

**Commission on Black Ministries (COBM)
Report to Diocesan Convention March 2, 2019**

History:

In 2015, when the Commission was created, 8 of the 11 historically Black congregations within the Diocese were without permanent clergy, an urgent situation. Following a meeting with Bishop Stokes, the Black Clergy and the Earl B. Scott - UBE Chapter, Bishop Stokes charged this commission with priorities to include support for recruiting the new Canon Missioner for Black Ministries, assessment of Black congregations needs, developing vocations and supporting Black ministries within the Diocese. The 2015 Diocesan Convention also affirmed the priority of having a full time Missioner with a positive vote for full time funding.

With the support of the COBM and the decision of Bishop Stokes the Rev. Canon Dr. Brian Jemmott began his ministry on February 1, 2016 as Canon Missioner for Black Ministry. Due to financial constraints within the Diocese in 2017, the position was eliminated as a full-time staff position and was initially made a volunteer position with the Rev. Canon Clive Sang, Dcn. appointed to be Canon Missioner for Black Ministry.

The 11 historically Black congregations to whom these initiatives were addressed are: St. Marks - Plainfield, St. Augustine- Atlantic City, St. Mary's - Pleasantville, St. Elizabeth- Elizabeth, St. Albans- New Brunswick, Christ the King - Willingboro, St. Augustine - Camden, St. Wilfrid – Camden, St. Thomas – Red Bank, St. Augustine, Asbury Park and Church of the Annunciation – Lawnside. In 2016 the congregation of Church of the Annunciation requested that the church building be closed, the congregation continues to assess next steps.

Members of the Commission:

Canon Annette Buchanan (Chair), Ms. Wendy Blackman, Mr. Marcus Gales, Ms. Natalie Moore, the Rev. Canon Dr. Martin Oguike, Ms. Linda Shomo, the Rev. Leroy Saunders and the Rev. Canon James Wynn were appointed to the commission. The Rev. Canon Clive Sang, Dcn. - Canon Missioner for Black Ministries and The Rev. Canon Dr. Brian Jemmott – Canon to the Ordinary also join the meetings.

2018 Status:

With the dedication and hard work of the congregations, diocese, missioners and the COBM the current status of the churches are as follows:

St. Marks – Plainfield: The Rev. Angelo Wildgoose continues an active ministry

St. Augustine- Atlantic City: The Rev. Canon Ryan Boyce continues an active ministry

St. Mary's – Pleasantville: The Rev. Hyvenson Joseph celebrating a new ministry

St. Elizabeth- Elizabeth: Active ministry ongoing with rector – The Rev. Canon Andy Moore

St. Albans- New Brunswick: The Rev. Ricardo Sheppard continues an active ministry

Christ the King – Willingboro: The Rev. Canon James Wynn continues an active interim ministry, currently in the process of searching for a priest

St. Augustine – Camden: The Rev. Dr. Earlie Roland Clemons retired and continues with congregation as a Priest-In-Charge, continued discussions of regional ministry in Camden

St. Wilfrid – Camden: Active outreach ministry, no permanent clergy, ongoing viability under discussion, continued discussions of regional ministry in Camden

St. Thomas – Red Bank: The Rev. Joseluis Memba continues an active ministry with the challenges of integrating a Black and Hispanic congregation

St. Augustine, Asbury Park: The Rev. Dr. William Ndishabandi continues an active ministry

Initiatives:

- In 2018, the COBM hosted two forums entitled “Meeting the Challenge of Church Transformation”, with the goal of providing resources and skills to these congregations to enhance their vitality.
 - In April 2018, the Rev. Dr. Renee Mckenzie-Hayward, Vicar, Church of the Advocate, Philadelphia, PA, presented on **Outreach Ministry** and Canon Myra Gaines, Canon for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Diocese of Long Island, presented on **Young Adult Ministry**
 - In December 2018, Dr. Raynard Smith, Assistant Professor, New Brunswick Seminary presented on **Pastoral Care for Seniors** and the Rev. Canon Betsy Ivey, Canon for Growth and Support, Diocese of Pennsylvania, presented on **Congregational Vitality**.

- The major concern for the historically Black congregations is ongoing financial support. Some are Missions and many received grants from the Special Initiatives funding to underwrite the salary and benefits for the priest. With that concern we invited Bishop Stokes to visit these congregations to assess their current status. In August with his senior staff, Bishop Stokes visited all these congregations to gain first hand knowledge of their ministries. We were very appreciative of this outreach. Questions on additional funding are outstanding.

- Cultivating interest in ordained ministry continues to be priority for the COBM, in support of this goal we have asked Canon Connie White, co-chair of the Commission on Ministry, to offer presentations to these congregations on the importance and process of this path.

- The COBM meets monthly to address relevant issues and continues to collaborate with the Black Clergy Caucus, the Union of Black Episcopalians and the Black Congregations to ensure that there is active participation and representation in the diocese.

- On review of the duties and accomplishments of the Canon Missioner for Black Ministry – the Rev. Canon Clive Sang, the COBM was a successful advocate for a stipend, expense reimbursement and a Letter-of-Agreement from the diocese for this position.

We look forward to a productive 2019.

Respectfully submitted,
Canon Annette L. Buchanan,
Chair, Commission on Black Ministry