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Suggested Title: Nonresidential President of Council of Bishops

Discipline Paragraphs: 49

Financial Implications: None

Global Implications: Yes

Add a new third paragraph to ¶49 in Article V of the Constitution as follows:

The Council of Bishops may elect from its active membership a fulltime president of the Council. The bishop so elected shall be relieved from presidential and residential responsibilities during the time of holding such office.

RATIONALE:

A fulltime Council president will give face, voice, leadership and continuity in strengthening and aligning The United Methodist Church's mission and implementing the Call to Action. It will aid in reconnecting our Church local to worldwide. It will facilitate our work ecumenically as well as in public arenas.

This petition is filed because in 2003, the Judicial Council found a barrier to using ¶406.3 to increase the term of a bishop with a special assignment from two years to four years. Judicial Council decision 961 determined that the Constitution required "residential" status for all bishops unless altered by a Constitutional amendment to ¶49. The Judicial Council urged the COB to move forward with such an amendment.

In 1939, at Union there were 20 active and 20 retired bishops. Today the Council has 69 active and 86 retired bishops and far more responsibilities than the past, including spiritual shepherding and administering a church of 12 million worldwide members with around 50,000 congregations, 126 colleges, universities and seminaries.

The Council of Bishop is committed to making the General Superintendency as effective as possible for the sake of the mission of Christ in the world. The increasing demands and expectations by the church upon the Council of Bishops calls for a restructure to provide much greater continuity and intensity of leadership by the whole Council of Bishops.

The Council of Bishops is the only body authorized by our Discipline to be a rudder giving global leadership and direction to United Methodism. The Council continues to seek to be a model of servant leadership, and this amendment will provide more continuity to the office of the President, thus giving stronger leadership to the Council and the whole Church. The duties and responsibilities of the President will be only those ascribed by the Council of Bishops.

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Every United Methodist bishop has two major roles: 1) a General Superintendent of the entire connectional church, ¶427.1, and 2) a residential bishop of a particular Episcopal area.

The second role, that of residential bishop, has changed dramatically. Area and office staff resource the bishop even as areas grow increasingly larger in size. Such support is essential for a bishop to function effectively.

But the first and equally important role of General Superintendent is largely carried out through the Council of Bishops and is operating with basically the same support structure it had 100 years ago. While having a permanent office (Washington, D.C.) and an administrative assistant, its episcopal leadership changes every two years with increasingly heavy burdens placed upon its president.

With increased attention given to issues associated with the worldwide church, a fulltime bishop designated as President and Ecumenical Officer of the Council of Bishops will facilitate a greater sense of unity and witness for the denomination as a whole.

The workloads of the President and Ecumenical Officer of the Council of Bishops are extremely demanding. The denomination will be better served by one fulltime bishop serving both of those roles.

A fulltime bishop as President of the Council will bring greater and more timely attention to matters needing a denominational response. It will also give coordination to the reforms spelled out in the Call to Action Report.

Date: September 6, 2011

Signature of Petitioner

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