

Petition to Revise The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church The Superintendency ¶403.1 The Role of Bishops

Rationale: Courageous leadership by our bishops is needed to overcome a century’s “culture of silence” regarding evolution, and a perceived aversion to new scientific findings. Accepting evolution will help attract and stem attrition of disciples for Christ. Understanding global warming can help prevent weather catastrophes – which disproportionately devastate God’s poorest children.

Desired action: Please insert a new sub-section e) to ¶ 403. 1. and re-sequence the remaining two sub-sections: (Additions are single underlined, ~~deletions are strikeout~~)

Section II. Offices of Bishop and District Superintendent

¶ 403. The Role of Bishops and District Superintendents—Bishops and superintendents are elders in full connection.

---- Start of ¶ 403.1 The Role of Bishops ----

1. Bishops are elected from the elders and set apart for a ministry of servant leadership, general oversight and supervision (¶ 401). As followers of Jesus Christ, bishops are authorized to guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the Church. The role and calling forth of the bishop is to exercise oversight and support of the Church in its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The basis of such discipleship of leadership (episkopé) lies in discipline and a disciplined life. The bishop leads therefore through the following disciplines:

a) A vital and renewing spirit. The role of the bishop is to faithfully practice, model and lead the spiritual disciplines of our faith and to call and inspire the clergy and laity within the Church to practice the Christian disciplines in their individual lives through the tradition of personal holiness. The bishop is to lead in public worship, in the celebration of the sacraments and in the commendation of our faith.

b) An enquiring mind and a commitment to the teaching office. The role of the bishop is to continue to learn and to teach how to make disciples and lead faithful and fruitful congregations using scripture, spiritual disciplines, our Wesleyan heritage, and the history and doctrines of the Church.

c) A vision for the Church. The role of bishop is to lead the whole Church in claiming its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The bishop leads by discerning, inspiring, strategizing, equipping, implementing, and evaluating the fulfillment of the mission of the church. Working in partnership with the Council of Bishops, the cabinet and lay and clergy leadership of the annual conference, and the professing members of the church, the bishop urges the whole church to move toward the vision of sharing Christ with the world in fulfillment of our mission, faithful discipleship and a “more excellent way” of being Christ’s people in the world.

d) A prophetic commitment for the transformation of the Church and the world. The role of the bishop is to be a prophetic voice for justice in a suffering and conflicted world through the tradition of social holiness. The bishop encourages and models the mission of witness and service in the world through proclamation of the gospel and alleviation of human suffering.

e) Making the Church relevant to our world. The role of the bishop is to at least annually encourage the clergy to communicate to their congregations the critical roles science plays in fulfilling God’s wishes. The bishop does this using courageous leadership by fostering appreciation for disasters that can be averted, and good for God’s children[, both] that can be accomplished through scientific understandings of climate disruption and evolution.

e) A passion for the unity of the church. The role of the bishop is to be the shepherd of the whole flock and thereby provide leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation, and unity within the Church—the United Methodist Church and the church universal.

fg) The ministry of administration. The role of the bishop is to uphold the discipline and order of the Church by consecrating, ordaining, commissioning, supervising and appointing persons in ministry to the Church and the world. As the presiding officer of the annual conference, the resident bishop provides order and leads in new opportunities for ministry within the annual conference. The bishop shares with other bishops the oversight of the whole church through the Council of Bishops and is held accountable through the Council of Bishops in collaboration with conference and jurisdictional committees on episcopacy.

---- End of ¶ 403.1 The Role of Bishops ----

Petition to Revise The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church General Commission on Communication ¶1806 Responsibilities

Rationale: Clergy and Members use UMC.org as an Internet accessible resource for religious issues. Subsection 19 will provide reliable information on important and/or controversial topics. Subsection 20 will facilitate determining applicability and history of various “laws” and “Resolutions.” Both will make this existing and valuable resource (UMC.org) more useful.

Desired action: Please add subsections 19 and 20 to ¶1806. Responsibilities... and re-sequence the remaining subsections as follows: (additions are single underlined, ~~deletions would be strikeout~~).

Section XII. General Commission on Communication

¶ 1806. Responsibilities—Specific responsibilities and functions of the General Commission on Communication and its staff are as follows:

Subsections 1 – 17 remain unchanged and are not shown in this petition.

18. It may develop information and other services that provide channels of communication to and from all levels of the Church.

19. It shall produce and/or solicit Internet accessible educational materials including FAQs and resources on “Hot Topics” relating to the missions and teachings of the UMC such as evolution and global warming. These would be accessed by a sub-topic under the “Our World” button on umc.org.

20. It shall maintain Internet accessible “Sections” and/or “Paragraphs” from *The Book of Discipline*, and “Resolutions” from *The Book of Resolutions*. New and/or amended Sections, Paragraphs, or Resolutions shall show near the bottom the date adopted with either the changes, or a link (other than CALMS) to the changes. Sections, Paragraphs or Resolutions that have been amended, deleted, have expired or will expire shall conspicuously note that fact at the top with the date of action.

~~21. 49.~~ It shall provide resources, counsel, and staff training for area, conference, and district communication programs and develop guidelines in consultation with persons working in areas, conferences, and districts.

~~22. 20.~~ It shall produce materials for program interpretation in cooperation with the Connectional Table and the general program boards, including the official program calendar of the denomination.

~~23. 24.~~ The General Commission on Communication shall be charged with planning and implementation of the official United Methodist presence on and use of the Internet, the World Wide Web, or other computer services that can connect United Methodist conferences, agencies, and local churches with one another and with the larger world.

This completes ¶ 1806. Responsibilities...

Petition to Revise The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church Social Principles ¶164. V. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY C)

Rationale: Some, by misrepresenting science, continue efforts to legislate their religious beliefs about creationism into public school biology classrooms – as they have for over a century. Science, several major court decisions, and many in religion have repudiated their actions, actions that jeopardize our freedom of religion. Hence this petition.

Desired action: Please add the shown paragraph to ¶164. V. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY C) as follows: (additions are single underlined, ~~deletions would be strikeout~~).

This starts ¶164. V. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY C)

C) Church and State Relations—The United Methodist Church has for many years supported the separation of church and state. In some parts of the world this separation has guaranteed the diversity of religious expressions and the freedom to worship God according to each person’s conscience. Separation of church and state means no organic union of the two, but it does permit interaction. The state should not use its authority to promote particular religious beliefs (including atheism), nor should it require prayer or worship in the public schools, but it should leave students free to practice their own religious convictions. We believe that the state should not attempt to control the church, nor should the church seek to dominate the state. The rightful and vital separation of church and state, which has served the cause of religious liberty, should not be misconstrued as the abolition of all religious expression from public life.

The United Methodist Church opposes the legislation of any faith-based accounts, such as creationism, ~~or~~ intelligent design, **[or Theistic Evolution]** into the science curriculum of our public schools. We oppose any ploy questioning scientific evolution on religious grounds, or misrepresenting science to further religious goals. We encourage science teachers to enthusiastically teach all, and only, legitimate scientific understandings of evolution. We further encourage highlighting **[in the classroom]** significant contributions arising from evolutionary theory, such as new pharmaceuticals and vaccines, increased agricultural yields to feed earth’s growing population, etc., that are improving conditions for all God’s children. If asked, science teachers should point out that many thousands of religious leaders are fully comfortable with all aspects of science’s findings while some in religion have historically fought new scientific concepts such as our sun centered solar system, evolution, and now climate change. While not questioning scientific findings, we reserve the right to participate in how these findings may be used.

This completes ¶164. V. THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY C)

NOTE: The words “or Theistic Evolution” and “in the classroom” need to be added to the petition by the Legislative Committee. Theistic Evolution (TE) is not accepted by the scientific community. TE is basically intelligent design (ID) renamed. ID was found in the 2005 Federal Trial of the Dover (Pennsylvania) School District to be religious and hence not appropriate in a science classroom.