February 4, 2018 – 5th Sunday after the Epiphany (B)  
Absalom Jones Offering

In honor of February Black History Month and Blessed Absalom Jones, the first African American priest in the Episcopal Church, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has called for an increased understanding and commitment to the Episcopal Historically Black Colleges and University, known as HBCUs.

The Presiding Bishop invites Episcopalians “to deepen our participation in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation by dedicating offerings at observances of the Feast of Absalom Jones to support the two remaining Episcopal Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCUs): St. Augustine’s University in Raleigh, N.C., and Voorhees College in Denmark, S.C.”

The two institutes of higher education were founded in the later 19th century as an Episcopal Church missionary venture. “These schools bring educational, economic, and social opportunity to often resource-poor communities, and they offer many blessings into the life of the Episcopal Church,” he said. Donations to the HBCUs will provide much needed help to offer competitive scholarships and financial aid, attract and retain exceptional faculty, support cutting-edge faculty research, install new and upgraded technology campus-wide, and provide state-of-the-art classroom and athletic equipment.

“The Episcopal Church established and made a life-long covenant with these schools, and they are an essential part of the fabric of our Church.”
shared life,” the Presiding Bishop noted. Once there were 10 HBCUs; however, St. Augustine’s and Voorhees are the only two remaining.

**Absalom Jones**

Absalom Jones is honored in the Episcopal Church on February 13. Jones was an African-American abolitionist and clergyman and the first African American ordained a priest in The Episcopal Church. Absalom Jones was born enslaved to Abraham Wynkoop in 1746 in Delaware. Jones moved to Philadelphia after his master sold his plantation along with Absalom’s mother and six siblings. Jones bought his wife Mary’s freedom and later his master granted Absalom’s emancipation in 1784.

In 1787, with his friend Richard Allen, they founded the Free African Society, a mutual aid benevolent organization that was the first of its kind organized by and for black people. Bishop William White ordained Jones a deacon in 1795 and a priest on September 21, 1802. Jones faithfully served the people at the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in Philadelphia, a church which remains a vibrant congregation.

“As we approach February, the remembrance of the Blessed Absalom Jones, the first African-American priest in the Episcopal Church, we have a unique opportunity to celebrate his memory and to honor the witness of two schools that continue to form new leaders,” Presiding Bishop Curry said. “In honor of Jones’ commitment to advancing the education of African Americans and promoting the development of African American leaders in all areas of life, the Episcopal Church is delighted to designate Saint Augustine’s University and Voorhees College as the beneficiaries of the 2018 Feast of Absalom Jones offerings.”

Donations are accepted at [episcopalchurch.org/give](http://episcopalchurch.org/give). For more information, contact Tara Elgin Holley, Episcopal Church Director of Development, at tholley@episcopalchurch.org.

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