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TMS Global Aims to Increase Diversity in the World Missions Workforce

New African-American advisory board welcomed as a key step in missions group's major push to more fully reflect God's church and kingdom

NORCROSS, Ga.—Non-white churches and workers have long been underrepresented in mainline denominations in missions, but one agency is doing all that it can to help change that. TMS Global is undertaking a major drive to diversify in its work around the world, to more fully reflect the rich breadth of God's church and kingdom.

"In the past we have failed to make changes in organizations to make them more diverse so that diverse cultures are not merely the recipients of missions, but leaders within missions organizations," said the Rev. Romal Tune, who joined TMS Global last year as full-time senior adviser to president and CEO, the Rev. Max Wilkins, and is spearheading the organization's efforts. "That must change."

As a major step in the initiative, the Norcross, Ga.-headquartered agency has named its first African American Mobilization Advisory Board. The 12 influential leaders representing a broad range of the African-American church will work with TMS Global to influence organizational policies, and offer recommendations to help increase staff diversity and make existing staff more aware of cultural issues. They will also help make churches aware of the resources and opportunities available through TMS Global and help ensure its training materials are culturally sensitive.

Danielle Ayers is minister of justice at Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas; Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore is senior pastor of the International Community Baptist Churches in the U.S. and the Philippines; Leroy Barber is co-founder and director of the Voices Project and college pastor at Kilns College in Bend, Ore.; the Rev. Sheila Bates is a provisional elder and will serve as associate pastor at Dauphin Way United Methodist Church (as of July 1) in Mobile, Ala.

Dr. Joseph W. Daniels, Jr., is lead pastor at Emory United Methodist Church in Washington, DC; Bishop Jonathan Holston is resident bishop of The United Methodist Church South Carolina Conference; the Rev. Dr. Candace M. Lewis is district superintendent of the Gulf Center area of The United Methodist Church Florida Annual Conference; Bishop Sharma D. Lewis is resident bishop of The United Methodist Church's Richmond episcopal area; Krystal Norman is a Global Mission Fellow of The United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries; Vance Ross is director of Annual Conference Relationships for The United Methodist Church's Discipleship Ministries, based in Atlanta; and the Rev. Sidney Williams is pastor of Bethel Church of Morristown in Morristown, New Jersey, an African Methodist Episcopal congregation.

The group also includes the Rev. Christian Washington and the Rev. Regina Henderson, who have been

consulting with TMS Global on how to revise its mobilization curriculum to better serve black churches. The Rev. Washington is the community pastor at The Upper Room, a United Methodist Church congregation in Houston, and the Rev. Henderson heads The Riverside Group, which provides grant administration and program management services with Wesleyan-tradition faith-based organizations and their partners, and is based in Columbia, S.C.

The board has held its first meeting. Members of the board also participated in The Convocation for Pastors of Black Churches, a national gathering of several hundred black church leaders held in Atlanta, where Tune presented the organization's vision for more involvement in world missions by black churches.

"We are so pleased to be able to draw on the wisdom of leaders of such influence and believe we are making significant steps towards realizing our goal," said Tune. "Moving forward, we must make our institutions as diverse as we want to see the missions field, and we are glad to see such interest in and support for what we are committed to achieving."

Founded in 1984 as The Mission Society for United Methodists, TMS Global has developed into an interdenominational agency that honors its Wesleyan heritage and beliefs, with a community of cross-cultural workers now representing more than a dozen different denominations. Based in Norcross, Ga., with some 175 workers engaged in a wide range of ministries in 35 countries around the world, TMS Global launched its commitment to broadening the diversity of its staff and programs in 2016.

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TMS Global (www.tms-global.org) mobilizes and equips the body of Christ to share the good news of the gospel, with an emphasis on the least-reached peoples of the world. Workers are engaged in a wide range of dynamic, culturally-sensitive ministries, from training and leadership development to literacy, medical care and relief aid.

PHOTO CUTLINE: The Revs. Romal Tune, Christian Washington and Regina Henderson at The Convocation for Pastors of Black Churches in Atlanta.

To schedule an interview with Romal Tune and other representatives of TMS Global, contact Ty Mays at (770) 256-8710 or tmays@inchristcommunications.com.