

IESDG Statement Regarding Proposed Restructure of the Church and Legislation

We commend the Connectional Table and the Council of Bishops for their concern about the need to reenergize our church around its central mission of “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World” and the Four Areas of Focus. However, after careful consideration of the proposed changes in the structure of the Church and the legislation that is before the General Conference we need to express our deep concerns:

- The strategic process to develop the proposed new structure of the church from the Interim Operations Team (IOT) and the legislation which will present the new structure to the 2012 General Conference was well intentioned but had little or no consultation with the different ethnic constituencies of our church. In particular we feel that the contributions of diverse ethnic communities within our church were not carefully heard or incorporated in the proposal going to the 2012 General Conference.
- We are not opposed to change for we are aware that organizations need to, from time to time, assess effectiveness in the light of the new realities facing them. However, the changes being proposed do not take into consideration the unique perspectives or contributions of the different racial/ethnic groups. To ignore these perspectives minimizes the opportunity of our church of making disciples for Jesus Christ among the rapidly growing ethnic constituencies.
- The proposed consolidation of the General Agencies and the concentration of decision-making power in a Board of 15 persons will exclude or greatly minimize the participation of racial/ethnic persons. Our church will lose exposure to different styles of ministry that in the past has led to the development of new and creative ways of being the church.
- In reviewing our past experiences as racial/ethnic persons we become aware that the Staff and Members of the General Agencies have been far more sensitive and concerned with in the needs of racial/ethnic communities than Annual Conferences. Their advocacy and resources have made possible the full participation of racial/ethnic persons at the General Church level and helped Annual Conferences become more inclusive and responsive to the spiritual needs of racial/ethnic persons.
- Overall, because we represent many voiceless United Methodists whose reality is far from that of ministry professionals, looking through their lens, the proposal seems to abandon the concept of representative democracy with checks and balances characteristic of our church and adopts an oligarchic form of government.

In summary we feel that the proposed restructure of our church and the legislation presented by the IOT is too drastic a change. It minimizes and will exclude the participation of racial ethnic persons, and works against the principle of inclusiveness that we see as one of the important values our church has to offer to the multicultural, multi-racial society in which we live and do ministry.

We are aware that General Agencies are proposing legislation that addresses some of the concerns expressed as reasons for the IOT proposal. The legislation coming from the General Agencies seeks to prioritize resources, increase effectiveness, reduce expenditures, and, yet, it presents a more inclusive and responsible model or restructuring our beloved church. It is our hope that future reviews and actions will improve this proposal so that the mission of our church is fulfilled.

Respectfully submitted,

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The Inter-Ethnic Strategy Development Group (IESDG) represents the five official racial ethnic caucuses of The United Methodist Church. The group exists to build solidarity among racial-ethnic minority groups in The United Methodist Church; to provide the vision and strategy for inter-ethnic cooperative efforts; to discuss, interact, and reach for ethnic concerns and consensus as a group for empowerment and ministry of all racial ethnic groups in the Church, to develop strategies for empowerment of racial/ethnic minority persons, to advocate for racial/ethnic staff in all levels of the Church structure, to strategize toward the renewal of The UMC in recognition of the gifts of racial/ethnic minority persons, and to advocate for justice ministries within the Church and the world. In addition to caucus representatives, members include representatives from the ethnic comprehensive plans, general agency staff, the connectional table, and jurisdiction agencies.