

"The purpose of this organization shall be to organize and train the laity of the African Methodist Episcopal Church so that each layperson may utilize to the maximum the abilities and skills granted by God, in assisting with the improvement and extension of God's kingdom, and creating happiness, peace, and harmony among its members."

"FIRST IN TOUCH"



FIRST EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY NEWSLETTER

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July 2026

Annual General Meeting Edition

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Greetings from the First Episcopal District Lay President

Linda C. Gant

I greet the loyal Laity of the First Episcopal District with the joy of Jesus!



Words cannot fully express the gratitude in my heart for serving as the President of the First Episcopal District Lay Organization. This is a wonderful opportunity to use the gifts and talents God has given me, but just as important, to work with a group of like-minded and purpose-driven individuals as we continue this journey together.

We celebrate the success of the Mid-Year Convention and commend Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston, our Director of Lay

Activities, for her diligent work and dedication. We also extend sincere appreciation to President Nickolas Clark-Durham, the laity of the New England Conference Lay Organization, Host Pastor Rev. Wayne Daley, and the Bethel A.M.E. Church family for their warm hospitality. The event was further enriched by our workshop presenters: Rev. Alvin T. Riley, Pastor of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church in Newport, Rhode Island; Rev. Janine Dailey, Pastor of Allen A.M.E. Church in Providence, Rhode Island; Sis. Nicol Ayers, New England Conference Director of Lay Activities; Evangelist Josephine Fulcher Anderson, New England Conference Concerns Chairperson; Bro. T. R. Jones, St. James Danbury Lay President; Sis. Brittany Wilson, Bethel Providence YPD Director; Sis. Wendy Ramirez, Bethel Bridgeport WMS; and Rev. Wayne Daley. We are also grateful to our Presiding Prelate, Bishop Samuel Lawrence Green, Sr., who delivered the sermon, "This Is Not What You Think

Greetings from the First District Lay Organization President

(continued)

It Is,” from Luke 7:11–13. Additional highlights included a historical station showcasing the laity through the years and new interactive stations where attendees shared prayers, concerns, and words of encouragement. The positive feedback reflected how meaningful and enjoyable the experience was for all who attended.

Supervisor Dr. Phyllis N. Green always says how we are at our best when we work together, and it is all because of the dedication and commitment of members like you. ***“Thank you.”***

As we move forward, let us continue to fulfill our goals and objectives, collaborating amongst the laity and clergy, while exploring new opportunities that will elevate us further, building on our legacy.

Our continual prayer is, ***“May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us, yes, establish the work of our hands,”*** as stated in Psalm 90:17.

We are excited to host our Annual General Meeting, this July 10 – 11, 2026, at Harrah’s Resort in Atlantic City, NJ. The highlights below are some of the activities this journey has brought me on thus far:

January – My travels included attending the celebration of life for Bro. James Ford, the husband of our Financial Secretary, Sis. Cheryl L. Ford, the First Episcopal District WMS Learning Experience. Attended Sis. Sharon Drew’s Celebration of Service in Delaware.

February – Attended First Episcopal District Founder’s Day in Philadelphia; I was the speaker for Calvary Fellowship AME Church Lay Day, honoring and celebrating the workers of their organization, as it was renamed. Held the Mid-Year Convention at Crowne Plaza in Warwick, RI. Held a “Chat with the Presidents;” Attended Presiding Elder Loudon’s Retirement Celebration in Delaware. Participated in the virtual Christian Education Leadership workshop. Held committee meetings.

March – Attended the pre-conference to closing services for Bermuda, Delaware, and New Jersey Annual Conferences. Attended the New York Unsung Hero Luncheon, celebrating Sisters Mary Mootoo, Shirley Canty, and Bonita O’Neal. Traveled to Nashville, TN, for the 13th Episcopal District Planning Meeting, where Bishop Green was the preacher. Attended the England Conference Annual Award Luncheon. Held committee meetings.

April – Attended the Connectional Lay Organization’s Executive Board Meeting in Nashville TN, giving my second report as the President of the First Episcopal District Lay Organization. To God be the glory! Attended the pre-conference to closing services for New England, New York, and Western New York Annual Conferences. I was the guest speaker for Western New York Lay Witness night from Ephesians 3:20-21, entitled ***“What Are We Thinking?”***

May – Attended the pre-conference to the closing services of the Philadelphia Annual Conference. Attended Heard A.M.E. Church Annual Lay Day in Roselle, NJ. Attended the New England Conference Lay Organization Lay Mixer, filled with learning through games

June – Attended the First Episcopal District Planning Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. Attended the New York Conference Lay Organization Annual Meeting, where elections were conducted, as well as the General Board in Orlando, Florida.

Let this scripture be our guiding light and inspire us always: ***“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*** Colossians 3:17.

Blessings,

Linda C. Gant

Sis. Linda C. Gant – President

Greetings from the First District Lay Organization President

(continued)



Bermuda Annual Conference



Bermuda Annual Conference



Mid-Year Convention



Mid-Year Convention



Calvary Fellowship Annual Day



Calvary Fellowship Annual Day

Greetings from the First District Lay Organization President

(continued)



Philadelphia Annual Conference



New York Award Luncheon



13th Episcopal District



Delaware Annual Conference



New York Award Luncheon



"FIRST IN TOUCH"



Spotlight on our Conferences





Delaware Conference Lay Organization (DCLO)

Submitted by Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston, President

The Delaware Conference Laity continues to abide in the spirit of our motto “*There is strength in unity and love, being of one accord and one mind.*” During the 2026 Annual Conference Session, our Annual Lay Witness Nights fellowships included the New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia Annual Conferences.



Dover and Wilmington Presiding Elder Districts of the Delaware Annual Conference

Back Row (l-r): Delores Tatman (W), Vernell Brown (W), Lindsey Williams (D), Reginald Mays (D), Nancy Boyer (W). Front Row (l-r): LaVerne Blanks (D), Dorothy Coleman (D), Sandra Griffin (D), Louise Hudson (D), Vanessa Mohammed (D), Robin Goldsborough (W), Nancy Guy (W), William Majett (W), Penny Washington (W). Seated: Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston (W), DE Conference President

Under the leadership of the newly elected president, Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston, the Delaware Conference Laity is building its Executive Board and increasing the membership of its laity. The Delaware Conference laity is deeply indebted to the labor of love and service of Sister Katrina Ronell Brown, our Treasurer. They served for many years during the leadership terms of the

late Dr. Martin Drew and the immediate past-president, Sister Sharon Drew.



Standing (l-r): Thalia Harris, Robin Goldsborough, Sherry Rose, Cecelia Sanders, **Sharon Drew**, **Katrina Smith**, Connie Fleming. Seated (l-r): Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston, Barbara Harris, Sheila Marlowe, **Dr. Martin Drew**, Eleanor Maiden, **Ronell Brown**

John Wesley Deliverance Center in Dover, Delaware hosted the Immediate Past President, Dr. Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell at their Annual Lay Day on Saturday, March 26th.



The Laity of John Wesley Deliverance Center- Dover, Delaware

(l-r): Teresa Walker, Evangelist Charlotte Tull, Rev. Benson, Laverne Blanks, Louise Hudson (Local President), Dr. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell (Lay Day Speaker); Rev. Maxine L. Johnson (Pastor); Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston (DE Conference President), Carla Benson-Green, Charles Moore

Delaware Conference Lay Organization

(continued)

The Delaware Conference Laity celebrated with the Mt. Zion AME Church Laity in Norristown, PA on their Annual Lay Day.

Mt. Zion hosted the Delaware Conference President. Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston as their Annual Lay Day Speaker on Sunday,



Our Sister Church: Mt. Zion Lay Organization – Norristown, PA

Sister Joanne Turner – President

Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston, Ph.D. – 2026 Annual Lay Day Speaker

April 19th.

Mt. Hebron A.M.E Church, Linwood, PA celebrated their Annual Lay Day on Sunday, April 26th led by their president, Sister

Karen Thomas who also serves as the Secretary of the Delaware Conference Lay Organization.



Mt. Hebron A.M.E. Church 2026 Annual Lay Day Celebration : (l-r) Lay Day Speaker: Bishop Anton Hackett, Sr., Olivia Miller, Laura Colton, Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston (DE Conference President), Karen Thomas (Local President), Rev. Deborah D. Carpenter (Pastor), Janis Thomas, Patricia Thomas, Rev. Andre Johnson

The Mighty Five of the Margaret E. Wallace Lay Organization are Laura Colton, Olivia Miller, Janis Thomas, Karen Thomas, and Patricia Thomas.

We are looking forward to another successful Recognition Banquet on Saturday, October 3, 2026. Our enthusiasm is mounting as we prepare for the 40th Biennial Convention in Johannesburg, South Africa in August 2027.



New Jersey Conference Lay Organization (NJCLO)

Submitted by Sister Elizabeth Clark, President

The 154th Session of the New Jersey Annual Conference Lay Organization's Lay Witness Night was held at St. Matthew AME Church in Orange, New Jersey, where Reverend Melvin E. Wilson serves as pastor.



The service opened with songs of praise exalting the name of Jesus. Led by Brother Kyle C. Smith, the praise and worship team combined traditional and contemporary selections that encouraged spiritual engagement and active participation from the congregation.

Worship continued under the leadership of Sister Dorothy Chandler, President of the Newark District Lay Organization, together with other program participants.

From Sister Bonnie Collier's invocation to the preaching of the Word by Reverend Jovan A. Moore, pastor of St. James AME Church in Hightstown, New Jersey, the service remained spiritually uplifting. Her sermon, "Pressed and Under Pressure," was based on 2 Corinthians 1:8-10. The gathering concluded with joy as

from various churches across the New Jersey Conference.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

Besides having a Hallelujah time Lay Witness night, the NJ Annual Conference Lay Organization wanted to connect to a community outreach program in the Newark District area. Sister Dorothy Chandler, president of the Newark District located The Apostle House Emergency Shelter in the City of Newark, NJ. Sister Chandler was able to reach out to the director asking how our organization could provide assistants to the Women and Children shelter individual and families in transitions.



After finding out the needs for the agency our Laity throughout the conference started pulling together donations needed from the churches. On Saturday March 28, 2026 all collected items were picked up and given to the Apostle House from our NJ Lay Organization.



New York Conference Lay Organization (NYCLO)

*Submitted by D'Yonce S. Williamson, New York Conference Lay YAR
Dr. Alicia Collins-Dennis, President*

The New York Conference Lay Organization concluded the conference season with a spirit of fellowship, service, and connection across the First Episcopal District. Supporting the work of lay members was a central goal of our conference organization. Under the leadership of Dr. Alicia Collins-Dennis, we aimed to mobilize



our laity, ensuring that our constituents know they can lean on us as lay sisters and brothers.

For our organization, attending the various Lay Witness Days is about far more than a road trip. These journeys required a collective commitment from organized lay members and offered an opportunity to experience the diverse ministries that exist beyond the lower New York region. Our district comprises seven conferences, all of which added their own unique twist to



their annual day. Much can be learned during a two- or three-hour journey along Interstate 95.

Despite the weather conditions, members of the New York Conference Lay Organization pressed their way through to various cities from New England to Delaware including Orange, Wilmington, Harlem, King of Prussia, Stamford, and Albany.

The days were filled with joy as we awaited the



services, discussing our excitement for upcoming lay events such as our Biennial in South Africa and the Annual General Meeting in Atlantic City.



New York Conference Lay Organization (NYCLO)

(continued)

Though each preacher brought a unique style and message, all shared a common commitment to



empowering the organized laity. Likewise, the singing of the Laymen's Hymn was marked by enthusiasm and expectation as conference members celebrated the culmination of another year of ministry. The Annual Conference Lay



Days are a time to come together in worship. We value traveling not only for the business of the church, but for the spiritual fellowship that brings us together in the first place.

Two of the three Presiding Elder Districts within the New York Annual Conference organized bus trips for members throughout their circuits and extended invitations to conference lay members as well. The Greater Allen AME Cathedral of New York and Calvary Fellowship AME Church in partnership with Allen Temple AME in Mount Vernon provided trips with representation from all districts on the bus.

Conference President, Dr. Alicia Collins-Dennis,



and Young Adult Representative, D'Yonce Williamson, attended the Western New York Annual Lay Day in support of President Keith Young and the Lay speaker for the evening, First Episcopal District President Linda C. Gant. We serve a God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or imagine. Our goal for next conference year is to have representation at all seven of the annual conference lay days, ensuring that our lay sisters and brothers in Bermuda feel the love of the Big Apple.



We ended our travel season by attending the First Episcopal District Planning Meeting where we had close to 30 New York Conference lay members in attendance across the three-day weekend event. We extend a special thank you to each member who participated in traveling from March to June. As we prepare for a new conference year, we remain committed to strengthening the bonds of fellowship across the First Episcopal District, one journey, one worship experience, and one connection at a time.



“FIRST IN TOUCH”



Spotlight on our Young Adults

The young adults of the First Episcopal District Lay Organization were happy and blessed to attend the CLO Executive Board Meeting in Nashville, TN in April 10-11, 2026. New York Conference Lay Organization (NYCLO) YAR , D’Yonce S. Williamson, who also serves on the Connectional Budget Committee, presented her report. Outstanding job Sister Williamson!



NYCLO YAR D’Yonce S. Williamson



L to R: First Episcopal District Lay President Linda Gant, NYCLO YAR D’Yonce Williamson, First District Lay YAR Jyzelle Steplight

Spotlight on Our Young Adults

First Episcopal District Lay Organization Mid-Year Convention

First Episcopal District Lay Organization young adults showed up and showed out at the First Episcopal District Lay Organization Mid-Year Convention at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick, Rhode Island, February 20-21, 2026. The Host Conference was New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO) and President Nickolas Clark-Durham. The Convention theme was “I Spy Laity In Motion”, coordinated and delivered by President Linda Gant and DOLA Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston. The young adults showcased their gifts and talents in the worship service and workshops. To God be the Glory!



New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO) President Nickolas Clark-Durham



First Episcopal District Lay Organization Director of Music, Earl Knight, leading the choir in song and praise.



Enoch Gatling, First Episcopal District Lay Organization Social Media Committee Chairperson

Spotlight on Our Young Adults

First Episcopal District Lay Organization Mid-Year Convention (continued)



L to R: Nicol Ayers, First Episcopal District Lay Organization Registrar; Jyzelle Steplight, First Episcopal District Lay Organization Young Adult Representative (YAR)

L to R: Starsha Frierson, Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization YAR; Daysha Smith, First Episcopal District Lay 2025 Young Adult of the Year



Kezia Moore, former First District Lay Organization Young Adult of the Year

Far left: Ashley Banks, Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization (PCLO) Young Adult, with other members of the First Episcopal District Lay Organization.



Spotlight on Our Young Adults

First Episcopal District Lay Organization Mid-Year Convention (continued)



We are happy to celebrate so many of our First Episcopal District Lay Organization Young Adults at the 2026 Mid-Year Convention.



First Episcopal District Lay Organization Committee on Social Action

Submitted by Sister Sharon Carmichael – First Episcopal District Lay DOPR

“Why is it important to get involved in your local government?”



From the perspective of a person who was a private citizen up until 4 years ago, I care about people and have worked in my community and church helping

youth, adults and senior citizens as a volunteer in many different areas for more than half my life.

So, as an elected Councilwoman in Piscataway Township, my caring for people and wanting to help them comes naturally. I understand how important it is to use the position that you are blessed with in the local government for the good of the people you serve.

As an elected local government official, you are right there as a friend and neighbor to your constituents. You are closely involved in the setting of the policies that impact their daily lives and the lives of their families. You become the eyes and ears of your town. You are reachable, and therefore can actively listen to your constituents' input, questions, and concerns, and they in turn can feel seen and heard. When you are reachable and listen with an open mind, you can be responsive with honesty and respect. You can confidently

advocate for and vote on township policies, ordinances, plans, services, budget, and funding with the best interest of your constituents in mind.

This promotes local government transparency, trust, and mutual respect; and your constituents' willingness to support and work with their local government officials to help make the town better. This could improve voter turnout during primaries and non-Presidential elections, and lead to the election of candidates that best represent the local government issues that are important to the constituents and the towns they live in. This could lead to efforts at the federal level that matter to your town. This can only make a positive impact in your local government and your town as a whole, and the lives of the people who reside there.

By getting and staying involved and raising your voice about issues that concern your town, you can make a difference in not only your local government, but you can effect change in other local governments around the country who care about these same issues. There is power in numbers.

So, stay encouraged and get involved. It's extremely important now, more than ever. Do not give up. Your involvement in your local government will inspire others to get involved. We need a team to get the work done.

Sharon Carmichael - First Episcopal District Lay Director of Public Relations (DOPR)

Councilwoman

Piscataway, NJ - Ward 3



“FIRST IN TOUCH”



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First Episcopal District Lay Organization

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