



FIRST IN TOUCH LAY NEWSLETTER



Greetings from the First Episcopal District Lay President

MID-YEAR MEETING 2019

Inside this issue:

Dear Loyal Laity,

I am thankful to Almighty God for His many, many blessings and I am grateful to each and every one of you for all you do for African Methodism and the Lay Organization. Our Annual Meeting in July in Dover, DE was a huge success. We were able to get our business done as all elected officers and committee chairpersons gave an account of their stewardship for the past year.

We continued to have wonderful and inspirational Bible Study and although the Annual Meeting is mainly for business, we still had two exciting and engaging workshops led by young adults on “Methodists – A Singing People” and “AME for Me, What’s Missing?”

We also continued to take care of our bodies by rising early for 30 minutes of morning fitness. Our Friday night service was a blessing with special thanks to our preacher, Brother Sean Lewis, First District YPD President. At each meeting we continue to provide an excellent newsletter featuring the First District Lay and our seven Conferences.



Our workshops are always streamed live so others can see the wonderful work we are doing. We continue to give ten to eleven scholarships each year and we thank our Scholarship team for a wonderful breakfast on Saturday morning. Scholarship winners and/or their families were present and recognized. The president began the President’s Youth and Young Adult of the Year Award and congratulations to our first winner, Jyzelle Steplight.

Even though only one person could be the ultimate winner, all of them are winners and received gift bags. Thank you to all elected officers, committee chairpersons, members and friends from the officers on every level to no office at all, for making the First District Lay Organization something we can be proud of. I appreciate each of you and thank you for all you have done.

We look forward to our Mid-Year Meeting being hosted by the Philadelphia Conference and know we will have two days of extraordinary workshops. As your president I have continued to travel to all seven conferences to be of support in any way I possibly can by attending your luncheons, lay services, training sessions, funerals, election of officers, conducting workshops and speaking at lay days. I do my best to encourage and support you because I love what I do and I love each of you.

THE WORK IS ALL DIVINE! Looking forward to great things in 2019.

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

Annual Meeting July 2018	2-4
Delaware Conference	5-6
New Jersey Conference	7
Philadelphia Conference	8-9
New England Conference	10
Social Media Challenge	11

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, a& harmony among its members

Bishop

Gregory G.M. Ingram

Presiding Prelate
First Episcopal District
African Methodist
Episcopal Church

Reverend Dr.

Jessica

Kendall Ingram

Episcopal Supervisor
First Episcopal District
African Methodist
Episcopal Church

Mrs. Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell

President
First Episcopal District
Lay Organization

Ms. LaSean R. Shelton

Director of Public Relations
First Episcopal District
Lay Organization



***First Episcopal District Lay Organization
Annual Meeting
Submitted by: Sister Cynthia King
First Episcopal District Lay Historiographer***

The First Episcopal District Lay Organization returned to Dover, Delaware on July 19, 2018 for its Annual Meeting in large numbers and feeling excited after being away for a few years. We were greeted by the Delaware Conference and President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell at the Dover Downs Hotel. We would like to thank President Cheryl, Dr. Martin Drew and the officers and members of the Delaware Annual Conference for making sure our needs were met. Thank you for a great job well done.

On Thursday evening, July 19, 2018, everyone was invited to dinner at Mt. Zion AME Church in Dover. We were received with hugs, smiles and great hospitality. Back at the hotel, lay members assisted with preparing the registration kits, President Cheryl met with the Executive board and the Frank C. Cummings Scholarship committee met.

As the sun rose on Friday morning, July 20, President Cheryl and some of the lay members started the day with morning exercise. If you have never run, walked or exercised with the president, make sure you bring your workout gear at our District Lay Meetings. Morning devotions led by Chaplain Terri Fisher had a theme for the weekend, "The Truth Shall Set You Free". The scripture was from John 8:32. She informed us that when we are set free, we experience the beauty of God and his Word.

First Episcopal District Lay Director, Sister Josephine Fulcher-Anderson greeted us and spoke about the activities for the day. The First Timers were dismissed to meet with Sister Robin Batson. Sister Batson presented the First Timers with an awesome overview of the AME Church and the Lay Organization. She explained to them the facts that we should know as members of the Lay Organization about the AME Church, the history of the Lay Organization and the church, the functions of the church, the church organizations and the levels of the AME Church. Sister Batson spoke about the 2016 Bicentennial Doctrine and Discipline and the upcoming 2019 Biennial which will be held in Seattle, WA, June 30 – July 4, 2019. The session was another great hit with 19 in attendance.

The morning began with a greeting and welcome back from President Cheryl. She also recognized Presiding Elder Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace from New England Conference and Sis. Patricia Nira Smith, First Episcopal District WMS President and thanked them for their support and dedication to the lay organization. Sister Smith is also the First VP of her local lay organization. Business included the Adoption of the Agenda, Roll Call and Minutes, Correspondence, and a report from the Lay Institute Workshop held at the Christian Education Congress.

The Lay Institute was led by Sister Donna-Lee Chandler-Smith who discussed that we have a void in age group 18-35 that we must find a way to fill and work on. We must build our recruitment, membership and explain to the members of the church that if they are not clergy, they are laity. We must find a way to include the millennials. There was also a report from the First Timers leader, Sister Robin Batson who gave an overview of her session and thanked President Cheryl for giving her the opportunity to be the presenter.

There were positive responses from her session. The following gave their annual reports: 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, 3rd Vice President and the committee chairpersons who serve under them. The FCC Scholarship Committee will host a breakfast on Saturday, July 20, 2018 at 7 am. There are 10 awardees receiving \$1,000 scholarships each and 4 book awards. The Connectional Lay Organization would like for us to incorporate an Evangelist Day for each conference. It was mentioned that Bishop Ingram has an Evangelist night at each Annual Conference so we are covered. Other reports were given by the Recording Secretary, Assistant Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary and their committees. We also received the Audit Committee report.



The Memorial Service was presented by Sister Kitty Combs. The First Episcopal District Lay Organization extends its deepest condolences to all of the family members of the deceased. After the Memorial Service lay members had a chance to meet with committee chairpersons to learn how their committees operate and to more about their duties and responsibilities.

Even though this is our business meeting, we still have a workshop on Friday and Saturday. Our first workshop was presented by Brother Earl Knight, III and Brother Marcus Bennett. The workshop was entitled, "Black Methodist, A Song for the People". Brother Burnett spoke about how very important it is to listen to the words of the songs that you sing. He spoke about the old hymns and what they meant during slavery. It was a way of communicating with other slaves and with God. We sang several songs and was given the history of those songs. It's important to sing more than 2 verses to get familiar with the rest of the song. We had lots of audience participation singing solos and joining in the singing of the hymns. It was well received.

The Lay night worship service was outstanding as always. The speaker was First District YPD President, Brother Sean Michael Lewis who was introduced by his father, the Rev. Stephen Michael Lewis, Pastor of Bethel Freeport, NY.

Brother Sean is an active member of St. Matthew AME Church, Philadelphia and attends Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD where his major is Physical Education. Brother Sean took his scripture text from Nehemiah 2:17-20 and his sermon topic was, "Get Ready for Reconstruction". God called Nehemiah to restore the city. In verse 18 Nehemiah spoke about rebuilding the land. Brother Lewis spoke of how we need to motivate our children to rebuild our communities.

On Saturday, July 22, 2018, the morning began with the Frank C. Cummings Scholarship Breakfast. It was well attended and we were happy so many of the c and their families were able to attend. After breakfast we continued the business including the annual report from our First District President showing her stewardship for the year. We are always amazed at the all the work our president does on behalf of the First District Lay Organization. Our last workshop was entitled, "AME for me, What's missing?"

We focused on the disconnect youth and young adults have with the church and what steers them away from the church. Brother Burnett gave special thanks to the First District Lay Organization for its uncompromising efforts to get and keep youth and young adults in the organization. Various persons spoke on what they felt could be done to help us all do a better job. They spoke about how the behavior of some adults in church turn the young people off. The Annual Meeting closed with our circle of 225 members and President Cheryl thanked everyone for their attendance and for some a wonderful meeting.



FIRST IN TOUCH LAY NEWSLETTER





Delaware Conference Lay Organization

Sis. Sharon Drew— DoPR

The Delaware Conference Lay Organization celebrated its Annual Evening of Elegance on Friday, October 19, 2018, at the Modern Maturity Center in Dover, Delaware. The Evening of Elegance highlights talent of the Delaware Conference pastors and laypersons of the Delaware Conference. Inclusive, during this very special evening, is the crowning of the persons representing the Delaware Conference Royal Court for the King/Queen Contest.

Presiding Elders Ellis B. Louden and Richard H. Worthy, many pastors of the Delaware Conference, family, and friends were all in attendance.

The outgoing Court crowned the winners for the 2018-2019 Conference year. The program included a special rendition, "You Are So Beautiful", performed by the Presiding Elder of the Dover District, Rev. Ellis B. Louden, as a tribute to the Royal Court. The evening continued with a delicious meal prepared by the staff of Modern Maturity Center which was enjoyed by everyone.

The entertainment theme this year was a Tribute to Gospel Music and we were thoroughly entertained by the Gospel Disciples of Chester, Pennsylvania with their unique rendition of many Motown popular songs with gospel lyrics. The gentlemen took us to church for the remainder of the evening. Everyone enjoyed the melodious sounds from the Gospel Disciples. This activity has become a signature event for the Delaware Conference Lay Organization.

We salute Dr. Martin Drew who chairs the entertainment portion of this special event each year for the Ways and Means Committee. The programs get better and better each year.

Some 2018 participants:

The following Churches in the Delaware Conference participated in the 2018 King/Queen Contest:

Bethel Smyrna	Shelden Wisher
Bethel Wilmington	Eleaner Maiden
Burton's Chapel	Emanuel Reid
Byrd's AME	Ke'Andra Hackett
Emmanuel AME	Sandra Griffin
Graham AME	Nancy Kellam
Mt. Friendship	Taquina Warren
Mt. Zion Dover	Laura Burnett
New Elizabeth	Josephine Reynolds
St. George AME	Leonia Robinson
St. Paul AME	Ricardo Griffin
Star Hill AME	Linda Lewis

Congratulations to the Delaware Conference Ways and Means Committee for another successful event.



Rev. Makeeda Brooks, Presiding Elder Loudon, Dr. Erika Crawford, Mrs. Wanda Smith, Rev. Dr. Stanley Smith, Presiding Elder Worthy





**New Jersey Conference Lay Organization
Fifth Sunday Fellowship
Historic St. James A.M.E. Church, Manalapan NJ**

New Jersey Conference Lay Organization convened its last Fifth Sunday Fellowship worship experience of the year 2018 on Sunday, December 30, 2018 at historic St. James A.M.E. Church in Manalapan, NJ (a registered stop on the Underground Railroad)..

Rev. Julian La Rosa Cooper, pastor at St. James delivered a soul stirring message on reaching and ministering to the generations that have fallen away from the church, reiterating that the church needs to connect and communicate with them through twenty-first century means.

Members from several churches came out to support the service, despite the holiday scheduling. The attendees also included Presiding Elder Vernard Leak (New Brunswick) and Rev. Marty Robinson and Sis. Robinson, pastor and first lady at Ebenezer A.M.E. Church in Rahway, NJ. It was a festive fellowship!!



PCLO Awards Luncheon Honors Layperson of the Year and Unsung Heroes **By Shawn J. Lee, PCLO 2nd Vice President & Luncheon Co-Chairperson**

The Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization celebrated its Annual Awards Luncheon on Saturday, November 3, 2018 at Drexelbrook Catering in Drexel Hill, PA. Members from 23 churches in the Philadelphia Conference assembled to honor those that they deem the “Unsung Heroes” from their individual churches. The members of the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization also saluted their 2018 Lay Person of the Year, Sister Ruth Nelson from St. Paul AME Church in the Elmwood section of Philadelphia.



The program was chaired by Licentiate Starsha Frierson, PCLO 1st Vice President, and co-chaired by Bro. Shawn J. Lee. Sister Frierson served as the Mistress of Ceremonies for the event. Other top dais guests included Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, First Episcopal District Lay President, her husband Brother Irv Hopewell, Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization President, Brother Andree A. Turner, Sr., his wife Sister Joanne Turner, Lay Person of the Year, Sister Ruth Nelson, and Sister Cynthia Douse who is the 3rd Vice President of the Philadelphia Conference Lay

Organization. The chairpersons stated that they desired to do something new this year for those who are faithful patrons of the annual event who continue to sacrifice and purchase tickets year after year. So, there were door prizes that guests holding winning tickets hap-

pily took home with them.

The program proceeded as printed with the singing of the Laymen’s Hymn; the Invocation and Table Blessing by PCLO Chaplain, Sister Juanita Bryant; the Welcome, Establishment of Protocol and Recognition of Special Guests by Sister Daysha Smith from Bethel, Downingtown; and the Occasion by Sister Kezia Moore, PCLO Young Adult Representative. Then, Sister Dana Frierson from Grimes, Phoenixville rendered a beautiful selection declaring that we are “Safe in His Arms.” After this, it was time for the members, honorees, guests, and friends of the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization to “chat and chew”. Following lunch, Brother Alan Nelson, a young adult in the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization and a member of St. Paul, Elmwood came forth to uniquely present his aunt, who is the PCLO’s Lay Person of the Year. To introduce his aunt, Brother Nelson wrote a rap that he recited eloquently and with power and authority. This rap highlighted his aunt’s life and legacy.

Chief among her most noted accomplishments included her tenure in the Lay Organization, where she has served as an active local Lay member and the PCLO Ticket Chairperson for the past several years. Her service to her home church, St. Paul, Elmwood, was praiseworthy where she served faithfully as a steward, finance committee vice-chair and member, and class leader among several other positions. Sister Ruth gave an acceptance speech stating that she was humbled and honored to receive this award from the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization. She stated that she enjoys being in the Lay and agrees and is in step with its mission and purpose of teaching and training, because she believes that “informed people are happy people”.

She thanked her family and her friends for attending, especially her friends that came out from the YMCA. She also recognized her home church, St. Paul AME Church in Elmwood for all their continued support. After this, the Mistress of Ceremonies individually presented the Unsung Heroes from the various churches of the Philadelphia Conference. This was the first year that the honorees were announced in order by presiding elder district instead of alphabetically.



The awards were given by Brother Andree A. Turner, Sr., Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, and the Presiding Elder over each district. In attendance were Presiding Elders Reverend Dr. Charles H. Lett, Sr. of the West/Mainline District, Rev. Dr. Natalie P. Alford of the Philadelphia District and Reverend Lawrence Henryhand of the Harrisburg District.

Remarks were given by Brother Shawn J. Lee, Luncheon Co-Chair, First Episcopal District Lay President, Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, and Philadelphia Conference Lay President, Brother Andree A. Turner, Sr. It was announced that for 2019, the Lay Awards Luncheon will return to its original weekend, the first Saturday in October. Shawn Lee will assume the role of Chairperson and Sister Bernice Green from Bethel, Ardmore will serve as the Co-Chairperson.



The Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization would like to truly thank EVERYONE that came out to this event and supported the 2018 Lay Awards Luncheon in any way. Special thanks go to each Local Lay President that had and supported an unsung hero. Significant recognition goes to those distinguished guests in attendance from other components of the church that supported this effort including:

Connectional Officers: Rev. Vernon R. Byrd Jr., Esq., Secretary of the AME Church Judicial Council; Reverend Dr. Miriam Burnett, Medical Director of the Connectional Health Commission of the AME Church; and Sister Wanda Ringgold, International YPD Director

First District Officers: Reverend Jay Broadnax, Executive Director of Christian Education; Sister Jean Chavious, Church School Superintendent; and Sister Susan Butler, YPD Director;

Philadelphia Conference Officers: Reverend Diana Clark, Executive Director of Christian Education; Reverend Tabatha Ssonko, Chairperson, Department of Christian Education; Sister Connie Smith, WMS President; Sister Victoria Hill, Church School Superintendent; and Sister Dominique Silas, YPD President.

This festive occasion concluded with joyous singing of the Lay Benediction.



New England Conference Sister Ethel Wallace Jenkins DoPR

September found the NECLO anxiously looking forward with great expectations to, this Administration's, 1st Conference Wide Day of Training which was a great success. Registration was from 10 - 10:15 AM; 10:15 - 10:30 AM, President Gant brought greetings and presented/introduced facilitators. We then proceeded to break up into groups where the 1st Workshops were presented for 1 hour each from 10:30 - 11:30 AM:

- Finances in the Black Church was a unique financial presentation by Rev. Kaden Nurse.
- AME Order of Service/Liturgy was an in-depth of What, When, Where and Why We Do as we do while Worshipping.
- You're a Young Adult - Now What and the AME Order of Service, presented by Rev. Marcus McCullough .
- Come as You Are, presented by Nickolas Clark-Durham
- Clergy and Laity Working Together; It Works, presented by Bro. Isaiah and Rev. Donna George and the fruitful and busy day ended with our Lay Director, Nicol Ayers, presenting Roadmap to Leadership.

We left looking forward to and anxiously awaiting our next NECLO Conference Wide Day of Training The month of December was to see the Installation of the Newly Elected NECLO Executive Board. The E Board was installed by Rev. Jocelyn Hart-Lovelace, Presiding Elder of the Boston/Hartford District. They are as follows:

Linda Copeland Gant	President
Nickolas Clark-Durham	1st Vice President
Henry McMillan	2nd Vice President
Linda Meadows	Recording Secretary
C. Mae Bunch	Corresponding Secretary
Sandra Mosby	Treasurer
Annie M. Haynes	Financial Secretary
Robert Ford	Chaplain
Nicol Ayers	Director of Lay Activities
Ethel Marie Wallace-Jenkins	Director of Public Relations

A very informative and thought provoking workshop was presented by Ethel Wallace-Jenkins on The Lay Electoral College including the proper processes that must be followed, beginning with the announcement of the Church Conference that is to elect and ending with a mock Election at the seat of the Lay Electoral College.



Is your Church Social?

As churches grow, the era of iPads and Smartphone's are in full swing, social media has become the most effective way to reach members. Sometimes it can be a slow process learning how to effectively use and be comfortable with Social Media. Studies show that even though it may be challenging at first, it's more important than ever for Churches to be using social media.

Does your Church and Lay Organization have a website? If not, you're missing out on heavy traffic; but more so, ways to keep your members aware of what's going on in the Church. Imagine that you're looking for a place of business for an urgent matter; you're driving up and down the street; however, you can't find it due to a lack of address...frustrating isn't it? Addresses are vital for us to find each other, why should your online presence be any different?

If you have a website, connect your website to Social Media, it'll raise awareness and will be COMFORTABLE visiting your Church or program IF you have a website!! Broadcast videos (meetings, Sermons or Lay Days) from your site, or, put a link of your YouTube or other recordings on your website, people love human interaction—you appear real.

Online mobile giving— this gives congregants and or benevolent people the opportunity to sow into the Church 24/7; it also gives those that are sick and shut or those working or on vacation an opportunity to tithe while away. **Givelify** is a well used platform! It is easy to use and effective.

Video Integration (Vimeo, Youtube, etc) - Every Church/Lay should have a YouTube Channel because it gives an array of info to watch. YouTube is the World's largest video platform with millions of downloads per day! We can fulfill the Great Commission via YouTube. It is possible. Live streaming— By far the BEST way to gain traction and new followers!!! Between Facebook Live, Instagram Live, Periscope and LiveAF these tools are the most effective because the viewer is watching you REAL TIME like a television show and can correspond with you as you speak. The Lay has increased viewership of over 177k since 2016 that is HUGE!

Your Lay or Church page should be public— this means that anyone can see your photos and post as well as giving them opportunities to share our events or history. Another important factor with Social Media Management in the Church is their "WHY".

- **W- When, where, who what and why we should use Social Media to brand the Church.**
- **H- How it impacts and GROW the Church...and how to use it.**
- **Y- Youth Use is a myth! Yearn to learn the tools**

In the long run, we will be able to service the following populations:

- **The Sick and Shut in**
- **Our Millennials**
- **Those on vacation or working during Church or Lay Nights**
- **Those without transportation**
- **Those that do not KNOW Christ!**
- **NEW Lay Members...**

Imagine if we all did the same how much our Church, the Lay and other Ministries could flourish! I challenge you to learn more about Social Media and how it can benefit your Lay Organization.

For Trainings or Lay Workshops, contact:

Sister LaSean R Shelton
1st District Director of Public Relations

1stdistrictlaydopr@gmail.com

