

**Ninth Episcopal District
African Methodist Episcopal Church
Mid-Year 2026
Richard Allen Young Adult Council (R.A.Y.A.C.)
Location: Renaissance Hotel – Riverview 7
Date: April 23, 2026
Time: 11:00AM- 12:15PM**

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at **11:22 a.m.** and opened with prayer, led by **Brother Jameer Bradley of Nichols Chapel, Phenix City District, Northeast Conference.**

Following the prayer, **Rev. Brandon Thornton, President of the Ninth Episcopal District RAYAC**, extended greetings and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to gather as the Ninth Episcopal District Richard Allen Young Adult Council. Rev. Thornton stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the work of RAYAC, receive updates from the local conferences, and consider future direction for the months ahead.

Thereafter, **Bishop Julius H. McAllister, Jr.** entered and was formally received.

Bishop McAllister greeted the group and expressed appreciation for those present. He affirmed his support for RAYAC and encouraged the council to continue developing plans and ideas. He noted that while space during Annual Conference may be limited due to the established evening worship schedule, there may be opportunities during the Christian Education Congress or through special moments such as Morning Glory worship.

Bishop McAllister also requested a written report from RAYAC and invited the council to share ideas, concerns, and recommendations by email. He emphasized that the Episcopal District desires to support RAYAC and help put meaningful plans in place. He further affirmed that young adults will continue to have opportunities to participate in district worship services.

Following Bishop McAllister's remarks and a group photo, the meeting continued with reflections from **Rev. Brandon Thornton, President of the Ninth Episcopal District RAYAC.**

Rev. Brandon Thornton shared that the council is in a season of evaluation and rebuilding. The following questions were presented for reflection:

1. What progress have we made?
2. What structures are now in place?
3. Who have we reached?
4. What requires our attention in this season?

It was acknowledged that RAYAC continues to face challenges because many people in local churches still do not fully understand what RAYAC is or how it functions. However, progress is being made in several conferences.

Conference Reports

Northwest Conference

The Northwest Conference reported that it is still in the process of reorganizing and identifying young adults within local churches. The conference is working to determine which churches have active young adults and how to involve them more intentionally.

The Northwest Conference also partnered with Reverend Star Cullpepper-Jackson of Bryant Chapel on sickle cell awareness. A virtual conversation was held to discuss the importance of sickle cell awareness and ways the church can help serve the community. Additional programming is being planned.

They also reported partnership with the Women's Missionary Society, with more information forthcoming once plans are finalized.

Northeast Conference

The Northeast Conference reported significant progress in organizing RAYAC according to the Discipline. For a period, the work was carried primarily by one person, but now more churches are becoming involved.

Nichols Chapel and St. John have active RAYAC involvement, including RAYAC takeover services. St. John has been organizing regular fourth Sunday RAYAC services. Local RAYAC officers are being organized, and work is being done to develop leadership at the presiding elder district and conference levels.

The Northeast Conference also held a successful RAYAC fellowship trail ride, with approximately 80 to 100 people in attendance. They are currently planning a "Bible Study on the Beach" trip to Destin and are also preparing to send representatives to the Connectional RAYAC gathering in Houston.

Southwest Conference

The Southwest Conference reported that its coordinator recently created a Google Form to gather contact information from young adults. The form has been sent to pastors, who then share it with the RAYAC representatives or young adults in their local churches. The current listing includes approximately 42 people.

Rev. Thornton also shared that although young adults were present at his local church, a formal Richard Allen Young Adult Council had not been organized until recently. An interest meeting was held and included conversation around mental health, stress, young adulthood, family responsibilities, and creating safe spaces for young adults in the church.

The Southwest Conference is working toward a more unified conference-level approach rather than isolated local church efforts.

Membership and Database Discussion

The group discussed the need for a centralized RAYAC database across the Episcopal District. Each conference is gathering information in different ways, including local lists, Google Forms, and direct contact through pastors.

It was suggested that local church information be gathered first, then forwarded to the presiding elder district level, then to the conference level, and finally compiled at the Episcopal District level. This would allow RAYAC to have a clearer understanding of who is active, where they are located, and how to communicate with them.

Leadership, Elections, and Transition

Rev. Thornton shared the desire to hold Episcopal District RAYAC elections at the Christian Education Congress. It was noted that the Discipline requires a nominating committee. Rev. Thornton expressed the intention to organize the nominating committee process properly and in good order.

It was clarified that candidates for office must be at least 21 years old and no older than 42.

Rev. Thornton also shared that the current leadership has served beyond the expected term and that it is time for a changing of the guard. He expressed a desire to transition leadership properly, carefully, and with integrity.

He encouraged the group to remain faithful to local, conference, and district work, while also warning against burnout. He reminded those present that serving in Episcopal leadership does not mean neglecting local or conference responsibilities. Collaboration and wise stewardship of time are necessary.

Encouragement to RAYAC

Rev. Thornton reminded the group that what is seen locally is not the full picture of RAYAC across the Connectional Church. RAYAC is active and meaningful across the denomination, even if the Ninth Episcopal District is still rebuilding and strengthening its structure.

The group was encouraged to stay motivated, stay connected, and continue the work, even in a challenging season.

Connectional RAYAC Gathering

The group discussed the upcoming Connectional RAYAC event in Houston, Texas, scheduled for August 28–30. More information regarding registration and hotel accommodations will be gathered and shared.

The Northeast Conference reported interest in sending four representatives, two from Nichols Chapel and two from St. John. The discussion included possible financial support for registration, travel, and lodging. Rev. Thornton stated that he would explore what assistance may be available through the Episcopal District.

Participants were reminded to make sure they have proper identification for air travel.

RAYAC Connect Initiative

The group discussed the possibility of launching a “RAYAC Connect” model across the Ninth Episcopal District. The Northeast Conference has previously considered a similar gathering, and Rev. Thornton suggested receiving that framework and sharing it with all conference coordinators.

The goal would be for each conference to host a RAYAC Connect gathering. If possible, members from other conferences could travel and support each gathering, helping to build stronger district-wide unity.

This was identified as a practical and achievable initiative moving forward.

Visit from Reverend Dr. G. Diane Lewis

Reverend Dr. G. Diane Lewis, consultant to the Mobile District and candidate for the Episcopacy, stopped by and greeted the group. She thanked RAYAC for its work and emphasized the importance of young adults in the life and future of the church.

She encouraged the group to use their gifts and graces for the growth of the church and reminded them that the potential of the church is deeply connected to the leadership and participation of young adults.

Action Items

1. Submit ideas and concerns to Rev. Thornton by Saturday for inclusion in a written report to Bishop McAllister.
2. Gather and share accurate RAYAC contact information from local churches, districts, and conferences.
3. Continue developing a centralized Ninth Episcopal District RAYAC database.
4. Begin organizing the nominating committee process for elections at Christian Education Congress.
5. Gather and distribute full information regarding the Houston Connectional RAYAC event.
6. Explore financial assistance for representatives attending the Houston gathering.
7. Develop a RAYAC Connect model that can be used across each conference.
8. Encourage each conference coordinator to host a RAYAC Connect gathering.

Closing

The meeting concluded with prayer led by Reverend Randy Rhodes, Coordinator of the Northwest conference. The prayer asked God to strengthen every person present, and continue growing the work of RAYAC across the district.

The meeting was adjourned with gratitude and encouragement for the work ahead. (12:28pm)