

**HISTORY OF THE**  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CATHOLIC DEACONS**

Seeds for the National Association of African American Catholic Deacons (NAAACD) were planted in the Autumn of 1991 when a National Conference of the African American Catholic Deacons was held in Chicago, IL, under the leadership of Deacon Jasper Roy, and sponsored by the Chicago African American Diaconate community.

In October 1992, ten regional coordinators from the various geographical regions of the U.S. met with the Deacon Representative to the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC) to discuss important issues relevant to the African American Diaconate community.

In July 1993, a charter meeting was held in Louisville, KY, and a proposed set of By Laws was adopted. The charter members elected officers for two-year terms as follows:

<b>President:</b>	<b>Dn. Frederick Mason (Chicago, IL)</b>
<b>Vice President:</b>	<b>Dn. Marvin Threatt (San Diego, CA)</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Dn. John Holmes (Rochester, NY)</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Dn. Hilliard Lee (Atlanta, GA)</b>
<b>Wives' Reps:</b>	<b>Ms. Barbara Mason (Chicago, IL)</b>
	<b>Ms. Carol White (San Antonio, TX)</b>

Articles of Incorporation were recorded by the State of Illinois in April 1994. A National Catholic Diaconate Congress (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishops' Committee on the Diaconate [NCCB/BCD]) was held in New Orleans, LA, in 1994. The membership postponed their general meeting until 1995.

Charter Members (the first Board of Directors) are as follows:

<b>Frederick A. Mason</b>	<b>Marvin Threatt</b>
<b>John W. Holmes, Jr.</b>	<b>Hilliard M. Lee, Jr.</b>
<b>Raphael A. Velazquez</b>	<b>Jimmie Boyd</b>
<b>Allen Stevens</b>	<b>Jerry Lett</b>
<b>Daniel Vincent</b>	<b>Joshua Alves</b>
<b>Ronald Ealey</b>	<b>Thomas White</b>
<b>Hosea Alexander</b>	<b>Clarence McDavid</b>
<b>John P. Stewart</b>	<b>Barbara E. Mason</b>
<b>Carol White</b>	<b><i>Bradley Seabrook</i></b>
	<b><i>Minnie Seabrook</i></b>

In January 1995, the Board of Directors met in Chicago, IL, with the election of officers to be held at the membership meeting to be held in conjunction with the Joint Conference with the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus (NBCCC), the National Black Sisters Association (NBSA), and the National Black Catholic Seminarians Association (NBCSA). During the membership meeting, the following officers agreed to continue in office for one year:

**President:** Dn. John P. Stewart (Washington, DC)  
**Vice President:** Dn. Marvin Threatt (San Diego, CA)  
**Secretary:** Dn. John Holmes (Rochester, NY)  
**Treasurer:** Dn. Dorsey Chappell  
**Wives' Reps:** Ms. Kitty Ealey  
Ms. Carol White

In October 1995, President, John Stewart served as the National Site Coordinator for the Summit for Black Catholic Men on 14 and 15 October, prior to and in conjunction with the "Million Man March" held in Washington, DC.

In 1996, the NAAACD met in conjunction with the Joint Conference, this time in Montgomery, AL. Officers were elected as follows:

**President:** Dn. John P. Stewart (Washington, DC)  
**Vice President:** Dn. Marvin Threatt (San Diego, CA)  
**Secretary:** Dn. John Holmes (Rochester, NY)  
**Treasurer:** Dn. Thomas White (San Antonio, TX)  
**Wives' Reps:** Ms. Kitty Ealey  
Ms. Carol White

Additionally, during this year a major revision of the By Laws was initiated, and an update of the membership list was commenced.

In 1997, the NAAACD again participated in the NCCB/BCD National Catholic Deacons Conference, this time held in Milwaukee, WI, conducting workshops and conducting the Saturday morning Prayer Service. The annual membership meeting was held in conjunction with the Joint Conference in Baltimore, MD. The President of our organization was seriously ill at the time and was unable to attend the membership meeting. Due to the serious nature of this illness, and in the absence of the Vice President, the membership elected Interim Officers for a period of one year (or until the President was well enough to continue his duties). Secretary John Holmes chaired the meeting. Many of the deacons and wives participated in the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) Congress VIII, also held in Baltimore; and, the dedication of the "Our Mother of Africa" Chapel at the National Shrine in Washington, DC. Interim Officers elected at the membership meeting were:

**President:** Dn. John Holmes (Rochester, NY)  
**Vice President:** Dn. Jerry Lett (Lithonia, GA)  
**Secretary:** Dn. Paul E. Richardson (Yellow Springs, OH)  
**Treasurer:** Dn. Thomas White (San Antonio, TX)  
**Wives' Reps:** Ms. Kitty Ealey (Wichita, KS)  
Ms. Carol White (San Antonio, TX)

Deacon Paul E. Richardson, Secretary, represented the NAAACD at a National Economic Summit of African American religious leaders held in Shreveport, LA. The conference was hosted by Dr. E.

Edward Jones, President of the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., and sponsored by Mr. Vernon Weems, of Weems Productions and Enterprises, Inc., of Waterloo, IA. Dn. Stewart passed away on November 27, 1997. Secretary Richardson represented the NAAACD, and the NBCCC at the funeral which was held at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

In 1998, a final mailing list was developed, and Revision 1 to the By Laws was sent to each name in preparation for a vote for approval at the annual membership meeting. A Board meeting was held in April in Kansas City, MO, at which time the Board developed a list of candidates from those responding to the mailing, Board members proxy ballots, and nominations from the floor. The Board met again in July prior to the annual membership meeting in Charlotte, NC. During the annual membership meeting (held in conjunction with the Joint Conference), Revision 1 of the By Laws was approved and the following officers were elected:

<b>President:</b>	<b>Dn. Paul E. Richardson (Yellow Springs, OH)</b>
<b>Vice President:</b>	<b>Dn. Ralph Cyrus (Washington, DC)</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Dn. Ron Ealey (Wichita, KS)</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Dn. Jerry Lett (Lithonia, GA)</b>
<b>Wives' Reps:</b>	<b>Ms. Paula Todd (Charlotte, NC)</b> <b>Ms. Edith Stevens (New Orleans, LA)</b>

A Diaconate ministry dialogue session was held at the residence of Dn. and Ms. Curtiss Todd of Charlotte. The Board developed a list of speakers and workshop leaders from the African American Catholic community to be considered for participation in the Jubilee 2000 NCCB/BCD Conference to be held at Mt. St. Mary College, Moraga, CA. A committee was established to address the impact of the Vatican Norms for the Formation, Life, and Ministry of Permanent Deacons on African American Deacons.

In September 1999, President Richardson participated in a Vocations Day (to increase vocations among African Americans) sponsored by the Secretariat for African American Catholics in Washington, DC. Representatives from the NBCCC; NBSC; Knights of Peter Claver; Ladies of Peter Claver; the Superior General of the Josephites; and the United States Catholic Conference, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishops' Committee on Priestly Formation, and Committee on Vocations were present. This event was stimulated by a most interesting opening address by Fr. Martin Carter (representing the NBCCC) who provided reflections on the African American experience of religious formation and vocations from his own view, and that of current and former seminarians. In November 1999, during the Bishops' Committee on the Diaconate meeting, a representative (Fr. Robinson) from St. Meinrad Seminary (Benedictines) made a presentation to the BCD about their program for deacon formation. In this program, St. Meinrad partners with diocesan resources and employs a flexible offering to create a culture within the diocese that can provide ongoing formational resources for deacons. This program does have components for multi-cultural training. It is available as individual components, or as an entire program.

September 1999 – July 2000: The dialogue during a conference in Chicago on the image and role of black men in the Catholic Church stimulated a plethora of responses from the

NBCCC, NBSC, NAAACD, and others. A copy of some of these responses (concerning the meaning of respect) was mailed to all Regional Directors.

In May 2000 President Richardson participated in a Retreat Day for African American Vocations (Hush, Hush, Somebody's Callin' Mah Name) as a guest of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Office of Communications (Ms. Leodia Gooch, past president of the Ladies of Peter Claver). Representatives from the NBCCC, NBSC, and NBCSA, were also present. Each national organization representative provided a reflection on his/her experience in calling, formation, and ministry. Archbishop Rigali delivered the keynote address, and Bishop Braxton provided an insightful opening speech. Sr. Pat Haley led the day of song, reflection and dialogue. This event was reasonably well attended by religious, clergy, and lay people from the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

4. The NAAACD was contacted in February by Pentecostal Deacon Donald Oliver of Brooklyn, NY, who requested information about our Roman Catholic diaconate formation program, and continuing formation. Once over my illness and after making copies, President Richardson forwarded him a copy of the Vatican document on formation, life, and ministry of deacons. Additionally, a copy of the St. Meinrad formation program was sent to him. He understood that we Catholics might have a more rigid theological educational requirement; however, he felt that he could use both documents to initiate a formal program for their church.

5. Rev. Mr. Jerry Lett represented the NAAACD at the NCDC in Moraga, CA. He reported that the major news from this meeting is that the National Directory was approved by the NCCB by a vote of 196 to 1. Additionally, the next NCDC be in 2004 to celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the restoration of the Diaconate, possibly somewhere on the East Coast. The 3 year format has proved to be too much of a burden on the National office because they are required to publish a triennial statistics/census.

6. Our 2000 Annual Membership Meeting and Board meetings were held in Hampton, VA, in conjunction with the Joint Conference. Our President was unable to travel due to illness. This was an election year, and all the officers agreed to continue for another term of office.

The 2001 Board Meeting and Membership meetings were held in St. Louis, MO, in conjunction with the NBCCC and NBCSA. This was the Silver Anniversary for our President, Dn. Richardson, who delivered a stirring homily for the evening prayer at St. Nicholas church during Evening Prayer. The organization membership was well represented.

Our 2002 meetings were held at the Divine Word International Conference Center, Techny, IL, in conjunction with the PARCCC and NBCCC meetings. 2002 was an election year and all officers agreed to continue another term of office, with the exception of our Secretary, Dn. Ronald Ealey who could not serve another term due to other ministry schedule requirements. The membership then agreed to accept nominations for Secretary, and Dn. Marvin T. Threatt, PhD, was nominated and accepted by acclamation.

1. The President called for a review of the By-Laws, and a Committee was established, consisting of: Dn. Jimmie Boyd, Region 1 Director, Dn. Marvin T. Threatt, PhD., Secretary, and Dn. Alfred Adams, Region 5 Director.

**2. A Programs Committee was established with Dn. Raphael Valesquez, Region 1 Director, as Chair, and Dn. Dexter Watson, Region 6 Director, Dn. Jerry Lett, Treasurer, and Dn. Joseph Lewis as members. They will bring recommendations to the table for discussion at the 2003 annual meeting.**

**In 2003, the annual meetings were again held at the Divine Word International Conference Center in conjunction with the PARCCC and NBCCC meetings. The By-Laws committee consolidated comments from the membership, and prepared a draft set of By-Laws. They were subsequently mailed to all active members in sufficient time for a vote in 2004. Dn. Raphael Valesquez made a presentation which identified various sources for funding organizations with a separate 501(c)(3) designation from Faith Based Initiatives, and other grant agencies. Dn. Valesquez was requested to proceed with the necessary actions to accomplish this task. The committee members remained the same as last year. In preparation for the Joint Conference in 2004, the NAAACD will plan to have a special celebration in Houston, TX (site of the conference). That will also be the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NAAACD, and the NCDC will meet in Baltimore, MD, July 1 – 7, at the Marriott Inner Harbor. A special celebration for the NAAACD is being planned for a local Black parish in the Baltimore area.**