

No. 9124

(Operational Business Item)

DECLARATION ON DISCIPLES OF CHRIST REFORMED RELATIONS**ADOPTED by the General Assembly****Background Information:**

In many countries (e.g., North India, Japan, the Philippines, South Africa, and Great Britain) Disciples of Christ and Reformed churches have come together in united churches; in other places (e.g., COCU in the U.S.) they are engaged in sincere conversations moving towards visible unity. These two traditions also are partners in mission at international, national, and local levels.

In March, 1987, an international dialogue was held in Birmingham, England, sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) and the worldwide Disciples

Ecumenical Consultative Council. (For papers and report entitled "No Theological Obstacles," see *Mid-Stream: An Ecumenical Journal*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, April, 1988.) The conclusion was a common recognition that there are no theological and ecclesiological issues which now divide these two traditions. On the basis of these theological agreements and the growing unity and cooperation in different parts of the world, the WARC and the DECC invited their member churches to move toward closer relationships in their national situations. At their 22nd General Council at Seoul, Korea in August, 1989, the WARC affirmed a jointly drafted declaration, saying, "The Disciples of Christ and the Reformed Churches recognize and accept each other as visible expressions of the one Church of Christ." In February 1991 at Canberra, Australia the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council unanimously affirmed the same declaration. Following these actions, Reformed and Disciples churches in various countries are now being called upon to affirm this joint declaration and to continue this dialogue making their unity real in communion, common mission, and worship.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that in response to the unity God has given in Jesus Christ and to the increasing ecumenical developments between Disciples and Reformed churches at international, national, and local communities, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada affirms the following joint declaration:

The Disciples of Christ and the Reformed Churches recognize and accept each other as visible expressions of the one Church of Christ. Acceptance of this declaration presses us beyond our divided histories toward a common ecumenical future. We believe that this declaration has several specific implications. It implies sufficient consensus between our two traditions on the meaning of the Gospel, on baptism, the Lord's Supper, and ministry to enable our churches to recognize and accept each other's members and ministries, to share reciprocally the Lord's Supper, and to engage in common mission, evangelism, and service in the world. The acceptance of each other as churches also implies our commitment to remove obstacles which keep us from sharing full fellowship and mission in the name of Christ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly calls upon the Council on Christian Unity, through the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council, to continue this dialogue with the aim of (a) deepening the mutual understanding and communion between these two traditions, and (b) finding ways of giving fuller expression to the communion and common mission that exists between Disciples and Reformed churches.

Council on Christian Unity

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly ADOPT business item No. 9124 (Debate time: 12 minutes)
