



A NEW DAY!
General Conference 2021
A Glimpse From My Humble Perspective
By: Rev. Shirley D. Heermance

As we all know the 51st General Conference Session of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was held a whole year later than originally to be. The COVID-19 pandemic literally changed our world's circumstances, and the in-person restrictions prevented the global A.M.E. Church from assembling to do the work of the 51st Quadrennial Session as sequentially it should have. Without reiterating the perils of 2020, I will simply say our amazing Church found a way to hold the 51st Quadrennial session during the week of July 6-10, 2021, in Orlando, Florida.

So much work went into the preliminary working to prepare the general church, beyond the usual. Much of what was needed to ensure the maximum connection and communication was achieved through AME GC2020 and Episcopal District apps. The AME Connect gave access to activity feeds, GC daily news, the schedule, the mall, speakers, reports, legislation and etc. The 5th District app kept the whole district informed and connected as we moved through the daily endeavors. Because I'm writing this in hind-site I want to inject here however the extreme loss I felt at not experiencing (in person) the usual crowds, not seeing people I've come accustomed to seeing from across the globe, because of the hybrid meeting spaces which were also prepared for the safety of all the attendees.



The complexities of holding the 51st General Conference were not overcome without obvious challenges. Still the complications were met with serious resolve whenever possible. In my humble opinion the technical teams that connected us from meeting room to meeting room and across the globe were exceptional. Though I am hopeful the 52nd session will be held in person, I am truly grateful for the experiences afforded our Zion both in person and virtually.

As I noted earlier each Episcopal District met in our individual hybrid meeting spaces. Every day we were required to go through a health check before we could enter into the meeting space. Each day a temperature check was taken, and during the day a well check questionnaire was placed on our cell phones to be completed. Bishop Fugh provided for the 5th District an Oatmeal breakfast bar, supplied with fruits, nuts, muffins, and a variety of other goodies along with coffee, water, and tea. Needless to say it was well received by most, and a perfect way to start the day. Followed by the morning worship service that was entitled “Morning Manna.”

Due to the sacrifices made by many of our original elected delegates who, for whatever their personal reasons did not attend the General Conference, the remaining delegates and alternates were elevated in position. I trust that we are all in agreeance that the Midwest Delegation served diligently. The Alternate delegates (both clergy and lay) were ever attentive to ensure our delegation was always fully staffed. The legislation was made available via app and voting apparatuses were used for most elections.



The Midwest, as each Conference, was socially distanced, as you can see. The Alternates sat behind and the Observers met in the Convention Center in a designated meeting room.

Members from the Fifth Episcopal District were elected to various leadership connectional roles. The Rev. Dr. Edgar Boyd, as always, served as an excellent leader for the Mighty 5th. He navigated throughout the conference, articulating the wishes and concerns of the district.



Happy to announce that the Rev. Dr. Harold Mayberry was re-elected to serve as the Episcopal Committee Chairperson for the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Rev. Mayberry also serves as Presiding Elder of the California Conference.

Happy to announce that Sister Monice Crawford was elected as Lay Alternate to the Judicial Council of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Sister Crawford is a member of the Historic St. Mark's AME Church/Topeka, KS - Midwest Conference



Happy to announce that The Rev. Dr. Francine Brookins was elected the 141st Bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Brookins was the former pastor of the Bethel AME Church in Fontana, California, and is also a licensed attorney. Bishop Brookins will serve the 18th Episcopal District and is the fifth woman elected bishop in the AME Church.

Please enjoy the following articles.

FOUR NEW BISHOPS

July 12, 2021

By

[Kathryn Post](#)



Four new bishops were elected to the African Methodist Episcopal Church on Saturday (July 10), the final day of the denomination's General Conference in Orlando, Florida. Four general officers and two judicial council members were also elected. The Rev. Francine A. Brookins is the first biracial bishop to be elected, and Advocate Thabile M. Ngubeni is

the first African lay person elected by the General Conference to hold any office.

Also elected bishop was the Rev. Dr. Silvester Scott Beaman, pastor of Bethel AME Church in Wilmington, Delaware, who delivered the benediction at President Biden's inauguration. He will serve the 15th Episcopal District, which includes Western South Africa, Namibia, and Angola.

The other bishops elected are the Rev. Marvin Clyde Zanders II, pastor of St. Paul AME Church in Jacksonville, Florida, and the Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Wright Sr., pastor of Quinn Chapel in Cincinnati, Ohio. They will serve the 16th District (Caribbean, South America, and Europe) and the 20th District (Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Uganda), respectively.

Brookins is pastor of Bethel AME Church in Fontana, California, and is also a licensed attorney. Her father was the late Bishop Hamel Hartford Brookins, known for his role in the civil rights movement. She also ran for bishop in 2016 but was unsuccessful. She will serve the 18th District, which includes Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, and a portion of Mozambique. She is the fifth woman elected bishop in the AME Church.

AME Church bishops address COVID-19, critical race theory as major meeting opens

‘We acknowledge the current controversy around Critical Race Theory and acknowledge that healing can only begin when the traumas of the past are recognized,’ the bishops said.



Bishop Anne Byfield, front right, president of the Council of Bishops, speaks during the opening worship service at the African Methodist Episcopal Church conference July 6, 2021, in Orlando, Florida. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

July 6, 2021

By [Adelle M. Banks](#)

(RNS) — The bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church opened their denomination’s major meeting — a year after it was delayed due to the coronavirus — with a call for greater worldwide access to COVID-19 vaccines and testing.

“Joining our ecumenical and interfaith partners, we call on the United States government to expedite equity in global vaccinations,” they said in a Tuesday (July 6) statement released during a news conference at the start of their General Conference. They cited “the desperate need of COVID testing and vaccine resources” in regions outside the United States such as Africa, India, and the Caribbean.

The five day-meeting in Orlando, Florida, included recorded messages from President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. Attendees considered proposed legislation that included repealing the denomination's ban on same-sex marriage, also addressed critical race theory, an academic theory about systemic racism, in a global context. "We acknowledge the current controversy around Critical Race Theory and acknowledge that healing can only begin when the traumas of the past are recognized," the bishops said.

The AME bishops also highlighted a congregation and a deaconess affiliated with their denomination who have worked to draw national attention to events in Black history related to slavery and its aftermath. They saluted Opal Lee of Fort Worth, Texas, who made symbolic marches to seek a holiday marking June 19, 1865, when enslaved Black people in her state learned they were free – two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The bishops expressed their support for a reparations bill for the massacre and apology to the three remaining survivors and the descendants of those who were killed. "Joining with Vernon Chapel AME, the only landmark that survived the massacre, our commitment is to make it the law of the land," they said. "Reparations is a solution."

The bishops also expressed their support for other legislation related to voting rights, quoting the namesake of the proposed John Lewis Voting Rights Act. "Especially in the wake of the recent Supreme Court decision essentially gutting the remaining protections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act," they said, "The AME Church must take a public position, and get into 'good trouble,' thus helping to ensure that there is authentic voter integrity and protection of every person's right to vote."



Retiring Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, first AME Church woman prelate was the opening preacher for the 51st annual African Methodist Episcopal General Conference and retired this year. Also retired this General Conference Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram. The Church also acknowledge the late Bishop McKinley Young.

This General Conference reminded me how much I love the African Methodist Episcopal Church. That's not to say that I agree with everything, or that the week was "picture perfect." But with every debate, victory, and/or defeat I simply found myself more appreciative of God choosing for me to serve Him through the AME Church faith community.

Please let me remind you that the Christian recorder is an excellent resource to get greater details about the General Conference. If you do not subscribe to the Christian Recorder I promise that you are missing the opportunity to read a first-rate paper that is informative and essential to all AMEs.

I apologize to the Midwest Conference Delegates and Alternate Delegates for not putting your individual pictures in this article. They all turned out great, and I'm going to do my best at getting you a copy for your GC2020 memorabilia.

I cannot conclude this endeavor without acknowledging The Rev. Dr. Karla Cooper who ran an excellent campaign for Executive Director of Global Witness and Ministry. Though she did not acquire enough votes to gain the seat, for a first run, Rev. Cooper results were exceptional. We look forward to her connectional leadership in the future.

Also I want to thank Presiding Elder Cary for allowing me the space to share just a small portion of General Conference 2020. On her website you will find a complete listing of the AME Bishops, their assigned Districts, and retirement dates. I pray that you are content with having Bishop and Mrs. Fugh's return to the Fifth Episcopal District leadership for three more years.



May God's Richest Blessings Be Yours
Rev. Shirley D. Heermance
Peace