

Please Attend
Public Celebration of Absalom Jones
First Black American Episcopal Priest
Saturday, February 11, 2012



Celebration Mass
11:00 a.m.

Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral
13th and Broadway, Kansas City, Mo.

Celebrant: The Rt. Rev. Martin Field,
Bishop - Episcopal Diocese of West Missouri
Preacher: The Rev. Emanuel Cleaver III,
St. James United Methodist Church
Performance: St. James Praise Propulsion &
St. Augustine's Liturgical Dancers

Reception in cathedral's Haden Hall following the service

Born a slave in Delaware in 1746, Absalom Jones was the first Black American to be ordained an Episcopal priest (and quite possibly the first black priest of any denomination). At age 16, Jones was sent to Philadelphia to work in his master's store. He taught himself to read from the New Testament and attended night school for Blacks operated by Quakers. In 1786 Jones met Richard Allen, and they became lay ministers for the Black members of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. Their active evangelism and pastoral efforts resulted in a tenfold increase in Black members of the parish. This alarmed the vestry, which decided to segregate Blacks to an upstairs gallery. Jones and Allen were outraged, and they led the Black parishioners out the door.

The two continued holding church services, and Allen went on to found the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Absalom Jones, with

the aid of Quakers and Episcopalians, erected the African Church, which was admitted as St. Thomas African Episcopal Church in October 1794. Jones was ordained priest in 1802, yet he and his parishioners were not permitted to participate in Diocesan life.

Jones was an activist in areas important to his congregation and to other Blacks. Education was a major need of the Black community as they were excluded from the public schools. He founded a day school at the Church. Jones, who had purchased his wife's freedom and later his own, protested against slavery. He preached a Thanksgiving sermon, titled *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, in 1808. During the War of 1812, Jones and Allen recruited 3,000 Blacks to form a "Black Legion." Jones continued his ministry on behalf of the oppressed and distressed until his death in 1818.