

No. 9146

(Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolution)

RESOLUTION CONCERNING END STAGES OF LIFE**ADOPTED by the General Assembly**

WHEREAS, God's gift of life requires our stewardship of every part of creation, including the end stages of life; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has a heritage of informed conscience and open dialogue on related issues, including the approval of Resolution 7724 concerning death with dignity; and

WHEREAS, increasing numbers of people are dying of chronic disease and debilitating injury, and their dying is prolonged over a period of months or years by technology; and

WHEREAS, the intervention in the dying process through artificial means has become a norm; and

WHEREAS, this situation has given rise to a number of ethical dilemmas, including the following:

1. Patients and families may lose control over decisions affecting the final days of individuals;
2. The individual's dignity and quality of life may be sacrificed;
3. Serious financial burdens may accrue to families and to society in situations where there are no reasonable expectations of recovery, rehabilitation, or mentation;
4. Lengthening of litigation may be used for political purposes ignoring patient's rights;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 25-30, 1991:

1. Support congregations as communities of faith who:
 - a. Seek new insight from our Biblical and traditional heritage through prayerful study of these matters; and
 - b. Prepare for possible extended durations of ethical, legal, and community debate surrounding some situations; and
 - c. Encourage families to discuss possibilities openly and honestly before a decision must be faced; and
 - d. Cultivate relationships with hospital social workers, chaplains, ethicists, and other caregivers so as to maintain current knowledge of medical developments.
 2. Encourage congregations and pastors to recognize opportunities related to the end stages of life and to educate and to facilitate people finding a commonality of human experience by:
 - a. Learning the terminology; and
 - b. Becoming familiar with policies of local hospitals, nursing homes, and other care-giving institutions regarding advance directives and exploring an individual's rights under the state, provincial and national laws; and
 - c. Developing a theological understanding of life and death; and
 - d. Recognizing the possibility of attention from the media, government officials, medical facility personnel and various issue-oriented groups which may seek to use these circumstances for purposes far beyond the immediate concerns of the individual, family, or health care workers.
 3. Acknowledge that local pastors may be called to prophetic as well as pastoral leadership surrounding such issues and will require congregational support; and
- BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly:
1. Encourage pastors and congregations to make their opinions known, recognizing that each situation is unique and offers a great opportunity for shared ministry and deeper spiritual growth; and
 2. Encourage its members to engage in the dialogue pertaining to the formation of public policy that includes concern for moral issues; and
 3. Request the General Minister and President to develop a process for creating a theological statement to help our members reflect on the theological, moral, and ethical issues related to the end stages of life.