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## **As Part of America's Semiquincentennial, St. Luke's United Methodist Church Will Host *Bear Me Into Freedom: Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for America's Promise* Over the July 4<sup>th</sup> Weekend**

July 4, 2026, is the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of America's Declaration of Independence founding the nation on several revolutionary ideals, including the concept that "all men are created equal." Frederick Douglass who was born on Maryland's Eastern Shore and enslaved in the town of St. Michaels, became a transformational figure whose fiery oratory and compelling prose advanced America towards the fulfillment of those ideals.

St. Luke's United Methodist Church seeks to honor the extraordinary contribution of Frederick Douglass by screening the powerful new film *Bear Me Into Freedom: Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for America's Promise* during the 250 anniversary. It portrays the odyssey of Frederick Douglass—his birth and enslavement on the Shore, his life's work championing abolition, emancipation, and equal rights throughout the United States and abroad, and his triumphal return in the last decades of his life as one of the most consequential figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

St. Luke's figures prominently in the story of Frederick Douglass. When enslaved in St. Michaels as a teenager, he attended Sardis Chapel which became St. Luke's in 1871. Douglass's three autobiographies detail his St. Michaels' experience, including his struggle with the doctrines of Christianity and the reality of his enslavement. Several of the individuals described in his autobiographies have graves in the church's cemetery, including Thomas Auld, his enslaver, and Lucretia Auld, the first wife of Thomas Auld and likely his half-sister.

The pastor of St. Luke's is Rev. Elmer Neal Davis Jr., the church's first African American pastor. He says, "The life of Frederick Douglass stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of resilience and the power of faith. Emerging from the shadows of oppression, he became a beacon of hope, a relentless advocate for justice and equality. The words from Jeremiah 1:5 ring true, 'I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.' There is no more fitting way to honor our nation than honoring the legacy of Frederick Douglass who championed the ideals contained in the nation's founding documents."

*Bear Me Into Freedom* is an hour-long tribute to the life of Frederick Douglass, his experience on the Eastern Shore that gave rise to the most powerful slave narrative in American literature, and his contribution to the transformation of America's social policy. Screenings will begin on Wednesday, July 1, and continue through Sunday afternoon, July 5. On Sunday, July 5, Rev. Davis will give a special sermon at St. Luke's appropriate to America's 250 celebration.

St. Luke's United Methodist Church is located at 304 South Talbot Street, St. Michaels, MD 21663. Additional information can be found on the St. Luke's website: <https://www.stlukesstmichaels.org/>, and on *Bear Me Into Freedom's* website: <https://www.bearmeintofreedom.com/>.