

Statement on Interim Operations Team/Connectional Table proposals

January 27, 2012

UMCom is committed to providing support and partnering with local congregations and annual conferences to communicate effectively in order to renew the church and assist in the work of healing the world. We believe communication is a crucial part of the church's mission and ministry.

In reviewing the IOT proposal, The General Commission on Communication concurred with the need for change. However, they called on the IOT to give additional consideration to how the proposed organizational change will affect our ability to communicate across the whole church, and how it will affect our witness to the world.

The IOT proposal places the communication function of the general church in a shared service unit which has the effect of reducing it to a secondary role. Over the past thirty years, the mainline denominations in the U.S. have reduced their communication capacity, even as they have experienced a decline in growth in North America. The two are connected, in my opinion. They result in a loss of voice and visibility.

The ability to project the church's voice into the wider public conversations about faith and values is critical today. In fact, it is a responsibility of our call to be faithful disciples. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, admonishes us to bring the light of the gospel to a culture of darkness. The communications function of The United Methodist Church is about supporting disciple making.

As for the reduction in funds, it is unavoidable that less funding will result in reductions in services to Central Conferences for communications support, for communications training across the church and media outreach through Rethink Church, among others.

Larry Hollon

General Secretary, Commission on Communication