



The Second Episcopal District of the AME Church under the leadership of our dynamic leaders *Bishop Adam Jefferson Richardson, Jr., Mrs. Connie Speights Richardson, Episcopal Supervisor, Presiding Elders' Rev. Dr. Earle M. Brooks, and Rev. Ernest L. Montague*, made history as we . Convene the 193<sup>rd</sup> session of the Baltimore Annual Conference, the oldest conference in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District. This year's annual conference was held On March 30-April 4, 2009, and hosted by five of the churches in our conference, *Payne Memorial AMEC, Rev. Dr. A. Qismat Alim Co-Host Pastor, Ebenezer AMEC, Rev. Charles A. Baugh Co-Host Pastor, Shiloh AMEC, Rev. Charlotte Clemons, Co-Host Pastor , Immanuel Temple AMEC, Rev. Rodrecus M. Johnson, Sr. Co-Host Pastor and, Grace AMEC, Rev. Howard C. Wright Co-Host Pastor*. The conference was held at Empowerment Temple A.M.E. Church, 4217 Primrose Avenue, in Baltimore where Dr. Jamal H. Bryant is the Pastor. The week included worships services, workshops, seminars, and ordination of ministers. Over one- thousand pastors, laypersons and youth from all over Maryland were in attendance. What a glorious, spirit filled week! But, I have to say that the highlight of the conference was the Lay Commitment Worship Service held on Thursday, April 2, 2009. *GOD OUR FATHER, CHRIST OUR REDEEMER, THE HOLY SPIRIT OUR COMFORTER, HUMANKIND OUR FAMILY" was the sentiment throughout the service*. Embracing the Connectional Lay Organization theme "Sowing Seeds beyond the Walls: A Rear-View Mirror Glimpse", four outstanding lay trailblazers were honored for their respective roles in organizing and sustaining the Lay Organization of the Baltimore Annual Conference.

The mode of worship and presentation of the honorees engaged young lay members who presented the lay veterans. The young people told of the struggles experienced by their elder laity and of how their respective legacies had inspired them in the springtime of life to model the faith, persistence and commitment to Christian values and to the community of Christians who are our brethren. The young people articulated lives of great sacrifice, vision, and determination to uphold the banner of African Methodism as having provided the path to valued lives that have made a difference for others.

Further engagement in the presentation of the importance of the church to their lives was powerfully demonstrated in song; renditions of the favorite hymns of the honorees were sung by four ordained ministers of the Conference. Those hymns, over the times of the lives of the honorees, had a significant place in affirming these honorees and sustaining them through the challenges and triumphs of life.

The honorees included: Mrs. Sonora White Johnson, President of the Lay Organization at Trinity A.M.E. Church, Baltimore; Mr. William Eugene Chapman, President of the Lay Organization at Hosanna A.M. E. Church in Darlington, MD; Mr. Amos Harvey, former President of the Lay Organization at Mt Zion A.M.E. Church, Long Green, Mad; and Mr. Mack B. Simpson, Jr., former President of the Baltimore Annual Conference Lay Organization and member of St. John A.M.E. Church, Baltimore, Md. Ms. Brandi Bell, a member of Evergreen A.M.E. Church, presented Mrs. Johnson and Rev. Cordell Hunter sang "It Is Well with My Soul", Mrs. Johnson's favorite hymn, which spoke about her unwavering faith in God. Mr. Christian Savage, member of Shiloh A.M.E. Church, presented the life of Mr. Harvey and Rev. Edward C. Wilson, Presiding Elder Emeritus, sang "How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours in honor of Mr. Harvey's faith and steadfast service. Ms. India Somerville, a member of the Empowerment Temple, presented Mr. Chapman and Rev. Nathaniel Batty, sang *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*". Ms. China Wilson, a member of the Empowerment Temple A.M.E. Church presented Mr. Simpson and Rev. Anthony Radcliff gave a great rendition of "Pass Me Not Oh Gentle Savior", Mr. Simpson's favorite hymn.

Throughout the presentation, the significance of the collaboration between the young and senior laity along with the clergy participation was impacted as a very spirited partnership in articulating the importance of Clergy, Youth and Laity working together in our great Zion.

THE 2009 DAVIS/McKINNEY and KITTRELL-ALLEN-ADAMS SCHOLARSHIP were awarded to 12 students from various churches in the conference by Mrs. Beatrice Avery BCLO Scholarship Chairperson of Ebenezer A.M.E. Church, and her committee. SPEAKING on behalf of the 2008 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS was Ms. Rachel Wills from St. Stephens AMEC, Essex.

The scripting and direction for the collaborative presentation was coordinated and directed by Jean Wilson Richie, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of the BCLO. The Commentator for the presentation was Mr. Cory Seward; member of Shiloh AME, Pauline Watson, Shiloh AMEC, one of the Host churches was the Worship Leader for the Lay Commitment Service. The Program Committee members that made this all possible were: ZILPHA P. SMITH, CHAIRPERSON, JEAN WILSON RICHIE, ERIKA McCLAMMY CHARLES E. JONES, II, PAULINE WATSON, JACQUELYN HULL, SONORA W. JOHNSON, WILLIAM E. CHAPMAN, SR, PRISCILLA SMOTHERS AND LeOTHA HULL. MUSIC CHAIRPERSON WAS CHARLES JONES.

In addition to the Spirit Filled Lay Witness Night on Thursday, the Baltimore Conference Lay Organization hosted "The Great Debaters" at the Lay Breakfast and Seminar on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The topic of the debate was "Praise the Lord! We Have Overcome...Or Have We? Is Affirmative Action Still Needed?" The topic was especially timely considering this country has witnessed female secretaries of state, female and African American Supreme Court Justices, and the first African American elected as President of the United States. Many racial barriers have come down and glass ceilings have been shattered. Has the time come to reshape or eliminate affirmative action? Teams representing three churches presented different viewpoints arguing for or against affirmative action. Teams had several weeks to prepare for the debate and it gave Lay Organizations to involve young people as this topic will surely affect their future. Lay members from across the conference attended the breakfast and churches represented in the debate included Adams Chapel AME Church (Baltimore), Empowerment Temple AME Church (Baltimore) and an all-youth team from Mt. Calvary AME Church (Towson). Debates were serious and at times humorous with each team presenting for five minutes followed by rebuttals. Teams for and against affirmative action also gave biblical foundation for their position. During the final rebuttal session, lay members in the audience had the opportunity to share their personal stories of the difficulties many encountered with school desegregation and racism in the workplace. The Seminar provided a time for Lay persons to recall our history as Africans in America, *rejoice in the faith that the dark past has taught us, rejoice in the hope that the present has brought us and face the rising sun of our new day begun.* Kudos to Erika McClammy, DOLA, for a wonderful presentation,

The Baltimore Conference Lay Organization had its inception in the year of 1956 during the tenure of Bishop D. Ward Nichols. Bishop Nichols appointed Mrs. Clara E. Harris as president. Therefore, Mrs. Harris was the first official president of the Baltimore Conference Lay Organization. Under her leadership, Lay Organizations were established at ten Baltimore churches and began to grow throughout the conference from that time on. Today under the leadership of *Mr. Steven L. Armstrong, Baltimore Conference Lay President, the struggle continues ...to improve and empower lay participation throughout the Baltimore Annual Conference.*

#### TEAM FROM MT CALVERY AMEC FOR THE GREAT DEBATERS

