

**No. 8736**

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING CHURCH-WIDE PROGRAM  
TO ESTABLISH NEW CONGREGATIONS**

**ADOPTED by the General Assembly**

**Background Information:**

The priority to establish new congregations in the 1980's, entitled Church Advance Now was created by General Assembly Resolution 7569 and called upon "the regions, Board of Church Extension and Division of Homeland Ministries to engage in a consultation concerning a strategy, including financial support, for establishing new congregations in the United States and Canada especially among Blacks and Hispanics." Affirmation was given to the structures and strategies of the Church Advance Now (C.A.N.) Program through General Assembly Resolution 8361.

The decade long objectives have been to establish 100 new congregations at an estimated cost of \$25 million. The commitment of the New Congregation Establishment Committee is that, of new congregations established, not less than 15%, 10%, and 5% shall be Black, Hispanic, and American Asian respectively.

As of March 1, 1987, 107 congregations have been initiated, and are in the process of development. Of those, 12 are Black, 8 Hispanic, and 4 are American Asian. 64% have been initiated by regions; 34% supported by regions after being started and 2% starting independently. Toward the \$25 million, approximately \$10 million has been committed through regional capital campaigns and programs.

In 1986, congregational, regional and general representatives evaluated the Church Advance Now Program. The evaluation noted a number of learnings, among which were:

1. New congregation establishment brings vitality to the whole church.
2. The unchurched are reached through new congregations. Nearly 50% of the members reported were either alienated or never related to the church. (As compared to a study by Homeland Ministries of persons uniting with established Disciples congregations in 1984 which revealed that 6.1% of new members had no prior church experience);
3. Greater financial resources are needed;
4. To date, goals related to new Hispanic, Black and American Asian congregations have been only minimally realized;
5. Covenantal relationships between congregations and with the regional and general manifestation are enhanced by the partnership called for in Church Advance Now;
6. Region by region strategies of locating and funding new congregations cannot meet the demands of the task.

WHEREAS, there is widespread concern for the vitality of congregational life; and

WHEREAS, at the heart of congregational vitality is commitment to evangelizing the unchurched; and

WHEREAS, Church Advance Now is successfully reaching the unchurched through new congregations; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is committed to: (1) reach the growing numbers of Blacks, Hispanics, and American Asians, with the empowering and liberating good news of Christ in communities of Christian Faith; (2) follow moving population into the areas of growth; and (3) create new opportunities for persons not yet having found a home in the church; and

WHEREAS, these imperatives can be fulfilled by a church-wide strategy of targeting, establishing, and financing new congregations;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that this General Assembly meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, October 16-21, 1987, call upon the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to enter into a broadly based planning process that will result in a continuing and enhanced church-wide strategy for targeting, establishing and funding new congregations for the 1990's; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this strategy will continue to involve all three manifestations and will include what has been effective in Church Advance Now.