his resurrection provides to us. As with the rest of the text throughout *Messiah*, Handel and his librettist, Charles Jennens, relied entirely upon the themes and words of Scripture in the Old and New Testament (largely the King James Version of the Bible except for the psalms, with some variations). Accordingly, anytime that you hear a performance or a recording of *Messiah* or peruse its text, you will find yourself surrounded by biblical words, images, and messages. That is surely true about Part III, with all its focus on resurrection and Easter, starting with "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (from the Old Testament Book of Job, interesting enough!) and leading directly into First Corinthians 15, from which chapter nearly all of Part III is taken (along with brief portions of Romans and Revelation at the end).

While the extraordinary circumstances posed by the coronavirus pandemic at this moment in history will not permit a repeat of last year's use of Handel's *Messiah* at Aquia Church, you are certainly welcomed and indeed encouraged to hear that same music from Part III on your own. Recordings of Handel's *Messiah* are widely available in albums, CDs, and MP3, other electronic forms, along with seasonal broadcasts around Christmas and Easter on radio and television and similarly scheduled live performances. At present, until we can be reunited physically for corporate worship, we may need to rely on such individual listening and personal reading more than usual. To that end, drawing on my own study of Handel's *Messiah* and reflection on it, I have found three books quite helpful.

The first book, which is largely biblical and theological in orientation, is ***Messiah: The Gospel according to Handel's Oratorio*** (Eerdmans, 1993) by Roger A. Bullard, who taught religion at Barton College (formerly Atlantic Christian College) in North Carolina and performed as an amateur musician; with his training in Hebrew and Old Testament, he has also written a number of handbooks about Jewish writings inbetween the times of the Old Testament and the New Testament. In 150 pages of lively text, Bullard walks us through *Messiah* section by section in order to illustrate what Handel and Jennens were trying to accomplish by drawing on the particular passages of Scripture that they used. Directly after each section from Jennens's text, Bullard explains what is going on in the biblical background and how the combination of text and music is intended to shape our experience of the performance. Of the three books I am recommending here, this book supplies the least attention to musical details, and to that extent it might appeal to the widest audience.

A different book that is far more musically and historically oriented is ***Handel: Messiah*** by Donald Burrows in the Cambridge Musical Texts series (Cambridge University Press, 1991). In an appendix, Burrows provides the entire libretto (text) of *Messiah*, complete with biblical references and musical information. The main text by Burrows is only 82 pages long, with a treasure-trove of information about the composition of the libretto and the music (including some perspective on selected European antecedents for this form of music), the early performances of this oratorio in Dublin and London, changes Handel made to it over time, and the subsequent history of how *Messiah* has been received and cherished. Unless you read music, you probably won't find this volume engaging; but if you do read music, then you may find Burrows rather fascinating.

A third book combining some biblical-theological orientation like Bullard's with some musical and historical interests like Burrows's is ***Handel's Messiah: Comfort for God's People*** (Eerdmans, 2010) by Calvin R. Stapert, who taught music at Calvin College in Michigan. Stapert provides a rich mixture of theological commentary and musical information. Even if you do not read music, you can still profit considerably from what this book explains about the power of the musical score and its effect on listeners, combined with the brilliance of the text. Stapert is indeed a reliable guide to this great work.