



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE UNITED METHODIST JUDICIAL COUNCIL, COUNCIL OF BISHOPS, SOUTH CENTRAL JURISDICTION EPISCOPAL REVIEW COMMITTEE, AND NORTH TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE EPISCOPAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

I greet you with words of Shalom, and pray God's Shalom be with us in these times of tremendous anxiety within our denomination.

Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe's statement regarding his position as a Bishop of the North Texas Annual Conference has been a source of significant anguish and disappointment among friends and family of Black Methodists for Church Renewal; especially surrounding the issues of ineffectiveness.

It is disappointing and anguishing because we have never witnessed this type of situation, especially in light of the response from the chair of the South Central Jurisdiction Episcopacy Committee regarding ineffectiveness following a demonstrated effectiveness of the North Texas Annual Conference both numerically and spiritually. This question of ineffectiveness is raised involving an African American Bishop, Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe and is unprecedented in The United Methodist Church. We, therefore, come seeking answers.

Our greatest concern regarding the issues related to Bishop Bledsoe is the process of evaluating bishops of the church; particularly the process that has taken place in the South Central Jurisdiction. We would like to know what rubric is used to measure the benchmarks of effectiveness. Did any committee member meet with Bishop Bledsoe to share concerns and solicit improvement prior to the ineffectiveness decision? Was there a written plan developed by Bishop Bledsoe and the episcopacy committee identifying the needed changes? Was the outcome of a follow-up evaluation shared well in advance to give the Bishop an opportunity to address those concerns with a cross section of laity and clergy in the North Texas Annual Conference? Was a cross section of laity and clergy given an opportunity for input in his evaluation?

The health and vitality of an annual conference is usually determined objectively by the vital signs and stats that serve as indicators of the effectiveness of its lay and clergy leadership, and most importantly of the Bishop. At this past annual conference Bishop Bledsoe was applauded for helping to leading the North Texas Annual Conference in one of the highest apportionment payouts in recent history, particularly in light of a distressed economy. In addition, there have been more than 16 new church stars since Bishop Bledsoe took office four years ago. The stats also indicated that worship and membership attendance is up over last year. What other measurements are being used?

Quite frankly, it appears that this evaluation is being conducted by methods of hearsay and bullying. We are offended at the press releases that have come from the South Central Jurisdiction Episcopacy Committee. They have been embedded with a spirit of retaliation and deceptiveness. Our hope is that this response is not the desire of this committee.

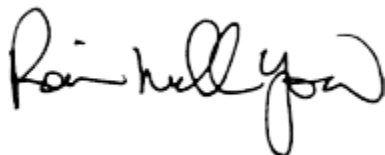
As persons of faith born out of the Wesleyan Tradition, using the Quadrilateral and the edict: "Do no harm, do good, stay in love with God," we are concerned with the treatment of all people in this church.

As Black Methodists for Church Renewal we are especially concerned when one of our brethren, a General Superintendent, a Bishop of the Church seems to be judged unfairly. Our charge as an organization is to: advocate on behalf of the future of African Americans in the denomination; for the interests and inclusivity of Blacks in the general church structures, serve as the spiritual agitating conscious of the church, and raise up prophetic and spiritual leaders who will be advocates for the unique needs of Black people in The United Methodist Church.

Black Methodists for Church Renewal asks that the General Commission on Religion and Race, the Council of Bishops as well as the Judicial Council review this process for its compliance with the Book of Discipline and for its equity across jurisdictions. We believe that SCJ Episcopal Review Committee's process is flawed and redress must be taken immediately in this matter.

Our time under God is now!

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronnie Miller-Yow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronnie L. Miller-Yow, National Chairperson
Black Methodists for Church Renewal