

ThirdPRESS

JULY 2019

THE BOOK OF JAMES AND

COUNTER-CULTURAL COMMUNITY

Jesus creates a different kind of community.

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The Book of James is often touted as a “handbook for life,” a practical guide for how to live out your faith in daily ways. It’s true—the book is incredibly helpful, practical, and offers plenty of guidance for individuals. But what’s often overlooked is that James’ letter could be better described as a blueprint for counter-cultural community. James is writing not to individuals but communities of Jesus-followers who are trying to figure out together how to be faithful witnesses to Christ in an inhospitable society. It’s more of a blueprint for community than a handbook for individuals.

For example, in 2:1-13, James goes after Christian communities for their tendency to show favoritism within their churches to those who have more wealth and power. James rebukes any attitudes or practices that create hierarchies or divisions in the church. In doing so, James says, the church is mirroring the patterns of the society and becoming polluted by the world (1:27). Instead of letting the world determine someone’s spiritual worth based on their economic standing, the Christian community is called to model an entirely different social vision, one in which needy people are honored and people from different socio-economic classes can be one new family in Christ. Jesus creates a different kind of community.

We make a big deal out of community here at Third. We talk about it a lot, and we’ve re-organized our church around Parishes in order to foster deeper community. But James reminds us that the purpose of community is not just to have nice friendships, but to offer an alternative socio-political vision that is grounded in Jesus. In the way we handle conflict, in the way we share our goods, in the way we model unity between classes and cultures, in the way we give generously to one another and those outside the church, in the way that we handle suffering.... In all these ways we are offering the world a vision of what human community can be like when Jesus reigns as the King. This is why James calls the church “the firstfruits of all God created” (1:18). The church is meant to be like the first green sprout of what will one day be a renewed creation. We are supposed to be the appetizer of what humanity will one day be: united, whole and beautiful under the reign of Jesus.

THE BOOK OF **JAMES** AND COUNTER- CULTURAL COMMUNITY



This is a tall order. It means it’s not enough to see each other a couple times a month, but that we need to really get into each other’s lives, work hard to build deep and vulnerable relationships, and examine our communal practices to see how they may be mirroring the practices of the world. In a society that is as deeply polarized—socially and politically—as ours, it’s easy for Christians to drift to the left or the right and start following some political or social vision that is being offered in the cultural newsfeeds. But we’re called to be different because we have a different King. We are called to model a different vision of human community.

As we work through the book of James this summer, let this letter not just guide you personally, but also let it call you into deeper commitment to help build the community of Jesus.



PARISH AREA GATHERING RECAP

On June 1-2, each of our twelve parish areas hosted a parish-wide picnic for the purpose of having parish area folks get to know one another. In total, 502 people came out across the metro Richmond area in groups that were intergenerational, full of babies, toddlers, kids, and married and single adults of all ages. The weather was great, the food was delicious, and all kinds of fun was happening all over Richmond!

Some glimpses of our parish life events...

Fried chicken, corn hole, fishing, blueberry picking, kayaking, volleyball, games, piñata, guess on jar of skittles, water balloons...

Meeting folks not part of Third in a park setting, people getting to know one another around a meal, laughter, music.

One group had been praying for the difficult pregnancy of a daughter & son-in-law who lived in Switzerland. Much to the surprise and delight of the group, this family was at the picnic with their new baby.

Our next Parish Area event is Sunday, September 8 – mark your calendar and plan to attend and join the fun!

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

On October 6, congregations around the globe will celebrate World Communion Sunday. This day, which has been celebrated since 1936, has grown into an international ecumenical celebration of Christian unity. World Communion Sunday serves as a time to remember that around the globe—in different languages, with different traditions and customs and forms of liturgy—the Lord's Supper is celebrated throughout Christendom. So while this day is a joyous and meaningful celebration of communion it also exposes us to different Christian traditions from around the world.

How you can be a part of it: Do you have any scraps of fabric or unwearable garments from other cultures that you'd be willing to donate to be reconstructed into a communion table cloth? This year, Third's World Communion Celebration will incorporate different elements in worship that will help connect us to the broader, big "C", Church around the world.

One of those ways is through our creative team who will be creating a special tablecloth using strips of fabric from many cultures for the communion table, as well as accents for the sanctuary. We are calling for any scraps of fabric or unwearable garments that you are willing to donate! Also, we will be using some textiles from around the world to assist in the actual serving of communion that day. If you would like to donate, please drop them at the church office or hand off to Rebecca Hatton (rebeccah@thirdrva.org) by August 15.

Are you traveling internationally this summer? Check with the mission department, we can help connect you with a mission partner serving in that country. Why not purchase a piece of clothing and consider wearing it on October 6th to honor and celebrate the diverse cultures of the world? More information will appear in September's issue of Third Press about our World Communion Sunday Celebration describing ways that you can participate.



OUR MISSIONS TRIP TO RUSSIA

An Educational Experience Beyond Textbook

Written by LJ Jaworski

A team of five, from four different churches, traveled to Russia on a vision trip sponsored by Frontier Fellowship. Our mission partner, Donald Marsden, introduced the team to many Central Asian pastors serving as church planters—some of which have fled their countries after converting to Christianity. On this trip, our understanding of the Russian Church, and its migrant communities grew exponentially.

We visited both Moscow and St. Petersburg. While in Moscow, we met with seven pastors, two of which traveled with us. In St. Petersburg, two pastors traveled with us, and we met with an American missionary, Uzbekistan church planters, and also visited our mission partner, Lyle Thomas' ministry team.

Personally, I found the trip to be extremely enlightening, educational and physical. We walked for miles but this a good thing! We listened to their stories, and learned and prayed a lot. Our rich discussions covered culture, theology and mission. The fact we came to visit—that we showed up—seemed to give weary discouraged leaders a glimmer of new hope. God confirmed that his work is expansive and that serving in difficult places does not limit his word from spreading. It was even more apparent that short-term mission is an educational experience beyond text books.

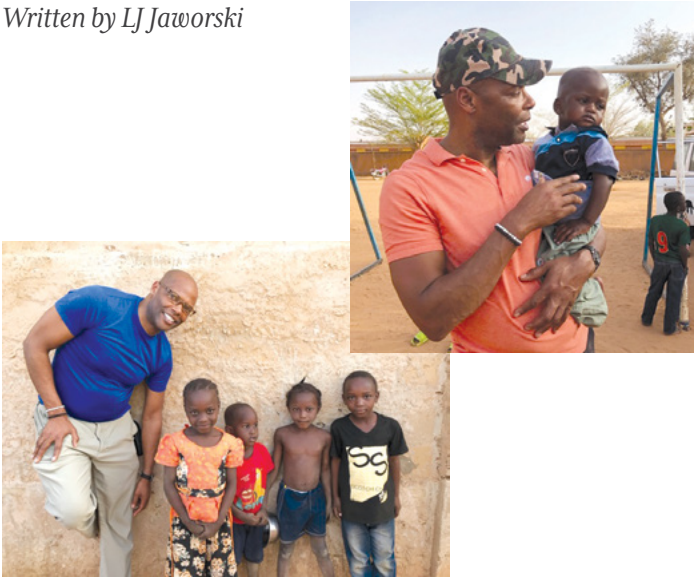
In September we'll sponsor a reunion of the team while one of the pastors is visiting Richmond, and we hope to have a time where we can share with our congregation about the trip and what we observed God doing in Russia. (Date to be announced! Stay tuned!)

In addition to the Russia Team debrief later this year, we'll have a training opportunity from our mission partner, Lyle Thomas. Lyle will run a pilot project for a training program he developed and has been using in Russia for the last few years. He is looking for members of the community interested in participating in the filming of the first part of that training for a grant he received to produce the program. The training is a new approach to developing deep, authentic, and mutually accountable relationships in the Body that lead to effective ministry to those far from the Lord. Training will take place during the week of September 6-15. Please contact Lyle directly for more information: lyle.thomas@novo.org.



STEPHEN JENKINS

Written by LJ Jaworski



I asked Stephen, “Why did you decide to go to Niger?” He mentioned that after receiving his DNA results he discovered that he had ancestors from Niger. Then Buddy Childress, of Needle’s Eye Ministries, hosted a speaker named Michael Thaler in September 2018. Thaler leads 10 mission trips a year to Niger to help with clean water, health care, orphanages and micro-finance. The goal is to impact the country by raising future leaders. Stephen has a background of caring for people, which will help greatly as he serves in Niger.

I loved Stephen’s response when I asked why he wants to return to Niger. It has a lot to do with the kids: how they reacted to him, and he to them. He also mentioned that a man named Bernard is head of the orphanage. Bernard and his wife, who recently died, ran the orphanage together. Stephen hopes to come alongside Bernard to assist with the day-to-day responsibilities there. When Stephen was asked if he would consider coming back for an extended time, he felt God spoke to his heart powerfully, telling him that he doesn’t need to be afraid and inviting him to step out of his comfort zone so he could be used in a unique way.

“You may already know I had the privilege to go to Niger, Africa in March. To say the trip was amazing would be an understatement! There were many things that moved me and spoke to my heart but I must say that my time with the children at the orphanage opened my heart to a new call. I have the opportunity to **go back to Niger this summer** and serve again at the CSEN orphanage in the desert, where there’s very limited access to clean water and nutritional food choices. We have prayerfully sought the Lord on this and with complete peace I have decided to return for six weeks (June 17 - August 2). I will be serving in multiple capacities but look forward to teaching English to both the children at the orphanage and the children in the village, and reading to them under the big old tree in front of the orphanage.”

STEPHEN JENKINS

Covenant Partner

Stephen asks us, his church family, to keep this extended trip in our prayers. He also asks us to pray for the orphanage and the work going on there with CSEN (the French acronym for Solidarity Compassion for Children of Niger). The orphanage, located in a desert, has no air conditioning and it will be hot during the summer. You are welcome to check out the ministry online: effectiveministries.org/link-missions.

Please pray for the children of the orphanage and for God to use Stephen in whatever way he wishes. Stephen’s life has already been touched by the children and they have been touched through him as well.



If you’d like to receive updates from Stephen, please send an email to Rebecca Hatton at rebeccah@thindrva.org. Rebecca will make sure Stephen includes you in his weekly updates!

FAMILY MINISTRY

UPCOMING EVENTS



CHRISTMAS IN JULY

Friday, July 19, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall

Join us for Christmas in July Family Night, with a theme of *service*. We'll eat pizza and snacks together, watch *The Grinch* (2018), and do a service project for Third's *Forgotten No More* ministry. We'll provide pizza, popcorn, drinks, fruit, some carrot sticks, and a hot cocoa bar! We'll even have a cookie decorating station and Christmas-themed games.

PLEASE NOTE! For all of these events, we need some help with set up and clean up, so if you'd like to be part of those teams, you can volunteer for that when you sign up.

Visit thirdrva.org/events to RSVP.

Questions? Contact Kathy (kathyw@thirdrva.org) or Tracie (traciem@thirdrva.org)

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR 4 YEAR OLDS THROUGH KINDERGARTEN



WILD & WONDERFUL CAMP

God and Nature Camp for Preschoolers and Kindergartners

Wednesdays, July 24, 31, August 7, 14

We're so excited for this special camp designed to begin the process of developing a Biblical worldview as children discover the amazing and creative God we have while exploring nature! This exciting offering will be available for children who will be 4 years old by September 30 through rising 1st grade. Sign up at thirdrva.org/events. If you have any questions, contact Kathy White at kathyw@thirdrva.org.

UPCOMING BAPTISMS

In this monthly feature in the Press, we share the scheduled baptisms and dedications for the upcoming month. As a church family, we know it's important for you to be able to attend these sacraments for people within your community, your parish area, or perhaps a new friend you recently met. We hope this gives you the insight you need so you can plan to bear witness to these special occasions.

JULY 14

8:45 a.m. Cole Kyle and Anthony John Fuschetti, twin sons of Kyle and Jean Fuschetti (Grove Parish)

10:00 a.m. Ann Douglas Copeland, daughter of Sarah and Scott Copeland (Three Chopt Parish)

DELTA

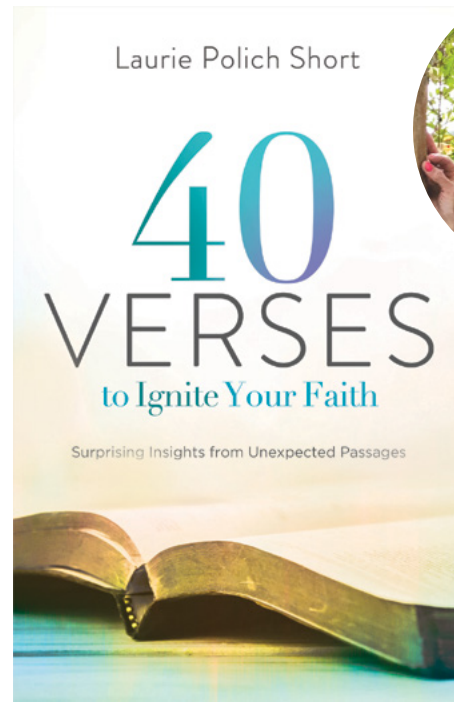
YOUNG ADULT COMMUNITY AND CONVERSATION

Are you in your 20-30s and looking for a place to connect and grow at Third? Join us on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in Room 217 for coffee, snacks, conversation and teaching.

Delta is a new community at Third for young adults (20-30 somethings, single or married), who are seeking others to befriend, learn from and grow alongside. We aspire to create a space for those who desire deeper friendships with peers and rich conversations relevant to their current questions about faith and all of life. We all long for a place to belong and for a people to know us well and yet embrace us all the same. We long for relationships in which can we discover and explore truths about God, ourselves, others and the changing world. We long for a community in which we are loved, heard, and challenged to grow together as we share our ambitions, struggles and questions, or just a laugh on a Saturday night. We long to be transformed into who God has called us to be — come share, learn and grow!

The Sunday group will discuss issues related to faith and culture, work and career, singleness, marriage and friendship. The format aspires to be a social forum for asking questions and seeking together authentic answers found in God's Word, the life of Jesus Christ and our own stories. The next class will kick off Sunday, July 7 with a 7-part series called For the Life of the World. Author and recent Third guest speaker, Andy Crouch calls it "the best treatment of faith and culture ever put on a screen. Just outstanding." This quirky narrative-based video series explores the question: *What is our salvation for?*

Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in Room 217 - Join us for coffee and a good conversation. College-age students are welcome!



WOMEN'S SUMMER STUDY

When: Wednesday evenings, July 10 – August 14
7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Where: Fellowship Hall

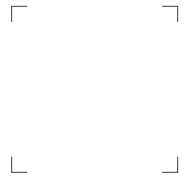
Join the women of Third for a study of *40 Verses to Ignite Your Faith* by Laurie Short. Women of all ages at Third will gather for an engaging look at lesser known passages of scripture that will challenge and encourage you in your faith. Each week is stand-alone, so don't worry if you miss a week. Also, this is a great study to invite a friend or neighbor to!

Cost: \$20, includes study guide

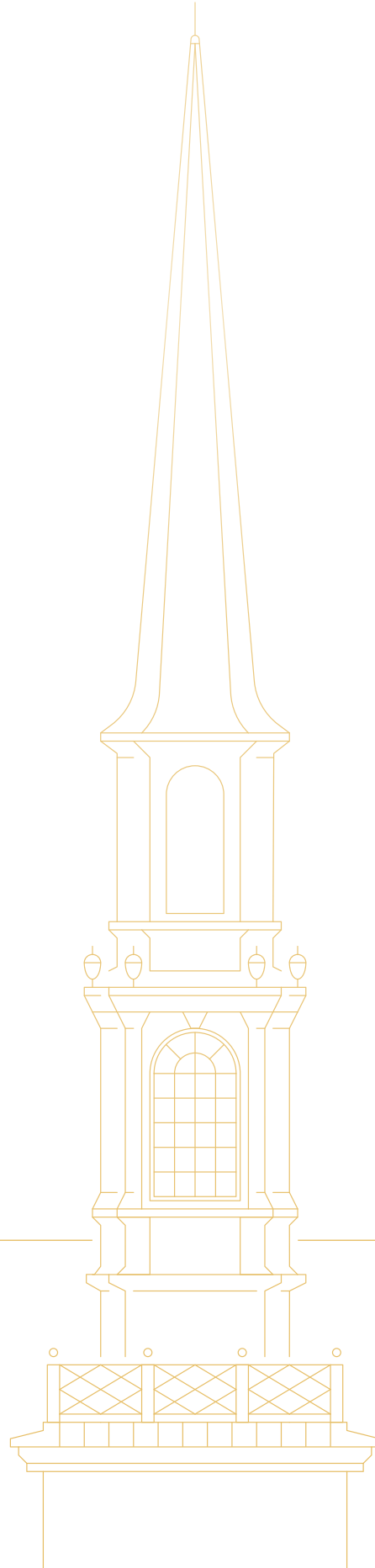
Sign up: thirdrva.org/events



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