



## Telling Our Stories

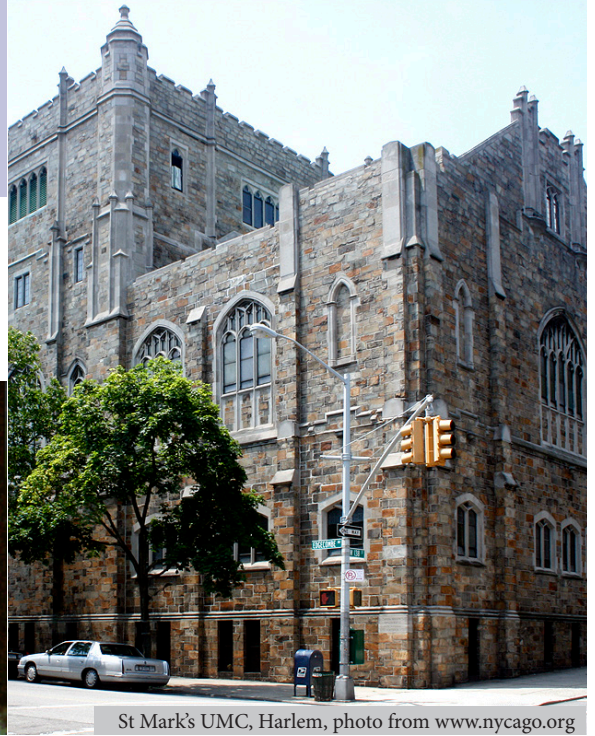
250 Years of United Methodism  
in the New York Area

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# First African-American Bishop Elected from the NY Conference

1878-1946



St Mark's UMC, Harlem, photo from [www.nycago.org](http://www.nycago.org)

# Lorenzo King

Pastor of one of the largest African-American congregations in the country (St. Mark's in Harlem), Bishop Lorenzo King was elected in 1940 by the Central Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church, in part because of his opposition to the creation of that entity!

Bishop King was the first African-American bishop elected from the New York Conference, and his election in 1940 underscored the conflicts over race within The Methodist Church at the time. The two branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North and South) had split over the issue of slavery before the Civil War, and when they united in 1939 with a third Methodist branch (the Methodist Protestant Church) to form The Methodist Church, creation of a racially-segregated jurisdiction for African-American churches was the price of unity.

King was outspoken in his opposition to the Central Jurisdiction and his church did not join it, remaining part of the New York Conference in the Northeastern Jurisdiction. Thus his election as bishop by the Central Jurisdiction was highly symbolic. Bishop King served faithfully until his death in 1946, and became a trusted and beloved leader.

Many others within The Methodist Church fought against the racism embodied by the Central Jurisdiction as well, and the Jurisdiction was finally dismantled in 1968.

## For Discussion

- The Central Jurisdiction was established in 1939 as a compromise. What do you think of this compromise? When do you think it is OK to compromise, and when should you stick to your principles?
- Do you think the issues raised by the Central Jurisdiction still affect the UMC today?

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