Interview with Bishop Kenneth Monroe, Presiding Prelate Eastern NC Episcopal District AME Zion Church and the South Atlantic Episcopal District AME Zion Church on July 16, 20222 via telephone call. He is the visionary leader and Senior Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. He serves as Chairman of the Board of Livingstone College. He is past Chairman of the Board of Hood Seminary, Salisbury, NC. He is the builder of the Kenneth Monroe Transformation Center in Rock Hill, SC and is currently preparing the Eastern NC Episcopal District in the building of an Educational Resource Center. He is the author of Adventures of Uncertainty, Making the Impossible Possible with God. He uses the funds from the sale of this book to give scholarships to train persons for ministry. He believes in making deposits into people that transform generations to come.

**Who inspired or mentored you?**

I started preaching at 17 under the leadership and mentorship of Presiding Elder Rev. Samuel Farrow. He was not an educated man but a learned man because he was a voracious reader. He built a business in 1970. Also, as a visionary leader, he purchased a school for the Laurinburg District that still exists today. He also, worked and changed the hearts of the people to move from being a circuit church to becoming a station church that meets every Sunday. He provided me with responsibilities and took me to my first connectional meeting in the AME Zion Church.

**What is one choice you wish you had avoided?**

I don’t know at this time anything. In retrospect, in ministry we have to experience ups and downs. We have to experience bad times as well to balance our ministry. As Romans 8:28 assures us all things work together for good to those who called according to his purpose.

Hence, as a visionary leader you are able to see where you are going but you also understand that you are going to have difficulties getting there. Anyone with vision, must have insight, hindsight, and foresight.

**How do you encourage your team in the face of disagreement and adversity?**

In order to have a team you must win the confidence of those you are leading. One of the greatest things a leader can do is “win the confidence of a team” without it they will follow because of your position and authority. And it will be half-hearted, without enthusiasm, and confidence. For example, on basketball team all members must understand the make-up of the team and each person’s ability to contribute to the team and have confidence in each person so that when a pivotal moment arises they know who they can rely upon.

**What are the most critical characteristics of today’s effective leaders?**

There is a myriad of characteristics critical for leaders to be effective today. Leaders must have confidence and gain confidence in the people. Leaders must be loyal to the cause. I am not sure if everyone in leadership understands the relationship of the cause to leading. Too many leaders are more dedicated to what their leadership position can gain them rather than fulfilling the cause (call) of Christ. We must understand the church has been composed of flawed individuals who have been redeemed that God uses to do what He need to be done in Kingdom building. We need to understand that there is a call (cause) on leaders. God knows we’re sinners but He trusts us because of our faithfulness. We must understand as visionary leaders that teaching, preaching and serving are the ingredients to carry out the vision. Visionary leaders understand that ministry is not convenient but one that trusts God.

**This is a great sedge way into my next question, what is the greatest risk you have taken and why?**

I worked at the college in NC and my wife worked for the Board of Education for the county. But when opportunity came to do ministry, I relished in doing ministry, and I (we) reigned our job responsibilities at the college and the County Board of Education. It was a great sacrifice leaving NC to go to Kansas City Missouri. You see, I know that God makes a way when you’re doing His will. It doesn’t mean that you are not going to have difficulty, it means during those difficult moments He’s with you. I have sacrificed in helping other ministries and people. Any funds I have received for preaching, conducting training sessions I would take one-half for myself and one-half for the work because I understand that God blesses us for us but in order that we might bless others. Throughout my ministry, even as a Bishop, I have

**How do you maintain your leadership development and growth?**

I understand what God has for me in that position and that he provides for me to do ministry. A leader must build other leaders—leaders are called, born to be leaders rather than to be trained. Leaders must make deposits into people to help them develop. I spend time with God and I read. As a Bishop, I plan leadership institutes, convocations, and Annual Conferences that sell my vision to the people and help enhance and develop leadership abilities lying dormant in the people. Furthermore, I use these sessions to present my Vision because Vision must be transferred through the leader not a committee.

**As a Bishop, you have to make appointments to churches from many ministers under your jurisdiction, what critical characteristics do you look for in making those appointments?**

First, an appointment is an act of faith. Hence, the sincerity of the person and their loyalty to God and the church are the critical characteristics I look for in individuals as I make appointment.

**What leadership books would you recommend?**

I recommend the following books:

Managing Transition, Making the Most of Change by William Bridges

Necessary Endings: The Employees, Businesses, and Relationships That All of Us Have to Give Up in Order to Move Forward by Dr. Henry Cloud

Adventures of Uncertainty, Making the Impossible Possible with God by Kenneth Monroe

**As a visionary leader what would you like to share with other leaders?**

1. Love people regardless of their position economically, socially, and spiritually

2. Develop a sincere relationship with the people

3. Make Disciples of people as you win their confidence.

4. You cannot lead people if you are afraid of them. You must demonstrate faith and have courage.

Thanks for interviewing with me.

**Other notes for assistance**

Leaders with faith and courage are transformational/visionary, not only because they demonstrate a willingness to be accountable but because they act on the belief that anything is possible. Without these qualities, it is difficult to see challenges as opportunities rather than threats and to take action in the face of uncertainty. Great leaders want to change the world, not just their organizations and companies. They can achieve this transformation because they understand that every situation for an organization is unique, requiring a different approach and solution.

The story of Saddleback is all about faith and courage. Despite many obstacles, they persevered and expanded their vision into all kinds of places worldwide. Their main goal since then has been to build a community for their congregation and the entire city of Irvine. From its humble beginnings, it always kept the faith through all the difficulties. It kept courage when facing an uncertain future; it never wavered from its values despite adversity. Now, the Saddleback has developed into a great organization and can be described as one of the fastest-growing churches in US history.

Faith and courage are essential for organizations to grow, but plans can be easily derailed without a focus on discipline. This is why we believe discipline is vitally important to any organization. Without it, organizations start with a solid foundation but become weaker and unbalanced over time[[1]](https://canvas.liberty.edu/courses/247413/discussion_topics/2603985?module_item_id=32764099" \l "_ftn1). This can lead to mistakes that might jeopardize their existence. However, there is another way of looking at things: by building faith and courage into an organization while at the same time embedding in its culture the importance of discipline, it will eventually be able to progress toward its full potential in terms of both strength and stability.

The very essence of leadership is derived from two primary sources: Faith in God and Courage in the face of obstacles. If an organization does not have faith in God's promise and His plan for a better future, it will never be able to achieve greatness. Next comes courage, the bold act of faith without fear, without hesitation and without sacrificing those who follow you and believe you are leading them out of a dark place into the light[[2]](https://canvas.liberty.edu/courses/247413/discussion_topics/2603985?module_item_id=32764099" \l "_ftn2). All great leaders must have these qualities if they want to build great organizations. In addition, employees need to believe that they can do something good with their life to succeed in leading an organization. They also need to be courageous enough to take risks by involving themselves in new projects or tasks that may seem harder than they have already done before.

One of the challenges I have faced while advancing as a visionary leader is that I am often challenged by the fact that I may be seen as too controlling or micromanaging. If a team needs to push back against a decision, or if there are differing opinions on how to proceed, then it can take some time to understand the other person's thoughts and intentions clearly. To achieve this goal, I have learned to seek new ideas and perspectives that put others at ease while creating an open environment where everyone is included in the team's future vision.

As a visionary leader, you need to be able to communicate your vision. The critical skill differentiating visionary leaders from other types of leaders is the ability to communicate your ideas clearly and compellingly[[3]](https://canvas.liberty.edu/courses/247413/discussion_topics/2603985?module_item_id=32764099" \l "_ftn3). But becoming an excellent visionary leader can sometimes be the hardest thing in business. Speaking publicly about your vision and values, managing others, and being proactive in establishing goals takes time. These challenges can make it difficult for some people to advance their careers as visionary leaders because they lack experience leading others at an executive level or the communication skills required to present ideas effectively.

[[1]](https://canvas.liberty.edu/courses/247413/discussion_topics/2603985?module_item_id=32764099" \l "_ftnref1) Dr. Faulls. 2022. "The Power Of Persevering Faith In Leadership." Kaltura.

[[2]](https://canvas.liberty.edu/courses/247413/discussion_topics/2603985?module_item_id=32764099" \l "_ftnref2) Warren, Rick. "the purpose-driven church-Growth Without Compromising Your Message."

[[3]](https://canvas.liberty.edu/courses/247413/discussion_topics/2603985?module_item_id=32764099" \l "_ftnref3) Dr. Faulls. 2022. "The Power Of Persevering Faith In Leadership." Kaltura

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Warren, Rick. "the purpose-driven church-Growth Without Compromising Your Message."

Also include this, I will provide citation later:

A Christian leader has to be able to draw people to Christ and help them grow in their relationship with Christ; he has to be able to help people come together to form community based on Christ; he has to be able to organize the community in such a way that people get all the help they need to be good Christians—in that order of importance. In order to be a good community dynamically developing, a leader has to do these three things. (Roman Catholic author)