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Methodist bishops agree to pay cut

by Daniel Burke by Religion News Service

Bishops in the United Methodist Church have voted themselves a pay cut after "recognizing the financial challenges facing the church."

The United Methodist Church's 50 active U.S. bishops voted to give up their planned pay raises for next year and instead reduce their salaries to the 2008 level, dropping their annual pay from \$125,650 to \$121,000 according to United Methodist News Service.

"The current global crisis has uncovered our hesitancy to act, but it has also gifted us with a sense of urgency and an opportunity to lead courageously," the bishops said in a May 8 statement at the conclusion of their annual spring meeting. The bishops also said they will cut their semiannual council meetings from five days to four to save money.

The UMC, which has about 8 million U.S. members, is suffering through the same budget pressures besetting most U.S. churches as the spiraling stock market cuts into endowment funds and donations decline.

The Methodist bishops said their church faces "an unprecedented moment in our history," with church membership, worship attendance, baptisms and funding for certain ministries all declining.

Meanwhile, the bishops said, the church suffers from "institutional inertia" and "the structure we live with is not sufficient, nimble, or responsive to the fast-changing 21st century world we inhabit."

The church is studying ways to "radically refashion and reorder the life of the United Methodist Church," the bishops said.

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