

Cross Section

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



Confirmation Sunday

On Sunday, Nov. 16, Aquia Church welcomed the Right Rev. Mark Stevenson, the 14th bishop of the Diocese of Virginia, during the 10:30 a.m. worship service. Bishop Stevenson was present to confirm some parishioners, receive others into the Episcopal Church and help others reaffirm the vows made at their baptism. A reception followed honoring the bishop

See more photos from the special occasion on page 6.

and candidates in the Great Hall.

INSIDE:

- From the Rector:
 Being Overwhelmed
 by Christmas
- Assistant Rector: Hope in a Season of Longing
- ECW
- Aquia's Pantry
- · Lessons and Carols
- Sts. Mary and Martha Guild
- Vestry Minutes
- December/January
 Prayer List
- Christmas Poinsettias
 Order Form





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
Kimberly Bamber

Parish Administrator **Sue Selz**

Bookkeeper

Nursery Supervisor

Dawna Spaulding

FROM THE RECTOR

Being Overwhelmed by Christmas

o you ever feel overwhelmed at Christmas? We face so much pressure to decorate more than before (or at least to top how our neighbors are decorating), to purchase more presents or more expensive gifts than usual (hoping that the recipients will reciprocate better than they did last year), to bake and cook and eat even more (while failing to put larger-sized clothing on our wish lists). Don't forget the extra events added in December—seasonal concerts, parades, parties, and TV shows right when you have more obligations to fulfill and less free time than ever. No wonder Dr. Seuss's Grinch complained about all the "noise, noise, noise, noise" that prompted him to hate Christmas.

We might ask ourselves: Why has Christmas become so overwhelming? In fact, much of what now passes for Christmas celebrations can be boiled down to this: excess from forgetfulness. We somehow believe that we must exceed the extravagance displayed so prominently around us. That's why neighborhoods compete about who has the most colorful yard décor with the brightest lights (think of the 2006 film Deck the Halls with Danny DeVito and Matthew Broderick), why one Christmas tree no longer suffices when we can set up three, and why kids keep count of who received the most presents. Similarly, the abundance of sales in stores generates in us a desire to buy all of these items, even if we don't have enough money or enough storage space for all that. The supposed attractiveness of such indulgence fills our minds when we forget what might motivate that excess.

Undoubtedly, some of the excess is sparked by greed or lack of self-control, and those issues can be addressed faithfully. Yet I also suspect that some of what has often rendered Christmas overwhelming is that we have forgotten, or failed to remember, the root and source of some seasonal

traditions. Start with the word 'Christmas' itself: the origin of this term goes back nearly a thousand years for a mass or communion service honoring Christ-the Messiah, Jesus. Note that placing candles in the windows of homes was initially a way of keeping alert and ready for Jesus' Second Coming—which is a custom for Advent, not mere decoration for winter. The wise men who brought gifts to the baby Jesus offered him only three gifts, not thirtythree—with each of the three gifts having deep spiritual significance. Our favorite Christmas hymns and carols and even movies have become so beloved and memorable precisely because we enjoy them repeatedly, year after year, instead of neglecting them.

If we recall that the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem is the real reason for the season-rather than whatever commercial advertising tells us we should be doing these days—then we begin to put the cart and the horse in the proper order. If we remember that Jesus' birth led angels to announce the news to shepherds, who in turn told their friends and neighbors, then we ourselves are encouraged to share our joy at Christmas with others. If we receive Christmas presents believing that they reflect the generosity of God in coming down from heaven to us and the generosity of the wise men who searched for this God incarnate and gave him gifts, then we can appreciate our presents in a better light.

In fact, on second thought, perhaps not all instances of being overwhelmed at Christmas are entirely bad. Indeed, when we remember that the human extravagance of Christmas—at its best—is intended to mirror the divine extravagance of God's love for us in sending Jesus Christ to us, then we *should* be overwhelmed by Christmas.

Jay Morris



FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Hope in a Season of Longing

Dear Family in Christ,
Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! I
thank my God for you, especially for the
steadfast faith and hope you continue to
show as our parish moves from the watchfulness and repentance of Advent to the
joy of Christmas and the bright glory of
Epiphany. These seasons, full of beauty
and hope, bring with them longing and
sadness too. Yet even in the busyness and
emotion, we hold fast to Him whose
mercies never fail and whose promises
stand firm.

Advent comes again every December. But in truth it is the perpetual season of the Christian. It is the season of repentance, faith, and waiting when we recognize our sinfulness, of course, but also the mercy and grace of God to sinners. It is safe to say that we all carry burdens with us into this season: unresolved grief and sadness, uncertainty about the future, anxieties and disquiet, the weight of life's ongoing demands. These things don't go away just because the church hangings change from green to blue. Yet what changes everything is that Advent teaches us that our hope rests not on our own strength, but on God's. Our hope is in his unwavering faithfulness. "Come thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free."

Then Christmas arrives, not as an escape but as a clear reminder of God's intervention in the world. The Word has become flesh and dwelt among useven in the midst of our fragility. The babe in the manger proclaims that God does not wait for us to come to him; he comes into our world to bear our wounds and our weakness. His birth announces that the deepest truth of the universe is neither fear nor failure but the steadfast love of God revealed in Jesus Christ—a love for sinners like you and me. "Joy to the world! the Savior reigns; let us our songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy."

"Joy to the world!
the Savior reigns; let us our songs
employ, while fields and floods,
rocks, hills, and plains,
repeat the sounding joy."

Epiphany then takes the Light that was revealed at Christmas and extends the light outward. The star that drew the Magi reveals that Christ is the Savior of all peoples, not of one nation alone. We hear anew that at Jesus' baptism the Father's voice declares his delight in his beloved Son. In our baptisms we are gathered into that same delight. Epiphany calls us not only to behold the light of Christ but to carry it—to share the Gospel of his mercy and grace to the broken world. "With shining face and bright array Christ deigns to manifest today what glory shall be theirs above who joy in God with perfect love."

Throughout these three seasons, look for the ways Christ is already at work among us here at Aquia Church. You can see it in the Word and Sacrament, through which Christ continually forgives, strengthens, and sustains us. Even in uncertainty, God provides for his Church through his means of grace and through the love we share as his family.

May this time fill you with hope and deepen your trust in Christ. May your hearts be renewed in confidence, not in yourselves but in the God who keeps his promises. May the light of Christ guide and steady you. And may Aquia share that light ever more faithfully in the months ahead. 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

Rick Bryant

Finance Committee

Michael Ferrantino

Administration Committee

Brad Hammer

Junior Warden
Chairperson, Buildings &
Grounds Committee

Dale Hendon

Chairperson, Finance Committee

Bill Hoffman

Senior Warden

Joe Howard

Register Finance Committee

Carol Korth

Buildings & Grounds
Committee

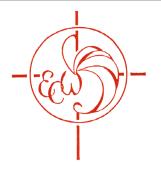
Walt Peterson

Chairperson,
Administration Committee

Pat Quinn

Administration Committee

EPISCOPAL CHURCH WOMEN



Mission Statement:

The Episcopal Church Women of Aquia Church, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, wish to know Christ and make him known through prayer, education, concern for others and joyful service.

or Episcopal Church Women of Aquia, our year of receptions and parish support usually begins in February with the Shrove Tuesday breakfast on the Sunday before Shrove Tuesday. In 2025, this Shrove Tuesday breakfast was the start of my first year as president of ECW at Aquia. I remember trying to figure out the logistics and food preparations, something for which I really had little knowledge. Several church womenand a few men—came to my aid, and before I knew it, a volunteer was flipping pancakes in the kitchen on that breakfast morning, while others were arranging food donations, and helping me organize myself. I felt togetherness as people worked to-

felt togetherness as people worked together. Moving through the spring and early summer, we celebrated our historic church through Heritage Sunday. Again, I was assisted by many wonderful hands as we created this celebratory reception, where we also welcome the Peyton Society of Virginia, whose loved ones are buried in the churchyard, and who come back each time to celebrate those ancestors during Heritage Sunday.

Moving again through the year, Homecoming in September welcomes previous parishioners who have moved away but look forward to coming back to visit. Also, Homecoming offers new parishioners a chance to meet more people and come to consider Aquia Church their church home.

Of course, waiting in the wings is

Fall Fest, preparations for which start in July with a grand meeting of department volunteers and any person interested in volunteering time and talent. Fall Fest comes about in October, a few weeks after Homecoming. Fall Fest is the major fundraiser for ECW. Through those funds, ECW can continue to support our yearly ministry work—locally, in our diocese, and worldwide—partly due to the success of Fall Fest.

Supporting the confirmands, those reaffirmed, and transferred into The Episcopal Church was ECW's honor and privilege in November 2025.

Other receptions during 2025 supported members of our parish and their families with a time for remembrance, memorials, communion, and love.

We now look forward to December and all its festivities, celebrations. and prayer times. As we lit our Advent wreaths for the first time on November 30, ushering in Advent and eventually the Christmas season. ECW invites everyone to visit our Advent gift tables, located in the Great Hall of the CFFB. As always, I invite all women to participate in ECW. Stop by the Advent gift tables if you have any questions regarding ECW. The Saints Mary and Martha guild of the ECW meets the first and third Thursdays of each month for a time of study and reflection. On the fifth Thursday of any month containing five Thursdays, the Saints Mary and Marth guild meets in

service to our parish and community, as we do good works for our Lord.

Do not forget our annual meeting in December, which will be held on the morning of Sunday, December 14, as we share breakfast together, recognize our Gift of Life honorees, and place names in the Book of Remembrance. Immediately following the ECW annual meeting, the 10:30 service will be conducted in the great hall with our precious children of the parish, as they reenact the Nativity of our Lord.

The days of January allow us to take a soothing break from the busyness of the holiday season, as we celebrate Epiphany, which signals for the Korth family the taking down of all those bright, sparkly lights, and those sentimental decorations (I always leave a strand of lights up somewhere, reluctant to give up the holiday spirit), while also giving us the chance to contemplate the new year. I have never been a keeper of all my New Year's resolutions, vet nevertheless I still make them. As we move through January with an eye to February, our yearly ECW events begin again.

I do hope and continue to pray for our togetherness as we move into 2026. I am so very thankful and grateful for all the help and support from my ECW sisters and from the parish. May God bless us all with his peace which passes all understanding.

> God's peace to you and yours, Carol Korth



AQUIA'S PANTRY

quia's Pantry is so thankful for our volunteers who have helped us through these remarkably busy past few months. We are indeed grateful for a new family of four that has joined us on Wednesday nights, and for the energy of two of our parish families who split their year between Forida and Aquia Church. With each pantry requiring over 100 volunteer hours to plan, pick up or purchase food, pack bags, and load vehicles, we will have logged over 50,000 volunteer hours in 2025.

November was our busiest month to date, averaging about 160 families each week. As a result of our heavier workload, we have moved our start time to 5:45 p.m. just to keep the line of cars from spilling out on Route 1 and causing a traffic hazard.

very generous with gifts of boxes of cereal, canned goods, and grocery base well as monetary donations which enable us to put together the bags of shelf-stable groceries. Speaking of gery bags, we also received a bale of bags (400 brown paper bags) from an

On November 2, the five Stafford high school marching bands put on a brilliant competition at Mountain View High School called Band Together to Fight Hunger. The price of admission was a shelf-stable food item. The donations were gathered by SERVE and divided amongst several Stafford County pantries. Aquia's Pantry received 378 pounds of those donations which proved so helpful in fulfilling our mission in November!

Due to the generosity of some local grocery stores, we have been able to offer bread and desserts, fresh vegetables, and frozen meat or fish to each family. Parishioners have also been very generous with gifts of boxes of cereal, canned goods, and grocery bags as well as monetary donations which enable us to put together the bags of shelf-stable groceries. Speaking of grocery bags, we also received a bale of bags (400 brown paper bags) from an anonymous donor with a promise of more!

We are so grateful for all these donations. During the next couple of

months, please consider adding a few extra boxes of cereal or cans of vegetables to your grocery cart. That way, you can enable this outreach ministry to be as helpful as possible to our neighbors in need.

In order to learn more about Aquia's Pantry, stop by the great hall any Wednesday between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. You can witness the delivery and weighing of food from the grocery stores in the morning, the filling of bags in the afternoon, and the filling of trunks starting at 5:45 p.m. Yes, we still need additional volunteers on Tuesday mornings and at any time on Wednesdays. Please consider giving a gift of time to help our neighbors who come up the hill for assistance. If you have any questions or suggestions, reach out to Ron Korth, Barb Bingay, or Mary Jane Cole (maryjane@cfsw.biz).

Mary Jane Cole

Lessons and Carols

he lingering aroma of pumpkin spice is barely past when the industrial onslaught of 'the holidays' starts to overtake us. In the Church we are blessed to celebrate Advent as a separate portion of the calendar, separate from Christmastide. One of the ways in which both Advent and Christmas are observed is through a service consisting of Lessons and Carols. Each season has a distinct focus, and the selection of Scripture and hymnody certainly animate the spirit of each season. Christmas provided the impetus for the development of this sacred tradition.

In the Anglican tradition, the origins of Lessons and Carols does not reach back to ancient times, but

occurred in the late 19th century. Until that time, the singing of Christmas carols was deemed secular and was limited largely to groups singing while strolling through villages or social gatherings (consider the Fezziwigs in Dickens's A Christmas Carol). But on December 24, 1880, Edward White Benson, the bishop of Truro in Cornwall, England, held the first service of Nine Lessons and Carols. The notion was that this kind of worship might attract those Cornishmen who would otherwise be celebrating in pubs, rather than church. Then in 1883 Bishop Benson became the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the popularity of this service spread across the United Kingdom and throughout the Anglican Commun-

SERVICES:

Advent Lessons and Carols Sunday, December 7 4 p.m.

Christmas Lessons and Carols Sunday, December 28 10:30 a.m.

ion. Most notably, the observance of this service at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, catapulted it onto the international scene.

The first Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College Chapel, Cambridge, was held on Christmas Eve

Continued on page 7



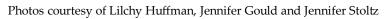
Confirmation Sunday















STS. MARY AND MARTHA GUILD

Gathering, Giving and Gratitude: A December Message from Sts. Martha and Mary Guild

Mary and

Martha

Harvesting pumpkins and apples is a rite that signifies we are in fall, and winter is right behind it. Here we are in December, on the brink of winter.

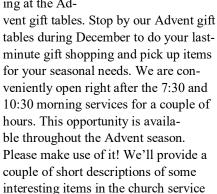
Our annual ECW meeting and breakfast feast will be held on December 14. Along with perusing next year's budget, we also will celebrate those who have demonstrated their time and talents for the church. These individuals are presented with the "Gift of Life Award."

We have just begun Advent, which started on November 30 this year. Advent is a time for introspection and self-examination as we await the coming of our Lord. What if the Lord were to come this year, for real? Would you be ready? I personally will have a lot of introspection and work to journey through first, but we all need God's grace.

Separating the spiritual aspect

from the marketing topic, we at Sts. Martha and Mary guild are putting together items everyone needs or wants for Advent, Christmas, or holiday cooking at the Ad-

bulletin.



If you have been a member of Sts. Martha and Mary Guild in the past,

we'd really like you to rejoin us. If you haven't been a member, or if you are new to the church, please join us on the first and third Thursday of each month. If the month has a fifth Thursday, then it's a service day. Come to one of the meetings that month, and we will give you the details. Or, better yet, email Carolyn Hendrickson, co-chair of the guild (docnpch@gmail.com).

On December 25 we celebrate Christmas! God's gift to humankind has been delivered in the birth of His Son Jesus Christ—God's promise fulfilled. We pray that you have several gatherings with family and friends where you and your kids can make memories that will last a lifetime.

A HAPPY AND HOLY MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR to EVERYONE!

Carolyn Hendrickson

LESSONS AND CAROLS,

Continued from page 5

in 1918. During World War I, the chapel's dean, Eric Milner-White, had been an army chaplain, and he was worried that the suffering of the "Great War" had hardened attitudes against religion. Using the rich choral tradition of the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, he introduced Benson's carol service to King's College as a way of attracting people back to Christian worship. This service was very successful, and the following year Milner-White made some changes to Benson's original format, notably introducing the tradition of opening the service with a solo

treble singing "Once in royal David's city." The format has not significantly changed since 1918. Today the first verse is sung unaccompanied by a solo boy chorister. In order to avoid putting him under undue stress, the chorister is not told that he will be singing the solo until immediately before the service.

The popularity of this service was established when it began to be broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1928. This service has been broadcast every subsequent year except for 1930. Since the Second World War, it has been estimated that each year there are millions of listeners worldwide who listen to the service live

on the BBC World Service. In the UK, the service is broadcast live on BBC Radio 4, and a recorded broadcast is made on Christmas Day on BBC Radio 3. In the US, since 1979 the broadcast is heard live on public radio stations associated with American Public Media, and many stations broadcast a repeat on Christmas Day.

Building on this pattern, Aquia Church will host a service of Advent Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 7, at 4:00 p.m. and a service of Christmas Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 28, at 10:30 a.m.

Chris Arey



VESTRY

VESTRY MEETING (via ZOOM) MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 23, 2025

In Attendance: Fr. James Rickenbaker, Assistant Rector; Charlie Bingay, Assistant Treasurer; Bill Hoffman, Sr. Warden; Brad Hammer, Jr. Warden; Michael Ferrantino, Dale Hendon, Carol Korth, Walt Peterson, and Joe Howard, Register.

Business Session (starting at 7:00 p.m.)

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer: led by the Assistant Rector.

Treasurer's Report: provided by Charlie Bingay.

Minutes from Previous Meeting: Motion by Brad Hammer, second by Carol Korth, to approve the August Meeting Minutes as submitted. Approved unanimously by the vestry.

Continuing Business:

Fall Fest: Discussion centered on making arrangements for picking up the nuts and candy for sale at Fall Fest when ready. It was emphasized that when they arrive at Aquia, they need to be carefully inventoried. Michael Ferrantino volunteered to work on the sale of the nuts at Fall Fest and Dale Hendon agreed to assist.

New Business:

R-2025-13: Fire and Intrusion Security Contract: Bill Hoffman explained that this contract deals with the historic church and represents a modest increase over the past contract with the same company, Johnson Controls. Buildings and Grounds Committee evaluated other options, but



Vestry Highlights

recommends renewing the contract with Upcoming Dates Johnson Controls, as the best overall alternative. Approved by the vestry unanimously.

Reports from Committees, Wardens and Clergy:

Administration: Walt Peterson reported that the committee met and is continuing its work on job descriptions for lay staff, led by Michael Ferrantino.

Buildings and Grounds: Submitted a written report. Bill Hoffman announced that the committee has completed approximately 90 percent of its goals for the year. This year the leaves on the campus grounds will be taken care of after Thanksgiving. Based on the suggestion by Chris Arey last month, B&G is undertaking a five-year forecast for replacement/repair of major capital items in all buildings, which Brad Hammer is coordinating.

Clergy: Fr. James submitted a written report. He said that in discussions with Fr. Jay, it is anticipated that the rector will be out until approximately the end of October. From the standpoint of good news, Fr. James announced that attendance in Sunday school has started off well, that 10 children came up for the recent children's sermon, that he had performed a fatherson baptism last week, and that the attendance last week was 125 members.

10/4: Fall Fest (8:00 a.m.---2:00 p.m.)

10/28: October vestry meeting over Zoom (7:00 p.m.)

11/16: Bishop's visitation for confirmation and related rites

11/23: Tentative date for the Stewardship Campaign pledge ingathering

11/25: November vestry meeting over Zoom (7:00 p.m.)

11/26: Thanksgiving (Eve) worship service (7:00 p.m.)

12/16: Tentative date for December meeting in person with meal (6:00 p.m.)

(NOTE: third Tuesday of the month, rather than the fourth)

Good of the Order, Closing Prayer, and Adjournment

Carol Korth announced that she is preparing a paper spreadsheet for keeping track of the sales of the nuts at Fall Fest.

There being no further business to be brought before the vestry, the meeting was adjourned with a prayer by Fr. James.

> Respectfully submitted, Joe Howard Register



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Transfers In with Reception: "And the Lord added to their number day by day" (Acts 2:47): Stephanie and Russ Moore

Confirmation: Sheila Harrell, Eddie Robles, Cliff Shaw, Bob Stevens, Ciara Stoltz.

Reaffirmation: Joe Howard, Penny Stevens.

Burials: "Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon them" (BCP 486/502): Judy Morris, 1946-2025.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT AQUIA CHURCH

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

Those Being Deployed: Please call the church office (540-659-4007) so that we can offer special prayers at a service prior to your departure. Also, we want 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 **January 11**, **2026**. 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 (540-659-4007) so that counseling with the clergy can be scheduled.

PRAYERS FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS

Samantha and Joseph Paris (Steve and Margaret Hedger's daughter and son-in-law)

Aquia Church Prayer List December 2025/January 2026

Pam Allison, Faye Andrews, Carol Bailey,
Richard Chichester, Paula Davis, Craig Evans,
Michael Ferrantino, Michael Golasz,
Jeanette Lempka, Lori, Ken Luehrs,
Doug McGinity, Pat Moncure, Brett Moran,
Rebecca Poole, Rebecca Schaffer,
Arnie Schwartz, Scott Smith, Tim Spaulding,
Carolyn Stringer, Tom Tremper,
Nancy Wentworth, 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.



Aquia Episcopal Church Post Office Box 275 Stafford, VA 22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

