

UBE SUNDAY

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September 11, 2022 – Pentecost 14 (C) The Feast of Alexander Crummell and UBE Sunday

On September 11, The Episcopal Church celebrates the life and legacy of a notable saint: the Reverend Alexander Crummell. This day is also designated as Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) Sunday to commemorate the racial justice ministry of this organization which was an outgrowth of Crummell's advocacy.

The Rev. Alexander Crummell was born March 3, 1819, in New York City to Charity Hicks, a free woman of color, and Boston Crummell, a former slave. Both parents were active abolitionists. The first African-American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, was published out of their home.

As a young man, Crummell was driven out of an academy in New Hampshire, dismissed as a candidate for Holy Orders in New York, and rejected for admittance to General Seminary because of his race. He was eventually ordained in 1844 as a priest in the Diocese of Massachusetts, but left for England after being excluded from diocesan convention.

Ever determined, Crummell studied at Queens' College, Cambridge and was the first officially black student recorded as graduating. Soon after, he traveled to Liberia as a missionary to convert native Africans to Christianity and educate them, as well as to persuade American black community of their duty to go to Africa to spread Christianity across the continent. Crummell lived and worked for 20 years in Liberia. Finally, political opposition, lack of funding, and the potential for life-threatening violence forced him to return to the United States.

Upon return to the U.S., he was first called to St. Mary's Episcopal Mission in the Foggy Bottom area of Washington, DC. In 1875 he and

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his congregation founded St. Luke's Episcopal Church, the first independent black Episcopal church in the city. When in 1882 southern bishops proposed that a separate missionary district be created for black congregations, Crummell was a founding leader in establishing national black convocation to fight the proposal. That organization became known as Conference of Church Workers Among Colored People and is a predecessor body to UBE.

After retiring from St. Luke's in 1894, Crummell taught at Howard University until 1897. He died September 10, 1898, at the age of 79. Crummell was an important voice within the abolition movement and a leader of Pan-African ideology, influencing other black nationalists. In fact, W.E.B. Du Bois paid tribute to Crummell with a memorable essay entitled "Of Alexander Crummell" collected in his 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. His Episcopal feast day is September 10.

The Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) is a national faith-based advocacy organization whose goal is to address racial and social injustices and disparities within and outside our church. Visit UBE's website, www.ube.org, to support UBE's ministry of justice and racial reconciliation.

Collect for Alexander Crummell

Almighty and everlasting God, we thank you for your servant Alexander Crummell, whom you called to preach the Gospel to those who were far off and those who were near. Raise up, in this and every land, evangelists and heralds of your kingdom, that your Church may proclaim the unsearchable riches of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Lessons: Ecclesiasticus 39:6-11, Psalm 19:7-11, Mark 4:21-25; Preface of a Saint (2)

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