

America Amid Resurgent Overt Racial Division

January 18, 2026

St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Arlington, VA

Zoom Information:

[Click here](#) to be directed to the talk by Mr. Temple.

Meeting ID: 818 2416 9732

Passcode: AF011826

I don't feel no ways tired

I've been too far from where I started from.

Nobody told me the road would be easy

I don't believe He's brought me this far to leave me--

Negro Spiritual

“[W]here the hell was God when all of this was going on?”

Levee, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1984)

August Wilson

Riley Keene Temple is the curator and collection growth specialist of the African American Episcopal Historical Collection (AAEHC) at the Bishop Payne Library of the Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS). Chronicling the history of Black Episcopalians, the AAEHC is a partnership of VTS and the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church. He also advises Episcopal parishes around the country that exhume and study their race histories.

Temple, born in 1949, grew up in the segregated world and public school system of Richmond, VA surrounded by its rich history and vibrant Black community. He graduated at the top of his

class in 1967 from the storied Armstrong High School and received his AB degree from Pennsylvania's Lafayette College. He went on to earn his law degree from Georgetown in 1974. After some early career years in telecommunications law, including stints on the Senate Judiciary Committee and as Communications Counsel to the Senate Commerce Committee, he entered private telecommunications practice for the ensuing 40 years.

In 2009 just before retirement from the practice of law, he enrolled in the Virginia Theological Seminary and graduated *cum laude* in 2014 with a master's degree in theological studies. His public service included the Presidency of the Whitman-Walker Clinic (now Whitman-Walker Health) during the rampaging HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 90s. He fed his creative appetite as Chair of the Board of Arena Stage, and as a co-founder 30 years ago of Atlanta's True Colors Theater Company with Tony Award winning Director, Kenny Leon.

Temple's theological interests explore how theology and the creative arts together enlighten, instruct and inspire. He is the author of the highly regarded, *Aunt Ester's Children Redeemed* (2017) that examines the theological richness of August Wilson's ten plays of twentieth-century Black America. "...*Redeemed*" is now used as a textbook in English, theater, and drama courses throughout the country.

His has served on the Foundation Boards for the National Archives, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation. He was also elected to be on the Vestry of St. John's Lafayette Square (Junior Warden, Senior Warden). He was Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees of Lafayette College, where he established the David and Helen Temple Visiting Lecture Series in Africana Studies, and the Temple Study Abroad Fellowship.