



“From Where I Sit ...”

“Let me be clear ...”

One of the phrases often used by the President of our country is “Let me be clear ...” After having read the Judicial Council Opinion in the May issue of the Christian Index, I feel compelled to address a portion of the ruling of this opinion and the need to “make myself clear.”

First let me state that my concern with this opinion is not with its outcome. The issue addressed by the Judicial Council was regarding the application of the retirement law in the CME Discipline as it applies to the President of the Women’s Missionary Council as a General Officer. And I, in fact, commend the Judicial Council for its efforts to be evenhanded and just in arriving at their final conclusions. However, my concern is about the Judicial Council’s use of an erroneous reference in support of their ruling and the subsequent wide spread circulation of this erroneous reference through the publication of their opinion in the Christian Index.

This is a small point but it has significant implications and therefore I will again attempt “to be clear.” On page 32 of the May 2012 issue of the Christian Index, the last four lines at the bottom of the second column, the ruling states, “... However, a President of the Women’s Missionary Council **cannot** [emphasis added] enroll in the CME retirement plan because they can never meet the qualification for retirement benefits, as is illustrated ...” This is not a true statement. I know for a certainty that each president of the Women’s Missionary Council since 1987 has enrolled and participated in the CME Retirement Plan because my department processed their disbursement checks and I personally signed them.

This is further illustrated by referring to the 2010 Book of Discipline of the CME Church, page 215, ¶1017, Schedule “F” – Pension Ministries, and noting the allocation “General Officers Annuity 10 @ \$4,800”. This line item allocates \$4,800 annually for each of the 10 active general officers (including the President of the Women’s Missionary Council) to be paid by the Department of Finance into the CME Retirement Plan. Additionally, this benefit has been provided in the Connectional Budget for bishops and general officers as far back as 1978 (see page 20, Pension-Official-General Church).

In my earlier article entitled, “**Retirement and Pension ... A Difference in Practice**” (published as a part of this series in the November 2011 issue of the Christian Index) I sought to clarify for our readers the subtle differences between Retirement Benefits and Pension Benefits as they are used in our denomination. It was out of this particular concern that I penned this article. (I will not attempt to repeat the differences in this article and would refer you to our webpage for a copy of that article if your November 2011 issue of the Christian Index is unavailable.) Additionally, when the Judicial Council met in September 2011 to hear this matter and this erroneous assumption was put forth as submitted testimony, I requested and was allowed to make a clarifying rebuttal to this misconception.



I reiterate my original premise. My intent in raising this concern is not to question or challenge the final outcomes of the ruling of the Judicial Council on this matter. Those matters are not within my purview. My intent and purpose is solely to address and correct an erroneous statement which was used as foundation in arriving at a final conclusion. Why make such an issue of a seemingly small matter that has no subsequent impact of the final outcomes? For me,

the answer is two-fold: 1) such an account stated in the ruling of an opinion of the Judicial Council and published in the Christian Index will be circulated to a large readership and will be relied upon to be correct when in fact it is not and 2) there may be future occasions when the Judicial Council may rely on its own assertion of this erroneous statement when considering other cases.

Finally, as we look to the future, I feel it encumbered on the Board of Personnel Services to propose to the next General Conference revisions to these sections of the Book of Discipline that lend themselves to such misunderstanding. If some of our laws are as misleading to the Judicial Council, the third branch of highest government within our Zion, then certainly it would seem quite likely that the normal reader may draw a wrong conclusion. 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 which sponsors the CME Retirement Plan & Trust

(Copies of earlier articles may be found on the Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at www.c-m-e.org)