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12 Months Away: The AME Church's Voter Alert Initiative Re-Launches In Advance of the General Elections in 2020

The AME Church Pushes Forward With Its Voter Education and Mobilization
Campaign In Spite of Ignorance and Hatred Targeted at Church Members

Under the auspices of the **African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church Connectional Lay Organization**, the **AME Social Action Commission (AME SAC)** this month announced the re-launch of their nationwide **AME Voter Alert** initiative (also known as *AMEV-Alert*). The awareness campaign is squarely focused on informing AME congregants, the African American community-at-large, and at-risk communities to utilize their fundamental right to vote. Using the church's esteemed internal publication, *The Christian Recorder*; organic social media content; and the power of the Black press to achieve its mission, *AMEV-Alert* promises to ignite congregants into action well in advance of the upcoming historic presidential elections next November.

Bishop Harry Seawright, President of the AME Church Council of Bishops, reminds us that "It is absolutely urgent as well as necessary that we get out the vote. The African Methodist Episcopal Church has always stood tall in the movement of social justice, equal rights, voter rights, as well as human rights. We encourage every one to please get out and vote [because] your vote can make a difference."



Bishop Seawright’s call-to-action is further amplified in the telling of the history of the initiative, as explained by **Mrs. Valerie Gary Bell**, Connectional Lay Organization President. She shares: “The *AME Voter Alert* initiative was established as an initiative of the AME Church Connectional Lay Organization [CLO] primarily because the CLO’s mission is teaching and training. This very timely initiative became a vehicle, not just for the organization, but for the entire denomination because it offers a structured approach for voter mobilization, education, and community engagement; with the desired result to be greater voter participation.”

Mrs. Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker, Director of AME SAC, further explains: “The Black church has a mandate—AME in particular—to take a stand. Being that the AME Church was founded on the premise of social justice and equality for all people, we must continue to be the conscious of the nation, the voice for the voiceless.”

In contemplating significance and utility of AMEV-Alert, and the role that this awareness campaign can play in our own communities, the AME Lay Commission Chair, **Bishop E. Earl McCloud, Jr.**, asked a poignant question that drives the matter home: "If we disrespect ourselves by not voting, what should we expect from others?"

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The AME Church and its more than 30 partners are excited that people have made a commitment to be engaged and involved in the 2020 elections. Mrs. Dupont-Walker reminds us that “100% voter turn-out should not be impossible to achieve. We know that people will show up. We saw it in 2008 and 2012. With a concentrated campaign, when people speak the truth, their truth resonates with people, and people respond. We believe in being ‘ALL IN.’ This is important for future generations. We must leave a legacy.”

Twenty years ago, the church’s Connectional Lay Organization, along with the AME Social Action Commission, developed a voter education toolkit as the practical arm of this initiative. The resource guide lists national partner organizations that are focused on voting rights and voter suppression solutions, and it addresses many FAQs, including how to register to vote, how to



access elected officials and polling sites, and much more. The toolkit is housed (and can be downloaded) at www.amev-alert.org. It is being updated for the upcoming elections in 2020 but has sections that are evergreen (for congregants and the general public alike).

It is important to note that AME SAC is charged to bring awareness to, and encourage action toward, a number of important causes *beyond voter education*. While lifting that mantle, AME SAC also stands for the rights of formerly incarcerated people, Census 2020, climate change, and most uniquely - gun control. President Bell elaborates: “As AME’s, we are still feeling the loss of the senseless shooting of the Emmanuel 9 in Charleston, South Carolina. It calls us to be vigilant -- even in the face of a wealthy organization such as the NRA -- for more effective gun control. As a native of Virginia Beach, the place of another act of senseless violence, the stand to reform laws for better gun control has a special significance to the AME Church. It has far reaching effects in the larger world.”

For more information about the AME Social Action Commission and AME V-ALERT, please visit www.ame-sac.org or Facebook (@AMESocialActionCommission).

For media inquires or to request an interview, please contact PR representatives Lea Byrd or April R. Silver for the AME Church Connectional Lay Organization / AME Social Action Commission. Feel free to call 718 756 8501 (office) or 646 522 4169 (mobile). And via email, send inquiries to pr@akilaworksongs.com.

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