

Black and Lutheran: 40th anniversary celebration of the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) set for Sept. 9 in Philadelphia

Celebrating a milestone

On Wednesday Sept. 9 at United Lutheran Seminary's Philadelphia campus and online the Conference of International Black Lutherans will celebrate its 40th anniversary with an eye toward the future

PHILADELPHIA, PA (August 11, 2026) – The Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) will celebrate its 40th anniversary Sept. 9 on the campus of United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia's East Mount Airy. The event may be attended in person at the Philadelphia campus of United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia's East Mt. Airy or on Zoom, originating from the seminary chapel.

The United Lutheran Seminary and African Descent Lutheran Association are sponsors for the event. The celebration is offered free of charge but registration is required online at <https://www.blackandlutheran.com/cibl>.

CIBL grew out of a conference held in Harare, Zimbabwe in September, 1986. The conference featured an assembly of 40 African and African American Lutheran theologians, church administrators and other leaders. The primary goal of the conference was to interpret and affirm an African and African American Lutheran understanding of Lutheran doctrine in which unity in diversity is celebrated with a culturally inclusive church. Planners of the event at the University of Zimbabwe were the late Rev. Dr. Albert "Pete" Pero of the LSTC faculty, and the Rev. Dr. Ambrose Moyo, who was serving on the faculty of the University of Zimbabwe and subsequently served as Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe.

A morning keynote lecture will be delivered by the Rev. Dr. Richard Perry, Professor Emeritus of Church and Society and Urban Ministry at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC). Dr. Perry's lecture is entitled "Disrupting the River: A Story of CIBL, USA." It will focus on the spirit and connections with an early public expression of African Descent Lutheranism in the United States.

Dr. Perry was a presenter at the first CIBL conference. In 1999 he co-chaired the International Planning Committee for a CIBL conference held in Wittenberg, Germany. In Wittenberg he presented his paper, "Justification and Racial Justice." Dr. Perry chaired the working group on racism in the church and society at the Lutheran World Federation's Seventh Assembly in Budapest, Hungary in 1984. Most recently he has served as a key scholar and essayist for the Black and Lutheran History Project (blackandlutheran.com) initiated by the late Rev. Dr. Richard N. Stewart.

The opening session at 9 a.m. that features Dr. Perry's lecture will be moderated by the Rev. Dr. James R. Thomas. Currently serving as the interim pastor at Christ Lutheran Church, Upper Darby, PA, Dr. Thomas is the author of *A Rumor of Black Lutherans: The Formation of Black Lutherans in Early American Lutheranism* (Fortress, 2024). A discussion will follow.

Worship at noon will feature as liturgist the Rev. Dr. Nelson Strobert, Professor Emeritus of Religious Education at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (LTSG, now part of ULS) and also a key essayist for the Black and Lutheran History Project. The preacher will be the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Blair Milton, Bishop for the Virginia Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

A 2 p.m. panel discussion will be moderated by the Rev. Dr. Beverly Wallace, Managing Director for the Sankofa Theological Center for African Studies of the ELCA.

Dr. Wallace is a family therapist with research focusing on grief and loss. She has also designed the ELCA's Womanist Initiative. Dr. Wallace is also a key contributor to the aforementioned Black and Lutheran History Project. The panel theme is "Who Do You (African American Lutherans) Say That I Am?" Living Waters and Re-imagining Black Futures.

Panelists will include Dr. Selenir Kronbauer, Brazilian academic, researcher and professor at Faculdades EST in Sao Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul. Dr. Kronbauer serves as editor of the *Identidade!* Journal and coordinates the *Grupo Identidade* focusing on gender, diversity and public policy. Also serving on the panel will be the Rev. Dr. Elieshi Ayo Mungare, a Tanzania theologian and member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). Dr. Mungare is former Area Secretary for Africa for the Lutheran World Federation and is known for her work in the area of gender justice.

A highlight of the day will be the presentation to two recipients of the Pero/Moyo Legacy Award. Receiving the award posthumously will be the Rev. Dr. Cheryl Stewart Pero, who is known as the "Mother of CIBL." Dr. Stewart was the first African American Lutheran female to receive a PH.D. in Biblical Studies. Dr. Pero served as convener of CIBL USA for many years and worked to include women of color in theological education. She served as a parish pastor, campus pastor, and director of the Pero Center (now the Albert "Pete" Pero, Jr. and Cheryl Stewart Pero Center of Intersectionality Studies) at LSTC.

The second recipient is the Rev. Dr. Kevin Dudley, senior pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Columbus, OH. Dr. Dudley has held the Trinity Lutheran Seminary Endowed Chair in Mission and Ministry and now serves as Mission and Ministry Chair and Instructor of Church and Society at the school. He holds Master of Divinity (M.Div.) and Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degrees from Trinity and a Doctor of Ministry Degree in Leadership from Ashland Theological Seminary. Dr. Dudley is an accomplished writer having recently published *Anonymous Anointing: God's Power Through Our Presence* (June 2026, Highly Recommended Int'l)

Both honors will be awarded at the event's reception.

The event will include remarks by ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry and ELCA Secretary Lucille "CeCee" Mills and other dignitaries.