



Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



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[Black leaders meet to discuss future of United Methodist Church](#)

CHICAGO - Dozens of key African-American laity, clergy and episcopal leaders met in Chicago on Thursday and Friday to discern and map out the future of the Black Church in The United Methodist Church as a prelude to the 2020 General Conference.

Organized by the Ebony Bishops and facilitated by the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), the meeting brought together leaders of the different constituencies of the Black Church for a time of prayer, reflection, and mutual conversation around concerns about the future of both the Black Church and the United Methodist Church and what the Black Church has to offer in this season of discernment.

The Ebony Bishops envisioned the meeting as an intentional forum for Black leaders to hear each other's concerns, glean ideas and priorities, and learn from each other's wisdom and experiences. Ebony Bishops in attendance included Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling, Bishop Leonard Fairley, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, Bishop Frank Beard and Bishop James Swanson.

"The Ebony Bishops called together Black leaders from across the connection to engage in a time of truth-telling, regarding current realities in the Black Church and the Black community, and to engage in conversations that reflect our hope for the future of The United Methodist Church, as it relates to Black people," said Bishop Beard.

During the opening worship Bishop Easterling, who preached from I Corinthians 13:13, urged the participants to show that "Love Is Justice in Action," in all their aspects of life and ministry; reminding them of their journey of faith that had overcome many obstacles on the way.

The participants agreed to pursue legislative advocacy, build bridges with the African diaspora, create an anti-oppression agenda for the Black Church, claim African-American identity and missional imperatives and work beyond General Conference 2020.

Bishop Malone noted that: "This is one of several conversations the Ebony Bishops have engaged in with the Black leaders, clergy and lay, of the United Methodist Church. We want to make sure that Black people and the Black church perspective contributes to conversations and any decisions made for whatever is next for the United Methodist Church."

In the closing worship, Bishop Moore-Koikoi called on Black Methodists to prepare to sing a new song that tells their story, instead of letting other people tell the narrative of the Black Church in the global denomination.

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