WE SPEAK

OCTOBER 2026 EDITION

THE 40TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE CONNECTIONAL LAY ORGANIZATION



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"Reviving the Connection: Exceedingly, Abundantly"

Ephesians 3:20-21

Bishop Ronnie L. Brailsford, Commission Chair

Brother Matikane Abednego Makiti, CLO President

Sister Patricia Wright, CLO Director of Lay Activities

Sister Amiee Beasley, CLO Young Adult Representative

Sister Dianne H. Battle, CLO Director of Public Relations

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CONNECTIONAL LAY ORGANIZATION

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Charlie Nichols

CLO Chaplain

Our Parents Were Right, Life Is Not Fair

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:13–25

From the earliest moments of childhood, we face life's biases; for example, getting the smaller half of the cookie or being left out of a trip while a sibling is chosen. These moments seem minor, but they prepare us for the harsher realities that follow: false accusations, missed opportunities, and broken expectations. Life, without a doubt, is not fair.

When we are misunderstood or wronged, our instinct is either to fight for our reputation or to withdraw quietly. But Scripture calls us to something deeper: trust in a God who is entirely just. His judgment is never biased or influenced by circumstances. He sees every hurt, every injustice, and He responds—not with delay, but with perfect precision.

Many still struggle with their perception of God. Some picture Him as distant and condemning, while others see Him as tender, present, and attentive. When anxiety takes hold and loneliness sets in, we must anchor our hearts in the truth: God cares deeply, loves relentlessly, and remains faithfully by our side even when trouble arises.

The Bible reminds us that all authority comes from God, and human leaders are governed by divine permission. The Bible teaches us in Romans 13:1, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Yet, Scripture also shows us that obedience to God takes precedence over obedience to man when the two clash. However, the Bible consistently presents God as the ultimate source of authority in the universe. He is the creator and sustainer of all things, and therefore, His authority is absolute.

As believers, we are called to rise above our temporary struggles and see life through God's eternal perspective. What feels overwhelming today becomes manageable when we remember that eternity redefines everything. God's justice isn't delayed; it's eternal.

Church, running this Christian race will push us beyond our comfort zone. But we run with purpose and hope because the One who watches over us is not indifferent. He is our refuge, our righteous judge. And we must never forget: God is a just God.

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, in moments when life feels unfair and circumstances hurt our hearts, we turn to You, our righteous and all-seeing Father. Thank You for reminding us through Your Word that, even when justice seems out of reach, Your wisdom and timing are perfect. Help us, Lord, to release our need for control and trust in Your sovereign authority. Fill us with peace when we are misunderstood or wronged. Calm our anxious minds with the assurance that Your love is unwavering and Your presence is closer than our breath. Teach us to respond to life's injustices with faith instead of bitterness, relying on Your promise that You see every hurt and will act in perfect justice. Strengthen us to rise above our struggles, to reflect Christ's humility, and to persevere with hope for the day when all things will be made right. May we rest in Your care, seek Your wisdom, and walk in obedience, knowing that Your justice is never delayed and that it is eternal and true. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Prepared by Sister Maggie Jackson

11th Episcopal District | District of the Annual Conference Lay Organization's Chaplain

Pensacola, Panama City



Bishop Ronnie Elijah Brailsford, Sr.

Chair, Connectional Lay Organization Commission

Rise Up! Speak Out! And Act!

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is my great joy to greet the faithful members of the Connectional Lay Organization throughout the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I thank God for your commitment to Christ, your service to our Zion, and your faithful witness in communities around the world.

The Connectional Lay Organization has a vital mission: to educate, equip, inspire, and empower the laity for effective ministry, leadership, service, and witness. We are not called merely to occupy positions in the Church; we are called to make a difference through the Church. An informed, spiritually grounded, and engaged laity is essential to advancing God's Kingdom.

This calling is deeply rooted in our history. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was born from a struggle for spiritual freedom, human dignity, and justice. Richard Allen and our foreparents understood that the Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks both to the salvation of the soul and the liberation and well-being of people. They worshiped God while confronting injustice. They built churches while strengthening communities. They proclaimed Christ while advocating for freedom and human dignity. That legacy now belongs to us.

As we approach the November 2026 Midterm Elections, our faith calls us to responsible civic engagement. The prophet Micah asks, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13–16). Salt influences. Light illuminates. Neither fulfills its purpose by remaining inactive.

Therefore, I challenge every member of the Connectional Lay Organization not simply to vote—but to multiply your influence. Make certain you are registered. Become informed about the issues. Make your plan to vote. Then help someone else do the same. Encourage your family, church members, neighbors, young adults, and friends to participate. Assist seniors who may need transportation. Encourage first-time voters. Support nonpartisan voter education and Get Out the Vote efforts in our congregations and communities. Imagine the impact if every member of the CLO helped five additional eligible citizens become informed, engaged, and committed voters. Our individual participation would become collective influence. This is a moment for the laity to Rise Up! Speak Out! And Act!

Rise Up spiritually through prayer, worship, biblical study, and faithful discipleship. Speak Out courageously for justice, righteousness, equality, and the dignity of every person created in the image of God. Act faithfully through Christian service, community engagement, and responsible participation in the democratic process.

Our ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ. Therefore, our political participation must never be defined merely by party, personality, or partisanship, but by biblical principles, moral conviction, justice, compassion, and concern for the common good.

This is our moment. Let us honor our heritage, fulfill our mission, strengthen our communities, and prepare the next generation to carry forward the witness entrusted to us. May God bless the Connectional Lay Organization and the African Methodist Episcopal Church as we continue to serve faithfully for such a time as this. And wherever God sends us, let us remember our calling: Go to the People. Love the People. Serve the People. Empower the People.

Faithfully yours in Christ,
Bishop Ronnie Elijah Brailsford, Sr.
Chair, Connectional Lay Organization Commission
African Methodist Episcopal Church



Brother Matikane Abednego Makiti

CLO President

Connectional Lay Organization

President's Greeting

Greetings, Connectional Lay Organization Family.

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

As we continue our journey of faith, service, and leadership, I am encouraged by the opportunities before us to strengthen our Connectional Lay Organization and expand our impact throughout the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Preparations are moving forward for our 40th Biennial Convention in Sandton, South Africa, in August 2027. I have participated in informational and planning meetings with our Director of Lay Activities, Treasurer, and AMEC Meeting Management Director to provide direction and ensure that we are moving forward with purpose and unity. This historic gathering presents an extraordinary opportunity to celebrate our connectional heritage, strengthen relationships across Episcopal Districts, and chart a course for the future of lay ministry. I encourage every Episcopal District to remain engaged in the planning process and to share convention information with its membership.

We are also preparing for our December 2026 Virtual Executive Board Meeting, where we will review our progress, address organizational priorities, and continue planning initiatives that will strengthen our effectiveness at every level of the Connection. As we prepare for this important meeting, I am particularly interested in exploring opportunities for organizational growth, leadership development, and meaningful programs that respond to the needs of our members and the communities we serve.

As we look ahead, I want to hear from YOU—our membership! The continued growth and vitality of our organization depend upon the ideas, involvement, and commitment of the laity. What can we do to encourage membership growth, particularly among young adults and in churches where Lay Organizations are not yet established? What new programs, training opportunities, or initiatives would better equip our members to serve their churches and communities? How can we strengthen engagement and inspire greater participation throughout the Connection?

Your voice matters, and I want to hear your ideas! I encourage you to share your thoughts and recommendations through your District Lay Organization leadership or directly with my office by emailing my Personal Assistant, Nkele Mookane, at nkele.mookane@ameclay.org. Your suggestions will help inform our discussions as we prepare for the December Executive Board Meeting and plan for the future of our organization.

We must not be content simply to maintain what we have built. We must be willing to embrace fresh ideas and innovative approaches that inspire participation, develop leaders, and ensure that our organization remains vibrant and relevant for generations to come. The strength of our Connection lies not only in our history and traditions but also in our willingness to grow, adapt, and work together toward a shared vision.

As we move forward, let us remain united in purpose, steadfast in faith, and committed to the mission of the Lay Organization. Together, with God's guidance, we can accomplish far more than we could ever achieve individually.

May God continue to bless each of you, your families, and your respective Lay Organizations as we labor together in His service.

Yours in Christian Service,

Matikane Abednego Makiti
President
Connectional Lay Organization
African Methodist Episcopal Church



Dianne H. Battle

CLO Director of Public Relations

THE IMPORTANCE OF A TEAM WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION

Reviving the Connection:
"Exceedingly, Abundantly Above All We Can Ask or Think"
Ephesians 3:20–21

Every successful organization is strengthened when its members understand that no one person carries the work alone. The Connectional Lay Organization grows when officers, district leaders, writers, young adults, committee members, and supporters bring their individual gifts together for a common purpose. Teamwork turns separate talents into shared progress.

Working together requires more than simply being present. It calls for respect, trust, clear communication, and a willingness to listen to one another. Each person has a responsibility, and each voice can offer insight that helps the organization move forward. When we support one another, we make room for new ideas, stronger leadership, and meaningful service.

Communication is essential to a healthy team. Through We Speak, the CLO website, meetings, and conversations across the districts, we can share information that informs, inspires, and connects our people. Communication keeps us focused on our mission and helps every member understand how his or her work contributes to the larger vision.

A strong team also celebrates the contributions of others. We should recognize the work of those who plan, write, organize, teach, lead, and serve behind the scenes. Encouragement strengthens commitment. When challenges arise, teamwork gives us the ability to face them together, seek solutions in love, and remain accountable to the purpose God has placed before us.

As Director of Public Relations, I am grateful for the opportunity to work with members throughout the Connection. Our effectiveness depends on our willingness to share accurate information, promote the good work taking place in every district, and tell the story of Lay ministry with excellence. We are at our best when we remember that our service is not about any one individual; it is about the good of the whole organization.

Let us continue to build a team that is united in faith, committed to service, and prepared to work together. As we communicate clearly, respect one another, and use our gifts for the benefit of all, the Connectional Lay Organization will grow stronger and better equipped to serve the Church and our communities.

Moving forward, let us be intentional about strengthening our relationships, mentoring new leaders, and creating opportunities for every member to serve. The future of our organization will be shaped by the spirit we demonstrate today. When we choose cooperation over competition and service over self-interest, we make a lasting impact on the Church, our communities, and generations yet to come.

May we go forward with one heart and one purpose, trusting God to guide our work. Together, we can build an organization that is informed, connected, compassionate, and prepared for every assignment. Let our teamwork be a living witness of faith in action, proving that when we work together for the good of the organization, our service will continue to be successful.

MY MOTTO:

"OUR SERVICE IS SUCCESSFUL."



Dr. Dorothy Henderson

CLO First Vice President

Celebrating Lay Membership & Recruitment Explosion Day 2026

It is with great joy and gratitude that I reflect on the success of our Lay Membership & Recruitment Explosion Day 2026. What an honor it was to bring Laity from across our Connectional Church together for a celebration focused on inspiration, fellowship, recruitment, retention, and growth.

The commitment of First Vice Presidents on all levels of the Lay Organization to developing creative and strategic approaches to membership recruitment continues to make a difference. This year's Explosion provided an opportunity for longstanding members, new members, young adults, and those interested in joining to connect, learn, and share successful strategies for strengthening the organized Lay Organization.

I am especially grateful for the overwhelming support of our 2026 Recruitment Explosion, which reached more than 1,500 views and participants. This tremendous response reflects the continued excitement surrounding Lay ministry and reminds us of what is possible when we work together with a common purpose.

My sincere appreciation is extended to Bishop Ronnie E. Brailsford, Lay Commission Chair; Mr. Matikane A. Makiti, our CLO President; CLO Executive Board Officers; First Vice Presidents throughout the Connection; and the Lay Membership Committee for your leadership and support. Special thanks to Sister Megan Doctor, Sister Chaney Sanders, Ms. Natalie Horton, and Aimee Beasley for their technical expertise and YouTube development, along with committee members Meka Sylvester, Alicia Cotton, Lother Cherry, Milton Chambliss, Wendell Callaway, Deena Dubose, Jean Richie, Tamara Bonner, Beverley Nutall, Brian Glover, Jimmy Woodbury Jr., and Padi Mokodutlo for their dedication to this vision.

As we celebrate this milestone, we are already looking forward to the future. We will continue recruiting new members, engaging young adults, retaining and strengthening our current membership, embracing technology, and finding creative ways to take Lay ministry beyond the walls of our churches. Our goal is not simply to increase membership, but to inspire Laity to become active, informed, committed, and equipped for service.

To everyone who participated, viewed, shared, promoted, and supported Lay Membership & Recruitment Explosion Day 2026, thank you. Reaching more than 1,500 people represents more than a number; it represents the growing impact and future possibilities of Lay ministry.

To my First Vice President Team, thank you for your continued commitment and support. The Explosion may have been one day, but the mission continues. Together, we will recruit, retain, engage, and grow as we build a stronger Lay Organization for generations to come.

Yours in Lay Ministry,
Dr. Dorothy Henderson, CLO First Vice President



Lovie Aaron

CLO Third Vice President

Advent: A Season of Holy Expectation

Advent is a sacred season of waiting, watching, and preparing our hearts for the coming of Jesus Christ. It reminds us that God keeps every promise and that Christ is the Light who shines in darkness. During these weeks, we are invited to slow down, pray, reflect, and make room for the Savior in our homes, our churches, and our lives.

Each Advent candle carries a beautiful message: hope, peace, joy, and love. Hope reminds us that God is with us in every circumstance. Peace assures us that, even in a troubled world, Christ gives rest to the heart that trusts Him. Joy rises within us because the Savior has come. Love is shown in the gift of Jesus, who came not to condemn the world, but to save it.

Isaiah declares, “Prepare the way of the Lord” (Isaiah 40:3). Advent calls us to prepare—not only through decorations and celebrations, but through forgiveness, kindness, worship, generosity, and faithful expectation.

The word Advent means coming or arrival. For Christians, this season holds two promises together: we remember the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, and we look forward in faith to His coming again. During the four Sundays before Christmas, our worship directs us toward the wonder of Emmanuel—God with us. Waiting becomes an act of trust as we remember that God is at work even when we cannot yet see the answer.

Mary’s faithful response to God’s call and Joseph’s willingness to follow God’s direction offer examples for our own preparation. Their journey reminds us that obedience may require courage, patience, and a change of plans. Like the shepherds who heard the good news, we are invited to respond with worship and to share what God has done. Advent asks us to listen carefully and make ourselves available for service.

We can observe Advent through simple, meaningful practices. Set aside time each day to read Scripture and pray. Gather as a family, reflect on the weekly candle’s message, and name the blessings for which you are thankful. In our Lay Organizations, we can encourage these habits through brief devotions, shared Bible readings, and conversations that connect our faith with everyday life. A quiet moment with God can bring renewed purpose to a busy season.

Preparation also calls us beyond ourselves. Remember those who are grieving, living alone, experiencing illness, or facing financial hardship. A telephone call, a meal, a thoughtful card, or help with a practical need can express Christ’s love. Encourage young adults and children to take part in these acts of care. When generations serve together, we teach that the message of Christmas is lived through compassion, generosity, and faithful presence.

Advent does not require us to pretend that every heart is cheerful or every circumstance is easy. We bring our disappointments and unanswered questions to God alongside our gratitude. The light of Christ meets us in these places and gives us strength to continue. As a church family, let us make room for honest prayer, offer encouragement without judgment, and remind one another that no one has to walk through this season alone.

As we light each candle, may we remember that the true Light of the world is Jesus Christ. May this Advent season renew our hope, deepen our peace, fill us with joy, and help us share Christ’s love with everyone we meet.


ADVENT
A Season of Hope, Peace, Joy & Love
"Prepare the way of the Lord."
Isaiah 40:3
May the light of Christ guide your heart this season.



Patricia Wright

CLO Director of Lay Activities

Teaching and Learning Across Our Church

What are you teaching in your Lay Organization? What is the most recent lesson you attended, presented, or found especially meaningful at the local church level?

The wonderful thing about teaching and learning is that almost any subject can become a meaningful lesson. We do not have to be certified educators or experienced presenters to recognize the wealth of information available to expand and enrich teaching throughout our Zion. The Book of Discipline alone contains abundant material that can be framed creatively as a lesson, workshop, or learning lab.

There is no reason we cannot create a teaching and learning opportunity every time we gather—whether as an organization, a component group, or simply a circle of friends. We should make the most of every occasion to reach and teach, not in a didactic manner, but through conversation, engagement, and shared discovery. By embracing the many ways people learn, we can make these opportunities effective at every level of our church.

The 2025 Study Guide offers numerous lessons and practical strategies to support this work. It was designed for flexibility: lessons may be presented in brief increments, divided into mini-sessions, or, when time permits, taught in their entirety over 45 to 60 minutes.

It is my hope that we will use the Study Guide to its fullest potential. Visit the AMELAYWAY store and purchase one of the limited print copies still available. Talk about it. Share it. Tell others about it, and consider organizing a book study around it. We already have the materials; we simply need to make use of them. Let us teach, let us reach, and let us move our church forward with information that is accurate, timely, relevant, and resonant.

Sometimes we do not know what is happening in our church. At times, we hesitate to ask questions because we do not want to appear uninformed. At other times, a practice has been followed for so long that it simply becomes the accepted way. We may even be told, “If there is something you need to know, I will tell you.” In all of these circumstances, I encourage you to ask questions, raise concerns, and use clear examples or scenarios to explain your point. Be courteous in your expression, but remain vigilant until you gain understanding.

Across our Connectional Zion, it is exciting to hear that learning labs are taking place with remarkable enthusiasm and covering a wide range of topics. Episcopal Directors of Lay Activities from around the world have shared reports of conventions, TNTs (Transformational Next-Level Teaching), monthly sessions, Annual Conference workshops, and focused Zoom conversations about the 40th Biennial. Lay people are gathering mornings, afternoons, and evenings—both in person and virtually. Just as importantly, many districts are opening these sessions beyond their own boundaries and inviting participants from other districts, allowing the learning experience to be shared across our entire connection.

Teaching and Learning – Such a beautiful thing!!

CLO Fall Executive Board Meeting



CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

Registration is Non-Refundable



Dr. Edna S. Watson

Connectional Assistant Recording Secretary

What Does the Lay Organization Do?

Recently, at a meeting, I was asked a question that initially seemed very simple: “What does the Lay Organization do?” My immediate response was that we teach, train, and help preserve the history, traditions, and principles of our Church. Although my answer was correct, I soon realized that it was not the answer the young lady was seeking. Trying to understand her question more fully, I began asking questions of my own. I learned that she was president of the Lay Organization at her local church. I explained that, while we are guided by the mission, purpose, and objectives of the Lay Organization, each local organization should also develop programs that address the needs of its church and community. That may include Christian education, preserving our history, outreach, leadership development, service projects, and other ministries that strengthen the Church and its people.

As our conversation continued, I discovered something important: this young lady and her local Lay Organization were already doing amazing things. Her concern was not that they did not have anything to do. Her concern was, “Who do we report it to?” That question stayed with me. The Women's Missionary Society has an established structure of leadership and reporting. Our pastors operate within an established structure that includes Presiding Elders and Episcopal leadership. Throughout the Church, we understand these lines of communication, accountability, leadership, and support. The Lay Organization also has structure. We have leadership at the local, conference, episcopal district, and connectional levels. Yet this conversation caused me to think more deeply about whether the average layperson understands how those levels are connected—and, more importantly, whether the local Lay Organization feels connected to them.

There is a difference between having an organizational structure on paper and experiencing that structure in practice. Laity represents an enormous part of the life and ministry of the Church. We are the people sitting in the pews Sunday after Sunday. We serve as stewards, trustees, ushers, musicians, church school teachers, class leaders, officers, ministry leaders, technology workers, volunteers, and members of countless other ministries. We support the Church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witnesses. Yet the young lady's question caused me to ask: Who is intentionally encouraging the local Lay Organization?

Who asks the local president, “How is your organization doing?” Who hears about the successful outreach project? Who recognizes the young adult who has become involved? Who knows that a local Lay Organization has developed an innovative program that could benefit other churches? Who helps the organization when it is struggling? Who connects one local organization with another so that successful ideas can be shared? And who makes certain that local laypersons understand that they are part of something much larger than their individual congregation? These questions are not meant as criticism of our clergy or Episcopal leadership. We have pastors, Presiding Elders, Bishops, and other leaders who strongly support the Lay Organization, and that support should be acknowledged and appreciated.

But support for the laity should not depend solely upon who happens to be the pastor, Presiding Elder, Bishop, or Lay president at a particular time. Connection should be intentional. When the Bishop or Supervisor attends a gathering, people naturally respond to their presence. Pastors come. Officers come. Members come. Their presence communicates that the occasion matters. But what happens when they are not there? Do we still show up for one another? Do conference Lay officers visit and support local Lay Organizations? Do district leaders know what local organizations are accomplishing? Do local presidents know where to send their reports, questions, concerns, and success stories? Are we communicating accomplishments upward and bringing information, training, encouragement, and resources back down?

What Does the Lay Organization Do?

Dr. Edna S. Watson | Continued

Perhaps the question, “What does the Lay Organization do?” requires more than reciting our mission and purpose. Yes, we teach. Yes, we train. Yes, we preserve and promote an appreciation for the history, traditions, principles, and development of African Methodism. Yes, we prepare laypersons for ministry, leadership, and service. But we must also connect. We must create relationships between the local church, conference, episcopal district, and Connectional Lay Organization so that a local president never feels that her organization is doing great work with no one to tell.

We should have mechanisms for local organizations to report their accomplishments, share best practices, identify challenges, request assistance, and receive feedback. Those reports should not merely be filed away. They should become opportunities to celebrate successful ministries and allow one congregation's good idea to inspire another. Most importantly, our local Lay Organizations must know that someone is listening. The strength of the Lay Organization cannot be measured only by how many people attend a convention or gathering. Its strength must also be measured by what happens between those gatherings—in our local churches, communities, ministries, and in the lives of the people we serve.

The conversation with this young lady reminded me that sometimes people are not asking us for another definition. They are asking us for a connection. She already knew how to work. She was already serving. Her organization was already making a difference. What she needed was to know that the work mattered beyond the walls of her local church and that there was a larger Lay Organization ready to hear from her, support her, learn from her, and celebrate what God was doing through the laity. Perhaps one of the greatest opportunities before the Lay Organization today is to strengthen that connection. Because if we truly believe in teaching, training, and empowering our laity, then we must also make certain that they are connected, supported, heard, and valued. The laity should never have to wonder: “Who do I report to?” Instead, every local Lay Organization should be able to say: “I know where I belong. I know who I am connected to. I know where to go for support. And I know that the work we are doing for Christ and His Church matters.”





Aimee Beasley

CLO – Young Adult Representative

ABUNDANTLY ABOVE AND BEYOND

Young adults from across the Connection gathered during the Connectional Lay Organization Spring Executive Board Meeting for Abundantly Above and Beyond, a Young Adult Retreat centered on fellowship, leadership development, and preparing young adults to serve throughout the AME Church.

The retreat created an intentional space for Young Adult Representatives and young adult laity to network, build meaningful relationships, and strengthen connections across Episcopal Districts.

Through fellowship and open conversation, participants were able to share their experiences and discuss the current status of young adult involvement throughout the Connection including successes, challenges, and opportunities for continued growth.

A highlight of the retreat was the opportunity for young adults to not only take part in workshops, but to prepare and lead workshops for their peers. Young adults shared their knowledge, talents, and experiences while developing valuable skills in teaching, public speaking, leadership, and ministry. This peer-to-peer approach proved the importance of giving young adults opportunities to lead now, rather than simply preparing them to lead in the future.

Abundantly Above and Beyond was more than a retreat; it was an opportunity to listen, learn, connect, and grow together. Young adults left encouraged to take what they learned back to their districts and local churches, continuing the work of building a stronger and more connected generation of AME laity.











William (Bill) Ayers

CLO Historiographer

Historical Overview of
The Connectional Lay Organization (CLO)
1912 - 2026

The Lay Biennial Convention of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is a major event organized by the Connectional Lay Organization (CLO) of the denomination. It typically takes place every two years (biennially) and serves as a gathering for lay members (non-clergy) across the AME Church connection to engage in spiritual growth, leadership development, networking, and church governance. The 40th Lay Biennial Convention will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, August 8-11, 2027.

The Lay Biennial also reflects the AME Church's commitment to lay empowerment as a vital part of its structure and tradition, reinforcing the idea that laypeople play a crucial role in the mission and ministry of the church. The Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is one of the newest in our church relative to our total years of existence. The Organization, like many in our church at any early age, did not keep official records that would serve as reference material.

Research started with a brief history as given by former President, Attorney Herbert L. Dudley of Detroit, MI. He used as his first pamphlet, History and Official Guide of the Lay Movement by Professor R.J. Gardner of Cleveland, OH, as a guide. In this pamphlet, Professor Gardner states that the "Organized Lay Movement" started at the General Conference in Kansas City, MO, in 1912, with esteemed Professor Charles H. Johnson, President.

This organization was short-lived and at the 1916 General Conference, not being satisfied with the progress of the Laymen's Missionary League movement, the Connectional Lay College was organized with Professor Carl V. Roman, a noted Greek Scholar at Fisk University, as President. This organization met only once in four years at the seat of the General Conference and only delegates to that Conference were members. With this ever-changing membership and no funding, the Organization did not reach the local lay members that it needed.

Since Professor Roman was not elected to the General Conference in 1920, the Lay College proceeded to elect a new President, Mr. Aaron Eugene Malone. He was the husband of the first Black female millionaire, Mrs. Annie Turnbo Malone of St. Louis, MO. Mr. Malone served until 1924, when Dr. R.R. Williams of Tampa, FL was elected. Dr. Williams served as President until the General Conference in 1936. Attorney Herbert L. Dudley was elected and succeeded Dr. Williams as President at the 1936 New York City, NY General Conference. He served from that Conference in 1936 except for the single term from 1940 to 1944 when Professor George Harris of Charleston, SC was the Lay College President. He was responsible for the fast movement of the Organization and for facilitating the name change of the Connectional Laymen’s Organization.

Professor Harris served as an excellent president and worked zealously to get Attorney Herbert Dudley re-elected. Attorney Dudley remained President until he retired in 1959. Our next President was Mr. Jason David “JD” Williams. He was noted for his long tenure, facilitated the name change of the Lay Organization, and his ability to get presiding Bishop George Baber to the White House of the United States of America. In 1985, Dr. Katheryn Middleton Brown became the first female President of the CLO. She was from Atlanta, GA. It was under her reign as CLO President that a person running for President or as an Officer of any AME Church Connectional Organization could serve only 8 years.

In 1993, at the 23rd Biennial Session in Columbus, OH, Mr. James L. Williams was elected President of the Connectional Lay Organization. He was responsible for the Advent of the Young Adult Representative Ministry. His first charge was Ms. Mila Cooper (she is now an outstanding reverend in the 3rd Episcopal District). Our current President, Mr. Makiti, continues this ministry by the election of Ms. Aimee J. Beasley from the 6th Episcopal District.

Historical Overview of
The Connectional Lay Organization (CLO)
1912 - 2026

At the 24th Biennial Session, Mr. Arthur D. Brown of Columbus, OH was elected President and in 2003 at the 25th Biennial Session Mr. Jesse L. Burns, Jr., of Gainesville, FL was appointed President due to the untimely death of President Brown. President Burns was known for his hard work to move this organization further, and his ability to reach out to the 16th District where they had a conference.

In 2005 at the 27th Biennial Session in Houston, TX, Jesse L. Burns, Jr., was elected President and in 2009 at the 28th Biennial Session in Little Rock, AR, Dr. Willie C. Glover, Columbus, OH, was elected as the 13th President of the CLO. He was noted for his ability to move the Lay Organization forward, and for orchestrating the celebration of the 100th year anniversary of the Connectional Lay Organization, where he named Bill Ayers and AME General Church Officer Dr. Paulette Coleman as co-chairs. They both gave a presentation in Zambia, which is in South Central Africa. Dr. Glover and his vivacious wife, Karen, attended the ceremony commemorating the Marker on the grounds of St. Philip AME Church in Atlanta, GA. The Marker will be opened at the 200th Anniversary of the CLO.

Mrs. Valerie Faith Gary Bell – 14th President of the Connectional Lay Organization was elected in Columbus, OH, at the 35th Biennial. Our current President, Mr. Matikane Abednego Makiti, was first appointed to the role due to the untimely death of former President Bell. He was elected the 15th President and the first African to serve as President in 2021 at the 37th Biennial held in Orlando, FL. He was re-elected as the 15th President.

Early in the Lay College's history, it became clear that an organization meeting only every four years, with constantly changing membership, could not effectively mobilize the laity for service in the church. In 1946, lay leaders in Little Rock, AR, abolished the former Lay College, which convened only at the General Conference, and organized the CLO from the Episcopal District level through the Conferences to local units and churches.

This progress represents the culmination of a long and difficult struggle led by many courageous laymen over the years. Notably, some of the AME Church's most significant, progressive, and constructive legislation has been enacted since laymen gained equal representation. This was neither accidental nor coincidental; it resulted from the laity's influence, prestige, and voting strength being directed toward constructive and worthwhile movements within the church.

In 1928, legislation giving laymen equal representation in the General Conference was enacted by the General Conference which met in Chicago, IL. Up to that time, Lay representation was confined to three (3) Laymen from each Annual Conference. In 1932, at the General Conference held in Cleveland, OH, laymen were granted the right to serve on the Episcopal Committee. However, Bishop Flipper ruled at the succeeding General Conference in 1936 in New York City that the right to serve on the Episcopal Committee by the laity was an act passed by the General Conference of 1932 and applied only to that General Conference, so that in 1936 we had to renew the fight previously waged in Cleveland to establish the right of laymen to serve permanently in equal numbers on the Episcopal Committee.

The General Conference of 1936 permanently established the right of laymen to serve in equal numbers on the Episcopal Committee. In 1940, in Detroit, MI, legislation gave the laymen equal representation in the Annual Conference. In 1944, laymen sought equal representation on all departments and boards. The most significant achievement at the 1944 General Conference was the weight and influence taken on by the Lay Organization behind the legislation which created a Pension Department in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Historical Overview of
The Connectional Lay Organization (CLO)
1912 - 2026

The organized Lay Movement has had four significant stages of growth and development. First, the early formative years under the Laymen's Missionary League organized in 1912 by Professor Charles H. Johnson, Wilberforce University; second, Connectional Lay College, organized in 1916 under the leadership of Professor Carl V. Roman of Fisk University; third, the Connectional Laymen's Organization organized by the delegates from the Lay College who were meeting in Little Rock, AR in 1946 (another accomplishment by President Dudley); and fourth, under the presidency of Mr. Jason David “JD” Williams, the organization became known as the Connectional Lay Organization.

Key Purposes of the Lay Biennial

1. Spiritual Empowerment: Worship services, Bible studies, and inspirational sessions to uplift and strengthen the spiritual life of lay members;

2. Training and Development: Workshops and seminars on leadership, church administration, evangelism, social justice, and other relevant topics;

3. Business and Governance: Delegates from each Episcopal District participate in organizational business, including elections, reports, constitutional updates, and resolutions;

4. Fellowship and Networking: An opportunity for laypersons from different regions and countries to connect, share experiences, and collaborate on church missions;

5. Celebrating Lay Leadership: Recognition of outstanding lay leaders and achievements within the AME Church; and

6. Technology. Recognition that technology is changing and that we as an organization must keep abreast.

The individuals listed below have served or are serving as "President" of this esteemed Lay Organization, beginning in 1912 under The Laymen’s Missionary League and continuing through 2026 as the Connectional Lay Organization. Together with CLO Officers, their leadership has contributed significantly to the organization’s development and progress and the AME Church.



Historical Overview of
The Connectional Lay Organization (CLO)
1912 - 2026

The Lay CLO Presidents Through the Years At-A-Glance

The Laymen's Missionary League

1st President Charles H. Johnson, 1912–1916

The Connectional Lay College

2nd President Dr. Carl V. Roman, 1916–1920

3rd President Aaron Eugene Malone, 1920–1924

4th President Dr. Reden Reche Williams, 1924–1936

5th President Attorney Herbert Luther Dudley, 1936–1940

6th President George Harris, 1940–1944

The Connectional Laymen's Organization

7th President Attorney Herbert Luther Dudley, 1944–1959

The Connectional Lay Organization

8th President Jason David "JD" Williams, 1959–1985

9th President Dr. Katheryn Middleton Brown, 1985–1993*

10th President James L. "JL" Williams, 1993–2001

11th President Arthur Dean Brown, 2001–2003

12th President Jessie L. Burns, 2003–2009

13th President Willie Clayton Glover, 2009–2017

14th President Valerie Faith Gary Bell, 2017–2020

15th President Matikane Abednego Makiti, 2020–

*The AME Church General Conference appointed a Lay Commissioner for the first time during President Kay Brown's second term.

Brother William (Bill) Ayers, CLO Historiographer
Brother Matikane Abednego Makiti, CLO President
Bishop Ronnie E. Brailsford, Sr, Chair, Lay Commission

August 2026



Penny S. Oliver

Second Episcopal District President

Legacy Renewed: The Rebirth of the Maude Davis and Dr. Joseph C. McKinney Scholarship

A Renewed Chapter of Faith, Service, and Educational Opportunity in the Second Episcopal District - "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." — 1 Peter 4:10

The Second Episcopal District Lay Organization proudly celebrated the rebirth of a ministry that embodies the very heart of Christian stewardship, servant leadership, and our unwavering commitment to the next generation. The Davis/McKinney Scholarship has been revitalized, signaling a renewed investment in the educational dreams and spiritual development of young people throughout the African Methodist Episcopal Church. This scholarship honors the extraordinary legacies of Sister Maude Blow Davis and Brother Dr. Joseph C. McKinney, two faithful servants whose lives reflected the highest ideals of the Lay Organization. Their dedication to the Church extended far beyond words. Through their leadership, generosity, and steadfast commitment to Christian service, they showed that empowering young people through education is one of the greatest investments the Church can make. The Davis / McKinney Scholarship was named for Mrs. Maude Blow Davis and Dr. Joseph Columbus McKinney. Mrs. Davis, a member of Emmanuel AME Church (Virginia Annual Conference) and Dr. Joseph Columbus McKinney, a member of Ward Memorial AME Church (Washington Annual Conference), served on all levels of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Today, their vision lives on.

An Evening of Purpose and Celebration

The rebirth of the scholarship was commemorated through the successful “Intergenerational Sneaker Ball” Scholarship Fundraiser, held on July 6, 2026 at the Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Temple Streaming Center in Hampton, Virginia. The evening brought together clergy, laity, community leaders, supporters, and friends from across the Second Episcopal District for an unforgettable celebration of fellowship, generosity, and purpose.

Elegantly dressed guests paired formal attire with elaborately adorned stylish sneakers, creating a unique atmosphere that reflected both creativity and unity. More importantly, the event proved what is possible when God's people come together around a shared mission—to ensure that deserving students have opportunities to pursue higher education without unnecessary financial barriers.

In addition to raising over $10,000, the overwhelming support of attendees, sponsors, volunteers, and donors transformed the evening into more than a fundraiser. It became a celebration of legacy, hope, and the enduring spirit of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. There was exquisite dining; memorable dancing from the twist and soul train to current line dancing, and fun was had by all, including Bishop Harry L. Seawright and Supervisor Sherita Moon Seawright.

Continuing A Legacy of Service

The Davis/McKinney Scholarship is far more than financial aid. It is a promise—a promise that the Second Episcopal District will continue nurturing future leaders who will excel academically while remaining rooted in Christian faith and service. As scholarship recipients pursue their educational goals, they will also carry forward the values exemplified by the scholarship's namesakes: integrity, commitment, humility, excellence, and faithful service to God and His Church. Mrs. Davis’s and Dr. McKinney’s lives remind us that true leadership is measured not by titles held but by the lives one transforms.

Looking Toward the Future

At the direction of the 2nd Episcopal District Prelate, Bishop Harry L. Seawright, the success of this inaugural Sneaker Ball marked the beginning of what promises to become a signature ministry of the Second Episcopal District Lay Organization during the district's Summer Summit Meeting. With continued support from churches, Episcopal District leadership, local lay organizations, and faithful supporters, the scholarship fund will continue to grow, expanding opportunities for future generations of AME students. Every scholarship awarded is more than an investment in one student's education—it is an investment in the future leadership of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The rebirth of the Davis/McKinney Scholarship reminds us that the work is far from finished. As members of the Second Episcopal District Lay Organization, we are called to continue supporting ministries that educate, inspire, and prepare young people to lead with faith, excellence, and compassion. Together, we honor the memories of Sister Maude Blow Davis and Brother Dr. Joseph Columbus McKinney by ensuring that their legacy continues to open doors of opportunity for generations yet to come. Our prayer is that God may continue to bless this scholarship ministry, those who support it, and every student whose life will be forever changed because faithful servants chose to invest in their future.

Ways and Means Committee Members; Sister Penny Oliver (SEDLO President, WNCC); Sister Yvonne Davis (SEDLO 2nd Vice President, VC); Sister D. Faye Conley (DOLA, WC); Sister Edna Watson (SEDLO Treasurer, NCC); Sister Janice Murray (SEDLO Corresponding Secretary/Public Relations Director); Sister Glen White (SEDLO Parliamentarian, WC); Brother Adam Johnston (SEDLO Young Adult Representative, WNC); W&M Committee Chair: Brother Alvin White (BCLO President); Sister Chenay Saunders (WCLO President); Sister Valerie Terry (VCLO President); Brother Elbert Davis (NCLO President); Sister Barbara Meyers (WNCLO President);

Submitted by Alvin White, President, Baltimore Conference, Second Episcopal District









Lamar Rose

Fifth Episcopal District President

Activate 2.0:
Reconnect, Refocus, Recommit

The Fifth Episcopal District Lay Organization held our 69th Annual Convention on June 24-27, 2026 at the Crowne Plaza St. Louis Airport Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. It was hosted by the Missouri Annual Conference, Bro. Lamar Rose, 5th Dist. Lay President, Sis. Brenda Simpson, MACLO President, Sis. Jackie Payton, MACLO 1st Vice President & Convention Co-Chair. The theme was: Activate 2.0: Reconnect, Refocus, Recommit.

There were 145 people registered for the hybrid convention, including 12 clergy members. The meeting (and every day following) opened with prayer and devotion by the District Lay Chaplain, Mrs. Frances Settles. She used prayer, music, scripture, devotion and testimony in an inspiring way to connect the attendees with God and usher the Holy Spirit into the convention spaces.

The opening worship service was held on Wednesday evening and the messenger was Exhorter Dallas Richardson (Immediate Past 5th District Lay YAR). She preached on the topic “Activated 2.0,” taken from Luke 8:4-15. Here are a few highlights: • God is gracious and wants us to see the possibilities • Have we positioned ourselves to hear what God has to say to us? • God is still speaking, through the word, prayers, victories and struggles, are we listening… • Activated people produce fruit; fruit is evidence that transformation is taking place • What life have we produced; have we been transformed?

The service included praise dance and the presentation of the LAOS Community Service award to Heal Center for the Arts, a non-profit that “partners with schools across the St. Louis region to provide students with direct access to structured music education, mentorship, and ensemble development during the school day to support and help rebuild the musical integrity of underserved urban school communities, and by bringing students from multiple schools together for advanced ensemble training, masterclasses, workshops, and collaborative performance experiences led by professional artists and educators.” The message was followed by Communion led by clergy from the Missouri Annual Conference. The evening concluded with a welcome reception featuring a live performance by the students of Heal Center for the Arts.

The remainder of the week consisted of officer and committee reports, training & workshops, including AI Technology & Cybersecurity (Rev. Dr. Virgil Woods), Blue Table Talk - Redistricting and Reorganizing (facilitated by Bro. Wendell Callaway with panelist City Councilwoman Dr. Rochelle Gray), Judicial Council (Judge Tania Wright, President of the AMEC Judicial Council), Changes in the Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church 2024 (Sis. Faye Brown), and How to Read and Write Music (Rev. Ramona Bailey).

A fun time was had at the Sneaker Ball & Y’all Awards Soiree on Friday evening. A number of awards were given by President Rose, plus participant contests and a lot of dancing and laughing. The convention concluded on Saturday morning with the Memorial Service to our departed members and the Love Circle of prayer and the Lay Benediction with 112 attendees remaining in person and on Zoom.

Submitted by Pamela L. Williams
Director of Public Relations, Fifth Episcopal District Lay Organization

FIFTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

LAY ORGANIZATION | CONVENTION MOMENTS



















Keith Britton

7th Episcopal District President

SEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION

The 7th Episcopal District Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church marked a significant milestone as we celebrated our 60th Convention on June 12–13, 2026, at Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina. The event brought together clergy, laity, and guests from across the district for a memorable gathering centered on faith, fellowship, and purpose.

The convention theme, "Rooted in Purpose, Rising in Power," was inspired by Ephesians 2:10, which reminds believers that, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." The convention began on Friday morning as lay attendees assembled and the meeting was officially called to order by our esteemed President Keith Britton. The day was filled with engaging and informative power sessions designed to equip participants with practical tools for effective ministry in a rapidly changing world.

One of the most anticipated sessions was "Kingdom Innovation: Using AI for Ministry Impact," presented by Rev. Gabriel McCloud of the 6th Episcopal District. The session explored how artificial intelligence can be utilized as a resource to enhance ministry, outreach, communication, and community engagement while remaining grounded in biblical principles.

Later that afternoon, attendees transitioned to Chappelle Auditorium for the highly anticipated Oratorical Contest. The competition featured outstanding high school seniors, each representing one of the conferences within the 7th Episcopal District. Demonstrating poise, confidence, and exceptional public speaking skills, the students delivered thought-provoking presentations that showcased the bright future of the Church.

Friday evening brought one of the convention's most elegant and memorable events, the Madame 7th Black Renaissance Gala. Attendees arrived dressed in their finest black formal attire, creating a striking atmosphere of elegance and excellence and a stunning visual display of sophistication and unity. Through the generosity and support of participants and supporters, the Madame 7th Contest raised more than $50,000 to support mission, training, and outreach initiatives throughout the 7th Episcopal District and around the world.

On Saturday, attendees continued to be inspired through a dynamic power session entitled "Rising in Power: From Membership to Intentional Impact—Transformative Lay Ministry in Action." The session featured presentations from distinguished leaders within the 7th Episcopal District, including Dr. Reggie Wicker, Newberry District Lay President; Sis. Jackie Goggins, Piedmont Conference Lay President; and Bro. Roosevelt Mitchell, 7th Episcopal District Lay Organization President Emeritus.

Following the morning power session, President Keith Britton led the membership in honoring President Emeritus Ralph James and President Emeritus Roosevelt Mitchell for their distinguished service. Each received specially designed stoles and engraved awards bearing their pictures. We then transitioned to the Layperson of the Year Awards Ceremony, honoring the nominees from each District of the Annual Conference. Sister Vergie Tenneson and Brother De'Marius Frederick were named Adult and Young Adult Laypersons of the Year respectively.

As the convention concluded, participants gathered for a spiritually uplifting worship service that served as the perfect culmination of a powerful weekend. Through prayer, praise, and the proclamation of God's Word by Presiding Elder Herbert Temoney, attendees were reminded of their divine purpose and empowered to return to their local churches ready to serve with renewed passion and commitment.

The 60th Convention of the 7th Episcopal District Lay Organization was more than a celebration of history—it was a declaration of vision for the future. Rooted in purpose and rising in power, lay members and clergy departed Allen University inspired to continue the work God has called them to do, carrying forward a legacy of faith, service, and leadership for generations to come.

Submitted by Tylaunda Corbin, Director of Public Relations

SEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

LAY ORGANIZATION | CONVENTION MOMENTS













Patricia Campbell

8th Episcopal District President

EIGHTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION

We are wrapping up 2026 and looking ahead with Great Expectations as we continue to create a Love and Appreciation of the History and Principles of African Methodism.

The Great 8th hosted its Annual Leadership & Training Convention in June of 2026. We had Outstanding Workshop Presenters, An Epic Worship Service and a Memorial Lunch that Honored Outstanding Laity.

The Great 8th Episcopal District Lay Organization Annual Training and Leadership Convention was held at the Bonner Campbell Complex on June 12th & 13th in Edwards, MS.

This convention featured workshops, a worship service and much more. Our theme for the convention was “Revive To Thrive: Rekindling the Fire”.

We are thankful for the support from our Bishop, Erika Crawford and our Supervisor, Rev. Huge Marriott. The Great 8th Lay Organization donated a $5,000 check to help continue the work and revitalization of the Bonner Campbell Complex on Saturday June 13th.

Under the leadership of Episcopal President Ms. Patricia Campbell, the convention featured three guest presenters. Bro. Jalen Lindsey, Rev. Horace McKay and Bro. Jackie Vernon, Jr., all presented helpful and informative information.

The convention was coordinated by our DOLA Sis. Cynithia Holman with the help of the conference DOLAs.

Our Key Scripture taken from Ephesians 3:20 reads, now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

The Convention also featured a worship service with Rev. Alonzo Williams as the Guest Speaker on Friday evening. Rev. Williams is the pastor of Allen Chapel AME Church and he is the director of the music ministry for the great 8th district.

His church choir traveled from Baton Rouge, Louisiana and performed spirit-filled songs that were a blessing to experience.

The convention concluded with a memorial lunch on Saturday afternoon that was filled with recognition as we honored outstanding contributions from laity from each conference.

Looking ahead, we are starting to plan for the 40th Biennial in South Africa with fundraising events and activities taking place across the district to help our delegates travel.

EIGHTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

LAY ORGANIZATION | CONVENTION MOMENTS















Robert L. Turner

9th Episcopal District Lay President

Ninth Episcopal District Lay Organization

The Ninth Episcopal District Lay Organization invites lay members, local church leaders, young adults, and friends to its State Lay Convention and 67th Annual Meeting, November 20–21, 2026, in Mobile, Alabama. Held each year on the third weekend in November, this gathering brings our district together in faith, fellowship, and service. Our Executive Board meeting begins at 4 p.m. on Friday, November 20.

The meeting location is The Admiral Hotel, 251 Government Street, Mobile, AL 36602. Participants may contact the hotel at 251-432-8000. The registration flyer lists October 21, 2026, as the hotel reservation cut-off date. Hotel reservations may be accessed through the reservation link provided with the meeting materials. Anyone still arranging accommodations should contact the hotel about current availability and rates.

The published adult registration fee was $120 for September 1 through October 18, 2026. Adult registration after October 18 and on-site is $130. For youth under age 18, the published fee was $60 during the September 1–October 18 registration period; registration after October 18 and on-site is $70. These fees and dates are provided in the accompanying convention flyers so that churches and delegates can plan accordingly.

Registrations should be made through your local Lay President. Local Lay Presidents are to forward registrations to their Conference Lay Presidents. The flyer requested submission of registration forms and payments no later than October 18, 2026. Because that date has passed, participants who have not completed registration should consult their Lay President about arrangements for late or on-site registration.

Registration forms and payments should be made payable to Ninth Episcopal District Lay Organization. The mailing contact listed is Ms. Mary A. Banks, Financial Secretary, 1352 Ware Boulevard, Birmingham, AL 35235. Complete the requested contact and church information carefully, include emergency contact details, and identify any special dietary restrictions or allergies on the registration form.

Our district leadership includes Robert L. Turner, Episcopal President; James C. Bonner, Jr., President Emeritus; Veronica Wiley, Director of Lay Activities; Cortez Thomas, Young Adult Representative; and Dianne H. Battle, Director of Public Relations. Together with our Conference and local Lay leaders, we encourage participation across the Ninth Episcopal District and look forward to a meaningful time together.

As we gather, let us renew our commitment to teaching, training, and empowering the laity for ministry, leadership, and service. May our fellowship strengthen the bonds among our churches and inspire us to use our God-given abilities for the work of Christ. We look forward to welcoming you to Mobile as we continue the mission of the Lay Organization.

Robert L. Turner

9th Episcopal District Lay President


METHODIST
EPISCOPAL
AME CHURCH
LAY ORGANIZATION
9th EPISCOPAL DISTRICT
Lay Organization
INVITATION TO THE
STATE LAY CONVENTION
NOVEMBER 20-21, 2026
Early Bird
REGISTRATION
$120.00
DISTRICT OFFICERS
Robert Turner
Episcopal President
James C. Bonner, Jr.
President Emeritus
Veronica Wiley
Director of Lay Activities
Cortez Thomas
Young Adult Representative
Dianne H. Battle
Director of Public Relations

67th Session of the Ninth Episcopal District Lay Organization Annual Meeting

November 20-21, 2026

The Admiral Hotel
251 Government Street
Mobile, AL 36602
251-432-8000

Hotel Registration Cut-Off Date October 21, 2026
https://reservations.travelclick.com/115026?groupID=5402775

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

Adult Registration: September 1, 2026 – October 18, 2026, $120.00
On-site and after October 18, 2026, Registration - $130.00
Youth Registration: September 1, 2026–October 18, 2026, $60.00, Youth under the age of 18
On-site and after October 18, 2026, Registration $70.00

REGISTRATIONS SHOULD BE MADE THROUGH YOUR LOCAL LAY PRESIDENT. THE LOCAL LAY PRESIDENTS SHOULD FORWARD TO YOUR CONFERENCE LAY PRESIDENTS
The registration forms and payments must be submitted no later than October 18, 2026.
Registration forms and payments payable to: Ninth Episcopal District Lay Organization.
Mail forms and payments to:
Ms. Mary A. Banks, Financial Secretary
1352 Ware Blvd
Birmingham, AL 35235

2026 67th SESSION ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION FORM
November 20-21, 2026

Name_____
Address_____
_____
E-Mail Address_____

Telephones: (include area code)
Home_____Cell_____Work_____

Emergency Contact Information:
Name_____ Telephone_____
Conference_____
Church_____
Pastor_____ _____Presiding _____

Please note any special dietary restrictions or allergies:

1._____
2._____
3._____



Dr. Roderick Moore

10th Episcopal District President

United for Purpose:
Empower, Equip and Engage.

The 10th Episcopal District Lay Organization opened its State Lay Convention on Friday, August 21, 2026, at Paul Quinn College in Dallas. Excitement ensued as convention attendees gathered for an Evening of Fun with Dinner, DJ and Dancing. The night included presentations by the President, Dr. Roderick Moore, with special recognition to the 10th District Presiding Elders for their continued support of the Lay Organization. Certificates of Recognition were presented to those who pledged and contributed to the Legacy Circle. The Legacy Circle is a dedicated group of supporters who believe in the power of collective action and the importance of leaving a legacy for the lay organization, our communities and future generations.

We were entertained by well-known comedian, actor, and radio host, Shedrick Garrett (Shed G). He treated us to clean Christian comedy and was accompanied by Thomas “DJ Swerve” Hervey who provided the music. DJ Swerve played all of the latest line dances to end the evening.

On Saturday, with all four Annual Conferences represented, the session opened under the very fitting theme of: “United for Purpose: Empower, Equip and Engage.” The scripture reference was 1 Peter 4:10: “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” Greetings were given by Bishop Ronnie E. Brailsford, Presiding Prelate of the 10th Episcopal District and Lay Commission Chair. He stated that the theme chosen is what the lay organization must be about in the present age. He encouraged us to “go back to your conferences, go back to your churches, go back to your communities fired up and ready to go, and Empower everybody, Equip everybody, Engage everybody.”

After a heartfelt Memorial Service honoring the lives and legacy of our departed members, the business session included reports from the President, First Vice President & Director of Lay Activities along with a budget presentation.

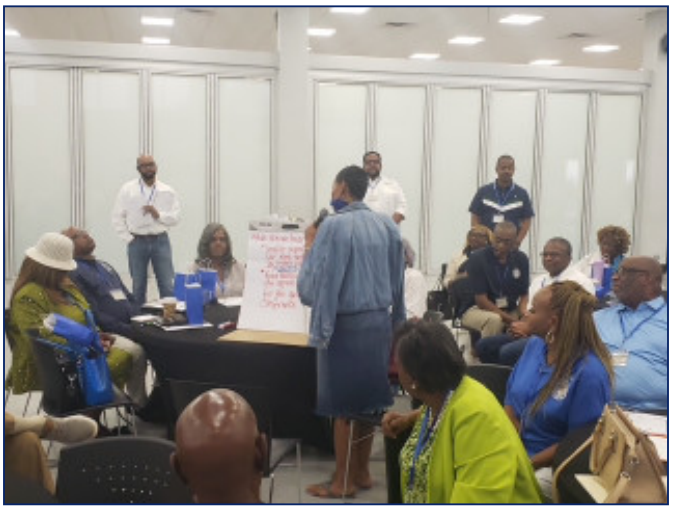
Director of Lay Activities, Kathy Drayton, presented workshops that were fun, interactive and educational. A panel discussion with Perspectives from a Presiding Elder, Pastor, Lay Member & Young Adult was presented. Groups were established to develop practical strategies for growth and revitalization of Local Lay Organizations. Participants shared ideas for increasing membership, engaging inactive members, improving communication, strengthening programs and activities, and making the Lay Organization more visible and relevant to the church and community. The goal was to move beyond discussion and identify specific, achievable actions that can lead to stronger, more active, and sustainable Local Lay Organizations.

The Young Adults led an engaging Guided Discussion featuring an AME Family Tree Activity, encouraging participants to explore, share, and connect others to the mission and ministry of the Lay Organization.

At the close of the convention, Dr. Moore laid out the charge. The charge was simple. He encouraged everyone to “Empower somebody, Equip somebody, Engage somebody. We are to go forward together, serve together, lead together, grow together and build together. And above all, we are to use whatever gift God has given us to serve others.”

TENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

LAY ORGANIZATION | STATE LAY CONVENTION









TENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

LAY ORGANIZATION | STATE LAY CONVENTION











John W. Love

11th Episcopal District President

FAITH IN ACTION:
EEDLO COMES ALIVE IN TALLAHASSEE

The Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization gathered in Tallahassee, Florida, June 9–12, 2026, for its 82nd Annual Convention under the theme, “ALIVE: Rooted in Faith, Shaped by Culture, Activated for Service.” The convention brought together laity and clergy from across the district for worship, learning, fellowship, celebration, and renewed purpose.

We kicked off the annual convention with a spirit-filled worship service where our own presiding prelate, The Right Reverend Marvin Clyde Zanders, II preached an electrifying and timely message in line with the convention’s theme. If we weren’t ALIVE upon arrival, we were definitely revived as we were reminded of our faith and culture, and released equipped to serve.

Throughout the week, members participated in devotions, Bible studies, plenary sessions, officer and commission reports, and training designed to strengthen the work of the Lay Organization. An impromptu moment with Bishop Zanders allowed for a conversation with our episcopal leader. Bishop Zanders provided insight and encouragement to lay members and transparency that we don’t often experience.

Additionally, there were many opportunities for training. Ms. Patricia Wright, CLO DOLA, and member of the 11th District, along with other district leaders led a session focused on recruitment, retention, and reclaiming members. The EEDLO DOLA presented a lesson on taking ownership of the Lay Organization. Lay members put the word ALIVE in action in a session led by one of our PE District DOLAs. The highlight of our training day was a workshop led by the CLO Treasurer and 10th District DOLA, Mrs. Kathy Drayton. DOLA Drayton connected fiscal responsibility within the church to the mission and purpose of the Lay Organization. All sessions were meaningful and enriching for our work as Lay members.

A meaningful moment came during the Young Adult Hour of Power, where Rev. Octavius L. Smith, Pastor of Greater Grant Memorial AME Church in Jacksonville, FL, delivered a message that reached beyond one generation. He challenged participants with the question, “Do you have do-it-again faith?” His message encouraged the laity to keep trusting, trying, and moving forward, even when the path ahead is uncertain.

The convention also celebrated excellence and faithful service during the annual Awards and Scholarship Banquet. Five deserving students received $2,000 scholarships to assist in furthering their education. Lay Organization members and Pastors were recognized for their stalwart service to the church and their communities. These moments highlighted the dedication and commitment that continue to move the organization forward.

As the convention concluded, one message remained clear: ALIVE is more than simply having breath in our bodies. It is being active, intentional, visible, engaged, and ready to serve. We left Tallahassee encouraged to return to our churches, conferences, and communities ready to put what we learned into action.

We are ALIVE, and there is still work for the Lay Organization to do.

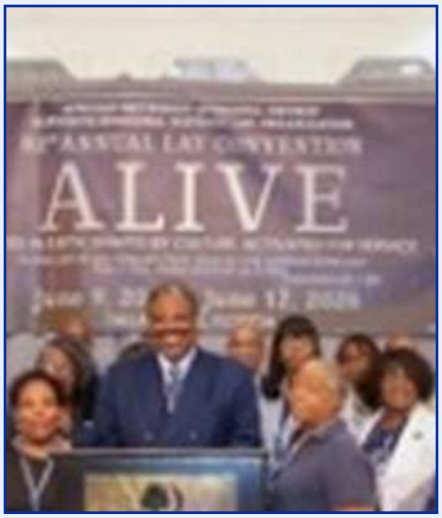
ELEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

LAY ORGANIZATION - CONVENTION MOMENTS















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2026

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Natalie Horton

12th Episcopal District President

TWELFTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION

The 69th Annual Convention of the Twelfth Episcopal District Lay Organization was more than a gathering — it was a spiritual, historical, and organizational revival. Held June 11–13, 2026 at THE Historic Vernon A.M.E. Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, this year's convening embodied its theme with power and purpose: "REVIVING the Connection Exceedingly, Abundantly Above All That We Can Ask or Think!"

President Natalie Horton opened the convention on June 11th with warmth, clarity, and unmistakable enthusiasm. A spirit-lifting devotion set the tone for the day, followed by greetings from leaders across the district — including Host Conference President Regan Green, Host Pastor Rev. Brandon Sims, Host Local Lay President Dr. Fredrick Wright, Presiding Elders Kevin Clayton and Marcellus Fields, and Bishop Silvester S. Beaman. Each session offered collaboration, clarity, and renewed commitment for the year ahead.

The Opening Service was a mountaintop moment. The 12th Episcopal District MCAM Choir filled Faith Hall with praise that lifted every heart. A joyful welcome reception hosted by the Oklahoma State Conference closed the night with fellowship and hospitality.

The convention reconvened on Friday and centered on civic responsibility and political engagement — a vital part of Lay ministry. The Social Action team, led by Sis. Dianne Curry, Sis. Ruth Rolfe, and Sis. Cheryl Bollar brought dynamic speakers who challenged and inspired: Mayor Monroe Nichols IV, the first Black mayor of Tulsa, Senator Regina Goodwin, and Professor Vanessa Hall-Harper, Tulsa Community College. They offered insight into voting rights, civic power, and the responsibility of informed engagement. The afternoon concluded with a Holy Smokes Cookout and a powerful tour of Historic Vernon A.M.E. Church, the last remaining structure from Tulsa's original Greenwood District — a sacred survivor of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

Our Annual Gala & Lay Person of the Year Awards ceremony was held on Friday evening and was a star-studded celebration hosted by Sis. Patricia Edgerson, DOLA. Awards were presented to outstanding leaders whose service reflects the heart of Lay ministry. Their dedication continues to elevate the work of the Lay Organization across the district.

Saturday began with the Ed Swift Prayer and Meditation Service, presided by Jequetta Rogers, YAR, and was followed by a moving memorial service honoring laypersons, clergy, and connectional leaders who transitioned this past year. Scholarships were also awarded as part of the Lay Organization's commitment to education: the Rucker Clayton Memorial Scholarship and Textbook Scholarships.

The convention closed with a dynamic worship service led by Bishop Silvester Scott Beaman, preaching from Ephesians 3:14–15. His sermon, "Positioning for the Abundance," charged the laity to align themselves with God's purpose and prepare for the blessings ahead — a perfect culmination of the convention's theme.

The 69th Annual Convention reached new heights — spiritually, organizationally, and historically. Gathering at the heart of Black Wall Street reminded us of our legacy, resilience, and responsibility.

As we move forward, the charge is clear: Revive the Connection. Serve with excellence. Trust God to do exceedingly, abundantly above all we ask or think.

TWELFTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

LAY ORGANIZATION - CONVENTION MOMENTS





Caesar Kalenga

17th Episcopal District President

EVANGELISM FOR CHURCH GROWTH

Evangelism, evangelisation, or witnessing is the act of sharing the Christian gospel—the good news about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—with the intention of inviting others to Christianity. Evangelism can take several forms, including personal conversations, preaching, and media. It is especially associated with missionary work conducted in our communities. Christians who specialize in evangelism are often known as evangelists, whether they serve in their home communities or as missionaries in the field. Some Christian traditions refer to such people as missionaries in either case. Some Christian traditions consider evangelists to be in a leadership position; they may preach to large gatherings or serve in governance roles. Christian groups that encourage evangelism are sometimes described as evangelistic.

The New Testament paints a picture in which every disciple of Christ is normally and naturally involved in evangelism, as well as Bible study, prayer, and corporate worship. From the newest Christian to the seasoned saint, sharing the gospel is integral to a growing life in Christ. In the African Methodist Episcopal Church, every pastor is encouraged to establish a local church commission on membership, evangelism, and discipleship. In conjunction with the local church conference, the pastor shall establish realistic goals for the growth of the church committed to his or her charge. These goals and objectives shall include increasing membership and training clergy and laity. This tradition is one of the strengths the church uses to reach communities, preach the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and invite people to His saving grace. The call to evangelism and witnessing is not only for the wider AME Church. The Connectional Lay Organization has adopted it as a core value in its Constitution and Bylaws, maximizing the potential of the laity to bring souls to Christ and the church.

The 17th Episcopal District Lay Organization has continued its mission outreach beyond the walls of the church, witnessing to Jesus Christ through practical deeds as well as words. Evangelism and personal witness throughout the divisions introduce many souls to the saving grace of our Lord. The steady growth of evangelism in the district has been influenced by the annual Evangelism and Witness Sunday promoted by the Connectional Lay Organization. It is a marvel that the district does more than celebrate Evangelism and Witness Sunday on designated days. Its leaders have arranged seven days of practical, intensive outreach beforehand: witnessing to the community, clothing the needy, feeding orphans and older people, helping widows, and visiting prisons and hospitals. These practical works follow the example of Jesus Christ, who preached the Word and also met people’s physical needs. Modern evangelism and witnessing seek to meet basic needs among the less privileged and those from other communities. When those of us who follow Jesus put our faith into action, we can bring nations to the Lord.

The success of evangelism and personal witness in the 17th Episcopal District Lay Organization cannot be recognized without acknowledging Episcopal Third Vice President Brother Shone Sipopa. His passion for this work across the divisions is strengthened by cooperation with Connectional Third Vice President Sister Lovie Aaron. It is with great joy that we recognize Bishop Vernon R. Byrd, Jr., who has brought renewed love for evangelism and a vision of sharing the love of Jesus by loving one another. His love for the church and community is evident in the work that has touched communities where AME churches are situated. Many churches that previously lacked clean drinking water have been helped by the drilling of boreholes. Surrounding communities, including people who are not church members, also benefit.

Some beneficiaries have begun attending services in these congregations. Thanks be to God, from whom all blessings flow. Our account of the borehole projects would be incomplete without thanking the CLO for contributing funds toward this milestone. When the apostles preached salvation, healed the sick, drove out demons, and helped the needy, thousands turned to the Lord and joined the early church. As evangelism and Lay witness grow beyond the walls of AME congregations, new members continue to join the church where practical mission outreach takes place. We give thanks for the work of the sons and daughters of Richard Allen. May the God of our founder and those who advanced the church through evangelism and self-sacrifice continue to guide us in bringing nations to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Prepared by Caesar K. Kalenga, Episcopal Lay President



Ronald Erasmus Mkandawire

20th Episcopal District President

Faith, Family and the Fight Against Drug Abuse and Domestic Challenges

As drug and substance abuse among young people and conflict within families continue to threaten communities in the 20th Episcopal District, the African Methodist Episcopal Church is calling for stronger parenting, healthier relationships and faith-based values. The message took centre stage in Harare at Bright Temple, where the church concluded a two-day Lay Convention bringing together members from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Held under the theme “Virtue Belongs to God,” the gathering addressed social challenges affecting young people and families, including drug abuse, social media influence, parenting and conflict resolution.

Speakers identified substances being abused by young people as cannabis, commonly known as mbanje; crystal meth, locally called mutoriro; Gukka Makafela; codeine-based cough syrups; and nyaope, a dangerous drug mixture increasingly reported in Harare. Speaking at the convention, AME Church Lay President Takudzwa Nyagura urged congregants to remain steadfast in prayer and challenged young people to reject alcohol, drugs, tobacco and other behaviours that could undermine their health and future. “The challenges against our children are alcohol abuse, drug abuse and tobacco abuse. We will defeat them.”

Second Vice President Faith Tsoro called for stronger parental guidance, particularly as social media exposes young people to information, lifestyles and influences that may encourage risky behaviour. She urged parents to remain actively involved in their children’s lives and help them make responsible choices.

The convention also addressed domestic challenges and conflict within relationships. Certified professional coach Francis Kamoto encouraged couples to develop healthier approaches to disagreements, stressing that conflict does not have to destroy relationships. “You do not choose how the next person reacts to any situation, but you can react to it in a way that fosters peace.” Kamoto further urged couples to challenge ideas rather than attack one another personally, emphasising respectful communication as a foundation for reconciliation and stronger families.

The discussions highlighted the need for churches, families, schools and communities to work together in addressing drug abuse, domestic violence and family breakdown. While faith provides an important foundation, the challenges also require education, counselling, responsible parenting and appropriate community and social support. The convention called on parents to become more engaged in the lives of their children, young people to resist destructive influences, and couples to build relationships based on communication, patience and respect. Under the theme “Virtue Belongs to God,” the gathering reminded members that Christian faith must be demonstrated not only through worship, but also through responsible choices and the way people treat one another at home and in the wider community.

By Pride Nyagura

WE SPEAK | 20TH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

20TH EPISCOPAL LAY ORGANISATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

I.

ıe following Members make up the Executive Committee of the 20th Episcopal District L organization:

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Lay Organization Leadership of the AME Church

20th Episcopal District

The 20th Episcopal District was formally established in 2004 following the approved redistricting process. Bishop W. Jacobus Messiah was appointed as the first Presiding Bishop of the district. He was succeeded by Bishop Julius McAllister, who served as the second Presiding Bishop of the 20th Episcopal District. The district has since been served by successive episcopal leaders. The current Presiding Prelate is Bishop Dr. Gregory Vaughn Eason, Sr., who serves as the sixth Presiding Bishop since the district's formation.

The first Lay President of the 20th Episcopal District was Brother Phillip Nhekairo of Zimbabwe, who served during the episcopacy of Bishop W. Jacobus Messiah from 2004-2008. During the tenure of Bishop Julius McAllister, the late Brother Charles Evance assumed leadership of the Episcopal District Lay organization. Following his passing, leadership transitioned to Brother Gibson Mengwe, who had been serving as First Vice President.

Brother Mengwe was succeeded as Lay President by Brother Siles Gulule, who is now a Presiding Elder in Malawi Central Annual Conference. He was followed by Brother Qedindaba Khumalo. The current elected Lay President of the 20th Episcopal District is Brother Ronald Erastus Mkandawire, who assumed the leadership mantle following Brother Khumalo.

Structure, Geography, and Administration

The 20th Episcopal District is organized into seven (7) Annual Conferences and comprises a total of 244 African Methodist Episcopal churches. The district spans five African countries: Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Currently, all seven Annual Conferences within the 20th Episcopal District have Conference Lay Presidents, each supported by their respective executive office. These officers provide essential administrative support to the Presiding Elders and District Presidents within their conferences, strengthening governance and coordination at all levels of the district.

The district reflects broad cultural and linguistic diversity, with more than eight local languages spoken across its conferences and congregations. From its roots in the former 17th Episcopal District to its formal establishment in 2004, the 20th Episcopal District has continued to grow in leadership, structure, and regional influence.

Through faithful episcopal oversight and organized lay leadership, the district stands as a vital part of the African Methodist Episcopal Church's mission and witness in Africa.

Submitted By Ronald Erastus Mkandawire,
Elected President of The 20th Episcopal District

William E. Ayers, Jr., CLO Historiographer
Matikane Abednego Makiti, President, CLO

VOTE
VOTE
VOTE



IT IS OUR WATCH!

Do's and Don'ts on Political Activities for Churches and Pastors

DO discuss the candidates' positions on issues to the congregation.

DO lobby and campaign for or against legislation.

DO publish political ads.

DO NOT publish these ads as a donation.

DO publish news stories about campaigns in order to keep the congregation informed.

DO rent out church facilities (e.g., kitchens, athletic facilities, board/community rooms) for political activities. Regular rates MUST apply.

DO provide rentals of membership lists at regular rates.

DO allow candidates to make appearances at church events/services.

DO NOT distribute candidate campaign literature as a part of the congregation. An individual church leader is allowed to do so.

DO distribute candidate surveys and/or voting records of officeholders.

DO participate in non-partisan voter registration and identification: these activities CANNOT be affiliated with a political party.

DO provide non-partisan voter education (it CANNOT be affiliated with a political party).

DO use the church van for transportation to the polls.

Do's and Don'ts on Political Activities for Churches and Pastors

DO NOT support or oppose the candidates on the congregation's behalf.

DO NOT use the congregation's funding to give financial contributions of any kind to the candidates/officeholders.

DO NOT allow your (the church leaders') personal opinions to inflict the opinions of the congregation. Please note: the Pastor's personal views and personal donations (not affiliated with the church) can be used to his or her own discretion, as long as these views are not imposed upon the congregation.

DO NOT publish church editorials that are meant to support or oppose candidates, as a congregation and/or as an individual church leader.

DO NOT pay for a candidate's or officeholder's attendance at a caucus or political party convention. While the congregations CANNOT pay for this, the church leader CAN do so on an individual basis.

DO NOT give contributions to political action committees as a congregation, but the church leader may **DO** this on his or her own terms.

DO NOT use the church van to advertise candidates or allow candidate discussions in the van.

Source: "Preaching Politics from the Pulpit."
Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. www.pewforum.org

Moving into
Freedom Harvest
in the Fall!



Bishop Francine A. Brookins, Esquire

Chair - Social Action Commission

www.amefreedomsummer.com

Stay Informed

Freedom Summer is a shared witness. Across the Connection, AME congregations are educating voters, hosting events, building partnerships, and serving their communities in powerful ways. Stay informed by learning what others are doing and sharing what you know. Whether it is a voting rights update, an upcoming event, a resource, or a story of impact from your congregation, your knowledge can help equip and inspire others. Together, we strengthen our witness and ensure that no church serves or stands alone.

Speak Out!



Faithful witness takes many forms. Some are called to preach, some to pray, some to teach, and all are called to bear witness to truth and justice. Whether from the pulpit, in a Bible study, around the dinner table, or on social media, your voice matters. We have gathered talking points, prayers and litanies, sample social media posts, hashtags, and other communication tools to help individuals and congregations speak with clarity, courage, and conviction. Whether you are taking your first step or strengthening an ongoing commitment, these resources are designed to equip every level of call and engagement.

Show *Up!*





Faithful action takes many forms. Not everyone is called to march in the streets, but everyone is called to show up. Sometimes showing up means praying. Sometimes it means making a phone call, sending a letter, attending a meeting, or supporting organizations already doing the work in your community. We have gathered simple, meaningful ways to act—along with connections to trusted partners and organizations across the country—so that every person and every congregation can participate according to their gifts, context, and calling.

AMEC Freedom Summer

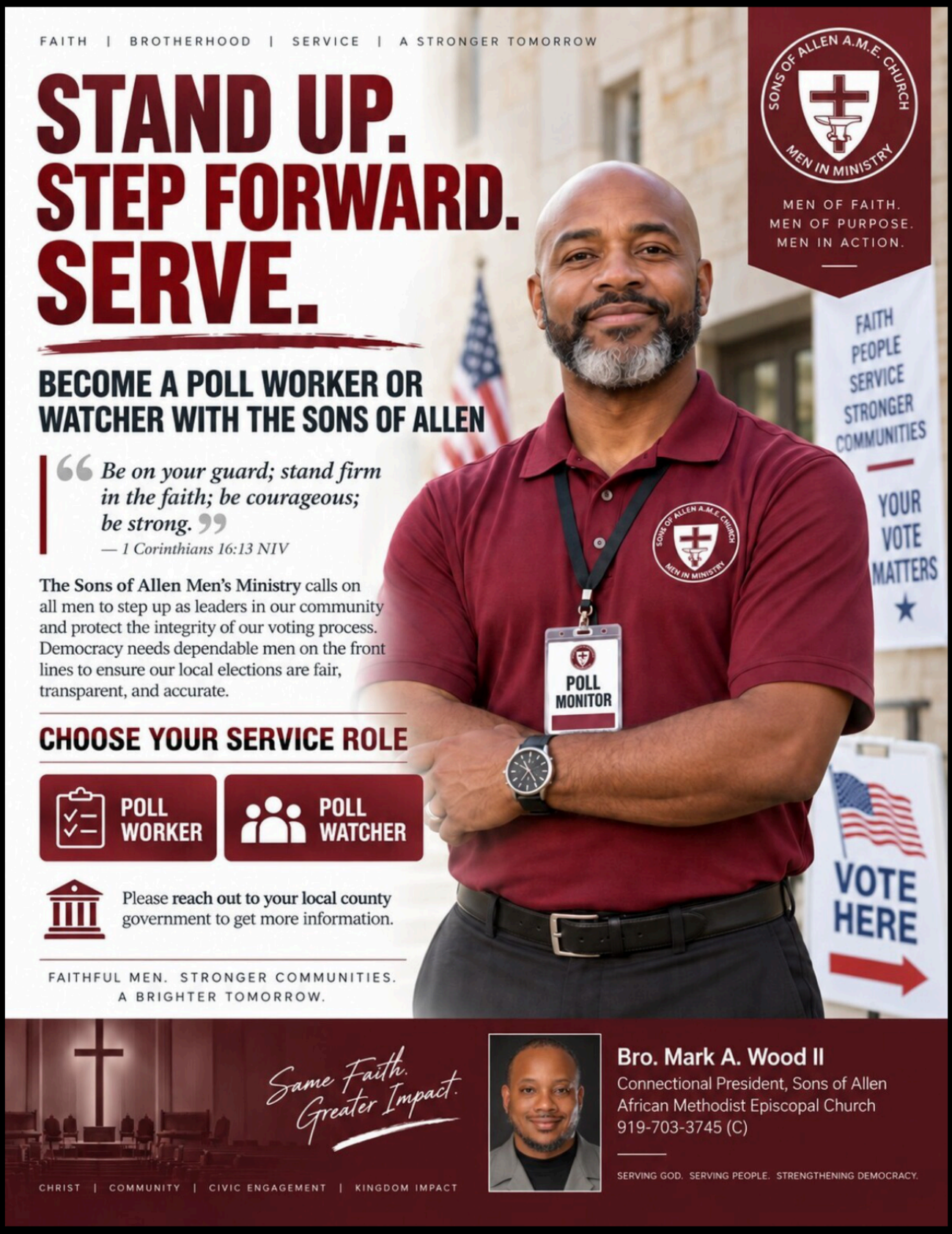
RICHARD ALLEN YOUNG ADULT COUNCIL
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RAYC 1937
RAYAC
RAYAC 1996
"ONE RAYAC, ONE CHURCH"

Root & Fruit Voter Guide

An independent application of the Root & Fruit Integrity Index through the lens of Free African Values, drawing on the 1787 Free African Society legacy and 240 years of AME civic tradition. This guide presents its analytical framework openly and invites readers to evaluate the reasoning for themselves.

We Will Do It for *Ourselves!*

SONS OF ALLEN MEN IN MINISTRY



YES "*WE*" CAN!

Plan Of Action:
10 * 10 * 10 =1,000



WWW.AMEV-ALERT.ORG

Plan Of Action: 10 * 10 * 10 =1,000

Recipe for Victory

Responsibilities of a Team Captain:

- Ø The **Team Captain** will identify 10 people to be **Team Leaders** (gathering name, phone/text and email address). Keep list close by for daily contacts. Please see attached Team Captain form.
- Ø The Team Captain will only manage those 10 Team Leaders.
- Ø Add email addresses/Text Messages

You are your **Team Captain** check in with your **Team Leaders** every day or every other day, keeping in direct communication, encouraging them to put their lists together within the first week.

- v Create a V-Alert Folder on their computer with sub-folders for:
- v Voting Photos (with sub-folders for each of their Team Leaders)
- v Rosters
- v Training Materials – re ballot initiatives and 10-10-10 model.
- v
- v Team Leaders will identify 9 **Team members to vote, and** forward **Team Members and Team Leaders** voting photos to the Team Captain c/o the 15th Episcopal District Coordinator as they are received from their Team Leaders.

AME Church Mission

The Mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed.

AMEV-Alert

AME Voter-ALERT (V-ALERT) is the Voter Education, Mobilization, and Education Project by the AME Church. AME V-ALERT seeks to create networks that include local congregations and engaged community partners to encourage eligible voters to vote!

AME Social Activists

AME Social Action Commission is the social justice arm of the AME Church. Its work is representative of the ongoing fight for Civil Rights and Social Justice in the world, and ongoing efforts to uplift and educate throughout all of our endeavors. Social Action is basic to ministry in African Methodism.

Thank You!!!

It's Our Watch!

AMEV-Alert is committed to bringing BEST practices to the work.

This model is adapted from years of use to increase the voter turnout. Thank you to all who, by using the model, have been a part of making it better.

To Connect:

"Sisthah" Jackie DuPont Walker
213-494-9493
jdupontwalker@gmail.com



www.ame-church.com/ame-voter-alert/



James C. Bonner, Jr. (9th)

Advisor Chair
Office of the Director of Public Relations

What Roles Does the Organized Lay Play in the AME Church?

The organized Lay is an essential partner in the life and work of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Its purpose is to prepare members for informed, faithful service and to encourage the use of their God-given abilities. Through teaching, training, and shared responsibility, the Lay Organization helps members understand their church and take an active part in its ministry.

One of its central roles is education. Lay members are encouraged to study the history and principles of African Methodism, honor the legacy of Richard Allen, and learn the laws of the church through The Doctrine and Discipline. Such learning should invite questions and thoughtful discussion. A lesson becomes especially meaningful when members can connect what they have learned with responsibilities in their own congregations.

The organized Lay also prepares people for leadership. Training in parliamentary procedure, church organization, and the duties of office helps members participate with confidence and respect. Good leadership requires listening, preparation, accountability, and cooperation. An informed layperson can contribute to a meeting, understand a report, and help an organization carry out its decisions with care.

Christian stewardship is another important responsibility. The Lay Organization encourages support for the church's work and teaches that stewardship includes more than financial giving. Our time, talents, knowledge, and willingness to serve also matter. Whether helping a neighbor, supporting a church program, or mentoring a new member, we can offer something valuable to the ministry entrusted to us.

The work of the organized Lay reaches beyond a meeting room. Evangelism, service, and social action connect faith with the needs of the community. We should ask where encouragement is needed, whose voice has not been heard, and how our congregations can respond. Prayer and practical service belong together as we seek to make the love of Christ visible in daily life.

Youth and young adults must have room to learn and contribute. Teaching them about African Methodism should be accompanied by opportunities to ask questions, share ideas, and accept meaningful responsibility. Experienced members can offer guidance while remaining open to fresh perspectives. The strength of our future leadership grows when generations work together in mutual respect.

Communication helps this work reach the whole church. Publications such as We Speak allow members to share lessons, district activities, and examples of service across the Connection. Clear reporting can encourage participation and help an idea from one congregation become useful to another. Each contribution reminds us that the work of the Lay belongs to a church family whose experiences deserve to be heard.

Dianne H. Battle deserves sincere commendation for a well-outlined document that presents solid, current information for our church family. Her commitment to bringing these contributions together makes this edition a valuable resource for learning, connection, and service. Her team is to be highly praised for their inclusion of voices, articles, and activities from across our Connection. Their thoughtful work honors the organized Lay and encourages all of us to remain informed, involved, and faithful.



Dr. Garland F. Pierce

General Officer

Prepare the way of the Lord:
Preparing for the Season of Advent

“Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.” Matthew 3:3b NRSVue

On Sunday, November 29, AME congregations around the world will light the first Advent candle. Some will be in Accra, Atlanta, or Kingston, others in Johannesburg, London, or Port-au-Prince. Advent comes from the Latin word for "coming." For four Sundays we remember Israel's long wait for the Messiah, we get ready to welcome Christ again at Christmas, and we look ahead to the day Christ will come again. Our tradition has always taught that a coming like that calls for preparation. For those of us who teach classes, lead ministries and worship, serve as stewards and trustees, and carry the life of the local church, preparation is not optional.

Preparation clears the way personally. John the Baptist cried, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, explained that this means "removing every thing which might prove a hinderance to his gracious appearance." That makes Advent a season for honest inventory. What grudge, habit, distraction, or fear stands between you and Christ? Wesley called the first step of repentance simply "know yourselves." We can't clear a road we have not looked at sufficiently.

Preparation is active, not idle. Some believers in Wesley's day taught that seekers should stop praying, reading scripture, and coming to the Lord's Table until God moved. Wesley disagreed. "All who desire the grace of God," he preached, "are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not in laying them aside." Advent waiting is not sitting still. It means praying, searching the scriptures, worshiping, and gathering at the Lord’s Table, so that grace has room to work.

Preparation builds a reserve. In Jesus' parable, five bridesmaids were ready for the bridegroom and five were not. Wesley put the difference this way, "He that watches has not only a burning lamp, but likewise oil in his vessel." Faithful members often give and serve until there is little left. Advent invites us to restock what the year has used up, so that our lamps are still burning when midnight comes.

Preparation joins prayer and work. Our founder, Richard Allen, showed this when Philadelphia's Black Methodists began building a church of their own after being pushed out of the white congregation. "I arose early in the morning and addressed the throne of grace, praying that the Lord would bless our endeavours," he wrote. Then "I put the first spade in the ground." Allen taught that "the chief end of our having a being in this world is to be prepared for a better," yet he never let heavenly hope excuse inaction on earth. Prayer came first, and only then did building begin.

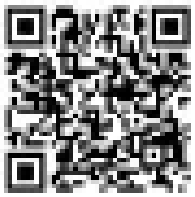
Preparation honors the call. Jarena Lee, the AME Church's first licensed woman preacher, waited eight years for the church to recognize her calling. During that time, she served wherever she was allowed, and the calling burned in her "as a fire shut up in my bones." Bishop Daniel A. Payne spent his life arguing that every calling must be backed by preparation: "Freedom is one thing; qualification is another." He also understood that clergy and laity grow together: "An educated ministry is more highly appreciated by an educated laity … They act and react upon each other." A prepared laity makes a stronger church.

Prepare the way of the Lord:
Preparing for the Season of Advent

Preparing as a family and worshipping community: There are a number of resources to assist you in preparing for Advent. Here we share only two recent presentations. One is by Rev. Dr. Roderick D. Belin, President and Publisher of the AMEC Publishing House, which offers suggestions for families and congregations, and the second is by Rev. Dr. C. Dennis Williams, Presiding Elder of the Tyler District of the Tenth Episcopal District, presented as part of the Connectional Fellowship of Church Educators Virtual Teach-In. His presentation focuses on the biblical and theological themes of the Advent season.



Dr. Belin's Presentation



Dr. Williams's Presentation
(start at 1:15:04)

Preparing personally and as family and community: For decades the Christian Education Departments of the AME, AME Zion, and CME Churches have produced an Advent/Christmas daily devotional entitled Prophecy and Expectation. It helps to prepare us for Christ's coming by linking the themes of the season with the themes which arise from our study of the church school curriculum over this period. It is an excellent resource for your spiritual practices during this season.



2026 Prophecy and Expectation Advent Devotional

Charles Wesley gave us the prayer for this season: "Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free." That prayer has always meant a great deal to a church born in the struggle for freedom. This Advent, in every district of our global connection, let us do more than expect him. Let us get ready for him. Clear the road. Fill the lamp. Pray, and then pick up the spade. The One who is coming is worth the preparation.

Connectional
LAY
Organization



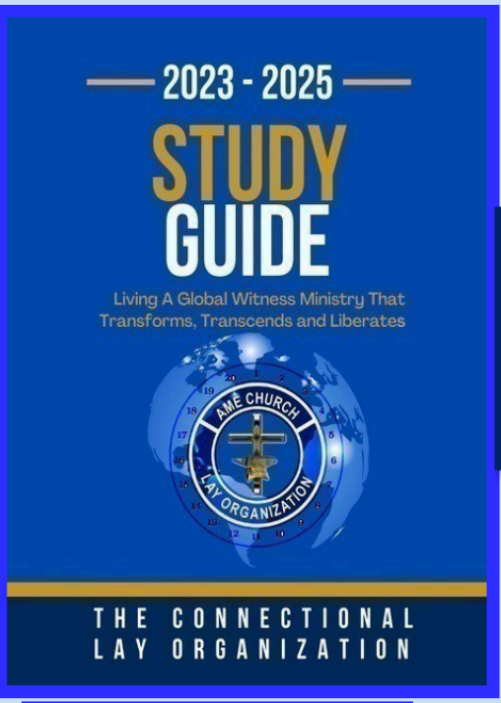
STUDY MANUAL

MAKING IT
Make Sense

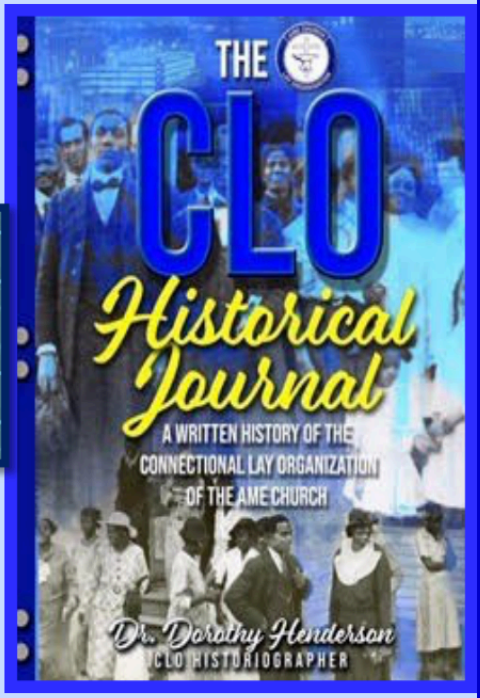
Teaching STRATEGIES
Building STRUCTURES
Growing STRENGTHS

2025 - 2027

SHOP LAY STORE: https://www.ameclay.org/shop.html





















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Ronnie Elijah Brailsford
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Matikane Abednego Makiti
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Patricia Wright
Director of Lay Activities



Dianne H. Battle
Director of Public Relations



William Ayers
Historiographer



Aimee Beasley
Young Adult Representative

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Twentieth — Ronald Erastus Mkandawire
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ARTICLES: SUBMISSION REQUEST
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

It is with great joy that I extend this opportunity to each of you.

Connectional Lay President Matikane Abednego Makiti has asked the Office of the Director of Public Relations to publish We Speak quarterly, four times a year, according to the Constitution and Bylaws and the requirements of the Discipline.

DEADLINE: THE 10TH OF THE MONTH BEFORE PUBLICATION

January 2026, February 2026, March 2026 — Publish April 2026.
May 2026, June 2026, July 2026, August 2026, September 2026 — Publish October 2026.
October 2026, November 2026, December 2026 — Publish January 2027.

NO EXTENDED DATES WILL BE AVAILABLE.

Special Note: Please send articles as soon as they are completed. Together, we can make We Speak a unique magazine. We understand that not all officers and presidents may submit. This is a request to share the exciting news happening in your districts.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please edit and proofread your article before submission. There will be no time to return documents for revisions. The Director of Public Relations reserves the right to edit submitted articles and determine their placement in the publication.

Submit to: Dianne H. Battle, CLO Director of Public Relations
Email Address: clodopr16@gmail.com

INCLUDE A HEADSHOT AND YOUR DISTRICT WITH YOUR ARTICLE

1. ELECTED CLO OFFICERS: Submit a one-page Word document and a headshot. Do not embed photos in the article. Include photos on a separate page, with or without captions.

2. DISTRICT PRESIDENTS: Share your most exciting event. Submit two pages: one written article and one page of pictures, with or without captions. Do not embed photos in the written document; place individual photos on the second page.

3. FORMAT: Times New Roman, 12-point font, single-spaced, fully justified. Use one-inch margins at the top, bottom, right, and left.

ARTICLE II – MISSION STATEMENT, PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Resource: The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church pages, 497-533, 2024

Section 1. Mission Statement.

The Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is commissioned to teach, train and empower its members for lay ministry, global leadership and service following the tenets of Jesus Christ.

Section 2. Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be to organize and train the laity of the African Methodist Episcopal Church so that lay persons may maximally utilize their God-given abilities (page 471), and skills to improve and extend the kingdom, to create happiness, peace, and harmony among its members.

Section 3. Objectives

Objectives – To accomplish this purpose, the following objectives are adopted:

a. To instill in the membership of the church a love for, and an appreciation of the history, traditions, principles and development of African Methodism by encouraging, motivating, and educating all lay persons.

b. To keep forever alive the sacred memory of Richard Allen, the illustrious founder of the AMEC.

c. To advocate respect and loyalty at all times to constituted authority and leadership.

d. To encourage the laity to support the total program of the church in the local congregation, in the community, and throughout the Connection.

e. To foster a systematic and regular study of The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and parliamentary procedure, to the end that greater knowledge and information may be disseminated among the laity, and with the further purpose of encouraging lay members to participate more largely in the general functioning and supervision of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

f. To foster, influence, and support all constructive and progressive legislation for the church that promotes the teachings of Jesus Christ.

g. To encourage development, recognition, and utilization of the most appropriate operational practices and modern technology in conducting the activities of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

h. To promote the spread of personal evangelism through activities designed to prepare lay members for appropriately conveying God’s Word.

i. To provide training in Christian stewardship, which causes lay members to recognize that the connotation of stewardship addresses more than giving money.

j. To increase the circulation of church periodicals.

k. To provide for the orderly and systematic training of lay persons, especially officers, in order that they might more effectively perform their service responsibilities.

l. To promote activities which will result in harmonious fellowship for lay persons throughout the Connection.

m. To help in the support of the AME educational institutions.

n. To give financial assistance to the Connectional Lay Economic Development Corporation (CLEDC) in support of Connectional programs.

Special Note: The Executive Board of the Lay Organization voted to change the name to: CONNECTIONAL LAY EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION (CLEF). See the 2024 minutes of the lay executive board meetings for more detailed information.

OCTOBER

Health • Awareness • Community

Fall into wellness. Care for yourself and one another.



GET YOUR FLU SHOT

An annual flu vaccine helps reduce the risk of flu and serious complications.

Recommended for everyone 6 months and older, with rare exceptions.

Contact your doctor, pharmacy, or local health department.

CDC flu vaccine information: cdc.gov/flu/vaccines



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Everyone deserves safety, respect, and love.

Support survivors. Listen without judgment.

Help is available: **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

Text START to 88788 • TheHotline.org

In immediate danger, call 911.



BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Honor survivors. Support those in treatment.

Talk with your healthcare provider about screening.

THIS OCTOBER: TAKE CARE & SHOW YOU CARE

Schedule your flu shot • Wear purple and pink

Check on a neighbor • Share helpful resources

Health information: CDC • Awareness resources: TheHotline.org • WHO

Visit and Connect with Us: Connectional Lay Organization Website:

https://www.ameclay.org/

Email Address: ameclayorg@gmail.com

40th Lay Biennial Convention: https://2027-biennial.base44.app/