



DEPARTMENT OF LAY MINISTRY CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH



HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

The first official reference to some type of organization for laymen of the Christian Methodist Episcopal [CME] Church came in the Episcopal Address at The General Conference of 1910. The message expressed the thought "that provision should be made, allowing each Annual Conference and each presiding elder's district to have a laymen's meeting when there is such a call for one. But it should be left discretionary with the Annual Conference, on the one hand, and with the District Conference on the other hand, whether such a meeting should be held or not. Where conditions are favorable, we think such meetings, with the sanction and high authority of the lawmaking body, might accomplish great good."

At that 1910 General Conference, the laymen who were present held an informal meeting and elected R.L. Smith of Little Rock, Arkansas as the chairman. Smith wrote in the Christian Index, **"If we laymen would take up the cause of mission in our church, what a great good we could do in the next four years."**

E.B. Barco, an active layman of Atlanta, GA announced a National Laymen's Conference set for Chicago, Illinois on September 1, 1912. A.J. Cobb, the editor of the Christian Index, commented, "We are glad to note that our laymen are becoming more successful in the general work of the Church...This Layman Movement is a wholesome innovation to the largest majority of our laymen."

Over the years, the laity of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church worked for a better-prepared ministry and a program of social activity for the youth of the church. Thus, the beliefs of Lay Ministry in the CME Church became and still are: (1) STUDYING God's words; (2) SEEKING lost souls; (3) SHARING God's Blessings; and (4) SERVING all mankind. One of the primary objectives at the time of inception and still today in the work of Lay Ministry is to promote Christian Stewardship among all believers. This Ministry has provided countless opportunities for lay men and women to grow in Christian leadership and in God's grace.

At the December 1997 Connectional Lay Institute in Louisville, Kentucky, the Connectional Stewards, Ushers, and Stewardesses were established. Confirmed by the 1998 General Conference, ten Vice Presidents (one from each of the Episcopal Districts within the United States) were elected to serve in those capacities for the first time ever.

The mantle of leadership of the Laymen's Organization passed from Mr. R. L. Smith (1910-1922), to Mr. O. B. Hines (1922-1934), to Mr. E. F. Durr (1934-1950), to Dr. Willie L. Graham (1955-1963), to Mr. Walker E. Solomon (1963-1974), to Dr. I Carlton Faulk (1974-1998) to Dr. Victor Taylor (1998-2010) and to Dr. Clifford L. Harris, July 1, 2010 at the 37th General Conference held Mobile, Alabama.

On the 2nd Sunday of October, of each year, the CME Church everywhere celebrates Connectional Lay Ministry Day. Each church is encouraged to have a lay speaker during its regular service or during a special service. In addition a free will offering is received to assist the Department of Lay Ministry in building the Graham-Webb-Kennedy Scholarship Fund.