

Saint Peter Claver Catholic Church

[Saint Peter Claver Catholic Church](#) is the largest and first African American Catholic Church in Lexington, Kentucky and is also one of the oldest black Catholic churches in Kentucky. Prior to 1887 there was no African American Catholic church to help serve the black community of Lexington. In order to change this, a school was founded in 1887 on the corner of Fourth Street and Jefferson Street as a way to address the problems facing the black Catholic community. This location is still the location of the present day church and school.

Four years after the creation of the school, a small chapel was built in 1891 and was named to honor Saint Peter Claver, a Jesuit priest who had converted many Africans to Catholicism (see more on this at the [Knights of Peter Claver](#) website – Lexington’s chapter is [Court #233](#)). This was the beginning of the first formalized Catholic Church for the African American community in Lexington. This small chapel on the second floor of the school served as the place of worship for the community for 57 years, until in 1947 construction on a new building began. Father Frederick Bamberger was the priest at the time of construction and the building was fully erected by December of 1948. The building operates as the church today and is positioned directly next to the old school building.

The original school that was formed in 1887 was established by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth and despite being run by Catholics only 20 of the original 296 students were actually Catholic. In 1942, the Sisters of Divine Providence took over the school and in 1948 a Catholic High School was created and lasted until the end of segregation and schools became integrated. The church was also the original home of the Montessori School that is now located on Leestown Road and is named the Providence Montessori.

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1 response to *Other Historic Black Churches*



Dr. James Perkins said on April 13, 2017

The history of Black Churches in Lexington is very intriguing and provides individuals with information on landmarks, history of ownership, land development and a basis to move forward to the future with knowledge and resources.

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