

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DECISION 1245

IN RE: *Review of Revised Standing Rules of the North Texas Conference in Light of Judicial Council Decisions 1198 and 1225*

DIGEST

The North Texas Conference has met the disciplinary requirements of ¶ 604 of the *Discipline* and has complied with Decisions 1198 and 1225.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

During the 2010 regular session of the North Texas Annual Conference, the Conference session adopted Amendments to the Standing Rules of the Conference relating to the structure of the Conference and specific agencies. During the 2011 session, a member submitted a request in writing for a bishop's decision of law that asked the presiding bishop to rule on the constitutionality of the amendments to the standing rules, specifically related to ¶¶ 629, 632, 633, and 634 of the 2008 *Discipline*. The presiding bishop ruled that the amendments to the standing rules were consistent with the Constitution, the 2008 *Discipline*, and were constitutional and legally valid.

The Judicial Council reviewed the completed plan and rendered Decision 1198 on October 28, 2011. In Decision 1198 the Judicial Council reversed the bishop's decision of law and remanded the case to the North Texas Annual Conference for further revision and completion of its intended plan, as follows: all boards, commissions and committees mandated by the *Discipline* shall be maintained, clearly identified, and defined; the connectional relationships shall be clear and obvious; any equivalent structures must be defined by name, function, connection, and membership; and nomination and election of the members of the boards and committees of the operating agencies must be completed. The Judicial Council also retained jurisdiction and instructed that the revised plan of structure be submitted to the Secretary of the Judicial Council no later than 30 days following the close of 2012 regular session of the North Texas Annual Conference.

The North Texas Annual Conference, in compliance with the mandate of the Judicial Council, submitted a revised plan to the Judicial Council. The Judicial Council, with appreciation for the hard work of the conference in developing the new structure, reviewed the comprehensive record supplied by the North Texas Annual Conference in October 2012 and issued Decision 1225. In Decision 1225, the Judicial Council again remanded the case to the North Texas Annual Conference for further work on the plan to ensure that it fulfills the disciplinary requirements of ¶ 604 and by including provisions for ¶¶ 643.1, 644 and 641, the ministry of Religion and Race, the Status and Role of Women, and Archives and History,

respectively. The revised and completed plan was to be returned to the Secretary of the Judicial Council 30 days after the close of the 2013 annual conference.

The North Texas Annual Conference complied with Decision 1225 and provided the minutes of the North Texas Annual Conference for June 2, 2013, to June 4, 2013, reflecting action taken to establish the Committee on Religion and Race and the Committee on the Status and Role of Women and the approval of the report of the Committee on Nominations, including these two new committees. The functions of the two committees were also supplied. Additionally, the Conference also supplied a copy of the 2010 Standing Rules that included structural designation for Archives and History.

JURISDICTION

The Judicial Council retains its jurisdiction under Decisions 1198 and 1225.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE

Under ¶ 604 of the *Discipline*, an annual conference for its own government may adopt rules and regulations not in conflict with the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church. When an annual conference elects to combine various functions that are separately provided for in the *Discipline*, the annual conference must address how the new entity, which will be responsible for these various functions, will operate to ensure that the requirements of the *Discipline* are achieved. The annual conference must specifically enumerate the responsibilities of the new entity to ensure that all mandated provisions of the *Discipline* are clearly assigned. The connectional relationships and functions cannot be on paper only, but must be legitimate working connections and functions with appropriately adopted budgets finally approved by the annual conference. In addition, the number of members, the method of nomination and election, fixed terms and diversity of membership must be exactly as stated in the *Discipline*. See Decisions 835, 928, and 1198.

The revised Standing Rules of the North Texas Annual Conference, in its present form as submitted to the Judicial Council, is in compliance with Decision 1225, and meets the requirements set forth in the *Discipline* as expressed by Decisions 1198 and 1225.

The plan of structure delineates how the function, connection, and membership of the operating boards or committees of the center will comply with the *Discipline*. It provides for the function, connection, membership and method of election of each board and committee. The membership of the boards and committees are clearly delineated in the Standing Rules and Plan of Structure. The Committee on Religion and Race and the Committee on the Status and Role of Women were reinstated and their functions, connection, membership and method of election clearly delineated. Members of the boards of the center, upon proper nominations, were elected at the Annual Conference.

The North Texas Conference has met the disciplinary requirements of ¶ 604 of the *Discipline* and has complied with Decisions 1198 and 1225.

DECISION

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Dennis Blackwell was absent.

Timothy K. Bruster, first clergy alternate, participated in this decision.

October 26, 2013