**THE RISE OF AFRICAN METHODISM**

**The Historical Background**

**by**

**The Rev. Dr. Esther L. Seales**

We often look at the state of the nation and the world and think that we are living in the worst of times. But in reality, the world is no worse than it was when John Wesley and Richard Allen were alive. It seems that America has lost respect for family values and morals, and decency. Even the church is often seen as a social club where the click meets. But over 200 years ago in England people’s past times were much the same as they are today. We love violent movies, car races, tough sports, wherein folks get concussions and injuries for life.

The British pastimes over two hundred years ago were chicken fights, bull and bear-baiting, public lynching of Black folks, Freaks and curiosities of every kind were on commercial display, from hermaphrodites and dwarfs to operate cats and acrobatic monkeys…, hand to hand combat, puppet shows, quack doctors, and prostitutes, known as The Covenant Garden Ladies, were popular for entertaining tourists.. Slave trade was a very lucrative business.

There is human trafficking today wherein women and girls are abused and sold for millions of dollars. In 2014 in Chibok, Nigeria, 276 girls abducted from their school, abused, and treated worse than animals. So, there is little or no difference between the two worlds. We have more industry, technology, satellite, sophisticated transportation, but the heart of humankind has not changed, it is still deceitful and desperately wicked, (Jeremiah 17:9).

There are fights in Congress today, because both parties just cannot work together for the good of the country and the people that have elected them to serve. There is little or no compromise. But the entire American system of government is built on compromise. The concept of a house and Senate is the result of the so-called **Great Compromise” arising from the 1787 Constitutional Convention.** The **Virginia Plan** required Congress to be based on population; the **New Jersey Plan** entailed equal representation for all states. So, to solve the problem they merged the two in a **compromise.**

**Take the Electoral College:** Delegates to the Constitutional Convention differed as to whether voters should directly elect the president. Yet, others worried that some voters would not be wise enough to choose the best candidate. Therefore, they settled on a **compromise. Citizens would have a voice in government by casting their individual ballots for candidates running for office. But the Electoral College would actually elect the president.**

Just a few weeks ago, the United States experienced the longest **government shutdown in American History, because both parties refused to compromise.**

Seems that many of the young people’s heroes today, **2019,** are ex- gang, ex-offenders who are now rap music celebrities, and making big money using profanity and disrespecting women and humankind in general. Even some cartoon characters on television are using profanity. Decent, hard working, respectful, honest kids that come to school, study, work hard get their lesson make good grades are made fun of, ostracized, bullied on line and in school, are called nerds.

During John and Charles Wesley’s day the same thing happened. John Wesley was born June 17, 1703 in Epworth, England, and died March 2, 1771 in London, England. In the early 1700’s, John and Charles Wesley, Francis Asbury, George Whitfield were all young Christians studying at Oxford University and members Christ Church. This little group insisted on regular hours of devotion, and a kind of social gospel which included concern for the sick, the poor, the needy, the homeless. The other students made fun of them and called them **Methodists,** because they had a time, method, structure for everything that they did. Other students looked upon the Wesley’s and their friends as **fanatics.**

John Wesley went to Georgia in **1736** because he wanted to save the Indians. John Wesley said that he wanted to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by converting the heathen. John Wesley’s evangelism thrust was not successful at all. He was not able to convert the Indians. So he returned to London England very distraught, down hearted. He felt like a failure. But Peter Bohler, a Moravian influenced John Wesley to attend a prayer Meeting on Aldersgate Street.

Peter Bohler was a Pietist Theology Student from Frankfort, Germany. Peter Bohler was a beloved missionary. He is most well known for his ministry to the Wesley brothers on a ship sailing to America. It was Bohler who convinced John Wesley of the doctrine of Justification by faith, (faith alone). Martin Luther.

This helped Wesley to free his troubled soul from trying to earn salvation by self righteousness.

The Moravian Church share the same core values of beliefs including that Jesus Christ was born, died, and resurrected as the Protestant Church.

The Moravian Church has existed for over 500 years. Moravians originally came from Ancient Bohemia and Moravia in what is now called the Czech Republic. Their name comes from the denomination’s original birth place of Moravia.

During the 18th century, The Moravian split from the Roman Catholic Church and formed their own communities in Europe to preserve their culture and belief.

**John Wesley’s awakening came during this prayer meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, in May 1738. He describes his experience as follows:**

*In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society at Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s preface, (Romans 10:17), “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” About a quarter before nine, while the reader was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and of death.*

**John Wesley had been converted. Even though he had been ordained for many years as an Anglican Priest, he had just met Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. John Wesley could not lead the Indian Colony in Savannah, Georgia to Christ, because no one can lead people to where they have not been. You cannot give people something that you do not have.**

From this time on until his death, John Wesley went around the country conducting revivals. These revivals had an impact similar to the meetings that had taken place during the Reformation. Wesley adopted George Whitefield’s practice of preaching in the open fields. (“All the world is my parish.”)

John Wesley carried his church to the people, wherever they could be found. He had a special appeal to the masses, but the Anglican Church considered it to be heretical. Wesley’s revivals drew large numbers of people. The country sides of England reverberated, not only with the sermons affirming God’s free gift of salvation to those who believed, but with rousing hymns, the like of which England had never witnessed before, and fervent personal testimonies of faith.

**Richard Allen was born February 14, 1760, a slave of Benjamin Chew, who was a leading lawyer in Philadelphia.** In 1767, there was a decline Benjamin Chew’s law practice. So in order to maintain the style of living in which he was accustomed, he had to sale some of his slaves. He sold Richard Allen and his entire family, Father, Mother, and four children. This was unusual to keep an entire family together. Richard Allen’s new master allowed him to attend the Methodist Church in Dover Delaware. Allen was moved by the sermons of Freeborn Garretson and Francis Asbury. Allen was converted in 1777. Richard Allen was also influential in converting his Master, Mr. Stokely. Allen was allowed to work and purchase his freedom and his brother’s freedom. Francis Asbury and Richard Whatcoat, (the third bishop of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, often took Allen with them on their preaching missions. Sometimes Allen was asked to preach.

Methodism as it came to be known, also spread across the Atlantic Ocean to America. **In 1768, the first Methodist church was built in New York. The American Movement like, its English counterpart, was not without its heroes. Perhaps one of the most famous and influential pioneers in the American Methodist Movement was Francis Asbury,** who was sent to America by John Wesley in 1771.

**When the American Revolution, (Revolutionary War) broke out, most of the Methodist ministers left America. But Francis Asbury and Thomas Rankin refused** to leave, even though Wesley had issued a statement that “We Methodists are no republicans and never intend to be.” This statement caused the American colonists to look upon the Methodists as Tory sympathizers. When the war was over and the treaty signed, Wesley agreed that American Methodists could sever their ties with England. America’s independence from British rule led the Methodists to see the advisability of their forming a Church which would be independent of the Church of England.

**In 1784, Rev. John Wesley ordained Rev. Thomas Coke, LL,D., (a member of Jesus College) in the University of Oxford) for the Office of Bishop, and sent him over to America.**

**The Christmas Conference of 1784**

**In December of 1784, at a minister’s conference, the Methodist Episcopal Church formally came into being. During this Christmas Conference, as it came to be called, the doctrines and the structure of the Church were formulated. John Wesley’s *Sunday Service,*** which contained the “Articles of Religion,” was adopted. Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke were elected the American Bishops. Twelve other men were elected elders.

**Richard Allen and Harry Hoosier were the only two Black men at the Methodist Christmas Conference of 1784.**

**This conference failed to order the ordination of its colored preachers, and this happened in every General Conference when a special resolution was made under specific circumstances to ordain the colored preachers.**

John Wesley wrote: “Our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the state and from the English hierarchy. We dare not entangle them again either with one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures.

**Long before the Christmas Conference, Wesley had already set in motion the machinery for a new denomination. He organized religious societies that were patterned after those of the Moravians.** After being excluded from the Anglican pulpits, he administered the sacraments to the members of his societies. He appointed Lay Ministers to itinerate under his tutorage. **In 1742, he divided the societies into classes, and appointed leaders to head the classes, and stewards to** **supervise monies received. By 1743, John Wesley had published the *Rules of the United Societies. Then in 1744, he held his first Annual Conference* and soon** after began to ordain ministers. As a result of these activities, he gained many enemies, especially among high churchmen.

**Richard Allen and the Struggle to Own Bethel Church**

**Genesis chapters 28, 35, 36**

Jacob was fleeing from Esau. He left Beersheba and was traveling through Haran. He was looking for a wife from his Uncle Laban’s family. Jacob set up camp for the night at a place called Luz. The Lord gave him a dream. In this dream he saw a stairway that reached heaven. He saw angels going up and down this stairway. At the top of the stairway stood the Almighty God. God spoke to Jacob, “I am the Lord, the God of your father, and the God Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and to the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place. And I wasn’t even aware of it!” But Jacob was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the House of God, the very gateway to heaven!” The next day Jacob got up very early. He took the stone He had rested his head against as a memorial pillar. Then he called and named that place, **Bethel**, which means **House of God.** It was previously called Luz; it was of Canaanite land.

**Jacob lives a life with his Uncle Laban. He worked for him fourteen years to be given his beautiful daughter Rachel, as his wife. He struggles with Laban not treating him fairly. But he raises a big family, become very prosperous, and returns to the land of Luz, (Bethel) many years later as the Lord had promised.**

**In Genesis chapter 25, Jacob returns to Bethel as God had promised. Jacob built an altar there and named the place El Bethel, which means the God of Bethel. This new name suggested Jacob’s personal relationship with God Himself.** It was no longer just a place but represented a person. Even though God’s men and women may stumble, they get up with God’s help and keep growing in grace.

**Three years after the organization of the Methodist Church in America, the Black people who had been worshipping with the White Methodists were still suffering from unkind treatment by their White brothers. They considered the Black people a nuisance. In 1786, Richard Allen was preaching at St. Georges at 5:00 A.M. and the numbers of Blacks that attended St. Georges were growing.**

**Because of the inhumane treatment of Black by the White Methodists, Richard Allen decided that Black people needed a place of their own, where they could worship under their own vine and fig tree, (Zechariah 3:10).**

**The Walkout as Described by Richard Allen 1787**

A number of us usually attended St. Georges Methodist Episcopal Church on Fourth Street. And when the colored people began to get numerous in attending the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall, and one Sabbath morning we went to church, and the Sexton stood at the door and told us to go into the gallery. He told us to go, and we would see where to sit. We expected to take the seats over the ones we formerly occupied below, not knowing any better. We took those seats. Meeting had begun, and they were nearly done singing, and just as we got to the seats, elder said: “Let us pray.” We had not been long upon our knees before I heard considerable scuffling and low talking. I raised my head up, and saw one of the Trustees, having hold of the Reverend Absalom Jones, pulling him up off his knees, and saying, “You must get up—you must not kneel here.” Mr. Jones said, “Wait until prayer is over, and I will get up and trouble you no more.” With that he beckoned to one of the trustees to come to his assistance… By that time prayer was over, and all went out of the church in a body and they were no more plagued with us in the church.

**Free African Society**

Allen and his people knew that they had to find a way to create an effective bond among themselves. They needed an organization that would help Black folks to improve themselves. They organized **The Free African Society on April 12, 1787.** This was the first Negro institution that had the characteristics of a benevolent and reform organization. This organization was to meet the holistic needs of the Black people. This was the first organization founded by Black folks for Black folks. The meetings were held monthly in the home of Richard Allen until May 1788, when they had to move to a larger place because of the growth in attendance. It moved to Sarah Dougherty’s home and then to The Friend’s Free School House. The Free African Society had taught The Black people lessons on thrift, sobriety, industry, and higher virtues. It was in a position to give help to needy individuals. The Free African Society had financial growth; **by 1790 it had** forty-two pounds, which was $1,386.00 in Continental money. The Free African Society had an Account with the Bank of North America.

Richard Allen was a very thrifty individual. He worked as a shoemaker and carried on a successful business on spruce Street in Philadelphia. He employed several journeymen and apprentices. He also was a chimney sweeper. Chimney sweeping was a very lucrative occupation.

Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, William Gray, William White and others decided to build their own church. They asked for donations to build their own church, and Blacks and Whites contributed. Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush encouraged and supported the society and its plans. Benjamin Rush wrote to Grandville Sharpe in London England and asked him to solicit his friends to contribute to the African Church. Before a church could be purchased, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones split over theological questions. Jones was more Anglican in his philosophy. He formed St. Thomas Protestant Episcopal Church in 1794. That same year Richard Allen organized Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Soon several branches of Allen’s Church sprang up in several northern states, including Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey.

**The Yellow Fever of 1793**

The Yellow Fever Epidemic hit Philadelphia in 1793. It started in August and ended in October. The fifty physicians led by Dr. Benjamin Rush rendered unusual service. There were twenty deaths a day before the end of August. Dr. Benjamin Rush, Physician at the University of Pennsylvania, taught Richard Allen and Absalom Jones how to bleed the sick that had the fever. Dr. Rush believed that is he could get the bad blood out of the system that the people could be cured. Richard Allen also transport the sick to Bushkill, Pa. which was a colder climate. Allen also buried the dead. Over 5,000 persons died over the summer of 1793. The Black people were forced to nurse the white sick people. It was thought at one time that the Black people were not as prone to get the fever as White people. But that was not true. Black people were also suffering and dying from the Yellow Fever.

What caused the Yellow Fever? Some persons believed that the disease had local origins. Other believed that the disease arrived on the refugee ship from Saint-Dominque where the yellow Fever was an endemic and was transmitted by the mosquitos between the infected and the healthy persons. But It was one hundred years later when it was discovered that an insect, the Aedes Aegypti Mosquito caused the Yellow Fever. Yes, the Yellow Fever was a viral infection spread by the Aedes aegypti mosquito. It is believed the mosquito came over with immigrants from Haiti and would hatch in water standing around the homes, flowers pots, rain water standing around the home.

**The Struggle to Worship Under their own Vine and Fig Tree**

On May 5, 1794, several Black people assembled at Allen’s house. The members who were present at this meeting were, Robert Green, Joseph Houston, William Hogin, Isaac Miller, York Evers, Anthony Robinson, John Britenham, Prince Prudence, John Allen, Thomas Martin, and Richard Allen. They decided to purchase the frame of a blacksmith shop. It was purchased from Mr. Sims and was hauled to a lot. Allen employed carpenters to repair the building and to change the blacksmith shop into a house of worship. The building was hard to work with because it was just a large open frame with no supports. Contributions were received from Blacks and Whites, and the house was made ready for worship. St. Thomas Protestant Episcopal Church has its first worship experience in its completed building on July 29, 1794, this was the same year that Richard Allen organized Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

On July 29, 1794, Bishop Francis Asbury preached the dedication sermon of the church which was called, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal church. He prayed that the church might be a “Bethel” (Genesis 28:190), where thousands would gather to worship God. Bishop Francis Asbury recorded in his journal that his colored brethren would be governed by the doctrine and discipline of the Methodists. Services were to be held in Bethel Church under the direction of a white elder that was in charge of the Methodist Church in Philadelphia. Bishop Francis Asbury ordained Richard Allen as the First Black Methodist Preacher in the in 1799.

On October 13, 1794, Richard Allen deeded the lot upon which the building had been placed to the Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The trustees were John Morris, Wiliiam Hoggins, John Allen, Jonathan Trusty, Robert Green, and Jacob Johnson.

Richard Allen and a special committee drew up a public statement concerning Bethel Church. The statement was issued on November 3, 1794. Bishop Arnett has called this statement a “Declaration of Independence” of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The preamble provided the following:

1. Separate worship of the Black people from the white to avoid any offense given the whites by their presence by their mingling with Black people in public worship because of the partiality that was shown by the white worshipers because of color.

God does not show partiality. “ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. “ Galatians 3:28

1. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church would be governed by the rules, government, discipline, and articles of faith of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Bethel Church would continue in union and be subject to the government of the Bishops of the Methodist Church I all ecclesiastical affairs except in the right of the church property.
2. No one was to be admitted into the church classes or as members of Bethel Church except “descendants of the African race.” Despite this separation, Bethel Church members hoped to have mutual fellowship with their white brethren.
3. The Trustees of Bethel Church were to control all temporal. Matters.

The Preamble or “Declaration of Independence” did not change the fact that Bethel Church was still controlled by the Methodist Episcopal Church, the white church. Preachers were sent to Bethel Church by the Elder of St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church. The property was held by the trustees of Bethel Church, and this gave the basis for the struggle for complete independence.

Bethel Church had been purchased, built, and paid for by Allen and its donors. But the Methodist Church wanted to control Bethel Church. They wanted to send preachers and have Bethel Church pay these preachers. We know that Richard Allen was not ordained at this time. But Richard Allen in 1807 had written, The African Supplement, a document which stated that the Black people had power and owned Bethel Church. Allen claimed that The African Supplement superseded the original charter with the Methodist Church. Methodist Lawyers argued that Bethel Church had illegally seized power from white preachers. According to the elders Allen had failed to inform St. George’s about the African Supplement’s claim to Black sovereignty. “No notice was given to the Methodist Episcopal Church or to the Elder…of the design to alter the charter of Bethel Church.

Pastor John Emory of Bethel Church explained to Attorney Samuel Shoemaker in April 1815 that as far back as 1807, when the Methodist Conference requested information on the State of Bethel Church that the Black Trustees from Bethel Church had nonchalantly mentioned having formed the African Supplement to their charter, but gave a false representation of the nature of it. They did not clearly state that they owned their Bethel Church. Pastor Emory explained to Attorney Samuel Shoemaker that the St. George’s Methodist Church did not realize that the Black Church, called Bethel had redefined their relationship with the church hierarchy, which the white Methodist claimed to be the owner of Bethel Church.

The White Methodist said that the African Supplement was illegal. They said that they, The White Methodist owned Bethel Church and they could do whatever they want to do with it. Please note that this is no longer a wooden blacksmith shop, but this is years later, a lot of work has been done on the church since 1794. The church building is now a brick building known as “roughcast,” which replaced the old converted blacksmith shop. And the church was in a prime location...(similar to 3801 Headquarters in Philadelphia, Pa.). The Bethel Church sat on ground surrounded by Black property owners. Not only did Allen own land on the church’s northern edge, but a Black waiter owned property south of Bethel and a Black dry goods dealer owned a lot behind it. Because the church included two contiguous rental properties once purchased by Allen, the auction would attract good bids. **All Allen could do was pray and bid high. And this is exactly what Allen did.**

**How did Allen acquire the money to purchase back Bethel Church?**

For years Allen and the church had been accruing monies from rental properties around Philadelphia. In addition, Allen had given over church property to Bethel Trustees in exchange for an annual stipend and bonds. Finally, Richard Allen could count on passing the hat to raise extra money for the church. Allen’s diligence and foresight in acquiring rental property and making a deal with his own church would now be put to the best use of saving Bethel.

Bethel Church had been offered up in a Sheriff Sale by the White Methodist. Allen went to the Sheriff Sale. **Allen was the highest bidder. He bought back Bethel Church for the Black people. The price he paid was $9,600.00 for the church, an $525.00 for the rental lots near it.** **That was a lot of money in 1815.**

Now Bethel owned Bethel again. But the White Methodist refused to recognize Allen and the Black people as owners of Bethel. The White Elders filed a lawsuit and applied to the Supreme Court for a writ of mandamus. A writ of mandamus, (Latin word), is an order that is issued from a court of superior jurisdiction that commands an inferior tribunal, corporation, Municipal or individual to perform or refrain from performing a particular act, the performance of omission of which is required by law as an obligation. **This brought on a lawsuit that ended in favor of Bethel Church. Allen and his people were delivered, from an expensive and expensive lawsuit. Bethel Church was now free to sit under its own vine and fig tree.**

**The Problem**

Some of the Black people would not follow Richard and join Bethel Church because they said that the African Methodist Episcopal Church was being exclusive by not allowing White people to worship with them in Bethel Church.

Because Bethel Church was independent, the Methodist of Old St. George’s Church established another Methodist Church exclusively for Negro Methodist. Some of the Negro Methodists of Philadelphia would not follow Richard Allen’s leadership; they turned back to seek the aid of the white Methodist. The white Methodist established a mission church for Negroes at Camperdown, in the northeast part of the city. A class of 21 were formed and a white minister was made the head of the class. For many years the colored members of the Methodist Church were pastored by white preachers. This mission developed into Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church. This is the oldest Methodist Episcopal Church for Negroes in the United States

**Richard Allen wanted to have Bethel Church incorporated**. The trustees applied to the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, Jared Intersol, and the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania for the issuance of Article of Association under the incorporation laws of the state. This request was made on August 23, 1796 and signed by nine trustees of Bethel Methodist Church including Richard Allen. The articles provided for a title for a church. It was “The African Methodist Episcopal Church of the City of Philadelphia in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.” It was to consist of the Trustees and members of the church, called “Bethel Church., and of all and every such other church and churches as so not or hereafter shall become the property of the corporation.”

*“This property was declared to be held in trust for the religious use of the preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church and for “our African Brethren and the descendants of the African race as hereafter specified and also for the ministers and teachers of our African brethren newly licensed or ordained according to the forms of discipline.”*

Up to this point no Negro minister had been ordained. A white Elder from the Methodist Church was given the power to nominate the preacher, who was to officiate at Bethel Church, and he himself was to attend the church in order to administer the ordinances of baptism and holy communion. He was to give license to those who felt called to exhort to preach. This would have to be approved at the General Conference. Despite the power that was given to the Elder, the African Methodist Church was striving to be totally independent.

Bethel Church had been purchased, built, and paid for by Allen and its donors. But the Methodist Church wanted to control Bethel Church. They wanted to send preachers to be paid by Bethel. Then they wanted to have a Methodist Bishop over the church. A Methodist Elder drew up the incorporation papers; the Elder filed the papers but he did them in a way that Bethel Church would be deprived of the liberty they expected to enjoy. Richard Allen and his people fought for twenty-two years to get ownership of Bethel Church. (Read complete detailed account in “A History the African Methodist Episcopal Church by Daniel A. Payne.” After losing the church, Richard Allen, was able to buy his church back.

When a Methodist Elder who was assigned to the church was refused by Allen and his people, this Elder applied to the Supreme Court for a writ of mandamus. A writ of mandamus (Latin word), is an order that is issued from a court of superior jurisdiction that commands an inferior tribunal, corporation, Municipal Corporation or individual to perform or refrain from performing, a particular act, the performance or omission of which is required by law as an obligation. **This brought on a lawsuit that ended in favor of Bethel. Allen and his people were delivered, forever delivered, from a distressing and expensive law suit and from all their oppressors.**

**Organizing the A.M.E. Church 1816**

**The A.M.E. Church was organized at the General Conference of 1816. Sixteen Black Methodist congregations held a conference in Philadelphia for the purpose of forming a separate Methodist body. They called the new organization the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and elected Richard Allen as Bishop.** (Daniel Coker was elected the first Bishop on 9 April 1816; he resigned on April 10, 1816, and Richard Allen was Chosen in his stead.) The churches in the city of Baltimore were planted by Daniel Corker.

**The following persons were in attendance at the General Conference in 1816:**

**From Baltimore:** Rev. Daniel Corker, Rev. Richard Williams, Rev. Henry Harden, Mr. Edward Williamson, Mr. Stephen Hill, Mr. Nicholas Gilllard

**From Philadelphia:** Rev. Richard Allen, Rev. Clayton Durham, Rev .Jacob Tabisco, Rev. James Champion, Mr. Thomas Webster

**From Wilmington Delaware:** Rev. Peter Spencer

**From Attleborough, Pa.**  Rev. Jacob Marsh, Rev. William Anderson, Rev. Edward Jackson,

**From Salem New Jersey:** Reuben Cuff.

**Please note that the Rev. Jacob Marsh, Rev. William Anderson, and the Rev. Edward Jackson were from the Colored Methodist Society of Attleboro which later became Bethlehem A.M.E. Church of Langhorne, Pa. Bethlehem A.M.E. Church was founded in 1809. It is seven years older than Bethel. But it asked to join the connection at the General Conference of 1816.**

**Note: Many persons like to think of the African Methodist Episcopal as the First Black Church in America, but the First African Baptist Church of Savannah Georgia was founded in 1777. This was the first Black church in North America; was originally called, “The First Colored Church.”**

**In 1817 Richard Allen published the First Discipline of the A.M.E. Church. And in 1830 he became a pioneer in the Black Convention Movement in America.** The First convention was convened at Bethel Church in Philadelphia. Richard Allen was elected its president. The purpose of the society was to discuss the oppression of Black people in a country whose constitution declares that all humankind are created equal.

**The General Conference of 1844**

**Daniel Alexander Payne (Feb. 2, 1811-Nov. 2, 1893**

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by Him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the Word of Truth. 2 Timothy 2:15*

In 1841, Daniel Alexander Payne joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He gave tone, dignity, and trend t it. He was always interested in the things of intellect, literary societies, journals, magazines, and studies. He even introduced choral music into the church. The emphasis that the Church places upon things of the mind goes back the Daniel Alexander Payne.

**The Conference Course of Studies with which serve as a curriculum for ministerial students stems from Payne.** He was the author of the resolution which established this course of study. This course of study was adopted by the General Conference of 1844. Initially introduction of this bill created consternation and bitter opposition. When the resolution was introduced the house was thrown into chaos. There was much confusion, so much so until the conference. Men called Payne “a devil” and slandered his name for introducing this resolution. Payne felt that he was about to be destroyed and he decided not to attend the General Conference the next day and he gave Morris Brown his resignation. Morris Brown encouraged Bishop Payne to attend the General Conference of 1844. He told Payne that He had to go to the conference.

The next morning at the reading of the journal a motion to reconsider the Conference Course of Studies was offered by Bishop Morris Brown himself. Bishop Morris brown was not an educated man; he did not have the privilege of very much schooling. Bishop Morris Brown began to speak; his English was very poor, and he could see the need of a trained ministry. He made an eloquent address in favor of the proposal. His speech was very passionate, and his words melted the hearts of the men to the extent that before he had finished his plea for education there were cries from those assembled: “Give us the resolution!” All of the same men who stormed and broke up the General Conference on the previous day, voted for the passage of the Resolution for The Conference Course of Studies. This was a great achievement on the part of Daniel Alexander Payne. This Course of Studies has influenced more men and women than any of Payne’s other contributions to the A.M.E. Church.

The Conference Course of Study is found on page 119, Section III, Ministerial Education, Annual Conference Course of Study.

**The Emancipation Proclamation, April 1862**

Daniel Alexander Payne was Bishop over the Second Episcopal District, which includes Washington D.C. and Georgetown. He was Presiding Prelate when the slaves in the District of Columbia were set **free April 11, 1862**. Congress passed a bill abolishing slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, made known that all enslaved people in confederate states were set free. Daniel A. Payne visited President Abraham Lincoln to discuss the abolition of slavery. In many A.M.E. Churches on New Years Eve the church is at worship commemorating slaves being set free!

But in reality, the Emancipation Proclamation did not instantly free all Slaves because it only applied to places of Confederate control. However, as Northern troops advanced into Confederate South, many slaves fled behind Union lines.

**Juneteenth and Slavery in Texas, June 1865**

In Texas slavery was relatively unaffected because the state experienced no large-scale fighting or significant presence of Union Troops. Many slave owners from outside the Lone Star State viewed it as a safe haven and moved there with their slaves. After the war came to a close I the spring of 1865, General Granger of the Union Army went to Galveston, Texas in June and commanded Texas to free 250,000 slaves. Although emancipation did not happen overnight for everyone, in some cases, slave owners withheld the information until after the harvest season – celebrations broke out among the newly freed blacks, and Juneteenth was born. That December, slavery in America was formally abolished with adoption of the 13th Amendment.

**Wilberforce University**

Wilberforce University was established **in 1856** by the Cincinnati, Ohio Conference of the A.M.E. Church. By 1860 the college had more than 200 students. The number of students decreased due to the Civil War, and financial losses. The College closed in 1863. Its first President was Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, one of the original founders. Payne was the first African American to become a College President. There was a fire at the school in 1865. When the college added an industrial department in the late 19th century, state legislators could sponsor scholarships for students. The college was named after William Wilberforce, (1759-1833), who was an English Politician who became the voice of the abolition movement in Parliament. He achieved the end of the Slave Trade in Great Britain.