

Report of the General Secretary-Auditor

**The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,
Board of Bishops' Meeting & Connectional Council**

July 17th – 20th, 2018

**Sheraton, Birmingham Hotel
2101 Richard Arrington, Jr. Blvd., North
Birmingham, AL 35203**

**The Reverend J. Elvin Sadler, D.Min.,
General Secretary-Auditor**

**Bishop Staccato Powell, Chairman
Commission on Discipline Codification**

**Bishop Mildred B. Hines, Chairperson
Board of Records, Statistics and Archives**

**Bishop W. Darin Moore,
President, Board of Bishops**

**Bishop George E. Battle, Jr.,
Senior Bishop**

Introduction

To Bishop W. Darin Moore, President of the Board of Boards, Bishop George E. Battle, Jr., Senior Bishop, the Board of Bishops, active and retired, and Members of the 2018 Connectional Council.

Grace, Mercy and Peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. It is with tremendous humility that I give my second report as General Secretary-Auditor of our great Zion! The Lord has been both kind and merciful to me and for this I am grateful.

My work as General Secretary-Auditor continues to evolve. In this report, we will focus on the status of existing projects and propose the direction of the office for the next twelve months. The following is a report of the work:

The Book of Discipline

The work of the Book of Discipline will begin, for this Quadrennium, during the 2019 Connectional Council, by establishing the scope of work and assigning Commissioners to respective committees. The work of the 2020 Book of Discipline will focus on:

- Refining the current version by providing more inclusive and updated language to correspond with the times.
- Cleaning up inconsistencies in existing legislation verses new legislation and coding,
- Creating a more comprehensive glossary of terms,
- Revising language in the ritual section, where appropriate.

The most important area for revision will be redefining the roles of General Officers and their respective Administrative Boards and Standing Committees to coincide with the

restructuring mandate of the 2016 General Conference. General Officers have met to revise job descriptions. The Central Management Team reviewed and returned to the General Officer Team for consensus. Descriptions have gone to the CMT Administrative Work Group for further dialogue and consensus, and the to the Board of Bishops has given final approval of the descriptions. They will be placed in resolutions form to be submitted to the 2020 General Conference for discussion and ratification. The CMT Administrative Work Group is also working on Administrative Board and Standing Committee descriptions and functions and will follow the same process. The Commission on Discipline Codification will begin its more intensive work beginning with the 2019 Connectional Council, leading up to the 2020 General Conference.

Quarterly and Annual Conference Reporting Forms

The greatest emphasis for the Office for all of 2018 will be with refining and perfecting the Forms System Management Program. We spent all of 2017 building, reviewing, evaluating and revising the system. We have made great strides and are seeing a large number of churches in America beginning to become more comfortable with implementing the system, along with more Presiding Elders accessing the Quarterly Conference Workbooks for their evaluation and input. We have updated the process by doing the following:

- Providing “how to” videos for congregations to use at their own pace,
- Developing a “Step by Step Guide” to provide greater ease of use for congregations,

- Developing a “Step by Step Guide for Presiding Elders” to help them become better acquainted with how to access the system to review and evaluate the Workbooks, and
- A “Step by Step Workbook Guide” to assist congregations with knowing how to correctly fill out the Workbook.

While we have had better success in getting more buy-in from churches, we have made the following observations:

- Districts and Churches are more successful when the Presiding Elder appoints a team of people to serve as trainers.
 - Our office provides the trainers with the resources necessary to be successful.
 - Districts are then instructed to contact the trainers, should they have any questions about the process.
 - If trainers run into a snag, they contact our Office, who then provides them with the necessary resources to rectify any concerns they may have;
- Churches are attempting to modify the workbook, which causes the coding in the workbook to become corrupted and therefore kick the workbook out of the system when it is uploaded;
- Churches are also either attempting to create their own workbooks, or use the old statistical report, which results in the same problem previously mentioned with those who try to modify the document: their documents are rejected.
- Some churches are not fully filling out their workbooks, which limits us from receiving the information necessary to adequately assess the status of the General

Church. We have discovered that there are churches who are not entering anything for their classes, which either means they are trying to circumvent the process, or they are not using the class leader system.

Overall, we are happy with the progress being made and will use this entire year to perfect the system. **Within the next 30 days**, we will begin to test **version 2.0** of a more automated system, that will be even more user friendly, called **Zion Connect MRM**. This **will not only give us access to a more user friendly way to enter our statistical information but also provide a church management system for our churches.**

Each of the stateside Districts have gone through their training. We are continuously following up with them to assess their needs. We will also begin to schedule training with the Overseas Districts during this meeting so that we can successfully bring them onboard.

As a part of our partnership with Microsoft, each church continues to receive the online version of Microsoft Office 365 to be used by the Pastor and congregation. Each Bishop and Presiding Elder District has been provided with a full version of Microsoft Office 365 that can be downloaded onto five desktops, or laptop computers and five tablets or smart devices. This includes:

1. Microsoft Word,
2. Excel,
3. PowerPoint,
4. Office,
5. Skype for Business,
6. OneDrive with one TB of memory,
7. SharePoint,

8. One Note, and twelve other applications to use,

Another application that will be of great benefit for future connectivity across the Denomination is Microsoft Teams. It will allow Bishops, General and Connectional Officers, Presiding Elders, Pastors to creatively connect with the Church virtually, at no additional cost to the Denomination. Initial immersion trainings have been done with the General Officers' Team and their staff. A schedule of ongoing training will be provided to Episcopal District staff in the near future.

GSA Website

The GSA website continues to evolve as more information is being added ongoingly. It continues to provide the Denomination with a one stop source for all Doctrine, Polity, Information and Research. In the future, it will also serve as a vehicle to research trends in the Denomination as well as trends relating to the Church Universal. The website continues to provide:

- A **Reporting** tab to access all reports pertinent to our Zion, i.e. General Conference and Connectional Council minutes, and General Conference resolutions, revisions, reports of Bishops, General and Connectional Officers and Official Minutes and all other information relative to our Connectional meetings;
- A password protected **Forms** tab to access forms relative to the various levels of the Denomination. All of the forms that the church has used in the past, that came with a cost, are now available on the website. They have been updated and revised and are available for use. There are Annual and District Conference and Local

Congregation tabs available to provide the user with level-specific templates to carry out their work, such as:

- Forty-one (41) forms for the Bishop for certificates of appointment, ordination, licenses, credentials, budget, audit, etc.
- Forms for the Presiding Elder to appointments, licenses, evaluations, deeds, etc., and
- Forms for the Local Congregations for Quarterly Conference, Deeds, certificates of membership, baptism, consecration, achievement, welcome and inactive member letters, strategic planning, Steward Board collection accounting sheets, sample budgets, etc.
- We will continue to add templates to assist our churches with becoming more uniform and effective in the execution of ministry.
- An **FYI** tab to provide:
 - “how to” trainings on various administrative protocols
 - Leadership and organizational principles assist in creating ministries of excellence, and
 - Modules to give direction and instruction on various aspects of AME Zion Doctrine and Polity;
- A **Reporting Portal** tab to:
 - Access Quarterly Conference forms (1st Phase),
 - Upload forms to the Denominational Portal to accurately assess the current state of the Denomination, and

- Provide a source for polling and data collection to ascertain trends, patterns and shifts in culture(s) (2nd Phase),
- **All of these services and the cost for the website are included in the annual license fee.**

Archivist

The Office of the General Secretary-Auditor has secured the services of Dr. William McKenith for a second year to continue the work of the Archivist. The following is a brief description of his work:

- Accomplishments:
 - On July 11-13, 2017 the historical documents (approximately 250 storage boxes) held by Livingstone College at Port City Storage, Mooresville, NC have been segregated and transferred into the Walls Advisory Board storage bins held at the same facility, at a cost of \$2,665.00.
 - This was a major achievement that took more than a year to implement due to constant delays.
 - The Walls Advisory Board held its Second Recognition Banquet on Saturday, May 5th, 2018 Livingstone College School of Hospitality Management and Culinary Arts. Dr.

Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr. and Livingstone College provided the banquet room, menu, caterer and journal production gratis. We are very grateful to Dr. Jenkins and the college for their extraordinary support. We are also grateful for Bishop George E. Battle, Presiding Prelate of the Piedmont Episcopal District, Bishop W. Dain Moore of the Mid-Atlantic

Episcopal District, Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr. of the Mid West Episcopal District and several A.M.E. Zion Church connectional boards for their sponsorship of this banquet.

Photographer and videographer recorded the event. Two soloists rendered musical selections. We honored Dr. Jimmy R. Jenkins, Sr., Bishop Mildred B. Hines and Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr. We raised \$6,325 in ticket sales and \$10,450 in journal sponsorships for a total of **\$16,775.00**. The proceeds from the banquet will be used to acquire supplies and additional support for the digitization project.

- Dr. Jenkins, Bishop Hines and Dr. Vergel Lattimore had approved the digitization project on November 28, 2017. Since that time the Board has been waiting for the completion of renovations to the second-floor classroom at Andrew Carnegie Library, Livingstone College. Security doors have been installed. We are now waiting for security camera installation and door cipher locks. We can begin the digitization process upon completion of renovations.
- Drs. Sadler and McKeith finalized the draft of the Walls Advisory Board Bylaws, which was presented to the Walls Advisory Board membership on January 29, 2018. The Walls Advisory Board has approved the bylaws for its 501c3 nonprofit corporation. We now have to secure the approval of the board's principles: Dr. Jenkins, Bishop Hines and Dr. Lattimore.
- The historical book project, covering The A.M.E. Zion Church History: 1972-2016, under the direction of Bishop George Walker continues to conduct research on a weekly basis with three research assistants. They have thoroughly read, selected articles of interest and taken notes on nearly thirty years of *Star of Zion* articles from 1976-2005.

The Archivist conducted extensive research for one chapter of the book and recently completed the writing of that first chapter. Another chapter has also been written.

Chaplaincy

The office of the General Secretary-Auditor, which serves as the official posit for the vetting and maintenance of our Chaplains has a developed a vetting, interviewing and record-keeping system for all military, federal prison, Veterans Administration Hospital, jail and hospital chaplains, as the criteria for each level of chaplaincy now requires ecclesiastical endorsement. The Office vets and interviews all existing and prospective chaplains and submits documentation to Dr. Lattimore for endorsement. All military personnel have been re-certified for this fiscal year and files for all others are currently up to date.

Legal Authorization

We are living in an age where legal documentation is being required of all churches, new or established, to provide evidence of incorporation and tax status. The Patriot Act is requiring banks to request churches to provide evidence of their status. With this being the case, the Denomination was granted a corporate 501c3 in May. The 501c3 will be used for purposes of verifying banking relationships and establishing trademarks and copyrights. The Denomination will also be provided enormous discounts on services Corporations provide to non-profits. In order for Churches to be verified for bank accounts, they will need to provide their own Tax Identification Numbers (TIN). The Office will provide verification for churches who request in

writing the need to open accounts. Protocols are in place to assure that churches are submitting proper documentation and operating procedures for proper fiscal responsibility.

Trademarks

All General and Connectional Officer departments have been apprised of the need to have their departmental logos trademarked and written materials copyrighted. Several of the departments have either completed the process or are in process. This office will serve as the repository of all denominational trademarks and copyrights.

General Officer Audits and Bonds

All General and Connectional Officer departments, that are amenable to the Council, have been audited and copies of their audits and bonds are up to date and in my office.

Proposed Vetting Process for Candidates of Offices of General Officers and Episcopacy and Plan of Succession

Purpose: The purpose of this proposal is to create and implement a process by how we vet and prepare candidates to run as candidates for the offices of Judicial Council, General Officer and Bishop.

Rationale: There is the possibility, currently, that we will be a need to replace several of the nine General Officer positions and most, if not all of our Judicial Council. Due to retirement and death, and term limits, key personnel competencies that manage the day to day global ministry departments of the denomination will be lost, leaving the denomination at a significant disadvantage regarding the general oversight and management of key departmental functions and responsibilities.

The Need: The need to vet and assess potential candidates is critical to providing a plan of succession that will create an atmosphere for a smooth transition and identify qualified candidates to fill these vacant positions.

With this being the case, a proposed plan and time schedule needs to be approved and implemented:

- I. **Candidate Vetting Process (Old Screening Process):** The following process will be implemented to ensure the identification, vetting, interviewing and approval of qualified candidates to serve as members of the Judicial Council, General Officers and the Episcopacy:

Purpose: To ensure that the denomination is presented with qualified, vetted and interviewed candidates, based upon predefined competencies and skillsets, identified in proposed job descriptions, and the Book of Discipline to fill General Officer and Episcopal positions with individuals who will add to the life and growth of our Zion and the Kingdom. Also, to provide an arena for those who wished to serve the Church as members of the Judicial Council. The following process is being suggested:

Candidacy Packet

Each candidate will be required to fill out a candidacy packet. This packet will include items germane to the specific office. The packet of information will be placed on the GSA website for all candidates to review and complete;

The following is an overview for each office:

i. Bishops

1. Application,
2. Resume,
3. District and Episcopal Recommendations,
4. Birth Certificate,
5. Official Transcripts and Certifications,
6. Consent and fee (\$35.00) for Criminal Background check,
7. 500-750 word essay describing gifts, competencies and abilities held to qualify for the respective candidate position,
8. Application Fee, \$500.00.

ii. General Officers

1. Application,
2. Resume,
3. District and Episcopal Recommendations,
4. Birth Certificate,
5. Official Transcripts and Certifications,
6. Certificate of Bond (based upon of fiscal responsibility)
7. Consent and fee (\$35.00) for Criminal Background check,
8. 500-750 word essay describing gifts, competencies and abilities held to qualify for the respective candidate position,
9. Application Fee: \$250.00.

iii. Judicial Council

1. Application,
2. Resume,
3. District and Episcopal District Recommendations,
4. Official Transcripts and Certifications,
5. Consent and Fee (\$35.00) for criminal background check,
6. 500-750 word essay describing gifts, competencies and abilities held to qualify for the respective candidate position,
7. Application Fee: \$125.00.

Vetting Interview

Once all materials and fees have been submitted to the Office of the General Secretary and authentication has been completed, a vetting interview with each candidate will be held to present the findings and their ability to begin to campaign.

Within 48 hours of the interview, a letter of authorization to campaign will be provided. Candidates will then be permitted to announce their candidacies and to campaign around the Church. Each Bishop will receive updates on certified candidates ongoingly;

All current General Officers are grandfathered and will not have to follow the same vetting process. They will, however, be responsible for paying the candidate registration fee and updating their applications, where applicable.

Filing Period

The filing period for all candidates will begin July 22nd 2018 through March 15th, 2020. Candidates have until then to file.

BE NOTIFIED THAT NO CANDIDATE WILL BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE THEIR CANDIDACY, OR CAMPAIGN UNTIL THEY HAVE GONE THROUGH THE VETTING PROCESS. ANY VIOLATION OF THIS PROCESS WILL BE GROUNDS FOR IMMEDIATE DISQUALIFICATION.

Final Interviews

Each candidate will be required to go through a final interviewing process. This process and timeline for interviews will be presented at the Board of Bishops Meeting in February, 2019.

Final Thoughts

This process has been approved by the Board of Bishops. We pray that the Church will further be strengthened as we enter into a new season of greater accountability and process.

For more information, beginning July 22nd go to: www.ameziongsa.com and click on "Candidate Application".

Conclusion: We believe that this will give us the optimal pool of qualified candidates and season of succession that will prepare new General Officers and Bishops to operate at their highest levels of competency, while minimizing the amount of "catch up" and proficiency time needed.

HERE'S TO A GREAT CAMPAIGNING SEASON!!!!

Ongoing and Future Endeavors

- **Evaluative Instruments** – The key to creating ministries of excellence lies in one’s ability to self-evaluate. **Accountability is the key.** We are in the process of developing pastoral, congregational and presiding elder evaluative instruments to enhance our ministry efforts.
 - **With the approval of the Board of Bishops, the Office of the General Secretary-Auditor in conjunction with the General Secretary of Christian Education, and President of the Presiding Elders’ Council has initiated the “2020 Connectional Think Tank” of gifted persons, from across the church, to assist in developing a comprehensive system of evaluation and accountability for our denomination.**
 - **Additionally, a training model for Presiding Elders be developed and implemented as a standard for pastoral and congregational leadership evaluation and leadership development;**
 - **Further, vetting processes for trustees, stewards, treasurers and all church workers who work with children, youth and adults be established.**
 - **A report of progress and plans for implementation will be presented by February, 2019.**
- **Training for Conference Secretaries and Statisticians** - In order to create consistency in the disposition of minutes and reports, a training will be developed and implemented for conference secretaries and statisticians;

- **Document Digitization** – We are continuing to organize files for digitization of all documentation associated with the Office of the General Secretary-Auditor. The goal is to have this completed by year end, 2018.
- **Protocol Manual for Administrative Procedures and Training Modules** – Working with the Senior Bishop, Bishop Hines, the Board of Bishops, the “2020 Connectional Think Tank” and the Board of Records, Statistics and Archives, we will develop protocols and processes to create systems and structures for more effective ministry execution. We will also provide “How to” training modules on a wide range of ministry areas, which will result in a manual to be used in all of our churches.
- **Grant Procurement for Emergency Response, Archives & Other Endeavors** – We will seek grants to assist with funding the strengthening of data accumulation and research to better assess and evaluate how we do greater and more effective ministry, as well as funding the archives of our denomination, and other endeavors, such as emergency response, outreach, etc.
 - **Connectional Emergency Response Network** - We are stronger together. The Denomination can create a Connectional Emergency Response Network to respond to and assist our members and communities when disaster strikes. Working with state and federal agencies, we can create an “On the Ground” response network, with granted resources, both financial and material, to meet the needs of those who are in the greatest affected areas. We don’t wait or rely on Red Cross or others: we can do this ourselves!!! **We seek your approval to begin exploring this venture to report back in July, 2019.**

Finally, I want to thank Bishop Mildred B. Hines for her leadership as the Chair of my Administrative Board and the guidance and support she has given me during these past 18 months. To my Bishop and the Senior Bishop, Bishop Battle for your prayers, concern and financial support, and particularly your care to my family during our time of sorrow and grief. To the entire Board of Bishops, active and retired, for your ongoing encouragement and support. To all of the Presiding Elders who have invited me to your Districts to do training, and to all of the clergy and Laity who, through your words of encouragement, prayers and support have helped to make this journey easier. And, finally to my wife, Stefanie and children and grandchildren for sharing me with the Church and the Kingdom: I love you dearly! I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to serve. THANK YOU!!!

Financial Statement

Attached, please find the audited financial statement for January through December, 2017.

In and for the Sake of the Kingdom and *“The Freedom Church”*,

Respectfully, Submitted,

The Reverend J. Elvin Sadler, D.Min., General Secretary-Auditor

