

**The Connectional Lay Organization
34th Biennial Session**

Presenter:

Rev. Ronald Slaughter,

Senior Pastor

Saint James AME Church

One Church, Two Locations

Newark and South Orange, NJ

www.stjamesame.org

Plenary Session:
“Role of the Laity in
Growing the Church”

The statistics concerning the decline of church attendance and membership are alarming. According to the Francis A. Schaffer Institute of Church Leadership Development, “the United States ranks third following China and India in the number of people who are not professing Christians.”

Every year, more than 4,000 churches close their doors due to membership decline, inability to pay bills, and the inability to reach new people.

The Institute of Church Leadership lists several reasons why church membership is declining. Some of those reasons are: “Lack of vision, inept leadership, poor or no evangelism efforts, one-way communication, church mentality, little working capital, inadequate childcare, out dated youth programs, and being seeker sensitive.”

Beyond the aforementioned, experts also believe that churches are declining because some churches just don't want to grow. Some churches' members have very little desire to change. They have become complacent, don't like to change, and are unwilling to follow pastoral leadership.

In order to reverse this alarming trend, the church, local and connectional must become more serious and intentional about church growth. As a denomination, we often place politics, polity, and tradition ahead of intentional and relevant church growth.

Church growth must become our primary focus and, not secondary or an afterthought. It is imperative that pastor and laity form a cohesive working relationship in order to reverse the decline in church discipleship.

There are many biblical examples that one can refer to as models that demonstrate the power of working together: the Moses, Aaron, and Hur model in Exodus; Nehemiah and the people rebuilding the wall; and the Apostles working with the children of God in Acts chapter two.

The biblical text proves that by working together, we can grow our churches and our communities at the same time.

During this session, we will take a look at several ways in which pastors and laity can work together to grow the local church.

“Role of the Laity in Growing the Church”

I. Make Evangelism a Priority

- A. Spreading the good news
- B. Intentional and relevant
- C. Use of Positive language

II. Willingness to do things a little differently

- A. Worship
- B. Hospitality
- C. Ministries vs. Boards
- D. Transparency
- E. Marketing/Media

III. Laity emulating the characteristics of a Servant Leader

- A. Stewardship
- B. Finance Committee
- C. Transparency

If there are any questions or you would like to contact Rev. Slaughter after the session, please contact his Executive Assistant, Sis. Alison Nettles at 973-622-1344 and extension 124 or you may email her at anettles@stjamesame.org.