

ZION



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WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE LAY COUNCIL OF THE PIEDMONT EPISCOPAL DISTRICT

THE FREEDOM CHURCH - A MOVEMENT EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT:
STRENGTHENING OUR FELLOWSHIP, SERVING OUR FLOCK,
SHARING OUR FAITH, SECURING OUR FUTURE



REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE 132ND SESSION OF THE WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE JUNE 9 - 11, 2022

DR. MARY S. PONDS, WNCC PRESIDENT

SISTER CAMILLE C. STARNES
MISSIONARY SUPERVISOR

THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP DARRYL B. STARNES, SR.
PRESIDING PRELATE

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This is the day that the Lord has made and I will rejoice and be exceedingly glad in it!!

To Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., Presiding Prelate, Piedmont Episcopal District; Sister Camille C. Starnes, Missionary Supervisor; General and Connectional Officers of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (past and present); Mrs. Leondras Davis, First Vice President, Connectional Lay Council; Mrs. Connie Bell-Wright, Second Vice President, Connectional Lay Council; Mrs. Dorothy Gill-Smith, Connectional Lay Council Regional Director, Piedmont Episcopal District; Presiding Elders; Members of the Clergy; Conference and District Officers; Conference and District Officers; Delegates, Laity, Visitors, and Friends of the Great Western North Carolina Conference, I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ!

To God be the glory for the great things He has and continues to do for us each day. I am grateful for the privilege and opportunity to serve as President of the Western North Carolina Conference (WNCC) Lay Council. The challenge is exciting, but the desire to serve and represent the goals of the greatest aspect of The A.M.E. Zion Church, the laity, is more rewarding.

Following the election on **October 16, 2021** in Statesville, North Carolina, the newly elected Board began meeting virtually, due to COVID-19, via ZOOM to organize and establish the plan to complete the yearly activities. I quickly became an active participant and representative at the Piedmont Vision Casting Retreat held at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, NC on October 26-28, 2021.

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November continued to be filled with virtual meetings of local and connectional laity, executive officers, committees, and boards. Our first WNCC Lay Council meeting was held via ZOOM on November 27, 2021, hosted by the Sensational Salisbury District, Dr. Yvonne Tracey, President. I presented my Focus Forward Challenge to the newly elected Executive Board and the laity of the WNCC. Reverend Dr. Corey Rustin, Sr., Pastor of Zion Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church in Concord, NC, West Central North Carolina Conference, Piedmont Episcopal District, was our Lay Academy presenter.

Activities in **December** continued to be held via ZOOM and conference call which included local as well as conference business meetings. I participated in the Connectional Lay Council Regional Meeting via ZOOM on December 14, 2021.

The pace of the Lay Council continued as we welcomed a new year and the month of **January**. Meetings and communications continued via ZOOM and conference call and we participated in the monthly Connectional Lay Council Prayer Call, Executive Board, Piedmont Regional Lay Council meeting, and local activities. Preparations were also made for the second WNCC Lay Council Meeting on January 22, 2022, hosted by the Charlotte District, Mr. Willie Bratcher, President. Reverend Dr. Jerret Fite, Pastor of Robinson A.M.E. Zion Church, Cheraw, SC, South Atlantic Episcopal District presented the Lay Academy. Later in the month of January, the Sensational Salisbury District and the WNCC Lay Council grieved the loss of Mr. Julius E. Suiter who developed a philanthropic revenue stream entitled "Each One Give One" which directly benefited the work at Dorothy Walls Conference and Retreat Center in Black Mountain, NC. The WNCC Lay Council was

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represented at the funeral of Mr. Suiter.

During the month of **February**, Conference Lay Training took place via Microsoft Teams on February 10, 2022, with Mr. Church Williams on behalf of our International President, Mr. Joseph K. Davis. The International Ministers and Lay Association (IMLA) met via ZOOM on February 15-17, 2022. Thank God for technology - I was able to share with both! Throughout the month, we were also privileged to meet several times with the Executive Board and committees of the WNCC Lay Council.

March proved to be no exception to the fast pace of lay activities and the increased convenience of technology. Meetings via conference call, ZOOM, and Teams continued. The monthly Connectional Lay Council Prayer Call continued to be a blessing. Several meetings with committees and the Executive Board of the WNCC Lay Council were held via ZOOM throughout the month as we discussed by-laws, budget, and other concerns to improve and grow the laity. The Check-up Meeting for the WNCC was held March 26, 2022, at St. Stephens A.M.E. Zion Church in Gastonia, NC, and I was honored to present the Lay Academy. Our third WNCC Lay Council Meeting was held on March 19, 2022, with Lincolnton District and Mr. William Manning, host President. The Lay Academy was presented by Mr. Darin Kent, Chief Communications Officer of The A.M.E. Zion Church and Editor-in-Chief of The Star of Zion, Mount Vernon, NY, North Eastern Episcopal District. Also during the month of March, we formed a President's Talk session for District Presidents of the conference to discuss concerns, ideas, issues, and/or changes to help us grow. We continued to meet monthly on each second Monday via ZOOM.

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As **April** arrived, COVID-19 restrictions/precautions were lowered and face-to-face meetings were once again enabled, we continued on the side of caution to implement technology. Lay Council committees, District Presidents, Executive Board, Connectional Lay Council Prayer Call, and all lay activities were carried out via ZOOM and conference call.

May brought about a new attitude as we prepared for Annual Conference on June 9-11, 2022 at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, NC as well as our last WNCC Lay Council Meeting on May 28, 2022, hosted by the Winston-Salem District, Mrs. Sharon Hargrave, President. Mr. Joseph K. Davis, International President of the Connectional Lay Council presented the Lay Academy. We continued to execute the business of the WNCC Lay Council virtually as we fulfilled the mission, purpose, and objectives set before us.

We look forward to **June** and the time of the Annual Conference, with the celebrations of the Lay Council, WH&OMS, Christian Education, Home Missions, and the excitement of being together face-to-face. I realize that this is just the beginning of what truly lies ahead. We have come too far, by the grace of the Lord, to not be anxious to run this race to see what more we can do for the Lord.

I am appreciative for the opportunity to serve and grateful for your many expressions of support. To Bishop Starnes and Sister Starnes; my Presiding Elder, Reverend Dr. Grant Harrison, Jr. and First Lady, Reverend Carla Harrison; my Pastor, Reverend Thomas D. Lee - thank you for your support and encouragement. To the Executive Board of the WNCC Lay Council and Laity - thank you for allowing me to stand upon your shoulders as we work

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as a team to make disciples for the work of the kingdom.

*"I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day:
the night cometh when no man can work." - John 9:4*

Blessings,

Dr. Mary S. Ponds

President

WNCC Lay Council

Note: The Western NC Conference Lay Council President and
District President Reports are available for download at
[https://sdwnccamez.org/wncc.](https://sdwnccamez.org/wncc)

**Western North Carolina Conference Lay Council
Executive Board and Committees
2021-2022**

ELECTED OFFICERS

President, Dr. Mary S. Ponds
First Vice President, Ms. Rachel Highsmith
Second Vice President, Ms. Linda Faye Starnes
Secretary, Ms. Deidra Camp
Financial Secretary, Mrs. Phyllis D. Reid
Treasurer, Mrs. Delphine McCullough
Chaplain, Mrs. Paula Robinson
Advisor, Mrs. Lillian Williams
We Care, Mrs. Sandra Pickens (Chairperson)
Public Relations, Mrs. Dorothy Gill-Smith

APPOINTED OFFICERS

Assistant Secretary,
Mrs. Gloria Joyner-Johnson
Parliamentarian,
Mrs. W. Jean B. Kennedy

Communications Committee:
Ms. Jacqueline L. Anthony
Mrs. Dorothy Gill-Smith

DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

Charlotte District, Mr. Willie Bratcher
Lincolnton District, Mr. William Manning
North Charlotte District, Ms. V. Carolyn Hubbard
Statesville District, Mr. Jerry McCombs
Salisbury District, Dr. Yvonne Tracey
Winston-Salem District, Mrs. Sharon Hargrave

ALBERT S. STOUT, SR.

MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND COMMITTEE

Chairman, Mr. Ervin D. Reid
Vice-Chairman, Dr. Yvonne Tracey
Recording Secretary, Mrs. W. Jean B. Kennedy
Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Sarah S. Lightner
Financial Secretary, Mr. Trubbie Leeper
Treasurer, Mrs. Connie B. Wright
Chaplain, Mr. Albert Alexander, Jr.
Members-at-Large:
Mrs. Margaret H. Nelson
Ms. Joan Logan
Ms. Leverne Scott
Conference President, Dr. Mary S. Ponds

