



AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Cross Section

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

Where is God in the Coronavirus Pandemic, and Is There Any Silver Lining in It?

Whenever bad things happen, most folks want to blame someone or something for it. Take for example an injury, the diagnosis of a disease, or a defeat suffered by your favorite sports team or your political candidate: when trouble occurs, our natural reaction is to assign blame. We especially try to find fault for conditions that are deteriorating from bad to worse. In order to get the situation reversed, and in order to avoid repeating past mistakes in the future, some of this blame-focused approach can be useful and even necessary. That is as true in spiritual matters as in the rest of life.

So sometimes we see that the liability lies within ourselves as fallible creatures—"frail children of dust, and feeble as frail," we are reminded in the hymn "O worship the King." Other times we blame others: other people elsewhere, the world, or everything in general. In plenty of cases, instead of turning inward or outward, we look upward and point an angry finger at God for His harsh imposition of perceived punishments (whether deserved justly or not), for His obvious incompetence as Creator, or for His apparent lack of care and concern about us. Once again, some of this approach can be useful and even necessary, theologically and otherwise.

With the coronavirus pandemic, I am hearing almost surprisingly few questions being raised about where God is in all this. I say "surprisingly" because from time immemorial people have often looked to purported gods and to the biblical God as

the focus of ultimate authority and responsibility for blessings and curses alike. I say "almost" because our increasingly secular culture is turning less and less often to God for answers, guidance, and help about anything ultimate. With similar disappointment, I am hearing very little of worthy substance about any possible connection between God and our current situation.

While I can appreciate a religious and reverent reluctance to blame the Lord for anything, our forebears in the faith during biblical times and beyond were often willing to understand *everything* with ultimate reference somehow to Him. In both the Old and the New Testaments, there are plenty of places where we learn that so much of what goes well with us (though not quite everything good) happens as the Lord blesses us for our faithful obedience to Him, whereas by contrast so much of what goes wrong with us (though not quite everything bad) happens as we rightly incur the Lord's curses upon us for our rebellious disobedience of Him. Accordingly, our present predicament might prompt us to presume that we may as well blame the Lord for this pandemic.

Yet case-by-case discernment of course remains important. Following Genesis 3, for instance, we have to admit that much of our suffering and dissatisfaction in life—not to mention death itself—comes from being part of a fallen world that is affected adversely by the sins that we moral creatures have introduced along with their wide-ranging consequences, regardless

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CROSS SECTION

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Assistant Rector

The Rev. James Rickenbaker

Treasurer

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Charlie Bingay

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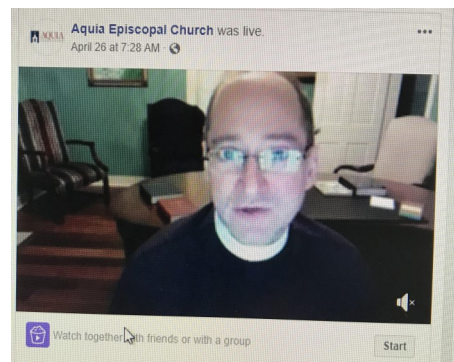
FROM THE RECTOR

... *Fr. Morris, continued from front page*

whether they were intended. Following Jesus' own approach in John 9, furthermore, I for one am not prepared to attribute the coronavirus mess to God.

With these important acknowledgements as caveats, we may find it more fruitful to think less about blaming God and instead to think more about whether there might be any silver lining in the cloud currently overcast. For all the problems that coronavirus and COVID-19 have caused us or that we have brought upon ourselves, are there any positive gains to be realized from how we address these challenges?

New rules for public health have certainly brought changes to Aquia Church, but not all of those changes have been bad. While restrictions against public gatherings in person have forced us to find other ways for conducting our worship, sometimes necessity is the mother of invention—and sometimes in good ways. Unable to worship in the historic church, we have needed to worship privately and electronically from home. Sharing our worship services over Facebook Live has enabled us to reach members near and far who might otherwise be left out of any sort of corporate worship. Many people have reported how blessed they have been by our electronic broadcasts, not only for sermons and prayers, but also for Bible studies, youth group conversations, and Sunday school lessons being conducted online now—with some participants embracing the good habit of more regular involvement this way. Former parishioners and friends of this parish who are scattered around Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, North and South Carolina, and West Virginia (among the varied places I recall offhand) have joined us for many of these broadcasts. The same is probably true for neighbors nearby who have heard about Aquia Church but have not visited us yet. Perhaps one silver lining here is that we can connect electronically with prospective members and reconnect with former members and dear friends while keeping current members connected,



Fr. Morris conducts Morning Prayer on the Third Sunday of Easter, followed by responses to interesting questions submitted throughout the previous week.

too. These electronic kinds of evangelism and faith-formation might have an impact that we can barely begin to imagine.

Another silver lining that comes from following the stay-at-home guidelines: we're now staying at home! Instead of breaking our backs and behinds with too many hours of commuting and working too hard, we're now catching up on really refreshing rest. Instead of allowing ourselves to be distracted by too many trips for trivial travel and shopping sprees, we're now spending real time in person with loved ones at home. Instead of going to the gym, we're now taking walks in our neighborhood, where we can stop and smell the roses once again. Instead of racing around frenetically from one event to the next, we're now slowing down to a pace of life that is sustainable. Those who are struggling with isolation caused by social distancing may renew relationships with friends and family elsewhere via telephone, the Internet, and good old-fashioned written notes (gasp!). While some folks are getting on each other's nerves more often by being cooped up together, we understand that this too shall pass. Meanwhile, if we're now wasting money and time less often by staying at home and taking care of projects and people there, then that's reason to celebrate.

Several of our recent group studies—on the book of Deuteronomy, the prophet Elijah, and the *Screwtape Letters*—have reminded me about our human tendency toward idolatry, just as our recent

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FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Formation in the Midst of COVID-19

Dear Family in Christ,
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank our God for you, as you have remained faithful throughout the trying time in which we find ourselves. I have been very thankful for the fact that I have seen many of your names pop up on the Facebook Live Sunday for worship as well as for the other formation opportunities that we have offered in recent days. I want to encourage you to continue in the faith during this time. Most especially, I want to encourage you to continue in the important work of Christian formation at home. As parents, when our children were baptized, we made a vow before God and the Church that we would help our children grow into the full stature of Christ. To be unequivocally clear: parents are the primary teachers of the Christian faith. Parents are with their children far more than those children are in Sunday school. It is high time that we as parents remember our solemn commitment to God to raise our children in the faith. So here are a few things to consider during this time of physical distancing.

Be aware of what your children are watching. It is easy when we are all at home together to turn on the television or to be on other electronics all day. Make no mistake: there are things on TV and social media that are fundamentally anti-Christian. As parents, it is our responsibility not necessarily to shelter our children, but certainly to teach them the difference between right and wrong. Supplement whatever your children are watching with Christian alternatives. If you are looking for a good, Christian streaming service, there is one called PureFlix. It has lots of wholesome programming. Fr. Jay and I are still offering youth group morning and evening meetings on basically the same schedule. We are meeting with the youth on Google Hangouts to continue our portion of faith-formation. Kristen Morgan has sent out materials for all grades each week to encourage parents to go through

the lessons with their kids. (See the Children's Ministry article on page 7 for more information.) Please engage with your children in the faith during this time.

Be aware of what your children are reading. In this regard, make sure that while the kids have extra time, get into a pattern of reading Scripture with them. I know for a fact that we have a few bookworms in our youth group. Take this time to read a chapter a day in the Acts of the Apostles with your kids, as we are still in the Easter season. Read together what the disciples did in light of the resurrection of Jesus. Talk about what you read with your kids. (For younger kids, I suggest instead the *Jesus Storybook Bible*). Take this time also to start up good prayer practices with your kids. Praying together as a family is a wonderful thing.

As you build up new practices during this time, don't overwhelm yourselves. But I implore you not to let this time go to waste. Take up the mantle laid upon you when your children were baptized. Help them grow in the faith. Remember that God is with you during this strange time. He holds you in his loving arms. We will get through this and, by God's grace and help, we'll be stronger in the faith because of it.

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*



Fr. Morris preaches on Palm Sunday via the Aquia Church Facebook page.



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



Memorial Day: A Commemoration of Service and Sacrifice

Memorial Day is an annual reminder of the sacrifices made for our country by the men and women of the armed services. Though a dozen communities claim to have been the first to honor the fallen, in 1966 Congress granted the right of primacy to the small village of Waterloo, N.Y., based upon the fact that (unlike the ceremonies of other communities) its commemoration had been formal, community-wide, and recurring. Each year in our own church cemetery, members of our youth group and their families, in concert with American Legion Post 290, mark the graves of the fallen with flags.

In October, 2019, there was a brief service in our cemetery to inter the recently discovered partial remains of a World War II airman were interred in his grave. The Rev. James Rickenbaker presided, and the service was attended by ladies of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the son and grandchildren of the fallen airman. The fallen airman was 2nd Lieutenant John Conway Kehoe, called Conway, who is buried with his parents, John Carlisle Kehoe and Mildred Moncure Kehoe, and beside his

older brother, 1st Lt. William "Bill" Joseph Kehoe. The family was from Bealeton in Fauquier County. Seven of the eight Kehoe children served their country, and two of them gave their lives during the war.

Both Bill and Conway were bomber pilots. Bill, who had completed 30 combat missions, was killed over France on April 18, 1944, when his B-26 Marauder collided with another B-26 that had been hit by flak and spiraled out of control. On Aug. 18, 1944, on his 19th mission with his crew, Conway's B-24H was hit by flak and crashed near Boussicourt, France.

Among the Kehoe children also serving was their daughter, Lelia Moncure "Mickey" Kehoe. She volunteered for the Army Nurse Corps after Pearl Harbor and reported for duty at Fort Eustis in January, 1942. Assigned to the 51st Station Hospital, she deployed overseas, landing at Casablanca, Morocco, on Christmas Eve, 1942. After the North African campaign, she served with the 51st Station Hospital in Italy and France. Upon learning that her brothers were missing in action, after she was redeployed to France, she

vowed to discover what happened to them. Learning where the crash sites were, she traveled to the nearby villages and found where Bill and Conway were buried. In 1949, their remains were brought back to the United States and buried next to each other in our cemetery. Present at this 1949 reburial were their families, including their widows and their sons, seven-year-old William J. Kehoe, Jr., and five-year-old John Conway II. John Conway II (who was born after his father died) attended the reinternment of his father's partial remains. Lieutenant Col. "Mickey" Kehoe retired from the U.S. Army after a distinguished career, serving as the chief nurse of two Army hospitals and as chief nurse of the Eighth Army in Korea. After retirement, she worked at the McGuire Veterans Hospital in Richmond, Va.

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In 2019, partial remains of 2nd Lt. John Conway Kehoe were interred in his grave in Aquia Cemetery. Present were members of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the son and grandchildren of the fallen airman.



Update on New-Building Construction Loan

During the past couple of months, Aquia Church has received some generous contributions from anonymous sources totaling over \$350,000 that have already reduced the principal on the construction loan for our Christian Formation and Fellowship Building. These gifts have been applied above and beyond our continuing to make our regular monthly mortgage payments on time every time. In addition, we have received a commitment for another \$50,000 that will be donated later this year. Such major gifts as these are obviously significant for helping us accelerate the reduction of our construction loan debt and for inspiring confidence in the financial health of our parish.

Furthermore, at its April meeting, the vestry voted unanimously to commit an extra \$50,000 that we already have in hand in our new building fund toward another payment for reducing the principal on our construction loan. The vestry was able to take this bold action because of the fact that we currently have approximately 18 months' worth of funds available for making our monthly mortgage payments. That remarkable cushion will help to sustain us through the current period of stock market turmoil and economic uncertainty related to the coronavirus pandemic.

Also, Aquia Church has recently reached an agreement with our lending institution, United Bank, that will soon

reduce our interest rate on the remaining balance of our construction loan by around one-fifth. With this lower rate, we will soon start paying less money overall for interest on that balance. The combination of an even lower interest rate with the reduced principal is positioning our parish nicely for making the total cost of the entire project a good deal less than originally forecast. Charlie Bingay, who is a vestry member as well as our assistant treasurer, has provided helpful guidance to the vestry about how our bottom line improves considerably the faster we can pay down the principal—just like with reducing personal debt on a vehicle loan, a home mortgage, or credit card debt.

There is more good news as well. Thanks to an anonymous pledge, we have a new opportunity to help retire the construction loan debt on our new building even sooner than expected, and for less money overall. This opportunity comes in the form of another matching challenge grant that has just been launched. Every contribution for the new building received 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 pay off the principal, the sooner we pay off the



entire loan (thanks to reduced interest payments), and the less we have to raise for our total expenses on the loan.

Even amidst the present challenges in the economy, 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. You may also make an electronic contribution online. For information about how to transfer investments in tax-advantageous ways for this purpose, please contact Sue Selz: sue.selz@aquiachurch.org.

As the facts and figures form a clearer picture of where we stand in the time ahead, and as we continue to be blessed by the generosity of members and friends of this parish, we shall continue to keep you apprised of the relevant details. We invite your spiritual contributions through your prayers and praise for this important work alongside your financial donations.

Jay Morris

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She died in May, 2015, in Warrenton, Va., at the age of 96.

This story of service and sacrifice evokes both pride and sorrow. These young men engaged in deadly aerial combat. (In fact, during World War II, the 8th Air Force lost more men over the skies of Europe than the entire U.S. Marine Corps did.) Their sister, a healer, found and returned her fallen brothers to their native soil.

Our nation must never forget the sacrifice and dedication of those who served. Over the coming Memorial Day weekend, or when we can again venture safely outside, slowly walk through the shade of our cemetery and mark the names of those who gave all.

Chris Arey



EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

I am not sure everyone pre-plans the year ahead on two different calendars in late December or early January. In our house, each year we use two separate calendars to track annual events and insert the new events as needed throughout the year. It comes as no surprise to anyone that there are a lot of “Xs” on my personal calendar and the household calendar. I am certain many members of Aquia are marking their calendars in the same manner. What I have left little room for on my calendar are the many little things/changes we are experiencing since life took this unexpected change with the coronavirus pandemic. Scientists, presidents, and doomsday predictions had warned us that this time would eventually come—perhaps in our lifetime, perhaps not—which led me to ask a fellow parishioner what his thoughts were on the pandemic.

When I spoke to this member of Aquia about his thoughts on the predictions, he never hesitated and said, “really doesn’t matter to me actually, I am ready for whatever God’s plans are for me.” Until this conversation, I too thought I was ready. My faith had sustained me throughout several difficult and life-changing events. I thought my journey was well in hand, certainly being guided by God’s hand, and enlightened and supported by Father Morris

and Father James. I understood the promise Jesus made for all with his sacrifice over 2000 years ago. I knew what my baptism and confirmation meant in words; then after our conversation, the meaning of those words took on new light. I knew I needed a deeper look into my own faith.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to have an X on my calendar now. It has provided a stronger opportunity for me to be a part of my Christian family at Aquia with so many different means of communicating and sharing that were not always used before our quarantine. Meditation and study are now available through posts in every conceivable manner, from Facebook to Zoom—including worship services, Bible readings, studies, and music. While some things will never be the same moving forward and some creative skills may go by the wayside whenever we are back to ‘normal,’ I feel I am a better Christian coming out of the pandemic. My listening and hearing skills are tuned in a different way. My discipline to study and prayer has changed, and that is most important in my journey.

Much on our calendar now has become indefinite as we move into this year. I will keep you posted in the weekly announcements as I receive notifications.

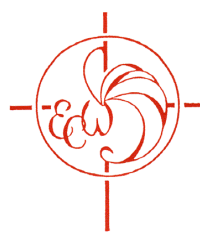
Undetermined at this time: Spring

Ingathering of the United Thank Offering (UTO), usually held in mid-May. Also undetermined: Heritage Sunday, when the Episcopal Church Women of Aquia traditionally host a luncheon buffet the on third Sunday in May in celebration of Aquia’s heritage.

Each May the tradition of Aquia ECW’s Anne E. Moncure Scholarship award is opened to all graduating seniors. The application process for graduating seniors usually begins on May 1, with the final day for applications to be received in the church office being May 31. Further information will be shared in weekly announcements. The ECW scholarship supports all continuing education.

We will also begin the preparation for many events on our calendar for the balance of the 2020 calendar. It’s not about joining the ECW, it is about sharing in our ministries: within our parish, in our local communities, and even worldwide. Contact me by e-mail (bkwings_n_things@yahoo.com) or see the parish directory for my phone number.

Briget Kane
President



OUTREACH

The outreach ministry was not able to meet in person on April 7; however, we did conduct an e-mail exchange exchange. First, we decided that the Craft Show/Pig Roast/Rummage Sale scheduled for May 2 should be canceled. We requested that refunds be issued to crafters who had registered, and we were very blessed when two of our crafters donated their registration fees to us.

Second, the Chili Cook-Off has been postponed until the fall. We will

decide on a date when we have more information.

Our next project is Cash for Cows and Change for Chickens, usually held between Mothers Day and Fathers Day. We will change the date and run it later, perhaps in July or August. The date will depend on when we can resume services in the historic church.

We have a shoe collection scheduled for July. We hope this will run as planned. Please check through your closets, particularly for children’s

shoes. We know there will be a need for gently worn shoes when children are ready to go back to school and parents have been out of work for an extended period. Also, don’t forget shoes for teens and job-seekers.

During the summer we also collect school supplies. Again, this will depend on when school and our services resume. The Stafford County Department of Social Services will be grateful for whatever supplies we are able to collect.

Johanna Jones



STS. MARY AND MARTHA

Worship, Service and Fellowship

Although we cannot yet physically gather for our meetings, Sts. Mary and Martha Guild members continue to stay close to each other. We have taken up the habit of mingling our prayers by saying Morning Prayer at home each Thursday morning at our regular meeting time of 9:30. We include intercessions that we would be lifting up aloud at our meetings in person as well as offering prayers for the health and well-being of each other and our parish family.

During these quiet times, several ladies have also been working on crafts at home to get ready for Fall Fest 2020 scheduled for Oct. 3. Altar candles stubs have been repurposed into wax angel ornaments and star-shaped candles, paint brushes are turning into Santas, and wooden alphabet blocks are turning into little elves. If you are spending your quarantine making a craft, please consider making a few extra to donate to our craft room at Fall Fest. While cleaning, organizing and

decluttering, please consider checking your jewelry box for items to contribute to the Fall Fest jewelry room.

As mentioned above, Sts. Mary and Martha Guild members are praying together on Thursday mornings for our families, friends, our parish family, and the world. If you would like to join us during this quiet month, please reach out to us so we can include you in our e-mail list, which will have an attachment with the prayers and readings for the upcoming Thursday, or simply join us by following the Morning Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer and reading the lessons found at www.LectionaryPage.net.

As one of our members said recently in a text-message, "I trust others had the strong feeling of the prayers of others, as well as the overwhelming feeling of God's presence, that I experienced during that time. It was especially meaningful to me as I took my time reading aloud each word and having trouble seeing through my tears. Quiet time for



Good time to make crafts!

reflection is one blessing to me through these days." 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

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Sunday School: While we cannot meet in person, Sunday school materials will continue to be e-mailed out to parents and grandparents of registered Sunday school children in preschool through grade 5. Middle school and high school students will continue to meet on Sunday mornings through Google Hangouts and meet for "virtual youth group" twice a month. If your child is not currently registered, but you would like to receive Sunday school materials and morning meeting updates, please e-mail Kristen Morgan (christianed@aquiachurch.org).

Vacation Bible School is still scheduled for 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. If you are available to volunteer any days during VBS, please e-mail Kristen Morgan.

Kristen Morgan

Please stay tuned to any scheduling changes that may need to be made due to the current coronavirus pandemic.



VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

March 17, 2020 Meeting

Clergy in Attendance:

The Rev. Jay Morris and 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, Patty Montgomery, Patricia Springer

Dinner and Fellowship: Dinner commenced with the blessing of the food by Fr. Jay Morris. Dinner was provided by Bill Hoffman and Ron Korth.

Business Session: Called to order by Fr. Jay Morris and opened with The Lord's Prayer.

Hand-outs were explained by Fr. Jay Morris: Stewardship, Financial Information, and Membership Statistics of the Reporting Congregation; Proposed 2020 Goals and Activities for Administration Committee; Comparison of Loan Payment Strategies.

Fr. Jay Morris opened discussion regarding election of Carol Korth as register. A motion was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Treasurer Chris Arey presented the monthly treasurer's report and answered a few questions about it.

New Business:

- Motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes of the previous vestry meeting of Feb. 18, 2020.
- Discussion of Resolution 2 regarding work on the historic church: water is evident on the inside of the church. Ron Korth has suggested that structural engineers should examine the historic church. If more work is needed, it is hoped that the expense would be manageable without vestry approval. Ron Korth suggested a timeline that is

in keeping with the examination. Fr. Jay Morris called the question and the resolution was approved.

- Discussion of Resolution 3: Daughters of the King have requested budget support for the order; as stipulated by the bylaws of the order, the order cannot raise funds. Fr. Jay Morris called the question and the resolution was approved.
- Fr. Jay Morris called the question regarding committee assignments and lists of members. The goals and committee membership lists were approved.
- Chris Arey discussed the Stewardship and Financial Information of the Reporting Congregation, as part of the parochial report on 2019, that was circulated at the meeting. Fr. Jay Morris discussed the other information for the parochial report regarding membership, attendance at worship services, and general statistics of the congregation. Fr. Jay Morris called the question to accept this parochial report and the report was accepted.

Reports from Vestry Committees:

- Administration Committee goals were distributed by Bill Hoffman: goals reflect committee examination of employees, such as bonuses and how the raising of minimum wage may affect those guidelines; a second goal reflects support for the general administration by the church office. A list of non-vestry members and vestry members was included with their committee assignments. Fr. Jay further clarified that full vestry vote may be needed as goals become resolutions that need full vestry attention.
- The Finance Committee is researching ways sensitively to pursue unfulfilled pledges. Due to current Federal Reserve interest rates, it is possible to secure a new



rate
for

Vestry Highlights

mortgage. Charlie Bingay and Chris Arey will be effecting a shred of old financial documents. Lisa Schwartz and Carole Stadnyk have agreed to serve on the audit committee. The Finance Committee discussed an impact on the budget of the raising of the minimum wage by our adult employees.

Comparison of loan payment strategies document was discussed. Fr. Jay Morris further clarified that at the end of 2019, a written intention for a gift of \$400,000 was received. A portion of that pledge (approximately \$130K) has been received but with the current volatility due to COVID-19, it is unclear as to exact date when the rest of the pledge will be received. Bill Hoffman proposed that vestry approve use of entire \$130K partial pledge with immediate application to the balance of the construction loan. Bob Brandon seconded and the motion was approved.

The Building and Grounds Committee report was given by Ron Korth. Ron suggested that Johnson Controls should visit the historic church for a site examination. It has been determined the security equipment installed in the historic church is not the equipment as described in the rental agreement. For the CFFB, options for installation of a SimpliSafe security system were discussed. Particulars regarding the historic church security system and proposed CFFB security were discussed. Also, the Mowing

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... *Fr. Morris, continued from page 2*

devotions during Lent have reminded me about our occasional need for mid-course corrections in life. In trying to connect such conversations with this pandemic, I have been asking what false gods we worship today—not so much the golden calves and other statues of biblical times, but less tangible and more subtle idols that we allow to take on too much power but that we can no longer worship in quite the same way at the moment. In other words: as the pandemic forces us to rethink our priorities in life, are there some idols that we can dethrone now? Have we given undue prominence to work, wealth, sports, celebrity, crazy competitiveness, and spending too much time away from home and away from church? Have we allowed the allure of such distractions to manipulate us, while this current respite from their corrosive influence is letting us put them back into proper perspective?

Could yet another silver lining in our present restrictions be a crucial opportunity to recalibrate the center of our lives, so that we can take better care of our people, our priorities, our planet, and above all our relationship with God?

While our current situation reminds us about our world's fracturedness and the fragility of our social structures, we may still be wondering where God is in all this. After all, we normally sing that "He's got the whole world in His hands," whereas nowadays we might be tempted to observe instead that coronavirus has us confined in its clutches. Yet I have no doubt that God is involved somewhere and somehow in this mess: not as its blameworthy cause, but as the sovereign Lord and Ruler of all creation who is guarding and guiding His people and who is always available for us everywhere, even amidst crisis. I see Him working through medical personnel, caregivers, health experts, and

various leaders who are trying to promote "wise decisions and right actions for the welfare and peace of the world" (BCP 329). I see Him working through revitalized prayer and through the altruistic care and concern we are showing for one another's well-being. I see Him working through the disciplines of Lent to call us to faithful obedience and greater devotion to Him, and working through the joy and hope of Easter to remind us that He is making everything new (Isaiah 43:19 & 65:17; Revelation 21:5). He has not forgotten us nor neglected us, because all along He has always been right here with us and for us, as He always will be. We can always turn and return to Him.

Even if God has not created the trouble of the coronavirus pandemic, there are some silver linings to be found in this dreadful situation—if only we know how and where to look.

Jay Morris

... *Vestry, continued from previous page*

Masters contract needs signing, which does not need vestry approval, with service to begin mid-April. Building and Grounds also approved Eagle Scout project proposed by Kit Stoltz for building and installation of a playground fence to be behind the CFFB.

Reports from Sr. Warden and Jr. Warden:

Senior Warden Bill Hoffman discussed the impact of our current situation due to COVID-19 and the suspension of regular church services: how will that be reflected in the current cash flow? It was determined that cash flow was not an immediate concern. Due to COVID-19, rental congregations using the parish hall are unable to meet. Land of Promise Church who had previously been renting the parish hall has suspended services currently. Vestry opinion on this matter was requested. It was agreed that charity be shown to those churches since they are unable to use

the facility through no fault of their own. The congregation meeting at Clifton Chapel should fall under the same consideration. That congregation's use of Clifton Chapel was still happening. On March 31, 2020, the Sr. Warden will be meeting with the Cemetery Committee and vestry attendance was requested. No further report was given by the **Junior Warden**.

Report from the Rector:

Current governmental regulations regarding COVID-19 have prompted the Diocese of Virginia to prohibit all gatherings of public worship through Holy Week and Easter. Further diocesan recommendation is to stick to no greater than 10 persons gathering. Furthermore, this affects non-Episcopal churches using Episcopal properties for worship. Fr. Jay Morris discussed particulars to these unprecedented prohibitions. Fr. Jay Morris clarified that he has no options on this matter. Discussion of the form of conducting the business of the

church will likely change as well, and impacts could be felt in formation and fellowship, due to the impacts of COVID-19. Due to the nature of the public health restrictions, and the projected timeline for those restrictions, many cancelled events cannot be rescheduled at this time. Possible ideas: local news stations, radio stations, anything with a live feed. Some video conferencing platforms are available such as Zoom, podcasts, and YouTube videos, any of which Fr. Jay Morris and Fr. James Rickenbaker could potentially use for posting sermons online.

Upcoming Dates and Information:

March 31, 2020, 7 p.m.: Cemetery Committee Meeting

Good of the Order, Closing Prayer and Adjournment: Rev. James Rickenbaker at 9:36 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Carol F. Korth, Register*



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 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 a baptism, including baptismal instruction, please contact the church office or sue.selz@aquiachurch.org so that counseling with the clergy can be scheduled.

JOIN US ONLINE

For all who wish to participate in Sunday worship, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/AquiaEpiscopalChurch>.

Morning Prayer with a sermon will be offered on Facebook Live each Sunday morning. Even if you do not have a Facebook account, you can still access the videos archived there for worship and for faith-formation simply by clicking on the video for the given day. Also, 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.

Sue Selz

*Worship
with us
from*
HOME



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

www.aquiachurch.org

office@aquiachurch.org

(540) 659-4007

Aquia Church Prayer List – May 2020



Faye Andrews, Rhett Blythe and Family, Julie Burgess, Jackie Chichester, Elijah Colliver, Richard Craven, Jeff Davis, Donnie Davis, Brian Driscoll, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, Sarah Fredell and family, Robert Garrett, Christopher, Shawna & Oliver Gray, Larry Hartzler, Steve Hedger and family, 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.



Faith and Finances

“**O**ur God, Our Help in Ages Past” is a hymn known to many of us. It was composed by Isaac Watts, a prolific hymn composer, and is based on Psalm 90, *Domine refugium*. It is said to have been sung as the final hymn at a church service on RMS *Titanic* on the day she sank. In this time of sickness and uncertainty, this hymn calls to mind God’s sovereignty and our total dependence on him.

The Episcopal Church has been affected in many ways by COVID-19, not least by the absence of public worship and the concomitant impact to church finances. Many churches in our diocese and around the country will need to request aid under the \$2.2 trillion relief legislation known as the CARES Act. Not-for-profit organizations are eligible for relief under this legislation in order to mitigate the need to lay off staff using the Payroll Protection Program. At Aquia, my initial assessment is that for the short term, we have sufficient available funds and will not need to seek relief through the CARES Act. The financial health that we have reflects foremost God’s bountiful providence and the faithfulness of our parish.

Without seeking it, Aquia Church will receive some relief. Church Pension has authorized a two-month waiver of the pension assessment for our clergy, without impacting their benefit, for a savings for us of over \$4,500. We will also have a three-month grace period for the payment of health, life, and property insurance premiums. However, our healthy condition can only be sustained if our giving continues. By vestry consensus, we are not expecting the churches that rent our property to pay for those periods when they are not holding services. Rental of our great hall and other facilities is suspended, and fundraising events for our outreach and Aquia’s Table Ministry are being postponed or even cancelled. Our monthly operations—including employee compensation, administration, utilities, and

maintenance exceeds \$30,000, excluding our monthly mortgage on the Christian Formation and Fellowship Building—and this amount includes reduced costs for utilities and maintenance. So if you pledge or give without pledging, your continued support is sorely needed. The increased use of electronic giving is encouraging. Where possible, if parishioners can absorb the nominal transaction cost, that is also very helpful. Be mindful that you can make an electronic contribution and apportion your gifts between multiple purposes, e.g., pledge, flowers, outreach, etc. For some parishioners, reducing or suspending your pledge may be a necessity. This is entirely understandable, and we can do this with ease. If this circumstance applies to you, contact Sue Selz in the office (sue.selz@aquiachurch.org), and we will adjust your pledge for our records.

The Episcopal Church Foundation has provided the following information about the CARES Act, because this legislation also contains some new provisions for charitable giving:

- For 2020, there is a new \$300 deduction for qualified charitable donations. Individuals who take the standard deduction can claim an above-the-line tax deduction for cash donations to qualified charitable organizations, up to \$300. Gifts of appreciated securities and gifts to a donor-advised fund or supporting organization do not qualify.
- Donors who itemize their deductions can usually deduct cash contributions up to 60% of their adjusted gross income. For 2020, that cap is lifted, and donors contributing cash to charity may deduct up to 100% of their income, which represents a significant tax-savings for anyone able to contribute larger amounts. Again, this is only for gifts of cash, and only for gifts made directly to charity (not to donor-advised funds or supporting organizations).

- The CARES Act eliminates required minimum distributions (RMDs) from many retirement plans in 2020. Some donors have been using their RMDs for tax-advantaged charitable gifts by making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) directly to charity. Under the CARES Act, it is still possible for donors who are 70½ or over to contribute up to \$100,000 directly to a charity without paying tax on the distribution. This remains a beneficial way for donors to make gifts to church.

The CARES Act is a complex new law. This information is intended only as a summary of provisions that may be important for church stewardship efforts. Donors should always consult with their own professional advisors before making a gift.

In 1918 the Spanish influenza pandemic afflicted nearly one-quarter of all Americans and took over 600,000 lives. In Fredericksburg and Stafford, 47 lives were lost. Churches, schools, and public places were closed. The medical community was sorely taxed, as there was little that could be done to contain the sickness. In 1928, ten years after the pandemic, the revised Book of Common Prayer was published, updating the 1892 version. Perhaps, but not surprisingly, the prayer below was included titled, “In Time of Great Sickness and Mortality.” It is just as meaningful today as it was then:

O most mighty and merciful God, in this time of grievous sickness, we flee unto thee for succour. Deliver us, we beseech thee, from our peril; give strength and skill to all those who minister to the sick; prosper the means made use of for their cure; and grant that, perceiving how frail and uncertain our life is, we may apply our hearts unto that heavenly wisdom which leadeth to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Christopher M. Arey
Treasurer

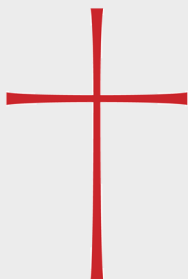




AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Aquia Episcopal Church
Post Office Box 275
Stafford, VA
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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.

Most Christians probably have an uneasy relationship with the Old Testament, and understandably so. For one thing, there's simply *so* much going on there: *so* many centuries are covered, *so* many countries and peoples are involved, *so* many events are described, and it's sometimes difficult to keep everything straight. For another thing, there is the wide gulf of time between the era of the Old Testament and our own day, alongside the gaps between ancient near Eastern culture and the various cultures of the twenty-first century. There are serious differences among various Christian groups about which texts are included and which texts are important but excluded—Protestant Bibles have 39 books in the Old Testament, while Roman Catholics and some other Christians include 'deuterocanonical' books (a.k.a. the Apocrypha) as well. There are also considerable differences of interpretation based on different theological perspectives within the Christian tradition, not to mention even more obvious differences between Jews and Christians over how to read the same materials and not to mention differences of terminology (Old Testament, First Testament, Elder Testament, Hebrew Bible vs. Christian Scriptures—all such options have merits and risks). Unsurprisingly, many prejudices have inevitably arisen in several directions that create complications for our approach to what came before the New Testament.

Yet for all that complexity, there remain some important facts. Jesus grew up what we call the Old Testament, he obviously memorized lots of it and relied on it, and so much of his work is deeply rooted in it. Furthermore, Jesus interpreted his life, death, and resurrection by direct appeal to the Old Testament. According to Luke the evangelist, as Jesus was talking with two Jewish men on the road to Emmaus on that first Easter Day, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures" (Luke 24:27). Luke also reports a subsequent gathering at which Jesus told his followers: "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45). The Hebrew Scriptures of which Jesus is speaking are certainly foundational for Christians no less than for Jews. Since Jesus and practically all of his earliest followers (including nearly everyone who wrote anything that now appears in the New Testament) were Jews who understood his mission and ministry within an Old Testament framework, that ancient library compels our thoughtful attention if we are to have any accurate understanding of the New Testament. I cannot express this point better than did Martin Luther:

There are some who have little regard for the Old Testament. They think of it as a book that was given to the Jewish people only and is now out of date, containing only stories of past times. ... But Christ says in John 5, "Search the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness to me." ... [T]he Scriptures of the Old Testament are not to be despised but diligently read. ... Therefore dismiss your own opinions and feelings and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find that divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guide as to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies. ... Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them. [Luther, *Preface to the Old Testament*, quoted in Richard B. Hayes, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*]

Even so, coming to terms with that truth does not make our need to embrace and engage the Old Testament easy, nor does this recognition provide a simple or guaranteed light on our path. More than one Christian scholar has tried to assist us with this important task, and one of the most recent guides for us is John H. Walton in his book, ***Old Testament Theology for Christians: From Ancient Context to Enduring Belief*** (IVP Academic, 2017). Father Rickenbaker and I believe that this volume is potentially fruitful and significant enough that we are devoting a good deal of time to reading it and discussing it ourselves, and perhaps it would interest you, too. I must admit that I have not yet finished the entire book, but I have perused enough of it to recommend it here. Not everything in Walton's book will be perfectly clear at first glance, but he is concerned to show that everything in the Old Testament can point toward Jesus in its effort to reveal what is crucial about the LORD's presence with us and for us. I am learning a good deal from Walton about how to understand the LORD of the Old Testament in relation to purported gods as rival claimants for our worship and devotion, about the role of human beings in the world and in covenantal relation with the LORD, about what He actually expects from us, about what is really going on with various Old Testament accounts of sin and evil, and what we may faithfully expect from the Old Testament about salvation and any kind of life after death. I am aware that some of the conclusions in Walton's final chapter will not be received entirely favorably within some circles, Christian or otherwise, and so I am not prepared to endorse every one of his final findings. Yet from what I am reading so far, I applaud Walton's effort to help Christians understand the Old Testament on its own terms, through its own lens, and in light of its own historical and theological situation first, while also helping us thereafter to relate that essential and formative bedrock to what the New Testament explains about how Jesus fulfills and completes that to which the Old Testament points. If you read any of Walton's book and have questions or concerns about it, or if you simply want to know more about the issues addressed in this book, then I'd welcome the chance to discuss that with you.