



Northwest Texas Conference Lay Organization

NWTC Lay Organization Newsletter

The NWTC Lay Organization Voter Registration Drive

Special points of interest:

- NWTC Lay Organization Voter Registration Drive
- 200 Club Report

During Annual Conference in Fort Worth, Texas the Northwest Texas Lay Organization went to Polytechnical High School to conduct a voters registration drive. The event was a success as some twenty or more students registered to vote. Because this election is so important, it was an absolutely positive

venture by the Northwest Texas conference Lay Organization. “It was interesting that some of the youth didn’t realize the importance of voting or even the process of voting,” says Donnie Davis, one of the volunteers on that day. “It was awesome when during the process that we looked up and there

stood our Bishop. Who couldn’t be proud of a Bishop that is in the trenches with us,” says Roosevelt Ellis, Jr., President of the Northwest Texas Conference Lay Organization. “This was a great event

Inside this issue:

Unique qualities of the AME Church	2
Watch Your Language	6
Annual Conference Lay Night	8
200 Club Report	8





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SOME MORE UNIQUE QUALITIES OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Reverend Dr. Calvin H. Sydnor III
The 20th Editor of *The Christian Recorder*

There is so much to learn about the Bible and the church and we must never forget that we are in spiritual warfare.

Pastoring is an awesome responsibility and it is important for pastors to train parishioners and especially young people about the sacredness of the things of God.

I have written on more than one occasion that one of interesting things about being the Editor of *The Christian Recorder* is the opportunity to interact with clergy and laity from across the AME Church, both here in the U.S. and abroad.

Some of the comments and queries send me scrambling to the Bible, to *The Doctrine and Discipline - AMEC*, the *AMEC Hymnal*, to reference books, the internet and even to colleagues; and those queries help me to learn and grow, and to be able to share.

Some of the parishioners who correspond with me ask questions, others share anecdotes and others give their opinions. A common thread of all the inquiries reinforces for me the notion that pastors and religious educators need to do more teaching.

Spirited preaching that helps people to feel good and cope with the various challenges of life is wonderful, but teaching is important, especially in "connected organizations" and particularly so in a connectional church such as the AME Church.

We have some biblical beliefs and doctrines with which people should be familiar. And, in this sense, "familiarity does not breed contempt," but enhances love and appreciation for our Zion. The more we pray and the more we know about scripture, the greater possibility for a deeper spiritual life. The more we know about doctrine and why we do certain things in worship the better enhanced is our relationship with each

other and with God.

For instance I am sure it's helpful for our parishioners to understand why we pray in worship before the reading of the scripture. In Methodism we have the prayer before the scripture because we invoke God's presence before the reading of the Word of God.

Another example, the first hymn should always be a hymn of praise and acknowledgement of the presence of God, not just any hymn because it's upbeat or we like the melody. The sentence of the traditional AME Call to Worship, says, "*O Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth and sing praises.*" The opening hymn should be praise to God!

Someone asked last week if I could address infant baptism. The question was, "Why do we baptize babies?"

A couple of observations

There is nowhere in the

Bible and more specifically in the New Testament, a prohibition against baptizing infants. One could start off with the premise that the scriptures encourage baptism of children and even infants.

Why do I start off with that statement? Every AME should be familiar with the Articles of Religion. Pastors should insure new and old parishioners understand the Articles of Religion.

In the Fifth Article of Religion – *“Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation, it states, “The Holy Scriptures containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man*

[woman].” Simply stated, the Bible contains everything necessary for salvation, the Bible is our rule and guide for faith and practice.

If the Bible says it, “Believe it and obey it and where the Bible is silent, the Pope or any other religious leader or denomination does not have the authority of making additional re-

quirements about faith and salvation.”

Having said that, the Bible does not prohibit infant baptism, but rather infers that infants and children were baptised, e.g., the Philippian Jailer and his whole household were baptised. The scripture, Acts 16: 25-34 records the Philippian Jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.”*

Another example – Jesus never rejected children, blessed them and chastised his disciples when they tried to keep the children away from him. Jesus was inclusive and Methodism is inclusive!

And before proceeding further, the terms “baptism and christening” are synonymous

and the terms literally mean “to make Christians of them.”

One does not have to be baptized in order to be saved, based on Jesus’ response to one of the thieves crucified with him, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

We do not re-baptize in the AME Church. I am not sure what it is about the concern of people remembering their baptism. Do Jewish men who were circumcised on the eighth day remember their circumcision ceremony? Do they want to remember it? No!

Remembering our baptism is not important and there is no biblical injunction to do so. Remembering the suffering, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is important because the Bible tells us to do so.

It is the responsibility of pastors to teach parishioners about baptism. The “quick and dirty” answer is that those who practice infant baptism believe that baptism has replaced [fulfilled] the Old Testa-

ment circumcision and is the religious ceremony of initiation into the Christian community. Infant baptism is also referred to as *pedobaptism*.

Methodists believe infant baptism has spiritual value for the infant. John Wesley believed baptism was a means of grace, and water baptism was symbolic. Methodists view baptism in water as symbolic and believe that water baptism does not regenerate the baptised or cleanse them from sin. In Methodism, baptism is the doorway to sanctification and it is the water and the Spirit. We embrace water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Obedient Christians baptize babies because baptism is a “type” of circumcision. Jewish baby boys are circumcised on the eighth day; devout Jews do not wait until the boys come of age to determine for themselves if they want to be Jews (circumcised). Jewish infants are “made” Jews through circumcision and when they come of age can decide if they don’t want to be Jews.

We do not delay baptism; we make our children “Christians from birth.” They can decide later if

they don't want to be Christians. It doesn't seem Christian to wait and let our children decide if they want to be Christians. We baptise them, make Christians of them and if they want; they can decide "not to be a Christian."

When people were converted in the Apostolic church (throughout the book of Acts and the epistles), the person and his or her whole household were baptised (Acts 16 and I Corinthians 1:16) as well as "the promise to you and your children" (Acts 2:39) as including small children and infants.

One does not have to be baptised to be saved. In Methodism, one does not have to be baptised to take Communion and that's why in Methodism our Communion is called the "Open Table."

Interestingly, most Christian faith groups around the world practice *pedobaptism*, the baptism of children, i.e., Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Eastern Orthodox, and many others.

There is nothing in the Bible about the necessity for a person to remember his or her baptism; and nothing in Judaism that emphasized the notion that Jewish boys needed to remember their circumcision.

And, a bit more about the various modes of baptism, most denominations around the world practice sprinkling and affusion (pouring).

The earliest images in the catacombs show John the Baptist pouring water on the head of a person, who is standing in ankle-deep water.

And in the *Didache*, an early Christian treatise, dated by most modern scholars to the first century gives a description of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by affusion.

A couple of more things

Traditionally pastors serve the elements of communion in a recipient's right hand and people who receive the Sacrament cup their right

hand over the left hand and in some instances, the crossed hands form a Cross.

In biblical times, and even today, in the Middle East, the left hand is considered unclean; the left hand was supposed to be the hand that one used to clean oneself after using the toilet. People ate with their right hand; touched others only with the right hand; never the left hand. The tradition has been carried over in the church and tradition has been to take Communion with the right hand. (It's not a sin to take the sacrament with the left hand, just a tradition).

Blessings are also given with the right hand. In some churches a left-handed blessing is an anathema. The Bible speaks about the right hand of God; never the left hand of God.

Holy Communion is a sacred event. The bread and wine become the "Presence" of the body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The consecrated bread and wine transcend the ordinary and become sacred. We call the process

"Consubstantiation."

Roman Catholics believe the consecrated elements of Communion become the "actual body and blood" of Jesus Christ and that doctrine is called, "Transubstantiation."

The consecrated elements of the Eucharist should be handled with respect, and just as importantly, should be disposed of with utmost care. The consecrated elements should not be thrown in the trash or flushed down the toilet.

The left-over consecrated elements can be eaten, but with reverence. It is appropriate to put the leftover wafers/bread and juice/wine on the ground, but not where people can walk on it. Leftovers should be disposed of with respect and reverence to God.

The sacredness of the Cross

In worship, during prayer and singing the doxologies, it is traditional for clergy, parishioners to face in the direction of the Cross. In many churches, the church ar-

chitecture lends itself to everyone facing the Cross; and clergy and parishioners naturally face the Cross.

There is so much to learn about the Bible and the church and we must never forget that we are in spiritual warfare.

Pastoring is an awesome responsibility and it is important for pastors to train parishioners and especially young people about the sacredness of the things of God.

The world is our stage or the world is now the platform for the African Methodist Episcopal Church since that fateful night in June 2015 (the massacre at Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church). Moreover, because the world is our stage we should be aware and mindful of not only our actions but our language as well, since both can bring positive or negative light to our Zion. During the afternoon session of the General Conference Commission gathering in early April, Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie issued a reminder to those who gathered for the General Board and the General Conference

Commission meeting.

The reminder was for individuals to be cognizant of their discussions, jokes and other conversations during the meeting. Bishop McKenzie said, “I would hope that we are careful about the language that we use to each other. We have young leaders in the room. Be careful how we speak to each other, we cannot expect the world to respect us if we cannot respect each other.”

I have had several weeks to ponder on the importance of the cautionary warning issued by our pioneer female bishop on that April afternoon, and I realize that the warning was not only applicable to that afternoon, but it should be a continuous reminder moving forward. The warning should also remind us that our language and actions not only affect our young leaders but also affects others who are not members of our Zion.

For instance, I wonder about the thoughts of the audio-visual technicians/engineers who were not employees of the AME Church, but employees of the Philadelphia Convention Center. What were they thinking as

the Church presented, discussed, queried, shared information that was relevant not only to the upcoming General Conference but to the overall business of the Church? Did those individuals leave our meeting with a positive or negative understanding of the AME Church, whom did they share this information with, or what did they share about what they learned about our Zion in those few days?

Bishop McKenzie was correct when she reminded those gathered – and perhaps those viewing via livestream – that if we as members of this great body do not respect each other in our language and actions then we could not or should not be dismayed when the world does not respect us in any capacity. I am almost certain that our General Conference will be observed by many worldwide, and therefore “business as usual” should not be the norm.

I have overheard several individuals at different times; offer what they deem to be sage advice to some other individuals who are con-

templating making their first General Conference appearance. The advice is usually cautioning those first timers not to be disappointed in the actions and language displayed by “church people” during the normal course of General Conference sessions. In other words, first timers should not be disappointed or dismayed when Jesus is left outside the door during business sessions or when Jesus is not visible during the course of the business session deliberations.

Let us strive to heed the words of Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie and exercise caution in our language and in our actions. Let us exercise caution so that we can be positive role models not only for our young leaders but also for others who are watching us on this worldwide stage. Let us invite Jesus to enter and stay in the room as laws, regulations, and polity are discussed, as new leaders are elected (not selected) to enhance our Zion as well as the kingdom of God. Please, watch your language and your actions so that others can see God working within us as members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Church of Jesus Christ, Richard Allen, Sarah Allen, and Jarena Lee.

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE



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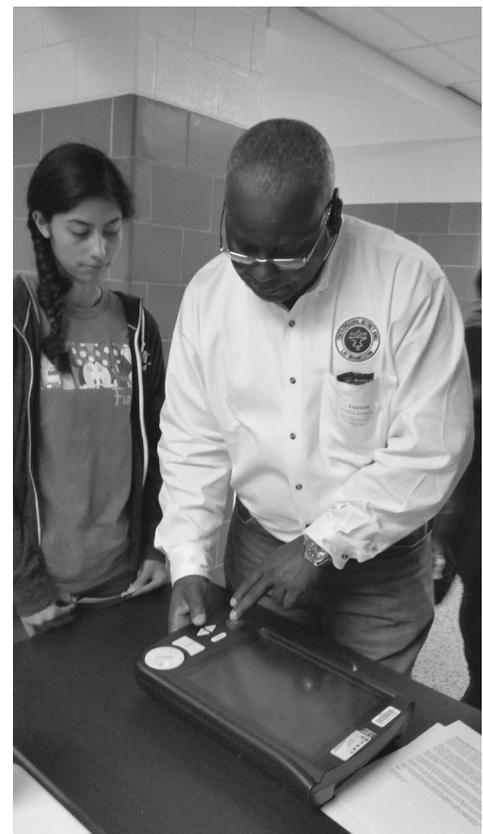
WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE CONTINUED

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As we move towards the 50th session of the A.M.E Church’s General Conference, let us strive to heed the words of Bishop Vash-ti Murphy McKenzie and exercise caution in our language and in our actions. Let us exercise caution so that we can be positive role models not only for our young leaders but also for others who are watching us on this worldwide stage. Let us invite Jesus to enter and stay in the room as laws, regulations, and polity are discussed, as

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MORE PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE VOTERS REGISTRATION DRIVE



We're on the web at <http://www.nwtclo.org>

ANNUAL CONFERENCE LAY NIGHT

Annual Conference Lay night was held on September 15, 2016 at the Bakers Chapel A.M.E. Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Our speaker for the occasion was Rev. Lish K. Burgess. Rev. Burgess delivered a magnificent sermon entitled "A Moral Majority Making Major Decisions" from Numbers 14:20-25.

Rev. Burgess challenged the Lay Organization to keep the faith in God and remember all of the wondrous things that he has done for us. His sermon told the story of the 12 spies that went into Canaan who were to bring a report of if they could take the land. Ten spies said no the land couldn't be taken because of the giants who

lived there. Two spies, Caleb and Joshua, said they could. The majority ruled but caused an entire generation to be excluded from crossing over into Canaan land. We must always remember the promises of God whereas we can get the full benefit of what God has to offer us.

200 CLUB REPORT

During the Annual Conference Lay night was held on September 15, 2016 at the Bakers Chapel A.M.E. Church, Fort Worth, TX, President Roosevelt Ellis, Junior presented Bishop Vashti McKenzie a check for \$3,000 from the 200 Club. The money will be used to help the Paul Quinn College Gap Fund which helps students of Paul Quinn if they run short for college necessities.

As of this year, the Northwest Texas Conference Lay organization have raised a total of \$6,500 to help support Paul Quinn College.

"We thank each person who helped to make this venture a success," says Donnie Davis, 200 Club Chairperson, "We normally starts slow but thank the Lord by the time of Annual Conference everyone comes through in a mighty way."

