
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE

February 2006

Dear Friends,

Jesus is on a mission. We hear it and see it in the stories in the time after Epiphany, during Lent, Easter and Pentecost. Jesus is on a mission and he asks us to join him.

From the very beginning of his earthly life, Jesus began to draw people to him. The people he draws to that humble place of his beginnings foreshadow the mission of his life. Shepherds who are on the fringes of society are brought to the holiest place on earth; they are given a personal message by the heralds of heaven. Peasants, townspeople, innkeepers are all around this place of a miracle. The people he draws to himself include the rich and powerful and learned as we see in the Magi. These people of a noble class (the scripture doesn't tell us how many) came in numbers to the place where Jesus' earthly life began. The shape of his mission can be seen in the people that surrounded him then.

Jesus is for all people: poor and rich, old and young, women and men, marginalized and mainstream, Jew and Gentile. Jesus is going to be in the world for all humanity.

And what is the mission? It is to save the world. All of it! All of us! And he succeeds as we know and as we remember through the stories of the gospel. And although Jesus' mission of salvation is complete, although his work to save has been accomplished, the work of reconciliation of the world continues.

Like those first followers we are called to engage the mission as well. We are not called to save the world; it is done. You and I are saved people. No strings attached. But as a saved people we are motivated to participate in the ongoing work of healing the saved world. We are motivated to reach out to the sick, the lonely, and the lost and bring the good news of Jesus through our love and compassion. We are motivated as a saved people to act on behalf of Jesus to bring about healing.

This time after the celebration of Epiphany is often called Ordinary Time. I like that designation because it is in the ordinariness of our daily lives that we are called to serve. It is in our willingness to be faithful companions to our loved ones and to those in need around us. In our ordinary day to day lives we are called to reach out, touch and heal with our words, our attentive listening, and our friendship to one another and to the stranger among us.

We will hear tales of the healing stories and teaching stories and miracle stories these next weeks. These are signs of the mission. By our love, we will heal the anxiety and fear that may be in another's heart; by our sincere care, we will raise the spirits of those in need and by our willingness to bring the good news out into the world with our voices and our gifts, we will participate in the gathering of the people of God.

And in this mission work that is given us through the love of Christ, we are called to care for ourselves. We are called to rest, to refreshment and to play. We are called to care for our minds and our bodies and our spiritual life. The mission reaches out and reaches in.

During these weeks you will see signs of the joy we have in the mission of Jesus as the children make and display **ALLELUIA** signs around the church. As you look at these signs remember that Jesus came here for

you. Jesus' mission is about you and the love God has for you. And in that knowledge we are called to be like Christ in the world.

The Reverend Absalom Jones – February 13th

The Episcopal Church commemorates the life of Absalom Jones, the first African-Anglican priest in the United States, on February 13th. This is a fitting celebration of the life of a man whose love of God and love of the church and its people guided his life and ministry. The following synopsis of his life is taken from a biographical sketch written by the Reverend Ellis Clifton, Rector, St. Mary's Church, Dorchester, Massachusetts.

Absalom Jones was born the property of Abraham Wynkoop in 1746 in Sussex, Delaware. Little is known of his childhood and pre-teen years except that Absalom Jones was so eager to receive an education that he taught himself to read using the Bible. In 1762, Benjamin Wynkoop who was Jones' owner moved to Philadelphia, taking Jones with him. Absalom served as a handyman and clerk in his owner's store.

In 1786, Jones met Richard Allen, and a strong friendship developed. They quickly discovered that they shared many common beliefs and goals as well as a great and immovable faith in Jesus Christ. Eventually, Jones and Allen became "lay preachers" for the black population at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. They were known for their powerful and persuasive preaching style and their pastoral work throughout the city. Their evangelistic efforts were so effective that the population of people of color grew unexpectedly. This caused the church officials and other parish congregants a great deal of concern. Church officials began to expel their black members for even the smallest violation of church discipline. Finally, a decision was made to implement a segregated seating policy. Later, an expansion effort largely funded by the black membership of the church contributed to the continued growth of the black membership. As a result more restrictive seating policies were enforced. Black members of the congregation were restricted to seating in an area of the balcony only. This new policy was instituted without advanced notification. In fact, the black membership of that congregation did not learn of this new policy until they arrived for worship at the first service after the renovation that they had paid for were complete. This in part led to the historic skirmish in which the black membership of St. George's walked out of that church—never to return.

Jones and Allen were responsible for organizing Black Christians to come to the aid of all Philadelphians during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. They served as nurses, caretakers, chauffeurs, and undertakers for white citizens who were stricken with the fever and left unattended by friends and family afraid to come in contact with them for fear of contracting the disease. Little concern was shown for their health because the popular belief at the time was that people of African descent were immune to the virus that caused the fever. Even after this belief was proven false as black volunteers were stricken with the fever, the efforts of these Black Christians continued until the winter when the cold killed the mosquito responsible for the spread of the virus. Later, their efforts were largely credited with rescuing the city from certain defeat during the War of 1812. Their patriotism was demonstrated as they recruited over 3000 black men and formed "the Black Legion" to protect the city from invasion.

It seems that despite the discrimination and uncharitable treatment they received at St. George's, both Jones and Allen were satisfied with Methodism in general. It is likely that both men might have remained affiliated with the Methodist Church in some way. This was not the case with many of the people of color who had been worshipping together under the name "The African Church" since before the St. George's incident. Members of the African Church began to voice strong opposition to continued association with a denomination that had treated them in such an un-Christian manner for so long. The issue was put to a vote and the majority of the black worshipping body decided to seek affiliation with the Episcopal Church. Richard Allen was asked to lead the new congregation but he declined. Absalom Jones who had previously attended St. Peter's Episcopal Church while he was still the property of Wynkoop, received the call to lead their congregation and proceedings for affiliation with the Episcopal Church began.

Absalom Jones was ordained to the diaconate on August 16, 1794. He was not ordained to the priesthood until 1804, ten years after he was made a deacon. The Reverend Absalom Jones, first American Episcopal priest of African descent, died in his home on February 13, 1818.

Catechesis Corner

The children returned from a long break, having prepared for and presented the very moving Christmas Pageant and having celebrated the 50th birthday of our church, full of wonderful questions and eager to learn. Upon their return they were presented with the post Christmas stories, Jesus' Presentation in the Temple and The 3 Wise men. Session II ends January 22nd.

Session III begins January 29th and runs through April 2nd. Both classes will be presented parables that speak of the kingdom of Heaven, using materials and concepts with which they are familiar. Both classes, as we prepare for Easter, will discuss Lent, will become more familiar with the city of Jerusalem through the use of a hands-on wooden model, and will learn about the Last Supper and Jesus' last days. The Catechists will review gestures and the preparation of the cruets with the children, demonstrating the gestures they see at the altar every Sunday, thereby making them more noticeable and meaningful. As you can see we have many busy weeks ahead.

Please note that there will be **NO CATECHESIS classes Sunday, February 19th** due to school vacation. Classes will resume February 26th.

Please know how grateful we are to be in our new beautiful and bright classrooms with your beautiful and bright children every week. The children bring us great amounts of joy and are truly a gift from God.

Amanda Hubbard and Ellen Ryan

St. Paul's Christian Education

Elementary School

Epiphany is about Jesus coming to life, and we have certainly felt that this January in our Sunday School. We have been learning about how Jesus was a real human being and how he did and felt all the things that we do. Also, the story of the conversion of St. Paul has been an important lesson, since our church is named after him.

Our attendance remains high, and we are pleased with all the new students that have joined us this year. Our school focuses on reaching out to others and the students have such kind and generous hearts, we are truly blessed.

Session III will continue until April. Look for our Alleluia banners up around the church which we will take down when Lent begins. We will be changing the date of our **Session IV Parent/Teacher workshop to March 2nd at 7:30 p.m.** so please mark your calendars. Teachers and helpers are always needed, so if you would like to join in please let us know! We especially need teachers for Grade 3 for this session.

February Sunday School Calendar

Feb. 5th Family Sermon
Feb. 12th Class 2

Feb. 19th No School (vacation)
Feb. 26th Class 3
Feb. 28th Pancake Supper
March 2nd Parent/Teacher Workshop – Session IV – 7:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Please call us if you have any questions.

Karin Baker 781 275-2956
Cathy Presti 781 271-9808

Karin Baker

High School and Middle School Youth

It's that time of year again: time to visit another church, to experience new and different ways of worship. This year we plan to visit the monastery of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist in Cambridge. This is the Episcopal monastic community that our bishop, The Rt. Reverend Tom Shaw, belongs to. We'll be attending the 4:00 p.m. service of evening prayer on Sunday, February 12th. We'll meet at church at 3:00 p.m. to allow enough time for travel and parking.

All high school and middle school youth are invited to attend. It should be an interesting service -- very different from our usual Sunday service at St. Paul's.

Hope to see you then!

John & Emily Mitchell

Women's Group

Monday, February 13th – Book Discussion of *The Giver*

On Monday, February 13th, Louisa Saladino-Kuhl will lead the group in a discussion of the book, *The Giver* written by Lois Lowry. It is a short but thought provoking book about what makes a perfect society. Copies of the book will be available to purchase in January. It is also available at Amazon or at the Bedford Public Library. Join us for a thought provoking discussion.

Refreshments will be served at 7 p.m. and the discussion will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Save these dates

Our annual brunch will be held on Sunday, March 5th after church at the home of Suzanne Johnson. We will enjoy quiche, delicious baked goods and fruit while sharing fellowship and planning for the future activities of this group. This is a favorite event so plan to come and bring along someone who is new to the parish.

On Saturday, April 1st, the group will attend the Indian Hill Symphony's April Fool's Day Pops concert. We will begin with a light supper at Jan Gurley's and then attend the concert as a group. Watch for more details and a sign-up sheet in early March.

Betsy Anderson

***Via Media* – Christian Adult Education**

Beginning on Wednesday, February 8th, St. Paul's will host the adult education series *Via Media*. This program celebrates who we are as Episcopalians and invites people to “come and see” – offering both the content and context for engaging in conversations about our faith journeys from an unabashedly Episcopal perspective.

These sessions will continue for the next eight Wednesdays, excluding Ash Wednesday. Please join in this engaging and enriching conversation. Session I is titled “An Anglican Way of Being Christian”.

Anne Gardner

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Ron Presti, Senior Warden

Emily Mitchell, Junior Warden

Betsey Anderson, Treasurer

Michael Ryan, Assistant Treasurer

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