

**Statement of Senior Bishop John R. Bryant  
Press Release of the African Methodist Episcopal Church**

**July 1, 2015**

I am pleased to have standing with me on my left the newly installed President of the Council of Bishops, Bishop Julius McAllister, who is a South Carolinian. We were reminded last week of exactly how the Kingdom of God operates. God has always done His best work out of crucible—out of fire, out of pain. The Bible puts it this way that He is light and darkness cannot put out the light. What happened in Mother Emmanuel was an act of darkness, but the whole nation and the world was able to see what only God can do. Out of the darkness of that experience we watched light break out.

On the way to bury Reverend Pinckney we saw a motorcade moving through rural areas of South Carolina. Bishop McAllister reports that in some areas where there were not large numbers of African Americans, he saw whites standing on the side of the road paying their respects, holding an American flag with tears in their eyes. That's the America that we believe our forefathers dreamed about. It was once asked a few years ago when Reverend Pinckney entered public service about taking down the Confederate Flag which we find so offensive, and he said that the Black Caucus of South Carolina is not strong enough to get that done. But we are a people who believe that God moves in mysterious ways. And we have watched with our eyes on tip-toe expectation as the state of South Carolina, Governor and Mayor, leading a movement that is now moving across the southern section of our country to bring that flag down which will make this country more palatable for all of us.

We were in a worship service last night, and in that service we were in the process of raising an offering to be divided for help for the families who lost their loved ones in that prayer meeting Bible Study when someone rushed to the pulpit and passed me the information that an A.M.E. Church, Mt. Zion, was burning—a church that had burned back in the 90s in a rash of fires. And so we had to go and deal with that, but in the process, we as a people had to process that. After trying to deal with last week, and we do know that several other churches have been burned, but I am pleased to report that in the processing of that information—it still was not a moment of panic. It still was not a moment of despair. We still believe in this country, and we believe that there are more people in the country who believe in justice than those who are driven by hatred.

We have some information on the fire and we would like to ask Presiding Elder Goff who is with us in this meeting to share information on the particular church, Mt. Zion... [statements from Presiding Elder Norvell Goff, Sr.]

I would publicly also like to thank also the ecumenical community. We have had responses from just about every denomination in this country. Also, from heads of the Jewish faith, the heads of the Islamic faith, who say that we stand with you in this hour. And I am hoping that when all of those who believe in humanity and all of those who are driven by love and not hate come together, we can make this nation truly a model for the world. For us to speak one thing globally and live another thing locally, is a contradiction. But I believe the nation is ready now that our local declarations will be able to stand up to global inspection—that in this country, everybody is treated as a citizen.