QUADRENNIAL REPORT
OF THE
CONNECTIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION
TO THE
THIRTY - NINTH
GENERAL CONFERENCE
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

THE "FLYING BLACK MEDICS" - CAIRO PROJECT
THE "SOUND OF BLOODLETTING" CAN BE THE KEY TO BLACK HEALTH

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CONNECTIONAL HEALTH COMMISSION
JUNE 1972
DALLAS, TEXAS
It seems appropriate at this time to briefly review the history of the establishment of the Health Commission and its activities. In 1940 I contributed a short chapter in the book entitled "A Century of Missions of the A.M.E. Church" by my late father, Rev. L. L. Berry, who was at that time Secretary of Missions. My contribution was entitled "Opportunity of African Methodism in Medical Missions" - A Prospectus.

Beginning twenty-four years ago in 1944 I undertook a study of the possible areas and methods by which the A.M.E. Church might participate in the great health field on an organized Connectional basis. Historically the church had begun its missions program in 1840, its Connectional activity in education in 1856. But nearly one hundred years later the church had not taken the next logical and traditional step so well established among leading Christian denominations; namely a national or connectional program in medical care. African Methodists in the Kansas City Area of the Fifth Episcopal District had taken over the Douglass Hospital near the turn of the century as a splendid example of a church-related community Hospital.

In 1946 I presented a proposal before the Chicago Annual Conference Laymen for the enactment of a laymen's sponsored bill at the 1948 general conference to establish a permanent Connectional Health Commission which would survey and coordinate any and all health activities of local churches and establish local church health guilds which would sponsor the organization of health education assemblies, health fairs, nurses corps, first aid courses, etc. The proposal was unanimously endorsed. The Fourth District laymen gave the plan unanimous endorsement in 1947 and the Connectional Laymen's Organization under President Herbert L. Dudley unanimously endorsed and sponsored the health commission bill at the 1948 general conference in Kansas City, Missouri. The bill to establish a permanent Connectional Health Commission became law at that General Conference. The president of the Bishop's Council, the late Rt. Rev. Reverdy C. Ransom, appointed Bishop George W. Baber as the first Commission chairman and the Commission elected Leonidas H. Berry, M.D. of Chicago its first Medical Director.

During the next three quadrenniums that followed the Health Commission had to operate entirely without funds but with the moral encouragement of its chairmen, Bishops Baber, Wilkes and Primm. The Medical Director attended annual meetings and presented reports of his activities and pleaded for the Commission's proposals before the Bishops Councils or General Boards. He also attended annual conferences, district conferences, laymen's conventions and local churches in many parts of the country and in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, all at his own expense, speaking in behalf of the program of the Health Commission. He visited the Douglass Hospital at Kansas City and served as professional medical administrative consultant to the executive director of the hospital, Rev. Eugene H. Kelly, Jr. and was elected ex-officio member of the hospital trustee board under the chairmanship of Bishop Frederick Jordan.

Fortunately your director was able to be elected a lay delegate from the Fourth Episcopal District to every general conference from 1936 to 1956. In 1956 a resolution was passed making the Medical Director of the Health Commission a Connectional Officer and providing for the office a permanent seat in the
general conference. At Chicago in 1952, Miami in 1956, Los Angeles in 1960, Cincinnati in 1964 and Philadelphia in 1968, the medical director working with local Host Committees organized and supervised First Aid Rooms and gave professional services during the entire General Conference sessions. An average of 500 to 600 people were given free care during each conference for a great variety of disorders including sprains, fractures, heart attacks, strokes, hypertensive crises and coma. In every general session clergy and laymen were hospitalized, some of whom succumbed.

Physician-Churchmen who have helped in the Clinic and on the Commission during these years include: L. M. Donaldson, Tennessee; W. D. Chappelle, South Carolina; R. L. Chamberlain, Georgia; J. E. Randolph, Kentucky; T. J. Davis, Georgia; J. L. Leach, Michigan; Joshua M. Brown, Illinois; R. W. Mance, D. C.; W. L. Haywood, Oklahoma; H. Rains, California; F. D. Coleman, Tennessee and others. Voluntary Graduate Nurses include: Mrs. David Harris, Mrs. L. J. Davis, Mrs. Hilda Tompkins, Mrs. Mildred Harris, Mrs. Susie M. Padgett, and Mrs. Leonidas H. Berry, Clinic Secretary.

At each of the general conferences referred to, resolutions were passed for the extension of the Health Commission's program and the provision of funds. However, the budgetary hurdles required to actually receive these funds were never overcome during the first sixteen long years. Since 1964 meager funds have been received for minimal secretarial, travel and other expenses and the medical director has tried to carry out the best program possible with limited facilities.

During this period the Medical Director used personal funds and other methods of projecting the image of African Methodism in the total community. In 1950 while President of the Cook County Physicians Association he led an interracial, interfaith, city-wide movement in Chicago which succeeded in establishing the "Berry Plan" for rehabilitation of young narcotic addicts. By special legislation the Illinois General Assembly appropriated 90,000 dollars to set up this plan in three special clinics in medical centers at the University of Illinois, Northwestern University, and Provident Hospital. Dr. Berry served as coordinator of the rehabilitation program under the supervision of Illinois State Department of Public Health for 8 years. The "Berry Plan" for rehabilitation of young narcotic addicts is described in an original article in the Journal of the American Medical Association, January, 1951.

Your Medical Director has continued to project the image of African Methodists by pioneering in removing racial barriers as a specialist in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology. He has been Clinical Assistant, Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Illinois and as a post-graduate Professor and Staff member at the world's largest hospital, the Cook County Hospital of Chicago for many years. He has been active in clinical research, reporting his observations before many state, national and international societies and congresses in his specialty, including a World Congress in Paris, 1954; a Pan American Congress in Santiago, Chile in 1960; and World Congresses in Tokyo, Japan in 1966, Rome, Paris and Copenhagen, 1970.

During the current quadrennium the "Flying Black Medics" Project has been our most dramatic achievement. However, we have continued to be involved in trying to encourage the church hierarchy to become more relevant to the Public Health needs in Black Communities. The present faddism about sickle cell anemia and its harmful "political" repercussion is a good example.
FIRST AID CLINIC and FREE CHEST X-RAY SURVEY

Total Delegates and Visitors Examined and Treated 992

First Aid Clinic - 426
Free Chest X-Ray - 566

A daily first aid clinic was held for two weeks in which 426 patients were seen and treated by the Medical Director and two other doctors, namely, L. M. Donaldson, M.D., Fayetteville, Tennessee, Horace Rains, M.D., Long Beach, California, and four nurses, namely, Mrs. P. J. Davis, R.N., Atlanta, Georgia, Mrs. Hilda Tompkins, R.N., Augusta, Georgia, Mrs. Mildred Harris, R.N., Temple, Texas, and Mrs. Susie M. Padgett, L.P.N., Tampa, Florida, and one voluntary assistant, Mrs. Leonidas H. Berry. The Director arranged for local Philadelphia physicians and surgeons with hospital services headed by Dr. Arthur H. Thomas, famed Philadelphia surgeon, for major emergencies and back-up services. Five General Conference delegates, all visiting churchmen, were hospitalized by ambulance, or resuscitated by pulmotor squad and taken to their hotel or stopping places.

FREE CHEST X-RAY SURVEY.

The Medical Director arranged with the cooperation of Mr. Paul W. Bachman, Director, Case Detection Service of the Philadelphia-Montgomery Tuberculosis and Health Association of Philadelphia, for a mobile chest x-ray unit with full x-ray staff to be placed outside the spectrum for free chest x-ray examinations. Five hundred sixty-six delegates and visitors had chest films made during a ten day stand. Seventy-six of these showed significant or suspicious lesions of the chest.

EARLY CASES OF TB AND CANCER FOUND.

Eight cases showed probable tuberculosis or lung cancer. All persons showing significant chest lesions, including cardiac enlargements, were sent letters by the Medical Director with the cooperation of the Philadelphia-Montgomery Tuberculosis Association informing them that their cases might be serious and requesting the names of their family doctors with addresses. Doctors in several states, Africa and the Caribbean received reports on these patients.

TRAUMATIC INJURIES.

The number of traumatic injuries was very high on the list of patients seen at the clinic. Included were sprained ankles, body bruises, laceration of legs from falls while climbing or descending the steps of the athletic stadium which housed the General Conference. There were fractures of ankles, one fracture of the fibula (small bone of the leg), and one known fracture of the knee cap. Several sprained wrists and other bruises and lacerations were treated. Many patients were women who caught their high heels in treads of the stairs.
PHYSICAL DISABILITIES.

The most frequent physical disorder was respiratory infections, "fresh colds" from weather changes, stadium dust, crowds of people in smoke-filled committee and caucus rooms with insufficient ventilation. There were many cases of severe bronchitis, virus pneumonitis and a few of pneumonia who were diagnosed, treated and sent to hospitals or stopping places by car.

Next in order of incidence were hypertensive crises with headache, dizziness and disorientation. Then came cardiovascular diseases with recurrent congestive heart failure and coronary attacks quite similar to those which the Medical Director has seen so often during the twenty years that he has set up General Conference clinics. These attacks occur among candidates for the bishopric and general offices, ambitious ministers, concerned laymen and other overweight, middle aged and elderly A.M.E.'s without connectional ambitions who just like to follow the big meetings of the Church. As always, there were others of the delegates and visitors who forgot their heart pills, misplaced their blood pressure tablets, broke their insulin syringes, etc. Still others had stomach upsets, kidney complaints, arthritis hurting feet. There was one case of a West African delegate who developed a severe recurrent attack of tropical fever with splenomegaly. Hospitalization and adequate treatment were arranged.

FIRST AID SUPPLIES AND DRUGS.

The Philadelphia division of the American Red Cross furnished a wide range of first aid supplies. The Director collected sample drugs and carried them to Philadelphia.

DISTRIBUTION HEALTH LITERATURE, HEALTH MOVIES AND POSTERS.

Health education and health career recruitment literature and posters were procured by the Medical Director from U.S. Department of HEW, American Cancer Society, Pennsylvania Department of Health and Philadelphia Health Department. Several thousand copies were distributed. Health Education Movies and projectors were borrowed from the Philadelphia Health Department and shown at intervals during the conference.

MEETINGS OF THE HEALTH COMMISSION.

During the 20 years of the existence of the permanent Health Commission it has been able to meet only at the time of the General Conference and in a few instances at interim connectional meetings. In Philadelphia the Commission met three times, elected officers, drew up guidelines and proposals for health programs during the ensuing quadriennium.

Officers elected: L. H. Berry, M.D., Director  
L. K. Donaldson, M.D., Tennessee, Associate Director - Commission  
Rev. Eugene Kelly, Assistant Director  
Mrs. T. J. Davis, RN, Georgia, Secretary - Commission

STATE OF THE COMMUNITY HEALTH

Correspondence was carried out with bishops, general officers, ministers and
laymen outlining plans and suggested techniques for church-related health programs. At the Director's request some of the bishops appointed district health supervisors and health committees to make official surveys and reports to the Annual Conferences and the Connectional Health Commission on the "Status of Health Care in the Church Community", through reports on the "State of the Community Health" similar to reports on "State of the County" and "State of the Church".

The Director has counselled and directed the health education and assemblies in the A.M.E. churches in Chicago, other parts of the Fourth District, and throughout the Convention when information or counsel has been requested.

LIMITED TRAVEL IN INTEREST OF CHURCH ORIENTED HEALTH PROGRAMS.

Address Chicago Annual Conference, Bishop H. T. Primm presiding, Bethel A.M.E. Church, Chicago, September '69, subject "Status of Health Care in Church Communities". Annual Conference, St. Stephens Church, Chicago, report for "Committee on State of Community Health", '70.


Address: "Poverty, Community Health and the Church", Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D. C., Rev. Frank Madison Reed, pastor - May 1969.


Allen Day Visitor and Speaker on 2-21-71, at the Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church, Rockford, Illinois: "Medical Missions and Black History". We also visited churches in Detroit, New York, Milwaukee and the Chicago Area of the Fourth District.

FLYING BLACK MEDICS - PROJECT

During the last two years the Health Commission through its Medical Director by a Herculean effort was able to carry out a dramatic HEALTH TASK FORCE CONFERENCE in the Fourth Episcopal District. The beleaguered Black people of Cairo, Illinois, in their struggle for racial justice have attracted world wide attention. The Medical Director saw an opportunity to answer their call for Medical Care through his official status with the Black Medical Profession in Chicago. He organized a group of 35 Black Physicians, Dentists, Nurses, Medical Technicians, Dietitians and Social Workers for a flying Medical Care demonstration in Cairo, Illinois. He named the group, "The Flying Black Medics". The Doctors contributed $2200, chartered two 16 seater planes and carried the Medical Team to the basement of the WARD CHAPEL A.M.E. CHURCH in Cairo, Illinois. In the belly of the plane was $10,000 worth of medical laboratory equipment borrowed from the Black Williams Brothers Clinic. During ten long Sunday hours, 250 poor people were given physical examinations, electrocardiograms, a battery of six blood chemistry tests, blood counts, urinalysis, dietary and social service
SUPPORT OF BISHOP PRIMM AND CHICAGO MINISTERS

Bishop H. Thomas Primm of the Fourth Episcopal District and the Chicago A.M.E. Ministerial Alliance cooperated in raising $800, used for the purpose of "Door Prizes" distributed to patients at the Ward Chapel Church. The "Prizes" consisted of aspirin tablets, chewing aspirins for children, cough syrup, vitamins, liniments, ivory soap, toothpaste, tooth brushes and St. Valentine Day candy for children. A truck load of food was purchased and distributed through the Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church in Cairo.

Our Survey and Demonstration Clinic revealed that a great majority of the people had incomes at or below the poverty level of $3500 per year per family of four. The great majority of adults and almost every child had extensive dental caries and pyorrhea. It was learned that there had not been a dentist in Cairo, who would treat Negroes in twenty years. Among the physical disorders found, high on the list, were high blood pressure, heart disease, and malnutrition, or hidden hunger. Other disorders were glaucoma, chronic bronchitis, pulmonary emphysema, rheumatoid arthritis and skin diseases.

All of the doctors were well established specialists in all fields of Medicine and carried the patients through "Specialty Clinics" in the basement while Health Education Movies and Negro Musical Entertainment was conducted in the sanctuary which served also as a waiting room. Late in the afternoon, a Workshop and Symposium on the "Problem of Continuing Medical Care Delivery in Cairo and Alexander County", was held in the Sanctuary of Ward Chapel A.M.E. Church, pastored by the Rev. M. T. Herrell. Participants consisted of the Rev. Charles Koen, organizer and director of United Front of Cairo, Mr. Preston Ewing, President of Cairo N.A.A.C.P., Rev. Blaine Ramsey, Illinois Council of Churches, Dr. Frank Perry, Chairman, Department of Medicine, Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tennessee, your Medical Director and other doctors from Chicago.

The "TASK FORCE CONFERENCE" on HEALTH and "SCREENING CLINIC" attracted wide attention and was carried by every newspaper in Chicago, many dailies in Southern, Illinois, Jet and Ebony Magazines, and N.B.C. Television News. An N.B.C. plane with reporters and T.V. cameras followed us into Cairo and taped our activities all during the day.

During the last several months, the Medical Director and his supporters in Chicago and Cairo, have been involved in trying to establish Improved Continuing Health Care for the Poor Blacks and Whites in Cairo and Alexander County, Illinois. The Office of Economic Opportunity Promised funds at one point, but the funds were diverted by the current Federal Administration into the hands of the "Opposers" of the struggles of the "Black United Front" of Cairo. The "Flying Black Medics" are now planning "Flying Weekend Clinics" and free Social Service, Chicago to Southern Illinois.
## MEMBERS OF HEALTH COMMISSION
### AND EPISCOPAL DISTRICT HEALTH SUPERVISORS
#### THIRTY-NINTH QUADRENNIUM

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### CHICAGO MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE - CAIRO PROJECT COOPERATING COMMITTEE

- Reverend H. E. Waldon, Chairman
- Reverend Russell S. Brown
- Reverend S. S. Morris
- Reverend J. A. Danes
- Reverend Robert Thomas