

Resolution
153rd Session of the Tennessee Annual Conference
13th Episcopal District
African Methodist Episcopal Church
October 25, 2020

To: The Right Reverend Jeffrey Nathaniel Leath, Presiding Prelate of the 13th Episcopal District, Dr. Susan Leath, Supervisor of Women's Missionary Society, The Reverend Troy Merritt, Jr., Host Presiding Elder of the Nashville District, The Reverend Alexander Gatson, Associate Presiding Elder of the North District, The Reverend Sidney Bryant, Associate Presiding Elder of the South District, The Reverend W. Antoni Sinkfield, Ph.D., Host Pastor, Pastors, Clergy, Delegates, and members of the 153rd Session of the Tennessee Annual Conference, visiting guests, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

WHEREAS, at 7:00 p.m., on Wednesday, October 21, 2020, the Right Reverend Jeffrey N. Leath, the Presiding Prelate of the 13th Episcopal District, convened the 153rd Session of the Tennessee Annual Conference, hosted by Payne Chapel AME Church, via the virtual platforms of Zoom, Facebook Live and YouTube, in Nashville, TN;

WHEREAS, we have been blessed, revived, restored and challenged by the powerfully preached word during this annual conference. The Reverend Dr. Ralph Johnson, Pastor of St. Peter AME Church, Clarksville, TN delivered a commanding opening worship sermon entitled "Back Down Memory Lane" from the text 2 Peter 1:12-15. The Reverend Angela Green, Pastor of St. James AME Church, Mayfield, KY preached an inspiring, informative and challenging message, "The Master's Mission" from Isaiah 61 during the Women's Missionary Society's Missionary In White Service; and

WHEREAS, on Saturday morning, October 24, 2020, the Young People's Division (YPD), led by the capable, confident and efficient TN Conference YPD President, Sister Makayla Patton, blessed us with a worship service centered on the theme: "YPD Voice Your Vote". We were further inspired by the past Tennessee Conference YPD President, Ms. Erica Perry, Esq.

WHEREAS, the following recommendations were made by various committees for implementation during the 2020-2021 conference year:

State of the Church recommended:

1. Church Leaders stay connected and active within their communities;
2. Christian leaders seek God's guidance in order to innovate and minister in new ways beyond the walls of church buildings and the limits of physical spaces;
3. Church leaders take inventory, assess, imagine, create, experiment; take ministry online;
4. Leaders of congregations (both lay and clergy) step into the role of a moral leader and guide our people with virtues of justice, love, and humility;
5. Weekly gatherings via Class Leader system; create a virtual Children's Church program; send daily texts to members; do safety checks on older members or sick and shut in; utilize conference calls for meetings; develop resource packets for members and community; provide family time Zoom meetings; Stewards and/or Trustees develop online giving plans to meet needs of the church; Pastors visit the church a least once during the week to remain visible to the community;

State of the Country/Social Action recommended:

1. Get AME Clergy and Lay to talk about problems in education and Black student achievement, while advocating for education reform;
2. Each local church appoint someone or join with another church or nonprofit organization to have monthly meetings with the local school board director or his/her designee to discuss efforts to increase black student academic achievement;
3. Each local church appoint someone or join with another church or nonprofit organization to have monthly meetings with the local school board member to increase black student academic achievement;

Christian Stewardship recommended:

1. Be the Church: important to sustain stewardship, serve the Lord and love neighbors;
2. Communicate and tell your story: use tools available to use email, texting, social media, phone calls, etc. Seek out church members; inquire if they need help;
3. Model Justice: continue paying all staff and honoring contacts with small businesses;
4. Online Giving: if you aren't offering online giving, start offering it;
5. Set Up a Covid-19 Assistance Fund: many in the church are being financially impacted by this crisis;
6. Keep Being the Church: relationships matter most; the Healing Ministry role in the local church has never been greater;

Board of Examiners recommended:

1. Brother Artis McKinney, Sr – admitted to Tennessee Annual Conference on trial and advanced to the First Year Studies in itinerant relations;
2. Brother Cameron Robinson – this year of study be acknowledged, recorded, and that he return to the 154th Session without any repetition or engagement of studies presented by the board;
3. Sister Tamika Watkins – acknowledgement of successful completion of this year of study in her journey toward ordination;
4. Brother Boyce Wilkins – advanced to 3rd year studies and be ordained itinerant deacon during this conference or later at Payne Chapel;
5. Sister Margarette An Dashiell – acknowledgement of successful completion of this year, and that she remain in Second Year Studies while she continues to pursue her Seminary degree. Bishop will pay for one credit of studies;
6. Tremaine Sails-Dunbar – the trial period be ceased and his name removed from the Tennessee Annual Conference Roll of Members on Trial;
7. Sister Tanya Mason – advanced to 4th year studies;
8. Reverend Corwin Malcolm Davis - be elected and ordained an itinerant elder with commendations for exceptional work;
9. Reverend John R. Cummings, Jr. – be elected and ordained a local elder for Payne Chapel, Nashville;
10. Reverend Jimmie L. Handley, Jr. – be commended for successfully completing all of his ministerial studies and receive a Certificate of Completion; Bishop stressed the decision is not a punishment;

Committee on Health and Wellness recommended:

1. We recognize significant racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes; over 70% of COVID-19 deaths have been people of color who are more likely to have pre-existing medical conditions which put us at risk for poorer health outcomes;
2. We do not allow health and wellness to become a political issue; however, must involve ourselves in the political process to ensure appropriate public health measures are being put in place to

protect our community to ensure the health of all people, regardless of age, race and gender are respected;

3. We look for changes in policies and hold our leaders/officials responsible to help implement policy changes so the health care of citizens in our communities are considered important issues;
4. We use our new found time in prayer, meditation, preparing of healthier meals, and developing a personal exercise program;
5. We thank all of our frontline healthcare workers for their bravery and sacrifice as they have gone to work every day to help, care for and relieve suffering for patients affected by this pandemic;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Tennessee Annual Conference approved the above recommendations to be implemented in the 2020-2021 conference year; and

WHEREAS, The Ministerial Efficiency Committee made the following recommendations:

1. Reverend Raymond Corbin, itinerant elder, Pastor of Moore's Chapel, Clinton, KY – referral placed on hold due to his wife's current health status;
2. Reverend Tylan Orr, local deacon – request to leave the African Methodist Episcopal denomination was honored; he is to surrender his ministerial credentials and be dropped from the roll of the Tennessee Annual Conference;
3. Reverend Dr. Yvette Tisdale, itinerant elder, Pastor of St. Luke AME Church, Nashville, TN – placed on temporary suspension while Committee investigates charges and conciliation efforts can be performed;
4. Reverend William Howard Smith, itinerant elder, recent transfer from East Tennessee Annual Conference to Tennessee Annual Conference – request to Superannuate approved by common consent;
5. Reverend William Easley, Jr., itinerant elder, retired Presiding Elder, recent transfer from Kentucky Annual Conference to Tennessee Annual Conference – request to Superannuate approved by common consent;
6. Reverend Christopher Grizzard, itinerant elder, Pastor of Mullin Chapel AME Church, Shelbyville, TN – request to Superannuate and transfer from the Tennessee Annual Conference to the East Tennessee Annual Conference approved by common consent;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Tennessee Annual Conference approved the above recommendations to be implemented in the 2020-2021 conference year; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we acknowledge the dedicated and commendable service Sister Ramona Young and Brother Joe Turner have provided the Believe Board for the past ten (10+) years; we will honor their service at the upcoming Episcopal District Planning Meeting; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, we acknowledge and pay deepest respects to our fellow clergy and lay of the Connectional Church that have joined the Church Triumphant – Bishop Zedekiah Lazette Grady, Supervisor Patricia Ann Morris (PAM) Deveaux, Mrs. Valerie Gary Bell, Connectional Lay President; Dr. Frederick C. Harrison, Former Secretary of Missions; Mrs. Johanna Green, Former Connectional YPD Director; Rev. Jeane Williams, Former Connectional President of WIM; Dr. Jesse L. Burns, Jr., Former Connectional Lay President; Mr. Richard Bowden, Treasurer Connectional Lay; Mrs. Micha Mack, Widow of Former Director of Christian Education Dr. McDonald Williams. Well done, God's good and faithful servants; take your rest; "For this God is our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even unto the end." Psalm 48:14; and

BE IT ALSO FUTHER RESOLVED, we honor and celebrate the ministries of The Reverend Christopher Grizzard and The Reverend William Howard Smith as they retire from active pastoral ministry, but not from service to the Lord and His people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the congregations of Payne Chapel AME Church and St. James AME Church, both located in Nashville, TN requested to be united as ONE congregation; and the congregation of Moore's Chapel AME Church, Clinton, KY requested to withdraw from the African Methodist Episcopal denomination;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Tennessee Annual Conference approved the above requests to be implemented in the 2020-2021 conference year; and

BE IT ALSO FURTHER RESOLVED, we applaud the work of the heart and hands of Payne Chapel AME Church as they served with excellence throughout the course of the Annual Conference, during the new normal we find ourselves in. We further applaud The Reverend W. Antoni Sinkfield, Ph.D., his spouse, Sister Kristy Sinkfield, and the Payne Chapel AME Church family as they hosted Bishop Leath in a social distancing manner. While we said our goodbyes and fare the wells at our LAST Annual Conference, we thank God for the opportunity to continue to be led by our remarkable Episcopal Leadership Team, Bishop Jeffrey Nathaniel Leath and Supervisor Dr. Susan Leath, who have lead us with eminence, class and integrity for the past nine (9) years. Even in the midst of a Pandemic, Bishop and Supervisor continue to show us a more excellent way. We continue to thank God for the Leaths and their family and pray all God's blessings, grace and mercy upon them as they journey onward and upward.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, that we, the members of the Tennessee Annual Conference continue to diligently work, strive and serve to manifest the social justice and liberating faith tradition in which our African Methodist Episcopal denomination was established by Bishop Richard Allen and so many others as we seek to fulfill God's Will to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God among old landmarks in unchartered times.

Humbly submitted by the Resolutions Committee,

The Reverend Sherri Cowley Scott, Chair
The Reverend Ashley Cox
The Reverend Linda Hopkins
The Reverend Frankie Witt
Sister Sherryle Fletcher
Brother Lester Lewis

The Reverend Cedric Bailey
The Reverend Dr. Sonja Brown Deloatch
The Reverend Kenneth Odom
Sister Tennille Chatman
Sister Cynthia Herron
Sister Rose Wilson