

Episode 4: African American Lutherans: 'Voices' from the ELCA Archives/Parting Words

The archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America contain a document entitled: "The Major Events in the Evangelizing of Black People within the Lutheran Church in the New World." Part of it reads as follows:

Lutherans established the first seminary/college to train black pastors and

Christian day school teachers at Concord, North Carolina (1901); Lutherans established a second school at Selma, Alabama, to train full-time black church workers. This was the first Lutheran school of higher education to be staffed solely by blacks (1922); Lutherans established a third training facility (the Alabama

Lutheran Bible Institute at Montgomery, AL) for black full-time church workers (1947) and after almost **20 years** of discussion, a number of Lutheran bodies (specifically the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church) attempted to engage in a cooperative approach to work in the black community under the administration of the National Lutheran Council (1950).

Also found in a scrapbook in the ELCA's archives was a notation that in 1950 the American Lutheran Church (ALC) called Pastor Ervin Krebs (**a white man!**) to direct their efforts within the African-descent community.

Pastor Krebs cited the following as necessary for the Lutheran Church to be successful in evangelization among black people:

1. Negroes are to be treated as equals in the Lutheran Church with a **dose** of denominational patience as the Negroes learn the history and polity of the ALC, grow in financial stewardship (due to their low economic stratum and minimal education) and appreciation of Lutheran worship.
2. The ALC must appreciate the Negroes' irregular work hours (working as they do as maids and janitors) while attending to the task of thorough doctrinal teaching due to their lack of Christian educational backgrounds.
3. The ALC must understand the Negroes' background of emotional preaching by pastors and thus, liturgical education must be offered.

Parting Words:

And so, dear listener I trust that the story I told will move you to dig-deeper into journey of your Lutheran sisters and brothers of African – decent. Perhaps even the elderly gentleman (in SC) who was incredulous that people of African descent might be Lutheran – could learn

something – if he would have ears to hear.

To be sure, the history of Lutherans of African descent here in the United States and the Virgin Islands has yet to be definitively written.

To be sure, **hospitality** extended people of African descent has been un-even, at best.

But, yes, === we say that we are Lutherans!

+ Baptized African-descent membership in the ELCA standing around fifty-four thousand.

+ Over two hundred and forty congregations with at least twenty percent African-descent members.

+ Public ministry leadership (clergy and lay) stands at over two hundred and eighty persons.

Yes, we say that we are Lutherans—and have been so ==== for three hundred and fifty-three years!

Howie: Thank you, Pastor, for helping our congregation listen to the voice of Lutherans of African – descent, this Black History Month.

Dr. Carroll would like to dedicate this series to: his wife, Geneva, and children: Kimberly, Kiesha, Malcolm, Ramona, Jasmin, Damien and +Anthony (who rests in the arms of Jesus).

For those who would like to dig-deeper == the sources used by Dr. Carroll for this podcast are:

Julius Carroll, “A Theology of African Descent Lutheranism” 2004 (Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004).

Michael Lee Cobbler, “What Price Inclusion?” in The Mt. Airy Parish Practice Notebook, no. 19 (Philadelphia: Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 1982)

Joseph A. Donnella II, “Like Other People’s Children: The Danish West Indies Lutheran Mission: A Carib-bean Prototype of Liturgical Inculturation” (PhD diss., Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, 2008).

George Handley, A Short History of Frederick Evan. Lutheran Church, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands (Philadelphia: Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 1955).

Jeff Johnson, “The Major Events in the Evangelizing of Black People within the Lutheran Church in the New World,” in Missionary to America: The History of Lutheran Outreach to Americans; Essays and Reports 1992 (St. Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1994).

Harry J. Kreider, Lutheranism in Colonial New York (New York: Edwards Brothers, 1942)

Susan Wilds McArver, "A Spiritual Wayside Inn: Lutherans, The New South and Cultural Change in South Carolina, 1886–1918" (PhD diss., Duke University, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1995).