Historically, religious institutions have provided strength, stability, and support for their members as well as a focal point for social interaction. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the African American community from the antebellum period to the present.

In its effort to collect materials relating to the culture and history of the commonwealth, the Library of Virginia has assembled a wide variety of materials about Virginia religious institutions, including many for African American churches. Types of materials presented in this research guide include:

- Histories of congregations .................................................. 2
- Associations and conventions ............................................ 5
- Biographies of church leaders ............................................. 5
- Denominational histories ................................................... 6
- Manuscript resources ....................................................... 6
- Images ........................................................................... 8
HISTORIES OF CONGREGATIONS

The scope of congregational histories may vary from a few paragraphs in an anniversary bulletin to scholarly histories. In addition to a narrative history of a church's activities, these materials may contain membership and leadership rosters, biographical information about their pastors, names and life details of prominent members, and often photographs of pastors, groups, and significant events in the institution's past.

Alexandria


Includes an index compiled from the records of the First Baptist Church and Trinity Methodist Church as well as Censuses and Free Negro Registers.


Arlington County


Bedford


Charles City County


As well as a history of the church and description of its programs, this report includes biographies of church leaders and a genealogy of Abram Brown, the founder of the church.

Charlottesville


Hanover County


Harrisonburg


King and Queen County

Hundley, W. T. *History of Mattaponi Baptist Church*, King and Queen County, Virginia. Richmond: Appeals Press, [1928].

Mattaponi Baptist Church, founded August 9, 1828, was comprised of both white and African American members until 1866 when Zion Baptist Church was formed by the black members of the church. This history includes descriptions of practices with slaves and a brief description of the formation of Zion Baptist Church. Membership lists include names of slaves and their owners.
Loudoun County

Norfolk

“Church of the Week.” *Richmond Afro-American*,
“1st Calvary Has Had 4 Pastors in 63 Years,” 25 March 1939, 16.
“First Holiness Church Was Organized in 1899,” 15 April 1939, 24.


Petersburg
Bragg, George F. *The Story of Old Saint Stephen’s, Petersburg, Va.* [Baltimore, Md: Church Advocate Print., 1906?].


Portsmouth

Richmond
Historical Records Survey of Virginia, Works Projects Administration. *Inventory of the Church Archives of Virginia: Negro Baptist Churches in Richmond*. Richmond: Historical Records Survey of Virginia, 1940.

Outline the background of the church associations and conventions and their member churches in Richmond. Provides location, physical description, history, and archival holdings as well as references for further information. Although repositories may have changed since 1940, this inventory provides a means of tracking difficult to find materials.


Fifth Street Baptist Church. *Programme of the 50th Anniversary of the Fifth Street Baptist Church, October 5 to 19, 1930, Richmond, Virginia*. [Richmond: Service Print Shop, 1930].


First Baptist Church, South Richmond. *A Historical Chronology, 1821–1992: Preview of the Comprehensive History of First Baptist Church, South Richmond*. [Richmond: First Baptist Church, South Richmond, 1992].


Mosby Memorial Baptist Church. *The Programme of Services Representing the Twentieth Anniversary of the Clay Street Baptist Church (formerly New Baptist Church) and Dedication of Its New Home, Hereafter to Be Known as the Mosby Memorial Baptist Church from Sunday October 2nd to Sunday October 16, 1927, Inclusive.* N.p., 1927.


Second Baptist Church. *Souvenir Program, Second Baptist Church. First Anniversary of the Pastor, Joseph T. Hill and the Eighty-third Anniversary of the Church, October 14–21, 1929.* [Richmond: Second Baptist Church, 1929].


Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. *Souvenir Programme, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia; Centennial Celebration of Our Church and the John Jasper Memorial, Sunday, April 2, 1967 to Friday, December 1, 1967.* [Richmond: Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, 1967].

Swansboro Baptist Church. *The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Swansboro Baptist Church and the Fourth of Its Pastor, Rev. Emmanuel C. Kent…. [Richmond: Deluxe Print., 1938]*.


“Ebenezer Baptist Was Erected by Donations from Colored and Whites,” 5 November 1938, 16.

“First Baptist Church (of South Richmond) Is Oldest Separate Colored Church in Richmond,” 12 November, 1938, 12.

“Hood Temple Was Organized in 1911; Moved Several Times,” 19 November 1938, 24.


“Sharon Baptist Church Is Nearly 52 Years Old,” 10 December 1938, 17.


“Second Seventh-Day-Adventist Church Obtained First Church Home in 1912, “ 14 January 1939, 12.


“Mount Calvary Had First Cornerstone Laid in Richmond by Odd Fellows,” 28 January 1939, 15.

“Third Street Bethel Church, Erected 1859, Still Points the Way to Progress,” 4 February 1939, 6.

“Goodwill Baptist Church Formed by Six Men and Women in 1923,” 11 February 1939, 14.

“Mt. Moriah Baptist Church Held First Sessions in Armstrong High,” 18 February 1939, 14.

“Sixth Street Church, Daughter of Mt. Carmel, Began with 40 Members,” 25 February 1939, 15.

“Rising Mt. Zion Emerged from Quaker School in Fulton in 1869,” 4 March 1939, 15.

“Trinity Baptist Church, Founded in 1906, Started as a Mission,” 11 March 1939, 12.

“Timothy Baptist Church Was Begun with Thirteen Members,” 18 March 1939, 24.

“Mount Vernon Baptist Began in 1905 with Its Present Pastor,” 1 April 1939, 15.

“Grayland Avenue Baptist Born in Home of Mrs. Martha Johnson,” 8 April 1939, 6.


“Church of God in Christ Was Dream of Elder R. N. Johnson,” 22 April 1939, 15.

“Osgood Memorial P.E. Was Born during World War Days,” 29 April 1939, 15.

“52-Year-Old Mt. Carmel Records Congregation’s First Song,” 13 May 1939, 15.

“Little Church around the Corner Organized in 1890 with 14 Members,” 20 May 1939, 24.
“Charity Baptist” Had 12 Members When It Was Organized in 1915,” 10 June 1939, 24.

Salem

ASSOCIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS
Reports of church and Sunday school associations provide lists of clergy, ordinations, and often memorial biographies of recently deceased prominent members. Although more impersonal than histories of congregations, the facts that can be gleaned from these reports can provide dates and locations for further research.

Volume II contains listings of the Virginia Baptist Associations, their member churches, addresses and pastors.

Further information about these associations is found in their minutes or proceedings. Library of Virginia holdings include scattered individual copies and the following more extensive microfilm collection:


BIOGRAPHIES OF VIRGINIA CHURCH LEADERS
Biographies of pastors and other church leaders provide information not only about the subjects but also about the churches and congregations they helped to form.


Berry, Silas N. Memories of Rev. R. D. Merchant. N.p.: [1935?].


DENOMINATIONAL HISTORIES
Denominational or general histories of African American religious development often present clues or pathways for further research.


Robert, Joseph C. *Excommunication Virginia Style*. Reprinted from the *South Atlantic Quarterly* XL no. 3, July, 1941.


MANUSCRIPT RESOURCES
African Methodist Episcopal

*Includes fliers, histories, newsletters, and programs relating to Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia, and photocopies of minutes and committee reports of the Virginia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church from 1867–1869, 1872, 1877, 1886, and 1896.*
**Baptist**

Ryland, Garnett. Permission and character certificates for slaves seeking to join Bethel Baptist Church, 1832–1860. Accession 22681.

*Permission and character certificates, 1832–1860, for slaves seeking to join Bethel Baptist Church in Clarke County, Virginia.*


*This material consists of seventeen volumes that contain matters of church business and discipline as well as some lists of baptisms and deaths. Periods covered are 1858–1876, 1879–1883, 1892–1904, 1908–1911, 1910–1925, 1921, 1961–1974.*

First African Baptist Church (Richmond, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Minute books, 1841–1930 [microform]. Miscellaneous microfilm reel 494. Accession 28255.

*The material includes three minute books. The first covers the period from 3 October 1841 to 7 August 1859. There is an account of the organization of the church and many names are listed of candidates for baptism, persons dismissed or excluded, and deaths. The second volume, 7 June 1875 to 12 September 1897, contains very full minutes. The third volume covers the period from 5 October 1897 to 2 June 1930. There are no membership lists in any of the three volumes.*

Gillfield Baptist Church (Petersburg, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Minute book, 1815–1842. Accession 28981

*Gillfield Church was constituted in 1785. In 1865, the black members requested and were granted permission to organize a separate church. These minutes cover the period from June 1823 to March 1869. Membership lists appear on pages 145–202.*

Mount Tirzah Church (Charlotte County, Va.), Church records collection; Baptist. Minute books, 1834–1915. Accession 24261

*Includes three minute books. Membership lists are included in each volume.*

Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church. 130th Anniversary Committee (Richmond, Va.) Church records collection; Baptist. Records, 1997. Accession 35664.

*The Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church was organized on 3 September 1867 by Reverend John Jasper. These records consist of material from the 130th Anniversary Committee of the Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, including a program, a copy of “De Sun Do Move–The Celebrated Sermon of John J. Jasper,” and assorted pamphlets and copies of photographs.*

**Catholic**


*St. Joseph’s Catholic Church was the first Catholic church in Richmond, Virginia, established to serve the African American community. The records include the baptismal register, 1884–1912; marriage records, 1908–1912; marriage register, 1884–1912; death records, 1908–1912; confirmation register, 1885–912; and first communion register, 1885–1912.*


*St. Francis Colored Foundling and Orphan Asylum, Richmond, Virginia, was founded in 1893, and the name was later changed to Holy Innocents Foundling Asylum. Miscellaneous reel 1085, Accession 33477, consists of two volumes. The first volume, 1894–1897, shows orphan’s name, date of birth, parents’ names (if known), by whom the orphan was sent, and baptismal information. The second volume, 1888–1906, includes index, chronological list of deaths, orphan’s name, place and date of birth, color, sex, parent’s names, date orphan was admitted, and reason. Miscellaneous reel 1086, Accession 33478, includes a third volume, 1906–1912, containing index, chronological list of deaths, orphan’s name, place and date of birth, color, sex, parent’s names, date orphan was admitted, and reason.*
Episcopal
Relevant records include Register, 1825–1855, consisting of baptisms, burials, marriages, and communicants. Also includes baptisms, marriages, and burials for African Americans. Accession 23956a is the transcribed copy of this volume. Transcribed copy includes index. (Accession 29952e; Misc. reel 137, no. 5)

Henrico Parish (Richmond, Va.) Church records collection; Episcopal. St. Philip's Church history, St. Philip's Church vestry books, 24 May 1869–2 May 1887 Microfilm Records, 1730–1941. Accession 28068a and 28068b-d (bound together). St. Philip's Church, an African-American church established in 1861, ceased to exist in 1865 probably due to the burning of Richmond at the end of the Civil War, but in 1866 reapplied for admittance to Council. Materials include St. Philip's Church History (n.d.), St. Philip's Church vestry books, 24 May 1869–2 May 1887; 7 April 1888–7 July 1892; 22 March 1895–5 February 1904. Register entries are found in the first volume, and miscellaneous material in the third volume extends the date range to 1941.


Methodist
Monumental Methodist Church (Portsmouth, Va.) Church records collection; Methodist. Records, 1772–1936 [microform]. Miscellaneous Microfilm Reel 380. Accession 29799f. Includes reports from the African Methodist Church, organized by African-American members of Dinwiddie Street Methodist Church who wanted their own church.

Methodist Episcopal
Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Virginia Conference. Norfolk District. Princess Anne Circuit. Church records collection; Methodist. Register, 1828–1868 [microform]. Accession Princess Anne County reel 54. Relevant records include a "Register of Colored Members," November 1859.

United Brethren in Christ
Kelley Street United Brethren in Christ Church (Harrisonburg, Va.) Church records collection; United Brethren in Christ. Records, 1892–1905. Accession 37081
On 28 November 1892, the Reverend T.K. Clifford officially organized this African-American congregation. Records include a minute book; financial records, minutes of a Quarterly Conference meeting; and loose papers. These records have been transcribed in, History of Kelley Street United Brethren In Christ Church, Newtown, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1892–1906, by Ruth M. Toliver, 1998.

IMAGES
Various images, including photographs and drawings, are available for research in the Picture Collection (By appointment, 804-692-3703, Monday through Friday, 9–4:30).

Compiled by Gail Tatum
August 2001

Cover Picture: The First African Baptist Church, northeast corner of College and Broad Streets, Richmond, Va.