

Richard Allen Leads The Way

Midwest Conference Lay Organization Learning Lab

Lay Training

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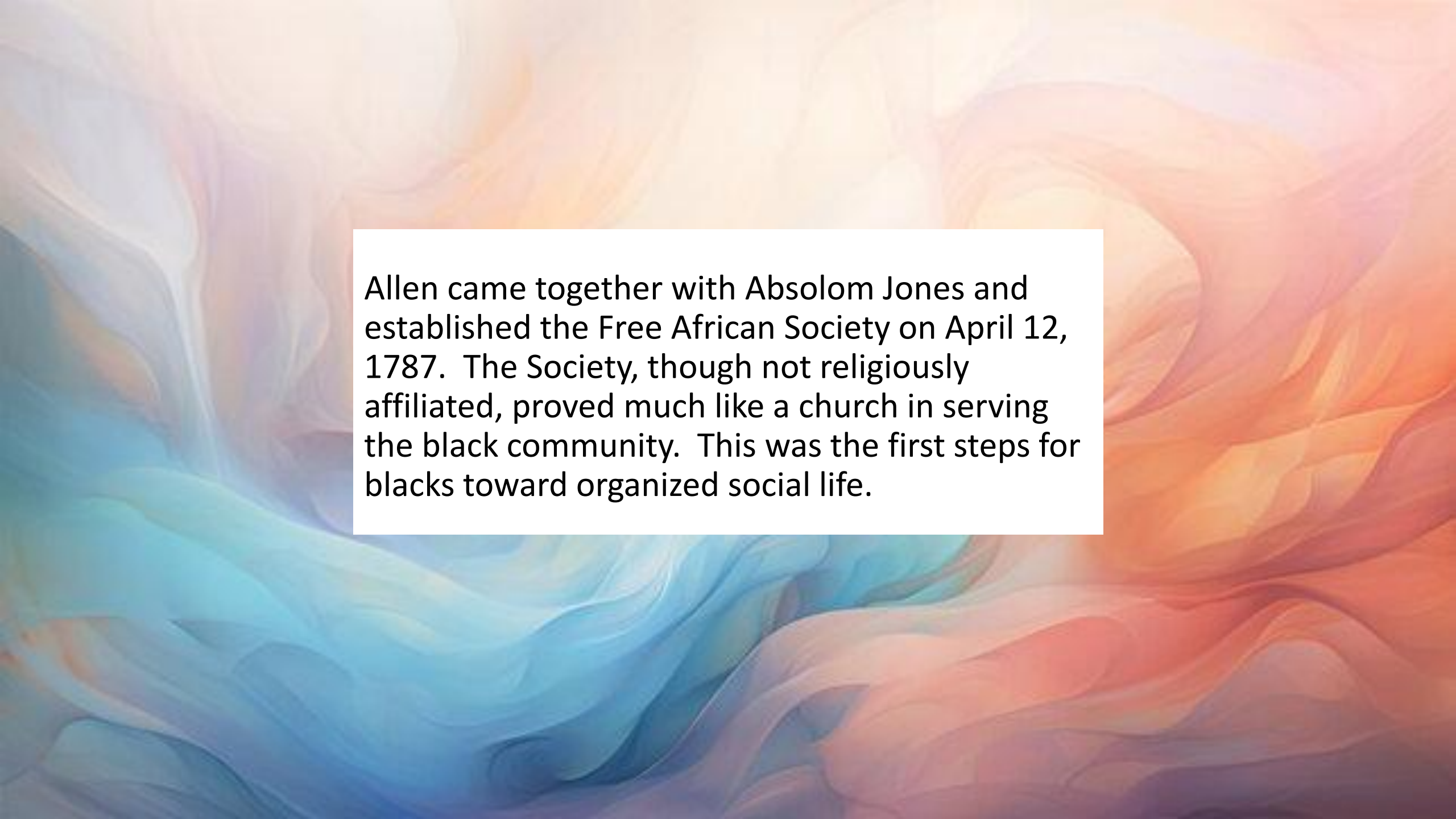
Born in Philadelphia on February 14, 1760 and sold with his family to a Delaware farmer, Stokley Sturgis, in 1767. Allen's Mother and two of his siblings were sold off. A brother and sister remained with him on the plantation. He taught himself to read and write. They began to attend the meetings of the local Methodist Society. Allen experienced a religious conversion at age 17. He began evangelizing, attracting criticism and anger from local enslavers.



In 1780, he began preaching, converted his Master, purchased his freedom, and was proficient as a woodcutter, brick master, and wagon team driver. He then changed his name from "Negro Richard" to "Richard Allen"



At 26, he came to Philadelphia. He affiliated with St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. One morning in 1787, at St. George's, while praying was going on, Richard Allen heard considerable scuffling and low-talking. As he raised his head, he saw the trustees pulling Absalom Jones and William White off their knees telling them that they could not kneel there because White people wanted to pray. Mr. Allen asked if they could finish praying and if so, they would trouble them no more. When the prayer was over, the Black people, led by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones withdrew from the St. George's Church. In response to this incident, a group of Philadelphia area slaves and former slaves also withdrew from the church.



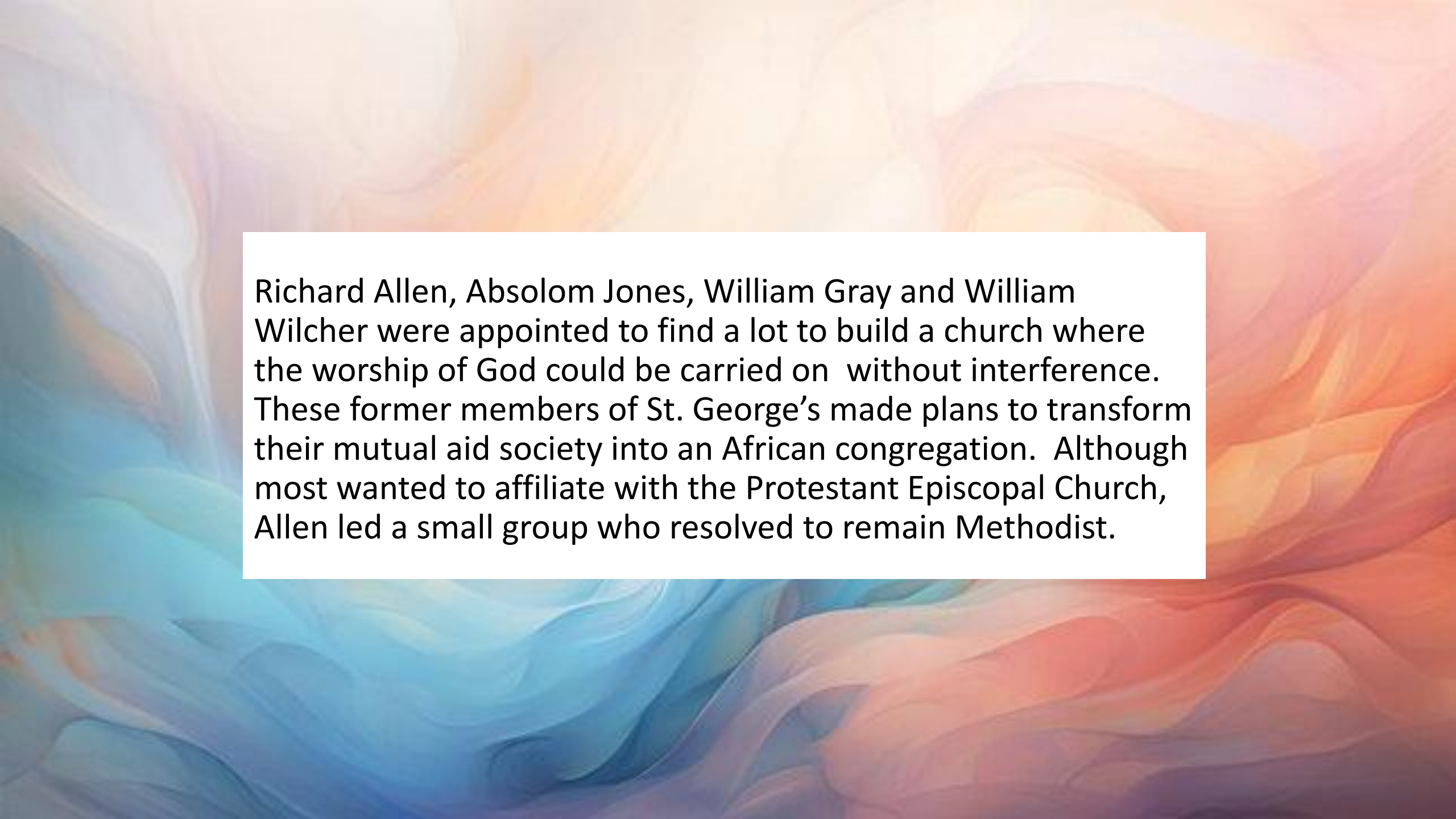
Allen came together with Absalom Jones and established the Free African Society on April 12, 1787. The Society, though not religiously affiliated, proved much like a church in serving the black community. This was the first steps for blacks toward organized social life.



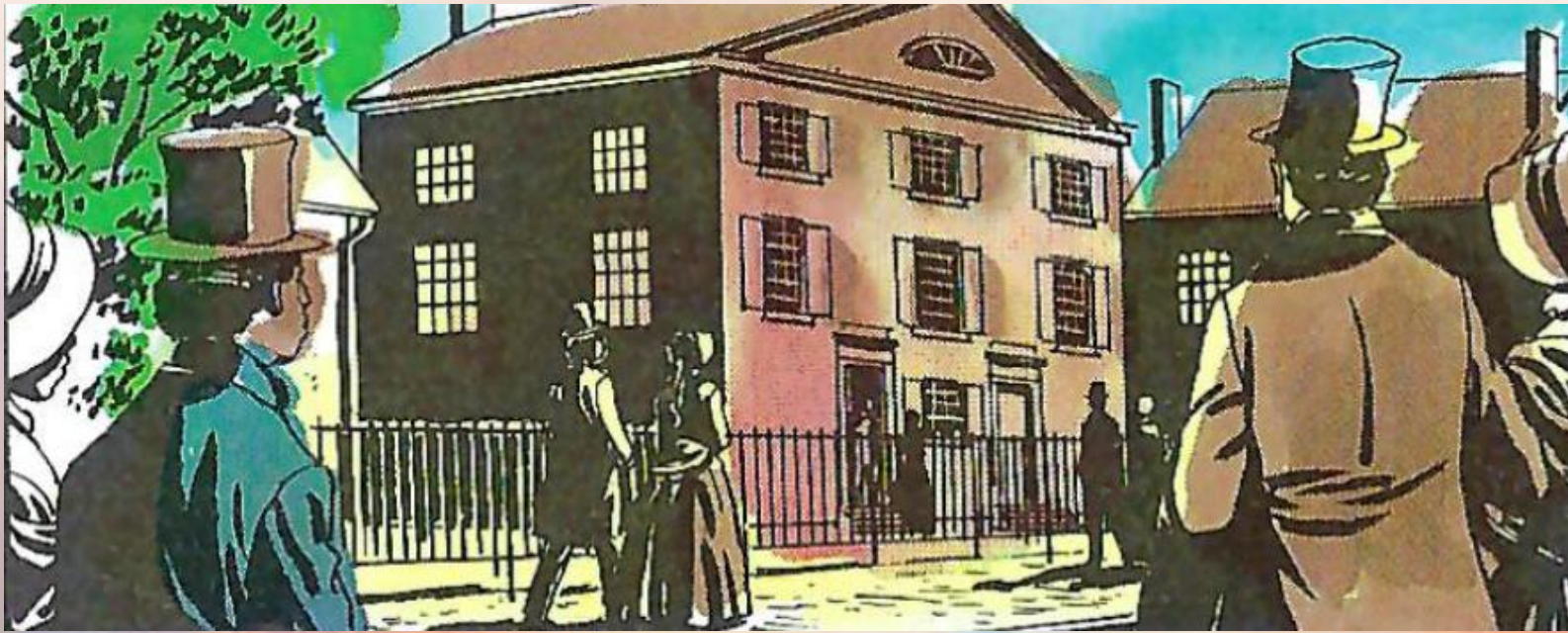
Allen preached to mixed congregations, but it became apparent that he was not welcome in white churches. He and Jones were thrown out of St. George's Methodist Church, and Allen was refused ordination by the Methodist Church. He married his first wife, Flora, in 1790.



Despite its separate nature, the Society helped blacks and whites alike. They nursed the sick during the yellow fever epidemic in 1793. During the War of 1812, they recruited 2,000 blacks to defend Philadelphia against the British.

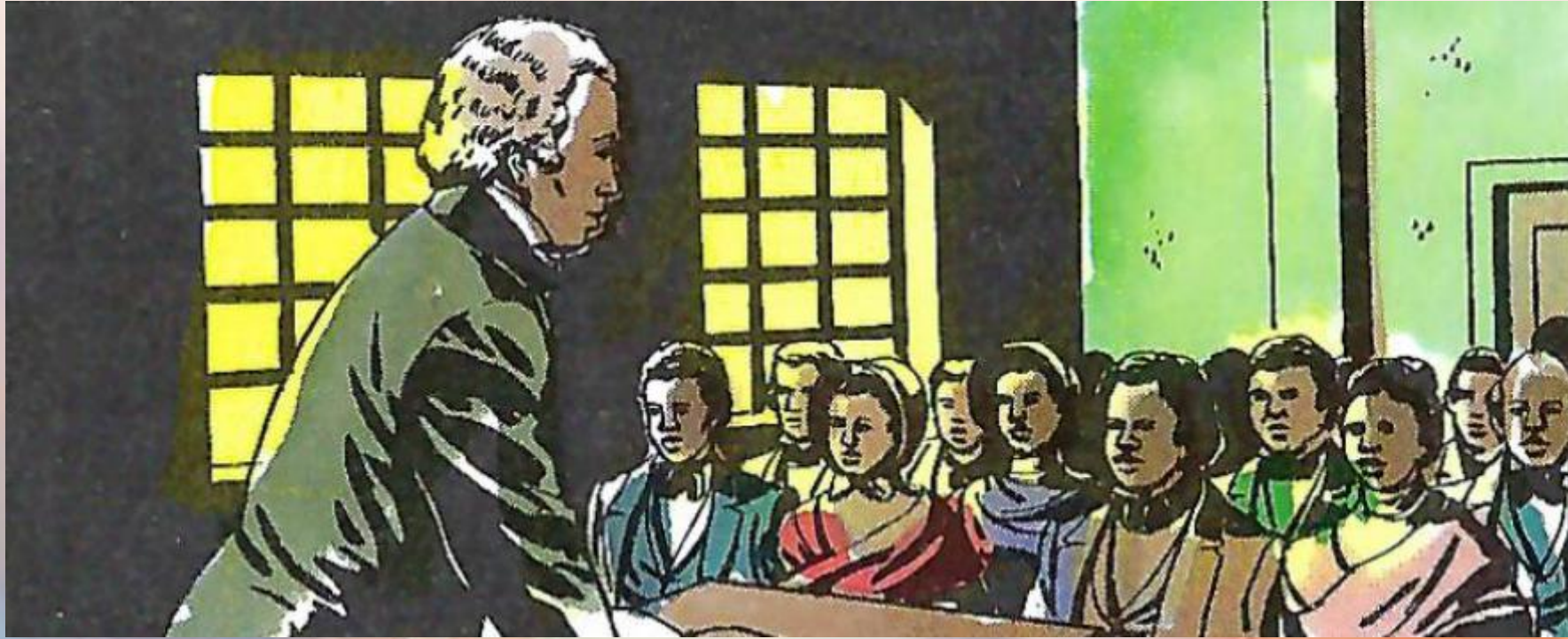


Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, William Gray and William Wilcher were appointed to find a lot to build a church where the worship of God could be carried on without interference. These former members of St. George's made plans to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation. Although most wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Allen led a small group who resolved to remain Methodist.



This prompted Allen to establish Bethel Church. He built Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, fondly known as Mother Bethel. In 1794, Bethel was dedicated with Allen as Pastor. Besides being a place of worship and assembly, it was a temporary home for former slaves, a Sunday School and Adult Evening School. Flora worked very closely with him during the early years of establishing the church, from 1787 to 1799. Flora died on March 11, 1801, after a long illness.

To establish Bethel's independence from interfering White Methodist, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution.

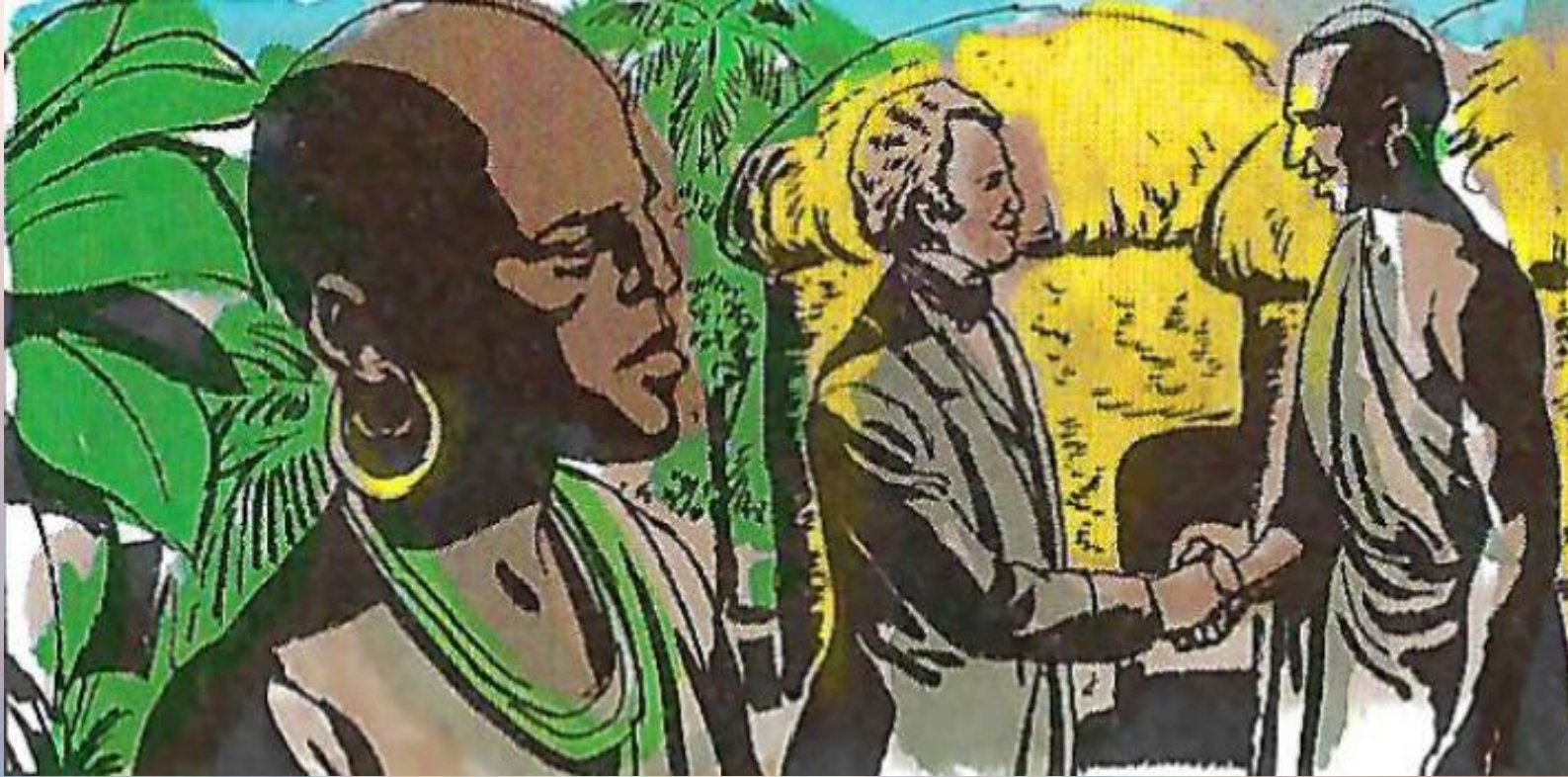


After moving to Philadelphia, Allen married Sarah Bass, a formerly enslaved person from Virginia. She had moved to Philadelphia as a child, and the couple met around 1800. Richard and Sarah Allen had six children. Sarah Allen was highly active in what became the AME Church and is called the "Founding Mother"

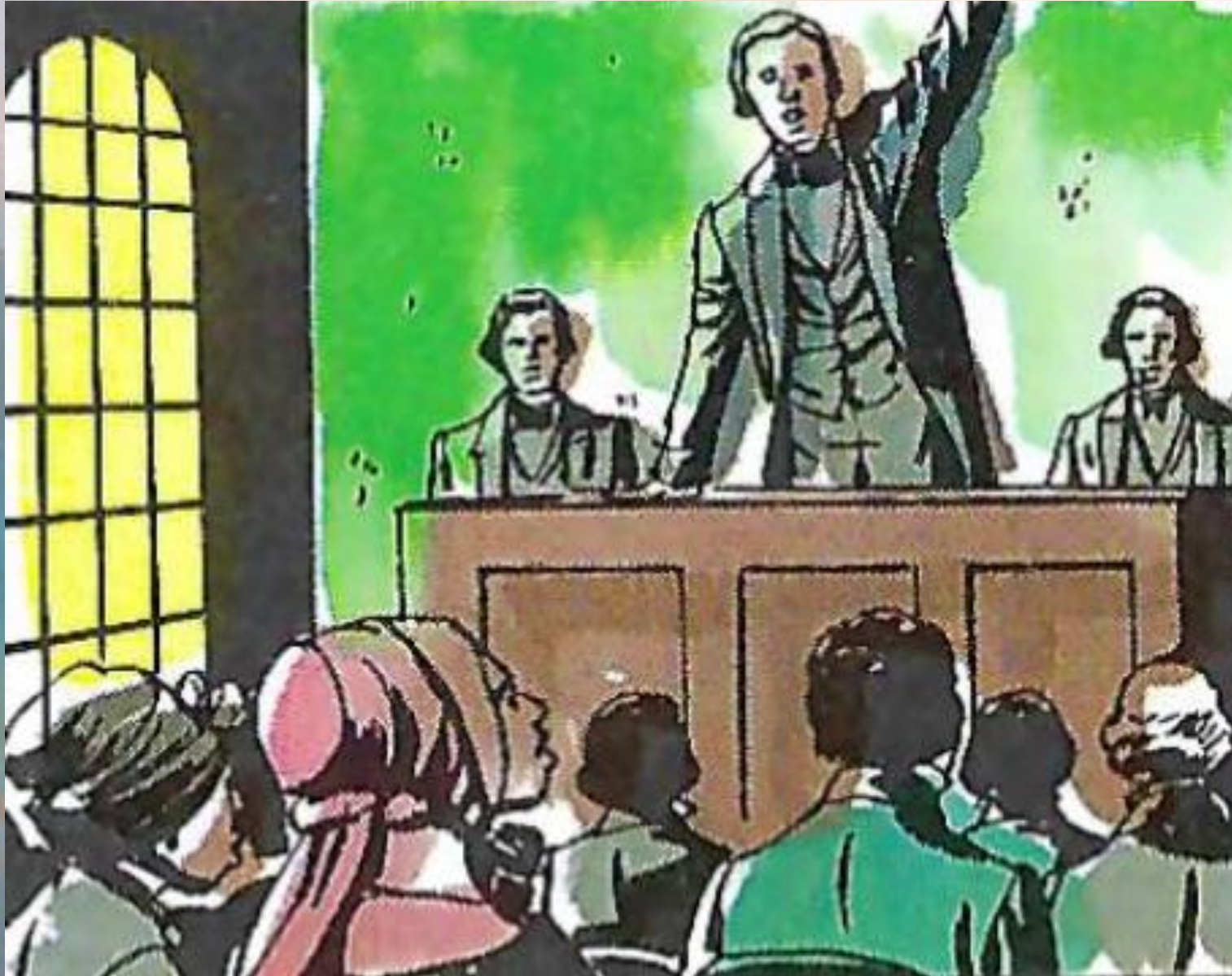
Along with Prince Hall, Absalom Jones, and other black leaders, he set up the Second African Lodge in 1798 and a Grand Lodge in 1818. Concerned with the social and economic problems of this people, he continued to preach and pray.



In 1816, he was finally ordained as a minister.



Because Black Methodist in other middle Atlantic communities encountered racism and desired religious autonomy, Allen called them to meet in Philadelphia to form a new Wesleyan denomination, The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church). In 1816, he also became the first Negro Bishop of any church in the United States. He established missionary work in the South, Haiti and Africa.



Through his efforts, the first General Conference of this African Methodist Episcopal Church was held in Philadelphia in 1820.

In 1931, at the first Annual Convention for the People of Color, he opposed plans for immigration of American Blacks to Africa.



He was active in the “Free Produce Society” which bought from merchants who refused to sell slave labor produce. This economic boycott sat the position for those of the 19th and 20th centuries. Richard Allen died March 25, 1831.

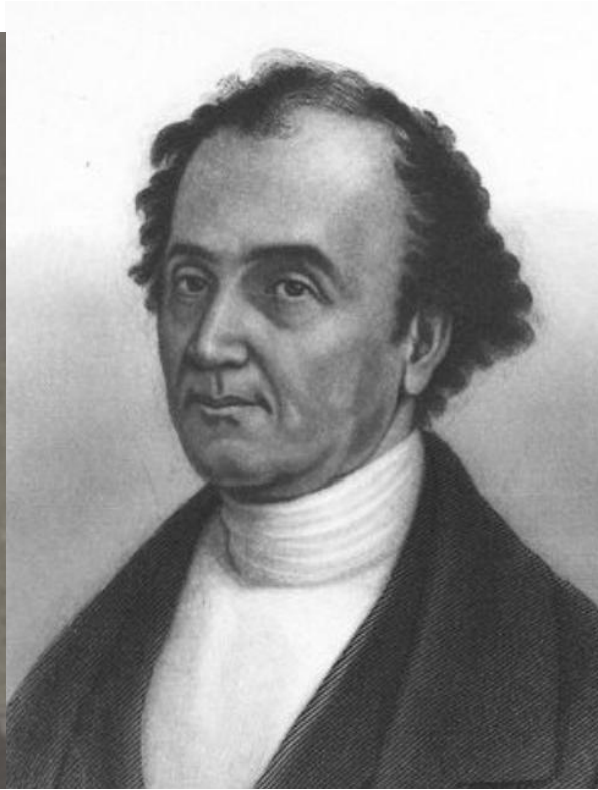


**“A Charge To Keep I Have,
A God To Glorify”
The AME Church Expands**

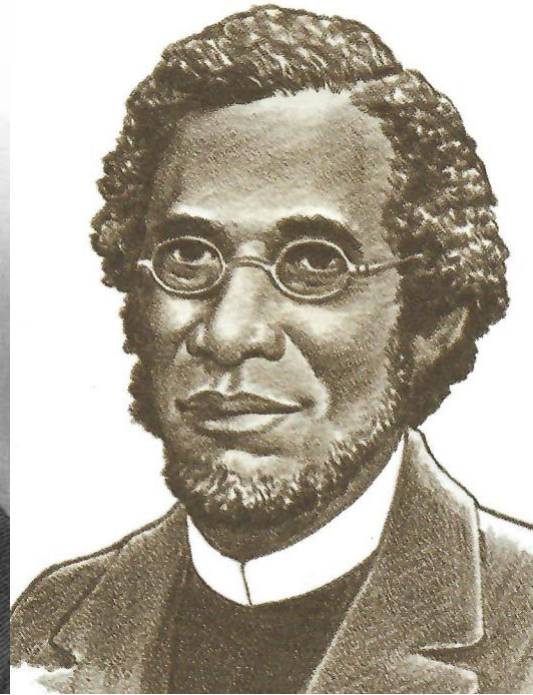
THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE AME CHURCH



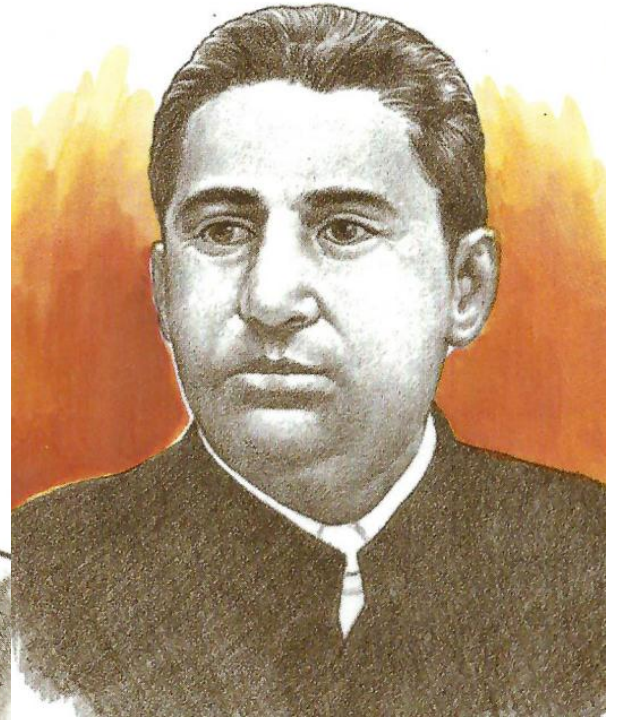
1st Bishop
Richard Allen



4th Bishop
William Paul
Quinn



6th Bishop
Daniel Alexander
Payne



12th Bishop
Henry McNeal
Turner

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE AME CHURCH

- **Richard Allen** (1760–1831): The founder and first bishop of the AME Church. He led the movement to establish an independent Black denomination in 1816 after facing discrimination at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE AME CHURCH

- **William Paul Quinn** (1788–1873): Quinn was among the parishioners in the founding of the AME Church. Born in Calcutta, India. He was introduced to Christianity by a Quaker missionary in India and went to England, where he took an English name. He immigrated to the United States as a young man by 1808 and became active with an AME Church in New Jersey. The fourth Bishop, known as the "Missionary of the West." He is also credited with helping found the Brooklyn AME Church in Brooklyn, Illinois. Now called the Quinn's Chapel AME Church. He became the Senior Bishop of the church in May 1849, serving until his death in Richmond on February 3, 1873. During that period, another 47 AME congregations were established from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to California. He significantly expanded the church across Northwest Territory, the **Midwest** (Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri) and creating districts in the south. He was a noted abolitionist active in the Underground Railroad. The oldest historically black college in Texas is named after him to commemorate the contributions toward funding and growing the college.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE AME CHURCH

- **Daniel Alexander Payne (1811–1893):** Daniel Payne was among the parishioners in the founding of the AME Church. He was a free born native of South Carolina. The sixth bishop and a fierce advocate for education. He is considered to be the one of the most influential African American Christians in the 19th century. He worked vehemently to disprove the theory that African Americans lacked the capacity to be fully equal American citizens. He was self-educated and opened his first school in 1829 at the age of 18. He joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1842. In 1844 he was appointed chairman of the church's committee on education. He insisted on an educated ministry. As a Bishop of the AME Church, he introduced resolutions requiring church leaders to be educated. He led the quest and helped found Wilberforce University in 1856. He became its first Black President of a college in the United States. He served for 20 years. Payne Theological Seminary is named in his honor. He authored the original motto of the church: "God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, Man Our Brother".

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE AME CHURCH

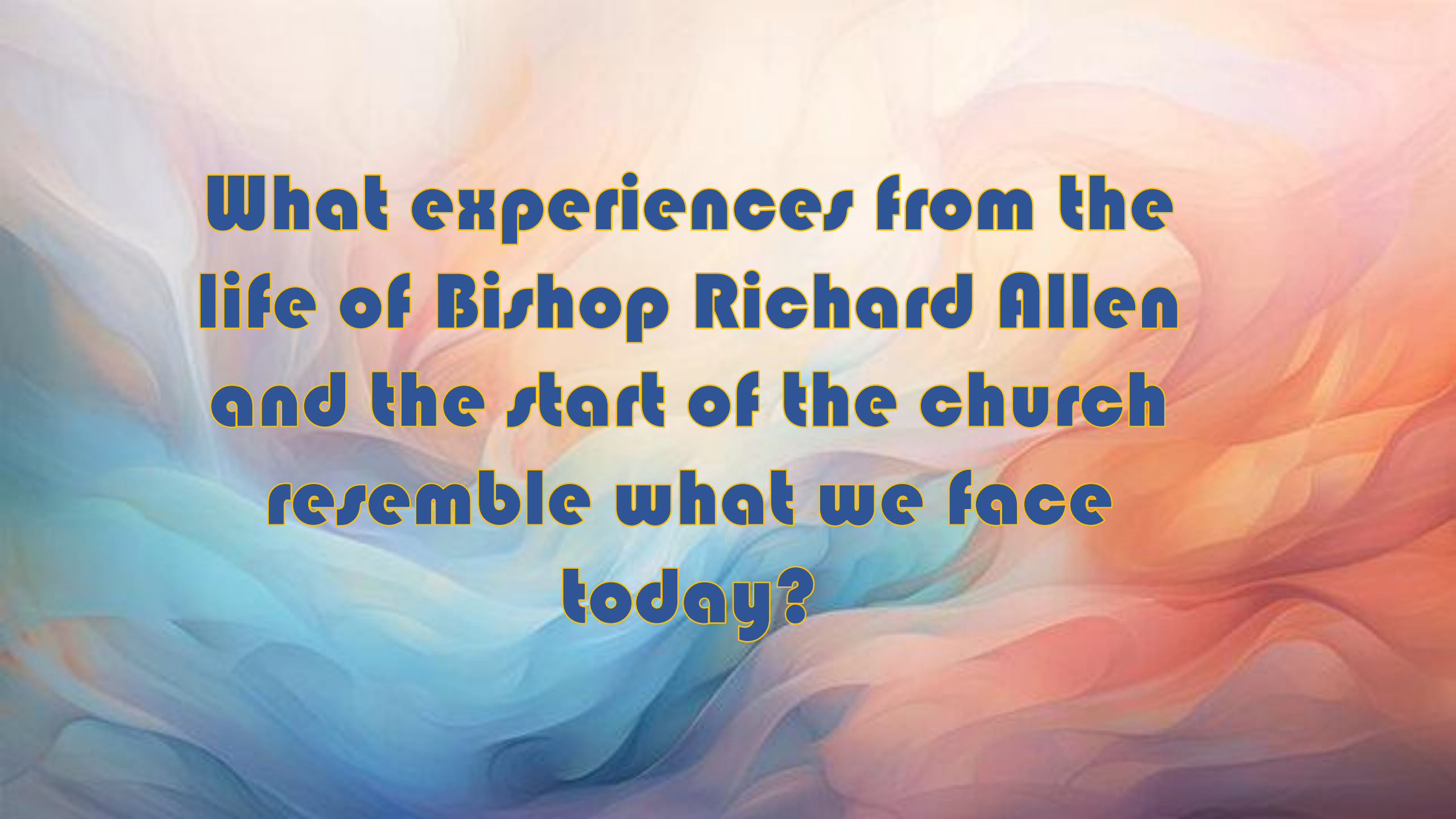
- **Henry McNeal Turner** (1834–1915): The twelfth bishop and a powerful voice for **Black nationalism** and civil rights. He joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church movement in 1857 to teach religion in the context of liberation. He was a proponent of going back to Africa rather than endure the racial discrimination of the times. He was outspoken in his support for general emancipation of the slaves and the use of black troops in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was the first Black Chaplain in the U.S. Army and extended the church's reach into **Africa**, establishing branches in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. He was elected as a Republican to the Georgia Constitutional Convention in 1867 only to face greater institutional racism. He continued his message of black pride and speaking out against America's social injustices. He served as the elder Bishop of the church for nearly 20 years.

Presentation Resources

- Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2021
- George A. Beach Calendar Series 1985, 1991, and 1999
- First AME Church 157th Anniversary Knowledge Bowl Study Guide
- Wikipedia



Discussion Questions



**What experiences from the
life of Bishop Richard Allen
and the start of the church
resemble what we face
today?**

**In what ways do the
life actions of
Bishop Richard Allen
inspire or correlate with
the construct of the
lay Organization?**