

African American Leaders in the PC(USA)

Edrena Valeria Murphy



Edrena Valeria Murphy (1902-1987) was raised by her grandmother in Brazil, Indiana after the death of her mother when she was thirteen months old. Murphy attended public schools there before heading to DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana for her college education. When she graduated in 1926, she was one of the first Black alumnae of the school.

Some accounts say Murphy immediately sought employment in church work without success. She did secure teaching appointments at two HBCUs: Roger Williams University in Nashville and the Presbyterian-affiliated Swift Memorial College in Rogersville, Tennessee. In 1934, Murphy moved to Baltimore,

where she taught at the Baltimore Junior College meeting in Douglass High School and directed the East Baltimore Cooperative Nursery School. Murphy was also involved in the Presbytery of Baltimore's efforts to organize a congregation in the Cherry Hill neighborhood of Baltimore. In 1947, Casper Glenn became the founding pastor of Cherry Hill Community Presbyterian Church, with Murphy serving as Director of Christian Education.

In 1963, Chicago beckoned, and Murphy became Director of Christian Education at Grace Presbyterian Church (which merged into Sixth-Grace Presbyterian Church in 1969). She officially retired as a professional Christian educator in 1974 in her early seventies, but continued to attend local Christian education conferences and the Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE) annual event. She was in the first class of APCE Life Members in 1978. APCE has named an offering in her honor—the Val Murphy Offering—as well as a scholarship program established in 1987, after her death. Both the E. Val Murphy Scholarship Program and the Val Murphy Offering continue to this day to help fund attendance at the APCE annual event.

During her lifetime, Murphy worked as an educator, church worker, community organizer, and advocate for Christian education. Her passion for teaching and sharing the faith impacted many lives—both in the Black communities she served daily and in national Christian Education circles more generally.



APCE Life Members at Retirees Luncheon, 1985.



Read more about Val Murphy on the PHS blog
history.pcusa.org/about/blog/african-american-leaders-series



Learn about the AALC Initiative
history.pcusa.org/aalc

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