

Volume 1, 2016



AAMHC *Journal*

A Journal of the African American Methodist Heritage Center

About AAMHC

The African American Methodist Heritage Center is a ministry related to the United Methodist Church.

It views the church and its ministry in retrospect and prospect. It envisions its work as gatherer and conservator of the vital history and heritage of Black people in the successive Methodist bodies of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to being racially segregated in the Central Jurisdiction to the United Methodist Church in the American and global society. The AAMHC ministry is to help ensure that accurate representation of that story is preserved and examined.

Board of Trustees: Rev. David W. Brown, Dr. Angela Current Felder, Rev. Fred Day, Rev. Dr. James Ferree, Rev. Dr. Hilly Hicks, Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopson, Rev. Rita Howard, Ms. Ruth Lawson, Ms. Cecelia Long, Mr. Donald Lusk, Rev. Dr. Walter McKevey, Dr. Arnold Parks, Dr. James M. Shopshire, Sr., Ms. Mollie M. Stewart, Bishop Forrest C. Stith, President Emeritus, Dr. Barbara Ricks Thompson, Dr. Cheryl Walker, Ms. Anne Fleming Williams, Member Emeritus, Dr. John Wright, and Carol L. Travis, Executive Assistant. The AAMHC Journal is published several times a year by the African American Methodist Heritage Center; AAMHC, 36 Madison Avenue, P. O. Box 127; Madison, NJ 07940. aamhc@aol.com
www.AAMHC-UMC.org; (973) 408-3862. Advance #3020514.

Mrs. Ruth Thomas, widow of Bishop James S. Thomas; photo by Adelle Banks.

A Glimpse of the Oral History Project

Although many aspects of the Black presence, participation and contribution to the Methodist heritage have been discovered and recorded, much work remains to be done. In light of that reality, the African American Methodist Heritage Center Board has directed its Program Committee to assume the lead to work on several kinds of research. The large aim of research is to locate, compile and archive elements of the "story" that will help the church to know and remember that we are and have been part of the Methodist heritage from the very beginning in the American context. Furthermore, it is recognized that much of the story of African Americans in predecessor structures of the United Methodist Church will not be known and will be lost to our posterity forever if we do not find and preserve the writings, the artifacts, the stories of Black people as individuals and as a group in the various structures of the Methodist church.

One important area of research is the Oral History Project. The oral history project is gaining momentum in recording the stories of the eldest United Methodists, the "nonagenarians" (90 to 99 years) the "octogenarians" (80 to 89 years), and the septuagenarians (70 to 79 years) who recall what life was like for themselves in church and society from fifty to seventy years ago up to the present time. We started in the fall of 2015 with the stories of the widowed spouses of Black bishops and other outstanding ministers and lay persons. Some can recall their experiences far back to the years in the Methodist Church before and during the Central Jurisdiction wilderness.

The General Commission on Archives and History continues to offer encouragement and support of the efforts to study and research the many aspects of the Black Methodist heritage, not as some sidebar concern but as a vital part of who we are including all of our surface similarities and differences as a church seeking faithfully to be united. We are eternally grateful for that support from a perspective of inclusion that is yet alive in the work of the African American Methodist Heritage Center and the United Methodist Church. In that same spirit we trust that the AAMHC will be able to engage Black people and others to work with us, identify the oldest laity and ministers in order to record and preserve their stories. Please inform us if you have suggestions and names of persons whose stories should be included in the oral history project.

- Dr. James M. Shopshire, Sr. is the Chairman of the Program Committee and can be reached at jshopshire@aol.com.



Cornish Rogers A TRIBUTE

When an elder dies a library perishes.
- African Proverb

The African American Methodist Heritage Center and the United Methodist Church have lost an elder.

The African American Methodist Heritage Center (AAMHC) joins countless others in remembering and celebrating the life and ministry of Dr. Cornish R. Rogers. As a member of our Board of Trustees for many years, Cornish enthusiastically supported our ministry of recovering, preserving and sharing the participation of African Americans in Methodism. He graciously and willingly shared with us his many gifts including his perceptive memory, his keen insights and his clarity in sharing guidance. He very graciously consented to share with us his great writing skills. He provided extraordinary leadership in organizing, on behalf of AAMHC for the Western Jurisdiction, a unique local church workshop that was designed to help local African American United Methodists develop and strengthen their ministries of memory. Cornish also was generous in his financial support of our ministry. We celebrate Cornish Rogers, whose spiritual and cultural roots were seeded in Harlem, New York. He was a ground breaker for people of color as pastor, editor, teacher, and administrator. He was constant in spirit and service, never forgetting who and WHOSE he was. We remember Cornish Rogers for his contagious laughter and unique sense of humor, both combined with warmth and compassion delighted all who knew him. We thank the "loves of his life", his wife Elsie and his son David, for sharing Cornish with us. To paraphrase the Negro spiritual, Cornish R. Rogers "Done made (his) vow to the Lord' ...to see what the end will be". Thanks be to God for the gift of our brother, Cornish Rogers. — Bishop Forrest C. Stith, President Emeritus, AAMHC. [Photo by Eric Grigorian]

HERITAGE SUNDAY 2016

The General Conference has set aside several Sundays each year whereby as a connection, we observe specific themes and/or emphases. One of these Sundays is Heritage Sunday. It is fitting that Heritage Sunday, this May 22, shares this observance with the theme of "Peace and Justice".

Although Heritage is not limited to a specific ethnic, race or national group, it is important that churches with a predominantly African American history and membership especially observe this day to assure that the unique gifts and perspectives we bring to this great denomination are not lost.

The African American Methodist Heritage Center exists primarily to Celebrate, Preserve, Protect and Promote the history, stories, personalities, and institutions upon whose shoulders we stand. We offer support to congregations, regardless of ethnic context, who desire to participate in this observance. Contact us for print materials, videos, pictures and resources. Some suggestions you might consider:

- Write and share the unique history of your congregation
- Emphasize Heritage Sunday in the primary worship service of the designated day
- Share music, poetry, art, drama and a sermon, based on our Heritage.
- Sing and teach hymns written by African American composers
- Help Sunday school teachers and Youth workers to learn their history and participate
- Set up displays featuring your story and the Methodist story.
- Take offerings or designate funds for AAMHC (Advance Special # 3030514)

Remember the African proverb: "Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story. — Bishop Forrest C. Stith, President Emeritus, African American Methodist Heritage Center, can be reached at fcpreach@aol.com.



MORGAN STATE AWARDS CIVIL RIGHTS PIONEERS

Board member Angella Current Felder was one of over 200 students awarded honorary doctorates, en masse, by Morgan State University in December 2015. As one of the Civil Rights Pioneers participating in the 1963 demonstration at the Northwood Theatre at the Northwood Shopping Center in Baltimore, MD, she was arrested & jailed. Six days into the demonstration the Northwood Theater relented, the theater desegregated, and charges were dropped. Fifty years later Morgan purchased the mall property and dedicated the Earl Graves School of Business in its new building on that property. Earl Graves is a graduate of Morgan State. Since 1947, students at what is now Morgan State University have been involved in demonstrations in Annapolis and sites around Baltimore including Reads Drug Stores, Ford's Theatre, Hoppers Restaurant, and Hecht Company's Rooftop Restaurant. Dr. Current-Felder is the daughter of late Bishop Leontine Kelley, the first African American woman bishop in a major Christian denomination when elected in the United Methodist Church in 1984. Contact angellacurrent@comcast.com.

HAYNES RETIRES

Dr. Leonard Haynes, a member of the Development Committee, recently retired from the U.S Department of Education after over 40 years of service to the academic community and Federal Government. Haynes, born into a family of educators and ministers, began a lifetime of advocacy (see photo of him and brother boarding a American Airlines flight in the mid-1950s) and had a long, distinguished career serving colleges and institutions such as Howard University, Ohio State, GWU, Grambling University and the Brookings Institution. During President George HW Bush's administration he was appointed US Assistant Secretary of Postsecondary Education and Director of Academic Programs for the United States Information Agency (USIA), the first African American to hold the position. His retirement celebration featured remarks from Presidents/representatives



from six of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and greetings from President Obama. Haynes, an education and history advocate, stated that he will continue to work on projects directly affecting children and education. He and his wife, Mary, are the parents of four adult children and are members of Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, DC. Dr. Haynes may be reached at leonardhaynes@yahoo.com.

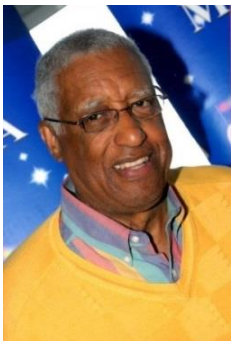


Photo courtesy of American Airlines



Mollie M. Stewart is a dynamic layperson and highly regarded workshop leader and motivational speaker. She is Founder and President of Stewart & Associates, Inc. and a meeting planner with the United Methodist Church. Presently Mollie is the President/CEO of Gulfside Association, Inc. in Waveland, Mississippi. She was elected President of the African American Methodist Heritage Center on January 1, 2016... She is a native of Talucah, Alabama where she is very active in her local church, (Mt. Mariah UMC); her community, District, (Huntsville, AL); Annual Conference, (North Alabama); as well as The General Conference of the United Methodist Church. She started a community watch program that led to the organizing of a volunteer fire department with five certified EMTS and is a trained and certified firefighter... Mollie was elected to General Conference for six terms. At the 1996 General Conference she introduced First Lady Mrs. Hillary Clinton. She has been an active participant with BMCR, locally, jurisdictionally and nationally, and served three terms as a member of the World Methodist Council. She taught Economics & History in the Morgan County School system. Mollie was married to the late Mr. Walter E. Stewart, mother of two young men, a grandmother and a great-grandmother.

NEW AAMHC BOARD MEMBERS



Donald Arthur Lusk is a native Chicagoan. He received his Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Roosevelt University and furthered his education at Northwestern University. Donald and his wife of 53 years, Bettie, are the proud parents of Michael (Bethany) and Cynthia and the grandparents of four boys: Andrew, Roan, Harper, and Griffin... Upon retirement, Donald continued his association with The Prudential as an Agent Emeritus. During his 47

years with The Prudential, Donald became the recipient of numerous industry related awards. His lifetime membership in the Million Dollar Roundtable (MDRT) continues to be one of his proudest moments. The MDRT is the prestigious international organization for the top 5% of all agents within the industry. Mr. Lusk still gives of his expertise for estate and financial workshops and his work is highlighted in two financial textbooks utilized for undergraduate business managers... Donald is a lifelong member of St. Mark United Methodist Church in Chicago. He has given of his time, talent, and gifts at the local, district, conference, and general church levels. Currently he serves as a certified Lay speaker, vice chair of the Church Council, a trustee, member of the UMM, Historian of Chicagoland Black Methodist for Church Renewal, and member of the African American Methodist Heritage Center Board of Trustees and was elected Vice President in January of 2016.



Rev. David W. Brown is a graduate of Duquesne University, where he majored in Journalism. He received his Master's Degree in Theological Studies with a focus in Social Policy from the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (now known as the Palmer Theological Seminary). Rev. Brown is an Ordained Deacon in Full Connection within the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and is a member of the ministry staff at Arch

Street UMC in Philadelphia. He is currently the Vice Coordinator of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) for the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and is the author of

"Freedom Drawn from Within" – a history honoring the impact African Americans have had in shaping the modern United Methodist Church... In addition to ministry, Rev. Brown is Executive Director of the West Philadelphia Alliance for Children (WePAC), a nonprofit child literacy organization. He is also the founder and Managing Director of The Marketing Collaborative – a nonprofit advertising and public relations firm dedicated to strengthening nonprofit organizations using creative marketing strategies. Rev. Brown was elected as a member of the Board of Trustees of the African American Methodist Heritage effective January 1, 2016... He was named a *"Champion of Change"* by the Obama Administration and has spoken at the White House about his work in the community. He lives in Turnersville, NJ with his wife of 29 years, Sharon, and daughters – Candace, aged 23 and Lauren, aged 26.



Rev. Dr. Hilly Gene Hicks

was born in Los Angeles and currently resides in Highland, California. An ordained clergyman, Rev. Hilly Hicks has served as Associate Pastor of Gordon Memorial UMC (Nashville), and as Senior Pastor of Pickett-Rucker UMC (Lebanon, TN), Crenshaw United Methodist Church (Los Angeles, CA), Emmanuel UMC (San Bernardino, CA), and Del Rosa UMC (San

Bernardino). Currently he is Senior Pastor of First United Methodist Church of Inglewood (CA). He was elected to the Board of Trustees on January 1, 2016... Dr. Hicks worked as a professional television and film actor in Hollywood for sixteen years. Appearing in more than 300 productions, he is best known for his role as "Lewis" in Alex Haley's *ROOTS*, and his work in classic shows like *MASH*, *Good Times*, *Hill Street Blues* and more can still be seen in reruns & DVD... Dr. Hicks is well known throughout the United Methodist connection as the long time video producer and the voice of many videos and training sessions for United Methodist Communications (UMCOM). Hilly was instrumental in launching and serving as anchor for the first weekly TV national newsmagazine show "Catch the Spirit." His work led to a national television advertising campaign presentation of the church. He retired from UMCOM in 2007. Pastor Hicks is married to Ms. Arthur Hicks, and have four children, two boys: Hilly Jr., and Ano; and two girls: Brett and Lindsey.



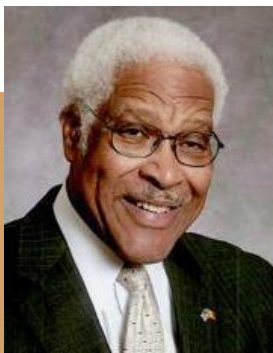
WHERE ARE THE RECORDS OF THE CENTRAL JURISDICTION?

The Central Jurisdiction is the way the Methodist Church, from 1939 – 1968, practiced segregation. All Methodist African American conferences and local churches were placed in this Jurisdiction. This ensured the separation of whites and blacks at all levels, except at the very highest. But since the ending of that jurisdiction in 1968 and the integration of the conferences by 1972 many have asked: “*What happened to its records?*”

What we need to ask is “What is the real question?” The Central Jurisdiction’s purpose, just like all the other jurisdictions, was to elect bishops. The jurisdictional conference met every four years, so there are actual records of that organization’s

functions. But people are seldom asking about the institution. They are often wondering about the annual conferences which belonged to that jurisdiction, about the boards, or about other organizations which were related to the jurisdiction. Sometimes they are wondering what happened to a church pastor from their own childhood. So, recognizing that, here are some answers:

- Information on pastors that served in churches which were part of the Central Jurisdiction can be found in the conference journals. General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH), located in Madison, NJ, has a significant collection of conference journals going back to the 1770s.
- Information on local churches can often be found in several places. If you are looking for a list of pastors of your local church contact your local conference archives, or GCAH. GCAH can help you determine which current annual conference archives to contact. The conference archives may have the records, or the records may be with a new church because one or more older churches merged.
- If looking for the records and reports of the Central Jurisdiction, they are housed at GCAH along with the other jurisdictions within the U.S. and many of the central conferences from overseas.
- Along with GCAH, the African American Methodist Heritage Center is working on collecting the history of individuals and local communities nationally and regionally. Within various annual conferences there are those working to preserve this portion of our past. Other resources include back issues of *Methodist History* and the archival database accessible via GCAH’s website.
- This information is provided by GCAH, at gcah.org. Questions may be directed to Dale Patterson at www.gcah.org or Carol Travis at www.aamhc.org.



BOARD MEMBERS *ON THE MOVE*

Board Member, **Dr. John A. Wright** has released his 17th book, ***African American St. Louis***, a collection of 170 color and black and white photos from the 1960s through the present. This

book is a coloration with his sons, John Wright, Jr. and Curtis Wright, Sr., and contains unique images you won’t see in museums, libraries, newspapers or online. Lead author and educator John Wright, Sr. grew up in St. Louis in the 1940s and ‘50s had a firsthand look at history as it unfolded. The book has two images relating to the shooting death of unarmed 18 year old Michael Brown, Jr. by a Ferguson police office in 2014. The book is available on Amazon.com. For more information, contact John at omega1958@aol.com

The video, ***Foundry and Asbury UMC Present Building the Beloved Community Race, Reconciliation Reconnection***, won one of the 38 “Best In Class” Awards presented at the United Methodist Association of Communicators’ awards ceremony in Portland, Oregon earlier this year. **Ms. Carol Travis**, Executive Assistant and member of Asbury UMC in Washington, DC and Mr. **Ralph Williams** of Foundry UMC co-chaired the ministry team celebrating the shared ministry of the two churches. **John Coleman** is the producer. Contact Carol at aamhc@aol.com for more information... **Ms. Mollie Stewart**, President of the Board of Trustees of the AAMHC, is featured in the March- April edition of ***By Faith Magazine***. The bi-monthly magazine celebrates the gifts and ministry of black United Methodist Churches and is dedicated to the legacy of Harry Hosier. Dr. Henry Masters, Sr. is the publisher. Contact cw@byfaithmagazine.com for information.