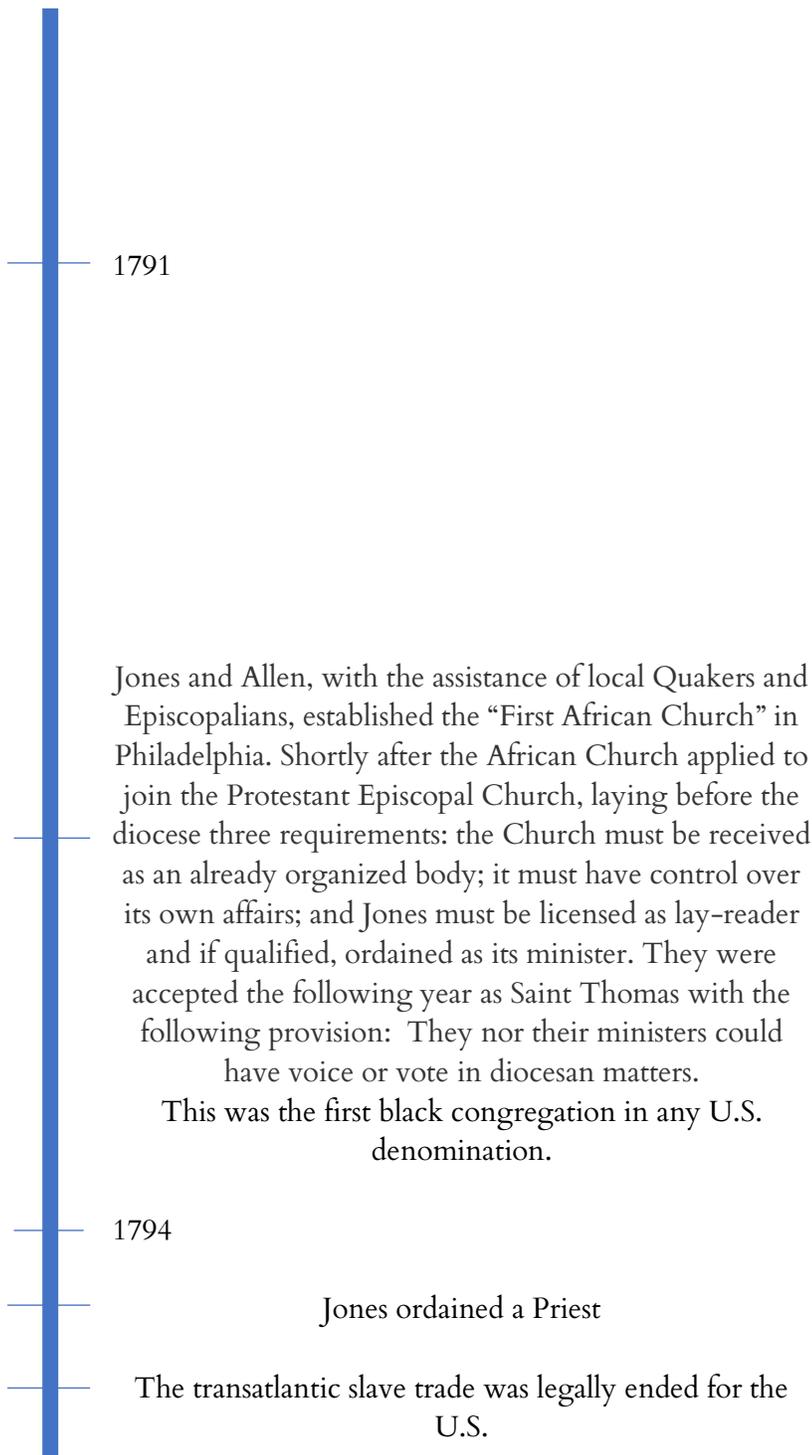


Race and The Episcopal Church



Jones and Richard Allen served as lay ministers for the black membership at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. Together they established the Free African Society to aid in the emancipation of slaves and to offer sustenance and spiritual support to widows, orphans, and the poor. The active evangelism of Jones and Allen greatly increased black membership at St. George's. Alarmed by the rise in black attendance, in 1791 the vestry decided to segregate African Americans into an upstairs gallery without notice. When ushers attempted to remove the black congregants who refused to leave the integrated floor, the group exited the church. (The first pray-in / kneel-in / sit-in)



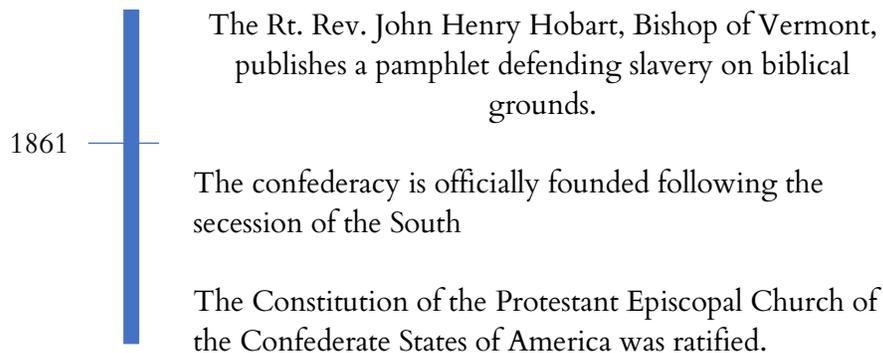
Jones ordained a deacon

Jones and Allen, with the assistance of local Quakers and Episcopalians, established the "First African Church" in Philadelphia. Shortly after 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. They were accepted the following year as Saint Thomas with the following provision: They nor their ministers could have voice or vote in diocesan matters. This was the first black congregation in any U.S. denomination.

Jones ordained a Priest

The transatlantic slave trade was legally ended for the U.S.

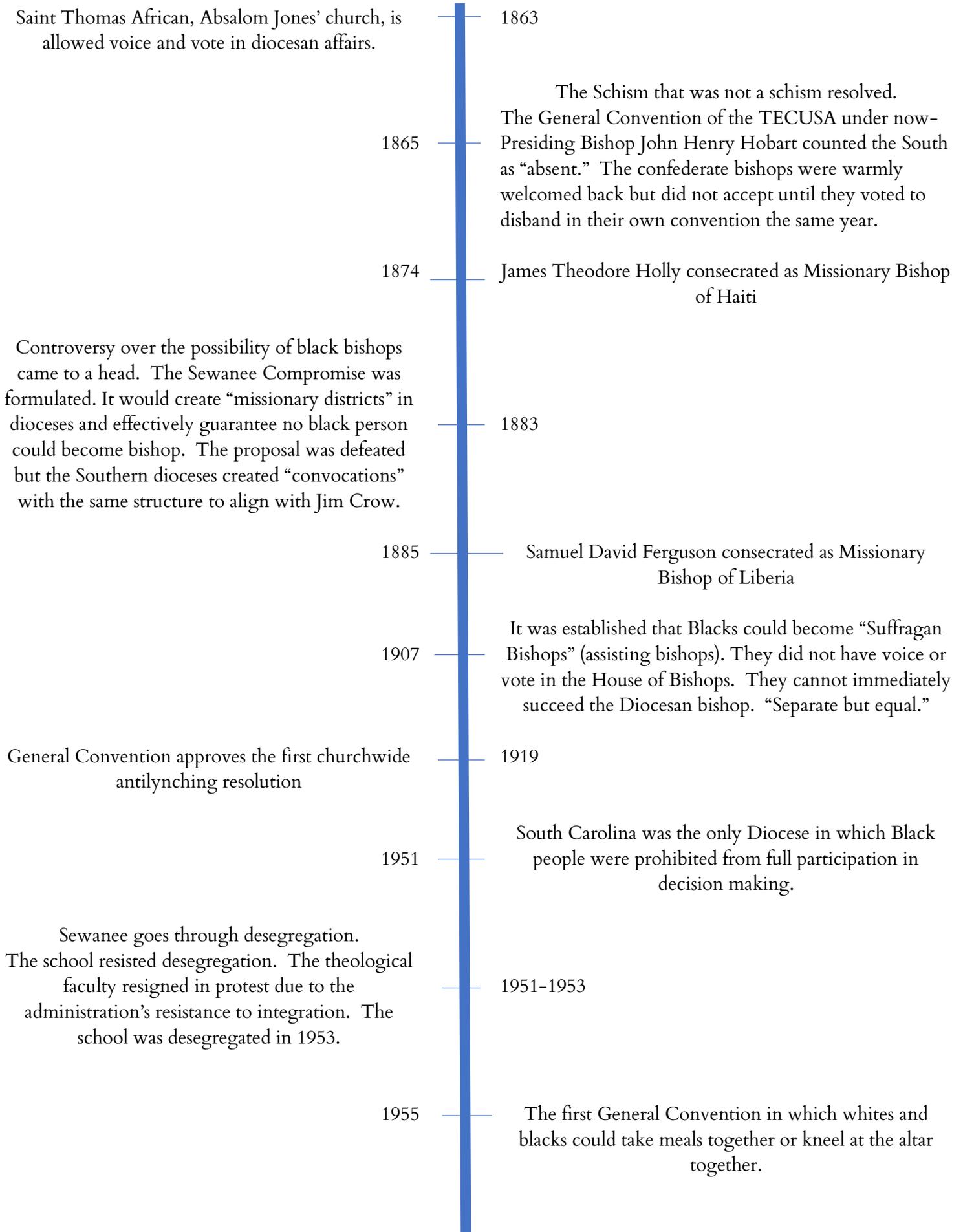
(Numerous black congregations were founded in the years to come)

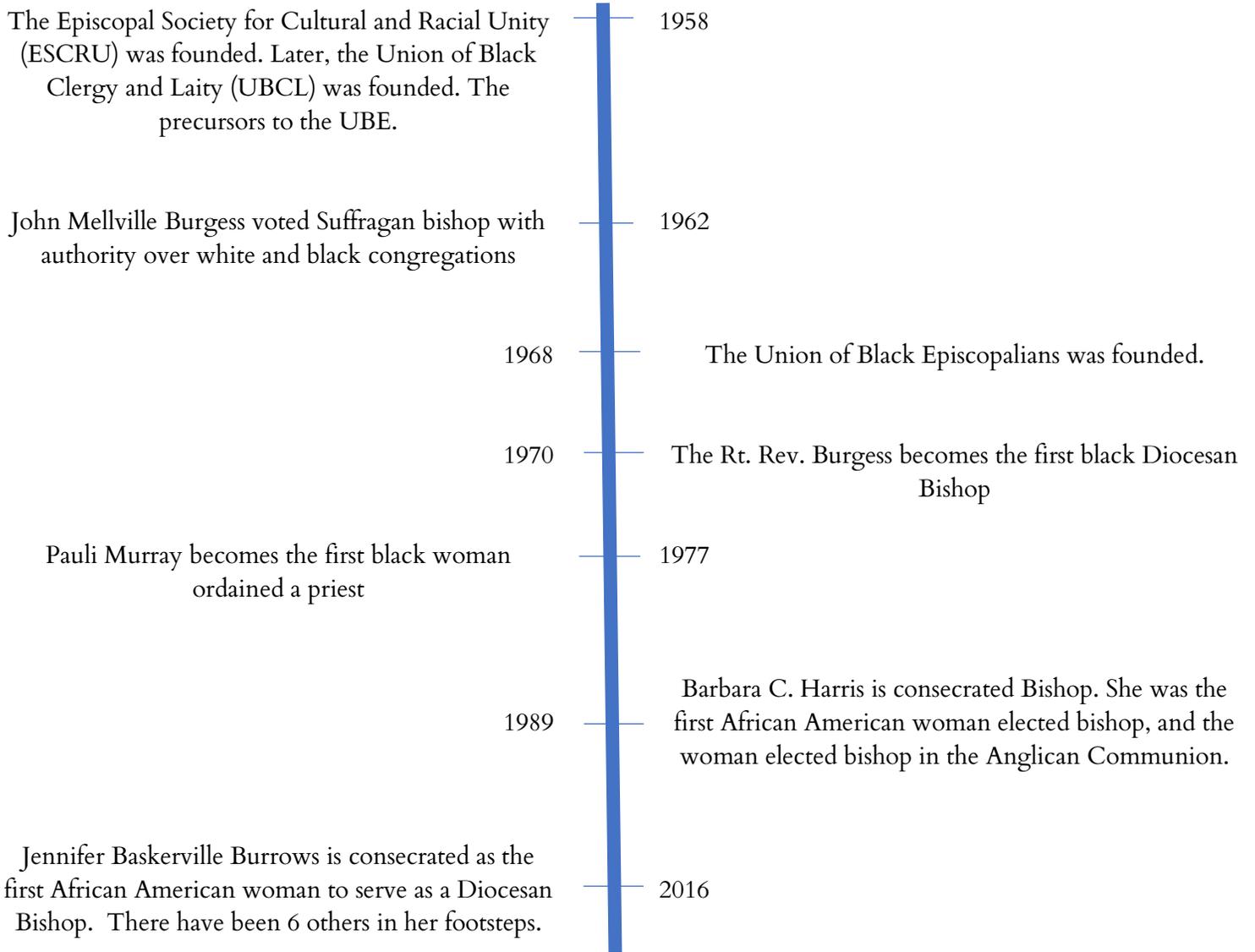


The Rt. Rev. John Henry Hobart, Bishop of Vermont, publishes a pamphlet defending slavery on biblical grounds.

The confederacy is officially founded following the secession of the South

The Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Confederate States of America was ratified.





A Thanksgiving Sermon,
preached January 1, 1808, in St. Thomas's, or the African Episcopal Church, Philadelphia:
On Account of the Abolition of the African slave trade, on that day, by the Congress of the United States.
By Absalom Jones, rector of the said church.

{An Outline}¹

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Exodus 3:7-8.

THESE words, my brethren, contain a short account of some of the circumstances which preceded the deliverance of the children of Israel from their captivity and bondage in Egypt.

Hebrew Affliction in Egypt.

Conditions of the work of the Hebrew Slaves and the execution of their infant sons.

God's remembrance of the Hebrews and God is Moved by their suffering.

The history of the world shows us, that the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage, is not the only instance, in which it has pleased God to appear in behalf of oppressed and distressed nations, as the deliverer of the innocent, and of those who call upon his name. He is as unchangeable in his nature and character, as he is in his wisdom and power. The great and blessed event, which we have this day met to celebrate, is a striking proof, that the God of heaven and earth is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Yes, my brethren, the nations from which most of us have descended, and the country in which some of us were born, have been visited by the tender mercy of the Common Father of the human race. He has seen the affliction of our countrymen, with an eye of pity.

God sees the abuses of the slave trade.

God sees how genteel enslavers become torturers.

Like of Old, God came down to end the slave trade.

He has heard the prayers that have ascended from the hearts of his people; and he has, as in the case of his ancient and chosen people the Jews, come down to deliver our suffering country-men from the hands of their oppressors. He came down into the United States, when they declared, in the constitution which they framed in 1788, that the trade in our African fellow-men, should cease in the year 1808: He came down into the British Parliament, when they passed a law to put an end to the same iniquitous trade in May, 1807: He came down into the Congress of the United States, the last winter, when they passed a similar law, the operation of which commences on this happy day. Dear land of our ancestors! thou shalt no more be stained with the blood of thy children, shed by British and American hands: the ocean shall no more afford a refuge to their bodies, from impending slavery: nor shall the shores of the British West India islands, and of the United States, any more witness the anguish of families, parted for ever by a publick sale. For this signal interposition of the God of mercies, in behalf of our brethren, it becomes us this day to offer up our united thanks.

¹ Compiled by Robert Berra. Sermon accessed through <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/ajones/thanksgiving1808.html>

How shall we thank God?

“Let our praise not be confined to today.”

Praise on behalf of Africans whom this might save from slavery.

Praise for those who worked toward abolition.

And let us intercede for:

God’s continued liberative work in Africa.

The continuance of the same abolitionist work in others slaving countries.

That God cause the U.S. to pass laws to protect kindness toward slaves and for their education so that they may come to know and love God through the reading of scripture.

Let us not embarrass those who labor for the liberation of Blacks and slaves.

Let us educate our children.

Perhaps our affliction is like Joseph (sold into slavery, by whom God saves the people from famine).

Gratitude for abolitionist benefactors.

Let January 1, 1808, be a day of perpetual memory and thanks passed down for generations.

Let the first of January, the day of the abolition of the slave trade in our country, be set apart in every year, as a day of publick thanksgiving for that mercy. Let the history of the sufferings of our brethren, and of their deliverance, descend by this means to our children, to the remotest generations; and when they shall ask, in time to come, saying, What mean the lessons, the psalms, the prayers and the praises in the worship of this day? let us answer them, by saying, the Lord, on the day of which this is the anniversary, abolished the trade which dragged your fathers [19/20] from their native country, and sold them as bondmen in the United States of America.

Prayer of praise to God following the petitions above

Oh thou God of all the nations upon the earth! We thank thee, that thou art no respecter of persons, and that thou hast made of one blood all nations of men. We thank thee, that thou hast appeared, in the fulness of time, in behalf of the nation from which most of the worshipping people, now before thee, are descended.

Send the gospel to Africans and those who have not received it.

Grateful thanks for friends, benefactors, and abolitionists in Great Britain and the U.S.

To be worthy of their friends, benefactors, and abolitionist’s goodness in thankfulness.

Prayers of thanks and intercession for the Government and nation, protection from war and slavery.

A Doxology

*An Excerpt from a Pamphlet by the Rt. Rev. John Henry Hobart
Bishop of Vermont
1861*

From his [God's] Word there can be no appeal. No rebellion can be so atrocious in his sight as that which dares to rise against his government. No blasphemy can be more unpardonable than that which imputes sin or moral evil to the decrees of the eternal Judge, who is alone perfect in wisdom, in knowledge, and in love. ...

...If it were a matter to be determined by my personal sympathies, tastes, or feelings, I should be as ready as any man to condemn the institution of slavery; for all my prejudices of education, habit, and social position stand entirely opposed to it. But as a Christian, I am solemnly warned not to be "wise in my own conceit," and not to "lean to my own understanding." As a Christian, I am compelled to submit my weak and erring intellect to the authority of the Almighty.

...I proceed, accordingly, to the evidence of the sacred Scriptures, which, long ago, produced complete conviction in my own mind, and must, as I regard it, be equally conclusive to every candid and sincere inquirer.

...First, then, we ask what the divine Redeemer said in reference to slavery. And the answer is perfectly undeniable: HE DID NOT ALLUDE TO IT AT ALL. Not one word of censure upon the subject is recorded by the Evangelists who gave His life and doctrines to the world. Yet slavery was in full existence at the time, throughout Judea; and the Roman empire, according to the historian Gibbon, contained sixty millions of slaves, on the lowest probable computation! How prosperous and united would our glorious republic be at this hour, if the eloquent and pertinacious declaimers against slavery had been willing to follow their Saviour's example!

Excerpts from The Rev. Pauli Murray

Collect for Poplarville
(Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer)
New York, May 1959

Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord;

Teach us no longer to dread

hounds yelping in the distance,
the footfall at the door,
the rifle butt on the window pane.

*And by thy great mercy defend us from all perils
and dangers of this night;*

Give us fearlessness to face
the bomb thrown from the darkness,
the gloved hand on the pistol,
the savage intention.

Give us courage to stand firm against
our tormentors without rancor—

Teach us that most difficult of tasks—
to pray for them,
to follow, not burn, thy cross!

Whatever future ministry
I might have as a priest,
it was given to me that day
to be a symbol of healing.
All the strands of my life
had come together...
reconciliation drawing us all
toward the goal of human wholeness.

Excerpts from The Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris

*From a sermon on the occasion of Women's Day at the Historic St. Thomas Church
(Absalom Jones' Church)*

John 4: The Woman at the Well

I think there are some clear messages for us in this strange story of the woman at the well: messages for us as we stand at our individual and personal crossroads and ponder the choices of life in a vain world that is no friend to grace; messages as we consider ourselves as emerging people of Christ's kingdom; messages for us as we realize, as did the woman at the well, that while we are not yet what we should be, thank God, we are not what we were. We are different because God has touched our lives, different because we realize we can learn from all of God's people, even from folk like the Samaritan woman—a street woman if you will. No matter what you think of the Samaritan woman, a fact—and an important fact—is that she was at the well. She was there where Jesus was. Had she not gone to the well when she did, she would not have been privileged to meet and have an encounter with the Savior.

People are absent from the well not realizing Jesus can give them a new heart, a new mind, a new song to sing, a new way of looking at life, a new way of loving other people—even the unlovable—if they have a thirst for the kingdom. Another fact to remember is that the Samaritan woman brought a vessel. If you are young or never lived in the country or visited a rural area or foreign nation where folks rely on wells, you may not know about drawing water. Getting water from a well is not like cupping your hands or holding a glass under a faucet or pressing a button on a water fountain. If you are going to make use of a well, you must bring something with which to draw water. The woman told Jesus, “Sir you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep.”

That is true of God's grace. Too many of us come to the well empty-handed. We bring no vessel in which to draw up the living water. People say, “I come to church, but I don't get anything out of it.” If you don't bring anything in which or with which to get something, then you won't get anything. We bring to the throne of grace the thin shells of ourselves instead of open, trusting hearts and souls, vessels in which to draw up the living water. If you don't believe God can do something for you, you'll never know when or what God does. Lastly, the Samaritan woman not only received a blessing, she went and told others. “Come see a man who told me all that I ever did.” Come see for yourself. The woman at the well became a well woman and shared her wholeness with others.

From a Personal interview

I didn't have much of a relationship with Pauli Murray. I knew who she was, and I encountered her from time to time. But one encounter with her sticks out in my mind vividly. We were at a worship service in the cathedral in Newark, New Jersey, and I don't remember what that service was at this time. But following the service we were at a reception in the parish hall, and Pauli came to me and said, “Why aren't you in seminary?”

And I said, “I'm too old!”

She said, “Too old!” and gave me the dressing down of my life.

And it was then that I realized that she had indeed embarked on this third career at a point in her life where most people would have thought that it was ridiculous, that she was too old. But I will never forget the chastisement that she delivered to me that day about not ever being too old to do something, to begin something important in life. And, I had very few actual encounters with her following that, but I will never forget that dressing down she gave me that day.