

“Allen 250”

A Celebration of the Life of Bishop Richard Allen:
February 14, 1760 to March 26, 1831

Wednesday, February 10, 2010

Event: Richard Allen Exhibition of Rare Objects & Public Dialogue on the Life of Richard Allen

Time: 6-8pm

Location: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA

Panelists: Fr. Martini Shaw, Rector of African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas; Rev. Fred Day, Pastor of St. George's United Methodist Episcopal Church; Rev. David Cassidy, Pastor of Mother Zoar United Methodist Episcopal Church; Rev. Dr. Mark Kelly Tyler, Pastor of Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church; and, Dr. Richard Newman, author of *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*.

Moderator: Dr. Anthea Butler, University of Pennsylvania

Presenters: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Library Company.

Thursday, February 11, 2010

Event: First Episcopal District Founder's Day Worship Service

Time: 7:30pm

Location: First District Headquarters, 3801 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA

Guest Preacher: Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Dickerson, Historiographer and Executive Director of the Department of Research and Scholarship

Presenter: Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, Host Bishop

Friday, February 12, 2010

Event: First Episcopal District Founder's Day Lecture on the life of Bishop Allen

Time: 10am

Location: First District Headquarters, 3801 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA

Lecturer: Dr. Richard Newman, author of *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*

Response to the Lecture: Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Dickerson, Historiographer and Executive Director of the Department of Research and Scholarship of the AME Church

Presenter: Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, Host Bishop

Friday, February 12, 2010

Event: First Episcopal District Founder's Day Worship Service

Time: 7:30pm

Location: Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church

Guest Preacher: Bishop John Bryant, Senior Bishop, 4th Episcopal District

Presenter: Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, Host Bishop

Saturday, February 13, 2010

Event: Tour on your own of the Audacious Freedom Exhibit and the Richard Allen Museum

Time: All day.

Location: The African American Museum of Philadelphia, 7th and Arch Streets and Mother Bethel

Saturday, February 13, 2010

Event: Free Concert featuring the Wilberforce University Choir

Time: 5pm

Location: Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Mark Kelly Tyler, Host Pastor

Sunday, February 14, 2010

Event: Bishop Allen's 250th Birthday!!!

Location: Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church

Time: 11am

Preacher: Bishop Richard Franklin Norris

Guest Choir: Wilberforce University Choir

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Mark Kelly Tyler, Host Pastor

Monday, February 15, 2010

Event: AME Preacher's Meeting of Philadelphia and Vicinity Founder's Day Observance

Location: Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church

Time: 7pm

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Frank Madison Reid, III, Bethel AMEC, Baltimore

Presenter: Rev. Simon Bouie, President of the AME Preacher's Meeting



June 2010

Event: The return of the “Bust of Bishop Allen” from Wilberforce University to Philadelphia

Background: In 1876, the United States celebrated its first 100 years as a nation. The 6 month celebration was held in Philadelphia at Fairmount Park. Although it was held to demonstrate how far America had come and the healing that had taken place since the Civil War, it was not very hospitable to Black Americans. In fact, when Frederick Douglass was invited to the stage for the opening ceremonies, America's greatest orator was to only be seen, but not heard.

For this reason, the actions of the AME Church are all the more remarkable. Beginning in 1873, Bishop John Mifflin Brown and the members of the Arkansas Annual Conference took the initiative to ensure a Black presence at the Centennial. Through the efforts of Rev. J.T. Jenifer and Rev. Andrew J. Chambers, a committee was organized to raise funds to have a monument placed at Fairmount Park in the memory of Bishop Richard Allen. The monument, once completed, stood 22' tall, consisted of 4 Roman style pillars, and was covered so that visitors could sit inside to reflect on this giant of a man. The center piece of the monument was a 3' bust of Bishop Allen made from imported Italian marble.

As the monument made its way from the sculptor's studio in Cincinnati, Ohio, it was met with disaster. The car, which carried the monument, derailed over a bridge completely destroying the monument. This news was disheartening to the AME Church, to say the least. However, there was a silver lining in this dark development. The bust of Bishop Allen, miraculously, was in a separate car and was saved from destruction. The committee quickly regrouped and erected the bust on a marble obelisk with only 8 days remaining in the 6 month Centennial.

Following the close of events in 1876, the AME Church was denied the right (unlike other denominations) to leave the bust in Fairmount Park. For that reason, the bust was relocated to Wilberforce University for safekeeping, where it has been up until this very day. Over the years, the story of the origin of the bust has faded from memory and it now sits on the reference desk in the Library at W.U.

As a part of the celebration, Dr. Patricia Hardaway, President of Wilberforce University has agreed to allow the bust to be restored and then transported back to Philadelphia to be on display at the Richard Allen Museum at Mother Bethel for the celebration. The plan is to bring the bust back to Philadelphia on an antique rail car which will be hauled by Amtrak. The bust will make a whistle stop tour of the state of Pennsylvania, beginning in Pittsburg, continuing to Harrisburg, stopping in Lancaster, and finally in Philadelphia. This trip, planned tentatively in June, will be a tremendous teaching opportunity for the AME Church, as we share with a larger audience, the legacy of Bishop Richard Allen. The whistle stop tour will be held in conjunction with “Quest for Freedom” sites across the state, a Black History initiative of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Allen 250 “Toolkit”

Things you can do to celebrate

In speaking about the importance of remembering Bishop Richard Allen, his successor, Bishop Morris Brown had these words to share with the Church:

This patriarch and founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, though his body is reposed in the silent tomb, yet his memory is still fresh in the minds of thousands, and millions yet unborn will rise up and call him blessed. It requires some one more conversant without venerable father in his early days than we are, to wield a pen in a manner sufficient to do that justice which belongs to him. Not only the members of our church should feel an interest in the history of this man of God, but every person of color in these United States, for he was the first among us in this country that ever moved and succeeded in obtaining spiritual freedom from under the sanctimonial (sic) yoke of our enemies, who, under the garb of religion, held our people in a most abject servitude, by taking advantage of their ignorance. Will not some one who is acquainted with the life and early pursuits of our beloved father, take up his pen and give us a brief sketch of them for our next number? We feel satisfied that it will be read with interest by every Christian and friend of the colored man.

With this in mind, there are multiple ways that every person who belongs to the AME Church can celebrate the life and legacy of Bishop Allen. The following are suggestions, but we look forward to this list growing with recommendations of your own.

- Contact the local newspaper about dedicating a portion of their Black History coverage to Bishop Allen.
- Conduct an essay contest about Bishop Allen’s life. Contact a local newspaper in advance and arrange for the winning essay to be published. Or publish the essay in your Church newsletter.
- Invite local artists to create a poster tribute to Bishop Richard Allen. Use the poster as a fundraiser and sell it after Sunday services and during special events.
- Host a public dialogue at your church. Invite local scholars and public historians to discuss the life of Bishop Richard Allen.
- Connect with your local schools to hold a Bishop Allen Day.
 - Teachers can have a poster contest in class.
 - Students can create a collage, drawings, or painted posters.
 - Teachers can offer extra credit for student research assignments about the life of Bishop Allen.
 - Display books about Bishop Allen and the Underground Railroad in the school library.
 - Invite a local history museum to talk about the importance of Bishop Allen and his struggle for freedom.
- Create a wall mural in a public space to honor Bishop Richard Allen and his struggle for freedom. Invite a local artist to lead a team of families to participate in painting the mural.
- Contact your local radio or television station. Ask them to invite your minister or church historian to talk about the Bishop Allen 250th Birthday Anniversary.
- Have local churches publish a Bishop Allen 250 Special Edition Newsletter. Invite church members to submit writings, research, photographs that add meaning to the occasion.
- Create Allen 250 Study Circles in local churches.

- Have members read Allen's autobiography which is free online at: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/allen/menu.html>
- Have you choir learn songs taken from Bishop Allen's Hymnal.

Suggested Litany for Allen 250

Acts of Hope

by

Bishop Richard Allen

O my God, in all my dangers temporal and spiritual I will hope in thee who are Almighty power, and therefore able to relieve me, who art infinite goodness, and therefore ready and willing to assist me.

O precious blood of my dear Redeemer! O gaping wounds of my crucified Savior! Who can contemplate the sufferings of God incarnate, and not raise their hope, and not put their trust in Christ?

What though my body be crumbled into dust, and that dust blown over the face of the earth, yet I undoubtedly know my Redeemer lives, and shall raise me up at the last day;

Whether I am comforted or left desolate; whether I enjoy peace or am afflicted with temptations, whether I am healthful or sickly, succored or abandoned by the good things of this life, I will always hope in thee my Lord, O my chief, infinite good.

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; although the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; although the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

What though I mourn and am afflicted here, and sigh under the miseries of this world for a time, I am sure that my tears shall one day be turned into joy, and that joy none shall take from me.

Whoever hopes for the great things in this world, and takes no pains to attain them; how can my hopes of everlasting life be well ground, if I do not strive and labor for that eternal inheritance? I will never refuse the meanest labors, while I look to receive such glorious wages; I will never repine at any temporal loss, while I expect to gain such eternal rewards.

Blessed Hope!!! Be thou my chief delight in life, and then I shall be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Be thou my comfort and support unto the very hour of death, and then shall I contentedly leave this world, and embrace you of God in Christ, as my supreme Hope.

*From: The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, 1833.
Arranged by Rev. Leslie R. White, Pastor of St. Paul AMEC, Berkeley, California*

Suggested Web Resources

<http://www.motherbethel.org/>

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>

<http://www.accessible.com/accessible/>

<http://markkellytyler.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/abolition/>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3h101.html>

<http://archives.delaware.gov/markers/kc/KC-43.shtml>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3h474.html>