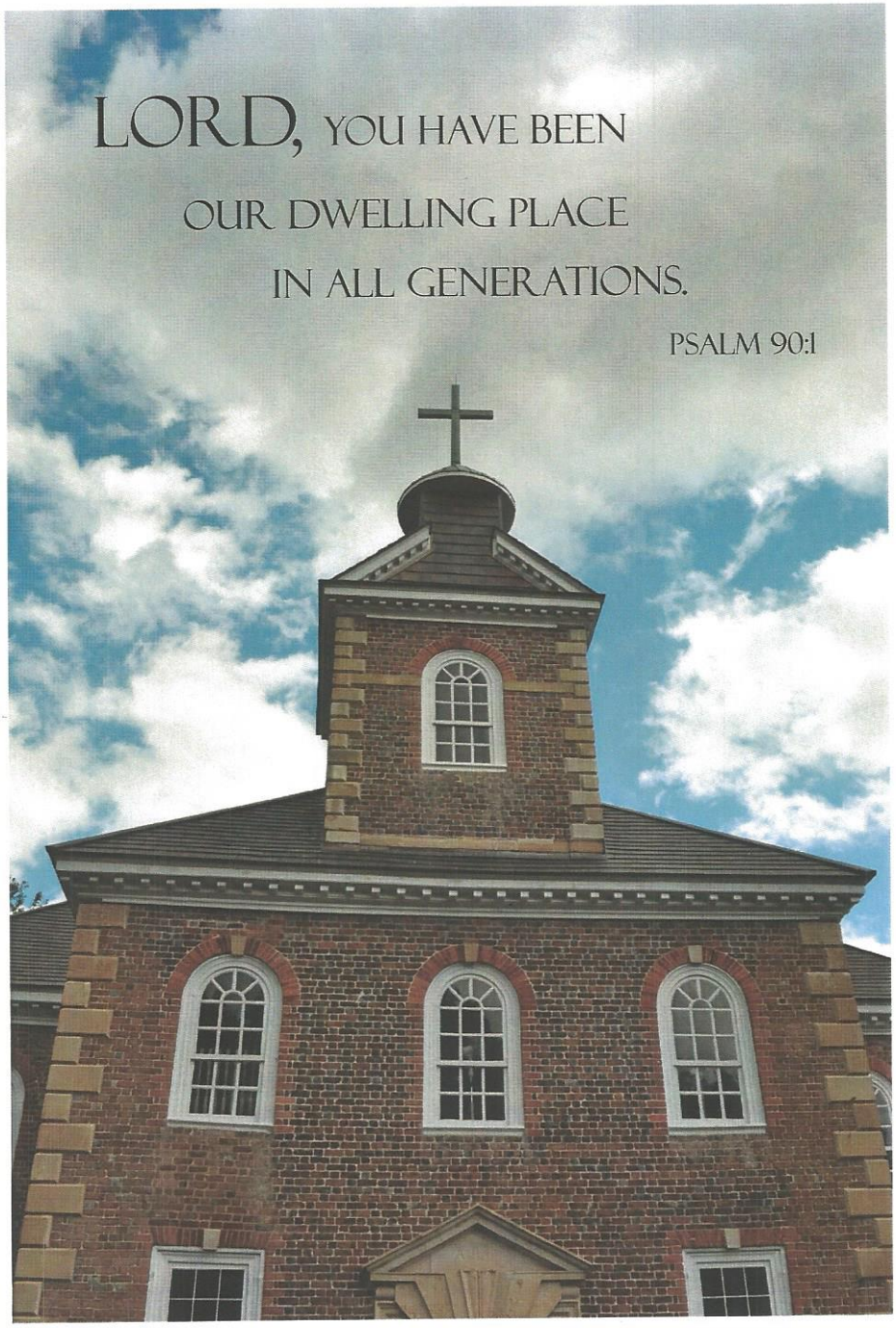
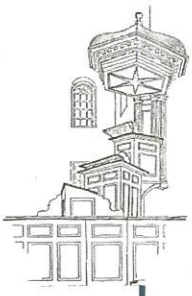
AQUIA EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Cross Section

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





CROSS SECTION

Aquia Episcopal Church
2938 Jefferson Davis Hwy.
P.O. Box 275
Stafford, VA 22555

Contact us:

(540) 659-4007
office@aquiachurch.com
www.aquiachurch.com

Office hours:
8 a.m.– 4 p.m.
Monday– Friday,
except Tuesdays (closed)

Rector
The Rev. Jay Morris

Assistant Rector
The Rev. James Rickenbaker

Treasurer
Chris Arey

Music Director
Trystan Bennett

Dir. Christian Education
Kristen Morgan

Parish Administrator
Dennise LaBarre

Executive Assistant
Sue Selz

Nursery Supervisor
Christine Hammer

Nursery Assistant
Dawna Spaulding

FROM THE RECTOR

Will You Offer to Serve with the Vestry?

In every church, leadership is shared, and Aquia Church is no exception to that rule. We make decisions together so that we can draw on the array of expertise within our membership, on the rich variety of our backgrounds, and on our collective wisdom. That is a major reason for having a vestry as part of the leadership team in an Episcopal congregation. Even a smarty-pants Rector should not foolishly dare to be a know-it-all when there is so much talent and thoughtfulness right here in our pews, as the women and men of this parish consistently show.

The lay members of our vestry, together with the Rector, exercise stewardship for the physical plant, material property, operational procedures, and finances of our beloved parish. That includes care for our seven buildings—the colonial church building, the 1960 parish house, the Fleurries office building, and the new Christian formation and fellowship building, plus the rectory in Aquia Harbour and the historic Clifton Chapel and its support building in the Widewater region. Also the important contents of our buildings. Also the 51 acres of land (much of it cemetery or forest) constituting our main campus, besides our other two parcels. Also our operating budget, several bank accounts, tithes and offerings, and overall financial management that enable our mission and ministry. All of this is a serious responsibility.

Our vestry meets as a full body once a month (usually the third Tuesday evening). Ahead of that monthly meeting, each permanent committee conducts its legwork and research and makes recommendations for the entire vestry to consider. For the division of labor, we have three vestry committees: administration, finance, and buildings and grounds. Within each committee, some parishioners not on the vestry team up with vestry members in order to make better decisions and accomplish more work than we could otherwise. The vestry also holds a one-day retreat each January to organize the coming year's work.

Something about vestry involvement that often gets overlooked—unfortunately so—is the joy that develops through this ministry. Vestry meetings begin with a meal for fellowship. Vestry members learn from one another and encourage each other during their teamwork. Every person on the vestry, collaborating with all the others, genuinely seeks what is best for this parish and commits to achieving it. The ordinary service of our vestry yields extraordinary satisfaction as we see how our ministry groups, our staff members, and so many faithful parishioners in Aquia Church make a favorable difference for this part of the Lord's vineyard.

Aquia Church has a strong record of having members who work with the vestry in one capacity or another—perhaps as a supporting member of a vestry committee, perhaps as a candidate for election to the vestry, always as a liaison with various other leaders here and our general membership. We want to build on that success with more good servants who will share in the management and stewardship of the many blessings the Lord has provided for us. Perhaps the time is right for you to offer to share in this vital ministry. If you are a confirmed member of this parish age 16 and older who has pledged and contributed financially during the year prior to election, you are eligible to offer your service. More details will be available later this month on the blue nomination forms available at the back of the church or in the church office. As our next vestry election will occur on 7 January 2018, we hope that you will explore what you can offer.

Jay Morris

FROM THE ASSISTANT RECTOR

Blessing of the Animals

Dear Family in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to God for you and for the glory of his creation. For you, I give thanks for your willingness to rejoice in God's majesty. For the glory of his creation, I suppose that needs no explanation. What a magnificent world he has created! The very first day of October presents an opportunity for us to give thanks together for that creation, especially those creatures with whom God has blessed us. On Oct. 1 at 2 p.m. in front of the St. Francis statue, we will have a short service of Blessing of the Animals. Each year, we, and other churches in Stafford and around the world, offer this service to give thanks to God for the important role of animals in our lives. We also take this opportunity to bless those animals, since they have been a blessing, of sorts, in our lives.

The tradition of blessing animals came from St. Francis of Assisi who, among other things, loved animals and saw them as a vital part of God's creation. The first Blessing of the Animals supposedly went like this: One day, Francis was outside wallowing in his own self-doubt, asking God if all that he had done had been wrong. He thought about whether he should have gotten married, had kids, and had a completely different life, all according to what his (earthly) father had desired for him. While this was going on, Francis, walking alone, came upon a group of birds. He began to speak to them. He then began to preach to them about the glories of God and about why everyone, even the birds, should be grateful for God's creation. In this event in Francis's life, both he and we have a lot to learn. First, when we experience self, God's own creation reminds us of how we are given worth by our Creator that cannot be taken away by anyone. Secondarily, we are reminded that we may be the stewards of creation, but we are not the whole of creation. The Blessing of the Animals bestows upon the animals a blessing by Almighty God and a promise from us that we will care for them as we are called to do.

So, bring your dog, cat, turtle, snake, lizard, snail, or whatever you're caring for at home. Please bring them on a leash or in a cage, since they don't always get along with one another. We would love to have as many animals as possible, so that we can be reminded of the riches of God's creation and that we are tasked with caring for it all as his stewards. As the hymn goes, "All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all." We look forward to seeing you there.

On a personal note, thank you for the support that you showed to Rachel and me during Fr. Morris's sabbatical. It was a wonderful time of growth for me in the parish. I appreciate all of the help that folks provided. Your kindness will not be forgotten. I look forward to continuing in ministry with you at Aquia in the coming years, knowing that I have been strengthened by and with you during the past three months.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

In Christ+,

Fr. James

AQUIA CHURCH VESTRY

Dickie Boes

Curt Bradford

Bob Brandon

Jackie Chichester

Jean Golas

Joseph Howard
Senior Warden

Doug McGinty
Register

Mary Nixon

Gary Perkins

Patricia Springer

Dina Stanford

Jason Stoltz
Junior Warden
Building and Grounds
Committee Chairperson

Youth Representative

FALL FEST AUCTION—Oct. 7 at 11 a.m.

A huge "Thank you" goes to all the parishioners and merchants who have contributed so generously to the Auction! **Below is a list of gifts that have been added since the last newsletter article was written.** (Aug. 15 – Sept. 15). If you would like a copy of the complete list, check out the poster on the church gate each Sunday or ask Mary Jane Cole. (maryjane@cfsw.biz)

New from Fellow Parishioners and Friends of the Parish:

The Composition of YOUR VERY OWN HYMN!

Father Morris will write the words for a hymn that you commission him to write.

It can be a hymn of thanksgiving, or joy, in honor of a loved one or about a church season.

It will be sung at Aquia Church during the coming year.

Beautiful Roll Top Desk donated by the family of Jacklyn and Chuck Butler

Handsome Pair of Lighted Double Bookshelves with glass shelves, donated by the family of Jacklyn and Chuck Butler

Guided Fishing Trip offered by Bill Hoffman: an awesome eight-hour fishing trip on the Potomac River in his boat

Fall Basket by Chrissy and Brad Hammer

Chocolate Lover's Basket by the Altar Guild

From Merchants, Businesses and Restaurants:

Inn at the Old Silk Mill: Stay one night in a Royal Suite

Dan's Wellness Pharmacy: four $25 in Gift Certificates

Forest Greens Golf Club: Green Fees for 4 Players plus cart (Monday thru Friday, no holidays)

Pets Plus: $50 gift card

Chili's Grill and Bar Stafford: $40 in gift certificates

Bob Evans: $10 gift card

Massage Envy 30-minute total Body Stretch

CiCis Pizza: 15 coupons for Free Kid's Buffet with purchase of Adult Buffet

sweetFrog: 6 coupons and 1 t-shirt (Scoop coming 9 to 10)

Corky's in Fredericksburg: $15 gift card

Liberty Lanes Bowling Center: Family Fun Package value $90

2 hours of bowling, shoes included for up to 8 guests plus pizza, drinks, popcorn

Giant Foods: $20 gift card

Chick-fil-A: cute stuffed cow plus 5 coupon cards

This and That of VA: 8 wood plaques

Horton Vineyard in Orange County, VA: 2 bottles of wine plus 2 glasses

Hammerstone Cellars in Broad Run VA: 3 bottles of wine

Rapidan River (Prince Michel Vineyard) in Leon VA: 2 bottles of wine

Bolts and Bows: Dry Erase Board, Hammer, Flashlight, 2 car coasters

Many of these items will be grouped together into single bidding items so we can bring our list to about thirty offerings.

Just to remind you of some more of the highlights of the Auction this year, in addition to above we have:

Potomac Point Winery: basket plus dinner for four in the Wine Library

Mouth-watering Pies: a pie a month for 4 months baked by **Pat Moncure**

An Evening in Italy: Dinner Party for 8 Guests prepared by **Father Morris** in his home

Four Virginia Cavalier Football Tickets vs. Georgia Tech on Nov. 4

A Pair of Redskins Football Tickets vs. Arizona Cardinals on Dec. 17

A Night in Historic Downtown Fredericksburg at Courtyard by Marriott

A Night at the Red Fox Inn in Middleburg, Virginia

Truck-load of Seasoned Chopped Firewood

Baskets, Baskets and more Baskets:

Best of Britain, Fall, New Orleans, Made in Virginia, Wine, Baby, Chocolate

Family Fun Package

Golf Course Package

Let's Eat Out! Gift certificates and coupons to local restaurants

Pro-Form Dual Trainer Bike/Rower

A Feast Built around a Fall Fest slow-cooked Pork Butt

Best of the 'Burg: exploring Fredericksburg

Saturday Morning Errands: gift cards from local merchants

To My Good Health: yoga, massage and more

Silver Polishing by Mary Jane Cole

Antique Oak Table

Tell your friends and neighbors about our awesome list! See our **Facebook page "Fall Fest at Aquia Church."** "Like" us and "Share"! Major credit cards will be accepted at the auction.

Fall Fest

Countdown Week has begun! Fall Fest starts at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 7. The Craft Room and The Treasures Corner are examples of our popular venues at Fall Fest. With your donations of good costume jewelry, beautiful glassware, serving pieces, collectible jewelry and watches, a keen collector never leaves Fall Fest empty-handed. We are accepting donations in the lower level of the Parish Hall. On Sundays, Dina Stanford, Briget Kane or Mary Jane Cole will accept your donations. Should you need a receipt for your donation, we can supply those as well. Pick-ups can be arranged by contacting those listed on the Fall Fest Handout found around the campus.

We also are accepting: flea market items, books, clothing, jewelry, costume or better, children's books, toys and games (with all the pieces). We will be taking your donations until Friday evening Oct. 6 at 5 p.m.

The Country Store will be accepting homemade cookies, pies, jellies, pickles, your prized recipes, and homemade snacks. Our kitchen in the Great Hall has a list posted and will have your roasted pork, pulled, bagged and ready to take home. Come enjoy lunch and remember to pick up your auction number. Take a walk down auction row in the Great Hall, and see which items may be going home with you for the right bid! The Garden Mart will bring fall rushing in with fall flowers, plants, and decorations to purchase. Their selection for planting for next spring, a cutting here and there, is always unique. Why not share your favorite flowers and plants by donating them to the Garden Mart?

We look forward to seeing you!

Briget Kane

STS. MARY AND MARTHA

Worship, Service and Fellowship

The ladies of Sts. Mary and Martha Guild are looking forward to seeing all our parish family at the Fall Fest on Oct. 7. Please be sure to come to the Craft Room located in the Parish Hall building upstairs right next to the Book Nook. We have lots of delightful items to show you: darling wood jack-o-lanterns, beautiful wreaths, paper angels, sea-shell angels, owl and snowmen ornaments and more!

But first, we will be spending Oct. 5 and 6 pricing the crafts and setting up the room. Oh, Yes! We still need gifts of costume jewelry for the very popular Fall Fest jewelry table. Every donation is gratefully received!

All ladies of the parish are invited to join us at any of our meetings. With October we return to our regular schedule of meeting on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month. These dates fall on Oct. 5th and 19th. We begin our meetings with a member of the clergy leading us in Morning Prayer at 9:30 and we finish by noon. This Fall we are reading *The Prodigal God* by Timothy Keller. Please come to enjoy a Thursday morning with the ladies of Sts. Mary and Martha Guild.

Mary Jane Cole maryjane@cfsw.biz

Denise Thornton neisieb@aol.com

Mary Jane Cole

FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN

WELCOME BACK! WELCOME HOME! IT IS A NEW YEAR, AND EVERYTHING IS NEW!

It is an exciting time, with everything starting new and fresh. I think of it as a new year, even though it is not a new church year or new calendar year.

College students have gone off for new classes, local public and private schools are now all in full session with teachers and students "All in their places, with bright and shiny faces!" Well, mostly! Some have started new jobs or entered the military. In some families, these are significant changes they are experiencing for the first time. The good news that we can rely on is that our Lord and Savior is with us in all of the new things happening in our lives.

At Aquia there is a lot to be thankful for and a lot to participate in as we start this "New" year together. Sunday school and Youth Group have started back, and we are very thankful for the Sunday School Teachers and Youth Group Leaders. The ECW is in full swing, with everyone looking forward to their major events as we start this new year.

Of course, a lot of members of our parish have been hard at work for the Fall Fest, sponsored by the ECW. This is an amazing event every year. There are a lot of fun activities for everyone to enjoy. I totally enjoy the live auction, for all of the excitement and bidding, even if I choose not to bid. The pulled pork lunch is another tradition that is a real important part of Aquia.

I am personally thankful for the safe return of our Rector, Father Jay Morris, from his sabbatical. In addition, I am thankful for the excellent spiritual leadership shown by our Assistant Rector, Father James Rickenbacker. It was good to work with him during Father Jay's absence, and to see him grow and handle new matters for Aquia.

ENJOY THIS "NEW YEAR," PARTICIPATE IN THE MANY OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE AT AQUIA, AND GIVE THANKS FOR ALL OF OUR BLESSINGS AS A PARISH FAMILY!

Thank you to each and everyone one of you for all you do for Aquia.

Joe Howard

OUTREACH

The Outreach Committee met on Sept. 5 for a potluck dinner and to discuss plans for the rest of the year. We will start packing meals for Stafford Junction's "Brain Builders" program at our October meeting. The delivery dates to Stafford Junction are Oct. 5, Nov. 2, Dec. 7, Jan. 4, Feb. 1, and March 1. We are waiting to hear from Stafford Junction regarding the number of meals needed, and if we will need to pack meals for April.

We delivered the school supplies donated by our parishioners to the Department of Social Services (DSS). The supplies received included 22 backpacks, 68 composition books and 38 spiral notebooks. The DSS was appreciative of the generous donation.

The final amount received from our "Cash for Cows" and "Change for Chickens" collection was $866.18. We purchased a cow for $630, a water buffalo for $250, and poultry for $60. We received positive comments about this project and plan on doing the collection again next year

Cereal 101 will start on Sept.10 and end on Oct. 1. We will be collecting boxes of cereal for "The Table," a food-distribution ministry at St. George's Episcopal Church in Fredericksburg. Their Table is a pantry-style market open every Tuesday. They offer fresh fruits and vegetables, canned items, pasta, breakfast items, bread, and meat for free. The Table needs cereal and we decided our project for September would be to give them some assistance. Our goal is 101 boxes of cereal.

The shoebox project for Operation Christmas Child will begin the Sunday after Fall Fest. The supplies have been ordered and we will have the pre-stamped shoeboxes available again. The return date will be Nov. 12. We noted

that the shipping cost is now $9 per shoebox.

This Christmas we will sponsor 10 families and seniors through DSS. As in previous years, we will provide food and gifts. The gift trees will be set out in November. We will also have our Dove Project beginning in November and will collect gifts for mentally-challenged adults.

We voted to send $200 to Nathan Havasy for his work with Young Life in Williamsburg and $200 to Rebecca Hedger for her work with the International House of Prayer.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 3, at 6:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Come join us.

JohannaJones

VESTRY HIGHLIGHTS

August 15, 2017 meeting

Dinner and Fellowship started at 6:30 p.m. (Hosts: Jean Golas and Dina Stanford). In attendance were Assistant Rector James Rickenbaker and vestry members Sr. Warden Joe Howard, Dickie Boes, Bob Brandon, Gary Perkins, Mary Nixon, Jean Golas, Dina Stanford, Curt Bradford, Jackie Chichester, and Register Doug McGinty. Also in attendance were Treasurer Chris Arey and Stewardship Campaign Presenter Greg Trevarthen.

The Business Session began at 7 p.m. Fr. James delivered the opening prayer. The attendees joined in the Lord's Prayer. *[Subsequent events are bracketed and italicized.]*

The *Treasurer's Report* was presented by Chris Arey. The narrative budget included Building and Grounds Committee activities and ministries. The cash flow is satisfactory. The budget reductions, though painful, save about $3000 a month. The Aquia Church Association gave the church $7200 in order to cover the cost of the roof replacement project on the Fleurries.

Stewardship Campaign Presentation, by Greg Trevarthen. Greg briefed the vestry on mailings, bookmarks, poster, and thermometer.

The minutes from the July 20, 2017 vestry meeting were adopted. The resolution on Rusty Lewis' plot was passed by electronic resolution on July 25, 2017.

Old Business

Security – Tiger Team report, by Gary Perkins. Three vendors will present security plans.

Historic Church A/C Units were replaced. Fr. James indicated that the units are doing well.

Report from Structural Engineer. Bob Brandon reported that the engineer saw no changes to the church walls since the last visit. The pit could be water sealed but no damage was found.

New Business

Resolution for Exterior Painting of Historic Church. The vestry approved.

Conversation regarding Clifton Chapel painting, by Bob Brandon. The proposed resolution was approved with an amendment correcting the name of the painter to Anderson. The bid to paint the Clifton Chapel for $14,000 was approved. *[The formal resolution was electronically approved on August 22, 2017.]*

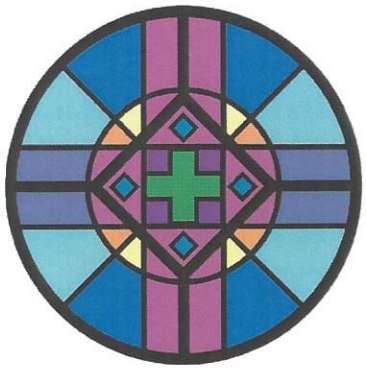
Conversation regarding Aces Electric work, by Bob Brandon. Work is needed to electrically upgrade Conference Room and classrooms in the lower level of the Fellowship Hall. *[The resolution to approve the bid by Aces Electric in the amount of $3,950.00 was electronically approved on August 22, 2017.]*

New website screenshots. Fr. James discussed screenshots. WordPress.com is easy to use. Perhaps the church website should be <.org>.

Reports from Vestry Committees

Building and Grounds Committee, by Bob Brandon. A stair on the pulpit may have to be replaced because of old termite damage. The committee will see if they can do the work. An observation was made to the effect that cracks were more pronounced on the sounding board, but the sounding board is considered to be sound. The environmental group in Stafford County again rejected the request for a $57K refund of the Certificate of Deposit, due to problems the group found with vegetation behind and around the new Fellowship Hall and other situations.

Finance Committee, by Dickie Boes. The motion to accept the June 22, 2017, Audit of Aquia Episcopal Church for 2017 was approved. Chris Arey indicated that rules were needed for managing petty cash.



Vestry Highlights

Administration Committee, by Jean Golas. The inventory will start shortly.

Report from Senior Warden

Joe Howard expressed his appreciation for the good work of the vestry, ministry groups, and Fr. James while Fr. Jay was on sabbatical. Fr. Jay remained connected to the church, which was very helpful.

Report from Clergy

Fr. James provided the Clergy Report. Fr. Jay provided an update to that report.

Upcoming Dates

8/26 – All-You-Can-Eat Crab Feast
8/27 – "Bring a Friend to Church" Sunday
9/3 – Blessing with the Backpacks
9/10 – Program Year Begins
9/17 – Homecoming

Good of the Order, Closing Prayer, and Adjournment

Fr. James closed with a prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Douglas McGinty
Register for Aquia Episcopal Church

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Blessing of the Animals

Please bring your animals, on a leash or in a carrier, to our annual Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, Oct. 1 at 2 p.m. in front of the St. Francis statue at the new building. An offering will be collected for the Stafford SPCA. Any dog or cat food collected will be donated to the Stafford County Animal Shelter.

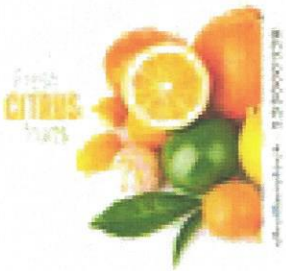
Trunk or Treat

Our annual Trunk or Treat event will take place on Saturday, Oct. 28 from 6 p.m. until 7:30 pm. Join us at 6 p.m. with a dish to share at our potluck dinner. Following dinner, the children will "trunk or treat." We need lots of decorated cars to pass out treats. We look forward to seeing you at this fun yearly event.

Aquia Episcopal Church Annual Citrus Sale

Oct. 7 – Nov. 27

Delivery on Dec. 11.



This year we are going with a new vendor, the Florida Fruit Association. We are very impressed with all they have done for us so far and all they have to offer. We will start selling at Fall Fest and continue to sell every Sunday. There will be purchase forms in the office, too. Once everything is set up, orders may be placed online and through the church website.

All proceeds will benefit the ministries of Aquia Episcopal Church. Please contact Jean Golas if you have any questions.

FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Transferred in: *"And the Lord added to their number day by day ..."* Acts 2:47

Recorded as transfers: Katherine Davis, The Episcopal Church of St. Peter & St. Paul, Marietta, Ga.

Baptisms: *"... sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever"*

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

Myrna Schmidt, 1938-2017; Margaret Dopf, 1932-2017; Cornelia Greer, 1930-2017; Elizabeth Buckingham, 1925-2017; Cathlyn S. McInteer, 1918-2017.

NEWCOMERS/VISITORS

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:2

Matthew & Sam Swartsfager, Tim & Kimi Lindeman, Justin Pagila & Julianna Jaime, Pat Weber, Marion Yantsios, Chris Jordan.

PRAYERS FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS

Charles and Mary Mohler

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT AQUIA CHURCH

New Babies: Thanksgiving for the birth of a child will be offered as part of the service on the second Sunday of the month (youth Sunday). This 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 Nov. 5, 2017. 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.

office@aquiachurch.com

(540) 659-4007

Aquia Church Prayer List – October 2017

Faye Andrews, Paul Baack, Anne Blosser, Rhett Blythe and Family, Jessie Bowie, Laura Chichester, Jeff & Paula Davis, Elinor Dayley, Richard Deyo, Karen Duvaney, Brandon Evans, Robert & JoAnn Feldman, Golas Family, Ken Gregg, Peggy Hall, Johnny Harrison, Patrick Hedger, Linda Huber, Martha Johnson, Suzanne Lanterman, Ken & Jeanette Lempka, Ken Luehrs, John Martin Marks, Erica Matthews, Adelle McCrary, Gary McKeever, Carmel McNeil, Pat Moncure, Vanessa Moncure, Patty Montgomery, Charles Mohler, Melissa Ndebe, Terri Nicholson, Rebecca Poole, Rosalia Pribble, Bud Santmyer, Scott Smith, Gail Squires, John & Pam Tompkins, Tom Tremper, Patrick Weber.

Update from Our Sabbatical

I am deeply grateful for the sabbatical that we took over the summer. I write about "our" sabbatical as it was a two-way street: while I was not around this summer, the good folks of Aquia Church made that refreshment possible, and you were able to thrive as a parish in my absence. Many people ensured this success: our lay members fulfilling their ministries, our talented staff members continuing their tasks with dedication, the reliable leadership of senior warden Joe Howard and fellow Vestry members, and the additional responsibilities borne by Father James Rickenbaker were among the essential ingredients making my departure feasible in the first place. I am thankful to each person who shared in this good work.

In previous newsletter articles, I explained in advance the important study and professional travel that became a core part of my summer. Conferring with clergy colleagues, training elsewhere, and exploring various areas of ministry with new perspectives were immensely helpful activities for me. You are already seeing some of that learning underway here—for instance, in the Wednesday evening Bible study on thankfulness and gratitude that reflects a seminar I took in July—and there is more yet to come.

My time away allowed some important developments with my family: getting my mother moved from North Carolina to Stafford, getting my daughter and me relocated to the residence where my mother has joined us with her all-one-level accommodations, traveling to Wake Forest and my college parish and around Charlottesville and across Arizona (including being dazzled by the Petrified Forest National Park, riding an old-fashioned train, ambling through the sandstone crevices of Upper Antelope Canyon, cruising down the Colorado River, and watching the sun rise and set over the Grand Canyon). Those remarkable opportunities—together with the varieties of cheese from Wisconsin and Michigan that we are still enjoying, delicious meals on our travels, some swimming, and fun on roller-coasters—have rejuvenated and revived in me what the packing and unpacking for moving might have wiped out.

Some reflections about our parish life together became crystallized during the sabbatical. After comparing notes with other clergy, I appreciate all the more that we are not suffering some of the problems that plague other places. While we have our own challenges, we also have a lot of strengths that we ought not take for granted. Furthermore, in certain cases of Christian formation (such as preparation for baptism and confirmation), we need to be more effective at inspiring folks to become more active in our parish as a direct consequence of those rituals. There are also some steps we can take toward more shared responsibility with our children and youth. Father Rickenbaker and I want to spend more time hands-on with our teenagers, and some adjustments to our Sunday morning routines will enable that. Parents of our youth can assist more in quiet but beneficial ways, such as preparing meals for the evening meetings. Indeed, we have more work to do about encouraging parents and grandparents of our young people of all ages (from pre-school through high school) to come with them for worship and to bring them to Sunday school, youth group, Vacation Bible School, and other opportunities for spiritual growth. I'll discuss more insights with you in the time ahead.

As I have been refreshed and recharged by our sabbatical, I hope that you too will discover a fresh spirit and new possibilities at Aquia Church, so that together we may realize our full potential in every good work the Lord has set before us.

Jay Morris

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

Aquia Episcopal Church
Post Office Box 275
Stafford, VA
22555

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

2017 CHRISTMAS FLOWER ORDER FORM

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

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

In Thanksgiving for _____

In Memory of _____

I would like to take a poinsettia home after Dec. 25. (Circle One) YES NO

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

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Please enclose a check for $20.00 made out to: Aquia Episcopal Church.
Please include "Christmas Flowers" on the memo line. DEADLINE IS DEC. 11

October 2017 **READING ROOM** by Jay Morris

The current Wednesday evening Bible study is titled "Thankful Hearts: Gratitude in the Bible and in our Lives." The immediate impetus for this series—besides taking up a neglected theme for more faithful living and covering a topic that pervades the Bible (instead of covering just one biblical book, like Genesis or First Corinthians)—is having an opportunity to share with the parish some of the work that I undertook during my sabbatical. I spent the last week of July as an invited participant in a seminar on gratitude at Calvin Theological Seminary in Michigan, and for many reasons I remain thankful for my time in that seminar. Some of what I learned there caught me pleasantly by surprise.

While so much of the academic discipline of psychology and the professional practice in that field has typically focused on diagnosing and treating illnesses of the human mind and disorders that adversely affect behavior, in recent years there has been growing interest in a more proactive approach that identifies the ingredients necessary for psychological health and encourages the activities that cultivate such well-being. This trend in psychology mirrors one in medicine, based on the notion that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure (with the preventative approach being less painful over the long run, inevitably easier to manage, and genuinely more fruitful for a life of contentment). The newer approach is called 'positive psychology' because it focuses more on building up the good and less on correcting the negative. Within positive psychology, there is an increasing amount of research with empirical data (through psychological examinations, longitudinal studies, and so forth) that confirms what many ethicists, theologians, and other thoughtful authors have long known: an emphasis on nurturing certain emotions and virtues (including gratitude) and on the practices that fortify such habits of good character generally promotes greater flourishing by individuals and communities. That is to say: when people engage in mental work and life-changes that develop our gratitude to God and to one another, then individuals and the communities in which they live—family households, churches, and so forth—experience more satisfaction and less disappointment with life. Plenty of wise writers have claimed as much for centuries, but now the field of positive psychology has facts and figures to bolster the arguments in favor of gratitude. In short: gratitude works.

That idea is the title of one handy book (***Gratitude Works! A 21-Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity*** [Jossey-Bass, 2013] and the inspiration for another, more extended book (***Thanks! How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier*** [Houghton Mifflin, 2007]) by Robert A. Emmons, one of the leaders in positive psychology who iss a pioneer in ground-breaking research about gratitude. Besides conducting social-scientific research at the University of California at Davis (much of which has been backed by the John Templeton Foundation), Emmons has spent a great deal of effort translating the results of investigations by his team and other associates into user-friendly format for publication in newspapers, magazines, and popular books. While neither of the books here is exclusively for the religiously inclined—for that is not Emmons's professional background and not his sole audience—what he explains here is clearly the kind of stuff that parishioners and church families can use for support as they explore the significance of thankfulness beyond what the Bible and Christian formation already have to say about it. Yet chapter 4 in both books and chapter 6 of *Thanks!* directly address gratitude to God in the Old and New Testaments and in non-biblical religions. *Thanks!* depicts how showing gratitude more frequently can strengthen married couples, how training youngsters to give thanks can make them better appreciate the blessings they receive, and how expressing thankfulness can even offer medical benefit to the heart and cardiac system. This book also deals constructively with handling the lack of gratitude and other obstacles to grateful living (such as a refusal to acknowledge our dependence on others, undue comparison of oneself to those considered more fortunate, the impact of suffering, the busy-ness of our lives, and selfishness). Its final chapter features a Top Ten list of particular actions that can encourage thanksgiving even when we struggle with adversities or find that our readiness to give thanks is waning. That Top Ten list is expanded in Emmons's more recent book, *Gratitude Works!* Where *Thanks!* is more comprehensive in scope and more detailed with examples from movies, novels, and the headlines from everyday life, the book *Gratitude Works!* presents itself more like a step-by-step self-help book. (I make that observation not as a derogatory comment, but instead as an objective description about its straightforward presentation and its literary style.) While *Thanks!* persuades us about the importance of gratitude, *Gratitude Works!* illustrates how to implement gratitude in our lives through particular practices and actions that reflect our heartfelt thankfulness.

I probably would not have heard about this social-scientific viewpoint and material if I had not attended the seminar on gratitude; indeed, I did not know about them until I was introduced to them by Charlotte vanOyen Witvliet, professor of psychology and departmental chair at Hope College in Michigan and one of the leaders of our seminar. I am thankful to her for the fresh perspective and keen insight that she brought to our learning in the seminar and to some discussion after its official end. I am also grateful to this parish for providing this sabbatical, which was a precious opportunity for study and travel (among other things) for the sake of strengthening the ministry that we together share at Aquia Church.