

African Methodist Episcopal Church Fifth Episcopal District Lay Organization

July 29th – July 31st 2015 | Airport Hilton | Kansas City, MO



Mr. Simeon P. Rhoden Jr.
President
5th District Lay Organization

FIFTY-EIGHTH (58TH) ANNUAL SESSION
FIFTH DISTRICT LAY CONVENTION

Hosted by The Midwest Lay Organization

President's Address

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To: Bishop T. Larry Kirkland, Presiding Prelate of the Fifth Episcopal District; Mrs. Mary Kirkland, Episcopal supervisor; Dr. Willie Glover, Connectional Lay President; Connectional Officers; Fifth District Lay Officers; Presiding Elders; Pastors; Clergy; Delegates; Visitors and Friends

There must be a continuation of “on purpose” training and development strategies that inspires and enhances the mind, body, and soul of Laity throughout the 5th Episcopal District. Incorporating a transmissible love of Jesus Christ for God’s people. There’s no mistake that throughout the old and new testaments, the word love is mentioned in the Bible over 30 times. In Matthew 22: 38, God never wanted us to forget that the greatest commandment of them all is to love him and that the second is just like it, that we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

In keeping with God’s commandment to love one another, we have been proactive in working with our Episcopal Leaders to ensure quality training and ongoing methods for working together, for both clergy and laity, at our District Planning Meeting and the Mid Year Convocation. We have been supportive financially through our donations/offerings, supportive spiritually through our active participation in worship, supportive in seeking out collaborative ways to rebuild the walls of our great Zion, and supportive physically by showing up and undergirding the programs of the 5th District.

5th District Laity, we are truly alive and well and you all should be very proud of the work you have done... BUT, in our work, do we really say what we mean and mean what we say?

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Since we met last, I have been actively representing you by:

- Attending all Connectional Executive Board Meetings
- Attending all District Meetings
- Holding Conference Elections of the Desert Mountain, Southern California, and the Pacific Northwest
- Attending the District's Educational Summit
- Answering the call by participating as a speaker at Lay and Church Activities/Events

Those are just a few obligations that as a President, one must keep, however what's most important to me in this role is that we expand outside of our comfort zone to incorporate an environment that is demographically inclusive and place emphasis on evangelizing to people who may not look like us. Laity it's time that we focus on social issues where we can effect change in our communities throughout the 5th District.

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Now really, since we last met, Eric Garner Happened – What did we do? Ferguson Happened – What did we do? Michael Brown Happened – What did we do? Baltimore Happened – What did we do? Tamir Rice Happened – What did we do? The Emanuel 9 Happened – What did we do? The list goes on and on and it won't stop, so Laity, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

We must:

- Strategize to implement legislation in our communities
- Inform and speak against racial inequality that seems to be visibly resurfacing
- Break the chains of hypocrisy and misunderstanding in our own local churches and communities – “EDUCATE THE PEOPLE”
- Build and restore laws that empower the people to get out and vote

As organized Laity, these are systemic priorities that I would like to see us embrace for the upcoming year.

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Having heard of all that, we must be able and willing to say what we mean and mean what we say. Laity, this type of personality begins with you and me. It starts right here in the 5th District Lay Organization by first understanding who we are as God's people and understanding the need for a change, a change that is tangible.

We must also not allow the method to outdo the message. A message that God has commissioned, not man, and as Laity embracing the fact that we are equipped, fully capable and ready to participate in making a change. This would be the recipe of a strong and mighty Lay organization. Are we there yet? Almost...and we have time but the time is now! We must take back our authority to be influential leaders and lead this District into a new dimension of integrity, supplied with vitality. A dedicated Lay Organization, on all levels, providing care, opportunities, and charismatic interactions for true church development. This is fundamental in all that we do.

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Ok, I don't want to scare you into self-determination, so allow me to get back to the kind of oratory that we are so use to hearing...We collected over \$10K for the scholarship fund, we collected \$2K for LAOS last year, we...blah, blah, blah...

You'll know what we did, because you we there with me for the past 20 years!

But honestly, don't you want to do more? Are you tired of hearing the same ole stuff? Aren't you upset that our churches are being evicted from their worship locations? Aren't you concerned about the money we give to support our church finances? Aren't you wondering what's going to happen with the two and three member churches you hear about yearly at your annual conferences? Aren't you disappointed to hear, "No Lay Organization"? Aren't you bewildered about how some ministers get away with dismissing Lay Organizations? Aren't you upset that people are appointed to the electoral college? Don't you want to be at the table in selecting our new Episcopal Leader? Aren't you worried that ignorance will prevail and the people will perish from lack of knowledge?

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Well, if you're really concerned about everything I've just said, then collectively here's what we need to say, "Here I am Lord, send me!" Send me to fulfill the great commission and to bestow a new day!

Respectively submitted,
Simeon P. Rhoden Jr. President

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Questions

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