

Lesson Plans that Work
Absalom Jones (1746-1818)
Lesson Plans for Older and Younger Children
Feast Day, February 13

Background: The saints are “the lights of the world in every generation,” people whose lives and deeds have shone brightly and helped others more closely follow God. There are saints who lived long ago and there are saints living and working in the world today, saints who are known by the church and saints who are known only to God. We say that the church—we—are part of the Communion of Saints, the company of all faithful people, connected through our baptism to those Christians who have died, those who are alive now, and those who haven’t yet been born. The word “saint” means holy. In the Episcopal Church we have a Calendar of Saints, *Holy Women, Holy Men* that helps us remember these saints on their feast day with the reading of scripture and prayer.

Supplies needed: You will need a prayer table, a white cloth for prayer table, a candle, pre-cut cardstock and writing instruments (crayons, markers and card decorations) to make cards and pictures. For older children you will also need a Bible.

Before: Prepare your prayer/gathering space with a small table, or space with a piece of cloth. If you like, you might place a picture of Absalom Jones (found at the end of the lesson) on the table. You will also need adequate table space for card-making and the church prayer list to secure names of people to whom you will send cards.

Beginning: Gather the children around the prayer space and ask some wondering questions: I wonder what kind of person is called a saint? I wonder what the work of a saint might be? (You may wish to share the introduction above.) Today we will hear the story of Blessed Absalom Jones. Light the candle.

Opening prayer: Jesus, your saints are the lights of the world in every generation. Help us to shine as they do, letting your light glow in us that through us others might see you. Amen.

Tell the story:

Absalom Jones was born into slavery in Delaware in the 1700s. When he was sixteen, he was sold away from his mother and six brothers and sisters and was sent to Philadelphia with his new owner.

Young Absalom wanted to learn. He managed to get and keep books which taught reading and writing. He practiced hard until he could do both.

Absalom thought of others first. In 1770, he married an enslaved woman named Mary King. He saved his money and took donations from friends to buy her freedom, instead of his own freedom. In this way, his children would be born free, and not as slaves.

Absalom was courageous. He and his family attended St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. The church leaders decided that they would segregate (separate) African

Americans and make them sit upstairs in a balcony by themselves. Absalom thought that this was very unfair. One Sunday, he sat in the main part of the church. The church ushers picked him up and dragged him to the back of the church. Absalom and other African Americans left the church and never returned. They started their own church called the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. That church is still in Philadelphia today.

Absalom and his African American friends helped people. They started a club to help people in need and started a school for African American children. When a serious sickness struck the people of Philadelphia, many people ran away from the city. Absalom and his friends stayed to help take care of the people who were sick.

Absalom Jones became a priest in the Episcopal Church, and because of all the good things he did, we Episcopalians have given him a special day. His special day is February 13th. Because he helped so many people and was a leader in our church, we remember him today.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what part of Absalom Jones story you like best?
- I wonder what part of Absalom Jones story you think is the most important?
- I wonder what part of Absalom Jones story is also about you?

You may move to another space with tables for the activity time.

Activity for Older Children: The Gospel reading appointed is John 15:12-15.

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."

Activity for Children: Absalom Jones inspires us to remember the sick among us and help them as much as we can. Invite the children to make cards and/or pictures that will be given to those on the parish sick list or local nursing homes or hospitals.

Gather/Ending: Return to your prayer space and gather in a circle to pray.

PRAYER FOR ABSALOM JONES

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.*

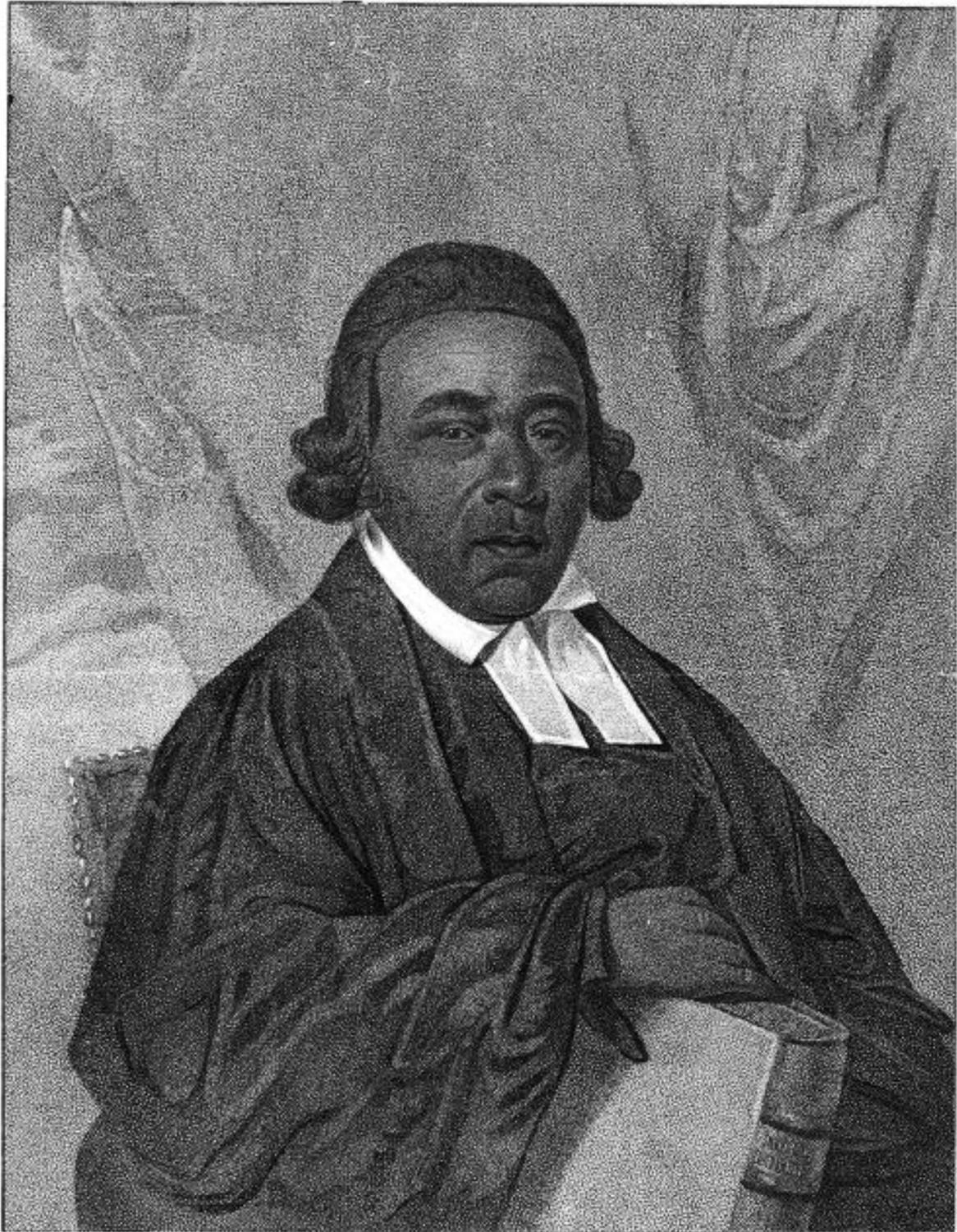
Prayer for younger children (Use the prayer below by having the children repeat each phrase):

Dear God, (Dear God),
may we with your help (may we with your help)
follow Blessed Absalom (follow Blessed Absalom),

by showing courage to do what is right (by showing courage to do what is right)
love for everyone, (love for everyone,)
so we can be true free children of God (so we can be true free children of God)
who gave for Jesus's sake (who gave for Jesus's)
to your honor and glory (to your honor and glory).
Amen. (Amen.)

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