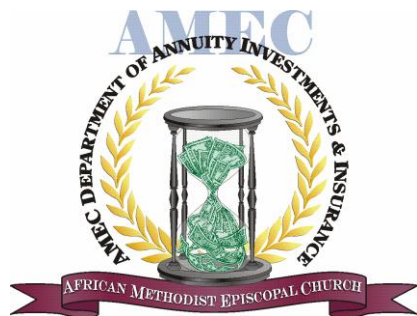


A Formal Recommendation
For
Effective Stewardship Ministry
In The
African Methodist Episcopal Church



Presented By
The Commission For



The Department of Annuity Investments & Insurance

Dr. Jerome V. Harris-Executive Director

June 30, 2010

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PURPOSE

In the 2008 edition of the AMEC Book of Discipline on Page 2 of the Episcopal Salutation, the following can be found: "In February 1973, in Galveston, Texas, the Council of Bishops held its first theological summit with the focus on "The Nature and Mission of the Church." The report of those deliberations was subsequently adopted by the Council of Bishops and is presented here as suggested guidelines on the matter of "The Nature and Mission of the Church." Of these ten critical guidelines, the first and the eighth provide the most compelling purpose for the following formal recommendations(s) on stewardship put forth herein by the Commission for the Department of Annuity Investments & Insurance.

The first guideline reads. *"That our task is to lift up what is the distinctive and special mission of the AME Church, within the context of the world mission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* The eighth guideline states, *"That the AME Church must fully identify with the poor and the oppressed in their struggle for human dignity. That this participation in human development is not optional, nor is it an addendum to an already crowded agenda. It must be the very heart of the life and work of our Church".*

For the past 223 years since its inception in 1787, the African Methodist Episcopal Church has written a storied history as one consistently on the cutting edge in the demonstration of theological courage in times of significant social change. Its organizational structure as a Connectional Church provides a uniquely different body of believers in the sense that it is one that is "connected" in its ability to clearly define and effectively communicate its mission and the furtherance of it.

It is that clear vision of mission and the effective communication of it that the African Methodist Episcopal Church needs today more than ever before. In these times of serious economic challenge, the Church must have the willingness to become rededicated to its mission, and the courage and fortitude to make the difficult decisions to effectuate that mission. The Church must re examine and reevaluate its standard operating procedure (SOP) so that every member at every level is made to fully understand their individual calling and obligation to the effectiveness of its larger mission. In doing so, we will again become a Church and a membership truly committed to the Glory of God as a means of working out the salvation of every individual soul.

It is for this purpose that this document was created. To present a recommended blueprint for the change that is critically needed – NOW. And to those who would suggest that it can't be done, we, the members of the Commission in a collective voice herein proclaim – ***YES WE CAN!***

CREATING A **LIVING** CULTURE FOR STEWARDSHIP IN THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

Culture is communication, communication is culture.

Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning.

Culture is a way of life of a group of people-the behaviors, belief, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.

Culture is the sum totals of the learned behavior of a group of people that are generally considered to be tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation.

Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

WHAT IS A CULTURE FOR STEWARDSHIP?

Stewardship, as in reading or writing, is a learned behavior. It is a behavior that requires repetitive practice and consistent emphasis through teaching,

encouragement, acknowledgement and praise. It is the establishment of a greater sense of understanding of the value of our God given resources and our individual, biblically based mandate to demonstrate our appreciation for these resources through our giving. Our treasure (money) is a valuable resource to be sure, but no more valuable than our time or our talent. All are God given resources that were individually bestowed upon us for His glory. The AME Church has an ordained mandate to create, teach, encourage and sustain a culture of stewardship in every aspect of its worship and structure that will ultimately become the inherent and normal behavior of all of its members.

WHAT IS A **LIVING** CULTURE FOR STEWARDSHIP?

A **LIVING** culture of stewardship is one that recognizes all our resources as being a part of our responsibility to demonstrate appreciation and thankfulness for that we are given. Living in a manner that protects and maintains our physical health so that our bodies are viewed as “temples of God” is stewardship. Giving a “hand up” to the despondent and the downtrodden is stewardship. Using the knowledge and experience that we have to help others grow in life and in the Lord is stewardship. Prayers of thankfulness that we utter while on our knees are stewardship. A **LIVING** culture of stewardship is all of these things and yet, it is so much more. It is an everyday awareness that all that we have-our bodies, our health, our minds, our knowledge, our money, our loved ones-all are gifts given to us by God to be used for His glory. A **LIVING** stewardship is all of our thoughts, all of our words and all of our deeds that we use to honor God every day.



**A FORMAL RECOMMENDATION FOR EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY
IN THE
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

Presented by
The Commission for the Department of Annuity Investments and Insurance

Dr. Jerome V. Harris, Executive Director

June 30, 2010

1. The Establishment of the Office of Stewardship Education

Purpose

Establish an office of Stewardship Education under the supervision of the Department of Annuity Investments and Insurance to be based in Memphis and housed in the same building facility.

Rationale:

The implementation of an effective stewardship ministry throughout the AME Church requires a full time focus if it is to be effective. The position would be filled under a three year contract, renewable based on performance and would report through the department and its commission to the General Board. A substantive report of all activities conducted in the promotion of a connectional stewardship regimen would be presented annually to include an unqualified audit of all income and expenditures.

Responsibilities:

The primary responsibilities of the position would be to develop a standardized curriculum and doctrine to be taught and implemented in every local church with particular emphasis on New Member and Sunday School classes. Curriculum to be reviewed by the Department of Christian Education and approved by the General Board prior to implementation which would be scheduled to begin in the 2012-2016 Quadrennial. The curriculum is to be designed to cultivate a **LIVING Culture of Stewardship** and create a new type of giving behavior. The achievement of this culture and giving behavior should be further reinforced by instituting a monthly "Stewardship Sunday" in every local church with a different stewardship focus each month.

A Stewardship Ministry line item is to be added to each Pastoral Report to the Annual Conference and to each Episcopal District and department annual report to the General Board. In addition to the traditional monetary and membership oriented reporting, the report would include a specific focus on the percentage of monies generated and allocated for stewardship/focus

efforts and the results achieved. A minimum standard of 10% of all monies raised would be established for this purpose. All Episcopal District, General Officer, Connectional Officer Departments and Components would be required to present a third party, unqualified audit to each General Board.

Create a standard recognition protocol for Proportionate Giving to take advantage of experienced volunteers (Retired Teachers, Physicians, Counselors, etc.) and establish a value for the voluntary time served. Establish a “Volunteer Recognition Sunday” whereby volunteers would be honored by the church and the “value” of their volunteerism, i.e. how much money was saved in potential salary of an employee as a result of a volunteer performing those duties, cost of medical care for members reduced as a result of free, church sponsored health/wellness clinics, food pantries, clothes closets, etc.

Position Compensation:

The position is designed to have minimal impact on the General Budget. The current annual allocation of \$28,028 to the department for stewardship training would be transferred to the position, with a modest increase of 25% (\$7,007/yr), thereby establishing a base salary of \$35,035 annually. As initial “seed” funds, Episcopal Districts 1-13 would contribute \$1,000 per month for 12 months, thereby generating an additional \$156,000 for position related expenses, i.e. stewardship materials, travel, necessary office expenses, etc. Office space, rent, and utilities will be contributed by the department at no cost.

2. Fixed Assets/Liquidity Review and Evaluation Committee

Purpose:

Perform a critical analysis of the fixed asset holdings of the AME Church to determine the “highest and best use” of all properties owned by the Church. The majority of the financial worth of the church is in its fixed assets, (buildings, lands, educational institutions, etc.) and a better understanding of the actual value and effectiveness of these holdings must be obtained in order to make rational and prudent decisions and become “good stewards” of these tangible resources.

Rational:

A candid analysis of the current financial position of the AME Church would reveal an irrefutable fact-that we as a Church are “**asset rich and liquidity poor.**” This means that although we have significant fixed assets as identified above, in the majority of instances, we have failed to utilize and leverage these assets to efficiently and effectively impact operational cash flow, thereby compromising the real mission of the church. An in depth analysis

performed by professional financial and real estate experts is required to determine how these assets may be better leveraged and utilized. This may be accomplished in either one or more of the following ways in order to minimize the inherent cost and impact on the General Budget:

- 1) Create a committee under the auspices of the Commission on Colleges and Universities in conjunction with the reactivation of the Executive Committee on Higher Education with the specific responsibility to analyze and evaluate all church owned educational properties. This analysis should include, but not be limited to, obtaining current property appraisals, enrollment, current and long term debt, federal and state support of students and community impact. The committee should be empowered to make candid but reasonable decisions regarding these properties and present the same to the General Board for further action.
- 2) Identify and engage certified commercial property appraisers that are located in close proximity of the subject property to perform appraisals based on the industry standard of “highest and best use.” These findings would be submitted to the above committee for presentation to the General Board. All findings should be computerized and housed in a central location for both present and future access and decision making.
- 3) Create a Fixed Asset Committee under the Commission on Economic Development to oversee all church owned properties (exclusive of local churches) with decision making authority and answerable to the General Board through the Commission.

3. Leadership by Example: A Systematic Philosophy and Practice of Tithing

Purpose:

In order to have an effective Stewardship Ministry, the Connectional Church must set the example and be viewed as a tither as well as the local church. As a means of accomplishing this, the general budget should be revised to present a greater commitment to the furtherance of the foundational mission of church.

Rationale:

In the current economic environment, the AME Church must become more proactive rather than reactive in the furtherance of its mission. In the midst of declining membership, limited financial resources and uncontrollable natural disasters, the church must position itself to address these issues in a positive and prepared manner by leading by example.

A. Connectional Church Tithing (Connectional Budget)

10% investment in calling people to Christ
(Commissions on Global Witness & Ministry and Church Growth & Development)

10% investment in social justice activities for the liberation of the oppressed
(Commissions on Social Action, Women in Ministry and Lay Organization)

10% investment of development/reserve/contingency funds
(Commissions Statistics and Finance, Economic Development and Global Development)

B. Local Church Tithing (Local Church Budget)

10% connectional obligations (general budget, etc)
(Board of Stewards)

10% community investment/missions
(Women's Missionary Society)

10% investment of development/contingency
(Board of Trustees, Board of Stewards and Lay Organization)

All Commissions, Boards and Components must be held accountable financially as well performance wise. A “results oriented” mandate must be in evidence at every level of involvement. Commission Members, Stewards and Trustees should elected and selected based on demonstrated experience, expertise and a sincere willingness to serve rather than on popularity or local church position. Commitment of an effective Stewardship Ministry is a serious commitment that should not be undertaken lightly and will require the best dedication and talents that the church can provide. With the one important exception of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ; the greatest asset of the AME Church is its people.

4. Establishment of an “eGiving” Committee for the Present Age

Purpose:

To create a customized “eGiving” software platform that will be “user friendly” and made available to all local churches throughout the Connectional Church at little or no cost.

Rationale:

In order to develop and maintain a viable and effective Stewardship Ministry, the AME Church must seek to take advantage of every means and opportunity available. The Internet Technology that is so pervasive in our world today

provides an excellent means by which membership giving can be efficiently enhanced and promoted in a non intrusive way. The prolific use of Debit and Credit cards has surpassed check writing and paying by cash as the preferred method of transacting everyday business transactions and should used as a critical component promoting stewardship.

However, this technology can and should be used in a broader sense that will enable the AME Church to “go beyond the walls” and reach those who may not be of our flock. Christian minded philanthropic individuals, foundations and corporations with “willing hearts” and an abiding love for the Lord are still very much in evidence, even in the recessionary economic climate of today.



STEWARDSHIP TASK FORCE COMMITTEE

	District
Mrs. Wanda L. Duckett	1 st
Reverend Terry McCray Hill	5 th
Reverend Ernest Davis, Jr.	6 th
Reverend Norvell Goff, Sr.	7 th
Mrs. Christine Garner Atkinson	11 th
Mrs. Dee Merritt Bell	11 th
Mr. Joseph S. Coppock, Jr.	11 th
Mrs. Sheila Hammond	11 th
Reverend Valerie J. Houston	11 th
Reverend Grandville Reed	11 th
Mr. James Robbins	11 th

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Reverend Jonathan Weaver
Mr. Marcus Henderson