

AME Bishops Issue Statement & "Call to Action" First Time Since Charleston Shootings

Exactly two weeks after the church massacre at Mother Emanuel AME Church, the AME Church meets in New Orleans, LA to issue an interfaith "Call to Action" for this 4th of July weekend

AME Church Makes First Public Statement & Issues Call to Action

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For the first time since the Mother Emanuel AME Church massacre in Charleston, SC, the AME Church Council of Bishops of the AME Church made their first public statement about the tragedy. Additionally they issued a "Call to Action" for all people of faith this 4th of July weekend, commonly referred to as "Freedom Weekend." The Bishops and AME Church leadership represents members in 39 countries on 5 continents and are gathered in New Orleans, LA for an already scheduled General Board Meeting.

Here is the statement:

African Methodist Episcopal Church
Council of Bishops

Media Contact: Jackie Dupont-Walker
213-494-9493

July 1, 2015

The Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church joins with our components and worldwide membership in expressing our grief and sympathy on the senseless and tragic attack which took the lives of The Rev. Clementa Pinckney, pastor, and eight other congregants of Mother Emanuel AME Church, Charleston, South Carolina. Mother Emanuel is the oldest black church in the south and one of the most historic churches in the nation. The senseless and evil action which took the lives of those who gathered at Mother Emanuel to study and pray is indicative of a major crisis facing our nation and its people.

First, we join in grief with Mother Emanuel Church in the loss of her pastor, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, and the Rev. Daniel Simmons Sr., Mrs. Cynthia Hurd, the Rev. Sharonda Singleton, Ms. Myra Thompson, Mr. Tywanza Sanders, the Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Ms. Susie Jackson, and Ms. Ethel Lance, members of that church family. We also grieve with the State of South Carolina, which also lost an outstanding state senator and leader in the person of the Rev. Pinckney. Second, we pray and ask for the God of love, mercy and grace to comfort; restore and give peace to family members and of all of us who have been shaken and saddened by this tragedy. May our faith be strengthened and our hope restored.

Finally, we call upon the nation's political leadership, faith institutions and other organizations in this country to face the reality that race remains a problem in this nation. "The arrest of Dylann Storm Roof, the assailant and alleged murderer does not end this matter. In fact this matter makes even clearer that race is a major problem in our nation that must be dealt with," said Bishop Julius McAllister, President of the Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. "The

nation can no longer live in denial and act as if it does not exist. Every week there is some incident, which involves the negative consequences of race,” he added. “The AME Church will join with other faith communities to stress the need for the United States to face, discuss and meet head-on the problem of race in this country,” said Bishop John R. Bryant, Senior Bishop of the AME Church.

“African Methodists in South Carolina are strong and faithful, we will not shy away or lessen our commitment to equality and social justice,” said Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, Presiding Bishop of South Carolina. “This will make us stronger and more determined to advance God’s kingdom on earth. This tragedy will not weaken, but strengthen us. African Methodism will become stronger because of this tragedy,” he said.

The problem of race has not decreased but increased over the last several years. Listen to what has been said, “We want our country back.” The question is “from whom? Mr. Roof stated that he had to kill blacks because of what blacks are doing to “his country.”

The recent Charleston, South Carolina tragedy; the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Eric Garner in Staten Island; Akil Gurly in New York; Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio; Ezell Ford in Los Angeles, and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, our nation’s president has been called “a monkey,” disrespected and had his citizenship questioned, are all indicative of a systemic race problem.

In September the African Methodist Episcopal Church will be joining with our sister communions and other partners to constrain this nation to address the issue of race in this nation. (Details will be announced). “With the presidential election in 2008, some announced that the USA had moved into a post-racial era. The current evidence does not support that pronouncement, “ declared Bishop Reginald T. Jackson, chair of the Social Action Commission. “In fact 2016 marks the 200th anniversary of the AME Church’s incorporation that resulted from a movement that decried racism in the church. We must then, be faithful to that legacy and again call attention to any behavior that is based in discrimination, injustice and/or violence leading to loss of life,” concluded Bishop Jackson. “The Social Action Commission will focus of issues impacted largely by our nation-view of race, like gun violence, mass incarceration, public school failure, and poverty,” concludes the AME Church’s Council of Bishops.

The Council of Bishops calls on all faith communities, civil rights organizations, civic groups, and people of good will to join together this week, and in particular this weekend – also known as “Freedom Weekend” wherever we worship, work and play to commit to working to stop any action that will result in the senseless end of human life .

For further information contact the Social Action Commission of the AME Church at Reginald.jackson132@verizon.net or jdupontw@aol.com.

Bishops of the AME Church:

Julius McAllister, President, Council of Bishops
John R. Bryant, Senior Bishop
John F. White, Secretary, Council of Bishops
Clement W. Fugh, Ass't Sec. Council of Bishops
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