

make laws. The A.M.E. Church has a Bishop's Council and a Judicial Council.

The Departments of the A.M.E. Church make up the operation of the Church. They are vital to the function of an organized government. The work of each Department is directed by a General Officer, who is elected by the General Conference.

Bishops are elected and consecrated to the work of the episcopacy in the United States, Canada, Africa, and the Virgin Islands which make up the eighteen episcopal districts of the A.M.E. Church.

The Bishop's Cabinet consists of the Presiding Elders. The Presiding Elders are appointed by the Presiding Bishop. The Presiding Elders superintend the work of the Church by presiding over sub-districts of each annual conference.

The Pastor is appointed by the Presiding Bishop to a mission, circuit, or station. The Pastors make up the Presiding Elder's Cabinet. The Pastor appoints Stewards in the Local Church. They serve in the Pastor's Cabinet. Trustees are elected by the local church. They carry out the temporal concerns of the church.

All persons in the A.M.E. Church are under law. The A.M.E. Discipline provides the rules and regulations for all the different parts of the Church, so that the Church becomes a fellowship of Christian love.

CONFERENCE

The term "conference" is very important in African Methodist usage. The first General Conference was held in 1816 in Philadelphia, PA.

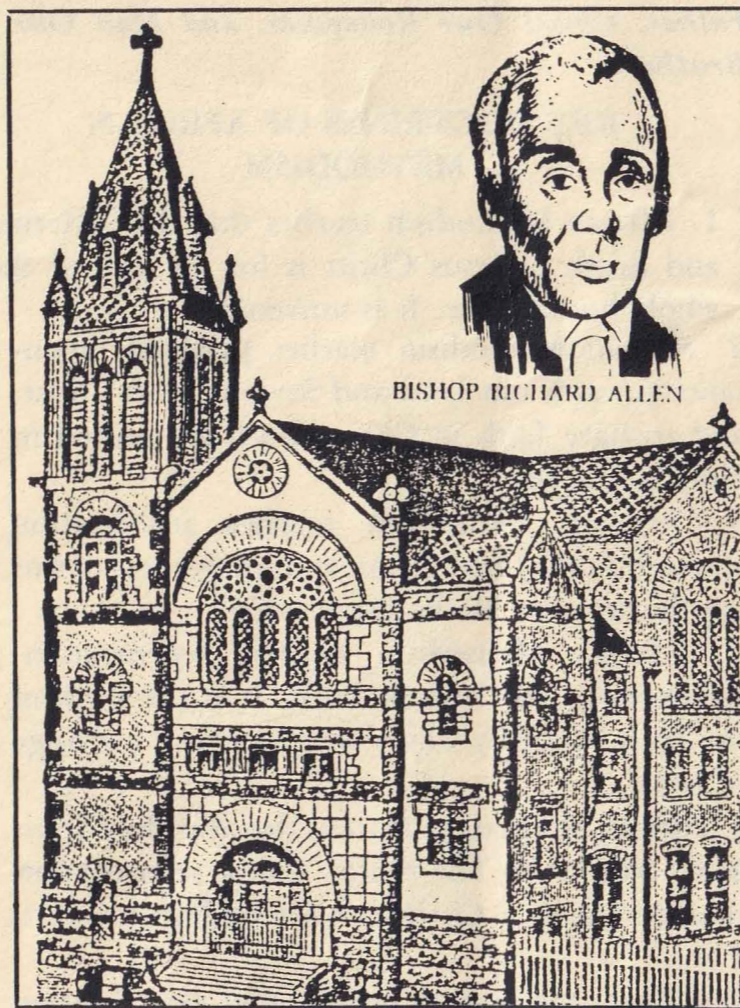
There are five conferences in the A.M.E. Church They are: 1, the General Conference; 2, the Annual Conference; 3, the District Conference; 4, the Quarterly Conference; and 5, the Church Conference.

A.M.E. DISCIPLINE

In 1817, Richard Allen published the first A.M.E. Discipline. The A.M.E. Discipline is our ecclesiastical constitution. It outlines the Articles of Religion, the General Rules, and Rituals, and other services of the Church.

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"Mother Bethel Philadelphia"

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Our Beginning

By Edgar L. Mack



Richard Allen
(1760-1831)

Founder and First Bishop
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Introduction to the
African Methodist
Episcopal Church

Our Beginning

by Edgar L. Mack

Introduction to the African Methodist Episcopal Church

In 1787, Rev. Richard Allen and Rev. Absalom Jones withdrew from the St. George Methodist Church because of "unkind treatment" and restrictions placed upon worshippers of African descent. They founded The Free African Society, which was the beginning of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1816, Richard Allen called together sixteen representatives from Bethel African Church in Philadelphia, and African Churches in Baltimore, Maryland; Wilmington, Delaware; Attleboro, Pennsylvania, and Salem, New Jersey, to meet in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A church organization or "connection" was organized as the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Richard Allen was the founder and first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

OUR NAME

African: The term "African" refers to people of African descent. Richard Allen also used the term "people of color." He advocated human dignity and religious liberty for people of African descent in America.

Methodist: Richard Allen accepted the doctrines and polity of the Methodist Church as appropriate for his people. The term "Methodist" was used as a word of derision and scorn for John Wesley and his followers, because of their systematic method and habits of religious duty.

Episcopal: The highest office in the A.M.E. Church is the Bishop. The term "Bishop" means "over-seer." The Bishop is the one who "oversees" or "overlooks" the work of the Church.

OUR BELIEFS

The standard of faith for the A.M.E. Church is The Twenty-Five Articles of Religion. John Wesley extracted The Twenty-Five Articles of Religion from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Richard Allen adopted The Twenty-Five Articles of Religion as sufficient for the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

OUR MOTTO

The motto of African Methodism is: *God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, and Man Our Brother.*

KEY DOCTRINES OF AFRICAN METHODISM

1. African Methodism teaches that the suffering and death of Jesus Christ is for the sins of the whole human race. It is universal.
2. African Methodism teaches personal repentance towards our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to have faith in Christ. Both are united in Holy Scriptures.
3. African Methodism teaches justification through faith. Justification and forgiveness of sins are the same in Methodist theology.
4. African Methodism teaches regeneration. Regeneration is the new birth. It is the work of the Holy Spirit by which we experience a change of heart.
5. African Methodism teaches that the Holy Spirit bears witness to The Spirit. Can a person know that he/she is a Christian? Methodism answers, Yes.
6. African Methodism teaches that sanctification

is the work of The Holy Spirit. Holiness is the conformity of the heart and life to the law of God.

OUR RITES AND RITUALS

Public Worship

African Methodism uses and cherishes its form of worship. Rites and rituals are held in high esteem by African Methodists. They are grounded in both law and tradition.

The Discipline and A.M.E. Hymnal prescribe the order of worship throughout the connection. The great hymns and music of the Church offer much food for the soul.

The Sacraments

Baptism is one of the two sacraments of the Church. It should never be so hurried or informal as to lose its significance and solemnity.

It is clear that A.M.E.'s accept infant baptism. Adults are also baptized. The mode of baptism in African Methodism is by pouring, sprinkling, or immersion. The A.M.E. Church does not deem the mode as essential to the validity of the sacrament.

The Church does not sanction re-baptism. Those who were baptized in infancy renew the baptismal covenant, and make it their own, when they come into full membership. This is quite sufficient in the judgment of the Church, and satisfactory to all those who are grounded in the polity and usages of African Methodism. A.M.E.'s accept the Lord's Supper as the other sacrament of the Church. All members of the A.M.E. Church should be exhorted to attend this service at every opportunity.

OUR GOVERNMENT

The African Methodist Episcopal Church has a real form of government. Our government is *episcopal* in form. This means that the Church is governed by *Bishops*.

The General Conference is the legislature. It meets every four years to elect bishops and to