

The African Methodist Episcopal Church  
General Board  
Atlanta Marriott Marquis Hotel  
265 Peachtree Center Avenue  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
Wednesday, June 29, 2022

### Closing Plenary

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Bishop Paul J.M. Kawimbe called the session to order at 10:00 a.m. presenting Bishop Michael Leon Mitchell (12) to lead devotion.

#### **DEVOTION**

The Reverend Larry Banks (12) served as Worship Leader. Song by the Twelfth District Ensemble, “*Bless the Lord with Me.*” The Reverend Marcellus Fields (12) offered prayer. The scripture was read by Ms. Raveon Ward (12), Psalm 30:1-5. Bishop Mitchell presented the Preacher, Presiding Elder Tyrone Bloomfield. Song by the Ensemble, “*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.*” Presiding Elder Tyrone Bloomfield’s (12) text was Psalm 30:5. His sermon topic was “*This Too Shall Pass.*”

Bishop Kawimbe then thanked the 12<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District for leading the devotion. He then stated that an hour will be allotted for the Department of Retirement Services; then the other reports will be given.

#### **COMMISSION REPORTS**

##### *Department of Retirement Services*

Bishop Kawimbe called for Bishop John F. White and Bishop Marvin C. Zanders to bring forward the commission. Bishop Zanders, Commission Co-Chair, offered opening remarks on behalf of the Department. Bishop Zanders presented the Reverend Robert Shaw (5), the Reverend Jarrett Washington (7), and Presiding Elder Troy Thomas (13) to read the report (see the report).

*The Reverend Robert Shaw (5) moved for the adoption of the report; seconded by the Reverend David Green (11).*

### *Unreadiness*

Bishop Samuel Lawrence Green requested the rereading of the amount from the Seventh District as his records show a different amount. Presiding Elder Tyronda Burgess (10) said Dr. James Miller, Executive Director of Retirement Services, will pull the report and confirm.

Bishop James L. Davis questioned the order of payouts. Should individuals who have not received a payout resubmit their request? Dr. James Miller stated that the process is done by paper. This means that there is a slight backup and delay. Dr. Miller further stated contributions made in the First Quarter may have been recorded in the Second Quarter. He must check each individual's paper file. All involved should reconnect with the office. Bishop Davis then asked if those who applied before the discovery are affected. The answer was yes.

Bishop Reginald T. Jackson asked about the responsibility of the Oversight Committee. Presiding Elder Tyronda Burgess (10) stated that the laws in the Discipline need to be reviewed to ensure that the laws are aligned with the New Life Plan. Bishop Zanders further explained that the Oversight Committee would share in the responsibility. Bishop Jackson further explained that the roles of all committees should be defined for the General Board. The Department is also preparing a Policy and Procedures Manual for the Commission and the Department to ensure that consistent procedures are in place in the future.

The Reverend J. Edgar Boyd (5) stated that there are good takeaways from the General Board. He further stated that the Board does not know the results of the Forensic Audit. Everyone should be aware of what is going on and what is needed to fix it. He inquired as to which Federal Agency is conducting the investigation. Attorney Doug Selby responded that a thorough forensic audit was completed under Smith, Gambrel, and Russell that was privileged. The facts that were learned as a result of the audit are not privileged. The way the audit is assembled is privileged. The information cannot be shared publicly to protect the privilege status.

Dr. Strong (9) asked if the Executive Committee of the General Board can be shielded in the process so that they can be consulted. Dr. Boyd asked for collaborative intent. Bishop Zanders stated that a deliberate communication process has been used.

Dr. Norvel Goff (7) stated that he is “intellectually challenged” by some of the things going on. He stated he had in his hand bank records that show that monies sent from the Seventh District were more than the committee reported. He is supportive of the commission and openness and being candid. Presiding Elder Burgess (10) clarified he was speaking of numbers sent to the Treasurer’s office.

Bishop Sylvester S. Beaman stated some issues are being raised that we need to hear from the legal counsel. We cannot from a legal perspective share all information.

### **Point on the Speaker**

The Reverend Dr. Henry Allen Belin III (1) stated privilege is understood. He stated, however, the process could have been shared in order to build trust. *He moved to amend the motion to add that the funds from the local church go directly to WesPath, seconded by Dr Kimberly Gordon Brooks (3).* Bishop Kawimbe asked that the recommendations from the commission be verified as they speak to what Dr. Belin (1) asks. The recommendations on slide 20 in the PowerPoint presentation were read. Bishop Ronnie E. Brailsford stated that WesPath made it clear that they did not want to work in that manner.

Presiding Elder Troy Thomas (13) stated that WesPath said that multiple persons submitting deposits would be costly. Each Episcopal District would have two representatives trained by WesPath to process the deposits.

The Reverend Matthew Watley (2) stated that there is a trust issue and is being exhibited in the discrepancy raised by Bishop Green. If there are fees to avoid these types of discrepancies, they are worth it. He then called for the previous question that had been properly moved and seconded.

### **Point of Parliamentary Inquiry**

Bishop Byfield stated that there is already a motion on the floor concerning the adoption of the report.

Bishop Zanders asked that the Commission be allowed to go back to WesPath to negotiate based on the recommendations of the body. Watley asked that it be done with a 30-day Zoom meeting return. Boyd asked if the General Conference would have to ratify these decisions.

Bishop Brailsford stated in agreement with Drs. Watley (1) and Belin (1) there is an issue of trust. He stated that the possibility of doing this will build that trust. He raised the question will each pastor actually send monies in directly or use it otherwise. Dr. Watley (1) agrees and asked that the commission include an accountability component. Bishop Zanders stated the Commission hears the concern. He requests again that the Commission be allowed to go back to negotiate with WesPath as has been requested.

Kimberly Gordon Brooks (3) stated that she was confused with recommendation 2 and action taken yesterday to postpone the committee of nine for oversight of financial affairs until the CONVO in 2023. Presiding Elder Burgess offered an explanation: the action from the previous session was from the Nominating Committee. Statistics and Finance is talking today about their own oversight.

Sherry Peyton (8) stated that when the financial deposits were reported the Eighth District was inadvertently omitted. Presiding Elder Troy Thomas (13) read the amount.

Jacquelyn DuPont Walker inquired if the pension fund is acting under the Pension Fund Act of 1956. Dr. Miller stated that the Church is not held to federal government regulation; however, the Department is working to mirror the government standards although it is not legally held to that standard. He further stated that the old system was archaic. The new system and plan will greatly improve the operations.

Mr. Marcus Henderson, Chief Financial Officer/General Treasurer clarified the Act is on a defined benefit plan while ours is a defined contribution plan. Mrs. Walker (5) suggested that qualified persons be in place to handle matters. She requested that persons with skills and talent be able to apply to fill these positions.

*Rev. Belin(1) restated the amended Motion and Dr. Watley(2) seconded.*

The Reverend Robert Jackson III (11) asked when individuals could expect to receive their individual statements covering the last ten months. Dr.

Miller responded he will be happy to send when released by the Council of Bishops and the General Board.

*Dr. Henry Belin III (1) clarified that the amended motion is that the commission be allowed to go back and negotiate with WesPath and report back on Zoom in 30 days regarding the process for deposits. **The motion to adopt the report as amended carried.***

The Reverend Robert Jackson III (11) moved that the individual statements be released; C. Dennis Williams (10) seconded.

### *Unreadiness*

Attorney Selby stated that the concern is that the information cannot be released until there is some certainty of accuracy of numbers. The legal team advises against release.

Jackson requested a receipt of the last ten months. Since the episcopal contributions have been accounted for, then individual statements should be available.

Bishop Frank Madison Reid III inquired of the legal team that as the persons suing are members of the AME Church, would releasing the statements put us in legal jeopardy. Attorney Selby stated the legal counsel has recommended not doing so until certainty on the individual amounts can be attained. Mr. Jackson (11) asked if the uncertainty is prior to September 21 or after. Dr. Miller responded prior, but the two are married creating uncertainty. He also stated the office is staffed by three persons who are inundated with the investigation, but if any individual contacts the office, they will get them the info.

Jackson withdrew motion along with the person who seconded the motion.

The Reverend Matthew Watley (1) stated that if WesPath cannot accommodate the request of the individual contributing, then the committee should be empowered to research other firms.

Bishop David Daniels clarifies that Dr. Watley's motion is sensible. Bishop Kawimbe stated his desire that if the negotiation with WesPath fails, it be referred to the Executive Committee. Bishop Zanders warned that the vetting for WesPath took months; and if they must vet another company, the process must begin again.

Boyd (5) asked if the plan can be changed to ERISA. Mr. Marcus Henderson stated that, as a 501c3, it is best to follow the guidelines without filing as an ERISA plan.

Bishop Kawimbe stated that we have convened for two hours on this topic. Bishop Daniels called for the previous question for the adoption of the report as amended. **The motion carried.**

### **Point of Personal Privilege**

The Reverend Dr. Henry Belin III (1) offered commendations; and then noted that what has been collected should be able to be provided. Perhaps the bishops could send a statement of what has been received.

### *Commission on Statistics and Finance*

Bishop Green made opening remarks, commended the Chief Information Officer and Chief Financial Officer for their exemplary work over the past year. He then presented Presiding Elder Tyronda Burgess (10) to read on behalf of the commission (see the report). Burgess moved for the acceptance of the report, seconded by the Presiding Elder Harold Mayberry (5). **The motion carried.**

Bishop Green stated he has now received a report from the Sixth District as well.

Bishop Kawimbe then presented Bishop James L. Davis to preside over the meeting.

### *Commission on Global Development*

Bishop Silvester S. Beaman then called for the entire commission. The acting secretary, Sis. Raveon Ward, to present the report (see the report). Bishop Beaman clarified that recommendation 2 is relevant for Districts 14-20. Bishop Daniels moved the adoption of the report, Dorothy Henderson (12) seconded.

### *Unreadiness*

Bishop Francine Brookins asked for clarification on the FC James Center. Bishop Brookins further stated that she would love to discuss. **The motion carried.**

### *Health*

Bishop Brookins presented the substitute secretary, Kimberly Gordon Brooks, to present the report (see the report).

Dr Burnett noted that there are positive tests at this meeting, and those affected have been notified. Testing is today from noon to 7:00 p.m. on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of the hotel. COVID is increasing, and Atlanta is in the hot zone. She also clarified that monkey pox is over the threshold for pandemic, but the United States Center for Disease Control is hesitant to declare the same.

Brooks moved for the adoption, seconded by Michael Cousin Jr. (4). **The motion carried.**

Bishop Daniels commended Dr. Burnett and the Commission for their help with Districts 14-20.

### *Publications*

Bishop Daniels commended Dr. Roderick Dwayne Belin, President of the Publishing House for a job well done in giving the church a 10.8-million-dollar building. He also noted the work of Bishop Belin's father, Bishop Henry Allen Belin Jr, who previously served in the position and built the previous building. He presented the secretary, the Reverend Willie Barnes Jr, PhD (11) to read the report (see the report). The report was added that Dr. Teresa Fry Brown received a Lily Foundation grant of \$50,000 for preaching workshops. Dr. Barnes moved for acceptance, seconded by Michael Brown (6). **The motion carried.**

Bishop Daniels encouraged subscriptions to pay for the printing of publications. He noted the delay on the Discipline was due to the vendor not the department.

### *Chaplains*

Chaplain G. Dianne Lewis came forward on behalf of the Commission (see the report). Bishop Harry Seawright moved for the acceptance of the report, seconded by Lt. R.L. Johnson III. **The motion carried.**

### *Global Witness and Ministry*

Bishop Michael Mitchell offered opening remarks and then presented the secretary Amaris Maxwell (2) to present (see the report). Bishop Mitchell moved for acceptance, seconded by Patricia Parker (7).

#### *Unreadiness*

Dr. Miriam Burnett clarified that the Fan Program was started by her in 1997 when she was the Health Director of the 7<sup>th</sup> Episcopal District. It was further expanded under Presiding Elder Rosetta Swinton.

#### **The motion carried.**

#### *Women In Ministry*

Bishop Frederick Wright offered commendations then presented secretary, Dr. Qismat Alim (2) to read the report (see the report). Angela T. Pettis (4) moved for the adoption, seconded by Dr. Agnes Lover (9). **The motion carried.**

#### *Christian Education*

Bishop Frank Reid offered opening commendations and presented Chantal Alford (9), the secretary of the Commission (see the report). Bishop Reid moved for the adoption, seconded by Dr. Garland Pierce. **The motion carried.**

Dr. Pierce made remarks concerning the Christian Education Congress which starts tomorrow at 9am.

#### *Seminaries, Universities, Colleges, and Schools*

Bishop Marvin C. Zanders presented the secretary, Angela T. Pettis (4) to read the report (see the report). Pettis moved for the adoption of the report, seconded by Rosemary Street-Nixon (6). **The motion carried.**

#### *Church Growth*

Bishop Jackson offered opening remarks and then presented secretary, the Reverend Dr. Rodrecus Johnson (10) to read the report (see the report). Andrew Coleman III (3) moved for adoption; the Reverend Michael Ephraim (6) seconded. **The motion carried.**

#### *Lay Commission*

Bishop Wicker presented Connectional Lay President Matikane Abednego Makiti who presented Keith Britton to read the report (see the report).



Dorothy Henderson moved for the adoption, seconded by the Reverend Benjy Mfolo (19). **The motion carried.**

#### *Social Action*

Bishop E. Anne Henning Byfield made opening comments and then presented Saundra Lucas Fields (12) to read the report (see the report). Lucas Fields moved for the adoption of the report, seconded by Carl Davis (10). **The motion carried.**

#### *Economic Development*

Bishop Harry Seawright presented Veronica Wiley to read the report (see the report). Wiley moved the adoption, Carl Davis seconded. **The motion carried.**

#### *Ministry & Recruitment*

Bishop Brailsford presented Dr. Garland Pierce to make comments and present Ms. Shirlane Hendrickson Thomas (16) to read the report (see the report). Mrs. Patricia Parker (7) moved the adoption of the report, seconded by Agnes Glover. **The motion carried.**

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Presiding Elder Michele Goodloe made a special presentation on behalf of the Connectional Presiding Elders Council to Districts 14-20 in the amount of \$1000 per district. An additional \$1000 was given to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Episcopal Districts for disaster relief.

Meeting Planner, Ms. Sharon Blaylock, gave additional closing announcements.

### **PERSONAL PRIVILEGE**

Bishop Wilfred Messiah commended the Chair and Vice Chair for the way they presided over the meeting.

Bishop Kawimbe thanked the Chief Information Officer and his team for their work.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Bishop Kawimbe adjourned the meeting at 2:18 p.m. EST by having Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry to offer closing prayer.

