



South Central Jurisdiction, The United Methodist Church Issue Paper

Southern Methodist University & the Bush Library, Museum, Institute

Official Position of the 2004 Book of Discipline

The South Central Jurisdiction (SCJ) of The United Methodist Church owns Southern Methodist University (SMU). Consequently, there is no Disciplinary paragraph applying directly to this issue. Actions taken by SMU fall under the authority of the "Structure and Rules" of the South Central Jurisdiction.

Why This Is an Issue

In 2001 SMU Trustees conceived the possibility of the Bush Presidential Library coming to the university and began plans toward that end. In 2004, the Trustees prepared a proposal and from that point on they were regularly informed of the progress of planning and negotiation regarding the library and consistently affirmed steps taken by the Board of Trustees' Library Committee and university administration. In 2006, proposals for the location of the Library were presented to the Foundation's Site Selection Committee, and in December of that year, the committee announced that SMU was the finalist with whom negotiations would begin. In January of 2007, the SCJ College of Bishops was informed the SCJ was being asked for permission to lease land to the Bush Foundation for the Library, Foundation, and Institute. The College of Bishops considered the request at their Feb. 4-5 meeting and concluded that the SCJ Mission Council, the elected governing body of the Jurisdiction, was the appropriate authority to make the decision. On March 14, the Mission Council approved the resolution granting SMU authority to enter into the lease. After meetings between the Council, SMU representatives, and representatives of the Bush Foundation to explain SCJ decisions, there was a conference call meeting of the College at which a letter to the Bush Foundation was approved. On Feb. 21, 2008, the SMU Trustees reviewed the agreements being proposed.

On Feb. 22, SMU and The Bush Foundation signed an agreement for the George W. Bush Presidential Library, Museum and Institute to be located on the SMU campus. SMU signed the agreement based on approval of the Mission Council. Article III, Section 3.1. of the SCJ Structure and Rules sets forth that the Mission Council shall "Deal with new matters...of a Jurisdictional nature between sessions of the quadrennial meeting" and "Between meetings of the Conference, shall perform all administrative and financial responsibilities not assigned to other bodies of The Conference." Article III, Section 3/2 (a) expressly provides that "All actions taken by The Council shall be valid and in full effect within the South Central Jurisdiction until the next regular session of The Conference." A legal opinion presented to the College of Bishops of the SCJ states, "The approval and consent required, so as to allow SMU to enter into a lease arrangement with the Bush Library, falls within the authority given to the Mission Council, subject only to the requirements of Article III, Section 3.2 (b), which requires that the "chairperson of The Council shall submit" a written report of the action to the next quadrennial meeting of the Conference.

Opponents of the Bush library argue the process does not follow church procedure, and that Jurisdictional Conference delegates must approve the land use, not the Mission Council.

Critics say they are against SMU hosting the presidential library because the Bush administration's policies conflict with church teaching.

Library supporters say the library would be an invaluable asset to the university because it would provide opportunity for scholarly, historical research, and would also help boost the local economy.

Referral of Petition from General Conference to South Central Jurisdiction

On April 28, 2008, the General Conference legislative committee on Ministry and Higher Education considered petition 80089 which urged the General Conference to prevent the leasing of land owned by Southern Methodist University to the Bush Foundation. The committee voted 51-5-1 to recommend referral of this matter to the South Central Jurisdictional Conference. The overwhelming vote placed the calendar item on consent calendar D04 which was considered on April 30. The Consent Calendar disposed of several referral items at once and was adopted 844-20. This was a procedural action reflecting the committee's belief that the matter belonged at the jurisdictional level.

All petitions to the Jurisdictional Conference must be considered by the Petitions and Resolutions Committee before consideration by the plenary session. The referred petition will be dealt with during the committee's meeting on Wednesday, July 16. The committee has many options including recommending concurrence, amendment, non-concurrence and non-reporting. It is likely that the committee's report will be considered in the plenary session on Thursday, July 17.

Opponents of SMU's relationship to the Bush Library, led by Rev. Andrew Weaver, have organized a number of efforts to influence public opinion and the delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference. They made a presentation to the Mission Council when it made the decision to grant SMU's request on March 14, 2007. They launched www.protectsmu.org, with over 12,000 signatures opposing the library, museum and think tank being located at SMU. More recently, they have launched www.whatwouldjwdo.net with appeals from United Methodist leaders to the delegates.

There will be discussion of this issue at the pre-conference press briefing scheduled for 4:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 16, at the Hilton Anatole.

Contacts:

College of Bishops: Bishop Charles Crutchfield, president, Bishop Scott Jones, past-president and spokesperson

Mission Council: Ms. Jackie Blair, chair, Rev. Austin Frederick, member, Rev. David Severe Executive Director

Opponents: Rev. Andrew Weaver, Dr. William McElvaney, Dr. Tex Sample