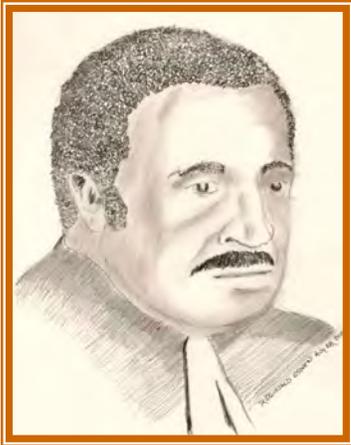


LUTHERAN MEMOIR

PASTOR JEHU JONES Jr. First Black Ordained Lutheran Pastor

Jehu Jones Jr. (1786-1852), was the first African descent Lutheran minister in the United States and founded one of the first African-American Lutheran congregations. Pastor Jones also founded Lutheran churches for people of all races in Gettysburg and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.



Sketch by Reginald Green

The Lutheran Church honors Jones and his contributions to the church in the Calendar of Saints on November 24th each year.

Born enslaved in Charleston, SC, he became free at the age of 12, when his father bought his family's freedom. The Jones family was successful in Charleston, since Jones Sr. was of mixed race, allowing him to join the relatively privileged mulatto elite of the time.

Jehu Jones Jr. was connected with the Episcopal Church until 1820, when he became a Lutheran. He held membership in St. John's Lutheran Church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Feeling called to missionary work with formerly enslaved people in the United States relocated to Liberia, Africa. Jehu was ordained in New York in 1832. Returning to Charleston after ordination, he was jailed; South Carolina had passed a law prohibiting blacks from reentering the state (a reaction to Nat Turner's rebellion of enslaved people).

In 1833, Jones moved to Philadelphia and began his missionary work there among the city's Black population. His mission congregation, St. Paul's Lutheran, built a church with assistance from nearby Lutheran congregations, dedicating the building in 1836. Community leaders described by Jones as "respected white gentlemen" (BlackPast.org) in 1838 promised to pay the balance of the church's mortgage on the condition that the ownership of the building was signed over to them. The promise was broken and the balance unpaid, resulting in foreclosure. The property sold in a sheriff's auction in 1839.

Jones tried to start a Lutheran church in New York City in 1849, however the New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church prevented him from doing so. They charged him with mismanagement of finances at St. Paul's Church. Jones responded in a pamphlet arguing that the unpaid debts were beyond his control because of racial prejudice against the St. Paul congregation.

Financial difficulties and broken promises resulted in the foreclosure of the building, yet the congregation continued until a few years after the death of Pastor

Turner's Rebellion (also known as the Southampton Insurrection) took place in Southampton County, Virginia in August of 1831. The four day battle for freedom was led by Nat Turner, an enslaved carpenter and preacher.

The rebellion of enslaved African American people resulted in the death of 55 white men, woman and children. This was the deadliest revolt of enslaved Blacks of whites in U.S. history.

In retaliation 120 Black men, women, and children, many of whom were not involved in the revolt, were killed by white soldiers and local mobs.

NorthEastern Iowa SYNOD

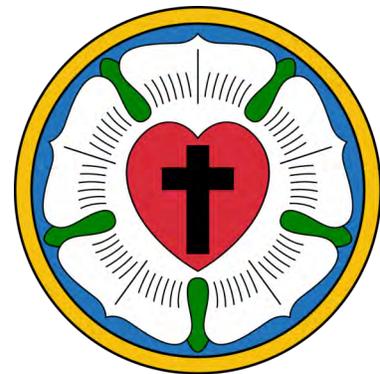
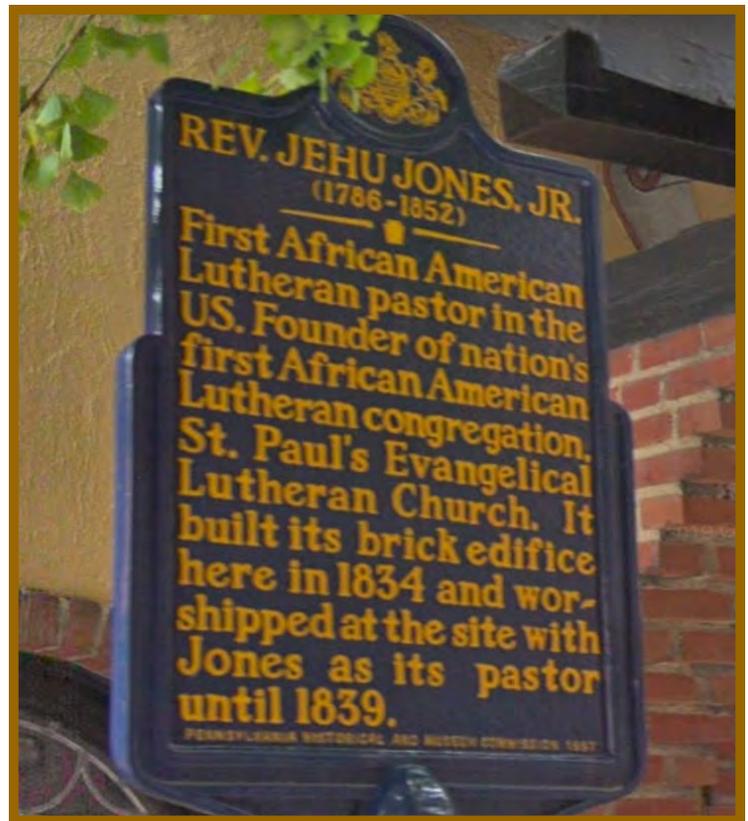


Racial Justice Web page

Jones in 1852.

Pastor Jones and St. Paul's Lutheran Church worked to improve the living conditions for Philadelphia's African Americans. They encouraged people to petition city authorities for black civil rights, and were part of the American Moral Reform Society and Improvement Society. Businessman and abolitionist William Whipper founded the American Moral Reform Society an African American, an abolitionist organization.

Jones was also involved in state politics, and the national Colored Conventions Movement, a series of national, regional, and state conventions held irregularly through out the 1800s. Convention delegates consisted of free and formerly enslaved African American men who were religious leaders, businessmen, politicians, writers, publishers, editors, and abolitionists. These meetings provided a structure for black male leadership and pursuit of black abolitionist goals.



St. Paul Lutheran Church building most recently Mask and Wig Club house. Image source Library of Congress.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the story of Pastor Jehu Jones Jr. influence your image of the Lutheran Church membership in early America? What implications does this story have for Northeast Iowa today?
- Some Christian denominations organized their church membership based on race i.e. African Methodist Evangelical AME, National Baptist Convention USA, Church of God in Christ. Why would that organization continue?
- *Why might other racially minoritized groups not have similar denominational divides?

ONLINE VIDEOS

Jehu Jones and African American Lutherans - Richard Stewart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JvJPTZSFWxI&t=1006s>

A 30 minute devotional from Zion Lutheran Church, Perry, Oklahoma is centered on the ministry of Pastor Jehu Jones Jr. The specific section discussing Reverend Jones begins at 12:12 time mark of the video and ends at the 23:26 time mark.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=849325956262401

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nat_Turner's_Rebellion

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Whipper

“Who is Jehu Jones” <https://jehustable.org/what-is-a-jehu%3F#>