



“From Where I Sit ...”

A Hundred Years of Change!

Next year, in Birmingham, at the 2018 General Conference, the General Board of Personnel Services will celebrate its 100th Anniversary and much has happened and has changed since its inception at the General Conference of 1918. My reference source concerning the changes comes from a 1918 Discipline of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church that was given to me in 1978 by Mrs. Lucille Cooper, a dear member of my former congregation at Parrish Temple CME Church in Saint Louis, MO.

In 1918, when my Board was established, it was then known as the Superannuated Preachers, Widows and Orphans Department and it maintained that name until it was changed to the Board of Pensions in 1962. It was not until 1978 that the department became known as the General Board of Personnel Services.

Some of the interesting differences since 1918 are:

- 1) There were only 7 bishops then instead of the 11 we have today.
- 2) Surprisingly, there were 10 General Officers listed in the Discipline of 1918.
- 3) The General Fund assessment for individual members was 50¢ per capita.
- 4) The annual salaries were:
 - a. \$2,250 – Active Bishops
 - b. \$600 – Retired Bishops
 - c. \$240 – Bishops’ Widows
- 5) The Connectional Budget (or *Financial Plan as it was call in 1918*) was allocated as follows:

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|
| a. Bishops’ salary | 25% | d. Publishing Interest | 10% |
| b. Education | 22% | e. Building Fund | 5% |
| c. General Missions | 22% | f. Conference Claimants | 10% |
| g. Contingent Fund | | 5% | |

- 6) Annual Conference were composed of “All the traveling preachers in full connection with it, and four lay representatives—one of whom may be a local preacher—from each Presiding Elder’s District.”
- 7) Annual Conference Lay Representatives were “chosen annually by the District Conferences ...” They were required to be 25 years of age and a member of the Church for 6 years.
- 8) The first of the disciplinary questions was not “Who are admitted on trial?” but instead “Are all the preachers blameless in their life and administration?” The admission question was #2. It is interesting to me that in 1918, the conference began its official business by first confirming the “character” of the preachers, especially since they would act on the subsequent issues related to the ministry. The question about character was changed to #12 in 1922 and has remained in this place to this day.

Yes, a lot has changed since 1918 and much of it signals our growth through the years. Yet, as we look back over the past, surely you can join me in affirming that “We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord ...” *Or at least that’s the way it looks to me...*

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