



"Our church's concern for ministry to whole person goes back to the Yellow Fever Epidemic in Philadelphia in the spring of 1793."

Greetings and we welcome this opportunity to share the story about the AME Church's journey with the Affordable Care Act. We could give a start date going back to advocacy for this law, but actually our church's concern for ministry to the whole person goes back to the Yellow Fever Epidemic in Philadelphia in the spring of 1793. The city sought the assistance of the Free African Society (now known as the African Methodist Episcopal Church) to help treat and bury poor people of all races - based on the mistaken assumption or myth that native Africans would have the same partial immunity to the new disease as many had to malaria and even knowing the risks, they readily agreed. So what we have done in outreaching, educating, and enrolling people in this blessing called the Affordable Care Act (and to many, "ObamaCare") is a continuation of caring for all of God's people.

The AME Council of Bishops unanimously endorsed, the General Board affirmed, and the Social Action and Health Commissions executed, partnering and collaborating with many of our departments, organizations, auxiliaries, Episcopal Districts, Annual Conferences, and local congregations. We also worked collaboratively with other community groups, and ecumenical/inter-faith bodies. Embracing the marketing advice that it takes 27 hits to get attention and 7 hits to inspire action, we have erred on the side of saturation with e-blasts, conference calls, webinars, presentations at seminars, meetings, and conferences. These efforts have created internal and external networks that can stay together and with asset mapping, the partners will learn more about each other. As we go forward – adding prevention and wellness as a focus – we can make a difference in the quality of life. Our experience has validated one more time, that there is nothing that cannot be done when we come together in networks.

What other time in our history will we be able to help our communities focus on wellness, to help every citizen access a means to be healthy and treat medical conditions breaking the trend of making emergency rooms and “urgent care” our primary care physicians? The need for messaging coming from trusted voices – the Black Church – made our involvement more compelling.

Over these last months, we have made presentations at every major church gathering, supported those who wanted to become certified educators and enrollment specialists, as well as navigators, distributed materials widely, and trained volunteers to create a “buzz” in church settings and in informal community places like beauty salons, barber shops, nail salons, markets, on buses and trains, just everywhere..

When a state chose not to create a marketplace or expand the Medicaid options, we have re-doubled our efforts and used resources from Enroll America and the HHS offices. Specifically, the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Information Officer of the AME Church designated staff to use the official website as a connector to Enroll America and www.healthcare.gov. Our Social Action and Health Commission websites created links to collateral material, enrollment sites, resources, and reporting forms re work done and help needed.

Pausing to recognize every AME who caught the spirit and answered the call to make this praise report possible, I share our outcome thus far:

Targeting our leadership - Six conference calls reaching thousands, and 3 national webinars that reached over 1,000 leaders in our church (over 450 in one webinar)

Events - Over 5,000 events from the remote rural areas to large urban centers. Much of this success is a result of collaborations with other faith groups and community organizations.

Lee Chapel in Nashville Tennessee organized an event in partnership with the NAACP and other churches to educate and enroll. They were supported by Enroll America. Radio advertising, flyer leafleting, phone banking, and personal

invitations were used in addition to e-blasts, twittering, and instagram. All organizational websites listed information about the Feb 15th event. Of those who attended 40% received personal counseling and 10% were enrolled. Two stories stand out:

"...this strategy gave them hope..."

Two ladies whose incomes did not exceed \$600 per month were counseled and referred to other sources. Since Tennessee does not have a marketplace and did not expand its Medicaid coverage, this strategy gave them hope of coverage and Lee Chapel has remained in contact with them.

Another lady has been the victim of identity theft and found it difficult to enroll via the website. A navigator took 2 hours to intercede and she left with coverage.

The outreach has been a godsend helping those who knew there was a deadline approaching to find a resource to take action.

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The AME Ministerial Alliance in the Los Angeles area made a commitment to work collectively with other faith partners for the past 9 months in the state that established the first marketplace. Weekly bulletin announcements, e-blasts, and other reminders to pastors; appeals to supporting organizations for presentations; presence at any events sponsored by the churches or at their facilities has led to increased momentum. The churches have become the centers of information, as validated by phone calls asking when the ObamaCare folk will be back at the locations.

From being a significant presence at "A Taste of Soul" in October with 250,000 people at a street fair and educating thousands and enrolling hundreds to events targeting the Young Invincible, calls come to our Info line with response committed within 24 – 48 hours, requests for educators are handled with core staff of 5 certified educators (one bi-lingual) and volunteers sent to worship services, church business meetings, libraries, conferences, elected official seminars, health fairs, town halls, and any events where people make requests. Partnering with certified enrollers via Covered CA, and resources from Enroll America, AARP and CoMerica Bank webinars and phone consultations have helped to make the AME Alliance a top performer in the state. They engaged a comedian, Angel, to help the

young invincible connect, shape questions about their fears and hesitancy, then remember the message and enroll.

In Washington DC and Maryland the Episcopal District leadership has dedicated staff to support local congregations in educating and enrolling over 13,000 people in partnership with DC Healthlink.

In Georgia, a team is being dispatched to every church (approx 600) on at least one Sunday to support the local church in outreach to enroll, and where needed to compliment their efforts with HHS support from Atlanta. Key to HHS support is an employee who is a member of the AME Church and proud to tithe her work experience in her worship setting.

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Several segments of the AME Church has devoted quality time for education and enrollment at national gatherings including the Church Growth and Development Seminar, Women’s Missionary Society Executive Board meeting, and the Lay Organization Biennial convention. Our bishops have devoted time and resources, bringing in navigators especially in the 11 targeted states to reach others.

HHS, Enroll America, and Covered California have brought resources, educators, enrollment specialists, navigators & materials (handouts, webinar access) to this effort. We have outreached in the 49 states where we have churches with strong efforts in Florida, Ohio, Illinois, and Texas.

We've been helping folk think through steps to take during these last weeks of the home stretch, and have found that urging everyone to make ACA their conversation niche everywhere they go is essential. We are making it our small talk. And using humor, we all receive serious information better when we can laugh at ourselves, and then address our inaction.

“Everybody wants to ...be a part of making a huge difference in the lives of so many.”

We have found that not being shy about highlighting the pending deadline followed by quick options for meeting the deadline works. Offering on the spot advice or access to enrollment, addresses the "right now" syndrome and instant gratification expectation that so many have become accustomed to.

Especially for the young invincible, using the tablet or hot spot connection to

enroll on the spot is a good tool. For others, getting an enroller on the line or taking them to an event is key.

For the population or demographic that we have been courting but nothing solidified, NOW is the time to go back and close the deal. Everybody wants to join this winning team, and be a part of making a huge difference in the lives of so many.

“It is not too late, because there are always some who are slower than others to take action, and you can be THE ONE who helps them beat the clock.”

Finally, in communities of color, we find that it's time for grandma, Mom, Great Auntie, or Grandpa, Daddy, and that favorite mentor to get on the phone, call a family gathering, get the sports teams together, or whatever it takes to get the young invincible, middlers, who think that it's not that important to hear from their elders. Pastors and lay leaders are conveying that message giving license, if you will, to our Elders and having a resource to talk with the hesitant and resistant when the Elders can get their attention. We expanded to include doctors, lawyers, teachers, police, fire, and elected officials to sound the alarm - March 31st is here. It is not too late, because there are always some who are slower than others to take action, and you can be THE ONE who helps them beat the clock.

We believe that the same energy used to urge voting is called for here.

When we come together, we can scale up our ministries to reach more, and make a huge difference in the quality of life in the communities where we live, work, play and worship. In these last 21 days, if there is an AME Church near you, we are waiting to work with you.

