

Minutes

International Ministers and Lay Association Annual Meeting

Tuesday, February 19, 2019 – Thursday, February 21, 2019

Sheraton Greensboro Hotel at Four Seasons, 3121 W. Gate City Blvd., Greensboro, North Carolina

Tuesday, February 19, 2019 – Opening Session – 3 p.m.

The opening session of the 2019 Annual Meeting of the International Ministers and Lay Association convened at 3 p.m. and our Worship Leader was the Rev. Dr. Jerret Fite. Devotions were led by The Rev. Tyquan Alston with a medley of worship songs - "He's Able", "You Deserve It", "Alleluia". The hymn of praise was, "To God Be The Glory." The scripture was read by Mrs. Melva Wright – Matthew 14: 22-27 and we were lead to the throne of grace by Sis. LaKesha Womack. A selection "God Works In Mysterious Ways/Lead Me Guide Me" was given by Dr. Daren H. Mitchell, Pastor of Trinity A.M.E. Zion Church, Greensboro, NC. The Preacher was introduced by Rev. Dr. Calvin Miller, Presiding Elder and following a selection, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," by Rev. Alston the Annual Sermon was delivered by The Rev. Michael A. Frencher, Jr., Pastor of the Union Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Linwood, NC. The Text was Matthew 14: 26-27; Subject: "Dealing With Troubled Times." Rev. Frencher sang "I Won't Complain."

Major Points:

- We are living in times where we have to watch how we speak to each other and watch who we call friend. We are lead by a narcissistic and unpredictable President who feels that he can do whatever he wants whenever he wants. We are living in times when young black people are in danger of losing their lives either by the police or by suicide. Trouble is all around us and can find you no matter where you are- your home, your job and even your church. We are not exempt from trouble just because we are active members of our churches. We cannot allow these troubling times to take us off course, break our spirits and mess up our faith.
- We all know something about troubling times. Yes, we have all had days when the seas were smooth and things were alright. But when the dark clouds and stormy weather comes, what do we do? In the text the Disciples were searching for someone to save them from their situation. Like Peter and the Disciples, we need to look outside of ourselves for the help that we need. If we are not looking for Jesus we must might miss Him. Peter stepped out of the boat and Jesus can do more for us outside of the boat than if we remain in the boat. Your boat is whatever you put your trust in when troubling times come. But we need to step out of the boat on faith and put out trust in Jesus.

The Invitation to Christian Discipleship and Altar Prayer was made by Rev. Tajuan Kyles, "My Soul Says Yes." The Offering Appeal for \$30 was made by Mr. Jerry McCombs, Rev. Dr. David T. Miller and the Finance Committee with an Offertory Prayer by Rev. Dr. Jerret Fite. Announcements were made by Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather, Executive Director. Rev. Dr. Anthony Witherspoon, IMLA President, acknowledged the presence of our immediate past President, Dr. Kevin McGill and past President, Dr. Curtis Walker. He officially opened the 2019 Annual Meeting of the International Ministers and Lay Association and called for the Treasurers Report for the period February 2018-February 2019 by Dr. David T. Miller, Treasurer. (See Full Report)

Summary:	Amount Brought Forward	\$	191.46
	Income		\$28,844.46
	Disbursements		\$29,079.00
	Balance On Hand	\$	401.00

All paid members of the Association were asked to raise their hands to receive a copy of the Treasurers Report. President Witherspoon entertained a motion for the reception of the Treasurer's Report. It was

moved by Sis. Lula Howard with a second by _____ to receive the report of the Treasurer with thanks. On unreadiness, Dr. Kevin McGill questioned the Receipts and Disbursements for banquet and suggested that the executive board look at the ticket price for the next banquet. President thanked Dr. McGill for pointing this out and said that the Executive Board will take his suggestion into consideration. The motion carried. Those present were encouraged to support the association and see Dr. Myrtle Bowen with memberships. After additional closing remarks and announcements, the benediction was given by Rev. Frencher.

7:00 p.m. – 41st Annual Cameron W. Jackson Awards and Recognition Banquet

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Q. James, Toastmaster

Honorees:

Paul Robeson Award – Rev. Dr. Larry D. Robinson – Rev. Dr. Calude A. Shuford, Presenter

Samantha Wormley Lay Leadership Award – Dr. Sandra L. Gadson – Ms. Cynthia Revels-Young, Presenter

Sojourner Truth Lifetime Achievement Award – Rev. Dr. Barbara LaToison – Mrs. Ruth Latoison Ifill, Presenter

Frederick Douglass Award – Dr. Janice Kennedy Sloan – Rev. Jordan B. Boyd, Presenter

Bishops Small/Lartey International Award – Rev. Dr. Takis Caiafas – Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Presenter

Bishop Alfred G. Dunston, Jr. Salute to Service Award – Mr. Thomas Vinson – Rev. Dr. Haven Anderson, Presenter

Young Gifted and Black Award – Dr. Da'Tarvia Parrish and Rev. Eldren Morrison

Presenters: Rev. Samuel Brown and Rev. Dr. Monte Witherspoon Brown

President's Award – Rev. Dr. Robert E. Christian – Rev. Dr. Anthony N. Witherspoon, Presenter

Harriet Tubman Award – Mrs. Iris M. Battle - Dr. Barbara L. Shaw, Presenter

Wednesday, February 20, 2019 – Afternoon Session - 4 p.m.

After a session of Praise and Worship the afternoon business session began with a report by Dr. Yvonne A. Tracey and Rev. Erich V. Shumake on our General Conference Legislation Development. Questions were taken from the floor regarding the resolution process on the Annual Conference level, reviewing the work we did in Rock Hill, NC, planning for continued work in Orlando and the plans for ongoing work looking towards the 2020 General Conference. The Minutes of the 2018 Annual Meeting were read by the Secretary, Ms. M. Denise Niles. Ms. Niles informed the body that full minutes were uploaded to the IMLA website and that there was a form online for any corrections of the minutes. Hard copies of the minutes were in transit and she read highlights of each days' proceedings. Copies of the correction form were made available at the Secretary's table. After the reading of the highlights of the minutes, President Witherspoon thanked the secretary for the manner in which she is carrying on the legacy of previous Secretaries of the Association. He then entertained a motion for the approval of the minutes with any necessary corrections. It was moved by Mrs. Ruth E. Gough and seconded by Dr. Margaret Blackmon that the minutes be accepted as read with any necessary corrections. On unreadiness, Dr. Yvonne Tracy asked if we were also accepting the recommendations included in the President's Report which was included in the minutes would be considered sure item or as overall operational improvements. In response Dr. Witherspoon stated that the recommendations should be taken as a whole for general operational improvements of the Association. The motion carried. President Witherspoon then introduced Dr. Eleazar Merriweather, Pastor of St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church, Detroit, MI and Presiding Elder in Trinidad, who served the Association for 8 years as Assistant Secretary, as the new Executive Director appointed by the Executive Board. The Business Session continued as President Witherspoon introduced Rev. Alice Walker-Johnson, Pastor of Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church, Rockville, MD, for her presentation entitled, "A Changing Church, But An Unchanging God." Members stood to commend Rev. Walker-Johnson for the excellent presentation and stated that it should be shared with persons who are not in attendance. Rev. Walker said that she would send it to the secretary for inclusion on our website and social media. A question

and answer period followed the presentation. Mrs. Lula K. Howard, Mr. Eric Smith and Rev. Dr. Andrew Smoke were introduced for a presentation on the Electoral College and the General Conference. Discussion ensued regarding issues pertaining to the Electoral College and the definition of “a member in good standing.” Dr. Myrtle Bowen reported on memberships and announced that membership cards were ready to be picked up. Announcements were made by Executive Director Merriweather and President Witherspoon who acknowledge the presence of Dr. Curtis Walker, Past President of the IMLA and Dr. Mary Matthews, International President of the Connectional Lay Council. He asked Sis. Vanessa Watt, Regional Vice-President of the South Atlantic Episcopal Area to closed the session in prayer. Special prayer was given by Rev. Andrew Smoke for Rev. Whitley from the Virginia Conference, who has fallen ill while in Greensboro.

Thursday, February 21, 2019 – Morning Session – 9 a.m.

The Thursday morning session began with a period of Praise and Worship led by Rev. Justin Barbour. The Memorial Service opened with the singing of “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less,” the scripture, 2 Kings 20: 1-5 was read by Mr. Demond Nichols and prayer lifted by Rev. Jawwad Jimi Love. The preacher for the morning’s Memorial Sermon was introduced by Rev. Dr. William Jordan, III, Presiding Elder. The Rev. Dr. Kay M. Hines, pastor of Pleasant Ridge A.M.E. Zion Church, Gastonia, NC, preached from the subject, “Give Me Just A Little More Time,” 2 Kings 20:5.

Major Points:

- We chart and plan our lives in measurements of time – but only God only knows our times and the transitions of our lives
- God has given us enough time to work with purpose, to worship intentionally and serve deliberately
- We experience change and transition as a part of life
- Our struggle happens with we resist the change

The Invitation to Christian Discipleship was made by the Rev. Hanna Broome, P.E. The Roll Call of the deceased members of the Association was called led by our 2nd Vice-President, The Rev. Dr. Myrtle Bowen and the Regional Vice Presidents. The Offering Appeal of \$50 was made by President Witherspoon and members were asked to call the name of someone that they would like to remember during this Memorial Service as they bring their gifts. The offering was collected The Rev. David T. Miller and the Finance Committee and Offertory prayer by The Rev. Carolyn Bratton. We learned of the passing of The Rev. Dr. E.H. Whitley and special prayer was offered for Mrs. Whitley and the Whitley family by his Presiding Elder. Announcements were made by the Executive Secretary. Final remarks were made and the benediction was given by Dr. Hines. President Witherspoon invited the Candidates for offices of the Women’s Home and Overseas Missionary Society to make their brief presentations. Dr. Yvonne Tracey and P.E. Erich Shumake continued with redouts and reports out from our Legislative Committees. Ms. LaKeshia Womack instructed the members on how they could access the power point presentation to follow along and review the reports on the Legislative process. Committee reports were presented and questions were taken from the floor regarding various committee reports. A presentation was made by President Witherspoon and Dr. Merriweather to the Rev. Dr. T. Anthony Spearman, who was unable to be present at last year’s Recognition and Awards Banquet. Dr. Spearman expressed his thanks and appreciation and encouraged our members to bring Zion to the forefront of the struggle for justice. Dr. David Aiken presented information regarding Zion Benefits Services and the new A.M.E. Zion Retirement Plan. A power point presentation was made available for the membership via the IMLA website. Dr. Aiken encouraged all churches in the denomination to participate in the plan and entertained questions and comments from the floor regarding the program. Dr. J. Elvin Sadler, General Secretary Auditor reported on the use of our Quarterly Conference Reporting System. We are 27 months out in utilizing the system and he reported that many Presiding Elder Districts and Annual Conferences are using the system. The system works and problems arise because many people are not following the step by step instructions and have a fear

of trying something new. Version 2.0 is in the testing phase and once that is complete the beta version will be rolled out with selected Districts. This version will be cloud based. Dr. Sadler emphasized that the use of this system will give us accurate data for the benefit of the entire denomination. He entertained questions from the floor regarding the system and remarks from those who have successfully and unsuccessfully used the system. Additionally, Dr. Sadler clarified the false impression that he is determining who can and cannot run for office in the church. Candidates are vetted through his office and he certifies that all their credentials are in order before the candidates are interviewed by the Board of Bishops. Announcements were made by President Witherspoon and members were encouraged to attend the closing business session. Closing prayer was given by Dr. Glenn Grayson and we adjourned for lunch.

Thursday, February 21 – Afternoon Session – 3 p.m.

The Closing Business Session was opened by Rev. Dr. Eleazar Merriweather who continued the discussion on the topic, “A Changing Church, But An Unchanging God.” Presenting from the perspective of the Laity was Ms. Lynda N. Byrd, from the Michigan Conference, Midwest Episcopal District. The Millennial Perspective was presented by the Rev. Austin J. Young, a student at Morehouse University. A few points presented:

- Purposes of the church are Worship, Fellowship and Ministry
- “Say what you mean and mean what you say...but don’t say it mean”
- Reach out to people even if they are different
- Embrace people who move into our neighborhood through gentrification
- Training is necessary so that we are prepared to receive people

Discussion ensued on the topic of Church Growth and Discipleship and questions from the floor from members.

Dr. Merriweather welcomed Bishop George Crenshaw who shared news from the Central Southern Africa Episcopal District.

- Assigned Conferences
 - Zimbabwe – 5 active churches – 250 members
 - South Africa –
 - India – 10 Presiding Elder Districts – 337 Pastoral appointments – 6500 members
 - East Angola – 10 Presiding Elder Districts – 21,000 members
 - West Angola – 3 Districts – 24,000 members – building a new headquarters and it is about 65% completed.
- Episcopal Expansion
 - South Korea – people from Liberia have relocated there are started a church – First A.M.E. Zion Church, and then Hoggard Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, membership is about 150
 - Malawi/Mozambique – they have come back with 70 Presiding Elder Districts, 8 Zone leaders, 701 churches and membership of more than 41,000
 - South Angola – 13 churches, membership 3,100
 - Namibia – 55 members
 - Other conferences in East Africa that split from the A.M.E. Church are in preliminary conversations to come into the A.M.E. Zion Church - 6 conferences, 24 Districts, 146 Churches , Membership: 32,909 (Mowanda, Berundi, Uganda North, Uganda South, Democratic Republic of Congo East, Democratic Republic of Congo West)
- Bishop Crenshaw also spoke about financial support and gave details on how the appropriation for Central Southern Africa is spent. He also gave us information regarding an upcoming tour.

Bishop Crenshaw received a standing ovation for his presentation and President Witherspoon thanked him for sharing all of this information with the body. The floor was opened for questions and comments,

especially regarding the topic of indigenous leadership in Central Southern Africa. Bishop Crenshaw recommended the delay of this for at least four years because of the number of countries and the fact that the work has only been together for such a short time. Questions were raised regarding support and members who wished to support the work were encouraged to use cashapp and givelify. An Offering was taken up by the Finance Committee and the Offertory Prayer was made by Rev. J. Martin Boulter, Chaplain.

Dr. Yvonne Tracey and Rev. Erich Shumake came forward with an Interim Report on the Legislative Committee process and plans for continuing our work at the Connectional Council in July in Orlando, Fla. They were commended for the work that they have been doing over the last 10 years to bring this information to us.

Updates were given regarding the 400 year Celebration by Dr. Kathy McFadden and Dr. Maurice Harden made a report of the IMLA Young Adults. Dr. Myrtle Bowen, 2nd Vice President gave us an update on Membership.

A presentation of \$1,500 was made from the IMLA to Bishop George Crenshaw to support the work of the Central Southern Africa.

Sis. Mary Matthews, International President of the Connectional Lay Council was invited up to bring greetings. She expressed thanks to Dr. Witherspoon and commended Dr. Yvonne Tracey for her work.

The following persons were appointed to the By-Laws Committee:

Dr. Gregory Smith, Mrs. Yvonne Baskerville, Mrs. Melva Polk- Wright, Dr. Curtis Walker, Dr. Charles Tillett, Ms. Vanessa Watt, Dr. Melanie Miller, Dr. Jerret Fitte, Dr. Kevin McGill, Mrs. Pat Hunter. President Witherspoon asked Dr. Smith to chair this committee.

Dr. Merriweather asked the members of the Executive Board of the International Ministers and Lay Association to stand and commended them for their work. He also asked that the body give a standing ovation for Dr. Anthony N. Witherspoon for his outstanding leadership of our team.

The 2019 session of the Annual Meeting of the International Ministers and Lay Association closed with the singing of "God Be With You" and benediction by Dr. Curtis Walker, past president of the Association.