

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
 CONNECTIONAL LAY ORGANIZATION (CLO)  
 36<sup>th</sup> Lay Biennial  
 Washington Conference Young Adult Delegate's Report  
 Washington Conference Lay Organization (WCLO)  
 30 June – 4 July 2019, *Hyatt Regency Bellevue on Seattle's Eastside, Bellevue, Washington*

To:

Mr. Matthew Douglas, Second Episcopal District Lay Organization (SEDLO) President  
 Mrs. Glen White, WCLO President  
 Officers and Members of the Washington Conference Lay Organization

Thank you greatly for the opportunity to represent the WCLO as a delegate to the Lay Organization's 36<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session. Outlined below is a comprehensive report from the Biennial's proceedings.

The 36<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session was themed, "Onward to Greater," and was emblazoned by Micah 6: 8, the familiar Lay scripture.

**Sunday 30 June:**

OPENING WORSHIP SERVICE

The 36<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session officially convened with the "Opening Worship of Word and Sacrament." The message was delivered by Host Presiding Bishop of the 5<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District Clement W. Fugh who implored the congregants to "Never Mind What They Say 'Bout Them Bones," a sermon scripturally rooted in Ezekiel 37: 11-12, and St. John 1: 14. Bishop Fugh warned that "there are very many bones, and they are very dry," and inquired if the bones could live. He then explored restoration and the depth of transformation before boldly asserting that we shall not live among the dead. Bishop Fugh emphasized that we should speak life because there is power in words, referencing James' description of the tongue.

**Monday 1 July:**

BUSINESS SESSION I

The first business session began with the presentation of the Registration committee's preliminary report; according to the report, 1,054 attendees registered as of 30 June; however, the committee was still gathering additional information and the results were not finalized. Additionally, the committee indicated that the final report would contain the total number of registered delegates.

Following the Registration committee's report, Natalie Horton, Chair of the Credentials Committee, outlined the total number of delegates from each district that had registered by 8:00 PM on 30 June. The totals were as follows:

<i>District</i>	<i>Number of Delegates</i>
1st	83
2nd	64
3rd	52
4th	40
5th	55
6th	68
7th	125
8th	33
9th	51

10th	48
11th	45
12th	37
13th	42
14th	7
15th	27
16th	5
17th	2
18th	16
19th	52
20th	2

**854**

Additionally, Ms. Horton provided an overview of the total number of delegates by type. The results were as follows:

<i>Type of Delegate</i>	<i>Number of Delegates</i>
CLO Officer	17
Conference	393
Episcopal District	150
Local District	222
Presiding Elder District	72

**854**

After the Credentials committee report, Wanda Sims provided a parliamentary procedure overview after which Starr Battle delivered the Rules Committee report. Following a presentation of the agenda, the Credentials committee provided updated figures as follows:

<i>District</i>	<i>Number of Delegates</i>
1st	83
2nd	63
3rd	52
4th	40
5th	72
6th	82
7th	125
8th	33
9th	51
10th	48
11th	45
12th	37
13th	42
14th	7

15th	24
16th	5
17th	2
18th	4
19th	52
20th	1

**868**

Following the Credential committee’s second report, the biennial program was adopted, and the credential committee, rules committee, and program and agenda report were adopted. Next, the convention was constituted, and the 36<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session was official called to order.

Host Bishop Fugh and 5<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District Lay President Simeon Rhoden welcomed the Biennial attendees in their own way and pitched the 5<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District-hosted Summer Jam which would be held the following day at Bellevue’s Meydenbauer Center.

Connectional Lay President Valerie Gary Bell requested the assistance of the Minutes Approval committee and Timekeeper Group, while Starr Battle acknowledged an assortment of special guests. Committees were advised to send their reports to the technology team.

President Bell delivered her first address as the President of the Connectional Lay Organization, during which she outlined the key areas of focus to effectively lead the Connectional Lay Organization and deliver on organizational goals. President Bell listed her recommendations as President, before thanking the Biennial attendees for their continual encouragement, love, and input on which direction the CLO should take. She emphasized that the Lay Organization belong to its members, and that she represented the members. Thus, President Bell indicated that she needed to hear the good, bad, and ugly from the laypersons in order to implement an authentic and transformative program for the CLO.

2<sup>nd</sup> Episcopal District Lay President Matthew Douglas moved for adoption of President Bell’s address, which was quickly properly moved and seconded. Additionally, President Douglas requested a point of personal privilege to allow 2<sup>nd</sup> Episcopal District Young Adult Representative Adam Johnston to thank President Bell for her continued efforts to lead the CLO. President Rhoden requested all Episcopal District Presidents to stand and congratulate President Bell.

Connectional Lay President Valerie Gary Bell delivered her first address as the Connectional Lay President during the first business session on 1 July 2019. President Bell emphasized key areas necessary to effectively lead the Connectional Lay Organization (CLO) and deliver upon its organizational goals. She indicated that the recommendations should be implemented with vision, energy, and vigor. Further, she highlighted the importance of Episcopal Lay Presidents in facilitating the CLO’s goals.

Chief among President Bell’s recommendations was the increased practice of evangelism—a practice which President Bell delineated as a priority for each Episcopal District to implement across all local churches under its purview—culminating in a “Lay Evangelism Sunday” for each church.

President Bell reiterated the importance of disseminating top-down decisions to the local church. She suggested that each Episcopal Lay President engage with their respective Episcopal Leadership to effectively implement Episcopal District Goals. President Bell identified the significance of cohesive conversations at all levels, including dialogue between Conference and Presiding Elder District Presidents, and Presiding Elders and Local Presidents with their Pastors.

President Bell indicated that Episcopal District Lay Presidents should designate a recruiter for the Episcopal District to encourage laypersons to enroll in the Lay Leadership Certification Program. She noted that at least five laypersons per Annual Conference should enroll in the first cycle—and explained that more details would be available by the next Executive Board meeting.

President Bell advised that Annual Conference Presidents should administer a survey at the beginning of every Conference Year of congregations within their Annual Conference to identify which churches have Lay Organizations. Subsequently, President Bell added that the survey results should be reported to the respective Episcopal District President one month after the survey was originally administered, and that the Annual Conference should proceed to assemble a task force to assist the local churches reportedly lacking a Lay Organization.

Finally, President Bell suggested that the Connectional Lay Organization support the election of informed and committed Delegates to the 2020 General Conference and the election of at least one female Bishop at the 2020 General Conference.

Following the President's address, Congresswoman Maxine Waters delivered a fiery message which asserted her unwillingness to retreat in the face of President Trump's unrelenting attacks. Congresswoman Waters intertwined several anecdotes reflecting upon her time as a Congresswoman, in addition to drawing upon her experiences within the church.

## BUSINESS SESSION II

The second business session began with Connection Director of Lay Activities Ametta Reaves presenting her report. Ms. Reaves' report was followed by Connectional Young Adult Representative Jamesha Williams report.

Connectional Lay Organization Young Adult Representative Jamesha Williams began by invoking a verbal commitment from the Connectional Lay Organization's general body to the Young Adults aged 18 to 35 attending the business session. The commitment included an appeal to allow Young Adults to fulfill their respective duties within the Lay Organization.

Ms. Williams indicated that 90% of the action items identified at the 35<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session in Columbus, Ohio had been resolved, including:

- unproductive and inefficient use of time;
- inadequate representation of Young Adults during plenaries;
- isolated plenaries (i.e. not presented in the Grand Ballroom);
- disorganized first-timer orientations that did not engage young adults, provide a detailed explanation of committees, or explain CLO governing processes;
- unfair treatment of Episcopal Districts 14-20;
- lack of Episcopal District 14-20 workshop presenters, committee chairs, program and plenary representatives;
- irrelevant workshops to Districts 14-20; and
- inadequate accessibility for physically disabled, deaf, and blind laypersons.

Additionally, Ms. Williams indicated that Young Adults were reportedly uninformed on committee appointments and effectiveness. Further, she noted that workshops did not address important issues, the Lay Organization's purpose, or officer roles. Rather, Ms. Williams asserted that workshops sought to serve political agendas, and issues often went unresolved by panelists.

Ms. Williams recommended that the Connectional Lay Organization leadership allow Young Adult Representatives to serve within their designated capacities as outlined in the AME Church's doctrine and discipline. She indicated that some Young Adult Representatives did not have budgets, support, or were for other unspecified reasons unable to do what they had been appointed to do. Additionally, Ms. Williams recommended that the Connectional Lay Organization maintain a relationship with Young Adults, a heart of service, and the willingness to lead by example to retain Young Adults.

Following Ms. Williams' report, the financial reports, the Budget and Financial committee's report, and the CLEDC's report was presented. The CLEDC report revealed that during the 30 June meeting, Rita Sinkfield Belin was reappointed, and a new full Board of Directors was elected and seated. Additionally, the Chair established five committees to review and report its findings and make recommendations, including:

- finance,
- membership,
- non-profit status,
- mission and purpose, and
- constitution and bylaws.

### **Tuesday 2 July:**

#### **BUSINESS SESSION II**

The second day of the Biennial proceeded with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President's report. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President asserted that evangelism is our basic mandate to fulfill the great commission, and that evangelism had changed from how it used to be. He indicated that the CLO was developing a book of First Friday devotions, and emphasized Lay organized revivals, and the coordination of revival within a certain area. Additionally, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President emphasized the coordination with local churches to implement Evangelism Sunday.

#### **BUSINESS SESSION III**

The afternoon business session began with Christian Recorder Editor John Thomas petitioning for memberships. Mr. Thomas indicated that he was accountable to God and accountable to the people that elected him.

Following Mr. Thomas' petition, President Bell introduced Ronald E. Braxton, the Presiding Elder of Potomac District for the Washington Conference. Presiding Elder Braxton gave an overview of the plenary session and insisted that there were key characteristics that composed the DNA of Christian and Lay leadership. The Presiding Elder asserted that chief among the characteristics was a belief in God, and our affirmation that he is savior, liberator, and redeemer. Presiding Elder Braxton specified that Christian and Lay leadership needed to:

- be familiar with scripture,
- love the church and body of Christ on Earth,
- have a witness and testimony,
- believe in the power of prayer,
- be a humble and loving person,
- exude kindness,
- get along with others,
- look beyond the faults and failures of others and see some good,
- discern whether your conversation is negative or positive,
- decide whether you like people,

- assess whether a small group will follow your advice,
- learn if you are a good follower, and
- determine whether you are willing to learn.

Presiding Elder Braxton indicated that there is a foundational principle, or a ladder, from which a foundation is coiled. He noted that we are idle, unaware, or we neglect to recognize this basic foundational principle, thus we have been robbed, crippled, and unable to use our full potential. Presiding Elder Braxton explained that we are all called to be priests, but we are not all called to be pastors. Further, he added that God has so tempered the body that we are priests to one another. He concluded that it's in our basic DNA to be servants, and that we're all called.

#### LEARNING LABS

2<sup>nd</sup> Episcopal District President Matthew Douglas led a learning lab entitled, "You Have What it Takes."<sup>1</sup> The primary objectives were encouragement, empowerment, and equipment. Additionally, the main points were to overcome fear, define your "Younique" gifts, and define where your faith is. President Douglas insisted that you can't make the transition until your transition from membership to discipleship. Additionally, he noted that path from membership to discipleship was as follows: membership, fellowship, stewardship, and discipleship.

An additional learning lab was entitled, "Saved to Serve." The learning lab explored salvation and servant leadership from the Lay and Clergy perspective. The workshop explored the meaning of salvation, God's expectations of us as members of the body of Christ, a deeper understanding of the ministry and servant leadership, and the fact that it can sometimes be difficult to be a professional AME and a good Christian at all times. Micah 6: 6-8 and Romans 10: 9 were used as a scriptural basis for the workshop.

The Candidates' forum finished the second day of the Biennial. Panels were held for the following positions:

- Executive Director for Retirement Services,
- Office of Judicial Council,
- Church Growth and Development,
- Office of Treasurer,
- Office of Global Witness and Ministry, and
- Bishop.

#### **Wednesday 3 July:**

##### BUSINESS SESSION IV:

The fourth business session convened with the Legislation and Constitution and Bylaws Committee delivering reports.

Rev. Shirley Lytle served as the speaker of the hour. Her message was entitled, "Behind the Mask, How We Challenge the Slave Mentality." Rev. Lytle indicated that even though we don't physical have handcuffs on, we become handcuffed in our minds. She asserted that God already paved the way for us, and all we have to do is believe and trust in him. Further, she insisted that it was time for us to stop trying to pit one black person against another, i.e. the "house vs. the field negro." Additionally, she highlighted the negative connotation of going to counseling and/or therapy.

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<sup>1</sup> President Douglas used the following scriptures: 2 Timothy 1:7, Isaiah 41:10, Joshua 1:9, Philippians 4:19, Jeremiah 1: 4-10, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 4: 11-12. Mark 11: 22-24, Philippians 3:14, Philippians 4: 6, and Luke 8:22-25.

Rev. Lytle explained that in order to “get behind the mask,” we need to:

- address the drama in our lives,
- explore the distortions that get in our way, and
- identify what matters to us (core values).

She emphasized Ephesians 4 before explaining that *distortion* was like an “all or nothing” situation. She indicated that we need to learn to show up in a way that’s honorable and Godly, and she questioned if prayer was our last resort or first option. Rev. Lytle observed that sometimes we are stuck and spiritually constipated, and that we can only see things one way. She explained that the world has changed, but the mission has not, and that we can make a 2-degree difference in how we show up every day.

#### EVENING GALA

An awards gala took place where Bro. Patrick Duane’ Josey and Sis. Adrienne Warren were among the honorees for the SED’s Outstanding Young Adult and Layperson respectively. The gala culminated with a powerful musical set by DaNell Daymon & Greater Works, a gospel choir that participated in Season 12 of *America’s Got Talent*.

#### Thursday 4 July:

The final day of the Biennial began with a word from Bishop Earl McCloud. Bishop McCloud indicated that we are bringing a new paradigm forward, and that we are greater together. Further, he indicated that anything that was done within debate was to stay within debate. Further, he indicated that you have a voice, and I have a voice, and that we all needed to respect each other.

The following reports were delivered:

- **Committee Recommendations**
  - Review of Job Analysis (Organizational Effectiveness)
    - Create a new reporting process for officers to assist in properly evaluating if the duties of the office were performed and the objective were achieved
    - Share the evaluation templates with officers in prep for the official evaluation process that will be initiated in the future on all levels
    - Submit proposed changes to cons and bylaws committee in reference to the job duties of various officers
- **Executive Summary**
- **AME V-Alert (Voter Alert)**
  - 100% voter turnout
    - Voters educated on issues and candidates
    - Every eligible voter registered
    - Including incarcerated men and women
- **Issues Facing the Church/Nation**
  - Create economic participation opportunities leverage government programs within respective communities. Databased comprising of skills from our members within reasonable proximity that fund and jobs can circulate among us before exiting
  - Ensure compliance with international human rights standards
  - Possible rights violation decisions consequences referred for legal guidance
  - Involved in domestic politics at all levels
  - In depth analysis cause of the exodus
  - Youth must be included in the process of needs analysis, solution, implementation, problem resolution

- Deliberate effort taken by the organization and the church at large to address disparities of age gender and geographical discrimination
- Effective use of communication platforms
- Decisiveness in decision making and efficient communication of same
- Deliberate activities to strengthen the family fabric and improve intergenerational communication about difficult controversial topics
- Similar mandate churches collaborate
- Requirements for claiming from the disaster funds must be made readily available
- Embark on awareness campaigns about the effects of climate change
- Monthly reports to be submitted by Episcopal Districts regarding natural disasters
- **Global Ministry**
  - All districts are represented in the CLO, introduce connectional vision as to how all ministers can be brought together and do things in the same way as other districts
  - Continually communicate with all districts, especially districts 14-20
  - Analysis of the districts, and present collective findings
  - Make recommendations and possibilities on making a contribution based on the recommendation of the President
- **Higher Education Support**
  - Collect and review data and provide updates periodically to the CLO President and to the Executive Board
    - Wish to be data-driven
      - Enrollment, accreditation, student outcomes
    - Collaborate with the General Board Commission on Seminaries, Universities, Colleges, and Schools
  - Establish mentorship programs, showcase students, report student achievement outcomes, and develop specific strategies for student support
    - Continuously support young adults through our members
- **Evaluation Committee**
  - Creation of a survey to assess the convention, including pre-convention activities
- **Resolution Committee**

-- Respectfully submitted

*P. Duane' Josey*