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PROPOSED SUSPENSION OF ARTICLE IV OF THE BYLAWS

Background Information

In the spring of 1999, an evaluation of progress on the “new” design for the Conference was undertaken with independent assessment offered by Hartford Seminary’s research center staff. The evaluation was shared with delegates to the 1999 annual meeting, and the board committed itself to bring recommendations this year. In general, our new design is working well in the deployment of Regional Ministers, the growing of relationships and trust among us, and the smaller Board of Directors with its focus on the whole Conference, rather than a large board with representatives of many different constituencies.

The evaluation was supplemented during this year by both formal and informal conversations of staff and board with many people involved in regional councils, ministry teams, focused communities, and nominating processes. In general, it found that two of the three Regional Councils were not meeting, that ministry teams were having a difficult time finding focus with their broad mandates and new, rather diverse regions, and that the nominating process was cumbersome and dysfunctional.

In the course of weighing possible outcomes of the evaluation as we “live into” the design for the Conference’s life, the Board of Directors concluded that the most helpful step would be the suspension of a small portion of the bylaws (Article IV) for two years.

This action would allow us to address issues raised in the evaluation, to make adjustments and continue improving the implementation without casting those changes prematurely into concrete bylaws. Legal counsel from Murtha Cullina, LLP, has advised us that the bylaws can be suspended, and assisted us in drafting the suggested action.

In short, the Board believes that moving in the following directions will address these concerns:

- Unite the nine regional ministry teams into three Conference-wide teams focused on Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries and Wider Church Ministries, encouraging them to meet occasionally and to offer program in regional settings. They would be accountable to the Conference through the Board of Directors.
- Encourage the three ministry teams to “birth or bless” ministry task forces with very specific foci for their work. These could be small or large, local, regional or statewide, and would be rooted in the energy of people stepping forward to lead or participate.
- Invite each existing Focused Community to affiliate with a ministry team, thus linking them back into the life of the Conference more officially.
- Shift the Regional Councils to more informal functions of consultation and coordination.
- Have the Conference Nominating Committee, insofar as possible in consultation with associations, nominate the Ministry Teams (one person from each association, plus five at large). In addition, have them nominate the Board of Directors (three from each Region) instead of relying on the Regional Councils for such nominees.

SUGGESTED ACTION TO SUSPEND ARTICLE IV

BE IT RESOLVED, that

1. Article IV of the Bylaws of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ be suspended until the Annual Meeting of the Conference in 2002; provided, however, that during said period the Conference shall continue to be divided administratively into three regions and membership on ministry teams shall continue to reflect a commitment to diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, age, expertise and status as an ordained or lay person.
2. The Board of Directors be authorized to establish interim procedures and structures during this period to assure both conference-wide perspectives and regionally rooted input for development of programs and ministries.
3. The Board of Directors shall appoint a Bylaws Committee to review the Bylaws, which committee shall report to the Board of Directors with respect to any changes to the Bylaws to be presented to the 2002 Annual Meeting and report back to the 2002 Annual Meeting with respect to any proposed action; provided, however, that if no further action is taken with respect to the Bylaws at the 2002 Annual Meeting, Article IV will be in effect as presently in the Bylaws.
4. The Board of Directors be responsible for making such other adjustments to the Bylaws as are required to accommodate the suspension of Article IV of the Bylaws.

FOR REFERENCE ONLY

ARTICLE IV (of present Bylaws)

REGIONS AND PROGRAMS OF THE CONFERENCE

A. The Conference shall be divided administratively into three Regions. The boundaries of the Regions shall be set to promote inclusiveness within each Region by considering elements such as the number of churches, Associations and church members; ethnic and economic diversity; and the presence of urban centers. Each Region shall have a Regional Council composed of two representatives from each Association in that Region. Each representative shall serve a two (2) year term, renewable one time. Other members of the Regional Council with voice shall be chosen by the voting members of the Council. Each Regional Minister shall be a member of the Regional Council with voice and without vote.

B. Each Regional Council shall create a pool of candidates from which the Conference Nominating Committee shall select nominees for membership on the Conference Board of Directors. Each Council shall also confer together and with Conference staff about the mission of the Conference and the churches in that Region, build collaboration and coordinate programs among the churches, and provide a link between the churches and the Conference. The Council shall nominate members for a search committee to be appointed by the Board of Directors when there is a vacancy in Conference staff serving in that region or for other committees for which its counsel may be sought. A Council Moderator and Scribe shall be chosen from among voting Council members. Each Regional Council shall meet at least quarterly.

C. Regional Ministry Teams shall be formed by each Regional Council to provide leadership in mission engagement and program development and leadership training in their particular area of responsibility, and to provide a link between the Local Churches and the program and mission resource persons of the Conference. There shall be three (3) Regional Ministry Teams in each Region: Local Church Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, and Justice & Witness Ministries. In each Region, Ministry Teams will be composed of up to ten (10) members of Local Churches within the Region, with at least one (1) person from each Association. Members of each Ministry Team shall serve for a maximum of six (6) consecutive years. Membership of the Ministry Teams shall be established by each Regional Council and shall reflect a commitment to diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical abilities, age, expertise, and status as an ordained or lay person. The Ministry Teams shall meet at least five (5) times during the year. The Ministry Teams will carry out their work in fulfillment of policy as voted by the Conference Annual Meeting or the Board of Directors:

1. Each Local Church Ministries Team will focus its leadership in such areas as Christian Education, youth ministries, stewardship, worship, evangelism and any other aspect of Local Church life which may be enhanced by its leadership, taking care to confer and coordinate with other ministry teams within the Region and in other Regions and Conference committees with which it may share interests.

2. Each Wider Church Ministries Team will focus its leadership in such areas as global education, mission interpretation, global partnerships, ecumenical cooperation, mission trips and experiences, and any other aspect of wider church ministries which may enhance the vision and experience of Local Churches in their mission engagement, taking care to confer and coordinate with other ministry teams within the Region and in other Regions and Conference committees with which it may share interests.

3. Each Justice & Witness Ministries Team will focus its leadership in such areas as theological reflection and action for social justice, education about social concerns and issues, urban ministries, developing leadership for local congregations to engage in prophetic ministry, and any other aspect of justice and witness which may enhance the life and witness of Local Churches and Associations, taking care to confer and coordinate with other ministry teams within the Region and in other Regions and Conference committees with which it may share interests.