

African American Church History Timeline

This African American Church History Timeline will guide you through the development of African American Christianity. The purpose is to show the development of all aspects of African American Christianity in relation to each other chronologically. The format is simple in order that it may be copied with little difficulty. Feel free to copy this document for personal or classroom use. As a courtesy, please contact Mark at drnickens@triad.rr.com so I can maintain a record of all such usages. Within this document the terms "Black" and "African American" are used interchangeably.

The nature of the project means it is an ongoing, living document. For suggestions contact Mark at drnickens@triad.rr.com.

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<p>Are you an Armorbearer or know an Armorbearer? I am currently researching the history of Armorbearers and would like talk with current or previous Armorbearers. Please contact me at drnickens@triad.rr.com. In return for your input, I will inform you of current research. Thanks, Mark.</p>	
1441	The Portuguese begin taking Africans as slaves and transporting them away from Africa. These first African slaves were taken to Europe to serve in households.
1502	African slaves first came to the Western Hemisphere when they were brought to Hispaniola.
1535	Cabeza de Vaca, a Spanish explorer in the New World, and three other men were the only survivors out of 300 men who had left Spain in 1527. He led them through part of the southeast of present day US and into Mexico, where they were rescued. One of the three other men was Benitez, a Black man. He is the first Black person known to have come to present day US. In an odd twist of fate, the Indians several times made Cabeza de Vaca a slave.
1607	Jamestown was established as the first English colony in the New World.
	<p><u>Mar</u>: According to a census taken in this month, 32 blacks (15 men and 17 women) were "in the service" of Jamestown planters.</p> <p><u>Apr</u>: A Dutch ship of unknown name and an English ship named "Treasurer" set out on a trading trip. While out to sea, they attacked and captured a Portuguese slave ship with approximately 100 Africans aboard.</p>
1619	<p><u>Aug</u>: The Dutch ship landed at Old Point Comfort near Jamestown, VA and sold "20 and odd Negroes" (This figure is taken from a letter by John Rolfe written in January 1620.) to the Virginians. Most of the slaves were sold to the Governor, Sir George Yeardley, and a wealthy merchant, Abraham Peirse. Smaller boats smuggled the slaves to Jamestown. This Dutch ship has been called "The Black Mayflower."</p> <p><u>End</u>: The "Treasurer" delivered an African named Angela to Point Comfort, Virginia. The "Treasurer" then left for Bermuda with 29 Africans aboard. Note: some sources state that she arrived in 1618.</p>
1620	<u>Dec 21</u> : The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in their ship the Mayflower.
1669	<u>Apr 14</u> : An African man named Emmanuel is baptized in a Lutheran Church in New York City.
1688	<u>Feb 18</u> : Four Friends (Quakers) from Germantown, PN, issued "A Minute Against Slavery, Addressed to Germantown Monthly Meeting, 1688." This may be the first protest of African slavery in the Colonies. Read the original here .
1706	Cotton Mather, Puritan minister, published "The Negro Christianized, An Essay to Execute and Assist that Good Work, The Instruction of Negro Servants in Christianity" in Boston.
1738	<u>Oct 16</u> : George Schullius and Peter Bohler arrived in Savannah, GA. They were Moravians sent to minister to slaves.
1742	David George born in Essex County, VA.
1743	The Society of the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (Church of England) opened a school for Blacks in Charleston.
1750	Anthony Benezet, Friends (Quaker) school teacher in Philadelphia, began teaching free blacks and slaves in his home at night. This action was suspended during the American Revolutionary War, but recreated once the war was over. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones were graduates of Benezet's school.

1758	The first known slave congregation was founded on the plantation of William Byrd III in Mecklenburg County, Virginia. It was known as the African Baptist or Bluestone church.
	The Anglican Church opened the first school for slave children in Virginia; it was located in Williamsburg. Among the topics was learning to read the Bible and learning the catechism of the Anglican Church.
1760	<u>Dec 25</u> : Jupiter Hammon wrote "An Evening Thought. Salvation by Christ with Penitential Cries" on this day. Early in the next year it was published, making it the first published work by an African American in America. Read it here .
1761	<u>Feb 4</u> : Samuel Davies died. In his ministerial career he baptized over 100 blacks into the Presbyterian church in Virginia.
1762	David George ran away from his slave owner and traveled south.
	Robert Strawbridge, a Methodist, organized a class meeting of twelve people in his home in this year. [1762, 1763, and 1764 have also been given.] Among the members was one known as "Aunt Annie," possible a Black slave of the family. This may have been the first Methodist society meeting in America.
1766	Philip Embury, Methodist minister, began preaching in his cousin's house, Barbara Heck. Attending the first meeting was Philip, Barbara, Barbara's husband, a hired hand (White), and a Black servant. This servant's name was either Betty or Bettea. This meeting plus the Strawbridge meeting (mentioned above) were the first Methodist class meetings in America, with Blacks being present at both.
	Quakers (Friends) in Philadelphia opened a school for free black children, although sometimes they accepted slave children.
1773	A Black Baptist pastor named Palmer baptized slaves at Silver Bluff, SC. He established a church there. David George was a member. George Liele spoke at this church.
	Anthony Benezet called to order the first meeting of the "Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully held in Bondage" in Philadelphia. Among the ten charter members is Thomas Paine. This may have been the first abolitionist group in America. In 1787, after much reorganizing and the death of founding leader Benezet, the society was renamed "The Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage," with Benjamin Franklin as its first president.
1775	
1778	Either in this year or the next, George Liele formed a Black Baptist church in Savannah, GA.
1782	George Liele leaves Savannah when the British evacuate the city.
1784	<u>May 3</u> : Anthony Benezet died (see 1750). 400 Blacks attended his funeral in response to his efforts to educate them and fight against slavery.
	Blacks in Baltimore began gathering for prayer and devotions apart from the white-controlled Methodist Church.
1786	Richard Allen organized 42 blacks in Philadelphia into a prayer meeting and a Methodist society. He also initiated the building of a church. All his efforts were thwarted and discontinued.
1788	<u>Jan 20</u> : The First Colored Baptist Church in Savannah, GA, is constituted.
	Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others left St George Methodist Church in Philadelphia after they were asked to move during a prayer.
1791	The first separate African American congregation was established in this year in Oxon Hill, MD. Today it is St. Paul's United Methodist Church.
1792	David George traveled to Sierra Leone and founded a church in Freetown.
1794	Bishop Francis Asbury dedicated Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. Richard Allen was the pastor.
1796	Francis Asbury dedicated present-day Mother Zoar United Methodist Church in Philadelphia.
1799	Richard Allen was ordained as the first African American Methodist deacon.
	John Chavis became the first African American home missionary commissioned by the Presbyterian church as a missionary to the slaves.
1801	Richard Allen developed the <u>Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns, Selected from Various Authors</u> , the first African-American hymnal.
1804	Absalom Jones was ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church.

1808	The U.S. Congress moves to stop the slave trade.
1809	African Baptist Church is organized in Philadelphia.
1815	African-Americans begin to develop their own covert church in Charlestown. This church will eventually be aligned with the AME Church in Philadelphia and Morris Brown and one other member will go to Bethel Church in Philadelphia to be ordained by Richard Allen.
1816	Bethel Church in Philadelphia separates completely from the Methodist Episcopal Church. African Methodists in Baltimore also separate from the White Methodists under the leadership of Daniel Coker. At a gathering in Philadelphia, the African Methodist Episcopal Church is formed. It is the oldest African American organization currently in existence. Apr 11: Richard Allen is consecrated as bishop of the AME Church.
1820	Daniel Coker sails for Africa as an unofficial missionary for the AME Church.
1821	Lott Carey sails for Africa as a missionary for the Baptists. Samuel Cornish founds First Colored Presbyterian Church of New York.
1822	Denmark Vesey insurrection in Charlestown foiled. The African-American church in Charlestown, which was linked with the AME Church in Philadelphia, was closed and the building was demolished. Morris Brown, the pastor, was smuggled north.
1826	The first congregation of Black Baptists in New Orleans, LA is organized.
1827	<u>Freedom's Journal</u> , the first African American periodical, is established by Rev. Samuel Cornish and John P. Russworm.
1828	Morris Brown is elected as the second AME Church bishop. Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first African American religious order, is founded in Baltimore, MD. Theodore S. Wright graduates from Princeton Theological Seminary, the first African American seminary graduate.
1830	Sep 20-24: Richard Allen presides at the first National Negro Convention which convenes in Philadelphia. Among the attendees are the Revs. Samuel Cornish, Peter Williams, and J.W.C. Pennington.
1831	Nat Turner Insurrection. Richard Allen died.
1832	Presbyterian Minister Charles Colcock Jones is appointed missionary for the Association for the Religious Instruction of Negroes.
1833	Oberlin College founded.
1834	The Providence Baptist Association, the first African American Baptist association, is formed in Ohio.
1839	Daniel Payne is ordained by the Frankean Synod (Lutheran).
1853	The first Y.M.C.A. for African American residents of Washington, D.C. is opened.
1854	James Augustus Healy is ordained in Paris at Notre Dame Cathedral, the first African American Roman Catholic priest. The Presbyterian Church establishes Ashmun Institute (now Lincoln University) in Lincoln, Pennsylvania, the first institution for higher learning for African Americans.
1858	Henry McNeal Turner became a preacher for the AME Church. He was the first prominent African-American to state that God was black.
1859	Oct 16: John Brown led raid on Harper's Ferry. This raid was unsuccessful and Brown was hanged.
1861	Apr 12: Civil War began with the firing on Fort Sumter.
1863	Jan 1: Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln appointed AME Bishop Henry Turner as chaplain of the 1st Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops. This made Turner the first African American chaplain in the U.S. Army.
	Feb 21: St Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Baltimore was dedicated as the first parish for African Americans of

1864	the Roman Catholic Church.
1865	Apr 9: The Civil War ended with General Robert E. Lee surrendered.
1875	James A Healy became the first African American Catholic bishop.
1878	Aug 18: St Paul's Colored Lutheran Church, the first Lutheran Church for African Americans, is dedicated in Little Rock, AK.
1886	Aug 25: the National Baptist Convention is founded in St. Louis, MO.
1889	Jan 1-4: the First Catholic Afro-American Congress convened in Washington, D.C.
1894	C. P. Jones and Charles H. Mason founded the Church of God in Christ.
1895	Sep 24: Three Baptist conventions merged to form the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A.
1896	The Supreme Court ruled in the "Plessy vs. Ferguson" case. This resulted in the "separate but equal" principle which supported segregation.
1897	Dec 16: The Lott Carey Baptist Home and Foreign Missionary Convention is founded.
1898	Mary Jane Small, wife of AMEZ bishop John B. Small, is ordained as the first female elder in the AMEZ Church.
1900	Charles Thomas Walker formed the first African American branch of the YMCA in New York.
1903	Eliza Healy was assigned as superior of a Roman Catholic convent, the Academy of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, in Port Richmond, New York. She was the first African American to become a superior of a convent.
1906	Apr 9: Pentecostalism on this date during a revival meeting at the Azusa Street Mission, Los Angeles, California.
1907	Charles H. Mason broke with C. P. Jones and reorganized the COGIC as a pentecostal denomination.
1911	Martha Cunningham Dolby is ordained as the first African American (and first African American woman) minister in the Church of the Brethren.
1918	Edward T. Demby became the first African American bishop in the Episcopal Church assigned in America. He is assigned to Arkansas and the Southwest.
1920	Matthew W. Clair, Sr., and Robert E. Burns became the first African American bishops elected by the ME Church in America.
1926	Mar 11: Ralph D. Abernathy was born in Linden, Alabama. He was the tenth of twelve children.
1944	James Russell Brown became the first African American chaplain in the U.S. Navy.
1946	James H. Lark was ordained as the first African American minister in the Mennonite Church.
1948	Abernathy ordained a Baptist minister.
1951	Abernathy became pastor of First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.
1954	The Supreme Court reversed its "separate but equal" provision for African Americans when it ruled in the "Brown vs. Board of Education" case. James H. Lark became the first African American bishop in the Mennonite Church.
1955	Dec 1: Rosa Parks refused to move to the back (colored section) of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Dec 5: Martin Luther King, Jr., led a boycott of Montgomery buses by the African American community. The boycott lasted 381 days.
1957	Jan 10: Abernathy's home and church were bombed. Abernathy was not at home and his wife and daughter were not hurt. Their home was damaged, but the church had to be rebuilt. Mar: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was formed.
1961	The Progressive National Baptist Convention was formed when followers of Martin Luther King, Jr., left the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A.
1963	Sep 15: The 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL was bombed; four children died. Sep 19: Abernathy and other African Americans met with President Kennedy to discuss the bombing four days earlier.
1964	Dec 10: Martin Luther King, Jr., was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
1965	Watts Riot by African Americans in Los Angeles. Trudy Trimm became the first female pastor in the NBC, USA.

	Feb 21: Malcolm X was assassinated.
1968	Apr 4: Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.
1969	Barton McIntyre achieves the highest rank held by an African American in the Salvation Army when he is promoted to Lt. Colonel.
End of 1960s	In response to the emerging African-American awareness brought about by the Civil Rights movement, Black Power ideology, etc., a number of African-American subgroups form in the last years of the 60s, including: American Baptist Black Caucus, Black Council (Reformed Church in America), Black Leadership Conference (Presbyterian Church in the US), Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Black Presbyterians United (United Presbyterian Church in the USA), Ministers for Racial and Social Justice (United Church of Christ), Union of Black Episcopalians, and United Black Christians (United Church of Christ). The National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, the National Black Sisters' Conference, the National Black Lay Catholic Conference, and the National Office for Black Catholics are formed in the Roman Catholic Church.