

No. 9127**(Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolution)****RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF MINISTERING TO PERSONS WITH A
SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AND THEIR FAMILIES****ADOPTED by the General Assembly****Background Information:**

The Lutheran Church (ELCA) and Presbyterian Church USA have already addressed this issue, and encourage other denominations to do so as well.

WHEREAS, mental illness is a mental disorder causing severe disturbances in thinking, feeling, and relationships, which result in a substantially diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life; and

WHEREAS, because of ignorance, fear, and the perpetuation of myths, mentally ill persons are often stigmatized and discriminated against in medical care, insurance benefits, and educational, employment, and housing opportunities; and

WHEREAS, because of the social policy of deinstitutionalization of mentally ill persons during the past three decades, communities are unable to meet their needs, and they are often denied community treatment and support services; and

WHEREAS, despite the human suffering and economic loss caused by mental illness (which is estimated to be \$50 billion annually), the United States of America has not provided adequate support for research on the causes and cures of mental illness; and

WHEREAS, the burden of care is frequently placed on the families of those with a mental illness, who bear the unnecessary shame and stigma as well, and who need the support of friends and the Church, but most often feel misunderstood and abandoned instead; and

WHEREAS, mentally ill persons and their families need to experience the compassion, understanding, acceptance, support and the grace of God through the faith community that is willing to reach out, welcome and minister to them with love and concern; and

WHEREAS, through the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Church is called upon to minister to those who are ill in body, mind and spirit; to advocate for those persons and their families who suffer stigma and discrimination; and welcome those who suffer rejection and abandonment;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 25-30, 1991 encourages congregations to examine their hearts and basic theology so as not to blame or further the belief that mental illness is a punishment for sin brought on by divine wrath and perpetuate the automatic assumption of family causation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that congregations be requested to recognize the need for spiritual healing of those with a mental illness and their families by reaching out and welcoming them into the Christian community and ministering to them in a compassionate and supportive environment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in order to eradicate the ignorance, fear and stigma associated with mental illness, regions and seminaries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) continue to develop and support the training of clergy, lay leadership and congregations through education and training and in regard to ministry with the mentally ill and their families; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the regions encourage clergy and their congregations to engage in ministry and advocacy on behalf of mentally ill persons and their families.