

Black Leadership in the Diocese of North Carolina  
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**1898-1928: Black Archdeacons in the Jim Crow Era**

Between 1898 and 1928, the Diocese of North Carolina was served by two African American “Archdeacons for Colored Work:” The Ven. John H.M. Pollard (1898-1908) and The Rt. Rev. Henry Beard Delany (1908-1928). From 1918 to 1928, Delany actually carried two titles: Archdeacon AND Bishop (Suffragan). Pollard’s was the first African American name to appear on the front page of the Journal of Annual Convention alongside the bishop and other officers. He was the first black person accorded the privilege of addressing the Convention and filing a report in the Journal. Delany was accorded the same standing when he became Archdeacon at Pollard’s death.

Delany was also chosen to represent North Carolina at the first meeting of Province (IV) in 1914, the only African American delegate at that organizing synod in New Orleans.

Moreover, Delany (and Pollard before him) was active with black ministry at the national level. Delany was President of the Conference of Church Workers Among Colored People (CCWACP or CCW) throughout the mid-1910s and represented the CCW at General Convention in 1913 and 1916.

So, Pollard and Delany should be considered important and visible leaders in the Diocese (and beyond). But with this important qualification: their leadership was always to be exercised among African Americans exclusively. They could address white Episcopalians, and did, but as supplicants only.

**1928-1954: Black ministry subsumed**

In 1928, at the death of Bishop Delany, the Diocese of North Carolina did not proceed with naming his successor. The Bishop Coadjutor, Edwin Penick, was given oversight of black congregations. At the same time, the Diocese established a new structure for mission and program which co-existed alongside the Negro Convocation: the Diocesan Executive Council. Serving on that Council was Mr. A. Thomas White of St. Ambrose’, Raleigh. In 1932, a Special Committee on Negro Work issued its report to Convention, calling for an end to the Negro Convocation and the creation of “a standing committee . . . on colored work, comprised of the Bishop, the Negro member of the Diocesan Executive Council, one Negro representative from each of the five Diocesan departments, and three members at large, appointed by the Bishop, one of whom shall be a woman to represent the Woman’s Auxiliary.”<sup>1</sup>

When Penick succeeded Bishop Cheshire, he reissued the call for black representation in all aspects of the church’s governance. In 1932, Charles Boyer of St. Augustine’s was named to the Committee on the State of the Church. That same year, George Pollard, Archdeacon Pollard’s son and the long-time lay-reader and schoolmaster in Louisburg, began serving the first of two 3-year terms on Executive Council (1932-1935; 1938-1941). In the intervening years between Pollard’s two terms, Arthur P. Chippey of St. Augustine’s served on both the Executive Council and the Committee on Pensions. Pollard was

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<sup>1</sup> Journal of Convention 1932, p. 63.

succeeded on Executive Council by John H. Clark, St. Mark's, Wilson (1941-1944); the Rev. Odell Stanley (1944-1947); the Rev. Robert J. Johnson (1947-1950 and 1952-1955); Dr. John W. Black (1948-1950 and 1954-1957); the Rev. John W. Herritage (1950-1952), and the Rev. J. Howard Thompson (1955).<sup>2</sup> So, throughout this period there was an unbroken succession of black representatives on Executive Council, and occasionally there was overlapping representation.

### **1954-1965: Civil Rights Era Begins; Diocesan efforts at Desegregation**

In 1955, in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court, the Convention called for a committee to study diocesan "work among Negroes." The committee, under the leadership of Bishop Co-adjutor Baker, offered its report the following year. The committee noted with alarm what it called the "low estate" of Negro congregations and called for a vigorous program of black clergy recruitment and increasing financial support for existing black congregations.

At the same 1956 Convention, Bishop Penick addressed the issues stemming from the *Brown* decision, declaring himself in favor of a "gradualist" approach to desegregation. In 1957, a special committee "On Racial Subjects" was formed and charged with overseeing the course of desegregation for diocesan institutions. Serving on the committee were the Chaplain at St. Augustine's, the Rev. Samuel Rudder, and the newly-installed President, Dr. James A. Boyer. Dr. Boyer was also elected to Executive Council (1957-1960).

In 1961, Fr. Rudder's successor at St. Augustine's, Fr. Joe Green, was elected to Executive Council, to serve until 1964. In 1963, Dr. Boyer was elected to be a Deputy to the Provincial Synod, and the Rev. Arthur Calloway was elected an Alternate Deputy to General Convention. Fr. Green, Fr. Calloway, and Dr. Boyer were also serving on the Committee on Racial Subjects. In 1964, the Rev. Richard Hicks, Jr., was elected to Executive Council, and when he left the diocese at the end of the year, the Rev. Arthur Calloway was appointed to fill his unexpired term; Fr. Calloway also served on the Board of Directors for the Terraces, the one-time conference center of the diocese. 1965 saw the completion of the work of the Committee on Racial Subjects, with desegregation policies in place for all diocesan institutions.

### **1966-1974: The Emergence of Black Power; "Urban Crisis" Initiatives**

Apart from the election of Dr. James A. Boyer as an alternate lay deputy to General Convention, there were no new appointments or elections of African Americans to positions of diocesan leadership in 1966 or 1967. But this would change in the course of the next several years.

The 1967 General Convention adopted the General Convention Special Program (GCSP), an ambitious \$9 million triennial grant program targeting black empowerment and urban poverty. The diocese followed suit in 1968 with its own "urban crisis" initiative. This led to the appointment of the Rev. E. Nathaniel Porter as the Director of the Urban Crisis Program and the naming of an Urban Crisis Committee to help direct and support this initiative.

With Porter's appointment, the Diocese had a black program staff person for the first time in 40 years (since the death of Bishop Delany in 1928). The Urban Crisis Committee was bi-racial; among its black

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<sup>2</sup> Note: further research into the congregational/racial identity of lay members of diocesan committees might lead to additional names being added to the list of black representatives.

members were Howard Clement and Dr. Cecil Patterson, both laymen at St. Titus', Durham. Also, in 1968, Dr. Prezell Robinson, President of St. Augustine's, was elected to a 3-year term on what was now called Diocesan Council.

But in 1969, the diocese was embroiled in controversy over a GCSP grant to the Malcolm X Liberation University in Durham. The backlash was so severe that the diocese gathered for the 1970 convention facing a \$165,000 budget shortfall. The delegates responded to the crisis by passing resolutions calling on the national church to reform its GCSP grant procedures, but they also embraced black leaders and black institutions. 1970 saw African Americans elected to Diocesan Council (Dr. Arthur Jackson of Greensboro), the Thompson Home Board of Directors (Dr. Cecil Patterson of Durham), and for the first time, the Standing Committee (Dr. Prezell Robinson of St. Augustine's, Raleigh); indeed, St. Augustine's received funding at an unprecedented level. Fr. Porter and members of the Urban Crisis Committee personally addressed the convention and detailed from their own experience what it felt like to be black in a white society. Following the convention, Bishop Fraser could write a pastoral letter to the diocese, touting these and other achievements.

1971 saw Fr. Calloway elected to Diocesan Council, joining Dr. Jackson, making it the first time in several decades that two African Americans served concurrently on that body. For the first time, an African American was named to the Commission on Ministry: Dr. Cecil Patterson. And perhaps most surprisingly, Dr. Patterson was also named as Trustee of St. Mary's School in Raleigh for a two-year term.

By 1972, Fr. Porter had left the diocese, and his position as Director of Racial and Urban Affairs was filled by William (Bill) Brock of Raleigh. In 1973, Dr. Jackson finished his term on Diocesan Council, but Cecil Patterson's wife, Vivian, was elected for a 3-year term. No African American succeeded Dr. Robinson on Standing Committee, however. And when Bill Brock resigned as Director of Racial and Urban Affairs in June 1974, he was not replaced. Instead, the diocese called the Rev. Lex Mathews to serve as the Director of Christian Social Ministries. As in the early 1930s, black ministry was being subsumed.

### **1975-1999: Ebb and Flow in Black Representation**

1975 saw Fr. Calloway joining Dr. Patterson on the Commission on Ministry. And for the first time, an African American was elected as a Deputy (not alternate) to General Convention: Prezell Robinson (L4).

In 1976, one member of St. Titus', Durham, succeeded another on Diocesan Council, as Vivian Patterson completed her term and Mary Hawkins commenced hers. Cecil Patterson rotated off the Commission on Ministry but continued to serve on the Thompson Orphanage board.

1977 saw no new appointments or elections of African Americans, but in 1978 Fr. Calloway became the 2<sup>nd</sup> African American to serve on the Standing Committee.

In 1979, Mary Hawkins was named as a Province IV representative and the Rev. Charles Smith, Jr. (Epiphany, Rocky Mount) was named to the Commission on Ministry.

In 1980, Fr. Calloway was appointed to the Penick Home Board of Directors and the Rev. Michael B. Curry joined both the Commission on Ministry and the Christian Social Ministry Committee. In 1981, Dr. Patterson rejoined the Commission on Ministry, serving alongside Frs. Curry and Smith. And in that year, Vivian Patterson became the 2<sup>nd</sup> lay deputy to General Convention (L3). No changes in black

representation occurred in 1982. In 1983, Mary Hawkins joined the Commission on Ministry (as the sole African American serving), and Reginald Moss from Tarboro was named to the "NC 2000" long range planning committee. Mary Hawkins also served on the Communications Committee. 1984 saw no change, except that Vivian Patterson was elected an Alternate in the lay order for deputy to General Convention. 1985 again witnessed no change. In 1986, Cecil Patterson was named Lay Warden for the Durham Convocation, and the Chaplain/Priest-in-Charge at St. Augustine's, Fr. Cy Burke, was added to the Commission on Ministry, serving alongside Mary Hawkins. In 1987, Fr. Calloway began a 5-year tenure as Chair of Dispatch of Business, and Fr. Burke was named Chair of the Commission on Ministry. Catherine Barnes from St. Titus' Durham was named to the Parish Grants committee in 1988. 1989 saw Margaret Akingbade join the Commission on Ministry, and Fr. Morales join the Committee on Institutions. 1990 brought Cecil Patterson election as the 3<sup>rd</sup> lay deputy to General Convention (L4).

After a decade in which no African Americans served on either Standing Committee or Diocesan Council, 1991 saw the election of Dr. Prezell Robinson to the Standing Committee (for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term). In addition, Alice Freeman was appointed to the Committee on Admission of Congregations; Catherine Barnes was appointed to CSM; Mr. Connie Sessoms, Jr. from Charlotte was named to the CoM, and Paul Valdez to the Committee on the Diaconate. After a year when no changes were made in African American diocesan leadership, 1993 brought a 2<sup>nd</sup> African American to the Standing Committee, Paul Valdez, and the election of the Rev. Monroe Freeman to Diocesan Council. Vivian Patterson was named to the Episcopal Church Foundation; Marjorie Freeman to the Summit Board; Zelda Kennedy and Velinda Hardy were appointed to the State of the Church Committee; Fr. Harold Cobb was named to Parish Grants, and he and Reginald Moss served on the Small Church Committee. In the election for Deputies to General Convention, both Fr. Cobb and Cecil Patterson were Alternates (C8 and L5 respectively). Fr. Michael Battle was named to the Companion Diocese Committee, and Catherine Barnes was named a delegate to the North Carolina Council of Churches.

Familiar names served in 1994: Dr. Robinson was appointed to the State of the Church Committee; Cecil Patterson was asked to serve on the Small Church and Education & Formation Committees; Alice Freeman was appointed to the Communications Committee, and Vivian Patterson to the Companion Diocese Committee. Paul Valdez continued to serve on the CSM and the Committee on the Diaconate, in addition to the Standing Committee.

In 1995, Christian Social Ministries was undergoing a major transition, and with the Rev. Bobbie Armstrong's leadership as CSM Coordinator, the Rev. Cliff Coles became one of a trio of Missioners (along with the Rev. Tom Feamster and Duncan Ely). In addition to her continuing duties as a member of the Committee on Communications, Alice Freeman was appointed to the Commission on Ministry, serving alongside Reginald Moss. Dr. Prezell Robinson was asked to serve on the State of the Church Committee alongside Zelda Kennedy. He would serve in 1996 as well. Likewise, Cecil Patterson served on the Committee on Institutions both this year and the next. Connie Sessoms was named to a term on the Summit Board.

But 1996 marked a return to a Standing Committee and Diocesan Council without any African American representation. Gertrude Murchison and Howard Clement III served as Directors of the NC Episcopal Church Foundation. Others, such as Alice Freeman, Connie Sessoms, Prezell Robinson, and Cecil Patterson served where they were previously assigned. In addition, Patterson was elected to the Penick Village Board.

1997 brought the election of the Rev. Cliff Coles to Standing Committee and the election of Velinda Hardy as Lay Warden of the Rocky Mount Convocation. Vivian Patterson was now asked to serve on the Companion Diocese Committee and Reginald Moss on the Committee on the Diaconate. Gertrude Murchison joined Connie Sessoms on the Summit Board.

The election of the first African American Dean of a Convocation occurred in 1998, when the Rev. Monroe Freeman was named Dean of the Durham Convocation; Velinda Hardy continued as Lay Warden in Rocky Mount. The same year, Prezell Robinson was named to the newly-formed Ecclesiastical Court, and the new Visioning Committee included Fr. Monroe Freeman, Alice Freeman, Gertrude Murchison, and Connie Sessoms. Marshall Harvey of Raleigh was elected to a 3-year term on Diocesan Council.

1999 was the year to elect Deputies to the 2000 General Convention. The Rev. Ida Louise Johnson was elected in the clergy order (C4), and Cecil Patterson in the lay order (L2). The Rev. Al Moore joined the CoM, serving alongside Alice Freeman.

When we look at the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a whole, we can see a few signs of change in patterns of black leadership, most notably in the make-up of the deputation to General Convention. But African Americans served only intermittently on the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council, and they held no positions as officers or executive staff of the diocese. Apart from representation on the NC Episcopal Church Foundation, they were not involved with financial oversight and governance, never serving on the Investment Committee or as Trustees.

#### **2000-2015: Black leadership during the Episcopate of the Rt. Rev. Michael Curry**

In 2000, North Carolina became the first southern diocese to elect an African American diocesan bishop. But this was another of those years when no African American served on the Standing Committee. That would change in 2001 with the election of Charles Thompson, Jr. from St. Titus' Durham. And for the first time in 2001, there were three African Americans on the Penick Village Board, with Fr. Calloway and the Rev. Zelda Kennedy joining Cecil Patterson. The Rev. Al Moore was named to the Committees on Socially Responsible Investment and the Diaconate.

2002 witnessed the election of the Rev. Ida Louise Johnson to Diocesan Council. She was also re-elected a Deputy to General Convention (C3), and both Alice Freeman and Gertrude Murchison were elected as lay alternates. Charles Thompson was chosen to serve as Lay Warden of the Durham Convocation, in addition to his continuing service on the Standing Committee. And there were now three black members of the CoM: Alice Freeman, the Rev. Al Moore, and Reginald Moss. Indeed, Al Moore was serving on five diocesan committees that year: CoM, Companion Diocese, Socially Responsible Investments, the Diaconate, and Sexual Ethics.

In 2003, Mr. Connie Sessoms joined the Rev. Ida Louise Johnson on Diocesan Council. The Rev. Zelda Kennedy served on four boards or committees: Penick Village, the Summit, Education, and Clergy Wellness; the Rev. Al Moore again served on five: Penick Village, CoM, Companion Diocese, the Diaconate, and Sexual Ethics. Mary Hawkins was the Co-Chair of the Convention.

The notable change brought about in 2004 was the inauguration of the Absalom Jones Initiative, but this was listed in the Journal for that one year only. In 2005, a Bishop's Anti-Racism Committee was formed under the leadership of the Rev. Kim Hudson.

In preparation for GC 2006, the Diocesan Convention elected Alice Freeman to the deputation in the lay order (L4). She also served on the Missionary Resource Support Team and the CoM. Al Moore continued on the Penick Village Board, the CoM, and the Diaconate and Pastoral Response Committees.

2007 brought both the Rev. Kim Lucas and Gertrude Murchison to Diocesan Council. Dr. Deidre Crumley co-chaired the Bishop's Committee on Anti-Racism with Dr. Jane Redmont. Delois Ward was appointed to the CoM, and David Dodson was named a Director of the NC Episcopal Church Foundation. Velinda Hardy served on the Companion Diocese sub-committee, and the Rev. Lawrence Womack joined the Missionary Resource Support Team along with Alice Freeman.

A new African American staff person was added in 2008, with the naming of Sonja Bennett as the diocesan Coordinator of Communications, a position she would hold for two years. Alice Freeman was re-elected to the diocesan deputation for General Convention (L3). Both Kevin Matthews and Lawrence Womack were elected Alternates in the clergy order (L5 and 6, respectively). The black representation on other bodies, elected and appointed, continued to mirror previous years, and that pattern continued in 2009.

2010 marked the first year that three African Americans served concurrently on Diocesan Council: The Rev. Dr. Hector Sintim was elected to serve alongside the Rev. Kim Lucas and Gertrude Murchison. The Rev. Kevin Matthews and Delois Ward continued serving on the CoM; the Rev. Al Moore and Alice Freeman were both Directors of the Penick Village. Al Moore and Velinda Hardy, along with Sharita Womack, served on the various committees related to international concerns. The re-named Committee for Racial Justice and Reconciliation remained bi-racial in composition. Deidre Crumley, Martina Gardner-Woods, and Bill Murchison were among the members.

2011 brought the implementation of a regional ministry structure; the Rev. Al Moore was named East Regional Deacon. And 2011 marked yet another milestone in Alice Freeman's tenure as Deputy to General Convention, when she was elected at the head of the Deputation (L1). At the same time, the Rev. Kevin Matthews was elected in the clergy order (C4). Wade Chestnut III joined Fr. Sintim on Diocesan Council in 2012. In other respects, black representation continued along the lines set forth in previous years; the same held true for 2013 and 2014.

2015 brought considerable change. Bishop Curry was elected Presiding Bishop, and the Rt. Rev. Anne Hodges-Copple was appointed by the Standing Committee to serve as Bishop Diocesan *pro tempore*. Both Alice Freeman and the Rev. Jemonde Taylor were elected to terms on Diocesan Council. Fr. Taylor also continued service on the Disciplinary Board. The Rev. Nita Byrd and Delois Ward both served on the CoM-P; the Rev. Ollie Rencher and the Rev. Kevin Matthews did likewise on the CoM-D. Larry Stroud was appointed to the Missionary Support Resource Team; DeDreanna Freeman joined the Committee for Racial Justice and Reconciliation.

In 2016, the Rev. Stephanie Yancy entered diocesan leadership as an elected member of Diocesan Council and an appointed member of the Pastoral Response Team, serving alongside Al Moore, and the Botswana Companion Diocese Committee, serving alongside Alice Freeman. New members of the Committee for Racial Justice and Reconciliation included the Rev. Joyce Cunningham and Pat Barnes.

In 2018, Larry Stroud was named Consulting Missioner for Black Ministries, the first time since 1974 that a diocesan staff position existed with that particular focus. The Standing Committee now had two black

clergy members: Fr. Sintim and Fr. Jemonde Taylor, and Diocesan Council had four black members: Alice Freeman, the Rev. Alicia Alexis, the Rev. Tyrone Fowlkes, and the Rev. Stephanie Yancy. What is more, there was now a black member of the Trustees: The Rev. Milton Williams. Fr. Williams also served as Dean of the Greensboro Convocation, and Marshall Harvey and Martina Gardner-Woods served as Lay Wardens of the Raleigh and Durham Convocations respectively. Lew Myers and the Rev. Alicia Alexis joined the Racial Justice and Reconciliation Committee, and Lew Myers also joined both the Botswana Companion Diocese Committee and the Mission Endowment Board.

In 2019, the Rev. Kathleen Walker was named the Missioner for Black Ministries. And in 2020, Fr. Taylor became the first African American President of the Standing Committee. There is still new ground to be broken.