

## ANNOUNCING THE CONNECTIONAL LAY COUNCIL CENTENNIAL



*Celebrating  
100  
Years*

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Connectional Lay Council. Throughout the remainder of this year, the Connectional Lay Council of the A.M.E. Zion Church will celebrate this significant milestone in our history. Get ready to celebrate the Connectional Lay Council Centennial! The first Connectional Laymen's organization was established at the 1916 General Conference. Upon presentation of the report of the committee on constitution, (B. T. Parsons, W. M. Bradley, R. McN. Williams, J. T. Hamilton, D. L. Gaines, Mrs. Anna L. Anderson, D. R. Corrothers, H. C. Wright, and Jacob W. Powell), the organization of the Lay Members Association of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was adopted on May 18, 1916. (Jacob W. Powell, *Echoes of Christian Education*, p. 32) The organization issued a four-page printed Constitution and By-Laws to take effect throughout the denomination. J. H. Johnson was the president, and the other members of the committee were vice-presidents, with the exception of Mrs. Anna L. Anderson and Rev Jacob Powell. In addition, Cephus McPhaul, M. A. Bonner and W. T. Abrams were vice-presidents; Oscar W. Adams Sr., corresponding secretary and reporter; Alonzo A. Rieves, recording secretary; and Mrs. E. H. Badhams, treasurer.

This organization made an attempt to carry out its dynamic aims and did well for a while. But for want of interested lay leaders and support of the clergy to build on this foundation, it became dormant. The spirit of reviving the laymen connectionally remained rife among several noted laymen of the denomination through the years. Finally, with the aid of interested bishops and ministers, the lay members began to build a concrete organization.

It was in 1948 when Dr. Victor J. Tulane and Arthur E. Brooks, both of Washington D.C., presented a recommendation to the General Conference "to set up organizations known as the Layman's Association in each Annual Conference throughout the Episcopal areas" and moved that the conference adopt it. The General Conference sustained the concurrence of the Layman's committee, with an order of the Committee to bring to the next session of the General Conference a proposed Constitution and By-Laws. (*Minutes, Thirty-Third Quadrennial Session*, pp 77, 83, 292)

On the fourteenth day of the 1952 General Conference, Dr. Victor J. Tulane submitted the Constitution and By-Laws of the Connectional Laymen's Council of the A.M.E. Zion church. Each article was adopted separately. It was moved by Dr. Tulane and seconded by Reverend J. A. Harris that the Constitution and By-Laws be adopted as a whole. The motion prevailed. (*Minutes, Thirty-Fourth Quadrennial Session*, pp. 76, 396-398) The Laymen's Council thus became a part of the constitutional structure of the A.M.E. Zion Church to be established throughout the denomination in local churches, annual conferences, and connectionally, with the connectional officers of the Laymen's Council providing leadership. As approved in 1952 by the General Conference, the primary objectives were stated as the following and remain the same today: for the purpose of deepening the spiritual life of the laymen of the church, to disseminate information and cultivate denominational loyalty, to expand the denomination through methods of education and evangelism and to promote any other interest of the Kingdom of God. (*Doctrines and Discipline, 1952, p. 288*)

The Laymen's Council was placed under the control of a new administrative board known as the Board of Lay Activities, composed of a representative from each episcopal district, appointed by the bishop and confirmed by the General Conference.