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A Conversation With:

The Rev. Dr. G. Grant Crumpley



The Rev. Dr. G. Grant Crumpley is a candidate for bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. He is pastor of Bethel AME Church, 1525 Michigan Ave., which is the first black church founded here. That first congregation, which was organized on April 28, 1831, a year before Buffalo became an incorporated village, was started with a "handful of members." The membership is now about 2,000.

C-E—How long have you been the pastor of Bethel AME Church?

Dr. Crumpley—I have been pastor of Bethel since 1965. Prior to that time, I was pastor of three other churches during my 28 years as a minister. Immediately before being assigned here, I pastored the Macedonia AME Church in Flushing for 17 years.

C-E—How are bishops elected, and when will the election be held?

Dr. Crumpley—Bishops are elected in the AME Church by the electorate, composed of about 1,500 delegates from the annual conference. Those delegates consist of 20 bishops; all the general officers; AME college presidents and college deans and active AME chaplains in the U.S. Armed Forces. The election will be held in June of 1976 in Atlanta, Ga.

C-E—When did you become a candidate for bishop and how often are elections held?

Dr. Crumpley—I announced my candidacy in 1968. Since that time, I have campaigned in seven South African nations, around the Gulf of Mexico and the West Indies. Before the 96th AME Annual Conference next year, I expect to visit all 50 states of this nation. The elections are held every four years.

C-E—How many vacancies will be filled at the time of the election, and are there any other local candidates?

Dr. Crumpley—There will be seven slots to

be filled. Presently there are about 25 candidates for the positions. None of the candidates is from this area. However, there are four other candidates from New York State. This will be the first time for all of the other four candidates from New York State to compete for the position of bishop.

C-E—Are bishops elected for life terms?

Dr. Crumpley—No. However, up until 1972, when the bylaws of the AME Church were changed to require bishops to retire at the age of 75, bishops had been elected for life terms.

C-E—On the celebration of your congregation's 144th anniversary on Sunday, what do the special programs include?

Dr. Crumpley—The 10:30 a.m. worship service will feature Dr. W. D. Johnson of Atlanta, Ga. He is editor-in-chief of the AME Review, the official quarterly publication of the AME church.

City Court Judge Samuel L. Green will speak at 4 p.m. in the church during the afternoon program. At this program, about 20 parishioners of the church will be honored for their contributions to the church for more than 50 years each.

An evening program, beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the church, will feature the church's music department presentation of a cantata. Musical selections from songs from the present time, and dating back before the turn of the century, will be sung.

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