



African American Methodist Heritage Center
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Annual Report of
The African American Methodist Heritage Center
To
The 52nd Annual Meeting of the Black Methodist for Church Renewal
Atlanta, Georgia - April 3-6, 2019

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:3

Greetings in the name of God our Creator, Jesus Christ our Redeemer and The Holy Spirit our Protector.

Recovering, preserving and telling the story of African Americans in Methodism is a pilgrimage that challenges the soul, the heart and the body. Embedded within our souls are the untold struggles for freedom and possibility. Secreted in our hearts are the hopes for opportunity and reality. Wrapped around our bodies are the struggles to realize the full personhood we understand God promises to all believers.

During this past year there were several foci on our pilgrimage. One emphasis was on expanding our knowledge base on how to be more proficient in pursuing our mission "...to provide research, preserve artifacts ... and protect and promote the stories of African Americans in Methodism." Board members provided support and resources for several educational experiences including a *Black Archives Matters* Seminar at Birdwell Library at Perkins School of theology in Dallas, Texas and in the *Merging the Streams* Conference sponsored by the General Commission on Archives and History in Dayton, Ohio. These experiences stressed the importance of meaningful goals and persistence in pursuing them. They also provided techniques and contacts for encouraging the recovery of historical evidence.

We have been more intentional about seeking ways to publicize the importance of recovering and appreciating our history. There has been a continuous presence in "By Faith Magazine" so that the African American constituency remembers "to remember". We have maintained a social media presence, including regular Facebook postings with consistent messages of historical significance. We invite frequent visits to our website (aamhc-umc.org) and Facebook page in order to keep up with recent developments and acquisitions by AAMHC.

Staff participates in Black Staff Association of the United Methodist Church as a way of keeping abreast of relevant “happenings” in the denomination while helping to sensitize staff to the interests of the Center.

One of the most important, and yet a more difficult effort, is providing consultative services to groups, churches and pastors across the denomination. An exciting example of this is staff participation on the Pilgrimage Task Force of the Baltimore Washington Conference to ensure that local historic African American churches are included in pilgrimage sites. It is a practice that needs to be more widely adopted by the denomination.

There are so many other initiatives AAMHC seeks to undertake. However, financial constraints are major roadblocks. The Center no longer receives funding from the general church, except the grant from the General Commission on Archives and History which declines annually until it ends in 2020. The limited resources seriously hamper the Center’s ability to get out to where people are; to make personal contacts; to build the historical collection. We understand that memorabilia are personal, almost sacred to people. It is essential to encourage people to share their artifacts with “history” so the future will be informed; it is a challenging endeavor that exceeds our limited resources. Yet, the AAMHC presses on trusting in God to direct our work so our plans will succeed.

You are encouraged to check our web site and Facebook posts to keep up to date with the Center’s ministry. We welcome your ideas, especially about possible additions to the historical collection, possible sources of financial support and or other ways of helping to ensure that the presence of African Americans in Methodism lives into the future.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mollie C. Stewart, President
Emeritus

Bishop Forrest C. Stith, President

Carol L. Travis, Executive Assistant