

FROM: Cathedral of St. John the Divine

CONTACT: RUBENSTEIN

Julie Falvo – (212) 843-9341 [jfalvo@rubenstein.com](mailto:jfalvo@rubenstein.com)

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***REQUEST FOR COVERAGE***

**THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE CELEBRATES THE FEAST OF  
BLESSED ABSALOM JONES ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2024**

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine will celebrate the Feast of Blessed Absalom Jones, first Black priest in the Episcopal Church, **on Saturday, February 3 at 10:30 AM at 1047 Amsterdam Avenue (at 112<sup>th</sup> Street).**

In the Episcopal Diocese of New York, the annual Absalom Jones celebration includes worshippers and cultures of all ethnicities from throughout the diocese; in recognition of current Episcopal Church inclusivity, prayers are offered in, at least, nine languages. All are welcome.

The service will be officiated by the Right Reverend Andrew M. L. Dietsche, Bishop of New York, in one of his last major services before his retirement. The 2024 preacher will be The Rev. Yejide Peters, Associate Dean and Director of Formation of Berkeley Divinity School, the Episcopal seminary at Yale University.

This year the Cathedral will be filled with Jazz Luminaries. Dr. Darrell Smith and the Jazz House Kids featuring Kim Kalesti and Marion Cowings will participate in a rendition of “David Danced before the Lord” from Duke Ellington’s *Sacred Mass*, which was first performed at the Cathedral in 1968. Also featured in this rendition will be the Festival Chorus, Christ Church Youth Choir, Joshua Coyne, and Tappers: Yvonne Curry, A. C. Lincoln, and Rita Tuitt. In addition, Dorian Lake will present a transcription of Take 6’s “A Quiet Place”.

Featured artists in the service include Jay Hoggard, vibraphonist; Patience Higgins, saxophonist; Bim Strasberg, Bass; Jae Lee, pianist/organist; Malik Jardin, organ; Justin Denhart, composer; Chris Almeida, drums; and Charles Lovelle, pianist, with Musical Direction by Jeannine Otis and overall coordination by Carla Burns and Roberta Todd and the Absalom Jones Diocesan Committee.

The Annual Blessed Absalom Jones service celebrates diversity and inclusion, since Absalom Jones was the first person admitted to the Episcopal priesthood who was not a male of European descent. Today, the Episcopal priesthood is representative of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and orientations. It has included women priests for the past 50 years.

**Blessed Absalom Jones (1746-1818)** was born into slavery; he purchased his own freedom and his family’s freedom, and was a civic and spiritual leader of enslaved and free Blacks in Philadelphia. Moved by righteous anger and courageous visionary faith, Jones led a departure of Blacks from St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church, where worship became segregated. He was one of the leaders to establish the African church which became the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. This was the first church founded by people of African descent in the Episcopal church and it is still an active congregation. Jones was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1802. Absalom Jones was declared a “saint” in the Episcopal Church in 1973; since then, the celebration of his feast day has become part of the official church calendar.

The service will also be streamed on the Cathedral's [YouTube channel](#).

**EVENT:** Blessed Absalom Jones Service

**DATE:** Saturday, February 3, 2024

**TIME:** Worship service at 10:30 AM

**WHERE:** The Cathedral of St. John the Divine  
1047 Amsterdam Avenue (at 112th Street)  
Manhattan

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