



THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH THE SECOND EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPETIVE – FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY

The Second District Layman's Organization is the original designation of the Second Episcopal District Lay Organization. It includes the following Conferences: Baltimore, Washington, Virginia, North Carolina and Western North Carolina. In 1956, Bishop Frank Madison Reid, Sr., the prelate of the Second Episcopal District at that time, organized the Second Episcopal District Laymen's Organization. He appointed Professor Vernon D. Cowan from Ashville, NC (Western NC Conference) as the first President. Professor Cowan's 57 peers subsequently elected him President. These peers represented all five of the Conferences in the Second District.

The Charter members were very influential members of various local churches within the five Conferences and would help grow the Lay Organization because of their commitment to the ideals of the Lay Movement in the AME Church. They included: Vorheese D. B. Jamison (B), H.C. Perrin (B), Myrtle L. Know (NC), P.A Williams (WN), Emma W. Hairston (V) and Rachel W. Valentin (W) and others. During the formative years, the Second District Laymen's Organization met annually on the campus of Kittrell College in Kittrell, NC.

Two years after its founding, the Lay Organization published the first printed copy of the Second Episcopal District Laymen's Organization Constitution and Bylaws (1958 ed.). The document established provisions for the following officers: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Director and Public Relations Coordinator. It also detailed the Aim and Purpose of the Organization that read as follows:

Section I. The Aim and Purpose of this organization is to organize, unite, and consolidate the lay members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in every Annual Conference and Local Church in the Second Episcopal District, to the end that the following aims be achieved:

- a. To instill in the membership of the church a greater love for and appreciation of the history, traditions and principles of the African Methodist Episcopal Church;*
- b. To keep forever alive the sacred memory and spirit of Richard Allen, our illustrious founder;*
- c. To always advocate for respect and loyalty to the constituted authority and leadership of our church, and to manifest proper reverence for our Spiritual Fathers;*
- d. To encourage the laity of our church to support the total program of the church in the local congregation in the community, and in the district;*
- e. To foster a systematic and regular study of the discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to the end that greater knowledge and information may be disseminated among the laity, and with the further purpose of encouraging lay members to participate more largely in the general functioning and supervision of the African Methodist Episcopal church;*
- f. To provide an interest in and a love for the development of Kittrell College, provide a close cooperation with the Alumni Association for the betterment of Kittrell College, and*
- g. To urge our rightful recognition in the affairs of the Local Church, District Conferences and Annual Conferences as provided by the Discipline.*



CHARTER MEMBERS (57)
LAYMAN'S ORGANIZATION, SECOND EPISCOPAL DISTRICT
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

BALTIMORE CONFERENCE

Mrs. Bessie Chapman	Mrs. Georgia P. Mitchell
Mrs. Julia Conner	Mrs. Mae H. Pack
Mrs. Beatrice T. Faulkner	Mr. H. C. Perrin
Mrs. Irene Garner	Mrs. Alverta Presberry
Mrs. Clara E. Harris	Mrs. Mary L. Steverson
Mrs. Maggie O. Harris	Miss Mayme Tilghman
Mrs. Vorheese Jamison	Miss F. L. Wright
Mrs. Rhonda McLain	Mrs. Sara Wirns

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

Mrs. Ida Collins	Mrs. Ema W. Hairston
Mrs. A. B. Funn	Miss Mary Parson
Miss Naomi Graves	Mrs. Alice B. Petty
Mrs. Ruth Gray	Miss Maude Williams

NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE

Mrs. Vernetta Bryant	Mr. J. B. Plummer
Mrs. Lucille E. Cooke	Mr. P. B. Richardson
Dr. Willa Easley	Mrs. Sallie Richardson
Mrs. Kathryn Hickson	Mrs. Revenia Wilkins
Mrs. Ada Johnson	Mrs. Dorothy Whitestone
Mrs. Myrtle L. Knox	Mrs. Eula Worsley

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE

Mr. L. E. Austin	Miss Carrie McAdoo
Mrs. Della Corbett	Mrs. Nellie Murphy
Mr. Vernon D. Cowan	Mrs. Marie M. Riddick
Mrs. Alberta Hicks	Mr. P. A. Williams
Miss Mae N. Hopson	

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Mrs. Hazel Benley	Mrs. Arlie P. Lewis
Mr. James H. Childs	Mr. George W. Mitchell
Mr. D. Carter	Mrs. Bernice M. Shelton
Mrs. Gladys Gant	Mrs. Melvina Offutt
Mrs. Ella M. Gothard	Mrs. Rachel W. Valentine
Mrs. Leona Harrison	Mrs. Frances Wells



SECOND DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION

Presidents who served after Professor Vernon Cowan's tenure include:

Dr. Joseph Columbus McKinney, Washington Conference
Dr. Paulette Coleman, Washington Conference
Gertrude Judd Upperman, Western North Carolina Conference
Marcie W. White, Virginia Conference
Valerie Faith Gary Bell, Washington Conference
Godfrey Nathan Patterson, North Carolina Conference
Dwight Morton Patterson, Western North Carolina Conference
Matthew Douglas, Washington Conference
Penny Summers Oliver, Western North Carolina Conference

The 2nd District Laity who were elected to serve as Lay Organization Connectional Officers include:

Vorheese D. Barry Jamison – Director of Public Relations & Editor of the Connectional Lay Organization Newsletter, “**We Speak**” (moved to the Washington Conference)
Annette Caldwell Jones – 3rd Vice President (Washington Conference)
Florence Warren – Director of Lay Activities (North Carolina Conference)
Sandra Bonner-Hadley – Meeting Planner, CLO and the AME Church (Washington Conference)
Dr. Joseph Columbus McKinney – Lay Consultant (Washington Conference) - Appointed
William “Bill” Ayers – Director of Public Relations & Editor of the Connectional Lay Organization Newsletter, “**We Speak**” (Washington Conference)
Starr L. Battle – Corresponding Secretary; 3rd & 2nd Vice President; Chairperson for Strategic Planning, Constitution and Bylaws, Budget, and Rules Committees, Chair/Co-Chair of various other Biennial Committees, and member of the Right-Sizing the General Conference Committee (North Carolina Conference)
Valerie Faith Gary Bell – President, Connectional Lay Organization (Washington Conference)
William “Bill” Ayers, CLO Historiographer (Washington Conference)
Dr. Edna Stancil Watson, Assistant Recording Secretary (North Carolina Conference)
Starr L. Battle, Judicial Council through 2032 (Washington Conference)

The 2nd Dist. Laity who were elected to serve the AME Denomination as General Officers included:

Dr. Joseph Columbus McKinney – Treasurer AME Church (Washington Conference)
Dr. Paulette Coleman – Editor, AME Review (Washington Conference – subsequently moved to the 13th district)



Some major accomplishments of the Second Episcopal District Lay Organization include:

The formation of a digital membership directory that facilitates communication;

The cultivation of a Bi-Annual venue for hosting speakers, programs, workshops, seminars, and formal events intended to educate, promote awareness, and salute individual achievements;

The establishment of the Dr. Joseph C. McKinney and Maude Blow Davis Scholarship Fund;

The development of a Budget that supports the goals and objectives of lay ministry as well as the programs and services of the Second District Lay Organization; and

First ever Lay Webinar held (2024) thanks to Teresa Fry Brown, Church Historiographer in coordination with President Makiti.

Under the United States Patent & Trademark Office, the CLO was granted a logo patent & “trademark” on February, 18 2025.