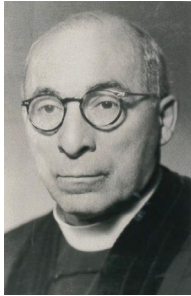


African American Leaders in the PC(USA)

William Lloyd Imes



William Lloyd Imes was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1889. After attending Knoxville College and Fisk University, William moved to New York in 1912 to attend Union Theological Seminary. Imes was ordained in 1915, and served Bethel Chapel, one of the 5 extensions of Crescent Avenue Presbyterian Church in Plainfield, N.J.

During World War I, Imes served in the YMCA at Camp Merritt. In 1919, he began serving as pastor of Lombard Central Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. He left there for St. James Presbyterian Church in Harlem, NY in 1925, where he served for 18 years. Imes knew Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, and poetry and music were essential to the life of his church which had 6 children's choirs and a glee club. Following the riots in Harlem in 1935, Imes and the children of St. James began joint worship services and pulpit exchanges with Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and its minister George Buttrick, in the hope of demonstrating what life in a just and integrated society would look like. During the height of his pastorate at St. James, Imes' congregation consisted of over 1,000 members.

Also in 1935, Imes led a march of 20,000 people against the Italian Fascist invasion of Ethiopia--at a time when fascist sympathizers mobilized intensely for the war. Imes' remarkable career was dedicated to free people living in a free society: "We are not battling just for our church community," he said, "we are battling for the Christian ideal of life."

In 1943, Imes became president of Knoxville College. In 1947, he began work as Secretary for Social Education of the New York Council of Churches, and remained active in the Steuben-Elmira and Geneva presbyteries through the 1960s. William Lloyd Imes passed away in 1986, leaving behind a legacy of work as a campaigner for human rights, organizer for the cause of peace, and committed ecumenist.



St. James moved several times before settling into its current location at 141st St and St. Nicholas Ave in 1927.



Read more about Rev. Imes on the PHS blog history.pcusa.org/about/blog/african-american-leaders-series



Learn about the AALC Initiative history.pcusa.org/aalc

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