



Alexander CRUMMELL

1819 - 1898
Missionary, Pastor, Visionary, Professor

On **Sunday, September 6, 2015**, the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) celebrates the life and legacy of the notable saint, the Reverend Dr. Alexander Crummell.

This day is also designated as **UBE Sunday** to commemorate the racial and social justice ministry of this organization which was an outgrowth the Reverend Crummell's advocacy.

Born March 3, 1819 in New York City, Alexander Crummell struggled against racism all his life. Dismissed as a candidate for Holy Orders in New York, and rejected for admittance to the General Seminary because of the color of his skin, Crummell persevered and was ordained in the Diocese of Massachusetts in 1844. Later that year, Reverend Crummell established a small mission in Philadelphia where he was an outspoken advocate for the abolition of slavery, equal suffrage and greater educational opportunities for African-American citizens. After being excluded from participation in the Pennsylvania diocesan convention in 1848, he left the diocese and moved to England. Rev. Crummell was able to complete his academic pursuits in England and received his degree in 1853 from Queen's College, Cambridge; making him the first black student to graduate from Cambridge.

After graduation, the Rev. Dr. Crummell went to Liberia, Africa as an Episcopal missionary where he lived and worked for nearly a quarter century. He worked tirelessly to establish the Episcopal Mission in Liberia as the national Episcopal church of Liberia. In Liberia, he combined his pastoral work with the headship of schools in Monrovia and Maryland County. The Rev. Dr. Crummell was professor of Philosophy and English at Liberia College from 1862 to 1866. Political opposition and a lack of funding forced Fr. Crummell to return to the United States in 1872.

Upon his return stateside, Crummell was appointed *Missionary-at-Large of the Colored People* and assigned to St. Mary's Chapel in Washington, D.C.

Father Crummell would realize his vision of vitality for the Church in the black community with the founding of St Luke's Episcopal Church in 1875, the first "independent" black Episcopal Church in the city. Pastor and civil rights leader, Fr. Crummell concentrated his efforts on establishing a strong urban presence of independent black congregations that would be centers of worship, education and social service. Notably, his efforts helped establish King Hall, an Episcopal Divinity school for Black priests located adjacent to Howard University.

The Rev. Dr. Crummell served as St. Luke's rector 20 years. After his retirement in 1894, he taught at Howard University and served part-time as warden at King Hall. He also co-founded the acclaimed American Negro Academy, a scholarly society dedicated to the educational and intellectual achievement of African-Americans.

In 1882, when Southern bishops proposed (the 'Sewanee Plan') to establish separate, disenfranchised missionary districts in each diocese for black congregations, Rev. Crummell was instrumental in organizing the Black clergy and laity to fight racism in the Church. **The Conference of Church Workers Among Colored People** was organized in 1883 to fight the proposal and "serve as the conscience of the Church, recalling it to its catholic ideals." Rev. Crummell is considered father and founder of the Conference; and was its first president. Over the years, the CONFERENCE achieved many goals: Segregation was never 'written' into national policy or canon law, and a national commission was established to evangelize and educate southern blacks for the priesthood. The **Union of Black Episcopalians** is an outgrowth of that mission for racial and social justice.

The Rev. Dr. Alexander Crummell's ministry spanned more than half a century and three continents. He continued his campaign against racial oppression, and the promotion of social justice, African-American leadership and Christian scholarship until his death on September 10, 1898.

His faith in God, his perseverance despite repeated discouragement and racism, his perception that the Church transcended the racism and limited vision of its leaders, and his unfailing belief in the goodness and greatness of black people are the incredible legacy of this African-American pioneer and the reason we celebrate him today.

African- American pioneer

