

Book of Resolutions - Request for Study

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING
THE INSTITUTE ON RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY**

WHEREAS, the Gospels of Jesus Christ implore all of God's people to love one another, our neighbors, and our enemies, and all followers of Christ are commissioned to "Make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:16); and

WHEREAS, the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), and its committee, UM Action, has characterized mainline churches as "The bulwark of the religious left" and has stated that "The IRD has worked to discredit and diminish the religious left's influence"; and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church, desiring to be a faithful witness for Christ in the society and world in which we live, and to be in connection with the larger family of Christ, created the General Board of Church and Society, and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, and became a member of the National Council of Churches of Christ and of the World Council of Churches; and

WHEREAS, the IRD's goals include: "Abolish the (the) General Board of Church and Society, and (the) Commission on the Status and Role of Women," and curtail United Methodist involvement in the National and World Councils of Churches; and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church, in its desire to share the grace of God in Christ with all people, created financial ministries which support the work of our denomination at all levels, supported by the financial witness of United Methodists around the world; and

WHEREAS, the IRD has solicited and received at least \$4,764,000 from conservative foundations outside of United Methodism, and has targeted 50% of its resources at the United Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS, advocacy for social justice has been and is a cornerstone of Methodism; the Social Principles of our denomination are "A prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound Biblical and theological foundation" (Book of Discipline, p. 95); and general church boards and agencies have vital roles in creating the powerful witness our Social Principles express; and

WHEREAS, the IRD's goals include: "The social principles shall be entirely rewritten...(and) General boards and agencies shall not submit resolutions or petitions to General Conference;" and

WHEREAS, representation of the Western Jurisdiction at general conferences was reduced by the 2000 General Conference due to IRD supported legislation; and

WHEREAS, the IRD called the 2000 General Conference "the most productive...in 40 years," in part because "Delegates...voted to reapportion the composition of future general conferences so that declining (and liberal) regions of the church such as the northeast and west coast will receive fewer delegates;" and the IRD is currently promoting an annual conference resolution which would reduce the number of Episcopal areas in the Western Jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, UM Action Director Mark Tooley, responding to the Council of Bishops document "A Call To Repentance and Peace with Justice," characterized the Council of Bishops as "Flower children and chronic demonstrators who never really grew up and faced the real sinful world;" another IRD posting claimed "One of the strongest regiments of this godless army (of the 'secular left') is America's mainstream protestant leaders...the real spirit driving the peace mongering protestant leaders is not pacifism at all. It is the hatred of President Bush and of

America itself;” and the IRD has stated, “Irreconcilable differences on essentials are dividing the culture-conforming liberals...from faithful United Methodists...we recommend allowing a gracious exit for those who cannot or will not accept the essential beliefs;” and

WHEREAS, Paragraph 104, section 4 of the Book of Discipline states:

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are called to work within our diversity while exercising patience and forbearance with one another. Such patience stems neither from indifference toward the truth nor from an indulgent tolerance of error but from an awareness that we know only in part and that none of us is able to search the mysteries of God except by the Spirit of God. We proceed with our theological task, trusting that the Spirit will grant us wisdom to continue our journey with the whole people of God (p. 84); and

WHEREAS, in its 2003 session, the Desert Southwest Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church stated that the agendas of the Institute on Religion and Democracy and its subcommittee UM Action, were inconsistent with the mission, nature, and theology of the United Methodist Church by adopting a resolution stating the same;

Therefore, be it resolved, That the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church will include this information concerning the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) in the Book of Resolutions; and

Be it further resolved, That the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church shall commission the General Board of Church and Society to create and distribute study materials on the Institute of Religion and Democracy to the to all United Methodist Annual Conferences, the Council of Bishops, the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the National Council of Churches of Christ, and the World Council of Churches.