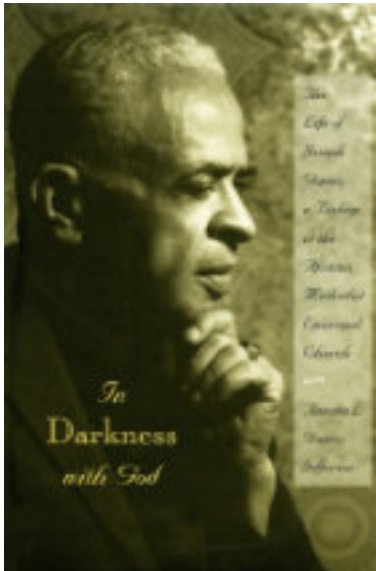## This Week in Eden History
April 28 | Bishop Joseph Gomez

Joseph Gomez as pictured on his biography, In Darkness with God. | Photo: Amazon

Joseph Gomez—African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) bishop, pastor, civil-rights pioneer, and the first African American to graduate from Eden—died on **April 28, 1979** in Wooster, Ohio.

Joseph Gomez was born March 21, 1891 on the island of Antigua and immigrated to the United States in 1908. He enrolled in Payne Seminary, Wilberforce, Ohio, in 1911. After ordination, he served AME missions in Bermuda and Hamilton, Ontario, followed by pastorates in Detroit, Kansas City and St. Louis.

Rev. Gomez was already a successful pastor in the AME when he and the Rev. John Moreland of the Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church applied to Eden Seminary's S.T.M program in 1932. No African American had yet been admitted to Eden's programs, even though its catalog stated that the seminary was "open to all students of all Christian denominations." This was new territory for a denominationally-focused, ethnically German institution. After thoughtful consideration, Gomez and Moreland were admitted for the fall term. Both graduated on June 7, 1934.

Gomez remained in St. Louis until 1936 when he was appointed to St. James Church, Cleveland. He was elected the 107th bishop of the AME in 1948 and assigned to the 10th, 13th, and 4th Districts before retiring in 1972.

Bishop Gomez was Eden's first African American commencement speaker and the first to receive an honorary doctorate on June 5, 1964.