



Photo (circa 1968) of my father (in the foreground), the late Al Fields (to the left), and the late Rev. Willis T. Goodwin standing in front of the Volkswagen bus. Used with permission of the Jenkins family.



# AAMHC *Journal*

## African American Methodist Heritage Center

### MAKING HISTORY

*We Are Our Brothers' and Sisters' Keepers*

*Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" - Genesis 4:9*

On June 1, 2014, approximately 300 people gathered at the site of the proposed International African American Museum in Charleston, SC to celebrate the send-off of two panels of my father's 1956 Volkswagen bus to the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African-American Culture and History in Washington, D.C.. The panels will become a part of one of the museum's permanent exhibits entitled "Defining Freedom, Defending Freedom: The Era of Segregation 1878-1968." Why my father's Volkswagen bus? Why now – 41 years 8 months and 30 days after his death? This year marks the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer and the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, both signal events in the struggle for civil rights in the United States. The year after my father's death, former Ambassador Andrew Young opined in his keynote address at the opening and dedication of the Esau Jenkins Community Health Center on Yonges Island, SC, that the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950's and early 1960's began in "a small, rural Methodist Church in a place called John's Island with a man named Esau Jenkins."

I've often thought about Ambassador Young's words through the years and was reminded of them again during the send-off ceremony. He was speaking, of course, about the Citizenship Education Schools that were established in African American communities throughout the South in response to laws passed in many of the southern states that effectively disenfranchised the majority of its African American citizens. These laws required the payment of a poll tax, passing of a literacy test, and the ability to sign one's name in order to register to vote. My father held teaching sessions on his bus as he transported residents from the Island to the City of Charleston to work. He later traveled to Highlander Folk Center and there collaborated with the late Miles Horton and the late Mrs. Septima Clark to devise a more organized and systematic approach that could be replicated across the South. Thus, the birth of the Citizenship Education Schools, the first of which were established on three of the five Sea Islands--- John's Island, Wadmalaw Island, and Edisto Island ---of Charleston County. *(Continue reading on next page)*

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Photo is of my siblings and me (from left to right: Elaine Jenkins, Francena J. Buncomb, Lorretta J. Saunders, James Jenkins, and Abraham B. Jenkins, Sr.) standing in front of the two rear panels of the bus which have been sent to the Smithsonian for preservation.

My father's Volkswagen bus was the last in a long line of buses that he used to travel throughout the State of South Carolina and beyond to make life better for "his people." The bus was readily recognizable because he had printed on the rear hatch panel these words: "Love is progress/Hate is expensive." This is one of the panels that will be enshrined at the Smithsonian.

In response to Cain's query of God, my father's response

was a resounding "Yes, we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers!"

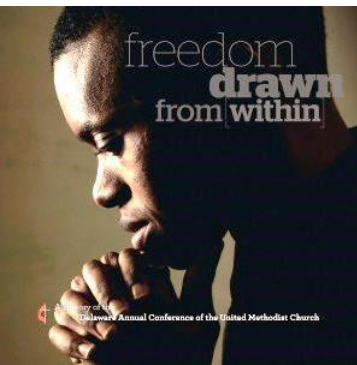
- Elaine Jenkins, Director of Planned Giving, Africa University Development Office, Nashville, TN; [ejenkins@gbhem.org](mailto:ejenkins@gbhem.org)

## DELAWARE CONFERENCE MARKS 150 YEARS

*New Book Details Struggles, Triumphs*

This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> year since the founding of the former Delaware Conference of the Methodist Church. A variety of events and activities are taking place in the denomination's Philadelphia Episcopal Area in recognition of this historic time. One exciting event was the publication of the book, "Freedom

Drawn from Within: A History of the Delaware Annual Conference," written by Rev. David W. Brown. The book



The African American Methodist Heritage Center is a ministry related to the United Methodist Church. It views the church and its ministry in retrospect and prospect. The AAMHC seeks to learn and appropriate the past as informant and bridge to a more faithful and effective future. It envisions its work as gatherer and conservator of the vital history and heritage of Black people in the successive Methodist bodies from the Methodist Episcopal Church, to being racially segregated in the Central Jurisdiction to the United Methodist Church in the American and global society. Recognition of the struggle and contributions

chronicles the historic struggles and triumphs of African Americans within Methodism in the region, including a part of the Greater Delaware Valley where much of the history originated. According to Bishop Peggy A. Johnson, the Episcopal leader for the Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula Delaware Conferences, the book is "the result of a year-long effort by a committee comprised of clergy, historians, and individuals interested in preserving and telling the story of perseverance."

Rev. Brown writes in the opening paragraph of his book:

*"The history of African Americans within the Methodist movement is a complicated tale to tell. There are moments of conflict, compromise and collaboration – all striving toward a freedom that celebrates the unique nature of who African Americans are as a people while remaining true to the traditions of the Methodist faith."*

Bishop Johnson, stated, "It is our hope that the proud history of the Delaware Annual Conference will educate people of all walks of life on building bridges as a human family." The book focuses primarily on formation in 1864 of the Delaware Annual Conference which was the first annual conference authorized by the Methodist Church to be defined by the race of its membership. More information about the historic observance is available at [www.epaumc.org](http://www.epaumc.org).

## AAMHC SUPPORT

*Carol Travis, Executive Assistant*

The African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC) is blessed to have staff support from Carol Travis. As the Executive Assistant, a part-time position, she is the person who returns phone calls, answers correspondence, sets up meetings, publishes the AAMHC Journal, and does whatever else needs to



be done. Carol has been associated with AAMHC since its very early years. As a volunteer, she handled several administrative

tasks. As a Board member she served on committees, served as Secretary and as Treasurer and staffed most of the workshops sponsored by AAMHC.



Carol is a member and leader in her Washington, DC congregation, Asbury United Methodist Church. Carol is an active layperson in leadership in the Baltimore Washington Conference. Carol may be contacted at aamhc@aol.com.

## REV. DR. ROBERT WILLIAMS RETIRES

*AAMHC Ally Will Be Sorely Missed*

A valued friend of the African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC) is retiring. Rev. Dr. Robert J. Williams, General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History, is stepping



down after nine years at the helm of our denomination's agency that promotes and cares for our historical interests, including the preservation of African Americans' contributions to the denomination's growth and development. During his tenure he has been a gallant ally of our Center, serving as an ex-officio member of our Board and providing an office and space for our collection at the United Methodist archives on the campus of Drew University. He was a major supporter of our successful efforts to receive funding by the General Conference during the last quadrennium. In addition, he enabled us to receive a student intern to assist in caring for our collection at the Archives.

And upon his recommendation, the GCAH, in 2009, honored one of our former Board presidents, Bishop Forrest Stith, with its Distinguished Service Award. During the 2011 celebration of the tenth anniversary of AAMHC, Dr. Williams was presented a Certificate of Appreciation for his "unwavering support, for his faith in our vision and for his work on our behalf."

Dr. Williams will be succeeded by Rev. Alfred T. Day, III, former pastor of the historic St. George's Church United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, PA. Prior to the new assignment, Rev. Day served local churches in the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference and served a term as District Superintendent in

of African Americans has ebbed and flowed over the past approximately 275 years. The AAMHC ministry is to help ensure that accurate representation of that story is preserved and examined.

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that conference.

- Rev. Dr. Cornish Rogers, [crogers@cst.edu](mailto:crogers@cst.edu)

## MOSES DICKSON

*African American Methodists Leaving Their Mark in Church & Community*

Throughout the history of the Methodist Church African Americans of the Methodist faith have played a vital role in the church's development and in the history of



the nation. In future issues of the AAMHC Journal some of these individuals will be highlighted. It is the hope that readers will be inspired to renew their desire and strengthen their resolve to be a part of this long legacy of involvement in mission and ministry.

Rev. Moses Dickson, was a "Moses" who fought for his people. One night in 1846 thirteen men met in a house on the southeast corner of Green and Seventh streets in St. Louis, Missouri to plot a revolution. Their organization, which became known as the Knights of Liberty, was formed to prepare for an armed struggle to end slavery in America. The Knights of Liberty was the brainchild of their leader, the Reverend Moses Dickson, a free black man born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1824. Dickson's desire to form the organization came after witnessing the horrors of slavery while traveling through the South between 1840 and 1843.

Records of the Knights' exploits state: "It was a gigantic, desperate movement... We expected to arrive at Atlanta, Georgia with at least 150,000 well-armed men." Dickson, known as the Chief, was ready to give the command to move forward in July 1857 but he determined a war was in the works and it would be better to let the whites get involved. Convinced that slavery would only end in a bloody civil war, Dickson turned the Knights from open insurrection to underground action. During the Civil War the Knights of Liberty fought with the Union forces and there were many casualties.

Dickson survived, and after the war he returned to Missouri in 1867 to become an ordained minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He joined efforts to get the Missouri Legislature to adopt the "separate-but-equal" doctrine that made schools for African Americans possible. He was a member of the group that founded Lincoln Institute (now Lincoln University) in Jefferson City, Missouri. He also joined forces with James Milton Turner to push for suffrage for African Americans in Missouri. In 1878, as president of the Refugee Relief Board in St. Louis, he helped to relocate about 16,000 formerly enslaved individuals who had fled the South. Again in 1892 Reverend Dickson joined a number of prominent black citizens touring the state to draw attention to crime and violence against blacks.

The Reverend Dickson died in his home at 2651 Pine Street in St. Louis on November 28, 1901. His funeral was reported to be the most elaborate St. Louisianans had ever seen.

- John & Silvia Wright, omega1958@aol.com

## CONGRATS AAMHC

*Dr. Cheryl Walker Awarded Doctorate*



Congratulations to Dr. Cheryl L. Walker, a member of the Board of Directors, who was awarded The Doctor of Humane Letters by Gammon Theological Seminary/ITC in recognition of significant contributions to the United Methodist Church and the society at large.

- Carol Travis, Executive Assistant

## THANK YOU

*We Appreciate It!*

Thanks for asking how you can support the ministry of the African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC). We welcome your time, your gifts, your talents, and your prayers.

We urge you to ensure the preservation of the important papers and documents of African American ministerial and lay leaders in Methodism, especially in our local congregations. We want to establish a collection of the histories of all of the historically African American United

Methodist congregations and we invite you to send your local church history to us. We have access to the state-of-the-art archival facilities of the United Methodist Church. We provide you with documentation of the items and collections you preserve with us. Send them to the address in the middle and at the very end of this journal page.

We gladly encourage you to share in the financial support of the AAMHC. For the quadrennium 2012-2106, we are an approved project of The United Methodist Church General Conference. Each year of the quadrennium we receive a grant for \$35,000 to help support our ministry. Our operating budget is more than twice the amount of the grant. So, we are dependent upon financial contributions from our friends and other constituencies to help us make our operating budget. These financial contributions will be acknowledged as tax-deductible.

AAMHC is an approved Advance Special of the United Methodist Church. Checks should be made payable to ADVANCE GCFA, annotated "AAMHC Code #3020514" and mailed to ADVANCE GCFA; P.O. Box 9068; New York, NY 10089-9068. You also may contribute on-line at [www.gbgm-umc.org/Advance](http://www.gbgm-umc.org/Advance).

There are other ways to make financial contributions:

- *Become a Sustaining Member of AAMHC by making an annual contribution of \$100.00.*
- *Make a contribution annually, or on a regular basis, of any amount.*

Checks for these contributions should be made payable to AAMHC at the address in the middle and at the very end of this page. We expect the AAMHC ministry to continue into eternity and so it is necessary to plan for the future sustenance of this ministry. We have established with the United Methodist Church Foundation a process for building an Endowment Fund to support the ministry into the future. Contributions to this endowment fund may be made in the form of monetary donations, investments, property, directly or through a legacy. More information on supporting the ministry in this way is available at the address below. Thank you for supporting this ministry.

- Barbara Ricks Thompson, Acting President,  
AAMHC, [beerix@aol.com](mailto:beerix@aol.com)

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