

Report

General Council on Finance and Administration

The Financial Services Committee reviewed all General Church board and agency spending plans for 2015 and approved same. The primary elements of the review are to determine that the spending plans conform to the budget approved by the 2012 General Conference, are within the forecasted receipts and that unreasonable reserves are not being accumulated. Budgets are subject to year to year adjustments required due to economic conditions. If such adjustments are required, they are prorata among all recipients.

The full GCFA Board is working with the Connectional Table to establish the proposed budget for the 2016-2020 quadrennium. Initial numbers indicate an increase of about 1% in the budgets of the general church agencies.

The Audit Committee received and extensively discussed with the external auditor the report of the audits of all general church boards and agencies. The reports on UMC General Boards and agencies audits did not disclose any unusual problems or major weaknesses in internal control. The Audit Committee also recommended asking for RFPs from firms desiring to do the audits of the General Church Agencies and recommended a change based upon lower costs.

The Committee on Legal Responsibilities has the disciplinary responsibility to protect the UMC and its mark, the Cross and Flame. It also has a fund to be used in related proceedings regarding annual conferences or local churches. This support is to be limited to matters of denominational significance.

During the year we reviewed several requests and did provide some funding for issues involving the defense of the trust clause and also of the rights of local churches to conduct religious services in non-traditional settings. We also denied several requests for funding.

The Committee on Legal Responsibilities participated in a number of legal briefs supporting the trust clause or its equivalent in other denominations. Many denominations are having issues with breakaway congregations that want to take their building and endowments with them as they leave the mother denomination. We have the obvious interest in that an adverse decision could affect future legal actions within the Methodist denomination.

Members of the GNJAC may be aware that GCFA and GBGM had halted all payments to the East Africa Annual Conference over which Bishop Wandabula presides. Salary and office expenses were also reduced. This is a result of long term inability to get Bishop Wandabula to provide documentation to show that his uses of the funds were appropriate. This matter was submitted to the Judicial Council which ruled that the Bishop's salary cannot be reduced from that authorized by the General Conference in 2012. The Judicial Council did not reverse any of the other actions related to program expenses and office expenses which are not being paid.

GCFA has continued adjusting to a new and smaller Board (21 vs. 41 previously). It is going well and most Board members prefer the new arrangement.

I have been personally involved with an effort to have administrative services provided on a shared basis among the general boards. Quite a number of services have been integrated into a shared service among the general agencies.

John Bishop, Member
General Commission on Finance and Administration