



Charles Harrison Mason: A Sanctified Life (1864-1961)

Teacher's Guide

This document is addressed to the instructor. Other documents in this lesson packet are addressed to students.

This lesson on Charles Harrison Mason, founder and bishop of Church of God in Christ (COGIC), a largely Black Protestant denomination, reveals the vibrancy and variation of religious expression in America. Mason was a public witness for peace and justice in America. As a pacifist and a peacemaker, he pursued racial equality and unity in both religious and civic spaces. The founding of COGIC, the second-largest Black denomination in the nation, demonstrates his giftedness as a leader, his resistance to the religious status quo, and his steadfast desire to serve his God.

Students will explore Black religious culture, the origin story of COGIC, and Mason's spiritual awakening and contributions to Black faith communities in the mid-20th century. Students will have opportunities to reflect on the lesson through optional documents-based questions, case studies, research and discussion questions, and collaborative projects and activities.

This lesson gives the educator the needed flexibility to implement the various components according to their time allotment and curriculum goals. Rearrange or cut down the materials to suit your classroom conditions, timeframe, or student comfort level, or to connect with other material from an established syllabus or textbook.

The Woodson Center would like to thank Dr. Goldie Frinks Wells, Ed.D, L.H.D. for her review of and invaluable feedback on the lesson.

Full Class Session Instruction (1 class day, approximately 50 – 75 minutes):

1. A “bell ringer” or lesson hook is a great way to stimulate student thinking and introduce a topic for the day’s lesson. Suggested bell ringers to ask students:

- What is your understanding of “the miraculous” or “the supernatural”?
- What role can faith play in a person’s life?
- What is a vocation? How does one know when they are called to do something?

2. The teacher should have the bell ringer displayed on the board and allow the students a few minutes to think independently about it. Next, students may turn to a peer to discuss their thoughts on the opening prompt. Finally, the teacher may ask for any students to volunteer to share their thoughts with the entire class.

3. Before moving into the lesson, the teacher may want to provide background explanations to the social, political, and cultural landscape of Mason’s lifetime.



Suggestions include Jim Crow laws, the civil rights movement, post-slavery migration patterns of former slaves, Christian missionary life, WWI, and J. Edgar Hoover. A few resources are provided below.

4. At this point, the teacher may open this lesson's PowerPoint Slide Deck and introduce students to the story of Bishop Charles Harrison Mason.

5. After the Slide Deck, the teacher may ask students to consider the following questions:

"How would you view your life if you had almost died (for instance, of an illness or in an accident), but then survived?"

"What events led Mason into ministry at the young age of sixteen?"

"Why could it be appropriate for an organization to split due to differences of opinion?"

"What issues saddened Mason throughout his time in ministry?"

6. The next part of the lesson allows the teacher flexibility to group students together to read and discuss the lesson's Case Studies. Each group may be assigned a particular Case Study to read and then to complete the accompanying questions. Groups may read more than one Case Study if time allows. Students may also be asked to develop a group statement about the Case Study to share with the class. The statement could articulate what surprised or interested them the most from the story.

7. At this point, the teacher may want to connect Bishop Mason's life experience, religious beliefs, and organizational leadership to our current times. A discussion question may be posed to help students understand the importance of and how Mason's story can guide us today. Questions to be considered may include:

"If you were going to form an organization, what larger purpose would it serve? What would its motto and founding principles be?"

"Mason's pursuit of God required him to stand firm on his beliefs when others disagreed. What can his example of resilience teach us today?"

"What does it take to stick to your convictions when the traditions or consensus of your community believe you're in the wrong?"

8. Lesson may conclude with students writing a brief reflection on the story of Bishop Charles Harrison Mason or discussing its significance in small groups. Possible extensions of the lesson include answering Case Study questions, responses to the Documents Based Questions (DBQs) included as a supplement, and/or completion of some of the Activities and Assignments or Critical Thinking Questions.



[Download All DBQs](#)



[Download All Case Studies](#)



[Download Slide Deck \(printable PDF\)](#)

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to describe:

- Aspects and definition of “culture”;
- How the Black Church fostered spiritual and social uplift;
- How Black ministers gave a voice to the Black community regarding political matters;
- Why spiritual experiences excited some and dismayed others;
- Distinctive practices that set COGIC apart from mainstream denominations;
- Attributes of Mason, whose parents had been slaves;
- Development of predominantly Black Protestant denominations after slavery.

Students will define the following vocabulary words, drawn from the Slide Deck and Supplemental Materials:

baptism, denominations, ecstatic, epidemic, evangelizing, fruition, lay, nascent, piety, sanctified, shorthand, “speaking in tongues,” tenants, transatlantic slave trade, tuberculosis, vices, vocation

Additional Research, Writing, and Discussion Prompts



[Critical Thinking Questions](#)



[Multiple Choice Questions](#)



[Activities and Assignments](#)



[Woodson Principles Applied](#)

Primary Sources

[Carter Godwin Woodson, 1875-1950. The History of the Negro Church](#)

[Denominations – Introduction to Protestantism](#) with downloadable chart



Additional Resources

Media

[The Black Church – Black History in Two Minutes or So](#) (3 min 7 sec)

[The Azusa Street Project, Vision Video, 2005](#) (54 minutes)

[Bishop C.H. Mason founder of the church of God in Christ](#) (4 min 52 sec)

[COGIC Founder Bishop C.H. Mason's Wife Lady Elsie Mason Speaking!](#) (1 min 44 sec)

[An Historical View of the Church of God in Christ](#) (3 min 12 sec)

Articles

[“How Memphis Gave Gospel the Holy Ghost” by Robert F. Darden, *Oxford American*, Winter 2024](#)

[Christian Branches and the Evolution of Denominations](#)

[The Church in the Southern Black Community: Introduction](#)

[Religious Variety and the Holiness/Pentecostal Movement](#)

[Charles Harrison Mason \(1866-1961\) | Tennessee Encyclopedia](#)

[Charles Harrison Mason \(1866-1961\) | Encyclopedia of Arkansas](#)

Web Resources

[Church of God in Christ Holy Convocation Souvenir Journal \(1953-2012\) – Consortium of Pentecostal Archives](#)

[COGIC Museum \(Elder Elijah L. Hill\)](#)

Standards and Learning Objectives

College, Career, & Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

CIVICS

D2.Civ.2.9-12. Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2.Civ.6.9-12. Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets

D2.Civ.7.9-12. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.

D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

D2.Civ.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

GEOGRAPHY

D2.Geo.7.9-12. Analyze the reciprocal nature of how historical events and the spatial diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced migration patterns and the distribution of human population.

D2.Geo.8.9-12. Evaluate the impact of economic activities and political decisions on spatial patterns within and among urban, suburban, and rural regions.

D2.Geo.12.9-12. Evaluate the consequences of human-made and natural catastrophes on global trade, politics, and human migration.

HISTORY

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.



D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.

D2.His.7.9-12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.15.9-12. Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.

ELA

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).

D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

D4.5.9-12. Critique the use of the reasoning, sequencing, and supporting details of explanations.

D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

AP U.S. History

THEME 1: AMERICAN AND NATIONAL IDENTITY (NAT)

THEME 4: MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT (MIG)

THEME 5: POLITICS AND POWER (PCE)

THEME 7: AMERICAN AND REGIONAL CULTURE (ARC)

THEME 8: SOCIAL STRUCTURES (SOC)

SKILLS

1.B Explain a historical concept, development, or process.

4.B Explain how a specific historical development or process is situated within a broader historical context. list learning objectives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Unit 6: Learning Objective C Explain how various factors contributed to continuity and change in the “New South” from 1877 to 1898.

Unit 6: Learning Objective F Explain how cultural and economic factors affected migration patterns over time.

KEY CONCEPTS

KC-6.1.II. D Despite the industrialization of some segments of the Southern economy—a change promoted by Southern leaders who called for a “New South”—agriculture based on sharecropping and tenant farming continued to be the primary economic activity in the South.

KC-6.3.II.C The Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson that upheld racial segregation (known as Jim Crow) helped to mark the end of most of the political gains African Americans made during Reconstruction. Facing increased violence, discrimination, and scientific theories of race, African American reformers continued to fight for political and social equality

KC-6.1.II.B.ii The industrial workforce expanded and became more diverse through internal and international migration.

KC-6.2.I.A As cities became areas of economic growth featuring new factories and businesses, they attracted immigrants from Asia and southern and eastern Europe, as well as African American migrants within and out of the South. Many migrants moved to escape poverty, religious persecution, and limited opportunities for social mobility in their home countries or regions.



KC-6.2.I.B Urban neighborhoods based on particular ethnicities, races, and classes provided new cultural opportunities for city dwellers.

KC-7.2.II.C In the Great Migration during and after World War I, African Americans escaping segregation, racial violence, and limited economic opportunity in the South moved to the North and West, where they found new opportunities but still encountered discrimination.

KC-8.2.I.A During and after World War II, civil rights activists and leaders, most notably Martin Luther King Jr., combated racial discrimination utilizing a variety of strategies, including legal challenges, direct action, and nonviolent protest tactics.

AP English Language and Composition

4.A Develop a paragraph that includes a claim and evidence supporting the claim.

4.B Write a thesis statement that requires proof or defense and that may preview the structure.

4.C Qualify a claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternative perspectives

6.A Develop a line of reasoning and commentary that explains it throughout an argument.

6.B Use transitional elements to guide the reader through the line of reasoning of an argument.

6.C Use appropriate methods of development to advance an argument.

8.B Write sentences that clearly convey ideas and arguments.

8.C Use established conventions of grammar and mechanics to communicate clearly and effectively.

AP African American Studies

LO 2.14.A Explain how free Black people in the North and South organized to support their communities.

EK 2.14.A.1 Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the free Black population grew in the United States. By 1860, free people were 12 percent of the Black population. Although there were more free Black people in the South than in the North, their numbers were small in proportion to the enslaved population.

EK 2.14.A.2 The smaller number of free Black people in the North and South built community through institutions that thrived in cities like Philadelphia, New York,



and New Orleans. They created mutual-aid societies that funded the growth of Black schools, businesses, and independent churches and supported the work of Black writers and speakers.

LO 3.9.A Explain how African Americans promoted the economic stability and well-being of their communities in the early twentieth century.

EK 3.9.A.1 In response to their ongoing exclusion from broader American society, many African Americans created businesses and organizations that catered to the needs of Black citizens and improved the self-sufficiency of their communities.

EK 3.9.A.3 African Americans continued to transform Christian worship in the United States and created their own institutions. The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) was founded in 1816 as the first Black Christian denomination in the United States, and after Reconstruction the number of Black churches increased significantly.

EK 3.9.A.4 Black churches served as safe spaces for organizing, worship, and cultural expression. They created leadership opportunities that developed Black activists, musicians, and political leaders.

LO 3.16.B Explain the impact of the Great Migration on Black communities and American culture.

EK 3.16.B.1 The effects of the Great Migration transformed American cities, Black communities, and Black cultural movements. The migration infused American cities such as New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles with Black Southern culture, creating a shared culture among African American communities across the country.

LO 4.16.B Explain how religion and faith have played dynamic social, educational, and community-building roles in African American communities.

EK 4.16.B.2 Black religious leaders and faith communities have played substantial roles in Black civil rights and social justice advocacy by mobilizing their congregations to act on political and social issues, including issues beyond those that directly affect Black communities.

EK 4.16.B.3 The Black church has served as an institutional home for developing and debating core values within Black communities related to education, community improvement, race relations, cultural practices, vernacular, and the broader African diaspora.