



JUSTICE
NOW!

OUR
LIVES
MATTER

2026 Midyear Gathering
RISE UP!



African Methodist Episcopal Church
Fifth Episcopal District

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Fifth Episcopal District

2026 Midyear Gathering
March 3-4, 2026

Hilton Hotel LAX Airport
Los Angeles, CA

RISE UP

Scripture – Psalm 96

Bishop Francine A. Brookins, ESQ.

Presiding Bishop

Rev. Miriam J. Burnett, MD, MPH

Episcopal Supervisor



BISHOP FRANCINE A. BROOKINS, ESQ.
Presiding Bishop, Fifth Episcopal District



THE REV. MIRIAM J. BURNETT, MD, MPH
Supervisor of Missions, Fifth Episcopal District

EPISCOPAL GREETING

We greet you in the resurrected name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Mary's baby. In this tense and turbulent season,

Psalm 96 calls us, "O sing unto the Lord a new song."

Our "Rise Up and Sing" theme is not a slogan; it is God's summons to respond to fear and division and grief and struggle, with worship, witness, and work. Our song does not ignore the pain of the world; it declares that God is still in the midst of us, and that we still belong to one another.

Across the Fifth District, we have been living this call. In prayer gatherings, we have cried out for justice, wisdom, and peace. In our mental health ministries, we have named our anxiety and grief and created safe spaces for healing and support. In disaster recovery and response, we have stood together when fires, floods, and storms have struck, turning compassion into action and service into a living hymn of hope.

We have literally risen up to sing—choirs, praise teams, congregations—proclaiming that the Lord is worthy of praise even now. The words of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" ring in our hearts:

"Lift every voice and sing,
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty."

Deep in our hearts, this song stirs and shapes us, reminding us that our praise is partnered with our pursuit of justice and that our worship fuels our faithful, fearless engagement in public life. In this climate, we will not answer hatred with more hate or despair with deeper defeat. Instead, we will respond with persistent prayer, compassionate care for our minds and spirits, brave ballots in the face of bullying and brutality, steadfast service in seasons of disaster, and strong, soaring songs and sounds of faith, hope, and justice.

I thank God that we are not just a District, but a family—spread across many countries yet bound together in our love for God and for one another. As we go forward, let us keep praying, keep tending to one another's mental and spiritual health, keep responding to crises with compassion, and keep lifting every voice until earth and heaven truly ring.

May the God who calls us to rise up and sing grant us strength for the struggle, peace in the storm, and joy that cannot be taken away.

In faith and love,

BISHOP FRANCINE A. BROOKINS
SUPERVISOR MIRIAM J. BURNETT

Midyear Gathering Master Schedule

Monday, March 2, 2026

- 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Women’s Missionary Society Executive Board – Catalina D
- 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Women’s Missionary Society – Mission Madness – Plaza A
- 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Clergy Family Organization – Catalina C
- 5:30 p.m. Presiding Elders’ Council Dinner
- 7:00 p.m. 9:00 p.m. District Disaster Relief & Recovery Team Meeting – Catalina C
- 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Prayer & Hymn Sing – A Lamentation
- 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. OPENING PLENARY
- Call to Order and Approval of Agenda
- Mental Health Ministry – Chaplain Addison
 - Disaster Recovery and Response – Rev. Shepard
 - Farm & Garden Ministry – Reverends Oliver and Finley
 - Mission Possible & Property Evaluation Forms
 - Supervisor Burnett
 - Eden Theological Seminary Opportunity – Rev. Smith
 - Kennedy
 - 5th District Retreat Update – Lic. Richards & Rev. Coston
 - Hosting the Investiture of Bishop Brookins 2027 –
 - Sharon Blaylock
 - Hosting the General Conference 2028 – Sharon Blaylock,
 - Supervisor Burnett & Ground Host Team
- 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Partnership with American Christian Credit Union

11:30 – 12:00 p.m.	Church Tech Update
12:00p.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Hour of Power – <i>The Rev. Traci Blackmon, Preacher</i>
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Lunch
2:30 – 5:00 p.m.	<p>COMPONENT MEETINGS</p> <p>Sons of Allen: Catalina A</p> <p>Women in Ministry: Catalina C</p> <p>RAYAC: Catalina D</p> <p>Lay Organization: Century C & D</p> <p>Stewardess Alliance: San Lorenzo A</p> <p>WMS: La Jolla B</p>
5:00 – 6:30 p.m.	Dinner Break
7:00 p.m.	<p>Opening Night RISE UP Experience</p> <p><i>Facilitated by Training for Change</i></p> <p>RISE UP Q&A</p> <p>Social Action – We Do It For Ourselves</p> <p>COMPONENT REPORTS</p>

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

8:00 – 9:00a.m.	Lay Organization
9:30 – 10:30a.m.	WMS/YPD
10:30 – 11:30a.m.	Clergy Family
	Sons of Allen
	Women in Ministry
	RAYAC
11:30 a.m.	Closing Prayer and Hymn Sing Commissioning Celebration

PRAYER & HYMN SING

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 8:30 a.m.

When we refuse to lament, our pain does not disappear; it disciplines us in silence instead. Taking time to lament is how the soul exhales grief so it can inhale hope again. Lament is not a lack of faith; it is faith refusing to lie about how much it hurts. It is taking time to have a little talk with Jesus and tell him all about our troubles. As we begin this full day together, we pause for a brief service of prayer and hymn singing to let God cleanse and steady our hearts. Lament is the protest of the heart that still believes God is listening.

Welcome.

THE OPENING HYMN

We Are Often Tossed and Driven (#394)

THE PRAYER (*I Am Weak and I Need Thy Strength* (#378) played as accompaniment)

THE LITANY

SUFFERING UNDER PONTIUS PILATE: A BELIEVER'S LAMENT

Call: Were we there when they crucified Jesus? Do we see the Jesus in the crucified people of today? The hymn writer said crucifixion should make us tremble. We are trembling today. We tremble in anguish. We tremble with righteous indignation. We tremble in anticipation. We tremble with dogged faith. We tremble in lamentation.

Response: Today, Jesus turns to us and says in the key of Luke's gospel, "Sisters and Brothers, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Call: We don't take time to weep. We often rush through the Apostle's Creed and do not reflect on the statements of faith it contains, particularly that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate." That statement means Jesus was harmed and murdered unjustly by the Roman Empire and its agent, Pilate. The statement means that those in power can and often do harm and kill innocent people. "Pilate" is cold as ice. "Pilate" carries out the will of "Caesar" with indiscriminate violence and unwavering loyalty. "Pilate" is devoted to domination instead of liberation, order instead of justice, lies and justifications instead of truth. "Pilate" will apply and circumvent the law when it is convenient to him. "Pilate" represents the powers of this world that remain hostile to the redeeming, reconciling, and resurrecting power of God.

Response: We must be real and admit: the spirit of Pilate still lives today—a spirit that foments, exploits, and submits to hypocrisy, expediency, and mob violence.

Call: "Pilate" says he's merciful because he flogged Jesus' back and had his soldiers beat Jesus, and that he had "no choice" but to kill Jesus. Pilate washes his hands of death even though he orders death. Pilate makes it hard for the poor and marginalized, the stranger and outcasts—all the while claiming he's working for the "greater good." Pilate's idea of mercy is every authoritarian's idea of mercy. "Be thankful I gave you one black eye. I could have given you two." Pilate's greater good ain't nothing but lesser evils.

Response: Lord, we are weary of lesser evils. We weep over our loss of the greater and greatest good. Lord, we lament a world that seeks to make us become well-adjusted to evil.

Response: Lord, we are weary of lesser evils. We weep over our loss of the greater and greatest good. Lord, we lament a world that seeks to make us become well-adjusted to evil.

Call: Sisters and brothers, lamentation was and still is a mark of faith. We don't cry out to God in lament because we don't believe in God. We cry out because we do believe and are in disbelief. We believe in God, but we can't believe how murderous and demonic this world can be. We believe that love is the answer, but we can't believe how many innocent people the powers of this world keep crucifying. We believe in mercy, but the world has shown itself cruel and petty yet again. We believe in truth; but we cannot abide the ways in which lies and misinformation dominate so many hearts and minds in our world. We believe in justice, but we cannot and will never understand the depths of injustice. Sometimes, it makes us tremble. We are suffering under Pontius Pilate and lament in the key of Jesus. We feel abandoned sometimes, forsaken sometimes. Sometimes—not all the time—yet, sometimes, we feel like a motherless child, a long way from home.

Response: Let us pray and cry out to the Lord! Let us weep and sing to the Lord who knows all about our troubles! Let us pray and sing from the very depths of our souls.

RESISTANCE CARDS

During the Annual Conference we took time to write down what resistance meant to us. Do you remember what you wrote? Do you have any fresh resolve for facing these days? Please use the card to write down what rises when you think about yourself and resistance. Place the card into the resistance box.

CLOSING SONG

I Once Was Lost in Sin (#351)

THE HOUR OF POWER
Tuesday March 3, 2026 – 12:00p.m.
The Rev. Traci Blackmon



The Rev. Traci D. Blackmon is a pastor who believes the gospel must be lived out loud—on the streets, in the halls of power, and wherever human dignity is at stake. Rev. Traci D. Blackmon is a nationally recognized preacher, public theologian, and justice advocate whose ministry stands at the intersection of faith, public witness, and collective action.

Ordained in the United Church of Christ, she is known for biblically grounded, Spirit-led preaching rooted in liberation theology and the prophetic tradition of the Black Church. She emerged as a national moral and movement leader during the Ferguson uprising following the killing of Michael Brown, where her pastoral presence, organizing leadership, and prophetic clarity helped shape a faith-rooted response to state violence and racial injustice.

A former registered nurse with 25 years of healthcare experience, Rev. Blackmon brings embodied pastoral wisdom, moral authority, and practical leadership to both sacred and civic spaces. Rev. Blackmon served as pastor of Simpson Chapel AME Church in Millersberg, MO for three years; the first woman pastor of Christ the King United Church of Christ in Florissant, Missouri for nine years; and Associate General Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries for the United Church of Christ for a decade, guiding the national public witness and congregational support for the denomination.

Today, she works as a public theologian, movement strategist, and organizational consultant advancing justice-centered, faith-rooted change. She is founder and CEO of HopeBuilds, a faith-based consultancy; co-founder of The Prophetic Convening, a collaborative space for moral imagination, and Lead Catalyst for Faith Out Loud!, an emergent justice strategy hub committed to embodied discipleship, narrative change, and sustained organizing across religious and cultural barriers.

Rev. Blackmon has served on the White House Faith-Based Advisory Council under President Barack Obama, addressed the Pontifical Council at the Vatican under Pope Francis, and is a member of the Morehouse College Board of Preachers. She is the recipient of several awards and honors and currently serves on the boards of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Americans United, and the Parliament of the World's Religions.

Rev. Blackmon's forthcoming book, *Enfleshed*, will be released this month!



THE RISE UP EXPERIENCE

The Rev. Timothy Tyler, Worship Leader

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 – 7:00p.m.

~ ORDER OF SERVICE ~

THE GATHERING

I Am On the Battlefield

THE INVOCATION

The Rev. Timothy Tyler

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 65:17-25

PRESENTATION OF THE BISHOP

The Rev. Darryl E. Walker

THE WELCOME & OCCASION

Bishop Francine A. Brookins

PRESENTATION OF TRAINING FOR CHANGE

The Rev. Traci Blackmon

TRAINING FOR CHANGE – PART I

Understand authoritarianism and prepare for largest resistance movement of our lifetime. Participants will receive useful tools and strategies to push against fascism.

THE GIVING OPPORTUNITY

5th District Finance Committee

In addition to supporting the cost of the meeting, a portion of the funds raised will be used to assist with the resistance.

TRAINING FOR CHANGE – PART II

INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND HOPE

Dr. Dwinita M. Tyler

CLOSING REMARKS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION



CLOSING PRAYER, HYMN SING & COMMISSIONING

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 – 11:30 a.m.

~ ORDER OF SERVICE ~

OPENING HYMN

Lift Every Voice and Sing (#571)

OPENING LITANY “We Will Trust in the Lord” (by Rev. M. JoDavid Sales, Ph.D.)

One Voice: We will trust in the Lord. This is our theological heritage, passed down by our ancestors in the form of scripture, testimony, and song. This is our basic statement of faith. We don't trust in power. We don't trust in riches. We don't trust in prestige. We don't trust in social status or weapons of war. We don't trust in idols. We trust in the Lord. We trust in God, the creator of heaven and earth and all flesh. We trust in Jesus, who shows us what God's love looks like in the flesh. We trust in the Holy Spirit, which has been poured out on all flesh.

Many Voices: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day he arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

One Voice: Our ancestors sang, “I will trust in the Lord until I die.” What a spirit of resistance! We will trust in the Lord—unto the end of time and beyond. We will treat everybody right until every person is treated like a child of God; until every liar who hates their brother and sister but claims they love God has been exposed for their hardheartedness. We will stay on the battlefield until Pharaoh's chariots are washed away, until Nebuchadnezzar's golden idol is cracked and splintered; until Naboth regains his vineyard; until the Jubilee Horn blows for all people. We will trust and hope in the Lord and resist all ungodliness until the crooked places are made straight, until the rough places are made smooth, the mountains are brought low and the valleys are exalted; until all flesh experiences the comprehensive salvation of a liberating God. We won't stop—until we see justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; until everyone does justice, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God. We will trust in the Lord!

Many Voices: Glory, glory! Hallelujah! May we be steadfast, immovable, and always excelling in the work of the Lord. Let us not grow weary in doing what's right, for we shall reap an abundant harvest if we do not give up. There is a power at work within us that is able to accomplish far more than we can ask or imagine. So as for us and our “house,” we will trust in the Lord and sing to the Lord new song

Rise Up and Sing of Faith

A Prayer for Faith in Idolatrous Times Rise Up
and Sing of Hope

A Prayer for Hope During Challenging Times

Rise Up and Sing of Love

A Prayer for Love in a Time of Hate

THE OFFERING

THE SENDING PRAYER & ALTAR CALL

APPOINTMENTS

BENEDICTION

MyFaithLooks Up to Thee! (#415)

My Hope is Built (#364)

Love Lifted Me (#461)

Bishop Francine A. Brookins

GIVING PLATFORMS

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“THE FIFTH DISTRICT OF THE AME CHURCH”

Make Checks payable to *Fifth District Fund*
6371 Haven Ave., Suite 3121 Rancho
Cucamonga, CA 91737

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATES 2026

August 11 – 15, 2026

135th Session Pacific Northwest Annual Conference

Location: Seattle, WA

Report submission deadline: July 28, 2026

August 25 – 29, 2026

140th Session Desert Mountain Annual Conference

Location: Phoenix, AZ

Report submission deadline: August 11, 2026

September 8 – 12, 2026

162nd Session California Annual Conference

Location: Sacramento, CA

Report submission deadline: August 25, 2026

September 22 – 26, 2026

172nd Session Missouri Annual Conference

Location: St. Louis, MO

Report submission deadline: September 8, 2026

October 6 – 10, 2026

19th Session Midwest Annual Conference

Location: Kansas City, MO

Report submission deadline: September 22, 2026

October 20 – 25, 2026

102nd Session Southern California Annual Conference

Location: Los Angeles, CA

Report submission deadline: October 6, 2026

October 26-27, 2026

Fifth Episcopal District Planning Meeting

Location: Los Angeles, CA

Report submission deadline: October 13, 2026



African Methodist Episcopal Church

Fifth Episcopal District

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