

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DECISION 1302

IN RE: Review of a Bishop's Decision of Law in the Southwest Texas Annual Conference and the Rio Grande Annual Conference Regarding the Constitutionality of the Conference Structure in the Plan for Unification for the Rio Texas Annual Conference.

DIGEST

The Bishop's Decision of Law, that the revised plan of organization as expressed by the actions of the 2015 Annual Conference Session of the Rio Texas Annual Conference, is in keeping with the Constitution and the *Book of Discipline 2012*, is affirmed.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The Rio Texas Annual Conference was established on January 1, 2015, in keeping with the timeline established by the Plan adopted at earlier sessions of both the Southwest Texas and Rio Grande Annual Conferences. The new annual conference plan was approved provisionally by the Judicial Council in Decision 1271. This decision stated in part:

The Rio Texas Annual Conference is permitted to use the Unification Plan as a provisional structure while they care for the matters that have been identified in this decision....The Judicial Council defers any further ruling on the Bishop's Decision of Law pending the outcome of Judicial Council review of the requested report and the Bishop's further ruling of law. The Judicial Council retains jurisdiction.

Following work to comply with Judicial Council's decision 1271, the Bishop submitted his ruling affirming his Decision of Law that "the revised plan of organization expressed by the actions of the 2015 Annual Conference Session of the Rio Texas Annual Conference is in keeping with the Constitution and the Book of Discipline 2012."

The requested reports and documentation were submitted to verify that (1) the "newly-created Finance Table reviewed the budget to be presented to the 2015 conference session in order to make certain appropriate agencies had funding for 2016"; (2) "the Nominating Committee reviewed the make-up of the leadership elected in 2014 to make certain appropriate diversity was reflected." And (3) the Standing Rules, adopted in June of 2014, were revised further to respond to other specific concerns cited in Decision 1271. These revised Standing Rules were adopted in June of 2015 and submitted with the Bishop's ruling.

Briefs were received that were not germane to this particular consideration.

JURISDICTION

The Judicial Council retained jurisdiction in Decision 1271.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE

The new conference is to be commended for taking seriously the Judicial Council's concerns and following through with corrective measures. The requested material was submitted to verify that the Annual Conference had made the appropriate modifications and added the appropriate information to make the Standing Rules complete, had complied with the financial assurances, and verified consideration for diversity in its nomination process. The Rio Texas Annual Conference has addressed and satisfied all concerns.

DECISION

The Bishop's Decision of Law, that the revised plan of organization as expressed by the actions of the 2015 Annual Conference Session of the Rio Texas Annual Conference is in keeping with the Constitution and the *Book of Discipline 2012*, is affirmed.

Beth Capen was absent.

Kabamba Kiboko was absent.

Randall Miller, first lay alternate, participated in this decision.

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

October 24, 2015