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**- Press Release -**

***Black Ministers Celebrate The Rich History Of African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Churches On Long Island***

*Promote Faith, Worship And Local Communities*

(**Hempstead, NY**) – From the underground railroad to free slaves to promoting local communities development since the early 1800s local African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Churches and their congregations have played an important role in the growth of Long Island, church officials said.

A special presentation celebrating the rich history and contributions of local African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church on Long Island was held on April 7, 2018 at *The African American Museum of Nassau County*, in Hempstead.

The Rev. Dr. Evelyn Miller-Suber, Pastor of the First Hempstead African Methodist Episcopal Church in Hempstead, said that local A.M.E., churches have a long, documented history of working with people of all-races to promote faith, worship and economic enterprise.

“The rich history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, or A.M.E., churches goes back to as early as 1814, where we see church leaders working to create houses of worship and promote local families and communities,” said the Rev. Dr. Miller-Suber who co-hosted the event along with other local A.M.E. ministers.

The presentation titled *The History of African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Churches on Long Island*

Included a brief oral history of several local A.M.E. churches and prominent pastors in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, including outlining contributions made on Long Island to end slavery.

The Rev. Dr. Keith Hayward, Bethel A.M.E., Copiague, NY, said that there are currently 13 A.M.E., churches located across Nassau and Suffolk counties. There was a special poster display at the event documenting the history of the active churches.

“We are very proud to be Long Islanders and the important role our congregations have played and continue to play across Long Island,” said the Rev. Hayward, whose church was founded in 1815 and is the oldest A.M.E. church on Long Island. “Several of our A.M.E. churches have been recognized by local historical societies for their contributions.”

Local Attorney and Pastor Monte Malik Chandler praised event organizers for their committed to promote the rich history of all Long Islanders.

“We are all proud to be New Yorkers,” said Chandler, founding partner of T*he Chandler Law Firm.* “But what makes this event special is that we are telling our own story about the important role the A.M.E., its leaders, and congregants have made to shape Long Island and this great country. These our stories our children need to hear.”

Today, local African Methodist Episcopal Churches remain active and the center of community activity and worship for many residents of Nassau and Suffolk Counties according to several A.M.E. ministers who participated in the event.

The Rev. Leonard Davis of *Bethel A.M.E. Church*, Babylon, NY, said: “Today the A.M.E. church continues to play a vital role in the lives of those who live and work on Long Island. We remained committed to those who have a desire to worship and grow their faith.”

The Rev. Stephen M. Lewis, *A.M.E. Church*, *Freeport*, NY, said: “Since our humble beginnings the African Methodist Episcopal Church has stood for the right to worship. Our church remains a beacon for religious freedom, hope and self-determination which I believe represents the spirit of all New Yorkers, especially here on Long Island.”

The Rev. Gregory Leonard of *Bethel A.M.E. Church*, Setauket, NY, said: “We have come this far by faith. The A.M.E. church on Long Island has strong community roots. We will continue to use our rich church history of accomplishment as a blueprint moving forward to strengthen our faith and serve families across Nassau and Suffolk counties.”

The Rev. Lawrence Jennings, *Bethel A.M.E*. Church, Huntington, NY, said: “Our rich church history shows us that it was not always easy but through our faith and perseverance we made a way for black worship and fellowship on Long Island. Our congregations are built from the strong families and individuals who continue to make a difference.”

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***//??//The First Hempstead African Methodist Episcopal Church***, 399 South Franklin St., under the current leadership of the Rev. Dr. Evelyn Miller-Suber has been a spiritual beacon of fellowship and community service in the greater Hempstead community dating from 1946.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (A.M.E.) CHURCH**

*The African Methodist Episcopal Church* (A.M.E. Church), black Methodist denomination originating in the U.S., was formally organized in 1816. It developed from a congregation formed by a group of blacks that withdrew in 1787 fro*m St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Chur*ch in Philadelphia because of restrictions in seating; blacks had been confined to the gallery of the church. Those that withdrew formed the *Free African Society*, the forerunner of the *African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church*, and built *Bethel African Methodist Church* in Philadelphia. In 1799, Richard Allen, a former Delaware slave was ordained its minister by Bishop Francis Asbury of the *Methodist Episcopal Church*. In 1807 and again in 1815, Allen successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts to establish Bethel’s independence from white Methodists. In 1816 Asbury [consecrated](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consecrated) Allen [bishop](https://www.britannica.com/topic/bishop-Christianity) of the newly organized A.M.E. Church, which accepted Methodist doctrine and [discipline](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discipline). The church speaks of Richard Allen, William Paul Quinn, David A. Payne and Henry M. Turner as the “Four Horsemen” instrumental in the establishment of the church.