



AAMHC *Journal*

African American Methodist Heritage Center



From left to right: Bishop Forreest C. Stith, Bishop Warner Brown and Bishop Marcus Matthews. Image courtesy of the Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church.

REMEMBERING, REJOICING & RENEWING

The Washington Conference Remembered

After months of planning, the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the founding of the Washington Conference came to fruition. The celebration of "Remembering, Rejoicing and Renewing" was held on Saturday, October 18, 2014 at Martin's West in Baltimore, Maryland. Before the program began, nearly four hundred persons arrived from near and far. They hugged, kissed and told stories of past days. It was a grand reunion.

"The Washington Conference of Colored Members" was formed 150 years ago to give black Methodist people their own governance for their own Methodist churches. The first session of the new Conference met from October 17, 1864 – October 31, 1864 at Sharp Street Station Church in Baltimore, MD. The next day, November 1, 1864, slavery ended in the state of Maryland. The Conference included churches in "Western Maryland, the District of Columbia and the territory south." The territory south designation covered churches located in Virginia. Within three years, the Conference had grown to 14,261 members and by 1874 it had grown to 24,272 members.

Rev. Cary James, pastor of the historic Sharp Street United Methodist Church, Baltimore, Maryland, hosted the event. Others who participated were Bishop Forreest C. Stith, retired, and President Emeritus of the African American Methodist Heritage Center; Bishop Marcus Matthews, the current Bishop of the Baltimore Washington Conference (Washington Area); and the guest speaker, Bishop Warner Brown, Jr., San Francisco Area and President of the Council of Bishops. Bishop Brown is a local "son of the church." He grew up in the Washington Conference, where he first felt the call to ministry.

Barbara Ricks Thompson, President of the African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC), led the group in a meaningful litany written for the event by Bishop Forreest C Stith. Barbara served as one of the last presidents of the Washington Conference Methodist Youth Fellowship. She remembers the many youth activities that were available. "We attended the summer Youth Institute at Morgan College," she recalled, and "We participated in week long retreats at camps. We travelled by car to various events, even cross country. We attended inter-racial events as fraternal delegates, so that the white youth could meet and learn about Black people and that we were a part of God's creation."

The actual ledger book which recorded the early minutes of the first sessions and other items were displayed by Robert Shindler, director of the Lovely Lane Museum. Artifacts from Sharp Street UMC were displayed by Dorothy Daughtery, Historian. *(Story continued on next page)*

Write

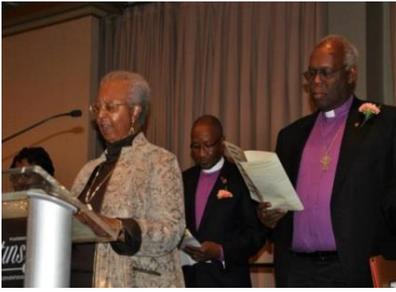
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Barbara Thompson, Bishop Marcus Matthews, Bishop Warner Brown.

Items from the African American Methodist Heritage Center were displayed by Carol Travis, Executive Assistant. Stories of the beginning of Asbury UMC in Washington, DC were displayed by Lonise Robinson, retired Historian. The highlight of the afternoon was the powerful message delivered by Bishop Brown. He reminded us that "our history gives us lessons for how to prepare for, and live, into the future."

- Lonise Robinson, Anniversary Planning Committee

AAMHC PARTNERS WITH CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY

South Carolina's Contributions Highlighted

The African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC) partnered with Claflin University to support the establishment of an archival site on the Orangeburg, South Carolina campus. With an initial grant from the AAMHC, the archival site will seek to document the presence and contributions of South Carolina African Americans to Methodism. With one of the largest populations of African American United



Dr. Henry Tisdale, Claflin President; Rev. Dr. Joe Wilson; Ms Marilyn Gibbes, Claflin Librarian; Rev. Whittaker Middleton, Claflin Vice President. Image courtesy of Claflin University.

Methodists, South Carolina has given its sons and daughters to serve Methodism throughout the United States. It has contributed outstanding pastors, Bishops, laity and church officials throughout the connection.

Claflin University is a preeminent Methodist-affiliated university which has nurtured many of the Methodist clergy who have provided leadership to congregations within South Carolina and throughout the denomination. Under the leadership of President Henry Tisdale, Claflin is recognized nationally as a

The African American Methodist Heritage Center is a ministry related to the United Methodist Church. It views the church and its ministry in retrospect and prospect. The AAMHC seeks to learn and appropriate the past as informant and bridge to a more faithful and effective future. It envisions its work as gatherer and conservator of the vital history and heritage of Black people in the successive Methodist bodies from the Methodist Episcopal Church, to being racially segregated in the Central Jurisdiction to the United Methodist Church in the American and global society. Recognition of both the struggle and contributions

preeminent institution of academic excellence, research and community service. Most recently it was cited by U. S. News and World Report as one of the nation's best values in higher education amongst liberal arts institutions.

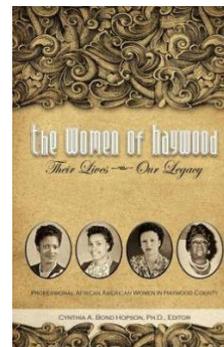
The Claflin site will display portraits of four native African American Bishops who have served Methodism. It will also include historic photographs of clergy and lay training sessions at Claflin and throughout the state, that were designed to train and equip local church leaders for leadership roles in local congregations and civil rights activities. It will also be available as an orientation resource and training site for Methodist clergy and others.

Efforts are ongoing to secure collections of memorabilia and writings relative to the African American experience and Methodism in South Carolina. The site is expected to serve as a place where historic writings and memorabilia can be gathered, preserved, and archived in one location so that all can come, see, and witness how God has protected and delivered the faithful as they sought to advance despite the state's tumultuous history. The site is intended to celebrate and educate all regarding the long and arduous journey of local African American Methodists, despite enormous odds, and their victories with the aid of a mighty God.

Meetings have been held with an AAMHC Board member and with elders in and about the state to secure documents, photographs, and additional support for the Claflin--AAMHC Site and its work. Contact and supportive discussions have been held with the Resident Bishop of the South Carolina Annual Conference, the President of Claflin, and Claflin's Vice President of Institutional Development.

Persons wishing to support this ongoing effort may forward donations to Rev. Whittaker Middleton, Vice-President for Institutional Development, Claflin University, 400 Magnolia Street, Orangeburg, SC 29115 (803-535-5000). For more information contact Rev. Joe Wilson, 803-348-3821.

- Rev. Joe Wilson, Board member, AAMHC, Joe3189@gmail.com



AAMHC BOARD MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Awards, Appointments & More

Board Member **Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopson** has just released her 7th book, *The Women of Haywood: Their Lives - Our Legacy*, an oral history project which tells the stories of four women in Haywood County, Tennessee. The book is available in digital and print format from Amazon.

Cecelia Long, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, retired as Executive Director of Mercy Manor Transitional Housing Program for homeless women with histories of addiction and abuse, in Dayton, Ohio.

Board member **John Wright** has been appointed to a nine member commission by the Governor and approved by the Senate of Missouri, to oversee and approve new charter schools for the state. The commission, one of the five sponsored by the state, will serve as sponsors for any school district seeking a charter school operation.

Member Emeritus, **Anne Fleming Williams** received the Belle Harris Bennett award from Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, TN for her life of dedicated leadership in her local church, in The Black Methodists for Church Renewal caucus, and in the Eastern PA Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women. The award was given in December 2014.



REV. FRED DAY JOINS AAMHC

Looking to the Future

Rev. Fred Day, General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History, has joined the Board of Trustees of the African American Methodist Heritage Center. A full Elder in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference since 1975, Day led St. George's, a Methodist Heritage Landmark, for nine years. While at St. George's, Day joined the Rev. Mark Tyler, pastor of Philadelphia's Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, in organizing two "Great Gatherings" that have brought the two congregations together in reconciliation for the mistreatment and well-known departure of Rev. Richard Allen and other African Americans due to racial discrimination in 1793. Allen went on to establish Mother Bethel and to become the first bishop of the AME denomination.

Expressing "joy" for his new challenge, Day quoted former General Secretary Robert Williams' description of the commission's work as the "ministry of memory". "One of history's traps is a backward focus: collecting old stuff without taking in present surroundings, not to mention what's coming down the road. The work of history is joining past and present to set the course for what lies ahead." We look forward to working with Fred in the years to come.

- Excerpted from article by John W. Coleman, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Communications Director

of African Americans has ebbed and flowed over the past approximately 275 years. The AAMHC ministry is to help ensure that accurate representation of that story is preserved and examined.

Board of Trustees:

Rev. Dr. Gilbert Caldwell, Ms. Angella Current Felder, Rev. Fred Day, Rev. Dr. James Ferree, Rev. Dr. John Heyward, Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopson, Rev. Rita Howard, Ms. Ruth Lawson, Ms. Cecelia Long, Mr. Donald Lusk, Rev. Dr. Walter McKelvey, Mr. Archie Moore, Dr. Arnold Parks, Rev. Dr. Cornish Rogers, Rev. Dr. James Shopshire, Ms. Barbara Ricks Thompson,



WAKE-UP CALL!

Four Things You Cannot Recover

Several years ago I received this message via e-mail:

Four Things You Cannot Recover:

- * **The stone after the throw**
- * **The word after it is said**
- * **The occasion after it is missed**
- * **The time after it is gone**

My response was "How true!" But when I read this recently I thought to myself "If that message is really true, why am I wasting my time working with the African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC)?

What a wake-up call.

I believe our challenge is to recover what some people might consider not recoverable. We want to recover the stories of our ancestors' struggles in Methodism. We want to recover the writings of our people who guided us through the difficulties of the past into the possibilities of today. We want to recover the joys and dreams of our prophets who inspired us to persevere. Because we believe many things can be recovered, we press on in pursuit of our mission.

During the year 2014, AAMHC sought to enhance our ministry by strengthening our infrastructure and by connecting and communicating with our constituency. We realigned the membership of the Board of Trustees to make greater utilization of the resources available through our relationships with the United Methodist Church agencies. We established a relationship with the United Methodist Church Development Center. We employed, on a part-time basis, an Executive Assistant.

In 2014 we began to issue *The AAMHC Journal*, an electronic publication designed to communicate with our constituency on a regular basis. Our goal is to publish it at least three times a year and to send it to everyone for whom we can get an e-mail address. We hope that people who receive it will forward it on to others, and at the same time share with us the e-mail addresses of people to be added to the mailing list. We regret that cost prohibits making this a publication sent through the US Postal Service. We want this to be a way to share with people the information we have been able to recover about the participation of African Americans in the life of Methodism. We want to share ideas that local churches may use to recover, preserve and share their histories. We have a rich story to tell to the world.

Also in 2014 we were fortunate to be able to add to the collection of memorabilia of our African American history makers such as Bishop Leontine Kelly, Rev. David Dewitt Turpeau and Mr. William Jason Jr. We encourage everyone to consider sharing your documents and materials for preservation with AAMHC.

But remember, the most important element is that the history be preserved whether in the AAMHC facilities or other archival facilities. We want "preservation" to be our guidance, not just possession by AAMHC.

In the year 2015 we anticipate continuing the publication of *The AAMHC Journal*. We invite readers to send in or suggest articles for inclusion in the Journal. Send suggestions to aamhc@aol.com. Also, send in addresses of people to be added to the mailing list.

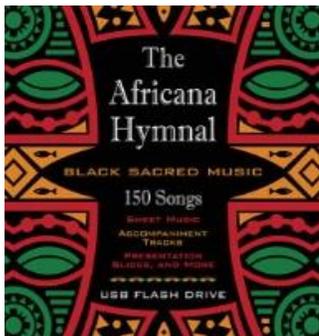
We anticipate beginning in 2015 an oral history project to capture the memories and experiences of stalwart Methodists who are living through history into the future. Then we will not have to worry about "recovering" the words we have already preserved.

One of our greatest challenges during the coming years will be in establishing a firm financial base for the ministry of AAMHC. We will be seeking more financial support from our constituency, especially the African American members of the United Methodist Church. The General Conference, through the General commission on Archives and History, has provided a grant during the current quadrennium that provides the major support to underwrite our ministry. Donations from supporters also help. However, we will face a great challenge in obtaining funding from the 2016 General Conference.

During 2015 we will be more proactive in seeking financial support with the help of the United Methodist Development Center. We encourage contributions to the ministry by sending checks payable to AAMHC, 36 Madison Ave, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 09740.

We hope that during the year 2015 we will continue to recover for posterity the words that have been spoken, the occasions that have been missed and the memories that are cherished. This is the challenge we must rise to meet. We can do it!

- Barbara Ricks Thompson, President,
AAMHC, Beerix@aol.com



The documentary was recently honored at a Regional Chapter of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) at the 20th Annual MidSouth Regional Emmy Awards show held in Nashville, TN.

SUPPORT THE AFRICANA HYMNAL PROJECT

*Give the Gift
of Sacred Black
Music*

The General Board
of Discipleship and
the United Methodist

Publishing House were authorized by the 2008 United Methodist General Conference to determine if the need exists for an official United Methodist hymnal for people of African descent worshipping in United Methodist

churches in the United States. The 2012 General Conference authorized the two agencies to develop a multimedia DVD/CD music and worship resource series to serve as a bridge between traditional and emerging music and worship practices in Black United Methodist congregations.

The AFRICANA HYMNAL PROJECT began in November 2012 when the two agencies partnered with the study committee of 2008 to produce three products to enhance the vitality of music/worship/study in Black congregations across North America.

The first product features the three historic forms of music that are deeply rooted in the Black worship experience. The DVD captures Ring Shout/Prayer Band, Long-Metered and Negro Spirituals. These worship songs have sustained African American Methodists for generations and were the incubator for jazz, gospel, rap, hip hop and other styles of music that are now the norm in Christian and secular arenas today.

The Study Guide is the second product that congregations can use in small groups to go deeper into understanding the origins of the historic genres of music brought from Mother Africa to the shores of America many centuries ago, as well as the liberating/freedom songs born out of pain and injustice at the end of slavery through the 1950's and 1960's civil rights marches and protests.

The third product focuses on songs that the study and work groups determined were the most significant findings from the study. The importance of music in the worship service and the desire for more congregational singing were ranked high in 90 percent of those who responded to surveys. The range of music crosses generations and includes the songs from the DVD, hymns, rap and hip hop Christian music through the vehicle of a USB Flash Drive.

The AFRICANA Hymnal Project, "Reflect, Reclaim, Rejoice," is a resource for the Black church as well as the entire Methodist church. In addition, other Christian denominations across the world will appreciate the depth and breadth of these products for years to come.

For more information regarding the study materials visit www.gbod.org/africanahymnalstudy.

To purchase the DVD, Study Guide and USB Flash Drive, contact from the following outlets:
www.upperroom.org/bookstore; (800) 972- 0433 or
www.cokesbury.com; (800) 672-1789.

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