



Cross Section

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

'Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gracious King'



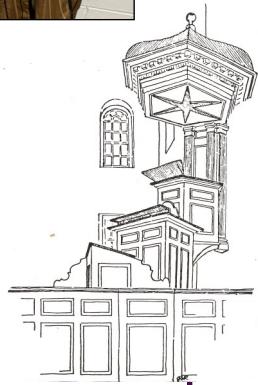
The annual children's Christmas Pageant *The Living Crèche* was held on Dec. 14, 2025 during a special service with Holy Communion in the Great Hall at Aquia Church.

Photos courtesy of Kimberly Bamber and Rachel Rickenbaker



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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@aqiachurch.org
www.aqiachurch.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

Christian Education Director
Kimberly Bamber

Parish Administrator
Sue Selz

Nursery Supervisor
Dawna Spaulding

FROM THE RECTOR

The Grace of Lent

Every human needs some help, and the help that God offers is grace.

Around this time of year, some folks start to cut back on chocolate, other treats, and desserts; and sometimes that happens as people aim to lose weight so that they can fit in their swimsuits once again for spring break or for a summer tan. There's nothing wrong with going on a diet, getting into shape, or trying to look attractive, but doing so is not the same thing as undertaking a Lenten discipline or Lenten self-sacrifice.

There are those who say they are devoted to the Lord—and perhaps in certain ways they are indeed devout—though perhaps it is hard to discern where their hearts really are from other indicators, such as their absence from public worship when they are obviously able to attend. Sometimes it seems as though folks have given up going to church for Lent and decided not to come back even after Lent has ended. Yet surely nobody is so busy praying day and night that they don't have time available for joining with other Christians in worship.

Some folks seem to believe that they can live as faithful Christians almost by themselves, more or less on their own, without engaging in the longstanding practices of the Church. Such practices include—but certainly are not limited to—worshipping together, enjoying fellowship with others, praying, studying the Bible, giving alms, and undertaking other spiritual disciplines. That's how we become disciples of Jesus. While there are some things that Christians can do individually or privately, becoming a Christian and growing in faith cannot be done in isolation from the rest of the body of Christ.

Like it or not, Lent is an annual reminder of something that we all need desperately. In some way or other, each per-

son has done something wrong in God's sight; every one is a sinner. No mere mortal is perfect—no matter how hard one tries to succeed—and that fact humbles all of us. We all fall short of God's standards, expectations, and desires for us; and truth be told, we sometimes disappoint ourselves, too. Every human needs some help, and the help that God offers is grace.

We do not deserve his grace, and we can thank God that he does not always give us exactly what we truly deserve! Oddly enough, sometimes we don't bother to seek his grace because his grace can change us from who we are or who we want to be into who *God* wants us to be, with an eventual result that might surprise us. God might not intend for a given individual to look handsome or gorgeous by human standards because God has something more worthy in store for that person. Someone might persist in an obvious weakness while receiving God's strength for another aspect of life. God could even take the lonely or isolated soul and bring that person into a church with a lively fellowship and an active faith.

Lent is that season of the church year when every Christian may concentrate on what is lacking in that person's life and then seek it in humility, waiting for a surprise in the end. Lent is a time for Christians to be reconciled to one another and to God. Lent is a period for repenting, returning to the Lord, and renewing one's faith. You don't need chocolate for that when you can feed instead on the Word of the Lord and on the Bread and Wine that he graciously provides at is altar. So come to church hungry, ready to return to meaningful practices in the faith, and see what happens!

Jay Morris



FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Hearts Prepared for Lent

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 the ways in which you show willingness to recognize your sin before God “with full purpose of amendment of life” (BCP 317). This posture of honesty before the Lord is itself a gift of grace, for when we confess our sins we “approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

This is precisely what the Church does during the season of Lent, which begins this month on Ash Wednesday (this year on February 18). As that day approaches, I want to remind you of a few things about this season and about the God who meets us in it.

We begin at the beginning: Lent begins with God’s action, not ours. Lent is not a season that we initiate in order to improve ourselves or prove our seriousness to God. Rather, it is a season in which we as sinners are addressed by our holy and gracious God. On Ash Wednesday, when ashes are imposed upon our heads, they are a visible sign of God’s verdict on sin and death. God has declared that sin deserves death, for “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). We are reminded that because of sin, we will die, and that death is not merely natural but the result of our rebellion against God.

Yet Ash Wednesday is not a day of Law without Gospel. Though death remains a reality on this side of the resurrection, we hear again the good news that we have a Savior who has died the death we deserved and is risen from the grave in order to redeem us from sin and death. The cross traced in ashes is itself a sermon: judgment and mercy meet in Christ. For this reason, Lent is rightly understood as a season of repentance and faith.

But what do repentance and faith mean in the life of the Church? Repentance is what God’s Law does to us. The

Lent is not a season that we initiate in order to improve ourselves or prove our seriousness to God. Rather, it is a season in which we as sinners are addressed by our holy and gracious God.

Law exposes our sin and guilt; it brings us low and strips away our self-righteousness. It leaves us with nothing to offer God but our need. Faith, in turn, raises us up. In the Gospel, God gives us a righteousness that comes from outside ourselves—the righteousness of Christ. Neither repentance nor faith are things we generate within ourselves. Both are worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace.

Through the Word, God speaks his two words of Law and Gospel, killing and making alive. Through the Sacraments, he gives us the benefits of Christ himself. In Baptism and Holy Communion, God delivers forgiveness of sins, union with Christ, and the promise of eternal life. These are not reminders of grace, but the grace itself given to us.

Lent is also a time for discipline. For many, this takes the form of giving something up. Such practices are not means of earning God’s favor, nor do they supplement Christ’s saving work. God is not more gracious to us because of our discipline. Rather, discipline is a fruit of repentance and faith, serving to drive us back again and again to the throne of grace, to the God of our salvation.

Come to church this Lent. Sit under the Word. Receive absolution. Come to the table hungry. And may 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

Andrew Albers
Finance Committee

Rick Bryant
Finance Committee

Michael Ferrantino
Administration Committee

Brad Hammer
*Junior Warden
Buildings & Grounds
Committee*

Sheila Harrell
*Register
Administration Committee*

Carolyn Hendrickson
Administration Committee

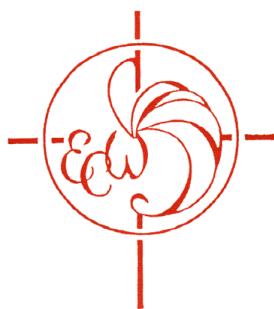
Joe Howard
*Senior Warden
Finance Committee*

Doug McGinty
Finance Committee

Russ Moore
Finance 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.

We are now in deep winter, in the span of time where Christmas is a very fond memory. We look forward to February for a reason to wear red, send notes of love, and wrap ourselves around the warmth we seek at this time of the year.

In the mid- to late 3rd century, a Roman priest named Valentinus lived; we know him now as St. Valentine. The then-reigning emperor Claudius enacted a mandate by which all engagements and marriages were forbidden, with hopes of strengthening the number of soldiers in the Roman army. St. Valentine married many couples in secret. We associate St. Valentine's Day with love and romance. However, the day is symbolic of a wider interpretation of love. In 1 Corinthians 13:3-7, Paul gives us a guide for an all-encompassing love that is God-given. It serves as my guide for

love, although I might fail many times (patience—Love is patient!). We wish you much love this month and celebrate with thanksgiving the love of God through his son Jesus Christ.

Shrove Tuesday is also known as Pancake Day and begins the official countdown to Lent. It is the last day before the season of fasting and reflection begins. Celebrations can be quite expansive. Please join our celebration as the Episcopal Church Women hold a pancake breakfast in the great hall on Sunday, February 15, from 8:30—10:15. We hope you will attend with your family, as we gather to celebrate Shrove Tuesday.

February serves Episcopal Church Women as the start of a calendar of events throughout the year. Beginning with the Shrove Tuesday breakfast, we

move to Heritage Sunday in May, plus the UTO spring ingathering, Homecoming in September, Fall Fest in October, the annual diocesan ECW meeting in the fall, and our own annual ECW meeting in December. We invite all of you who may be interested in being a part of Episcopal Church Women. You would be sharing in our mission to share God's love by supporting programs and projects through education, concern for others, service, and prayer. We share that mission statement with our parish. We hope and pray February surrounds you in love—especially God's love.

*God's blessing to you and yours,
Carol Korth, President
Episcopal Church Women of Aquia
|caakorth@gmail.com*



Christmas Eve

Greeneries and poinsettias decorate the historic Aquia Church for Christmas Eve worship services.



Photos courtesy of Rachel Rickenbaker, Kimberly Bamber



SENIOR WARDEN

Dear Fellow Aquia Episcopal Church Members:

Welcome to 2026! The year is already rolling along in many different respects. From the standpoint of the vestry, work started shortly after the election of five members at the Annual Meeting on January 4, with the vestry retreat following on January 10.

Three of the newly elected members have not served on Aquia's vestry previously—Andrew Albers, Sheila Harrell, and Russ Moore—and we also welcomed back Carolyn Hendrickson and Doug McGinty, who had previously served on the vestry. The retreat was an excellent opportunity to learn about the background of all of our vestry members.

We have a diverse group of talented individuals with interesting backgrounds. Getting to know each other in this fashion will serve the vestry well in

dealing with the business of Aquia Church in the coming year.

With three services each Sunday at Aquia, and with my attending the 7:30 a.m. service regularly, I find that there is a large number of parishioners whom I do not know. One way that I have found that I can meet and get to know other members of our parish family who attend other services, is to volunteer for various ministries at Aquia. For example, I first met Andrew and Sheila at Morning Call, and Russ at Fr. James's Thursday evening Bible study. Additionally, I have met other parishioners by participating in the Aquia's Pantry food ministry.

Another excellent way to meet, socialize, and break bread together is to attend the Lenten series on Thursday evenings starting on February 19 at 6:00 p.m. After the meal and socializing, this year there will be discussion of

the book *The True Story of the Whole World: Finding Your Place in the Biblical Drama*. This Lenten program brings together members of the parish from all three services, as well as non-member visitors. Attending the Lenten series years ago as visitors led my wife and me to join Aquia Episcopal Church as members. I encourage all who are able to plan to attend the Lenten series this year and share in the good food, fellowship, and discussion.

Every year something unexpected happens in the life of virtually every person, family, and organization. Aquia is a solid church, and, with God's help and the support of members of the parish, our vestry will be enabled to lead us through any eventuality.

Remember that it has been wisely said: "All will be well. All will be well. All manner of things will be well."

Joe Howard

Polycarp—An Early Church Father and Martyr

The early church Fathers were a remarkable group of men who, in the first seven centuries after Christ, preserved and passed down the apostolic teachings, battled against heresy, shaped church doctrine, and served as examples in the face of opposition and (in some cases) persecution. One of the earliest of these is Polycarp. His name is from the Greek meaning 'fruitful' or 'bearing much fruit,' from *poly* (many) and *karpos* (fruit). He was a disciple of the apostle John; this is attested both Irenaeus and Tertullian. Furthermore, we have writings attributed to Polycarp,

including an undisputed letter from him to the church in Philippi.

He was born around A.D. 69 in Smyrna (modern-day Izmir in Turkey), about 40 miles north of Ephesus. Smyrna was a prominent city in the Roman province of Asia, rivalling Pergamon and Ephesus for imperial favor. It celebrated the imperial cult, with an older temple to the emperor Tiberius and another to the emperor Hadrian. The incentive to curry imperial favor led to intolerance and persecution of Christians, who refused to engage in public worship of the imperial cult. Also, like Pergamon and Ephesus, Smyrna is spo-

ken to by Jesus in the Book of Revelation (2:8-11):

To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: "These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for

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AQUIA'S PANTRY



Photo by Dina Stanford

The Pantry is off to an amazing start in 2026! We thank God for the many blessings that we have received already this year, which include:

Six crates weekly of freshly picked produce (collards, kale, and cabbage—see accompanying photo) from the Rappahannock Education Farm, gratis to our pantry. You can check them out on Facebook!

- A bale of 400 bags each week from a fellow parishioner.
- A dozen loaves of sourdough bread baked and donated by Working Man Bread. You can check out their Website, WorkingManBread.com.
- Four boxes of canned goods (102 pounds) given by a lady who saw our roadside banner. We learned from chatting with her that her parents were married at Aquia Church in the 1950s and she was baptized here as a baby.
- 144 cans of tomato sauce donated and delivered from Harrisonburg by our anonymous "Super Shopper."



- Several new volunteers!
- 283 pounds of Christmas candy and cookies from Target in Stafford Market Place.
- A very generous check for \$2,000.00 from the Stafford Fraternal Order of Eagles, petitioned by a fellow parishioner on behalf of the Pantry (see accompanying photo).

We can also report that in 2025 there were 49 separate weeks of Pantry service backed by a total of over 5,000 volunteer hours. We managed to provide 6,421 sets of groceries to the families that came up the hill and waited

patiently for their trunks to be filled. We are so grateful to God for all the gifts of food we were entrusted to distribute last year, and for all the helping hands that gathered, sorted, bagged, and loaded this food. We are indeed blessed.

Our needs for the new year include boxes of cereal and pasta, and jars of peanut butter, as well as volunteers. If you have a student who needs service hours, these hours can be earned any Wednesday evening from 5:00 to 7:30. For further information, please reach out to Barb Bingay, Ron Korth, or Mary Jane Cole (maryjane@cfsw.biz).



VESTRY

VESTRY MEETING (via ZOOM) MINUTES

28 October 2025

In Attendance: Fr. James Rickenbaker, Assistant Rector; Bill Hoffman, Sr. Warden; Chris Arey, Treasurer; Rick Bryant, Michael Ferrantino, Dale Hendon, Carol Korth, Walt Peterson, Pat Quinn, and Joe Howard, Register.

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

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

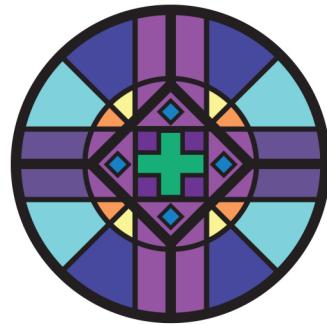
Treasurer's Report: provided by Chris Arey.

Motion by Bill Hoffman, second by Michael Ferrantino, to authorize the Treasurer to disburse to the ECW the funds earned from the Fall Fest in accordance with the standard 50/50 split. Approved unanimously by the vestry.

Continuing Business:

Pledge Drive: Bill Hoffman reported that the testimonies from vestry members have gone well at each service, with two Sundays remaining. Michael Ferrantino will provide the final testimony at the 10:30 service on November 9. The letter to the members of the parish has been sent out with the pledge cards.

Nut/Candy Sales: Some packages still remain to be sold, and Carol will conduct an inventory. It was agreed to take a week off before resuming the sales on Sunday mornings.



Vestry Highlights

New Business:

Bishop's Visit: Bill Hoffman talked with Jay Morris about the schedule for the Bishop's visit. It was decided that the candidates for confirmation would meet with the Bishop in the downstairs conference room at 9:30 a.m., together with Fr. Jay and Fr. James. After the 10:30 service, there will be a reception for the Bishop in the great hall. At a suitable time, vestry members and the Bishop will depart the reception and meet privately in the downstairs conference room.

R-2025-14: Approval of Leaf Removal Contract with Garcia Landscaping: Bill Hoffman advised the vestry that Garcia Landscaping had submitted a proposal for removing the leaves from the cemetery for \$1,200, the same price as last year, with the funds coming from the Cemetery Fund. Motion to approve R-2025-14 by Rick Bryant, second by Pat Quinn, approved unanimously by the vestry.

R-2025-15: Approval for the Sale of Cemetery Burial Rights to Bill and Kathie League: Bill and Kathie League requested to purchase Space 1, Lot 306, in the Aquia Church Cemetery for the required \$1,500 burial rights fee. Bill Hoffman advised that they

meet the requirements of the cemetery regulations and recommends approval. Motion by Michael Ferrantino, second by Pat Quinn, to approve R-2025-15, unanimously approved by the vestry.

Reports from Committees, Wardens, and Clergy

Buildings and Grounds: Bill Hoffman advised that B&G had spent the money appropriated in the budget, and had a few tasks remaining among its goals for the year.

Administration: Walt Peterson announced that the job descriptions for lay employees had been completed and the agreements signed by the three lay staff employees. The job description for the bookkeeper position is also done for when someone is hired for that job.

Finance: Dale Hendon reported that the committee will be tackling the 2026 budget at its next meeting, with the draft prepared by Charlie Bingay being the starting point. He will contact Chris to make sure all parties submit budget requests for consideration for the upcoming year.

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POLYCARP,

Continued from page 5

ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Polycarp served as bishop in Smyrna; in addition to keeping the apostolic traditions, he battled against false teaching and heresy. One such false teacher against whom Polycarp fought was Marcion of Sinope. Marcion was later excommunicated for denying Christ's humanity and for teaching that the Old Testament God and the New Testament God were completely different and irreconcilable deities. Warnings against the insidious nature of false teaching were handed down from Jesus to the apostle John and from John to Polycarp. Polycarp's defense of Christ and his witness to Christ were steadfast. In the letter of Polycarp to the Philippians, he wrote:

For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist (1 John 4:3), and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the cross, is of the devil; and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first-born of Satan.

Eventually, the tribulation that John described to the church in Smyrna in Revelation 2 came to pass. Persecution increased to the point where Christians were killed in the arena with wild beasts. Nonetheless, these unknown martyrs faced their violent death with boldness. Where had their courage come from, and who was their leader? The crowd demanded the arrest and execution of their bishop, Polycarp. When arrested, he was offered a tidy way to renounce Christ and avoid death. But Polycarp could not recant his faith or renounce Christ. Polycarp believed, confessed, and witnessed that Christ is Lord: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did

me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" Again, at the point of execution offered a chance to recant by the Roman proconsul, Polycarp refused. At last, he was burned at the stake in A.D. 155, and he was even stabbed to death because the flames could not quench his life. His body was desecrated and burned so that only his bones were left for his fellow Christians to gather.

Polycarp is remembered by the Church on February 23, and the collect for his feast day is: *O God, the maker of heaven and earth, you gave your venerable servant, the holy and gentle Polycarp, the boldness to confess Jesus Christ as King and Savior and the steadfastness to die for his faith. Give us grace, following his example, to share the cup of Christ and to rise to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.* (Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2024)

Chris Arey

VESTRY,

Continued from page 7

Clergy: Fr. Rickenbaker submitted a written report of his activities. He also mentioned that the youth group was off to a great start with up to 12 individuals attending events. He has noticed a number of visitors returning and being engaged by members of the parish, which is very positive.

Upcoming Dates

11/8: Funeral for Judy Morris at 11:00 a.m. with reception following.

11/9: Pledge Drive Ingathering at all services.

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

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

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

12/6: Fall Yard Cleanup (9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon)

12/14: ECW Annual Meeting and Children's Christmas Pageant

12/16: Tentative date for December vestry 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

There being no further business to be brought before the vestry, the meeting

was adjourned with a prayer by Fr. James.

/Subsequent Vestry Action:

R-2025-16: Approval of Contract for Removal of Cemetery Trees: Bill Hoffman advised the vestry that a proposal has been received from Crown Down Tree Service to remove several trees damaged by storms and impacting safety and mowing operations in the cemetery. The proposal is for \$4,747.60, and is the only proposal received from the estimates requested several months ago. He recommends approval. R-2025-16 was approved unanimously by the vestry by electronic vote on October 30, 2025.]

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Howard



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Funerals/Gravesides: “*Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon them*” (BCP 486/502):

Nancy Lee Lewis Barnes, Elizabeth Powers Armitage, Richard Adolphus Listhrop, Jeanne Roeder Purkins.

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 **May 24, 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.

Aquia Church Prayer List

February 2026

Pam Allison, Faye Andrews, Carol Bailey, Richard Chichester, Paula Davis, Craig Evans, Michael Golasz, Jeanette Lempka, Lori, Anne Luehrs, Ken Luehrs, Doug McGinity, Pat Moncure, Keith Mullowney, Rebecca Poole, Rebecca Schaffer, Arnie Schwartz, Scott Smith, 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

