

Statement from SCJ Mission Council

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Austin, TX – Today, the Texas Supreme Court held oral argument concerning the 2019 lawsuit filed by the South Central Jurisdictional Conference (SCJ) against Southern Methodist University (SMU). The underlying lawsuit involved claims brought by the SCJ concerning SMU’s amendment to its articles of incorporation that were made without the required approval of the SCJ. SMU requested review by the Texas Supreme Court following an unfavorable opinion by the Dallas Court of Appeals.

“One of the significant issues in this lawsuit is a breach of contract claim because, as the SCJ claims, SMU ignored its governing documents and a century-long course of performance by amending its articles of incorporation without the SCJ’s approval,” said Rev. Dr. Derrek Belase, chairperson of the SCJ Mission Council.

SMU, located in Dallas, is the home to Perkins School of Theology, one of the thirteen United Methodist seminaries approved by the denomination, which receives Ministerial Education Funds from apportionments paid by local churches throughout the SCJ.

In addition, the Bridwell Library at SMU now houses the entire collection of the World Methodist Museum, formerly located at Lake Junaluska in North Carolina.

“As you can see, maintaining the historical relationship between SCJ and SMU is important because of SMU’s Methodist heritage while integrating its educational mission with the church’s teachings and fostering a unique environment that nurtures academic excellence and moral development,” said Belase.

The desire of SCJ’s Mission Council and the College of Bishops is to maintain a strong, healthy relationship with SMU.

“Our hope is that we can be partners in ministry, just as we have since SMU was founded by our foremothers and forefathers in faith in 1911,” said Bishop Delores Williamston, resident bishop of the Louisiana Conference and president of the SCJ College of Bishops.

A ruling by the Supreme Court is not expected for several months.

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