

# LP-CWR-2

## WORSHIPPING FREE: AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

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**Properties:** Centenary United Methodist Church (Charleston)  
Emanuel A.M.E. Church (Charleston)  
Holy Trinity Reformed Episcopal Church (Charleston)  
Old Bethel United Methodist Church (Charleston)  
Old Plymouth Congregational Church (Charleston)  
Saint Mark's Episcopal Church (Charleston)

**Standard Indicators:** K-1.1; 2-2.5; 3-4.7; 5-1.3; 8-5.1; USHC-4.5

**Literacy Elements:** A, E, G, K, O, P

### Essential Questions

1. How did freedom affect the ability of African Americans to worship in Charleston and where did they worship?
2. Why was the worship experience important?
3. How did African American churches influence society?

### Historic Content

From *African Americans and the Palmetto State* pages 117-118, 122:

“. . . African Americans in pre-Civil War South Carolina were deeply religious. They took active roles in building churches whenever and wherever they could . . . Churches were a center of social life for people who were not welcomed elsewhere in society. They helped develop organizing skills in members. Until the Civil War was over, those skills were kept inside the church.”

Many new African-American churches were created during this period. “. . . African-Americans were eager to test their freedom. One way to test freedom was to move away from the churches identified with whites. Many white churches wanted to keep black members. However, they did not want to allow black participation in decision-making. In addition, they insisted on keeping segregated seating for services. As a result, African-Americans left these churches. Two church groups with very similar names, the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, sent missionaries to the South. Both attracted large numbers of people in many new churches.”

“Had it not been for churches providing opportunities for schooling, many African-Americans would have had little chance for an education. Church schools offered an elementary education to many African-Americans . . . there were no

government services to help the poor. Churches also assumed this role . . . Churches also played at least a limited role in politics . . . Most of the African-American churches supported the policies of the Republican government . . . Ministers became central figures in African-American communities . . . [and] served as role models and leaders during the era of segregation.”

### Sources Needed

#### Primary Sources (in addition to the historic sites)

Photographs to use in a PowerPoint presentation of the topic

Readings from interviews with former slaves pertaining to religion, specifically to church

Audio of the Slave Narratives that might pertain to religion and church

#### Secondary Sources

Botsch, Carol Sears, Robert E. Botsch, James O. Farmer, W. Calvin Smith, and Barbara Woods. *African Americans and the Palmetto State*. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Department of Education, 1994. [www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cso/african\\_american\\_history/aaps.html](http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cso/african_american_history/aaps.html).

Powers Jr., Bernard E. *Black Charlestonians: A Social History, 1822-1885*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994.

South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, “Old Bethel United Methodist Church, Charleston County, South Carolina,” National Register of Historic Places nomination, [www.nationalregister.sc.gov/charleston/S10817710089/index.htm](http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/charleston/S10817710089/index.htm).

### Lesson Procedures

*Have a cooperative group activity comparing the photographs and history of the three sites*

1. Give a PowerPoint presentation to the students that provides general background information about the sites. Include pictures of other examples of African American churches in the area.
2. Have groups examine the photos and other written material on the sites (provide specific information in the lesson plan so that the students will be able to answer the essential questions in their class presentations).
3. In groups, students can research the original pastors' and members' biographies. Based on their research, have each group present one site to the class in a way they have designed (i.e. drawing, skit, interview, etc.).
4. Finish with group discussion about the results of any investigation they have done.

**Assessment Ideas**

1. Informal evaluation of the group presentations.
2. Include vocabulary and facts from the lesson on a test.

**Lesson Activities**

1. Have a field trip to downtown Charleston to see the sites.
2. Have a daylong field trip to St. Helena Island or Edisto Island to visit other church sites.
3. Research a specific African American denomination and present a one to two page paper.
4. Make a drawing or painting based on one of the sites.
5. Act out a skit about African Americans deciding to leave white church groups and form their own churches.