

From Father Nik

It's not entirely clear why Absalom Jones (1746-1818) and the members of the Free African Society (FAS) of Philadelphia who formed St Thomas' African Church in 1792 chose to place their congregation within the polity & under the doctrines & disciplines of the Episcopal Church. Jones' friend, Richard Allen (1760-1831), as well as other members of the Society, felt too committed to the Methodist Church to leave that denomination for another, ever after their exile from St George's Methodist Church. In 1794, the same year that St Thomas' was officially brought into the Episcopal Church & Jones was ordained by Bishop White, Allen founded Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Before the end of his life, Allen & his church would break from the Methodist Church to become their own denomination, but for over 20 years Allen firmly believed that the Methodist Church provided the proper polity and worship style for African Americans.

So, why did Absalom Jones & the FAS members who formed St Thomas' choose the Episcopal Church? Jones had been the slave of an Episcopalian and most likely received his education at an Episcopal school; however, he attended & was licensed to preach at St George's Methodist Church until they implemented the segregationist policies that led the black congregants to leave. That experience, itself, may have convinced Jones & others that there was no place for them within the Methodist Church. Some have suggested that the Episcopal Church appealed to the free, educated African Americans of Philadelphia because it tended to be the Church of the new nation's leading citizens. Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, 32 were Episcopalians (57%), & 31 of the 55 delegates at the US Constitutional Convention were Episcopalian (56%).

In his book, *Yet With a Steady Beat*, the Rev'd Dr Harold Lewis worries that focusing on this one possible cause for black membership in the Episcopal Church obscures the fact that many African Americans have been drawn to the denomination for liturgical & theological reasons. Often despite its own social practices, the liturgy & theology of the Episcopal Church has cultivated a sense of catholicity for which all are one in Christ Jesus. Perhaps it was this theological ethos that led prominent Episcopalians like George Washington, Dr Benjamin Rush, & Bp White to provide social & financial support to FAS & their attempt to form the first African American congregation. And that support may have been one of the contributing factors in the decision of Jones & the FAS members who formed St Thomas' to affiliate with the Episcopal Church. With the election of the Rt Rev'd Michael Curry as the first African American Presiding Bishop at this summer's General Convention, we're just beginning to see blossom the seeds of grace planted by the Rev'd Absalom Jones and the Most Rev'd William White, which by God's Providence have struggled to flower amid the tares of slavery & racism that have endeavored to choke them from that day to our own.

Nik+

CARITAS is Coming

CARITAS is a shared ministry that helps break the cycle of homelessness by providing shelter and stability our neighbors who have lost both.

The CARITAS guests will be staying at
St. James the Less, Ashland from September 5 to 12.

**Fork Church is responsible for
the evening of Sept. 8, the morning of Sept 9,
and bag lunches for Sept 9.**

Look for the sign up sheet in the narthex of the church.
Let's all put our faith to work!

Lemonade on the Lawn

Thanks to the Droppleman family for this morning's refreshments!
Sally Campbell will host next Sunday.

Fall Small Groups

This Fall, the Thursday morning Men's Group & Women's Group
will read *Searching For Sunday* by Rachel Held Evans.

The book's chapters are organized according to the Seven Sacraments,
so the Adult Sunday School will explore those sacraments in depth.

**We'd like to organize another (co-ed?) small group
to meet on a weeknight to discuss the book.**

If you're interested, please let Fr Nik know.

Bishop Spong Discussion Group

Ruth Syman-May & Janet Taylor are leading a discussion group based on
St Paul's 2015 Lenten Lectures by Bishop John Shelby Spong.

The next meeting is 10am Thursday, August 20 at St. James the Less.

All are welcome!

Christian Education

... is Taking a Break for the Summer.

Godly Play needs volunteers this summer for:

- sorting & cleaning Nursery toys & equipment;
- helping with special summer events during the first part of church on Sundays from June 14 until August 16;
- reorganizing the Godly Play stories & the supply closet.

Please call Boo Smythe at 804-357-3319 if you can help.

J2A Youth Group will meet again in September, **but stay tuned for occasional summer events.**

The Adult Forum will meet again on Sunday, September 13.

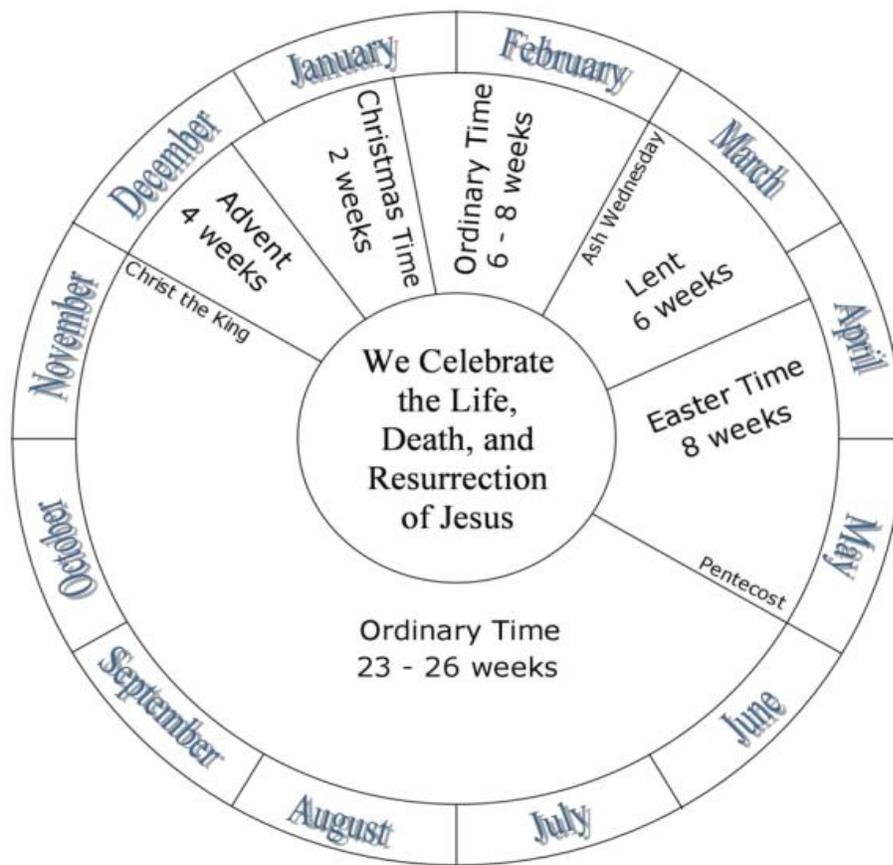
Small Groups

The Women's Book Group will meet again in September. They are reading *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle over the summer. Please contact Kathy for directions or more info: boysthree@embarqmail.com

The Men's Book Group will meet Thursday, August 20 at 7:30am at **The Ashland Coffee & Tea** to finish discussing *Killing Jesus: A History* by Bill O'Reilly & Martin Dugard. Our next book is *The Wisdom of Stability* by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (to be discussed on 9/3 & 9/10).

Christian Formation

If you're interested in being Baptized or would like to become a member of this Church, please contact Fr Nik – KNicholasForti@gmail.com



Nik's Calendar

Monday, Aug 17 – Meeting with the Rev'd Dr Ed. Bushong, 10:30am

Tuesday, Aug 18 – Coffee with the Rev'd Herbert Jones, 10:30am

Thursday, Aug 20 – Lunch with a parishioner, Noon
– Region XI Meeting, 6:30pm

Friday, Aug 28 – Young Rectors Group, 10am-12:30pm

Sunday, Aug 30 – RMC Campus Ministry Promo Luncheon, 11:45am

Looking Ahead

Thursday, Aug 20 – Men's Book Group, 7:30-8:30am @ Ashland Coffee & Tea
– Bp Spong Discussion Group, 10am at SJtL

Thursday, Sept 3 – Men's Book Group, 7:30-8:30am

Sunday, Sept 6 – Prepare lunches for CARITAS after worship

Office hours: Jacquie Alleva, our parish secretary, works Tuesday & Wednesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. If you would like to submit an announcement, please do so by noon on Thursday.