



CONNECTIONAL WMS EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 2025

Resilient
2 Corinthians 4:8-9



JANUARY
JAN 22-25, 2025



HYATT REGENCY HOTEL
GARDEN GROVE, CALIFORNIA



Pictured Left to Right
Dr. Phyllis N. Green, 1st District Supervisor
& Sister in Law of Bishop Samuel Green
Wanda T. Ringgold,
1st District WMS President



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Dr. Deborah Taylor King,
Connectional WMS President

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Report on the Women's Missionary Society AME Church Executive Board Meeting By Carole Copeland Thomas

Introduction The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) Executive Board Meeting and Leadership Training Institute for 2025 took place from January 22-25 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Garden Grove, Orange County, California. As a long-standing member of the WMS, this was my first time attending the Executive Board Meeting, and it proved to be an insightful and significant experience. This report provides an overview of the meeting's key discussions, leadership activities, and the impact of the event, particularly regarding the support efforts for fire victims in California.

Structure and Purpose of the Meeting The WMS Executive Board Meeting is an annual event held in different U.S. cities, rotating among the 13 domestic Districts of the AME Church. This year's theme was "Resilient," based on 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. The meeting serves as a governing and training event for missionary leaders across 20 Episcopal Districts, which include the U.S. and International regions. Approximately 700 missionaries and delegates attended, with evening sessions drawing nearly 1,000 participants.

Key participants included Bishops, District Presidents, and Connectional Officers, among them Dr. Deborah Taylor King, WMS President, and Bishop Francine A. Brookins, Esq., the Presiding Bishop of the 5th Episcopal District. The meeting covered organizational updates, leadership training, and missionary initiatives within the AME Church.

Leadership and Governance The WMS is led by Dr. Deborah Taylor King, who has served in various leadership roles and has been instrumental in guiding missionary activities. The 5th Episcopal District, which hosted this year's meeting, is under the leadership of Bishop Francine A. Brookins, Esq. The meeting was attended by various Bishops, including the Commission Chair and President of the Bishop's Council, Bishop Silvester S. Beaman, and Global Witness and Ministry Executive Director Rev. Dr. John F. Green.

One highlight of the Executive Board meeting was the recognition of the Supervisors of each District. Their leadership role provides a pathway of success and guidance for each Society within their respective District.

Missionary Efforts and Response to California Fires One of the most impactful aspects of this year's meeting was the focus on the devastating California fires, particularly in Pasadena and Altadena. Over 60 families from First AME Church in Pasadena lost their homes, with a total of 129 AME families affected across the 5th District. First AME Pasadena has become a major relief center, providing food, gift cards, clothing, and assistance with state requirements and FEMA applications.

During my visit to the area, I witnessed firsthand the extensive damage and the incredible relief efforts led by Reverend Larry Campbell and First Lady Melinda Campbell. The church has mobilized volunteers, secured temporary housing for victims, and hired a chef to provide hot meals for the families and the community.

A special commemorative service was held in place of a scheduled program on Thursday, January 23rd, raising over \$250,000 in initial aid, with ongoing fundraising efforts continuing.

Travel from Garden Grove to Pasadena and Altadena Getting from the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Garden Grove to First AME Church in Pasadena was an important part of my journey during the Executive Board Meeting. Recognizing the significance of witnessing the devastation firsthand, I coordinated with fellow attendees, including my roommate, Brenda Birch, and made arrangements to travel to Pasadena.

We were fortunate to connect with my two Delta Sigma Theta Sorority sisters, 5th District WMS President Charlotte Ned and Melinda Campbell, the First Lady of First AME Church Pasadena, who informed us about the relief efforts underway at their church and confirmed that it was possible for us to visit. Lynn Greenwade, college classmate of Brenda Birch, who has lived in California for decades, kindly volunteered to drive us.

We departed from the Hyatt Regency and made the approximately 90-minute drive to Pasadena. Traffic was heavy, but it gave us time to reflect on the magnitude of the disaster and prepare ourselves for what we were about to see. Upon arrival at First AME Church Pasadena, we were warmly received by church members who guided us through their relief operations. After spending time at the church, we continued our journey to Altadena, just a mile away, where we saw the true extent of the fire's destruction.

Driving through the burned-out neighborhoods of Altadena was a sobering experience. The damage was widespread—entire homes reduced to ashes, charred cars, and remnants of what were once vibrant communities. The devastation underscored the importance of the church's role in supporting those who had lost everything.

Business Sessions: Thursday and Friday The business sessions on Thursday and Friday were critical in setting the direction for the WMS for the upcoming year.

Thursday Business Session: The morning session began with the **Tanner Turner Memorial Service**, honoring Bishops, Supervisors, and key figures in the AME Church who had passed away over the last year. This was followed by a Roll Call of attendees and introductions of key leaders.

Next, officers of the Women's Missionary Society, including the First Vice President, Second Vice President, Third Vice President, Member-at-Large, YPD Director, PME Director, History Book, Missionary Magazine, NGO Representative, and Treasurer, presented their reports. Each

officer delivered a summary of their activities, followed by a pre-recorded video detailing their work across various districts.

A major highlight was the **Panel discussion on Health and Wellness**, covering topics on menopause, maternal mortality, and mental health. Speakers included Dr. Concepta Namukolo Kwaleyela, Ph.D., Supervisor Miriam Burnett, MD, MPH, Supervisor Melinda Contreras-Byrd, M.Div Psy.D., Supervisor Joanne E. Williams Cooper, MD, and Dr. Linda Frazier, MD, MPH, Moderator. The discussion provided valuable insights into healthcare challenges and solutions for women within the church community.

After a **Presidents' Luncheon**, which featured gospel and jazz performances, the afternoon session resumed with **District reports #1-13**. Each of the 20 Episcopal districts presented updates on their missionary activities. The First Episcopal District led the way, with **Supervisor Phyllis Green** and **President Wanda Ringgold** delivering a compelling report on initiatives in their region.

Friday Business Session: The final business session continued with the reports from **International Districts (#14-20)**, detailing their ongoing missions across Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe. The **Missionaries on the Move** segment highlighted health and wellness initiatives, while a representative from **Mercy Ships** presented on their medical outreach programs worldwide.

Another significant presentation came from **EcoAmerica**, which discussed climate change and its impact on vulnerable communities. Following this, a panel on **Banned Books and their effects on marginalized groups** emphasized the importance of literacy and access to information. Speakers included Mrs. Lisa Johnson Whigham, Dr. Shirley Weber (California Secretary of State), Ms. Jackie Dupont Walker (Director AME Social Action), Ms. Carolyn Norman, President, California Librarians Black Caucus, and Ms. Kadajah Brown, Moderator.

The afternoon Business Session also included the unveiling of a major fundraising effort to support the **Sarah Davis Foundation**, which aims to raise \$2 million for humanitarian projects in Haiti. A special recognition was paid in tribute to the late Bishop Sarah Davis for her lifelong contributions to ministry and missionary work.

Fellowship and Networking The meeting provided ample opportunities for networking and strengthening relationships among WMS members. Attendees wore district-specific colors, participated in evening social gatherings, and engaged in meaningful discussions. One of the highlights was the President's Luncheon, featuring gospel and jazz performances, which fostered a sense of unity and celebration.

Events I did not attend:

- Friday Afternoon Training Sessions
- Friday Evening Life Members and YAMs Event: Dinner In Blue
- Saturday Supervisors' Prayer Breakfast

Conclusion The 2025 WMS Executive Board Meeting was a deeply enriching experience, reinforcing the resilience and dedication of AME Church missionaries. The event successfully

combined governance, training, and humanitarian outreach, with a strong emphasis on responding to the California fire crisis. Looking ahead, the next Executive Board Meeting will take place in Baltimore, Maryland, in January 2026, continuing the tradition of empowering and equipping missionary leaders.

For those interested in contributing to the fire relief efforts, donation details can be found below.

First AME Church Pasadena,
1700 N Raymond Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91103
[\(626\) 798-0503](tel:6267980503)

Checks payable to: First AME Church Pasadena

Cash App - \$First-AMEPASADENA

Givelify - First AME Church, Pasadena.

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Or you can send to the Fifth Episcopal District

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Respectfully Submitted By



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