



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
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Annual Report of
The African American Methodist Heritage Center
to The 53rd Annual Meeting of
Black Methodists for Church Renewal – March 2020

“The Lord is intimately acquainted with the lives of the blameless; their heritage will last forever.”
Psalms 37:18

In recent years it has become fashionable for people to search to learn the genealogy of their families. Often they seek to find the local church that was attended by long gone members of their family. Sometimes they find a clue to a trail that leads to much information from a church that has been careful about its records. Sometimes, people hit a brick wall when preservation of information by the local church has not occurred. The inability to recover traces of heritage becomes a barrier to developing the legacy that builds an inheritance for the future.

Twenty years ago the importance of recovering and preserving the heritage of African Americans in Methodism was a need that was strongly pushed by Anne Fleming Williams as President of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR). She pressed Bishop Forrest C. Stith to take leadership in helping to establish a means for African Americans in the United Methodist church to reach back and recover the stories of their journey in Methodism. Anne and Bishop Stith gathered a few other people who were willing to help pursue the realization of that vision. Now Anne has transitioned to be with the other saints who created the heritage that became a legacy to those of us who survive. We must pick up her mantle and press forward to assure that the legacy from our forebears becomes the inheritance for our successors. We bless Anne for her foresight and persistence

Strong emphasis has been placed upon helping congregations and organizations that are predominantly African American to establish ministries to collect, preserve and disseminate information. Through the persistent efforts of our Executive Assistant, Carol Travis, efforts have been made to expand the listing of contacts in local churches and other organizations. Contacts have been made with Librarians in several Black Colleges, such as Allen University and Clark Atlanta University.

It is also clear that identifying and establishing contacts is essential to promoting the ministry and providing information and guidance. Toward that end, connections have been made with several staff groupings within the denomination as a way of enabling the spread of information about AAMHC through those channels. Articles have been included in "By Faith Magazine" which is distributed by *Closer Walk Ministries* to a subscription list and to local African American United Methodist Churches.

Marketing the AAMHC is critical to making connections. Many strategies are used to make contacts that encourage people to take advantage of the resources and educational opportunities available. There are daily Facebook posts. Ads have been placed with United Methodist and national publications, and groups such as the African American Historical Genealogy Society. Displays are presented at national and jurisdictional BMCR meetings.

There have been several new acquisitions for the AAMHC collection housed in the state-of-the-art archival facilities of the General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) at Drew University, in Madison, New Jersey. Some of the acquisitions include Minutes from the N. M. Carroll Auxiliary Society, Baltimore, Maryland, videos from St. Luke's UMC in Dallas, Texas, books and materials from the family of the late Rev. Dr. Charles A. Johnson, II., Baltimore Washington Conference, and a publication from the Virginia Conference Historical Society. Individuals and Local Churches are urged to contact Carol Travis (contact information above) in order to place important documents in the AAMHC collection. The GCAH staff continues to be a vital technical support to the AAMHC ministry. Dale Patterson, Archivist/Administrator, retired at the end of 2019. Dale has supported AAMHC since we were organized and will be greatly missed. In recognition of the support from GCAH, an annual report is made to the agency.

The AAMHC is confronting severe financial challenges. Funding is no longer available from the United Methodist Church general funds. Funding is no longer available from the General Commission on Archives and History. There have been a few contributions through the United Methodist Advance. Grants and contributions have been the primary sources of income and they have not been very productive in recent years. Additional sources of funding are mandatory in order for this ministry to continue. In light of that, AAMHC is initiating an aggressive membership drive to encourage both individual and local church memberships in the AAMHC. Information about the membership drive is available at the AAMHC display, which you are encouraged to visit, as well as through e-mails, Facebook and other promotional channels.

We are confident that this ministry is important to the United Methodist Church and to African Americans within the denomination. It is recognized that there is much uncertainty ahead for the denomination. But, we are confident that the African American Methodist Heritage Center will survive whatever transition occurs in the future. Our heritage is strong enough to create a resilient legacy as the inheritance for persons in ministry yet to come.

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