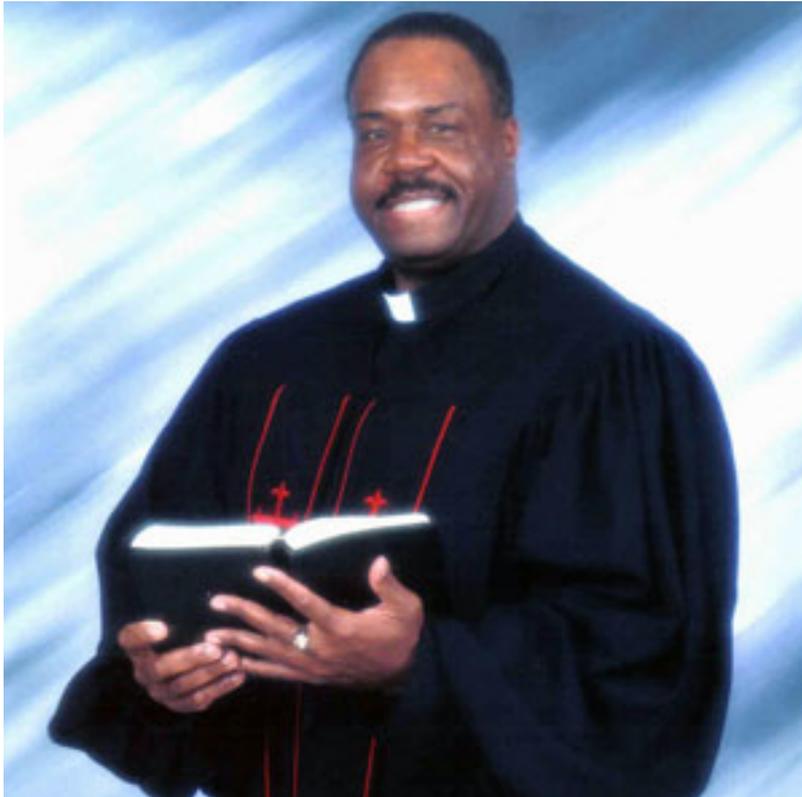


Written by
Saturday, 28 January 2012 00:18



Holsey Memorial C.M.E. Church has been standing right in the heart of north Minneapolis for almost 66 years, yet most people have no idea of its existence or the powerful history embedded in the name “C.M.E” (Christian Methodist Episcopal Church). The C.M.E. Church is richly steeped in southern Black tradition and has a legacy of holding firm truths of faith, knowledge and perseverance. According to Lynda Baker, a long-time member, “Holsey is the only C.M.E. Church in Minnesota. We want people to know who and where we are. For years, we have provided wonderful afterschool programs, summer programs, mentoring programs for youth...we have been serving the community not just on Sunday mornings, but throughout the week as well.”

In celebration of Black History Month, Holsey Memorial C.M.E. Church (named after Bishop Lucius H. Holsey) will host an informative program entitled “Roots of the C.M.E. Church” on Saturday February 4, 2012 from 4:00 to 6:00pm. A fundraiser bake sale will feature Lynda Baker’s (formerly the Bean Scene) homemade peach cobbler and Deep Roots Gourmet Desserts’ sweet potato pie. Refreshments will be served. Location: 1229 Logan Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55411. For information call the church office at (612) 388-1525.

The hymnal, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty - early in the morning our song shall rise to thee” may have been written in 1826 by English Pastor Reginald Heber before Blacks were even liberated from slavery, but serves as the C.M.E.’s national anthem of worship service. Dr. Gwen Timberlake, the piano/organ player and retired dentist who resides in Saint Paul states, “For a very long time, Holsey has been my church home. I have a deep commitment. My father, Reverend Timberlake was pastor here for a long time. After his death, my mother remained right here at Holsey until her death a few years ago.”

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Each Sunday, the few dedicated members can be heard singing their anthem and reciting (by heart) their affirmation of faith known as “The Apostles Creed”. A strong sense of pride flashes across faces being mindful not only of living right (so as to die and go to Heaven), but also pride in being a C.M.E. member. According to Reverend Carl D. Joyner, the senior pastor at Holsey since 2005: “The C.M.E. story began on December 15, 1870 when a Black preacher rode his horse to meet about 40 other African American men to begin their own church in Jackson, Tennessee. They organized the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church of America. That preacher was former slave, Bishop Isaac Lane who later went onto start Lane College – which is where Alex Haley’s parents met in the award winning book and movie, Roots. It was not until 1954 that the name “Colored” was changed to “Christian”.

Today there are over 3,000 C.M.E. Churches, 3,200 preachers and 800,000 members mostly in southern states as well as Africa, Haiti and Jamaica. However, Holsey is the only C.M.E. Church in Minnesota. Joyner adds, “Saving souls is the key mission of our C.M.E. Churches, but education has been and will continue to be essential to us. Several HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) were established under the sponsorship of the C.M.E. Churches. Remaining today are Lane College - Jackson, Tennessee; Miles College - Fairfield, Alabama; Mississippi Industrial College – Holly Springs, Mississippi; Texas College – Tyler, Texas, Paine College – Augusta, Georgia and Phillips School of Theology – Atlanta, Georgia.”

Stories can only be passed on when they are retold with passion and respect for the history. Holsey’s keepers of the flame are members such as Essie McKinney, Linnea Patterson, Leroy Burns, Dorothy Balsom, Miquel McMoore, Rev. Myril May, Annie Keys, Eunice Jones, Etta Rae, Ms. Catherine and Shirley Vincent who proudly tell the C.M.E. history to their children, grandchildren and community. Reverend Joseph Allen, a vocalist and keeper of the stories is greatly missed by the Holsey Family. After retiring as senior pastor in 2005, he remained an active member until he and his wife Sylvia moved to California last summer.