

November 24

Commemoration: Jehu Jones, 1852, pastor in North America

Jehu Jones, Jr. (1786–1852) was a Lutheran minister. He founded one of the first African-American Lutheran congregations in the United States, and was actively involved in improving the social welfare of blacks. He is commemorated as a priest in the Calendar of Saints of the Lutheran Church on November 24 with Justus Falckner and William Passavant. Jones is also the brother of Edward Jones, the first black college graduate who later immigrated to Freetown, Sierra Leone and was the first principal of Fourah Bay College.

He was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and named after his father, Jehu Jones Sr., a tailor who went on to gain his freedom in 1798 and later owned a successful hotel in Charleston. Jehu Jones was of mixed race ancestry and thus he was able to join the privileged mulatto elite of Charleston. Jehu Jones Jr. was originally connected with the Episcopal Church, but joined the Lutheran Church in the 1820s. He later took a post as a missionary to Liberia where he worked with freed slaves to left for that new nation. He returned to Charleston after his ordination, and was briefly jailed then for violating South Carolina's law which prohibited the immigration of free blacks.

He eventually settled in Philadelphia. He was appointed to work with as a missionary to the black population of Philadelphia. Shortly thereafter, he and the congregation he had decided to build a church, with the assistance of other Lutheran congregations in the area. They laid the cornerstone for their new building, which is still standing at 310 South Quince Street in Philadelphia. By the time the building was dedicated in 1836, his congregation had paid nearly 40% of the construction costs. However, because the remaining funding was not obtained, the building was sold at auction in 1839.

Jones remained active in the political scene in Philadelphia. In 1845, he helped organize a convention to unite freed blacks to petition for civil rights. He and his congregation were also active in the Moral Reform and Improvement Society, a group of African-American churches whose goal was to improve the social conditions for blacks in Philadelphia. He continued to actively serve his congregation through 1851, dying the following year.