

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
FIFTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION
PLANNING MEETING-LAY ORGANIZATION BREAK OUT SESSION
HILTON LAX- LOS ANGELES, CA
MONDAY OCTOBER 27, 2014 10:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

The session was opened with prayer by Thomas Sutton. Our scriptures came from John 15:5 and James 1:4. Roll call was conducted. 1st VP Lamar Rose, 2nd VP Patricia Samuel, Asst. Rec. Sec. Dianna Maddix, Treasurer Florette Hampton, Parliamentarian Foster Chisholm and Advisor Samantha Kendall were all excused. Judith Bradley was absent.

President Rhoden commended Director of Lay Activities Patricia Mayberry for the powerful clergy/lay presentation she had just completed on working together to break the chains that distract us from our true calling as Christians. President Rhoden was stopped several times in route to the meeting by members of the clergy who look forward to working together with the laity.

Brother Harold Shields (Past District President) is very ill and we were asked to keep him in our prayers.

President Rhoden has been approached and asked about the Lay Organization pledge towards an episcopal residency. After a brief discussion it was decided that we would honor our pledge of \$1000 but we would recommend that no further action be taken with the funds collected until a new Bishop is assigned to the Fifth District. Pres. Rhoden will ask that Rev. Mark Whitlock include this in his report.

Kathy Drayton gave the Evening of Elegance Report. We have sold the most tickets ever for this event when it was held in Denver in March 2014. We need to start advertising and publicizing this event early. In 2015 we will honor educators – one from each conference and we hope to have Bishop Kirkland sing two songs. Anita West-Ware is working on the money for the scholarships. First VP Lamar Rose said we need to focus on ticket sales for this event early.

Mary Scott stood in for Deborah Bowman-Lee and gave the Awards & Life Members report. All award nominations should be turned into the conferences by October 15, 2014. The conferences need to send these names on to Deborah Bowman-Lee by December 14, 2014 and then Deborah will send them out to the committee by December 28, 2014. The committee members will cast their votes and return them to Deborah by January 18, 2015. We must adhere strictly to these dates in order to meet the Connectional deadlines, even though some conferences may not have had their elections by then. New jackets have been acquired for the life members so they don't clash with the Past District Presidents jackets. The new jackets are navy blue with a white monogram and gold buttons. Nine have been ordered thus far to replace the white ones given out in 2013.

Sandra Nelson and Melvin Jenkins started the legislation review. There were nine bills presented to the committee and they sent the information out to conference presidents and posted them on the website. Bill Dickens, of the Pacific Northwest Conference, wrote five of the bills and was available to answer questions on those pieces. The first reading of these bills was held at the 2014 Midyear Convention. Here are the proposed pieces of legislation we discussed in no particular order:

1. **Phasing out the Ecumenical Officer Bishop** – It was felt that these duties could be transferred to the Senior Bishop starting in 2020 and we could save costs. This office relates to other faiths and deals with the chaplains. The role of Senior Bishop is ceremonial and changes with age. We need to include the Episcopal Committee in this bill. Bill Dickens will look over these points and make necessary changes.
2. **Grow Lay Organizations** – All lay members on official boards must attend at least six (6) lay organization meetings or give up their office. We need to look at the penalties and consequences of this.

This was all we could discuss during this session. We will continue the legislation at our next component meeting. Third VP Barbara Moore had set up information tables in the ballroom and the vendor room on Ebola. Everyone was encouraged to visit the tables and take information back to their conferences. It was also announced that the Fifth District would take up a special collection for Bishop Fugh and his District at this planning meeting.

Monday October 27, 2014 3:30-5:30 P.M.

At our afternoon session 1st VP Lamar Rose, Asst. Rec. Sec. Dianna Maddix, Treasurer Florette Hampton, Parliamentarian Foster Chisholm and Advisor Samantha Kendall were all excused. Corresponding Secretary Judith Anthony was absent. All other official board members were present.

We continued our legislation discussion led by Sandra Nelson and Melvin Jenkins. We discussed:

1. **Merging Annuities with the Treasurer** – This bill would create a Dept. of Finance and would cut costs by eliminating one full-time employee. Twenty to fifty percent of the savings could be used for operations. More information is needed on exactly how many people will lose their jobs.
2. **Transparency of Budget** – This bill calls for a definition of how assessments are derived by 2016. Current assessments are based on church membership and don't take into account local church indebtedness. This bill calls for a group of accountants, professionals and laity to develop a formula for local assessments. Concerns were raised over who would select the lay people and on the cost of hiring accountants and professionals. This is hard to determine from the connectional level to the local level so maybe we should start with connectional to district level budgets/assessments.
3. **Ministerial Training Board Composition** – This bill calls for the inclusion of credentialed lay members as instructors on the board. The laity with credentials include Directors of Lay Activities, trained lay Presidents, Lay ministers and others who are properly trained. They would focus on church policies and polity and the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
4. **Composition of Steward Board in Local Church** – This bill calls for congregants to help choose the stewards by election. All boards and leadership positions should be filled with qualified people. This bill has been presented three times previously and the Connectional Lay is in support of it. We need to clear up the language on the number of stewards that should comprise the board. If we have an even number then the pastor becomes the tie-breaker on any decisions made. Right now we can have no less than three (3) and no more than nineteen (19) stewards. All officers should support the church.
5. **Reduce Retired Bishops Travel Expenses** – This bill looks to cut the budget of retired Bishops by 50% starting in 2016. Retired Bishops are not eligible to vote at some of the meetings (Bishops

Council) and are therefore only there in attendance. Some feel that we should look at other areas of waste across the connectional church. It was suggested that we add General Officers back onto this bill and include their income and expenses for consideration also.

6. **Filling Vacant Offices in the Episcopacy** – This bill calls for vacancies to be filled by ballot voting, not just by the Bishops. Although this is mentioned in the Book of Discipline there is no specific process outlined. This would require a roll call of all general conference delegates and someone to secure and open the mailed ballots – a hectic and expensive process. The Episcopal Committee should be included in this process. Since the General Board is in charge after the General Conference ends then maybe they should handle this process.

The committee will take all of the comments and suggestions and do more work on the proposed legislation and prepare it for a reading at the President's call of the Executive Board.

Midwest Conference President Melvin Jenkins gave out information on the 58th Annual Session of the Fifth District Lay Organization which will be held at the Kansas City Airport Hilton in Kansas City, Missouri on July 29-Aug 1, 2015. The rooms are \$99/night plus taxes and fees. They are planning some events around the city and tours of historic sites. We may be able to see the Richard Allen Cultural Center and Quandera land/oil fields at Wesleyan University. We will receive future information on the registration fee from Pres. Rhoden. Judith Bradley and Nelda Hills will be in charge of registration. All programs during the convention must be approved by our Director of Lay Activities Patricia Mayberry. Pres. Rhoden asked all conference presidents to gather committee assignments early for their delegates. Observers can also work on committees.

At this time we were greeted by Rev. Anne Henning-Byfield who is running for Bishop In 2016 and by John Thomas III who is running for Editor of the Christian Recorder in 2016.

Every organization was requested to make a pledge to the Episcopal Defense Fund which will handle the payments of the \$1,000,000 settlement reached in the Fifth District sexual harassment case. Southern California Conference President Dorothy Vails-Weber moved and it was properly seconded to pledge \$1000 from the Fifth District Lay Budget. There were eleven (11) yes votes, three (3) no votes and one (1) abstention. The motion passed and we will give our check when Pres. Rhoden reads his report on Tuesday October 28, 2014.

We held a brief discussion on what monetary contributions the conference lay organizations have to make during their annual conferences. Each conference president explained their process. Since the Lay Organization doesn't hold official meetings or collect registrations at these conferences, we should not have to contribute more than 40% of profits after expenses to the Annual Conference. You should get permission from your conference lay executive board before you make any contributions. Each conference should include annual conference assessments in their annual budgets.

We closed our session in a love circle of sixty-four (64) with the Laymen's Benediction.

Simeon Rhoden, President

Nixietta Williams, Recording Secretary