



THE LAY CHRONICLE

The Official Quarterly Newsletter of the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization

JANUARY 2026

AT THE HEART OF THIS NEWSLETTER

Welcome to The Lay Chronicle, the official quarterly e-newsletter of the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization. This publication was established to inform, connect, and uplift the laity as we live out our shared call to faith, leadership, and service.

The Lay Chronicle serves as a space to highlight the work being done across the Eleventh District, elevate the voices of our leaders and members, and document the collective impact of lay ministry. Each contribution reflects a commitment to excellence and a dedication to strengthening the Church through intentional service and faithful witness.

Members are encouraged, if they feel led, to submit opinion pieces, reflections, or awareness articles that speak to the life and work of the laity.

Additionally, those interested in joining the EEDLO Public Relations team are invited to complete the EEDLO Public Relations interest form by scanning the QR code provided below.

As Director of Public Relations, it is both an honor and a responsibility to steward this platform with clarity, integrity, and purpose. It is my prayer that this publication will inspire engagement, promote collaboration, and serve as a lasting record of the vital work of the Eleventh.

Shrin A. Bryant
Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization
Director of Public Relations



IN THIS NEWSLETTER YOU CAN EXPECT:

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Conference Highlights

Captured Moments of
Connection

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Eleventh



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

As we walk together in humility and hope, let us honor our differences while standing firm in our shared mission. As we labor side by side---clergy and laity--- let us trust God as He moves exceedingly and abundantly through us. Stay encouraged, stay engaged, and let us press forward together for the glory of God and the good of God's people.

Thank you, Bishop Marvin C. Zanders, II, Supervisor Winifred H. Zanders, Presiding Elders, pastors and lay members for your faithfulness, support, encouragement and unwavering commitment this past conference year.

This year, our vision "A Stronger Church, A Deeper Faith, and A Greater Impact" is transparent as we prioritize spiritual growth, intentional discipleship, leadership development, and meaningful outreach. It is our focus to equip and empower lay members to serve confidently with more seminars about the church, youth, and young adult involvement. To God be the glory for the things he has done and will continue to do in the Eleventh Episcopal District Lay Organization.

Brother John W. Love
EEDLO President #9



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LAY ACTIVITIES (DOLA)

One of the most significant responsibilities of the Lay Organization is training. Training equips laity to serve with knowledge and purpose within the AME Church. The 11th Episcopal District Lay Organization is determined to offer training sessions that strengthen our understanding of church governance, culture, and our collective responsibility as informed and engaged lay people.

During the 11th District Planning Convocation, we conducted training on the roles of members as possible candidates for office and the Nominating Committee in the elections process. Understanding the nominating process ensures fairness, integrity, and trust within our organization.

During our 81st Annual Lay Convention, we explored the culture of the church. These trainings challenged us to examine how history, tradition, generational shifts, and societal influences shape us as AMEs.

Looking ahead, the EEDLO is excited about upcoming training opportunities. One key training will focus on the role of the Lay Organization in the AME Church, reminding us of our purpose as a viable component. In addition, upcoming sessions on Social Action and Voter Engagement will reaffirm the AME Church's historic commitment to civic responsibility in this political climate.

Training is essential. As Director of Lay Activities, I remain committed to ensuring that our training opportunities are relevant, informative, and rooted in the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Rhoshonda Herring
EEDLO Director of Lay Activities

Let God Be Your Point Man

³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33 NKJV



Let God Be Your Point Man

Connectional Lay Organization Chaplain Charlie Nichols

Matthew 6:33 NKJV

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

In the military, every soldier, regardless of their specialty, receives combat training. One of the most important roles in a patrol is that of the Point Man. This soldier leads the way through uncertain and sometimes hostile territory. His job is to guide the formation safely while scouting the path ahead, detecting potential danger, and warning the team of any hidden threats. The Point Man sets the pace and direction, ensuring that the unit avoids ambushes or traps that could bring the team harm. Through focus, awareness, and timely communication, the Point Man protects the entire group as they press toward their mission.

Now, think of life as a similar journey. We, too, move through territory filled with unseen dangers, temptations, distractions, and spiritual traps meant to derail us. But just as a patrol follows its Point Man, we must follow the One who knows the terrain of our lives better than anyone else; that Point Man is God Himself. When we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we are allowing Him to lead us, setting our direction and keeping us safe from spiritual ambushes.

Even Jesus modeled this truth. When He faced temptation in the wilderness, He resisted the enemy by leaning on the Word of God. Similarly, we strengthen ourselves for our daily battles by feeding on Scripture and listening to the Holy Spirit. God's Word becomes our compass, and His Spirit becomes our guide. While a human Point Man relies on training, experience, and constant alertness to navigate dangerous ground, God's leadership is far greater. He sees every threat before it happens. He knows the safest route through every trial. And unlike human leaders who can tire or make mistakes, God never fails, never sleeps, and never loses His way.

So, as we journey through life's unknowns, let us trust God to take the lead. Let Him be our Point Man. He is the One who walks ahead, clearing the path and guiding us toward His promises with perfect wisdom and unwavering love.

Prayer

Almighty God, our true and faithful Point Man, thank You for going before us. You see the dangers we cannot see and steer us safely through life's spiritual battlefields. Unlike a soldier who must rely on training and human instinct, You guide us with perfect knowledge and divine protection. Help us to follow Your lead and to seek first Your kingdom, and trust Your direction even when the path is uncertain. Guard us from every ambush of the enemy, steady our hearts in Your Word, and remind us that our victory is found in following You. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.



Around the Eleventh: Conference Highlights

Serving with Purpose: Highlights from the Florida Conference Lay Organization

Donald Russell
FFlorida Conference Lay Organization President

The Florida Conference Lay Organization remains true to form, as we continue to provide opportunities for teaching, training and empowering our members for service in their local churches and communities. One activity we highlight is our Day ½ Annual Convention, which was held on April 11-12, 2025, convening with Anderson Chapel AME Church in Tallahassee, Florida. Our convention is a time where we come together to organize, worship, celebrate, train, give an account of our service and to remember those who have served with us. Our Presiding Elders, Pastors, Ministers and Conference Component Leaders were invited to participate in our Convention. We awarded one male from each District of the Annual Conference with our "Men of Distinction Award", as a means of highlighting the presence of men serving in our churches. Two workshops were presented reminding us of our Church Structure from the Local to Connection. Elected and Appointed Officers reported on their service to the organization and provided recommendations to be implemented in the coming year. We close our convention with a memorial service, remembering those Church Leader and Conference Lay members who have run their race, finished their course and now has transitioned this Conference Year.

The best is Yet to Come!



Shepherds of the Flock Honored a Joyous District Banquet

Charlie Nichols
Pensacola-Panama City District Lay Organization President

The Pensacola-Panama City District Lay Organization (PPCDLO), a District of the Annual Conference in the Florida Conference of the Eleventh Episcopal District, joyfully celebrated a night of fellowship, gratitude, and recognition at the inaugural Shepherd of the Flock Banquet, an event honoring and uplifting pastors who labor faithfully within the District of the Annual Conference.

The planning team, Sis. Estell Hogan, Sis. Ann McCelvy, Bro. Robert Lane, Sis. Barbara Travis, President Charlie Nichols, and Presiding Elder Ronald E. Williams, Sr. worked diligently to bring this special evening to life. Their efforts took shape soon after the conclusion of the 160th Session of the Florida Annual Conference in August 2025, with the vision of creating an event that would tangibly demonstrate appreciation for pastoral service.

In October 2025, the District Lay Organization extended formal invitations to 26 pastors supplying the 29 churches of the district, along with their spouses or significant others, inviting them to share in an evening of fellowship and honor. Each pastor and guest was assigned designated seating and later received a special proclamation from the Chair Pro-Tem of their respective Board of Stewards.

The celebration took place in the beautifully decorated Fellowship Hall of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church in Crestview, Florida, where touches of blue and white adorned the tables and chairs, setting a serene and joyful atmosphere. Instrumental music welcomed attendees as the evening commenced. President Charlie Nichols provided warm words of welcome and shared the occasion's significance, followed by a heartfelt devotion led by Sis. Maggie Jackson, Chaplain of the District Lay Organization.

Presiding Elder Ronald E. Williams, Sr. graciously acknowledged all in attendance and expressed his sincere appreciation for this historic occasion and acknowledged that this event was the first of its kind in the Pensacola-Panama City District. The prayer of thanksgiving was offered by Bro. Raymond Jackson, First Vice President, after which a delicious meal was served while soft music filled the room with harmony and warmth.

Sis. Estell Hogan then called the roll, and in a moving tribute, each Chair Pro-Tem presented their pastor with the proclamation and accompanying gifts of appreciation. President Nichols extended special thanks to Rev. Ann Riley and the Mt. Zion A.M.E., in Crestview, Florida Church family for graciously providing their facilities for such a meaningful gathering.

Presiding Elder Williams and President Nichols jointly presented several distinguished awards to pastors and leaders whose service continues to inspire the entire district:

- The Leadership Award was presented to Rev. Clifton Riley, Pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church, Pensacola, for his exemplary leadership as host of the 160th Session of the Florida Annual Conference.
- The Extraordinary Service Award was bestowed upon Rev. Cecil Williams, recognizing his dedication to pastoring one congregation while restoring the physical and spiritual structure of another following hurricane devastation in Panama City, Florida.
- The Emerging Leader Award was awarded to Bro. Devon Grayheart, whose plaque carried the Zulu greeting "Sawubona," meaning "I see you," is a tribute to his visible impact and promising potential as a young leader.

The evening concluded with heartfelt remarks by President Nichols, who expressed deep gratitude for the overwhelming support from members throughout the district and for the teamwork that made the event a resounding success. He especially acknowledged Presiding Elder Williams, whose leadership and encouragement played a pivotal role in bringing this vision to fruition.

The Shepherd of the Flock Banquet will long be remembered as a night of celebration, unity, and thanksgiving. It is a shining reminder that our pastors and leaders, the shepherds among us, are truly appreciated for their faithful labor and unwavering commitment to God's people.



LEADING FORWARD WITH PURPOSE AND FAITH

Greg Bowers
West Coast Conference Director of Public Relations

One of the most impactful moments of the conference year took place during our 2025 Annual Convention Young Adult Retreat, where we participated in the Marshmallow Challenge—an activity that powerfully illustrated lessons on teamwork, adaptability, and unlocking personal potential. The exercise revealed the importance of not assuming outcomes and remaining willing to adjust plans in real time. It showed us that growth often emerges through trial, error, and persistence rather than perfection. Working together as a team emphasized the value of clear communication, a shared vision, and making the most of limited resources—realities that closely mirror lay ministry, church life, and leadership.

This experience reinforced our hopes for the new year: to lead with clarity, flexibility, and faith. Unlocking potential requires embracing challenges and failures as learning opportunities, building positive habits, and maintaining a growth mindset. It also reminded us to be mindful of our circle by surrounding ourselves with supportive, faith-centered individuals who encourage accountability and progress.

Additionally, the training on silencing the inner critic deepened our commitment to self-reflection, prayer, and positive self-talk. As we move forward in lay ministry, our goal is to continue striving, remain open to growth, and trust God through every step of the journey.



Celebrating a Century of Faithful Service

Honoring Centenarians Mable Blanco and Juanita Hagans

The East Conference

During the Sesquicentennial Session of the East Annual Conference, the East Annual Conference Lay Organization joyfully celebrated an extraordinary milestone as they honored two remarkable

centenarians, Mrs. Mable Blanco and Mrs. Juanita Hagans. These women represent a living legacy of faith, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to the African Methodist Episcopal Church and its Lay Organization.

Reaching 100 years of life is a rare blessing; reaching it after decades of faithful service is truly inspirational. Mrs. Blanco and Mrs. Hagans have not only witnessed history but have helped shape it through their steadfast leadership, quiet dedication, and servant hearts. Their lives reflect the mission of the Lay Organization: supporting the church, strengthening Christian education, and uplifting those around them

As centenarians, they stand as living testimonies to God's sustaining grace. Their example reminds us that true faithfulness is demonstrated through a lifetime of service, humility, and love for God's church.

The East Annual Conference Lay Organization honors their legacy with gratitude and admiration. We give thanks for their service and recommit ourselves to carrying forward the work they so faithfully modeled. We salute Mrs. Mable Blanco and Mrs. Juanita Hagan: centenarians, trailblazers, and faithful servants of God.



Built on Faith. Powered by Service.

A celebration of unsung heroes, lasting impact, and emerging leaders

The South Conference

The South Conference Lay Organization convened for a powerful and uplifting awards celebration hosted at St. Paul AME Church in Liberty City. The venue was elegantly adorned in white and blue, creating an atmosphere of excellence, unity, and reverence for the occasion. Lay members, clergy, and guests gathered in joyful fellowship to honor those whose service has strengthened the church and community.

This year's celebration highlighted several meaningful awards. Unsung Hero Awards were presented to individuals whose faithful work often goes unnoticed, yet remains vital to the mission of the church. Lifetime Achievement Awards honored distinguished servants whose years of dedication, leadership, and sacrifice have left a lasting legacy within the South Conference.

Their inspiring testimonies and reflections moved the audience and served as a reminder that commitment to God's work bears fruit across generations.

The program also recognized the importance of investing in the future with a Young Adult Award, celebrating emerging leaders who continue to advance lay ministry with passion and purpose. In addition, the Clergy of the Year Award acknowledged pastoral leadership that consistently supports, empowers, and partners with the Lay Organization. Attendees enjoyed a delicious lunch and rich fellowship, making the event both memorable and meaningful. The South Conference Lay Organization remains committed to honoring service, celebrating excellence, and inspiring continued leadership.





BAHAMAS CONFERENCE ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 8-10, 2025

Esther Ferguson
Bahamas Conference Lay Organization President

The Bahamas Conference held its Annual Conference from November 8-10, 2025, at Cousin McPhee Cathedral AME Church, located on Carmichael Road in Nassau, Bahamas.

The conference opened with a series of spiritually enriching services. The Women in Ministry Service was powerfully preached by Rev. Pamela Brice, followed by the Sons of Allen Service, delivered by Brother Ned Munnings.

During the conference, the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) convened for elections and a brief training session conducted by Supervisor Winnifred Zanders and President Laurastine Lennon-King. Following the training, elections were held. A subsequent worship service was preached by Rev. Faith Maycock.

The Lay Organization Service was preached by Brother Neville Woodside, a Hall of Fame member. His sermon, titled "No Season Lasts Forever," was rooted in Isaiah 43:16-21 and offered encouragement and reflection for the season ahead.

The Opening Service of the conference was preached by Presiding Elder Rev. Howard F. Williamson.

On Friday, November 9, the Business Session of the conference was conducted. The Closing Service was preached by Bishop Marvin Zanders, marking a meaningful conclusion to the conference proceedings. During this service, newly elected WMS officers and ministers were presented with their certificates.

The Young People's Division (YPD) also held a dedicated service, followed by elections and the installation of newly elected officers.

Overall, the Bahamas Conference Annual Conference was a spirit-filled and enlightening gathering, marked by meaningful worship, effective leadership, and a strong sense of unity and purpose.

Views of the Central Conference



A CLARION CALL TO YOUNG ADULTS

PENNED BY DANTE' D. BUCKSON

ELEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION YOUNG ADULT REPRESENTATIVE

As you stand on the threshold of 2026, remember this sacred truth: you were called for such a time as this.

God has entrusted you as young leaders, with a generation searching for authenticity, hungry for truth, and longing for hope that cannot be shaken! You are not merely planners of programs or curators of gatherings... you are servants first, shepherds who lead from their knees, and vessels through whom God desires to move. Heaven has placed this assignment in your hands because it trusts your heart.

The leadership required in this season cannot be loud, flashy, or self-exalting. It MUST be humble, grounded, and Spirit-led. Jesus redefined leadership when He wrapped a towel around His waist and washed the feet of His disciples. As you prepare to lead, remember: authority in the Kingdom flows from humility, and influence is sustained by obedience. Lead with open hands, not clenched fists. I want to challenge you to serve without seeking recognition, knowing that God sees what others may overlook.

Know that your peers are not looking for perfection... they are looking for presence. They need leaders who are willing to listen before they speak, pray before they plan, and discern before they decide. PLEASE BE SENSITIVE TO THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT! Let Him set the pace, shape the vision, and interrupt the agenda when necessary. Strategy matters, but obedience matters more.

WHAT I KNOW FOR SURE IS THAT WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS, TRANSFORMATION FOLLOWS!

Do not underestimate the power of a yielded life. Every prayer whispered in secret, every act of service done quietly, every moment you choose surrender over self will bear eternal fruit. Faithfulness is never fruitless.

As you step into 2026, anchor your leadership in these Kingdom commitments:

- Servanthood before status – greatness is found in service.
- Humility before honor – God exalts those who walk low.
- Intimacy before influence – stay close to the heart of God.
- Spirit before structure – leave room for God to move.
- Character before platform – let your life preach louder than your words.

Let your ministry be a space where worship is authentic, community is healing, leadership is shared, and the Holy Spirit is welcomed and obeyed. Go forward into this new year with courage, but also with gentleness. Lead boldly but seek to serve faithfully. Walk confidently but please stay teachable!

May 2026 be a year marked by Spirit-led decisions, servant-hearted leadership, and lives transformed by the love of Christ. What you do in the next 12 months is CRUCIAL!

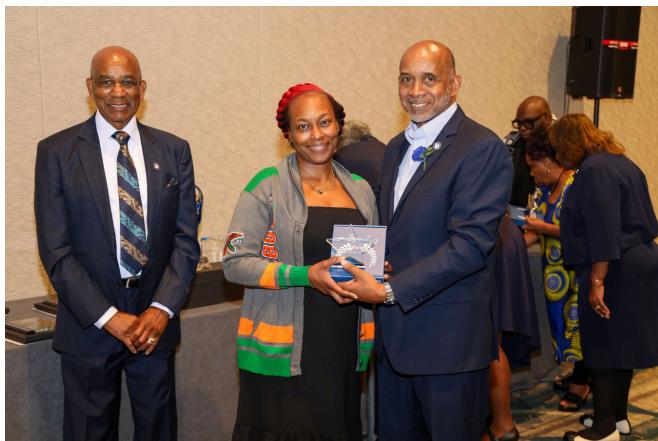
STAY HUMBLE. STAY OBEDIENT. STAY LED.



Captured Moments of the EEDLO

EEDLO PLANNING MEETING LUNCHEON AND Executive Board Meeting - November 20, 2025





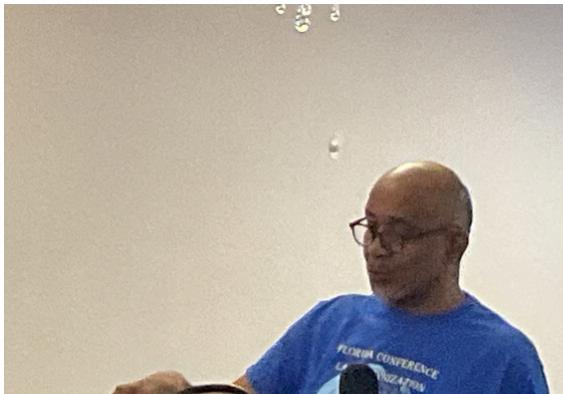






Capturing Moments of the EEDLO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

January 10th, 2026



Photographs contributed by Patricia H. Wright, Connectional Director of Lay Activities



What's Next in the 11th?

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
ELEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORGANIZATION

ANNUAL LAY RETREAT ROOTED IN CHRIST MOBILIZED FOR CHANGE

FOCUS: TO SPIRITUALLY GROUND AND MOBILIZE AME LAY MEMBERS TO LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH THROUGH INFORMED, COURAGEOUS, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION THAT ADVANCES SOCIAL JUSTICE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

FRIDAY
7:00PM EST
OPENING WORSHIP SERVICE

SATURDAY
8:30AM EST
RETREAT BEGINS

- MORNING GLORY
- KEYNOTE PRESENTATION
- LEARNING LABS
- VOTERS EMPOWERMENT ROUNDTABLE

REGISTER HERE

VIRTUALLY
FEBRUARY 27-28, 2026

BISHOP MARVIN C. ZANDERS, II
PRESIDING PRELATE

MRS. WINIFRED H. ZANDERS
EPISCOPAL SUPERVISOR

MR. JOHN LOVE
EEDLO PRESIDENT

MS. RHOSHONDA HERRING
EEDLO DIR. OF LAY ACTIVITIES

MR. DANTE' BUCKSON
EEDLO YAR





What's Next in the **11th**?

SAVE THE DATE

June 8-10th, 2026

**Eleventh Episcopal
District Lay
Convention**

Tallahassee, Florida

