



AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Cross Section

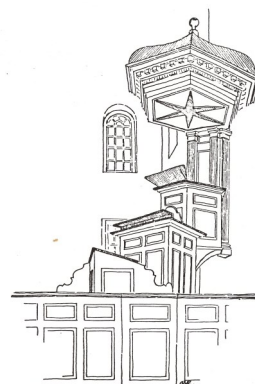
All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27

The grace of the Lord
JESUS
CHRIST,
the love of
GOD,
and the communion of
THE HOLY
SPIRIT
be with all of you.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:13, NRSV

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CROSS SECTION

Aquia Episcopal Church

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Stafford, Va.

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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

What Happened at Pentecost?

One event in Scripture that must surely have fascinated (or more likely shocked) everyone was the event of Pentecost as described in Acts chapter 2.

One morning after Jesus' ascension, when his apostles were assembled, they heard a sound from Heaven that was like the noise of a mighty wind. Soon afterward, a tongue of fire landed on the head of each one, and they all began to speak in various languages they had never spoken before—because they were filled with the power of God's Holy Spirit. They were talking with the many Jews who had arrived in Jerusalem from various nations around the world for the spring wheat harvest festival, and these foreigners were amazed that they could understand what the apostles were saying, even though the apostles were from the boondocks of Galilee. That occasion was certainly bewildering; it was so bizarre, in fact, that the apostles were accused of being drunk.

But Peter, the chief apostle, denied that charge and claimed instead that the Old Testament prophecy of Joel was finally being fulfilled—the prophecy that toward the end of time, before the Lord's judgment day, he would pour out his holy Spirit upon all people and empower them to dream big dreams and view bold visions and preach prophetically, so that everyone who would call upon the Name of the Lord might be saved. Then Peter interpreted Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in light of the Old Testament and offered his audience the chance to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, in the hope that they would receive the same Spirit of God. Nearly three thousand people were converted that day!

Even more signs and wonders developed. The apostles performed miracles, the Christians as a whole spent time together in worship and fellowship, they all took care of each other's needs, they ate with joyful and generous hearts, they praised God and received goodwill from other folks, and accordingly they grew in number and in strength of faith.



While I wish that I could have observed every aspect of that event two thousand years ago, we can still witness the same things happening almost any day at Aquia Church or wherever faithful Christians gather and do what faithful Christians do. We still reach out to all sorts and conditions of men and women and offer them the Good News of Jesus Christ. We still find guidance in the Old Testament for our New Testament faith. We still confess our sins, still receive forgiveness from God and each other, still baptize new followers of Jesus Christ, and still receive the Holy Spirit.

Those of us who continue to spend time in worship and fellowship with each other still witness miracles occurring all around us. We still support and encourage each other through adversity and through prosperity. We still proclaim the Gospel to others, still need to hear it ourselves, and still seek to live by it. Yet what about those of us who do not spend so much time in worship and fellowship with other Christians? How can their faith be strengthened? What prompts them to take such risks by drifting away from worship and fellowship together? Why are their numbers growing?

What happened at Pentecost was the full-fledged start of a dynamic movement, but I worry that some folks seem to suppose that this movement is declining, or has lost its attraction, or no longer matters. Nothing could be further from the truth! But we surely need to trust that God is sustaining this movement and will renew its power for us today, so that Pentecost will be not simply an event from ages past, but rather something that gives us life even now.

Jay Morris

FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Summer Reading

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 intentional you are about reading things that help you grow in your Christian faith. Since the summer has now arrived, I want to offer you some good options for Christian summer reading.

Holy Scripture tops the list. I know that sounds like the opposite of summer reading, but let me explain. Starting a regimen of reading Scripture daily is important. The most important reason, of course, is that it keeps you grounded in the promises of God. A big problem, however, is that most Bibles are formatted in a way that is not user-friendly. The typical two-column format with cross-references may be good for Bible study, but it's not great for Bible *reading*. So I encourage you to purchase a "reader's Bible." You can find reader's Bibles in different translations. These editions are single-column. They remove verse numbers, section headings, and cross-references, so the biblical text looks more like a novel that is much easier to read.

There are other books that I want to offer as options for possible summer reading. The first of these is *Low Anthropology: The Unlikely Key to a Gracious View of Others (and Yourself)* by David Zahl. This book sets out to help the reader lower his view of what we can do as fallen people. Even as Christians, we remain sinners. We are constantly in need of God's saving grace. We can do nothing of ourselves to help ourselves, as a collect in the BCP acknowledges. By knowing this, we are able to have a more gracious view of ourselves and others whenever we or they fail to do the right thing. This low anthropology is important for relating to others in the church, but it is especially important for relating to non-believers. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

A second recommendation is in the category of Christian spirituality: *Upside-Down Spirituality: The 9 Essential Failures of a Faithful Life* by Chad Bird. This

fantastic book, as you might expect, seeks to flip spirituality on its head. The gist is this: in order to succeed, we need to fail. We hear moralist sermons (both from the church pulpit and the world's pulpit) about how to do good and how to live your best life now. We hear that we can succeed at making ourselves better. We can make ourselves whole. We can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. We are the captains of our fate, as one poet puts it. We can, we are. Note the emphasis: we, we, we, and I, I, I. Bird reminds the reader that the faith we hold is not about us and what I can do, but about Jesus Christ and what he has done for us. We are convicted by God's law time and again, we fail to live up to the standard that God has for us, and this conviction of the heart pushes us to the gospel of grace: the good news that God himself has succeeded where we are bound to fail. Thank God for that!

Scripture is always important to read. The other two books mentioned above are, in my opinion, some of the finest theology written in the last decade. If you read one of these books or something else this summer, may it be something that builds you up in the faith. 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 Bowie

Administration Committee

Bob Brandon

Junior Warden

Building & Grounds Committee

Michael Golasz

Building & Grounds Committee

Dale Hendon

Finance Committee

Carolyn Hendrickson

Administration Committee

Bill Hoffman

Senior Warden

Sarah Kirby

Administration Committee

Walt Peterson

Administration Committee

Anna Rall

Register

Finance Committee

Lisa Schwartz

Administration Committee

Penny Stevens

Building & Grounds Committee



EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN

Our work as Episcopal Church Women at times seems somewhat vague, as we support our church, community, and world. While supporting the parish and activities of Aquia Church, our mission includes involvement in our church, our diocese, and our world.

I have been asked several times, “What is the ECW,” and “What does the ECW do?”

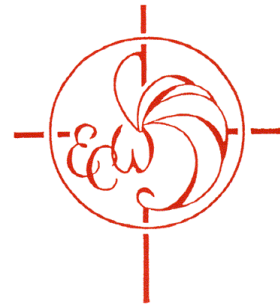
The Episcopal Church Women of the Diocese of Virginia has this mission: *With the grace of the Holy Spirit, we share the love of God by making Christ known in the world through prayer, education, concern for others, and joyful service.*

As part of the national ECW, we are Episcopal Church Women of all ages, ethnic origins, and socioeconomic backgrounds who hold a variety of views. However, the common denominator of our members is love of God and the desire to do His work.*

Our mission is centered in congregations, as the ECW empowers women to do Christ’s ministry in the world.

Our vision for all women of the Episcopal Church is that we become a vibrant blend of all ages, coming together as a peacemaking, healing part of the Church. We aspire to be a God-spark, shining and sharing the love of Christ.

Here at Aquia we work in joyful service and make Christ known in our world. Prayers include daily needs and special requests. We are blessed to have gifted women who are referred to as ‘prayer warriors.’ Their diligence and reverence in prayer is shared with our community, our nation, and our world.



At a 10:30 a.m. worship service in June, we will be presenting the Anne E. Moncure Scholarship to a senior graduating from high school. Stay tuned for more details, and plan to attend!

Briget Kane
President

**taken from the National Episcopal Church Women’s Website*
<ecwnational.org>

AQUIA’S TABLE



The 2023 Annual Bob Jones Memorial Golf Tournament was a day full of sunshine and Cinco de Mayo fun. It is now in the bag!

The Aquia’s Table Core Team wants to thank everyone who supported our fundraising event and its success by sponsoring a hole, donating an item for the silent auction, or playing a round of golf. We appreciate our silver, gold, and platinum sponsors and the time and laughter we shared with everyone at lunch and at the presentation of awards. Congratulations to Skip Causey, who won the 50/50 raffle. We look forward to seeing you all at the 2024 Annual Bob Jones Memorial Golf Tournament,

which is already scheduled to be held on Friday, May 10 of next year!

The Aquia’s Table ministry group is searching for substitute cooks and prep team members. As summer approaches, our volunteers—like other folks—enjoy taking a week or more and going on vacation. If you love to cook or can help prep for others to give and share your time, and we are happy to mentor. Each week we prep food on Tuesdays and cook and serve on Wednesdays. If you want to help, please contact me: Briget Kane (bkwings_n_wings@yahoo.com or ask the church office for my phone number).

Briget Kane



STS. MARY AND MARTHA

Worship, Service, and Fellowship

The Sts. Mary and Martha Guild is enjoying our new study book, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World* by Joanna Weaver. Ms. Weaver is helping all of us—Marys and Marthas alike—to draw closer to our Lord. If you would like to join us as we continue with this study, please feel free to stop by. We will be meeting in the downstairs parish hall on June 1, 15, and 29, starting at 9:30 a.m.

Our inventory for the Fall Fest craft room continues to build. We have restocked our supply of wax angel ornaments, star candles, and votive candles, all made from the wax of the church's altar candle stubs. We are also busily restocking our inventory of our felt ornament favorites like these button lambs and sparkly birds [see the related photograph].

Please remember that the Sts. Mary and Martha Guild also operates the jewelry table at Fall Fest. We would appreciate a donation of any costume jewelry with which you are ready to part. If a donation has a high value, we will pass it along to the treasures table, where finer items are sold.

All ladies of the parish and their friends are welcome to attend the Sts. Mary and Martha Guild meetings. Our meetings begin at 9:30 with Morning Prayer and end by noon. Come to enjoy a summer break with your sisters-in-Christ. For more information, contact Mary Jane Cole (maryjane@cfsw.biz) or Carolyn Hendrickson (cvhendrickson35@gmail.com), co-chairs of Sts. Mary and Martha Guild.

Mary Jane Cole



FALL FEST AUCTION ACTION



Happy News! Preparations are now under way for Fall Fest 2023. The date is set for Oct. 7 and, yes, we will have an auction!

What is needed to make the 2023 auction a success? Your gifts! Do you have a talent to teach or a service to offer? Do you have an antique in your attic, a drum set in your basement, or an extra week for your time-share? Perhaps you could donate a pair of tickets to a Caps game or a Washington Commanders game. Unused, unexpired gift cards are always welcome, as are moose heads, cigar humidors, and cedar chests. How about an evening of baby-sitting, or an afternoon of raking and bagging leaves? Could you build a gift basket with a friend or your ministry group, or could you contribute an item to a theme basket such as The Gardener's Basket, Movie Night, or Pamper Her? If so, please let us know.

There is also an urgent need for help with soliciting local merchants for their donations. With a letter of introduction in hand from our clergy, would you be willing to ask restaurants and shops for contributions? We could certainly use your assistance.

How can you help? Let us know! We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Mary Jane Cole
(maryjane@cfsw.biz)



VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

April 25, 2023

Dinner and Fellowship

Business Session

In attendance: Fr. James Rickenbaker, Assistant Rector; Deacon Stephen Pecot; Chris Arey, Treasurer; Bill Hoffman, Senior Warden; Christine Bowie, Michael Golasz, Dale Hendon, Carolyn Hendrickson, Sarah Kirby, Walt Peterson, Anna Rall, Lisa Schwartz, Penny Stevens.

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Treasurer's Report

- Reviewed cash flow and statement of activity for March
- March figures reflect payment for window replacement and repairs in 1960 parish house
- Budget vs. Actuals
 - ◇ Aquia's Table will add income from the golf tournament in May
 - ◇ At end of March, 50% of budget for fuel oil has already been spent, with additional expense expected in April

Minutes from Previous Meeting

- Approved as submitted

New Business

- Proposal for Eagle Scout Service Project (Brandon Spaulding)
- Approved
- Possible Parish Picnic
- Tentative date of July 23
- Reflection with the Reverend Deacon Stephen Pecot, Seminarian
 - ◇ Working with Vestry and committees has enhanced understanding of how these groups work within the church and led to a wonderful experience
 - ◇ Appreciative of time with Father James and Father Jay as mentors

Reports from Committees, Senior Warden, and Rector

Finance Committee

- Reached out to four firms for an AUP (Agreed-Upon Principles) audit
 - ◇ Two firms have replied with interest
 - ◇ Treasurer Chris Arey will meet with the two firms in order to discuss options and price
 - ◆ 2023 has budget of \$3,000 available for this purpose
 - ◆ Income for current matching challenge opportunity for CFFB is running about 10% behind on similar opportunity compared to this time in 2022

Buildings and Grounds Committee

- Windows on 1960 parish house have been installed
- Replacement of exterior doors on 1960 parish house is on hold
 - ◇ B&G reviewing options for estimates since they will need to be custom-made and will therefore be expensive



Vestry Highlights

- Phase I of landscaping project around Fleurries is about 2/3 complete

Administration Committee

- Approved continued rental agreement for church rental of the 1960 parish house
 - ◇ Pending approval from renters

Upcoming Dates

5/7 Breakfast reception honoring Kristen Morgan and Stephen Pecot (8:30–10:15 a.m.)
5/23 Vestry meeting (7 p.m. via Zoom)
6/27 Vestry meeting (7 p.m. in person, with dinner available at 6:15 p.m.)
7/25 Vestry meeting (7 p.m. via Zoom)

Good of the Order, Closing Prayer, and Adjournment

*Respectfully submitted,
Anna Rall, register*



TREASURER'S NOTE

The risk of financial fraud is rising every day. By e-mail, social media, phone, or text messaging, all of us have probably received some request for or warning about our finances. Indeed, even answering the phone can be risky, as your voice can be captured and manipulated and used by scammers. Know that Aquia Church will **NEVER** contact you via these means with a special request for money, gift cards, or any other financial resource. All appeals for dona-

tions appear in print in our bulletin or by snail-mail coming directly from the church office in ways that you can verify, are published via our weekly e-mail from the office, or are made verbally by the clergy in church. If you are contacted by someone posing as Aquia Church, please ignore the request and inform the office of this occurrence.

Chris Arey



Matching Challenge Grant

Aquia Church has received a commitment for a new matching challenge to help us retire the debt on the construction loan for the Christian Formation and Fellowship Building. Every donation received for the CFFB between 1 January 2023 and 31 October 2023—New Year's Day to Halloween—will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$100,000.00, so that we can con-

tinue to pay off the construction loan ahead of schedule, with reduced interest payments and reduced overall expense. So this opportunity includes gifts already made earlier this year, plus gifts that will be received between now and the end of October. Please consider what kind of contribution you can make toward this matching challenge opportunity, and let's make it a success!

Congratulations to Aquia's Pantry!



The Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank recently presented our Aquia's Pantry ministry group with their Marie Kunlo Award as the Agency of the Year "in recognition of [the Pantry's] extraordinary service and dedication to our community." Thanks to everyone involved with Aquia's Pantry for this faithful ministry!



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Burials: “*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon them*” (BCP 486/502).
Betty Loraine Olson, 1933-2023; Virginia Hazel Orrall Albert, 1928-2023; Frederic Bruce Miller, 1934-2023.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT AQUIA CHURCH

New Babies: Please call the church office (540-659-4007) after the birth or adoption of a child, so that a red rose can be placed on the altar in thanksgiving.

Those being deployed: Please call the church office before your deployment, so that we can offer special prayers at a worship service prior to your departure. Also, we would like to put your name 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 Nov. 5, 2023. 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

June 2023

Rhett Blythe and family, Debbie Byers, baby Calahan, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, Lori, Lori Hendon, Ken Luehrs, Pat Moncure, Rebecca Poole, Ray Parsons, Arnie Schwartz, Scott Smith, Dennis Springer, O.D. Taylor, John & Pam Tompkins, Kenneth Tompkins, Tom Tremper, Bryce Vinson, Jen Wassmer, Patrick Weber, Walt & Elizabeth Yager.

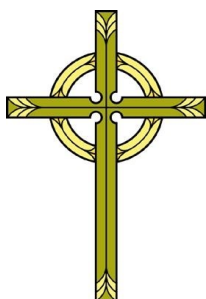


How to reach us:



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.



Justin Martyr

In a liberally translated text attributed to Tertullian (a second-century Christian author), it is written that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church” (*Apologeticus*, L.13). Martyrs, starting with St. Stephen—who was stoned to death while Saul held the cloaks of the crowd (Acts 7:54-60)—have appeared whenever and wherever the church was persecuted. The word ‘martyr’ is derived from the Greek and originally meant ‘witness.’ In the early church, the word ‘martyr’ rapidly became the term for someone who was pressured by non-Christians to renounce the faith but instead sustained witness to Christ and thus endured suffering and death. Although martyrs have appeared in nearly every century, the impact of martyrs in the early church had a magnified influence on the growth of Christianity. One of the most prominent early martyrs was Justin, now known as Justin Martyr. The Episcopal Church honors Justin Martyr on June 1.

We know of Justin through his writings and the writings of others. His three surviving writings which are known and confidently ascribed to him are (1) the *First Apology*, which was addressed to the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius, his sons, and the Roman Senate, (2) the *Second Apology*, which was addressed to the Roman Senate, and (3) the *Dialogue with Trypho*. The term ‘Apology’ as used by Justin Martyr derives from the Greek meaning ‘speaking in defense.’ It was Justin’s use of this term that gave rise to the theological discipline of defending the faith through argumentation and discourse, now known as apologetics.

Justin Martyr was born in Flavia Neapolis (modern Nablus) in Samaria around AD 100. He was born into a Gentile family, did not speak Aramaic or Hebrew, and was not schooled in Judaism. As a young man, he hungered for a more substantive education; after studying under several Greek philosophers, he encountered an old man who spoke with him about God and about

how the testimony of the Old Testament prophets was more trustworthy than the pedagogy of philosophers. Justin’s mind was opened, he renounced his prior religious and philosophical beliefs, and he adopted Christianity as his faith and philosophy. He adopted the dress of a philosopher (he is sometimes referred to as Justin the Philosopher); during the reign of Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161), he travelled to Rome and established his own school. Justin’s writings are so complex and rich that they defy summarization in this short article. Yet it is noteworthy that he was the first to explain explicitly how Jesus Christ was the Logos or ‘Word’ (Gospel of John, chapter 1).

Justin uses the idea of Jesus as Logos to repudiate an objection by early critics of Christianity. The criticism was that if Jesus really were the Son of God, then he could not be co-equal with God the Father, partly because it would mean there was a time when the Son of God was not. This criticism charged that Jesus-as-son was a creation of God and, therefore, not God himself. Justin used the Greek concept of *logos* (leveraging John’s usage and Greek thought) to articulate a profound defense of Christianity. Like some other authors, Justin thought that the Greek philosophers had derived (if not borrowed) from the Old Testament the most essential elements of truth found in their teaching. Indeed, he declares that prominent ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Heraclitus were Christians! He intended to demonstrate the absolute significance of Christ, so that everything of virtue and truth which ever existed may be found in him. The old philosophers only glimpsed part of the Logos, he contended, while the complete Logos appears in Christ.

Running his own school in Rome, however, Justin ran afoul of the authorities. During the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, after a dispute with a Cynic philosopher, Justin was denounced by the latter to the authorities

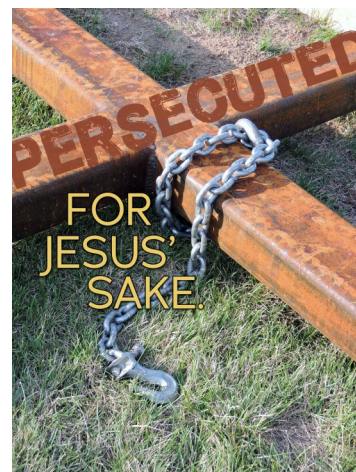
for refusing to sacrifice to the gods.

Justin was tried in court, along with six friends (two of them slaves he educated), and he was beheaded at the direction of the urban prefect, around AD 165.

According to tradition, Justin was martyred on April 13, and his feast day was the day after. However, since that day normally fell within the season of Easter, the date was moved to June 1, so as to occur always after Eastertide. Relics of Justin are claimed to be in Italy and Malta. There is even an American connection to Justin Martyr: in 1873, while Italy was in turmoil, some relics (15 small bones) of Justin Martyr were sent to Baltimore and kept at St. Mary’s Church in Annapolis in order to save them from destruction. Finally, in 1989, these relics were properly interred at St. Mary’s.

The Collect for Justin Martyr’s feast day on June 1 is: “O God, who has given your church wisdom and revealed to it deep and secret things: Grant that we, like your servant Justin and in union with his prayers, may find your Word an abiding refuge all the days of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen” (*Lesser Feasts and Fasts*).

Chris Arey





AQUIA
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Aquia Episcopal Church
Post Office Box 275
Stafford, VA
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Vacation Bible School

June 12–16, 9 a.m.– Noon

“Stellar VBS” is quickly approaching! Please register your child or grandchild right away, so that we can be sure to have enough materials ready for the week.



Children in preschool through 5th grades are invited to join us on a cosmic quest as we will have a blast shining Jesus' light into the world.

Our VBS week always has fun features, including recreational games, special crafts, exciting music, delicious refreshments, and of course important teaching about some of the great passages of the Bible that youngsters can understand for building up their faith in God. Our VBS staff members offer an enjoyable, safe environment in which our children's faith can grow.

Registration for both campers and volunteers (teen & adult) is available on the church's Website www.aquiachurch.org. Simply click on the logo for “Stellar Vacation Bible School 2023.”

Increasingly I recognize how far apart our world stands from the world of the Bible. Within the history of biblical times, there are important social, economic, and political differences from one period to another—say, from the eras of the Hebrew patriarchs and their descendants’ bondage in Egypt (there are already considerable differences between those two situations!) to the eras of the united monarchy from Saul to Solomon, the Exile of Judahites into Babylon, the Herodian rule in the Holy Land, and the early Church during and after the life of the apostle Paul. Yet even greater still is the disparity of difference between the start of the historical period covered in the Old Testament and the current phase of history in which we find ourselves. The distance of geography, time, and culture between then and now is, generally speaking, even more startling than what one finds within the span of biblical history, with social, economic, and political differences accentuated all the more by the growing multiplicity of religious traditions, the rise of modern and post-modern secularism, and other factors too numerous to explain here. Our attempts to understand the world of the Bible are not always easy, and it is typically even harder for us to attempt to understand the world of the Old Testament than for us to attempt to understand the world of the New Testament. (And of course the same is true in the other direction as well. Someone from the Jerusalem of King David or King Solomon might have appreciated various aspects from last month’s coronation of King Charles III in the United Kingdom; but how could we ask such an ancient visitor to fathom the contemporary situation in and around Jerusalem, or a presidential election in the United States, or Mardi Gras in New Orleans, or what passes these days for Christmas festivities?) So I am extremely grateful to those scholars who live in our own time but have labored thoughtfully and carefully to grasp the full significance of the biblical texts—especially when those scholars catch references and allusions that we would miss or overlook in our ignorance—and then communicated clearly and effectively the deeper meaning that truly makes the given passage of Scripture come alive for us today.

Here I am pleased to recommend one such book that has proven particularly insightful and helpful for me: the recently published *30 Old Testament Passages with Deeper Meaning: The Surprising Significance of Seemingly Ordinary Verses* (Zondervan, 2023) by Michael Williams. Building upon years of academic work in various languages of the Bible and its ancient near Eastern background, Williams’s linguistic and historical competence undoubtedly played a major role in his ability to catch clues in the biblical texts that less-informed readers would almost certainly miss but would want to know. Eight of the thirty passages appear in the foundational books of the Pentateuch (Genesis to Deuteronomy), with another ten found in the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi (four of them on Jeremiah); there is a good distribution of selected texts from across the various writings of the Old Testament. Williams has a gift for taking academic lessons learned and turning them into clearly written prose that illuminate what is really going on in the passage under consideration. From this book I have learned an array of background information from accounts of creation in the ancient near east (which can affect our understanding of the discussion about God’s creation of the world and humankind in the first two chapters of Genesis), the Exodus account of the Ten Commandments (with appropriate connection to Romans in the New Testament), and ancient perspectives about threats posed from the Mediterranean Sea. Among the most stimulating discussions were the four passages found in the Book of Proverbs, which might not always make for engaging reading in the absence of a guide like Williams. A feature of his book that I certainly appreciated were the set of three questions for discussion and reflection at the end of every chapter: some questions place an emphasis on leading the reader back to matters of biblical culture (perhaps as a way of emphasizing or reinforcing some of Williams’s teaching in that chapter), while other questions were more open-ended for reader to explore with a bearing on one’s Christian faith. For all of Williams’s expertise about the past, he is quite aware that his readers are most unlikely to share that same knowledge, and so his style is very approachable and pleasant; he wears his academic training lightly, without showing off. In the preface he compares his approach in this book to the work accomplished by the appraisers featured on the PBS series “Antiques Roadshow”: much like the experts who interpret and assess the *objet d’art* or collector’s piece at hand, Williams exposes and reveals what is in plain sight yet hidden and concealed until its significance is explained competently. Because the author is committed to the Calvinist conviction that all of Scripture—even the entire Old Testament—points somehow to Jesus Christ, Williams draws out connections between the Hebrew roots of biblical faith and their implications for the New Testament.

Williams is senior professor emeritus of Old Testament studies at Calvin Theological Seminary in Michigan, having taught there for many years, and a member of the Committee on Bible Translation for the New International Version of the Bible. (Interestingly enough, Williams came to faith in Jesus Christ in large part by reading a Bible that was provided by Gideons International while he was serving onboard a nuclear submarine in the U. S. Navy. After learning that fact, I returned to read chapter 10 again for its discussion about the glassy sea.) This volume is available in three formats: paperback, electronic book for Kindle devices, and audiobook.