

New board presents vast talent, leadership

When the archdiocesan Board of African American Catholic Ministries held its June meeting, it was held under new leadership. We prayed, we listened, and God sent forth several blessings – seven to be exact. The board prayed and voted for a strong and committed executive committee in the form of a president, vice president, recording secretary, assistant recording secretary and archivist.

The board has been blessed with the designation of Deacon Paul Shelton as the president of the board. Deacon Shelton is a member of the Blessed Sacrament Parish. As president of the board, Deacon Shelton's responsibilities will include calling and officiating at meetings; preparation of meeting agendas; being an ex-officio member of all committees, soliciting membership in those meetings and appointing chairpersons.

Deacon Shelton will also be responsible for encouraging the participation of all board members in promoting the initiatives and efforts of the Office of African American Catholic Ministries and the Harambee Organization for youth ministry. Deacon Shelton, as president (along with the director of the office), is responsible for preparing appropriate communications within the board as well as to other archdiocesan leaders.

The board's second blessing was through the designation of Leon A. Epps Jr. as vice president. Epps comes to the board from St. Gregory the Great. As Vice President of the Board Mr. Epps' responsibilities will include assisting the President and assumption of the president's duties in the event of his absence.

The third blessing came through the designation of Michelly B. Merrick to serve as the board's recording secretary. Merrick comes to the board from the historic St. Francis Xavier. As the recording secretary, Merrick will record proceedings of the meetings and provide a written report

Karen Bowens from St. Mary of the Assumption came as the board's fourth blessing.

She is serving as assistant recording secretary and will record the proceedings of the meetings and provide a written report in the absence of the recording secretary.

The board's fifth, sixth and seventh blessings came in a group of three women. Dr. Paula Langford of St. Ambrose; Mary Clayton of St. Wenceslaus; and Bessie Black of New All Saints make up the board's team of archivists. The responsibilities that these three women will share include: maintaining an organized record of the board's activity by constructing a scrapbook/binder. The binder will contain: a record of agenda and meetings; articles from The Catholic Review regarding the board; photographs; and letters to and from board members.

All organizations must have strong leadership at all times. The advisory board of African American Ministries is no exception. For the past 14 months retired board member Nina Harper has been serving as interim president. Harper has wonderfully and graciously served the board past her retirement and will now pass the baton to this newly formed executive committee.

The archdiocesan Board of African American Ministries consists of 21 members including staff, Therese Wilson Favors, director of the Office of African American Catholic Ministries and Howard Roberts, coordinator of the Harambee Organization. We are blest that Bishop Denis J. Madden attends all board meetings. Our mission includes more than 20 programs and initiatives including the Mother Lange Banquet aimed to recognize and celebrate the leadership and service of black Catholics to the church.

In order to more effectively carry out its mission the board has formed several sub-committees each one focusing on a topic that interests and affects the African-American Catholic community. The five sub-committees are: the African-American Family; Catholic Education; Black Catholic History; Leadership Development; and Utilizing Technology to Promote Evangelization. There is much work to be done. The executive committee is truly a blessing that will help guide board members as they continue to carry out their efforts of evangelization in the African-American Catholic community.

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