



*"From Where I Sit ..."*

## **General Officers Meet With CVS Caremark Officials on Partnership with the CME Church**

A little known by-product of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual CME Unity Summit is the approval by the College of Bishops of a partnership with the Faith-Based initiative of CVS Caremark, the largest US Health Care Provider. The decision came after a year of effort that included dialogue, a Nashville, Tennessee pilot project, a presentation to the College of Bishops, and a formal reception at the Houston Unity Summit.

As the Executive Director of the CME Unity Summit and the point person for arranging the reception, I became entwined in this project as both a Summit official and a General Officer. I am normally suspicious of individuals, groups or organizations that offer partnering relationships but seem to want more than they give. However this project appeared to be very different, very real and very beneficial. Therefore, I offered to coordinate or serve as a conduit for the implementation of this project. My goal was two-fold: 1) Not to let anything supplant what I perceived to be the primary mission of our Church and 2) to acknowledge that for a denomination our size to meaningfully and effectively partner with an entity as large as CVS would require the cooperative participation of each department of our Church and not just the Board of Personnel Services. In other words, to be successful with this endeavor will require a "full court press."

Earlier this month (November), at our invitation, CVS Caremark officials met with the General Secretaries of the departments of Christian Education, Lay Ministry, Publications, Personnel Services and the Editor of the Christian Index along with the Vice President of the Women's Missionary Council. Also present was the CME consultant to the project, Dr. Willie Mae Willett, who has been integral in the promotion of the project since the November 2012 pilot project in Nashville, TN. Representing CVS Caremark were Olivia Lang, Senior Manager, Workforce Development Programs and Wayne Ingram, Consultant, Work Force Development along with Jane Hamilton of Partners on the Path, a specialist on the subject of Caregiving. The purpose of the meeting was to strategically formulate the structure of the Partnership, assess the needs, determine national and local applications, and pose initial timelines.

The Partnership will focus on three primary areas: 1) Workforce Development (which will include potential opportunities for scholarships, fellowships and apprenticeships through CME affiliated educational institutions and employment and career enhancement for CME members; 2) Health and Wellness in the African-American and specifically CME communities and 3) Caregiver Support with a focus on Seniors, employed parents, employed children, teenagers, and children.

The next meeting is planned for January at the CME Pastors' Conference to include all of the General Officers and other designated officials. Although plans are being devised for the CVS fiscal year that begins in July 2014, some offerings and opportunities will be available in early 2014 and will be initially shared via the Christian Index, the Missionary Messenger and CIT.

Personally, I am excited for departmental officials of the Church to have this opportunity to utilize their collective gifts to brainstorm as a think-tank for the success of this Partnership ... a Partnership that is intended to be mutually beneficial to both entities. The enthusiastic excitement conveyed by each participant was indicative to the great potential for the future. I think this is a good thing in many different ways and certainly worth our individual and collective efforts. Or at least that is the way it looks to me ...

*“From Where I Sit”*

Tyrone T. Davis, D.Min, is the General Secretary of the Board of Personnel Services  
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Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at [www.thecmechurch.org](http://www.thecmechurch.org))