

## Continuing on the Trail of Souls: More on Isaac Brown

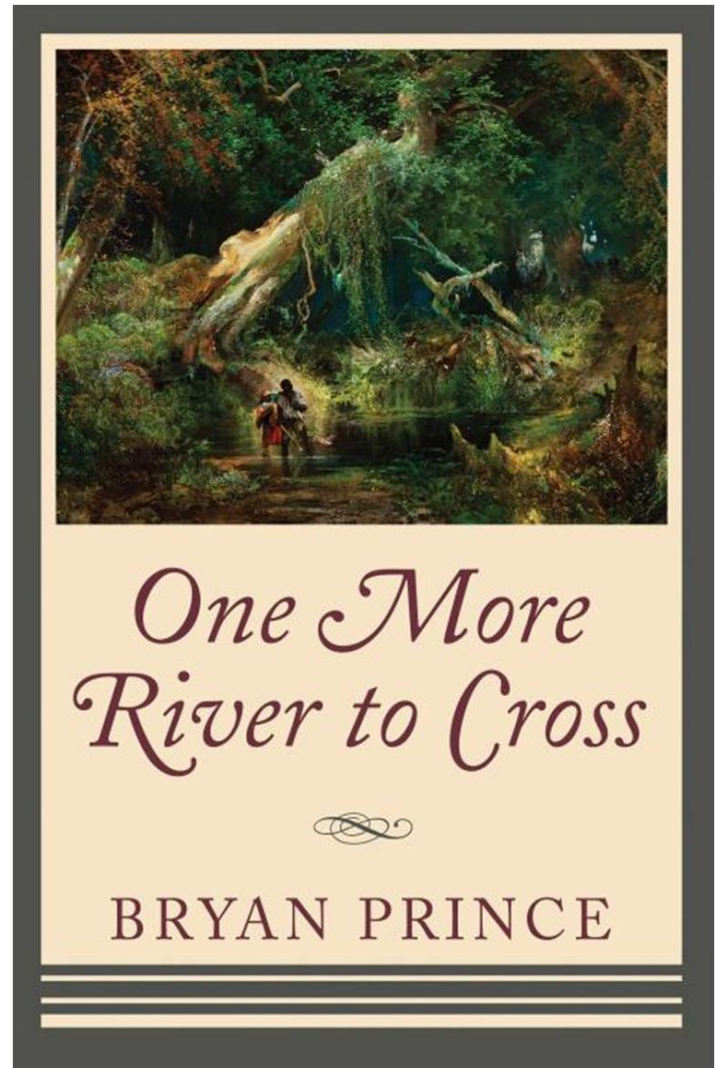
During our Trail of Souls project we learned about slavery in Calvert County and here at Middleham Chapel. In sharing our findings, we told the story of Isaac Brown. As you recall, Isaac was the slave of Alexander Somervell. In 1845 Isaac was accused of shooting Somervell in the back. At the time, Isaac was three miles away from the scene of the crime and clearly innocent. However, he was pursued, apprehended, jailed and convicted of the crime. As was the custom, convicted felons were sold south and Isaac taken to New Orleans, where he escaped, fleeing to Philadelphia. He was discovered in Philadelphia by Maryland officials. The

Governor of Maryland issued a warrant to the Governor of Pennsylvania for his arrest and return to Maryland. This, of course, would be double jeopardy. Nonetheless, he was brought to trial, but before the trial ended, he was released on a technicality and fled with his family to Canada. His mistreatment became a national story and was widely publicized by those in the abolitionist movement.

The full story of Isaac Brown is captured in the book "One More River to Cross" by Bryan Prince the renowned author and expert of the underground railroad. It provides full detail of Brown's harrowing escape through the underground railroad and those that helped him on the way. It also provides very interesting detail of life in Canada for the slaves that fled there, including Isaac Brown. Prince lives there today. This very interesting book is on Amazon.

Like so many slaves that fled north and to Canada, they led full lives in freedom. Isaac Brown became a doctor, serving his community. He also was active in the abolitionist movement. Bryan Prince thought that Brown was his ancestor - his great-great-great grandfather, but he was not able to confirm that. We have been in contact with Mr. Prince, and have shared our information with him. In his research for the book, he came to Lusby and the chapel a few years ago.

An interesting piece of the Isaac Brown story is why Alexander Somervell suspected that Isaac Brown



had shot him. It turns out that Isaac Brown's brother was also a slave of Somervell. Ten years earlier, in a fit of rage because the brother was late in returning from his wedding, Somerville stabbed and killed the brother. He had also promised Brown his freedom at age 35, but had reneged on this. So he would obviously be suspicious of Isaac when he was shot. Our parish and chapels hold many interesting stories, including this one. I highly recommend this book, which is available through Amazon. I will always think of Isaac Brown when I look upon the Somervell window in the front of the chapel. The section of the window with Somervell's name is at the left.