



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The South Central Jurisdictional Conference
Recognizes Significant Victories in Appeal**

Dallas, Texas - July 31, 2023 - The South Central Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church (the "Conference") is pleased to announce that its legal status as Southern Methodist University's controlling entity under Texas law has been upheld on appeal to Texas' 5th Court of Appeals.

In December 2019, SMU filed amendments to its 1996 Articles of Incorporation without the Conference's approval. The Conference claimed, among other claims, that SMU's action violated longstanding, unambiguous provisions in SMU's governing documents requiring that all such amendments have prior approval of the Conference. SMU's conduct purported to strip the Conference of its rights guaranteed for over a century in SMU's governing documents, including, but not limited to, rights to approve all amendments to SMU's articles of incorporation, elect and remove members of SMU's Board of Trustees, place a certain number of United Methodist Bishops on SMU's Board of Trustees, and approve any sale or lease of campus property. The Court of Appeals rejected SMU's position that it was unilaterally entitled to extinguish such rights. The Court of Appeals also rejected SMU's arguments that the Conference had no standing to sue SMU, no capacity to sue SMU, and no right to seek redress from SMU.

The Court of Appeals Opinion returns the lawsuit to the trial court for further proceedings consistent with the Opinion. The Conference looks forward to those proceedings with assurance that the harm to the Conference will be fully redressed and justice will be done.

We are grateful for the diligent efforts of our legal team and all those involved in presenting our case. The favorable decision on these specific items reinforces our commitment to upholding the values, principles, and mission of the Conference and The United Methodist Church.

Sincerely,

Eddie Erwin

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