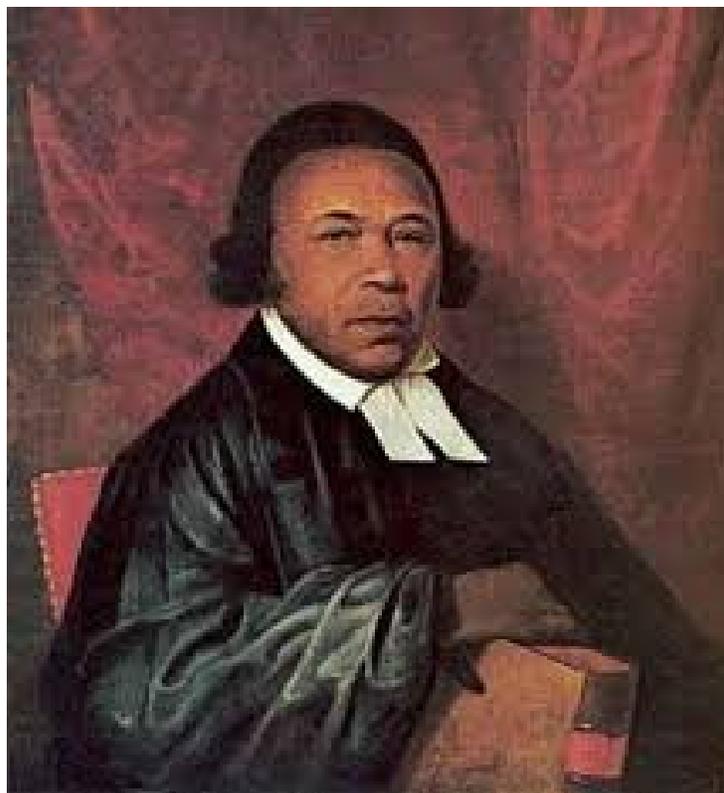


Trinity Episcopal Church

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania



*The Lessons appointed for use on
The Commemoration of
Absalom Jones
Priest, 1818
Wednesday, February 13, 2019*

Collect

Set us free, heavenly Father, from every bond of prejudice and fear; that, honoring the steadfast courage of your servant Absalom Jones, we may show forth in our lives the reconciling love and true freedom of the children of God, which you have given us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians Galatians 5:1-5

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

Response

Psalm 137:1-6

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, *
when we remembered you, O Zion.

As for our harps, we hung them up *
on the trees in the midst of that land.

For those who led us away captive asked us for a song,
and our oppressors called for mirth: *
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

How shall we sing the LORD'S song *
upon an alien soil.

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, *
let my right hand forget its skill.

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you, *
if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.

Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father."

Prayer over the Gifts

God of peace, who guided your servant Absalom Jones in the works that give you glory, grant that in all our offering this day we may wait upon the riches of your grace and be ready in truth for the abundance of your table, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion

Grant, O almighty and everlasting God, that your faithful people, whom you have restored to life through the proclamation of your holy word and nourished with the bread of heaven, may grow into the likeness of him whose Body and Blood they have received, and may be made worthy to dwell with him in heaven, where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

**Absalom Jones
Priest, 1818**

Information taken from : <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/jones-absalom-1746-1818/> (Victor Tolly)

Absalom Jones was born into **slavery** in Sussex, Delaware in 1746. He **taught himself to read** in his early teens from books he purchased by saving pennies given to him by visitors to his master's home. At the age of sixteen, Jones' family was separated when his immediate family members were **sold and he was taken to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by his new owner**. Jones worked as a clerk in his owner's store by day and **was allowed to work for himself and attend an all-black school at night**.

In 1770, Jones **married a fellow slave**, and through hard work and the help of friends and his father-in-law, he **was able to buy his wife's freedom**. Jones saved enough to **purchase his own freedom** in 1784. He was an **active member of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia** and served as lay preacher for the black members of the congregation. In 1786, **Richard Allen** joined Jones at the church and their

futures would forever be intertwined. **The black membership at St. George's increased tenfold as a result of the evangelistic efforts of Jones and Allen.** But this increase was not welcomed by the white members of the congregation. Instead of praising their efforts, church officials responded by attempting to **segregate the black congregants.** During a Sunday service in November 1786, **ushers attempted to remove all blacks, including Jones, from the main floor of the church to the balcony.** Jones, Allen, and the black members of the congregation **promptly left the church** as a group.

Jones and Allen subsequently founded the **Free African Society** on April 12, 1787. Members of this organization met regularly and paid dues which were used to **benefit those in need.** This organization was crucial in caring for the sick and dying of Philadelphia when a yellow fever epidemic swept the city in 1793. Out of this society grew **The African Church,** organized on July 7, 1791. **Both Jones and Allen wanted to remain affiliated with the Methodist church, but their followers overwhelmingly voted to affiliate themselves with Episcopal Church as a result of their persecution by the Methodists at St. George's.** Allen disagreed with this decision and withdrew from the African Church, taking a small number of followers with him.

Jones remained as the leader of The African Church which was formally received into the **Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania** on October 17, 1794 and renamed **St. Thomas African Episcopal Church.** **St. Thomas was the first black Episcopal parish in the United States.** **Bishop William White** (bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania) **ordained Jones a deacon** in the Episcopal Church in 1795 and as **priest in 1804.** **Jones became the first ordained priest of African descent in the United States.**

Despite the split in The African Church, Jones and Allen continued to work together. They were among the founders of the **African Masonic Lodge** in Philadelphia in 1798. The two men also led the black community in **petitioning the Pennsylvania State Legislature for the abolition of slavery in 1799.** In 1800, they sent a similar petition to the United States Congress. Jones and Allen also founded the **Society for the Suppression of Vice and Immorality** in 1809. In 1816, Jones saw his friend **Allen consecrated the first bishop of the newly formed African Methodist Episcopal Church.** And in 1817, the two men were united again when they **condemned the newly formed American Colonization Society, which encouraged freed slaves to return to Africa.** One year later, **Absalom Jones died** at his home in Philadelphia on **February 13, 1818.**