



Annual Christmas Fellowship “JESUS”Is The Reason For The Season!!

Dec. 20, 2014 Upon opening the doors to the narthex of Zion AME Church, we were greeted with the “Spirit of the Advent Season and of Christmas” by the warm smiles and cheerful greetings from members of the church.



Worship Leader
Bro. Earl Knight, III
Zion AMEC

As we entered the sanctuary we were delighted to hear the melodious Prelude by the organist, *Maestro Extraordinaire* Bro. Ron Blackstone, which filled the atmosphere with seasonal music.

The Service began with the Call To Worship led by Bro. Earl Knight, followed by the congregational singing of “Joy to The World”; prayer given by Rev. Nancy Jackson, (ministerial staff) and the choral prayer response of “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, There Is Something About That Name”.

The Scripture (Luke 2:6-11) was read by Sis, Lillian Murphy, Zion AME (see left).

...and no matter how often we hear that scripture it resonates joy, peace, hope, and love!

The Welcome was cordially

extended by Bro. Bill Manson (Zion AME) which was followed by a musical solo, “Nobody Greater Than You” by Bro. Ron Blackstone.

Sis. Patricia Manson Lay President (see right) of Zion AME enthusiastically introduced the preacher of the hour, “her pastor” the Rev. Bruce Points.



By: Anita Hanna Matthews

After the joyful congregational singing of “Jesus, Jesus, Oh, What A Wonderful Child”, Pastor Bruce Points delivered the Christmas Sermon entitled “*Forgive Us Our Christmases*” - Biblical text, *Luke 2:8-14*.



L-R: Rev. Bruce Points, Pastor and Rev. Nancy Jackson
Background: Organist Ron Blackstone and Choir members

This awe-inspiring message highlighted the fact that: ***“If you don’t have a “PIECE” of Christ in you, then you won’t be able to share the “PEACE” of Christmas with others; and, the fact that Christmas should be a “BLESSING” instead of a “BURDEN”; and, instead of concentrating on the colorful decorations, the external light of candles, and expensive gift giving and receiving, we should let our objectives of the season be seeking the joy and peace that only Christ can give. We are to let the “light” shine within us - a light that only Christ can give, not only at Christmas Season, but each and every day.***

Following this thought-provoking message, Pastor Points extended the invitation to Christian Discipleship as the congregation sang “Peace Be Still” led by soloist Bro. Ron Blackstone.

Philadelphia Conference Lay President Sis. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell gave remarks expressing her joy in being at the Christmas Fellowship and for the wonderful message preached by host Pastor Points.

2014 ANNUAL CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE AND FELLOWSHIP



Christmas is: A Time for Meditation, Worship and Praise



Christmas is: A Time for Cheerful Givers-Prizes-Smiles-Joy-Fun-Fellowship-Peace-Love-Chatting-Chewing



Immediately following the worship service we processed to the Fellowship Hall to continue the Christmas Fellowship which consisted of dining on a delicious luncheon prepared and served by the members of Zion.

And then the fun began – powered by our energetic Lay President, Sis. Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, as she directed the singing and the lively animated version of “The Twelve Days of Christmas”;



trivia Christmas quizzes and contests; prizes and more prizes; gifts and greeting card exchanges; laughter, and yet more prizes. Our thoughtful and generous Lay President made sure that **everyone** departed with wonderful gifts, prizes and smiles.

The Christmas Card Shower And lest we forget -- each year the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization hosts a **Christmas Card Shower** to recognize the diligent service given by laymen soldiers. “These are they” who render noteworthy leadership, time, talent, and stewardship, providing inspiration to those of us who now stand on their shoulders and walk in their shadows. We honor the longevity of their living legacy of service given to our Conference. This year the **Honoree** is **Sis. Mary L. Davis, a faithful and extraordinary member of Bethel AME Church, Harrisburg, PA.**

Although Sis. Mary Davis is no longer able to attend our lay meetings, nevertheless, she will always be deemed as one of our Conference Lay Catalysts who diligently rendered service for decades throughout the Harrisburg District, the Philadelphia Conference, the First Episcopal District and the Connectional Church, -- sowing seeds of love and noteworthy Christian service for the AME Church by teaching and training; and always willing to go that extra mile while exercising and promoting the laity’s role and responsibility as leaders and followers in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

MONUMENTAL

African Methodist Episcopal Church

2ND & Adams Sts. – Steelton, PA

CELEBRATES 28TH ANNUAL LAY DAY



Left to Right: Guest Speaker Licentuate Ivy Berry, Bethel AMEC, Carlisle; Anita Hanna Matthews, Local President; Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell

Nov. 16, 2014. It was such an exciting time while we were preparing to celebrate our **28th Annual Lay Day.**

Our enthusiasm mainly centered around our invited Guest Speaker, Licentuate Ivy Berry of Bethel AMEC, Carlisle. Our reflections of Licentuate Berry consists of being a faithful member of the YPD, the Youth Choir, Sunday School, and coming up through the ranks as a steadfast young adult at her church. She also participated on the Harrisburg District and throughout the Philadelphia Conference, and is one who always generate positive energy with an infectious smile, enthusiasm, and creativity.

And, thus, the Order of Service proceeded as follows: **10:45-11:00 a.m.** Praise and Preparation by the Praise Team; Introduction of the Worship Leader by Sis. Joyce Roach-Bradshaw, (Monumental); the Worship Leader, Sis. Alfreda Graves (Bethany AMEC Harrisburg) led us through the worship service as only a true “AMEer” could, starting with the Doxology and the Call to Worship which was followed by singing the Laymen’s Hymn accompanied by musician extraordinaire, Sis. Cynthia McCarthur. Bro. Abraham Reese, (Monumental) led us to the “throne of grace” with prayer; the Old Testament (Isaiah 6:1-8) was read by Sis. Brenda Thomas, (Ebenezer, Middletown) and the New Testament (Ephesians 4:1-16) was read by Sis. Elberta Joe, (St. Paul, Waynesboro).

Worship Leader Sis. Graves led us into the Preface of the Decalogue, the Summary of the Decalogue and the Gloria Patri. Bro. Calvin Cobb (Bethel, Hbg) led the Lay Litany; Sis. Alda Hanna Epps (Monumental) gave a beautiful and well deserved Memorial Tribute

“Remembering the Spirit of Mother Theresa M. House” which reflected on her 98 years of longevity, faithful service and beautiful persona.

Sis. Theresa A. Miller extended a warm welcome and acknowledged our guests. In the absence (due to illness) of Pastor Troy Lynn Carr, greetings and remarks were given by Rev. Johnie Vause of Monumental. Rev. Vause also extended the Altar Call. Sis. Rosa McCormick and Sis. Rosetta Archie (Monumental) assisted with the offerings.

And, the hour had arrived to hear **Guest Speaker, Licentuate Ivy Berry of Bethel AMEC Carlisle**, who was proudly introduced by Lay President, Bro. Carl W. Bell, III (Bethel, Carlisle).

Sister Ivy preached a profound message using the Connectional Lay theme of: **“Laity Fulfilling The Great Commission.”** – Scripture reference of **Matthew 28:16-20**, while stressing three challenging points: **(1) Moving Higher Is Required; (2) Walking in Authority; and (3) “Going” is mandatory.**

This was most certainly a soul-stirring message that I consider to be **“food for thought and thoughtful food.”**

Licentuate Berry was most certainly well prepared – and on point --preaching with authority and self-conviction. We received the message with open minds and open arms. She blessed us with her message and we, too, were so-o-o proud of her.

Licentuate Berry stated that “Monumental was the first church, outside of her church, where she “preached” and was thankful that Monumental had enough faith in her “calling” to invite her to give the Lay Day message.

After this encouraging and empowering “sermon” Rev. Johnie Vause extended the invitation to Discipleship and the Philadelphia Conference Lay Organization 3rd V.P Andree Turner, Campbell, (Frankford, Phila.) extended the invitation to unite with local Lay Org. Rev. Vause also invited the members of the Lay Organization to the altar to rededicate ourselves to the lay ministries of the church.

Our Conference Lay President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell (Mt. Pisgah AMEC, Phila.) extended greetings and gave encouraging remarks and complimentary support to us to continue the work as a lay organization.

President Hopewell was accompanied by her husband Bro. Irvin Hopewell and Sis. Patti Layne (Mt. Pisgah AMEC). There were additional guests including the family members and friends of our guest messenger.

Following the worship service we congregated in the social hall and dined on a delicious lucheon and joyful fellowship.

As President of our local lay, I truly thank “each and all” of you for your supportand **I count it all JOY!!**

Submitted by:
Anita Hanna Matthews, Local Lay President

MT. TABOR

African Methodist Episcopal Church

961-71 N. 7th St. - Philadelphia, PA

Rev. Albert Johnson, Pastor

“FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION” BROUGHT TO LIFE BY LOCAL CHURCH LAITY

Reported by: Juanita Bryant, Local President

LAY ORGANIZATION

In **October 2014**, members of AME Union Church (Pastor Paul J. Thomas); Historic Jones Tabernacle AME Church (Pastor Stanley Hearst, II); and Mount Tabor AME Church (Pastor Albert Johnson), brought the theme of the Connectional Lay Organization, “Laity Fulfilling the Great Commission” (Matthew 28:16-20) alive.



The congregations, led by the officers and members of the local church Lay Organizations, launched the **“First Golden Can Food Drive”** and within three weeks had collected 2000 non-perishable food items. The food was donated to City Team Ministries, a national non-profit organization which operates food pantries that serve needy families throughout the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey.

The drive was launched after Melanie Bryant, MSW and a doctoral candidate at Widener University in Chester, PA received word from John Clifford, Director

of Food Services at Team Ministries in Chester that the demand for food was far greater than the supply and donations were lower than in previous years. Ms. Bryant, who is a member of AME Union, shared the idea of a food drive with Pastor Thomas and reached out to other churches on the Philadelphia district to enlist support for the project.

The project took on an air of excitement and anticipation when members of the participating churches were advised by local Lay President Sister Bryant (pictured with Pastor Johnson with trophy) that the church donating the most food items would be awarded the “Golden Can Award” with bragging rights for one (1) year. The friendly completion however, was not the real incentive as evidenced by participants’ shared comments: “We are all winners.” “What a better way to begin the holiday season, than to respond to this food drive.” “We are truly about our Father’s business and doing the work of ministry”.

On Sunday, **December 7, 2014**, Mt. Tabor AME Church was the recipient of the “First Annual Golden Can Award”, having donated the most food items. It is expected that 2014 was the beginning of an annual food drive and that other churches in Philadelphia will join in this special effort to bring “Laity Fulfilling The Great Commission” to life.

BETHLEHEM

African Methodist Episcopal Church

217 South Pine Street, Langhorne, PA 19047

Rev. Dr. Ethel L. Moore, Pastor Sis.
Mamie T. Price, Lay President



Sunday, Jan. 18, 2015 – 3:00 pm HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL LAY DAY

*Submitted by: Lay Secretary,
Sis. Kimberly Reddick*

Once again, in spite of the unfavorable weather, the local Lay organization of historic Bethlehem AME Church, Langhorne celebrated its Annual Day. The Worship Leader was Sis. Linda Frazier, Lay President of Morris Brown AMEC, Philadelphia, who called the congregation and others to worship. This was followed by the singing of the “Laymen’s Hymn”. The Invocation was given by Bro. Donald Baldwin, Lay President of St. Mark AME Zion Church, Newtown, PA. followed by the Choral Response “He’s Sweet, I Know” .

(Continued) **Bethlehem AMEC – Langhorne, PA HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL LAY DAY**
Submitted by: Sis. Kimberly Reddick, Secretary, Lay Org.

The Scripture, Matthew 26:16-20, was read for our hearing by Bro. Shawn J. Lee of Bethel AMEC, Bryn Mawr. After the first musical selection rendered, Sis. Mamie Price welcomed all in attendance and acknowledge many guests. Sis. Shirley Moore Harris of Mt. Pisgah AMEC, introduced the **Guest Speaker, Sis. Beatrice Sims** of St. Matthew AMEC, Philadelphia. This was preceded by the Lay Litany, which was led by Bro. Irvin Hopewell of Mt Pisgah AMEC. Two more musical selections were rendered which prepared us to listen to the Lay Message by Guest Speaker Sis. Beatrice Sims. Her subject, based on I Samuel 3: 1-10 was entitled **“DON’T YOU MISS GOD’S CALL”**. According to this scripture text, Sis. Sims explained that young Samuel heard the voice of God calling him “four” times; and on the fourth time, however, he answered that call. Sadly, however, Samuel’s father Eli missed God’s call - - and ended up being **spiritually blind**.

Sis. Sims brought forth these important points during her message;

FIRST: “Be in the RIGHT POSITION to hear the Lord’s voice. Be still: and silently await His revelation and instructions.” **SECOND: “EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED.** *We often expect the call of God to be for those we think are most qualified for His work (those with degrees, titles, seminary students, etc.) In God’s eyes, ALL of us qualify! At first, young Samuel did not recognize it was the Lord calling him!”* **THIRD: When God calls us, we’d better LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY.** *Even now, too many believers miss the voice of God because either they don’t know it’s HIS voice or they choose not to hear him.* This challenging message was well-received by many.

Remarks were given by PCLO President Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, Local Lay President Sis. Mamie Price, and Rev. Dr. Moore, Pastor.

Everyone who was able to attend that afternoon service were both encouraged and challenged to do greater works as laypersons this year and to continue building up one another (as well as the church and the community) just as Jesus had taught!

In addition, to a nourishing dinner which preceded this service, a fine time had been enjoyed by all. Musical selections were graciously rendered by Sis. Kimberly Reddick at the piano with congregational singing. Sis. Reddick is also the Secretary of the local Lay of the Host church. The Service concluded with the singing of the Lay Benediction. **Of God because either they don’t know it’s His voice or they choose not to hear Him!”**

After Rev. Dr. Moore gave the Invitation to Discipleship, Bro. Gilroy Reid (PCLO First Vice President and the Layperson of the Year 2014) then issued the call to unite with the local lay of the host church. One new member has thus joined. **“MAY GOD BE PRAISED”**

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**SAVE THE DATES**

**May 18-24, 2015: 199<sup>th</sup> Session of the Philadelphia Annual Conference:** Mt. Pisgah AMEC, , 428 N 41<sup>st</sup> St., Phila, PA  
Host Pastor Rev. Jay Broadnax **Annual Lay Night: May 21, 2015:** Host Lay President Sis. Shirley Moore-Harris

**June 11-13, 2015: First Episcopal District Planning Meeting:** First District Plaza. 3801 Market St., Phila., PA

**July 23-25, 2015: First Episcopal District Lay Organization Annual Meeting:** DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Downtown  
700 N King St, Wilmington, DE 19801

**Aug. 2 - 5: 34<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session of the Connectional Lay Org.**

Charleston, SC -- Embassy Suites-North Charleston Airport & Convention Center  
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A NIGHT OF ELEGANCE

May 2, 2015 -- 7:00-11:00 P.M.

Unity Hall – 1349 Unity St. - Philadelphia (Frankfort) PA
See Marie Butler or Earl Knight, III for additional information





PHILADELPHIA CONFERENCE LAY ORGANIZATION OFFICERS

Cheryl Hammond Hopewell, President

Gilroy Reid, 1 st Vice President	Hosea Jackson, 2 nd Vice President	Andree Turner, 3 rd Vice President
Marion G. Bolton, Recording Secretary	Valerie O. Ward, Asst. Recording Secretary	Wanda Ringgold, Corresponding Secretary
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Anita Hanna Matthews, Director of Public Relations		Earl Knight, III, Young Adult Representative

Walter Jeffers , Connectional Director of Public Relations

The Right Reverend Gregory G. M. Ingram, Presiding Prelate

The Reverend Dr. Jessica K. Ingram, Episcopal Supervisor

The First Episcopal District - African Methodist Episcopal Church



The next publication of "OUR VOICES" newsletter will be published in June 2015.

All information to be published must be received by the Editor by May 15 , 2015.

Please e-mail all proof-read news articles and "camera ready" pictures to: anitamatt@verizon.net

PLEASE NOTE: The editor reserves the right to publish and/or edit articles when deemed necessary.

Anita Hanna Matthews, Editor - Director of Public Relations – PCLO

