

*Bishop Staccato Powell*

*Presiding Prelate Western Episcopal District AME Zion Church  
President, Board of Bishops AME Zion Church*



## COMMUNION DURING CORONAVIRUS

*"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out." (John Wesley)*

Your Board of Bishops continues to pray for healing in our land and the comfort of our people in the midst of this global COVID-19 pandemic. We are encouraged by the myriad of ways that our pastors and churches are ministering to their congregants and broader community utilizing social media, conference calls, and live streaming. This crisis is challenging indeed; however, we are witnessing opportunities for greater witness for Christ and Zion.

As this crisis extends into another month and may prohibit our gatherings for weeks to come, there has been some discussion about the practice of Online Communion as a means by which our members can partake of the Sacrament during this period of social distancing. While we applaud creative approaches to connecting with our members, we must guard against innovations that conflict with our church doctrine. If our deeply held beliefs and practices do not mean anything during a crisis then they do not mean anything at all.

The Board of Bishops deems Online Communion as inconsistent with our doctrine and therefore, it is not to be done by our African Methodist Episcopal Zion Churches. We do not mail pre-packaged, consecrated elements, consecrating the elements via computer screen is not a part of our accepted practice, and Christianity is inherently incarnational and the sacraments are tangible, not virtual. It is our position that consistent with the words of our Lord; "...as often as you do this..." that pastors should wait until the congregation once again gathers together to celebrate The Lord's Supper. This is a holy and blessed sacrament which must not be lessened for the sake of expediency.

Please join us in praying for everyone impacted by this health crisis. We pray for our elderly and those with compromised immune systems. We pray for our children and other vulnerable populations. We pray for healthcare providers, caretakers, and others who are on the frontline in confronting this pandemic and providing comfort for others. We pray for our pastors and ministers who often risk their own wellbeing to be with and serve others. We pray for our congregational life together that social distancing does not become social isolation. We pray that our people will not become weary or apathetic but that we grow deeper, stronger, more united and renewed in our commitment to Christian love and community. As always, we admonish you to stay focused, serve faithfully and stand firm!

We offer the words of the Apostle Paul for you, beloved sisters and brothers of Zion:

***And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to test and prove what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)***

Bishop George E. Battle, Jr., Senior Bishop  
Bishop Kenneth Monroe  
Bishop Darryl Starnes  
Bishop Dennis V. Proctor  
Bishop Mildred Bonnie Hines  
Bishop W. Darin Moore  
Bishop Seth O. Lartey  
Bishop Michael Angelo Frencher Sr.  
Bishop George D. Crenshaw  
Bishop Hilliard Dogbe  
Bishop U.U. Effiong  
Bishop George W.C. Walker, Sr.  
Bishop S. Chuka Ekeman, Sr.  
Bishop Joseph Johnson  
Bishop Marshall H. Strickland  
Bishop Nathaniel Jarrett  
Bishop Warren M. Brown  
Bishop Louis Hunter

Anointed to Serve,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Staccato Powell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Staccato" being more prominent and the last name "Powell" following in a similar style.

Staccato Powell  
Episcopal Servant of the Most High  
President, Board of Bishops