

# THE LAYMEN'S VOICE

OFFICIAL NEWS  
of the Fifth Episcopal District  
of the  
**AFRICAN METHODIST CHURCH**  
Rudie W. Shakespeare, Managing Editor

## Heads A.M.E. Laymen



**PRESIDENT JONES**

George (Farmer) Jones of Oskaloosa, Kas., is making plans for the meeting of 5th (Episcopal) district laymen of the A.M.E. church to be held February 20 in Los Angeles. This is one day before the gathering of the Bishops Council in that same city. Mr. Jones stated that church legislation will be one of the main topics at the bishops sessions. D. Ormonde Walker is presiding bishop of the 5th district which covers 14 states. Jones also pointed out that Bishop Walker works in full cooperation with the laymen's organization.

## Schedule of Lay Activities

Fifth Episcopal District Laymen's Convention, George Jones, Oskaloosa, Kansas, President. July 5th, 6th & 7th, 1951

A.M.E. Connectional Laymen's Convention, Denver, Colorado, August, 1951.

Attorney Herbert L. Dudley, President.

## Ministers Organize

A group of ministers met Friday night at the home of the Rev. J. B. Brooks to organize the Lincoln Ministerial Fellowship Association. Officers elected were: the Rev. Melvin L. Shakespeare, president; the Rev. Trago McWilliams, jr., secretary; the Rev. H. A. Simmons, treasurer and the Rev. R. E. Edwards, chaplain.

## Let Brotherly Love Continue

Los Angeles, Calif.

The Executive Board of the Laymen's League of the Southern California conference closed a successful years work. We have over forty churches in our district, since we were organized we have visited all but four. Evangelizing is the church's first need and everything else will be added. We hope to do more in 1951 with the expansion program of Bishop Walker in helping the smaller churches. The finance committee is due much credit under the chairmanship of brother Benjamin Inghram, of San Bernadino, California. Brother Inghram was Master of Ceremonies. Rev. A. K. Quinn, presiding elder of Pasadena, San Diego district, Rev. Conquest, Rev. Cryer of Ocean Side, gave encouraging remarks. Several visitors including Mrs. Katie Johns, from St. Stephens A.M.E. church of Chicago, Illinois were present.

All presidents of the leagues be-

## The Lay-Organization's Status In A.M.E. Church Program

By: J. Louis Ransom, M.D.  
2251 Topeka Ave.  
Topeka, Kansas

Pres. Lay-Organization Kas. Conference

The question of what should be the status of the Lay-Organization in the African Methodist Episcopal Church has already provoked some constructive criticism and should be answered in such a way as to make definite and certain the purpose and intent of the lay movement and its ultimate goal.

**BISHOP FRANK M. REID** in an article appearing in the January 13th issue of the Southern Christian Recorder under the title of "A Friendly Chat" quoted a ruling by the Judicial Council of the Methodist Church (mother church of all Methodism). Quote "Methodist Court Affirms Ruling of Bishop Oxnam," Columbus, Ohio, January 4, 1951—A.P. "The Judicial Council of the Methodist Church—The Supreme Court" for Methodist Church law—yesterday affirmed two (2) rulings of Bishop G. Bradley Oxnam of New York. Ruling to-wit:—The Judicial Council decided that the Bishop was right in declaring as illegal business meetings composed of entirely laymen at the annual conference. The "Judicial Council" held that meetings are illegal whether the conference is in session or recess. The writer (Dr. J. L. Ransom, M.D.) is omitting the other ruling as it concerned the clergy and certain annuity rights.

**NOW IT SHOULD BE KNOWN FIRST** of all that the Judicial Council of the Methodist church is composed of both laymen and elders elected by the general conference.

This ruling, coming from the Mother church, sets a standard for all Methodism throughout the world. Therefore, it is mandatory that the million members who constitute the laity of the A.M.E. church realize that the entire lay-program must clear through the constituted authority of our church. It is not our (the laity) prerogative to insti-

tute any lay-program or activities independent of the sanction of our episcopacy and the general conference. Let us consider the scriptural authority regarding the lay-leadership in the development of the early church.

**THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THIS LAY-MOVEMENT** and its guiding spirit is clearly expressed in the Book of Acts in the Holy Bible. I call your attention to the sixth chapter in which the twelve apostles state in Act 6-2, 3, 4. "It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God and serve table. Look ye out therefore brethren from among you seven men of Good report full of the spirit and of wisdom whom we may appoint over this business and we will continue steadfast in prayer and the ministry of the word." Now in the verses five and six is the statement apostles prayed and laid hands upon the lay-leaders selected and consecrated them for Christian service. Thus we see the established relationship between the clergy and lay-leaders of the church. It is stated that "God's word increased and many were converted and the priesthood were obedient to the faith." In this scripture it is made clear to us the dual responsibility and authority of both lay-leaders and the Christian ministry.

**IT HAS BEEN THE CONTENTIONS OF THIS WRITER** that our lay organizations and the lay-leadership were to be approved by the Christian ministry. I have never endorsed the spirit of establishing any organization in the church that went beyond the rights granted by the discipline of the A.M.E. church.

I am frank to admit that many lay members do not know when they go beyond constituted church authority. This authority is the mandates of our General Conference and the Godly judgment of the Episcopacy and the presiding elders who act as their agents in various annual conferences.

**IT IS IN VIEW OF THIS FACT** that I contend that qualified leadership should spearhead the program. Qualified leadership does not mean exclusively the social, political or fraternal leaders of a community but it means Christian men and women in the church who are qualified spiritually and mentally as well as being loyal to church government. I believe this type of leadership working with their pastors can put over a worthwhile program.

**SOMETIMES YOU FIND PASTORS** who have no program of their own and who do not possess vision or the qualities of leadership. In this case qualified lay-leaders in the church should contact their presiding elder and bishop, when necessary, to adjust conditions so that church programs will not suffer.

**IN AS MUCH AS THE LAWS** of the Methodist church do not recognize as legal any actions or commitments made by an exclusive lay-group meeting we should purge the lay-organizations status at the General Conference 1952. I suggest a Board of Lay Activities to be estab-

## Host-Pastor



**DR. JORDAN**

lished by our general conference using as a guide the lay set-up in the Methodist church. If we change the complexion of the lay-program I am certain the clergy will support an organization's program in the future instead of being reluctant and apprehensive in cooperating as in the past. We can also eliminate the designing politicians who have infiltrated our membership and have the effrontery to victimize the church program by their ruthless exploitation of church group meetings and programs with their secular political efforts.

**OUR LAY-ORGANIZATION MUST NOT BE ABUSED** by laymen or preachers as a Pressure political group in the church. Our program, to the contrary, is to entegrate laymen into a more active service in the church indoctrinate them in African Methodism and to properly train them to "Serve the Tables" which symbolizes the temporal and secular projects that are a part of church administration. The church has many duties in various fields in this present age that requires the services of a trained laity. For example, public health, child welfare, mental hygiene, social problems in the community, recreational and leisure time activities, missionary work, religious education, personal evangelism, Christian fellowship, Christian stewardship and such other duties that may arise in a rapidly changing social order. Under the existing program of our church there is no agency, sanctioned by the General Conference to meet these needs. All these projects are classified as "The Serving of Tables" which in keeping with the sixth chapter of Acts is not the duties of our clergy who are admonished by the scripture to give their time exclusively to spiritual guidance and preaching the word.

**THERE IS A MUCH NEEDED PLACE** in our church program for an organized lay-group, however such a group must clear through constituted authority. Special training schools should be established to prepare lay-leaders for their new responsibility in the church.

**A WELL TRAINED LAITY** in the African Methodist Episcopal church will immune our church from the inroads of various cults and "independent church movements" as sponsored by displeased A.M.E. church pastors and bishops. The laity has been victimized and exploited to often by the aftermath of pastoral and episcopal

## Host Bishop



**BISHOP WALKER**

The Winter Session of the council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal church will convene in Ward A.M.E. church, 25th and Magnolia Streets, Los Angeles, California, February 22-24. Bishop D. Ormonde Walker is host bishop.

The council sermon will be delivered by Bishop M. H. Davis. The host pastor is Dr. Frederick D. Jordan, candidate for Episcopal honor in 1952. Bishop J. A. Gregg is president of the council of bishops.

The General Officers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in association with the Bishops of the Church are honoring Dr. A. S. Jackson of Washington, D. C., and Waco, Texas, Financial Secretary of the A.M.E. Church, with a testimonial in recognition of 60 years of official connectional service.

The celebration will be observed in connection with the Mid-winter session of the Bishops' Council, February, 1951, at Ward A.M.E. Church, Los Angeles, California.

Clergy and laity of all African Methodism are cordially invited to be present and participate.

## What I Think

### Laymen Should Know

Colorado Conference

By James A. Atkins  
Denver, Colo.

The mission of Methodism in 18th century — England and America.

Why the A.M.E. Church was born.

The present status of the A.M.E. Church—its urgent problems.

Such information will add impetus to our drive for scholarship among our people.

### Southern California Conference Laymen's League, A.M.E. Church

COLEY W. STAFFORD, Pres. Greetings!

To the Bishops, General Officers, Ministers and Laymen. We welcome you to the Great State of California and to the sunny City of Angels.

Camilla Leftridge, Reporter.

outbreaks in our annual conferences.

A Lay program raised to this status in our church will be conductive to young men and women being awoken spiritually to the call of Christian service. If the Methodist church is to be used as a criterion in its laws, then why not emulate them in their lay-program.

Let the clergy and Christian laity of our church co-operate to develop such a program for the lay-organization of the A.M.E. church.