

Summer 2015



AAMHC *Journal*

African American Methodist Heritage Center

Image courtesy of the LOVEBDD Foundation, <http://www.lovebddfoundation.org/2015/04/to-sir-with-love.html>

REMEMBERING LOVE

Bishop Edgar Amos Love, a Methodist Minister Committed to Social Justice

Bishop Edgar Amos Love, 1891- 1974, a Virginia native, was remembered and honored at a Historical Marker Ceremony held April 18, 2015 at John Wesley UMC in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Bishop Love, the son of Reverend Julius C. Love and Susie C. Love, was born in a parsonage in Harrisonburg where his father, a Methodist minister was serving as pastor. Harrisonburg is also the home of Beta Delta Delta Chapter, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, chartered 1985 at James Madison University. Beta Delta Delta Chapter sponsored the historical marker and dedication ceremony honoring Bishop Love who co-founded Omega Psi Phi Fraternity at Howard University in 1911.

Attendees at the ceremony included Bishop Love’s son, Jon Love, Sr., age 75, of Owings Mills, Maryland and his wife, Carolyn Love, two grandchildren and a great grandchild. Also present was Bishop Love’s secretary, Thelma White, age 98, accompanied by her daughter, Brenda NeSmith and son-in-law, Samuel NeSmith, Virginia Conference clergy. Bishop Love conducted the NeSmith’s wedding, ordained Samuel and appointed him to his first pastorate.

Bishop Love was elected a bishop at the 1952 Session of the Central Jurisdictional Conference and was assigned to the Baltimore Area where he served until his retirement in 1964. He received his education at Morgan College Academy, Howard University and Boston University School of Theology. Prior to his election to the episcopacy, Bishop Love was Superintendent of Negro Work, Board of Missions, New York, 1940-52; pastor of churches in Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania, and an army chaplain in World War 1.

Thelma White, secretary for sixteen years to Bishop Love and also Bishop Alexander P. Shaw, was privileged to be a part of the historical Central Jurisdiction. In reflecting upon the past, Thelma recalls the camaraderie among the office staff that included Bishop Love’s Administrative Assistant, Dr. Daniel Lyman Ridout, and his wife, Frances Ridout. Thelma remembers Bishop Love’s wife, Virginia Love, as a quiet, supportive spouse and recalls that the bishop maintained an active lifestyle, played tennis regularly and enjoyed activities with his fraternity that he loved dearly. Bishop Love often spoke poignantly about the racism that he experienced as an African-American that motivated his advocacy for human rights. As a social activist, the bishop was an outspoken critic of segregation in the Methodist Church and was an active member of several civic organizations, in which he participated even amidst controversy. *Continued on the following page...*

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The fraternity sponsored the historical marker, not only to honor Bishop Love, but to give a sense of hope and pride to the community. United Methodists owe a debt of gratitude to the fraternity for the marker that will keep the memory of Bishop Love and our heritage alive for future generations.

- Samuel E. NeSmith, Sr. Retired Clergy,
Virginia Conference, nesmith9924@gmail.com



DOING THE RIGHT THING THE WRONG WAY

Lessons from Florida to Baltimore

"A man may do a right thing in a wrong way; but he cannot do a wrong thing in a right way. For there is no right way of doing wrong." (Charles Jewett, c1880)

As the mainstream media's attention shifted from Florida, to Missouri, to Ohio, to New York, to South Carolina, and to Baltimore, Maryland, it was as if we were watching bullets ricochet across the country as black men and women met their demise day-by-day. As soon as the crowds dispersed, the cameras stopped rolling. Or could it be, as soon as the cameras stopped rolling, the crowds dispersed? Regardless, the silence we experience about the effects of racism and racial bias in our society today is merely a reverberation of the complicity experienced the past three decades that ultimately set the stage for the tragedies we now experience. This is true whether we focus on police shootings, voting rights, equitable treatment in the church and many other deficiencies we experience as a society because we have not resolved our fascination with racism and our fixation on semblances of power while our people die a slow death in and outside the church.

As schools and public venues were desegregated and blacks were granted voting rights there was much jubilation that "we had overcome." We would now be treated equally and would have the same rights, privileges and advantages white folk had always enjoyed. With the creation of The United Methodist Church we saw a rise in the number of ebony bishops and district superintendents. As those critical voices were lifted from the black church context and community to serve the broader church there was no system in place or sense of urgency mounted to raise up more leaders from within to fill a now obvious void. Thus, as those persons who had been elevated to other offices and moved to distant geographic locations, where blacks were not the power base or majority, the strength of the black churches and

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. The AAMHC seeks to learn and appropriate the past as informant and bridge to a more faithful and effective future. It envisions its work as gatherer and conservator of the vital history and heritage of Black people in the successive Methodist bodies from the Methodist Episcopal Church, to being racially segregated in the Central Jurisdiction, to the United Methodist Church in the American and global society.

communities came into question. The prophetic and qualitative edge was lost as our political and quantitative assumptions were realized. This was, and still is, the wrong way to do a right thing.

Even if there are sweeping reforms in every police department in America, we know black and brown men and women will still be disproportionately stopped, arrested, jailed and/or killed. That means we must not allow the fact that we can name a few leaders of a bygone era be the sum total of what the Civil Rights Struggle was about. If our communities, our churches, our families, our schools and our lives are not worth more now than they ever have been, than the right things we have been doing must be examined because the results are far too wrong.

Let us consider doing the right things the right way and for the right reasons. We must be able to look back three decades from now and say, "Wrong things can never be done for the right reasons, so we stood up and we spoke out until things changed because we knew the right things had to be done for all the right reasons."

- Rev. Dr. Cedrick Bridgeforth

Rev. Bridgeforth is the Chairman of Black Methodists For Church Renewal, Inc. (BMCR). He can be reached at cbridgeforth@calpacumc.org.



**Joe Wilson Board Member,
and Carol Travis, Executive
Assistant, AAMHC**

IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION

'It Takes Two' to Challenge Racism

The 48th annual gathering of the Black Methodists for Church Renewal met April 16-19, 2015 in Orlando, Florida. The chairman, Rev. Cedrick D. Bridgeforth, urged members to work alongside others to challenge and ultimately

eliminate covert and overt racism in The United Methodist Church and the nation. The theme of this year's meeting was "It's Time to Take Action." The group kept to its plan to meet in Orlando despite Florida's high-profile deaths of young black men from gun violence.

Several developments since last year's gathering were highlighted. One is the Black Papers Project, a catalog of papers and statements expressing BMCR's Positions on various topics and issues and written by African American bishops and other caucus members. Another development was the move of BMCR's office from The United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville, Tennessee, to the campus of Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta. Two staff persons were hired, a manager of *Continued next page...*

program and operations and a project manager. As the denomination gets ready for General Conference 2016 in Portland the caucus will again be an active participant with the Love Your Neighbor Coalition in pushing for passage of legislation. BMCR will be working in this regard with the other four US-based ethnic caucuses.

The ethnic caucuses - BMCR, MARCHA (Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans), the National Federation of Asian American United Methodists, the Native American International Caucus, and the Pacific Islander National Caucus of United Methodists - had a historic first joint gathering last year. One of the results is a video series called "I Too, Am United Methodist." The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aZiS3IAN7M>.

- Dr. Larry R. Hygh, Jr.

Hygh is director of communications for the 360 churches and 78,000 members of the California-Nevada Annual Conference and can be reached at hallyh@calnevumc.org.

BOARD MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ON THE MOVE

Honors and Books Abound

Dr. Elaine Parker Adams has presented her book, *The Reverend Peter W. Clark: Sweet Preacher and Steadfast Reformer*, at two Authors of the Bayou events held at Calcasieu Parish Public Libraries in Lake Charles and Sulphur, LA. This Louisiana Notable Book can be purchased at your local or online bookseller and gives the biography of a 19th century African American pioneer in Louisiana Methodism.

Rev. Dr. James Lyles has released his first book, *Hard Trials, Great Tribulations, A Black Preacher's Pilgrimage from Poverty and Segregation to the 21st Century*. Board member, Dr. Cornish Rogers says "James Lyles has written an absorbing memoir of his life beginning as an impoverished child in Depression-era Arkansas and eventually becoming a highly educated and well-traveled religious leader in a major Protestant denomination. He was one of the first five black graduates of Perkins School of Theology, SMU, Dallas. He earned a doctorate at McCormick Seminary in Chicago.

Board member Dr. James Shopshire was recently honored by Wesley Theological Seminary with the Institute for Community Engagement's Partnership Award. Dr. Sam Marullo, Director of Research on Missional Communities at Wesley, offered a word of thanks for Dr. Shopshire's "inspirational leadership at Wesley Seminary." He also noted "how his gifts of sociological imagination and his analytical skills, combined with his graciousness and tenacity, have helped shape our Wesley curriculum in a way that makes us a leading edge institution of theological education. For more than 30 years Dr. Shopshire has brought his sociological insights and training to bear on shaping church leaders so that they understand the reality of powers and principalities in the world - our social and

Recognition of both the struggle & contributions of African Americans has ebbed and flowed over the past 275 years. The AAMHC ministry is to help ensure that accurate representation of that story is preserved & examined.

Board:

Rev. Dr. Gilbert Caldwell, Ms. Angella Current Felder, Rev. Fred Day, Rev. Dr. James Ferree, Rev. Dr. John Heyward, Dr. Cynthia Bond Hopson, Ms. Ruth Lawson, Ms. Cecelia Long, Mr. Donald Lusk, Rev. Dr. Walter McKelvey, Dr. Arnold Parks, Rev. Dr. Cornish Rogers, Dr. James Shopshire, Bishop Forrest C. Stith (President Emeritus), Ms. Barbara Ricks Thompson,

economic and political institutions - and how to understand the fallenness of these institutions."



ARCHIE MOORE, JR. DIES

Board Member Will Be Missed

Archie Moore, Jr, a member of the Board of Directors of AAMHC, died on May 19, 2015. Archie, a native of Arkansas, loved life and his hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas. He was a collector, historian, community developer, philanthropist, church trustee, and lifelong member of Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church. He had one of the largest one-of-a kind collections of African American memorabilia in the state of Arkansas. He loved to travel and sell items throughout the Southwest region at antique shows and had clients all over the nation. He will be greatly missed.



WEB WATCH

Half-truths and Un-truths Online

Half-truths and untruths can live forever on the Web. This problematic data may be distributed unintentionally, but the result can still be ignorance and confusion. The web page producer describes a world narrowed by limited vision that the unfortunate reader then absorbs and often shares. An example of this would be the historical reports that omit the roles played in events by people of diverse races or ethnicities. From the reporting, one would think that the world was entirely composed of the dominant group.

This situation was encountered in a list of 19th Century Louisiana Methodist Pastors posted on a Methodist archival web site. A review of the names and photos indicated that the pastors all were white men, which would have been true of the Southern Methodist Church. However, African American pastors were also active in Louisiana during the nineteenth century as part of the Northern Methodists.

An email exchange with the site webmaster revealed that the page was developed from data based on the previously divided church. There was no evil intent, just limited vision that was quickly corrected. But imagine the consequences if the list had retained its myopic depiction. Readers would have missed the powerful contribution of the African American pastors to the development of Methodism in 19th century Louisiana. *Continued on the following page...*

For those who monitor African American Methodist history, here are several suggestions:

- Review web pages to be sure that the “whole story” is told. If a page contains only selective information it should be so identified—example: “A list of white pastors” or “A list of Southern Methodist pastors.”
- Contact the web page producer if the page contains omissions or misstatements and identify the problem. Be cordial and pursue a positive outcome in the communication.
- Assume the misinformation is not adversarial, but make sure that the producer understands why the flaw is not acceptable.
- Offer to help collect accurate data since the web page producer may not be aware of sources. Educate for a 21st century outlook.
- Revisit the web page to be certain that appropriate adjustments have been made and that accuracy and currency are maintained.

- Elaine Parker Adams, AAMHC Marketing and Communications Committee member, can be reached at epadams@aol.com.



L-R: Bishops Ernest Lyght, Susan Morrison, Peggy Johnson, Violet Fisher, Woodie White; Courtesy of the Peninsula-Delaware Conf. Comm. Office

50TH CELEBRATION OF THE PENINSULA- DELAWARE CONFERENCE

April 25, 2015

On Saturday, April 25, 2015 over 200 people gathered at Whatcoat United Methodist Church in Dover, Delaware, to celebrate its history as the first annual conference formed for African Americans in the segregated Methodist Church. In 1965 it was the first African American annual conference to merge and become a desegregated and new Peninsula-Delaware Conference within the denomination. Bishop Woodie White was the keynote preacher. Bishop Peggy Johnson was the host bishop for the event.



L-R: Rev. David Briddell, Rev. Fred Day, Rev. Herbert Palmer, Bishop Gregory Palmer, Bishop Ernest Lyght, Rev. Robert Johnson, Bishop Peggy Johnson; Photo courtesy of Melanie Dupree, Tindley Temple

CELEBRATION OF THE DELAWARE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 30, 2015

“A Century of Commitment, A Legacy of Love” was the theme of a joyous celebration of the former Delaware Annual Conference on May 30, 2015, the segregated but beloved conference of black Methodists in the region from 1864 until it merged in 1965. Philadelphia-born Bishop Gregory Palmer, Rev. Herbert Palmer (his Dad

Dr. Cheryl Walker,
Dr. John Wright,
Rev. Dr. Joseph Wilson,
Ms. Anne Fleming Williams (Member Emeritus);
Executive Assistant Ms. Carol Travis.

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), Bishop Ernest Lyght of New Jersey, the Rev. David Briddell, all sons of the old Delaware Conference remembered highlights, honored heroes and challenged attendees to continue building the “beloved community” and making disciples of Jesus Christ. The Rev. Fred Day, General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church also brought greetings. At the event, held at the historic Tindley Temple in Philadelphia, Bishop Peggy Johnson welcomed hundreds of members and guests to this momentous event. – Excerpts from Eastern PA Conference, *NewsSpirit Digest*, March 11, 2015 issue



OUR TREASURE

Letting Others
Help Us

Some of you may know me as a “pack-rat,” a gentle description of a hoarder. Looking through my hoard of things I came across a January/February 1986 issue of *Alive Now!*, a devotional publication still published by the Upper Room of the United Methodist Church’s Discipleship Ministries. My attention was captured by an item created by Ray Council, then a UMC pastor from Middle Tennessee:

God’s Sacred Trust –
“To deprive others of the least opportunity to give to us what they desire for us to have, the benefits of that treasure of their inner goodness and grace, is to hold back from them God’s sacred trust of which they are heirs.”

It was a reminder to me that I need to be ever vigilant in offering to others the opportunity to support the on-going ministry of the African American Methodist Heritage Center.

You are invited to make financial contributions to undergird our ministry and the several projects that are underway. You are invited to make gifts in memory of persons who are a part of the historical stream of African Americans in Methodism. You are invited to make gifts in honor of persons presently a part of living out our Methodist story. You are invited to share your treasure as a token of appreciation for the blessings you have received.

We welcome contributions in the way of checks payable to AAMHC and mailed to the African American Methodist Heritage Center, 36 Madison Avenue, P.O. Box 127, Madison, NJ 07940. Your support of this ministry is greatly appreciated and we receive it as a sign that you share in the sacred trust of which we all are heirs.

- Barbara Ricks Thompson is the President of AAMHC and can be reached at beerix@aol.com