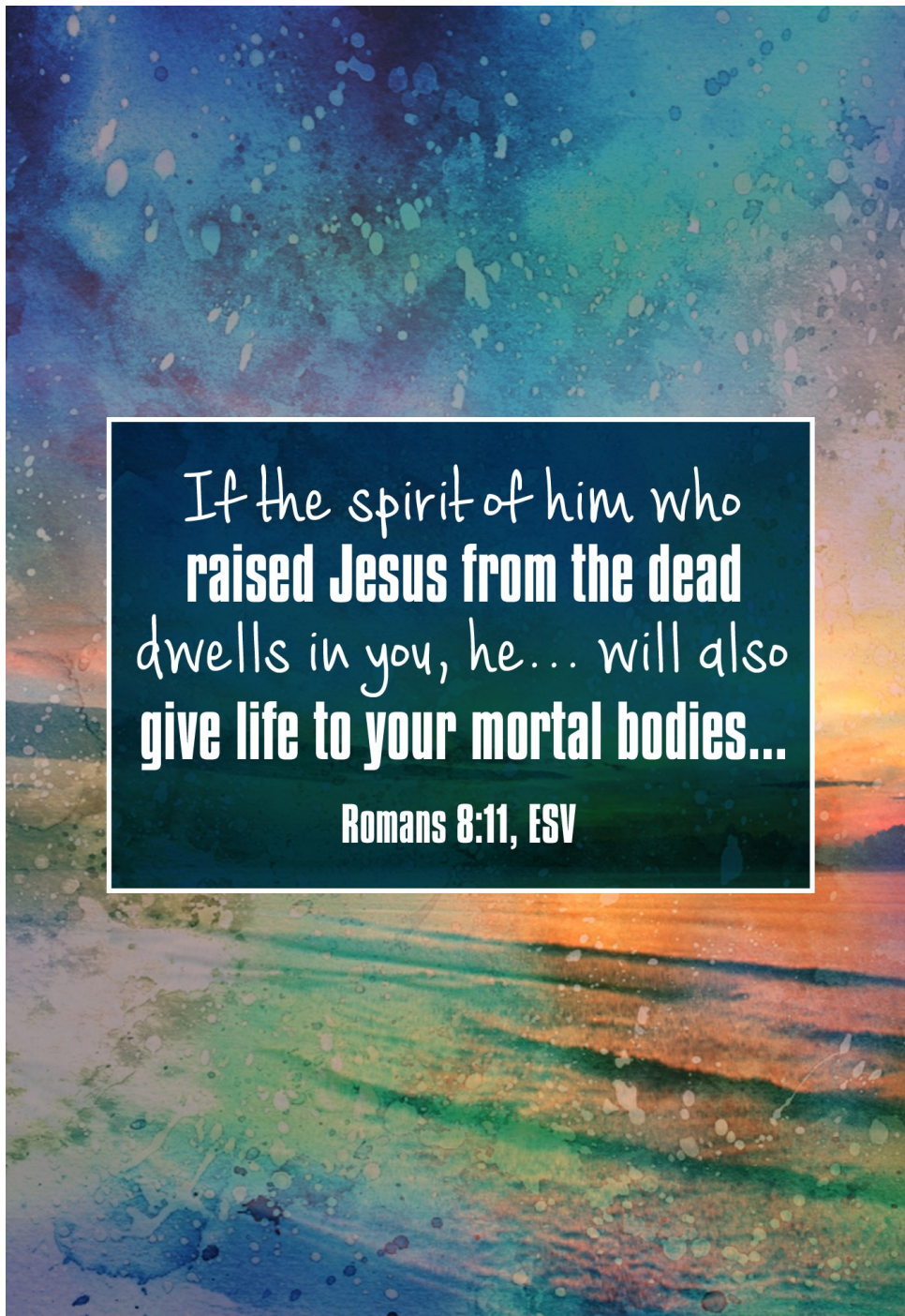




**AQUIA**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

# Cross Section

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

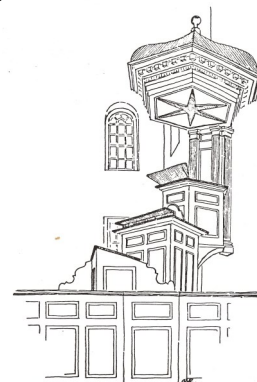


If the spirit of him who  
**raised Jesus from the dead**  
dwells in you, he... will also  
**give life to your mortal bodies...**

**Romans 8:11, ESV**

## INSIDE:

- After Easter, Now What?
- Calling All Teachers
- Accepting Applications for Anne E. Moncure Scholarship
- ECW: Heritage Sunday, UTO In-gathering
- New study book for Sts. Mary & Martha
- Outreach projects
- Vacation Bible School coming in June
- Vestry Highlights
- Origin of the Prayer of Humble Access





## CROSS SECTION

### Aquia Episcopal Church

2938 Richmond Hwy.  
Stafford, Va.

*Mailing address:*  
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.  
Tuesday– Friday,

*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*  
**Sue Selz**

*Bookkeeper*  
**Gloria Reyes**

*Nursery Supervisor*  
**Dawna Spaulding**

## FROM THE RECTOR

### After Easter, Now What?

Last month we celebrated Easter Sunday. So by now we have likely put away the Easter baskets and Easter eggs until next year. Some Easter lilies have been taken home and planted in the ground while others have started their journey toward compost. Folding chairs from our Easter sunrise service are back in storage, much like other items that were featured beforehand during Lent and Holy Week. Plenty of people probably presume that with Easter Day now finished, we can move on to other things. At least we might ask, “After Easter, now what?” The New Testament provides all the clues we need for what comes next.

Consider the final paragraph of Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus urges his surviving apostles to go into all the world and make disciples of people everywhere, baptizing them and instructing them to obey his commandments with the assurance that he will always be present with them as their risen Lord. Note the end of Luke’s Gospel, where Jesus opens the minds of his followers to understand how everything in the Old Testament points ultimately to him and that his disciples should preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to everyone, with the result that his followers worship him with joy and devotion. Read the next-to-last chapter of John’s Gospel, where Jesus shares peace and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment with his disciples, inviting them to forgive sins and to believe in his resurrection and Messiahship toward new life. See the final chapter of John’s Gospel, where Jesus tells his followers to go fishing for miracles, to feed his sheep, and to spread the good news about his rising again, even when doing so puts our lives at risk. Keep reading through the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul, and the

Book of Revelation and discover what else happens: lives get changed, communities get transformed, and the entire course of human history heads down a new path—all because Jesus was raised from the dead and directed his disciples to keep his mission alive.

If these New Testament reports give us any guidance for what we ought to do, now that the Sunday of the Resurrection has passed, the inspiration is this: we are supposed to keep it going! Liturgically, our



We should go out into the world with confidence that Christ remains with us, that miracles still happen, that we can bring food and hope to others in need, and that he is drawing the whole world to himself.

celebration of the Great Fifty Days of Easter indicates that we cannot confine our joy at Jesus’ return from the dead to only a single day or week—just as no tomb could keep Jesus confined forever. Easter is a season and a way of life, with a weekly reminder of it every Sunday. So we honor Jesus’ victory over death and evil until the Feast of Pentecost (on the fiftieth

day from Easter) sharpens our attention.

We should rejoice in the facts that Jesus died for us but was raised and remains alive forever, and we should share that good news with others everywhere. We should encourage others to repent and to practice forgiveness, just as we ourselves have repented and have been forgiven. We should go out into the world with confidence that Christ remains with us, that miracles still happen, that we can bring food and hope to others in need, and that he is drawing the whole world to himself. Regardless of one’s background, we all need this good news, we all should hear it, we all should be changed by it.

Those are the standards and expectations that our risen Lord has set for us; those are the goals before us. How is Aquia Church doing with what comes next after Easter? How do we together measure up? How do you yourself measure up?

*Jay Morris*



## FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

### Calling All Teachers

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 how willing you are to step in and invest in the youth of the church. This is essential for the growth of the church. It is also essential for the future of the church. As such, I would like you to consider helping with the youth group morning meetings starting in the fall of this year. Though the program year is ending later this month, it is never too soon to plant the seeds for next year. My main intention in writing to you is to address a common concern about teaching. When I have asked people if they would be willing to teach, one of the most frequent comments I have gotten in response is that they don't feel qualified to do so. So I want to take this opportunity to lay out what teaching the youth group entails. Once you see what is involved, perhaps you might be able to see yourself joining in.

**You don't have to know everything.** I don't either! Teaching the youth group doesn't mean having all of the answers. There have been times that the youth have asked me questions that I can't answer right away. Don't let that scare you. If you are OK with saying "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" occasionally, that's not a bad thing! If you can listen, speak from a place of faith, and read a lesson plan, then that's a great start.

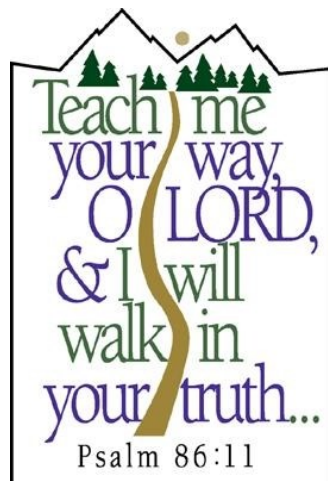
**It doesn't take exorbitant amounts of time to prepare.** Our morning meetings last 45 minutes each Sunday. The first ten minutes or so are taken up with checking-in with the youth. The curricula that we have used with the youth group for their morning meetings don't require a full week's worth of preparation. Sparkhouse (the company that produces our current curriculum) does a good job of mixing Scripture reading, videos, and conversation with the teens. The lesson plans are very intuitive and helpful for teachers. If you read through the lesson plan on Saturday and bring it with you for reference on Sunday, that's enough.

**You won't teach every Sunday.** I always make sure that we have more than one teacher (myself included) so that our teachers aren't on the schedule every Sunday. You are welcomed and encouraged to join us each week, even if you aren't teaching, but that is not a requirement. I plan to be there for most Sundays to be a support for whoever is teaching. If we can get at least four folks, you would only teach once a month! That is not a massive time commitment.

I hope that this has eased your mind a bit about what teaching the youth group might look like. I ask that you prayerfully consider joining the teaching rota beginning later this year. You have some time to pray and think about this before the year begins in August. This is an important and vital ministry of the church. God desires that these teenagers hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. He can and will work through whoever teaches to do that. Please let me know if you are interested. You can e-mail me ([rickenbaker@aquiachurch.org](mailto:rickenbaker@aquiachurch.org)) or talk with me in the receiving line after church. I'd love to talk to you more about this opportunity.

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

**Charlie Bingay**  
*Senior Warden  
Assistant Treasurer*

**Dickie Boes**  
*Finance Committee Chairperson  
Building & Grounds Committee*

**Chris Bowie**  
*Administration Committee*

**Bob Brandon**  
*Junior Warden  
Building & Grounds Committee  
Chairperson*

**Carrol Frederick**  
*Administration Committee  
Chairperson*

**Michael Golasz**  
*Building & Grounds Committee*

**Carolyn Hendrickson**  
*Administration Committee*

**Sarah Kirby**  
*Administration Committee*

**Anna Rall**  
*Register  
Finance Committee*

**Lisa Schwartz**  
*Administration Committee*

**Penny Stevens**  
*Building & Grounds Committee*





## EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

May is traditionally a time to share Heritage Sunday here at Aquia with the Peyton family and our parish family. We are excited to be back in the great hall with small modifications. Our traditional buffet will be changed to an attended buffet service. Several traditional dishes are planned: chicken, baked beans, salads, potatoes and Pat Moncure's famous lemon tarts. We will have a sign-up sheet on Sunday mornings each week for our parish family to sign up to bring a dish. The luncheon will be held in the great hall on Sunday, May 22, immediately following our 10:30 a.m. worship service. The ECW will take cautions for any compliances. Keep watching our Sunday announcements for additional news.

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 begins on May 1 with the final day for applications to be received in the church office by May 31. We

hope all graduating seniors will submit an application for review. Further information will be shared in weekly announcements. The ECW scholarship supports all forms of continuing education.

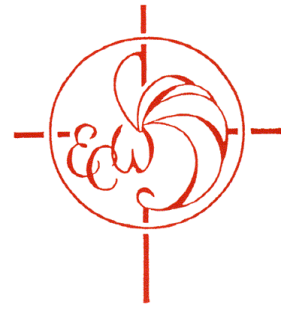


The spring ingathering for the United Thank Offering (UTO) will be held on May 8, which is Mother's Day. Jennifer

Stoltz, our parish coordinator for the UTO, will collect your donations in the blue and white boxes or envelopes that are available in the historic church.

Our annual calendar includes Fall Fest 2022, for which the date is Saturday, Oct. 1. As we begin to have more flexibility during our recovery from COVID, we are planning for all things Fall Fest. Fall Fest 2022 favorites, including the flea market, treasures, ECW crafts and jewelry, pulled pork, man cave, and a variation of our Auction, will all be back. More plans will be announced soon.

The following is a prayer from the National ECW for all women:



*Almighty God, we pray that You will bless our work in mission and ministry in the world. Help us pray fervently, labor diligently, and give liberally to make known the power of your love given through your Son Jesus Christ. 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.*

It's not about joining the ECW, it is about sharing in our ministries: in this parish, locally, and worldwide. E-mail me directly ([bkings\\_n\\_things@yahoo.com](mailto:bkings_n_things@yahoo.com)) or contact the church office for my phone number.

**Briget Kane**  
President



Photo: hmdb.org

Anne E. Moncure

### Anne E. Moncure Scholarship

To all graduating seniors: the ECW understands your 2022 graduation may be different than in previous years. Whatever the changes might be, the ECW will continue to accept applications for the 2022 Anne E. Moncure Scholarship. Each year the Aquia Episcopal Church Women honor Miss Anne Moncure's memory with a scholarship in her name, which is presented to a deserving graduating senior from Aquia Church. She was a life-long member of Aquia Church and also a long-time educator in Stafford County. She was the first supervisor of elementary education in Stafford County, a position she held for thirty years. In order to receive an application with guidelines, please contact the church office (540-659-4007). For consideration of the scholarship, all applications and required information must be returned to the Aquia Church office or e-mailed to [office@aquiachurch.com](mailto:office@aquiachurch.com) by the close of business on Tuesday, May 31.



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## STS. MARY AND MARTHA

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### Worship, Service, and Fellowship

The Sts. Mary and Martha Guild will soon be finishing our study book, *Unshakeable Hope* by Max Lucado. This book unpacks twelve of the Bible's most significant promises and has been a wonderful study for us. We will soon have several extra copies of the book available. If you would like a copy, just let us know. We will be glad to share.

Our next study book will be *Liturgy of the Ordinary* by the Rev. Tish Harrison Warren. The author is a priest in the Anglican Church of North America. In this book, she will help us become aware of God's wonderful presence in so many overlooked moments and routines of our everyday lives. Come and help us explore this book

together. All ladies of the parish and their friends are welcome at the Sts. Mary and Martha Guild meetings.

We begin our meetings with Morning Prayer at 9:30 followed by a study (and delicious snack) and often end by letting our creativity flow with a simple craft. If 'craftiness' is not your strength, there is always plenty of direction and help and no pressure. Christian fellowship is our mainstay and loving friendships flourish as we pray together, discuss the study, and tackle the crafts. Here we have photos of our latest craft, an ornament headed to the Fall Fest craft room. Its label reads, "Angels are near when feathers appear."

Our meetings in May will fall on the 5th and 19th. Isn't this the month



you resolved to give us a try? We look forward to seeing you and sharing our joy of Christian fellowship. Please reach out to us with any questions.

**Mary Jane Cole**

([maryjane@cfsw.biz](mailto:maryjane@cfsw.biz))

**Carolyn Hendrickson**

([cvhendrickson35@gmail.com](mailto:cvhendrickson35@gmail.com))

Co-chairs of Sts. Mary & Martha Guild

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## OUTREACH

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The spring craft fair that was scheduled for May 21 has been postponed. The new date has not been set yet.

Beginning on Mothers Day and running through Fathers Day, our outreach ministry group will be soliciting donations for our annual "Cash for Cows and Change for Chickens" campaign. We will use this money to purchase animals to help families in struggling countries fight poverty by providing a source of food and income. Com-

munity groups can raise poultry and sell surplus stock in the marketplace. Families can raise pigs for food and to sell. Each Sunday during the collection period, piggy banks will be on the picnic table in front of the church (or in case of rain, in the great hall). We are asking for donations of your extra pocket change (cash accepted, too) to fill the banks.

During the summer we will also collect school supplies. Dates and a list

of items needed for the collection will be announced.

We recently made donations to the Good Friday Offering for the Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East and to the Ukrainian Relief Fund.

We need new members to help us with our projects. Please consider joining this active and rewarding ministry.

**Johanna Jones**



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## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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Our last Sunday school class for this school year will be May 22, as the last day for Stafford County Public School students is May 25. Sunday school will resume in mid-August.

A big thank-you to our Sunday school teachers this year: Kim Bamber, Chris Bowie, Holly Embrey, Dave Morgan, Father James Rickenbaker, and Dana Van Metre. Thank you also

to Dawna Spaulding for helping with Sunday school and continuing to lead our Noah's Ark nursery.

Vacation Bible School, "Adventure Island," will take place June 20-24 (9 a.m. - noon), for children age 3 through fifth grade.



Registration for both participants and volunteers is available on the church website, [www.aquiachurch.org](http://www.aquiachurch.org). Scroll down to the VBS icon under "Upcoming Events."

**Kristen Morgan**



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## VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

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March 22, 2022, via Zoom

### Business Session

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer

In Attendance: Fr. Jay Morris, Rector; Fr. James Rickenbaker, Assistant Rector; Seminarian Stephen Pecot; Chris Arey, Treasurer; Charlie Bingay, Senior Warden; Bob Brandon, Junior Warden; Penny Stevens; Chris Bowie; Carolyn Hendrickson; Dickie Boes; Michael Golasz; Anna Rall; Lisa Schwartz; Sarah Kirby.

### Treasurer's Report

- Fuel oil cost is up, which increased the cost for February; not expecting this trend to continue as weather warms
- Pledged income received was down in February compared to average of the last three months
- Income line #4610 Rental Income will continue to increase throughout the year, as we've rented space to another church
- Will address differences in rental budget during midterm review in June/July

### Minutes from Previous Meeting

Approved unanimously

### New Business

- R-2022-04: Designation of Donations (Finance Committee):
  - ⇒ Updated designation of unrestricted donations to include an anticipated donation in 2022 under second paragraph
  - ⇒ Approved unanimously
- Offer of Matching Challenge Grant:
  - ⇒ Anonymous offer for \$100,000 matching challenge for construction loan debt

⇒ Dates for the matching campaign: from Jan. 1, 2022, up to Fall Fest (expected date of Oct. 1, 2022)

- Date for May Vestry Meeting
  - ⇒ Moving May meeting to Monday, May 23, 2022, so that Vestry members who are delegates to diocesan convention for electing a new bishop diocesan can attend the diocesan meet-and-greet event introducing candidates in Fredericksburg on Tuesday, May 24, which would be our usual meeting night

- *[Cemetery Mowing Contract: On 4/18, the Vestry unanimously approved by electronic vote the bid for cemetery mowing in 2022 submitted by Mowing Masters on 3/29 at a rate of \$314.82 per service, to be conducted twice monthly through October.]*

### Reports from Committees

#### Administration Committee

- Discussed initiating a complete review of bylaws with an understanding of potentially changing operational goals/rules
- Vestry stated that bylaws were reviewed in the last two years, but had remained a draft and were not fully adopted
- Heart defibrillator was ordered and delivery is expected in June or July of 2022. Training for this device will be arranged at a future date

#### Finance Committee

Reviewed items addressed above from treasurer's report and R-2022-04

#### Building and Grounds Committee

- 4/9/22 – Spring cemetery and grounds clean-up (will include erosion control clean-up requested by the county)
- Reviewing estimates for replacing parish hall roof and windows



## Vestry Highlights

- Investigating water run-off that may be impacting plaster in north-west wall of historic church

### Reports from Wardens

No additional commentary

### Report from Rector

Reviewed clergy report submitted

### Upcoming Dates

- 4/9 Cemetery and grounds clean-up
- 4/10 Palm Sunday (current schedule for worship)
- 4/12 Aquia hosts diocesan worship service for renewal of clergy ordination vows
- 4/14 Maundy Thursday worship service
- 4/15 Good Friday worship services
- 4/16 Vestry prepares for Easter sunrise service
- 4/17 Easter Day
- 4/26 Vestry meeting

### Good of the Order, Closing Prayer, and Adjournment

Potential for common cup at communion to return in the future will be discussed in the coming weeks

Respectfully submitted,  
*Anna Rall*  
Register



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## THANK YOU NOTES

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4-14-22

Dear Members of Aquia Episcopal Church,

I want to thank you for your gracious hospitality for the Renewal of Vows. Not only was the food delicious but there was such a warm welcome. Our Lord has promised to be with us when two or three are gathered, and I know he was with all of us that day.

I am grateful to you as well as the good people of the parish. Despite COVID, you remind me of what it means to be the Church.

May God continue to bless you.

Peace—

(The Rt. Rev.) Porter Taylor

*[Note: On April 12, the Tuesday of Holy Week, Aquia Episcopal Church hosted a worship service for clergy in the Diocese of Virginia to renew their ordination vows, followed by a scrumptious luncheon served by the ECW.]*

Dear Aquia Church Family,

Thank you for your kind expressions of sympathy in honor of my father, David Karcher, Sr. He was a deacon at St. Philip's Episcopal Church in South Florida for more than 25 years. For him, the Episcopal Church and its people was a special place, just as Aquia Church and you all are to Mary and me. We shared your kind letter with our family and they were touched by your offering of prayers. Thank you for thinking of our family.

Sincerely,  
The Karcher Family



## AQUIA'S TABLE GOLF TOURNAMENT: MAY 6

### Sponsorship Opportunities

\$100	Hole Sponsor
\$500	Silver Level Sponsor
\$1000	Gold Level Sponsor
\$1500	Platinum Level Sponsor (includes foursome)
\$5000	Hall of Fame Level Sponsor (includes foursome during this tournament and recognition at all future tournaments)



*Through the help of volunteers and patrons alike, Aquia's Table has successfully provided free meals and support to all who come to our campus every Wednesday night. We look to continue our positive impact in the community with your help. Aquia's Table is an outreach ministry of Aquia Episcopal Church.*



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## FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

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### SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT AQUIA CHURCH

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



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

### FUTURE BAPTISMS



The next scheduled date for a baptism is June 5, 2022. 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.

### Aquia Church Prayer List

May 2022

Kevin Beezhold, Nicole Bingay, Jean Bittner, Rhett Blythe and Family, Debbie Byers, Paula Davis, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, Lori Hendon, Rachael Hofford, Ken Luehrs, Lori, Pat Moncure, Rebecca Poole, Arnie Schwartz, Scott Smith, O.D. Taylor, John & Pam Tompkins, Gayle Tompkins, Kenneth Tompkins, Tom Tremper, Jen Wassmer, Arlene Weagraff, Patrick Weber, Walt & Elizabeth Yager.



### How to reach us:



[www.aquiachurch.org](http://www.aquiachurch.org)  
[office@aquiachurch.org](mailto: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.





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## The Prayer of Humble Access

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1533 to 1556, had an enormous impact on the establishment and development of Anglican worship. That fact is not surprising, given his authority and position, but his personal involvement characterized a deep commitment to the importance of the new Church of England. Across the reign of three monarchs, he was an influential and complex leader (Diarmaid MacCullough's biography *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* is over 700 pages long!). Cranmer was burned at the stake by Queen Mary when she attempted to reinstitute Catholicism, as he repudiated his prior recantation of his Protestant faith. The Anglican Communion remembers him on March 21, the day of his martyrdom.

Cranmer authored the new Book of Common Prayer, under King Edward VI, in 1549 and again in 1552, in order to standardize the liturgy, which previously had differed among different ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Cranmer used the Sarum Rite, a Latin rite used at the cathedral in Salisbury ('Sarum' was the Latin name for Salisbury), and incorporated elements of the Greek liturgies of Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, medieval Gallican rites, and early forms of the Lutheran church orders.

In the 1552 revision Cranmer produced a book with a more pronounced Protestant emphasis, especially in his reconstruction of the Holy Communion and in the deletion of many traditional ceremonies. One of the enduring aspects of Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer is what we know as "the Prayer of Humble Access." Though this prayer was not actually called such until 1647, the language and the placement of this prayer is significant to us today.

Cranmer translated compelling imagery from the gospels into the language of this prayer. The first part of the prayer echoes the words of the centurion who protested that he was not worthy for Jesus to enter his house

(Matthew 8:5-18) and the story of the Syrophenician woman who asked only to eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table (Mark 7:24-30).

Cranmer's contrast of our righteousness with God's mercy as the basis for God's action is found in Daniel 9:18: "For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy."

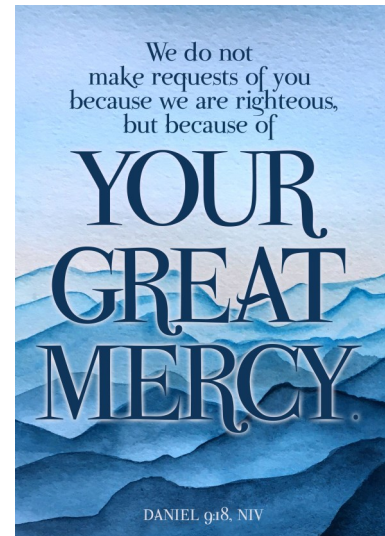
The concluding petitions, as Cranmer wrote them, reflect the language of John 6:53-56, where Jesus says that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood continually dwell in him and that he continually dwells in them.

In the 1549 prayer book, Cranmer's prayer was set just before the congregation received the elements of bread and wine. By listing distinct benefits of consuming the body and blood, Cranmer spoke to the importance of receiving in both kinds (which was a new experience for most Christians at that time). In the 1552 version, Cranmer moved the words into the Eucharistic prayer itself, immediately after the Sanctus ("Holy, holy, holy") and before the words of institution. It remained there for several hundred years. In the 1928 Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church, the prayer was moved back to its original position just before receiving communion, where we find it today. What follows is its present form:

*We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.*

(BCP 337)

Chris Arey





**AQUIA**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Aquia Episcopal Church  
Post Office Box 275  
Stafford, VA  
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



## Come Join Us!

- May 6 Aquia's Table Golf Tournament
- May 14 Men's Breakfast (8 a.m.)
- May 22 Heritage Sunday at the 10:30 a.m. service with luncheon afterwards
- Throughout May: Fellowship breakfast resumes after the 7:30 a.m. service
- Save the date! Vacation Bible School will be held June 20-24, 9 a.m. to noon



## May 2022 **READING ROOM** by Jay Morris

There appears to be no end to the writing of books about the Book of Revelation. Overall that is probably a good thing, because in the case of this biblical text in particular (as with other matters in general) there are a variety of audiences and a variety of needs that may be addressed by a variety of publications. The Wednesday evening Bible study series that I am currently leading on the Book of Revelation is benefitting from the way in which I am able to draw on several different monographs—various commentaries, some introductory books, other specialized guides—and I am happy to share with you here some of the basic materials on which I am relying most heavily for direction in this series and in its previous iterations. Any of them can help you go deeper in your engagement with this final book of the Bible.

One place where I typically start in preparing to work on the Book of Revelation is *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John* by Charles H. Talbert (Westminster John Knox, 1994), who was my first New Testament professor. He was a frequent author of commentaries on New Testament books, and this small volume represents very well his goal of “lucid brevity” (which was John Calvin’s goal too) alongside pastoral concern for those in the Church and elsewhere who have been harmed or otherwise misguided by unhealthy interpretations of this biblical book. The keyword in Talbert’s title simply highlights the Greek word (*apokalypsis*) that is the original title for the biblical book and that we usually translate into English as “revelation,” “unveiling,” or “disclosure.” After an overview of the usual historical and literary questions about authorship, date, genre, and the purpose for which Revelation was written, in roughly verse-by-verse analysis Talbert lays out the basic options for understanding each passage without going needlessly into picayune detail. He includes more references to Greco-Roman literature than some biblical commentaries do, but the reason for that stems in large part from his conviction (justly earned with Revelation) that authors of biblical texts often followed literary patterns and images from the surrounding culture, and that fact was surely true of John of Patmos and the seven churches in Asia Minor (present-day western Turkey) to which he was writing. Talbert taught for over three decades at Wake Forest University in North Carolina before continuing his career for fifteen years at Baylor University in Texas. Father Rickenbaker has used this book himself in previous work and has likewise found it to be a reliable guide.

Another brief volume that helps readers think through the big chunks of Revelation without being tedious whatsoever is *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation (Revised Edition)* by Bruce M. Metzger, now available in a version updated by David A. deSilva (Abingdon, 2019). Some remarks from de Silva’s preface are instructive here:

I was raised Episcopalian and eventually ordained United Methodist, denominations in which one is likely to hear readings from Revelation only on All Saints’ Day and possibly at funerals. I share Professor Metzger’s desire to see more Christians from such traditions allow Revelation to exercise its full, formative impact on them and their vision for discipleship. It was a privilege, therefore, to have been invited to revise and update Professor Metzger’s work and to add something from the fruits of my own career-long study of Revelation to what he has offered. [p. 10]

With such comments in mind, part of the reason why I am leading the current series on Revelation at this very time is precisely to take advantage of the fact that during the current season of Easter in our Eucharistic lectionary (Year C), our Scripture readings for public worship are taken in part from the Book of Revelation; we may as well use this period to our benefit for coming to terms with the biblical text. What has deSilva done to enrich Metzger’s original work (the version that I read first)? Strengthen its understanding of how Roman emperors were worshipped as gods and operated propaganda machines (and thus strengthen its understanding of how Christians back in the day needed to resist many temptations around them—which is still so very true of us today), along with its understanding of how apocalyptic literature addresses the political and social challenges faced by its readers and hearers. Metzger’s main text was originally just over 100 pages; with deSilva’s tweaks and enhancements, the main text is now about 135 pages, such that the additions are proportionally substantive. DeSilva urges Christians (just as I do) to peruse and reflect on this biblical text in community with fellow believers, so that together we can “hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (as we find throughout Revelation chapters 2 & 3), and this little guide can be very helpful in this regard. Metzger taught New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey for over four decades (having chaired the translation committee for the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible that we usually hear in church).

For those who want a more in-depth or advanced initiation to the Book of Revelation than the books above while remaining firmly at the introductory level, I suggest *Discovering Revelation: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (Eerdmans, 2021) by David A. deSilva, whom I mentioned earlier. This work is partly a broad overview of Revelation and partly a section-by-section commentary, with some attention to the enduring and intriguing influence that Revelation has had upon the Church and the wider culture over the centuries—attention to which the earlier volumes by Talbert and

Metzger are aware but do not address extensively. DeSilva's book is just under 200 pages long; but he attempts to cover more territory and to offer more background perspective than the other volumes suggested here, and in my view the extra information is helpful. The first four chapters of introductory material (nearly 55 pages) are particularly valuable for preparing readers to appreciate the situation in which John and his fellow Christians found themselves, under the domination of Roman imperial power. DeSilva continues to enjoy a distinguished career at Ashland Theological Seminary in Ohio, with expertise not only in New Testament but also in the Jewish heritage between the end of the Old Testament period and the start of the Christian era.

Perhaps the only longer-than-brief introduction that might exceed deSilva's is *Revelation and the End of All Things* (2d ed.) by Craig R. Koester (Eerdmans, 2018). Originally published in 2001, this monograph is largely a section-by-section commentary on the biblical text but with more attention to developments after the biblical period than Talbert or Metzger offer, even concerning the impact that the Apocalypse has had on Christian hymns and art (with prints from a number of woodcuts by German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer included in this volume for powerful visual imagery). Much like deSilva's expansion of Metzger's work, Koester in his second edition includes some new perspective based on the most recent scholarship, as well as some concern with popular futuristic writing about the end of the world (end-time fiction, one might say); this second edition also includes some study questions that can assist an individual or a group by providing guidance for crucial aspects about the book's discussion. Craig Koester is one of my favorite biblical commentators, with weighty accomplishments on such books as the Letter to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation itself (Koester has his own massive, scholarly commentary on the Book of Revelation in the Yale Anchor Bible series), and he typically exercises good judgment with his interpretations; he holds the Nasby chair of New Testament at Luther Seminary in Minnesota and is an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Talbert and Metzger could be said to provide introductions to the Book of Revelation that Sgt. Joe Friday (from TV's "Dragnet") could provide—"Just the facts, ma'am"—whereas deSilva and Koester offer somewhat more substantive, more detailed guidance still at the introductory level. None of these books are technical or require a specialist's training; all four are written for educated and interested lay people. While Talbert's book above (the earliest one here) is available only in paperback, the other three volumes recommended here are available as a printed book and as an e-book for Kindle. Any of these four helpful introductions—written clearly and concisely, all with an eye toward providing dependable support for Christians trying to make sense of the Apocalypse—might whet your appetite for further reading about the last book of the New Testament, and perhaps even for deeper reading about Revelation that I intend to introduce next month.