

*"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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### *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 were well attended at the Connectional Lay Biennial in Chicago, IL. Thank you those who joined us as part of the First District delegation.

We had another wonderful Virtual Annual Meeting in July and we give God the Glory. I would like to thank our DOLA, Brother Thomas Davis who does an excellent job. Our theme was "Reporting and Accountability."

For our Friday night worship, our preacher was the Reverend Dr. Erika Crawford, the Pastor of Mt. Zion AME in Dover, DE. She truly blessed us with her message. We thank all of those who participated in the worship experience.

On Saturday, we took care of business with the Memorial Service and our Annual Reports. We thank the elected officers, conference presidents and committee chairpersons who got their reports into me in a timely manner so they could be sent out ahead of time. It also works well with the reports all being uniform.

Our workshop on "Working Your Plan" was excellent and well received. The presenter was the Director of Public Relations for the 11<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District, Sister Robbyn Mitchell Hopewell. We also had a session on Accountability presented by Reverend Jay Broadnax, Pastor of Mt. Pisgah AME Church in Philadelphia. Congratulations to Earl Knight, III our Young Adult of the Year.

We are looking forward to our Hybrid Mid-Year Convention hosted by the Bermuda Conference in

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February 2024. Our theme is “Glorifying God by Serving Beyond Yourself.” We look forward to presentations from the Reverend Dr. Jahkimmo Smith, the Reverend Dr. Leonard Santucci, the Reverend Mark Kelly Tyler, PhD, and we will hear from our Conference Presidents. Our worship preacher is the Reverend Dr. Jahkimmo Smith. We know we will be blessed.

Thank 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. I truly believe our team is the best team in any Episcopal District. None of it is possible without YOU. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Please know that: *“We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength.”* *Philippians 4:13*

*First Episcopal District Lay Virtual Annual Meeting - July 21 - 22, 2023*  
*Submitted by Sister Sharon Carmichael – DOPR*

In their high standard of excellence, our First Episcopal District Lay President Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell and Director of Lay Activities (DOLA) Thomas Davis planned a well-executed and well received virtual Annual Lay Meeting via Zoom on Friday, July 21 and Saturday, July 22, 2023, focusing on “Reporting and Accountability”.

For the Friday night worship, Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Sr., Presiding Prelate of the First Episcopal District of the AME Church presented our preacher, The Reverend Dr. Erika B. Crawford, Connectional WIM President and Pastor of Mt. Zion AME Church in Dover, Delaware. Reverend Crawford delivered a powerful message, “I’m holding you accountable”, taken from Mark 6:1-6.



Reverend Crawford taught us that the Bible says that the Lord is not slow in keeping His word. If God didn’t move or respond, it may be because of our unbelief. Maybe we need to hold ourselves accountable.

Until we come to believe, nothing is going to happen. She admonished us to “Believe what you cannot see. Stop looking for everyone else to do it. Declare into the atmosphere that God can do anything!”

The Saturday Business Session was kicked off by Brother Earl Knight, III with devotions and praise and worship which ushered in the spirit of God.

Brother Knight then led us in Bible study with the topic “But the Lord is in His Holy Temple”, taken from Habakkuk 2:20.



Our Director of Lay Activities, Brother Thomas Davis reviewed the theme “Accountability”, providing us with a detailed definition to live by: “Accountability is the state of being

accountable or answerable. We are liable for every action we take and every thought we have. We will one day be called on to render an account of our life. We will bear the obligation for each action, thought and spoken word. We are doulas, or slaves to Christ”. Bother Davis also provided us with handouts of scriptures, the differences between Accountability and Responsibility, and 40 Bible verses on Accountability.

Brother Davis kept us on task by reviewing the “Code of Conduct and Meeting Etiquette” and the agenda for the day. He is quite efficient.

Evangelist Kitty Combs-Smith led the Memorial Service with a reading from 2 Corinthians 5:1, followed by a very moving “It is Well With My Soul” sang by Brother Earl Knight, III.

The Annual Reports were given by elected officers, the Conference Presidents, and the Report of President Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell.

President Hopewell also announced the 2023 Young Adult of the Year Awardee, Brother Earl Knight, III.

We were greeted by our First Episcopal District Lay Advisor, Mrs. Mary Mootoo, Reverend Trevor E. Woolridge, Presiding Elder Howard Dill (Bermuda), Judge Tania E. Wright, and other visiting clergy and guests who joined the session.

After the Business Session, we were enlightened by a workshop entitled “Working Your Plan – Designing and Implementing a Christ-Centered Strategic Plan for Your Life or Organization”, 1 Corinthians 3:7-9, presented by Sister Robbyn M. Hopewell who is the 11<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District



Director of Public Relations (DOPR) and 2<sup>nd</sup> VP of the West Conference Lay Organization. Sister Robbyn also happens to be the daughter-in-law of President Hopewell.

Sister Hopewell told us that Strategic Planning is the “Bedrock of Accountability” and that she is a “Strategic Planning Enthusiast”. She enriched our minds as she pointed out that goals must be SMART (Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Timebound). In making our plans we must be bold, perform skills assessments, identify our audience, establish a budget, research methods,

have low overhead, and go back and re-asses our plan before beginning work. Wow! Thank you Sister Robbyn Hopewell.

Lastly, we were spiritually fed with a “Meditation on Accountability” from

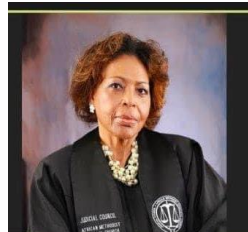


The Reverend Jay B. Broadnax, Pastor of Mt. Pisgah AME Church in Philadelphia, PA. Reverend Broadnax blessed us with the presentation, “We Are One Another’s Keepers: A Lesson Accountability”.

- All people are called to be “accountable”.
- We are GIVEN minds, bodies spirits, hearts, possessions and resources.
- “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked”. (Luke 12:48)

Reverend Broadnax reminded us that as Christians we are free, but we are accountable for our bodies, our minds, our words, our hearts, our resources, our work, to people, and more importantly to God.

Another successful meeting was adjourned by President Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell with First District Laity looking forward to the 2024 Mid-Year Convention in Bermuda. To God be the Glory!



*First Episcopal District Lay  
Young Adult of the Year*

*Congratulations Brother Earl Knight, III!*



# *"Spotlight on Our Conferences"*

## *Delaware Conference Lay Organization (DCLO)*

*Submitted by Sister Sharon D. Drew, President*



### **2023 Delaware Conference Annual Lay Recognition Banquet**

*Honoring the Lay Presidents - Past and Present*

**Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President**

**Sister Sharon Drew, Delaware Conference Lay President**



DE Conference  
Lay President,  
Sharon Drew

Over 400 people attended the Annual Recognition Banquet honoring Lay Presidents, both past and present, guided by the leadership of Sister Sharon Drew, the president of the Delaware Conference Laity.

The event was held in Dover, Delaware at the Modern Maturity on Saturday, September 9, 2023. It was a tremendous success.

The Community of Men rendered several handclapping and foot-tapping selections.

Our Presiding Elders, Reverend J. Stanley Justice and Reverend Ellis B. Loudon transformed the Modern Maturity Center to the grandness of the Apollo with their solos. All of our Honorees were worthy to be recognized and celebrated.

Members of the Delaware Conference Lay cabinet who ensured the program and benefits were a great success include Louise Hudson (1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President), Katrina Smith (Financial Secretary), Cecelia Sanders (Historiographer) and the word dropping Mistress of Ceremonies Sister Rose Poole (Macedonia A.M.E. Church, Seaford, Delaware).

We welcome our newest Lay Presidents to the leadership fold: Sister Alvera Lynette Wills from St. Paul A.M.E. Church and Sister KeAndra Hackett of Byrd's A.M.E. Church.

Kudos to the Ways and Means Committee for another successful event.

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**Delaware Conference Annual Lay Recognition Banquet  
(continued)**



Presiding Elder of the Wilmington District J. Stanley Justice



Presiding Elder of the Dover District, Ellis B. Louden



Presentation to President Sharon Drew with Pastor Hearst, II and Nancy Guy, President of Lay (Bethel Wilmington)



Special presentation to Conference President



Community of Men Choir

# *"Spotlight on Our Conferences"*

## ***New Jersey Conference Lay Organization (NJCLO)***

**Sister Elizabeth Clark, President**

**Submitted by Sister Francine Davis, DOLA**

### **Unsung Hero Breakfast**

After nearly four years of social distancing and mandated face masks, 316 people returned in person for one of the most exciting occasions held by the New Jersey Conference Lay Organization.

On September 16, 2023, at the Pines Manor in Edison NJ, the NJCLO hosted their Unsung Hero Breakfast, celebrating members from 16 local churches, who have rendered untiring dedicated service to their church and community.

In addition, our conference saluted our outstanding First Episcopal District Lay President and Corresponding Secretary for the Connectional Lay Organization, Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell and husband Brother Irvin Hopewell.

Our celebrated event was started by musician Brother Nathaniel Smith who set the tone by entertaining our guests with soothing music. Our dynamic keynote speaker, Reverend Dr. Catina Jackson, captured our guests' attention by giving encouraging words and highlighting our

unsung heroes personally.

The event was well received, and the NJCLO is looking forward to greater participation at our next Unsung Hero event.

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### **Annual Meeting**

After finding out that the return of our in-person Unsung Hero event sparked excitement, eagerness and interest, our President Sister Elizabeth Clark decided to gather our conference one more time on November 4, 2023.

The New Jersey Conference Lay Organization held their first in-person Annual Meeting since 2019 at Greater Mt. Zion AME Church, in Trenton, NJ. The speaker of the hour was Reverend Crystal James, Pastor of Union AME Church Allentown, New Jersey. Her sermon was titled "Help Wanted: UnPerfect People".

This experience gave many lay members the opportunity to reconnect with other NJCLO members who attended.



L to R: 1<sup>st</sup> District Lay President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, NJCLO President Elizabeth Clark, Mr. Irving Hopewell



Unsung Heroes Keynote Speaker Reverend Dr. Catina Jackson



ght)

# "Spotlight on Our Conferences"

## New York Conference Lay Organization (NYCLO)

Sister Bonita O'Neal, President

Submitted by Brother Gerald H. Tootle, DOPR and Sister Wilma H. Tootle, DOLA

### A Lay Ministry of the 'Passionate and Purposeful' Life

On Sunday, November 12, 2023, the Mae L. Felder Lay Organization at Bethel A.M.E. Church, Freeport, New York celebrated its Annual Lay Day with Dr. Marcus T. Henderson, Sr. serving as the guest speaker. Dr. Henderson, Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, spoke from the subject, "The Passionate and Purposeful" and he identified ten characteristics of passionate and purposeful people. All in attendance listened intently and took notes as Dr. Henderson delivered the wisdom of this powerful message.

The spirit-filled worship service was well-attended, both in person and virtually. Pastor Stephen Michael Lewis and the laity of Bethel Church were pleased with the presence of Reverend Dr. Jo-An L. Owings, Presiding Elder of the Jamaica Long Island

District and Mrs. Yolanda Henderson, wife of Dr. Henderson. The worship service was further enhanced by the presence and participation of New York Conference Lay Organization officers, Sister Bonita O'Neal, President; Sister Patricia Thornhill, First Vice President; Dr. Alicia Collins-Dennis, Director of Lay Activities; and Sister JoAnn McCaslin, President, Lay Organization at Bethel A.M.E. Church, Babylon.

Local Lay President Velma Rhodes-Ward and members hosted a post-service reception in the Fellowship Hall. Guests and members of the congregation enjoyed refreshments, shared memories of past Lay Organization gatherings, took photos and reflected on how to model the "global witness ministry" in their daily lives.



L to R: Dr. Marcus Henderson, Speaker; Charlene Palmore-Lewis, First Lady, Bethel AME Church; Yolanda Henderson, wife of Dr. Marcus Henderson; Rev. Dr. Jo-An L. Owings, Presiding Elder, Jamaica Long Island District; and Rev. Stephen Michael Lewis, Pastor, Bethel AME Church, Freeport.



Dr. Marcus T. Henderson, Speaker - Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer, AME Church



Pastor Stephen Michael Lewis (center), First Lady Palmore-Lewis, guest program participants, and members of the Mae L. Felder Lay Organization.



***Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization (PCLO)***

***Brother Andree' Turner, President  
Submitted by Sister Constance Williams. DOPR***

**PCLO Celebrates Meritorious Service and Academic Excellence**

The officers and members of the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization strive to serve and put forth their best efforts by sharing our God given gifts, talents, time and treasure in Christian preparation, teaching, training and service to God, Church, and community. In recognition and celebration of such dedication and selfless service, the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization, affectionately known as the PCLO, had a very busy time during the month of October, 2023. The PCLO held its annual Awards Luncheon and selected the 2023 Cheryl Hammond Hopewell Lay Scholarship recipients.

The PCLO's Annual Awards Luncheon was held on Saturday, October 7, 2023 at 12 noon at the Springfield Country Club in Springfield, PA. It was a chilly autumn day with light to moderate rain outside, but the inside atmosphere was lit up, festive, and guests greeted each other with squeals of joy and lighthearted conversation. This year's luncheon was the second post pandemic, live gathering held by the PCLO to follow its annual tradition and pursuit of excellence. The Event and program were planned and directed by Chairperson Sister Yvette Bayne, Local Lay President at Mother Bethel AME Church, and Vice Chair, Brother Kevin B. Lamb, 2nd Vice President of the PCLO and Local Lay President of Jones Tabernacle AME Church. Brother Kevin D. Lamb who served as Master of Ceremonies was introduced by Cynthia Douse, PCLO 3rd Vice President and Lay President at New Bethel Germantown AME Church, to get the affair started. Brother Earl Knight, III, PCLO Director of Music, offered uplifting and spirited musical selections throughout the celebration. After Introduction and Procession of Dais Guests, The Laymen's Hymn was sung with enthusiastic energy by those assembled. The Invocation and Table Blessing was offered by

Sister Jaunita Bryant, PCLO Chaplain and Lay President of Mt. Tabor AME Church. Sister Marie Butler, Lay President of Campbell AME provided a warm Welcome and introduced special guests. Brother Keith Arrington, PCLO Director of Lay Activities and Lay President at Mt. Pisgah AME Church, highlighted the essence of The Occasion, followed by an uplifting musical selection by Sister Joetta Cryer, a member of Mother Bethel. Lunch was served and the happy, chatty guests enjoyed a tasty meal. The purpose of the Awards banquet was fulfilled when Brother Asa C. McCollum, Lay President at St. Paul AME Church, Malvern, and PCLO Lay Person of the Year and Unsung Heroes from 28 churches were recognized. Brother Asa, a long serving Lay President at St. Paul A M E Church, Malvern as well as a dedicated Marshall in the Philadelphia Annual Conference was honored and celebrated as a Christian gentleman, loving husband and father, and dedicated servant to church and community. The Unsung Heroes were presented, applauded, and given their awards with high praise and appreciation. Laudatory remarks and expressions of appreciation were given by Chair Bayne, Co-Chair Lamb, PCLO President Andree A. Turner, Sr., and Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, CLO Corresponding Secretary and First District Lay Organization President. After the closing prayer by Reverend Joan L. Davis, Pastor, St. Paul AME Church, Malvern, this joyful, festive occasion was concluded with the singing of the Lay Benediction.

At the October monthly meeting of the PCLO, the recipients of the 2023 Cheryl Hammond Hopewell Lay Scholarship were announced by Sister Tameko Patten, PCLO Education Committee Chair. They are Zaria Carter (Monumental AME Church Steelton), and Zakai Ballard (St. Paul AME Church Elmwood).

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**PCLO Celebrates Meritorious Service and Academic Excellence (continued)**

Ms. Carter is the daughter of Sister Marcie A. Carter and in June 2023, she graduated from Central Dauphin East High School, Harrisburg PA. She is attending Temple University majoring in Biology, Teaching and Research. She continues to be a scholar and outstanding participant in school, church, and community activities. Mr. Zakai Ballard is the son of Sister Tamika Floyd. In June 2023, he graduated from George Washington Carver High School in Philadelphia, PA. He attends Bloomsburg University and is majoring in Computer Science. He was chosen as one of only ten High School students

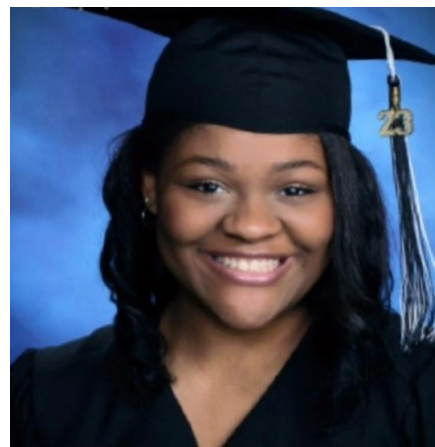
in Pennsylvania as a 2023 Boeing STEM Honoree. The Cheryl Hammond Hopewell Lay Scholarship was created by its namesake and has blessed two students a year for the last ten years. Our prayers and love go with these two promising students as they embark on their college journey and continue to pursue excellence. The PCLO is most thankful to God for the opportunity to acknowledge, bless and celebrate those among us, young and seasoned who reach the highest heights and give and serve in a most excellent way in church, family, and community.



PCLO President Andree A. Turner, Sr., Asa McCollum, Sister Yvette Bayne, Brother Kevin Lamb



Zakai Ballard



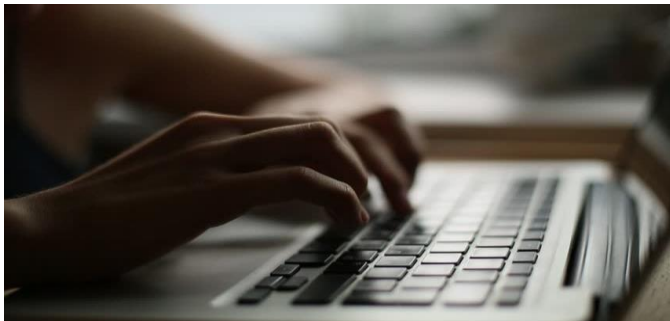
Zaria Carter



# "FIRST IN TOUCH"



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



Sharon Carmichael - DoPR

### Time to Recalibrate

Happy New Year Lay Brothers and Sisters!

Blessings come in many unexpected ways. I was blessed with an inspiring message on Sunday, New Year's Eve morning. Philippians 3:12-14 NKJV reads "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." Then, again several times in the days after Sunday, I heard similar thoughts in messages I received, in quotes I read, and in daily living encounters. It's even in our First Episcopal District theme, "Moving On". Have you ever had the thought, "God is trying to tell me something?" God was giving me confirmation.

God will help us to let go of all that lies behind us. The negative things that may have entangled us; the bad habits we cannot break; the fears and anxieties that keep chasing us.

Forget and forgive what is past and open yourself to a fresh start. Get ready for it. Believe that God is making all things new, and that He is preparing you for glory beyond what

you can imagine. Open yourself up to Him, and He will bless you to live in that glory here and now.

That's recalibration... Adjusting, amending, changing, developing. Think of how you might do this in your Lay ministry to improve and to help others do the same to grow in their ministry; to reach out, spread the news by word of mouth, via email, and social media about the goodness of God. How could this help you to draw others to the church and closer to Christ? There are so many possibilities to grow yourself, your ministry, and our Zion when you recalibrate.

It is important for us to recalibrate our lives according to God's standards and carry on the work that He has planned for us. Let the past stuff go, shake it off, hit the re-set button, and move forward! Keep your focus on Jesus and His will and plan for your life. Hold on and have faith in God.

Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God..."





# "FIRST IN TOUCH"



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**Shawn Lee**  
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**Sharon Carmichael**  
 Director of Public Relations

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## *First Episcopal District Lay Organization*

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