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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Ebenezer Baptist Church (Atlanta, Georgia) | [Next entry](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_eisenhower_dwight_david_1890_1969) | |
| |  | | --- | | http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/resources/uploads/EBC.jpg | | Public Domain, From NPS.GOV |   In the fall of 1947, Martin Luther King delivered his ﬁrst sermon at the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. Ebenezer’s congregation voted to license King as a minister soon afterward, and he was ordained in February 1948. King went on to serve as Ebenezer’s associate minister during his breaks from [Crozer Theological Seminary](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_crozer_theological_seminary/) and from his doctoral studies at [Boston University](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_boston_university/) School of Theology through early 1954. He returned as co-pastor with his father, [Martin Luther King, Sr.,](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_king_martin_luther_michael_sr_1897_1984/) serving from 1960 until his [assassination](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_kings_assassination_4_april_1968/) in 1968.  The church was founded in 1886 by its ﬁrst minister, John Andrew Parker. In 1894 [Alfred Daniel Williams](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_williams_adam_daniel_a_d_1861_1931/), King, Jr.’s maternal grandfather, became Ebenezer’s second pastor. Under Williams the church grew from 13 members to nearly 750 members by 1913. Williams moved the church twice before purchasing a lot on the corner of Auburn Avenue and Jackson Street and, announced plans to raise $25,000 for a new building that would include an auditorium and gallery seating for 1,250 people. In March 1914 the Ebenezer congregation celebrated the groundbreaking for its new building. After the death of Williams in 1931, King, Sr., who had married Williams’ daughter Alberta in 1926, became pastor.  With King, Sr. as pastor and his wife, [Alberta Williams King](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_king_alberta_williams_1903_1974/), serving as musical director, the King family spent much of their time at Ebenezer. King, Jr. later described how his earliest relationships were formed at church: ‘‘My best friends were in Sunday School, and it was the Sunday School that helped me to build the capacity for getting along with people’’ (*Papers* 1:359). While in seminary, King often preached at Ebenezer. He delivered some of his most enduring sermons for the ﬁrst time at Ebenezer, including ‘‘The Dimensions of a Complete Life,’’ ‘‘What Is Man?’’ and ‘‘Loving Your Enemies.’’  After King accepted the pastorate at [Dexter Avenue Baptist Church](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_dexter_avenue_baptist_church/) in Montgomery, members of Ebenezer’s congregation attended his October 1954 installation service, prompting King to express his gratitude: ‘‘Your prayers and words of encouragement have meant a great deal to me in my ministry; and you can never know what your presence in such large numbers meant to me at the beginning of my pastorate. I want you to know Ebenezer, that I feel greatly indebted to you; and that whatever success I might achieve in my life’s work you will have helped to make it possible’’ (*Papers* 2:314).  In November 1959, King accepted Ebenezer’s call to join his father as co-pastor, a move that brought him closer to the headquarters of the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_southern_christian_leadership_conference_sclc/). His ﬁrst sermon as copastor at Ebenezer was ‘‘The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life.’’ After King’s assassination in 1968, his brother, [A. D. Williams King](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_king_alfred_daniel_williams_1930_1969/), was installed as Ebenezer’s co-pastor. King, Sr. continued as pastor until 1975, and [Coretta Scott King](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_king_coretta_scott_1927_2006/) continued to attend services at Ebenezer until her death.   **SOURCES**   Introduction, in *Papers* [1:6–7, 13, 25–26, 28](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/volume_i_introduction/).  King, ‘‘An Autobiography of Religious Development,’’ 12 September–22 November 1950, in *Papers* [1:359–363](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/12_september_to_22_november_1950c/).   King to Ebenezer Baptist Church Members, 6 November 1954, in *Papers* [2:313–314](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/primarydocuments/Vol2/541106ToEbenezerBaptistChurchMembers.pdf).  King, Sr., with Riley, *Daddy King*, 1980.   Lillian D. Watkins, ‘‘Certiﬁcation of Minister’s License for Martin Luther King, Jr.,’’ 4 February 1948, in *Papers* [1:150](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/volume_i_4_february_1948/). |