

"FIRST IN TOUCH"



FIRST EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY NEWSLETTER

February 2022

Mid-Year 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."

In This Issue ...

Greetings from the President	1
First Episcopal District Lay Annual Meeting	3
2021 First District Lay Young Adult of the Year	4
Conference Happenings	
• Delaware Conference Annual Meeting	5
• New England Conference	6
• New Jersey Conference At the Biennial	7
• New York Conference	8
• Philadelphia Conference	9
A Word from the DoPR	11
About Us	12

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. It was great to see many of you at the General Conference and Connectional Lay Biennial in Orlando, Florida. We congratulate those elected from the First District: Bishop Silvester Beaman and General Officer Dr. Marcellus Norris. Congratulations also to Rev. Dr. Miriam Burnett who is the new Episcopal Supervisor for the 18th Episcopal District. We also came back with a new Bishop and Episcopal Supervisor, Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Sr. and Mother Joan McAllister. I was honored to be elected

Corresponding Secretary for the Connectional Lay Organization. Thank you for your support in this effort. I pledge to do my best in this new position while not letting anything lack in my position as your president.

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 outstanding job putting our programs and worship services together. Our workshop was in several parts. The "Toolkit for Officers" was presented by DOLA Thomas Davis, "Succession Planning" was presented by yours truly, and "Best Practices" was done by Sisters Mootoo, Drew and yours truly. We are grateful to Rev. James C. Simmons who was the messenger for our worship experience. Thanks also to all who participated in the service.

Continued on Page 2

Greetings from the First Episcopal District Lay President

(Continued)



Thank you to officers and committee chairpersons for your annual reports. It worked very well with them being uniform and all being received ahead of time.

This will be the first time in two years we will be meeting in person as a District Lay. Our last in-person meeting was our 2020 Mid-Year Meeting in the NE Conference. We look forward to this 2022 in-person Mid-Year meeting in the NY Conference. Covid protocols will be in place and masks will be required throughout the weekend.

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. 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 Annual Meeting – July 31, 2021

Submitted by Sister Sharon Carmichael - DOPR



Mrs. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, 1st District Lay President



Mr. Thomas Davis, DOLA



Reverend James C. Simmons

On the heels of our 51st Quadrennial and 37th CLO Biennial, our most efficient President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell did not miss a step in spite of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and Delta variant. President Hopewell and Director of Lay Activities (DOLA) Thomas Davis convened what was traditionally a 2.5-day Lay Annual Meeting as a well-organized 4-hour meeting on a Zoom platform from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. EST. Attending Laity, Clergy, District and Connectional Officers were blessed with a fulfilling meeting experience of devotion, bible study, business, and accountability,

training, and worship.

Utilizing the theme “Don’t Get Overwhelmed, Get Wisdom”, based on the scripture “Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding”, Proverbs 3:13 (NRSV), the attendees were enlightened by a panel discussion, “A Conversation on Best Practices for Newly Elected and Appointed Officers”. Panelists Mr. Thomas Davis (1st District Lay DOLA), Mrs. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell (1st District Lay President), Mrs. Mary Mootoo (1st District Lay President Emeritus), and

Mrs. Sharon Drew (1st District Lay Recording Secretary), and President Hopewell (Financial Officer) all provided their experiences, insights, recommendations, a toolkit, and references for officers and those seeking to become officers.

The Worship Service Guest Preacher, Reverend James C. Simmons, Pastor of Baber AME Church in Rochester, New York delivered a thought-provoking, soul-stirring sermon, “I’m Still Here”, taken from Genesis 22:1-13. The sermon intent was to help us, despite adverse experiences, have life, and have it more abundantly. To God be the Glory!

“DON’T GET OVERWHELMED, GET WISDOM”



Mr. Thomas Davis



Pres. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell



Mrs. Mary Mootoo



Mrs. Sharon Drew

*Congratulations Sister Starsha Divine Freerson
First Episcopal District Lay Young Adult of the Year!*



Delaware Conference Lay Organization

Sharon Drew, President



Delaware Conference Lay Organization Re-elects Sharon D. Drew as President at the Annual Lay Meeting

Submitted by Sister Sharon Drew



Rev. Dr. Tresa Coston

The Delaware Conference Annual Lay Meeting was held on November 6, 2021. Rev. Dr. Tresa Coston, Pastor of Byrd's AME Church in Clayton, Delaware gave the meditation and reminded us that we all have a purpose, and we should be operating in our purpose. The Memorial Service followed the meditation.

The meeting continued with greetings from the Presiding Elders Rev. Ellis Loudon and Rev. Richard Worthy, Consultant Rev. Vera Worthy, and President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell. Several Pastors of the Delaware Conference were in attendance.

During this meeting, officers were elected for the 2022—2024 Conference Years. The officers elected were:

President	Sharon D. Drew
1st Vice President	Louise Hudson
2nd Vice President	Doris Palmer
Assistant Recording Secretary	Delema Carter
Corresponding Secretary	Rosalynne Hart
Treasurer	Ronell Brown
Financial Secretary	Katrina Smith
Chaplain	Sandra Griffin
Director of Lay Activities	Terri Fisher
Director of Public Relations	Denise Hope
Young Adult Representative	RogJenea` Fisher
Historiographer	Cecelia Sanders
Parliamentarian	Alice Mitchell

President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell conducted the election and duly installed the officers. We extend sincere thanks to the outgoing officers and to the newly elected officers.

Book Scholarships

The Conference Lay Scholarship Committee awarded Book Scholarships during the Annual Meeting to five of the Young Adults in the Delaware Conference:

Ayo J. Mandela—Howard University

Jessica C. Simmons—Hampton University

Justin Morgan—Delaware State University

Faith Skinner—University of Delaware

Maya Rochester—Kutztown University

Stay-at-home Tea

The Delaware Conference sponsored a Stay-at-Home Tea on Saturday, December 4, 2021. This was a first-time event for the Conference and was held via the Zoom Platform. Some participants on the program were family members of the late Dr. Martin A. Drew. His Granddaughter, Imani Drew, sang two songs from her Senior Recital; his daughter, Mikelle Drew-Pellum, did a reading. Patricia Thomas of Mt. Hebron AME Church gave a brief history about the legend of tea. More than fifty persons were in attendance for this wonderful afternoon event. Hats were worn by some attendees and highlighted along with some tea table settings. There were door prizes awarded to add to the fun of the day.

New England Conference Lay Organization

Linda Gant, President



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

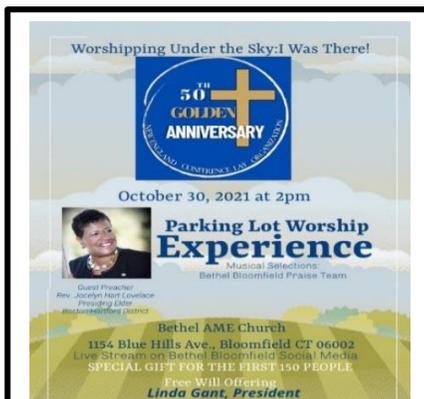
Submitted by Sister Linda Gant

“Empowering the Pew” is the governing theme for the New England Conference Lay Organization for the season. Sis. Nicol Ayers, our Director of Lay Activities has commissioned the local Presidents to be facilitators for our workshops, reminding them that they too have the gifts to be presenters. Bro. Henry McMillan, Bethel Bloomfield Lay President led the charge with his workshop on **“The Cost of Membership,”** centering his Scripture focus on Hebrews 10:24-25. He was followed by Bro. T. R. Jones, St. James Danbury Lay President with his workshop on **“Constitution and Bylaws”** and their importance for our governance. Thank you to you both for stepping out and allowing God’s given talents to shine forth as you both did an excellent job on your workshops.

“Celebrating 50 Years” – To God be the Glory, great things He has done! The New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO) celebrating 50 Years of organizing and training laity, held its first **“Worshipping Under the Sky,”** Parking Lot Service. It had to be moved to the Sanctuary as the weather did not want to cooperate with us. God certainly showed up to remind us that it doesn’t matter where we worship, as long as we do! From the opening Lay Hymn, the prayer, the songs sung (a Libation Ceremony performed by Sis. Josephine Fulcher Anderson), to the rededication prayer by *Retired Presiding Elder Herbert L. Eddy* and the hearing of

our Historical Framework by none other than Sis. Ethel Marie Wallace-Jenkins, we worshipped God and watched the Holy Spirit move throughout the service. To take us even further for our mountaintop experience, our very own *Presiding Elder Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace* allowed God to use her as she preached **“From the Heart,”** from Colossians 3:23-24. Did not our hearts burn!!! We thank the best First Episcopal District President, Sis. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell and Bro. Irv Hopewell, who thought it not robbery to change their plans to come and celebrate with us. Oh, how wonderful! We are also grateful to our Director of Lay Activities, Sis. Nicol Ayers, our Committee Chairperson, Sis. Josephine Fulcher Anderson, and the following worship participants: Sis. Sandra Mosby, Bro. Nickolas Clark-Durham, Bro. Henry McMillan, Sis. Brenda Birch, Bethel Bloomfield Praise Team, and Rev. Daylan K. Greer, Sr. They all made this an Anniversary Celebration to be remembered.

“Celebrating with the Newly Elected Council Woman!” – We are extremely proud of our Director of Lay Activities, Sis. Nicol Ayers, who was elected and sworn in as Town of Norwalk Council Woman for District A. It was an honor to be invited to witness Sis. Nicol take her oath of office. We know that God has set her aside for a time such as this when the world needs change from the status quo. Congratulations Sis. Nicol. We got your back!



50th Anniversary Flyer



50th Anniversary Committee and Worship Participants



Nicol Ayers and Linda Gant

Our Conference Happenings

New Jersey Conference Lay Organization

Marcus Burnett, President



New Jersey Conference Lay at the Connectional Lay Organization Biennial

Submitted by Sister Elizabeth Clark, DOLA





Sister Delores Thompson Street Naming

Submitted by Sister Carol Francis, New York Conference Lay Director of Public Relations



Delores Thompson

On Tuesday, September 28, 2021, East Second Street in Huntington Station was renamed in honor of Dolores “Dee” Thompson, the 92-year-old activist and civil rights leader.

The intersection of East Second Street and New York Avenue is where she founded the Huntington Station Enrichment Center as a community facility for residents. The Center provided training in computer skills, entrepreneurship, English as a second language, job placement, youth, and senior services.

Dolores Thompson, who serves as chairperson of the Dolan Family Health Center Advisory Board, is a long-time member of leadership on Huntington’s President’s Council, and a corporate trustee of the Huntington Hospital Board of Directors.

Dolores is a dedicated member of her church, Bethel AME Church, Huntington, New York where

the Reverend Larry D. Jennings is the Pastor. Her work in the community mirrors her giving and unselfish spirit in her church. She works diligently in the vineyard, exemplifying her love for God’s people and His church. She was president of the Usher Board for more than ten years, trustee for six years, and president of the President’s Council for many years. She was Chairperson of the Finance Committee for the past six years.

Dolores was also an active member of the New York Conference Lay Organization. She volunteered for and worked on numerous standing committees on the conference level and held elected positions. She was elected to the position of First Vice President and served in that capacity until her term ended in 2020. She was also a lay delegate for several General Conferences of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Dolores served in the First Episcopal District Lay Organization as Financial Chair for six years. She is still active and presently serves as Audit Chair of the District Conference Lay Organization.



Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization

Andree A. Turner, President



Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization (PCLO)

Gathers for First Annual Retreat on Zoom

Submitted by Sister Constance Williams, PCLO Director of Public Relations

The PCLO goes on retreat every October. October 16, 2021 was no exception to this tradition of setting aside time to explore and meditate on spiritual and everyday quality of life concerns for all members. This novel retreat experience on Zoom was planned and developed by Sister Margaret Miller, PCLO Director of Lay Activities, and her committee.

This year's Retreat provided a workshop entitled **“Addressing the Stigma Associated with Mental Illness”** presented by Reverend Dr. Melinda Contreras-Byrd, M. Div., PsyD. She is a member of the staff at Saint Matthew AME Church in Philadelphia. The worship meditation was given by Reverend Albert Johnson, Pastor of Mt. Tabor AME Church in Philadelphia with the intriguing and inviting title of **“What Are You Doing Here?”**.

Reverend Contreras-Byrd provoked thoughtful consideration of the fact that the stigma attached to being perceived as mentally ill is common in our personal beliefs, our society, our community and sadly in our churches. Struggling with life and being different in the world often places some adults in the vulnerable position of being less valued, isolated, feared, excluded, misunderstood, and labelled “crazy,” “weird,” “strange,” “hostile” and “flighty”. Children who struggle with learning or show behavior considered “bad” or noncompliant are seen negatively and punished rather than helped because of learning disabilities (neurodevelopmental Disorders, Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism) and psychosocial stressors including abuse in the home.

Valuable Take Home messages from her workshop include:

- 1 in 5 of U.S. adults live with mental illness, so it is more common than thought.
- People of color, especially African American and Latinx Americans, are more likely than whites to be diagnosed with more severe disorders like Schizophrenia and put on stronger medication with poor follow-up.
- Others are given the diagnosis of Mood Disorder, which is treated and followed-up better.
- Blacks are more likely to be put in jail rather than treatment for the same behaviors.
- Less than 2% of the American Psychological Society are Black even though we are 13% of the U.S. population.
- The stigma of mental illness causes people to not seek treatment or keep it a secret.
- The mentally ill are more likely to be victimized rather than hurting anyone.
- People believe that children cannot be mentally ill, but they do experience mental illness.
- Nine out of ten of us have a family member who is mentally ill.
- Mental illness is seen as weakness rather than an illness.
- Some Christians are taught to believe it is the devil and evil people, not mental illness. The devil and evil people can use mental illness against others, but like physical illness, mental illness is real. You can

Continued on Page 10

(Continued)

believe God and seek therapy and medicine to heal.

- You are not a bad Christian if you need therapy or medicine to treat and overcome mental illness. It is powerful to pray for healing as we do with physical illness.

Decreasing misinformation, learning facts about mental illness, and approaching ourselves and others with compassion and a willingness to assist will help to extinguish negative and fearful attitudes and enhance the lives of those experiencing mental illness. Therapy, medicine, prayer and positive, supportive relationships, and participation in your church are great ways to treat, heal and cope with mental illness for yourself and others. The Church can be a refuge providing knowledge, God’s care, acceptance, and inclusion for all.

Reverend Albert Johnson’s meditation, “What Are You Doing Here?”, was taken from 1 Kings 19:1-10. This meditation recalls the plight of Elijah after he fled to the wilderness under penalty of death and feeling failure and the aloneness of not fulfilling all that God

expected of him. His despair made him forget the power and promises of God. His spirit was so oppressed that he not only ran away but decided he wanted to die and give up his service and work for God. Even today this still happens to us as laboring laypersons. We go about making disciples and trying to do our mission of teaching and training but are often thwarted at every turn. This makes us want to give up and run away, avoiding the challenging work of keeping the faith. So Reverend Johnson asked the same question of us that the voice of God asked Elijah, “What are you doing here?”. Out of place and fighting feelings of failure and loss of commitment, we need to remember that the Lord is with us and fights our battles. We must avoid wallowing in the death of our Faith and be empowered to return, reset, and reenergize by the promise and power of God. Like the workshop, the meditation was nurturing to the spirit and instruction to the mind. **PCLO President, Andree A. Turner, Sr., and the membership are thankful for the efforts of our Director of Lay Activities and both of our inspiring speakers for such a relevant and informative retreat.**



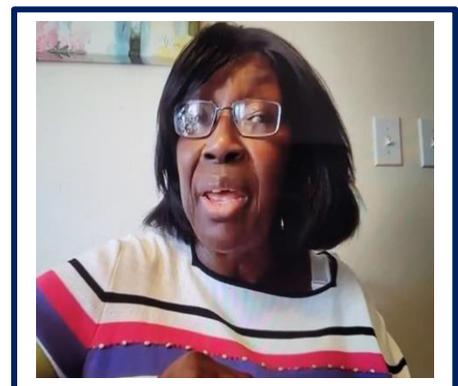
PCLO President Andree A. Turner



Rev. Dr. Melinda Contreras-Bvrd



Rev. Albert Johnson, Pastor, Mt. Tabor



Margaret Miller, PCLO DOLA



First Episcopal District Lay Organization

We're on the Web!
Visit us at ...

www.1stdistrictlay.org

Like us on Facebook at...

[First Episcopal District Lay Organization](https://www.facebook.com/1stdistrictlaydopr)

Contact us at...

1stdistrictlaydopr@gmail.com



Bishop Julius Harrison McAllister, Sr.

Presiding Prelate
First Episcopal District
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Mother Joan Marla McAllister

Episcopal Supervisor
First Episcopal District
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Mrs. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell

President
First Episcopal District
Lay Organization

Sister Sharon Carmichael

Director of Public Relations
First Episcopal District
Lay Organization