



# 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, had the authority to make that 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 or the Council of Bishops.

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.

While the focus of this issue is directed at the Jurisdictional Conference, it is possible that critics could raise the issue at General Conference.