

For Immediate Release

AREA UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HISTORY TO BE DRAMATIZED NOV. 4

CUMBERLAND, Md. – Dramatic portrayals and music will bring local Underground Railroad history to life Saturday, Nov. 4, at Cumberland's Emmanuel Episcopal Church, a gateway for runaway slaves seeking freedom in the mid-19th century.

The 153rd Anniversary of Maryland Emancipation Day with Samuel Denson's Last Run is an interactive experience on the hill, in the tunnels and in the church sanctuary. Free and open to the public, it begins at 7 p.m.

The event commemorates Maryland's abolition of slavery on Nov. 1, 1864, when voters ratified a constitutional amendment, and Samuel Denson's role in local African-American history. Denson, himself a runaway slave, remarkably assisted others while working as the church's sexton in a slave-holding state.

It is estimated that the Washington Street church, and its rector, the Rev. David Hillhouse Buel in partnership with Denson, enabled scores of runaways to secure freedom from the early 1850s through the Civil War.

The evening is a collaboration that includes Allegany College of Maryland's NAACP club and Frostburg State University's Center for Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, African American Studies Program and Department of Theatre and Dance along with Emmanuel Parish.

The narrative, which premiered in a commemoration last year, was developed by Lynn Bowman, an ACM associate professor of English who has a background in theater and is a published author of Allegany County's African-American history.

Dr. Amy Branam-Armiento, FSU NAACP chapter advisor and African-American studies coordinator, also will facilitate the upcoming event.

Among its features are portrayals of Denson and other local African-Americans from the era as well as a reenactment of the system that conveyed runaway slaves through Cumberland and toward freedom in the north.

This year Bowman has added six new monologues of local African-Americans from the period. They include FSU's Robin Wynder as Matilda Gant, who bought her freedom and that of others; and ACM students Dajuan Warren and Antonio Cummings as Frederick Burgee and Lewis Bush, respectively, who were freed by their masters to fight in the U.S. Colored Troops.

Another new feature is a quartet of singers portraying Emmanuel Episcopal parishioners from 1864. The vocalists are Dr. David Cox, Rabbi Mark Perman, the Rev. Marsha Bell and Ellen McDaniel-Weissler.

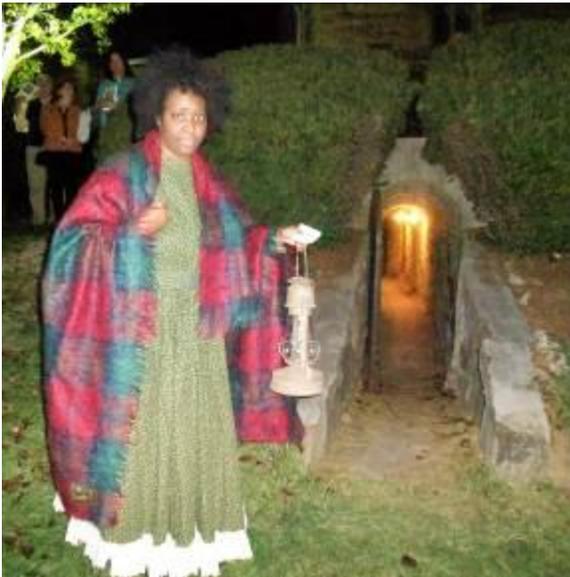
Also welcoming the runaways from the Emmanuel congregation are members of the Somerset County (Pa.) Sons of Union Veterans Auxiliary, who will be dressed in period costume.

The evening opens with music from a string quartet composed of Jay Moon, Charlene Moon, Annie Moon and Jacob Blank, who begin playing at 6:45 p.m.

ACM's Culinary Arts program students will provide light refreshments in the church fellowship hall after the performance.

More information is available at www.allegany.edu or by contacting Bowman at 301-784-5258. She can also be reached by email at lbowman@allegany.edu.

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Allegany College of Maryland graduate Lakeal Ellis will portray “Elizabeth,” an enslaved person in Civil War-era Cumberland, in a reenactment of area Underground Railroad history Saturday, Nov. 4, at Emmanuel Episcopal Church. The Cumberland parish, a final station for escaping slaves headed north, will host a commemoration of the 153rd anniversary of Maryland Emancipation Day and a celebration of Samuel Denson’s Last Run, the runaway slave who helped scores of others escape while working as the church’s sexton. This interactive event, free and open to the public, begins at 7 p.m.