

**THE CONNECTIONAL LAY ORGANIZATION  
OF THE  
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

**CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

**ARTICLE I – NAME**

*Section 1.* The name of this organization shall be the Connectional Lay Organization  
2. (CLO) of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

**ARTICLE II – PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

*Section 1.* The purpose of this organization shall be to organize and train the laity of the African Methodist Episcopal Church so that each lay person may utilize to the maximum the abilities and skills granted by God, in assisting with the improvement and extension of God’s kingdom, and creating happiness, peace, and harmony among its members.

*Section 2.* Objectives – To accomplish this purpose, the following objectives are adopted.

- a. To instill in the membership of the church a love for, and an appreciation of, the history, traditions, principles and development of African Methodism by encouraging, motivating, and educating all lay persons.
- b. To keep forever alive the sacred memory of Richard Allen, our illustrious founder.
- c. To advocate respect and loyalty at all times to constituted authority and leadership.
- d. To encourage the laity to support the total program of the church in the local congregation, in the community, and throughout the Connection.
- e. To foster a systematic and regular study of *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* and of parliamentary procedure, to the end that greater knowledge and information may be disseminated among the laity, and with the further purpose of encouraging lay members to participate more largely in the general functioning and supervision of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
- f. To foster, influence, and support all constructive and progressive legislation for the church that promotes the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- g. To encourage development, recognition, and utilization of the most appropriate operational practices and modern technology in conducting the activities of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
- h. To promote the spread of personal evangelism through activities designed to prepare lay members for appropriately conveying God’s Word.
- i. To provide training in Christian stewardship, which causes lay members to recognize that the connotation of stewardship addresses more than giving money.
- j. To increase the circulation of church papers.
- k. To provide for the orderly and systematic training of lay persons, especially officers, in order that they might more effectively perform their service assignments.
- l. To promote activities which will result in harmonious fellowship for lay persons throughout the Connection.
- m. To help in the support of the AME educational institutions.

- n. To give financial assistance to the Connectional Lay Economic Development Corporation (CLEDC) in support of Connectional programs.

### **ARTICLE III – DIVISIONS**

*Section 1.* The Connectional Lay Organization shall be composed of the Episcopal District Lay Organizations, Conference Lay Organizations, District Lay Organizations of the Annual Conference and Organizations of a Station or Circuit.

The District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference is optional, and shall only be organized where the Conference Lay Organization determines it to be necessary for the efficient conduct of its business. If such a determination is made, the Conference Lay President shall, after giving fourteen (14) days written notice, which shall include the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting, to each charge in the district, convene and organize the District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference. The District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference, where organized, shall bear the same relationship to the Conference Lay Organization as the Conference Lay Organization bears to the Episcopal District Lay Organization.

### **ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP**

*Section 1.* The Connectional Lay Organization membership to the Biennial Session shall be as follows:

- a. all elected officers of the Connectional Lay Organization.
- b. all presidents of the Episcopal District Lay Organizations and all Episcopal District Directors of Lay Activities.
- c. six (6) elected delegates from each Episcopal District Lay Organization, of which one (1) shall be a young adult, ages 18-30.
- d. all presidents of the Conference Lay Organizations.
- e. six (6) elected delegates from each Conference Lay Organization, of which one (1) shall be a young adult, ages 18-30.
- f. each president or a duly elected representative of each duly organized District Lay Organization of an Annual Conference.
- g. Each president or duly elected representative of each organized Station or Circuit Organization. A duly organized Lay Organization of a Station, Circuit, or Districts of the Annual Conference, shall be an organization reporting to the Conference Lay Organization's Annual Meeting, or which is recognized by the Conference as an organization.

### **ARTICLE V – OFFICERS**

*Section 1.* The elected Officers of the Connectional Lay Organization and its Divisions (see Article III, this Constitution) shall be (\*Elected at discretion of Divisions)

- a. President
- b. First Vice President
- c. Second Vice President\*
- d. Third Vice President\*

- e. Recording Secretary
- f. Assistant Recording Secretary\*
- g. Corresponding Secretary\*
- h. Treasurer
- i. Financial Secretary\*
- j. Chaplain
- k. Historiographer\*
- l. Parliamentarian\*
- m. Director of Lay Activities
- n. Director of Public Relations\*
- o. Young Adult Representative\*

*Section 2.* The records of all officers handling finances of the Connectional Lay Organization shall be audited by an external auditing entity, which shall report its findings to the Biennial Session. This Audit Report shall serve as the basis for the Annual Report of the Connectional Lay Organization as required by the General Board.

#### **ARTICLE VI – QUALIFICATION OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS**

*Section 1.* All officers and members of the Connectional Lay Organization and its Divisions shall be members in good and regular standing in their Station or Circuit Organization. The President of the Connectional Lay Organization shall possess such qualifications and fitness as shall entitle and qualify the President to sit as a member of the General Conference as the representative of the Connectional Lay Organization.

*Section 2.* The Connectional Lay Organization shall have the right at all times to pass upon the qualifications of its own members and may reject or accept the membership of any person.

*Section 3.* All candidates seeking an office in the Connectional Lay Organization must be registered and must have attended at least two (2) Biennial Sessions within the ten (10) year period immediately preceding the election year.

*Section 4.* All persons seeking an elected office must submit a “Letter of Intent” with qualifications signed by the Episcopal District President with the approval of the Executive Board, to the Chairperson of the Nominating Committee. Letter must be sent by certified mail and postmarked on or before April 15<sup>th</sup> of the election year. This deadline date will constitute the close of all nominations submitted to the Nominating Committee. All qualifications are subject to verification. All verifications must be received prior to placing an individual’s name on the voting ballot.

*Section 5.* All candidates seeking an office must have demonstrated active participation on the local districts of the Annual Conference, Annual Conference and Episcopal District levels within the ten (10) year period preceding the election year.

*Section 6.* All candidates seeking an office of Recording Secretary, Assistant Recording Secretary, and/or Corresponding Secretary must be literate in basic computer technology. A working knowledge in current word processing applications is essential.

*Section 7.* Any candidate seeking the office of Treasurer or Financial Secretary must have experience in financial management, including but not limited to, the areas of accounting, bookkeeping, finance or economics.

*Section 8.* Any candidate seeking the office of Public Relations Director must have a working knowledge of journalism, marketing, sales or media technology. The individual must also possess strong interpersonal and communication skills.

#### **ARTICLE VII – ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

*Section 1.* All elections of officers shall be by ballot, and a majority vote shall elect. Any method of election in any division other than by ballot shall be declared null and void by the Connectional Lay Organization.

*Section 2.* Connectional Lay Organization Officers shall be elected to a four (4) year term at the Biennial meeting following closest after the regular session of the General Conference, beginning with the 1985 Biennial Session.

*Section 3.* The elected officers of the Connectional Lay Organization and its Divisions shall serve no more than eight (8) consecutive years in the same office, except in the instance where the officer completes a term of office vacated by death, illness, resignation, or other life events that incapacitate the incumbent, or other conditions acknowledged by the Executive Board. The newly elected officers shall assume duties of the office upon installation. The transitional period to reconcile files, records, and check inventories before transferring them to the incoming officers shall not exceed a period of sixty (60) calendar days.

*Section 4.* Episcopal District Lay Organization Officers shall be elected quadrennially.

*Section 5.* *Conference Lay Organization Officers shall be elected biennially.*

*Section 6.* District Lay Organization Officers of the Annual Conference shall be elected biennially.

*Section 7.* Station of Circuit Organization Officers shall be elected annually.

#### **ARTICLE VIII – DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

*Section 1.* The President of the Connectional Lay Organization shall preside over its sessions during its regular, special, or emergency meetings, and shall also be Chairperson of the Executive Board. The President shall be the active head of said organization, and shall be

responsible for seeing that the Constitution and By Laws of this organization, as well as the orders and policies of the Executive Board, are fully carried out. The President shall also be responsible for expanding and developing the lay work throughout the Connection through channels of the Episcopal District Lay Organizations. The President shall also be responsible for such other duties as may be usual and customary to the position and which may be assigned from time to time by the Executive Board and the directives approved by the Biennial body.

*Section 2.* The President shall represent the Connectional Lay Organization at the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church during its Quadrennial Session.

*Section 3.* The President shall appoint chairpersons of all Standing and Ad Hoc Committees.

*Section 4.* The First Vice President shall assume the complete duties of the President during an absence or when it has been determined by the Executive Board that the President can no longer perform the duties. The First Vice President shall coordinate such programs as are assigned by the President.

*Section 5.* The Second Vice President, in the absence of the President and First Vice President, shall preside at all the meetings and assume all duties of the office of President. The Second Vice President shall coordinate such programs as are assigned by the President.

*Section 6.* The Third Vice President, in the absence of the President, First Vice President, and Second Vice President, shall preside at the meetings and assume all the duties of the office of President. The Third Vice President shall coordinate such programs as are assigned by the President.

*Section 7.* The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for the recording of attendance and accurate minutes of all business transacted during meetings and shall read the minutes of any previous meetings, when called upon to do so by the President. In the absence of the President and Vice Presidents, the Recording Secretary shall preside until a chairperson "pro-tem" is elected. The Recording Secretary shall prepare, for the presiding officer, a statement of unfinished business to come before the meeting and a report of the Executive Board meetings to be presented at the Biennial Session. The Recording Secretary shall hold the bond of the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary.

*Section 8.* The Assistant Recording Secretary shall assist the Recording Secretary in keeping accurate records and, in the absence of the Secretary, shall perform the duties of the Secretary.

*Section 9.* The Corresponding Secretary shall review all correspondence, report pertinent information to the Executive Board, and reply to correspondence as directed by the President and/or the Executive Board.

*Section 10.* The Treasurer shall receive all monies and disburse same upon authorization of the President, as approved by the body. The Treasurer shall keep accurate records and give an itemized report at each Board meeting and Biennial Session. The Treasurer shall be bonded and said bond be held by the Recording Secretary.

*Section 11.* The Financial Secretary shall assist the Treasurer. The Financial Secretary shall write vouchers countersigned by the President that authorize expenditures which are to be paid by the Treasurer. Monies received by the Financial Secretary shall be turned over to the Treasurer within thirty (30) days. The Financial Secretary shall be bonded and said bond held by the Recording Secretary.

*Section 12.* The Chaplain shall make adequate preparation for each Bible Study and Devotional Service. The Chaplain shall provide spiritual leadership to this organization.

*Section 13.* The Historiographer shall keep a written and pictorial record of the activities and achievements of the organization and make it available upon request. The Historiographer shall also act as custodian for all photographs, citations, awards, trophies, and other mementos.

*Section 14.* The Parliamentarian shall advise the President or presiding officer, when necessary, concerning questions of parliamentary procedure. The Parliamentarian shall follow *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* and *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* at all meetings. The Parliamentarian shall be the recognized authority on this Constitution, shall serve on the Constitution and Standing Rules Committees, and shall serve as a consultant to other committees as needed.

*Section 15.* The Director of Lay Activities shall be responsible for planning a training program and course of study in accordance with the purposes and objectives of the Lay Organization. The proposed training program and course of study shall be presented to the Executive Board for approval at the first meeting following the close of the Biennial Session. The approved program shall be forwarded from the Connectional Director of Lay Activities to the Episcopal District Director of Lay Activities within a period not to exceed sixty (60) calendar days. The Episcopal District Directors will immediately forward the course of study to the Conference Directors of Lay Activities. If there is no organized District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference, Conference Directors of Lay Activities shall forward the course of study to the Station or Circuit Directors of Lay Activities. The training program and course of study shall reach the Directors of Lay Activities within thirty (30) days after the Connectional Director of Lay Activities has forwarded same. A full report of progress made in the implementation of the course of study shall be given at each Biennial Session.

*Section 16.* The Director of Public Relations shall seek to bring about harmony of understanding between the church and public through the channeling of information to various media. The Director of Public Relations shall be responsible for all press releases and public relations for and during the Biennial Session and shall disseminate news items of interest received from the Episcopal districts through Newsletter and/or multi-media processes.

*Section 17.* The Young Adult Representative shall be responsible for coordinating teaching and training opportunities for Young Adults and Youth in conjunction with the Director of Lay Activities, voice the concerns and vision of a new generation of laity, and serve as Christian mentor to a younger generation of African Methodists. The Young Adult Representative shall be between the ages of 18-30 at the time of election.

## **ARTICLE IX – EXECUTIVE BOARD**

*Section 1.* There shall be an Executive Board of the Connectional Lay Organization, composed of the elected officers of the organization and the President of each Executive District Lay Organization of the Connection.

*Section 2.* The Executive Board shall meet at least annually at the time and place designated by the President and members of the Executive Board.

*Section 3.* The President of the Connectional Lay Organization shall preside over the meetings of the Executive Board, and the Secretary of the Connectional Lay Organization shall serve as secretary of the Executive Board.

*Section 4.* The Executive Board shall have the authority to carry on the work of the Connectional Lay Organization during the interim of the Biennial Sessions.

*Section 5.* The Executive Board shall establish the rules and regulations by which it shall be governed. The Boards shall have power over the supervision and direction of all affairs of the Organization during the interim of the Biennial Sessions of the Connectional Lay Organization, except that it shall not infringe upon any of the expressed constitutional provisions herein set forth and provided. Further, the Connectional Lay Organization, in its Biennial Session, may nullify abrogate, or rescind any action of the Executive Board.

*Section 6.* The Executive Board shall have the authority to make recommendations as to the official conduct of any elected officer, provided, however, that any decision to suspend, expel, or remove from office shall rest exclusively with the Connectional Lay Organization.

*Section 7.* The Executive Board shall pass upon the Constitution and By Laws of the Episcopal District Lay Organizations to determine their compliance with or conformity to the Constitution and By Laws of the Connectional Lay Organization.

*Section 8.* The Executive Board shall have such other authority as may be necessary to carry out the general purposes and intent of this Constitution.

*Section 9.* The Executive Board, in its discretion, may establish an Advisory Council to act in a purely advisory capacity. The Advisory Council may consist of past presidents of the Connectional Lay Organization and such other distinguished lay members as the President may designate. The Advisory Council shall not exceed five (5) persons.

*Section 10.* If a vacancy occurs among the elected officers other than the office of president, this vacancy shall be filled by the Executive Board upon the recommendation of the President.

## **ARTICLE X – MEETINGS**

*Section 1.* The Connectional Lay Organization shall meet biennially in its regular session.

*Section 2.* The Biennial Session of the Connectional Lay Organization shall be held during the period July 15 to August 15, with the first business to begin on Monday. No Biennial Session, Opening Worship Service, shall begin on the First Sunday. The site of the Biennial Session shall be determined six (6) years in advance.

*Section 3.* The Connectional President and/or the Executive Board may call an emergency meeting of the Connectional Lay Organization when such a meeting is necessary.

*Section 4.* The time, place, and object of such Special or Emergency Meeting shall be clearly set forth in the official call or notice. Only those matters expressly set out in the notice or call shall be deliberated upon, provided, however, that no election of officers shall take place at a special or emergency meeting.

*Section 5.* All delegates to the Biennial Session must be elected at a regular or properly convened meeting. The names and addresses of all delegates must be submitted to the Connectional Financial Secretary on or before April 1 of the Biennial year. These names shall be forwarded to the Connectional Lay Director by the Financial Secretary.

#### **ARTICLE XI – VOTING PRIVILEGE**

*Section 1.* Voting privilege in the Connectional Lay Organization shall be confined and restricted to persons set out under Article IV, this Constitution.

*Section 2.* No person shall be entitled to more than one (1) vote on an issue or matter in the Connectional Lay Organization, and must be personally present to exercise such privilege. No proxy or absentee voting shall be permitted.

*Section 3.* Unless otherwise indicated, the majority vote shall prevail in determining all matters.

#### **ARTICLE XII – POWERS AND JURISDICTION**

*Section 1.* The Connectional Lay Organization shall exercise prudent and appropriate authority, power, and supervision over all Episcopal District Lay Organizations established under the provisions of this Constitution.

#### **ARTICLE XIII – RESERVED AND IMPLIED POWERS**

*Section 1.* Each Episcopal District Lay Organization shall be vested with the full authority to make its own Constitution, By Laws, Rules and Regulations, as may be necessary for proper and orderly conduct of its affairs and for the governing of its officers and members. Each of these organizations shall have the authority to establish its own Executive Board, raise funds, and in general perform all duties incident to its existence as an autonomous body except, however, said organization shall make the Constitution, By Laws, Rules and Regulations which shall conflict with or abridge any of the Constitution and By Laws of the Connectional Lay Organization.



*Section 2.* A copy of the Constitution and By Laws of each Episcopal district organization must be filed with the Executive Board of the Connectional Lay Organization for examination and response.

*Section 3.* Each Episcopal District Lay Organization, Conference Lay Organization, District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference, and each Station or Circuit Lay Organization shall have the following inserted in its Constitution and By Laws: “This Organization shall be subject to and governed by the Constitution and By Laws of the Connectional Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.”

*Section 4.* This organization and each of its Divisions shall at all times be subject to and governed by the Discipline, Laws, Doctrine, and Tenets of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

#### **ARTICLE XIV – COMMITTEES**

*Section 1.* All committees shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Executive Board.

*Section 2.* The President, Executive Board, or the Connectional Lay Organization may appoint Ad Hoc Committees; however, when an Ad Hoc Committee is appointed, its function must be specified and procedures established for its functioning.

*Section 3.* The Finance Committee of the Connectional Lay Organization shall submit its final report to the regular session of the Organization not later than the evening of the second day.

#### **ARTICLE XV – SUBORDINATE BODIES**

*Section 1.* Episcopal District Lay Organizations – The Episcopal District Lay Organization shall be composed of:

- a. all elected officers;
- b. all Presidents and Directors of Lay Activities of Conference Organizations;
- c. six (6) elected delegates from each Conference Lay Organization, one of whom shall be a young adult, ages 18-30;
- d. each President or a duly elected representative of each organized District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference;
- e. each President and six (6) elected delegates, one of which shall be a young adult, ages 18-30 – of each organized Station or Circuit Lay Organization where there is a duly organized District Lay Organization of an Annual Conference;
- f. each President from each organized Station or Circuit Lay Organization and six (6) elected delegates and one should be a young adult age 18-30;
- g. the Constitution and By Laws of Episcopal District Lay Organization and must conform to and harmonize with the Connectional Lay Organization;
- h. the President and the Director of Lay Activities of the Episcopal District Lay Organization shall be members of the Connectional Lay Organization; and

- i. the President of each Episcopal district shall be a member of the Connectional Lay Organization Executive Board.

*Section 2.* Conference Lay Organization – The Conference Lay Organization shall be composed of:

- a. all elected officers;
- b. each President and Director of Lay Activities of duly organized District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference;
- c. six (6) elected delegates, of which one shall be a young adult, ages 18-30, from each duly organized District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference; and
- d. each President and six (6) elected delegates of which one shall be a young adult, ages 18-30, from each Station or Circuit.

The Constitution and By Laws of the Conference Lay Organization must conform to and harmonize with the Constitution and By Laws of the Connectional Lay Organization, and with the Constitution and By Laws of the Episcopal District Lay Organization.

*Section 3.* District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference – The District Lay Organization of the Annual Conference shall be composed of:

- a. all elected officers; and
- b. the President and six (6) elected delegates from each Station or Circuit where there is a duly organized Lay Organization.

This organization is amenable to the Conference Lay Organization and must report to the Conference Lay Organization at least annually.

*Section 4.* Station or Circuit Lay Organization – The pastor of each Station or Circuit shall, within thirty (30) days after the Annual Conference, call a meeting of the members of the Charge for the purpose of organizing a Lay Organization where none exists. The Station or Circuit Lay Organization shall be composed of all members of said Station or Circuit who desire to enroll. The officers of the organization shall be elected from those enrolled in said organization. The President of the Lay Organization, or a duly elected representative of the local church, becomes a member of the Official Board by virtue of office.

The officers of a Station or Circuit Lay Organization shall be those specified in Article 5, Section 1 of this Constitution. The Station or Circuit Lay Organization shall fix the time for regular meetings, which should not be fewer than eleven (11) times per year.

*Section 5.* There shall be a Youth component of the Lay Organization composed of youth between the ages of 13-17 established on all levels.

## **ARTICLE XVI – AMENDMENTS**

*Section 1.* Amendments to the Constitution and By Laws of the Connectional Lay Organization may be made by filing a copy of the proposed amendment with the President and Secretary at least sixty (60) days prior to the meeting of the Connectional Lay Organization. The Secretary

shall send a copy of the amendments by certified mail to each of the Episcopal District Presidents. Two-thirds vote shall be required to effect an amendment.

The following shall constitute the By Laws of this organization.

*Section 1.* The Order of Business shall be:

- a. Devotion
- b. Bible Study
- c. Roll Call of Officers
- d. Report of Credentials Committee
- e. Registration of Delegates
- f. Reading of Report of the Executive Board
- g. Appointment of Communications
- h. Appointment of Committees
- i. President's Message
- j. Reports of Officers
- k. Reports of Episcopal District Presidents
- l. Unfinished Business
- m. New Business
- n. Report of Committees
- o. Adjournment

*Section 2.* Representation from a majority of those Episcopal districts of the AME Church shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

*Section 3.* The members shall conform to all the rules and regulations of this organization; any member (s) guilty of an infraction or violation of the rules, or for conduct or decorum unbecoming a member, may be removed from membership herein.

*Section 4.* The order of business herein before outlined may be changed by a majority vote of the members present.

*Section 5.* All reports of Presidents and other officers shall be in writing and submitted in triplicate copies, one to be left with the President of the organization, one to be left with the Secretary of the organization, and one to be retained by the officer making the report.

*Section 6.* Any officer failing to perform his or her official duties shall be accountable to the Executive Board.

*Section 7.* No officer, nor standing or special committee, shall incur any obligation, which shall be binding, unless such action was authorized in its inception, or subsequently ratified and approved by the organization.

*Section 8.* The President shall be authorized to appoint and deputize, with sufficient power and authority, as many Marshals as may be deemed necessary to maintain order and decorum in the meeting. It shall be the duty of the Marshals to maintain strict order, see that only members are

seated within established bounds of the meeting, and perform such other duties as may be assigned to them by the President in keeping with the duties of their office.

*Section 9.* Any provision or condition not expressly covered in either the Constitution or By Laws of the Organization shall be interpreted and construed in keeping with the long established policy, customs, tenets, and traditions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, and *Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

### **Connectional Lay Economic Development Corporation (CLEDC)**

The purpose of the CLEDC is to provide financial assistance to the Connectional institutions and projects; a financial base for lay ministries, outreach missions, and long-term financial programs for the denomination.

The CLEDC is a not-for-profit corporation under the auspices of the Connectional Lay Organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The CLEDC is a continuation of the legacy of Richard Allen, the founding father, who preached a message of religious freedom, political empowerment, and economic self-determination.

Money contributed to the CLEDC will be handled by the CLEDC Finance Committee. All of the members of the CLEDC Finance Committee shall be fully bonded.

The checks and balances shall include full financial reporting on a quarterly basis; an annual external audit; availability of all financial records for inspection upon written request; and a six-part receipts system for every contribution received.