



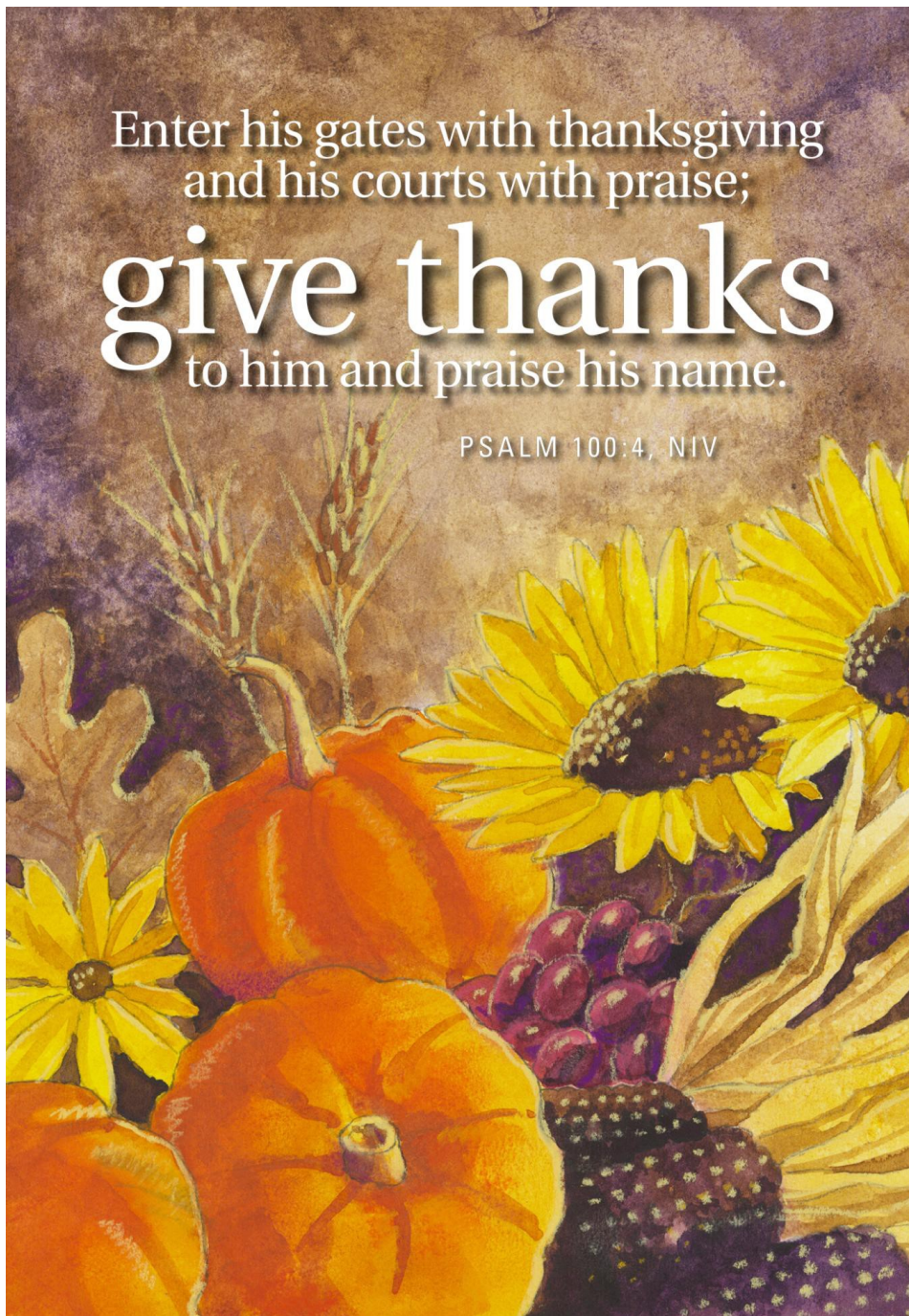
AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Cross Section

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

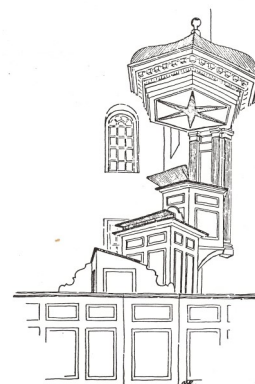
Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks
to him and praise his name.

PSALM 100:4, NIV



INSIDE . . .

- Outreach: Lend a hand during this season of giving
- ECW: Many thanks for a successful Fall Fest
- Vestry Highlights
- Sts. Mary & Martha Guild readies Advent gift table
- Give thanks to our sponsors for auction items
- Christmas flowers order form





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.
Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays

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

Executive Assistant

Sue Selz

Nursery Supervisor

Dawna Spaulding

FROM THE RECTOR

Thoughts of Thankfulness

The arrival of November brings with it thoughts of thankfulness. By this point in the calendar, we suppose that the longest and hardest parts of the current year are behind us, and we begin to anticipate what the new year might have in store for us. Hitting the pause button on our lives and taking some time to reflect might do us all some good. Some families and friends have a tradition of going around the table at the Thanksgiving meal and sharing one or two things for which each person is particularly grateful, and something like that can be valuable for our life together in this parish.

I for one am thankful that we here have been spared the worst of the coronavirus pandemic. A handful of parishioners contracted COVID, with some of these folks even requiring hospitalization; yet the total number of cases in our parish has been rather small overall, and our campus has not become a super-spreader site for this virus because of the good care we have taken with one another. For this we all can rejoice.

I am also grateful for the ways in which we have persevered and progressed through the pandemic. When the commonwealth and the diocese required that we meet outdoors for worship, we did so willingly for everyone's safety. When we were permitted to return to indoor gatherings, we did so gladly. Technology enabled us to begin broadcasts of worship services, Sunday school, Bible studies, book discussions, and other occasions that kept us united in spirit. We worked creatively and innovatively to adapt to changed circumstances with Aquia's Pantry, Aquia's Table, vestry meetings, youth group meetings, and more. Far from shutting down, we embraced the new opportunities to reach out and share God's love with a potentially wider impact than we had before.

Together we can rejoice because generosity toward God's mission and ministry at Aquia Church has remained healthy and abundant. Some churches and similar organizations have closed their doors and

ceased their operations during the pandemic. But not Aquia—on the contrary! Contributions to our general fund and to the clergy discretionary funds have been steady, and donations to such important areas as our food ministries have actually increased. We have met and even exceeded yet another matching challenge goal toward reducing our debt on the construction loan for the CFFB sooner than required. Plenty of parishioners have given their time and talent in various ways, from the music ministry and the flower guild to the remarkable success of our recent Fall Fest. These developments bode well for our ability to thrive and to meet the challenges of our times.

Our financial strength has helped us weather the storms of the pandemic. Many households made a financial commitment to Aquia Church for the current year in the form of a pledge, and we have been blessed by the fact that most pledges are being honored. We hope to see the number of pledges for 2022 grow along with the total amount of dollars pledged. The church office is mailing out 2022 pledge cards and related information for your prayerful consideration, or you may pick up a pledge packet at church on a Sunday (especially if the church office does not have your mailing address). We encourage you to submit your completed pledge card during the month of November as a sign of your gratitude to God for his many blessings in your life and as a sign of your commitment to the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our sharing together in this work will keep our parish strong for the new year and beyond.

Jay Morris



FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Aquia's Children and Youth

Dear Family in Christ,
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! I thank our God for you, especially for your diligence in attendance and participation in worship as a congregation. Corporate worship on Sundays is terribly important, as you have heard me say in more than one newsletter article. However, even though we have seen a significant return of our people to corporate worship, we have seen a steep decline of our children in worship and in Sunday school. In this I do not commend you. There are indeed regular attendees of Sunday school and corporate worship, for whose attendance we are excited and give thanks to God. With the precautions in place, we are doing what is needed to protect against the spread of the coronavirus among children and adults. I truly am unaware of what legitimate reason there may be for why more of Aquia's children are not in Sunday school and in worship. I know that there are a few exceptions to the rule who are dealing with some health concerns that make it ill-advised to attend corporate worship for now. But they are indeed exceptions to the rule.

There is no time like the present, as they say. There are a number of ways that you can get plugged back in to worship and formation at Aquia Church. We have Sunday school for all ages nearly **every Sunday morning** at 9:30 a.m. In the middle/high school class this year, we are learning about important people in the Bible and how they point to Jesus Christ. We have youth group meetings from 5 - 6 p.m. **every other Sunday** unless otherwise announced. We have had some fun times already this year with game nights and helping with Trunk-or-Treat. The upcoming meetings are scheduled for November 14, November 28, and December 12. If your child is involved in activities away from church on Sundays, we offer morning and evening services so that you can attend corporate worship before or afterward. We have worship basically **every**

Sunday morning and afternoon at 7:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 4 p.m. It is on very rare occasion that we change those times; they are standardized now.

With all of that said, we also have a special opportunity for our children and youth to participate in corporate worship. We are looking for children and youth from ages 10+ to serve in our acolyte corps. As a torch bearer, a Gospel-book bearer, or a crucifer, you would assist in leading the service on Sunday mornings. This is a very important part of our worship as it gets our young people involved in the service to the glory of God. Take note as well that this ministry can be counted toward service hours required by many organizations (Scouts, for instance). Depending on how many acolytes we have, you would be a part of a team that serves on a rotating basis. This is a great opportunity for our children and youth to get involved in worship. Parents of our children and youth should be prepared to receive personal correspondence about this important offering.

We are doing everything we can to protect the health those who join us for Christian formation and for corporate worship on Sundays. We are offering plenty of varied options for worship and formation for all ages. It is time to get your kids plugged back into the life of the church. We look forward to seeing you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

*In Christ+,
Fr. James*



AQUIA CHURCH VESTRY

Chris Arey

Finance Committee

Charlie Bingay

Finance Committee

Dickie Boes

*Finance Committee Chairperson;
Building & Grounds Committee*

Chris Bowie

Administration Committee

Bob Brandon

Building & Grounds Committee

Carrol Frederick

Administration Committee

Michael Golasz

Building & Grounds Committee

Bill Hoffman

*Senior Warden
Acting Chairperson of
Administration Committee*

Ron Korth

*Junior Warden;
Building & Grounds
Committee Chairperson*

Lisa Schwartz

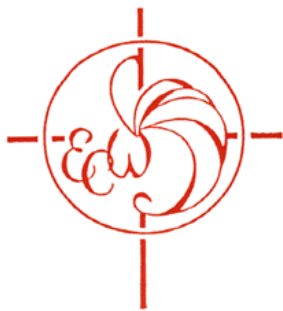
Administration Committee

Penny Stevens

Buildings & Grounds Committee

Chris Wanner

Buildings & Grounds Committee



Episcopal Church Women's Prayer

Almighty God, we pray that you will bless our work in mission and ministry in the world. Help us to pray fervently, labor diligently, and give liberally to make known the power of your love given through your son Jesus. Let us not forget the lessons from the past nor fear the challenges of the future. Anoint us with your grace and shine in our hearts as we reflect your light throughout the world. Amen.

All women of Aquia are invited to share in the ministry of the ECW. The ECW of Aquia Church is a chapter of the ECW of the Diocese of Virginia.

EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

November's newsletter article has taken on the tradition of a "short look back" article. As I write today, it is still mid-October, the PODs storage unit for Fall Fest is still on campus, and we are looking forward to the ECW Diocesan Annual Fall Meeting and UTO In-gathering on Oct. 30.

Fall Fest 2021 was a success in so many ways. Our efforts to keep everyone safe, to continue our traditional annual fundraising event, and to have a day to commune with members of our parish in the beauty of the day were well-received. To everyone: thank you for your support, hard work, and ideas. On to 2022!

"In thanksgiving," "giving thanks," and "thankful": these are phrases we often hear, but perhaps a little more often during November. This holiday often evokes these words more frequently than other times of the year. Plans to celebrate a Thanksgiving feast with family and friends or to enjoy a quiet getaway have been in the making for a while now. As these plans come to fruition, we are thankful.

Many words have a different meaning or take on a different meaning, depending on how we use them. "In thanksgiving," "giving thanks," and "thankful" really don't take on other meanings, they are fairly straightfor-

ward. When we are thankful, we recognize God's blessings to us. So we give thanks for the abundance of his love and for Jesus' ultimate love for us. "In thanksgiving" means to respond to God's goodness and grace with gratitude.

What does God say about thanksgiving? He is quite clear: *"The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:4-7).

As we pray in thanksgiving, we ask for God's love that he would guide us by his strength to enable and support us to succeed in our work and ministry in our church, community, and world.

On Dec. 19, we will hold our Annual Meeting. We hope you will join the ECW for a luncheon reception in the great hall immediately following the 10:30 a.m. service. The luncheon-reception will observe pandemic protocols. We will honor our 2021 Book of Life honorees.

Briget Kane
President

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



On Sunday, Nov. 28 (*the first Sunday in Advent*), we will offer an Advent workshop for children from noon till 2:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided in addition to Advent-themed crafts and activities. Please register for this event on the church website, www.aquiachurch.org; scroll down to

"upcoming events," then click on "Advent Workshop." You can also contact Kristen Morgan at chritianed@aquiachurch.org for more information.

Kristen Morgan



STS. MARY AND MARTHA GUILD

Worship, Service and Fellowship

The Sts. Mary and Martha Guild would like to thank all the parishioners who stopped by our tables to shop during Fall Fest! We also wish to thank all who gave jewelry and samples of their own crafts to our venues, and all the Fall Fest volunteers who pitched in at the last minute to get our tables set up and ready for the day. We are indeed grateful for these extra gifts of time and talent on Oct. 2.

If you missed our craft tables at Fall Fest, be sure to see the lovely array of remaining Christmas items on the Advent Gift Table in the great hall starting on Nov. 21. Yes, our little “shop” of handmade ornaments, wax angels, beautiful wreaths, Aquia Church note cards, and so much more is

“opening” a week early for your shopping convenience. Be sure to stop by any Sunday morning from Nov. 21 through Dec. 19, after either the 7:30 a.m. service or the 10:30 a.m. service. Check out the cute snowman ornament we just added to our inventory!

In November, the Sts. Mary and Martha Guild will be meeting on the 4th and the 18th. On Nov. 4 we will be gathering in the parish hall (lower level of the parish house); and for our Nov. 18 meeting, we will be in the great hall setting up our “shop.” Our meetings usually run from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

All ladies of the parish and their friends are welcome to join us. Please come and enjoy a morning of fellowship with your sisters-in-Christ. Feel



free to contact us if you have any questions about the Sts. Mary and Martha Guild.

Mary Jane Cole
maryjane@cfsw.biz
Carolyn Hendrickson
cvhendrickson35@gmail.com

2022 Annual Meeting and Vestry Elections

Our parish’s annual meeting will be held on the morning of Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022. This business session will take place in the great hall in conjunction with the Holy Eucharist. On this occasion, we hope to elect four adult members of the vestry to three-year terms. The vestry has responsibility for providing stewardship for the physical property, the finances, and the general operations of the church. It is a hands-on governing board, working closely with the clergy and other leaders in our parish.

Currently our vestry meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. over Zoom. Vestry members have found it fairly easy to move from in-person meetings to electronic/virtual meetings, especially when the weather is unpleasant.

Our vestry has three different committees—administration, finance, and buildings and grounds—and each vestry

member serves with at least one committee, almost always as chosen by the individual member. That way, as a vestry member you can become involved with the committee that best suits your interests, skills, and talents. Usually, each committee meets once a month.

Those parishioners rotating off the vestry at the upcoming annual meeting are senior warden Bill Hoffman (also acting chairperson of the administration committee), junior warden Ron Korth (also chairperson *ex officio* of the buildings and grounds committee), treasurer Chris Arey from the finance committee, and vestry member Chris Wanner from the buildings and grounds committee. As we thank these friends for their faithful service, we also seek folks who are not currently serving on the vestry to offer to join this important ministry. If you have any questions or concerns about serving with the vestry, or if you want to have more information about



ANNUAL
Meeting
& VESTRY ELECTIONS

this ministry group, then please speak with Father Morris or with any current vestry member. Blue self-nomination forms are available in the historic church and in the church office, and they are due on Monday, Dec. 20.

Jay Morris





FALL FEST SILENT AUCTION “AFTER ACTION”

A huge “Thank You!” goes to all parishioners and merchants who contributed to the 2021 Fall Fest silent auction! This year, we offered 24 grouped or individual items for bidding. Over half of these were built with the gifts of time, talent, and donations from our own parish family. The 2021 auction accounted for over a third of this year’s Fall Fest profits.

The merchants and business owners who contributed to the auction are listed below. Please remember them when you do your holiday shopping, and thank them for donating to your church’s major outreach fund raiser.

Mary Jane Cole, Silent Auction Chair

Sponsors of the 2021 Fall Fest Auction

610 Car Wash
Aquia Fishing Guide Service
Aquia Harbour Golf Club
Augustine Golf Club
Banner Hallmark
Carlos O’Kelly’s Inspired Mex
Corky’s
Courtyard by Marriott in Historic Downtown Fredericksburg
Dan’s Wellness Pharmacy
El Gran Charro
Fatty’s Taphouse
Flowers by Val
Forest Greens Golf Club
Gauntlet Golf Club
Irish Eyes of Fredericksburg
Jabberwocky
Meadows Farms
Norwex Independent Consultant Rachel Rickenbacker
Olde Virginia Gourmet & Gifts
Pets Plus
Picker’s Supply
Potomac Point Vineyard & Winery
Publix
Red Fox Inn & Tavern
Sake Thai Sushi Bar
Shoppes at Caroline Square, LLC, Fredericksburg
Sight & Sound Theater, Lancaster PA
The Alpine Chef Restaurant
Ulman’s Jewelers
Wawa
Wegmans
Zibibbo 73 Italian Restaurant



FUN AT FALL FEST



VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Sept. 21, 2021

In Attendance: Rector, the Rev. Jay Morris; Assistant Rector, the Rev. James Rickenbaker; Seminarian, Mr. Stephen Pecot; Senior Warden, Bill Hoffman; Junior Warden, Ron Korth; Treasurer, Chris Arey; Charlie Bingay, Dickie Boes, Chris Bowie, Bob Brandon, Carrol Frederick, Michael Golasz, Lisa Schwartz, Penny Stevens, Chris Wanner

Business Session

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer: The Rev. Jay Morris

Introduction of Guests:

- Penny Stevens: After the annual meeting in August, she offered to be appointed to the vestry. Upon her confirmation on Sept. 26, she will join the vestry by appointment.
- Stephen Pecot: Seminarian who is serving as an intern at Aquia Episcopal Church.

Treasurer's Report:

- July and August report included.
- Great Hall rental brought income.
- Bookkeeper's Salary as expenditure (line 6611)—paid partly to Gloria Reyes as new bookkeeper, paid partly to Dennise LaBarre for assistance in training new bookkeeper.
- Good cash flow due to funds received for CFFB Matching Grant Challenge.
- Checking account balance is high.
- Money Market: Going to Matching Challenge Grant, so shows as an expenditure of \$168,000.00.
- Online Giving fell in August, possibly because more people are attending in person.
- Over \$306,000.00 received toward pledges, more than anticipated.
- \$11,404.00 donation by non-parishioner to be used as designated by the vestry.
- Janitorial bill was paid twice in August.

- \$906,000.00 mortgage balance remains.
- More Rectory maintenance needed.

Minutes from Previous Meeting (Aug. 17, 2021): Unanimously approved.

Old Business

- **R-2021-22: Sale of Burial Rights to H. Conway Zeigler** (approved 8/17)
- **R-2021-23: Approval of Report from Audit Committee that Reviewed 2020 Financials** (approved 8/17)

New Business

- **R-2021-24: Sale of Burial Rights to Michael Golasz** (Rector for Cemetery Superintendent): regular-sized burial plot at space 10 in lot 201: approved unanimously.
- **R-2021-25: Appointment of Sarah Kirby as Delegate to Diocesan Annual Convention** (Rector): unanimously approved.

Reports from Committees

Administration: New contract for janitorial services specifies which buildings and which parts of buildings get cleaned on which weeks. Specific treatments defined (mopping, etc.) as well. Robyn's Professional Cleaning Services has not received any increase in basic rate since 2017; duties for the cleaning service have been increased (cleaning areas more frequently). Increase from \$1,700.00/mo. to \$1,800.00/mo. is the new monthly amount they have requested in new contract. Contract could go into effect as early as Oct. 1; however, if contract takes effect on Jan. 1, 2022, the \$100 monthly increase would not break currently balanced budget. Contract approved as submitted, and funding for the rest of the year accepted unanimously. Emergency Response Plan was discussed in the last committee meeting and is still underway.

Finance Committee: Diocese would like to know what contribution we will make to the Diocese for next year, and

next month's vestry meeting will be past the deadline for notification to the Diocese. The committee recommended a pledge of \$5,000.00 to the Diocese next year. In the past, the contribution was made in monthly or quarterly payments. In some past years also, a pledge of \$25,000.00 from Aquia Episcopal Church was made to the Diocese. The committee's recommendation was unanimously approved.

Building and Grounds Committee:

Emergency water heater replacement in Rectory; on-demand water heater installed in CFFB; large limb removed from Clifton Chapel; small crew will prepare grounds for Fall Fest.

Reports from Junior and Senior Wardens

Senior Warden: Parlier gravesite has been relocated; Fall Fest preparations going well.

Junior Warden: No further report.

Report from Rector

- To jump-start the vestry's candy and nut sale, some products will be on hand at Fall Fest. It is hoped that the sale table will be staffed by vestry members and friends for the duration of Fall Fest.
- Confirmation, reception in The Episcopal Church, and reaffirmation of baptismal vows will be held on Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021, with 15 candidates. It is estimated that the service will take 75-90 minutes, after which a luncheon-reception will take place. At some point during this reception, Bishop Brooke-Davidson will meet with vestry



Vestry Highlights

Continued on next page ...



Operation Christmas Child Annual Shoebox Campaign

Yes, it is time for our outreach ministry's Annual Shoebox Campaign for Operation Christmas Child (OCC). This year there are two options for putting together a shoebox. For the first option, you can fill a shoebox online for \$25 using our Goal Page link. You can select boy or girl and age group, and then select the gifts you would like in your shoebox. You can also add a message and/or a picture, and you can track where your shoebox travels. The OCC staff will pack the box for you. The deadline for online purchases is November 22, 2021. Our Goal Page link is:

<http://build-a-shoebox.samaritanspurse.org/view/4516240a-2eb2-4abe-8006-cfc662d31965>

The OCC team recommends copying and pasting the link into the main search bar on your browser, rather than into the Google search bar. Be sure it leads to the Aquia Episcopal Church page. If you have difficulty with the link, please contact Johanna Jones (rjones1549@aol.com).

The second option is to fill a regular or plastic shoebox (wrapped or unwrapped) and bring it to the church

(back pew) by Sunday, Nov. 14. If you gift-wrap your shoebox, be sure to wrap the lid and the box separately. Start with a "wow" item, such as a deflated soccer ball with a small inflation kit, a stuffed animal, or a clothing item that will capture the child's attention when the box is opened. Other suggested items are school supplies, hygiene items, or items such as small toys, caps, sunglasses, hair clips, toy jewelry, watches, or flashlights (with extra batteries). The boy/girl labels are available online through Operation Christmas Child, or you may attach a note to your shoebox indicating boy or girl and age. **To defray overseas shipping costs, if you do not pay online, please include a donation of \$9 per box**, either in cash or by check (payable to Samaritan's Purse with "Operation Christmas Child" in the memo line).

Please do not pack the following items: candy; toothpaste; gum; used or damaged items; war-related items such as toy guns, knives, or military figures; chocolate or food; seeds; fruit rolls or other fruit snacks; drink mixes



(powdered or liquid); liquids or lotions; medications or vitamins; breakable items such as snow globes or glass containers; or aerosol cans.

Hobby Lobby stores have the pre-printed Operation Christmas Child plastic shoe boxes and shoe box gifts available. They have gift suggestions organized by age and gender. Amazon also has Operation Christmas Child items, including soccer balls with inflation kits. If you order through Amazon Smile, Aquia Church receives a donation.

Johanna Jones

The Outreach Ministry is in need of helping hands to continue our mission. Our mission is: "With prayerful requests for God's guidance, the members of the Outreach Ministry hope to do His work so that others may know Our Lord Jesus Christ and His love through our work." Please consider joining this ministry.

... continued from previous page

- downstairs in the conference room for discussion.
- Bishop Goff announced that the diocesan Annual Convention will not be meeting in person in November, but via Zoom meetings, due to the rise in COVID-19 numbers and the continuing pandemic.
- See monthly clergy report for additional details.

Upcoming Dates and Information

- 9/26: Bishop's visit for confirmation, reception in The Episcopal Church, and reaffirmation of baptismal vows (10:30 a.m. worship service, with luncheon-reception following, and Vestry meets with Bishop during the luncheon-reception)
- 10/2: Fall Fest (8 a.m.-2 p.m.)
- 10/19: Vestry Meeting

- 11/16: Vestry Meeting
 - 12/21: Vestry Meeting
- Good of the Order, Closing Prayer by the Rev. James Rickenbaker, and Adjournment:**

Vestry member Carrol Frederick thanked the Rev. Jay Morris for delivering an eloquent eulogy for his daughter upon her recent passing.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol F. Korth

Register, Aquia Episcopal Church



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

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

François (Frank) Henri Parlier 1926-2021

Larry Hartzler 1936-2020

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT AQUIA CHURCH

New Babies: Thanksgiving for the birth of a child will be scheduled as needed. Please call the church office the week prior if your family would like to be included. Also, please call the church office after a birth so that a red rose can be placed on the altar in thanksgiving.

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

FUTURE BAPTISMS

The next regularly scheduled date for a baptism is Nov. 7, 2021. 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.

Sue Selz

Aquia Church Prayer List

November 2021

Kevin Beezhold, Nicole Bingay, Rhett Blythe and family, Debbie Byers, Donny Davis, Paula Davis, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, Lori, Ken Luehrs, Pat Moncure, Rebecca Poole, Arnie Schwartz, Scott Smith, Carolyn Stringer, O.D. Taylor, the Rev. David & Lois Thabet, John & Pam Tompkins, Gayle Tompkins, Kenneth Tompkins, Tom Tremper, Patrick Weber, Walt & Elizabeth Yager.



How to reach us:



www.aquiachurch.org

office@aquiachurch.org

(540) 659-4007

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



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.





CHRISTMAS FLOWER ORDER FORM 2021

Enclosed is my donation for Christmas and Epiphany altar flowers, wreaths, and garland. I understand that I am giving my donation toward the overall preparation of the church for Christmas.

I would like my gift to the Christmas Altar to be:

In Thanksgiving for _____

In Memory of _____

I would like to take a poinsettia home after Dec. 25.

(Circle One) YES NO

Otherwise, I understand that the poinsettias will be taken to shut-ins or other people in pastoral need during the Christmas season.

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Please enclose a check for \$20 made out to:

Aquia Episcopal Church

and on the memo line: "Christmas Flowers"

DEADLINE IS DEC. 10





Aquia Episcopal Church
Post Office Box 275
Stafford, VA
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Come join us!

Thanksgiving Worship

Wednesday, Nov. 24 at 7 p.m.

Enjoy music chosen especially for the day!

Daylight Savings Time Ends

Sunday, Nov. 7, 2021



Currently our Morning Call series about the Sermon on the Mount—Jesus’ great discourse in chapters 5 through 7 of Matthew’s Gospel—is prompting a good deal of reflection on what our Lord intended by his various teachings there. For example, are the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) some kind of checklist with personal attributes or characteristics that Christians must manifest in order to be saved or to become eligible for heaven, or are they recommendations for the behaviors that Christians should display, or are they promises of blessing to those who uphold these guidelines? When Jesus later in Matthew 5 supplies a set of antitheses between how he wants Christians to live, on the one hand, and between what the Old Testament or commonplace morality seems to expect of us on the other hand, is he imposing impossible standards for the Christian life—ideals worthy of our emulation but hopelessly unattainable for us—or is he truly expecting us never to become angry, never to look lustfully at other people, and so forth? When at the end of Matthew 6 Jesus encourages us not to worry, has he considered carefully enough how difficult and challenging our lives can be, and just how many different aspects of our lives we could genuinely and legitimately find as potential sources for concern and agony? Are our Lord’s pithy statements scattered throughout Matthew 7 little more than cute quips that you could find inside a fortune cookie, or are they bits of serious and profound advice? How do the many concerns about discipleship found in the Sermon on the Mount line up with other parts of Scripture—for example, with Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6? These questions and other important ones are on the table for discussion in this Morning Call series, and they might be of interest for you as well, even if you are unable to the series week after week.

Two books that I have recommended in years past for illumination about the Sermon on the Mount remain helpful for us today. Dale Allison’s book *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination* (Herder & Herder, 1999) remains a wise guide for those seeking to explore the depth of the biblical text. Allison succeeds particularly in situating the three chapters constituting the Sermon on the Mount within the broader framework of Matthew’s Gospel, taken as a whole, and within the even broader framework of the various expressions of Judaism in Jesus’ day—in order to show that the Sermon on the Mount ought not to be considered as a summary statement of Christian faith taken in isolation from the rest of Matthew’s Gospel or the rest of the New Testament, and in order to show that Jesus did not necessarily see himself as developing some brand-new faith cut entirely from whole cloth, but rather understood himself to be enhancing the heart of God’s longstanding covenant with his chosen people, the Hebrews. Allison’s book covers nearly 200 pages of text and is the most squarely academic of the books recommended in this issue of “Reading Room.” Charles Talbert’s book *The Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Baker Academic, 2006) has just under 150 pages of text, covering precisely what its subtitle suggests, with a bit more weight on character formation and yet plenty of attention to ethical decision-making as well. Talbert’s volume covers some of the same territory of Allison’s, including connections with other parts of the Gospels and the New Testament and with the varieties of Judaism around the time of Jesus. Talbert devotes more attention to parallels between the Sermon on the Mount in its context and Greco-Roman writings on morality and ethics than I think is necessary, but the parallels are interesting.

Two newer books from which I have been drawing occasionally in this series—and two that are aimed at a broader audience than those presented above—are as follows. A recent book by Frank J. Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life* (Liturgical Press, 2013), has only 118 pages of text, but don’t let the book’s brevity mislead you into thinking that it is weak in content—far from it! Matera summarizes the Sermon as follows: “*the Sermon on the Mount calls us to single-minded devotion to God*. It invites us to be perfect as God is perfect by being wholehearted and undivided in our allegiance to God. It is a call to perfection for all Christians to be lived out in the whole of life. It is not a new set of rules and regulations; it is a call to discipleship in light of the in-breaking kingdom of God” (pp. ix-x). Of these four books, Matera’s is the one that is most accessible to the widest audience because of its easy-going style, and it is perhaps the one that I would recommend first to many laypeople; yet it has real strength in the way it accentuates questions about applying the Sermon on the Mount in daily life. Matera taught New Testament for many years at the Catholic University of America and is a long-time parish priest in the Roman Catholic Church alongside his impressive academic work. There is also Scot McKnight’s book *The Sermon on the Mount* in the “Story of God” Bible commentary series (Zondervan, 2013). With almost 280 pages of text, it is certainly the longest and likely the most comprehensive of the four volumes praised here, but it is no less practical than Matera’s in its application. McKnight heartily endorses the previous work of Allison and Talbert, among others (p. 18), and he has culled wisdom from what many other renowned Christian authors (including Martin Luther, John Calvin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and John Stott) have written about the Sermon on the Mount. Of these four books, McKnight works hardest to address step-by-step the meaning and implication of each passage in the Sermon. McKnight teaches New Testament at Northern Seminary in Illinois and is an ordained deacon in the Anglican Church in North America.