

Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church

*The National Cathedral of African Methodism
1518 M St. NW
Washington, DC 20005*

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Media Alert

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METROPOLITAN AME PRESENTS DEC. 31 DRAMATIZATION OF FIRST “FREEDOM’S EVE” CELEBRATES 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIGNING OF EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

WASHINGTON – The date was Dec.31, 1862. The enslaved African Americans had been promised freedom after hundreds of years of painful bondage and a civil war. Enslaved and free persons alike gathered to await the news that the Emancipation Proclamation would become law at midnight and their long-awaited freedom would finally be realized. It was a night never to be forgotten.

On Monday, Dec. 31. the 150th anniversary of the celebration of “Freedom’s Eve” and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation the following day, Rufus Tiefert Stevenson, noted Africanist and griot, will dramatize that memorable occasion at a Watch Meeting Night Worship Service at Metropolitan AME Church, 1518 M St. NW at 10:30 p.m. The Rev. Ronald E. Braxton, senior pastor, will deliver the sermon accompanying the enactment. The community is invited.

Freedom’s Eve was inspired by the Watch Night Service tradition which can be traced back to 18th Century Europe. However, Dr. Calvin H. Sydnor II, editor of *The Christian Recorder*, stated, “in the black community, *the Watch Meeting Night worship* began with ...the AME church and with the founder, Rt. Rev. Richard Allen.” The cultural distinction between the two traditions will be on display at the historic downtown church on New Year’s Eve.

Pastor Braxton added that, “Metropolitan had already been in existence for 25 years and the AME Denomination had been founded 47 years before the Emancipation Proclamation was signed,” pointing out that the historic Metropolitan would begin a year-long celebration of its 175th anniversary in 2013.

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