



"From Where I Sit ..."

Coming Full Circle with Five Educational Institutions

In July 2016 (a month before the writing of this article), Bishop Kenneth W. Carter informed me that I had been elected to the Board of Trustees of Paine College in Augusta, GA (*a college that is jointly affiliated with the CME Church and the United Methodist Church*). This election brought to five the number of CME affiliated educational institutions whose Boards of Trustees I currently have the privilege of serving. It also makes me the only member of the CME Church currently serving on the Boards of all of the CME affiliated educational institutions.

This journey began in 2003 when then Senior Bishop Marshall Gilmore, who was also Chair of the Board of Trustees for Texas College in Tyler, TX (*which was unaccredited at the time*), presented me for nomination to the Board and, immediately after my election, appointed me to serve as the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee. What was so unusual about this action was that I had only been a General Officer for about 9 months and, prior to this election, had never served on the Board of Trustees of any educational institution. To be named to the Board and immediately appointed Chair of one of its most important committees during a time when the college had lost its accreditation, needless to say, caused me some hesitation due to my lack of prior board level educational experience. But how could I say no to the Senior Bishop of the Church? Since that time, in April of 2003, I have continued to serve as the Chair of this committee and a member of the Executive Committee and I have witnessed the College's reaccreditation (*with much thanks to the financial support of the CME Church*) and its resurgence as a viable institution demonstrated by increased enrollment and the construction of new campus buildings.



My second Board assignment came in 2005 when Bishop Lawrence L. Reddick III, who was then the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Miles College in Fairfield, AL, proposed my name for nomination to the Board. Subsequent to my election, I was appointed to serve on the Finance and Investment Committee which gave me an opportunity to utilize what I had learned from my experience at Texas College. Shortly afterward I was named Vice Chair of this committee. In 2006 I was elected Secretary of the Board which, by virtue of office, caused me to become Secretary of the Executive Committee and Secretary of the Miles Foundation Service Corporation. These new roles again caused me some hesitation because of my dislike for writing. But how could I say no to the Bishop of my home District and my friend of nearly 40 years? In 2013 I became Chair of the Finance and Investment Committee and since that time I have continued to serve as Committee Chair and as Secretary of the Board, witnessing again this college's growth through enrollment, property acquisition and construction of new campus buildings.



My third Board assignment came in 2009 through a change in the Bylaws of Phillips School of Theology in Atlanta, GA. Prior to that date, the Board of Trustees was

composed of a select number of Bishops, General Officers, Pastors, Lay persons and Alumni. When I was elected a General Officer in 2002, I was informed that, although not a member of the Board, non-member General Officers were invited to attend the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees held in January during the week of Founders Day and the CME Pastors Conference. In 2009, I was informed of the change in the Bylaws naming all of the Bishops and all of the General Officers as members of the Board of Trustees. Since that time, my colleagues and I have continued to serve as Trustees and, where appropriate, to more actively participate in the mission of the Seminary.

My fourth Board assignment came in 2011. After Bishop Lawrence L. Reddick III had transferred from Alabama to Tennessee, he then, as Chair of the Board of Trustees of Lane College in Jackson, TN, proposed my name for nomination to that Board. Upon election, he appointed me to serve as Chair of the Audit Committee and as a member of the Finance Committee which again allowed me to utilize the expertise I had gained at both Texas and Miles. In 2013, I was also elected as one of the two at-large members of the Executive Committee. Since that time, I have continued to serve in these capacities and I witnessed the Board's election of a young new President to continue the legacy of the late Dr. Wesley C. McClure, a historical giant in the field of education.

My fifth Board assignment is my aforementioned election to the Board of Trustees of Paine College, which is presently appealing the loss of its accreditation. Although formal attendance at my first meeting of the Board of Trustees will not occur until October (*when I will most likely receive a committee assignment*), I have participated in regularly held conference calls as the College prepares its appeal, which I believe and the Board anticipates will be successful.

Why am I telling this story? It is for several reasons. My participation on these Boards of Trustees has allowed my undergraduate training in accounting coupled with my experience as comptroller and CFO of the Congress of National Black Churches to be used in a way that has been proven helpful to these institutions and personally rewarding to me. Additionally, these trustee experiences have allowed me the opportunity to share with each institution best practices gleaned from the other institutions. And finally, in sync with my accounting background, I have learned from the audits and the auditors several unique but simple formulas and measurements that provide an early identification of the financial strengths and weaknesses of educational institutions.

The CME affiliated educational institutions, like all Historically Black Colleges and Universities, rely heavily on financial support. How well these institutions manage their finances will ultimately determine the degree of success they will have in providing an ample and meaningful education to our children. I am thankful to have the opportunity to serve and to help strengthen the oversight of these Boards of Trustees by sharing my training and experiences in the areas of finance. I am also thankful to those Bishops of the Church who have seen fit to propose me for election to these several Boards and to those Board Chairs who have allowed me to continue to be reelected to subsequent terms of service. Service within or outside of the Church is about the giving of oneself for the greater good and I believe that this is what we should each be about. *Or at least that's the way it looks to me ...*"

"From Where I Sit"

Tyrone T. Davis, D.Min, is the General Secretary of the Board of Personnel Services

(Copies of earlier articles may be found on the

Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at www.thecmechurch.org)