



"From Where We Sit ..."

Tributes in Memory of Dr. N. Charles Thomas

"Celebrating the Life of a Servant" was the title of the funeral program of the late Dr. N. Charles Thomas, the Fifth General Secretary of the General Board of Personnel Services (Pensions). His sun rose June 24, 1929 and set May 4, 2019.



Dr. Carmichael Crutchfield, Chair of the CME General Officers' Council and I, as Dr. Thomas' successor, were participants on the Homegoing program and presented tributes to our emeritus colleague. In my comments, I noted that Dr. Thomas was a skilled and multi-talented person. After having served as General Conference Secretary, Dr. Thomas in 1978 was elected General Secretary in what Dr. Crutchfield termed "a landslide election" on the first ballot. This was the first of what would become six successful, mostly uncontested, quadrennial elections.

His work included the administration of the CME Retirement Plan (which during his tenure grew to over \$21M), the conversion of the former SPW&O Program to the CME Gift Fund Plan, the initiation of the CME Fire & Casualty Insurance Plan, the CME Key Person Plan, the CME Reader Resource Series (RRS), and the CME Retirement 403(b) Plan. Dr. Thomas was a visionary leader as demonstrated by many of these plans, which at that time, were ahead of their day especially for a Black Church. Among other assignments entrusted to him was the presidency of the CME Community Development Corporation and directorship of the CME Annual Convocation, the CME Church's largest, most comprehensive, training and development program, where he successfully served during its formative years.

Dr. Crutchfield further noted that Dr. Thomas had also served as Chair of the CME General Officers Council and had led the Council in Retreat events that "included fellowship, [study and development] and ended [per the February 9, 1994 record] with a Dialogue with the College of Bishops." He continued to say, "It seemed obvious to me that the work of this group of General Officers, led by Dr. Thomas, laid the groundwork for the future of General Officers, which I am honored now to serve. I am convinced without a doubt that we, the present-day General Officers Council, are deeply indebted to Dr. Thomas' leadership and the work of those General Officers during the 1990's."

I came to know him as a quiet man who chose his words with reasoned carefulness. He may have seemed a small man to many, but the work he did, and the accomplishments of his deeds made him a giant among most. He was a hard worker who spent many long hours and weekends working in the office for the life of the Church.

The above highlights tell just a small part of the life-story of Dr. Thomas, but the closing words of Dr. Crutchfield, I believe, tell it best, "He was an iconic figure of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church." Or at least that's the way it looked to us...

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