

# The Lay Communiqué

*The Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization Convention Newsletter*



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Bishop Frank Madison Reid III, Presiding Prelate  
Mrs. Marlaa Hall Reid, Episcopal Supervisor  
Patricia H. Wright, President  
Teresa White, Director of Lay Activities  
Ashley Blakely, Young Adult Representative  
Robbyn Hopewell, Director of Public Relations  
Reginald Hardee, Central Conference President

## ‘Floor-shaking’ worship opens EEDLO convention

An air of celebration filled the room. The choir sang. The floor shook. All this ushered in the 80th Annual Convention of the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization. On Tuesday night, delegates and guests gathered at the Opening Worship Service under the theme “8 Years of Grace: Navigating the Course Ahead.”

This marks Eleventh Episcopal District President and Connectional Lay Organization Director of Lay Activities Patricia Wright’s swan song as Episcopal President. She drew praise for her innovative leadership from Eleventh Episcopal District Presiding Prelate Bishop Frank Madison Reid, III.

**Worship continues on reverse**

# Worship Continued

Setting the tone was a choir made up of members of the Central Annual Conference. "I Made it Out," "Jesus Is Mine, and "There Is No Other Way" inspired handclapping and singing along.

This paved the way for Bishop Reid to present the preached word. He charted his course from Mark 4:35-41. It tells the story of Jesus calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Bishop Reid talked about how navigation is necessary to "close out and cross over to the other side."

Bishop Reid took the navigation theme a bit further in talking about the voting strength of the Eleventh Episcopal District, especially when it comes to the upcoming General Conference in Columbus, Ohio. "Navigation demands that we be connected." He said, "If we are one in the spirit when we go to Columbus, we will elect two Bishops."

Bishop asked: "Do you care about your true self? When you care about God and care about others, then God makes you an unstoppable team." He then encouraged the congregation to read the book "Unstoppable Teams" by Alden Mills. It tells how to put together teams that can accomplish any objective.



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Shrin Bryant, South Conference Central District Recording Secretary  
LaTanya Cherry-Ginetta, Central Conference Director of Lay Activities  
Joyce C. Pink, West Coast Conference Historiographer  
Henry Love, Quincy/Monticello District Lay Organization President

# Six first time attendees join the 'FamiLay' at opening workshop

Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization Director of Public Relations Robbyn Hopewell gathered with six first time attendees representing the Central, West Coast and Florida conferences in Salons 13 and 14 for the annual First-Timers Workshop. Attendees asked questions about the upcoming officers elections and got tips about lunches out, important reports and the voting process as well as a detailed explanation of the agenda of activities from June 18-21 at the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida. The new cohort was excited about the week of fellowship to come.



# Executive Board meets to discuss election, anvil award and general conference information

Connection Lay Organization Director of Lay Activities and Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization President Patricia H. Wright called the EEDLO executive board to order at 2:16 p.m. on Tuesday, June 18 to illuminate the upcoming election process and other important information the would come before the full organization body during the 80th Annual EEDLO convention. Following robust discussion, the board voted to proceed with the recommended election process. The group also voted to allow the scholarship and awards committee to review and update the anvil award criteria.



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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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## EEDLO OFFICERS

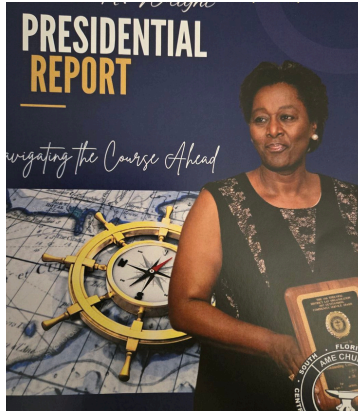
Bishop Frank Madison Reid III, Presiding Prelate  
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## Three candidates vie for first vice president role

Wednesday's forum for the First Vice President position of the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization was charged with energy and anticipation. Three dynamic candidates—EEDLO Young Adult Representative Ashley Blakely, East Conference Lay Organization President Nicholas Causey, and EEDLO Second Vice President Lothar Cherry—each delivered compelling presentations and outlined their vibrant visions for the future.

Blakely kicked off the session with enthusiasm, emphasizing action and readiness. She passionately detailed her plans to boost membership and engage new groups, drawing from her 20-plus years of experience in teaching, mentorship, and fellowship.

**Candidates continues on next page**



# EEDLO President Patricia H. Wright celebrates 8 years of grace in final report

When the slick blue booklets came out for distribution, convention attendees snapped them up like gold. It was another highly-produced, beautifully-appointed reminder of the eight years of excellence we've come to expect from Connectional Lay Organization Director of Lay Activities and outgoing Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization President Patricia H. Wright.

Wearing a boat captain's hat, President Wright detailed her term as the organization's eighth leader with a retrospective view of triumph for her final President's Message at the 80th Annual EEDLO Convention. A pandemic, which could have halted so many ministries, only served to catalyze and strengthen the EEDLO to stronger attendance and adoption of technology.

In addition to continuing the ministry virtually, President Wright also led a return to in-person meetings when the EEDLO hosted the Connectional Lay Organization Biennial in Orlando on the heels of the 2021 General Conference. Much of her work introduced the talent and training of the 11th Episcopal District to the world.

"For eight years, we have been charged, challenged and championed. We have been inspired, inspected and ignited. It has been my privilege, my honor, to be your president for eight years," President Wright said. "You have grown me. And certainly we hope that because our lives have intersected, you too have grown and been impacted in a meaningful way."

## Candidates continued

Causey followed with a powerful recount of his lifelong dedication to service. From his days as a Marine to his extensive roles within the church, Causey's story is one of relentless commitment. His vision fosters collaboration and ethical leadership and combines with his rich experience.

Cherry concluded with highlighting her deep understanding of the organization as she spoke passionately about the importance of preparation and training. Her 36 years of educational experience added weight to her vision of moving forward together.

President Wright reminded everyone that the candidates strive to serve, not run against each other. "Because two people won't get the amount of votes to make them first vice president does not diminish their skills," she emphasized, highlighting the importance of unity. The EEDLO's future looks bright, driven by a collective commitment to growth and excellence.



# Finance team presents budget for 2024-2028 term

Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization Treasurer Sharon Causey presented an operational budget for the 2024-2028 administrative years that anticipated significant growth. During Wednesday morning's business session of the 80th Annual EEDLO Convention, Presiding Officer EEDLO First Vice President John Love opened the floor for questions following Causey's thorough reading of the document formulated by the Committee on Stewardship and Finance.

EEDLO Second Vice President Lothar Cherry inquired about the \$2,000 allocated toward benevolence annually and if the organization had historically exceeded that amount. Causey explained that it depended on the year, but the record recently suggests no need to increase the allocated amount.

Causey's motion for the approval of the budget passed unanimously when the Chair Love called for the question.

Moving forward, the next administration is expected to increase revenues at the annual convention and retreat by \$5,000 and \$2,500, respectively. In turn, an additional \$10,000 a year will be allotted to the fees associated with the annual convention, specifically the event's planning.

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## Rev. Dr. Julius McAllister Jr. greets the EEDLO ahead of General Conference

In a riveting address, Rev. Dr. Julius H. McAllister Jr. electrified the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization with his vision for leadership within the African Methodist Episcopal Church as a candidate for Bishop at the upcoming General Conference.

Speaking to an energized audience, the pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church in Tallahassee outlined the essence of true leadership. "Leadership is about having a prophetic vision for the future and turning theory into action," he declared. His words met with applause. Rejecting self-centered leadership, he emphasized that genuine leaders are driven by a burning passion to make a difference.

Rev. McAllister championed investing in people over buildings, spotlighting his efforts in outreach, affordable housing, and addiction recovery in the Tallahassee area. "Leadership means making a prophetic investment in people," he asserted, drawing cheers of agreement.

"Together, we can climb any hill and coast down to a brighter future," he concluded.

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# Health walk kicks off ministry of movement

While the early bird gets the worm, the early riser gets the exercise. At 5:45 a.m. walkers met in the lobby to stretch and prepare to hit the road. The sessions, which meet each morning of the convention, often turn into laps and laughter. So it has been with convention-goers since the leadership of Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization President Marian Bacon White.

"We came to one of the conferences, I think it was in Jacksonville, and I said, 'Madam President, we need to make sure we come to convention fit. Our bodies, our minds, everything.' " says Connie E. Jenkins-Pye of the Florida Conference. The women talked about health topics and "decided that they needed to get delegates up and moving," said Jenkins-Pye, the chair of the Health Committee who walks 5 miles a day. She says that everyone needs an exercise routine. "Just 30 minutes a day of some type of movement helps."



Lisa Thomas of the West Coast Conference made her first trek with the group on Wednesday. "They did it in the Bahamas, but I never got up early enough, so I made every effort to do this because I'm in a regular routine at home to walk three days a week. Since I'm at the convention this week, I wanted to do my three days." Thomas says she walks 3-and-a-half to 5 miles a day. "Walking with the group this morning, I was appreciative of the fellowship. That was a plus."

## Lay Benevolence Service brings praise



In a night brimming with spiritual energy, Rev. Helen Johnson-Ford, the Pastor of New Bethel A.M.E. Church in Altamonte Springs, delivered an inspiring sermon at the Lay Benevolence Service centered on the theme "Ministry of Love." Rev. Johnson-Ford's message, anchored in Isaiah 61, radiated hope and assurance.

She spoke passionately about God's promise of "double for your trouble," reminding the congregation that despite life's trials, God's grace is abundantly rewarding.

Her recounting of the Lay Organization's history, marked by unwavering resilience and determination, served as a powerful reminder of the strength found in faith.

The service featured a moving Scripture reading from Colossians 1:3-14, emphasizing themes of steadfast faith, deep love, and continuous spiritual growth. The praise team's electrifying worship further ignited the congregation's spirit, turning the gathering into a joyous celebration of divine goodness.

Rev. Johnson-Ford's sermon was deeply moving, touching the hearts of all present. Her powerful words of encouragement and faith resonated with the congregation, inspiring them to reflect on their own spiritual journeys and the significance of love and service in their lives.

The night concluded on a high note, leaving the congregation with a renewed sense of community and spiritual rejuvenation. The service underscored the transformative power of love and service, reminding everyone of the profound impact of unwavering faith and the enduring promise of God's blessings.



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EEDLO Awards Banquet  
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## Banquet honors stalwart laity and stellar students

It was a night of surprises and honors as the the 80th Annual Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization Convention held its Awards Banquet.

With the theme "Navigating Excellence," master of ceremonies Connectional Lay Organization Chaplain Charlie Nichols guided the evening with inventive stories about the program participants and jokes for all to enjoy.

The heart of the evening was the awards presentations, which included six new recipients of the Selmo Bradley Scholarship, valued at \$2,000 per student.

**Banquet continues on next page**



# Banquet continued

This year's deserving honorees were: Brooke Stakley, a member of the Florida Conference's Gregg Chapel A.M.E. Church in Fort Walton Beach; Shakari Bell, a member of the South Conference's Payne Chapel A.M.E. Church in West Palm Beach; Jade White, a member of the Central Conference's St. Mark A.M.E. Church in Orlando; Shanaya Brown, a member of the East Conference's Greater Bethel A.M.E. Church in Gainesville; Morgan Pratt, a member of the East Conference's St. Paul A.M.E. Church in Jacksonville; and Tamea Saunders, a member of the Bahamas Conference's Robinson-Morris A.M.E. Church in Nassau, Bahamas.

Following the scholarship presentations, two new members were inducted into the EEDLO Hall of Fame—Shirley Harris of Greater New Hope A.M.E. Church in Jacksonville and Florida Conference Lay Organization President Donald Russell.

EEDLO Second Vice President Lothar Cherry received the Community Service Award and Outstanding Clergy of the Year was awarded to Orlando District Presiding Elder Milton Broomfield.

Connectional Lay Organization Director of Lay Activities and outgoing EEDLO President Patricia H. Wright surprised West Coast Conference Lay Organization President Lolita D. Brown with the Excellence in Service Award. She also awarded the Soldier of the Cross Award to East Conference Lay Organization President Nicholas Causey and Donald Russell.

In between official awards, special presentations honoring the tenures of President Wright, EEDLO Director of Lay Activities Teresa White and Young Adult Representative Ashley Blakely were bestowed by officers from across the district. Current and past officers from the last eight years also received recognition.

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**Shrin Bryant**, South Conference Central District Recording Secretary  
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**Joyce C. Pink**, West Coast Conference Historiographer  
**Henry Love**, Quincy/Monticello District Lay Organization President





# Incoming EEDLO officers share their visions for the future

Power Session 1 on Thursday was charged with energy and anticipation as incoming leaders—Young Adult Representative Dante Buckson, Director of Lay Activities Rhosonda Herring, and President John Love—delivered compelling presentations during the session titled "Navigating the Course Ahead: Beyond the Horizon." Attendees were left buzzing with enthusiasm for the future.

Buckson kicked off the session with heartfelt gratitude and infectious enthusiasm. He detailed his ambitious plans for the next four years, focusing on leadership development, intergenerational collaboration, professional growth, and robust membership retention. "We've got work to do, and together, we can make an impact!" Buckson declared. He also unveiled the theme for the young adult ministry: "Impact in Action."

Herring followed with vibrant energy. Her excitement was palpable as she outlined bold plans to foster leadership, creativity, faith, and faithfulness within the organization. Herring emphasized the importance of being advocates and leaders, creating an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. She promised dynamic activities designed to retain, recruit, and reclaim members, ensuring every voice is heard and valued.

Love concluded the session with a rousing speech that set the tone for his administration. With a blend of humor and earnest resolve, Love praised the outgoing leaders and committed to immediate and impactful action.



His charismatic delivery and bold plans invigorated the audience, making it clear that under his leadership, the organization is poised for greatness.

Power Session 1 concluded with unity and excitement, promising a dynamic, inclusive, and collaborative journey ahead. The energy in the room was electric, with members leaving inspired and ready to contribute to the organization's vibrant future.

## Rev. Dr. Ronnie Clark addresses convention

Rev. Dr. Ronnie L. Clark, pastor of Hurst Chapel A.M.E. Church in Winter Haven, told the 80th EEDLO Convention that he has dedicated his life to transformational work—healing families and growing churches. That's why he is seeking Episcopal office. Rev. Clark touted his resume of establishing healthcare clinics in Polk County, providing care to 40,000 people, and helping pass laws to protect children and decriminalize poverty. His vision is to elevate his ministry, bringing transformational leadership to the A.M.E. Church at a higher level.



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# ‘Hot Topics’ session sparks spirited debate among laity

On Thursday morning, the room was on metaphorical fire. Power Session II took on the subject “Hot Topics.” The hourlong discussion on sensitive subjects was facilitated by Connectional Lay Organization Director of Lay Activities and Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization President Patricia H. Wright, EEDLO DOLA Teresa White and EEDLO Young Adult Representative Ashley Blakley.

Topic 1: “Should General Conference delegates represent the interests of themselves, those who elected them or their Bishop?”

“We also are to respect constituted authority.” Someone added, “The Bishop and delegation have thought things through, we still have to think for ourselves.”

Topic 2: “When lay people have the knowledge, training and understanding, why do we quiet our voices when it’s time to speak up?”

Topic 3: What should the church’s stance be on same-sex commitment service?

Reference was made to legislation addressing those unions. “We can’t let what’s going on in society creep into church legislation. “God’s word still stands” Others invoked inclusion. “Jesus said to love everyone.” There was talk of sin by others and selected judgement.

Topic 4: How are friendships killing our church? What is causing us to ignore wrongdoing, create positions, show bias and grant privileges? Is being a minister a family business or a calling?

“Putting people in the wrong position is killing the church. Too often we don’t hold friends accountable.” The session ended with someone saying, “Blood is thicker than water. But we need to talk about the blood of Christ and the living water.”



## Convention-goers vote electronically in new election procedure

Voting Day at the 80th Annual Convention of the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization began on Thursday morning with a primer on the voting process coming from Election Committee Chair Garian Cason of the East Conference.

Cason presented recommendations from the committee on how votes should be cast: electronically or by paper ballot. A motion was carried to use an electronic method involving iPads and laptops.

Bahamas Conference Lay Organization President Valderine Evans waited in the hall to point voters toward the hospitality suite that served as the secured polling place. Only additional members of the Election Committee (Wanda Berry Glover, West Coast Conference; Lonnie Ford, Central Conference; Stephanie Gilliam-Brown, South Conference; and Allen Owens, Florida Conference) and those in line to vote could enter the room. “It was very easy,” said Tangela Wilson of the Central Conference.

The polls closed at 1 p.m. Results will be announced on Friday.



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## New EEDLO executive board elected and installed at convention's end

After four rounds of voting, Lothar Cherry was elected First Vice President of the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization at the 80th Annual Convention. The subsequent three rounds were needed because no candidate received a majority of the vote in the previous rounds.

Before voting began, Connectional Lay Organization First Vice President Dr. Henderson praised CLO Director of Lay Activities and outgoing EEDLO President Patricia Wright and members of the 11th District. In the first round on Thursday, 136 votes were cast."

**Election continues on next page**

# Election continued

The results were: 55 votes (40.4%) for Ashley Blakely, 26 votes (19.1%) Nicholas Causey, and 55 votes (40.4%) for Lothar Cherry.

Dr. Henderson presided over the process that began on Friday morning and went into the early afternoon. Dr. Henderson declared all offices vacated, allowing for the final stage to begin.

In the second round, 109 votes were cast. The results were: 43 votes (39.8%) for Ashley Blakely, 17 votes (15.7%) Nicholas Causey, and 49 votes (45.4%) for Lothar Cherry.

In the third round, 105 votes were cast. The results were: 41 votes (39.05%) for Ashley Blakely, 13 votes (12.38%) Nicholas Causey, and 52 votes (49.52%) for Lothar Cherry.

After that round, a motion was made to follow Standing Rule #6, Section D, which allows reducing the number of candidates in a contested election by going to a simple majority vote after the first ballot.

In the fourth round, 100 votes were cast. The results were: 37 votes (37%) for Ashley Blakely, 6 votes (6%) Nicholas Causey, and 56 votes (56%) for Lothar Cherry. The results brought applause for the top vote-getter. Then ended with a motion that carried to award President Wright the title of President Emeritus.



## 2024-2028 EEDLO Executive Board

President: John Love, Florida Conference  
1st Vice President: Lothar Cherry, Central Conference  
2nd Vice President: Robbyn Hopewell, West Coast Conference  
3rd Vice President: Esther Ferguson, Bahamas Conference  
Recording Secretary: Phillis Filer, East Conference  
Assistant Recording Secretary: Evelyn Odom, South Conference  
Corresponding Secretary: Robyne L. Edwards, East Conference  
Treasurer: Sharon Causey, East Conference  
Financial Secretary: Annie G. McCelvy, Florida Conference  
Parliamentarian: Rebecca D. Williams, West Coast Conference  
Director of Lay Activities: Rhoshonda Herring, East Conference  
Chaplain: LuCretia McBride, East Conference  
Historiographer: Joyce Pink, West Coast Conference  
Director of Public Relations: Shrin Bryant, South Conference  
Young Adult Representative: Dante' Buckson, East Conference

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**ELEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION**  
80TH ANNUAL CONVENTION, ORLANDO, 2024

SCAN ME!  
TO TAKE THE SURVEY



HELP US IMPROVE THE CONVENTION EXPERIENCE BY TAKING A BRIEF SURVEY.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE SURVEY WILL BE ENTERED IN A DRAWING TO WIN A GIVEAWAY FROM THE EEDLO CONVENTION.

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# Lay soldiers receive final memorials in annual ceremony

The EEDLO 80th Convention paused for a memorial service, led by Sister LuCretia A. McBride. The service, filled with hymns, prayers, and readings, honored the lives of the departed.

The program opened with "Down at the Cross," followed by Scripture readings from Psalm 90:1-6, 12; Romans 8:35-39; and John 14:27. Sharon Causey performed a solo, and Sister Peggy Rice Johnson delivered a poignant reading. A "Celebration of Life" PowerPoint presentation and candle lighting by Sister Lother Cherry added warmth.

Honored were:

Robert J. Wright Sr. - West Coast Conference  
Denise Thompson Holmes - South Conference  
Elzora White - West Coast Conference  
David Turner - East Conference  
Patricia Johnson - Central Conference  
Winston McGill - Central Conference  
Johnell Linton - Central Conference  
Thomas Mitchell, Jr. - Central Conference  
Murray Adams - Central Conference,  
Lindsey Glenn - West Coast Conference  
Janet Lee - West Coast Conference  
Dr. Alma Hires - West Coast Conference  
Dorothy Thomas - South Conference  
Emma Oretha Brizilla Kelly - Bahamas Conference  
Katherine Inez Petty - Bahamas Conference

The service concluded with a bell ringing for each, Sister Barbara Patterson's closing prayer, and the hymn "When We All Get to Heaven."



## South Conference Lay reminds us 'How Sweet It Is' in host presentation

During the final session of the EEDLO 80th Convention, the South Conference Lay Organization made a memorable presentation with a heartfelt serenade to the tune of "How Sweet It Is." South Conference Lay President Evelyn Odom delivered the spoken part, welcoming everyone on behalf of the organization and inviting them home to the South Conference in 2025. The tailored lyrics emphasized the South's welcoming spirit and readiness to host next year's event. The chorus, "We just want to stop and thank you, Laity," resonated deeply, setting a sweet tone for the convention and highlighting the organization's dedication and unity.

