



African American Methodist Heritage Center
36 Madison Avenue • PO Box 127 • Madison, NJ 07940
(973) 408-3862 • aamhc@aol.com • Web site: aamhc-umc.org
Advance Code #3020514

Annual Report of

The African American Methodist Heritage Center
To

The 50^h Annual Meeting of the Black Methodists for Church Renewal – March 8, 2017

“... each of you take up a stone ... so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ then you shall tell them ... these stones shall be ... a memorial forever’.” Joshua 4:6,7 (NRSV)

In December 2016, the African American Methodist Heritage Center, Inc. (AAMHC) celebrated 15 years of preserving, protecting and promoting the history of African Americans in Methodism. A long smoldering desire to recover and promote the history of African Americans in the Wesleyan tradition was infused with fresh fuel in 2001 by the leadership of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR). BMCR authorized the organization of AAMHC which was incorporated and elected its first Board of Directors led by Bishop Forrest C. Stith and dedicated clergy and laity. Over the years AAMHC has provided resources, training and information designed to help recover, preserve, and promote the stories of African Americans in Methodism. We have been blessed with support from many of you from across the nation as well as from agencies throughout the Methodist connection.

The recent opening of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D. C. has generated a reawakening of interest in the story of African Americans in America. A “spill-over” effect is emerging as people across Methodism want to know more about the role of African Americans in Methodism. AAMHC hopes that this revival in the interest of knowing more about our past will have a special impact upon younger people, especially those under the age of 50 years old. Younger persons are needed to help insure that all of our appropriate “stones” (see the Joshua quote) are recovered, preserved and remembered. AAMHC urges that you to share with us the names of persons who might be interested in being a part of, or knowing more about, this ministry.

One of the exciting initiatives underway is the Oral History Project. We currently have recorded over twenty (20) interviews with senior clergy and laity who were active in the period leading up to and during the period of the elimination of the segregated Central Jurisdiction. It is an opportunity for them to recall their experiences before, during, and after the transition to the integrated United Methodist Church. They tell heart-breaking as well as heart-warming anecdotes of those times. Bishops’ spouses tell of their experiences in new non-segregated settings. Bishops talk about leading annual conferences not accustomed to African American leadership. Laypersons relate their barrier-breaking experiences in conferences, on agencies, and in local settings. This information will be compiled and available as a resource to the entire church.

The AAMHC collection of memorabilia, housed in the state-of-the-art archival facilities of the General Commission on Archives and History at Drew University, is growing, although slowly. It is a challenge to encourage people to release for preservation their papers, photos and materials. The boxes packed away in basements can be better protected and more importantly used for research, when they are preserved in the Archives. It is a project on which the AAMHC continues to work. It is important for both research and for edification to be able to look back at the reminders of the experiences of African Americans in Methodism. Our history is not the end of the story – it is a stepping stone into the future.

For over a year now, the *AAMHC Journal* has been published and distributed via e-mail. It carries articles about current happenings; historical excerpts; resources; and African American Methodists making the news. The *AAMHC Journal* is one of the ways most people have come to know about the AAMHC. Unfortunately, because of expense, it has not been widely distributed through the mail. Your contact information is vital to this effort. If you are not receiving information from us, please make sure you provide email and postage information to us at aamhc@aol.com or at 973-408-3862.

For two quadrennia the General Conference of the United Methodist Church, through the General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) allocated \$100,000 to support this ministry which is related to the denomination through GCAH. However, beginning in 2017 The General Conference is no longer providing financial support. We will be receiving a significantly declining amount from the General Commission on Archives and History. In the past we have encouraged financial gifts from supporters. However, in order to continue this ministry we must seek much more substantial support to overcome the funding no longer received from The General Conference. We hope you will increase your donations, which are tax exempt.

Stop by our table in the exhibit area to receive more information or to make sure that your contact information is accurate. Otherwise, please feel free to contact, **Ms. Carol Travis, Executive Assistant on 973-408-3862.**

Please consider prayerfully and thoughtfully how you can best support the African American Methodist Heritage Center. Remember that just as a day that passes cannot be recovered, so the self-told stories of our elders cannot be recovered after they pass.

Thank you for your prayers and for your support.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mollie Stewart, President

Bishop Forrest C. Stith, President Emeritus

Board of Trustees



1st row, seated Bishop Forrest Stith, President Emeritus, Ms. Mollie Stewart, President. Mr.

Donald Lusk, Vice President,

2nd row standing, Dr. Barbara Ricks Thompson, Chairperson, Finance Committee, Ms. Carol Travis,

Executive Assistant, Rev. Dr. James Ferree, Chairperson of Nominations . Dr. Angella Current Felder, Treasurer, Rev. David Brown, Board Member,

3rd row standing, Rev. Dr. James Shopshire, Chairperson of Programs, Minister Brenda Bennefield, Rev. Dr. Hilly Hicks, Ms Cecelia Long, Secretary, Dr. John Wright, Chairperson of Communications, Dr. Arnold Parks, Chairperson of Development.

Not pictured Rev. Fred Day, Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopson, Ms. Ruth Lawson, Rev. Dr. Walter McKelvey, Dr. Cheryl Walker.