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## The Delaware Historical Society's

### Jane & Littleton Mitchell Center for African American Heritage & Culture

#### in collaboration with the Mother African Union Church

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### Request for Proposal (RFP)

### Documentary Film Project on the History of the Mother African Union Church Heritage

May 1, 2026

Issued by:

The Delaware Historical Society's Mitchell Center for African American  
Heritage

Representative

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## 1. Introduction

In collaboration, the Delaware Historical Society's Mitchell Center for African American Heritage and the historic Mother African Union Church ("the Church"), have spent the last three years pursuing a large-scale project to raise awareness of the Church's two centuries of activities shaping religious discourse and practices in the Mid-Atlantic region. Through public-facing outlets, including engagements at the Church's longstanding August Quarterly Festival, newly developed exhibitions and displays of the Church's history, and a documentary bringing the threads of this work together, this multi-year project seeks to create more information and access points for people to appreciate the living legacy of the Reverend Peter Spencer and the impact the church he founded has had on American history and broader diasporic Black faith practices.

The Mother African Union Church ("the Church") on Franklin Street in Wilmington, Delaware, currently pastored by the Reverend Dr. Ronald Whitaker, II, is the longtime home base for the African Union Methodist Protestant (A.U.M.P.) Churches—a network of over thirty churches spanning from New York to Virginia that were active participants in modeling religious freedom and supporting freedom seekers traveling along the Underground Railroad. The Church's early origins lie in the journey of Peter Spencer, a man of many talents born enslaved in Kent County, Maryland, in 1782. After being manumitted, Spencer migrated north to Wilmington, Delaware, in the 1790s, where he was exposed to Quaker practices and joined the city's vibrant Methodist movement that offered enslaved and free Black people a space to worship. Little is known of Spencer's day-to-day life during this period, but it is believed that he interacted with other religious thinkers and began carving out a space for himself as a lay preacher worshipping at Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, which had a sizeable Black membership since its formation in 1789.

The establishment of the Union Church of African Members, which later became the Mother African Union Church, was the result of years of organizing and advocacy efforts led by Spencer and William Anderson, another lay preacher active in Wilmington's Methodist movement. In the summer of 1805, the pair led forty Black parishioners in separating from the Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church in response to the continued discrimination they faced while worshipping. They established their own church, Ezion Methodist Episcopal Church, in June of 1805, which operated under the pastoral supervision of the Asbury Church and the broader Methodist Episcopal Conference. After ongoing struggles with the presiding Methodist Episcopal bishopry that parishioners perceived as limiting their religious freedoms, Spencer and

Anderson again led members in separating. This time, however, they worked to found their own space—the Union Church of Africans, which was legally incorporated on September 18, 1813.

Members of the Church hosted the inaugural Big August Quarterly Festival in 1814 to celebrate the founding of their new church. This event and its camp meeting-style worshipping attracted thousands of Black people who made their way to Wilmington by foot, horse, and steamboat to hear moving sermons, gather with friends and family, and organize themselves for generations. For the last 212 years, members of the Mother African Union Church have continued to host the August Quarterly to acknowledge the historical significance of the Church's founding and to gather people together for community healing, discussion, and organizing.

The Delaware Historical Society is honored to be partnering with the Mother African Union Church to elevate the living legacies and histories of this Church and its diverse membership over the last 212 years. As part of this endeavor, we are producing a documentary film that will present a nuanced history of the Mother African Union Church in 75-85 minutes. The objective for this Request for Proposal is to locate a partnering firm that will provide the best value and support to the Delaware Historical Society and our friends at the Mother African Union Church in producing this project. While price is an important factor taken into consideration, other criteria will also inform our award decision—more details can be found in Section 5.0.

## **2. Project Explanation**

The Delaware Historical Society's partnership with the Mother African Union Church is multitiered and comprised of four primary components, some of which are ongoing:

- I. Rejuvenating the Big August Quarterly's activities by working together to create programming and public dialogue engagements that generate new awareness of the Quarterly and its contributions to the Wilmington community.
- II. Developing an exhibition in the Mother African Union Church's Heritage Hallway slated to open in August of 2026. The experiential exhibition illuminates the life and work of Peter Spencer and the living legacy of the Union Church of Africans (now, known as the Mother African Union Church) showcasing extant artifacts including objects such as photographs, choir robes, business records, recordings of past sermons, and other ephemera from the DHS and MAUC collections that represent the church's vibrant contributions to American history.

- III. Preservation of historic documents and artifacts associated with the Mother African Union Church's history is a key factor for this project. Throughout the project, items will be rehoused, conserved, and digitized as appropriate. As the project progresses, staff at the Delaware Historical Society will teach and empower community members to preserve and care for materials through educational workshops.
- IV. Produce a high-quality documentary that highlights and emphasizes the role of the Black faith community in Delaware and its contexts within broader American histories. Specifically, the documentary will explore the origins of the Mother African Union Church in 1813 and how the community has continued and celebrated the work of Peter Spencer more than two hundred years later.

## **2.1. Project Purpose**

The purpose for this project is to capture a broader history of the Mother African Union Church on film for the first time. The film is meant to introduce and contextualize the story of Mother African Union Church and the various people who have shaped the church's community over the last 212 years.

Goals for the Film include:

- Including footage from historical events, contemporary events, and interpolating them with testimonial interviews from key Church members and scholars that can elaborate on the unique history of the Mother African Union Church.
- Present an inspirational and engaging filmed presentation that immerses people in the history of the Mother African Union Church and its role in the Independent Black Church movement.
- An exciting, filmed piece that can be used by educators and students eager to learn more about local Delaware history.
- A final product that can be screened by regional cultural heritage organizations seeking to uplift local histories.

## **2.2. Project Scope**

The scope of this documentary film project entails the production of a documentary film with a runtime of approximately 75-85 minutes. The Documentary Film project includes production, direction, and post-production of the film, which should complement the exhibition opening during the August Quarterly 2026 festivities in its interpretation of the story of Peter

Spencer and the many succeeding generations of people who have been part of maintaining the traditions he and his fellow worshippers implemented in 1813.

The selected firm will take responsibility for the production services which shall include but not be limited to:

- Design of the Documentary Film Project including its form, style, and audio/visual contents
- Selection of the production team to assist in the production of the project
- Use of third parties for animation, graphics, storage, etc.
- Location selection for filming
- Re-enactments, dramatizations, and use of professional actors for casting
- All post-production services
- Retention of associate producers, co- or assistant directors, and script writers
- Any and all additional services deemed necessary and required to produce the Documentary Film Project to the professional quality standards recognized by the Parties

### 3. RFP and Project Timelines

The documentary film is slated to premiere during the 213<sup>th</sup> August Quarterly Festival between August 22<sup>nd</sup> and August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2027. Bidders for this Documentary Film Project will be able to conduct on-site visits and interview with Delaware Historical Society staff and Mother African Union Church partners between May 4, 2026 and June 5, 2026.

Request for Proposal Announced	04/27/2026
Window for On-Site Visits	5/04/2026 - 6/05/2026
Proposal Due	6/12/2026
Contract Award / Notification to Unsuccessful Bidders	6/29/2026
Documentary Film Project Work Begins	7/1/2026

Documentary Film Project Completion Deadline	8/22/2027
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#### 4. **Budget Explanation**

The Mitchell Center for African American Heritage has set a *firm budget of \$505,000* to cover all services for pre-production, production, and post-production services to be provided by the selected vendor.

#### 5. **Submission Guidelines & Requirements**

- Summary of your firm's background, resources, and relevant experience.
- Examples from past projects of a similar size and scope.
- Statement of firm's philosophy and capabilities. Please explain your approach to working with clients and local histories to the best of your ability.
- References from past projects of a similar size and scope.
- Proposed schedule for completing the master plan, including project stages, milestones and payments.
- Proposed budget for completing the Documentary Film Project divided by major categories.
- Names and resumes of key personnel that will be *directly involved* in the Documentary Film project.
- Any other relevant supporting materials of the firm's choosing.

#### 6. **Evaluation Factors**

1. Responsiveness to the requirements set forth in this Request for Proposal
2. Relevant past performance/experience
3. Samples of work
4. Cost, including an assessment of total cost of ownership and maintenance
5. Technical expertise/experience of bidder and bidder's staff