

# African Methodist Episcopal Church

also known as "AME/A.M.E. Church"

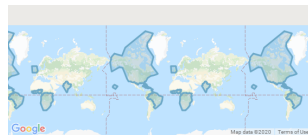
Secondary source

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\*Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA

Entry tags: North American Religions, Methodism, American Christianity, African American Religion, Protestantism, Christian Traditions, Religious Group

In 1787, roughly a decade after America's independence from Great Britain and almost a century before Black Americans were guaranteed U.S. citizenship, a group of Black congregants walked out of Philadelphia's primarily white St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in the middle of the Sunday service. One of these protesters, Black Methodist minister Richard Allen, eventually founded America's first independent Black denomination and its oldest formal Black institution—the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Described by W.E.B. Du Bois as the world's "greatest Negro organization," the AME Church is a Protestant Christian denomination aligned doctrinally with the United Methodist Church and organized in an Episcopal system. To tell the story of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, one must first turn to the history of Methodism, its antecedent. Originated by English minister John Wesley, the transatlantic denomination became ubiquitous in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America through the revivals of the First and Second Great Awakening. Historians often remark on the egalitarian and democratic nature of these revivals. While it is important for us not to romanticize early Methodism, thereby ignoring Black people's experiences of discrimination and systemic racism within the religious culture and society more broadly, we can still recognize that some enslaved people managed to make a home for themselves within the Methodist fold and, to some extent, were even accepted into communal worship spaces. The fact that services were held in large, open-air fields created a come-one, come-all atmosphere, and ecstatic, embodied worship experiences were customary. It was into this Methodist culture that Richard Allen was converted as a seventeen-year-old enslaved person in 1777. And ten years later, when he led a group of Black Methodists out of St. George's, it was as a consequence of this Methodist culture that he protested. While the Methodism to which Allen had been introduced as a young man was more open to Black congregants, the religious culture he experienced at the turn of the eighteenth century was increasingly stratified by race. Although sizable numbers of Blacks had been evangelized by Methodists and even licensed to preach in the mid-1700s, white Methodists started to neglect earlier ideals of acceptance in lieu of pursuing respectability and becoming an established church. Among other practices, white Methodists began to deny Black members leadership roles within the denomination and some white Methodist preachers even refused to hold Black babies during infant baptisms, as historian Julius H. Bailey has shown. Separating from St. George's signified Allen's rejection of the inequitable treatment of African Americans in Methodist spaces, his recovery of early Methodism's egalitarian ideals and his articulation of a new religious vision that embraced the humanity of Black Americans. After starting a church of his own in 1794 (Mother Bethel AME), Allen and a collective of other Black Methodists established their own denomination in 1816 with Allen as the organization's first Bishop. Commitments to racial justice and what twentieth-century AME minister and theologian James H. Cone would later name Black liberation theology have served as the cornerstones of the two-hundred-year-old denomination. In the antebellum period, AME churches served as posts for the Underground Railroad. During Reconstruction, Northern AME missionaries travelled southward to teach formerly enslaved people how to read. Today, AME churches provide community programming that, according to their mission statement, aims to "enhance the entire social development of all people." Furthermore, missionization, particularly in Africa, has been a primary component of the church's work, leading to the establishment of the denomination in over thirty countries.



Date Range: 1816 CE - 2020 CE

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, Asia, Africa, Europe

Region tags: U.S. Virgin Islands, Brazil, United States, South Asia, Canada, The Bahamas, Cuba, Guyana, Suriname, Rwanda, Kenya, Zambia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Martinique, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Togo, Benin, Cote D'Ivoire, India, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Bahamas, South America, Bermuda, Global, Nigeria, Republic of Congo-Brazzaville, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, United States of America, England, Africa, Europe, Asia

While the denomination originated in the Northern United States, global missions have led to the expansion of the AME Church into over thirty countries.

## Status of Participants:

✓ Religious Specialists    ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

## Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

—Source 1: *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1862-1939*. Edited by Stephen W. Angell and Anthony B. Pinn. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.

- Source 2: Bailey, Julius H. *Around the Family Altar: Domesticity in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1865-1900*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2005.
- Source 3: Bailey, Julius H. *Race Patriotism: Protest and Print Culture in the A.M.E. Church*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2012.
- Notes: This edited anthology and Bailey's work explore myriad aspects of AME culture, including ideas of domesticity and gender as well as print culture.
- Specific to this answer:  
Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe
- Source 1: Dickerson, Dennis C. *The African Methodist Episcopal Church: A History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Source 2: Hempton, David. *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Source 3: Owens, A. Nevell. *Formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Nineteenth Century: Rhetoric of Identification*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Notes: These texts offer overviews of the history of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. While not concentrated on the AME Church, Hempton's monograph provides an understanding of the development of American Methodism, out of which the AME denomination derives.
- Specific to this answer:  
Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe
- Source 1: Stobert, Nelson T. *Daniel Alexander Payne: The Venerable Preceptor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012.
- Source 2: Neumann, Richard. *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers*. New York: NYU Press, 2008.
- Source 3: Johnson, Andre E. *The Forgotten Prophet: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and the African American Prophetic Tradition*. New York: Lexington Books, 2012.
- Notes: For biographical information on a few of the prominent early (male) leaders in the AME Church, see these works by Neumann, Johnson and Stobert. See also Stephen W. Angell, *Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and African-American Religion in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992); William Seraile, *Fire In His Heart: Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999); Albert George Miller, *Elevating the Race: Theophilus G. Steward, Black Theology and the Making of an African American Civil Society, 1865-1924* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); and Calvin S. Morris, *Reverend Y.C. Ransom: Black Advocate of the Social Gospel* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990).
- Specific to this answer:  
Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe
- Source 1: George, Carol V. R. *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Emergence of Independent Black Churches, 1760-1840*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Source 2: Williams, Leonard F. *Richard Allen and Mother Bethel: African Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia: Historical Commission of Mother Bethel A.M.E., 1972*
- Source 3: Campbell, James T. *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Notes: Additional secondary sources for understanding the context of the denomination. James T. Campbell's work, in particular, highlights the global reach of the AME Church.
- Source 1: Melton, J. Gordon. *A Will to Choose: The Origins of African American Methodism*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.
- Source 2: Hendricks, Uklyn. *The African Methodist Episcopal Church in Barbados, 1892-1980*. St. John, Barbados: Caribbean Group for Social and Religious Studies, 1982.
- Source 3: Johnson, Evelyn M. *Blacks/African Americans and Latino(a)s/Hispanics in the African Methodist Episcopal Church: A Divine Connection*. Self-published. 2019.
- Notes: Further secondary sources on the denomination.
- Source 1: Jenifer, John Thomas. *Centennial Retrospect History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Nashville: Sunday School Union Print, 1915.
- Source 2: Wright, Richard Robert. *The Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Nashville: A.M.E. Sunday School Union, 1963.
- Notes: Older historiographical texts on the denomination.
- Source 1: Bailey, Julius H. "African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church." In *Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellion: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, Volume 1, A-N. Edited by Junius P. Rodriguez. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006.
- Source 2: Singleton, George A. *The Romance of African Methodism: A Study of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. New York: Exposition Press, 1952.
- Source 3: Walker, Clarence E. *A Rock in a Weary Land The African Methodist Episcopal Church during the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982.
- Notes: Additional sources about the denomination. See also John Thomas Jenifer, *Centennial Retrospect History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: Sunday School Union Print, 1915).
- Source 1: Lee, Jarena. *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, A Colored Lady, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel*. In *Sisters of the Spirit*, ed. William Andrews. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Source 2: Smith, Amanda. *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist*. Chicago: Meyer & Brother, 1893.

—Source 3: Dodson, Jualynne E. *Engendering Church Women, Power, and the AME Church*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002.

Notes: It is important to note that, while many early histories of the church foreground patriarchs and male leadership, women were active in shaping the church's doctrine and practices. Jarena Lee, a Black woman born in 1783, writes in her autobiography that she heard a call from God to preach. She repeatedly asked AME founder Richard Allen to authorize her as a preacher until he finally agreed. Almost a century later, Amanda Berry Smith, a formerly enslaved woman, travelled as a transnational missionary to myriad countries and eventually opened her own orphanage. For more on Jarena Lee and Amanda Berry Smith, see Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Turn the Pulpit Loose: Two Centuries of American Women Evangelists* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Carla L. Peterson, *Doers of the Word: African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Richard J. Douglass-Chin, *Preacher Woman Sings the Blues: The Autobiographies of Nineteenth-Century African American Evangelists* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001); Joy R. Bostic, *African American Female Mysticism: Nineteenth-Century Religious Activism* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); and Carole Lynn Stewart, "The Quintessence of Sanctifying Grace: Amanda Smith's Religious Experience, Freedom, and a Temperate Cosmopolitanism," *Journal of Africana Religions* 1, no. 3 (2013): 352-357. The AME Women in Ministry of the First Episcopal District recently celebrated Reverend Jarena Lee through a program involving reenactments from Lee's sermons and songs. See here: <https://www.thechristianrecorder.com/first-district-wim-celebrates-life-of-the-rev-jarena-lee/>. In addition to the primary and secondary sources above, see the following works by Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, the first woman to be elected as Bishop in the AME Church: *Vashti Murphy McKenzie of Strength in the Struggle* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2001) and *McKenzie, Not Without a Struggle: Leadership for African American Women in Ministry* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1996).

#### Online sources for understanding this subject:

—Source 1 URL: <https://www.ame-church.com/>

—Source 1 Description: The official website of the AME Church, featuring an abbreviated history, its mission statement and recent news and events

—Source 2 URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-Methodist-Episcopal-Church>

—Source 2 Description: Encyclopaedia Britannica entry on the denomination

—Source 3 URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Kcp-H6WfqQ>

—Source 3 Description: Performance of Mother Bethel AME Church Choir (the inaugural church of the AME denomination located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) at the 2016 Democratic National Convention, featured by PBS Newshour

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

—Source 1 URL: <https://www.thechristianrecorder.com/>

—Source 1 Description: The Christian Recorder, the official (virtual) newspaper of the AME Church and the oldest existing Black newspaper whose existence predates the Civil War

—Source 2 URL: <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/apps/readex/publication-browse?p=EANX&t=pubname%3A158C95D4A1CB2603%21Christian%2BRecorder%2Bof%2Bthe%2BAfrican%2BMethodist%2BEpiscopal%2BChurch>

—Source 2 Description: Archives of the Christian Recorder, the weekly AME newspaper, ranging from 1868 to 1872

—Source 3 URL: <https://www.loc.gov/item/15000601/>

—Source 3 Description: Archives of the A.M.E. Church Review, the quarterly periodical founded by Bishop Benjamin Tucker Tanner

Notes: See also this 1900 edition of the Voice of Missions, the monthly newspaper published by the AME Department of Missions: <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph596128/>

—Source 1 URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J1vFJ168g>

—Source 1 Description: Video highlighting Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia, PA, and its 52nd pastor, Reverend Mark Kelly Tyler

—Source 2 URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXCnK3Kf\\_Pg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXCnK3Kf_Pg)

—Source 2 Description: 2018 sermon by Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, the first female AME bishop, at Metropolitan AME Church in Washington, D.C.

—Source 3 URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VL7mYwawbA>

—Source 3 Description: African Methodist Episcopal Church Call to Prayer featuring the Council of Bishops, June 7, 2020

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

—Source 1 URL: <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/101686757>

—Source 1 Description: Published in 1849, *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, A Colored Lady, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel* is the autobiography of the first female preacher in the AME Church.

—Source 2 URL: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/allen/allen.html>

—Source 2 Description: *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*, published in 1833, conveys the narrative of the founder of the AME denomination.

—Source 3 URL: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/payne/payne.html>

—Source 3 Description: Written by an early bishop in the denomination, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* by Daniel Payne provides a foundational account of the denomination.

Notes: See also Charles Spencer Smith's 1922 A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cssmith/smith.html>

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

—Source 1 URL: [https://allenuniversity.libguides.com/c.php?g=609706&p=4356468#:~:text=Emanuel%20African%20Methodist%20Episcopal%20Church%20\(Charleston%2C%20SC\)&text=Founded%20in%20](https://allenuniversity.libguides.com/c.php?g=609706&p=4356468#:~:text=Emanuel%20African%20Methodist%20Episcopal%20Church%20(Charleston%2C%20SC)&text=Founded%20in%20)

—Source 1 Description: Allen University Library Guide for the AME denomination

—Source 2 URL: <https://divinity.yale.edu/academics/denominational-programs/african-methodist-episcopal-church>

—Source 2 Description: Yale Divinity School background on the AME Church

## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

— Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:

— No

Notes: The cultural contact is only competitive to the extent that the denomination believes that its mission is to carry out a global Christian evangelistic vision and "to spread Christ's liberating gospel" according to the 2016 AME Doctrine and Discipline (106). Violence and force, however, are not used in an effort to accomplish evangelism.

Reference: Roderick Belin D., *Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition*. AME Sunday School Union.

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

— Yes

Notes: The group promotes the liberation of oppressed peoples, foregrounds its commitment to fighting liberation and doesn't approach other religious groups with violence or hatred. In fact, the group's commitment to social justice has also sparked a commitment to interfaith coalitions. For instance, in 1993, Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan spoke at Mother Bethel AME (the first AME church). A Bethel member in attendance commented that Farrakhan "preaches the word of God just like my pastor does." It is important to note, however, that the AME denomination's doctrine doesn't hold space for religious pluralism for its adherents. Yet, within religions of the Black diaspora, what is often described as religious syncretism, blending or mixing is still common. In other words, simply because doctrine and theological tenets do not espouse religious pluralism doesn't mean that individuals do not curate their faith practices in ways that make the most sense to them. Finally, as the church has grown, so have its global missions. In order to determine how to navigate the diverse cultures and nations into which the denomination has expanded, the church's leadership established the Global Development Council in 1996. This group is tasked with figuring out how to meet the needs of and take into account the perspectives of AME churches in myriad social and physical locations. See <https://um-insight.net/in-the-church/umc-global-nature/comparative-wesleyan-global-polity-the-african-methodist-epi/>. That said, the church still believes in the primacy of Christianity and believes that other religions and deities are antithetical to the Christian God. In addition, they believe that only followers of Christianity will enter heaven. For an interesting example of how the church approaches missions, see this 2016 report on the AME Church in India: <https://www.thechristianrecorder.com/september-report-from-ame-india/>. Notice that the denomination is seeking to aid some of the most marginalized members of society, including widows, children and individuals suffering from leprosy. Notice, too, that the missionaries and pastors working for AME India consider Hindu festivals to be, in their words, "demonic."

Reference: *September Report from AME-India*

Reference: Michael Fletcher A. Nation of Islam minister preaches common ground Farrakhan speaks from Bethel pulpit.

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Is the cultural contact neutral:

— Yes

Notes: While evangelism is the ultimate goal of cultural contact, force is not used in the evangelizing act by church leadership.

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

— No

Notes: The church advocates for liberation and the extinguishment of racial oppression. While there are no stipulations that individual members cannot engage join the military or defend themselves/their loved ones against harm, the church as an institution is anti-violent.

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

— No

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

— Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Assigned at birth (membership is default for this society):

— No

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Assigned by personal choice:

— Yes

Notes: According to the denomination's Doctrine and Discipline guidebook, an individual can enter into full membership in a local congregation once she completes a series of steps. First, she must complete a period of 90 days of discipleship and nurturing training in the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church and the Bible. During the period, she must also receive training in at least three of the following areas: Assurance of Salvation, the History of the AME Church, the Articles of Religion, Introduction to Christian Stewardship, Rules and Regulations of the AME Church, Introduction to the Bible, Histories and Ministries of the Local Church and Catechism on Faith. After completing this series of trainings, the individual is named a full member and receives a Certificate of Full Membership.

Reference: Roderick Belin D. Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. AME Sunday School Union.

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Assigned by class:

— No

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Assigned at a specific age:

— No

Notes: Children and teenagers must undergo the membership process as well, even if their parents or guardians raised them in the AME tradition and/or their parents or guardians are members of the church. All youth through age 17 are understood as holding "preparatory membership," which lasts until they complete the full process to become full members. Children, however, can receive the sacrament of baptism without being members and "as early as convenient" for a family.

Reference: Roderick Belin D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. AME Sunday School Union. p.79, 81

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Assigned by gender:

— No

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Assigned by participation in a particular ritual:

— No

Notes: Though membership training is required for all full members of the group, "ritual" isn't the best term to encompass the significance of this instructional period.

↳ Assigned by some other factor:

— No

Notes: It must be noted that, while the AME Church is predominantly and historically Black, it is open to individuals of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. See this article on multiculturalism within the AME Church: <https://www.thechristianrecorder.com/at-home-in-allens-church-stories-of-multicultural-ame-members/> as well as Evelyn M. Johnson's book *Blacks/African Americans and Latino(a)s/Hispanics in the African Methodist Episcopal Church: A Divine Connection*. According to the denomination's statement on the significance of the word "African" within its title, "the word African means that the church was organized by people of African descent and heritage. It does not mean that the church was founded in Africa, or that it was for persons of African descent only."

Reference: The AME Name

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

— Yes

Reference: Lawrence Little. *Disciples of Liberty: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

Reference: James Campbell. *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Reference: Lewellyn Berry Longfellow. *A Century of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1940*. New York: Gutenberg Printing Company.

↳ Is proselytizing mandated for religious professionals:

— Yes

Notes: The church—and specifically, church leadership—understands its mission as spreading the message of Jesus Christ on a global scale, which is evident in the fact that, as it stands in 2020, there are local AME congregations in over thirty countries (including countries in South America, South Asia and Africa).

↳ Is proselytizing mandated for all adherents:

— No

Notes: There are no rules or specific metrics that adherents must meet in terms of proselytization. However, the general missionary ethos of the church encourages evangelization on individual and institutional levels. An example of this ethos resides in the Women's Missionary Society, a body into which AME female members can elect to participate. According to the AME Women's Missionary Society's purpose, they aim to "carry out God's mission in the church, society, and the world." For the Women's Missionary Society and the denomination as a whole, part of their globalizing mission is enmeshed in a desire to advocate for peace, liberation, human rights and justice abroad.

↳ Is missionary work mandated for religious professionals:

— No

↳ Is missionary work mandated for all adherents:

— No

Notes: Adherents can choose to become licensed missionaries can be recommended for the licensure by a class leader in her or his local congregation to the Quarterly Conference of the Church.

Reference: Roderick Belin D. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition*. AME Sunday School Union. p.93-94, 795

↳ Is proselytization coercive:

— No

Does the religion have official political support

— No

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Are apostates prosecuted or punished:

– No

Notes: Within the AME Church, an individual can choose to withdraw from the denomination or can be expelled. To withdraw her membership, she must provide the Pastor of her local AME congregation with a Letter of Withdrawal. After doing so, she "has no right or title to the personal or real property of the local or general church" (215). If an individual is expelled from the church, her membership cannot be reinstated "without contrition, confession, and acceptance of probation" (217).

Reference: Roderick Belin D. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* - 2016: Bicentennial Edition.

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 2510000

Notes: Data was derived from the World Council of Churches (<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/african-methodist-episcopal-church>). From available data, approximately 2,120,000 members reside in the United States, 375,000 members reside on the African continent and 15,000 reside in the Caribbean.

Reference: African Methodist Episcopal Church

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Estimated population, percentage of sample region: 0.5

Notes: Comprehensive and reliable data about the AME Church globally is unavailable. The estimated population provided (0.5%) is based on the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study; thus, this percentage only takes AME adherent in the United States into account.

Reference: Pew Research Center: Religious Landscape Study

Nature of religious group [please select one]:

– Small religious group (seen as being part of a related larger religious group)

Notes: The AME Church is a Protestant Christian denomination, holds many similarities with other Protestant denominations and is perhaps most closely aligned with Methodism, the denomination from which it derives. Within American Christianity, the African Methodist Episcopal Church falls under the category of Historically Black Protestantism. For more statistical and demographical information about the AME Church in the United States, see <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/#religions>.

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Scholar Lawrence S. Little argues that, in some ways, the hierarchy or religious leadership structure of the AME Church operated as a way for African Americans to participate in and have access to democratic society and politics in a white society where they were often constrained from leadership and political positions. He notes that "in the South, the church provided the only opportunity for many African Americans to vote for anyone." He writes that "the organizational and political structure of the denomination furthered the democratic and republican nature of the AME and allowed participation in decision making at nearly every level." See Lawrence S. Little, *A Quest for Self-Determination: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916* (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1993), 31-32.

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– Yes

Notes: See Henry McNeal Turner's *The Genius and Theory of Methodist Polity, or the Machinery of Methodism, Practically Illustrated through a Series of Questions and Answers*: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/turnerpoly/menu.html>

↳ A single leader of a local community:

– Yes

Notes: Every local congregation, of which there are approximately 7000 in the United States, maintains its own pastor. A pastor gains their leadership position upon the recommendation of the Presiding Elder, an individual who maintains authority over a specified district, and upon the final approval of the Bishop, the individuals who are designated as the "Chief Officers" of the Church and who each control a specific district (districts can traverse state and national boundaries). For more information about AME structure, see <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-structure/>.

↳ Multiple religious communities each with its own leader, no hierarchy among these leaders:

– No

↳ "Regional" leaders who oversee one or more local leader(s) (e.g. bishops):

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church is comprised of twenty-one bishops, twenty of whom provide leadership for a specified district (districts consist of both domestic and international locations) and one of whom holds organizational power over another area (Bishop Frank Madison Reid III manages the denomination's Ecumenical and Urban Affairs). The first female bishop, Bishop Rev. Vashti Murphy McKenzie, was elected in 2000. According to the Church's doctrine, bishops typically serve until retirement and are elected for life. Bishops appoint and are assisted by Presiding Elders, who manage the pastors in a district and report to their assigned bishop.

Reference: AME Church Structure

Reference: Roderick Belin D. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. AME Sunday School Union.

Reference: Laurie Goodstein "After 213 Years, A.M.E. Church Elects First Woman as a Bishop"

Reference: Dennis Dickerson C. "The Making of a Female Bishop: From Jarena Lee to Vashti Murphy McKenzie".

↳ A single leader for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– No

↳ A council or group of leaders for the religious group that oversees all other leaders in the sample region:

– Yes

Notes: The bishops make up the Council of Bishops, which is the Executive Branch of the Connectional Church. They meet annually and are tasked with "the authority to administer the affairs of the AME Church" (Doctrine and Discipline, 171). The ultimate authority of the AME Church, however, is the General Conference. The General Conference is described as "the supreme body" and consists of bishops and a number of elected ministerial and lay delegates (Doctrine and Discipline, 160).

Reference: Roderick Belin D. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. AME Sunday School Union.

↳ Estimate how many levels there are in the hierarchy of religious leadership:

– Number of levels [numeric value]: 5

Notes: In the AME Church, there are five levels of conferences (general, annual, district, quarterly and church). The General Conference constructs church policies and holds the power to create new rules and regulations. It's comprised of bishops and ministerial and lay people. Each member in the conference holds a single vote. The General Conference is divided into the Judicial Council, the Church's most powerful judicatory body; the Council of Bishops, often described as the Church's Chief Connectional Officers; the Board of Incorporators/Trustees, which controls the Church's property; and the General Board/Officers, an administrative body. The Council of Bishops convenes twice per year and, in the words of Lawrence S. Little, "managed the day-to-day activities of the church within the episcopal districts." Little points out that the term 'episcopal' within the title of the AME Church implies "rule by bishop." Bishops are assisted by individuals known as Presiding Elders. Each region of the AME Church maintains its own Annual Conference, which is led by the bishop of that specific region, and attendees at the annual conference include all the ministers and elected lay officials in the region. Annual Conferences are further divided into District Conferences. District Conferences, which are made up of various circuits and directed by an elder. Quarterly Conferences (which meet quarterly) and Church Conferences (which usually meet monthly) take charge of the duties and business of the churches and circuits comprising districts. Local congregations contain their own hierarchal structures and consist of ministers/pastors/preachers, deacons/deaconesses, elders and more. Finally, congregations maintain various ministries, each of which works to provide leadership for a distinct group or which aims to fulfill a purpose. Examples of local ministries include the Young People and Children's Division and the Women's Missionary Society. Religious leadership within the AME Church, however, is complex; therefore, conceptualizing it in terms of levels may not be the most helpful. Alternatively, we might think about the structure of the AME Church as a government with various branches. Similar to the federal government of the United States, the AME Church maintains branches that all issue out of the General Conference, the supreme body of the Church that is comprised of bishops and ministerial and lay delegates. The United Methodist Church, the denomination out of which the AME Church derives, maintains a similar organizational system. See Lawrence S. Little, *A Quest for Self-Determination: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916* (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1993), 21-30.



Reference: Roderick Belin D. Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. AME Sunday School Union.

Reference: Church Structure

Reference: Structure of the Church

Reference: What is...the Council of Bishops?

Reference: What is...the General Conference?

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– No

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– Yes

↳ A leader chooses his/her own replacement:

– No

Notes: Bishops are elected by the General Conference.

Reference: Roderick Belin D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. AME Sunday School Union. p.163

↳ A leader's retinue or ministers chooses the new leader:

– No

↳ Other leaders in the religious group choose that leader:

– Yes

Notes: The General Conference, the supreme ruling body of the AME Church, chooses new bishops.

↳ A political leader chooses the leader:

– No

↳ Other members of the leader's congregation choose the leader:

– No

↳ All members of the religious group in the sample region participate in choosing the leader:

– No

↳ Communication with supernatural power(s) believed to be part of the selection process:

– No

↳ Are leaders considered fallible:

– Yes

↳ Charges of fallibility made by a leader's own followers:

– Yes

↳ Charges of fallibility made by other leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Charges of fallibility made by a political ruler:

– No

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– No

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

— Yes

↳ Are they written:

— Yes

Notes: For members of the AME Church, the Christian Bible is the authoritative Scripture.

↳ Are they oral:

— No

↳ Is there a story (or a set of stories) associated with the origin of scripture:

— No

↳ Are the scriptures alterable:

— No

↳ Are there formal institutions (i.e. institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders) for interpreting the scriptures:

— No

Notes: No formal institutions for scriptural interpretation exist; however, ministers and religious professionals are encouraged to receive a theological education. These individuals interpret scriptures on a local level. On a more global scale, the General Conference and bishops interpret scriptures in order to form church policies.

↳ Is there a select group of people trained in transmitting the scriptures:

— Yes

Notes: Religious professionals are expected to interpret scripture for congregations, and bishops are expected to interpret scriptures into corporate policies.

↳ Is there a codified canon of scriptures:

— Yes

Notes: The canon of scriptures includes 66 books and is divided into Old Testament and New Testament.

Reference: The Books of the Bible

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

— No

Notes: AME churches do not reflect a standardized or monumental architectural style but rather a wide array of styles indicative of community resources at the time they were built as well as the personal flair of the architects who built them. The oldest churches in the denomination's history (for instance, Mother Bethel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) often hold architectural elements that are typical of American Protestant colonial church architecture, such as steeples, church pews and deep red carpets. See this article regarding recent renovations done at a Gary, Indiana, AME Church, which was originally designed by Black architect William Wilson Cooke: <https://www.npr.org/local/309/2020/07/09/889389273/what-s-that-building-the-first-african-methodist-episcopal-church-in-gary-indiana>. Some AME Churches, however, are recognized for their remarkable architecture. Brown AME Church (<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-4123>) in Selma, Alabama, features Romanesque-Revival style architecture as well as a exterior monument honoring Civil Rights activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr., James Reeb, Viola Gregg Liuzzo and Jimmie Lee Jackson. Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. (<https://www.nps.gov/places/metropolitan-african-methodist-episcopal-church.htm>) features Gothic architecture and bright red brick and is registered as a National Historic Place. For an example of one of the oldest surviving AME church buildings, see Bethel AME Church ([https://www.nps.gov/places/new-jersey-bethel-ame-church.htm?utm\\_source=place&utm\\_medium=website&utm\\_campaign=experience\\_more&utm\\_content=large](https://www.nps.gov/places/new-jersey-bethel-ame-church.htm?utm_source=place&utm_medium=website&utm_campaign=experience_more&utm_content=large)) in Greenwich Township, New Jersey, also registered as a national historic landmark. Completed in the 1830s, the humble structure was constructed out of white concrete. Oral histories attest that Harriet Tubman once used the church as a stop on the Underground Railroad as she journeyed to Canada.

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

— No

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

- On persons
- At home
- Only religious public space

↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:

– Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not):

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic):

– Yes

Notes: Similar to other Protestants, AME folks often use the symbol of a dove to represent the Holy Spirit.

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic):

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic):

– Yes

Notes: A unique feature in some AME churches are stained-glass windows depicting the biblical figure of Jesus Christ with dark skin, a direct contrast to many Euro-American depictions of the messiah figure and a visual embodiment of the church's background as a denomination created by individuals with African heritage. See images below and/or links: <https://www.lawsstainedglass.com/loris-sc-st-stephenamechurch> and <https://www.lawsstainedglass.com/apps/blog/show/44359947-stained-glass-windows-at-campbells-chapel-ame-church-in-virginia-beach-va>

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract symbol):

– No

↳ Portrayals of afterlife:

– No

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols):

– Yes

Notes: Crosses and other Protestant Christian iconography are also present in African Methodist Episcopalism. See image below and/or link: <https://www.lawsstainedglass.com/loris-sc-st-stephenamechurch>

↳ Humans:

– Yes

Notes: Windows at some AME churches visually document and sacralize African American history, referencing the Underground Railroad (for instance, a stained glass window with a white lily, a symbol for the Underground Railroad, at Mother Bethel AME Church), the civil rights activist Rosa Parks, the denomination's founder Richard Allen and more. See images below and/or links: <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/detail-of-rosa-parks-in-the-stained-glass-windows-at-the-news-photo/161183639>; <https://explorepahistory.com/displayimage.php?imgId=1-2-3CD>; <https://twitter.com/francineorr/status/952598246513192960>; <https://www.denverpost.com/2018/10/18/ruby-kirk-gray-obituary-denver/>; <https://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/news-photo/detail-of-the-stained-glass-windows-at-the-shorter-news-photo/161183625>; <https://www.fairfieldcitizenonline.com/default/photo/Stained-glass-window-showing-Martin-Luther-King-569822.php>

↳ Other features of iconography:

– Yes

Notes: The symbol or emblem of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is a cross foregrounded by an anvil. While the significance of the cross is more ubiquitous, as it alludes to the death of Jesus Christ, the symbology of the anvil is linked to the specific

history of the AME Church. The inaugural AME congregation (Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia, PA) was started in a building that was formerly a blacksmith's shop. The anvil reflects the history of this first church's location, and members over time have also grown to associate the anvil with the character of God. For members of the AME tradition, God's consistency is like that of an anvil. Although hammers may wear out over time, usually anvils are more durable and long-lasting, and typically blacksmith's only need to purchase one for the entirety of their careers. Likewise, AME followers understand God as everlasting, consistent and never-failing. These objects--the cross and the anvil--are enclosed inside a coat of arms or shield. The symbol includes the colors red, green and black, which are the colors in the Pan-African flag and have been used historically to represent Black liberation. According to the Doctrine and Discipline guidebook, red symbolizes the blood of Christ and God's life; green represents life, growth and "Christian vitality"; and black embodies the historical struggles of Black communities against oppression.

Reference: Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

Reference: Meaning of AME Symbols

Reference: Roderick Belin D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. AME Sunday School Union, p.469, 504, 588

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

Notes: Congregants meet regularly in church spaces, which are considered houses of worship.

↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– No

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: Some individual members and/or local congregations may choose to engage in trips to Israel and Palestine, but there is no formal method for doing so, nor is there any obligation.

## Beliefs

### Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– Yes

Notes: The spirit-mind is understood as eternal, while the earthly body decays and is ephemeral.

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body:

– Yes

Notes: A human's spirit is seen as everlasting, while a human's earthly body is understood as temporary. This understand is perhaps best clarified through the fact that the AME Church maintains no regulations against cremation or organ donation upon death. Generally, AME members believe that, if they have believed in and obeyed God, their "spiritual" bodies, rather than physical bodies, will be resurrected on what is described as the "Last Day" when adherents believe Jesus Christ will return to earth.

Reference: The Resurrection of the Body

Reference: How are cremation and organ donation consistent with resurrection of the body?

Reference: What are the Church's views on cremation and organ donation?

Reference: What happens after a person dies?

Reference: Ted Campbell A.. Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials, Revised Edition. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Other spirit-body relationship:

– Yes [specify]: The theology of the AME Church understands the spirit-mind of a human as willing to obey god but the body or flesh of the human as inherently sinful and weak, meaning that the body subverts and/or perverts the spirit-mind and leads the spirit-mind into wrongdoing. This concept comes from the New Testament of the Bible in Matthew 26:40-43.

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church, like the United Methodist Church, affirms the most basic Protestant Christian beliefs about the afterlife. For example, they believe in the spiritual resurrection of followers of Jesus Christ. They also believe in a day of final judgment upon which Jesus Christ will return to earth and judge both living and dead humans after which they believe he will reveal a new kingdom. However, unlike other Christian denominations that possess detailed theologies about afterlife temporality and cosmology, the AME denomination maintains a sense of openness about what the afterlife will look like and holds few precise doctrinal beliefs about it. There exists the idea that the righteous (those who followed god in life) and the unrighteous (those who did not) will reside in distinct and separate locations. The most conservative AME adherents would generally conceive of Heaven (the place for the righteous) as being above the earth, and hell (the place for the unrighteous) as existing below it. According to a 2014 Pew Research Forum survey, 83% of AME adherents believe in hell, 12% of AME adherents don't believe in hell and 5% either don't know or fall into an "Other" category. Conversely, 95% of AME adherents believe in heaven, 3% don't believe and approximately 3% either don't know or fall into an "Other" category. On the question of the afterlife and all other theological inquiries, the AME Church affirms the doctrine of the United Methodist Church. Specifically related to the afterlife, the United Methodist Church includes the denomination's founder John Wesley's sermon "The Great Assize" as part of its doctrinal standards. See references for a link to this sermon.

Reference: Members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Reference: Our Christian Beliefs: God's Reign

Reference: John Wesley The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 15: The Great Assize

Reference: What happens after a person dies?

Reference: United Methodist Beliefs: Hell

Reference: This We Believe: The Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Afterlife in specified realm of space beyond this world:

– Yes

Notes: In addition to believing in heaven and hell, most African Methodist Episcopal adherents believe that God will one day create a new heaven and a new earth. In this new world system, according to AME doctrine, there will be no more tears and no more war (Revelation 21: 1, 4 and Isaiah 2:4). According to the Pew Research Forum, 95% of AME adherents believe that heaven, a place "where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded," exists.

Reference: Members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Reference: What does the UMC teach about the second coming?

Reference: Our Christian Beliefs: God's Reign

Specific to this answer:

Region: North America, South America, Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, Europe

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined "above" space:

– Yes

Notes: In general, AME adherents themselves understand heaven as residing in a "vaguely defined 'above' space." Some AME folks might conceptualize heaven differently or not even believe in it at all.

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined "below" space:

– Yes

Notes: In general, AME adherents understand hell as residing in a "vaguely defined 'below' space." Some AME folks might conceptualize it differently or not even believe in it at all.

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– No

↳ Afterlife located in "other" space:

– No

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– No

Notes: The doctrine of the Church specifies that followers will be given new spiritual bodies in the afterlife; thus, adherents are not required to honor the dead with a specific kind of treatment. Cremation and organ donation are acceptable.

Reference: What are the Church's views on cremation and organ donation?

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Are grave goods present:

– No

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Reference: A Service of Death and Resurrection

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– No

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

↳ Other formal burial type:

– No

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

– Yes

Notes: The supreme high god is anthropomorphic, exhibiting emotions like love, jealousy and anger. Within the Bible, God is described as having human body parts, such as eyes (Psalm 34:15), hands (Exodus 7:5) and a face (Numbers 6:25). Additionally, the figure of Jesus Christ is understood as God's son, God in human flesh, completely

divine and completely human. According to the AME Article of Religion, No. 2, "the Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the God-head and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man."

Reference: Roderick Belin D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. AME Sunday School Union. p.25

- ↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:
  - No
  - Notes: God is not understood as a sky deity, although the Bible does assert that God created the heavens, resides above and is in charge of the skies/heavens.
- ↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):
  - No
- ↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):
  - No
- ↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:
  - No
- ↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:
  - No
- ↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:
  - No
- ↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:
  - Yes
  - Notes: According to Psalms 100: 5, God is good.
- ↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:
  - Yes [specify]: God is understood as perfect (Matthew 5:48), eternal (Colossians 1:17), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscient (Isaiah 46:9-10), omnipotent (Job 11:7-11), faithful (2 Timothy 2:13), loving (1 John 4:7-8) and holy (Revelation 4:8).
- ↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:
  - Yes
  - ↳ The supreme god's knowledge is restricted to particular domain of human affairs:
    - No
  - ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:
    - No
  - ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted within the sample region:
    - Yes
    - Notes: God is understood as omniscient.
  - ↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region:
    - Yes
  - ↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):
    - Yes
  - ↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– Yes

Notes: Adherents believe God looks at the heart of humans and weighs their morals (1 Samuel 16:7).

↳ The supreme high god knows your basic character (personal essence):

– Yes

Notes: Adherents believe God looks at the heart of humans and weighs their morals (1 Samuel 16:7).

↳ The supreme high god knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– Yes

Notes: Because God is understood as infinite and eternal, not existing on a human timeline, followers believe he knows the future and the future actions of humans.

↳ The supreme high god has other knowledge of this world:

– Yes [specify]: God is understood as possessing all knowledge of this world and beyond.

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: God is perceived as being active in the affairs of humans, of sending help, of interacting with them, of helping them in times of distress, of speaking to them and of helping to shape the arc of human history.

↳ The supreme high god can reward:

– Yes

Notes: Rewards are often understood through the language of blessings. According to Psalms 5:12, God blesses the righteous.

↳ The supreme high god can punish:

– Yes

Notes: According to Isaiah 13:11, God punishes the unrighteous or the wicked.

↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– No

Notes: God is understood as being completely in charge of God-self and the actions of God-self. Thus, within this theological paradigm, there could never be an action completed by God indirectly or an action that occurs of which God wasn't previously aware.

↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: A few of the positive emotions God is understood as exhibiting are love (John 3:16), compassion (Exodus 33:19) and joy (Nehemiah 8:10).

↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: For example, God can exhibit wrath (Romans 1:18).

↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:

– No

Notes: God (not Jesus) is not understood as existing in a physical body or human form. Thus, God does not need the physical nourishment that humans require.

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

– No

Notes: God is adamantly against idols and the worship of any idol or any deity other than God-self. Throughout the biblical narrative, God often exhibits anger and wrath and sends punishment when his followers turn to other beings or worship them. According to Luke 4:8, followers should "worship the Lord [their] God and serve him



only."

↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: AME members understand God as completely perfect and sinless, whereas humans are perceived as "born in sin and shaped in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5). They believe that God sent his only son, Jesus Christ, into the world to die as a sacrifice for humans' sins, and through his resurrection from the dead, followers believe humans can be reconciled unto God. The doctrine states that, by believing in the sacrifice Jesus' death and resurrection, humans are justified and saved from eternal separation from God or an afterlife in damnation/hell. Followers believe that, after Jesus' resurrection, he ascended into heaven and left the Holy Spirit on earth, which the Bible describes as a Helper, a Comforter, the Spirit of truth and a mechanism by which humans can communicate with God/hear God's "voice," so to speak John 14). God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit form what AME adherents would call the trinity. Finally, an important aspect of God for African Methodist Episcopal members is that he is implicitly male (even though he doesn't embody a human or physical form). They use the language of fatherhood and he/him/his pronouns to refer to God.

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life:

– Yes

↳ In dreams:

– Yes

Notes: Throughout the Bible, God communicates with his followers through dreams and visions.

↳ In trance possession:

– No

↳ Through divination practices:

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church affirms prophecy, speaking in tongues or glossolalia, interpreting tongues and discernment (intuition) as modes of communication with God and as spiritual gifts.

Reference: Spiritual Gifts: Discernment

Reference: Spiritual Gifts: Interpretation of Tongues

Reference: Spiritual Gifts: Tongues

Reference: Spiritual Gifts: Prophecy

↳ Only through religious specialists:

– No

Notes: God is understood as available to all his followers, according to the AME Church, and wants to be in communication with them.

↳ Only through monarch

– No

↳ Other form of communication with living:

– Yes [specify]: God is understood as being in active communication with his followers through the Holy Spirit. The Bible also states that God's creation declares His glory and serves as a form of communication of God's presence. Additionally, prayer, meditation and praise and worship can serve as mechanisms for adherents to connect with God.

Reference: Our Christian Beliefs: The Holy Spirit

Reference: What is the difference between prayer and meditation?

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: Throughout the Bible, angels appear to humans, and AME theology affirms the possibility of appearances by angels.

Reference: John Iovino undefined Angels among us: God's heavenly messengers for the world

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– No

Notes: Within AME theology, supernatural beings, including angels and demons, are spirits and do not embody physical bodies. Thus, they cannot be physically felt or experienced.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– Yes

Notes: In AME theology, non-human supernatural beings like demons and angels are not omniscient like God, and their knowledge is restricted in that they can only know what God allows them to know or reveals to them. Satan or Lucifer, believed by AME followers to have once been an angel who revolted against God, is understood as the chief demon. It is important to note that these beings are understood as only being able to perform actions that are allowed by God. That is, because of God's omnipotence, these beings can only do good or evil to the extent that God allows it.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted outside of sample region:

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings knows your basic character (personal essence):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– No

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have other knowledge of this world:

– Yes [specify]: Non-human supernatural beings know more than humans, but they can only know what God allows them to know, according to AME

theology.

- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
  - Yes
- ↳ These supernatural beings can reward:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These supernatural beings can punish:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:
  - No
- ↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:
  - Yes
- ↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:
  - Yes
- ↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:
  - Field doesn't know
  - Notes: In Hebrews 13:2, the writer pushes the reader to show hospitality to strangers, an invitation that could include food, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."
- ↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:
  - Yes [specify]: Within biblical texts, humans often experience fear when supernatural beings (positive or negative in connotation--that is, angels or demons) appear to them.
- ↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:
  - No
  - Notes: Jesus Christ, the son of God, is the only being who would qualify as a mixed human-divine entity. He is understood as an exceptional being because of his full humanity and full divinity.
- ↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:
  - No

### Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

- ↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously "moral" or "ethical" norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

  - Yes
  - Notes: AME members believe in following norms that are generally considered prosocial by society writ large (for example, not murdering others and not stealing). They also hold practices and motivations that, while less obvious, also promote prosocial behavior. To provide a few examples, they encourage regular church attendance and believe in keeping their word when they agree to do something/sign a contract. The Bible also encourages followers to be kind and show hospitality to strangers because the stranger, unbeknownst to the human, be an angel (Hebrews 13:2).
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about taboos:
  - Yes
  - Notes: While the denomination doesn't uphold the Mosaic law of the Old Testament, they do hold taboos around certain actions. For instance, followers don't believe in taking the Lord's name in vain. In general, practices that would be considered taboos are encompassed in the

Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, which include rules around adultery, honoring one's parents and idol worship. Sex taboos are often existent, and only sexual practices within heterosexual, monogamous marriages are affirmed by the church.

↳ **Food:**

– No

Notes: The AME Church does not maintain any dietary laws or affirm the dietary restrictions found in the Mosaic law of the Old Testament. It is important to note, however, that cannibalism would be considered sinful, even though it isn't explicitly stated in church doctrine, because it involves harming other humans.

↳ **Sacred space(s):**

– Yes

Notes: While there exist no explicit rituals or practices around honoring sacred spaces, in general, it would be considered disrespectful to desecrate churches.

↳ **Sacred object(s):**

– Yes

Notes: It would be considered disrespectful to desecrate a Bible.

↳ **Supernatural beings care about other:**

– Yes [specify]: God cares about and loves his son, Jesus Christ. Likewise, Jesus respects and loves God, his father.

↳ **Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:**

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church affirms the sixth commandment in Exodus 20, which states that individuals shall not kill. This command includes coreligionists and others. The AME denomination is also opposed to the death penalty because of their belief in the sacredness of every human life and that every human is made in the image of God.

Reference: Social Principles: The Political Community

↳ **Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:**

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church affirms the sixth commandment in Exodus 20, which states that individuals shall not kill. This command includes coreligionists and others.

↳ **Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:**

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church affirms the sixth commandment in Exodus 20, which states that individuals shall not kill. This command includes coreligionists and others.

↳ **Supernatural beings care about sex:**

– Yes

↳ **Adultery:**

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church affirms the Bible's teachings against adultery, including the Seventh Commandment in Exodus 20.

↳ **Incest:**

– Yes

Notes: The AME Church affirms the Bible's teachings against incest, such as Leviticus 18.

↳ **Other sexual practices:**

– Yes [specify]: AME adherents believe that God restricts his followers from engaging in premarital sex, and members are discouraged against marrying individuals who do not belong to the Christian tradition. Members also believe that God does not condone same-sex relationships or marriages, and they are encouraged to refrain from lust. Finally, the AME Church is adamantly against domestic violence and abuse.

↳ **Supernatural beings care about lying:**

– Yes

Notes: Throughout the Bible reside scriptures opposing lying and deceit (for example, Proverbs 12:22), which AME adherents affirm.

↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths:

– Yes

Notes: The God of the Bible is concerned with transparency, uprightness and the practice of keeping one's word. In Matthew 5:33, Jesus even encourages followers not to take oaths, but to simply state yes or no when asked a question.

↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness:

– Yes

Notes: In Colossians 3:23, followers are encouraged to work hard at whatever they do, including their occupation, and to view their work as a form of devotion.

↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery:

– Yes

Notes: Galatians 5:19-21 describes witchcraft/sorcery as a behavior that is fleshly or sinful.

↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting:

– Yes

Notes: In Ephesians 4:31-32, God encourages his followers to "let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk:

– Yes

Notes: Followers are encouraged to be hardworking and to do their daily tasks as if they are performed as worship to God in Colossians 3:23.

↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders:

– Yes

Notes: The fifth commandment in the Exodus 20 commands followers to honor their fathers and mothers.

↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping:

– Yes

Notes: Ephesians 4:29 states the following: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes:

– Yes

Notes: God pushes his followers to be honest and transparent, and property crimes would violate these qualities.

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance:

– Yes

Notes: For African Methodist Episcopal Church members, the two primary rituals or sacraments that they believe God promotes are baptism and the Holy Communion/The Sacrament of the Last Supper.

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:

– Yes

Notes: AME folks believe that God is concerned with baptism and the observation of the Holy Communion. Other rituals, such as prayer, worship and church attendance are understood as important in the maintenance of one's personal faith practice; however, it is important to note that AME members do not believe any ritual practice can grant them salvation from God. Salvation, they believe, comes from Jesus Christ's death/sacrifice and not from humans' sacrifices or holiness.

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists:

– Yes

Notes: The AME tradition is evangelistic in nature, meaning that it seeks to proselytize those who do not consider themselves Christian. Evangelization happens on a corporate level as the church supports and trains missionaries, but it is also understood as occurring on an individual level as members interact with non-Christians in their daily lives.

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness:
  - Yes
    - Notes: Economic justice and social justice in general are issues, according to AME members, with which God concerns himself. Proverbs 16:11 uses the metaphor of honest scales and balances to portray economic fairness.
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene:
  - No
- ↳ Supernatural beings care about other:
  - Yes [specify]: In the Bible, God is pleased by and loves his son, Jesus Christ.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

- ↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:
  - Yes
    - ↳ Done only by high god:
      - Yes
        - Notes: The AME denomination understands God as completely holy and completely just. In the Bible, when humans perform actions that are contrary to God's will, God often warns the individuals and, if they persist in their wrongdoing, proceeds to punish them. For example, Genesis 6 states God that God sent a flood to destroy the world after human wickedness had become rampant on the earth. Furthermore, while demons/evil spirits or Satan may exact punishment, no punishment is able to occur unless God allows it, according to AME theology. The ultimate punishment that a human can face is eternal separation from God in the afterlife--hell.
    - ↳ Done by many supernatural beings:
      - Yes
        - Notes: AME theology purports that Satan and demons can serve as agents of punishment. Ultimately, however, God is understood as being in control, so these agents could only do what God allowed them to do.
    - ↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:
      - No
        - Notes: In Galatians 6:7, the Bible proposes what some might understand as a karmic principle--whatsoever you sow, you reap in return. Thus, if someone sows evil, the church believes this individual can expect to receive evil in return. However, this process is still controlled by God and is not impersonal.
    - ↳ Done by other entities or through other means [specify]
      - Yes
        - Notes: While demons/evil spirits or Satan may exact punishment, no punishment is able to occur unless God allows it, according to AME theology.
- ↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:
  - Yes
    - ↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:
      - Yes
    - ↳ Done to enforce group norms:
      - No
    - ↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:
      - Yes
    - ↳ Done randomly:
      - No
    - ↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: Because God is understood as absolutely holy, as a being who cannot reside where unholiness dwells, individuals are punished when they behave in an unholy manner and/or commit unholy actions.

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural punishments in the afterlife are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The potential for hell is emphasized by AME members as the future and final destination of people who do not follow God.

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of mild sensory displeasure:

– No

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of extreme sensory displeasure:

– Yes

Notes: Punishment in the afterlife is described as cast into a lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). In Luke 13:28, the Bible also relays that hell will be accompanied by weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Reference: United Methodist Beliefs: Hell

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as an inferior life form:

– No

↳ Punishment in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in an inferior realm:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– No

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: While punishment in the afterlife is accentuated, most AME practitioners do not emphasize punishment in this lifetime. That said, members do believe in the reap and sow principle purported in Galatians 6:7-8; thus, punishment can also be understood as occurring in this lifetime. However, what punishment can look like in this lifetime is an ambiguous concept for AME members.

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– No

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of political failure:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of defeat in battle:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.

- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of disaster on journeys.
  - Field doesn't know
 

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of mild sensory displeasure:
  - Field doesn't know
 

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of extreme sensory displeasure:
  - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:
  - Field doesn't know
 

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of impaired reproduction:
  - Field doesn't know
 

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck visited on descendants:
  - Field doesn't know
 

Notes: The manifestation of punishments in this lifetime for Christians generally and for AME members is ambiguous in both the Bible and the AME doctrine.
- ↳ Other [specify]
  - No

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

- ↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:
  - Yes
 

Notes: Rewards are often understood as related to one's faithfulness and adherence to God's principles.
  - ↳ Done only by high god:
    - Yes
  - ↳ Done by many supernatural beings:
    - No
  - ↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:
    - No
 

Notes: In Galatians 6:7, the Bible proposes what some might understand as a karmic principle--whatsoever you sow, you reap. Thus, if someone sows evil, the Church believes this individual can expect to receive evil in return. However, this process is still controlled by God and is not impersonal.
  - ↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:
    - No
  - ↳ Done to enforce group norms:
    - No
  - ↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:
    - No
  - ↳ Done randomly:



– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural rewards in the afterlife are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Heaven is understood as the only and ultimate supernatural reward one can procure.

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of mild sensory pleasure:

– No

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of extreme sensory pleasure:

– Yes

Notes: In Revelation 21:4, Heaven is represented as a place where there will be no sorrow or pain.

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of eternal happiness:

– Yes

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation as a superior life form:

– No

↳ Reward in the afterlife consists of reincarnation in a superior realm:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural rewards in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The concepts of God's favor and blessings animate the religion.

↳ Reward in this life consists of good luck:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of political success or power:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of success in battle:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of peace or social stability:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of success on journeys:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of mild sensory pleasure:

– Yes

- ↳ Reward in this life consists of extreme sensory pleasure:
  - Yes
- ↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:
  - Yes
- ↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success:
  - Yes
- ↳ Reward in this life consists of fortune visited on descendants:
  - Yes
  - Notes: The idea of generational blessings exists.
- ↳ Other [specify]
  - No

### Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– Yes

- ↳ Is the messiah's whereabouts or time of coming known?
  - Yes
  - Notes: According to AME theology, Jesus Christ is the son of God, the Messiah, sent by God approximately two thousand years ago as a sacrifice to redeem the world from its sinfulness.
  - Reference: How is Jesus Both Human and Divine?
  - Reference: Our Christian Beliefs: Jesus
- ↳ Alive, identified:
  - No
  - Notes: However, in spite of the fact that Jesus does not exist on earth, followers still understand him as alive, communicative and active in heaven.
- ↳ Coming in this lifetime:
  - No
- ↳ Coming on specified date:
  - No
- ↳ Coming in unspecified time in near future:
  - No
- ↳ Coming in unspecified time in distant future:
  - No
- ↳ Coming has already passed:
  - Yes
- ↳ One in a line of many past and future messiahs:
  - No
- ↳ Is the messiah's purpose known:
  - Yes
  - ↳ Messiah is a political figure who restores political rule:
    - No
    - Notes: The Bible explicitly states that, although some of his followers wanted him to behave as a political leader and restore political balance in Israel, Jesus was not sent by God as a political ruler and actively avoided situations in which he might be raised up as one. That said, some of Jesus' messages could be construed as "political" in that he

advocated against social injustices.

Reference: AME Social Action

↳ Messiah is a priestly figure who restores religious traditions:

– Yes

Notes: Jesus is understood as both a divine and human figure who was the fulfillment of the Bible's Old Testament laws. AME folks believe that he came to earth to teach people the intent of the law and to serve as a conduit between God and people by reconciling them to God through his death on a cross. Finally, Jesus stated in the Bible in Matthew 10:34-35 that he did not come to earth to bring peace. Instead, he saw himself as stirring up old traditions and teaching people how to relate to God and each other anew. For instance, in Matthew 5:38-40, Jesus pushed for a new way of relating to enemies and retaliation. Jesus stated that if someone were to slap you on one cheek, you should turn the other cheek for them to slap that one as well rather than retaliate. This analogy embodies the radical sense of love that marked Jesus' teachings and which AME theology embraces.

↳ Other purpose:

– Yes [specify]: What is most important to the AME denomination is Jesus Christ's purpose as a sacrifice. Jesus' death and resurrection is understood as the only mode by which humans could have been reconciled to God.

Is an eschatology present:

– Yes

↳ Eschaton in this lifetime:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Eschaton at specified time in future:

– No

↳ Eschaton at unspecified time in near future:

– Yes

Notes: Throughout the New Testament, the kingdom of God is perpetually described as being at hand or imminent. No specific date or time is specified, however, according to Mark 13:32.

↳ Eschaton at unspecified time in distant future:

– No

↳ Eschaton at some other time:

– No

↳ Adherents need to perform specific tasks to bring about World's end:

– No

↳ Divine judgment event:

– Yes

Notes: At the end of time, the AME Church believes that God will judge each person based on whether or not they have accepted Jesus Christ as their lord and savior. While some Christian denominations maintain elaborate timelines and systems for understanding the divine judgement event or the end times, AME folks claim to lean into the mystery of the eschaton and don't maintain too many doctrinal details about what these times will look like.

Reference: What does the UMC teach about the second coming?

Reference: United Methodist Beliefs: Rapture

↳ Restoration of the world:

– No

↳ Start of a new temporal cycle:

– Yes

↳ Establishment of a new political system:

– Field doesn't know

- ↳ Establishment of a new religious system:
  - No
- ↳ Will anyone survive the eschaton:
  - Yes
    - ↳ All religious in-group members will survive the eschaton:
      - Yes
    - ↳ A subset of religion in-group members will survive the eschaton:
      - No
    - ↳ All members of the sample region will survive the eschaton:
      - No
    - ↳ Everyone in the world will survive the eschaton:
      - No
    - ↳ Other survival condition:
      - No

### Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: Within the culture of AME Church itself, an example of a conventional norm is weekly church attendance. Missing a Sunday service or two does not take away a follower's membership in the church or, more broadly, her Christian salvation. While regular attendance is encouraged and expected for members, it isn't codified into the doctrine. What is important is that an individual is maintaining their personal relationship with God and also not neglecting to fellowship with other Christian believers (however, there are no metrics or measures for how often this fellowshiping must occur). Another way to approach this question is to consider how the Bible, the denomination's authoritative text, serves as a source for both conventional and moral norms. For instance, any AME member would say that lust is sinful and ungodly. Rules against lust are considered moral norms because they are found in the Bible and throughout Jesus' teachings. However, the same member would also condemn stoning even though the Bible affirms the practice and, at times, even commands it. Members believe that, while eschewing lustfulness is a moral norm, stoning was a conventional norm in biblical times. From their particular social locations within history, they would understand stoning a woman for committing adultery--or stoning anyone for that matter--as contrary to God's plan for humanity. In the case of controversial practices such as stoning, slavery or women wearing head coverings in sacred spaces, AME followers determine norms based on their own cultural contexts, social locations and general societal standards rather than what the Bible perceives as normal. Other practices, like lust and murder, are understood as always wrong, no matter the cultural context. Finally, there exists the idea that, while AME followers are supposed to exist in the world, they are simply sojourners in it and should not make it--or its conventions or values--their home. They are not to be of the world, although they reside in it. Members tend to conceptualize their moral norms with this binary paradigm in mind.

- ↳ What is the nature of this distinction:
  - Present and clear
- ↳ Are specifically moral norms prescribed by the religious group:
  - Yes
    - ↳ Specifically moral norms are implicitly linked to vague metaphysical concepts:
      - No
    - ↳ Specifically moral norms are explicitly linked to vague metaphysical entities:
      - No
    - ↳ Specifically moral norms are linked to impersonal cosmic order (e.g. karma):
      - No

- ↳ Specifically moral norms are linked in some way to an anthropomorphic being:
  - Yes
- ↳ Specifically moral norms are linked explicitly to commands of anthropomorphic being:
  - Yes
- ↳ Specifically moral norms are have no special connection to metaphysical:
  - No
- ↳ Moral norms apply to:
  - All individuals within society
  - All individuals within contemporary world
  - All individuals (any time period)

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the religious group:

– Yes

- ↳ Honesty / trustworthiness / integrity:
  - Yes
  - Notes: The Bible promotes transparency and opposes deceit; therefore, AME followers aim to practice honesty. For an example, see 2 Corinthians 8:21.
- ↳ Courage (in battle):
  - Yes
- ↳ Courage (generic):
  - Yes
- ↳ Compassion / empathy / kindness / benevolence:
  - Yes
- ↳ Mercy / forgiveness / tolerance:
  - Yes
- ↳ Generosity / charity:
  - Yes
- ↳ Selflessness / selfless giving:
  - Yes
- ↳ Righteousness / moral rectitude:
  - Yes
- ↳ Ritual purity / ritual adherence / abstention from sources of impurity:
  - No
- ↳ Respectfulness / courtesy:
  - Yes
- ↳ Familial obedience / filial piety:
  - Yes
  - Notes: Honoring one's father and mother is one of the ten commandments in Exodus 20.
- ↳ Fidelity / loyalty:
  - Yes
- ↳ Cooperation:

- Yes
- ↳ Independence / creativity / freedom:
  - Yes
- ↳ Moderation / frugality:
  - Yes
- ↳ Forbearance / fortitude / patience:
  - Yes
- ↳ Diligence / self-discipline / excellence:
  - Yes
  - Notes: According to 2 Timothy 1:7, "God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline."
- ↳ Assertiveness / decisiveness / confidence / initiative:
  - No
- ↳ Strength (physical):
  - No
- ↳ Power / status / nobility:
  - No
  - Notes: In fact, the AME Church emphasizes a gospel of liberation for socially marginalized peoples (this liberation often does not include those marginalized because of sexual orientation). Those who are noble and powerful are often understood as oppositional in the fight for liberation.
- ↳ Humility / modesty:
  - Yes
  - Notes: According to James 4:10, Christians should humble themselves before God.
- ↳ Contentment / serenity / equanimity:
  - No
- ↳ Joyfulness / enthusiasm / cheerfulness:
  - Yes
- ↳ Optimism / hope:
  - Yes
- ↳ Gratitude / thankfulness:
  - Yes
  - Notes: Psalm 118:1 commands followers to "give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."
- ↳ Reverence / awe / wonder:
  - Yes
  - Notes: Awe and reverence in response to God and what is understood as God's creation (the universe) is encouraged within the Bible.
- ↳ Faith / belief / trust / devotion:
  - Yes
  - Notes: Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 17:20 that if 'you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'
- ↳ Wisdom / understanding:
  - Yes
  - Notes: The book of Proverbs is overflowing with verses about the importance of acquiring and valuing wisdom.

- ↳ Discernment /intelligence:
  - Yes
- ↳ Beauty /attractiveness:
  - No
- ↳ Cleanliness (physical) / orderliness:
  - No
- ↳ Other important virtues advocated by the religious group:
  - Yes [specify]: Social justice, social welfare and racial justice

## Practices

### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):  
– No

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– Yes

Notes: While human sexuality is viewed as a creation of and gift from God, its expression is only affirmed with a monogamous, heterosexual relationship. Lustfulness, adultery and homosexuality are not affirmed.

Reference: What is the Church's position on homosexuality?

Reference: Human Sexuality Backgrounder

Reference: United Methodist Church is expected to split over gay marriage, fracturing the nation's third-largest denomination

Reference: Now on Sexuality in the AME Church

Reference: Stances of Faiths on LGBTQ Issues: African Methodist Episcopal Church

Reference: Views about homosexuality among members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Reference: It's Time to Fully Welcome LGBTQ Members Into the AME Church

↳ Monogamy (males):  
– Yes

↳ Monogamy (females):  
– Yes

↳ Other sexual constraints (males):  
– Yes  
Notes: The AME Church only affirms sexual relationships within monogamous, heterosexual marriages.

Reference: Social Principles: The Nurturing Community

↳ Other sexual constraints (females):  
– Yes  
Notes: The AME Church only affirms sexual relationships within monogamous, heterosexual marriages.

Reference: Social Principles: The Nurturing Community

Does membership in this religious group require castration:  
– No

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:  
– No

Notes: Fasting is encouraged but never required.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– No

Notes: Tithing or donating one-tenth of one's income to one's local congregation is encouraged.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Yes

Notes: Prayer and personal devotional practices are encouraged, and regular meetings with other followers (church attendance) are also encouraged. These practices are not required for salvation, however.

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Yes

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– No

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– No

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Yes



- ↳ Fictive kinship terminology universal:
  - Yes
 

Notes: AME Church members often refer to one another as "sister" and "brother." God is understood as "Father."
- ↳ Fictive kinship terminology widespread:
  - Yes
- ↳ Fictive kinship terminology employed but uncommon:
  - No

## Society and Institutions

### Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: The AME Church is a Christian denomination/tradition, a subgroup of African American Protestantism and Protestantism more generally.

### Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– Yes

Notes: Some congregations, like Bethel AME Church in Brookhaven, MS, have food pantries that are open to the community: <https://www.facebook.com/bethelfoodpantry/>.

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– No

Notes: While the denomination doesn't have an institutional arm set up to specifically provide for poverty relief, the church was born out of Richard Allen's Free African Society, a mutual aid group that provided for the needs of Black community members.

Reference: Michael Barga African Methodist Episcopal Church (1794-present)

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– Yes

Notes: On a micro-scale, individual church congregations often support elderly and ill members by providing meals, transportation, etc. In the past, the church organized "old folks' homes, orphanages and mutual benefit societies," according to Lawrence S. Little. See Lawrence S. Little, *A Quest for Self-Determination: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916* (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1993), 28. See the following article for the story of how an archeological dig at Wayman AME Church in Bloomington, Illinois, led to the discovery that the church was once an epicenter for healthcare in the surrounding Black community: Melanie A. Cabak, Mark D. Groover, and Scott J. Wagers, "Health Care and the Wayman A.M.E. Church," *Historical Archaeology* 29, no. 2 (1995): 55-76, accessed August 14, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/25616388](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616388). [https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.princeton.edu/stable/25616388?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.princeton.edu/stable/25616388?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

### Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– Yes

Notes: While religious leaders are not required to seek training at African Methodist Episcopal seminaries, there are a number of AME educational institutions affiliated with the denomination, both

within and beyond the United States. Scholar Lawrence S. Little remarks that, in the nineteenth century, the church financially supported twenty-three institutions of higher learning for Black students. See Lawrence S. Little, *A Quest for Self-Determination: The African Methodist Episcopal Church During the Age of Imperialism, 1884-1916* (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1993). In the past, some local churches also served as schoolhouses.

Reference: Institutions of Higher Learning

↳ Is formal education restricted to religious professionals:

– No

Notes: Theological education is extended to lay people and those seeking to become religious professionals alike.

↳ Is such education open to both males and females:

– Yes

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Is extra-religious education open to both males and females:

– Yes

### Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Yes

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

Notes: National, state and local bureaucracies

### Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– Yes

Notes: Some congregations, like Bethel AME Church in Brookhaven, MS, have food pantries that are open to the community: <https://www.facebook.com/bethelfoodpantry/>.

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– No

Notes: However, the AME Church is actively raising awareness about climate change and in 2016 unanimously passed a Climate Change Resolution at its General Conference. The church is also a founding member of Blessed Tomorrow, an interfaith organization dedicated to addressing climate change: <https://blessedtomorrow.org/partners/african-methodist-episcopal-church/>. Finally, the church is interested in exploring alternative energy models, as evidenced in a recent virtual event: <https://www.ame-church.com/event/amec-ihc-alternative-energy-wind-solar-and-water-and-advanced-directives/>

Reference: AME Church Addresses Climate Change

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Notes: Local congregations may provide transportation for members who need it, but there is no institutional infrastructure for transportation.

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

### Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Yes

Notes: While not required, members are highly encouraged to tithe ten percent of their incomes to their local congregations.

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

### Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: The Judicial Council, a segment of the General Conference, is the denomination's most powerful judicatory body and an appellate court. However, this council only judges issues related to the church and not general societal ones.

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– No

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include execution:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include exile:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include corporal punishments:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include ostracism:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include seizure of property:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– Yes

Notes: The denomination maintains a Doctrine and Discipline volume; however, this is not understood as a formal legal code.

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– No

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Yes

Notes: The church follows the Protestant liturgical calendar, which includes seasons such as Lent and Advent.

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– No

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

↳ Please characterize the forms/levels of food production [choose all that apply]:

- Hunting (including marine animals)
- Fishing
- Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards
- Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)

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