

## **HISTORICAL NOTE ON THE KSNE & NWMO ANNUAL CONFERENCES**

The First General Conference of the African Methodist (AME) Church, organized by our Founder and First Bishop, Rt. Rev. Richard Allen, was held in 1820 at which time the six original Annual Conferences were established. The Indiana Annual Conference was one of the original Conferences and its boundaries included the states of Indiana, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee. The Indiana Conference has often been referred to as the “Mother Conference” because one-fourth (1/4) of all the AME Conferences in the United States were organized out of it.

When the early Missouri AME churches organized in and near St. Louis in the 1840s they were part of the Indiana Conference since the Missouri Conference had not yet been organized. The Indiana Conference was made part of the Third Episcopal District in 1852, when the first three AME Episcopal Districts were established.

**The Missouri Conference was organized out of the Indiana Conference in 1855** and embraced the entire state of Missouri and all slaveholding states in the West and Southwest parts of the country. At its inception, the Missouri Conference recorded a total membership of 1, 975. Until 1869, sessions of the Missouri Annual Conference were held in St. Louis and several Southern cities; the 1869 session was held at Bethel AME Church, Leavenworth Kansas. Since the 1870 Annual Session, held at Ebenezer AME Church, St. Joseph, Rt. Rev. Quinn, Presiding Bishop, the Missouri Conference has been organized only within the state borders of Missouri.

Once the abolitionists had expelled slaveholders from the state of Kansas, the first AME missionary, Rev. James M. Wilkerson was sent from the Missouri Conference into the Kansas Territory in 1859. That year, two societies were founded, one at Wyandotte City and the other at Leavenworth. Today we know these societies as First AME Church, Kansas City, Kansas and Bethel AME Church, Leavenworth.

**The Kansas Conference was organized out of the Missouri Conference on October 4, 1876** at Wayman Chapel, Fort Scott, Kansas, Rt. Rev. James A. Shorter, Presiding Bishop. The membership numbered 2,309. The early organization of the Kansas Conference was comprised of churches in Kansas as well as some churches located in Missouri, Nebraska and Colorado.

The societies reported in 1876 were at: Leavenworth, KS; St. Joseph, Mo; Kansas City, MO; Lawrence, KS; Atchison, KS; Wyandotte City (now Kansas City); Denver City, CO; Fort Schott, Ks; Omaha, NE; and Topeka, KS.

Due to westward migration, AME evangelism and thousands of “Exodusters” (freed slaves) fleeing from the South into Kansas, the stations and missions proliferated throughout Missouri and Kansas. By the early 1880s, membership in the Kansas

Conference had almost doubled in number from that of 1876. This resulted in the organization of two Conferences.

**In 1881, the North Missouri Conference was organized out of the Missouri Conference.**

The First Session of the North Missouri Conference was organized at St. John AME Church, St. Charles, Missouri on September 12, 1882 by Rt. Rev. T.M.D. Ward, Presiding Bishop.

**On September 27, 1882, the Kansas Conference was split into the South Kansas Conference and the Kansas Conference** at the Annual Session convened at Ebenezer Chapel, St. Joseph, Missouri, Rt. Rev. T.M.D. Ward, Presiding Bishop.

By 1887, the South Kansas and Kansas Conferences had reunited. Three Presiding Elder Districts reported in 1898: **Omaha District, Topeka District; and Fort Scott District.**

**In 1910, the Missouri Conference was split again to organize the Southwest Missouri Conference.** This action occurred at Handy Chapel, Joplin in October 1910 with Rev. Abram Grant, Presiding Bishop. The 1952 minutes show that the Conference was divided into two presiding elder districts: Kansas City-Lexington District and Kansas City-Springfield District.

**In 1920, the Nebraska Conference was formed by carving 5 counties out of the state of Kansas and joining them to the entire state of Nebraska.** This new Conference was established at the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Kansas Conference in Parsons, the Rt. Rev. Henry B. Parks, Presiding Bishop. The boundaries of the Nebraska Conference were Kansas City, Ks, Leavenworth, Atchison, with all points in northeast Kansas and all of the state of Nebraska. All remaining territories constituted the Kansas Conference. **This new configuration of the Kansas Conference placed the AMR – owned institutions of Western University (established in 1881) and Douglas Hospital (established in 1898) within the Nebraska Conference.**

At the **1932 General Conference at Cleveland, Ohio, a special resolution introduced by the Kansas Annual Conference and Nebraska Annual Conference for merger of the two Conferences was received and adopted.** The “blended and united” Conferences of Kansas and Nebraska convened as the “Kansas-Nebraska Annual Conference” in 1932 and 1933. But at the 1933 Annual Session of the united Conferences, a resolution was passed to once again split the Kansas Annual Conference by separating the Nebraska Conference from it. Subsequent issues of the AME Discipline defined the boundaries of the Kansas Annual Conference as comprised of the states of Kansas and Nebraska. But Kansas and Nebraska continued to meet and report as separate Conferences from 1934 until new legislation was passed at the 1960 General Conference.

**In 1960, legislation was passed that made changes for the three Missouri Conferences and for the Kansas Conference. Specifically: “That the North Missouri Conference shall**

*be absorbed into the Missouri and Southwest Missouri Conferences [certain parts defined]...that the Southwest Missouri Conference be changed to read, "THE NORTHWEST MISSOURI CONFERENCE" and "That the Kansas and Nebraska Conferences shall be merge and renamed "the KANSAS-NEBRASKA CONFERENCE." By 1962, these changes had been implemented.*

At the 130<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Kansas-Nebraska Conference, September 11, 2005 and the 124<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Northwest Missouri Conference, September 23, 2005, Rt. Rev. John R. Bryant, Presiding Bishop, Special Resolutions were adopted proposing the merger of the Northwest Missouri Conference with Kansas-Nebraska Conference for the creation of the Midwest Conference.

**First joint sessions of the 131<sup>st</sup> Annual Session of the Kansas-Nebraska Annual Conference and the 125<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Northwest Missouri Annual Conference, held September 6-10, 2006, at the Hilton Garden Inn, Kansas City, Kansas, Rt. Rev. John R. Bryant, Presiding Bishop.**