

*In Defense of Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake:
Refuting Carter's Defamation of His Character*

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I write this statement in response to Elder Earl W. Carter's multiple attempts to blemish and stain the excellent character and reputation of our Presiding Bishop, Charles E. Blake Sr.

Though Elder Carter's recent letter is filled with many groundless and irrelevant assertions, I must respond to one sinister and evil allegation that I know to be a lie. That is, his report of a claim by an Elder Thomas Cross that Harvard Professor Peter J. Gomes (now deceased) had claimed to have had an inappropriate encounter with Bishop Blake.

As a board member of Save Africa's Children and an active ex-student of Harvard University, I was personally involved when Bishop Blake received the Harvard Humanitarian Award in 2003. It has been my privilege to host and accompany Bishop Blake on all of his visits to Harvard and Boston. It is the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations that selects the recipient each year, and that invited Bishop Blake to address the university at Memorial Church in 2003.

As is their custom, the Foundation arranged for Bishop Blake, accompanied by his son, Charles E. Blake, II, and a group of COGIC pastors, to stay at the Charles Hotel in Cambridge. As a part of the process of honoring award recipients the Foundation arranges for them to meet with several distinguished Harvard faculty members. During Bishop Blake's very brief visit he met with Harvard Divinity School Dean William A. Graham, Murray A. Albertson Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, Harvey Cox, Victor S. Thomas Professor of Divinity, Ben Wikler '03, founder of the

Harvard AIDS Coalition, Robert M. Franklin, visiting professor of African American Religious Studies.

As an honored guest Bishop Blake spoke at Harvard's Memorial Church and was hosted for dinner along with his son, Charles, and several other COGIC ministers by the Minister of Memorial Church, the Plummer Professor of Christian Morals, the Reverend Peter J. Gomes. At a later time, Bishop and Lady Blake returned the professional courtesy by allowing Professor Gomes to speak at West Angeles. This was the extent of Bishop Blake's brief encounter with Professor Peter Gomes. It was only at a later time that Bishop Blake learned more about his reputation.

Contrary to Carter's allegations there was no friendship, not even a prior acquaintance, between Bishop Blake and Professor Gomes. Bishop Blake was never a "personal friend" of Professor Gomes. Bishop Blake NEVER stayed at Professor Gomes' residence.

Unfortunately, I am also, as a clergyman in the Boston area, acquainted with Thomas Cross. Carter quotes Cross' allegations which are indisputably false. It is ludicrous to even imagine that Professor Peter J. Gomes of Harvard University even knew Thomas Cross. It is an absolute lie that Bishop Blake had any kind of inappropriate physical relations with Professor Gomes. It is clearly just as untrue that Professor Gomes would confide any intimate details about any aspect of his life to Thomas Cross. Anyone remotely familiar with the world of Harvard or Peter J. Gomes would immediately recognize how completely mendacious any such claims are. I have confronted Thomas Cross and told him this to his face. And here an obvious question logically follows. If, as Cross has alleged, he had actually met with Professor Gomes in the presence of other COGIC clergy in a restaurant, why did he not produce the names of these individuals as corroborating evidence when directly challenged to do

so? How convenient to attribute this story to a person who is not alive to confirm or deny it, but not name those who could.

Bishop Blake has been uncompromising both publicly and privately in maintaining the biblical position on all matters related to human sexuality. He is on record for having done so in a number of COGIC statements on marriage. His pastoral ministry to members of his congregation unwaveringly reflects the integrity of that position.

I have dealt in detail with obvious lies and slander. However, the allegations based on hearsay, gossip and guilt by association are too unworthy to be dignified by a response.

In conclusion, this entire episode is part of a larger back story that few will articulate publicly. It must now be clearly outlined for the rising generation in the church. Presiding Bishop Charles Edward Blake, Sr. has been the victim of jealousy, envy and hatred for the crime, in large measure, of excellence and success. The truth is that lesser men have resented him and are now conspiring to undermine his efforts to reform areas of the church's spiritual life that have been ignored as the church played ecclesiastical politics. As for Mr. Carter, it seems that he is nothing more than a political mercenary on retainer to the highest bidding enemy of the Church of God in Christ and her leader, Bishop Blake.

Bishop Blake has burnished and enhanced the witness and image of the church before the larger world. I call upon all of the men and leaders of integrity and courage in COGIC to reject the morally disgraceful conduct of Carter and his co-conspirators and support the office of the Presiding Bishop.

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