

"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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"FIRST IN TOUCH"



FIRST EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY NEWSLETTER

July 2023

Annual Meeting Edition

Hail to Our President!

by Keith Arrington, Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization DOLA

On Saturday, June 3rd, beginning at Noon, the South Suburban Area Women's Missionary Society held their Sarah Allen Awards Luncheon at The Oaks Ballroom in



Glenolden, PA. The theme of the luncheon was "Hail to the Chief." We are pleased to report that First Episcopal District Lay Organization President Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell was one of the distinguished honorees. Sister Cheryl was joined by another awesome "chief," Connectional YPD President Brother Richard Franklin Norris, III, AKA "R3!"

As you may have guessed from the title, the affair had a presidential twist. In fact, Area Chairperson Sister Phyllis Ruffin, along with co-chairs Sister ThaeH Norris, Sister LaKeshia Baker, and Sister Tanisha Taylor Thomas dressed the part as Secret Service Agents with black suits, dark shades, and



headsets! They even had a contraband-sniffing dog, as much as a stuffed dog can sniff that is! It's a good thing we had such highly trained security to safeguard the host of dignitaries! Along with Sis. Cheryl and Bro. R3, we were blessed by the presence of Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, Sr., Presiding Elder Janet Jenkins Sturdivant, and Connectional YPD Director Sister Wanda Ringgold.

Though Sister Cheryl is a very active member of the Lay Organization; she is also a member of the WMS and was being honored this afternoon for her longstanding work in all areas. Surrounded by family, Mt. Pisgah AME Church family, members of the organized lay, and friends, Sister Cheryl was presented with a beautiful plaque and was gracious in her remarks. She shared how much she appreciates the work of the missionaries, reminding all in attendance that though they probably think of the Lay when they see her in her blue, she proudly wears WMS blue as well! Sister Cheryl shared how important it is for her to support the other components of the church. It has not gone unnoticed that despite her very busy schedule as 1st District Lay President and Connectional Lay Corresponding Secretary, Sister Cheryl selflessly travels far and wide to attend WMS meetings and events, along with



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Hail to Our President! Continued from Page 1

supporting the young people at YPD events. In honoring Sister Cheryl this afternoon, the WMS Chair emphasized that it doesn't matter under what banner you labor for the Lord, the work is all divine!



Highlighted by the recognition of the honorees, the Sarah Allen Awards Luncheon was a very enjoyable event, filled with laughter, fellowship, and praise. Reverend Kyle Thomas, Pastor of

St. John AME Church in Paschall, took on his DJ persona and offered a masterful blend of music.

We dined to our satisfaction, receiving presidential treatment from the Oaks Ballroom staff. We thank Brother Keith Arrington for capturing the event with beautiful photos. As the afternoon drew to a close, we cherished the opportunity to receive remarks from Bishop Norris!

After we sang the missionary benediction, we hung around a bit longer for fellowship, and to again share our love and appreciation with Sister Cheryl! Again, we say, Hail to our President, Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell!

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. I am grateful to have attended all of your Annual Conferences and to have stayed with you for the week.

I am overjoyed over our Mid-Year Convention in Rochester, NY. It was great to see so many of you. We had a wonderful time, and we thank President Thomas Whitt and the WNY Conference Lay for their hospitality. I would also like to thank our DOLA, Brother Thomas Davis who does an outstanding job putting our programs and worship experiences together. Our theme was "Serve with Integrity, Strive for Excellence." We thank Presiding Elder, Paul Thomas our preacher who blessed us with his message on "Maximum Contagion".

Our workshops were outstanding. We thank our 3rd VP Robin Batson who always has an conversation with the First Timers. We thank our presenters, Presiding Elder Rev. Dr. Faye Banks Taylor, Rev. James C. Simmons, Sister Claire Winchell, Sergeant Ryan Buttles, Rev. Kevin Taylor and Dr. Charmaine Cohen, who gave us lots of usual information. All of the teaching was rich.

While our 2023 Annual Meeting is virtual, we will still have a great time online. We are glad to have so many registered for our Connectional Lay Biennial Chicago and look forward to our time together.

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 actually 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 Convention – March 3-4, 2023

Submitted by Sister Sharon Carmichael – DOPR

The First Episcopal District Lay Mid-Year Convention was held at the Holiday Inn Downtown in Rochester, New York on Friday, March 3 and Saturday, March 4, 2023. It was graciously hosted by the Western New York Conference Lay Organization led by President Thomas Whitt.

First Episcopal District Lay President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell and DOLA Thomas Davis presented a well-orchestrated 2-day program inspired by the theme “Serve With Integrity, Strive For Excellence”. The weather in Rochester was cold and snowy, but our hearts were fired up by the inspirational workshops, the fellowship, spirit-filled worship, and blessed word of God.

Following her tradition, President Hopewell started each morning at 6 a.m. with “First Fitness” workouts. She prepared us for the day and inspired us to strive to be healthy and take care of our bodies.

Evangelist Kitty Combs of the New Jersey Conference Lay kicked off the sessions with devotion and interactive bible study on the topic of “Integrity and Excellence”. She engaged participants in the reading and discussion of the scriptures and topic. Scriptures included 1 Peter 2:9, Colossians 3:23, 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, 1 Corinthians 10:3, and Matthew 55:13-16.

Robin Batson, First Episcopal District Lay Third Vice-President, conducted the First Timers’ Seminar. She gave an excellent overview of the Connectional Lay Organization, First Episcopal District Lay Organization, and First Episcopal District history, structure, leadership, mission, purpose, objectives, themes, and logos.

The attendees were enlightened with six phenomenal workshops over the two convention days:

- “Christ-Centered Service: An Integrity Check”, by Rev. Dr. Faye Banks Taylor, Pastor of St. Mark’s Chapel AMEC and Presiding Elder of the Albany-Kingston District of the WNY Conference
- “Misconceptions About Separation of Church and State” – 3 case studies), by Rev. James C. Simmons, Pastor of Baber AMEC, Buffalo-Rochester District of the WNY Annual Conference
- “Be Red Cross Ready” and “Hands Only CPR” (non-certification course), by Clare Winchell, American Red Cross – Disaster Cycle Services, Individual and Community Preparedness Specialist
- “Active Threat Response Training” (Video) by Sergeant Ryan Buttles, Monroe County Sheriff’s Office
- “Put Down the Duckie” (Put down everything that hinders you) by Rev. Kevin Taylor, Pastor of Israel AMEC,

Albany-Kingston District of the WNY Annual Conference

- “Serve with Integrity, Strive for Excellence” (Review basic Christian Principles: Reboot, Restore, Reactivate) by Dr. Charmaine Cohen, Title 1 and Parent Engagement Coordinator – Rochester City School District

In our Friday evening worship, we received a spiritual blessing. Rev. Paul J. Thomas, Presiding Elder of the Buffalo-Rochester District, preached us happy with the powerful sermon “Maximum Contagion”, taken from Luke 4:14-30. Rev. Thomas taught us that we must serve with humility and integrity and step up our excellence game to have Maximum Contagion (maximum effect) in our ministry. This is God’s mandate for us. Praise God for the word!

The convention concluded on Saturday with our Business Session, President’s closing remarks, Lay Benediction, and closing circle. What a wonderful convention and a glorious time in the Lord.



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First Episcopal District Lay Mid-Year Convention (Continued from Page 3)

Photo credits: President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell and DOPR Sharon Carmichael





“FIRST IN TOUCH”

Spotlight on Our Conferences



Bermuda Conference Lay Organization Annual Meeting

Submitted by W. Anthoni Lightbourne - President



BERMUDA CONFERENCE LAY ORGANIZATION



SIS. CHERYL HAMMOND HOPEWELL
DISTRICT LAY PRESIDENT

ANNUAL LAY MEETING 2023 JANUARY 27-28, 2023



BRO. W. ANTHONI LIGHTBOURNE
SIS. COLINA OUTERBRIDGE
SIS. MARLYN GIBBONS RECORDING
SIS. LANAN BASCOMBE
SIS. JOHNAE PERINCHIEF
SIS. DEBORAH WILLIAMS
SIS. DARLENE ROGERS
SIS. SUZETTE BUTTERFIELD
SIS. GLENDA GIBSON

PRESIDENT
1ST. VICE PRESIDENT
SECRETARY
TREASURER
FINANCIAL SECRETARY
CHAPLIN
DIRECTOR OF LAY ACTIVITIES
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
HISTORIOGRAPHER



*DR. BEVERLY TAYLOR TOLD US
"WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY"

* PRESIDENT CHERYL SPOKE ON THE
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LAY
OFFICERS

Delaware Conference Lay Organization (DCLO)

Submitted by Sharon D. Drew, President

Jazz Brunch and Fashion Show

The Delaware Conference Lay Organization celebrated its First Jazz Brunch and Fashion Show on February 18, 2023 at the



Modern Maturity Center in Dover, Delaware. We enjoyed a beautiful

afternoon of Soulful Jazz and Gospel Renditions from Brother Tony Smith of New Castle, Delaware. This was another "First" for the Delaware Conference Lay Organization.

The Lay Organization entertained two hundred people at this event. What a blessing to behold. Presiding Elder Dr. J. Stanley Justice and Consultant Darlene Justice of the Wilmington District, many pastors of the Delaware Annual Conference, family members, and friends were all in attendance and it proved to be



Presiding Elder Dr. J. Stanley Justice, Wilmington District

an enjoyable and relaxing afternoon.

President Sharon Drew and Sister Louise Hudson served as

Co-Hosts for the program. Unlike our usual banquet activities, we honored one surprise honoree for this occasion. Sister Louise Hudson,



Louise Hudson and Rev. April Davis

who serves as 1st Vice President of the Delaware Conference Lay Organization and President of the Lay Organization at John Wesley AME Church in Dover, Delaware was truly surprised by all in attendance. Louise goes the extra mile to make every activity a success. She reaches out to each Lay President and Pastor so that they are aware of what is going on for the activity that is taking place.

After special presentations to Sister Louise, everyone was



President Sharon Drew



Louise Hudson and daughter Anna

ready for their meal. They enjoyed the music of Brother Tony Smith while they dined.

Throughout the program, many people won door prizes of gift cards and other gifts. Following



Maxine Lewis

the delicious meal, the program continued with Fashions by Maxine. Maxine Lewis is an entrepreneur in the city of Dover, Delaware, an active Lay Member of Mt. Zion AME Church in Dover, and is also active on the Conference Level. We enjoyed several fashions for the upcoming spring season and the colors for this year. Maxine always brings a very upbeat, vibrant, and entertaining show. The Ways and Means Committee hosted another outstanding and successful event. We look forward to the next activity scheduled for October 20.



Submitted by Linda Gant, President

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

“It’s a Learning Thing” – The New England Conference Lay Organization continues to re-imagine methods of teaching and training the congregations of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Most recently we took great joy in creating poster boards on “Know Your Church.” Pictured are members from *Allen Providence*, *Bethel Bloomfield*,



and *Bethel Norwalk* who worked together to highlight the many organizations within a local church, as well as an organizational chart.

“Conference Wide Training” – Yes, we did that! Thank you to our DOLA, Sister Nicol Ayers for for bringing the different components within our conference together for across-the-board training.

“Celebrate Good Times, Come On!” And that they did as we gathered for our in-person Annual Award Luncheon with the theme “*Each One, Teach One.*” We honored and celebrated those Christian Educators and their willingness to serve, as they prepare and teach lessons for our spiritual growth. We are so proud of each of them and thank them for their service in the building of God’s Kingdom. To God be the Glory!

Women’s Missionary Society, Board of Christian Education, YPD, and of course, Lay Organization, workshops were provided to teach about each of the components and their role, as we are all in this together. Thank you to Retired Presiding Elder Herbert L. Eddy, Sister Marion Smart, Sister Edwina Mays, Sister Renee Callender, as well as President Linda Gant who all served as facilitators for the various workshops. We are grateful to the Bethel



Bloomfield Lay Organization, where Brother Henry McMillan serves as Local President and Reverend Daylan K. Greer, Sr. is Pastor for hosting both amazing events.



Church

Allen A.M.E. Church – Providence
Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Bloomfield
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Bridgeport
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Fall River
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Greenwich
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Lynn
Bethel A.M.E. Church – New Bedford
Bethel A.M.E. Church – New Haven
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Norwalk

Honoree Name

Sister C. Mae Bunch (posthumous)
Sister Danielle Lawrence
Sister Valerie Gittens
Brother Edward Burns
Sister Jacquelyn Anfield
Brother Winston Robinson (posthumous)
Sister Tanya Crowell
Sister Kelley Regine Bradford
Sister Carolyn Kinder
Sister Barbara Barham

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New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO)

Celebrate Good Times, Come On! (Continued from Page 8)

Church

Bethel A.M.E. Church – Plymouth
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Providence
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Stamford
Historic Charles Street A.M.E. Church
Mount Zion Newport
Peoples Chelsea A.M.E. Church
St. James A.M.E. Church
St. Paul A.M.E. Church

Honoree Name

Sister Michelle Larkin
Reverend Dorothy Ola
Brother Rodney Bass
Sister Renee Reid Goldsmith
Sister Carole Peterson
Sister Beverly Martin Ross
Sister Avril H. Stephens
Sister Beverly A. Williams

Our 5th Sunday Worship – We also want to thank **Brother Henry McMillan** who serves as our Chairperson on our Outreach Ministry, as we have re-instituted our 5th Sunday outreach that took us from the Northern end to worship with Bethel

“Our Circle Has Been Broken” – The New England Conference Lay Organization experienced the passing of giants within our organization. They each gave of themselves for the betterment of not only their local church but also the New England Conference Lay Organization God for their presence in our lives glad these persons passed our way, Sister C. Mae Bunch, Brother Winston Robinson, Sister Ethel Marie Wallace Jenkins and Sister Mildred Pelote. They will forever live within our hearts.



Plymouth, where the Reverend Khaden Nurse is Pastor to the Southern end worshipping with Bethel Stamford, where Reverend Dr. Robert A. Jackson, Jr. is the Pastor.

“On the District Side” – Road Trip!! Off the delegation goes to Rochester, New York, for our Mid-Year Meeting to attend various workshops focused on **“Serving with Integrity and Striving for Excellence.”** Our two “first timers” raved about the lessons learned throughout the meeting.



“It’s Time to Witness” – We certainly experienced the Holy Spirit moving throughout our Lay Witness Service beginning with the Doxology and ending with our Lay Benediction. We thank our speaker, **Licentiate Omari Aarons**, whose message **“Claim Your Inheritance,”** touched our hearts and soul. Thankful for all our worship participants, **Sister Annie Matthews Haynes, Brother Nickolas Clark-Durham, Sister Sandra Mosby, Sister Sharon Mazyck, Brother Isaih George, and Reverend Bernadette Hickman-Maynard.** This was truly an awesome experience, and we were basking in God's glory.

New Jersey Conference Lay Organization (NJCLO)

Sister Elizabeth Clark, President

Submitted by Sister Francine Davis –NJCLO Director of Lay Activities

What a time we had on our Lay Witness Night Service!

Under the leadership of our newly elected NJCLO president Sister Elizabeth Clark, our service started off worshiping through music under the direction of Brother Kyle Smith. Our Young Adults served as participants in the Worship Service.

Following was a moving sermon from Reverend Tammy M. Mitchell, pastor of Remnant AME Church in S. Toms River, New Jersey. Her sermon topic was “Put Down the Bucket”. We were grateful how God used her to deliver the word and bless our souls through songs and his word.

Oh, what a time we had in worship!



Rev. Tammy M. Mitchell,
pastor of Remnant AME
Church (S. Toms River, NJ)



In loving Memory of Mrs. Brenda W. Lazier

March 2, 1944 - February 5, 2023

She stood small in stature but during her tenure as President of the New Jersey Conference Lay Organization she stood tall as a giant. Our Lay Organization will always remember the good times, laughter, and fun we’ve made and how she kept us aware of the historical events that took place in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Her life was a blessing, and her legacy was a treasure to our New Jersey Conference Lay Organization for ever.

We have the Fondest Memories of our NJCLO Members

*Brother Robert Lee, Past Local Lay President
Greater Mount Zion AME Church
Trenton, New Jersey*

*Sister Mary Jo Blue
Bethel AME Church
Asbury, New Jersey*

*Annette Allen
Fisk Chapel AME Church
Fair Haven, New Jersey*





“FIRST IN TOUCH”



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



The Transition Is in You!

Sharon Carmichael - DoPR

About two months ago I was asked to speak on a Lay Day theme “Encouraging Laity to Embrace Transition for “HIS” Glory, taken from Isaiah 43:19 – “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”

In pondering on the theme, it came to me that not only are we to embrace transition, but we are also the transition. The transition is in us.

Yes, God is going to transform you, but also through you He will bring about transformation in His church, in your community, in your country, and even in your world. God has empowered you to bring about the transition, the change. Just like the Prego spaghetti sauce commercial says, “It’s in there.” Where is there? It is Inside. Inside where? Inside you!

Think about wifi networks. They are comprised of channels that operate at different frequencies. If you are having slow network problems, you may need to change the channel on your router to get a better network experience, or change your location. Similarly in our lives we may need to change to get a better connection with God. We can be our own enablers / change agents.

Be mindful that you may not always be able to look to your leadership to give you a formula for bringing about change in the church. Change starts from the ground up. Look around the world at third world countries, for example. The people get fed up and start to protest and demand change. They start revolutions and the change happens, not easily, but it happens. Empires and monarchies fall. Remember the saying, “Giants do fall.”

Stop waiting around and pointing fingers about whose responsibility it is. Be like Nike and “Just Do It!” If you build it, others will come. If you change, so will others. It will rub off on them. It will be contagious, just like Covid, but in a positive way.

I reflect back on a famous speech from Rev. Dr. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr in 1967 where he asked, “What’s in your hand?”. He told them, “You’ve got God in your hand, and He’ll let you win! Because He’s on your side, and one with God is always in the majority. So, walk with Him and talk with Him, and work with him, and stick together, and fight together! And with God’s hand in your hand, the victory will be accomplished, here, sooner than you dreamed, sooner than you hoped, sooner than you prayed for, sooner than you imagined.” What’s in your hand my fellow AME laity? The transition is in your hand. It’s in you!





"FIRST IN TOUCH"



"Living a Global Witness Ministry that Transforms, Transcends and Liberates"
Luke 4: 18-19

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Cheryl L. Ford
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Shawn Lee

Shawn Lee
Historiographer

Thomas Davis
Director of Lay Activities

Sharon Carmichael
Director of Public Relations

Jyzelle Steplight
Young Adult Representative



First Episcopal District Lay Organization

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Living a Global Witness Ministry that
TRANSFORMS, TRANSCENDS, AND LIBERATES