

August 20, 2013

Re: Complaint of Bishop Larry L. Shaw against Bishop John H. Sheard et al

To my esteemed colleagues:

I trust this communiqué finds you and your families prospering and enjoying good health as your souls continue to prosper.

I write to transmit the report and results of the specially configured Grievance Committee, chaired by Bishop T. Walter Plummer, which was formulated to investigate the above referenced complaint brought by Bishop Larry Shaw against Board of Bishops Chairman, Bishop John H. Sheard, and several other Bishops (the “Shaw Complaint”). As you know, a special grievance committee had to be formulated to investigate the Shaw Complaint because the Chairman of the Grievance Committee, Bishop Roy Dixon, was named as one of the Respondents. Bishop Dixon therefore recused himself. Bishop Roger Jones is Vice-Chairman of the standing Grievance Committee. Because he was also a named Respondent in the Shaw Complaint, he recused himself as well. Bishop Albert Galbraith is secretary of the Standing Grievance Committee and because he was also a named respondent in the Shaw Complaint recused himself. Therefore, the members of the Special Grievance Committee included: Bishop T. Walter Plummer (chairman), Bishop Mark Walden, Bishop Harvey Lewis, Sr. Bishop Benjamin J. Ravenel Sr. and Bishop Oscar Meadows.

In its report, the Special Grievance Committee determined that the Shaw Complaint should not advance to a trial before the Board of Bishops because there was “no viable witness” that appeared or was presented to the Grievance Committee to support the allegations. The Special Grievance Committee determined further that there was not sufficient evidence to support Bishop Shaw’s allegations. Finally, the Special Grievance Committee determined that a trial was not necessary due to the “apparent reconciliation [between Bishop John H. Sheard and Bishop Larry L. Shaw] as displayed by statements of forgiveness and the embracing” during the Board of Bishops Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. For these reasons, the Special Grievance Committee found that there is no just cause for a trial by the Board of Bishops.

As the Executive Team Member, holding the responsibility for overseeing the fair adjudication of this Complaint brought by Bishop Larry Shaw, I have reviewed the report tendered by Bishop T. Walter Plummer and I have noted that there are a couple of troubling issues embedded within the report. Thus, as the Chief Hearing Officer for this particular matter, I must address these issues here, as I might not have an opportunity to do so in the future, nor do I want to turn any of our sessions into a spectacle.

The Special Grievance Committee report tendered by Bishop T. Walter Plummer shows that Bishop John H. Sheard, Bishop Roy Dixon, and Bishop Adrian Williams, in response to the May 15, 2013 letter sent by Acting Grievance Committee Chairman, Bishop T. Walter Plummer

pursuant to Rule of Trial Procedure 6(b), each *properly* filed a written response with the Special Grievance Committee addressing or denying all of the allegations of the Complaint. Clearly, these Bishops adhered to the Rules of Trial Procedure established by the Board of Bishops. Regrettably, the report also shows that the remaining five Respondents did not reply *at all* to the allegations of the Complaint even though a request was made by the Special Grievance Committee Chairman.¹

Hopefully, there is some reasonable explanation for these five Bishops' lack of response to a legitimate inquiry from a committee of the Board of Bishops. Surely, consecrated Bishops of the Church of God in Christ would not ignore or refuse to cooperate with a process that was established by a vote of the entire Board of Bishops. What makes this stand out to me is that four of these remaining five Bishops either hold elected positions within the Board of Bishops or have appointed positions of leadership on the Executive Committee. This is not the kind of example that I think we want to demonstrate. Failure to respond to inquiries that are made by a duly appointed special committee of the Board of Bishops has significant negative consequences to the proper functioning of this Board. To the extent that the five Bishops believe they are innocent of the charges, they should have been willing to address them and not leave this cloud of illegitimacy hanging over the entire Board of Bishops. We cannot expect other Bishops, clergy, and the laity to respect us, if we will not adhere to our own rules. As we have seen over the past few years, many of the things that we do are subjected to public examination. Failure to respond subjects the entire Board of Bishops to unnecessary scrutiny and criticism when our members do not adhere to the rules governing this august body. **I therefore ask of my dear brothers that until such time as our rules are changed or disposed of otherwise, that we all commit to respect and adhere to the subject rules.** We have to at all cost avoid the appearance of impropriety.

The report submitted by Bishop Plummer also indicates that the members of the Grievance Committee did not appear for and participate in a meeting called for by the Acting Chairman. The report indicates that the members of the Special Committee failed to avail themselves to participate. While I do not know the reasons for the lack of availability of these members, I will suggest that it is incumbent upon each of us to fully participate in the processes and operations of our Board of Bishops when requested by the leadership of this Board. I recognize that all of this work is time consuming and politically challenging, but it is necessary to maintain the integrity of our organization and to adhere to our constitutional obligations. My suggestion is that if a Bishop feels that they cannot or that they are unable to fully participate in the operations of any aspect of the Board, they should decline the opportunity when the

¹**The report shows** that on May 20, 2013 Bishop Benjamin P. Collins received the package requesting a response within 30 days via certified mail. **The report shows** that on May 18, 2013 Bishop Felton Smith received his package requesting a response within 30 days via certified mail. **The report shows** that Bishop John Wayne Leggett did not claim his certified mail package, but that the package was hand-delivered to him during the AIM Convention. To date, there has been no response. **The report shows** that Bishop Albert Galbraith's certified mail package was neither signed for nor was it returned. **The report shows** that the certified mail package sent to Bishop Roger Jones went unclaimed, and that an attempt was made to hand-deliver the package to Bishop Jones during the AIM Convention, but he refused to accept it.

appointment is made. It does the entire Board of Bishops a disservice to accept an appointment and then not fulfill the obligations of the job.

As indicated, the Special Grievance Committee ultimately determined by a majority of its members that the Shaw Complaint should not go to trial before the Board of Bishops, and a report has been submitted to the Assistant Secretary of the Board of Bishops² regarding the Subject Complaint indicating the reasons for this determination as required by Rule of Trial Procedure 7(a). **Because the Special Grievance Committee determined that there is no just cause for a trial, this matter is dismissed pursuant to Rule of Trial Procedure 6(g).**

Respectfully submitted to my Esteemed Colleagues,

BISHOP DONALD R. MURRAY,

FIRST VICE-CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF BISHOPS

²The matter must be submitted to the Assistant Secretary, as the Secretary of the Board of Bishops is the Complainant in this matter. The matter is also being copied to Bishop James C. Austin, Sr. who serves as the Recording Secretary.