

**CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL
THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH**

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
TO THE**

**CONNECTIONAL COUNCIL
THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL ZION CHURCH**



July 18-20, 2018

**Sheraton Birmingham Hotel
2101 Richard Arrington Jr. Boulevard North
Birmingham, Alabama**

**Dr. Mary J. Matthews, Connectional Lay Council President
Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr., Chairman Board of Lay Activities
Bishop Seth Lartey, Host Bishop
Bishop Mildred Bonnie Hines, President, Board of Bishops**

**Report of the Connectional Lay Council President
To The
Board of Bishops and Members of the Connectional Council
The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church**

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ! Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is with joy and appreciation that I have the wonderful opportunity and privilege to make this report on behalf of the Connectional Lay Council (CLC) Executive Board.

I am thankful for the love, support and continued cooperation that the laity and clergy gives in support of the Connectional Lay Council ministry. God is doing great things through this vital organ of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, because the people have a mind to work. God be praised! To our Episcopal Leaders, the Connectional Lay Council thank each of you for this challenging theme, adopted by the CLC "THE FREEDOM CHURCH: REFOCUSING ON OUR PURPOSE, REVIEWING OUR PRACTICES. RETOOLING OUR PEOPLE, AND REACHING OUR POTENTIAL." This theme helps us to evaluate ourselves and our commitment to God, our mission and our ministry.

11th Quadrennial Lay Convention. More than 500 registered laity and clergy traveled to Knoxville, Tennessee to participate in the 11th Quadrennial Lay Council Convention, convening on July 23-27, 2017 at the Knoxville Marriott/Civic Auditorium, Knoxville, Tennessee. A well-constructed, integrated program of informative thematic focused meetings and the plenary business session was executed ahead of schedule with all business completed. Mrs. Yvonne Baskerville, First Vice President/Convention Chair with great support from the convention steering committee, Connectional Lay Council (CLC) Executive Board Members and Board of Lay Activities did a phenomenal job. I am grateful to all participants, attendees and supporters for helping to make the convention a great success.

Transition Meeting/CLC Executive Board. A successful Officers' Transition meeting of outgoing to incoming officers was held on September 9, 2017 at the AME Zion Church Headquarters. The meeting provided for the transfer of organizational records, and information to newly elected officers. In addition to the Transition meeting, a Newly Elected Officers' Training Session was conducted to inform and prepare incoming officers for their new positions. All officers were informed of their duties and expectations of the office and the officers, shared incoming goals for their elected position.

I am pleased to say that we, the Executive Board of the Connectional Lay Council with the counsel and support of the Board of Lay Activities, during this Quadrennial are continuing to enthusiastically realize our vision of empowering and equipping the laity of Zion as we also equip ourselves to reach our potential. The CLC Executive Board stays connected and conducts necessary business between annual meetings via teleconferencing. Regional directors are fulfilling their role in serving as contact person between the Episcopal Districts and Executive Board through teleconferences, regional meetings, and presenting lay academies. The annual Executive Board meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 20, 2018.

Membership Growth. Since the last report, the total membership increased by 1,186, up from 40,289 to 41,475. Additionally, there was an increase of 296 Life Members. The number of active lay councils decreased by 14, down from 1083 to 1069. The percentage of active lay councils decreased by 1% from 74% to 73%. The overseas members are tracked through updates given by the presiding bishops. A membership Report is provided for your perusal.

Education. The Education Committee, chaired by Dr. Joyce Perry Edwards, presented an informative and engaging introduction of our 2017-2021 theme to the 11th Quadrennial Convention. Using drama, exposition, visual presentation, and song, the presentation addressed the leading component of the theme, "The Freedom Church," as well as the four subthemes: *Refocusing on Our Purpose, Reviewing Our Practices, Retooling Our People, and Reaching Our Potential*. So that laity throughout Zion could begin immediately focusing on the first subtheme during 2017, the Committee prepared a booklet of four lay academies that were distributed during the Quadrennial Convention. The Committee anticipates having available the *Facilitator's Guide for Conducting Thematic, Interactive Lay Academies for 2018 – 2021* at the site of this Connectional Council meeting. The Committee is presently preparing for a presentation on "Reviewing Our Practices" to the CLC Evangelistic Retreat to be held October 5-6, 2018. Both the presentations and the lay academies developed by the Education Committee utilize the lives and contributions of four notables in Zion's history: Harriett Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Eliza Ann Gardner, and Bishop Jermain Wesley Loguen to highlight key aspects of the Quadrennial theme. The chair of the Committee continues to write articles on our theme for each issue of *The Connection*, the CLC newsletter.

Bishop George J. Leake, III Endowed Scholarship. Dr. Regina Dancy, Chief Financial Officer of Hood Theological Seminary, continues to keep the Connectional Lay Council updated on the financial activity of the endowed scholarship. The fair market value for the scholarship as of March 31, 2018 was \$69,543.53.

The current "Leake Scholar" is Angellica Sweat, a native of Kings Mountain, North Carolina. Ms. Sweat is a member of the Charlotte District, Western North Carolina Conference, and the Piedmont Episcopal District. Currently, she is an exhorter at Greater Gethsemane A.M.E. Zion Church, under the leadership of Reverend David A. Williams.

Connectional Lay Sunday. The 2017 Lay Sunday offering recipients were Clinton College, Rock Hill, South Carolina and the Hurricane Disaster Relief. The amount received from all sources was \$30,998.81.

During the month of October 2017, \$5,000 was given in support of Phase I of the Hurricane Disaster Relief through the A.M.E. Zion Church Department of Finance c/o Dr. Shirley Welch, CFO. The Lay Council gave an additional \$5,000 donation during the month of January in support of Phase II of the Hurricane Disaster Relief; for a total of \$10,000.

On March 9, 2018, I represented the Connectional Lay Council in attendance at the 124th Clinton College Founder's Day Celebration and presented the school with a check for \$25,000 to establish the Dr. Sallie V. Moreland Endowed Scholarship Fund.

Technology and Social Media Webinars. The Connectional Lay Council sponsored a Technology and Social Media Webinar series to provide basic training on the use of technology and social media. The six online one-hour sessions were held on the second Thursday of each month (November, January, February, March, April and May) from 8pm-9pm EST, with a focus on using the Microsoft Office suite, conference call platforms, email marketing programs, and the various social media platforms.

The webinar topics and dates were as follows:

- November 11, 2017 - Technology 101 (MOS, cloud sharing, conference call)
- January 11, 2018 - Graphic Designs (ways to promote your ministry)
- February 8, 2018 - Socially Savvy 101
- March 8, 2018 - Socially Savvy 201
- April 12, 2018 - Websites 101
- May 10, 2018 - Email Marketing

Participants were able to view the live sessions on their cell phone, desktop or laptop computers and follow along with presenter, Miss LaKesha Womack, as she used her screen to walk participants through using the different tools and explain how each can be used to build their ministries. Participants were also able to interact with the presenter to get questions answered. This was a great initiative to begin to help participants improve their skills for working in the local church as well as enhancing their skills in the ministry of the Connectional Lay Council. Each participant received a copy of the presentation to review if needed or to serve as a teaching tool to those in their areas who were unable to login for the webinars. All sessions were free; persons only needed to register in order to receive the login link. All presentations are available on the CLC website. We are grateful to Ms. LaKesha Womack for her teaching, willingness to share and for providing such valuable timely information via the Connectional Lay Council.

“Let’s Get Moving” Fitness Challenge. The Connectional Lay Council is striving to help all members maintain healthy lifestyles, both clergy and laity. The Fitness Challenge began in January 2018 and will continue through December 2018. This will allow ample time for everyone to participate in the walking, jogging or running challenge! Because daily exercising remains a struggle, we have encouraged everyone to participate in a Walk-Jog-Run Fitness Challenge Day in each Episcopal Area. Participants were encouraged to gain support and participation from family, friends and co-workers as well.

Quadrennial Evangelistic Retreat. Bishop Michael A. Frencher Sr., Board of Lay Activities chairman has approved October 5-6, 2018 as dates for the Quadrennial Evangelistic Retreat. Plans have been underway for the 6th Evangelistic Retreat since October 2017. The location has been confirmed and we are elated to identify the site of the Evangelistic Retreat as the Dorothy Walls Conference and Retreat Center in Black Mountain, North Carolina. The Piedmont Episcopal District with Bishop George E. Battle, Jr, Senior Bishop and Presiding Prelate, Mrs. Iris M. Battle, Missionary Supervisor and Mrs. Dorothy Gill-Smith, Regional Director will serve as the host. Ms. Leondras Davis, Chairperson and the Evangelistic Retreat Steering Committee have been meeting monthly to plan this highly anticipated spiritual event. The retreat theme is “Equipped and Empowered to Serve.”

We are excited with the ongoing planning and looking forward to a spirit-filled mountaintop experience! It is our prayer that all Episcopal Districts will have representation as well as a young adult presence registered and in attendance. We thank and praise God for all He is doing to guide our hearts, minds and steps in the ministry of the Connectional Lay Council.

Necrology. We pause to remember those who have given so much in service to God through the AME Zion Church and are now resting in eternity. We honor their memory.

ACTIVITIES OF THE PRESIDENT:

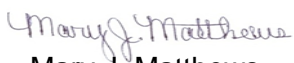
I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. John 9:4

- July 19-27, 2017. Provided executive oversight and presided for business sessions during the A.M.E. Zion Church Connectional Lay Council Executive Board meeting and 11th Quadrennial Lay Council Convention, Knoxville Marriott - Knoxville, Tennessee
- September 9, 2017. Held CLC Transition/Elected Officers Training Academy at the A.M.E. Zion Church headquarters, Charlotte, North Carolina
- September 15, 2017. Participated in the Kentucky Conference Lay Council Appreciation for Mrs. Lula K. Howard, CLC President Emeritus held at the Hughlett Temple A.M.E. Zion Church Louisville, Kentucky
- October 15, 2017. Brought the Lay Sunday message for the St. Catherine A.M.E. Zion Church New Rochelle, New York
- October 21, 2017. Supported the 50th Anniversary in Ministry of Bishop George E. Battle, Jr., Senior Bishop; held at Gethsemane A.M.E. Zion Church Charlotte, North Carolina
- October 22, 2017. Brought the Lay Sunday message for the Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church Mt. Vernon, New York
- October 22, 2017. Attended worship service at Mount Hope A.M.E. Zion Church, White Plains, New York
- October 24-26, 2017. Attended Connect Faith Education Conference and Appointment Trade show at the Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati, Ohio
- November 8-12, 2017. Attended Central NC Annual Conference held at St. Mark A.M.E. Zion Church Durham, North Carolina
- December 2, 2017. Presented Lay Academy during the Rock Hill District Lay Council Meeting, at New Mt Olivet A.M.E. Zion Church Rock Hill, South Carolina
- January 19, 2018. Conducted a session on the A.M.E. Zion Church's 2nd quadrennial subtheme "The Freedom Church: Reviewing Our Practices" during the South Atlantic Episcopal District Convocation, held at the Kenneth Monroe Transformation Center in Rock Hill, South Carolina

- January 24-29, 2018. Attended the Bahamas Islands Annual Conference held at the Shaw Temple A.M.E. Zion Church Nassau, Bahamas
- February 8, 2018. Attended the 15th Annual “A Service in Celebration of Livingstone College Leaders Hall of Fame,” which honors successful leaders by recognizing their unwavering commitment and service. Held at the former Holiday Inn on Jake Alexander Boulevard Salisbury, North Carolina
- February 13-16, 2018. Attended the Board of Bishop/International Ministers and Lay Association meeting held at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott, Norfolk, Virginia
- March 9, 2018. Attended the 124th Clinton College Founder’s Day Celebration, Rock Hill, South Carolina
- March 24, 2018. Participated in the Annual North Eastern Regional Lay Council meeting held at Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church Jersey City, New Jersey
- April 3-7, 2018. Participated in the International Pastors and Leaders Conference/Lay Convocation in the Western West Africa Episcopal District
- May 17, 2018. Attended the Bishop James Walker Hood Donor and Scholarship Recognition Dinner held at Hood Theological Seminary Salisbury, North Carolina
- June 7, 2018. Visited Dorothy Walls Conference and Retreat Center and the Ridgecrest Conference Center, Black Mountain, NC to meet with the Account Manager in preparation for the Evangelistic retreat
- June 25, 2108. Attended Trademark/Copyright Fees and Trademark Information meeting scheduled by Ms. Addie Lisby, CCO at the A.M.E. Zion Headquarters Charlotte, NC

As I conclude this report, I extend a sincere thank you to the local church, district and conference laity, pastors, presiding elders, and my Episcopal leaders for the continuous support given to the vision of the Connectional Lay Council. Working together works. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within us, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:14*

Respectfully Submitted,



Mary J. Matthews,
International President, Connectional Lay Council