

No. 8359

REPORT ON RESPONSE TO RESOLUTION NO. 8117 CONCERNING VOLUNTARY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLES

RECEIVED by the General Assembly.
Recommendations ADOPTED

BACKGROUND:

The 1981 Anaheim General Assembly adopted the Resolution No. 8117 Concerning Voluntary Service Opportunities for Disciples, which called upon the General Minister and President to explore the feasibility of establishing a Disciples Service Committee to coordinate voluntary service opportunities and provide a mechanism for channeling the creative energies and aspirations of members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The General Minister and President has consulted with representatives of the Division of Homeland Ministries, the Division of Overseas Ministries and the National Benevolent Association — the three principal administrative units in which volunteer programs are primarily dispersed.

The Division of Homeland Ministries presently administers the Voluntary Service Program, which receives its basic funding through the Week of Compassion. The major activity of the program is the operation of adult work projects in which 20-40 skilled and semi-skilled adults spend one to three weeks doing some form of construction. Many of these projects are related to disaster reconstruction. The program also relates to Ecumenical Youth Service through which Disciples young adults can have a short work camp experience overseas. During 1982 the following projects were supported: a self-development project in the Dominican Republic; reconstruction of Bet-el Christian Church, hispanic congregation in Robstown, Texas; a campus ministry project at Inman Christian Center, San Antonio; a youth work camp for 76 youth at Hazel Green Academy; an adult work project at Hazel Green for 64 adults; a young adult work project in Finland; a dispensary construction project in Cameroun, Africa; a follow-up project at Bet-el in Robstown.

The Division of Overseas Ministries operates the Fraternal Work Program, also funded largely by Week of Compassion. Participants in the program normally are not professionally trained, or are persons who have not completed professional training. Two-year assignments are usually made on a subsistence stipend basis.

Institutions related to the National Benevolent Association frequently have opportunities for service that can be filled by volunteers. These vary widely in scope and style. Most of the volunteer programming is done unit by unit, but coordination is provided by the central office.

Service committees in other denominations (like those mentioned in the resolution) are essentially equivalent to administrative units in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The potential for service volunteers and the operation of the dispersed service responsibilities suggest that the best course to follow is to provide inter-unit cooperation without changes in structures or budgets.

Recommendations:

1. That the three staff persons responsible for volunteer services in the Division of Homeland Ministries, the Division of Overseas Ministries, and the National Benevolent Association, together with such other staff members designated by the presidents of the three administrative units, be designated as a Disciples Service Committee.
2. That the Disciples Service Committee be chaired by the Director of the Voluntary Service Program in the Division of Homeland Ministries.
3. That the Disciples Service Committee coordinate the voluntary service opportunities in the three administrative units and from other places that may emerge from time to time.
4. That the Disciples Service Committee be the point of contact for persons in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) desiring to explore possibilities for volunteer service.