

# The New Epistle

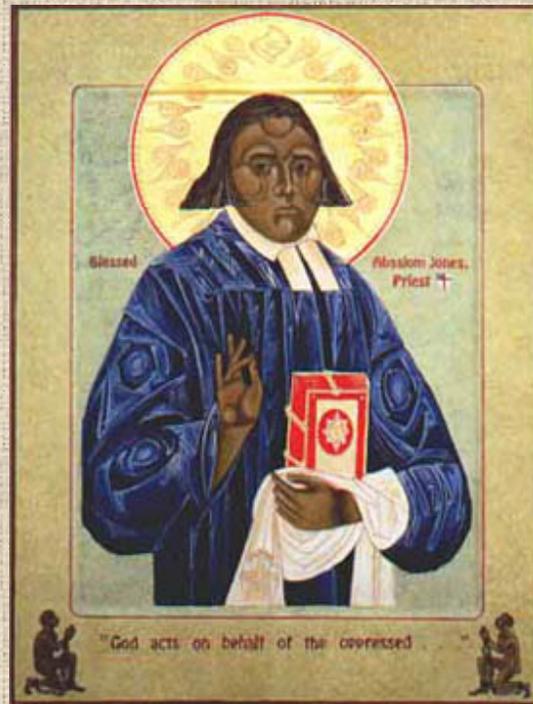
*a newsletter of*

The Progressive Episcopal Church

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## February



ABSALOM JONES, PRIEST  
FEBRUARY 13

As the calendar page turns to reveal February, those of us in the United States find ourselves in a country in a growing constitutional crisis, a country in great upheaval. We see those around us persecuted simply because of their religion, their race, their gender, or simply for who they are.

We are reminded that Christ made no distinctions with regard to religious belief or other so-called distinction. Scripture reveals to us that Jesus welcomed and healed Jew, Samaritan, Gentile, and Pagan. He taught us that God is beyond our divisions of race, colour, creed, religion/faith, gender, etc. To truly follow Jesus' teachings we ought carefully to consider what he is calling us to do, and *how* to do it. Given where we find ourselves in a collapsing country with increasing animosity and violence against people of non-Christian religions and beliefs, now more than ever it is vitally essential that we come together as living examples of Christ's teachings of caring for one another. It is not so much that we should "be Christ," but that we should "do Christ."

**Jack Mace**, a Progressive blogger, teaches us what it means to "Do Christ." We thank Jack for his kind permission to publish his article "[Talk About Theology and Spirituality](#)" in this month's newsletter.



## Talk About Theology and Spirituality ...

Theology and talk of spirituality have always seemed to stand aside from where my Christian walk takes me. I kind of look at it as the difference between studying God, and "Doing God." Perhaps I should be more specific and call it "Doing Christ."

In my Senior year of Seminary, I had the deep joy and privilege of being a Sunday Chaplain at the Methodist Medical Center in South Bend, IN. There, as in my CPE in the summer just preceding, and following that year I found thought of deep theological study to be unmeaningful. The sick and dying to whom I ministered didn't need to know what I "knew." They needed to feel my love and concern. They needed me to be Christ in their moments of need.

After my CPE came to a close and there was no work for me at the time in the church, I took the opportunity to learn carpentry from a company owned by Amish Mennonite men. Toward the end of my first year in that field, I met a local

retired pastor's wife who was running the local "Mother to Mother" ministry; who had tried to start a housing rehab agency with little success. When she learned that I had the M Div and carpentry experience, she said, "You are an answer to prayer. Here, take this (housing rehab) and make it go."

I had never done anything like that before, and I felt a bit out of my league, but I have always believed that God doesn't bring things to our attention without expecting us to take action. So, I did what I was accustomed to do.

I stepped up, recruited people to join me, and then I did what I had to do.

I went to work finding a way to serve God's children at the crisis points of their lives.

Like my earlier hospital unit patients, my clients didn't need to know my theology; not even my church. They didn't need esoteric terms to explain why I was doing it. They just needed me to do what they desperately needed. They didn't need to even be "Christian" themselves. They just needed me to do what I could to care for their needs. Christian or not, they were cross-

cultural children of God in abject poverty of some sort or another.

I remember one house in terrible disrepair. We had been called to “fix a hole” by a window in the bathroom. When I opened the wall before I could get my people focused in on this dwelling, I started taking out the window and ended up totally demolishing that room bare-handed; literally without tools. Inside the house, I remember a nice-looking “table cloth” that seemed to be in motion. On second look it turned out to be a table top so covered with cockroaches that there was hardly one square inch without a roach on it.

That aged African-American couple didn’t need to know that this white man loved God. They just needed me to “DO Christ,” whether or not they believed in Christ.

That was just one of many in the following few years before I left the company (which is still in existence and growing 25 years later); including a house that was so bad that welfare authorities had taken a 14-year-old daughter away pending fixing the house. The man I had hired in and helped to promote into the presidency of that organization (so that I could concentrate on the people) once saw me sitting on a pile of materials next to the parents and commented to others how I was there engaged in “Pastoral Counseling” (my specialty with my MDiv.).

Excuse me! I was just being their friend. I was using my talents and skills to do what I had to do for them.

I was DOING CHRIST.

Now, at age 72, I have taken on co-leadership with a mental healthcare consumer for leading a

local affiliate of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness – [www.nami.com](http://www.nami.com)). My co-leader, John, is a 43-year-old paranoid schizophrenia patient in abject poverty; poverty so deep and so exacerbated by his smoking habit that by the end of each month he is down to a loaf of white bread and cold-cuts for at least a week.

John doesn’t need me to be involved in teaching and praying, although I am a strong on including those in my work with all who need me. He doesn’t need high-sounding theology or spirituality.

He just needs me to DO CHRIST.

I do what I can; that is, I step up and do what I have to do.

Last Thursday to combat his severe malnutrition, I brought a gallon of whole milk, some cheese and a pound of hamburger to him early in the afternoon. I couldn’t believe the mood difference from then to 6:30 PM when I picked him up for a NAMI meeting. Again, he didn’t need theology or preaching about the things hindering his financial well-being.

He just needed someone who would DO CHRIST for him.

Well, I suppose that is enough for now. Thank you for your patience, and please pray for me as I continue to find ways to DO CHRIST.

In closing, I want to share the most beautiful word picture I know.

*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,  
is God in his holy dwelling.  
God sets the lonely in families.*

## The Reverend Absalom Jones, 1746-1818



Absalom Jones was America's first black priest. Born into slavery in Delaware at a time when slavery was being debated as immoral and undemocratic, he taught himself to read, using the New Testament as one of his resources. At the age of 16, Jones was sold to a shopkeeper in Philadelphia where he attended a night school for blacks, operated by Quakers. Following the purchase of his own freedom in 1784, Jones served as lay minister for the black membership at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church.

The active evangelism of Jones and that of his friend, Richard Allen, greatly increased black membership at St. George's. Alarmed by the rise in black attendance, the vestry decided to segregate blacks into an upstairs gallery without notice. When ushers attempted to remove the black congregants, the resentful group exited the church. This exodus triggered the establishment of the Free African Society by Jones and Allen in 1787 to aid in the emancipation of slaves and to offer sustenance and spiritual support to widows, orphans, and the poor.

In 1794 Jones and Allen, with the assistance of local Quakers and Episcopalians, established the "First African Church" in Philadelphia. Shortly after the establishment that same year, the African Church applied to join the Protestant Episcopal Church, laying before the diocese three requirements: the Church must be received as an already organized body; it must have control over its own affairs; and Jones must be licensed as lay-reader and if qualified, ordained as its minister.

Upon acceptance into the Diocese of Pennsylvania, the church was renamed the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. The following year Jones became a deacon but was not ordained a priest until 1804, nine years later. At 58 years old, he became the first black American priest. He continued to be a leader in his community, founding a day school (as blacks were excluded from attending public school), the Female Benevolent Society, and an African Friendly Society. In 1800 he called upon Congress to abolish the slave trade and to provide for gradual emancipation of existing slaves. Jones died in 1818.

*Set us free, heavenly Father, from every bond of prejudice and Fear: that, honoring the steadfast courage of your servants Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, we may show forth in our lives the reconciling love and true freedom of the children of God, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*



## TPEC Happenings . . .

At press time, things are relatively quiet, but several things are in the planning stages. One is the ordination of Min. Colin Keller to the priesthood. Colin has a small but active and vibrant ministry and worshipping community in the Richmond, Virginia area. He has been with us for many years and also holds dual affiliation with the Progressive Christian Alliance, our Communion partner.

Also in the initial planning stages is the episcopal consecration of Rev. Canon Rick Ward-Harder as Suffragan Bishop of the Delta. Canon Rick is one of the founders of TPEC, and continues to be a very active voice not only for this church, but more importantly, for all the children of God who continue to feel the adverse effects of prejudice and oppression. Last year a new chartered worship community was formed – St Mychal Judge – under Rick’s guidance. A third chartered parish is now in formation, and we hope to have a full profile in the March newsletter.



In this time of national political upheaval and the unpleasant similarities to Hitler’s rise to power and all that came with it, let us remember that no matter how dark the darkness appears, the Light will always conquer the darkness. Now more than ever, we are called upon to be the Light and **Love** of Christ in the world around us. Joining in protest marches is a good place to start, but for goodness’ sake, don’t let it stop there! Be the *voice* of Christ! Offer that kind word of support to that friend, acquaintance, or co-worker who may be Muslim, Jewish, LGBT, Middle Eastern, etc. Let them know you support them, and be prepared to back that up with action. If they are being verbally or physically assaulted, come to their defence. Provide them a safe refuge.

The Gospel of John tells us, “The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” The KJV states “... the darkness did not comprehend it.” Christ taught us that his Light shines within each of us. We are called by Him to guide others to that Light within themselves to the best of our ability. Together, as many Lights standing together, we are able to create a brilliant flood of the light of God’s love to all around us. And may we always be mindful of the prophet Micah’s admonished to seek justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Don’t just be Christ, DO Christ!





# February 2017



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*Churchman's Ordo Edition*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>READINGS Mass — Year A Office — Year One</p> <p>Weekday Eucharistic Readings for use throughout the year are found in LFF, pages 498-528.</p> <p>See Notes on Reverse</p> <p>[ ] - In some Places</p>			<p>Brigid, Abbess of Kildare, 523</p> <p><b>1</b></p> <p>Prf.St.2</p>	<p>THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE also called the Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin</p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p>Glo.Cr.Prf.Epi.</p>	<p>Anskar, Archbishop of Hamburg, Missionary to Denmark and Sweden, 865 [Blasius] ✱</p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p>Prf.Ap.</p>	<p>Cornelius the Centurion</p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p>Prf.Pen.</p>
<p>The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany</p> <p><b>5</b></p> <p>Glo.Cr.Prf.Epi. or L.D.</p>	<p>[Titus, Bishop and Confessor, 1st Century]</p> <p><b>6</b></p> <p>[Glo.Prf.Pen.]</p>	<p>Feria</p> <p><b>7</b></p>	<p>Feria</p> <p><b>8</b></p>	<p>Feria</p> <p><b>9</b></p>	<p>[Scholastica, Virgin ✱ and First Benedictine Nun, c. 543]</p> <p><b>10</b></p> <p>[Common of a Monastic II, Glo.Prf.St.2]</p>	<p>BVM on Saturday</p> <p><b>11</b></p> <p>Propers for May 31 Glo.Prf.Inc. or BVM (TASB)</p>
<p>The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany [Septuagesima - V]</p> <p><b>12</b></p> <p>Glo.Cr.Prf.Epi. or L.D. [Cr.Prf.Tri. or L.D.]</p>	<p>Absalom Jones, Priest, 1818</p> <p><b>13</b></p> <p>Glo.Prf.St.1</p>	<p>Cyril, Monk, and Methodius, Bishop 9th Cent.</p> <p><b>14</b></p> <p>Glo.Cr.Prf.Ap.</p>	<p>Thomas Bray, Priest and Missionary, 1730</p> <p><b>15</b></p> <p>Glo.Prf.Pen.</p>	<p>Feria</p> <p><b>16</b></p>	<p>Feria ✱</p> <p><b>17</b></p>	<p>[Simeon of Jerusalem, Bishop and Martyr, 1st Century]</p> <p><b>18</b></p> <p>[Common of a Martyr I, Prf.St.3]</p>
<p>The Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany [Sexagesima - V]</p> <p><b>19</b></p> <p>Glo.Cr.Prf.Epi. or L.D. [Cr.Prf.Tri. or L.D.]</p>	<p>Feria</p> <p><b>20</b></p>	<p>Peter Damian, Bishop, 1072</p> <p><b>21</b></p> <p>Common of a Theologian II, Glo.Cr.Prf.Tri.</p>	<p>St. Peter's Chair at Antioch</p> <p><b>22</b></p> <p>Propers for Jan. 18 Glo.Cr.Prf.Ap.</p>	<p>Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr of Smyrna, 156</p> <p><b>23</b></p> <p>Glo.Prf.St.3</p>	<p>SAINT MATTHIAS ✱ THE APOSTLE</p> <p><b>24</b></p> <p>Glo.Cr.Prf.Ap.</p>	<p>[Ethelbert, King and Confessor, 616]</p> <p><b>25</b></p> <p>[Common of a Saint 2, Glo.Prf.St.2]</p>
<p>The Last Sunday after the Epiphany [Quinquagesima - V]</p> <p><b>26</b></p> <p>Glo.Cr.Prf.Epi. or L.D. [Cr.Prf.Tri. or L.D.]</p>	<p>George Herbert, Priest, 1633</p> <p><b>27</b></p> <p>Glo.Prf.St.1</p>	<p>[Oswald, Abbot at York, Confessor, 992]</p> <p><b>28</b></p> <p>[Common of a Monastic, Glo.Prf.St.2]</p>	<p>✱</p>	<p>Glo.—Gloria Cr.—Creed Prf.—Proper Preface of Adv.—Advent Inc.—Incarnation Epi.—Epiphany H.Wk.—Holy Week Eas.—Easter Asc.—Ascension</p>	<p>Pen.—Pentecost Tri.—Trinity Sunday A.S.—All Saints St.—Saint Ap.—Apostles Ded.—Dedication Bap.—Baptism L.D.—Lord's Day</p>	<p>Days of Special Devotion are noted with ✱</p>