



Brief History of the 20th Episcopal District Lay Organization



Lay

Organization Leadership of the AME Church 20th Episcopal District

The 20th Episcopal District was formally established in 2004 following the approved redistricting process. Bishop W. Jacobus Messiah was appointed as the first Presiding Bishop of the district. He was succeeded by Bishop Julius McAllister, who served as the second Presiding Bishop of the 20th Episcopal District.

The district has since been served by successive episcopal leaders. The current Presiding Prelate is Bishop Dr. Gregory Vaughn Eason, Sr., who serves as the sixth Presiding Bishop since the district's formation. The first Lay President of the 20th Episcopal District was Brother Phillip Nhekairo of Zimbabwe, who served during the episcopacy of Bishop W. Jacobus Messiah from 2004-2008.

During the tenure of Bishop Julius McAllister, the late Brother Charles Evance assumed leadership of the Episcopal District Lay organization. Following his passing, leadership transitioned to Brother Gibson Mengwe, who had been serving as First Vice President.

Brother Mengwe was succeeded by Brother Siles Gulule, he is now a Presiding Elder in Malawi Central Annual Conference, who served as Lay President. He was followed by Brother Qedindaba Khumalo. The current elected Lay President of the 20th Episcopal District is Brother Ronald Erastus Mkandawire, who assumed the leadership mantle following Brother Khumalo.

Structure, Geography, and Administration

The 20th Episcopal District is organized into seven (7) Annual Conferences and comprises a total of 244 African Methodist Episcopal churches. The district spans five African countries: Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Currently, all seven Annual Conferences within the 20th Episcopal District have Conference Lay Presidents, each supported by their respective executive office. These officers provide essential administrative support to the Presiding Elders and District Presidents within their conferences, strengthening governance and coordination at all levels of the district.

The district reflects broad cultural and linguistic diversity, with more than eight local languages spoken across its conferences and congregations. From its roots in the former 17th Episcopal District to its formal establishment in 2004, the 20th Episcopal District has continued to grow in leadership, structure, and regional influence. Through faithful episcopal oversight and organized lay leadership, the district stands as a vital part of the African Methodist Episcopal Church's mission and witness in Africa.

Submitted By Ronald Erastus Mkandawire, Elected President of The 20th Episcopal District
William E. Ayers, Jr., CLO Historiographer
Matikane Abednego Makiti, President, CLO
March 2026