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Elect New Prelates For The AME Church

By Lucille BluFord

In an election that consumed the better part of two days and two nights, the A.M.E. General Conference, which held its 42nd Quadrennial session here July 8 to 15, elected four new bishops last weekend, bringing the number of active prelates to 20 to serve the church's 19 Episcopcal districts. The election began about 2 p.m. Friday and ended around 10 p.m. Saturday.

The new bishops, one from South Africa, in the order of their election are:

1. Rev. Harold Ben Senators, who was a minister in the East Transvaal conference of the A.M.E. church in South Africa.

2. Rev. Robert L. Pruitt, who was pastor of the Metropolitan A.M.E. church in Washington, D.C., known as the "National Cathedral of African Methodism."

3. Dr. Henry Allen Bellin, Jr., who was Secretary-Treasurer of the Sunday School Union, Nashville, Tenn.

4. The Rev. Vernon R. Byrd, who was pastor of the St. James A.M.E. church, Newark, N.J., which has a membership of more than 3,000.

The new bishops were consecrated at a formal religious ceremony Sunday morning, July 15, in the Municipal auditorium with all of the bishops of the church, active and retired, participating. Bishop W.T. Handy, presiding bishop of the Missouri conference of the United Methodist church, also took part in the service.

Using 20 voting machines, the 1472 voting delegates required five ballots to complete the election of the four bishops. Under A.M.E. law, each bishop elected must receive a majority of the votes cast. Forty-four candidates were in the race,