

"FIRST IN TOUCH"



FIRST EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY NEWSLETTER

July 2022

Annual Meeting Edition

"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."

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We Remember the Emanuel Nine



Rev. Clementa Pinckney



Rev. Sharonda Singleton



Myra Thompson



Tywanza Sanders



Ethel Lee Lance



Cynthia Hurd



Rev. Daniel L. Simmons Sr.



Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor



Susie Jackson

June 17, 2022 marked seven years since the senseless massacre of the Mother Emanuel Nine in Charleston, South Carolina.

We remember the Honorable Rev. Clementa Pinckney (41), the Rev. Daniel "Super" Simmons (74), the Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton (45), Brother Tywanza Sanders (26), Sister DePayne Middleton Doctor (49), Sister Cynthia Hurd (54), Sister Myra Thompson (59), Sister Ethel Lance (70), and Sister Susie Jackson (87).

Greetings from the First Episcopal District Lay President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell



I am thankful to Almighty God for His many, many blessings and I am grateful to each of you for all you do for African Methodism and the Lay Organization. We have been through our series of Annual

Conferences and each of you had wonderful Lay Witness Nights, whether in person or virtually. I am grateful to have attended each of your Annual Conferences.

I was delighted that we were able to get together in person in the New York Conference for our Mid-Year Meeting. It was great to see so many of you again. We had a wonderful time, and we thank President Bonita and the NY Conference for their hospitality.

I would also like to thank our DOLA, Brother Thomas Davis who does an outstanding job putting our programs and worship services together.

We thank Bishop McAllister for being our preacher even after the struggle he and Mother McAllister had getting there. We were blessed by his message, and we thank our Episcopal Leaders for taking the time to spend with us. Our workshops were outstanding.

We thank Rev. Jo-Ann Owings, Rev. Stephen Michael Lewis and Rev. Tristan Salley, our presenters, who gave us lots of usual information. We also thank Brother Thomas Davis for leading us in the interactive workshop where we made decorative tiles. It was so much fun, and we thank him for thinking outside the box.

While our 2022 Annual Meeting is virtual, we look forward to our 2023 Mid-Year Meeting which will be hosted by the Western New York Conference in the city of Rochester, NY to be held at the Holiday Inn, Rochester Downtown.

Thank you to each of you for all you do to make the First District Lay Organization something we can be proud of. Your efforts are very much appreciated. Together we will continue to build a strong, solid lay ministry.

Special thanks to our elected officers, conference presidents, committee chairpersons and our advisors. Our team is the best team in any Episcopal District. None of it is possible without each of You. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

"We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength". Philippians 4:13



First Episcopal District Lay Mid-Year Meeting – February 25-26, 2022

Submitted by Sister Sharon Carmichael - DoPR

First Episcopal District Lay Organization President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell and Director of Lay Activities Thomas Davis planned our first in-person Mid-Year Meeting since February 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and changed our way of lives forever.

The meeting was hosted by President Bonita O'Neal and the New York Conference Lay Organization at the New York LaGuardia Airport Marriott Hotel, February 25 – 26, 2022.

The Lord blessed us to travel, dress up a bit, meet and greet each other, fellowship, and worship together in person. Of course, we followed standard and hotel mandated Covid safety practices.

The Executive Board started out on Thursday evening, February 24 where the officers happily met and greeted each other, shared accomplishments, and praise reports, and took live photo ops instead of zoom screen shots! Praise God for how far He has brought us from 2 years ago!

President Hopewell started the next morning at 6 a.m. with "First Fitness" workouts for the few of us who were brave enough to venture down to the hotel lower level and

join in. Boy did we get a workout, but she took it easy on us and said, "Do it at your own pace!" We were thankful for her mercy. After the workout, President Hopewell rewarded us with snacks and water, and surprise gifts of "Get Fit With Cheryl" t-shirts. How awesome was that!! We are blessed to have such an effervescent and generous -hearted President.

The day was full with morning devotion and bible study led by Chaplain Terri Fisher, a First timers' workshop presented by 3rd Vice President Robin Batson, an informative business session, reports from the 37th CLO Biennial delegates, and four dynamic workshops. We learned about "Christian Symbols and Rituals – Liturgical Calendars and Colors" from Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. Jo-An Owings, New York Conference; "AME Polity – The Duties of Stewards and Trustees" presented by Rev. Stephen M. Lewis, Pastor of Bethel AME, Freeport, NY; and "Developing Leaders" by Rev. Tristan J. Salley, Senior Pastor of St. Paul AME Rockville Centre.

For the evening worship we were blessed with the preached word from our new Bishop of the First

Episcopal District, the Right Reverend Julius Harrison McAllister, Sr., taken from Isaiah 43:19, "Behold I will do a new thing." "God is calling us to be more than we have been."

The final day began again with "First Fitness", with a few new participants. Those of us who received the "Get Fit With Cheryl" t-shirts returned the surprise by wearing our t-shirts. President Hopewell expressed how happy she was with our gesture.

After the morning Devotion and Bible Study, DOLA Thomas Davis caught us all off guard with an unusual, interactive workshop, "Creativity Exercise". We had to follow many steps and use arts and crafts to create our own artistic decorative tile showpieces. Many of us were reluctant at first, but we tried it and had an incredibly fun, creative, afternoon. We did not know we had it in us! Thank you, Brother Davis!

The day concluded with our Business Session, Closing Circle and Lay Benediction.

It was a great meeting and a glorious time in the Lord.

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First Episcopal District Lay Mid-Year Meeting (Continued)





“FIRST IN TOUCH”

Spotlight on Our Conferences



Bermuda Conference Lay Organization Highlights

Submitted by W. Anthoni Lightbourne - President



Lay Witness Night was held on Friday March 4, 2022. It was a hybrid event hosted by St. Paul AME Church, where the Pastor is Rev. Nicholas Geneve Tweed, and the host Lay President is Sister Lynell Furbert.

The night was full of worship and praise with Lay Conference Chaplain Sister Deborah Williams as Worship Leader. The opening hymn was a Layman Song, penned by a local lay soldier Sis. Venita Smith of Allen Temple A.M.E. Church and sung to the tune of “At Calvary”. The welcome was given by Sister Glenda Gibson, Lay President of Vernon Temple AMEC. Young Adult Sister Champagne Cann conducted responsive reading of the Litany and Young Adult, Sister Kharzimah Daniels of St. Paul AME Church read the scripture.

There was also a stirring solo by Sister Laverne Daniels, local president of Richard Allen AME Church.

Bermuda CLO President Brother W. Anthoni Lightbourne presented the Presiding Prelate Bishop McAllister, who then introduced the speaker, Sister Carla George.

Sister George is a member of Mt. Zion AME church, her pastor is Rev. Dr. Jahkimmo Smith. She has served in many capacities including YPD director, Sunday school teacher and as a Steward. She is married to Marcus (DJ Chubb) George. While they reside in Bermuda, they consider themselves citizens of the world because of their shared love for traveling. She is a Purpose Strategist who has curated the brand, **Pushed Into Purpose**, to empower hundreds of women to discover their purpose, reignite their passion and launch their dreams. She has connected with women through her book **‘Proverbs 31 Woman: More than the Good Wife’**, her podcast **‘Pushed Into Purpose’**, speaking engagements, and her annual summit **“The Pushed Into Purpose Summit”**. She has served in many capacities including YPD Director, Sunday School teacher and as a Steward.

Sister George delivered a very engaging and thought-provoking message entitled **“We the People Are the Church.”** Her scripture text was **Luke 4:18-19**.

The night concluded with the appropriate protocols. Bermuda CLO President Brother Lightbourne thanked Bishop McAllister and Episcopal Supervisor Mother Joan Marla McAllister for their presence. He was also thankful for the presence of our Episcopal District Lay President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, the Presiding Elders of the East/West District of the Bermuda Annual Conference, and other out of town guests. The service was broadcast via Zoom, which allowed for other conferences to join in the worship experience as well. To God Be the Glory!



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Bermuda Conference Lay Organization Highlights

(continued)



Sister Carla George



Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Sr.



President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell



Soloist
Sister Laverne Daniels



Front Row: Bishop McAllister, PE Larry Dixon, PE Howard Dill

Rear Row Episcopal Supervisor Mother McAllister, Sis. Patricia Smith



L to R: Sister Glenda Gibson, President Vernon Temple, President Lightbourne & wife Jewell, First District President Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell, and Conference Lay Chaplain Deborah Williams



Lay Night Praise Team



Worship Leader
Chaplain Deborah Williams



Lay Litany
Sister Champagne Cann



Scripture
Sister Kharzimah Daniels

Delaware Conference Lay Organization Highlights

Submitted by Sister Sharon Drew - President



Greetings from The First State and the Delaware Conference Lay Organization. The New Year 2022 found us still in the Covid Pandemic and continuing to meet on the Zoom Platform. January brought us our Annual Day of Training. The day began with a short meditation on faith given by our Chaplain, Sis. Sandra Griffin. The morning continued with Dr. Eyerce Armstrong Poston, second vice-president of the Delaware Conference Lay, who gave an extensive presentation on the History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and our founder, Richard Allen. She spoke about the challenges that Richard Allen

faced after walking out of St. George in Philadelphia and how Richard Allen was able to buy back Mother Bethel Church. Dr. Poston gave an inspiring and excellent message on the history of our church.

Following Dr. Poston was presenter, Brother Anthony Bernard Johnson, who studies the history of African Americans in the state of Delaware. Brother Johnson's focus was on Richard Allen and his connection to the state of Delaware. We were treated to a video by Brother Johnson who reflected on the various areas of Delaware where Richard Allen grew up and his

time in Delaware before moving to Philadelphia.

Our third presenter was Mikelle Drew-Pellum, daughter of President Drew. She shared her Oratory skills with poetry from several Black Poets. One of the favorites for the group is a poem called Toussaint from the play "For Colored Girls." This poem always makes the audience want to hear more. Her elegant expressions are always outstanding and enjoyable. This allows us to get a jump on Black History Month.

All and all we experienced a wonderful day and enjoyed another great day of Training for the Laity of the Delaware Conference.



L to R: Debbie Street, Dorothy Coleman, Eleanor Maiden, Barbara Sullivan



L to R: Debbie Street, Dorothy Coleman, President Sharon Drew, Eleanor Maiden, Barbara Sullivan



Front center: Maggie Story



“For in Him we live, move and have our being.” Acts 17:28



Rev. Tristan Salley and President Linda Gant

“On the District Side” – New England Conference Lay Organization delegation attended the virtual Annual Meeting, as well as participating in the 1st Episcopal District ‘Know Your Church’ challenges, where President Gant brought home a 3rd place win. **Road Trip!!** Off the delegation goes to Orlando, Florida for our Lay Biennial to witness the business of organization, elections and enjoy an in-person worship service (even with some technical difficulties.) What joy it was to witness Rev. Tristan Salley (always a New Englander) while he presented his workshop **“Developing Great Leaders”** with such proficiency during our Mid-Year Meeting, acknowledging how great a supporter President Gant was to him.

“It’s Time to Celebrate” - New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO) held its **“Virtual Award Ceremony -**

Celebrating Women - Past, Present and Future” through Arts and Humanities. The celebration included songs from Jazz Saxophonist Marion Meadows; Spoken Word by Tracy Caldwell; Gospel Recording Artist Kim Trusty and Songstress Sharon Maczyk, along with a Special Women’s History Tribute by Marion Meadows teaching about the Women’s role in Jazz. Those celebrated were as follows:

Present – Leaders and Gatekeepers

Sister Lori Nelson – City of Boston Chief Resilience Officer
Licentiate Teresa Jenkins – Author “*Dwelling in the Secret Place – A Day at a Time*” and

Past

Sister Barbara Lowe – Outstanding Leadership – 1st Vice President – WMS
Sister Ethel Marie Wallace Jenkins – Drum Major – Founding Member of the Reorganization of the New England Conference Lay Organization
Sister Ethel Marie Wallace Jenkins – Glass Ceiling Breaker – 1st African American Woman Chairperson
Rev. Amelia Eddy – Armor Bearer – Consultant for 33 Years in the Boston-Hartford District
Sister Priscilla Green (Posthumous) – Regulator – AME Judicial Council Member

Founder of the “*Unleashing the Jewel Conference.*”

Rev. Dr. Gloria Cater – 2022 Living Legend from the American Nurses Association
Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell – Connectional Corresponding Secretary and 1st District Lay President
Dr. Lorna Thomas Farquharson – City of West Hartford Chairperson of the Board of Education

Future – Leaders and Gamechangers

Dr. Christina Dickenson-Cousin – Author “*Black Indians and Freedman: African Methodist Episcopal Church and Indigenous Americans – 1819 – 1916*”
Sister Nicol Ayers – City of Norwalk CT Councilwoman and Doctoral Candidate
Dr. Christina Nurse – Co-founder of Urban Finance
Rev. Mariama White-Hammond – Chief of Environment Energy and Open Space – City of Boston
Presiding Elder Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace – Humanitarian, Counselor, Nurturer, Supporter, Encourager and Coordinator



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New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO)

(continued)

“It’s Time to Witness” – We are in awe of how God moved through our hybrid Lay Witness Service. Sister Annie Matthews Haynes served as our Worship Leader, Brother Henry McMillan led our Call to Worship, and Sister Brittany Wilson prayed our invocation, with the choral response being “...Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper
Light in the darkness, my God
That is who You are”.

The Holy Spirit rained on us!! Hallelujah! Brother Melton Hawkins and Sister Nealon Jaynes-Lewis read our Scripture lessons. Sister Sandra Mosby led our Lay Litany, and the New England Conference Choir sang our souls happy.

The spirit continued to take us to another level as Brother Nickolas Clark-Durham introduced our Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Sr. for the first time in New England. What a powerful message delivered by Licentiate Teresa Jenkins of Bethel A.M.E.

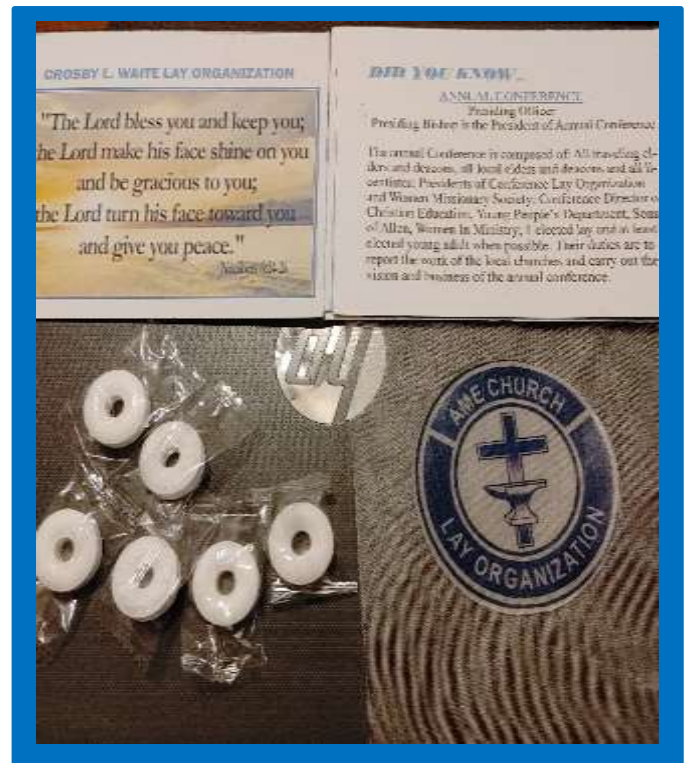
Church, Providence, RI. She challenged us with a mighty Word of God entitled ***“Empowering the Pew to be a Witness.”***

This was truly an awesome experience, being able to fellowship in person and basking in God's glory at the same time.

“It’s Time for Another Lay Learning!” If the people won’t come to the workshop, bring the workshop to them!! New England Conference created ***“Did You Know”*** postcards with lay learning information that included gift bags with candies. They handed them out to the congregations across New England. The congregations were very receptive, and it brought about conversations among the groups. Spread the word, as we are teaching and training as we reimagine ministries.



Front row L to R: Mrs. Ethel Wallace Jenkins, 1st District Lay President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell. 2nd row L to R: NECLO President Linda Gant, Cynthia King, NECLO DOLA Nicol Ayers. 3rd row L to R: Nickolas Clark-Durham, Irv Hopewell, Linda Meadows, Brenda Birch



New Jersey Conference Lay Organization (NJCLO)

Marcus Burnett, President

Submitted by Sister Elizabeth Clark – Director of Lay Activities



New Jersey Conference Lay Night

After two years of full virtual Lay Witness Nights, the New Jersey held the service via in-person and virtual at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Brunswick, NJ.

The preacher for the evening was the Rev. Bryan McAllister, Pastor of Heard AME Church, Roselle, NJ. He preached our souls happy on the topic “Making of a Revolution”.

This in-person service was needed for such a time as this. Lay persons were able to see faces that they haven’t seen in over two years.



Heard AMEC Roselle, NJ Members L to R: Sister Tina McGriff, Rev. Naomi Myers, Sister Lorraine Coage, Sister Arlene Sumner, Rev. Kamaria Byrd-McAllister, Rev. Bryan McAllister, Sister Marge Benson, Sister April Coage, Sister Evelyn Maynor



L to R: Sister Arlene Sumner (NJCLO 2nd VP, Bishop McAllister, Sister Tina McGriff (Heard AMEC Church School Superintendent)

New Jersey Conference Lay Banquet

On Saturday, April 23rd New Jersey Lay Conference held their annual banquet. The theme for this event was “Generational Leaders”. Past President Brenda Lazier and Past President Jacqueline Sibbles were honored. In attendance were 1st Episcopal WMS President Sister Patricia N. Smith and former New Jersey YPD Director Laverne Mackey Merritt.



L to R: Awardee Sister Jacqueline Sibbles, NJCLO President Marcus Burnett



L to R: Awardee Sister Brenda Lazier, NJCLO President Marcus Burnett



PCLO March Meeting Goes Beyond Business as Usual

The monthly meeting is a critical staple in the life of PCLO officers and members from September to June of each year. Frequently clergy, component heads and connectional officers join and greet the body and receive the information and spiritual nurture provided from and for the members. Before the pandemic, each meeting was preceded by a tasty, in person lunch and joyful fellowship. Now on ZOOM, the physical nourishment has been replaced by spiritual food, shared information, upfront business, and an eclectic array of workshops. The March Meeting of the PCLO was a perfect example of Business as Usual but had a bucolic and botanical touch that heralded the coming of Spring. This special touch was a reminder that God renews and refreshes not only the plants and flowers of Spring but our bodies, minds, and spirits as well, if we rely on Him, worship Him and are attentive to His Word.

President Andree A. Turner, Sr. gave the Call to Order. Sister Linda Frazier led the opening of Devotions and Bible Study. First Vice President Starsha Divine Frierson did a vibrant rendition of "What a Mighty God We Serve". The scripture lesson was from 1 John 2:17. Her topic was "What Can the World Offer You That Can Last?". In Christ we have everlasting life, the world and worldly things will pass away.

1st Vice President Sister Frierson also gave official Words of Welcome. Sister Margret Miller, PCLO Director of Lay Activities, presented our two workshops of the day. The first was expected and part of usual PCLO business, Reports from

Delegates to the Mid-Year Meeting of the First Episcopal District Lay Organization. It was the second workshop that was different, highly anticipated with the inviting title of **"Spring Planting and Gardening in Small Spaces"** presented by Reverend Carolyn Cavaness, Pastor of Bethel AME Church in Ardmore, PA where Sister Bernice Green is the Lay President. This workshop provided a glimpse into the hands-on fun and power of community gardening and sharing. Prior to the workshop, PCLO members were invited to pick up free gardening kits to start their own gardens even if they were in urban settings in cities that have more cement than soil for planting. Thus the **"gardening in small places"** effort. Reverend Cavaness' presentation of startup gardening tips and the health and financial benefits of growing your own herbs and vegetables was a spiritual lesson as well as an agricultural one. They grow their own, receive from local farmers and gardeners, share with others, and eat more healthy foods in this time of inflation of food prices. They share their harvest with those in need by having fresh vegetable giveaways. Gardening is intergenerational. Children, young adults, seniors, and everyone can participate and

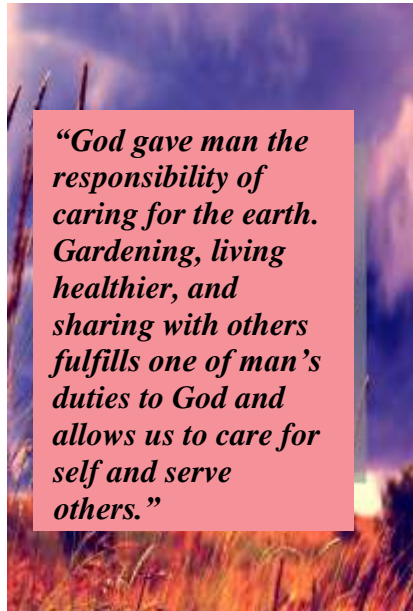
share. This participation and sharing builds unity within the church and the community. You can start small and expand. She gave resources to help regular non-gardening people get started. At the time of the workshop, the Church was still making the gardening kits available. One important spiritual point she made was the connection many African Americans have to tilling and tending the ground to produce their own food. This was a large part of their lives and daily survival. Reverend Cavaness' willingness to share with the laity was a wonderful example of clergy-lay collaboration that we strive for in the AME Church. Her enthusiasm and apparent joy in gardening was contagious, refreshing and encouraging to all. She invited clergy and laity to contact her at the church or on the church's website. Gardening can be a satisfying hobby, but it also has practical rewards like good food for health and enjoyment. Many get a sense of satisfaction by caring for the earth and producing food for self and others. The Word tells us that God gave man the responsibility of caring for the earth. Gardening, living healthier, and sharing with others fulfills one of man's duties to God and allows us to care for self and serve others. Gardening, Way to go PCLO! Going beyond business as usual is an effective way to do Lay Ministry.

Philadelphio Conference Lay Organization

(continued)



Reverend Carolyn Cavaness



Brother Andree A. Turner, Sr, President of the PCLO



Community Vegetable give away at Bethel Ardmore's Victory



Starsha Divine Frierson, PCLO
1st Vice President



Sister Margret Miller, PCLO
Director of Lay Activities



"FIRST IN TOUCH"



A Word from the First Episcopal District Lay Director of Public Relations (DOPR)



Sharon Carmichael - DoPR

Commemorating Juneteenth

This year marks the 2nd anniversary of Juneteenth becoming a national holiday, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States in 1865 (2 years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863).

President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act on June 17, 2021. June 19 is now officially Juneteenth National Independence Day.

Spurred on by the Black Lives Matter Movement, it is the first holiday to be approved since Martin Luther King Jr. Day was established in 1983.

"Despite certifying Juneteenth as a federal holiday, Black

Americans continue to face systematic challenges such as the racial wealth gap, disproportionate incarceration, and persistent health disparities. Therefore, activists say the holiday shouldn't be seen as a substitute for substantive action, but a step in the right direction." – from CNN's Harmeet Kaur and Alyssa Kraus, CNN politics, June 17, 2021, [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com)

So how do we keep moving in the right direction? Let me offer a few suggestions:

- First, pray and be led by God.
- Remember, the Bible says prayer without works is futile. So, get involved. Bring your ministry outside of the church walls.
- Look around. Where can you lend your knowledge, skills, gifts, and talents to do the most good? Dr. Maya Angelou said it best, "Be a Rainbow in Somebody Else's Cloud". "Be a blessing to somebody".
- Let your voice be heard. Vote! Not just in the presidential election, but in your local elections. This is where you have the strongest voice in who governs your community and making it the best it can be for you and your family.
- Take care of yourself. Eat healthier, exercise, get your recommended hours of sleep, go to the doctor, and get your checkups, and drink lots of water.

Be blessed!





First In Touch



***First Episcopal District
Fall Convocation
November 10-12, 2022***

***2023 First Episcopal District Lay Mid-Year Meeting
Western New York Conference Lay Organization
March 3-4, 2023 (Executive Board Meeting is on March 2)
Holiday Inn Rochester Downtown***

***Connectional Lay Organization 38th Biennial Convention
June 26 - 30, 2023
Hilton Chicago Hotel
720 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60605***



First Episcopal District Lay Organization

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Lanan Bascome
Corresponding Secretary

Cheryl L. Ford
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Terri Fisher
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Shawn Lee

Shawn Lee
Historiographer

Parliamentarian

Thomas Davis
Director of Lay Activities

Sharon Carmichael
Director of Public Relations

Marcus Burnett
Young Adult Representative



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