

48th Quadrennial Session

General Conference

African Methodist Episcopal Church



**Distinguished AME Church
Scholars & Teachers**

Dennis C. Dickerson, Ph.D. (13th)

Historiographer/Executive Director, Research and Scholarship
James M. Lawson, Jr. Professor of History
Vanderbilt University

Marcia Allen Owens, J.D., Ph.D. (11th)

Assistant Professor of Environmental Science & Policy
Florida A&M University

History & Evolution

- Past Working Papers
 - 1976 General Conference
 - 1988 General Conference
- Current Group
 - February 23, 2008 – Atlanta
 - April 14, 2008 – Dallas (CONVO XI)

Who We Are

AME's with terminal degrees

AND

A recognized seminary
or divinity school degree

Who We Are

- People in the Ph.D. pipeline invited as associate members
- D.Min.'s will be invited to share in conversations on faith and order
- More than 65 people identified thus far
- All ordained Elders or Deacons

Purpose

- Theological and ecclesiological think tank of the AME Church
- Contributing to the Anvil
- Writing AME Position Papers on Matters of Faith and Witness

Issues Identified at 2008 Meetings

- **MINISTRY** (ministerial orders, clergy health & wellness, education, "prosperity gospel", "wounded" clergy, boards of examiners)
- **HUMAN LIFE ISSUES** (euthanasia, abortion, stem cell therapies)
- **VIOLENCE** (war, unjust war, pacifism, youth violence, domestic violence)
- **CRIME, PUNISHMENT & RESTORATION** (victim's rights, capital punishment, prison/industrial complex, forgiveness, redemption)
- **ECCLESIOLOGY** (African Methodism as a global church, immigration and ethnicity, church growth & evangelism, connectionalism, nature and mission of the church, interfaith interactions)
- **GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH** (black men, masculinity and the church, empowerment of black women in the church, sexuality)
- **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES/STEWARDSHIP**
- **YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS**
- **ECONOMIC JUSTICE** (poverty, capitalism)
- **SOCIAL JUSTICE**
- **HEALTH AND WELLNESS** (physical, mental, spirituality, health care, disparities)
- **THEOLOGY AND DOCTRINE** (Wesleyan heritage, doctrinal clarity and the 25 Articles of Religion, liberation theology, theological interpretation and revision of "God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, Man our Brother")

Plan

- Four-year process
- Scholars will write drafts – sample drafts available today
- Topics in the Episcopal Address will be the starting point for the position papers
- Website & Blogs will be used to post draft papers and solicit feedback from clergy and lay
- Conversations on papers will be hosted in different Episcopal Districts (Christian Education Congresses, CONVOS, etc.)

Plan

- Significant drafts will be submitted to the *AME Review*
- Compendium of the four-years of activities will be submitted to the *Christian Recorder*
- Post-feedback drafts published in 2011
- AME Position statements on matters of faith and witness adopted at 2012 General Conference



Scholars Already Active

- Teaching and Pastoring
- Represent the AME Church in ecumenical efforts
- Contributed to Book of Prayers for the 48th Session of the General Conference (2008)
- Planning to submit proposal to the Louisville Institute for a Religious Institutions Grant

Issues Identified at 2008 Meetings

Issues Consolidated into 4 General Areas

- **Basic Beliefs**
- **Health Care**
- **Social Justice**
- **Ministry**

Issues Aligned With the “Four I’s” of the 2008-2012 Theme

- **Influence**
- **Inheritance**
- **Integrity**
- **Innovation**

16 preliminary papers published in *The Anvil*

Contributions to *The Anvil*

Michael Joseph Brown, Ph.D., Emory University (4th)

- *The Influence of Our Ministry: Quadrennial Considerations*
- *The Ministry of the AME Church: Considerations for the Next Quadrennial*

Miriam J. Burnett, M.D., M.P.H., Morehouse School of Medicine (6th)

- *Optimal Health Care*

Dennis C. Dickerson, Ph.D., Vanderbilt University (13th)

- *Basic Beliefs*

Teresa L. Fry Brown, Ph.D., Emory University (6th)

- *The AME Church and Social Justice*
- *The AME Church Influence and Social Justice*
- *Inheritance and Social Justice: A Prophetic Activist Legacy*

Marcia Allen Owens, J.D., Ph.D., Florida A&M University (11th)

- *Did You Know? What We Don't Know IS Hurting Us: Information Leads to Influence*
- *Practicing What We Preach and Preaching What We Should Practice*
- *What Does The Lord Require of Us? Integrity in Achieving Social Justice*

Alesia Scott Ford-Burse, Ph.D., Pastor, St. James AME Church, Orange Park, FL (11th)

- *The Church and Its Influence on Health Care*
- *What Health Care Practices Will our Children's Children Inherit? An Exploration of Health Care Practices in the AME Church*

Mark Kelly Tyler, Ph.D., New Brunswick Seminary (1st)

- *Innovation in Social Justice*
- *Innovation in Ministry*

Going Forward

- “Position statements should reflect the intersection of theology and public policy; they should answer the questions of AME position on relevant matters. These position statements should be sufficiently thorough and controversial. We should be able to argue about a given issue and then find common ground. Most importantly, once we reach this consensus, we should then make sure that these papers are translated and disseminated to the Church at all levels rather than them being completed and shelved.”

Bishop John Hurst Adams