



# HISTORIOGRAPHERS' JOURNAL

Volume 3



*"Living a Global Witness Ministry That Transforms, Transcends and Liberates" Luke 4:18-19*

## CLO – Connectional Lay Organization



**BISHOP RONNIE BRAILSFORD, SR.**  
*Commission Chair*



**BROTHER MATIKANE A. MAKITI**  
*CLO President*



**BROTHER WILLIAM AYERS**  
*CLO Historiographer*

## SEDLO – Seventh Episcopal District Lay Organization



**BISHOP JAMES L. DAVIS**  
*SED Presiding Prelate*



**BROTHER KEITH E. BRITTON**  
*SEDLO-President*



**BROTHER CLEVELAND FRASIER**  
*SEDLO & SC Conference  
Historiographer*

## Conference Historiographers



**SISTER IDELLA  
BRADFORD**  
*PALMETTO*



**SISTER NELL  
FOXWORTH**  
*NORTHEAST*



**SISTER WENDY  
BOUKNIGHT**  
*COLUMBIA*



**BROTHER CLEVELAND  
FRASIER**  
*SOUTH CAROLINA*



**SISTER EVELYN  
WARDLAW**  
*PIEDMONT*



**PRESIDENT  
SHAKEIA  
HAMPTON**  
*CENTRAL*

**SED LAY RETREAT ♦ JANUARY 2025**  
**THEME: THE BLUEPRINT**

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## Welcome

Bishop James and Mother Davis head the new Episcopal leadership of the Seventh Episcopal District.



I was part of the history-making delegation from the 7th Episcopal District that attended the 52nd session of the General Conference 2024 when Bishop and Mother Davis were assigned to the District.

## WELCOME BISHOP AND MOTHER DAVIS

Brother Cleveland Frasier





**SEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT  
LAY ORGANIZATION**

A M E C H U R C H



*Together We Will*

Greetings Seventh Episcopal District:

Learning about our past provides an opportunity for us to gain a greater understanding of where we came from and the foundation on which we stand. As the elected Historiographer for the Seventh Episcopal District Lay Organization, Brother Cleveland Frasier is passionate about documenting the accomplishments of those who served before us. Volume 3 of this publication continues his personal attempt to share the works of those who served on various levels of the Lay Organization.

We extend special thanks to Brother Frasier and the Historiographers throughout the Seventh Episcopal District for your efforts. Let us continue to foster a love and appreciation of African Methodism.

*Keith E. Britton*

**SEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION OFFICERS  
BROTHER KEITH E. BRITTON, PRESIDENT**

- Brother Leroy Linen.....First Vice President**
- Sister Debra Darby.....Second Vice President**
- Brother Alphonso Times.....Third Vice President**
- Sister Darlene W. Ravenel.....Director of Lay Activities**
- Brother Lakendric A. Rush.....Young Adult Representative**
- Sister Patty Britt Pooser.....Recording Secretary**
- Sister Cynthia Toland.....Assistant Recording Secretary**
- Sister Barbara Felder.....Corresponding Secretary**
- Sister Brenda F. Bowens.....Financial Secretary**
- Brother Kevin Simmons.....Treasurer**
- Sister Shirley Abraham.....Chaplain**
- Sister Tylaunda Corbin.....Director of Public Relations**
- Brother Cleveland Frasier.....Historiographer**

**Conference Presidents**

- Sister Gloria A. McClam, Palmetto**
- Brother Ricarldo "Ricky" Washington, Northeast**
- Sister Cynthia Toland, Columbia**
- Sister Jeannie Rivers, South Carolina**
- Sister Jackie Goggins, Piedmont**
- Sister Shakeia Hampton, Central**



## Magazine Purpose

The founding members faced numerous challenges, including a lack of financial resources and limited support. However, their unwavering determination and resilience allowed them to overcome these obstacles and establish a strong foundation for our current achievements. Their efforts paved the way for our magazine's success and inspired future generations to carry on the vital mission of preserving memories.

Another purpose of this magazine is to highlight the contributions of members from each lay organization. Each of us is just one election away from potentially losing our opportunity to make an impact. That is why each president is encouraged to shine a light on their predecessor.

Brother Cleveland Frasier, Editor

## Acknowledgments



I am grateful to the members of the Seventh Episcopal District Lay Organization for giving me the opportunity to serve as the Historiographer of the organization. To fulfill the duties of this office, I have developed a magazine to highlight the efforts of various members of the lay organization and their contributions to enhancing and promoting the Laity. I especially want to thank the president for his hard work and support.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my wife, Valarie, for her support, as well as to Sister Pat Parker and Sister Sally Wilson for their contributions in editing portions of the magazine. A special thanks goes to Sister Brittany Pringle for designing the cover page.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge the Conference Historians for their effort and research in highlighting the individuals they wrote about.

Brother Cleveland Frasier

## Greetings: By the Late Brother Cleckley speaking to us from 2015

As I write this piece today, it is hard to believe that in a few days 2015 will come to a close. I believe the Lay Organization of South Carolina should be proud of our Ministry here in the Seventh District. We can't however, rest on our past



accomplishments. We must continue to press forward in the Spirit of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank God for this journey because if it had not been for him, who has been on our side every step of the way, we would not have been able to accomplish the things we have done. Just to name a few of our many successes in SC because of God's Blessings:

- Hosted two successful Connectional Executive Board Meetings
- Hosted our Annual Lay Retreat and JTW Mims Little Allen Stars Program
- Held a successful State Lay Convention with one of the largest attendance ever
- Hosted the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Global Lay organization with more than 3000 persons in attendance
- Participated with Allen University in their monthly CORDS Program
- Purchased two (2) Tables and made a \$15000.00 Contribution to the Allen University UNCF program in addition to donating \$20,000.00 to Allen University

In all of our Blessings and accomplishments we've had some difficult times this year...the loss of the Emanuel Nine, the historic flood, police killing our citizens, continued mass incarceration, under funding and educating of our children, many of our people not receiving the health care that they so rightly deserve because of the refusal from our Governor and Legislatures to accept and fully implement the Affordable Health Care Act (Obama Care) and so many of our citizens' (people of color) continued refusal to vote. Despite these difficulties God still has Blessed the Lay Ministry in South Carolina.

We thank God for his Mercy and Grace for allowing us, the Laity in South Carolina, to be able to sing his praises. However, we can't sit still we must be about our father's business as a Organization over the course of these next four years we must continue to:

- train our people on the AME Discipline with a focus on the Robert Rules of Order
- prepare our people for the coming General Conference and election of Bishops, General Officers, and proposed legislation that will affect our Church.
- encourage our Lay People to become more ACTIVE and VOCAL in the life of the Church
- encourage and continue to build on a positive relationship between the Clergy and Lay
- encourage transparency within all of our work in the church
- work hard in our Communities with Voter Registration, Voter Education and Voter turnout
- challenge Racism and Discrimination across the four corners our State

May God continue to bless the Seventh Episcopal District and our Church as we continue work as together as a team. "Not as man over man but as Laypersons working with God".

In the Spirit God,

Roger Cleckley, President

Seventh Episcopal District Lay Organization



**Brother James Brogdon Hilderbrand**  
**An Episcopal President**

He was born in Cameron, SC, one of ten children of the late Reverend Benjamin S. Hildebrand. He attended Lincoln High School in Sumter, SC. He earned his undergraduate degree from South Carolina State College. In Orangeburg, SC with a degree in horticulture, he obtained his master's degree from Penn State University in Educational Administration. His teaching career began in 1949 at Wilkerson High School, Orangeburg, SC. He was a veteran of World War II.



Brother Hilderbrand was a member at Campbell Chapel AME Church In Bluffton, SC.

Brother Hilderbrand served as one of the church's stewards at Campbell Chapel.

He was employed as a principal at Michael C Riley School in the fall of 1965. He began teaching Agriculture at Bluffton Grade School in 1953. Before his principalship in 1970, the schools in Bluffton were fully integrated and reorganized. MC Riley became an elementary school and Bluffton High School served as the lone high school. He became the principal of the elementary school and served until 1984. At the time of his retirement, he had completed 33 years in the field of education. He also served as Mayor Pro-Tem for the Township of Bluffton. A street is named in his honor, 'Hildebrand Dr.' which was parallel to the old MC Riley site.

**Brother James B. Hildebrand served as president of the Seventh District Lay Organization from 1979-1987.**

He ran and was elected president of the SEDLO in 1979. The election was held in the Columbia Conference at Bethel AME Church, which was located on Taylor Street at the time. When he ran, two other people ran for the same position. When Brother Hilderbrand was elected and installed as president, Bishop Frank M. Reid II, was the Bishop of the Seventh District, and his son Rev. Frank M. Reid III preached the Installation Service.

He was a member of the Hildebrand family. He was the brother of the late Bishop Richard Allen Hildebrand. Bishop Hildebrand was the 88th elected Bishop of the AME Church. Most of his brothers were either preachers or Presiding Elders. The Hilderbrand name dominated the General Conferences for years; however, nothing lasts forever.

Brother Hildebrand's style of leadership and past president JT Mims style of leadership were similar in that they both were educators.

Written by Brother Cleveland Frasier with help from Sister Delores Anderson and Brother Ralph James  
Edited by Sister Pat Parker

Even though Brother Hildebrand's siblings were ministers, he was a lay person. The 7th District leadership did not see him as a rebel lay leader. Brother Hildebrand won the lay organization election with the help of the late President Elizabeth Northerner of the Edisto District Lay Organization. Along with the South Carolina Conference Lay Organization, they were able to bring out the numbers.

When Brother Hildebrand became president, he changed the meeting format of the State's Lay Organization Meeting. It was a day's event closing out the next day. What was done on Friday was the business session

Friday night, a big banquet and Saturday morning closing with the Episcopal leader preaching.

What separated both men was the time between them. Brother Hildebrand was now the person for a new time.

What Brother Ralph James did was summarize some of the qualities of Brother James Hildebrand's leadership.

He offered respectful leadership.

He offered staple leadership.

He was respected by the clergy.

Also, he was respected by the lay members of the district.

His style of leadership offered the organization an opportunity for growth.

This made for great recruitment because everyone wanted to be a part of something that looks great

The outgoing Brother Hildebrand offered to the new President Ralph James to be prompt to have a plan;

- staying in touch with all of the church entities
- having an agenda to get everyone involved with the plan as my conversation with Brother Ralph James ends, the downside was that Brother James Hildebrand died two years after his tenure as president ended, but he felt blessed to have known him for that time.

Brother James Hildebrand was born September 3, 1919, and died September 2, 1989. He was married to the Late Carrie Wright Hilderbrand; they raised two foster sons.



## **Local President Sister Valarie Frasier Kingtree District**

Sister Valarie Frasier is the President of the Lay Organization at St. Peters AME Church in the Kingtree District of the Palmetto Conference. She is also a member of the Steward Board, a member of one of the choirs, and teaches Sunday School at her church. Sister Frasier is married to Brother Cleveland Frasier, and they have five children, nine grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Sister Frasier also served as president of the local Lay Organization at Bethel AME Church in Ravenel in the Edisto District and of the South Carolina Annual Conference. When Sister Frasier served as president at Bethel AME Church, Brother Leroy Lenin was the president of the Edisto District Lay Organization. Sister Frasier credits Sisters Green and Nedd for their support and influence on her when she was a local president in the Edisto District.

Sister Frasier felt that she was elected because of her eagerness to learn about the AME Church. President Leroy Linen appointed her to chair a Baby Contest Committee during her time in the Edisto District. At the end of the fundraising event, she thought it was extraordinarily successful, and THE CONTEST raised over \$2,000.00.

She would later move her membership from Bethel AME Church in Ravenel to St. Peters AME Church. Sister Frasier is currently the local president of the Lay Organization of this church. Since moving to the Kingtree District.

- She has served as Recording Secretary of the Palmetto Conference Lay Organization.
- She was a district officer under the late Sister Minnie Gibbs and past president Debra Darby.
- Later, Sister Frasier would serve as Director of Public Relations in President Keith's first four years as president.

Currently, in Kingtree District Lay Organization, she is the Corresponding Secretary, for the Kingtree District Lay Organization.

Since being active in the Lay Organization and the Palmetto Conference Lay Organization, she has accomplished the following.

- Has attended the General Conference many times as a delegate or alternate.
- Has attended the CLO Biennials as an Episcopal District Delegate, a Conference delegate, and a local delegate.

Sister Frasier is grateful for the opportunities that the lay organization has given her to be an active member of the AME Church.

**Sister Eliza Parker Linen.  
Local President at  
Nazareth AME Church  
Choppee Community, Georgetown, SC  
Palmetto Conference**

My name is Sister Eliza Parker Linen. I am a member of Nazareth AME Church (Choppee Community) Georgetown, SC. I am in the Georgetown District. I was elected as Local Lay President on September 24, 2023, at Nazareth AME Church located at 7817 Choppee Rd, Georgetown, SC 29440.

My Conference President is Sister Gloria A. McClam

My style as Lay President at Nazareth AME Church has not been developed yet. I still struggle but I thank God for guidance and reading The Doctrine and Discipline 2021.

I still have a lot to learn but continue praying and trusting God to direct my footsteps to do the best I can to learn and teach God's people.

Some of my Challenges as Lay President at Nazareth AME Church Choppee.

- Not knowing what the role was in the church as Lay President.
- Some of the myths concerning the Lay had us all confused about the Lay and its purpose in the church.
- I had heard about the Little Allen Star, but never participated in it or helped with it.

Noah Carr represents our Church and our District, so we needed to prepare him for the presentation at the Lay Retreat. We prayed and he gave an amazing performance.

My contribution to our local Lay Organization:

- I purchased the Lay Study Guide.
- I spoke with our Pastor concerning the Study Guide and the purpose of the guide.



He immediately said we would support the Lay Organization and allow the time for the teaching.

Well, I attended my first Lay Retreat at the Sheraton in Myrtle Beach SC. It was very informative, educational, and Spiritual.

Our First Lay Day at Nazareth was beautiful and God helped us to pull it together. We presented the three oldest ladies in our church with beautiful yellow Calla Lilies. Our Allen Little Star did his presentation again.

I am believing God for a better year and getting more done from the Study Guide this year. I think the Lay will always face some challenges because some people do not allow the teaching to be done. There are still a lot of myths concerning the Lay. We are supposed to work together and unite for Christ as one. So, I am not turning around. We will move forward for God together we can. 🙏 Amen



**Local Lay President  
2001 - 2009  
Sis. Lucille Batts**

**St. Paul AME Church, Little River, SC**

- Local Laymen League (name of the organization during her tenure) President 8 years
- Served as Chaplain for the Marion District Lay faithfully for eight years; 2001 - 2009
- Work of the Laymen League at St. Paul flourished during her tenure
- Supported the Layman League on all levels
- Received many awards from the church and Lay on various levels
- Organized the “Rainbow Banquet”, a successful fundraiser at her local church. This fundraiser continues to date
- She continues to remain a faithful member of the Lay Organization and the church
- Under her leadership as local Lay President, the church received many awards

**Florence District Lay President**

**1989-1997**

**The Late Bro. J. B. James**

**Bethel AME Church, Darlington, SC**

**Motto: “Plan Your Work, Work Your Plan”**

- The Florence District Lay Organization was thoroughly immersed in the study of the Bible, the Discipline, and the AME Hymnal
- The district was informed of the training from the Connectional and SED Lay Organizations.
- While leading the Florence District, Brother James stressed that each officer should study, learn, and serve in their position with vigorous zeal.
- District officers were encouraged to attend all meetings above the district level to enhance their knowledge of their position.
- He encouraged the local Lay Organizations to financially support their local Lay church representatives.
- He spoke on the importance of replenishing seasoned laity with new and young trained laity in order for the Lay Organization to keep growing.

Information submitted by Sis. Jackie Jackson

**Local Lay President  
1950 - 1960**

**The Late Bro. James (Jake) Hodge**

**New Ebenezer AME Church, Mullins, SC**

**Motto: “Under the Umbrella of CHRIST’S LOVE”**

- The Laymen’s League was the name of the organization during the tenure of Bro. James A. Hodge
- Served as Local Lay President and church secretary for many years
- Always gave a detailed Lay report, which included handouts from meetings he attended
- Was elected Treasurer during the administrations of Dillon District Presidents Charlie Bell Wilson and Lynwood Lewis
- Was elected NEC Lay Historiographer from 1985-1993 during the administration of Bro. Samuel A. Bradley, NEC Lay President
- Faithfully and consistently attended the following Lay meetings: Dillon District, NEC, SED, and Biennials. Bro. Hodge also attended the General Conferences.
- Under his leadership, several members from his church began attending Lay Meetings. Some were elected and appointed to various Lay positions.



**Sumter District Lay President  
2008 - 2016**

**Bro. Dale Wilson**

**Mt. Olive AME Church, Sumter, SC**

**“I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living (Psalms 27:13)**

- Hosted the Executive Board Planning Meeting held at Mt. Olive AMEC, Woodrow
- Hosted the District’s Allen Little Stars and The Lay Little Toddlers packed the pews at St. Luke AME Church

These two programs were successful.

Held elections, attended the Lay Biennial, our Annual Day Celebrations, and Oratorical Contest

featuring gifted high school seniors

- The Sumter District was well represented at the Lay Biennial which was held in Charleston, SC (2015)
- Attended the following Lay Meetings: SED: Post Conference, Lay Retreat, Allen Little Star, Leadership Congress. NEC: Lay it Out Session, Annual Lay Day, District: P/E Planning Meeting, Founder’s Day, Lay Day Worship Service

**The Sumter District is alive and well. It is our perpetual prayer that our steps are ordered by the Lord while knowing that it is His joy that is our strength. O taste and see.**

Information submitted by Sis. Betty W. Stevens



**Sister Agnes O. Alexander  
Past Recording Secretary  
Of the SCCLO**

Sister Agnes Alexander was deeply involved in her church, Mt. Zion AME Church in the Sugar Hill section of Hollywood, SC. She served her church admirably as the Lay Organization as Local Lay President, Usher President, Church Recording Secretary, and Steward.

Sister Agnes O. Alexander was a trailblazer for the Lay Ministry, making significant contributions from a young age. She joined the Lay Ministry early and held the position of Recording Secretary for the conference's lay organization she was an officer when the late Marion Brown was the president of the South Carolina Conference Lay Organization.

Traveling to many conventions with her children and adopted children, she became a mentor to many within the Lay Organization. Sister Alexander was also, the first Madam 7<sup>th</sup> coming from the Edisto District Lay Organization.

Sister Agnes Alexander answered her calling to preach the gospel and is now an ordained Local Elder at Mt. Zion AME Church in the Sugar Hill section of Hollywood, SC. In the South Carolina Annual Conference of the 7th Episcopal District. Her dedication and leadership have left a lasting impact on the church and community that she serves.

Sister Elizabeth Norther  
Edisto District



Sister Elizabeth Norther, a member of Mount Horr AMEC, was elected President of the Edisto District Lay Organization.

Sister Norther taught the organization to love and respect our church's rich history and the founder of the A.M.E. Church (Bishop Richard Allen). She served diligently until 1982.



## Brother Blease Spell Past District President of the Charleston District Lay Organization

Bro. Blease Spell became the local Lay representative after Bro. Brown. He served in this capacity for many years. In 1963 the Charleston District Lay Organization was organized with Bro. James Cato when he was appointed as its first President by Rev. B.

J. Hutchinson.

Bro. Spell was appointed its second president in 1968 by the Rev. H. B. Butler, the Presiding Elder of the Charleston District. He then organized Bethel's first Lay Organization and served as its president. He faithfully served in this position and represented Bethel Church at District, Conference, Annual, and General Conferences.

Bro. Spell functioned as the Lay voice of the Charleston District for 10 years. Additional persons who worked with Bro. Spell and Bro. Cato and the Lay Organization. They were: Sis. Carrie Aiken, Sis. Emily Alston, Sis. Florine Gladden, Sis. Edna Noisette, Sis. Madeline Reed, Bro. Wickman Reed and Sis. Magnolia Thomas all of Bethel Summerville, Bro. Jacob Banks and Isaiah Brown of St. Paul Harleyville, Mrs. Rachel Jenkins of Mt. Zion Harleyville, Mrs. Bertha Lisbon of Bethel Holly Hill, and Bro. Ralph James from Bethel St. George. Bro. Ralph James was often seen with Bro. Spell and spoke on his behalf on several occasions. The voice of the laypeople became stronger and stronger. The laypeople began to articulate the intricate circles of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Regular meetings took place and interest in serving was being expressed by others from the ranks of the laity.



**Sis. Delores F. James**  
**Past local President**  
**Bethel AME Church**



Sis. Delores James was elected Lay President in the Conference year 1990 under the pastorate of Rev. Joseph Myers. The following officers were elected to serve and installed by President Ralph James of the South Carolina Conference:

Lay persons of Bethel attended the District, Conference, and Episcopal meetings and voted in the elections of the Lay Organization on all levels. The annual program “Laymen in Royal Blue and White” with worship and praise headed by a member from the different organizations of the church testifying and followed by “Tag Team Preaching” by guess ministers and the “Penny -O -Meter Project” (collection of pennies for the college student fund). The Budget asking at this time was \$300 per year. Sis. Delores James funded and represented Bethel at the Charleston District Meetings, South Carolina Conference Lay Meetings, State Lay Conventions, and the Lay Biennial Conventions that were held in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Ohio, and Texas.

President	Sis. Delores James	Treasurer	Sis. Lou Ellen Boyd
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Sis. Gladys Gardner Moses	Financial Secretary	Sis. Linda Scott
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Bro. George Felder Jr. (Rev.)	Chaplin	Bro. Oscar Odom (Rev.)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice President	Bro. Blease Spells	Historiographer	Sis. Judy Britt
Recording Secretary	Sis. Doris Elmore	Director of Lay Activity	Sis. Samella Odom
Asst. Recording Secretary	Sis. Gloria Jean Elmore	Parliamentarian	Bro. Calvin Felder
Corresponding Secretary	Sis. Erma Brown	Advisor	Bro. Ralph James
Asst. Corresponding Secretary	Sis. Valencia Mackey		

During the pastorate of Rev. John Paul Brown, the Lay organization was granted the privilege to participate during the Sunday morning church service on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month in addition to the official Lay Day on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in April. This Tradition continued in the years that followed. During the year 1990 training was presented to the congregation in a monthly publication published by Sis. James with articles from the Connectional Lay Guide. Lay Envelopes were issued on second Sundays asking for a \$2 donation. The Lay and YPD switched their Sunday of participation days in April in observance of the traditional Connectional Lay Day on the fourth Sunday in April. The speaker for the Lay Day program was the President from the District, Conference, or Episcopal levels of the Lay Organization.

**Brother Raymond Seabrook**  
**Local President**  
**At White Hall**  
**2025**



My name is Raymond Seabrook. I am proud to serve as the president of White Hall AME Church Lay Organization and the second vice president of the Beaufort District Lay Organization. I am also a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather.

At White Hall, I wear several hats. In addition to my presidency, I am an active member of the usher board and the male choir.

My journey to the presidency began when Brother Field stepped down to care for his family. I saluted his efforts in rebuilding our organization, which provided me with a solid foundation upon which to build. Thanks to his dedication, I inherited a thriving organization, and I have since worked tirelessly to continue his legacy.

**Our esteemed members include** Sisters: Danny Mae James, Mary Cox, Ogleatha Fludd, Alice Manigo, Sylvia Aiken, Zenobia White, Lunetha Gary, Quanisha Chilsom, Belle Behling, Nicole Holmes, Brothers: David James, Charles Fraiser, Cleveland Fraiser, and Brother Micheal Lane, Sr.

I understand that this magazine aims to highlight the accomplishments of past leaders. However, I believe that my story is also important and deserving of recognition. If it is not shared now, it might never be told.

From the very beginning of my presidency, I have been learning valuable lessons in leadership within the AME Church. My commitment to our organization remains unwavering.

### **Lessons Learned**

- I began attending several district meetings and discovered that the district operated on a two-year budget cycle. Inspired by this, I aspired to implement a similar approach in our organization. However, I was informed that we did not need a budget as our organization did not pay one. Recognizing that their tenure was nearing its end, I decided to wait patiently.

- **Material Accessibility:** When materials were needed to advance our meetings, I was instructed to come to the church to make copies. This presented a challenge as I did not possess keys to the church or office. Despite this, I found ways to overcome this obstacle and successfully obtained the necessary materials.

### **Problem-Solving**

- I encountered several challenges, but I was able to navigate around each one effectively.

### **Understanding My Roles as President**

#### **Presidential Duties**

- Ensure that all meetings are properly scheduled.
- Represent the organization at all Official Board Meetings, Quarterly Conferences, District Lay Organization Meetings, and Conference Lay Organization Meetings.
- I know that I am an observer at any meetings above the district unless I hold a committee chairperson role.
- I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to lead and serve in our local Lay Organization at White Hall.

**Gil Alpha Walker**  
**President of Greenville District**

Born January 27, 1957 – Died May 6, 2012



Gil was educated in the Pickens County South Carolina school system and graduated from D.W. Daniel High School in Central, South Carolina.

He furthered his education by attending Forrest Junior College in Anderson, South Carolina.

Gil worked with Duke Power and Nutra Manufacturing.

Gil was a member of King’s Chapel AME Church in Pendleton, South Carolina where he held numerous titles such as Church School Teacher, Chairman Pro Tem of the Trustee Board, Christian Education Director, and President of the local Lay Organization. Other boards and auxiliaries to which he belonged included the Commission on Stewardship and Finance, the Church School Department, Resource Center staff member, the Sons of Allen, the Senior Choir, the Gospel Choir, the Men’s Choir, which he organized, and the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS).

Gil was also very active at the Greenville District and Piedmont Conference levels of the Seventh Episcopal District of the AME Church, serving as the Greenville District Lay Organization President, member of the Piedmont Conference Lay Organization (his love for the church and his desire for the AME community to be trained and to be loving Christians inspired him to become involved with the Lay Organization), member of the Richard Allen Banquet Committee, member of the Greenville Area Women’s Missionary Society, and a member of the Piedmont Conference Women’s Missionary Society, where he was named “Mr. Missionary” for his involvement and works. He often traveled across the state for various meetings, conventions, and annual conferences.

Also active in the community, Gil served as a board member of the Pendleton Community Center, Inc., the Alliance of Pendleton Area Churches (APAC), and the Anderson County NAACP. He was also an accomplished orator, and he enjoyed cooking.



## The morning after the Emanuel Nine



This is now December 19, 2015 a lot have happen since that awful night. Confronting evil is a way of life for the church but the church doesn't always know what evil looks like. II Corinthians 11:14 says that satan can hid in the light, he does not look like himself but have a different look. When you least expects he strikes. When the worshippers at Emanuel let that monster in their mist do you think they would have let him in if he looked like a monster? They would not have. In July what was meant for evil was turned into something else. Look at Genesis 46:7 because of his action an evil symbol was taken down in July of 2015.



This picture was taken June 1, 2015 at St. Peters AME Church North Charleston, SC

Reverend Clementa Pinckney is the tallest person in the picture.

I attended a meeting called by the Right Reverend Richard Franklin Norris Bishop of the Seventh Episcopal District to pray and talk about the shootings of nine AME members. This meeting took place in the Palmetto Annual Conference of the Mt. Pleasant District and Morris Brown AME Church was the host site. This church is also named after one of the bishops of the faith. There was standing room only as our Episcopal leaders discussed the terrorist attack on the denomination. Similar meetings were scheduled in several other places across the state of South Carolina.

Bishop Norris couldn't attend, because he had just received an organ transplant. Attending this meeting would have placed his health in jeopardy. He, I think, did a lot of the organizing efforts from his office. In addition, a video was shown on the site of the Seventh Episcopal District in which he is speaking to Episcopal District and letting the membership and the world know that we would not give in to fear and that we are still a praying church.

I attended this meeting because I wanted to hear firsthand how the Seventh Episcopal District leadership was handling these events as we move forward. I was quite impressed with the numbers of news organizations that were covering this first meeting, which was held at Morris Brown AME Church.

Four of the bishops of the faith were present during this meeting. They all shared that this attack will not make us weak, but will cause us to be stronger. The church doors will not be closed nor will we give up. I could identify leaders of other faiths present in addition to leaders from the AME Church. Business and political leaders were also at the gathering. All of the leaders were given a time to make comments.



One of the Presiding Elders prayed that the community would heal and that God would keep the church family under his protection.

< **Elder Novell Goff** Presiding Elder of the Edisto District informed us that the lone killer had been caught. While this is a part of the healing process, there is still a long way to go.



**Congressman James Clyburn** our congressman brought us a message from the President of the United States. It was a message of hope to families. He said the black church is the rock in our communities. The church is also built upon a rock; no acts of terrorism will move this rock. He quoted from a letter that the late Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. wrote while sitting in a jail during the struggle for equal rights: "in the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."





< **Mayor of Charleston, SC Joseph P. Riley** announced that a fund had been set up to aid Emanuel AME church and the nine victims.



< **The Governor of South Carolina Nikki Haley** said what has happened is not South Carolina, but what's happening now reflects the value of the state. If this can happen in a church, we have a lot of praying to do. She also, spoke about the nine families



< **Dr. Juenarrl Keith** speaking on behalf of Bishop Richard Franklin Norris



< **Bishop David Daniel** sharing his feeling about the events June 17, 2015



< **Bishop Julius H. McAllister**, President of the Council of Bishops, spoke about his relationship with Reverend Pinckney. He also, stated that when the members were attacked they were studying God's words. He believed the persons that were studying felt that they were in a Holy Place.



< **The Senior Bishop of the Church The Right Reverend Bishop John Richard Bryant** said what happened is terrorism and asked what is the purpose of terrorism? Its purpose is to bring confusion and destruction. The young man picked the wrong place. Emanuel AME Church is on Holy Ground. We all know about the trials that the church has gone through. We know that the church is accustomed to terror, because Jesus was nailed to a cross. The AME Church and Emanuel will survive. There is now violence in the church. The problem the church and the streets have in common is guns. He is concerned that our politicians are giving rights to gun owners.

We must break this cycle.



## Sister Cynthia Toland Past District President



My experience being the past Newberry District President is one that I will always remember. As I sit here and reflect over the years, it's becoming more apparent to me what this position meant to me on a personal and professional level. The position enhanced my growth, and my skill set as a whole, but most of all maturity. Being a president prepared me for so much more than I would ever imagine. Who would have thought that I would be able to take this leadership skill that I obtained in my day-to-day life? I can remember when I would have monthly meetings, I always found myself being nervous, but after serving for a few years I found that nervousness somewhat disappeared, and now I find myself speaking with no problem. There were a few times when I felt this was not for me, but the one thing that kept me grounded was knowing that God had placed me in this position for a reason, so that made me more conscious of my decision-making. The position of president forced me to think about something bigger than myself.

As the District President, I felt like the spotlight was on me and people would always come up to me or call me with questions, which gave me a better understanding of how my actions and my words impacted others. which now meant (remove) I had to be selfless and make all decisions in the best interest of the organization.

I now understand how to better appreciate those in similar positions and how to better assist them in their roles even if that just means showing up when I am asked.

I must admit it has not always been easy. There were times I felt like I had bitten off more than I could chew. In my mind, I could hear God saying, "I will not put more on you than you can bear". That is what gave me the strength to keep on striving. When it's all said and done, I will not take anything for my journey. Being the past Newberry District President of the Lay Organization is a position I will always cherish.



**Sister Genell E. Ruff**  
**Past District President**  
**Newberry District**

Sister Genell Ruff, a retired florist and lifelong resident of Newberry, SC was indeed one of Newberry County's most distinguished citizens. She served as chairperson of the Newberry County Council on Aging and was an Official at Ward Sixth Democratic Precinct.

She was an active member on the Local, District, Conference, Episcopal, and Connectional levels of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Moreover, she was a devoted member of Pleasant Grove AME Church in Newberry, where she served unselfishly and with distinction as Chairperson Pro Tem of the Steward Board, Class Leader, WMS President, and Church Treasurer. Additionally, she served as Church Secretary for more than forty years. On the district level, she served faithfully as President of the Newberry District Lay Organization and Finance Committee for more than 30 years.

Miss Ruff was a member of the Columbia Conference WMS nominating committee; Torch Lighter; Life Member; Lay Organization; Treasurer; Advisor and Trustee. In addition, she served as Vice President of the 7th Episcopal Lay Organization for twenty-five years and was a delegate to the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

**Sister Wendy M. Bouknight**  
**Columbia Conference Lay Historiographer**



Wendy has been a member of Trinity AME Church since the age of five. Growing up in the African American Episcopal Church of Trinity, Wendy has served on many levels in the church, such as Class Leader, Trustee Board, Stewardess Board, Financial Secretary of local WMS, and Christian Educator.

Wendy is currently serving in different areas of the district and conference levels. She is currently serving on the Newberry District Women's Missionary Society as Third Vice President. She also serves as the Historiographer in the Newberry District and the Columbia Conference Lay Organization.

It has been an honor to be in these positions to grow and learn what it is to be a part of the Seventh Episcopal District in AME Church.

# Notes

