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# A Brief History of St. George's Episcopal Church Fredericksburg, Virginia

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**St. George's**  
Episcopal  
Church

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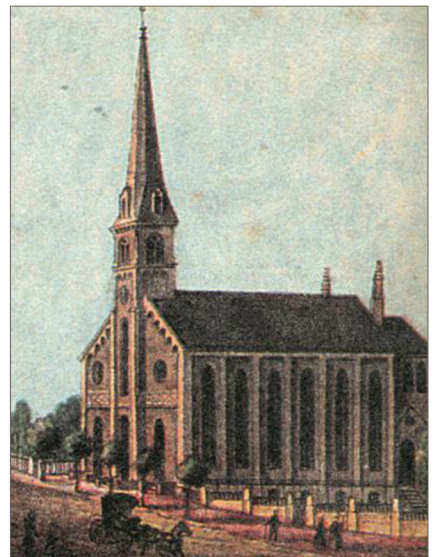


The illustration on the front cover is taken from a panoramic chromolithograph "View of Fredericksburg, VA" that was published in 1856 by Edward Sachse & Co. of Baltimore, Maryland. Across the bottom of the panorama are individual drawings of key elements of the wider view and St. George's is shown at the far right, labeled "Protestant Episcopal Church." Image courtesy of the James Monroe Museum, University of Mary Washington.

### St. George's History Committee:

Cindy Helton, Chair  
Trip Wiggins, Archivist  
Malanna Henderson  
Steward Henderson  
Shannon Lee  
Craig Rains  
Ken Samonds  
Peggy Verdine  
Barbara Willis (d. 2021)

Spring, 2024



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## Forward

In the acknowledgments of his 1951 work, *The History and Background of St. George's Episcopal Church Fredericksburg, Virginia*, Carrol H. Quenzel writes, "This history was written at the suggestion of the vestry," likely because it had been roughly 60 years since the last published history of the parish. Upon my arrival as the 27th rector of St. George's in January 2015, I was made aware of the pending 300th anniversary of the parish in 2020-2021 and the desire among many parishioners for a significant observance of that milestone. I soon realized that it had also been over 60 years since Quenzel's last significant update of the parish's history. One of my first steps in preparing for the celebration of the 300th anniversary was to call together a history committee to oversee a new update.

My initial charge to committee co-chairs, Barbara Willis and Cindy Helton, along with parish archivist, Trip Wiggins, was not only to bring the history up to date but also to expand upon previous work to tell more of the story. I wanted us to celebrate our accomplishments in the service of the Gospel while also recognizing the need for repentance and transformation in light of the sins of oppression. Particularly, it felt essential to me to name the pre-colonial presence of Indigenous peoples in the region, to highlight the contributions of black persons and women, and to honestly face the role St. George's has had in perpetuating the institution of human chattel slavery and the legacy of white supremacy with which we still contend today. In bringing our history up to date, I also wanted to share the good news of how St. George's has become increasingly a parish dedicated to justice and the flourishing of the whole community. I wanted us to tell a broader truth so that, in the spirit of John 8:32, the truth might set us free as we become The Beloved Community, committed to the fulfillment of our Baptismal Covenant. In that Covenant, we promise to respect the dignity of every human being and to work for justice and peace among all people, with god's help.

The History Committee has worked with great effort and deep integrity over several years since 2017. Their thorough research was shared at several parish presentations prior to and during our 300th anniversary and in an exhibit in 2020-2021 at the Fredericksburg Area Museum about the place of St. George's in the community, titled "The Church in the Public Square." I am delighted that this updated history document is now ready to share with the congregation and community.

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I give profound thanks for the work of the History Committee: Cindy Helton, Trip Wiggins, Craig Rains, Malanna Henderson, Steward Henderson, and the late Barbara Willis (2021) as well as newer members Shannon Lee, Peggy Verdine, and Ken Samonds. The committee and I wish to gratefully acknowledge the significant work of Ben Hicks, former Business Manager of St. George's, whose research and web archive have been invaluable. We are also indebted to the assistance of John Hennessey, former historian with the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Sara Poore, former executive director of the Fredericksburg Area Museum, and Julia Randle, former historiographer of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. Finally, this research and document project would not have happened without the ongoing support of St. George's Chief of Staff, Laurel E. Loch.

I hope you will read this brief history with open eyes and an open heart. To be clear, it is not meant to be an exhaustive work but rather a more succinct introduction to the parish's history. It takes a place alongside the work of Quenzel and other sources as we continue to understand the story of God's people in this place known as St. George's Parish in Fredericksburg, Virginia. I pray that God will use our sharing of this story to further the reconciling and joyful work of the Gospel.

—the Reverend Joseph H. Hensley, Jr. March 2024

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## The Colonial Period

The city of Fredericksburg and St. George's Episcopal Church occupy land bordering the Rappahannock River that was home to the Patawomeck, Manahoac, Mattaponi, Rappahannock tribes, and other Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. The area now known as Fredericksburg was a contested territory for fishing, hunting, and meeting for Native Americans.<sup>1</sup>

In their search for more land for growing tobacco, the early English settlers in Colonial Virginia traveled up the Rappahannock River until reaching the river's fall line in this tribal area. As the settlers expanded into the new territory, they brought the Anglican Church of England, the established church. In the Virginia colony, the church served as a place of worship and as an instrument of government in maintaining order and ensuring religious conformity. The distance of the settlement from the Mother Church in England and the shortage of clergy led to more control by the Virginia General Assembly, which enacted laws governing the local church and gave vestries more power over their local parishes. As the colonial population grew and expanded westward, the General Assembly created and set boundaries for new parishes.<sup>2</sup>

In 1720, the General Assembly created St. George's Parish, which marks the founding of St. George's Church. The new parish extended to the edge of the westward expansion of the English into the Americas. Later that same year, the General Assembly also enacted legislation creating Spotsylvania County and designating the whole county as St. George's Parish. This vast parochial territory included all the present-day counties of Spotsylvania, Orange, Madison, Culpeper, Greene, Rappahannock, and part of Page, Rockingham, and Warren counties. Vestrymen began their responsibilities by appointing the Rev. Theodosius Staige as the first rector of the Anglican St. George's Parish.<sup>3</sup> He was the son of an Anglican clergyman in England and the brother-in-law of the Rev. James Marye Sr., who became the fourth rector of St. George's.

The General Assembly established the town of Fredericksburg in 1728, and the new town set aside property for a future church. The first church, known as the Rappahannock Church, had been built about 10 miles west of Fredericksburg. When that location proved unsatisfactory, parishioners constructed a second church on the city plot at the corner of Princess Anne and George streets. This second Rappahannock Church, built of wood, opened for services in 1734. That same year, the vestry appointed the widow Suzanna Livingston as sexton.<sup>4</sup> Women had an active role in the church from its beginning. Mrs. Livingston received pay from the church for assisting with "burial" and for "salivating" (caregiv-

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ing) to those in need.<sup>5</sup> She appeared to be a woman of some independent means, for she leased 100 acres in Spotsylvania County from Henry Fitzhugh in 1733.<sup>6</sup> In 1729, the widow Livingston purchased two lots in Fredericksburg, Numbers 29 and 31, from Augustine Smith and John Waller, directors and trustees for Fredericksburg Town.<sup>7</sup> The next year, she purchased Lot 6 in Fredericksburg from Henry Willis and John Waller, trustees of Fredericksburg, for five pounds, five shillings.<sup>8</sup>

By 1815, the second church had deteriorated, and a brick structure replaced it. This building, set on oak beams to prevent disturbing the surrounding graveyard, later exhibited signs of collapse, and in 1849, the current church building replaced it. The vestry renamed the Rappahannock Church as the Protestant Episcopal Church and finally, to St. George's Episcopal Church, in keeping with the parish's name. The exact date of that name change is unknown because the vestry minutes from 1817 through 1864 burned during the Civil War after being transferred to Richmond for safekeeping. In *A Digest of the Proceedings of the Conventions and Councils in the Diocese of Virginia* by T. Grayson Dashiell, the church is called St. George's of Fredericksburg for the first time at the "Convention of 1827". In subsequent parochial reports to the Convention or to the Annual Council, the church was called St. George's of Fredericksburg.<sup>9</sup>

Early church attendants included the family of George Washington. His father, Augustine Washington, acquired the Ferry Farm plantation across the river from Fredericksburg in 1738. George Washington and his siblings may have attended the Parson's School founded by the Rev. James Marye after he became rector in 1735.<sup>10</sup> According to the wording on the George Hume memorial plaque in St. George's narthex, George Washington learned surveying from Hume, who was a parishioner. Hume laid out the town of Fredericksburg, designated the two lots for the church and the graveyard, and served, according to vestry minutes, at least once as a processioner to walk and verify land boundaries.

George Washington inherited Ferry Farm after his father's death, and his mother, Mary Ball Washington, operated the property for him. When she retired, George bought a home for her in Fredericksburg and attended church with her when he visited. When Mary Ball Washington died in 1789, the Rev. Thomas Thornton conducted her funeral in St. George's Church.<sup>11</sup> Washington's brother-in-law, Fielding Lewis, and Washington's brother, Charles, served as St. George's vestrymen, with terms beginning in 1753 and 1776, respectively.<sup>12</sup>

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The graveyard at the center of the St. George's campus is the oldest known graveyard in the region. The town founders set aside this land when they founded Fredericksburg in 1728. George Washington's father-in-law, Col. John Dandridge, is buried here. William Paul, the brother of John Paul Jones, the Revolutionary War hero known as "the Father of the U.S. Navy," is buried in a grave close to Faulkner Hall, just inside the front gate and to the left.<sup>13</sup>

James Monroe, who would later become the fifth president, was a lifelong Episcopalian who may have attended St. George's since his law office was only one block from the church. As a member of the Fredericksburg City Council in 1787, he served as chairman of a committee that presented a petition to the General Assembly to divide St. George's Parish and to vest (give ownership of) the church property and burying ground to Fredericksburg.<sup>14</sup>

The vestry selected the Rev. Patrick Henry, uncle of the famous Revolutionary era orator of the same name, as the third rector for St. George's in 1733.<sup>15</sup> After the departure of Rev. Henry, St. George's enjoyed an extended period of stability in clergy leadership with the appointment of the Rev. James Marye Sr. in 1735. Born in France and educated as a Catholic priest, he migrated to England and became an Anglican clergyman. Marye would serve St. George's for 32 years. During this time, he earned an annual salary of 16,000 pounds of tobacco and acquired 1,900 acres of land in Spotsylvania County.<sup>16</sup>

In 1765, Rev. Marye and Fielding Lewis, George Washington's brother-in-law, established a Bray Associates School to educate enslaved children. Unfortunately, most holders of enslaved people, including members of the parish, did not allow the children to attend school regularly, and consequently, the school closed in 1770.<sup>17</sup>

Both the Rev. James Marye Sr. and his son, James Marye Jr., who succeeded his father as rector in 1768, benefited from the enslavement of Africans, as noted in their wills, in which they bequeathed land and enslaved persons to their children. The Rev. James Marye Sr. gave enslaved people to his sons, James Marye Jr. and Peter Marye, and to his daughters, Lucy Marshall and Susanna Heath, as well as to his grandchildren. As stated in his 1767 will: "*I bequeath unto my son James Marye the following Negroes: will dick jerry moses, sam, Caesar, and aaron [sic] besides the four now in his possession, to him and his heirs forever.*" Similar language conveyed others to his daughters, including the "*two young female Negroes and their increase out of Phillis's children to my granddaughters.*"<sup>18</sup>



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In the period before the Civil War, many Virginia Episcopalians and clergy held enslaved persons. Julia E. Randle, registrar and historiographer of the Diocese of Virginia and former archivist of the Virginia Theological Seminary, reviewed the 1860 U.S. Census data that documented 103 Episcopal clergy in the diocese and “eighty-four of the brethren, or 82 percent, possessed at least one slave, while some owned dozens.”<sup>19</sup>

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## Decline and Revival After the American Revolution

After the colonies achieved independence from England, the Virginia General Assembly repealed the laws mandating conformity to the Church of England and the use of tax levies to support it. The disestablishment law stated, "No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever..."<sup>20</sup> As a result, the Rev. James Marye Jr. received no salary for the last three years he served except for voluntary donations by church members.<sup>21</sup> In 1789, the vestry voted to join the newly formed Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, which remains a member of the worldwide Anglican Communion.<sup>22</sup>

The vestry established two charity schools following the Revolutionary period. The Male Charity School was founded in 1795, followed seven years later, in 1802, by the Female Charity School, which was organized to teach "the rudiments of an English education" and the fundamentals of the Christian religion.

With the disestablishment of the church after the Revolution, the clergy and parishioners no longer had the legal power to command the financial support needed to maintain operations. Other difficulties arose from a clergy shortage resulting from the unreliable means of paying their salaries, the aging of many clergy into retirement, and the absence of a bishop in the newly formed country to ordain clergy. A continuing loss of church members further reduced financial support. As a result of these conditions after the Revolution, St. George's experienced increased turnover in rectors until the arrival in 1813 of young Edward McGuire, too young to be ordained at age 20 when he became minister to the congregation with a membership of "fewer than 12." After being ordained in 1814, he served as rector for 45 years.<sup>23</sup> The Rev. McGuire led the revival of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese. His work was remarkable for its "duration and usefulness," according to Bishop Johns, who delivered Rev. McGuire's funeral oration. He was always "among the people, visiting the sick, burying the dead, baptizing households and preaching" throughout the area. He took an active role in the work of the diocese, especially in instructing young priests.<sup>24</sup>

The Rev. McGuire increased the number of members from fewer than 12 in 1813 to 251 members in 1859, leading St. George's to become the second-largest church in the Diocese. Under his leadership, a brick building replaced the old second Rappahannock Church in 1815. However, by 1846, the congregation outgrew the second church, which had severe construction faults and desperately needed replacement.

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The present church building in the Romanesque Revival style, the third St. George's building constructed on this site, was consecrated in 1849. Although the names of the workers who built the church are unknown, its funding and construction probably were supported by the system of enslaved labor. During the period before the Civil War in Virginia, enslaved persons often worked on the construction of buildings, including churches. Parishioners financed the cost of building both the 1815 church and the 1849 church by purchasing pews. Many parishioners gained their disposable income from the labor of enslaved people on the surrounding properties.<sup>25</sup> Only those who bought pews could vote for vestry candidates, which ensured wealthier members' control of church affairs.<sup>26</sup>

At about two a.m. on the morning of Wednesday, July 19, 1854, St. George's Church was reported to be on fire, and the Fredericksburg Fire Company, with the assistance of onlookers and the late arrival of the water-pumping fire engine, finally extinguished the flames. However, the heat, smoke, and water extensively damaged the church's interior. Other damage from the fire destroyed the vestry room and its contents and ruined the pulpit, cushions, and church books and papers. Although feared to be a total loss, the church organ suffered some exterior, repairable damage; however, the instrument's interior was "uninjured." Fortunately, Mutual of Richmond had insured the church and bore four-fifths of restoration costs. The fire also damaged the town clock in the bell tower, and the contractor restored it and added the two galleries in the nave and the two circular stairways to the galleries. There was speculation about the cause of the fire since there had been no need to light a fire in July, but investigators have never found records of a definitive cause.<sup>27</sup>

The Rev. McGuire received support from the labor of the enslavement of at least three persons. Records in the Fredericksburg Circuit Court reveal that Rev. McGuire sued the estate of Benjamin Leitch and Francis Leitch to recover the sum of \$125, with interest, for their "hire of his servant, Louis, a blacksmith, for the year 1853." Another enslaved person, Spencer Robinson, is also mentioned in the court records as having belonged to Rev. McGuire.

In 1831, Rev. McGuire emancipated Patsy Garnett. He stated, "From consideration of the sum of two hundred dollars to me paid by my slave Patsy Garnett, the receipt of which I do hereby acknowledge ... I do by these presents set free the said Patsy Garnett and do hereby forever discharge her from all obligations or liability to serve me, my heirs,

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executors, or administrators.”<sup>28</sup> By 1858, McGuire established five active Sunday Schools at St. George’s, and two of them were exclusively for enslaved persons.<sup>29</sup>

The Rev. McGuire advocated in support of the American Colonization Society (ACS), which sought to return people of African descent to Liberia, a small African country founded by free people of color from the United States and funded by the American Colonization Society. McGuire called the movement of ACS a “great and magnificent design.” He held a meeting in 1819 to establish a chapter and accepted collections to support the ACS effort.<sup>30</sup>

The members of the ACS movement were a mixture of abolitionists and enslavers with differing objectives. The abolitionists believed that free Blacks could escape racism in America and enjoy true liberty and self-government in their own country. At the same time, the enslavers viewed colonization as a means of removing a threat to the institution of slavery. “Many members of the American Colonization Society viewed their efforts as benevolent, still they gave little consideration to the opinions of free African Americans or to how these measures would impact individuals, families, and communities of color.”<sup>31</sup>

A notable St. Georgian, Mary Minor Blackford, and her family worked tirelessly to help enslaved people migrate to Liberia. Despite a law making it a crime, she taught Black children to read the Bible, but she encountered the disapproval of her neighbors. Some of her family traveled to Liberia to help Black people settle there. However, the African Americans found themselves in a different culture, felt they were unwanted there, and endured living conditions that were miserable in the swamps of Liberia. The mortality rate was high. Blackford continued supporting efforts to educate women in Liberia until 1846, when her family moved to Lynchburg.<sup>32</sup>

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## The Civil War and Its Aftermath During the Nineteenth Century

When the Southern states seceded from the Union, the Episcopalians in those states withdrew from the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States to create the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Confederate States of America.<sup>33</sup> The rector of St. George's, the Rev. Alfred Randolph, joined the Confederate Army in 1863 as a chaplain in Gen. Stonewall Jackson's corps of Southern troops.<sup>34</sup>

In the Civil War, Fredericksburg was occupied 11 times by the Union and Confederate armies. During bombardments by the opposing armies in the Battle of Fredericksburg, artillery shells hit the church at least 25 times. Eugene Blackford, son of Mary Blackford, wrote about the damages to St. George's: "In the steeple of the Episcopal Church alone I counted twenty cannon hole shots. Most were in the main building."<sup>35</sup>

Northern Army soldiers looted the four-piece communion set donated in 1827 by Warden John Gray. One piece was retrieved, and the other three pieces were recovered over a period of 74 years. The set continues in use today. In 1862 and 1864, the church served as one of the largest Federal Army hospitals for wounded and dying soldiers. In 1863, the church became the site of a great spiritual revival in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, and it overflowed nightly with soldiers seeking solace and comfort from the trauma of the battlefield.<sup>36</sup>

St. George's history is intertwined with the history of the Confederacy and its armed rebellion to achieve independence from the United States. Three of the four rectors called to St. George's after the war had served in the Confederate Army. After Rev. Randolph left to join the Confederates, St. George's did not have a rector for two years.

In the Reconstruction period after the war, the vestry faced the daunting task of repairing the extensive damages to the building from its use as a military hospital and from its bombardment by the opposing armies' artillery fire, as well as damage from small arms fire that left holes in the structure. A plea for donations resulted in a large enough collection to support a rector, and the vestry temporarily appointed the Rev. Magruder Maury. A native of Fredericksburg, Rev. Maury served as a chaplain in the Confederate Army during the war. With his appointment, services resumed in the basement of the war-torn church.

The vestry, in an effort to raise more funds, sent Rev. Maury to New York to seek donations for repairs to the church building. He successfully raised over \$1,400 with a promise of more for the church, and in 1865, the vestry changed his status from temporary to rector.<sup>37</sup> In addition to

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his fund-raising abilities for repairs to the church, Rev. Maury enabled the church finances to transition from dependence on the pew tax and special collections to weekly collections where ushers passed a bag and received contributions in an envelope. This practice would eventually evolve into the pledge system. By 1870, the vestry reported the church as "in the best shape since the war."<sup>38</sup>

Just as the history of St. George's is interwoven with the history of the Confederacy, so was it to be intertwined with the history of the struggle for equality and civil rights in the ensuing 150 years of American history. An incident in the church in May 1866 described the efforts of two Black men to be seated in a pew reserved for white church members. The two men were Dr. Joseph Harris, head surgeon of the Fredericksburg Freedmen's Hospital, and his brother, Cicero, who later became bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Following orders from the vestry warden, St. George's sexton, Washington Wright, a Black man, told the two Harris brothers to vacate the private pews and go to the gallery seating. After protesting to Sexton Wright that the pews were not private, they eventually acceded to the sexton's order to leave. But the incident foreshadows the civil rights sit-ins that were to occur in Fredericksburg a hundred years later.<sup>39</sup>

In 1869, parishioners had restored St. George's Church sufficiently to serve as the site of the diocesan convention, where one of the main attractions was the presence of former Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee as a lay delegate from Lexington. Gen. Lee stayed as a guest of a St. George's vestryman, Judge William Barton, and the general gave a lock of his hair to the daughter of a parishioner.<sup>40</sup>

The Rev. Maury resigned in 1871 when the vestry did not accept his request for a salary increase. However, the vestry provided a severance amount equal to his requested amount. After the departure of Rector Maury in 1871, the vestry unanimously elected the Rev. Edward Murdaugh from St. James Church in Herring Creek, Maryland, as rector. During Rev. Murdaugh's tenure, the legislature passed an act in 1874 to establish the St. George's Benevolent Society to aid the city's poor and to help needy orphans and widows during the winter months. It is unclear if this was a continuance of the 1817 Benevolent Society championed by McGuire or a new organization. However, the foundation of these ministries formed the basis for future St. George's outreach ministries in the community. Other initiatives included the purchase of a new organ with funds raised by the church's women, the organ loft's expansion, and plans for a stained-glass window in remembrance of Rev. McGuire and his contributions to the church.<sup>41</sup>

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Dissatisfaction with Rector Murdaugh was evident within the congregation and the vestry by 1877. Still, without definite evidence in the records, it is difficult to determine the exact cause of the split. In April 1877, he submitted his resignation to the vestry.<sup>42</sup> Murdaugh had served for six years, and many parishioners wanted him to continue. Despite this support, the vestry accepted his resignation on a seven-to-four vote without further explanation. Within three months, 50 St. George's members who opposed accepting Rev. Murdaugh's resignation organized the new Trinity Episcopal Church and called Murdaugh to be their rector. The newly formed church members met in the Methodist Church until they could build a new church at the corner of Hanover and Prince Edward streets in 1881. Within a year, 112 communicants left St. George's for Trinity, including several vestry members. The Rev. Murdaugh continued serving as Trinity's rector until he died in 1886.<sup>43</sup>

Following Rev. Murdaugh's resignation and move to Trinity Church, the vestry selected the Rev. Robert McBryde as the new rector. McBryde had served in the Confederate Army and as a chaplain at the University of Virginia. Following the material destruction and social upheaval after the Civil War, the church struggled to find its voice for social justice and human rights in a segregated society.

In 1878, the vestry set aside an entire block of seats in the gallery for people of color. However, Rev. McBryde reported to the vestry that some parishioners were criticizing the action and asked for a statement of support. As a result, the vestry issued a resolution stating that it was "Speaking in behalf, as they believe of the entire congregation, cordially invite all calsses [sic] and colors of our citizens to join with us in public worship and participation in all the benefits and sacraments of our church."<sup>44</sup>

During the latter 19th century, Fredericksburg and the surrounding area were still supported by an agricultural economy based on farming crops and raising livestock. The vestry's allocation of \$18 to build the rector a cow house and \$20 to renovate the rectory greenhouse in 1880 reflected this local agricultural lifestyle.<sup>45</sup>

The bishop called for Rev. McBryde to be the rector in Lexington in 1883 because of McBryde's ability to inspire young men. Lexington was home to Washington and Lee University and Virginia Military Institute, which enrolled only male students. McBryde felt that his calling to St. George's had been to consolidate and reconcile any conflict within the congregation, and he believed that he had achieved that goal of uniting the church.<sup>46</sup>

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Three stained-glass windows depicting “The Ascension of Christ” were placed above the altar in 1885. Created in Heidelberg, the windows were in memory of the Rev. Edward C. McGuire, who served as rector for 45 years.<sup>47</sup> These were the first stained-glass windows to be installed in the church.

Because the operational costs were greater than its income, the church was experiencing financial difficulties again in March 1886. Out of a membership of 193, there were only 60 regular contributors during the entire year. Exclusive of the contributions of the 60 faithful donors, the total yearly collection from all the other members and non-members who attended amounted to \$350, which averaged about four cents per Sunday. The vestry directed the new rector, John Mason, to present a resolution informing the congregation of the budget shortfall with an urgent plea for all attending to increase their support. It appears that the congregation responded to avert a financial crisis because the rector hired two paid singers for the choir for \$100 each per year.<sup>48</sup>



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## St. George's Church in the Twentieth Century

In 1902, the vestry noted that the supports for the cross on top of the church steeple were deteriorating and needed replacing. In memory of his grandfather, John Herndon of Alexandria gave a gilded copper cross mounted in 1905 as the church spire. The vestry report of 1904 indicated that the church building was appraised at \$25,000, the rectory at \$6,000, the Parish House at \$600, and additional real estate at \$13,000.<sup>49</sup>

The vestry selected the Rev. Robert McBryde in 1905 to replace the Rev. William Smith, who had resigned to accept a call to Christ Church, Winchester. McBryde had the distinction of being the only rector to be elected twice to serve as rector of St. George's. Rev. McBryde had previously served from 1878 to 1883 before being called by the bishop to serve in Lexington.<sup>50</sup>

During McBryde's tenure, the vestry approved the Rector's Guild's (Altar Guild) request to place a brass cross and flower vases on the Holy Table during services, a decision that later provided the impetus for the Flower Guild. There appeared to be some conflict within the church choir in 1910, for the vestry issued a directive indicating that "no complaints shall be made by a member of the choir about a fellow member except to the rector or the organist" and "when members cannot agree on the merits of each other, they should be separated while singing." The vestry urged the choir members to practice more "Christian charity" in their relationships with each other.<sup>51</sup>

The Daughters of the American Revolution funded a stained-glass window dedicated to the memory of Mary Washington, which was installed in 1907. From the Bible story of Deborah and Barak in the book of Judges, "the window depicts Deborah pleading with Barak to lead the Israelites against Sisera."<sup>52</sup>

Three Tiffany-signed windows were commissioned and installed over five years. In 1912, "Christ on the Road to Emmaus" was set in place, followed by "Angel in the Field of Lillies" in 1914 and "Angel of Victory" in 1917.<sup>53</sup> Tiffany techniques, such as fused color and folded, layered, embedded and rippled glass, are displayed in the St. George's windows.

In 1913, responding to a request from members of the choir, the vestry approved the wearing of robes by the choir, but in 1923, it discontinued the practice of presenting a Christmas gift of cash to choir members. Instead of cash gifts, the vestry proposed a yearly dinner and testimonial appreciation program to honor the choir's work. By 1925, the rector im-

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plemented plans for a voluntary choir without the additional incentives needed to ensure an adequate ensemble. For most of the period during the Great Depression, the church could not fund a choir director because of the financial crisis that impacted Fredericksburg's economy.<sup>54</sup>

Elsie Lewis was a faithful choir member who organized and directed the junior choir. Miss Lewis contributed significantly to the operation and growth of St. George's by serving as a teacher, assistant superintendent, and superintendent of the Church Sunday School. She directed the annual Christmas pageant for more than 25 years. Rectors and vestrymen sought her advice for solutions to problems, and she was known as the "pillar of St. George's."<sup>55</sup> Miss Lewis died in 1987 at 95.

The congregation held differing views about communion by intinction in 1939, and the rector surveyed members for their opinions. The majority response was positive about the practice, as the vestry accepted a gift of an intinction set and its use by members who chose that method instead of sipping from the cup. St. George's may possibly have used this method earlier during the 1918 flu pandemic.<sup>56</sup>

The individual who served St. George's for the most extended period, spanning from the 19th into the 20th century, was Joseph Walker, who served 53 years as sexton from 1886 to 1939. Born an enslaved person in 1854 on the farm of Col. William Goodwin in Spotsylvania County, Walker moved to Fredericksburg after the disruption of the Civil War. He also worked as a janitor at the National Bank of Fredericksburg, as a contractor for hauling the mail between the post office and railway stations, and as a deacon for 48 years at his church, Shiloh Baptist Church (New Site).

Sexton Walker, who had worked since 1886 for three dollars a month, requested a raise in 1918 to \$15 per month. He received a raise at St. George's in 1922 to \$216 yearly. In 1939, he received a salary of \$310. Upon his retirement, the church awarded him a lifetime pension of \$25 per month, making him sexton emeritus.<sup>57</sup> Walker-Grant School is named in his honor and for Jason Grant, a freeman and educator. The Rev. John Lanier, St. George's rector, interviewed Walker three years before he died in 1943 and privately printed his memoir, *Life of Joseph F. Walker, Fredericksburg, Virginia*.

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Glaziers installed the last stained-glass windows in 1943. The windows depict "The Nativity Scene" in the lower panel and "The Majesty of Christ" in the upper panel. St. George's collection of stained-glass windows is one of the most significant in the Commonwealth of Virginia. From the first, in 1885, to the last, in 1943, the 18 windows represent techniques in Christian-oriented stained-glass windows from the 12th to the early 20th centuries.<sup>58</sup>

In 1946, the vestry called the Rev. Thomas Faulkner as rector. Under his leadership, the entire exterior of the church building was repaired and repainted, a slate roof replaced the tin roof, and the steeple was rebuilt. Workmen found Civil War cannon balls embedded in some of the timbers during this work. By 1951, the church membership had grown to 479 members, the largest in its history. In response to the need for additional space, McGuire Hall was built in 1959 to house the Sunday School. The three-level addition connects the Parish Hall (now Faulkner Hall) with the main church building.

Rev. Faulkner confronted the issue of segregation, which was being increasingly resisted in Virginia and other Southern states by the mid-20th century. In 1954, during Virginia's "Massive Resistance" to the Supreme Court's unanimous decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* declaring segregation in public schools unconstitutional, the vestry directed Rev. Faulkner not to conduct integrated services in the church. The vestry also instructed the rector to bring all requests for reception or confirmation into the church before them for approval. Rev. Faulkner stated that his "God and Savior opposes segregation in any form and...for me, therefore, the position that I take on segregation is, in the last analysis, a test of faith in Jesus Christ and God almighty."<sup>59</sup> When new members joined the vestry, Rev. Faulkner cited the church canons on the rector's authority and resolved the issue by affirming the legal precedent in the rector's duties and responsibilities for determining baptisms and for controlling the worship service. Following this precedent, he desegregated the church.

For 57 years, from 1946 to 2003, only two rectors, Thomas Faulkner and Charles Sydnor, led St. George's Church. Both rectors advanced social justice more than at any other time in the church's history. During this period, the church struggled with the same justice and equality issues faced by the nation. Rev. Faulkner's tenure as rector paralleled the rise and growth of the Civil Rights Movement. By the work and example of Rev. Faulkner, the word "race" was added to St. George's welcoming statement, and he ensured the church would not be segregated but open to all.

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During the first two centuries of St. George's history, the women of the church actively served by hosting weddings and funerals in their homes for church members and their families in time of need. In 1871, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church approved forming the Women's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church. According to St. George's worship bulletins in the 1950's, the women met in small groups in their homes, and the auxiliary had expanded to 13 chapters, all named for former rectors. By 1959, the auxiliary became the Episcopal Church Women (ECW).<sup>60</sup> Vestry minutes indicate that the vestry invited St. George's ECW officers to attend vestry meetings as observers. Two chapters of the ECW continue at St. George's as the Mary Faulkner Chapter and the Avis Harris Chapter.

It was during the ministry of Rev. Faulkner that women assumed a more significant role in the administration and governing of the church. In 1966, a parishioner made the first motion for a female member of the vestry at the annual meeting; a heated debate ensued, and voting split three ways, with 25 in favor, 41 opposed and 29 abstaining. However, two years later, in 1968, Avis Harris was elected to serve as the first woman on the St. George's Vestry.<sup>61</sup> In addition to her term on the vestry, she served St. George's for 40 years and was best known as the Coordinator of Christian Education. She reviewed and selected curriculum materials and recruited and conducted teacher training. She pioneered advocating for the Church Day School.<sup>62</sup> Since Avis Harris's election, more than 70 women have served on the vestry, and the first Black woman, Jessica Atkinson, was elected in 2015. Women now serve in every church role, including committee chairs, lectors, lay ministers, and clergy.

Another notable woman who contributed to the outreach and operation of St. George's was Thurman Brisben. She was elected to the vestry three times, served as a member of the Worship Committee, and was active in Christian Education. Her most remembered work is establishing a homeless shelter for the Fredericksburg area. She worked tirelessly to achieve this goal with the Rev. Judith Fleming, the first female clergy member at St. George's, who was hired as a curate to Rector Charles Sydnor in 1986. According to Rev. Sydnor, Rev. Fleming provided leadership and coordination with other local churches to ensure the availability of sleeping cots and meals for dinner and breakfast for the homeless. In 1992, the homeless shelter opened and was named The Thurman Brisben Homeless Shelter in Brisben's memory after she had died in 1990 at the age of 74.<sup>63</sup>

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In its history, St. George's has been a place where people of other faiths could turn in time of need. In the early 1800s, Presbyterians used St. George's Church as a place of worship while forming a new congregation in the city. In 1936, the Jewish community needed a location to practice their faith, and they worshiped in the Parish House (now Faulkner Hall) until moving to their new Beth Sholom Temple in 1940. In 1939, St. George's served as a temporary place of worship for Fredericksburg Area Greek Orthodox Christians until they finished building the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church in Spotsylvania County.<sup>64</sup>

Upon the Rev. Faulkner's retirement in 1976, the Rev. Charles R. Sydnor Jr. became rector. Rev. Sydnor's commitment to social justice was grounded in the Baptismal Covenant, as he recognized the accomplishments of his predecessor in the church's history. During his tenure, Rev. Sydnor opened St. George's to community discussions on controversial topics such as AIDS, school shootings, and issues of poverty and homelessness. In 1992, St. George's hosted a World AIDS Day observance in Fredericksburg. During the vigil, the Rev. Sydnor assured those assembled that all in attendance are welcome to worship at St. George's.<sup>65</sup> Shortly thereafter, the vestry agreed to add "sexual orientation" to its statement welcoming people to the church "regardless of race, nationality, or denomination."

During the renovation of the city's Market Square, the skeletal remains of three men, two women and one teenage boy were unearthed. On All Saints Day 2002, Rev. Sydnor memorialized them with a ceremony from the 1660 Anglican Prayer Book as they were reburied in the church graveyard, and he recited the prayers in Elizabethan English.<sup>66</sup>

Upon Rev. Sydnor's retirement in 2003, the vestry called the Rev. James C. Dannals as rector. During his tenure, on February 16, 2013, St. George's hosted a community service, "From Repentance to Hope: A Service of Remembrance, Celebration and Witness in Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation." The Race and Reconciliation Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia planned the service with support from The Episcopal Church, led by the Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori. Bishop Jefferts Schori conducted the service, and during the liturgy, the entire church repented for its past role in maintaining and supporting slavery.<sup>67</sup> The ceremonies concluded with a march to the Fredericksburg Slave Auction Block and to a work of public art, "Jubilation," by Ayokunle Odeleye. The artwork was dedicated and placed in the Fredericksburg Area Museum rose garden. The St. George's Vestry commissioned the sculpture, and it remains an enduring symbol of freedom and hope for the church and community.

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During the church renovation under the leadership of Rev. Dannels, the nave closed in 2008 and 2009 for the most extensive and significant building renovation since 1849. Worship was moved to the family room in the undercroft (now Sydnor Hall) until the nave reopened in 2009. Rev. Dannels initiated the practice of leaving doors on the pews open to indicate that the church is open and welcoming to all who attend services.

The music program expanded significantly under the leadership of John Vreeland, who arrived in 2005 as the director of music ministries. Participation grew to include music for Holy Eucharists involving three adult choirs, a children's choir, a handbell choir, a 13-member jazz ensemble, a chamber ensemble, two Celtic ensembles, and the St. George's Chamber Orchestra. A monthly concert series inviting the parish and the entire community to enjoy "Beautiful Music in a Beautiful Space" added to the offerings. Installing a new three-manual and pedal Parson tracker organ in 2010 greatly enhanced the music program.

In 2014, the vestry called the Rev. Joseph H. Hensley Jr., who became the 27th rector to serve St. George's. He led the congregation in celebrating the church's 300th anniversary in 2020-2021. The celebration included unveiling the new National Register of Historic Places plaque, made possible mainly by the work and contribution of St. George's parishioners Barbara and Judge Jere M.H. Willis Jr. The Virginia Landmarks Register added St. George's as a Landmark site in Virginia in 2018, and in 2019, the National Register of Historic Places named St. George's Church as one of the historic places in America.<sup>68</sup>

In the three centuries since the church began in Fredericksburg, St. George's has experienced many changes in its journey toward inclusion. In its beginnings, it was the established state church in which the vestry possessed more local power than those in the Church of England in the Mother Country and received its support by local taxation. After the Revolutionary War and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church, the state no longer provided tax support. Membership became voluntary, and support came in the form of voluntary contributions. St. George's transitioned from being the only legally authorized church for all the people living within the parish boundaries to being one of the many church attendance options in the community.

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From once being considered the oppressor, where all were subject to paternalistic control, the church evolved over the ensuing years to become a voice for social justice and social support in times of need. Today, the communicants of St. George's Church continue learning how to live into their Baptismal Covenant: to love one's neighbor as oneself. All are welcome at St. George's Church regardless of race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender expression, or tradition.

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<sup>3</sup> Virginia General Assembly. House of Burgesses, H.R. McIlwaine, and Virginia State Library. *Journal of the House of Burgesses of Virginia* November 18, 1720. Richmond, Virginia: (The Colonial Press, E. Waddey Co.) 1912, pp.249-271; Bond and Gundersen, pp.176-181; Felder, *Forgotten Companions*, pp.37-58; Saint George's Vestry Books, February 25, 1779-30 and September 1736. Translated and Indexed by John Frederick Dorman, Fredericksburg, Virginia and on file at Central Rappahannock Heritage Center, Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1998

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<sup>5</sup> St. George's Parish Vestry Book 1726-1745, September 8, 1770, and October 3, 1732.

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<sup>7</sup> "Virginia Court Records, Spotsylvania County, 1721-1800, Vol. 1, Book A," by William Armstrong Crozier.

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<sup>12</sup> Quenzel, Appendix D.

<sup>13</sup> Quenzel, Appendix H.

<sup>14</sup> Quenzel, p. 21. (Evidence is lacking that James Monroe was a vestryman at St. George's.)

<sup>15</sup> Quenzel, pp.8,88.

<sup>16</sup> Quenzel, pp.11,14: Appendix C.

<sup>17</sup> Fitzgerald, pp. 71-73; Electronic Document: Jennifer Bridges Oast, "Educating Eighteenth-Century Black Children: The Bray Schools" (2000). Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects Paper 1539626264.

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<sup>19</sup> Julia E. Randle, "The Economic Benefit of Slavery to the Episcopal Church of Virginia" from Impact of Slavery Reports, The Committee on Race and Reconciliation. Diocese of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

<sup>20</sup> Manuscript in the Virginia Museum of History and Culture Research Library." A Memorial and Remonstrance: Presented to the General Assembly, of the state of Virginia at their session in 1785, in consequence of bill brought into that assembly for the establishment of religion by law" by Isaiah Thomas, 1786. Call number: Rare BV741.V81 p.16

<sup>21</sup> Quenzel, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Quenzel, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Quenzel, p. 26; Appendix C.

<sup>24</sup> Hicks, "Bishop Johns on the Life and Labors of Edward McGuire," Electronic Document, <https://history.churchsp.org/bishop-johns-on-the-life-and-labors-of-edward-mcguire/>

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<sup>43</sup> Quenzel, pp.48-49.

<sup>44</sup> St. George's Episcopal Church, *Minutes of the Vestry*, May 16, 1879; and Quenzel, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> Quenzel, p.52.

<sup>46</sup> Quenzel, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> Hicks, Ben Y., Electronic Document, "Stained-Glass Windows," <https://history.churchsp.org/stained-glass-windows/>

<sup>48</sup> Quenzel, p. 54.

<sup>49</sup> Quenzel, p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> Quenzel, p.60.

<sup>51</sup> Quenzel, p.60.

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<sup>57</sup> St. George's Episcopal Church, *Minutes of the Vestry*, February 5, 1940; Walker, Joseph. "Life of Joseph F. Walker, Fredericksburg, Virginia. Interview with the Rev. John J. Lanier. Privately printed by Lanier (1940) and on file at the Central Rappahannock Heritage Center, Fredericksburg, Virginia. Electronic Document, Hicks, <https://www.history.churchsp.org/Joseph-walker-1954-1943/>

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**St. George's Episcopal Church**

905 Princess Anne Street  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 7127

Fredericksburg, VA 22404

540.373.4133 (office)

Pastoral Emergencies:

540.361.8573 (call or text)

[StGeorgesEpiscopal.net](http://StGeorgesEpiscopal.net)

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