



Council of Bishops
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Bishop John Franklin White
President, Council of Bishops

Bishop McKinley Young
Senior Bishop

Episcopal Statement
January 31, 2017

Dearly Beloved African Methodist Episcopal Church:

Your Bishops issue the following statement in response to the views and actions of President Donald Trump since his inauguration on January 20, 2017. Please provide this statement to your organizations, components and congregations, and ask them to act accordingly.

Following the national elections held on November 8th of last year, many across the nation found themselves fearful about the future of our nation. The newly-elected president, during the campaign, had expressed views and policy positions which threatened the quality of life and status of many people in the United States. It was the hope of many, that these views and policy positions would be altered during the transition and after being briefed by those with expertise and experience in government. However, this has not been the case. Since his inauguration on January 20th, less than 10 days ago, now President Trump has taken actions which have divided and polarized the nation even more, showing insensitivity and callous disregard for the rights and wellbeing of countless millions of American citizens, and harming our national security around the world.

The Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first protestant denomination formed on American soil, had hoped that the Trump Administration would alter the views and policies espoused during the presidential campaign, but is disappointed and troubled by the decisions and actions taken during the early days of this administration, and vow to do all that we can to see that these decisions and actions do not last. We ask that every member of this denomination, and people who are committed to justice and righteousness, equality and truth, will join with us to thwart what are clearly demonic acts. Indeed, the words of the Apostle Paul to the believers at Ephesus apply today, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against..... the rulers of the darkness of this present age, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

President Trump has demonstrated that his word is not to be trusted or believed. On election night, he said it was time to unify the nation and committed to do his part to bring about this unity. Yet his actions have caused bitter divisions and fear among many. He has appointed Steve Bannon, former head of Breitbart Publishing which has spoken and written racist rants against minorities and Jews, as his Chief Strategist and nominated Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions to be the U S Attorney General. Sen. Sessions has a history of racial indifference and as US Attorney for Alabama had a controversial record as it related to decisions



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regarding racial matters. Sen. Sessions was so controversial that the US Senate would not confirm him for a federal judgeship almost 30 years ago. If Mr. Trump was serious about unification, why would he select these two persons for major positions in his administration? The Council of Bishops calls upon President Trump to remove Steve Bannon as his Chief Strategist and opposes confirmation of Sen. Jeff Sessions as Attorney General.

The first act of the Trump presidency was to seek to begin to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act”, the signature domestic achievement of President Obama. This Act has insured over 20 million Americans, many of whom did not have healthcare. It should be noted that many of them from so called “Red states” supported President Trump with their votes. President Trump and the Republican- controlled Congress have vowed to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act but have not presented a plan to replace it, leaving the healthcare of more than twenty million Americans in question. Interestingly enough, both President Trump and Republican Congressional leaders have all said they want to retain the two major provisions of the Affordable Care Act; one requiring that people with pre-existing conditions be assured coverage, and second, that young adults up to 26 years of age be covered under their parents’ insurance. If these two provisions are retained, the Affordable Care Act will not be repealed no matter what they claim. If they are going to retain these two provisions why not say, “reform and improve.”? No one questions that the Affordable Care Act can be improved, but it makes no sense to “repeal and replace.” The Council of Bishops opposes repealing the Affordable Care Act, but supports “reform and improve.”

In office less than ten days, President Trump has already issued five Executive Orders and eight Executive Memoranda. Executive Orders are legally binding documents that declare government policy. They cannot reverse a law passed by Congress, but are used to delegate and direct government departments and agencies. The four Executive Orders signed thus far by President Trump seek to:

- 1) Undo finances related to implementation of the Affordable Care Act
- 2) Speed up environmental reviews and approvals for high profile infrastructure projects
- 3) Begin immediate construction of a 1,900-mile-long wall along the southern border with Mexico
- 4) Ban travel that restricts immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the United States for ninety days. Muslim US citizens who have left the US for any reason, seeking to return may have difficulty getting re-entry into the US.



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Some of the Executive Memoranda signed by President Trump include the following:

- 1) Withdrawing the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement
- 2) Support for the Keystone XL Pipeline and the Dakota Pipeline

The Council of Bishops expresses our opposition to the Executive Orders and Memoranda listed above. We have already expressed our support for reform, not repeal, of the Affordable Care Act. We are concerned about the Trump Administration's denial of climate change, the order for expediting reviews and approvals for infrastructure projects. In addition, support for the XL and Dakota pipelines, places profits above the importance of protecting the environment, and the health of citizens. President Trump claimed during the campaign that he would build a wall along the Mexican border to halt illegal immigration, and that Mexico will pay for the building of the wall, estimated to cost billions of dollars. Now we are told that the US will build the wall and that Mexico will reimburse the US. Mexico has made it clear that it will not pay for construction of the wall, despite what President Trump says. Many security experts question both the need and effectiveness of a wall, and now the United States will bear the total cost for the construction of the wall. The Travel Ban, which despite what President Trump says, is in actuality a "Muslim Ban". This ban is discriminatory against one of the world's great religions, increases support for terrorist organizations who target the US, and endangers US national security. This Travel Ban has divided and polarized even more the American people, and has undermined US relationships with our closest allies. While we do have concerns about US trade deals and their fairness and impact on US jobs, we believe that President Trump has acted too quickly in withdrawing US partnership, which will have an even greater negative impact on trade, jobs and the economy.

We want all of our clergy and laity to know where the Council of Bishops stands as it relates to the present views and policy positions of the Trump Administration. Not only do we want our denomination to know where its leadership stands, but we also ask our clergy and laity to join with us in action. We must do more than talk and write, we must act. Again, the Apostle says that "we wrestle", not just talk, with spiritual wickedness. Therefore, we ask clergy and laity to join us in the following:

We ask the Social Action Commission in every annual conference to organize a meeting on Friday, February 17th with members of the Congressional delegation from each of the states. Some will meet with your US Senators and others with members of the House of Representatives. In the meetings, members are to express the position of the AME Church on the views and policies expressed above. (It is important that everyone read and be familiar with our positions) Congress is not in session on Fridays, so it is important that their offices be contacted immediately to get a meeting. Do not let their offices claim they



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are not available. If February 17th is not a good date, tell them you will meet at the senator's or representative's convenience. We must do more than talk, we must act. We are their constituents just as much as anyone else. Insist on a meeting. Be knowledgeable and prepared. We will provide talking points for you next week. It is our hope that each annual conference has an organized social action commission. If not we ask each bishop to organize a committee immediately.

“Put on the whole armor of God”, and let us be about the work of the kingdom.

Yours and His,

John Franklin White, President, Council of Bishops
McKinley Young, Senior Bishop
Adam Jefferson Richardson
Vashti Murphy McKenzie, President, General Board
Gregory Gerald McKinley Ingram
Wilfred Jacobus Messiah
James Levert Davis
Paul Jones Mulenga Kawimbe
David Rwhynica Daniels
Samuel Lawrence Green
Errenous Earl McCloud
Jeffrey Nathaniel Leath
Julius Harrison McAllister
Clement Willie Fugh
Reginald Thomas Jackson
Harry Lee Seawright
Michael Leon Mitchell
E. Anne Henning Byfield
Ronnie Elijah Brailsford
Stafford J. N. Wicker
Frank Madison Reid, III, Chair, Social Action Commission

John Hurst Adams
Frederick Hilborn Talbot
Frederick Calhoun James
Frank Curtis Cummings
Philip Robert Cousin, Sr.
Henry Allen Belin, Jr.



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