

What a wonderful start on Sunday, October 17th to the Celebration of our 300th Anniversary of Old Wye Church!

Just in case you missed it or would like to hear it again, here is how it began with an amazing portrayal, (as presented in the First Person by Warren Tewes on October 17, 2021), of the somewhat controversial Rev. Christopher Wilkinson

Introduction:

Good Morning Everyone!

May I kindly beg of your most immediate attention.

On this Seventeenth Day of October, in the Seventeen Hundredth and Twenty-first Year of our Lord, I want to direct your affectionate attention, to our current Rector and Commissary of the Eastern Shore.



The Reverend Christopher Wilkinson:

Good morning, good friends, neighbors and faithful parishioners on this glorious day. In fact, a monumental day, as we are no longer the Wye chapel-of-ease from St. Paul's of Centreville, but now, The Wye Church.

As your Reverend Christopher Wilkerson, I have had the privilege to be not only your rector at this time, but also to supervise the construction of our House of Worship that, with the dedicated support of our vestry, has brought our labor of love to fruition.

For me, this has been a joyous, life-long journey beginning 58 years ago, in Yorkshire England, my home of 1663. I studied at Horton Hall, was admitted to Christ College Cambridge, graduating 1686, and ordained Deacon. I succeeded to Curate of Armley in 1690, and while there, supervised the parsonage construction, with the assistance of subscriptions.

In 1693, I married my dear Frances Hutchinson, daughter of the Reverend John Hutchinson, Vicar of Moreland, and we began our family of 8 children over 2 decades. In 1705, I was assigned to Spain, then the West Indies in 1706 for 4 years while my family remained in England. In 1710, the Bishop of London, "licensed" me to America, first as rector to All Hallows parish in Somerset Co., then here in 1713 to St Paul's parish, Centreville.

Over the following years, I was able to purchase Barbados Hall, a 350-acre plantation on the Corsica River, planning for my family's arrival. Also in 1713, I was appointed Rector of the

Wye River Chapel-of-Ease, and directed by articles of agreement, and the Vestry, to build this church on what had been deteriorating, wooden foundations, of an earlier wooden structure.

For the next 3 years, work proceeded well, but my family remained in England, in order to draw my salary. The Wye Parish parishioners, petitioned the Archbishop of London, to allow my family to join me, while maintaining my salary. The Archbishop required I first resign my Curacy, in spite of a standing order, by the Council of King Charles II, on behalf of persons serving Holy Orders overseas. With some vigor, I was forced to litigate the Archbishop! From this and other local events, I have been called “Acid”, but also, I carried vast regional responsibilities. I can say with a clear heart, that I have always acted in the good and welfare of those around me. Nonetheless, I lost the legal ruling, lost the Curacy appointment, and lost the salary. Joyfully however, Frances and our children arrived in America in 1716.

The other major event of 1716, was when the Bishop of London appointed me Commissary for the “whole” of the Eastern Shore. This granted me permission to perform his duties as Bishop in the New World. In this role, I called my first visitation of clergy for following year, of 1717. I was most humbled when, at the conclusion, seven of these clergy addressed a letter to the Bishop of London characterizing me as, “...remarkable for his prudent and judicious, yet slow operations of sound, well-balanced mind, directed by the feelings of a truly, pious heart.”

Now in 1721, construction here is complete. As I age into my latter years, thinking over life’s past journey and projecting into the Wye Church future, this is now our home. I sincerely hope to resonate into the future that this Church, “possesses a loving and simple beauty of its own, which I think will appeal to many generations. When I end my days, I would like to sleep amid these peaceful surroundings.”

God bless Wye Church. God’s peace be with you, always. Amen

Our Rector has rung the bell and so let us enter into the New Wye Church!

Note: Historical research continues by the Old Wye Church the 300th Anniversary Committee, and will be published as new findings come to light.

