



Who Was This Absalom Jones?

Born a house slave in 1746, he taught himself to read by using the New Testament because school was not available for him. At age sixteen, Absalom Jones was sold to a store owner in Philadelphia.

It was there that he finally attended a night school for blacks, run by Quakers.

At St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church, he served as lay minister for the church's black members. His active evangelism greatly increased membership in the parish which alarmed the parish vestry. At a Sunday service soon after, the blacks walked out when ushers attempted to segregate them into an upstairs gallery.

In 1787, these black Christians created the Free African Society, and Absalom Jones was elected one of its overseers. Members paid monthly dues, used to help the very poor in the city. In 1782 the Society began to build a church, and it was dedicated in July, 1794.

One of the first things that group did was to apply for membership in the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, but with these stipulations: they would have control over their own affairs, be received as an organized body, and Absalom Jones would be licensed as a lay reader and, if qualified, be ordained as minister.

They were admitted to the diocese in 1794 as St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. Jones was ordained as a priest in September, 1802. He often warned oppressors to "clean their hands of slaves."

To him, God was the Father who always acted on behalf of the "oppressed and distressed." But it was Jones' constant ministry and mild manner that made him so loved -- not only by his own members, but the entire black community. As a result, during its first year St. Thomas Church grew to over 500 members.

Today in Philadelphia that parish will celebrate the life and ministry of its first rector, Absalom Jones. The guest preacher will be Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts-Schori. Holy Eucharist will be celebrated on the original altar used by Absalom Jones.

To Africa to a Closed Conference, Jefferts-Schori May Be Shunned

Church history will surely get written this week, authentic textbook stuff. Events will occur in Africa, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where 38 Anglican Primates (consisting of presiding bishops, senior bishop and moderators) of the worldwide Anglican Communion will gather. This meeting at Jangwani Beach is not open to the public.

Our new American Presiding Bishop will attempt to convey to her peers that despite the highly publicized departure of some 45 American congregations (out of a total of 7400) the Episcopal Church in the U.S. has the support of most members, who are engaged in worship and mission work, and not fixated on the controversy. "The folks who are unhappy represent a small percentage of the whole" she said, "but they are quite loud."

Bishop Katharine Jefferts-Schori will be conferring with some bishops who have broken their ties with the American church after it ordained an openly gay bishop and permitted the blessing of same-sex unions.

At age 52, our Presiding Bishop is said to exude a cool presence and use few words to make her points. Ordained a priest only 13 years ago, she was elected Presiding Bishop last June, a nine-year assignment.

She maintains that only a few primates made it appear as if the bulk of the Anglican Communion was arrayed against the Americans, when that was not the case.

At the meeting in Tanzania, Bishop Jefferts-Schori is to sit down with the primates of 13 provinces that do not ordain women as priests, not to mention as bishops. She is likely to be face to face with Archbishop Akinola, who has created a rival network of conservative churches in the United States. (Compiled from the *NY Times* and *The Episcopal News Service*)

THIS MONTH:

Absalom Jones Celebration and Eucharist, 2/13 at 7pm. In our Sanctuary. **Vestry Meeting**, will follow service. Parish Hall. Parishioners are invited.

Pancake Supper, Shrove Tuesday, 2/20 6 - 8pm. \$5/person. Take outs available. Sponsored by ECW.

Ash Wednesday Service, 2/21 at 7pm.

ECW meeting, 2/22 at 6:30pm. Parish Hall

Men's Brotherhood meeting, 2/22 at 7:30pm. Ford Hall.

Absalom Jones Celebration 2007, 2/24 at 11am. Sociedad La Union Marti-Maceo Cuban Club Hall, 1226 E. 7th. Ave., in Ybor City.

New Vestry Approach

"I hope to give some direction," Fr. Whitlock says, "to how our vestry handles business."

He's referring to our vestry's style of managing church affairs. "It's pretty much micro-managing." He continues, "We can't grow as a parish if we don't grow out of that model."

What's he proposing? He believes the vestry should set direction and goals for the parish instead of entering long discussions about how work should be done. Committees should do the how, when and where work, then report back. The vestry should encourage, approve or disapprove.

"This approach frees vestry members to focus on big issues," Fr. concludes. "Detail work goes to committees of parish members."

This week's regular meeting will reflect this new discipline.

Service to honor Absalom Jones

Eucharist and readings for his Feast Day

Tuesday, February 13th at 7pm

Parishioners are invited to Vestry Meeting immediately after service

This weekly newsletter is for members and friends of one courageous Episcopal Church in south St. Petersburg, FL. The publication is about recognition and nixing hearsay, about candor, spiritual attitude and, yes, unashamed cheer leading. Members Judy and Tom Krug are the project's co-editors. Some 65 parishioners are essential to the effort. We think of this publication as the first draft of our congregation's recent history. Issues are available each Sunday after the service and also online at www.staugstpete.org, our web site for church-shoppers.



Mordecai Walker displays his just-patented "Rib Slinger," a unique device that allows a barbecue chef to handle a full slab of ribs safely at one time. The government's protection process began just two years ago with the help of this church's Atty. Yate' Cutliff. (photo by Nat Caines)

He Gets 1st Patent & 2nd Is Pending Inventor Looking to Tenn. State for Marketing Help

It all really started in this church's back yard. **Mordecai Walker** was doing something he loves, something he started at age six: he was tending a barbecue fire. He thought that the process of moving whole slabs of ribs was awkward and an idea was born right there. So he gathered some coat hangers, bent them into a crude prototype and was soon off to a metal fabricator to make improvements.

Then came formal engineering drawings and the professional help of a good patent attorney – **Yate' Cutliff**, also from St. Augustine's. That was almost exactly two years ago and on January 30th his US Patent #D0535858S was awarded.

Mordecai recalls an experience from his early childhood when his father was doing a BBQ for a Tampa mayor's big shindig. When his uncle, who'd had a few too many, was left to watch the coals, it was 6-year old Mordecai who saved the day until his dad returned. He's been refining his BBQ processes ever since.

"A patent is the first step. Now I've got to figure how to make it commercial," he says. "I'd like to involve my alma mater, Tennessee State University."

Mordecai has another idea submitted and a third invention may follow.

Atty. Yate' Cutliff is now working in Washington D.C. at the Patent Office.

**We
can be
more!**

Episcopalians aren't interested in replenishing by having children?

No. It's probably the opposite. We encourage people to pay attention to the stewardship of the earth and not use more than their portion.

You're actually Catholic by birth; your parents joined the Episcopal Church when you were 9. What led them to convert?

It was before Vatican II had any influence in local parishes, and I think my parents were looking for a place where wrestling with questions was encouraged rather than discouraged.

Pope Benedict became embroiled in controversy this fall after suggesting that Muslims have a history of violence.

So do Christians! They have a terrible history. Look at history in the Dark Ages. Charlemagne converted whole tribes by the sword. I think Muslims are poorly understood by the West, and it is easy to latch onto that which we do not understand and demonize it.

What do you make of Ted Haggard who just stepped down as the head of the National Association of Evangelicals, after he was accused of cavorting with a gay escort?

I think it's very sad. We're always surprised when we see people's clay feet. Our culture seems to delight in exposing them. I think we have a prurient interest in other people's failings.

You can't blame the Haggard case on the culture or the media. It isn't a story about sex so much as the disturbing hypocrisy of a church leader.

But we're all hypocrites. All of us.

You're very forgiving.

I like the word "shalom." I use it in my correspondence, in my sermons, and that's how I sign my e-mails — "shalom." To me it is a concrete reminder of what it is we're all supposed to be about.

Because it means peace in Hebrew?

It means far more than peace. I think it's a vision of the human community. Those great visions of Isaiah — every person fed, no more strife, the ill are healed, prisoners are released.

You were previously bishop of Nevada, but your new position requires you to live in New York City. Do you and your husband like it here?

He is actually in Nevada. He is a retired mathematician. He will be here in New York when it makes sense.

I hear you're a pilot.

I got my license when I was 18.

You have many talents.

Many crazinesses, many passions.

So We're Episcopalians

Just Who Is This New Presiding Bishop of Ours?

At last Thursday's gathering of Christians, Jews and Muslims, one speaker, Rev. Donna Schaper, was asked: Are more women becoming church leaders? Her answer: there is progress. Her evidence: the election of Katharine Jefferts-Schori as our Presiding Bishop. Here is a recent interview reprinted from the *New York Times*, written by Mackenzie Stroh.

You just took office as the first woman to head the Episcopal Church and curiously enough, you come from a science background, having worked as an oceanographer for years.

I worked on squids and octopuses.

As a scientist with a Ph.D., what do you make of the Christian fundamentalists who say the earth was created in six days and dismiss evolution as a lot of bunk?

I think it's a horrendous misunderstanding of both science and active faith tradition. I understand the great creation story in the scientific sense — big bang and evolutionary theory — as the best understanding of how we have come to be what we are: not the meaning behind it, but the process behind it. Genesis is about the meaning behind that.

Your critics see you as an unrepentant liberal who supports the ordination of gay bishops. Are you trying to bolster the religious left?

No. We're not about being either left or right. We're about being comprehensive.

How many members of the Episcopal Church in this country?

About 2.2 million. It used to be larger percentagewise, but Episcopalians tend to be better-educated and tend to reproduce at lower rates than some other denominations. Roman Catholics and Mormons both have theological reasons for producing lots of children.