

# THE DAILY INDEX

Rev. Dr. Ore L. Spragin, Jr., Editor

2018 General Conference

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

## Getting Back to Basics

The Episcopal Address by Bishop Bobby R. Best

*Submitted by Ore L. Spragin, Jr.*

*Editor, The Christian Index*

The Episcopal Address given by Bishop Bobby R. Best was titled “Getting Back to Basics as We Envision Our Way Forward in Taking Care of God’s Business”. The stated goal was to “clearly express our concerns and issues and to articulate a clear vision that will move the CME Church toward a brighter future”. Following is some of the content of the 38-page report and challenge.

No Chief Pastor has left us since 2014, but we do mourn the loss of Sis. Willie Ann Helton, the widow of Bishop Charles L. Helton. She is small in stature but a giant to her family and friends.

“The state of the CME Church is GOOD,” but this does not mean we do not have challenges. First, the Church is good because of God’s grace and God’s unconditional love. Second, the state of the Church is good “because we are improving services to humanity in both our U.S. and non-U.S. work, through our churches, colleges and schools, hospital, seminary and Bible colleges and all programs put into place for the well-being of our world”. Third, the state of the Church is good because of the pioneering spirit bequeathed to us by our 41 founders. Post-slavery conditions were grueling to blacks who lived during the early days of our Church, but they triumphed through perseverance through the strength of Christ. We recognize the value our Church has always placed on education. Our four current CME-affiliated colleges and our seminary consume about 24% of our CME Connectional budget. Fourth, the state of the Church is good because of our most valuable resource – our members: clergy and laity. Your value is recognized in your needed, faithful, generous, and great giving to our Connectional institutions, and national affiliations and needs.

But what challenges must we confront and overcome?



First, we must confront declining membership in most of our U.S. churches (Episcopal Districts 1-9), especially that of men, young, adults, and children. This is opposite of what is seen in our foreign Districts (10 and 11). It is imperative that actively recruit men and give young adults the opportunities to exercise their talents, gifts, and abilities to help grow our church. Second, we have many aged and much-decaying facilities, and not enough funds to make repairs or improvements. The third challenge is the high apportionment among our **SMALLER, SHRINKING, STRUGGLING** local churches. The concern is for the very small, struggling church, **NOT EVERY CHURCH**. The final challenge is to be confronted is the need to “enhance our discipleship and leadership development training for our preachers and laypersons”.

To meet these challenges, we must get back to the basics. The theological underpinning of this approach comes from Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 2:41-50, and Christian education is the methodology. We must make disciples in **ALL** nations. Spreading the word is not enough; we must make disciples. We must do a better job. Are you up for the challenge?

We must stay connected with God, and we must reconnect with Jesus if we have lost our connection. We must commit to God’s plan for our lives if we are to fulfill his purpose. Staying connected helps us to

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prepare for a life-long journey of learning. We must constantly develop our faith with intentionality, and then mentor others. Additionally, sexual abuses and misconduct allegations must be addressed. It is not okay. It is NEVER okay ... not in Hollywood, in the media, in politics, and especially in the church!!

Six proposals were given to help us get back to the basics. (1) Prayer/Evangelism/Church Planting/Outreach – We must not overlook ANYONE in the communities surrounding our churches. The General Officers are asked to lead in this effort. (2) Project Restoration – “one church in each Episcopal district per year for the next four years will be selected to receive a one-time gift, between \$25,000.00 and \$50,000.00 to assist in [much-needed] repairs and renovations.” Second, each church that does not have a fund for such repairs should start a restoration fund and give regular opportunities for contributing to it. (3) Stewardship Training – Pastors should teach on stewardship. “Stewardship is about more than just giving monetary contributions, but the giving of one’s whole life in service to God.” (4) Adjusting apportionments to reflect our present reality for smaller churches – Presiding Elders and Finance Committees are challenged to relieve the SMALLER, STRUGGLING churches. (5) Discipleship Training and Leadership Development – Five books were proposed “as part of our curriculum for discipleship training and leadership development. (6) Energize and Revitalize Worship – “Our corporate worship can be so much more, if only we get away from our cookie cutter mentality.”

Finally, we have to envision what we want to see. “We can see it as a College of Bishops, but we need you to see it with us. Can you see it? Can you see it? Can you see it?”

## When Jesus Interrupts Your Morning

Fishermen, Failure, Dirty Nets, Grace . . . an electrifying message from Bishop Kenneth Wayne Carter at the Sunday Morning Worship Service.

*Submitted by Rev. Dr. Earl J. Griffin, Sr.*

*Presiding Elder, Monroe District, LA Region*

*4th Episcopal District, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*

The Sheraton Hotel East Ballroom was full; the atmosphere was charged with expectation; and prayer was being offered for a Word from the Lord. It is Day 2 of the 2018 Christian Methodist Episcopal Church General Conference, and word has gone out that the Presiding Bishop of the Sixth Episcopal District has been fasting, praying and seeking the Lord for a fresh Word for all those in waiting. The choir sang "Total Praise" and spontaneous worship erupted. Then just before the Bishop stood to proclaim the gospel, the choir charged the atmosphere with "God Is!" The Holy Spirit hovered over the chaos in our lives as Bishop Carter read Luke 5:1-5. Anticipation heightened because we knew that Word would bless our souls.



Vividly, and with the aid of Visual Arts crafted by Rev. Amina McIntyre, President, Connectional Young Adult Ministry, Bishop Carter set the stage with a profound illustration concerning a man who had given his all, only to have life deal him a cup of failure. Alone on boat with only two instruments, a pen and a gun, he pondered his next move. And as we anxiously awaited the choice he would make; the Bishop turned the tables toward every hearer.

Have you ever tried to do what was right, yet success escaped you at every turn? Are you frustrated because no matter how hard you try, life keeps serving you up a plate of failure after failure? Have you plunged into ministry and found yourself tired and weary because your efforts were fruitless? Well, Bishop Carter said God's grace is offered at every turn and when you fail, get back up and try again because your victory is assured.

So, don't quit, give in, or throw in the towel. Even when your failures leave you in the gutter, remember who you are because "All Failure is not Final," Bishop Carter insisted. "Everybody has a bad night," he proclaimed. But, when the bad night comes, just know that morning is coming. Each of us will experience failure although we do our very best to fight the good fight of faith. The struggles of life sometimes result in our failure, but we serve a God who comes in the morning.



As Bishop illuminated how Jesus was a morning person, he caught us by surprise when he brought to our attention that the disciples had not finished washing their nets when Jesus told them to launch out into the deep, which suggests to us that the nets were still dirty or partially clean. "Jesus uses dirty nets," Bishop Carter exclaimed, and led us to see that each of us are simply dirty nets God uses for God's glory. At best, the power we exude as believers does not come from us but comes through us. All of us are works in process, partially clean with struggles in this life that sometimes causes us to fail and sometimes even puts us in gutter situations. But even in the gutter we should remember that we are God's children and not adjust to the gutter but speak to the gutter about our God and who we are in our God.

This message gave insight into what it meant when Bishop Marvin Frank Thomas told us at the Saturday morning Holy Communion Service "we could make it safely to shore on broken pieces." Failure may leave us in pieces, so hold on to those pieces and use them to reach the shore safely. God knows that we are broken. Yet, God uses us to display his glory, his grace, and his power. Praise God that failure is not always final. "Weeping may endure for a night, but Joy comes in the morning." Truly Jesus interrupted our morning and we will never be quite the same.

Does Your Local Church, Presiding Elder's District, Region, or Episcopal District Produce an Electronic Newsletter?

If so, send the Editor a copy at:  
[ChristianIndex@thecmechurch.org](mailto:ChristianIndex@thecmechurch.org)

## Reporting of the Stewardship of the General Officers:

General Secretary of Publications, Editor, *The Christian Index* and the General Secretary of Evangelism and Missions

Submitted by Rev. Valencia Edner

On Sunday evening, June 24th, the Reports of the General Officers of the CME Church commenced at the Birmingham Jefferson County Convention Center. While all the reports are not completed, the reports of Dr. Roderick Lewis, General Secretary of Publications; Dr. Ore Spragin, Editor, *The Christian Index*; and Dr. Faith Allen, General Secretary of Evangelism and Missions were presented to the 39th General Conference and 38th Quadrennial Session of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Each of these General Officers gave highlights of their stewardship and the work of their respective offices for the years 2014-2018.

Dr. Lewis thanked all who had been instrumental in assisting him over the four years. He then explained the capacities and difficulties, both practically and fiscally, for the progress from printing press to digital publications. While he expressed some updates had been made, still others were necessary to affect the overwhelming cost of publishing, including *The Christian Index*. Dr. Lewis reported that the Miles Bookstore is fully operational on-line, and all books are competitively priced. He also stressed the importance of fiscal responsibility on the part of the churches to remit funds for Sunday School materials in a timely manner. The Hymnal is on hold awaiting further direction and finances. His recommendations, though pending confirmation from committee, included increased funds to ensure forward progress in acquiring equipment updates, the self-sufficiency of *The Christian Index*, and placing late fees on accounts that are delinquent. The motion for acceptance of Dr. Lewis' report was carried with commendation for a job well done.

As Dr. Spragin began his report, he asked for prayers for his family in light of recent deaths. He then went on to thank those who were supportive throughout the quadrennial. His report slide presentation, with his voice as guide, highlighted much of the work he had done over the last four years. He reported the many places that he had

visited to capture ministries at work and historic milestones in the CME Church. He also indicated the progressive work of the *Index* in the social media arena, including a Facebook and Twitter presence, as well as an expansion of the *Index* to include a Children's Corner, the "More" section, and an increase in articles from a diversity of people. His recommendations, though waiting confirmation included most notably, the desire to pursue advertisement for *The Christian Index* to offset the cost of publication, and the desire to have greater representation in the *Index* from CME-affiliated institutions of higher learning and from the international community of CME's. His report was accepted by the conference with commendations as well.

The power of the scripture introduced the report of Dr. Faith Allen, and she followed with gracious thanks to God and all those who have been supportive. Her report highlighted the places she traveled, the training sessions conducted throughout the connection, and preaching opportunities given. She also indicated the importance of her work in ecumenism, connecting with others across denominational lines.

Dr. Allen emphasized her introduction throughout the four years of the SWAG initiative for faith sharing. SWAG is an acronym for Sharing Witnessing About God. The forward progression of SWAG shaped her recommendations, though they await confirmation. The implementation of SWAG in each district would include relationships strengthened, a strong media presence, more training, and church planting. She ended with a story that illustrated that despite the threat of flatlining, the church's life prognosis is improved. The report was accepted by the conference unanimously.

The reports will continue tomorrow and will be summarized here in the Daily Index.