

February 12, 2025

Bishop J. Drew Sheard
Office of Presiding Bishop
Church of God In Christ, Inc.
930 Mason Street
Memphis, Tennessee 38126

Re: Episcopal Visit to Texas North Central Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

Dear Bishop Sheard:

I am writing to you with a heavy heart regarding the recent events within the Texas North Central Jurisdiction, Holy Tabernacle Church of God in Christ, and the challenges I have faced due to my age and health. While I remain committed to serving our Lord and the members of this jurisdiction, I have become aware of certain actions by some of my subordinates, locally and jurisdictionally, that are deeply troubling.

As a result of alleged conversations that I have not been privy to by some members, you have determined that it is best to convene a meeting with the congregation I pastor and the jurisdiction where I serve as the duly consecrated and appointed Bishop. I am unclear of the intention of this meeting. It has been alleged that you plan to ask for my resignation or remove me as Pastor and Bishop. I feel compelled to express my concerns about this approach. As jurisdictional Bishop, I would like to note that I am currently finalizing plans to solidify future pastoral leadership of Holy Tabernacle and will be executed in the very near future. Additionally, there are critical decisions that I plan to make at the local church. The proposed meeting would impose undue confusion into that process and disrupt our efforts in a significant way. While I am always open to addressing concerns and fostering unity, I believe that bypassing the established procedures outlined in our organizational constitution, specifically Article VIII, would be detrimental to the integrity and order of our church.

As you know, Article VIII clearly lays out the process for addressing concerns regarding a Bishop, which includes a written complaint, an investigation, and a hearing before the Board of Bishops. This process is not merely a formality; it is a vital safeguard designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and due process for all members of our leadership. It protects against unfounded accusations, ill-motivations, and ensures that any concerns are addressed in a structured and equitable manner.

I am particularly concerned that a meeting directly with these clergy members and local members outside of this established process could be misconstrued as an endorsement of their actions and a disregard for our constitutional framework. This could set a dangerous precedent, potentially emboldening others to circumvent established procedures in the future, thereby undermining the authority of our constitution and the stability of our organization. Imagine the organizational chaos that would endure if vain and ambitious clergy across the country saw this action as the way of moving an aging prelate out of the way for their own selfish motives.

I have dedicated my life to the Church of God in Christ and have always strived to uphold its principles and regulations. I believe that adhering to our established procedures is paramount, even in challenging circumstances. Consequently, I believe a more amicable approach would be the meeting, Monday, February 24, be with you, me as Pastor and Jurisdictional Prelate, the General Board, designated members of the Board of Bishops, and my family prior to speaking to the congregation and clergy under my direct consecrated authority. I honestly do not believe we would have sufficient time to adequately address the concerns you may have, share my plans and intentions, and then immediately go into a meeting with the jurisdiction and local church. The initial meeting scheduled could be with individuals mentioned above. Collectively, we can determine the course of action that may include me convening the church and jurisdiction later to address whatever issues. This would ensure dignity and respect of the sacred Office of the Bishop and Pastor and its authority. Such a meeting would be in ecclesiastical order and certainly would be the right thing to do.

Therefore, if there are any members who are not satisfied with my proposal, I respectfully request that all parties involved be directed to follow the guidelines outlined in Article VIII. This will ensure that any concerns regarding my leadership are addressed appropriately and fairly, while also preserving the integrity of our organizational structure and upholding the due process afforded to every Bishop within the Church of God in Christ.

I trust in your wisdom and leadership, and I pray for your guidance as we navigate these difficult times. I am confident that by adhering to our established principles, we can emerge stronger and more united.

Sincerely,

Bishop Robert L. Sample
Jurisdictional Prelate
Texas North Central Jurisdiction
Church of God in Christ