



THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

In the city of Brotherly Love, who would have ever thought that in a country founded on religious principles, that segregation would be practiced in the church among its members based on race. The church was founded in 1816 by Richard Allen the first Bishop.

The AME church was created and organized by people of African descent as a response to being officially discriminated against by white congregations in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The church was not founded in Africa but in Philadelphia. The church is not exclusive for people of African descent. The congregations are predominantly of black Americans, yet it is open to people of all origins. The church's roots are in the Methodist tradition. The AME church operates under an episcopal form of church government and the denomination leaders are bishops of the church.

The AME motto is "God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer and Man our Brother". The basic foundation of the beliefs of the church can be summarized in the Apostles' Creed and the 25 Articles of Religion.

Our denomination has put a high premium on education. It has been one of the forerunners of education within the African American community. In the 19th century, the AME Church of Ohio collaborated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, in sponsoring the second independent historically black college, Wilberforce University. Did you know we have Wilberforce alums in our church? There are several other colleges. Allen University, Columbia, South, Carolina, Edward Waters, Jacksonville, Florida, Morris Brown, Atlanta, Georgia, Paul, Quinn Colege, Dallas, Texas. Bethel has several alums from Morris Brown – can you identify them?

In 2016 a stamp honoring Richard Allen was issued by the United States Postal Service as part of the ongoing Black Heritage Series.

The AME church has been the heart of many social justice issues. Jarena Lee was the first female preacher in the African Methodist Church. She was born into a free Black family in New Jersey. Lee asked Richard Allen to be a preacher. Initially Allen refused; however, after hearing her preach in 1819, Allen approved of her preaching ministry.

Despite Richard Allen's blessing, Lee continued to face hostility to her ministry because she was black and a woman. She became a traveling minister, traveling thousands of miles on foot. In one year alone she travelled 2,375 miles on foot in one year alone. Also, in 1836 Lee became the first African American woman to publish an autobiography.