

The Connectional Lay Organization African Methodist Episcopal Church Convenes Its 32nd Biennial Session

On August 14th - 18th, all roads led to Detroit, Michigan - the "Motor City", the site of the 32nd Biennial Session of the Connectional Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. With over 1,100 delegates, alternates, and observers in attendance, the members gathered to participate in business and Christian fellowship under the visionary leadership of CLO President Dr. Willie C. Glover and General Board Lay Commission Chairperson Bishop C. Garnett Henning. The 4th Episcopal District hosted the meeting under the guidance of Senior Bishop John R. Bryant and Episcopal District Lay President Madge White.

Session highlights are as follows:

Saturday, August 13th - Organized activities for the Biennial began with several cultural and historical excursions around Detroit available for early arriving delegates. Additionally, the 4th Episcopal Young Adult Lay members sponsored a welcome event.

Sunday August 14th was packed with the normal organizational particulars of any large-scale convention.

Registration, First Timer's Orientation, Committee meetings and the final Executive Board meeting of the 2009-2011 Biennium were the orders of the day. The Connectional Lay Economic Development Corporation (CLEDC) held its annual board meeting introducing their new CEO, Dr. Vera Bradley (5th). The opening worship service under the direction of Bishop McKinley Young featured the participation of a cross-section of active and retired Bishops along with the Lay leadership of the AME Church. The 4th Episcopal District Choir under the direction Connectional Music and Christian Arts Ministry Chair the Rev. Anthony Vinson is to be commended for using a creative blend of contemporary and traditional music throughout the service. Bishop Henning delivered the sermon entitled "Team Commitment" (I Corinthians 3:16-17). The message charged those assembled to reevaluate their commitment to the church and following the teachings of Jesus Christ. After the service closed, the various Episcopal Districts adjourned to their meetings.

Monday, August 15th - The 32nd CLO Biennial officially convened. The early morning devotion service featured the Rev. Rodrecus M. Johnson (3rd) speaking on the topic "Choose Life" (John 10:10). After the service, preliminary organizational matters and a greeting from Congressman John Conyers (D-Michigan), the keynote address was delivered by Retired Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D-Michigan). An active member of Oak Grove AME Church in Detroit, Ms. Kilpatrick charged the laity assembled to live up to the social justice principles on which the AME Church was founded. The afternoon business session opened with a presentation from Mercy Ships followed by the Presidential Address. After being presented by his Episcopal District President Ms. Ametta Reeves (3rd), Dr. Willie Glover rendered an expansive accounting of his service over the last two years followed by a detailed video presentation. The report was duly received with accolades and praise by the assembly. After the lunch recess, the General Conference Candidates' Forum sponsored by the V-Alert Committee was held in order to provide laity with an opportunity to learn more about those seeking election to the Episcopacy, a General office or the Judicial Council. The two hour session was filled with revealing and thought-provoking answers from the candidates to the questions raised by the panel. Following the Forum, the assembly adjourned for the host District Reception. Interspersed with the Motown musical flavor were greetings from various city dignitaries. Following the reception, several committees met and the Episcopal District Young Adult Representatives had their Annual Retreat.

Tuesday August 16th - The morning service began featuring the Rev. Elaine P. Walters (4th) preaching an electrifying sermon entitled “We Can’t Stay Here, God is Calling Us to Go!” (Matthew 17:18 and 28:18). After the devotional, CLO Director of Lay Activities Edith Bartley Cartledge introduced the first intensive plenary session: “Perspectives of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: Past, Present and Future”. The Panelists were as follows: Past—Dr. Jayme Coleman Williams, the Rev. Dr. James Miller (4th), Bishop John Adams; Present— Mr. Kgosi Monaisa (19th), Bishop Adam J. Richardson, the Rev. Dr. William Watley (6th); Future—Mr. John Thomas III (13th), Bishop Jeffrey N. Leath, the Rev. Raymond Bryant (5th).

The panelists engaged in an entertaining and enlightening discussion of the challenges facing the AME Church as it seeks to fulfill its mission in a changing world. Specific mention was made of the issues facing educational institutions, social justice, financial accountability and relevance. A highlight of the panel took place when Dr. Isabel Medina of the Dominican Republic Annual Conference (16th) addressed the panelists in Spanish and Mr. Thomas responded to her in her native language to the assembly’s surprise.

The next plenary was “Transitional Leadership” featuring the Rev. Dr. Floyd Flake (1st). Rev. Flake used his vast experience in both the ministry and the political world to discuss leadership and motivational strategies. So much was the desire to glean from Rev. Flake’s knowledge, that an additional session was scheduled to dialogue further with one of African Methodism’s clergy giants.

The Third Plenary Session was divided between two topics: “Building a Successful Lay Organization” (Presenters Gloria Byrd (6th) and Herbert Mngadi (19th)) and “Motivating Emerging Leaders for Christ-Centered Leadership” (Panelists Karabo Links (15th), Dr. Kris Marsh (2nd), Rev Councilman Andre Spivey (4th), the Rev. Dr. Reginald Blount (4th) and moderator Darrel Thomas (4th). While the latter panel was geared towards Young Adults, both panels had a sizeable attendance with a mixed crowd.

After the intensive training sessions, the delegates had a three-hour break to prepare for the Jesse L. Burns Black Tie Soiree. The attendance of the immediate past CLO President made the event especially unique. Spearheaded by 2nd Episcopal District President Valerie Bell and CLO Assistant Recording Secretary Doris Bell, the event highlighted the CLO commitment to AME institutions of higher education as \$45,000 was raised through ticket sales and donations for Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas. In addition to the fellowship and fine dining, the attendees were blessed by the musical talents of The Beverley Thomas Fine Arts Institute Choir and the LaShaun Gary and Friends band. Mr. Michael Blake, Associate Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House brought words of encouragement and praise. After the banquet, attendees were treated to more musical delights via the Beverley Thomas Choir, Mr. Adrian Dunn, Positive Force and the headliner Kurt Carr and Singers. No stranger to Connectional AME audiences, Kurt Carr delivered an exemplary performance treating the audience to well-known favorites and sneak previews from his upcoming album.

Wednesday, August 17th - The morning started with a devotional featuring the Rev. Eddie L. Harris, Jr.(12th) preaching from the topic “Can’t Nobody Do Me Like Jesus” (Jude 21-25). After the discussion, the business of the Biennial began in earnest with an aggressive and daunting agenda. The morning session was consumed with the reading of the Constitution and Bylaws navigated by the capable leadership of Chair Ethel Wallace-Jenkins (1st) and Vice-Chair Starr Battle (2nd). The business adjourned for the noon-day Young Adult Explosion. Feature a mix contemporary and traditional praise and liturgy, the service culminated with the preached word from the Rev. Dr. Joseph Cousin (4th). He preached from the topic “When the Church Gets Together” (Matthew 18:18-20). Presentations were made to the CLO Director of Lay Activities, CLO President and retiring Episcopal District YARs. The business session resumed after lunch with a series of briefings from AME-SADA and the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA). After a heated and spirited

debate, the 2011-2013 budget was adopted. The assembly then adjourned to prepare for the Outstanding Layperson of the Year Banquet. Mrs. Starr Battle Mrs. Beverly Nutall (10th) served as the Mistress of Ceremonies and Mrs. Starr Battle (2nd) delivered the keynote address. **The 2011 Biennial Lay Person of the year was Phyllis Bergen-Jackson (10th)** and Mr. Jai Ingraham (11th) won the inaugural Ted Harris Young Adult Award. The following scholarships were awarded:

- Dr. Jayme Coleman Williams Scholarship:
Alexander Davis (13th)

- Dr. Joseph McKinney Scholarship:
Rachael Richard (11th)

- Mr. J.D. Williams Scholarship:
Not Awarded

After the banquet, the Biennial reconvened to finish consideration the budget in an expedited session.

Thursday, August 18th – The morning began with a devotional featuring the Rev. Cindy Carr (1st) “What’s Fueling Your Fire?” (Philippians 4:1-6). The final business session began with committee reports and the final disposition of Mr. Alphonso Times (7th) Director of Public Relations. After a lengthy debate, the Biennial upheld the Executive Board’s recommendation to remove Mr. Times from office. Committee reports were received and the assembly adjourned to the Centennial kick-off luncheon under the guidance of Dr. Paulette Coleman and Mr. Bill Ayers (2nd).

The 32nd Biennial Session of the Connectional Lay Organization ended on a high note. The passage of the extensive Constitution and Bylaws revision will chart the course of the CLO for decades to come.

Several essential agenda items—most notably review of the proposed CLO legislation for the 49th General Conference—were deferred until the Fall Executive Board meeting.

The 4th Episcopal District superbly hosted the event and set the bar high for 6th Episcopal District in 2013 and other future hosts.

The AME Church needs a well-trained and capable laity now more than ever and the Connectional Lay Organization is postured to live up to the mantle that has been placed upon it.

Article reprinted with permission from The Christian Recorder Online. John Thomas, III (Young Adult Representative) Chief Correspondent.

Congratulations to
Phyllis Ann Bergeen-Jackson (10th Episcopal District)
CLO Lay Person of the Year 2011

Mrs. Jackson, a veteran of the United States Army, is a resident of San Antonio, Texas and is employed as a Training Technician, Office of the Dean, Army Medical Department Center and School, Fort Sam Houston, TX. She is a member of Hodges Chapel AME Church where she serves as a Steward, Treasurer, Church School Teacher, Vice-President Lay Organization, member of the Teutha Wilson Missionary Society, member of the Gospel Choir and Director of Outreach Ministry. On the Conference level, she has served as Financial Secretary for the Southwest Conference Lay Organization and Historiographer of the Southwest Texas Missionary Society, member of the conference choir, Annual Conference Delegate, a member of the Finance Committee, and the Presiding Elder's Salary and Upkeep Committee. On the District Level, she is member of the Lay Organization and Women's Missionary Society, and Secretary of the San Antonio District Finance Committee.

Mrs. Jackson has been elected a General Conference Delegate since 2000 and elected a biennial delegate since 2001. She served on the Women's Missionary Society's Social Action, Budget and Finance and Director of Lay Activities Committees.

Her community involvement includes: Life Member of Blacks in Government, Chair of the Federally Employed Women, AME Church Director of Volunteers for San Antonio Haven for Hope, Board Member of the San Antonio Chapter of Church Women United, and Fort Sam Houston Mentor.

Mrs. Jackson's significant honors and awards include: 10th District and Southwest Conference Lay Person of the Year, Women's Missionary Society Boundless Missionary Award, and Most Committed Equal Opportunity Special Emphasis Program Manager, and the Medical Command Nominee for Blacks in Government Meritorious Service Award.

She is married to Travis Jackson and they have two children (La Freya and Trevor) and one grandchild.



CLO - Nominees - Lay Person of the Year 2011

Dr. Martin A. Drew (1st District)
Warren Malcolm Lea (2nd District)
Barbara Rosser (3rd District)
Sheridan Cyril Butterfield (4th District)
Luegene Hill (5th District)
Dr. Vetrma Curtis (6th District)
F. Jackie Williams (7th District)
Oka C. Howard (8th District)
Gloria B. Woods (9th District)
Phyllis Ann Bergen-Jackson (10th District) **WINNER**
James L. Williams (11th District)
Flossie B. Green (12th District)
Dorothy L. Ealy (13th District)
Undetermined (14th District)
Undetermined (15th District)
Anna Marie Gordon (16th District)
Undetermined (17th District)
Lekhetho Mosito (18th District)
Undetermined (19th District)
Undetermined (20th District)

Ted Harris Young Adult of the Year - 2011 District Nominees

Walter Craig Jeffers (1st District)
Felecia Commodore (2nd District)
Ryan Cody Nall (3rd District)
Darnell Thomas (4th District)
Daniel Harris-Lucas (5th District)
Jamesha J. Williams (7th District)
Jai A. Ingraham (11th District) WINNER
Alicen Loreall Boone (12th District)