

"FIRST IN TOUCH"



FIRST EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY NEWSLETTER

July 2024

Annual Meeting Edition

Join the First Episcopal District Lay Organization

Celebration Weekend!!

Honoring

Cheryl Hammond Hopewell

Our First Episcopal District Lay President

*July 26 -27, 2024
Bethel A&E Church
Wilmington, DE*

*"For many are called, but few are chosen."
~ Matthew 22:14*



*"And of some have compassion, making a difference."
~ Jude 22*

Celebrating 8 Years of Leadership & Service

Bishop Julius Harrison McAllister, Sr. - Presiding Prelate
Mother Joan Marla McAllister - Episcopal Supervisor
Mrs. Wanda Duckett - General Chairperson
Mrs. Donna Lee Chandler Smith - First Vice President
Ms. Robin Batson - Third Vice President
Ms. Jyzelle Steplight - Young Adult Liaison

"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 ...

President's Celebration Cover	
President's Greeting	1
First District Lay Mid-Year Convention	2
First District Lay 2024–2028 Officer Candidates	4
Spotlight on Our Conferences	5
• Bermuda Conference Lay Night Highlights	6
• Delaware Conference Lay Witness Night	8
• New England Conference Updates	10
• New Jersey Conference Stalwart Women & Lay Night	12
• Philadelphia Conference Lay Night	14
• Western New York Conference Lay Night	16
A Word from the DOPR	18
About Us	19

"FIRST IN TOUCH"



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 truly grateful to each of you for all you do for African Methodism and for the Lay Organization. We have finally been through this last series of Annual Conferences and each of you had wonderful Lay Witness Nights. I am grateful to have attended all of them, not only this past year, but for the last eight years. I am grateful for the success of our Mid-Year Convention on the beautiful island of Bermuda. It was hybrid but it was great to see so many of you there.

We had a wonderful time, and we thank President Anthoni Lightbourne and the Bermuda Conference Lay for their hospitality. I would also like to thank our DOLA, Brother Thomas Davis who does an outstanding job putting our programs and worship experiences together. We thank our preacher, the Rev. Dr. Jahkimmo Smith and our working presenters, Rev. Dr. Jahkimmo Smith, Rev. Dr. Leonard Santucci, Rev. Mark Tyler, PhD, and the Historical Commission of Mother Bethel. They all were outstanding.

Our 2024 Annual Meeting will be in person. We have not had an in person Annual Meeting since 2019 and we are looking forward to the warm hospitality we will receive from the President Sharon Drew and the Delaware Conference Lay Organization after not having hosted us for the last five years.

This is my last message as your President, and I am thankful to all of you for making this journey with me. I made a vow when I became president that each day I would put in a good day's work, and I have tried to do just that each and every day. We transitioned as needed during the pandemic and never missed a beat. Thank you to each of you for all you do to make the First District Lay Organization something we can be proud of. Your efforts are very much appreciated. We are looking forward to continuing to move forward under new leadership and I know that you will be just as supportive. Again, I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. I love what I do, and I love each of you.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Philippians 1:3-6

First Episcopal District Lay Mid-Year Convention - February 23 - 24, 2024

Submitted by Sister Sharon Carmichael – DOPR



In her final tenure as President of the First Episcopal District Lay Organization, Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell and Brother Thomas Davis, Director of

Lay Activities (DOLA) held the organization's Mid-Year Convention in the beautiful Bermuda Conference at Mt. Zion AME Church in Southhampton Parrish. The convention convened on Friday and Saturday, February 23 and 24, with the theme "Glorifying God By Serving Beyond Yourself".



Friday morning's session of Devotion and Bible Study was led by Brother Earl Knight, First District Music Director. Using Jude 4:18-19, Brother Knight admonished us not to be discouraged by those who

following ungodly ways, doing their own thing and trying to discourage us. God has bought us by His love and preserved us to serve. We have calling on our lives and must do the work that He has preserved us to do!

In parallel, Robin Batson, First District Lay Third Vice President, also conducted a First Timers' Session, where she provided training on the AME Church Lay Organization.



After an orientation of the theme by DOLA Thomas Davis, opening remarks by President Hopewell, and a warm welcome by Bermuda Conference Lay Organization President W. Anthoni Lightbourne, the attendees were enriched by two theme-focused workshops:



1) Rev. Dr. Jahkimmo Smith, Pastor of Mount Zion AMEC, Bermuda: "Have You Washed Any Feet Lately?", taken from John 13:1-13 NLT.

Reverend Smith taught us that "Christlike service compels us to strip away the things that keep us from serving.

2) "Glorifying God by Serving Beyond Ourselves – Focusing on Bishop Richard Allen's Life", presented by Reverend Mark K. Tyler who was virtual from South Africa. He said that we have normally focused on Richard Allen as a young man and an adult, but there

is not much focus on his elderly years. At age 70, Richard Allen felt the need to get involved. Due to violence against Black people in Cincinnati in 1829, restrictive "Black laws", and attacks against Black success, he opened the doors of Mother Bethel for the "Colored Convention Movement" to Resist, Emphasize self-determination, and Fight Back against Jim Crow, KKK, etc. Reverend Tyler reminded us that "there is no age that God cannot get something out of us." We need to follow Richard Allen's model.



For the afternoon session, DOLA Davis introduced the third workshop for the day: "Outstanding First District Lay Conference".



We were enlightened as the Conference Lay Presidents spoke about the happenings, work, and accomplishments in their conferences that demonstrated our theme of

"Serving Beyond Ourselves":

W. Anthoni Lightbourne, Bermuda Conference Lay President, spoke about visiting nursing homes, inviting youth to church and Lay activities, distributing food in the community and other community activities, and the Bermuda Conference Annual Inaugural Health Fair.



Brother Thomas Whitt, Western New York Lay President, spoke about the Leadership Conference at Baber AMEC, the Richard Allen Essay Contest, and shadowing the First Responders.

Delaware Conference Lay President Sharon Drew spoke about their Impact Program in the community.



New England Conference Lay President Linda Gant discussed the distribution of food, clothing, and other necessities throughout the Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island communities.

Continued on Page 3

First District Lay Mid-Year Convention (continued)



New Jersey Conference President Elizabeth Clark spoke about distribution of clothing, socks, school supplies, a Love Feast, Women's Shelter diaper distribution, helping families with rent problems, and supporting Evangelists' outreach to children during Christmas, the Unsung Heroes breakfasts, and 5th Sunday Fellowships.

New York Conference Lay President Bonita O'Neal spoke about outreach areas: Soup kitchen, food pantry, block association co-sponsorship for food purchase and distribution, voter registration, Operation Asylum Seekers for clothing, food, shelter and other needs, breast cancer seminar, and 2 Fish & 5 Loaves distribution of socks, hats, gloves, and school supplies.



Philadelphia Conference Lay President Andree' Turner spoke about feeding the community, Child Sexual Abuse Preventative workshops, Health workshops, Civil Rights workshops, and supporting other ministries including Unsung Heroes breakfasts, Frank C. Cummings Scholarship, and YPD coalition.

Reports from the First District delegates to the 38th CLO Biennial followed the Conference Presidents' sharing session: Bermuda – Mrs. Donna Lee Chandler Smith, 1st VP; Western New York – Sister Marjorie Wright; Delaware – President Sharon Drew; New England – Sister Annie Haynes; New Jersey – President Elizabeth Clark; New York – Sister Mary Whitis and President Bonita O'Neal; Philadelphia – Brother Shawn Lee.

The Evening Worship was led by Bermuda Lay Conference President Brother W. Anthony Lightbourne with the Conference Presidents serving as worship participants.

Reverend Dr. Emily Gail A. Dill, Bermuda Conference Itinerant Elder, introduced the preacher, the Reverend Dr. Jahkimmo F. Smith. Reverend Smith's sermon was taken from Luke 10:36-37 (Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan), with the subject, "Go and Do the Same". In Jesus' words, He challenges us to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. We must go do the same as Jesus did. Reverend Smith challenged us, asking the question, "Are you / we ready to go and do the same"?

The service concluded with "Prayer for Services to Others", "Prayer of Commitment and Rededication" by Bermuda Presiding Elder Howard H. Dill, Reflections by President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, and the Lay Benediction sang by all.

Saturday's session began with Brother Earl Knight again leading us in song, "This is My Story, This is My Song, devotion, and Bible Study, with prayer by Brother Kevin D. Lamb, Philadelphia Conference.

Brother Knight's lesson was "Let's Do This Together", taken from Psalm 34:1-4. Sometimes it is hard to get people together on one accord to get things done. God has not called us to do it alone. Brother Knight used our hybrid meeting as an example. It was hosted by Bermuda Conference, but it required others to work together using technology so that others could join. We did it together! We all have different gifts, talents, and expertise. We must put these together, let go of our insecurities, work together, and glorify God!



Reverend Dr. Leonard Santucci, Pastor of Vernon Temple AMEC, Bermuda Conference, presented our final workshop, "A Call to Action". He highlighted three points:

1. Call to liberty – We've been set free.
2. Call to love one another – Empathy!
3. Call to serve one another – Through our service, we Empower.

After this thought-provoking and well-received workshop, President Hopewell led the Business Session with Roll Call, brief greetings by the officers, Conference President remarks, and comments from the advisors: Sister Mary Mootoo and Sister Edna Sharp.

President Hopewell announced the July Annual Meeting dates of July 26 – 27, 2024 with the Executive Board meeting on July 25. The Delaware Conference Lay Organization will be hosting in Wilmington, Delaware.

The 2025 Mid-Year Convention will be February 21 - 22, with the Executive Board meeting on February 20. The Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization will be hosting.

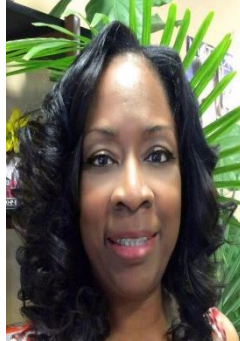
President Hopewell also announced the candidates for First District Lay Officers.

A 90-minute Zoom virtual tour of the Mother Bethel and Richard Allen Museum followed the business session. Afterwards, President Hopewell gave closing remarks followed by the Lay Benediction and circle. Another successful meeting by our illustrious leader!

*First Episcopal District Lay Organization
2024 – 2028
Officer Candidates*



President -
Linda Gant,
New England



1st VP –
Wanda Duckett,
New Jersey



2nd VP –
Robin Batson,
New York



3rd VP -
Shawn Lee,
Philadelphia



Recording Secretary -
Dorothy Chandler,
New Jersey



Assist. Recording
Secretary -
Cynthia King,
New England



Corresponding
Secretary –
Keith Arrington,
Philadelphia



Financial Secretary –
Cheryl L. Ford,
Philadelphia



Treasurer -
Sandra Mosby,
New England



Chaplain –
Catherine Combs-
Smith,
New Jersey



Historiographer –
Caroline Hoffman-
Veasey,
New England



Director of Lay
Activities (DOLA) –
Eyerce Armstrong-
Poston, PhD,
Delaware



Director of Public
Relations (DOPR) –
Sharon Carmichael,
New Jersey



Young Adult
Representative
(YAR) Jyzelle
Steplight
New York



“FIRST IN TOUCH”

Spotlight on our Conferences





Bermuda Conference Lay Organization (BCLO)

Brother W. Anthoni Lightbourne, President

Bermuda Annual Conference Lay Witness Night Highlights

Submitted by Brother W. Anthoni Lightbourne, President

Lay Witness Night was held on Thursday March 7th, 2024, at St. Paul AME Church.

The worship event was well attended by Laity, Clergy and out of Conference guests.

The service was ably led by Brother Raymond Tucker of Bethel AME Church, with worship in sign language by Sister Janita Thomas.

Bermuda Conference Lay 1st VP, Sister Colina Outerbridge presented our Episcopal Prelate, The Right Reverend Julius H. McAllister, who then introduced the Lay Night Speaker, Conference Lay President Brother W. Anthoni Lightbourne. Songs of preparation were then rendered by soloist Brother Willard Burch who blessed us with “Goodness of God” and “Nobody Greater.

In a message entitled “Are you Ministering with Your Gift?”, with scripture text from 1Peter 4: 9-11, Brother Lightbourne encouraged the laity to use their God given gifts for the upbuilding of the church and to not leave all of the ministry to the pastor. He also reminded us that the mission and

purpose of the Lay organization is about ministering to others.

The service concluded with closing expressions by President Lightbourne, FDLO President. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, and Bishop Mc Allister.

President Hammond-Hopewell extended well wishes to the Conference and indicated that this is the first of her last in a series of Lay Witness Nights. This would be the last time she would attend a Bermuda Conference Lay Witness Night in her capacity as First Episcopal District Lay President, as her term of office was drawing to an end.

Bishop McAllister thanked Brother Lightbourne for a powerful word and message and for his leadership in the Bermuda Conference. He also thanked President Hammond-Hopewell for her extraordinary leadership, and expressed to the pastors and clergy that their presence was important. He also thanked the laity and acknowledged the role they played in his becoming a Bishop.

The service concluded with the Lay Benediction.

Continued on Page 7

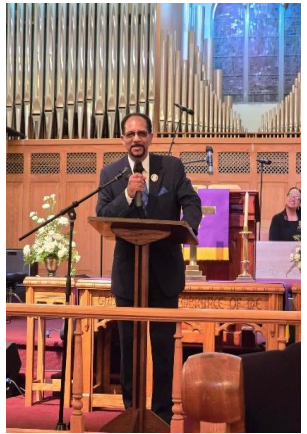
**Bermuda Annual Conference Lay Witness Night Highlights
(continued)**



Introduction of the Bishop
Sis. Colina Outerbridge



The Lay Litany
Sis. Suzette Butterfield



BCLO President Lightbourne



Bishop
Rt. Rev. Julius H. McAllister Sr.



The Welcome
Sis. Jewell Wears



BCLO Executive Board
&
1st District Lay President Hammond Hopewell



Worship Attendees



Delaware Conference Lay Organization (DCLO)

Sister Sharon D. Drew, President

101st Session of The Delaware Annual Conference Lay Witness Night

Submitted by Sister Sharon D. Drew, Photos provided by Dr. Eyerce Armstrong-Poston

Members of the Delaware Conference Lay, Pastors, Clergy, Conference Delegates and Alternates, President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, and Brother Irv Hopewell, along with members of the New Jersey, New England, New York, and Philadelphia Conferences gathered at Bethel AME Church, Wilmington, Delaware to celebrate the Delaware Annual Conference Lay Witness Night. The Conferences gathered prior to the Service for a light meal and fellowship. This was the second in-person Lay Night since the Pandemic for the Delaware Conference Lay.

The Lay Night Worship Leader was Sister Maggie Story of Mt. Zion Dover who moved the program along. Brother Lindsay Williams of Mt. Friendship AME, Smyrna gave the Invocation, Sisters Louise Hudson of John Wesley AME Church, Dover and Venessa DeLoach of Dickerson Chapel AME, Millsboro read the scriptures. The Program continued with the reading of the Litany read by Enoch Gatling, Young Adult Representative, Bethel AME Wilmington. The Music was rendered by the Men of Mt.

Zion AME Church in Dover, Delaware under the direction of Dr. Gregory McPherson.

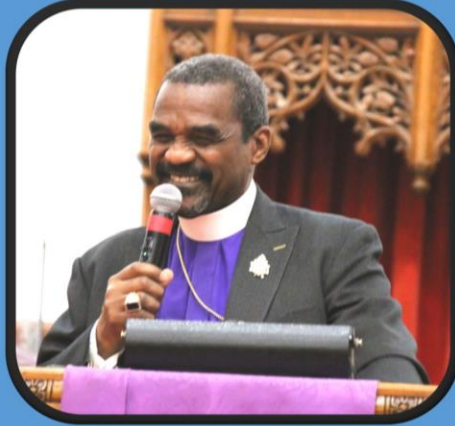
The highlight of the evening was the message brought to us from Reverend Dr. Erika D. Crawford, "Witness Protection System." Her message was taken from Matthew 11:1—6. Reverend Crawford explained the workings of Witness Protection. She used this message as a metaphor to describe the situation John the Baptist and the Disciples were in when John was in prison. The Disciples were in God's witness protection program. It was time for the Disciples to testify about the wondrous works of Jesus. She preached with such power and fervor ushering in the Holy Spirit. God has kept us today and it is our time to testify and proclaim Jesus.

The program ended with reflections from President Sharon Drew and President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, followed by the Lay Benediction.

CONGRATULATIONS, BEST WISHES, AND THANK YOU TO DR. CHERYL HAMMOND HOPEWELL FOR ALL HER SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE DELAWARE CONFERENCE LAY ORGANIZATION!

Continued on Page 9

**DELAWARE CONFERENCE LAY NIGHT 2024
THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024**



Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Sr., Presiding Prelate



Rev. Dr. Erika D. Crawford



Dr. Cheryl Hammond-Hopewell



Bro. Enoch Gatling



Sis. Sharon Drew



New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO)

*Sister Linda Gant, President
Submitted by Sister Linda Gant*

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

“It’s a Learning Thing” – The New England Conference Lay Organization continues to re-imagine methods of teaching and training the congregations of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Whether it involves, **Retired Presiding Elder Herbert L. Eddy**, sharing with the laity the importance of worship, or **Sis. Renee Callender of Grant A.M.E. Church** also shares her understanding of what it means to be a leader. Let the learning continue!

“A Time of Celebration” – To God be the Glory, remarkable things He has done! The New England Conference Lay Organization (NECLO) held its Annual Award Luncheon and with this being my last year serving as its President chose to celebrate our Presiding Elder and the Pastors of this great conference with the theme, **“A Willing Shepherd,”** from 1 Peter 5:2. It was a time of joy and delight as we recognized their dedication to service and spiritual leadership, as they guide, support and uplift the lives of those God has entrusted to their care. We thank them for their tireless efforts and commitment to service.

The List of Honorees are as follows:

Allen A.M.E. Church – Providence
Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Bloomfield
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Boston
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Bridgeport
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Fall River
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Greenwich
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Lowell
Bethel A.M.E. Church - Lynn
Bethel A.M.E. Church – New Bedford
Bethel A.M.E. Church – New Haven
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Norwalk
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Providence
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Springfield
Bethel A.M.E. Church – Stamford
Bethel Community A.M.E. Church
Boston-Hartford District A.M.E. Church
Grant A.M.E. Church
Historic Charles Street A.M.E. Church
Malden Mission A.M.E. Church
Mount Zion A.M.E. Church
New Life in Christ International
New Roots A.M.E. Church
Peoples Chelsea A.M.E. Church
St. James A.M.E. Church
St. Paul A.M.E. Church

Rev. Janine A. Dailey
Rev. Orsella R. Hughes
Rev. Daylan K. Greer, Sr.
Rev. Ray A. Hammond, M.D.
Rev. A. Iona Smith Nze
Rev. Darryl D. Malden, Esq.
Rev. Felix-Gerard Delatour
Rev. Sharel A. Roberson
Rev. Bernadette Hickman-Maynard
Rev. Dr. Sandra G. Whitley
Rev. Steven A. Cousin, Jr.
Rev. Dr. Richard W. Clarke
Rev. Howard M. Jenkins, Jr.
Rev. Marcus T. McCullough
Rev. Dr. Robert A. Jackson, Jr.
Rev. Dr. Gwendolyn Wrighten-Montgomery
Rev. Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace
Rev. Dr. Pedro A. Castro, Jr.
Rev. Dr. Gregory G. Groover, Sr.
Rev. Dr. Gloria Harris Cater
Rev. Alvin T. Riley, Jr.
Rev. Martha Florestal
Rev. Mariama White Hammond
Rev. Dr. George Walters-Sleyon
Rev. Tamesha Mills
Rev. Dr. Ellis I. Washington



Continued on Page 11

(continued)

“Keeping in Touch” – Thank you **Sis. Josephine Fulcher Anderson**, Chairperson of the New England Conference and First Episcopal District Lay Organization’s Concerns Committee for ensuring our members are aware they are being lifted in prayer. Cards of Encouragement, Sympathy, Get Well, or Just Thinking About You are mailed throughout the year.

“Education It Is!” – The New England Conference Lay Organization continues to support the Frank C. Cummings Scholarship each year which affords the opportunity for college students to receive \$1,000 in scholarship awards or possibly a Book Scholarship for which the amounts vary each year. Congratulations to **Sis. Andrea Drayton** from Charles Street -Boston recipient of \$1,000 scholarship award.

“Our Annual Get Together” – It was a great time of fellowship as we celebrated Lay Annual Days with Allen Chapel-Hartford with the **Bro. Jaquan Samuels from Phillips Metropolitan C.M.E. Church of Hartford** serving as the Lay speaker. Followed by Bethel Bloomfield with local Lay **President Henry McMillian** giving the lay message. **Sis. Nicol Ayers** brought the word as the Lay speaker for Allen Providence, and **First District Lay President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell** brought down the house for Charles Street A.M.E. Church.

“It’s Time to Witness” – We certainly experienced the Holy Spirit moving throughout our Lay Witness Service beginning with the Doxology and ending with our Lay Benediction. We thank our speaker, **Sis. Greta Douglas**, Local WMS President of Bethel A.M.E. Church – Boston whose message **“Choosing to Win and Equipped to Serve,”** touched our hearts and soul. Thankful for all our worship participants, **Sis. Renee Callender, Sis. Vanessa White, Bro. Michael Powell, Sis. Sandra Mosby, Sis. Veneice Smith-McCain, and Rev. Gloria White-Hammond**. This was truly an awesome experience, and we were basking in God’s glory.

“On the District Side” – Road Trip!! Off the delegation (three in total) goes to Bermuda for our Mid-Year Meeting, attending workshops that focused on **“Glorifying God By Serving Beyond”** Each presenter identified different scenarios regarding integrity and the importance of striving to walk in it. We were blessed with two “first timers” who raved about the lessons learned throughout the meeting.

It’s a Connectional Thing! – The delegation was off to Chicago traveling by planes, automobiles, and trains, and to God be the glory for the traveling mercies as we arrived at the 38th Biennial. Here is where we had “Great Worship Services,” “Informative Workshops,” Exciting Business Sessions, Gala Banquet, and “Wonderful Fellowship,” all in one place. The NECLO is attending the First District Breakfast adorned with our First District stoles.

“We’re In This Together” – This has been an amazing journey as I have served as the Conference President for these past eight years. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Executive Board of the New England Conference Lay Organization for their unwavering support and dedication to our shared mission in Christ. Their use of their God-given talents has been instrumental in our success in teaching and training. I also want to express my deep appreciation to Presiding Elder Jocelyn K. Hart Lovelace, Bro. Eddie Lovelace, Consultant, and the esteemed Pastors of the New England Annual Conference for their invaluable counsel, support, and love. The collaboration between laity and clergy truly brings meaning to our work, and we feel incredibly blessed to be serving together in the vineyard.



It’s a Learning Thing



A Time of Celebration



Our Annual Get Together



It’s Time to Witness



It’s a Connectional Thing



Our Annual Get Together



New Jersey Conference Lay Organization (NJCLO)

Sister Elizabeth Clark, President

Submitted by Sister Francine Davis, DOLA

Stalwart Women Shall Live Forever in our Hearts

We mourn the death of Dr. Juanita J. High born on September 25, 1930, in Atlantic City, New Jersey peacefully transitioned on January 24, 2024, at Gulf Coast Medical Center in Fort Myers, Florida where she was a winter resident.

Sister Juanita served as president of the Atlantic City District of the conference Lay Organization under the leadership of the late Siter Brenda Lazier former President of the New Jersey Conference. Up until her death, she was President Elizabeth Clark's adviser and she served on The Frank C. Cummings NJ conference and First Episcopal District level. Scholarship Committee.

In addition to working hard in her local church, and the New Jersey Conference Lay Organization she was a lifelong member of Saint James AME Church in Atlantic City as a Steward. As well as holding numerous offices in her local church she was the President of the Senior Choir; a member of the Senior Steward Board; chair of the Worship Commission; vice chair of the Finance Committee; and president of Bright's Villa Board of Saint James AME Church, which provides housing for more than 100 families in the Atlantic City area.

Elizabeth Anderson

In celebration of a life so beautifully lived a sweet, kind, and soft-spoken person entered this world on August 30, 1940, in Havelock, North Carolina. On February 6, 2024, in the twinkling of an eye, she peacefully entered eternal rest at the Riverview Medical Center in Red Bank, New Jersey was Elizabeth "Liz" Anderson. Sister Liz served as New Jersey Conference Lay Organization as Director of Lay Actives under the leadership of the late Sister Brenda Lazier the former President of the New

Jersey Conference, as well as being the Lay President of the New Brunswick District of the New Jersey Conference.

In 1968 Liz joined Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church in Long Branch, New Jersey. Before joining she had already had a relationship with God by giving her life to Christ at an early age in Havelock, North Carolina. While attending Trinity she served in leadership roles as Local President of the WMS and WMS Asbury Area Chairperson of the District of the Conference.

After Sister Anderson retired from Prudential, she loved doing the work for the Lord by working full-time as the church administrative assistant under many pastors' administrations until the present pastor Reverend Dr. Lesley Devereaux.

Being a dedicated servant, Liz was always willing to offer help to the people in the church and community, especially working as the overseer for the weekly food distribution for the community. While serving her church and community, people relied on Liz for rides to the doctors or running errands to the grocery store. For members of the church who were sick and shut in, she would cook hot meals for them, especially her famous chicken noodle soup.

Liz received many awards for her dedication to community service such as The New Jersey Conference Lay, New Brunswick District Laymen's Organization, Fisk Chapel AME Church (A Woman of Leadership), The National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, Inc., and The Asbury Area Women's Missionary Society.

Continued on Page 13

New Jersey Annual Conference Lay Witness Night

Sister Cheryl Hammond Hopewell spoke at the 152nd Session of the New Jersey Annual Conference Lay Witness Night in Atlantic City.

She delivered a powerful, empowering, and inspirational message, “Don’t Give Up”, taken from the Book of Isaiah 40:28-31.

The points given were filled with real-life examples of what to look out for and how we can overcome our adversities with the help of the Lord.

In July, Sister Hopewell will be leaving her office as president of the First Episcopal District Lay Organization. The New Jersey Conference is grateful for her dedication, untiring years of service, and making a difference in our conference.

Her leadership and presence as our Episcopal District Lay leader will be missed.



L to R: New England Conference Lay Organization President Linda Gant, New Jersey Conference Lay President Elizabeth Clark, Delaware Conference Lay Organization President Sharon Drew, Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization immediate past President Andree Turner, and First Episcopal District Lay Organization President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell.



Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization (PCLO)

Brother Kevin Lamb, President

Submitted by Sister Constance Williams, DOPR

PCLO Lay Night at The Mother Church

Clergy, laypersons, AME Leadership and guests gathered to worship at historic Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia on Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 7 PM. The Order of Service and coordination of participants was done under the direction of Brother Keith Arrington, PCLO Director of Lay Activities from Mt. Pisgah AME Church. Those present as well as those worshipping online were joyful and well aware of the significance and uniqueness of AME History, once again being made at the very site of the founding of our Great Zion, the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Bishop Julius Harrison McAllister, Presiding Prelate of the First Episcopal District, Doctor Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, President of the Lay Organization of the First Episcopal District and Brother Andree Turner, Sr., President of the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization each approached this service by acknowledging this would be the final time that they would worship with the laity on Lay Night of the Philadelphia Annual Conference in their present positions. Bishop McAllister is retiring, and Doctor Hammond Hopewell and Brother Turner are approaching completion of their service in their current positions and will be stepping down.

Sister Yvette Baynes, Local Lay President at Mother Bethel served as the Worship Leader. After the Call to Worship by Brother Wade Briscoe of Morris Brown AME Church, the congregation sang the Laymen's Hymn. Tymir Banks of LaMott AME Church read the scripture, Luke 4:18-19 followed by Gloria Patri. Sister Siani Moore of St. Matthew AME Church offered the prayer. The AME Mass Choir accompanied by Brother Earl Knight, Philadelphia Conference Music Director, offered an energetic

rendition of "Blessed Assurance." The Lay Litany was led by Sister Naima Debrest of Allen AME Church, Baltimore, MD. The choir offered the selection, "Lord, I'm Trusting in You." Sister Aaronica Burrell of Waters Memorial AME Church presented Bishop McAllister, who introduced the speaker, Sister Cherie Garrett Debrest, a dedicated and long serving member of Jones Tabernacle AME Church. The Choir sang "The Lord is my Shepherd" in preparation for the speaker taking the podium.

The title of her message was "The Great Migration," presented as "A View from The Pew." She began by reminding the congregation that the Great Migration in Black History refers to massive numbers of freed but oppressed African Americans who left the South and moved north and west to escape discrimination, Jim Crow to find equality, better lives, and freedom. Her message stressed that even today, we must once again go on a "Great Migration" similar to when Jesus sent his disciples out to share the gospel with a sinful world. Showing faithful service over a few things meant that greater missions and responsibilities would be given. Like the disciples, and once equipped with our multi use spiritual staffs and the anointing power of Jesus' oil, the laity can serve a "Church on the Move." Each of us is gifted differently, therefore we are most effective when we work together. The Church will then be able to lead from the front with justice and strength without permission from the world.

The life work and perseverance of Opal Lee in getting Juneteenth recognized as a national holiday was described as an example. God will fill the gaps, and prayer and trust in Him will empower us for the journey if we go together, follow instructions, and go forth with courage, teaching repentance, and offering healing through anointing with oil which imparts the power of Jesus. Do not get weary.

Continued Page 15

Philadelphia Conference Lay Night at The Mother Church

(continued)

Sister Debrest cited Mark 6:7-13. He is coming back to meet us where we are and equip and empower us for the journey. Through prayer and a thirst and hope for an ever improving and better Church, we will succeed. Laity of the Church must leave their comfort zone and step out from the security of static Church membership to a mission which serves the present age that reaches those seeking salvation.

The Invitation was given by Reverend Mark Tyler, followed by the lifting of the offering.

Remarks were given by PCLO President Turner, who expressed thanks to those who served with him, and for all prayers and best wishes during his illness. He also acknowledged the wonderful participation of youth and young adults in the service. Doctor Hammond Hopewell thanked “all who always had my back.” The bishop declined further remarks. The service ended with The Lay Benediction and a congregation of lifted spirits.



Lay Witness Night Participants

Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, Brother Tymir Banks, Sister Aaronica Burell, Brother Keith Arrington, Brother Andree Turner, Sr., Lay Speaker Cherie Garrett Debrest, Sister Yvette Baynes, and Sister Siani Moore



Western New York Conference Lay Organization (WNYCLO)

Brother Thomas Whitt, President

Western New York Annual Conference Lay Night

Submitted by Brother Thomas Whitt

Photos submitted by Brother Thomas Davis

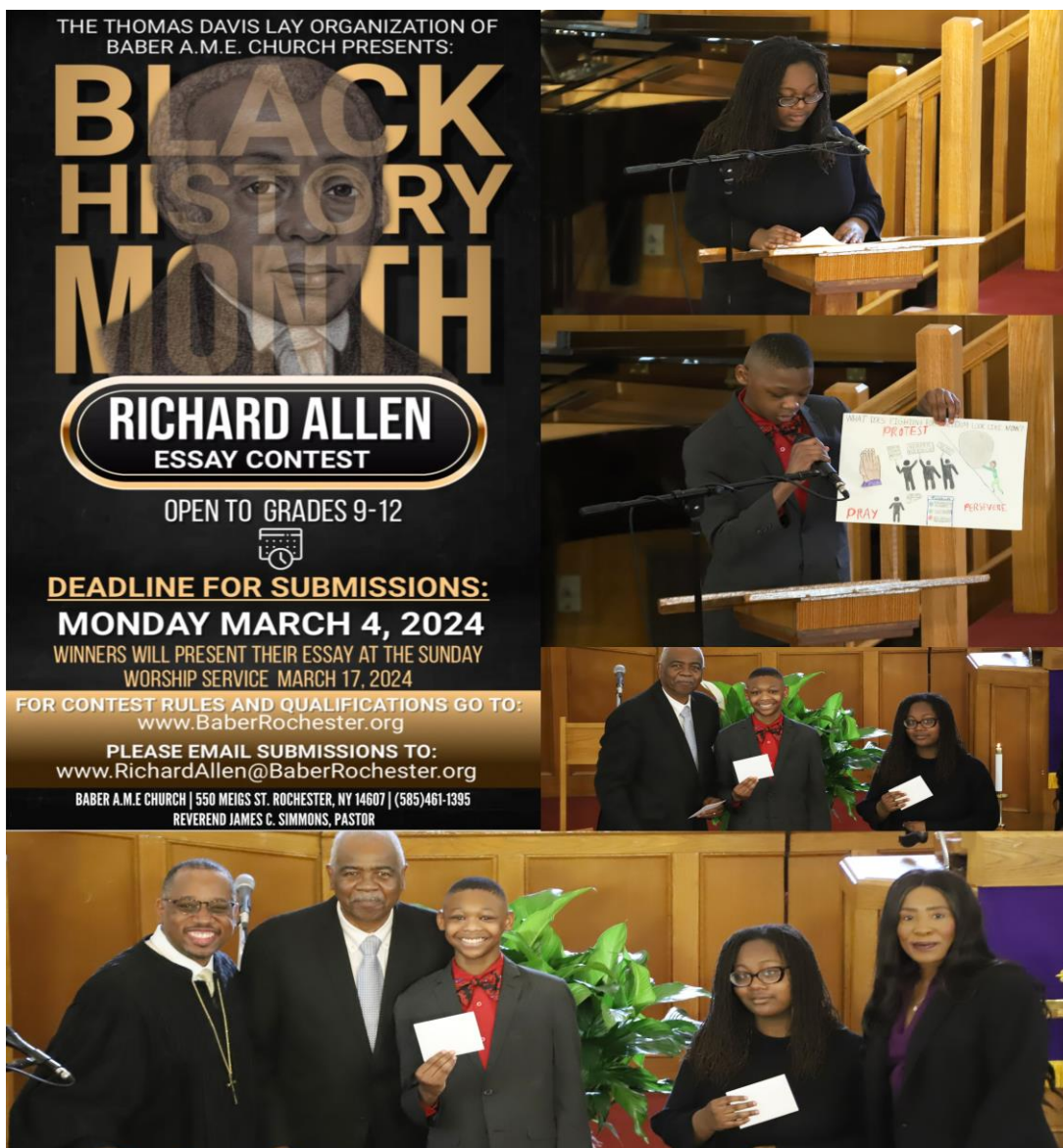
The 28th Session of the Western New York Annual Conference was held on May 2-4, 2024 in Niagara Falls NY. The Lay worship service on May 2 was hosted by Saint John African Methodist Episcopal Church, where the pastor is Reverend Makeeda Brooks. The Lay speaker was Bro Donte Miles, Niagara Falls City Council member and community advocate. His lay message was “Your Laziness Will Eulogize the Funeral of Your Faith”. The scripture was James 2:14-26 NIV with key verse 26, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead”.



Continued Page 17

Baber AME Church Richard Allen Essay Contest
Submitted by Baber AME Church Thomas Davis Lay Organization

The Baber African Methodist Episcopal Church, Rochester, New York Thomas Davis Lay Organization started an annual Black History Month Richard Allen Essay Contest. The 2024 theme was “What does fighting for freedom look like now?” The Baber essay contest winners for 2024 were Ajani Tap and Jazz Cohen. They presented their essays to the Baber AME Church congregation during worship service on Sunday March 10, 2024. The contestants were awarded a \$100 gift certificate.



Starting bottom photo left to right: Pastor Rev James C. Simmons, Thomas Whitt - Baber Lay President, Jazz Cohen - Baber YPD President, Ajani Tap Baber - YPD, Regina Grice - Baber Lay Organization



"FIRST IN TOUCH"



A Word from the First Episcopal District Lay Director of Public Relations (DOPR)



Sharon Carmichael - DoPR

Thank You Madam President!

Hello First Episcopal District Lay Organization,

I have been honored to serve as your DoPR for the last 4 years under the leadership of the incomparable Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, my First Episcopal District Lay Organization President.

I thank God for this awesome opportunity that President Hopewell gave to me four years ago. I remember it vividly. I was attending a Lay meeting in the Newark District of the New Jersey Conference. President Cheryl was there, as she is always everywhere! She came over to me and told me that she had heard good comments about my work as Public Relations Director for the New Brunswick District (New Jersey Conference). Then she asked if anyone had talked to me. I answered "No". She then asked if I would be interested in being PR Director for the District. I said, "What District?" She said, "The First District". OMG! I was in shock and awe, and quite frankly nervous too! Never had I dreamed that I would go from doing PR work for my local Presiding Elder District to being PR Director for the First Episcopal District! Then she told me that the position was going to be open for the next term, and that she would like for me to take the position if I was interested. Of course I got up enough courage to say yes, I was interested. My Mom (God rest her soul) always told me to never pass up an opportunity that your leadership offers to you. You might miss your blessing. Then President Cheryl told me that she would send me a letter of intent, and of course she

gave me strict, detailed instructions to fill it out and not to miss the deadline! That's my President Cheryl. (smile)
I told her that I would, and the rest is history.

One of my favorite scriptures which is also a song, is "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." – Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV. Thanks to my God that I trusted Him when he led President Cheryl to me. It has been a blessing to serve as your Director of Public Relations. It was not easy in the beginning. I had to learn new technology, and new and different ways of doing this work. But President Cheryl trusted me, and God always was there guiding me. I believe I've grown, and I look forward to continued growth and the opportunity to serve you better.

Not being one to let a job go unfinished, I have thrown my hat in the ring to be your PR Director for a second term. I would like to work with you and our soon-to- be new President Linda Gant in the next 4 years.

With God's guidance and help, I believe that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." - Philippians 4:13 NKJV. Please pray for me as I follow Christ in my endeavor to serve you.
Thank you, President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, for your legacy of leadership and service.





"FIRST IN TOUCH"



Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Sr.
 Presiding Prelate
 1st Episcopal District, AMEC
 3801 Market Street
 Suite 300
 Philadelphia, PA 19104
 215-662-0506

First District Lay Officers

Cheryl Hammond Hopewell
 President
 421 East Eagle Road
 Havertown, PA 19083
 (610) 457-5710

Donna-Lee Chandler-Smith
 1st Vice President

Wanda Duckett
 2nd Vice President

Robin Batson
 3rd Vice President

Sharon Drew
 Recording Secretary

Dorothy Chandler
 Asst. Recording Secretary

Lanan Bascome
 Corresponding Secretary

Cheryl L. Ford
 Treasurer

Sandra Mosby
 Financial Secretary

Terri Fisher
 Chaplain

Shawn Lee
 Historiographer

Thomas Davis
 Director of Lay Activities

Sharon Carmichael
 Director of Public Relations

Jyzelle Steplight
 Young Adult Representative



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](#)

Contact us at...

[First District Lay DoPR](#)



Living a Global Witness Ministry that
TRANSFORMS, TRANSCENDS, AND LIBERATES