



*First in Touch*  
*First District Lay Newsletter*  
*African Methodist Episcopal Church*

**JULY 2017 ANNUAL MEETING**

**FROM THE DESK OF THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT**

**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.**

*Bishop*

**Gregory G.M. Ingram**  
Presiding Prelate  
First Episcopal District

**Rev. Dr. Jessica Kendall Ingram**  
Episcopal Supervisor  
First Episcopal District

**Mrs. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell**  
President  
First Episcopal District  
Lay Organization

**Ms. LaSean R Shelton**  
Director of Public Relations  
Editor in Chief  
First Episcopal  
District Lay Organization  
[www.1stdistrictlay.org](http://www.1stdistrictlay.org)



To the Loyal Laity of the First Episcopal District,

We had a wonderful Mid-year meeting in Buffalo, NY. President Caroline Hoffman-Weasey and the wonderful laity of the Western New York Conference went out of their way to make our stay so enjoyable.

Sister Josephine Fulcher-Anderson made sure there were excellent presenters, workshops and worship and we are grateful to God and to all of you who participated for this blessed time.

As we arrive in Wilmington, DE for our Annual Meeting we look forward to another blessed time in the Lord.

During this time, elected officers, conference presidents and committee chairpersons will give an account of their stewardship for the year. Great things have happened all throughout the First District and we are looking forward to hearing all about them.

While we will give an account of our stewardship, we will still have two workshops. We want to keep the training going so we are continuing with the tradition of workshops even at the Annual Meeting.

Thanks to those who have embraced the Reading Centers. This is also another way we can reach and teach others. I know wonderful things will happen and looking forward to hearing you report of those things you will be doing in your conferences.

Philippians 4:13 reminds us that "We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength". With the help of the Lord and all of us working together, we Can and we Will reach even higher heights".

In His Service,

Cheryl Hammond Hopewell  
President, First Episcopal District Lay Organization



# *First Episcopal District Lay Mid-Year Meeting*

*Submitted by: Sister Cynthia King*

*First Episcopal District Lay Historiographer*

Our First District Theme is “From the Word GO” and the Lay Organization took off running! The first Mid-Year Meeting under the direction of our new First Episcopal District President Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell was a huge success. The Western New York Conference Lay welcomed the First District Lay Organization to our Mid-Year Meeting which was at the Millennium Hotel, Buffalo, NY from Thursday, February 23 – Saturday, February 25, 2017. The Rev. Pedro A. Castro, Jr. was the host Presiding Elder, the Rev. Richard A. Stenhouse was the host Pastor, and Sister Caroline Hoffman-Veasey was the host Conference President. We were received with warm smiles from the time we arrived until the time we left.

On Thursday evening, February 23, the Western New York Conference Lay Organization hosted a reception. This was also the night that we had to get down to business with packing kits and a meeting in the President’s suite. President Cheryl gave all the members of the Executive Board a special gift as well as plenty of snacks.

Friday morning, February 24, 2017 we started with “First Fitness”. President Cheryl invited everyone to exercise with her from 6:30 to 7:00 am. It was a large group and they exercised and had fun doing it. “First Things First” Bible Study by our Lay Chaplain Sister Terri L. Fisher was first on the agenda. Sister Fisher’s subject for the weekend was “Believe It Or Not” and the scripture reference came from Roman 10:9. She spoke about believing the impossible and about what we can do to increase our beliefs and decrease our doubts.

Sister Mary Mootoo, immediate past president of the First District Lay Organization facilitated the First Timers’ workshop. There were a total of nine First Timers. Sister Mootoo brings great joy when explaining to them about the Lay Organization and its role in the A.M.E. Church. First District Director of Lay Activities, Sister Josephine Fulcher-Anderson welcomed everyone back for another year. We started with something a little different. We decide to have a workshop on Fire Drill and Safety. It is very important that everyone is aware of the Fire Exits in the building. We were briefed by the hotel manager.

The second workshop of the day was given by Brother Thomas Davis, the Director of Lay Activities for the Western New York Lay Organization. His title was the “Twenty-Five Article of Religion”. Brother Thomas took time in explaining the Articles of Religion and what they are, the beliefs, instructions, principles and positions. He even gave us quite a history lesson.

The next workshop, an “Overview of the Lay Organization” was given by Sis. Josephine Fulcher-Anderson. Sister Anderson explained that the purpose of the Lay Organization is to organize and train the lay members of the A.M.E. Church, to utilize the abilities and skills granted by God, improvement and extension of Gods kingdom, and create happiness, peace and harmony among its members.

Presiding Elder, Rev. Melvin Wilson from the New York Conference was the afternoon presenter. His workshop was “Using the New Standardized Quarterly Conference Report Forms”. He informed us how the form works and that is standard throughout the First Episcopal District and can possibly expand to all 20 Districts. It is a great shift for the Presiding Elders, Pastors, Local Churches, Laity and foremost the culture of the churches themselves. Everyone will be held accountably for their actions. You must now report what your organization or auxiliary is doing each quarter.



There were suggestion and ideas for improvement that were offered which PE Wilson was willing to incorporate the next time the form is revised. The reports should be prepared at least one week in advance of the Quarterly Conference and signed by the presidents of each organization, then email or faxed to the Presiding Elders. Quarterly Conferences should last no more then 60-75 minutes. There are 8 mandatory reports forms and they are: Quarterly Conference Disciplinary Questions, Steward Board, Trustee Board, Board or Commission Christian Education, Church School, Women Missionary Society & YPD and Lay Organization. There is also an Organization/Ministry Quarterly Financial Summary.

Our Worship Service was held on Friday evening. The Worship Leader was Sister Caroline Hoffman-



Veasey, President of the Western New York Conference Lay Organization. The spirit was very high and we were uplifted in songs by the First District Choir directed by our First District Musician, Brother Earl Knight III. Scriptures were taken from Joshua 3:9-17 and Matthew 28:16-20. Brother Walter C. Jeffers, Philadelphia Conference Lay President and Connectional DOPR introduced our First District Lay President, Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell by singing to her then called on Sister Cheryl’s pastor, the Rev. Jay B. Broadnax to sing, “My Soul Has Been Anchored in the Lord”, which is the President’s favorite song.

Our preacher for the evening was the Rev. Richard Stenhouse, Pastor of Bethel AME Church in Buffalo, NY. His sermon was titled, “The Great Possibility”, and his scripture text was from Revelation 2:22. He told us that you have choices and the ability to make choices. Rev. Stenhouse informed us that God will be with us all the way even until the end. He told us to walk with God no matter what and build your relationship with God. We have to trust God, no matter what.

# Mid-Year Meeting



On Saturday, February 25, 2017, President Cheryl again had First Fitness from 6:30 – 7:00 am with an even larger crowd. We then started the morning with Devotion and Bible Study by Chaplain Terri who continued with “Believe It Or Not”. She asked us if we remembered the show Ripley’s Believe It Or Not. Everyone acknowledged they did and she then explained that it was started in 1933 and was about some amazing things. She spoke about the how we question our own belief and concerns with Jesus. We discussed how we can increase our beliefs and stop the doubts by studying Gods word daily and through prayer.



Presiding Elder Pedro Castro of Western New York, assisted by his wife, Rev. Stephanie Castro were the first workshop presenters for the day and their presentation was “Repositioning the Lay Organization as a Relevant, Empowered, and Comprehensive Education Support for Unprecedented Church Growth Beyond 2017”. Rev. Castro explained to us how he grew his ministry by feeding and helping the community and by working with local farmers in the area who gave him vegetables and produce which he distributed to the community. The author who wrote “The Shack” also made a gracious donation to his church. PE Castro said that the students who attend their worship services are given meals after service. With him working with the community and the local colleges, his church is on the move to greater things.

The final workshop was presented by Rev. Dion Greer, Pastor of St. John A.M.E. Church, Niagara Falls, NY. His title was “Computers in the Church: How We Can Effectively Use Technology in the Church”. Rev. Greer spoke about Cyber Technology in the Church and gave examples of different types of websites, applications and their functions. He also talked about Church finance programs and different types of telephone systems.



We were blessed to have several young adults in attendance. Brother Marcus Burnett is the Young Adult Representative for the First District Lay Organization and he gave remarks. The Young Adults are moving in strides and making sure that their voices are being heard on all levels in the A.M.E. Church.

The weekend ended with a short business session and remarks by President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, who presented each of the Conference Presidents for remarks about how things were going in their conferences.

We heard from all the President’s advisors and then President Cheryl also gave everyone who stayed until the end, an “everybody’s birthday” gift. We closed with our circle, with a countdown of 130 persons and sang the Lay Benediction. It was a wonderful Mid-Year Meeting under the leadership of our new District President and we thank the Western NY Conference for being such wonderful hosts.

**BERMUDA CONFERENCE LAY ORGANIZATION**  
**LAY NIGHT**  
**131<sup>ST</sup> SESSION BERMUDA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**MARCH 9, 2017**

Lay Night at the 131st session of the Bermuda Annual Conference was exciting electrifying, uplifting and thought provoking. Our Episcopal District Lay President Sis Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell was in attendance along with Episcopal District Lay Officers Sisters Donna Lee Chandler-Smith and Lanan Bascome and other dignitaries.

The night took the form of a worship service which began with our processional “Bless That Wonderful name of Jesus” Our Worship Leader Sis Serena Jill Burt ably led the congregation deeper into the presence of the Lord with the singing of the doxology (Bermuda’s version) and call to worship.

The Song of Praise was a Laymen’s Song (sung to the tune of “At Calvary”) and written by Sis Venita Smith (a Laymen soldier from Allen Temple AME Church, Bermuda).

***“Laymen, Laymen just you sing and shout***  
***Tell the world what it is all about***  
***Laymen, Laymen let us sing and shout till victor’s won!”***

The Bethel AME Church Family Choir gave us renditions of two songs – “Pray” (by Brooklyn Tabernacle Mass Choir) and “Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior”

Conference Lay President Linda D Bean introduced Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram highlighting the First Episcopal District Themes over the past five years and ending with his love for Supervisor Jessica Kendall Ingram by introducing the song “At Last” by Etta James.

Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram introduced Our Preacher Reverend Dr. Silvester S Beaman, Pastor of Bethel AME Church, Wilmington, Delaware. Bishop Ingram stated that there is little difference about people in this world. That little difference is attitude and the big difference is whether the attitude is positive or negative.

He stated that Rev Beaman embodied a magnanimous spirit and a wonderful positive attitude. Rev. Dr. Beaman preached from 1 Corinthians 16:13-24 on a topic “The Problem with Comfortable Pews”

Rev. Dr. Beaman suggested that comfortable pews is an analogy for behavior and not the opulent cushiness of the seats in our sanctuary. The work of ministry is predicated on us doing something.



This is a wonderful time to be the Church and we must be equipped to move beyond being comfortable in the church and get uncomfortable while being on guard, being brave, standing firm in the faith and not being drawn away from God. It's time to rise and advance against the evil in this world which is only the system holding us down.

Rev. Dr. Beaman challenged us to Love one another because Love is contagious. We must find something positive to say about our church and each other. We must allow ourselves to get addicted to the ministry of the saints by having concern for those who are down trodden, drug addicted, etc.

We must get addicted to praising God and working for God even if it means getting uncomfortable. Remember what God has done for you and just watch the church grow in the process.

The problem with comfortable pews is that we sit down on God. Rev. Dr. Beaman prayer was that the Lay become more like the church of Corinth by committing ourselves enthusiastically and devoting ourselves to ministry that we might make a difference.

Closing with the Lay Benediction the members of the Lay Organization and laity at large left with a new excitement and resolve to get addicted to praising God and working for God.



## DELAWARE CONFERENCE CELEBRATES GOSPEL EXPLOSION

Submitted by Sharon D. Drew



The Delaware Conference Lay Organization led under the leadership of Dr. Martin A. Drew, President, celebrated its 2nd Annual Gospel Explosion to support scholarships for the Frank Curtis Cummings Scholarship Fund on Saturday, May 20, 2017. Many choirs from the Delaware Conference Churches participated. The program was held at Mt. Zion AME Church in Dover, Delaware.

Sis. Dorothy Coleman, Lay President of Mt. Zion greeted the congregation with a very warm welcome and the program began with an outstanding performance from the Youth Choir of Mt. Zion Dover. Their performance wowed the audience and ended with a standing ovation for encouragement to our young people.



Sis. Sandra Griffin of Emmanuel Hartley, Delaware served as the Worship Leader for the evening. She did an outstanding job keeping the program flowing. Our 2016 Frank C. Cummings Scholarship Recipient, Raven Mandela James, attended and expressed her thanks for the scholarship. She also expressed how the \$1,000 scholarship allowed her to meet her financial obligations. Raven is presently a sophomore attending Delaware State University in Dover, Delaware and she is a member of Mt. Zion AME Church in Dover, Delaware (picture to left).



As we continued through our evening of music and fellowship, we were favored with selections from The Crusaders of Antioch AME Church. Sis. Rosemary Martin and members of the Sussex County Community Choir took the audience way back to the traditional old-time gospels and reminded the audience that we should care about one another because life is short.

RoJenae` Fisher of Mt. Pisgah AME Church in Laurel, Delaware blessed the audience with her worship through dance as she rendered a beautiful routine through her Liturgical Dance. Those in attendance had an enjoyable evening of dance and music while the Scholarship Fund raised \$1,000 for scholarships to our students.



## **New Jersey Conference Lay Organization Annual Banquet**

The New Jersey Conference Annual Lay Banquet was held at The Hyatt Hotel in New Brunswick, NJ on April 22, 2017. It was a warm, celebratory and, overall, rewarding affair.

This year, the organization honored culinary arts ministries and culinary workers of the local church. Twenty-three churches sponsored their culinary ministry workers and several others elected to participate and support the event. There were over four hundred fifty (450) persons in attendance, with notably sixty-two (62) representing St. Luke A.M.E Church, Newark NJ.

Honorees were from the following churches:

Allen AMEC, Newark	Bethel AMEC, Freehold
Bethel AMEC, Moorestown	Bethel AMEC, Pennsauken
Bethel AMEC, Woodbury	Ebenezer AMEC, Rahway
Fisk Chapel AMEC, Fair Haven	Friendship AMEC, Browns Mills
Greater Mt. Zion AMEC, Trenton	Heard AMEC, Roselle
Israel Memorial AMEC, Newark	Mt. Teman AMEC, Elizabeth
Mt. Zion AMEC, New Brunswick	Mt. Zion AMEC, Plainfield
Mt. Zion AMEC, Princeton	North Stelton AMEC, Piscataway
St. James AMEC, Atlantic City	St. James AMEC, Hightstown
St. Luke AMEC, Newark	St. Mark AMEC, East Orange
St. Matthew AMEC, Orange	St. Paul AMEC, Pleasantville
Union Chapel AMEC, Newark	

Leadership support for the event stood out!

In attendance were, the president of the Connectional Women-In-Ministry, Rev. Dr. Erica Crawford, the First Episcopal District Lay Organization president and spouse, Sis. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell and Bro. Irvin Hopewell.

New Jersey Annual Conference hosts Rev. Dr. Kenneth Saunders and Sis. Shirley Saunders, and leadership from all districts of the annual conference – Presiding Elder Larry Dixon (AC), Presiding Elder Robert Wade and consultant Sis. Prudence Hope Wade (CT).

Presentations to the culinary ministries were made by Presiding Elder Vernard Leak (NB) with the assistance of the mistress of ceremonies, Sis. Jannie Foxworth. Each church ministry was announced individually by a district of the annual conference president. In addition to a plaque of recognition, honorees received a complimentary copy of the beautiful commemorative journal in full color. The majority of the culinary ministries were accompanied by their respective proud pastors and presiding elders.

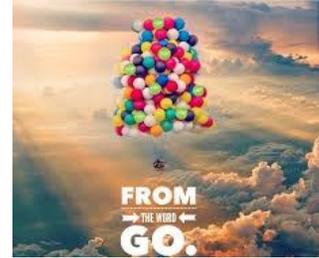
To conclude the evening, the banquet co-chairs, Sis. Sharon Carmichael and Sis. Jacqui Davis gave remarks on the evening's activities, thanking all who participated in and supported this occasion of well deserved recognition.



## *Globally Bridging The Church– One Post at a Time*

*Developed by LaSean R Shelton*

As we go into our theme, “From the Word Go!”, there are so many ways that we can continue to globally enhance our presence in a safe constructive way. It is our job as the Lay to train our fellow Lay and those that are members of the AME Church— on all levels that we are blessed and called to encounter—thus this quick tip guide to help us all elevate a POSTIVE image on the World Wide Web (www).



- Church Website – Every Church and Lay should have a website, once that is established every event that’s open to the church should be on your website 6-8 weeks out. If sign up is needed, include a way to sign up online if possible. Make sure that the webmaster includes strong SEO metatags.
- Church Blog – Write 2-3 blog posts per month, this could be and not limited to Lay Days, Lay Workshops, Sermon themes or what is discussed during Bible Study.
- Mass Email – Create a well-designed email in MailChimp or Constant Contact and send it to anyone in the church database as well as those in the community we worship in. These emails are derived from events and or sign up forms that are completed. Make sure to mention occasional email campaigns to avoid a “spam” perceptions.
- Create a Video – The video could include highlights of previous Sermons and or events. It could be Top 10 Reasons to Attend a Lay Meeting, or, it could be a Livestream videos that allow comments and a share option.



- Church and Lay Facebook Page – Schedule 2-4 posts on your Facebook page and be sure to include a good image and a link to the web page about the event. Optionally, you can pay to “boost” the post to ensure it hits the most people. PLEASE ensure that the designated person that is posting gets approval from the Lay President (for Lay pages) or Trustees and Pastor for Church postings.

These are a few ways to integrate the community and the Lay with one stoke of the keypad!

Graciously submitted,

Sister LaSean R Shelton

1st District Director of Public Relations

<http://www.1stdistrictlay.org/>



**The First Episcopal District–African Methodist Episcopal Church 195th  
Session of the New York Annual Conference  
Hosted by: Greater Allen Cathedral, Jamaica, NY 11433  
Reverend Dr. Floyd H. Flake, Pastor Reverend Elaine M. Flake Co-Pastor  
Host**

**Mrs. Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell, First Episcopal District Lay President  
Ms. Bonita O'Neal, New York Conference Lay President**

**Connectional Theme  
Laity Fulfilling the Great Commission Matthew 28:16-20**

**Thursday, April 27, 2017**

**Highlights**



What A Mighty God We Serve!

Kudos to our New York Conference Lay President, Sister Bonita O'Neal, Sister Shirley Canty, Director of Lay Activities and the program participants for one of the best Lay nights!!! The Lord truly showed up and showed out!!!

From the Prelude to the Benediction, the presence of the Lord was felt at the New York Conference Annual Conference Lay Night service.

We thank God for the Ministry through Dance, led by Rev. Eyesha Marable, Director. The energy and spirit are still a topic of conversation. We thank God for all programs participants: Sister Carol Francis (The Greater Allen AME Cathedral)

Call to worship; Sister Esther Delaney (Calvary Fellowship AME Church), Hymn of Praise; Sister Norma Brown (Allen Temple AME Church) – ushered the Holy Spirit into the service, with her spirit filled invocation: Sisters Sara Tinsley (Emmanuel AME Church) and Daisy Lewis (Macedonia AME Church), scripture; Sister Mecca Levy (Carter Community AME Church) Litany!

Bethel A.M.E. (Freeport) Choir ministered in song. The worshippers were on their feet praising God. The Right Reverend Gregory G. M. Ingram, Presiding Prelate of the First Episcopal District was presented by Sister Bonita!



Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram, presented the speaker, Sister Valerie Gary Bell, President 2nd Episcopal District Lay Organization!

The Lord continued to reign supreme over the service. Sister Valerie Gary Bell, presented a message from the Scripture - Matthew 28:16-20 - (The Great Commission), on the topic: "Believing for Greater" - Can the Church be trusted to fulfill the great commission? Further reminding us all that the Saints must be empowered for the next conference year.

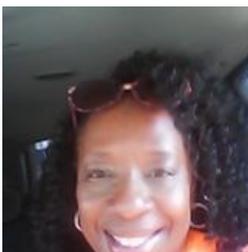
Sister Marie Bailey, Chairperson and the F. Jane Harris Scholarship Committee awarded scholarships to two deserving youth. The recipients were Sister Ayana Jones-Scott, Mt. Zion AME Church, Manhattan District, Estelle Livingston, President, Rev. JoAnn Owings, Pastor, and Sister Maya Sanders, People's Institutional AME Church, Brooklyn/Westchester District, Sister Bonita O'Neal, President, Rev. Carrie Nobles, Pastor. Acknowledgements made by Sister Shirley Canty, Director of Lay Activities.

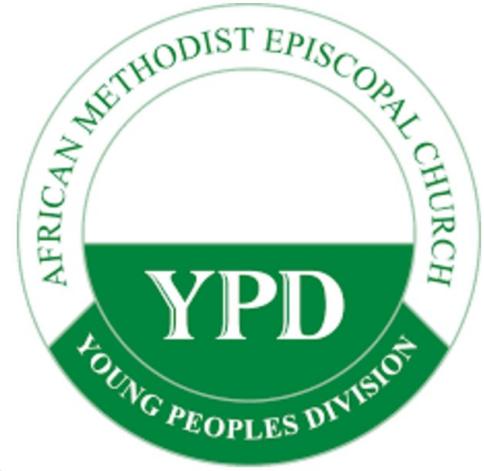


Remarks were made by: Sister Bonita O'Neal, President, New York Conference Lay Organization; Sister Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell, President, First Episcopal District Lay Organization; Rev. Dr. Jessica Kendall Ingram, Episcopal Supervisor; and Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram, Presiding Prelate, First Episcopal District.

We ask God to continue to order the steps of our President and thank God for Sister O'Neal's vision and committed leadership. Looking forward to a new conference year!!!!

Submitted by:  
Sister Sharese Wilson  
Public Relations Director, NYC





Creating a NEW bond!

## **The Young Adults working together to bond our Ministries**



Marcus Burnett (First District Young Ault Representative)

As the district Young Adult Representative, I have the pleasure of working with young adult auxiliaries and ministries within and outside the AME church.

In early June, I was invited to an executive board meeting, by Sean Lewis, the first district YPD president in Freeport, New York.

We discussed new initiatives to recruit more young adults into the lay organization. Stay tuned, for future newsletters to find out how you can help in this effort.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**



# 35th BIENNIAL SESSION OF THE CONNECTIONAL LAY ORGANIZATION, *August 7-10, 2017*



**Pre-Biennial Dates: August 5th & August 6th**

**Hosted by: Third Episcopal District Lay Organization**

**Location: Hyatt Regency Hotel – Columbus, Ohio**

Monday - Blue polo shirts and white pants or skirts. If no polo shirt, please wear a blue shirt of the same color. Please wear white for the Opening Worship Service on Monday night.

Tuesday - Black (President will provide blue flowers).

Wednesday - Fuchsia general conference shirts and tan or black pants or skirts. If no general conference shirt, please wear another fuchsia color shirt.

Thursday - Lay colors. Any combination of blue and white.

Sunday: Host District Reception

Monday: Election/Opening Worship Service

Tuesday: Black Tie Affair

Wednesday: Awards Dinner

Thursday: Closing & Installation Service

## “Power” Message Energizes Philadelphia Annual Conference Lay Night

By Connie Williams, Director of Public Relations, Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization



Thursday evening, May 27, 2017 was rainy and stormy around the Radisson Hotel in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Worshippers gathered at 7:31 PM at the Philadelphia Annual Conference Lay Night heard the sound of thunder inside and out by the time John Thomas, III took his seat. After delivering a soul stirring message entitled “Where is Your Power?” there was high spiritual energy and the atmosphere was filled with rejoicing.

After thanking Bishop Ingram for his laudatory introduction and greeting the congregation, Mr. Thomas started with “From the word Go” highlighting the main mandate of the Great Commission which describes the role of laity in discipleship. Jesus said “Go” to all, not just the to the pastor and other clergy with vision and duty.

Laity who are true disciples must internalize the strength of power to know where, how and who to take with you when you go out to evangelize in the community. His message had several important points. First, “there is power in patience”. The disciples did as Jesus had instructed. They went to Jerusalem and waited. Once they received power, they were able to embark on the Great Commission.

Today, we too must believe and receive God's power if we are to fulfill the Great Commission. Witnessing and winning souls for Christ is demanding work. It takes time and giving of yourself repeatedly. It would be great if it was quick work which could be completed in a hurry. In reality, it takes time and patience. Second, "there is power in community". Working together builds strength as Christians were never meant to be alone.

We are refreshed and better armed for Christian service when we worship and fellowship together. Involved Laity need to communicate better with those in the pews. A church community which feeds people's spirits and lets them know you care will be most receptive to growth and discipleship. Third, "there is power in understanding" yourself and the source of your power. We have power and spiritual gifts. Where does that power come from? It comes from the Lord. Brother Thomas' message was timely and provoked deep thought for laity and everyone. What will our individual answers be to the question, "Where is your power?" We will be able to reflect on the points he offered and put these into action as we strive to fulfill the Great Commission. God bless the messenger and His Word delivered to His people!

Reverend Dr. Janet J. Sturdivant, Presiding Elder of the South District, offered the Invitation to Christian Discipleship. The message was obviously the highlight of the Lay Witness service, but there were other wonderful participants and spiritual offerings that created a memorable worship experience. Brother Alan M. Nelson of St. Paul AME Church, Philadelphia, PA served as Worship Leader and guided the congregants through service with enthusiastic care. Philadelphia Conference Lay Musician, Brother Earl Knight III, provided music throughout service that enhanced the worship experience.

The Philadelphia A.M.E. Mass Choir offered several selections which opened our hearts to the Word and restored our spirits with joy. Other participants who served include: Sister Linda Frazier of Morris Brown AME Church, Philadelphia, PA lined the Laymen's Hymn; Sister Juanita Bryant, Mt. Tabor AME Church, Philadelphia, PA provided the Invocation; Sister Bernice Green, Bethel AME Church, Ardmore read the Old Testament Scripture; Sister Kezia Moore, St. Matthew AME Church, Philadelphia read the new Testament Scripture; Sister Anita Hanna-Matthew lead the Litany; Marie Butler did the Acknowledgement of Visitors.

Remarks were made by Philadelphia Conference Lay President Walter C. Jeffers which included presenting a special proclamation to Mr. John Thomas III. In the proclamation from The City Council of Philadelphia, Mr. Thomas was acknowledged for being elected as a General Officer of the AME Church as Editor of The Christian Recorder.

The Christian Recorder was recognized as the oldest publication that has been continuously published. Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell praised Mr. Thomas for his message and congratulated President Jeffers and Director of Lay Activities, Shirley Moore Harris and all the participants for a wonderful Annual Lay Night Service. Bishop Ingram and Reverend Jessica Kendall Ingram, the Episcopal Supervisor lauded the Mr. Thomas for his message and service to the AME Church as Editor of The Christian Recorder.

The service was concluded with joyful signing of the Lay Benediction.

**21st Session of the Western New York Annual Conference  
Lay Witness Night  
May 18, 2017**

Congratulations to the members of the WNYC Lay Organization, under the leadership of Sister Caroline Hoffman-Veasey, for a wonderful Lay Night service held at Bethel AMEC in Buffalo, New York.

The speaker for the evening was introduced by the Presiding Prelate of the First Episcopal District, Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram. The First Episcopal District Lay Organization President, Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, topic was "What Will it Take for You to Go" Sister Hopewell concentrated on the scripture of Matthew 28: 18-20.

Sister Hopewell received a surprise, encouraging visit from, Reverend Jay Broadnax her Pastor at Mt. Pisgah in Philadelphia, PA. We were also honored to have the Connectional Director of Lay, Sister Edith Bartley Cartledge, with us and Bro. Andree Turner, 1st. Vice President, Philadelphia Conference.

The service ended with the singing of the Lay Benediction, as we close another Lay Night celebration we remember, "We are Laymen Soldiers strong in unity and love!"



LOVE IS  
IN THE AIR!

**Dr. and Mrs. Drew**  
**50th year Anniversary**



**Mr. and Mrs. Hopewell**  
**36th year Anniversary**



**Marcus Burnett**  
**and Ms. Jessica**  
**Lynn Mims**



# The Lay Benediction

## Connectional Lay Organization AME Church

Words by Mrs. Rose Reese  
Tune by Ms. Jackie Winston/Ms. Florine Herron  
Scoring by Ms. Florine Herron

May God bless us with the true spir-it of

The first system of musical notation is in 4/4 time, featuring a piano accompaniment with chords and a vocal line. The lyrics are: "May God bless us with the true spir-it of".

6

Chris-ti - a - ni ty. That we may live to-geth-er not as man o - ver man. But as

The second system of musical notation continues the piano accompaniment and vocal line. The lyrics are: "Chris-ti - a - ni ty. That we may live to-geth-er not as man o - ver man. But as".

10

Lay per - sons work-ing with God - - But as Lay per - sons work-ing with

The third system of musical notation continues the piano accompaniment and vocal line. The lyrics are: "Lay per - sons work-ing with God - - But as Lay per - sons work-ing with".

13

God - - But as Lay per - sons work-ing with God. A - men.

The fourth system of musical notation concludes the piano accompaniment and vocal line. The lyrics are: "God - - But as Lay per - sons work-ing with God. A - men.".