



**The Department of Research and Scholarship
The African Methodist Episcopal Church
Rev. Mark Kelly Tyler, Ph.D.
Historiographer/Executive Director**

May 4, 2026

Dr. Leroy Hopkins
President of the Board
Underground Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania

Grace and peace to you.

In my capacity as Historiographer of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, I write to offer my full support and strong recommendation regarding the work of the Underground Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, which is being developed in Columbia, Lancaster County.

This important initiative, under your leadership as President of the Board, represents a vital and timely effort to preserve, interpret, and share the rich and often under-told history of the Underground Railroad within the Commonwealth. The vision of serving as a clearinghouse for information on approximately 300 sites and more than 2,000 individuals who aided freedom seekers is both ambitious and deeply necessary. Such work ensures that the courage, sacrifice, and faith of those involved in this first great Civil Rights movement are not forgotten, but instead are made accessible for education, reflection, and inspiration.

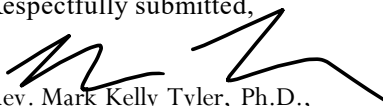
The historic role of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the struggle against slavery is well documented, and it is fitting that this project seeks to highlight figures such as Rev. Stephen Smith, whose contributions are central to understanding the broader movement for freedom and human dignity. Efforts to collaborate with institutions like the Stephen Smith Multi-Purpose Community Center at Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church in Columbia further underscore the project's commitment to community engagement and historical continuity.

Please consider this letter as an official endorsement of the mission and work of the Underground Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania. This endorsement is offered in recognition of the project's historical significance, educational value, and alignment with the enduring legacy of faith-based advocacy for justice and liberation.

I look forward to the ways in which this initiative will continue to uplift and illuminate this critical chapter of our shared history.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication,

Respectfully submitted,



Rev. Mark Kelly Tyler, Ph.D.,
Historiographer