

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> District Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Hosts the  
35<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session of the Connectional Lay Organization  
August 7, 2017 – August 10, 2017  
Greater Columbus Convention Center~350 N. High St.~Columbus, OH**



**Report by Mrs. Sonia Barbre**

Registration opened on August 6, 2017 at noon-5pm. A new bar code system scan helped to move registration quickly. An open Candidate Forum was held from 4pm-6pm in the convention center. The candidates answered questions from the audiences. Mr. Simeon Rhoden (5<sup>th</sup>) moderated the forum questions and answers. After the forum the 3<sup>rd</sup> district hosted a welcome reception. Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Episcopal District was sung by the Hosts and Hostesses. Mr. Eric Brooks, prayer, Welcome, Mr. Mark Mayo, Sr. 3<sup>rd</sup> District Pres. and Kimberly Gordon-Brooks, Director of Lay Activities, 3<sup>rd</sup> District. Mr. Derrick Fisher introduced City officials; Ms. Jaiza Page from the City Council gave greetings from the Mayor and City Council. Dr. Dorothy Jackson-Young, Episcopal Supervisor gave greetings and introduced the Senior Bishop, Bishop McKinley Young. “Be at Home.” We enjoyed the smooth sounds of the Black Chip Band playing old school music. A delicious array of cheeses, meats, fruit and punch we served.

Episcopal Districts and Convention Committees met at their assigned rooms after the welcome reception to meet the candidates running for the various offices. President Bell addressed the 2nd District and THANK ALL of her supporters. Ms. Florence Warren District 2ndVP conducted the remaining of the night as candidate’s dropped by with their platform. Bishop Davis visited to give his support and rally before the district.

**Monday, August 7, 2017**

Ms. Alice Belden, Connectional Chaplin was the morning worship leader for the 7:00am to 8:30am services which the Rev. Tammy Harris, pastor of St. Luke AMEC, Highland Park Michigan spoke the word.

The 35<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session of the Connectional Lay Organization was called to order by President Willie Glover. President Glover called for committee’s reports followed by the Registration Committee to give the number of each district delegates. After seating of the delegates (1021) and roll call, the Rule Committee chaired by Connectional Attorney 3<sup>rd</sup> VP Starr Battle read the rules for the convention.

Lay Commission Chair, Bishop E. Earl McCloud addressed the body with his thoughts that we should *act like who we are....if not you, who, if not now when.*

The convention planners, Ms. Anita Rankin and Sandra Hadley were presented to the Laity and the adoption of the agenda was approved by the body.

3rd District President Mark Mayo, Sr. introduces the Connectional President Mr. Willie C. Glover who gave his final convention address. Mr. Glover recognized over 60 millenniums registered for the convention. After President Glover message was accepted, a motion by President Turner (4<sup>th</sup>) that the body elects President Glover as President Emeritus of the Connectional Lay Organization. Question from Attorney Starr Battle (3<sup>rd</sup> VP) had no problem with the motion, but the Rule Committee had just been adopted and what would be the ruling for Emeritus and the Constitution and Bylaws statement.

Noonday, Keynote Speaker was introduced by Bishop Jeffrey Leah, 13th District Prelate. The Rev. Dr. Michael J. Brown, past Christian Recorder Columnist and authored New Testament Studies expertise: Books on The Lord's Prayer through North African Eyes: Finding Your Purpose through Prayer shared his thoughts on social justice, using a quote from the Declaration of Independence that pertained to social justice for African Americans.

Rev. Dr. Brown open with a tweet dated from July 4, 2017 from NPR (National Public Radio), regarding the Declaration of Independence. He stated that "**JUSTICE**" comes in many forms and gave a description of a story in the book of Genesis.

Rev. Dr. Brown stated that we are here to make sense out of the senseless. People look to us; we look to ourselves to make sense of what doesn't make sense. We seek education, we put in the extra prayer time, we struggle for the additional insights, and we try to hold back the night and we try to keep the struggles from being a struggle.

We try to identify our core. We don't know how to make sense of the cowardly murders traffic, such as

- A 12 year old boy playing with a toy shot down
- A man trying on shoes in Denver killed
- Nine humans beings at a bible study shot down
- A young lady dead in a jail cell after a traffic stop

Rev. Brown outlined three types of justice:

- Payback-wrath of God
- Disbursement Justice - paying up- idea of awards and punishment
- Restored Justice – we can pay it forward

God calls us not just to go to the church on Sunday morning or Biennial meetings or WMS meetings. God call us to be the disciples out in the streets, standing with the hopeless, lifting up the light of Jesus, so they can see that all is not lost.

We are people that banded together not because we look good and dressed up, we are here to do God's WORK! We want to leave this place and make a change in a dying world. We shall leave here with our aprons of God's CHANGE.

### **EVENING SESSION:**

The representative from AARP pointed out; 1) Take care of your health, 2) Consider establishing a healthcare ministry in your church, 3) Seek to learn about your health, so you can use it wisely. Contact

AARP at [www.aarp.org/blackcommunity](http://www.aarp.org/blackcommunity). Also, available is information on African American Faith base.

SADA reported that there will be an opening of a new office in Guyana and Haiti and the dedication of Bishop Sarah Francis Davis Outpatient Delice Health Center on October 30, 2017 in Haiti.

Mr. Darwin K. Eldridge, Connectional Lay Treasurer presented the balance in the treasurer along with a written report from the auditors to the organization. After serving eight years as past financial secretary and eight as treasurer, we are in the BLACK! He closed with reading the letter from the auditor. Thanks to Mr. Darwin K. Eldridge, treasurer and Mr. Richard L. Bowden, financial secretary for being stewards of the funds.

The Budget and Financial Committee will be meeting on tomorrow as a partial report was given.

After the noonday services, the 2<sup>nd</sup> District met to have lunch together prior to the election.

***ELECTION RESULTS!!!!***

***THE BELL RANG FOR BELL  
CONNECTIONAL PRESIDENT VALERIE GARY BELL***

First Vice President

Mr. Abednego Matikane Makiti (19)

Second Vice President

Mr. Simon Letsoko (19)

Third Vice President

Mrs. Starr L. Battle (2)

Recording Secretary

Mrs. Doris Bell (13)

Assistant Recording Secretary

Mrs. Brenda Holland Curry (7)

Corresponding Secretary

Mrs. Ada L. Goff (5)

Treasurer

Mr. Richard L. Bowden (9)

Financial Secretary

Mrs. Lyndia Mayo (3)

Chaplain

Mrs. Alice Belden (4)

Historiographer

Dr. Dorothy Henderson (12)

Director of Lay Activities

Ms. Ametta L. Reaves (3)

Young Adult Representative

Ms. Jamesha J. Williams (7)

Director of Public Relations withdrew from the ballot due to health concerns. Mr. Jeffers passed away one week after the Biennial closing.

**Opening Worship Service of Word and Sacrament**

Report: By Kenneth Woods Sr., August 7, 2017

First, I would like to thank the Western North Carolina Conference Lay Organization for giving me the opportunity to serve as a Biennial Delegate.

The Processional Hymn #62 God of Grace and God of Glory

The Processional was led by, the Bishops of the church and General Officers; this is a very sober moment in the African Methodist Church.

Bishop Clement W. Fugh, Presiding Bishop of the 5<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District and the President of the Council of Bishops, served as the Worship Leader. The Call to Worship was led by the Bishop of the 6<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District, Bishop Reginald Jackson. The opening Hymn # 52 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah. Invocation: Bishop John White of the 4<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District. Old Testament: Ms. Patricia Wright Isaiah: 6: 6-13, New Testament: Mr. Chris Qwane Acts: 1: 7-8, Gospel: Bishop Adam Jefferson Richardson, Bishop of the 11<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District, Matthew: 28: 16-20.

The Music by the musicians and the Third Episcopal District Choir was soul steering, spiritual and awesome. The Litany was led by Mr. Michael Cousin, Mr. Mark Mayo Sr., President of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Episcopal District gave a warm Welcome. The greetings were given by Mr. Willie Glover, Connectional Lay Organization Global President. Bishop Earl McCloud, Jr., presiding Bishop of the 14<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District, Commission Chair Connectional Lay Organization gave us greetings.

The Presentation of the Preacher was given by Senior Bishop Retired, Bishop John Bryant.

Sermonic Selection: I'll be Alright by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Episcopal District Choir.

The Sermon: Bishop McKinley Young, Senior Bishop and Presiding Bishop of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Episcopal District. Scripture: Matthew 28: 16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. Topic: Go.

Bishop McKinley who was not feeling well, preached our souls happy and brought the congregation to their feet.

The Communion Hymn by Bishop Harry L. Seawright, Presiding Bishop of the 9<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District. Solicitation: Bishop Michael Mitchell, General Confession: Bishop E. Anne Henning Byfield, First Collect: Bishop Ronnie Brailsford Sr, Second Collect: Bishop Stafford Wicker, Prayer of Adoration: Bishop Webster, Prayer of Humiliation: Bishop John White, Prayer of Consecration: Bishop McKinley Young. Communion was served. Lord's Prayer Bishop McKinley Young, Prayer of Thanksgiving: Bishop Clement Fugh. Song of Fellowship: What a Fellowship #525. Benediction: Bishop McKinley Young.

## **Tuesday, August 8, 2017 – Report By Barbara Smith**

Plenary 1: The African Methodist Episcopal Church

Panelist: Bishop Reginald T. Jackson

### **“Our Incredible Future”**

There are 3 things our clergy and lay must do:

- Face reality
- Acknowledge (God's word)
- Plan for it (future)

The African Methodist Episcopal Church and other denominations are decreasing in membership; however the only church that has an increase is the Church of Christ.

- Why are we not growing? Most people want to grow; they long for growth. The church must

meet the needs of the people and the need for Church Growth is Christian Education.

To have an incredible future we must change our mindset; the way we think. We must have a mission and a vision. Spiritual growth is a must and we must hear and respond to the church of edifice. Bishop Jackson stated, “We have left our first love,” Revelation 2: 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

The lay must teach and train; but we cannot teach what we don’t know. The trainer must be trained.

Plenary 2: “An Open Forum on the African Methodist Episcopal Church”  
After 200+ Years in African Methodism  
**Where Were we? Where Are We? What Have We Learned?**  
Panelists: Rev. Garland Pierce, Rev. Earle Ifill, Rev. Dr. Erika D. Crawford  
Ms. Kimberly Gordon Brooks and Jerry Turner

Mr. Jerry Turner remembers when the AME Church was in the home. It was all there, the good, the bad and the ugly. They had HOPE! They had hope even when they locked the door on the pastor; even when they had to push the envelope. Young people grew up and were trusted into leadership positions. Parents used to speak up in the home. Now our voices are not heard in the neighborhood. There are growth challenges that are mainly caused by the church around the corner. What have we done or what have we not done. They have taken the things we used to do and are using them to attract and keep our members.

He remembers when the AME Church was first in the community and usually among its congregants were doctors, lawyers, teachers and business persons. He remembers when the AME Church members attended community boards and commission meetings and the AME Church practiced the Leader Method, where each level took care of the next level.

He admonished the stewards for shirking their responsibilities. They allow our pastors not to have office hours, not to work in the community. But we continue to complain instead of holding them accountable.

Each panelist also gave other thought provoking dialogue.

### **Training Institute – Rev. Rodney D. Smith, St. John AME Church, Fort Mitchell, Alabama**

The first statement Rev. Smith made was that it takes seven minutes for a person visiting your church to decide if they will join or come back. His presentation focus was on the language of our church. What message does your church send out? How does the community see you, how do you see yourself and what are the signals being sent out by your church?

Rev. Smith stated, “There are three things that the Millennials are looking for in a church: (1) networking; (2) parking, and (3) Children’s Church.” He asked, “Are you providing Community Service or “Community Partnership?” Community service is when you create programs for the community without surveying the community to find out what the community wants. An example is giving grocery bags with food items that are not a part of the community culture or diet.

Rev. Smith provided a delightful message, with anecdotal and hilarious stories that provided comic relief to some of the problems that church folk create in how they present themselves and their church image to the public. He concluded his presentation about a pastor casting out a net and catching only three fish, a catfish a tilapia, and a salmon. Two of the fish leave. The pastor took the catfish to the Annual Conference and told the Bishop that he caught three, but the tilapia and salmon left. Rev. Smith said we have got to stop standing up at Annual Conference with reports with two or three new members joining and saying that you have good report.

**The Jesse L. Burns Black Tie Soiree**  
Benefit for A.M.E. University  
Monrovia, Liberia, South Africa

The Biennial Black Tie Soiree had a dual purpose this year. Not only was it a fundraising event, recognizing AME University in Monrovia, but also a celebration of the leadership and service of outgoing CLO President Dr. Willie C. Glover. Lay Commissioner, Bishop E. Earl McCloud, Jr. introduced Dr. Joseph Isaac, President of AME University – Monrovia. Dr. Isaac is the fourth President of the University. Bishop McCloud shared that the AME Church sends some \$24,000+ monthly to the University.

President Isaac gave a PowerPoint presentation acquainting us with life in Liberia. He told us that those entering college from high school are generally not well prepared and that some remediation courses must be utilized. AME University has 4,000+ students and recently graduated 200+ students. Dr. and Mrs. Isaac presented a crystal plaque expressing their thanks to the Lay Organization for their support. Dr. Glover presented Dr. Isaac with a check for \$50,000.00 from the Connectional Lay Organization.

The remainder of the evening was all about President Glover. Person after person took to the podium to share their (or their organization's) experiences with Dr. Glover and the impact he had on their lives. The reflections closed out with a PowerPoint entitled "Your CLO Life" which chronicled His life from early childhood through the present especially as it relates to family, church, education and the Lay Organization. Dr. Glover then took to the podium to humbly express his thanks to everyone. It was a wonderful evening and the accolades were well deserved.

**Wednesday, August 9, 2017**

Awards Banquet  
35<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session  
Of  
The Connectional Lay Organization  
African Methodist Episcopal Church  
By Byron Barbre



On Wednesday evening the Award Banquet was present to give honor to our honorees across the district. The master ceremony, Mr Derek H. Anderson and mistress of ceremony, Ms. Valencia Wicker, who kept the crowd in an array of laughter.

Soloist *Ms. Mishonna McCottry* of the 1<sup>st</sup> Episcopal District for the occasion performed “The Lord’s Prayer”. The Occasion was presented by 1<sup>st</sup> Episcopal District YAR, *Mr. Marcus Burnett. Mr. Richard Bowden* of the 9<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District offered a blessing for the meal.

Dinner was served, followed by the introduction of the speaker for the evening. Chairperson of the Lay Commission, Bishop E. Earl McCloud Jr., presented the speaker of the evening Dr. Michael Eric Dyson. Dr. Dyson is a three-time NAACP Award winner, American Book Award winner, former NPR host of the Michael Eric Dyson Show, author of numerous books, including, “*Why I’d like to see a Black Women as President*”, *Is Bill Crosby Right?*, *Can You Hear Me Now*, and his latest, “*Tears We Cannot Stop.*”

As the Dr. Dyson’s took the podium, he thanked Ms. Edith Bartley Cartledge for the invitation to speak, and joked that she will soon have a reality show, “How to track down Negro preachers on a weekly basis.” He proceeded with scripture from Matthew 16:13-18, with the theme “*Why the Church Should Go To Hell?*”

Dr. Dyson tells the story of Jesus making his way to the coast of Caesarea Phillippi in asking his disciples, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And as the story is told at verse 18; “Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of **hell** shall not prevail against it.” As he spoke he, reminded everyone of the story and that Jesus was stepping into chaos along the way. “We today don’t have to know when chaos may happen. We do know that it tweets every morning around 4:30am. Because there was a black man before him who was in charge he was just mad. Obama wasn’t perfect, he had to learn about black people. Even OJ said, I’m not black I’m OJ, OKAY! If we have to compare Obama to what we have now, we had a GENIUS before him. At least he knew more than twenty-five words. He could just show up and tempatures would rise. Obama may have had a swagger when he stepped down off of Air Force One, had tea with the Queen and married to a beautiful, brilliant black women and has two beautif children. “They became the most famous black family in public housing”, he added. “That unleached panic, but yet, they wanted to know who is he, who are his parents birth, where did he come from. . . . They became obsesed about whether he was a real AMERICAN! He continued, “Jesus comes in the midst of chaos, like the chaos we have right now. Billionaires are out here ain’t doing nothing for you. You’re mad with black folk because we have our hands raised up and not hands out. How can they call our race lazy, when we have been have working for over 300 years for FREE. White working class kept us out of unions, police unions, fire department unions and pipe fitters unions. If identity policies is bad why do you call it the white working class.”

Dr Dyson spoke of Martin Luther King Jr sitting in a Birmingham jail. When his jailer came to him and said to him, “Dr. King you are wrong, segregation is right, desegregation is wrong and intergregation is evil”. Dr. “King said, “no I’m not, then he asked him how much money do you make?” When he answered, Dr. King said “My God you need to be out here marching with us”.

“Lyndon Baines Johnson said that if you can pick the pocket of a white man as long as you can make him feel better than a black man. They are using us as footstools. They are just using you and then they are going after affirmative action.

“So, Jesus comes to Casereena Phillip, asking his disciples, that’s what we do ask questions, black folks ask questions, we cut it down to the matter. “Who do people say I am?” What CNN, TNT, ESPN, NBC, ABC, what the media say that I am, what does the white supremacy say I am? Well, they say that you are mean to poor people, you got to get what you get on your own. They want to cut folks off, cut healthcare off, in the name of Jesus. Why we can’t get the same healthcare that Congress has? We’re living in a society that is different than any other. It’s not the Mexicans, Puertoicans, Dominicans, it’s the Republicans.”

“So Jesus asked what do society say who I am? They say that poor people are the people that’s poor, people should survive by their self. Don’t put down the gays, lesbian, transgendered, queer, or bisexual. Don’t be hating on gay people, you’re next, in fact, you were first. I never been to a black church that turn down gay tithes. If anything, you won’t give change back. Some blacks may say that they didn’t chose to be gay, when most have opt out, and some like Been there and Done that, names like Clarence. When did you chose to be gay and when did you chose to be straight. “Now you know that wasn’t a black woman that Jesus met at the well. When he went up to her and said may I have a drink of water please, he said where’s your husband, you know that was no black woman, she’ll say Jesus, you tell me where he is, I been looking for him for thirty years.” How can you quote the bible out of context. Trying to get God to co-sign your hatred. Black folks should not hate any marry. We need to get our numbers up for the census.”

“Jesus, asked who do they say I am, you been hurt, suffering, abused, hungry, talked about and forgotton. Who do you say that I am, you been through something, it makes a difference when God has brought you through something.”

Dyson cautioned us to remember that we shouldn’t criticize anyone about their name. Even though there are names we would have never thought to name our children, i.e. Lexus, Mercedes, Goodlove.... Yes, we have names that are unusual that stand out; Shaquille O’Neal, Oprah, Kenesa Johnson, and Condoleezza Rice.

“Back in our days, our parents would take care of us and now they are scared of us. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Michael Brown. If they hated Obama for being a black man who had skills, well educated, a job and trained in life, even when he said “Yes, We CAN”, in a smooth tone.” “If anyone could get us out of HELL it would be a black woman. We must not forget our young black girls. Black women suffering, young black girls being arrested, in jail, prison, kick out of school or in detention. If white women get 80% pay, what do you think a black woman receive?” “Stop dogging young people about their sagging pants. Instead help them lift their dreams and maybe their pants will follow.” “There’s nothing like a strong black woman to lead us out of HELL!” Dr. Dyson’s left the crowd to a burst of cheers and a standing ovation.

The evening continues as District Outstanding Lay Person were recognized. Representing the Second District Outstanding Lay Person, Ms. Bernetta Lachelle Ghist from Galatia AME Church in Nashville, NC. The Outstanding Lay Person of the Year Award was Ms. Wimpfrey W. Jenkins, First Episcopal District. The Living Legend Awards Winners were Ethel W. Jenkins, First



Episcopal District and Tyrone Prestley, Eleventh Episcopal District. The winner of the Jayce C. Coleman Scholarship, Mr. Adam Shephere, Fourth Episcopal District and Carolyn Nicole Simmons, Tenth Episcopal District. The committee announced for the first time the Ted Harris Young Adult Award to Ms. Chntal Alford, Ninth Episcopal district.

The evening closed with the singing of the Laymen hymn.

**Young Adult Representative**  
Report By Mr. Adam Johnston

Imagine this as a concept for any card-carrying member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to consider, do you attend a dead church? As a young adult, I had to rattle with this concept in the aftermath of the Lay Biennial. With dwindling attendees and delegates to the Lay Biennial, this concept must be considered. Most members of the AME church would say this is absurd to ask, however in response I would ask you to objectively examine the numbers within your home church, conference, district, and various events held throughout the year. Although I do not believe I am a member of a dying faith tradition, I do believe rejuvenation or rebranding is necessary. I have been fortunate to represent the Western North Carolina Conference as the Young Adult Representative at the 200<sup>th</sup> Quadrennial Session of the General Conference and the 35<sup>th</sup> Lay Biennial of the Connectional Lay Organization. I have enjoyed both experiences immensely but cannot help but notice the things that I was surprised to witness. While I am happy to report that the Lay Biennial was less drama filled than General Conference, a significant factor to our prolonging has been neglected, the youth.

Youth have to be supported and an extremely proactive recruitment must take place on all levels of the Lay Organization. We cannot solely put this duty on our pastors because clergy can come and go based on assignment. I have constantly heard throughout my time in the Western North Carolina Conference, “if you are not clergy, you are a Lay member.” I do not mention this to say that there is a divide, but what must be acknowledged is the Lay Organization serves a separate purpose. The Lay Organization is the teaching arm of the church. We all must do our part; this responsibility cannot be done solely by the few that are willing to step up. Our total AME membership is estimated to be 2-3 million and yet only an estimated 1000+ members attended the Biennial. If we want to see our institutions succeed we must hold ourselves accountable.

During the breakout sessions that I had with my fellow young adult delegates, a constant joke/comment that was raised is why is AARP the sponsor for the Lay Biennial? I’m not against any corporation for promoting itself at an event where its primary target audience will be in abundance. However, it does illustrate that the average age of an AME church member is 55 and that the primary attendee of our Connectional level events is close to senior citizenship eligibility.

We must have a youth revival. We cannot critique youth, while saying they need to be involved. We cannot use the excuse, todays generation of youth prefer social justice over working for the Lord. We cannot say youth must wait their turn and need to know what sacrifice means. The most significant interaction that I had at the Biennial was after the Awards dinner, where our newly elected Connectional President Valerie Bell came to speak with the young adults about what can be done to assist the youth at all levels in the Lay Organization. This conversation took place over the course of two hours. The youth voiced their concerns and frustrations with the church and its direction. This was by far one of the most

emotional experiences that I had when examining my own faith background. I am fortunate to say with pride that I am supported by my home church and conference, others were not. This had a trickling down effect where folks in high positions in their own districts were ready to walk away from the church if they did not see change. President Bell heard the remarks and wanted to make her best attempt to assure that the inner conflicts mentioned would not be consistent with her administration.

I know our conference has the highest amount of lay membership within the Second Episcopal District. Well done, Western North Carolina Conference! It's not enough. We have to do more. I ask each of you to find the adolescents and young adults in your church and tell them to get involved. Invite them to a meeting. Let them know as they transition out of the youth centralized organizations the AME church offers, they have an obligation to themselves and future generations to further the AME church in their adult lives as well.

### 35<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session

I want to thank you for the opportunity to attend my first Biennial session. It was indeed an experience.

The primary purpose of the Biennial Session was the election of officers. This year especially in that Valerie Bell from the Second was running and was elected. Another proud time for me was to watch Starr Battle display her outstanding leadership skills.

The election had another uniqueness to it, both the first vice president and the second vice president are from the overseas delegation. The overseas delegation was well represented. As I watched their participation, my heart was moved. This delegation represents the region where our forefathers were born. It was noted with much displeasure that all printing and messages were in English and very limited interpretation for our none English brothers. It was mentioned that the cost would have been too high to provide the required interpreters.

The duration of the session was too long. Each day on the site was costing money that could be used on a local level. The session could be reduced by at least one day. The language in the lay constitution should be clearly stated to give local conferences the option of their delegation size.

The content of the educational sessions was great. There was great emphasis put on our need to change some of our methods of teaching. Some say that we need to spend more time teaching than preaching. Some say we need to do more ministering outside the church walls. Some say we need to make our church services more alive. The learning session that I attended was on how to grow your church. The session that I attended was somewhat an open discussion. As one participated, the goal was to try and let each one of us try to find something that could possibly increase our church growth and community outreach.

From the opening with Bishop Jackson, to the end, the AME Church need to make a change to grow. The numbers on the role is not the number in the pews. There are other denominations that are growing at great pace and the AME Church is not one of them.

Conclusion: As laity, we have a greater task of taking the name of Jesus Christ to the world. Do not be ashamed to let your life reflect who you are and Believe.

Woodrow Winchester

### **Focus on Training Session**

I thank God and you, the Western North Carolina Conference Lay Organization for the opportunity to attend this Biennial session. I am also grateful for the opportunity to work with the Registration process.

The training session that I attended was presented by Ms. Stephenie Bruce, “Where Do We Go From Here? The S.W.O.T. Analysis of the State of the A.M.E. Church was developed by the participants in the session by groups. The Analysis determined is as follows:

**STRENGTHS** – Rich History, Legacy; Organization; Open Door Policy; First Publishing House; Structured; Educated Leadership; Methodical; Church School; Scriptural based; Connectional Church.

**WEAKNESSES** – Lack of knowledge; Tithing is not taught; preachers not sent but they go; lack of vision to serve the present age

**OPPORTUNITIES** –Community Outreach; Connection; Sunday School; Travel Ministry; Outreach Ministry; Gifts; Grow, Glow for Christ Ministry learned through Y.P.D under the leadership of W.M.S.

**Threats** – Lack of Sunday Schools; lack of inclusiveness; Economics/Tithes/Economic Growth; need to bring young men in; Priorities.

There needs to be a vision to serve the present age. There needs to be more Christian Education. Do you want to grow? Pray for God’s direction; Plan; Mission – to help save

Teach from the Bible how to live it. Strive to live Holy. Let Jesus be seen in YOU. Have Men Bible classes to read scriptures. Outreach – meet the needs of the people outside of the church. Go make the Disciples. God wants us to go as it is stated in the book of Matthew.

It is all about love. Tell the world about Jesus, tell about His love. Be committed and dedicated.

Jacqueline C. Kanipe, Director of Lay Activities, Western North Carolina Conference Lay Organization

The 35<sup>th</sup> Session of the Connectional Lay Organization concluded on Thursday, August 10, 2017 with a Memorial Service and the Installation Service of New Officers. The 36<sup>th</sup> Session will be held in Belleview, Washington in 2019.

