

# **2017**

## **General Assembly**

### **Business Items**

*(resolutions, informational documents,  
study documents received or adopted)*

**GA-1717**  
**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**RESOLUTION TO CELEBRATE AND REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO THE  
VISION OF PLANTING 1,000 NEW CONGREGATIONS BY 2020**  
**adopted**

WHEREAS, throughout our history, the Stone-Campbell movement has been marked by courageous leaders called to create communities rooted in God's mission for wholeness; and

WHEREAS, God has called Disciples to start 1,000 Disciples congregations in 1,000 different ways by the year 2020; and

WHEREAS, since 2001, bold Disciples leaders have answered this call by establishing more than 975 new churches, including plants and affiliates, in United States and Canada, and celebrate that over 60-percent are still bearing Christ's witness to the world five years past their inception; and

WHEREAS, the New Church Movement, in response to the 2020 Vision, is a major contributor to the racial/ethnic diversity of our congregations, as exemplified by at least 28 languages in which we now worship Church-wide; and

WHEREAS, Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation partners with Disciples Regions and Areas, National Convocation, Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries and North American Pacific/Asian Disciples to train, equip, assist and multiply new church leaders as they guide new congregations into God's mission; and

WHEREAS, it is through this partnership and the mighty courage and commitment of new church planters and their families that the New Church Movement serves as an area for growth in the denomination;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting July 8-12, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana, celebrates the meaningful New Church work already accomplished and encourages the whole Church, Regions, Areas, and congregations to recommit to the critical mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to start new churches through 2020 and beyond. By collective spiritual support and prayer, ongoing Pentecost Offering giving, financial stewardship, and the faithful call and formation of new leaders, Disciples will champion the proclamation: "Churches Change the World... Start More!"

Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation

*list follows*

#### 2017 – 20

1. Urban Missions – Pomona, CA
2. Potluck Church – Madisonville, KY
3. Vision of Jesus Christian Church – All these churches are PSWR region and are under care by the region
4. Joyful Church
5. Loving Jesus Church
6. Nanum Christian Church
7. Silver Lakes Christian Church
8. Casa de Oración Fullerton
9. Casa de Refugio
10. Centro de Alabanza Emanuel
11. Centro Familiar Cristiano Restauración
12. Iglesia Cristiana de Ventura
13. Iglesia Cristiana Emanuel
14. Iglesia Cristiana Encuentro con Dios
15. Iglesia Cristiana Seguidores de Cristo
16. Iglesia Discípulos de Cristo
17. Fe, Esperanza y Amor Christian Church
18. Iglesia Unida en Cristo
19. Iglesia Cristiana - Árbol de Vida, Pensacola, FL - In Formation
20. Primera Iglesia Cristiana, Birmingham, AL - In Formation

#### 2016 -14

1. Community Christian Church – Brooklyn, NY
2. The Church at Lake Cherokee – Henderson, TX
3. New Life in Christ Christian Church – Louisville, KY
4. First Tongan Christian Church – Salt Lake City, UT
5. Centro la Familia Cristiano Church – Rowlett, TX
6. Bethel Ethiopian Christian Church – Dallas, TX
7. New Life Christian Church – Sacramento, CA
8. First Samoan Congregational Christian Church – Oakland, CA
9. Disciples in the Wilderness – Conroe, TX
10. Life Recovery Fellowship Church – Hastings, NE
11. New Hope Community Christian – MO
12. Chuukese Fellowship Church of Christ – Salem, OH - Affiliation Process
13. Iglesia Cristiana Príncipe de Paz – Portland, OR – Affiliation Process
14. Iglesia Nueva Vida – Portland, OR – Affiliation Process

#### 2015 - 20

1. Congregational Christian Church – Stockton, CA
2. La Viña – Troutdale, OR
3. Christ Church – Portland, OR
4. Saint John's Community Church – Portland, OR
5. Pacific Islands Family Church – Portland, OR
6. Iglesia Cristiana Bíblica Eben-Ezer – Dallas, TX
7. At the Cross Christian Church – Dallas, TX
8. Open Table Christian Church – Murfreesboro, TN
9. Church of Another Chance – Nashville, TN
10. Co-Heirs with Christ Missions INC – Lexington, KY
11. Discípulos de Cristo – Springfield, VA

12. Visión Mundial para la Familia – Arlington, TX
13. Pacific Islanders Fellowship- Lakewood, CO
14. Centro Cristiano Discípulos de Cristo en Houston – Houston
15. Saint Paul’s Church – Dearborn Heights, MI
16. Casa de Refugio Christian Church – Covina, CA
17. Zeteo – Houston, TX
18. Sacred Hoop Native American – Tulsa, OK
19. New Century Fellowship Christian Church – Louisville, KY
20. Downtown Disciples – Des Moines, IA

**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**CONCERNING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MERGER AGREEMENT BETWEEN  
THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY CONVENTION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONVENTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)  
adopted**

WHEREAS, the Merger Agreement is presented as a part of the orientation offered to Board Members of the National Convocation, however, it is not enough in regards to the increased interest and questions that have arisen around the National Convocation and the Biennial Session; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has adopted the priority to become a Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racist denomination, and a better understanding of the Merger Agreement would help to implement inclusiveness and diversity, wholeness and Christian Unity; and

WHEREAS, the National Convocation, the North American Pacific Asian Disciples and the Central Pastoral Office of Hispanic Ministries are recognized as the Racial/ Ethnic Ministries, each having unique histories and relationships within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Merger Agreement is solely between the General Assembly and the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and

WHEREAS, at their December 2015 meeting, the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) assigned their Executive Committee to draft a resolution that would serve to encourage the education of the denomination regarding the Merger Agreement beginning with the 24th Biennial Session of the National Convocation meeting at Overland Park, Kansas (Greater Kansas City) and the 2017 General Assembly meeting at the Indiana Convention Center; and

WHEREAS, the 24th Biennial Session of the National Convocation meeting in Overland Park, Kansas (Greater Kansas City), approved this resolution and forwarded it to the 2017 General Assembly in Indianapolis;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Indianapolis, IN, July 8-12, 2017, celebrates the reprinting of the 1990 edition of JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS: A History of Black Disciples of Christ in the Mission of the Christian Church: Vol. 1, From Convention to Convocation, by Brenda Cardwell and William K. Fox, Jr., as a proactive measure to assist in the education of our denomination on the Merger Agreement in particular and our history in general; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that the church is encouraged to include the afore-mentioned book in the libraries of all our church affiliated colleges and seminaries and that it serve as a resource for the teaching of Disciples of Christ History and Polity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the aforementioned book become a regional office resource and be available with the selected books in local church libraries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Merger Agreement is presented as part of the orientation offered to General Board members; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the study of the Merger Agreement be promoted across all three expressions of the church and higher education through all channels available.

National Convocation

**GA-1719**  
**(Sense-of-the-Assembly)**

**A CALL FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) TO  
ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN LIVING UNDER  
ISRAELI MILITARY OCCUPATION  
adopted**

WHEREAS, the witness of Scripture grants children a privileged place in the embrace of Jesus and the vision of the beloved community, and Jesus welcomed children and blessed them; he called us to become childlike in our reception of the Realm of God. [1] Jesus himself was born in Palestine under Roman Occupation and, according to Matthew's Gospel, escaped the slaughter of innocents by becoming a refugee in Egypt before returning to the land of his birth where he came of age.[2] To read the Gospels is to become aware of both the blessing and the vulnerability of children. It is to know that God's love was revealed in a child and, in particular, a child vulnerable to injustice and violence; and

WHEREAS, Kairos Palestine, written by Palestinian Christian theologians in 2009 and commended to the churches by the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in a Pastoral Letter (April 2010), reminds us that "the communion of love says to every believer in spirit and in truth: if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner; if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed; when my brother is killed, then I too am killed." [3] Discipleship calls for solidarity with the vulnerable and the oppressed; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has repeatedly called for a just settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, for an end to prolonged Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, for the upholding of principles of non-violence, for the protection of human rights and for a just peace in Israel/Palestine where all peoples, both Israeli and Palestinians can live in freedom, equality and dignity; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the State of Israel has ratified, calls on states to "Treat every child deprived of liberty with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age," to use arrest and imprisonment of children "only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time," to give detained children "prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty" and "the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits," and in no case to subject children to "torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," [4]; and

WHEREAS, UNICEF in 2013 determined that the "ill-treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system appears to be widespread, systematic and

institutionalized” and that this ill-treatment of children includes the use of blindfolds, hand-ties, strip searches, physical violence, verbal abuse and intimidation, denial of access to lawyers and parents prior to and during interrogation, and failure to inform children of their legal rights, such as their right to remain silent[5]; and

WHEREAS, subsequent update reports to UNICEF’s 2013 report have found that the situation has changed little for Palestinian children arrested by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank[6][7]; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of State in its annual country reports on human rights practices has, since 2007 in each annual country report on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, included data and information on ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention, denial of fair trial rights in Israeli military courts, and other grave violations against children committed by Israeli forces and settlers; and

WHEREAS, Defense for Children International – Palestine and other international, Palestinian, and Israeli human rights organizations regularly publish reports confirming Israel’s widespread and systematic ill-treatment of Palestinian children arrested in the occupied West Bank, ill-treatment which includes heavily armed Israeli soldiers invading children’s homes and arresting them in the middle of the night; failure to notify parents of the reason for arrest or the location of detention; denial of access to lawyers during interrogation; failure to inform children of their rights; the use of position abuse, threats, and isolation by interrogators to coerce confessions; the use of solitary confinement for interrogation purposes; acceptance of confessions obtained by coercion or torture as legal courtroom evidence, even those confessions written in Hebrew and not understood by children coerced into signing them; and the routine transfer of Palestinian children out of the occupied Palestinian territories to prisons inside Israel in violation of international law[8]; and

WHEREAS, Israeli forces have held an average of 201 Palestinian children in custody each month since 2011, and this number spiked dramatically in late 2015 so that by the end of February 2016 the total had increased to 440, the highest number at any given point since the Israel Prison Service began releasing data in 2008[9]; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act specifies that no military assistance be given to any country that “engages in a consistent pattern of gross violation of internationally recognized human rights” and on at least eleven previous occasions the U.S. has withheld assistance from countries based on their human rights violations[10]; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) supported the ecumenical calls of Oct. 5, 2012, to request that Congress hold Israel accountable to the US Foreign Assistance Act and US Arms Export Control Act[11] and in May 5, 2016, urged the US to cease all arms allocations and transfers to the Middle East[12];

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, July 8-12, 2017, calls on members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to learn about the plight of children in Palestine and the State of Israel; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly calls on the government of the United States to adhere to its own established law – in this case, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act – by withholding military assistance from the State of Israel due to its practices of arrest and detention of Palestinian children, requiring Israel to guarantee basic due process rights and exercise an absolute prohibition against torture and ill-treatment of detained children, ensuring that, from the moment of arrest, all operations and procedures are carried out in accordance with international juvenile justice standards, specifically the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and that the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) communicate this call to the United States Congress, as well as the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State of the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly calls on the United States Senate to join with 194 other nations in ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child so as to bring stronger international pressure to bear on Israel to comply with the Convention's provisions, in particular Articles 37 and 40 of the Convention governing the treatment of children held in detention and requests the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) communicate this call to the United States Senate, as well as the President, Vice President, and Secretary of State of the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly calls on the State of Israel to guarantee basic due process rights and exercise an absolute prohibition against torture and ill-treatment of detained children, ensuring that, from the moment of arrest, all operations and procedures are carried out in accordance with international juvenile justice standards, specifically the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and requests the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to communicate this call to the Prime Minister of Israel and the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, noting that among the practices in Israel's military detention system that require change are the use of nighttime arrests in the child's home, physical and verbal abuse, blindfolds and restraints, strip searches, solitary confinement, coerced confessions and confessions written in Hebrew, as well as the separation of detained children from their parents and legal counselors (including the transfer of Palestinian children to prisons within the State of Israel that their parents are not permitted to visit); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly expresses gratitude to Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ for its advocacy on behalf of children in Palestine and the State of Israel; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages continued partnership with U.S. and global ecumenical and interfaith partners, as well as with Palestinian and Israeli organizations that are advocating for the rights of children and providing educational, social, and psychological support for children and their families adversely affected by the occupation.

Division of Overseas Ministries

## Background and Biblical Grounding

Kairos Palestine, written by Palestinian Christian theologians in 2009 and commended to the churches by the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in a Pastoral Letter (April 2010), reminds us that “the communion of love says to every believer in spirit and in truth: if my brother is a prisoner I am a prisoner; if his home is destroyed, my home is destroyed; when my brother is killed, then I too am killed.”[13] Discipleship requires solidarity with the vulnerable and the oppressed.

As Palestinians living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip enter their 50th year under Israeli military occupation, instability and violence continue to define much of life for Palestinian children. While living under prolonged military occupation causes suffering to all Palestinians, the plight of children is of particular concern in light of the persistent grave human rights violations and violence that surround them and the physical and emotional trauma to which they are subject. Generations of children have come of age as refugees living in refugee camps and behind walls.[14] Generations of children have waited at checkpoints to go to school and return home.[15] Generations of children have witnessed Israeli soldiers, many themselves young, harass and humiliate their parents. Generations of children have witnessed the demolition of their families’ homes or businesses, theft of their land, or the destruction of their families’ farms and orchards.[16] Generations of children have been arrested by Israeli forces and prosecuted in an Israeli military detention system notorious for the systematic and widespread ill-treatment of children.[17]

Israel has the dubious distinction of being the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts. Since the year 2000, over 8,000 Palestinian children have been arrested and prosecuted in this system.[18]

In April 2016, Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCIP) published a study of 429 West Bank children detained between 2012 and 2015. Three out of four children had endured some form of physical violence after being detained by Israeli forces. In 97 percent of the cases, children had no parent or lawyer present during the interrogation process. Interrogators used position abuse, threats, or isolation to coerce confessions from some of these children. At least 66 children were held in solitary confinement for an average period of 13 days. One child was held in isolation for 45 days.[19] Most

often, they are accused of throwing stones, but many times, the charges are never made public.

In addition, there are several indirect acts of violence that children suffer. According to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), some 48,000 Palestinian houses have been demolished in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem since 1967, leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless,[20] including children. This situation has left devastating physical, psychological effects on children, which are irreversible.

Almost 60% of the population living in the West Bank and Gaza are refugees. More than half of them live in refugee camps. Since 1967, these refugee camps have been target for Israeli army operations that include the use of gas bombs, tear gas, and the harassment and arrest of men, women and children. Sometimes, families spend days looking for their children in detention centers. During this time, the violence that children face is horrendous, and much of that is not even officially reported because these are not formal prisons that are officially monitored.

Since 1967, Israel has operated two separate legal systems in the same territory. Israeli Jewish settlers who (in violation of international law) reside in the West Bank enjoy protections provided by the Israeli civilian legal system. In contrast, Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to Israeli military law, which fails to ensure and, in fact, denies basic and fundamental rights. Palestinian children in the West Bank thus suffer abuses and constraints of a military detention system which no Israeli child living in the West Bank ever experiences.

The occupation thus creates a system where Palestinians living in the same occupied territory as Israeli settlers have inferior rights and protections under the law – a system where Palestinian children experience an environment of fear, dehumanization and violence that is contradictory to the flourishing of life in a nurturing environment, including opportunities to play safely, to access education and health care, to which all children, including Palestinian and Israeli children, aspire.

The witness of Scripture grants children a privileged place in the embrace of Jesus and the vision of the beloved community. Jesus welcomed children and blessed them; he called us to become childlike in our reception of the Realm of God.[21] Jesus himself was born in Palestine under Roman Occupation and, according to Matthew's Gospel, escaped the slaughter of innocents by becoming a refugee in Egypt before returning to the land of his birth where he came of age.[22] To read the Gospels is to become aware of both the blessing and the vulnerability of children. It is to know that God's love was revealed in a child and, in particular, a child vulnerable to injustice and violence.

Justice and peace are impeded today by those who hide behind a false equivalency, refusing to acknowledge the gross imbalance of military and police power between Israelis and Palestinians, or refusing to recognize that the impact of occupation falls with greater weight on the occupied, not the occupier. Justice and peace are impeded today by those who, in the face of failed peace processes and seemingly intractable obstacles,

grow resigned and indifferent, as if God were impotent and historical change impossible. To those lacking vision or energy to pursue this issue of justice, Kairos Palestine responds, “In the absence of hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God’s goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land.”[23]

## Notes:

- [1] Matthew 18:1-5; Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-15
- [2] Matthew 2:1-23
- [3] Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth, A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from Palestinian Suffering, 2009, par. 5.2, Kairos Palestine - A Moment of Truth
- [4] United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 37, U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child
- [5] UNICEF, Children in Israeli Military Detention – Observations and Recommendations – 6 March 2013, Children in Israeli Military Detention - Observations and Recommendations - 6 March 2013
- [6] UNICEF, Children in Military Detention – Bulletin No. 1 – October 2013, UNICEF oPt Children in Military Detention - Bulletin No. 1 - October 2013
- [7] UNICEF, Children in Israeli Military Detention – Observations and Recommendations – Bulletin No. 2 – February 2015, UNICEF oPt Children in Israeli Military Detention - Observations and Recommendations - Bulletin No. 2 - February 2015
- [8] Defense for Children International – Palestine, No Way to Treat a Child, Palestinian Children in the Israeli Military Detention System, 14 April 2016, Palestinian Children in the Israeli Military Detention System
- [9] Defense of Children International - Palestine, Detention Bulletin – April 2016, publ. August 8, 2016, Detention Bulletin - April 2016
- [10] U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, U.S. Military Aid to Israel: Policy Implications and Options, March 2012, <http://uscpr.org/campaign/government-affairs/resources/military-aid-policy-paper/> [11] Oct. 5, 2012 Ecumenical Letter to Congress [http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/globalministries/legacy\\_url/7495/Military-aid-to-Israel-Oct-1-Final.pdf?1419969549](http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/globalministries/legacy_url/7495/Military-aid-to-Israel-Oct-1-Final.pdf?1419969549)
- [12] “U.S. Diplomacy, not arms sales, needed in Middle East,” [http://www.globalministries.org/u\\_s\\_diplomacy\\_not\\_arms\\_sales\\_needed\\_in\\_middle\\_east](http://www.globalministries.org/u_s_diplomacy_not_arms_sales_needed_in_middle_east)
- [13] Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth, A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from Palestinian Suffering, 2009, par. 5.2, Kairos Palestine - A Moment of Truth
- [14] United Nations Relief and Works Agency, multiple reports, U.N. Relief and Works Agency
- [15] U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Occupied Palestinian Territories web site contains useful, detailed reports about Israeli checkpoints, United Nations OCHA-OPT website
- [16] Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, multiple reports, ICAHD
- [17] World Council of Churches, edited by John Calhoun and Rajan Solomon, Palestinian Prisoners: A Question of Conscience, 2014
- [18] Defense for Children International - Palestine, report citing numbers of detained children
- [19] Defense for Children International – Palestine, No Way to Treat a Child, Palestinian Children in the Israeli Military Detention System, 14 April 2016, Palestine Children in the Israeli Military Detention System
- [20] Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, “Guidelines for Effective Advocacy” <http://icahd.org/what-can-you-do/guidelines-for-effective-lobbying/>
- [21] Matthew 18:1-5; Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-15
- [22] Matthew 2:1-23
- [23] Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth, A Word of Faith, Hope and Love from Palestinian Suffering, 2009, par. 10, Kairos Palestine - A Moment of Truth

## Additional references

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- Defense for Children International Palestine, Solitary Confinement for Palestinian Children in Israeli Military Detention, May 2014, [http://www.dci-palestine.org/sites/default/files/report\\_doc\\_solitary\\_confinement\\_report\\_2013\\_final\\_29apr2014.pdf](http://www.dci-palestine.org/sites/default/files/report_doc_solitary_confinement_report_2013_final_29apr2014.pdf)
- Defense for Children International Palestine, Bound, Blindfolded and Convicted: Children Held in Military Custody, April 2012, [http://www.dci-palestine.org/sites/default/files/report\\_0.pdf](http://www.dci-palestine.org/sites/default/files/report_0.pdf)

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- Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Cornerstone, August, 2017, "To Set the Captives Free." [http://www.globalministries.org/new\\_issue\\_of\\_sabeel\\_s\\_cornerstone\\_to\\_set\\_the\\_captives\\_free](http://www.globalministries.org/new_issue_of_sabeel_s_cornerstone_to_set_the_captives_free)
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the second to fourth periodic reports of Israel, July 4, 2013, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/co/CRC-C-ISR-CO-2-4.pdf>

#### International Law

- Fourth Geneva Convention, August 12, 1949, Fourth Geneva Convention - August 12, 1949
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977, 1125 UNTS 3, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36b4.html>
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, G.A. Res. 44/25, U.N. Doc. A/RES/44/25 (Nov. 20, 1989), U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment or Treatment, G.A. Res. 39/46, U.N. Doc. A/RES/39/46, (Dec. 10, 1984), <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r046.htm>

**GA-1720**  
**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**AFFIRMATION OF OUR COMMITMENT TO RESPONSIBLE INVESTING**  
**adopted**

WHEREAS, our biblical, theological and historical heritage calls us to responsibility in all areas of our lives, including the management of money; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada calls for ministries of the church to engage in a theology of justice, kindness and walking humbly with our God; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church Foundation, Disciples Church Extension Fund and the Pension Fund of the Christian Church are stewards with a fiduciary and covenantal responsibility to manage resources responsibly; and

WHEREAS, responsible investing<sup>1</sup> is a critical tool in furthering the transformational ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 8-12, 2017, affirms its shared accountability in addressing social and environmental issues; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the financial ministries reaffirm our commitment to be engaged with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR <sup>2</sup>), an association of faith-based and values-driven institutional investors dedicated to direct engagement with corporations to effect positive change; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the financial ministries will provide an educational program for the 2019 General Assembly addressing our responsible investing policies and practices in support of the church's total mission.

Christian Church Foundation Board of Directors  
Disciples Church Extension Fund Board of Directors  
Pension Fund of the Christian Church Board of Directors

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<sup>1</sup> Responsible investing is an investment strategy which considers both financial return and the values of the church.

<sup>2</sup> ICCR ([www.iccr.org](http://www.iccr.org)) was founded in 1971 and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was a founding member. ICCR is not an investment manager or advisor, but rather a coalition of 275 faith-based institutional investors. By partnering with other faith-based investors we gain a broader and deeper source of information about corporate and societal issues, and can achieve greater impact.

**GA-1721**  
**(Sense-of-the-Assembly)**

**A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION MINISTRY**  
**adopted**

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has committed to be a pro-reconciling/anti-racist church through the adoption of General Assembly resolutions<sup>i</sup>, the 2020 Vision and its Mission Priorities; and

WHEREAS, this conversation, which started in the early 1960s as an open dialogue and church-wide prophetic commitment to the eradication of racism in all its forms; has become at times, a marginalized topic despite our continued efforts to include this as an imperative goal for the body of Christ; and

WHEREAS, in Resolution 6919 we affirmed the “oneness of all [hu]mankind demonstrated by Jesus Christ in his respect and self-giving for every person, regardless of the distinctions imposed by the social system” and acknowledged that “that despite our resolutions and pronouncements, our churches, have, with rare exception, failed to demonstrate a race-less Christianity, a community of once alienated persons reconciled and made one in Christ. We repent of our racism. We pledge ourselves by God’s grace to bring forth the fruits;” and

WHEREAS, Disciples have prophetically affirmed that we are one body of people (Romans 12:5), gathered at the Welcome Table who are commanded to love one another (Matthew 22:37-40), be reconciled to God and to each other (II Corinthians 5:16-21), and be a witness of God’s power to break down walls which separate us (Ephesians 2:14b); and

WHEREAS, we must reaffirm that the struggle against racism is not an optional endeavor but an intrinsic mandate we all must share; and

WHEREAS, we have seen the progress that the establishment of the Reconciliation Ministry office has made in advancing the church towards better providing minority groups with a clear focal point for community with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and

WHEREAS, one office and a single funding source cannot expect to meet the challenge of dismantling racism alone, but rather all three expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) must join together as one to eradicate that which destroys the image of God reflected in all humanity;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, IN, July 8-12, 2017, urges all expressions of the church to re-commit to “dismantle the pervasive evil of racism that keeps the community broken and fragmented [and] reconstitute the

table into a place where healing, remembering, and reconciliation take place”<sup>ii</sup>; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly urges congregations, regions, and General expressions of the church to renew their support of the Reconciliation Ministry Offering and to explore the implementation of the recommendations of General Assembly resolution 0731 (attached) so that the funds allocated to Reconciliation Ministry will continue to sustain this ministry by providing sufficient support for a full-time staff person with administrative support and contracted professionals to provide on the ground training and education during pertinent moments of racial upheaval and reconciliation opportunities, as well as funds to support the pro-reconciling/anti-racist priority of the church; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Reconciliation Ministry, in consultation with the Office of General Minister and President, establish metrics that can narratively and numerically demonstrate progress toward becoming a pro-reconciling/anti-racist church and report back to the next General Assembly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly acknowledges that race is still an issue within our ministry context, affirms the removal of the marginalization of this work, fully expresses support for the office of Reconciliation Ministry and the mandate of its work and calls upon Disciples to provide the necessary pastoral and financial resources to move the church to become a Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racist church where institutional and interpersonal sins of racism will be fully eradicated; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that until then, Reconciliation Ministry will be absolutely necessary.

Centennial Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) St. Louis, MO  
Webster Groves Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), St. Louis, MO  
Memorial Blvd Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), St. Louis, MO  
New Vision Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Kansas City, MO  
Woodland Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Columbus, OH  
East Sixth Street Christian Church, Oklahoma City, OK

i Resolutions about pro-reconciliation and anti-racism that were adopted by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) include, but are not limited to: No. 6919, No. 6920, 6922, No. 8122, No. 9144, No. 9720, No. 0121. Reports have also been received by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that include background information and strong abhorrence to racism include, but are not limited to: No. 7148, No. 0113, and No. 0116.

ii No. 0113 Report from the Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Initiative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Received by the General Assembly (Year Book Pages 247-250).

## Attachment

### NO. 0731 (OPERATIONAL BUSINESS ITEM) RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING RECONCILIATION MISSION<sup>1</sup>

#### <sup>1</sup>A Brief Background to the Formation of the Reconciliation Evaluation Committee

By early 2003, its existing funds expended, the upcoming Reconciliation 2005 Offering became the only source of funding for Reconciliation Mission.<sup>2</sup> Hurricanes Katrina and Rita aggravated the financial stress, for as a result of the ensuing devastation, our congregations understandably gave money to assist our sisters and brothers in the Gulf Coast region, thereby limiting their resources for other offerings. In the aftermath of these disasters, the Reconciliation offering dropped by twenty-five percent.

The continued insufficiency of funding resulted in staff reductions and severe curtailment in trainings. In light of this circumstance, Reconciliation Mission Commission formed an evaluation committee to assess its mission and make recommendations regarding its future. The Committee thus formed consisted of thirteen persons, plus General Minister and President as ex officio. The Committee included five women and eight men: five African Americans, two Asian Americans, one Hispanic American, and five European Americans.

To carry out its task, the Reconciliation Evaluation Committee devised two surveys on reconciliation ministries of the church. Each survey consisted of ten questions, one geared toward regional and general leaders, the other toward congregational leaders of the church. Each Committee member then used one or both of these surveys to interview up to four active leaders of the church. Consequently, a total of fifty-one survey results were collected. In addition to these surveys, the Committee consulted the Shank Study, commissioned by Reconciliation Task Force in 2004. This was an online quantitative and qualitative study based on 668 responses, the majority of which came from lay members throughout our Church. Recommendations in this report reflect opinions expressed in these data gathering efforts, with particular emphasis on the fifty-one in- depth surveys. The Evaluation Committee has met several times by telephone conference and once in person. Subcommittees met to help design the survey and draft the recommendations.

WHEREAS, in the year 2001, the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, approved the 20/20 vision for our Church, which included the mandate for the Disciples to become an anti-racist/pro-reconciling Church. This mandate was in accord with the original mission of Reconciliation, whose antecedent was established in the wake of significant urban unrest following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., and affirmed our commitment to live up to a core

<sup>1</sup> This version of the document represents the edits and adaptations of the Reconciliation Mission Commission, which reviewed and adapted the Evaluation Committee's recommendations on March 30, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> For a more extensive background, see "Report of the General Board Task Force Administrative Committee January 2005 (abbreviated)," and "Reconciliation Mission Seeks New Approaches For Its Work," Disciples News Service (April 28, 2006).

Disciples value—unity—which cannot be achieved unless we value and practice diversity, which in turn necessitates that we value and embrace persons of all races—and keep ourselves and our institutions free of racism; and

WHEREAS, after focused and prayerful deliberation, informed by the above resources, we, the Reconciliation Evaluation Committee, believe that racism—especially institutional racism—remains a formidable force in our church, and that the resources the church has thus far provided to combat it have not been equal to the task. God calls us in Jesus Christ to “break down the dividing walls that is the hostility between us.” (Ephesians 2:14b) Yet, the walls of racism have locked us into a hostile system that blocks us from achieving the unity we fervently desire; and

WHEREAS, in the light of this reality, we, the Reconciliation Evaluation Committee, conclude that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) continues to need a ministry whose sole purpose is to guide the whole Church in eradicating the sin of systemic racism. We heard again and again that this is a priority of the church. We therefore recommend that the Reconciliation Mission Commission restructure and augment Reconciliation Mission, so that it may more effectively combat racism in our midst. In such restructuring, the Commission should keep in mind that the relationships between the congregational, regional, and general expressions of our Church are covenantal, and that this justice ministry deserves the support of the whole Church working in covenant, holding each other accountable. While 2007 is a very different time than 1968, we are aware that Reconciliation’s original purpose remains to be fulfilled, that purpose being the end of systemic racism and therefore we continue to work on that mandate;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Reconciliation Mission now be called Reconciliation Ministry and that the Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Initiative housed in Reconciliation Ministry be known as the Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Initiative. Reconciliation Ministry should carry out its work under the direction of the Reconciliation Ministry Commission, which in turn should be supervised by the Administrative Committee of the General Board; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Reconciliation Ministry focuses much of its work on networking in collaboration with regions. To this end, we recommend the following steps be taken:

- Regions of the Church collaborate with each other to carry out the work of racial reconciliation, possibly focusing on the existing five clusters or with other regional configurations.
- The clusters should consider sharing staff for the work of racial reconciliation.
- The regions should assume primary leadership in enabling congregational involvement in the work of racial reconciliation.
- Regional boards and clusters should be held accountable for the work of racial reconciliation, accountability determined with measurable benchmarks such as the number of congregations with active teams involved in the work of racial reconciliation.
- Reconciliation Ministry maintain an office in the Office of the General Minister and

President so that it may equip general ministries and educational institutions for the work of racial reconciliation and liaise between these ministries and institutions and regional clusters.

- Reconciliation Ministry, housed in the Office of General Minister and President, develop resources and supervise core organizers and trainers and be available to regional clusters and other entities of the church.
- Reconciliation Ministry, housed in the Office of General Minister and President, collaborate with regions to promote the annual offering; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Reconciliation Ministry better communicate the significance of its works among the congregations. Towards that end we have formed an interpretation task force whose purpose is to translate Reconciliation Ministry to people who have not experienced the anti-racism training and to aid the incoming Minister of Reconciliation in developing a strategy for ongoing communication regarding Reconciliation Ministry with the wider church; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Reconciliation Ministry obtain/develop varied resources for its work. To this, end we recommend the following measures be taken: Reconciliation Ministry identify multiple models for addressing systemic racism, recognizing that no one model will meet all needs.

- Reconciliation Ministry develop and resource the development of preparatory materials for racial reconciliation training; such materials should include models congregations can use to engage in the work of racial reconciliation.
- Reconciliation Ministry develop materials and opportunities that support and encourage congregational, regional, and general ministries, particularly clergy, to engage in the work of racial reconciliation.
- Reconciliation Ministry develop resources that can be used to educate Disciples about the nature of systemic racism, white privilege and power, and internalized superiority and inferiority.
- Reconciliation Ministry strengthen ecumenical partnerships for the elimination of systemic racism; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we recommend that funding for Reconciliation Ministry be revamped and augmented. To this end, we recommend the following steps be taken:

- that general Reconciliation Ministry be supported by the Disciples Mission Fund. The Mission Funding Task Force will need to develop a timeline and mechanism for phasing in this budgeted item which will initially be funded by the Reconciliation Offering with the burden shifting over time to Disciples Mission Fund. The Mission Funding Task Force will report back to the General Board in 2008.
- that funds allocated to Reconciliation Ministry be sufficient to provide for a full-time staff person with administrative support, and to develop educational, promotional, and training resources.
- that the Annual Reconciliation Offering, implemented in partnership with regions, be continued and that promotional costs should be shared.
- that the Annual Reconciliation Offering that is collected be allocated among regions and Reconciliation Ministry and that the regions and Reconciliation Ministry

negotiate an arrangement that will enable the regions to receive 50 percent or more of the offerings, to be negotiated with the awareness that some clusters may even choose to invest in cluster Reconciliation staff.

- that the Annual Reconciliation Offering be used primarily to make grants to congregations, regions, general and institutional ministries for projects that focus on racial reconciliation. Congregational and regional grants will be allocated by regions. General and institutional grants will be allocated by the Reconciliation Ministry Commission as soon as the burden of funding the office of Minister of Reconciliation begins to shift to Disciples Mission Fund, and reported to General Board for approval.
- that the Annual Reconciliation Offering be used for anti-poverty works only if such works contribute directly to the work of racial justice and reconciliation. We understand that poverty and racial inequity often correlate, and that as racial equity is achieved, poverty will decrease. We likewise recognize the biblical mandate to address poverty as a justice issue. We therefore encourage the church to find means to address poverty issues that are not directly related to race through additional venues (local, regional, general, and ecumenical); and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Fort Worth, Texas, July 21-25, 2007, join in prayer that may God bless this ministry as we serve together for all of God's people. "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

## Current Glossary

**Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Initiative:** An initiative announced in the 1999 General Assembly to combat racial injustice; it has included training Transformation (anti-racism) Teams to work within various expressions of the church.

**Anti-Racism Commission:** This oversight body was formed in 2001 to give direction to the Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Initiative.

**Reconciliation:** The ministry that began in 1968 when the General Assembly adopted the urban Emergency program. Its mission was to work to dismantle racism in our church and society. In 1972, Reconciliation was reaffirmed as a permanent ministry of the church. "Reconciliation" has sometimes been used in a general sense to refer to the church's work to combat racism and promote reconciliation.

**Reconciliation Committee:** For many years this Committee oversaw Reconciliation Fund and made grant decisions for Reconciliation at the level of the general church as well as working with the Director of Reconciliation to develop policies. In 2001, it and the Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Initiative came together under the Reconciliation Mission. In 2005, it dissolved.

Reconciliation Mission Commission: Established in 2005 by merging the work of the Reconciliation Committee and the Anti-Racism Commission, the Commission is responsible for oversight of Reconciliation Mission and thus the Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Initiative. The Commission is constituted by and accountable to the Administrative Committee and the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Reconciliation Evaluation Committee (also known as the Evaluation and Assessment Working Group): A committee created in 2006 by Reconciliation Mission Commission to evaluate the church's work to dismantle racism and promote reconciliation. (Both this committee and Reconciliation Communication Committee were created in response to the termination of Reconciliation Mission staff in 2006 in order to discern and promote new ways of doing this ministry.)

Reconciliation Communication Committee: A committee (not mentioned in this recommendation) created in 2006 by the Reconciliation Mission Commission to develop ways to interpret more effectively and fully the work of Reconciliation Mission to the church.

(Both this committee and the Reconciliation Evaluation Committee were created in response to the termination of Reconciliation Mission staff in 2006 in order to discern and promote new ways of doing this ministry.)

Reconciliation Mission: A ministry created in 2001 to encompass both the Reconciliation Committee (the long-standing group overseeing the Reconciliation Fund and grant allocation at the general level of the church) and Anti-Racism Commission (charged with intentional organizing, educating and advocacy). In 2005, Reconciliation Mission was restructured, no longer awarding grants at the general-church level (therefore dissolving the Reconciliation Committee) and maintaining and focusing on the Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation initiative (the former task of Anti-Racism Commission). This ministry is under the supervision of the Administrative Committee through the Reconciliation Mission Commission. In 2006, due to declining funds, its staff was let go.

Reconciliation Evaluation Committee: Eric Brown, Ken Hall, Bob Hill, Chris Hobgood, Timothy James, Sandhya Jha, Jane Lawrence, Marcus Leathers, Tim Lee (Moderator), Janet Long, Noemi Mena, Regina Morton, Ron Parker/Sharon Watkins (ex-officio), Chandra Haskett (administrative assistant)

**(Sense-of-the-Assembly)**

**REPUDIATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY:**

**A CALL TO EDUCATION AND ACTION, AND SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS VOICES  
IN THE WITNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)  
adopted**

WHEREAS, Luke 4:16-21(NRSV) testifies to the 5-fold mission of Jesus Christ to “bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free, and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” thereby calling Jesus’ disciples to oppose genocide, oppression, dehumanization, and the removal of Peoples from ancestral lands; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Doctrine of Discovery (CDoD) is a body of work beginning in the 15th century with a series of papal bulls and theological statements justifying the Age of Discovery and the colonization, conquest, subjugation of lands and peoples around the world[i]; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Doctrine of Discovery continues to facilitate genocide, oppression, dehumanization, and the removal of Peoples from ancestral lands in the United States, Canada and globally; and

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court legally adopted the Doctrine of Discovery in the 1823 landmark decision of Johnson V. McIntosh[i]; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (DOC) has historically and consistently claimed an identity of a westward movement church on the North American Landscape; and

WHEREAS, the DOC recognizes its identity, polity, congregations, and theology have benefited from the CDoD and its legal/theological support of seizing indigenous lands and human rights abuses of indigenous peoples and further recognizes North American DOC congregations reside on land immorally acquired from Indigenous North American Tribes and Bands; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) under the guise of civilization and Christianization, engaged in programmatic assimilation, discrimination, subjugation, and desecration of Indigenous American Tribes and Bands (e.g., American Tepee Christian Mission—also known as Yakama Christian Mission); and

WHEREAS, cultural, communal, and individual damage experienced by American Indians, Alaska Natives and First Nations people are disproportionate in the United States and Canada[ii]; and

WHEREAS, governmental and economic institutions lack the will to dismantle the CDoD, and the Church is the one institution who can clearly speak against this unjust CDoD

system, as it has in the past against slavery and apartheid; and

WHEREAS, the DOC has recognized disproportionate hurt inflicted upon People of Color and oppressed Creation with Sense of the Assembly Resolutions[iii]; and

WHEREAS, many of our ecumenical partners have already repudiated and renounced the CDOD [iv]; and

WHEREAS, Robert Brock, Northwest Regional Minister, began a process of relational change between the DOC, American Indians, and First Nation peoples in 1987 by signing A Public Declaration of formal apology for the Northwest Christian Church's participation in the destruction of Native American spiritual practices;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting July 8-12, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana, condemns and repudiates the Christian Doctrine of Discovery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to expose and remove denominational structure which benefits from the Doctrine of Discovery; work toward eliminating the CDoD as a means to subjugate peoples, property, and land; develop resources for study; enter into self-examination; seek to recognize and understand the historical trauma of indigenous people and to recognize DOC's participation in the continuing effects of that trauma; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly urges the Office of General Minister and President, National Convocation, Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries, North American Pacific/Asian Disciples, Global Ministries and Disciples Home Missions:[v], in consultation with Yakama Christian Mission's Advocate for Indigenous Justice, Reconciliation Ministry, and the Moderator(s) of ad hoc Landscape Mending Council to learn where their organization/entity/structure have benefited from the CDoD and assist Regions and Congregations in documenting and explaining the effects of the CDoD in the life of the Church; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourage the leaders of the church's racial/ethnic constituencies to insist on an indigenous voice in all General Church and Office of General Minister and President meetings/conferences/etc., where leaders of the ethnic constituencies are invited; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages the church's educational affiliates (e.g., Colleges, Universities, Seminaries) to educate students on the Christian Doctrine of Discovery, how the CDoD influenced past and current DOC polity and theology, support instructors to research and write on how the Christian Doctrine of Discovery has benefited and/or damaged their area of expertise and recruit and provide scholarships to Native people; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly urges all Regions and congregations to develop and nurture relationships with the American Indian, Alaska Natives, or First Nation people of the place where they reside; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages congregations to act and urge their State to offer a free curriculum about the history, culture, and government of federally recognized Indian Tribes within State boundaries to State school districts, and require districts to incorporate the curricula of their nearest Tribe(s) into their schools' curriculum [vi].

Yakama Christian Mission, White Swan, Washington  
Marshall Avenue Christian Church, Mattoon, Illinois  
Westlake Christian Church, Westlake, Ohio  
Illiopoli Christian Church, Illiopoli, Illinois  
Heights Christian Church, Shaker Heights, Ohio  
Disciples Christian Church, Owasso, Oklahoma  
Christian Church in Ohio (Regional)  
United Christian Church, Levittown, Pennsylvania  
Firestone Park Christian Church, Akron, Ohio  
First Christian in Bowling Green, Ohio  
First Christian/Presbyterian Church, Pryor, Oklahoma  
First Christian Church, Concord, California  
First Christian Church, Clarkston, Washington  
First Christian Church, Vallejo, California  
First Christian Church, Puyallup, WA  
Canoe Camp Church of Christ, Mansfield, Pennsylvania  
University Christian Church (DOC), San Diego, California  
First Christian Church of Eugene, Oregon  
Downtown Disciples, Des Moines, Iowa  
University Christian Church, Fort Worth, Texas  
First Christian Church (DOC), Minneapolis, Minnesota  
University Christian Church, Seattle, Washington  
Pine Valley Christian Church (DOC), Wichita, Kansas  
Rock Bridge Christian Church, Columbia, Missouri  
First Christian Church, Redding, California  
Nixa Christian Church, Nixa, Missouri

Supporters and Advocates:

Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin Regional Council  
Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin Pro-Reconciliation & Anti-Racism Team  
GLAD Alliance  
Ohio Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Commission  
Disciples Justice Action Network  
Blue Eagle Wellbriety Ministry

Notes:

[i] Find educational information on the Doctrine of Discovery at Yakama Christian Mission, <http://wp.me/P6DjFC-2j>.

[ii] US incarceration rates for American Indians (<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/aic.pdf> and [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/2010percent/US\\_American\\_In-](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/2010percent/US_American_In-)

dian\_2010.html , suicide among American Indian/Alaska Native adolescents and young adults ages 15 to 34 is 1.5 times higher than the national average (<https://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide-DataSheet-a.pdf>), American Indian students are disproportionately disciplined ([https://archive.uneews.utah.edu/news\\_releases/american-indians-disproportionately-disciplined-at-school-compared-to-white-students-new-university-of-utah-research-shows/](https://archive.uneews.utah.edu/news_releases/american-indians-disproportionately-disciplined-at-school-compared-to-white-students-new-university-of-utah-research-shows/))

[iii] GA 1323: Incarceration, Justice and Restoration in the United States; GA 1324: Reflection on Christian Theology and Polity, the Christian Doctrine of Discovery, and the Indigenous Voice; GA 1518: Black Lives Matter: A Movement for All; GA 1519: Commemorating 100 Years Since the Armenian Genocide; GA 1520: Concerning Environmental Racism; 0313 Ending Violence Against Women—an essay on Native Human Trafficking can be found at: <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/politics/trafficking-in-native-communities/>.

[iv] Episcopal Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, New England Yearly Meeting-of Friends-Quakers, United Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), World Council of Churches.

[v] Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Green Chalice, Disciples Women, and Disciples Men, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Week of Compassion, National Benevolent Association, Pension Fund, Hope Partnership, Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, Disciples Church Extension Fund, Council on Christian Unity, Christian Church Foundation, Christian Board of Publication, College of Regional Ministers, Disciples Center for Public Witness, Disciples Peace Fellowship, European Evangelistic Society, National City Christian Church Foundation, and the United Christian Missionary Society.

[vi] Washington State adopted such an amendment, RCW 28A.320.170, which, can be found at <http://app.leg.wa.gov/Rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.320.170>.

**GA-1723**  
**(SENSE OF THE ASSEMBLY)**

**ON BECOMING IMMIGRANT WELCOMING CONGREGATIONS**  
**adopted**

WHEREAS, the Bible instructs, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34 NRSV); and

WHEREAS, Jesus commands us to welcome the stranger, for “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40 NRSV); and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes that it was founded partly by immigrant ministers, such as Thomas and Alexander Campbell; and

WHEREAS, immigrants are pastors, congregation members, and leaders in our church and denomination; and

WHEREAS, in these uncertain times of unprecedented negative rhetoric against immigrant groups and with changes in immigration policies, our congregations and pastors have heard the cries of affected communities many of whom are fearful of detention, deportation, and the ultimate separation of families and who are concerned about their families and family members who are already residing in detention centers; and

WHEREAS, the United States immigrant population stood at more than 42.4 million, or 13.3 percent of the total U.S. population, in 2014<sup>1</sup> and immigrants in the United States and their U.S.-born children now number approximately 81 million people, or 26 percent of the overall population of the United States<sup>2</sup>; and

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration, an estimated 11.4 million undocumented immigrants resided in the United States as of January 2012. Between 2009 and 2013, it is estimated that 4 million unauthorized immigrants (39 percent of the overall unauthorized population aged 15 and older) resided with children under the age of 18. Of this group, about 3.3 million (84 percent) resided with at least one U.S. citizen child under the age of 18, and 16 percent resided with non-U.S.-citizen children<sup>3</sup>; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that in the 2009-13 period, 5.1 million children under the age of 18 lived with an undocumented immigrant parent, representing 7 percent of the U.S. child population. About 79 percent (4.1 million) of these children were U.S. citizens, and

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<sup>1</sup> In 2014, around 47 percent of immigrants (20 million) were naturalized U.S. citizens. The remaining 53 percent (22.4 million) included lawful permanent residents, undocumented immigrants, and legal residents on temporary visas (such as students and temporary workers)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>

<sup>3</sup> Id.  
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another 19 percent (959,000) were permanent residents and those with temporary visas<sup>4</sup>; and<sup>5</sup>

WHEREAS, there were between 35,000 and 120,000 undocumented immigrants in Canada as of May 2013<sup>6</sup>; and

WHEREAS, it was estimated that somewhere between 100,000 and 250,000 undocumented migrants resided in Greater Toronto area alone, and that the number was expected to surge in 2015 when four-year work permits for thousands of temporary foreign workers who had moved to Canada began to expire under a 2011 law, potentially moving thousands more “underground”<sup>7</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada has historically fought for social justice and has advocated in favor of the poor, dispossessed, and marginalized; and

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is committed to serving all of God’s people; and recognizes all persons are created by and valuable in the eyes of God;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that in this prophetic and historic moment, the 2017 General Assembly, meeting July 8-12, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana, encourages the church to deepen its commitment to building unity and integration among all our Disciples congregations by issuing a call to congregations to become “immigrant welcoming congregations;” and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and their respective Disciples ministries consider:

- (1) engaging in congregational prayer, listening conferences, and action around immigration policies;
- (2) offering mental health training and resources to immigrants and immigrant families, and to those from communities providing support and solidarity to these immigrants and immigrant families, such as clergy and other leaders;
- (3) supporting immigrant families when facing and experiencing separation; and
- (4) promoting ministries of healing for trauma resulting from immigration travel and trafficking<sup>8</sup>; and

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4 Id.

5 The U.S. Supreme Court’s 4-4 split decision on June 23, 2016, effectively blocked President Obama’s executive actions on immigration that sought to expand Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and created Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), thereby resulting in adverse effect upon thousands of families residing in the United States. *United States v. Texas*, No. 15-674.

6 As reported by the Toronto Sun, <https://www.reference.com/government-politics/happens-illegal-immigrants-canada-107f166da99ce7e4>

7 As reported by the Toronto Star newspaper reported August 20, 2013, [https://www.thestar.com/news/immigration/2013/08/20/undocumented\\_immigrants\\_toronto\\_may\\_be\\_a\\_sanctuary\\_city\\_but\\_agencies\\_still\\_ask\\_about\\_status.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/immigration/2013/08/20/undocumented_immigrants_toronto_may_be_a_sanctuary_city_but_agencies_still_ask_about_status.html)

8 According to the Pew Research Center, “The Obama administration deported 414,481 unauthorized immigrants in fiscal year 2014...” <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/08/31/u-s-immigrant-deportations-declined-in-2014-but-remain-near-record-high/>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and their respective Disciples ministries consider:

- (1) establishing preventive measures that help immigrant families and individuals avoid fraud and obtain credible legal resources and guidance;
- (2) offering planning and resource materials for individuals and families in the face of detention and deportation risks; and
- (3) offering support for those immigrants and families living in border communities and beyond; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that churches of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada seek to:

- (1) build solidarity between immigrant and non-immigrant congregations;
- (2) consider becoming or assisting congregations offering sanctuary protections to immigrants;
- (3) develop community protection and response models for families facing separation due to detention or deportation;
- (4) educate themselves and others about those immigration policies that support the rights of immigrant families;
- (5) offer support for current Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, border communities, and victims of hate crimes, fraudulent activity, and sex trafficking; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that congregations, ministries, organizations, and institutions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will continue to strive to respect and affirm the dignity of every child of God and to advocate for the fair and just treatment of immigrants and immigrant families in the United States and Canada.

Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries (Obra Hispana)  
Refugee and Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel  
Iglesia Alas de Salvación, Chandler, AZ  
Iglesia Cristiana Emmanuel, San Benito, TX  
The National Benevolent Association (NBA)  
National Convocation  
North American Pacific/Asian Disciples (NAPAD)  
Disciples Women

## Background Information

Previous Disciples statements/resolutions:

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/about/disciples-statements/>

UCC Immigrant Welcoming Congregations Initiative:

<http://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/Becoming%20an%20immigrant%20welcoming%20congregation%20updated%20Nov%201%202012.pdf>

UCC's historical resolutions related to immigrants, including their most recent resolution passed in 2013: [http://www.ucc.org/justice\\_immigration\\_resolutions](http://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_resolutions)

**(Sense-of-the Assembly)**

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING CARBON NEUTRALITY  
adopted**

WHEREAS, scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, refers to the entire cosmos as God's sacred creation and calls followers of Christ to love our neighbors and to care for creation;<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS, resource extraction and overconsumption are putting unprecedented pressure on ecosystems, global climate, vital natural resources and communities;<sup>2</sup> and

WHEREAS, there has been a long-term shift in the earth's climate,<sup>3</sup> with the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century being the warmest period on record globally,<sup>4</sup> resulting in unpredictable, extreme, and dangerous weather events,<sup>5</sup> species extinction, rapidly changing habitats,<sup>6</sup> water scarcity,<sup>7</sup> more frequent flooding<sup>8</sup> and fires,<sup>9</sup> shifting seasons,<sup>10</sup> and species migration;<sup>11</sup> and

WHEREAS, climate change puts all of our health at risk,<sup>12</sup> especially threatening the wellbeing of children, elderly, and those with chronic illnesses<sup>13</sup> such as asthma;<sup>14</sup> and

WHEREAS, the rate and severity of disasters such as floods, droughts, storms, and fires have seen a marked increase, directly affecting the work of Disciples Volunteering, Disciples Church Extension Fund and Week of Compassion, and threatening to undo decades of collaborative work by Global Ministries<sup>15</sup> and international partners around the world;<sup>16</sup> and

WHEREAS, the effects of climate change, such as drought and rising sea levels,<sup>17</sup> contribute to the current crisis of displacement of people through mass migrations and exacerbated conflicts;<sup>18</sup> and

WHEREAS, our sisters and brothers, including many indigenous communities,<sup>19</sup> in low-lying areas, especially island nations<sup>20</sup> and coastal cities,<sup>21</sup> are most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, including superstorms, flooding, rising sea levels, severe drought, and the mass migrations that follow; and

WHEREAS, in support of carbon neutrality, Green Chalice, working with the Blessed Tomorrow group of ecoAmerica, distributed a toolkit to every Disciples congregation and regions that included an action sheet, introduction to Green Chalice Certification, a poster including areas of environmental concern, sample sermons, a communication guide, and video, presentation and webinar resources;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 8-12, 2017 urges all Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations, organizations, ministries, and institutions, as children of God and followers of Christ Jesus, to address climate change through action and covenant to:

Worship God with all creation and pray for the healing of the earth;  
Study the climate crisis and engage others in climate solutions;  
Repent and ask forgiveness for the harm we have inflicted on the earth

that sustains life;  
Advocate for ecojustice public policies and witness by living sustainable lifestyles; and  
Rest in God's good creation and invite others to delight in nature<sup>22</sup>; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls upon all members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada to support national, state, or provincial legislation which protects, supports, and empowers communities including those who are oppressed as well as those communities who are currently dependent on an extractive energy economy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls all congregations, regions, ministries, organizations and institutions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to diligently strive to faithfully care for all of God's creation by becoming climate-literate,<sup>23</sup> intentionally engaging in collaborative dialogue and education that serves to advance the discussion, offering support for solutions through means of best practices and resources within the context of worship, committee meetings, community organizations, and national gatherings;<sup>24</sup> and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 stands with our ecumenical partners<sup>25</sup> and people of many faith traditions<sup>26</sup> to care for our neighbors, God's creation, and future generations in calling for immediate action on climate change; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls individuals, congregations, and ministries to work to reduce our carbon output with our goal to become carbon neutral by the year 2030 and climate positive by 2035, and to do this by:

- conserving and using energy wisely;
- substituting clean, renewable energy for polluting fossil fuels;
- offsetting any energy source we cannot reduce or replace;
- urging our policy makers to provide clean energy choices;
- guiding and supporting our churches and our sisters and brothers as they do the same; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that General Assembly 2017 calls upon Disciples to stand together in Christ's name studying, planning, and acting to accomplish these goals, with faith that we will overcome.

Christmount National Camp and Conference Center  
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Black Mountain, North Carolina

Green Chalice  
A Partnership Ministry of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky  
and Disciples Home Missions

Week of Compassion  
The relief, refugee and development mission fund of the  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

Disciples Volunteering  
Disciples Home Missions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

## Background Information

“We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late.” - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, called to “do justice” which includes caring for God’s good earth. But we are experiencing crises of unprecedented proportions due to global climate change. Our planet struggles to sustain all life and the first people affected are those among us with the least resources, including indigenous, poor, and marginalized peoples.

The earth is warmed by the sun and gases are released into the atmosphere through natural and human activities creating a blanket around the earth. The primary emitted gas, carbon dioxide, is constantly being exchanged among the atmosphere, ocean, and land surface as it is both produced and absorbed by many microorganisms, plants, and animals, in a carbon cycle. Since the Industrial Revolution, human activities have contributed CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere in greater and greater amounts from the burning of fossil fuels, solid waste, and wood throwing off the balance of the carbon cycle.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a founding partner of Blessed Tomorrow, a coalition of diverse religious partners united as faithful stewards of God’s creation. With churches like ours, they inspire communities to take action on one of the greatest moral challenges of our era — protecting our shared home. The Blessed Tomorrow is a program coordinated by ecoAmerica, a nonprofit that creates engagement programs to build awareness and action for climate solutions. In order to act with the speed and impact that effective climate solutions require, ecoAmerica has an organizational commitment to go climate positive by 2025 and encourages its partners to do the same.

Striving to balance the carbon cycle, we advocate for all Disciples to live sustainable lifestyles with the goal of being carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon positive by 2035. Climate Neutrality is achieved when there is no net climate impact that results from carbon or other greenhouse gases. This can be accomplished through a hierarchy of actions that include aggressive reduction of energy consumption, a conversion to low or no impact energy sources, and through carbon offsets. Climate Positive requires taking the additional steps to offset more carbon than is emitted into the atmosphere. Striving toward becoming Climate Positive, while difficult, will help us lead and support our neighbors, particularly “the least of these.”

We join hands as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to address the urgent issues of overconsumption in the United States and Canada and the inequality of distribution and use of the earth’s resources. Starting with ourselves, we lead by example and empower and educate our congregations and communities about how to walk more gently on

the earth. We will pursue energy conservation and renewable energy toward carbon neutrality. We will help guide and support one another as others do the same. We don't know how we'll accomplish this, but with God's help we will study, plan, and act in faith that we will succeed. Finally, we seek to be in awe as we rest in God's good creation and invite others to delight in nature as well.

### Steps toward Carbon Neutrality<sup>27</sup>

**Carbon:** calculate the carbon footprint of your family and congregation,<sup>28</sup> conduct an energy audit of your home and church building, try a carbon fast, or support and purchase carbon offsets.<sup>29</sup>

**Buildings:** install programmable thermostats (set for lower or higher temperatures in the winter/summer), insulate and weather-strip, purchase only the energy efficient appliances you need, lower temperature on water heaters, use less heated water, maintain HVAC and boiler systems, buy or rent a smaller home or apartment, close off areas not in use, shade your windows, replace indoor and outdoor incandescent light bulbs with CFL or LED bulbs, dry clothes on a line, turn off unused equipment and computers, install solar panels or geothermal or connect to a solar or wind farm.

**Transportation:** ride a bike or walk more and drive less, reduce speed while driving, purchase fuel-efficient and smaller vehicles, commute by public transportation, limit flying.

**Food:** grow a garden for fruit, vegetables, and herbs; purchase local, seasonal foods through a CSA, farmers' markets, and grocery store; limit packaging and waste' eat fewer animal products; compost food scraps; and stop using bottled water.

**Yard and Fields:** plant native perennials rather than grass to limit mowing, use manual mower or an electric mower, install rain barrels, mulch leaves and yard waste, plant bird and insect friendly trees and plants, create a rain garden, start a worm farm, compost for soil enrichment, plant trees and support organizations that plant trees.

**Education:** read, explore websites,<sup>30</sup> attend community events, host green events.<sup>31</sup>

**Advocacy:** become informed on energy issues, write or call your elected officials at every level about ecojustice issues, become a Green Chalice Ministry.<sup>32</sup>

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### Endnotes

- 1       Genesis 1:28, Genesis 2:15, John 1:3, Mark 12:30-3
- 2       <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=671>
- 3       <https://climate.nasa.gov>
- 4       <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-noaa-data-show-2016-warmest-year-on-record-globally>
- 5       <https://www.epa.gov/climate-change-science/understanding-link-between-climate-change-and-extreme-weather>
- 6       [http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/elements\\_of\\_biodiversity/extinction\\_crisis/](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/elements_of_biodiversity/extinction_crisis/)
- 7       <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water>
- 8       <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-coastal-flooding>
- 9       [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/11/science/climate-change-forest-fires.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/11/science/climate-change-forest-fires.html?_r=0)
- 10       <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/sns-green-climate-change-shift-story.html>
- 11       <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/03/140331-global-warming-climate-change-ipcc-animals-science-environment/>
- 12       <https://health2016.globalchange.gov/>

13 [http://www.who.int/kobe\\_centre/publications/climate\\_change\\_work\\_ability\\_2009/en/](http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/publications/climate_change_work_ability_2009/en/)

14 <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-change-may-speed-asthma-spread/>

15 Global Ministry partners in the Pacific islands of Fiji, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, etc. have documented rising seawater and increasingly brackish groundwater due to climate change. This has contributed to increased emigration from the islands. Both drought and flooding rivers have been a problem in the Congo River basin in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and flooding and problems with sedimentation in the Ganges river system in Bangladesh—the Bangladesh case due to melting glaciers from the Himalayas. Droughts and changing monsoon patterns in India have negatively affected agriculture and contributed to social problems as populations—especially men—leave rural areas and swell urban areas (pollution, lack of housing and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, etc.). In Hong Kong partners, have addressed urban environmental concerns as well as the damaging effects of warming waters on coral reefs and sufficient fish stocks. Finally, water shortages are alleged to be partial causes of some conflicts in the Middle East.

16 <http://www.weekofcompassion.org/our-impact/2010/9/28/caring-for-our-world-working-with-its-people.html?rq=climate%20change> , <http://www.weekofcompassion.org/our-impact/2016/4/26/fighting-climate-change-and-poverty-in-the-republic-of-georgia?rq=climate%20change>

17 [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html?_r=0)

18 <https://climateandsecurity.org/2016/07/07/general-keys-the-military-thinks-climate-change-is-serious/>, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/climate-change-and-disasters.html>

19 <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/tar/wg2/index.php?idp=671>

20 <http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/11/5/054011>

21 <https://www.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-coastal-areas>

22 <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/green-chalice-covenant-2/>

23 <http://blessedtomorrow.org/impact>

24 <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/green-chalice-covenant-2/>

25 [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

26 <http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/religious-statements-on-climate-change/> , <http://www.greenfaith.org/media>

27 “Climate Change and Global Warming”, United Church of Christ [http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries\\_climate-change-and-global](http://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_climate-change-and-global), “Energy Conservation,” Green Faith <http://www.greenfaith.org/resource-center/stewardship/energy-conservation>, “Carbon Fast Resources,” Interfaith, Power and Light <http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/carbon-fast-resources/> and “Campaigns,” Creation Justice Ministries <http://www.creationjustice.org/campaigns.html>

28 <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/household-carbon-footprint-calculator>

29 <http://www.communitycarbontrees.org/>, <https://carbonfund.org/individuals/>

30 <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/resources/>

31 <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/resources/green-events-resources/>

32 <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/green-chalice/green-chalice-program/>

**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**RECOGNITION OF THE REGION OF CANADA AS A  
TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED CULTURAL COMMUNITY  
adopted**

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada states as one of its Four Priorities of the church to be a “Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racism” church, and has been aware of the continuing disparity and under-representation of the Canadian church, and yet to date has been unable to reconcile the situation; and

WHEREAS, “Culture” can be defined as “the total sum of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another, as defined in the field of anthropology. Culture can be related to one’s ideology and traditions as well as other areas of living;”<sup>33</sup> and

WHEREAS, the sovereign nation of Canada, and by extension, its Disciples of Christ congregations, hold a unique cultural identity, historical national development, and religious landscape, vastly different than that of the United States of America, which produces citizens with different world-views and social and cultural self-understandings; and

WHEREAS, Canada has additional ecumenical obligations not found in other Regions, namely as founding members and active participants in the Canadian Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches; and

WHEREAS, it has been noted on various occasions at numerous meetings, councils, and boards, that the unique Canadian voice adds a critical and welcome perspective to the overall life of the church; and

WHEREAS, as a unique member body of this denomination, Canadian perspective, worldview, history, culture, and Christian tradition and experience, are valued within the greater body, and as such their participation in and voice within the greater church should be protected and encouraged;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2017 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana July 8-12, 2017, recognizes the Region of Canada to be a traditionally under-represented cultural community within the life of the church and pledges to work to include Canadian content in its pro-reconciling/anti-racism training, marketing, communication, registrations, and forms; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly urges the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada to become more culturally aware with respect to Canadian culture at all levels of our life together, especially the General Ministries, the Office of General Minister and President, staff, and General Assembly; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly urges the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada to guarantee representation on General Board and its future manifestations as well as be adequately prepared for Canadian participation in special programs and events in the life of the church.

The Region of Canada, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada  
Sugarbush Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Guelph, Ontario, Canada

## Background

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada stands as a unique expression of Christ's church on the continent of North America inasmuch as it declares itself one body across an international border. For over 200 years, we have ministered in our two countries under a common cause, eventually coming together as one body. This unique identity as a bi-national church stands as witness to the importance and possibility of greater Christian unity in our shared continent and world. Disciples of Christ in our two countries covenant to work and worship together in missional, ecclesial, educational, and ecumenical arenas, as one body with one voice. We are a beacon of hope to many inside and outside traditional denominations who look to our model as an answer to the question, "how might Christ's church work more closely together across so many of our human-inspired boundaries?"

As the Canadian church, we celebrate our ongoing covenant with our American brothers and sisters, and stand proudly and faithfully with the entire church in our mutual witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. While we experience much harmony in our united ministry, there is not yet true wholeness. One of the most difficult aspects of this relationship is the wide gulf between our two core cultural identities – Canadian and American. Neither culture is superior to the other. Although we share some aspects of culture (i.e., some languages, pop culture), in the everyday living of life, church, and society, our two cultural identities are very different in thousands of practical ways.

Despite the strong shared witness to Christian unity, within our denomination there still exists disparity, especially in terms of representation and recognition, between our two expressions of church on either side of the US-Canadian border. Although Canada exists as one of 32 Regions of the CC (Disciples of Christ), it is the only Region which exists also as a sovereign nation with a distinctive cultural identity, a different national history, and a unique religious landscape than that of the United States of America. Within the current structure of our covenant, as a Region, we are limited to the same representation as any other Region, despite being the only one that is not part of the United States of America nor "American" in its self-understanding. Unlike our brothers and sisters in other "traditionally under-represented cultural communities" who likewise have unique cultural self-understandings (albeit still under the American umbrella), we as a people are not afforded recognition of our unique perspective, experience, tradition, culture, or language, and are regularly under-represented in the dominant culture of the American church, specifically, but not limited to:

- Dues for participation in the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA are paid by the Council on Christian Unity. However, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada is also a member of the Canadian Council of Churches and incurs dues as a denominational body, unlike any other Region. Due to a misunderstanding, Canadian Council of Churches dues have not been supported in recent years;
- Omission of Canadian content in Reconciliation Ministries' Anti-Racism training events, despite the material being available and a promise in 2012 to incorporate more fully in future events and trainings;
- Lack of preparedness on behalf of General Church bodies when Canadian participants are part of a program (e.g. NBA's XPLORE program had inadequate solutions for the first Canadian participants re stipends, healthcare, and immigration, in the 2016-17 program. Despite knowing many months in advance that Canadians were involved, little preparation was made);
- Lack of French language resources and exclusion of French on communications and advertising (e.g., items are often translated in Spanish, Korean, and occasionally Creole, which are not official languages in either country, yet French is omitted despite the fact that it is an official language and we do have French-only language congregations who are limited in their full participation in the life of the church);
- Regular omission of Canadian content in many resolutions submitted to General Assembly despite information being readily available online concerning Canadian involvement in most issues impacting our nations and world;
- Omission of Canadian provincial/territorial options on most registration forms;
- Omission of full Canadian Region on maps produced by Communication Ministries; and
- General disparity in descriptions of the Disciples of Christ on either side of the border. In letters and announcements from American sources (i.e., OGMP's office, General Ministries, partners, and in various meetings, dockets, and resolutions) the church is often described as "national", whereas in Canada it is described as "bi-national".

In order to gain a deeper appreciation of how deep our cultural differences go, one must briefly examine the following areas: national cultural difference; historical development; and ecclesial culture.

### National Cultural Differences

Historically, Canadian and American cultural identities have been described in studies as a "cultural mosaic" and "melting pot", respectively. While many in the United States have moved away from the melting pot understanding in recent decades, it does continue to shape the nation's identity. Likewise, the Canadian cultural mosaic concept is not fully embraced by all Canadians, yet it is a world-view and ideology that has and contin-

ues to shape Canadian action and interaction both nationally and internationally, socially and ecclesially:

- “The mosaic is based on our belief that Canada as a whole becomes stronger by having immigrants bring with them their cultural diversity for all Canadians to learn from.”
- “Melting pot” and “cultural mosaic” are essentially ways of encompassing the American and Canadian ideologies, respectively, toward multiculturalism, citizenship, and integration, as well as linguistic pluralism.
- Canadian attitudes toward diversity are evident in manifestations such as:
  - The two official languages (French, English). The Official Languages Act was brought about as an act of reconciliation by the dominant English culture to recognize and honour the national contributions of the non-dominant French culture. It being written into Canadian law to “preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French” as a matter of public policy, as well as to “encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada’s multicultural character;”
  - Ongoing dialogues on Canadian understandings of national unity and patriotism;
  - A core Canadian value evident across Canadian culture, and highlighted in recent research appears to be “respect of equality” (and diversity). and
  - An expansionist immigration policy. Canadians seek relatively high levels of immigration, and welcome immigrants. Since 1990, well over five million new immigrants have been admitted (to a country of only 30 million inhabitants), mostly members of visible minorities
- The Canadian cultural mosaic ideology has a very specific historical rooting, distinct from the U.S.A.’s: “The initial significance of multiculturalism was in the context of policy to accommodate Canada’s English-French linguistic duality. The enduring presence of two national groups, neither of which could expect to assimilate the other, required the acceptance and institutionalization of diversity in Canadian society to prevent its dissolution. Since that time, as [J.G.] Breton suggests, multiculturalism had a singular place in the process of nation-building for Canada following World War II. The declining position of Britain and the rise of the US created a shifting political environment for Canada, and new symbols of national identity were a response.”
- Multiculturalism is a matter of Canadian policy.
  - The Canadian government established the Official Multiculturalism Act in 1971 and appointed a minister responsible for multiculturalism in 1972.

- Multiculturalism is included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, focusing on the right to maintain cultural heritage.

### Differences in Historical Development

It may be a combination of weather, geography and historical economic development of the Canadian nation that has given birth to its population's understanding of themselves as Canadians, both within the local experience and the national: Canadians are a colony, wired for survival. This attribute of Canadian identity may have become so common sense, so intrinsic to Canadian self-understanding that it is taken for granted and rarely surfaces as a conscious delimiter of a shared identity. But in reality, the way Canadians live, and understand power, government, economics, even their role in the greater world, is shaped by the fact that they are a people relegated to the harsh hinterland, a colony sitting on the "edge of empire." Canadians have been shaped by geography and the harshness of the Canadian winter. So much of our distinguished Canadian literature, tells the story of survival, of being pitted against the forces of nature, a death-match not always won. As Canadians grew together and learned that survival was easier, if not full of deeper meaning when done together, they developed a "garrison society," where socially held standards were adhered to by all, and so they understood the need to support one another, defend one another in the face of threat.

According to Harold Inness, this country, colonized by first France and then Great Britain, was opened up along fur trade routes, accessing natural resources to send to the metropole (London). Unlike the United States whose frontier was viewed as an opportunity and a time to express and enact Manifest Destiny, Canadian expansion was economic, not for their own gain, nor for a sense of national pride, but in order to feed the need of a ruling culture. They encountered indigenous peoples, and rather than enter into mutually beneficial relationships consisting of the fair trade of cultural information, they saw only more access to more resources. Canadians dehumanized and exploited for economic gain, some of which would stay in Canada to continue to build the machinery of economics, but the majority going to fill the coffers of empire. In so doing, Canadians set the stage for the development of future habits and patterns of expansion, interpersonal relationships, value of persons, and economic development. Today, while the empire to which Canadians are a willing colony may have shifted from across the sea to south of the border, their approach to life and living remains the same. Canadians are inhabitants of the hinterland, who use the resources of this great land for economic profit often times without thought to the environmental, cultural and human expense.

### Differences in Current Religious Culture

While there are some similarities, there also are important differences between the religious trends in Canada and the US. In Canada, both the Catholic and Protestant shares of the population have been falling. In the United States, by contrast, the Catholic share of the population has held fairly steady in recent decades (at roughly one quarter), while the Protestant share has been declining, falling from more than two thirds of US adults in the 1960s to about 50% today.

Also, the share of the population that belongs to faiths other than Catholicism and Protestantism has grown much faster in Canada than in the United States. In the early 1980s, only about one in twenty adults in either country was affiliated with religious traditions other than Protestantism or Catholicism. As of 2011, however, about one in ten Canadians (11%) self-identify as Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish or an adherent of other religions (including Orthodox Christianity). By contrast, the share of US adults who belong to these smaller religious groups has increased more slowly over the last 30 years, reaching 6% in 2012.

In addition, the rise of the “nones” in Canada has been accompanied by a substantial drop in religious commitment in the Canadian public, while key measures of religious commitment in the US have remained relatively stable or declined only modestly. For example, in 1986, more than four in ten (43%) Canadian adults ages 15 and older and five (54%) in ten US adults ages 18 and older said they attended religious services at least once a month, according to General Social Surveys conducted in both countries. By 2010, the figure for Canadian adults had fallen 16 points, to 27%, while the share of US adults who reported going to worship services at least once a month had declined by 8 points, to 46%.

Moreover, regional variations in disaffiliation are greater across Canada than across the US. For instance, the share of the population that is religiously unaffiliated in British Columbia in Western Canada (44%) is more than twice as high as the share in Atlantic Canada (16%) and three times higher than in Quebec (12%), according to Statistic Canada’s 2011 National Household Survey, the most recent data available. In the United States, by comparison, the percentage of unaffiliated adults in different regions is closer, ranging from 26% in Western states to 15% in the South, according to aggregated data from Pew Research surveys conducted in 2012.

1. Jouhki J, 2008. Humans as social and cultural beings. A lecture on Basics of Cultural Anthropology- course. Department of Communication, University of Jyväskylä. 25.9.2008
2. The origins of our movement in Canada and the United States occurred near the same time in both countries--1810 and 1815 in parts of Canada--with unique developments in British North America, what was to become Canada in 1867. Brief history of Canadian involvement in the bi-national church :
3. - William Wentworth Eaton taught English at Bethany College in the 1840s and was leader in spreading our movement in the Maritime Provinces of Canada and New England.
4. - Josephine Wood Smith from Nova Scotia was among our earliest missionaries in Japan in 1881. Many other important missionary and mission-minded people followed, including Alice Porter, Susie Carson Rijnhart, Charles T. Paul, Margaret Stainton, Robert S. Wilson, W.E. Macklin, Mary Riach Miller, W. C. MacDougall, Alfred Henderson, Lilliath Robbins, Ruth Sinclair, and many others from across the country.
5. - Archibald McLean from Prince Edward Island served Bethany College as the President and also as the first Secretary of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society
6. - James Lord from Deer Island, New Brunswick was an early editor (1895-1911) of *The Christian Standard*, a publication that continues to serve our independent sisters and brothers in the Stone-Campbell Movement.
7. - We have contributed many ministers and leaders to the US church and to our own part of the movement.
8. - For much of the 20th century, until Restructure, the All Canada Committee of the Churches of Christ (Disciples) reported directly to the International Convention--the predecessor body of the General Assembly of our church.
9. Henriksson M, 2006. *Kanada: Vaahteranlehdennmaa*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus
10. Levine R., Serbeh-Dunn G. Mosaic vs. Melting Pot. *Voices*. 1999;1(4)
11. Canadian Multiculturalism Act, Section 3, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html#h-3>
12. Michael Adams, *Sex in the Snow: Canadian Social Values at the End of the Millennium*. Toronto: Penguin Books Ltd., 1997, 5, 192
13. Jeffrey G. Reitz, “Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration,” pp. 107-26 in *The Multiculturalism Question: Debating Identity in 21st Century Canada*, ed. by Jack Jedwab. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014

14. Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration," pp. 107-26
15. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/>
16. Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration," pp. 107-26
17. Excerpt from Jennifer Garbin, *Towards a Theology for Emerging Adults in the Canadian Context*, December 2013 (unpublished)
18. Northrop Frye, *Divisions on a Ground: Essays on Canadian Culture*, ed. James Polk. Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982
19. Douglas John Hall, "A View from the Edge of Empire: Prophetic Faith and the Crises of Our Time." *ARC*, XX (Spring 1992), 31
20. Frye, *Divisions on a Ground*, 46
21. Harold Adams Innis (November 5, 1894–November 8, 1952) was a Canadian professor of political economy, University of Toronto and author of seminal works on media, communication theory, Canadian economic history.
22. Harold Inniss, "Conclusion from The Fur Trade in Canada," in David Taras and Beverly Rasporich, eds, *A Passion for Canadian Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies*, (Toronto: ITP Nelson, 1997): 17
23. Excerpt from Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape" Last modified June 27, 2013. <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape/>
24. Although the percentage of the general public that is affiliated with religions other than Catholicism and Protestantism is higher in Canada (11%) than in the United States (6%), the US has a higher absolute number of people who identify with other religions (about 18 million) than Canada does (nearly 3 million) because the US has a much greater total population.
25. For more information on indicators of both stability and gradual decline in religious commitment in the US, see the Pew Research Center's October 2012 report "'Nones' on the Rise (/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/)."
26. Several studies have suggested that survey respondents tend to overstate their frequency of attendance at religious services. However, data analysis in 2011 indicates that the level of overstatement is about the same in Canada as in the United States. See Brenner, Phillip. 2011. "Exceptional Behavior or Exceptional Identity? Overreporting of Church Attendance in the U.S." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Volume 75. Pages 19–41.
27. Atlantic Canada includes four provinces on the Atlantic coast – New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.
28. W. C. MacDougall, Alfred Henderson, Lilliath Robbins, Ruth Sinclair, and many others from across the country.
29. Archibald McLean from Prince Edward Island served Bethany College as the President and also as the first Secretary of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society
30. James Lord from Deer Island, New Brunswick was an early editor (1895–1911) of *The Christian Standard*, a publication that continues to serve our independent sisters and brothers in the Stone-Campbell Movement.
31. We have contributed many ministers and leaders to the US church and to our own part of the movement.
32. For much of the 20th century, until Restructure, the All Canada Committee of the Churches of Christ (Disciples) reported directly to the International Convention—the predecessor body of the General Assembly of our church.
33. Henriksson M, 2006. *Kanada: Vaahteranlehdennmaa*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus
34. Levine R., Serbeh-Dunn G. *Mosaic vs. Melting Pot*. Voices. 1999;1(4)
35. Canadian Multiculturalism Act, Section 3, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/page-1.html#h-3>
36. Michael Adams, *Sex in the Snow: Canadian Social Values at the End of the Millennium*. Toronto: Penguin Books Ltd., 1997, 5, 192
37. Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration," pp. 107-26 in *The Multiculturalism Question: Debating Identity in 21st Century Canada*, ed. by Jack Jedwab. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014
38. Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration," pp. 107-26
39. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-18.7/>
40. Jeffrey G. Reitz, "Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration," pp. 107-26
41. Excerpt from Jennifer Garbin, *Towards a Theology for Emerging Adults in the Canadian Context*, December 2013 (unpublished)
42. Northrop Frye, *Divisions on a Ground: Essays on Canadian Culture*, ed. James Polk. Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982
43. Douglas John Hall, "A View from the Edge of Empire: Prophetic Faith and the Crises of Our Time." *ARC*, XX (Spring 1992), 31
44. Frye, *Divisions on a Ground*, 46
45. Harold Adams Innis (November 5, 1894–November 8, 1952) was a Canadian professor of political economy, University of Toronto and author of seminal works on media, communication theory, Canadian economic history.
46. Harold Inniss, "Conclusion from The Fur Trade in Canada," in David Taras and Beverly Rasporich, eds, *A Passion for Canadian Identity: An Introduction to Canadian Studies*, (Toronto: ITP Nelson, 1997): 17
47. Excerpt from Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life. "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape" Last modified June 27, 2013. <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape/>

48. Although the percentage of the general public that is affiliated with religions other than Catholicism and Protestantism is higher in Canada (11%) than in the United States (6%), the US has a higher absolute number of people who identify with other religions (about 18 million) than Canada does (nearly 3 million) because the US has a much greater total population.
49. For more information on indicators of both stability and gradual decline in religious commitment in the US, see the Pew Research Center's October 2012 report "'Nones' on the Rise (/2012/10/09/nonesontherise/)."
50. Several studies have suggested that survey respondents tend to over state their frequency of attendance at religious services. However, data analysis in 2011 indicates that the level of overstatement is about the same in Canada as in the United States. See Brenner, Phillip. 2011. "Exceptional Behavior or Exceptional Identity? Overreporting of Church Attendance in the U.S." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Volume 75. Pages 1941.
51. Atlantic Canada includes four provinces on the Atlantic coast – New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO  
THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST:  
CLARITY ON THE ROLE OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINISTRIES IN THE DESIGN  
adopted**

WHEREAS, in January 2015, the National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through its Hispanic Board of Directors and the Pastoral Commission, submitted a letter to the General Board via the General Minister and President and current Moderator team, naming significant concerns related to the role of Obra Hispana in the life of the church; and

WHEREAS, the first concern expressed was a greater clarity regarding the racial/ethnic ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in paragraph 69 of The Design; and

WHEREAS, as called for in the letter, a Task Force on Hispanic Ministries was created to address the concerns detailed in the letter, through “dialogue, prayer and concrete action”; and

WHEREAS, at their December 2016 meeting, the Task Force drafted language to address their concern regarding paragraph 69 of The Design and submitted to the Governance Committee of the General Board; and

WHEREAS, the draft language was submitted to the Governance Committee of the General Board for editing and review before forwarding it on to the full General Board for approval; and

WHEREAS, the Governance Committee is charged with reviewing The Design and other governance documents for suggested changes and modifications;<sup>1</sup>

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting July 8-12, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana, approve the amendment to paragraph 69 of The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as presented on the subsequent page.

General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Original language:  
Paragraph 69 of The Design

(rev. 07-2015)

69. The life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is blessed by the racial/ethnic ministries of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship, the North American Pacific Asian Disciples, and other groups that may be recognized by the General Assembly. Where general ministries are called upon to serve the life of the church through reports and representation, these ministries shall be included.

Proposed New Language:  
Paragraph 69 of The Design  
(rev. 02-2017)

69. The National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship and the North American Pacific Asian Disciples witness to the diversity within the church. These ministries, with their unique historical relationships within the Christian Church and the rich cultural gifts they share, are empowered to speak to particular cultural contexts within the ecclesial needs of Disciples in the US and Canada and are charged with the development of their particular ministries.

These ministries make reports and are represented in places where general ministries are called upon to serve the life of the church through reports and representation. Their executive ministers shall serve in partnership and collaboration with regional ministers and other leadership groups throughout the church.

**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO  
THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST):  
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RACIST LANGUAGE AUDIT TASK FORCE  
adopted**

WHEREAS, at the 2013 General Assembly in Orlando, Florida, GA-1328, called on the General Minister and President in consultation with the Minister of Reconciliation to form a task force charged with reviewing the governing documents of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada for instances of racist language; and

WHEREAS, said task force completed its work and reported its findings to the Administrative Committee (acting as the General Board) in April 2016<sup>1</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the task force recommended changes to The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) which were submitted to the Governance Committee of the General Board; and

WHEREAS, the Governance Committee is charged with reviewing The Design and other governance documents for suggested changes and modifications;<sup>2</sup>

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting July 8-12, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana, approve the amendments to The Design as recommended by the Racist Language Audit Task Force and presented on the subsequent pages.

General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendations of the Task Force on Eliminating Racist Language from Governing Documents  
<sup>2</sup> General Board Standing Rules 6.2.5

12. Among the responsibilities by which congregations demonstrate their mutual concern for the mission and witness of the whole church are the responsibilities to proclaim the gospel and administer baptism and the Lord's Supper; to provide for the spiritual nurture of their members and families; to grow in understanding that the church is a universal fellowship, transcending all barriers within the human family, **working for reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines**; to engage in evangelism; to sustain their ministers in faithfulness and honor and, in matters pertaining to relationships with them, to seek counsel from the regional minister; to be faithful in Christian stewardship, striving to share proportionately in providing the resources for the total life, work, and witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); to choose voting representatives to the General and Regional Assemblies; to share with other ministries of the church in the establishment and nurture of new congregations; and to seek to realize the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ through cooperation with other congregations and with present and emerging ecumenical structures.

25. As an integral part of the whole church, regions witness to the unity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by calling congregations to an awareness of their opportunities and responsibilities beyond local concerns. They also help to relate congregations to the total ministry of the whole church **including working for reconciliation across racial and ethnic lines**. By calling the general expression of the church to an awareness of the needs both of congregations and of regions, the regions help to relate the general expression to the life and work of congregations.

31. Regions call regional ministers as their spiritual and administrative leaders serving as the chief executive officers of the regions. Each region develops stated processes for nominating and electing its regional minister, including procedures for seeking counsel from the Office of the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Regions are encouraged to use current Disciples search processes and safeguards, **as established by the General Board**, so that all qualified ministers might be considered. Regions employ other regional staff as required to meet their responsibilities in mission and nurture **and so the whole church's commitment to be a pro-reconciling/anti-racism body can be fully honored in each region**.

38. All members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who register for the General Assembly shall have all privileges of the Assembly, except that voting privileges shall be limited to the following:

a. Voting representatives from congregations. Each congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be entitled to have two voting representatives, plus one additional voting representative for each 100 participating members, or major fraction thereof, over the first 100. These voting representatives from congregations shall be in addition to persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry.

b. Voting representatives from regions. Each region shall be entitled to have a minimum of three voting representatives for the first 1,000 members, as stated in the most recent Yearbook. In addition, each region may have an additional

representative for each 1,000 participating members, or major fraction thereof, within the region. These voting representatives from regions shall be in addition to persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry. The voting representatives from each region shall include women and men, **persons of varied racial or ethnic backgrounds**, young adults ages 18 to 30, and youth under the age of 18.

c. Ministers. Persons holding standing in the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in accordance with the policies and criteria established by the General Assembly through its General Commission on Ministry.

d. Exceptions. Members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) not otherwise voting members, who are the chief administrative officers of institutions of higher education and general ministries that are recognized by the General Assembly; members of the General Board not otherwise voting members; and former Moderators and Vice Moderators not otherwise voting members.

41. The General Assembly shall: plan and conduct Assembly programs for worship, education of its members, and transaction of business; receive and act upon proposed policy and program, reports and resolutions, and other items of business duly referred to it as hereinafter provided; elect officers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); elect the General Board members for which it is responsible; make provision and approve procedures for the financial support of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including its regions, general ministries, and institutions of higher education; **be a place of accountability for the church's work toward racial justice and inclusion**; determine the basis of cooperative relationships of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with other religious bodies, organizations, and agencies; be responsible for authorizing unity and union conversations, consultations, and negotiations with other Christian communities; and maintain appropriate national ecumenical relationships in both Canada and the United States. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada, which is related to the General Assembly both through congregations and through the All-Canada Committee, shall be responsible for matters pertaining to the ecumenical and Christian unity concerns of national bodies in Canada, and may take the initiative in relating itself to any and all Canadian and world ecumenical bodies.

48. Non-salaried officers of the General Assembly. The non-salaried officers of the General Assembly shall be a Moderator, a Moderator-Elect, a First Vice Moderator, a Second Vice Moderator, and such other officers as the General Assembly may from time to time determine. These officers shall be nominated by the General Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly for terms of two years, unless otherwise noted.

a. The Moderator shall preside at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee, and shall assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies.

b. The Vice Moderators shall assist the Moderator in presiding at the sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee, and shall assume such other responsibilities as may be assigned by these bodies.

c. The Moderator-Elect shall serve for two years and then serve as Moderator for two years. The Moderator-Elect shall assume other responsibilities as may be assigned by the General Board or Administrative Committee.

d. The Moderator ~~and Vice~~, Vice Moderators **and Moderator-Elect** shall **be active members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and shall include** at least one woman, one man, one lay leader and one minister with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). **The moderators shall include persons from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.** These officers shall take office upon the adjournment of the regular meeting of the General Assembly in which they are elected, and shall hold office through the next regular meeting or until their successors have been elected and installed.

e. A Parliamentarian shall be appointed by the Moderator with the approval of the Administrative Committee. The Parliamentarian shall serve during the business sessions of the General Assembly, the General Board, and the Administrative Committee, advising on parliamentary questions that may arise. Unless otherwise provided, all proceedings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order, Revised.

51. As pastor to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the roles for the General Minister and President are to:

a. Provide spiritual leadership to the church in all of its diverse ~~expressions~~ manifestations and ~~to all its racial and ethnic communities~~ and exercise pastoral authority over concerns of the church in times of crisis.

b. Embody the spirit of The Design.

c. Articulate and interpret The Design.

d. Serve as the primary ecumenical representative for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

e. Lead and give oversight to the continual discernment of God's vision for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),

f. Give oversight to mutual accountability among all expressions of the church.

g. Represent the whole church in collegial leadership in gatherings of regional, general, and congregational ministries.

h. Offer advice and counsel to commissions, committees, and task groups of General Board and regional bodies.

i. Convene various congregational, regional, educational, and general church executives and pastors for dialogue and reflection on the whole life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

79. The General Board shall maintain procedures for continual renewal and structural reform under policies approved by the General Assembly, **taking into account implications for racial and ethnic congregations and clergy**. To further the process, existing general ministries may be called upon to reassign staff, budget, and functions for this purpose. In any inter-unit adjustment, as well as in development of any new general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), existing organizations remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the organizations involved in light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as expressed through the General Assembly. Full protection shall be given to all legal and contractual relationships, including trust funds and pension funds.

80. There shall be a General Nominating Committee consisting of 10 members elected by the General Assembly. The General Nominating Committee shall **be widely representative by gender, age, race and ethnicity**, and not more than one member shall be from any one region **except as may be necessary to ensure representation from National Convocation, National Hispanic and Bilingual Fellowship, North American Pacific-Asian Disciples and other such ministries that may be recommended by the General Board and recognized by the General Assembly**. One-half of the members at the time of their election shall be from the membership of the General Board, and not more than one-half nor less than one-third shall be ministers. Each biennium the Administrative Committee shall nominate five persons for election by the General Assembly to a term of four years on the General Nominating Committee. A member of the General Nominating Committee may serve only one full term.

**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO  
THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST):  
REMOVAL OF CONGREGATIONS FROM THE YEARBOOK AND DIRECTORY  
FOR CAUSE OR INACTIVITY  
adopted**

WHEREAS, at the 2005 General Assembly in Portland, Oregon, numerous amendments were made to The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and

WHEREAS, during the writing of those amendments, language regarding the “ten-year rule” which allowed for the removal of congregations from the Yearbook after ten years of no congregational activity being reported to the Yearbook, was inadvertently dropped from endnote 1 of the revised Design; and

WHEREAS, both the College of Regional Ministers and the Administrative Committee have asked the Governance Committee of the General Board to restore that language regarding the removal of congregations to The Design; and

WHEREAS, the College of Regional Ministers further requested that due to this information being vital to a region’s role in certifying and decertifying a congregation to the Yearbook, it would be helpful for this language to reside in the body of The Design instead of being part of an endnote; and

WHEREAS, the Governance Committee is charged with reviewing The Design and other governance documents for suggested changes and modifications;<sup>1</sup>

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting July 8-12, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana approve the amendments to The Design as recommended by the College of Regional Ministers and presented on the following pages.

General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

9. All congregations listed in the latest Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be recognized congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Other congregations desiring recognition and congregations desiring to withdraw from recognition in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall follow established procedures for<sup>i</sup> ~~(See note)~~

Year Book and Directory listing. Congregations that follow the procedures for listing after the publication of the latest Year Book and Directory and that are recorded in the Year Book and Directory office shall also be recognized congregations.

#### ~~Procedure for Year Book and Directory listing~~

a. A congregation seeking recognition takes congregational action expressing its desire and intention to be a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and be listed in the Year Book and Directory.

~~b.~~ The congregation then provides its regional office with a copy of a document containing the declaration of its desire and intention to be a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The document may be the congregation's charter, constitution, bylaws, or a notarized statement of the congregation's action.

~~c.~~ Regional endorsement of the congregation's request for recognition and listing, attested by the regional minister, is sent to the Office of the General Minister and President for filing with the Year Book and Directory.

~~d.~~ b. Once a congregation has been listed, it can be omitted from the Year Book and Directory if:

i. ~~the~~ The congregation has taken action to withdraw as a recognized congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Office of the General Minister and President has received a notarized statement from the congregation of its action, which the regional minister has certified; or

**ii. There has been no congregational activity reported in the Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for a period of five (5) consecutive years and the regional minister certifies that the congregation does not participate in or contribute to area, regional or general church program(s), including participation in Disciples Mission Fund.**

**iii. A congregation may also be omitted from the Year Book and Directory by action of a region if the region can demonstrate actions or statements on the part of the congregation that are deemed detrimental to the covenantal relationship with all expressions of the church, as may be determined by the General Board.** ~~When a region takes action to omit a congregation for either of the above stated reasons, the re-~~

gion will send notification of the intent to remove the congregation's listing to the congregation via certified letter. If within 30 days of the notification the congregation makes no objection to its removal from the listing, then the removal will be final.

iv. Regardless of which entity initiates the action, reasonable attempts will be made to renew the relationship between the congregation and the region before removal is finalized. Once the removal is final, the region will notify the congregation that it has been removed from the Year Book and Directory. A congregation may appeal the region's action in accordance with paragraphs 17 & 66 of this Design.

## **GA-1729**

### **(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

#### **REPORT OF THE TIME AND PLACE COMMITTEE**

##### **adopted**

At the 2015 General Assembly, GA-1532, Report of the Time and Place Committee was committed to the Administrative Committee for further investigation. This action was taken so that a task force would be formed to research alternatives to the current model we are using for General Assembly. Our current model has become financially unsustainable.

The GA Futuring Task Force completed its work and made a report to the General Board during its Spring 2017 meeting. Due to time constraints on organizing a General Assembly, the conclusions reported by the task force will not affect the 2019 Assembly location brought to the 2015 General Assembly.

The 2019 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be held in Des Moines, Iowa, July 20-24, 2019.

General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

in the United States and Canada

**REPORT FROM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE  
OF THE GENERAL BOARD**

*(no action required)*

The General Assembly Committee of the General Board has a two-fold responsibility. First - it is the General Board committee responsible for recommending the location for future General Assemblies. Secondly, it follows up on approved or referred resolutions which contained actionable items from the previous General Assembly and report back to the current General Assembly.

From the General Assembly which met in Columbus, Ohio, July 18-22, 2015 , the General Assembly Committee of the General Board has the following updates.

**GA-1522 A Call for Peace, Justice and Reunification in the Korean Peninsula**

North American Pacific/Asian Disciples (NAPAD) and the Council on Christian Unit encouraged the whole church to observe the Sunday of Prayer for reunification of the two Koreas in August 2015. In addition, at the 2017 General Assembly, the Justice Track is offering a session on the initiative headed by the National Council of Churches of Korea regarding a peace treaty between the two Koreas.

**GA-1523 Becoming a People of Welcome and Support to People with Mental Illness and/or Mental Health Issues**

The submitter of this resolution Mary Alice Do has written a book being released this spring about dealing with mental illness while pastoring a congregation. Disciples Home Missions is partnering with Mary Alice in the development of a study guide to accompany the release of this book for local congregational study.

The National Benevolent Association working in collaboration with DHM has launch a Mental Health Initiative focused on countering stigma, providing resources and education and prioritizing clergy mental health care. The NBA has hired a full time Mental Health Manager.

**GA-1525 A Call to End Solitary Confinement**

The Justice Track at the 2017 General Assembly has offered a session to delve deeper into the issues of both Solitary Confinement and Mass Incarceration. Both issues continue to be studied regionally and in local congregations throughout the church.

The National Benevolent Association in collaboration with Disciples Home Missions has offered webinars on prison and jail related issues including solitary confinement. An affinity group of persons and organizations across the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) working ecumenically continue to address advocacy and activism related

to solitary confinement including sponsoring at GA 2017 a Virtual-Reality Solitary Confinement cell experience.

GA-1536 Resolution Calling for a Study Document on Understanding Stewardship as a Spiritual Discipline and Its Practical Application in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The Center for Faith and Giving was charged with creating this document, to be presented at the 2017 General Assembly. The document has been written and GA-1732 calls for the document to be issued to the church for study.

GA-1539 Charleston and Beyond: Terror, Intimidation and the Burning of Black Churches

By adopting this resolution, the 2015 General Assembly gave their support to the General Minister and President's continued condemnation of the massacre of the Charleston 9 and her continued partnership and solidarity with the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Letters of support were sent to AME leadership on September 14, 2015.

A letter to Disciples congregations from Timothy James, Associate General Minister and Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation, April Johnson, Minister of Reconciliation Ministry, Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President and Robert Welsh, President of the Council on Christian Unity, was issued on August 28, 2015. The letter encouraged congregations to observe Confession, Repentance and Commitment Sunday to End Racism in September 2015.

GA-1540 Support For Agreement with Iran

Letters of affirmation regarding the Agreement with Iran were mailed to President Obama August 14, 2015, and to Indiana US Senator Joe Donnelly on August 19, 2015, who also supported the Agreement in the Senate.

General Assembly Committee of the General Board

**SOCIAL WITNESS TASK FORCE PROGRESS REPORT**

*(no action required)*

At the 2015 General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, GA 1524 called for a task force to be formed by the Office of General Minister and President, Disciples Home Missions and the Division of Overseas Ministries for the purpose of:

“...bringing to the 2017 General Assembly, meeting in Indianapolis, IN, a jointly sponsored process for discussion of and education about important religious, ethical and social issues.”

The resolution stated “the task force shall include representatives of, but not limited to:

Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries  
Council on Christian Unity  
Disciples Home Missions  
Diverse congregations throughout the United States and Canada  
Division of Overseas Ministries  
General Board  
Historic justice and peace advocacy groups in the church National Convocation  
North American Pacific/Asian Disciples  
Office of General Minister and President

In addition to representatives of those ministries, the final task force also includes an equal number of congregational representatives. They have met twice face-to-face and numerous times by conference call and email.

Consensus has been reached that a process favoring wide conversation and learning is desirable. To facilitate the ongoing conversation within the task force and across the life of the church, a working document of what such a procedure might look like is in development. The document does not yet represent a consensus of the task force at every point, but it does put ideas into writing, so that it is easier to determine where consensus exists, where it does not, and how the process, as it is shaping up, would actually work.

The working document proposes that pastoral “statements of witness” replace “resolutions” for matters of social, theological and ethical concern. The “statement” format acknowledges the wide diversity of opinion church-wide on most issues and makes it clearer that the General Assembly is speaking to the church and not for the church.

The working document describes three “tracks” for statements of witness:

- a Direct Track to be used when the church is believed to be at substantial consensus;
- an Assembly Prayer and Study Track, calling for resource groups and plenary conver-

- sation at General Assembly; and
- a Whole Church Prayer and Study Track, calling for longer study and review of a concern in congregations between assemblies.

The statement of witness would provide for “alternative points of view” to be expressed both at assembly and in writing. It would include a living “call to action” section that would grow over time (possible in our electronic age) as more and more congregations and ministries respond to the statement.

Though much headway has been made, there are many questions yet to be answered and consultation to do across the life of the church before the task force is ready to present a finished proposal to the General Assembly. Therefore, we offer this report, along with our statement of intention to continue the work, with progress reports being made to the Administrative Committee and General Board over the next biennium, with the goal of bringing a finished proposal to the 2019 General Assembly.

The Social Witness Task Force  
 Ken Brooker Langston  
 Julia Brown Karimu  
 Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder  
 Robert Cayton  
 Ron Degges  
 Shannon Dycus  
 Charisse Gillett  
 Jeff Goodier  
 Sekinah Hamlin  
 Richelle Himaya  
 Mark Johnston  
 Fiyori Kidane  
 Scott Kinnaird  
 Rebecca Littlejohn  
 Vangie Perez  
 Dean Phelps  
 Katherine Raley  
 Paul Tche  
 Sharon Watkins  
 Twanda Wilson

### **Moving a Statement of Witness through the General Assembly Summary of Process Currently Under Discussion (rev. 02/2017)**

1. A Statement of Witness must be submitted to the OGMP 180 days prior to a General Assembly.
  - It should include information about the topic or issue being considered and provide a few suggestions for action steps that one might take.
  - Regional endorsement is not required but should be part of the dialogue throughout the process

2. A Review Committee, chosen by the Moderator, with input from submitters, will be appointed to help prepare the Statement for review and inclusion in the General Assembly Docket and to select a GA track.

This includes developing accompanying documents, engaging in conversations with Regional Minister(s), and exploring alternative perspectives.

3. The General Board reviews the Statement, offering its recommended action and determining the proper General Assembly track.

4. The submitters, in consultation with the Review Committee, broaden the circle of conversation by seeking the endorsement of diverse congregations and groups within the church.

5. As presented in the General Assembly Docket, the Statement should include:

- Statement(s) of Endorsement
- Suggested Action Steps
- Discussion guide & additional information to enhance smaller group study
- Summary of discussions that produce a different perspective from the submitters

6. The Statement will be placed in one of three tracks:

- Direct Track:
  - For Statements assumed to have already built a substantial consensus on the topic and are ready for a vote to Affirm or Not Affirm. A two-thirds majority is required for affirmation.
  - Motions may be made for twelve (12) minutes of floor discussion.
- Assembly Prayer, Study, and Reflection Track:
  - For Statements that have not built a strong consensus yet but the topic is still of great importance and warrants attention.
  - Additional study, prayer, and reflection time at assembly needed to hear multiple perspectives.
  - Workshops will be provided and additional summaries (alternative perspectives) may be included as part of the Statement.
  - Motions are made to accept any additional reports.
  - As with the Direct Track, motions are made to conduct floor discussions and same majority needed for affirmation.
- Whole Church Prayer, Study and Reflection Track:

For statements that warrant further study over the coming biennium.

  - These statements are still of great importance to the church but a significant consensus does not yet exist for affirmation.
  - Submitters will have the option for workshop discussion and motions can be made for floor discussions
  - The Assembly will only vote to accept the item for further study. A simple majority is needed.



**GA-1732**  
**(Study Document)**

**STEWARDSHIP AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE AND ITS  
APPLICATIONS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**  
**issued**

This study document was prepared in response to GA-1536 which authorized the Center for Faith and Giving to prepare a Study Document on Understanding Stewardship as a Spiritual Discipline.

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**A Point of Origin and Direction**

This document is presented as a response to the charge of the General Assembly (GA 1536), meeting in 2015 at Columbus, Ohio, to offer for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) a study and reflection document on stewardship – specifically understanding stewardship as a spiritual discipline and its practical applications for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The Center for Faith and Giving, tasked with undertaking this responsibility, presents to the General Assembly, meeting July 8-12, 2017, at Indianapolis, IN, a biblical reflection, a series of theological assertions, and some recommendations for the church to consider, along with the commitment to establish and curate resources in the long-term for the continued in-depth study of stewardship.

This document serves as a broad examination of the biblical materials that relate to the topic of stewardship, with an intent that the church become conversant with these

fundamental understandings. It further provides a theological perspective which is intended to encourage dialogue and conversation within the church about what stewardship is, and what it means to be a steward as an individual, a community of faith, and a part of God's wondrous creation.

Assumptions are proposed regarding practical applications if the perspective of the document is followed to some of its potential conclusions. Suggestions as to how these assumption/conclusions might interface with the context of the early 21st century are offered at the end of these pages. We recognize that not everyone will share the same conclusions/assumptions of the document. That is acceptable since unity of opinion on how to be a steward in a singular way is not the primary goal. Our objective is to better define what a steward is and thus to open a conversation. We trust that the church in its wisdom will discover what a steward does in the unique contexts in which individuals and communities of faith are located.

The curation of resources is one important outcome of this assigned task and it is a logical culmination of our ongoing work given the following circumstances: 1) The sheer volume of the materials required for in-depth study cannot be contained in this type of document; 2) the changing nature of our context, requiring a more nimble ability to adjust to the contemporary social and political climate, which would appropriately dictate the tone and focus of such statements; and 3) the fact that in this age of easy access via electronic means, a more comprehensive and divergent mosaic of materials can be made available to a wider audience at little or no cost with unlimited access to those seeking the information.<sup>1</sup>

By the church receiving this document, it is commissioning the development of additional resources from a "Disciples" perspective on all aspects of stewardship for study and reflection into the next decade.

### **The Biblical Witness and Theological Assertions about Stewardship**

Biblical stewardship, broadly defined, is the intentional management of resources (all living things in and of the earth and their produce) on behalf of the rightful owner, who is God.

**Abundance and Care for the Earth:** The biblical and theological grounding for stewardship is found first in the creation stories. The poem of Genesis 1 affirms God's delight in all that springs from the Divine imagination. Each day the conclusion is the same, "God saw that it was good."<sup>2</sup> In fact, on the sixth day, it is not simply good, but it

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1 The Center for Faith and Giving envisions an access port via our website to videos, articles, essays, curriculum, an extensive bibliography, and a conduit to other collections of stewardship-related materials. In many respects, the Center for Faith and Giving website currently operates in this regard. However, this portal can serve as a central location where connections to stewardship-related ministries within the whole church can be identified and accessed. For example, pointed connections on the Center for Faith and Giving website to the Green Chalice ministry within Disciples Home Missions can list assets and materials for those who visit the CFG site seeking earth-stewardship-related resources. A mirror index on the CFG website of these materials within Green Chalice would allow for easier access and quicker discovery. By its very presence on the CFG site, it affirms holistic and a less fragmented view of stewardship.

2 Gen 1:4; Gen 1:10; Gen 1:12; Gen 1:18; Gen 1:21; Gen 1:25

is “very good.”<sup>3</sup> This embrace of the material world by the God who is wholly “Other” sets the relational tone for all that follows. God and “the world” are inextricably linked. Going forward, the choices of one will in some way impact the other. This interrelatedness is a Divine prerogative – and choice will become a marker of the human creature created in God’s image, as well. This includes the choice to love God and practice obedience to God’s desires.

As the creation narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that there is an abundance within the Divine design. The text implies a wild array of living creatures (winged things that wing, creeping things that creep, swimming things that swim)<sup>4</sup>, and ample sustenance for all of these beings as God has “given every green plant for food.”<sup>5</sup>

Further evidence that this abundance is present and intended to be a permanent condition is contained within the first portion of the Divine command/promise to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...”<sup>6</sup> The abundance of the earth is self-generating and perpetual. Plants have seeds and trees have seed within the fruit for a never-ending cycle of plants weighed heavy with grain and tree branches laden with produce. There is enough. The needs of creation are attended to by Divine providence.

Concepts of abundance and the well-being of “enough,” however, do not mean that the earth can be subject to mindless exploitation. There is no sense or endorsement within the text that every want can be sustained or must be satisfied. A choice is to be made for the management of resources. The second portion of the Divine command/promise is to “...subdue it [the earth]; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”<sup>7</sup> Made in the image of God, the human beings are to rule in the earth in the same manner that God rules in the cosmos. God governs for the good and well-being of creation. Humans must exercise their designated power in the same manner. This is the goal of stewardship.

Stewardship, while not specifically stated in the Genesis poem, is strongly inferred. “And God said ‘Let there be...’”<sup>8</sup> as well as later biblical affirmations that “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it...”<sup>9</sup> remind us that we are the creation, not the Creator. The world, its produce and its inhabitants belong to God. Human beings, in exercising dominion, do so on behalf of God. Therefore, doing as God would do matters and is a form of obedience. We are stewards, not owners. Our own mortality affirms we are at best temporary tenants and shareholders of what we claim to possess. We are accountable for the way we express and exercise our dominion. There are consequences for both good and poor stewardship.

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3 Gen 1:31

4 Gen 1:20, 1:24

5 Gen 1:29-30

6 Gen 1:28a

7 Gen 1:28b

8 Gen 1:3

9 Ps 24:1

In the second creation story (Genesis 2:4b-25), the concept of the human being functioning as caretaker is again expressly stated. Genesis 2:15 states that “God took the human creature and put him in the garden of Eden to protect and serve it.”<sup>10</sup> The human has a vocation, and in fulfilling that labor of “tending,” the garden flourishes. Not only is this a stewardship function but it is also in the best interest of the garden’s inhabitants, including the human! There is a direct relationship between the health of the planet and the health of all living things which inhabit the earth. It was indeed paradise, but what made it so was the presence of God,<sup>11</sup> not the absence of work. To act as a steward is to fulfill a part of the human calling.

**Sabbath:** The dual themes of abundance and relationship continue with the dawn of the seventh day: Sabbath. The very proclamation/observance of Sabbath is a way of stating that God has provided enough. Labor is only required for six days, yet there is provision for seven. This is abundance! The fear of scarcity and the anxiety of want can be laid to rest and need not drive or define our psyche.

Sabbath also expresses the nature of the Divine/human relationship. It reminds us that we are the created, not the Creator. The world does not exist solely because of our frenetic activity. It exists because of the providential nature of God. God has commanded rest and built it into the fabric of creation. To do violence to this command is to deny God’s generosity and to risk a form of existential amnesia. We forget who we are (the creation) and Whose we are (the Creator).

Several texts that pertain to Sabbath reinforce these themes. Exodus 16 is the story of the manna in the wilderness that further affirms abundance and provision. Not only is this the bread that God gives,<sup>12</sup> but each household has exactly what they need.<sup>13</sup> To hoard the manna (to keep it over for the next day, out of fear it would not appear or out of greed or sloth) would lead to its becoming wormy and vile<sup>14</sup> – except for the day before the Sabbath, when a double portion could be collected and would not spoil. The context of the story is set over against the wider wilderness-wandering theme of trust. Will Israel believe in the God of deliverance? As the Christian Church, we of course hear, echoes of Jesus’ prayer “give us this day our daily bread”<sup>15</sup> as we read about the manna. Do we believe God will provide?

The record of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 affirms that Sabbath is kept because God rested and commanded creation to do the same.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting that all the community is to rest – including servants, sojourners [the alien], and beasts of burden. This agency is extended even to the land in Leviticus 25, though the cycle of rest for the

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<sup>10</sup> Translation provided by Rev. Dr. Carol Johnston, Christian Theological Seminary.

<sup>11</sup> Gen 3:8

<sup>12</sup> Exod 16:15

<sup>13</sup> Exod 16:18

<sup>14</sup> Exod 16:20

<sup>15</sup> Matt 6:11

<sup>16</sup> Exod 20:8-11

land is in years as opposed to days.<sup>17</sup> Everything needs rest. Provision will be made and rest can be taken. One part of creation is not to abrogate the rights of another on this issue. An account of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 moves us to another consideration regarding the meaning of Divine and human relationship. Here, the reason for Sabbath keeping is the deliverance from Pharaoh's bondage and God breaking the yoke of slavery. We mention it here because it has at some level an economic significance, and stewardship is in part about money and economic systems. Some scholars believe that the Decalogue is, in point and fact, more about social-economic relationships than a moral code.<sup>18</sup> As to Deuteronomy 5:12-15, a few salient points follow.

First, the weekly observance of the Sabbath is a regular reminder of God's powerful act of deliverance (not simply a reminder of the Divine rest on the seventh day of creation). Slaves do not get a day off and the freedom they enjoy comes not from their own strength, but from God's "mighty outstretched hand."<sup>19</sup> Second, the reason the slaves labored under Pharaoh was to create bricks for supply cities – Pharaoh's hedge against the unreliable gods of Egypt who produce with inconsistent abundance. Third, the relationship between Israel and Egypt is economic (cheap labor enforced by the hegemony of Egypt's military). Pharaoh is anxious about brick tallies, and Israel's relationship to the ruler of the Nile is based solely on their ability to produce building materials.

God's deliverance of Israel however, is not related to what Israel can produce. It is a choice by God, having heard the cries of their oppression, to deliver them, not for what economic value Israel may possess, but rather for their intrinsic worth to God as a part of the creation. God does not deliver the people of Israel to create a new labor force.

This distinction is significant. God's covenant will be based on relationship, not an economic contract, which will thus impact the relationships among the people themselves. Take, for example, the command to honor mother and father.<sup>20</sup> In a social system that values life for its quality and quantity of production, honoring aging parents who cannot contribute to the production schedule becomes problematic. In fact, the entire second tablet of the law is about what makes human community possible and the character of those relationships. Living peacefully with neighbor will include the command to not covet the neighbor's belongings. As it relates to stewardship, this will come to light when we consider financial and material goods below.

Stewardship as Loving Attention to Body and Mind: Jewish thought understands not that we have a body, but that in fact we are a body. The bifurcation and separation of body from spirit comes late into the church's self-understanding and comprises only a narrow percentage of Second Testament thought. To love God with body, mind, and soul in harmony would have been familiar to Jesus as well as Paul. It is true that gnostic and ascetic movements grew alongside of and within the early church. We don't deny that

17 Lev 25:1-7

18 For more see Walter Brueggemann: *Money and Possessions*, Interpretation; John Knox Press 2016. pp15-33.

19 Exod 5:15

20 For additional consideration of this idea, see *Sabbath As Resistance*, Walter Brueggemann, John Knox Press, 2014.

there are believed benefits from suppressing the urges of the body [flesh] in favor of strengthening the spirit. At the same time, we affirm that God proclaimed on the sixth day that the material creation (including embodied human creatures) was “very good.” This colors our perspective on the value not only of our own bodies, but on the entire created order itself. We might further appeal to the apocalyptic biblical literature that suggests that even the “new heaven and new earth” <sup>21</sup> will still in fact be material in nature, however perfect (not susceptible to corruption) it might be imagined. That “God’s place is among mortals”<sup>22</sup> and that God will still “give water to the thirsty”<sup>23</sup> further suggests a realm that is not simply spiritual and disembodied, but still somehow physical in nature. That this form would continue in an eternal state validates and affirms material being.

When Paul suggests in Romans “...to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...”<sup>24</sup> we know that he has moral purity in mind (this ties to his understanding that the body and spirit are intimately related so that what we do with our body impacts our spirit). But, we can also infer that to offer the body as a sacrifice entails giving God the best of what we have to offer. A body broken down by abuse and poor health habits is far from the best “living sacrifice” we might produce! Such a body cannot manifest the full capacity of its offerings and deployment of its assets. Thus, failure to care for ourselves functions as a poor steward of a magnificent gift.

The body should be honored. It contains the indwelling treasure of the gospel<sup>25</sup> and is a temple for the Holy Spirit.<sup>26</sup> Care for self, including rest (tied to Sabbath), renewal, and providing for the body’s good health are tethered to stewardship. When issues of quality healthcare being available to all people arise, we can understand this as being related to stewardship. Bodily health concerns, as addressed by prophets, Jesus, and the apostles view healing as God’s preference. Poor health separates one from the community, and the failure to treat curable disease denies a person desired wholeness. It follows that moving available resources in the direction of human wellness and wholeness is an aspect of faithful stewardship within the context of forming and sustaining community.

**Stewardship and the Gospel:** “You are stewards of the many-colored graces of God.”<sup>27</sup> When the author of 1 Peter makes this statement it resonates with the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:1 that we [the church] are “the stewards of God’s mysteries.” Here the Greek leaves no doubt. It is not an inference but it is direct: oikonomos is translated “steward.”

We are stewards of the gospel. Those who follow Jesus, who have made a confession of faith, received the waters of baptism, and been given the gift of the Holy Spirit are stewards – caretakers of the Good News of God’s unending love for creation, a love that

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21 Rev 21:1  
22 Rev 21:3  
23 Rev 21:6  
24 Rom 12:1  
25 2 Cor 4:7  
26 1 Cor 6:19  
27 1 Pet 4:10, translation: Rev. Dr. Ronald J. Allen, Christian Theological Seminary

death itself cannot conquer.<sup>28</sup> That love is present at creation and is displayed most fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This is the church's ultimate story, our most treasured of entrusted gifts, and it is ours to tell as faithful stewards.

Stewardship and evangelism are related to each other. We have a light to shine and we must not put it under a bushel.<sup>29</sup> The simplicity of the task and the gravity of its importance appear mismatched. We must tell our story because it has the power to transform lives. Transformed lives have the power to change the world. Failure to be a steward of the gospel not only risks others not coming to know its power, but for the story (in the particular way that we, as the Disciples of Christ, know it) to not reach beyond this generation. It is not about our own survival, yet we acknowledge that something in the wider stream of Christian thought and witness will be lost without our tributary adding to its ever-flowing river.

The Disciples of Christ tradition has long lifted the ministry of Andrew as "one who brings others to Christ".<sup>30,31</sup> In story after story we learn that, despite Jesus' urging to do otherwise, those who witness his power and are moved by his teachings are compelled to share the story of Jesus with others.<sup>32</sup> To encounter Christ is to encounter an experience worth sharing.

Per the synoptic gospels, upon his ascension into heaven, Jesus gives the great commission to the disciples [the church] "to go into all the world and proclaim the good news"<sup>33</sup> – leaving it for us to do in his physical absence, as a steward would manage the household in the absence of the master. Prior to this, Jesus had also sent the disciples on a mission to proclaim the Realm of God.<sup>34</sup> In the record of the four evangelists, when Jesus is talking to the disciples, he is talking to us [the church]. Sharing the gospel is not optional; it is our vocation as followers of Jesus.

**Stewardship and Resources, Money, and Possessions:** We begin by noting that this relationship between ourselves and our possessions is often characterized in the bible as one of choice. "No one can serve two masters; for a slave, will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon [wealth]."<sup>35</sup> It is a clear-cut choice. Money makes a powerful servant but a lousy master. We get to pick, but we must also understand the consequences of our choice. If we choose the possession of money as our source of security and place of our ultimate loyalty, it will be like trying to collect water with a sieve. There will never be enough to protect the well-being of our soul and there will always be a desire for "just a little more," and then "just this much more," and so on, in a never-ending cycle. That

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28 Rom 8:38-39

29 Matt 5:15

30 John 1:41

31 The cross of St. Andrew is emblazoned upon our chalice as a reminder of our Scottish Presbyterian roots; Andrew is the Patron Saint of Scotland.

32 Mark 1:28; 1:45; 2:7; 5:20; 6:56; and 7:36-37 as examples.

33 Matt 28:20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47

34 Matt 10:7; Mk 6:12; Lk 9:2

35 Matt 6:24

which is less than the ultimate cannot ultimately satisfy.

When you can give money away, you demonstrate your power over it. When you cannot, it displays its power over you. The three synoptic gospels each tell of a man (the composite picture of whom is a “rich, young ruler”) who presents himself before Jesus with a question – a query about that which most of us would wish to have a clear answer: “What must I do to inherit the Realm of God?”<sup>36</sup> Jesus begins by quoting the second tablet of the Law, the things that make human community possible. Jesus then, upon hearing the man’s reply that he “has done all these things,” presses him still further. “Go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor so you will have treasure in heaven, then come and follow me.”<sup>37</sup>

Jesus sets before the man a choice: Divest your money and place it toward the values of the Realm (taking care of the poor) and follow me, or stay with your stuff and miss what ultimately matters. This or that. The man goes away sad, for he had many possessions, or perhaps more accurately stated, his many possessions had him. He chose poorly, selecting his lifeless wealth over the Living God. The strength of the pull of our possessions should not be underestimated.

The nature and clarity of the decision are reminiscent of the first two of the great commandments: You shall have no other gods before God; and, you shall not create an image or worship anything that is “in the heaven above, on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”<sup>38</sup> The First Testament reminds us in an oft-repeated mantra that our things cannot save us. When Joshua prepares the people of Israel to cross over the Jordan and enter the land of promise, he reminds the people of the power of God that has been displayed on their behalf, and demands that they make a choice: Will they serve God or will they wander after foreign gods?<sup>39</sup>

When in need, Israel has (a least part of the time!) chosen to trust God; and God has (all the time) been the trustworthy provider in the desert wilderness. Now, when they are to enter a land flowing with milk and honey, will they remember the source of their abundance? Prosperity is as great a threat to the faithful handling of our possessions as is being in want. When times are good, are we as generous as we might be? Are we still aware of the ultimate source of our abundance? Or, do we think it is because of our own hard work or other good fortune? Do we become more judgmental about those who do not share in prosperity, perhaps believing them to be lazy? The warnings (particularly in Deuteronomy 8) pertaining to the risk of unfaithfulness in the midst of plenty are aimed at precisely this fact. Don’t forget the true source of your provision.

Those things that would lure us away from true discipleship are rarely easily identified as such. Temptation is often subtler in its appearance. Consider the choice placed before our primordial ancestors and the nature of its presentation! “The serpent was more

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<sup>36</sup> Matt 19:16-30; Mk 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

<sup>37</sup> Mark 10:21

<sup>38</sup> Exod 20:4

<sup>39</sup> Josh 24

crafty [subtle] than any other creatures...”<sup>40</sup> Even the choice in the garden itself is a quest for more than what was deemed to be enough – to be more than human (eat the fruit and become like God). A choice was made to live in the world on our own terms instead of on God’s terms, the consequences of which were/are harsh and damaging to all the relationships in the creation. Stewardship is about rightful ownership (it is all God’s) and thus “rightful place” (we are entrusted with its care as managers) in the created order. It is also about contentment with “enough” in contrast to the insatiable desire for more.

This acquisitiveness is a human condition which can undermine our trust in God, our relationships with one another, and the faithful stewardship of our resources. It’s connections to the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments are obvious (the prohibitions against adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting). To take or desire that which does not belong to us, as opposed to being content with what we have, makes living in human community impossible. To take more than we need at the expense of another or to abuse the truth for our personal gain does violence to the neighbor and denies God’s provision and abundance, which is for the whole of creation. To be in fear that what we have will be lost due to the actions of another creates defensive postures, relationships shadowed by mistrust, and self-justification for hoarding.

Jesus says, “Do not store up treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth or rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”<sup>41</sup> Despite wanting to believe that our money will naturally flow toward the ventures of the heart and the spirit, Jesus says something quite different. It is more than a mere suggestion that the condition of our heart can be seen in the ledger of our debit card statement. Find your money and you will find your heart. Your checkbook (and the church budget, for that matter) is a theological document.

Are we investing in the values of the Realm of God (storing treasures in heaven), or are we engaged in something else? Have we been generous toward those things that lead to justice, wholeness, and hope, or have we been seeking more “stuff” because our current possessions have failed to truly satisfy us?

This question of acquisitiveness is not solely for the individual. It can apply to our institutions, as well. To steward well the resources entrusted to us as communities of faith should include an examination of our property, our “reserve” funds, and all our assets (physical, human, and spiritual) that we hold in common trust. Are they all employed well in service to the mission to which God has called us? Are we clear on what that mission is? The human existential questions of “Who am I?” and “What am I to do?” are meaningful for organizations as well as individuals. They are the perpetual questions of a church that understands itself to be reformed and ever-reforming, thus seeking to know God afresh in this time and place.

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40 Gen 3:1

41 Matt 6:19-21

We noted that the relationship with our material goods, especially our money, is presented as a choice. Wealth and resources are themselves treated as value-neutral in most biblical passages that pertain to them. The real issue of concern is, what is our relationship with these things? In what ways do we define them or allow them to define us? The author of 1 Timothy reminds us that “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.”<sup>42</sup> When our desire is for money and material things in and of themselves, we risk potential damage to ourselves and others. Most of us need little imagination to connect this truth to the devastation left in the wake of those (both individuals and corporations) whose only pursuit in life has been the acquisition of more. Such desire can fragment relationships and exploit resources, both human and natural.

Luke’s gospel reminds us of a farmer whose land produced in immense abundance, so much so that his current barns could not hold all that the fields had produced. In a conversation he has only with himself (absent of others or accountability to God), he plans to raze his old barns, build new ones adequate for the task, and “eat, drink, and be merry for the rest of his days.”<sup>43</sup> As Jesus tells the story, it concludes with “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And all those things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves, but whose lives are not rich toward God.”

We would note here that conversations about legacy are important for individuals and congregations. Have we made provisions for that moment when our own lives (or the sustainable life of our institutions) will “be required of us?” Understanding our stewardship is “whole life” in nature would suggest that conversations about everything from organ donation and the way we approach a funeral (especially cost), to being intentional about leaving planned gifts for organizations that have changed our lives or the lives of others, should be important. Other non-profits have not been afraid to ask their donors and supporters to consider making a gift (perhaps the most generous gift a person will ever make) at the end of life; shouldn’t the church be willing to ask for the same consideration?

Instead of flowing freely into a community for the benefit of all, wealth can become concentrated among a few, and thus its blessings of assuring enough for others can be withheld at the expense of those others. Money was not originally intended to be a commodity, but rather a temporary medium of exchange.<sup>44</sup> Eric Law reminds us that “when we lost sight of the original purpose of money and decided to accumulate it as a commodity, rather than keeping it moving as medium of exchange, we created economic problems.”<sup>45</sup>

We see at the beginning of this century how this becomes a concern for the practice of stewardship and its impact at global level. It was reported in January 2017 that eight individuals had amassed a combined wealth greater than the total resources of

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42 1 Tim 6:10

43 Luke 12:13-21

44 Dr. Eric Law, *Holy Currencies*; Chalice Press, St. Louis, MO. 2013 p. 133ff

45 *ibid*

50% of the planet's population!<sup>46</sup> This staggering figure suggests a problem both in the management of resources for the greater good and for the flow of money in the wake of global poverty. It is true that several individuals of this "gang of eight" are generous with their wealth and have invested in programs that are designed to help those in desperate need. However, it is not unfair to ask, when so many go without basic essentials for life, "How many billions of dollars do you need after the first billion?" The concentration of wealth among such a few, while permitted in supply-side and free-market economic systems, appears contrary to all acceptable biblical models. How much is enough?

At issue is not solely that some are wealthy and some are not. The concern is the sanctioned systemic process whereby money is transferred to a concentrated few at the expense of others through suppressed wages, which harm the very people who produce the goods and services. It is further exacerbated when, due to insufficient earnings, people are forced into indebtedness to purchase necessary goods for survival. When lenders are unscrupulous, the rates of interest too high, or the terms of loans unreasonable, the cycle is virtually unbreakable, and even more money flows from the many to the few. Welcome the new Pharaoh! The practice of the empire in the ancient world achieved this through taxes, indentured servitude, and outright government-sanctioned theft. The prophets railed against the nation of Israel when it imitated this behavior, seeing it as a violation of the laws God had set in place, and the prophets believed that such actions contributed to the downfall and subsequent exile of Israel.<sup>47</sup>

That said, the church also has an obligation to be in ministry with the wealthy and to tend to their spiritual needs, rather than to dismiss them as evil or worthy only of condemnation. While scholars within the church have clearly pointed to God's preferential option for the poor,<sup>48</sup> that is not meant to counter the well-being of the rich. Jesus says that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the Realm of God."<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is incumbent on the church to educate the wealthy on their responsibilities toward those in need and their opportunities to lift-up the human dignity of each child of God. Naming the dangers of wealth and its: 1) ability to insulate one from the suffering of another, and 2) the reliance on money instead of God, is part of our vocation in proclaiming the whole gospel.

To suggest that God loves the poor more than the rich would be to deny both God's love and God's grace to each individual person. Rich and poor alike and together have both spiritual and physical needs to which the church has equal responsibilities. At the

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46 Reported by Oxfam and CBS Evening News on January 17, 2017. Bill Gates, \$75 billion; Amancio Ortega, \$67 billion; Warren Buffett, \$60.8 billion; Carlos Slim Helu, \$50 billion; Jeff Bezos, \$45.2 billion; Mark Zuckerberg, \$44.6 billion; Larry Ellison, \$43.6 billion; Michael Bloomberg, \$40 billion. This is said to equal the economic power of 3.6 billion people, or roughly one half of the world's population.

47 Amos 2:6-7; 5:10-12; 6:3-7, 12; 8:4-6; IS 2:1-11; Micah 2:1-5; 6:9-15

48 Catholic Encyclicals dating back to 1891 *Rerum Novarum* take up the cause of the poor. Most recently Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* links the suffering of the poor to the environment devastation we have unleashed upon the earth and its impact on the impoverished who suffer from its effects on their land (climate change) and within their bodies (pollution). All of this is within a sound condemnation for unbridled consumerism and its effect on both spiritual and physical wellbeing. Disciples should note in our own history in this area of concern that includes GA 8735 "Economic Systems – Their Impact on the Third World – A Beginning Study" which contains a section on Christian Affirmations: The Judeo-Christian tradition emphasizes special concern for the poor and further states A Christian will require any economic system to give and account of how it will improve the lot of the poor. (Paragraph 39)

49 Matt 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25

same time, we acknowledge that to the one to whom much has been given, much is expected.<sup>50</sup> Those who have wealth are often concerned about how it should be used. They are also aware of how it can label or identify them in confining ways uniquely similar to how the lack of money defines and limits the identity of those who are poor.

**Stewardship and Generosity:** The model upheld for the people of God is one of sharing resources. Both Testaments leave little doubt that economic protections for the poor and the vulnerable are not to be ignored. These prescriptions include laws that pertain to gleaning,<sup>51</sup> to what may be held as collateral,<sup>52</sup> the charging of interest,<sup>53</sup> the fair payment of wages,<sup>54</sup> the canceling of debts,<sup>55</sup> and generosity toward the poor (which include the widow, the orphan, and the alien/sojourner).<sup>56</sup>

Concern for the poor is stated most emphatically in Deuteronomy and the appeal to “...not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. ... Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you, your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.’”<sup>57</sup>

The faithful keeping of these laws will have its own economic impact on the people, for God promises that if the commandments are kept, there will be life and prosperity. For Israel, and the land it is about to occupy, failure to do so will result in the blessing of God being removed, which will end in death and alienation.<sup>58</sup> The ideal behavior for the church to aspire is one where all things are held in common, so that there is no need within the community.<sup>59</sup> This is not to be understood as an imposed economic system (such as socialism), but rather a way of living that is truly egalitarian in nature, brought about through the reconciliation of all things in Jesus Christ. Further, within the church, there is to be no partiality shown between the rich and the poor, for to do so is to commit a sin.<sup>60</sup> In fact, to fail to address the needs of the neighbor is to be in possession of a faith that is dead.<sup>61</sup>

Such a way of being in the world is an outgrowth of discipleship flowing from the people outward, rather than imposed by authority or compulsion. The Jerusalem offering

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50 Luke 12:48

51 Deut 24:19-22; Lev 19:9-10

52 Deut 24:6, 10-13

53 Deut 15:1-3; Deut 23:19-20. Also, see Lev 25:35-37 and Exod 22:25

54 Deut 24:17-18; James 5:4

55 Deut 15:1-11; see also Lev 25:10

56 Deut 14:28-29; Deut 26:12. In addition, the following texts (among others) emphasize the importance of giving to the poor: Prov 19:17; Prov 22:9; 14:21; Prov 21:13; Is 58:7-8; Heb 12:16; Matt 5:42; 1 Tim 5:8; Luke 3:11; Jas 1:27

57 Deut 15:7-8, 10-11; This text is also restated by Jesus in Matt 5:42.

58 Deut 30:15-20

59 Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37

60 James 2:1-10

61 James 2:14-16

and Paul's appeal for its collection is one model of this behavior within the Second Testament. There is a need among the "saints" in Jerusalem, and Paul has agreed to seek financial assistance from the gentile churches in Asia Minor and Greece.<sup>62</sup> We first learn of this offering at the end of the First Epistle to the Corinthians,<sup>63</sup> as Paul instructs the church gathered there to prepare for his coming. He encourages the Corinthians to approach this offering with intentionality and discipline. Each week they are to set aside something, so that when he arrives they will have the gift ready. That this gift is being received over time suggests it is indeed a generous offering to meet a substantial need. The idea that an offering is given with thought and preparation is worth noting as we consider our own approach to such an act in our own congregations. Indeed, taking time to be prepared both to make and to receive the offering is worthy of our best efforts.

In Second Corinthians (chapters 8 & 9) we learn the details of Paul's case for support of the Jerusalem saints. It is important to note that Paul does not use guilt, though he certainly appeals to the Corinthians' sense of pride by encouraging them "not to be outdone" by the churches of Macedonia!<sup>64</sup> While remarking that the Corinthians have excelled in many things, he now wants them to excel in generosity. He does not want them to give beyond their means, but he does expect them to give liberally. There is a call to a careful examination of conscience and an honest appraisal of individual capacity. Paul suggests a balance between the Corinthian's abundance and the need in Jerusalem, with the possibility of a reciprocity in the future. Paul refers to the story we explored above in Exodus 16 regarding the manna in the wilderness. "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."<sup>65</sup> Abundance has not come at the expense of another. In this case, the one who has given to the one who has not, so that all have "enough" and no one goes without.

That this gift should be generous is made clear in Paul's reference to Jesus Christ, "who though he was rich became poor for our sake."<sup>66</sup> This further affirms the idea that the gift itself is meaningful and offered with thought. Generosity looks like Jesus. It is not without cost or sacrifice. As disciples, we, too, are called to give with liberality. To sow sparingly is to reap sparingly, cautions Paul, so we are to sow bountifully with an expectation to reap bountifully. And here, Paul sets the giving as an act of the will – a choice. We are to give without reluctance or compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver!<sup>67</sup> Your discovery that you have something to give should bring thanksgiving – you have enough and then some! That what you give will make a difference in the world on behalf of the Realm of God – what could be more satisfying? Knowing that someone will

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62 It is not completely clear if this offering is specifically for the poor in Jerusalem proper, or if this offering is to be received by the Jerusalem church which will serve as a clearing house for the distribution of this money. If it is the latter, one could argue the idea of a common mission fund, such as Disciples Mission Fund, has its origin in scripture. Either way, the idea of a disciplined and intentional offering for those beyond the immediate context of the local community yet done in partnership with other communities of faith is compelling for the Christian Church which understands its mission to be "From our doorsteps to the end of the earth".

63 1 Cor 16:1-2

64 He will later stake his own reputation on their ability to practice generosity along with their pride. 2 Cor 9:3-5

65 Exod 16:18

66 2 Cor 8:9

67 2 Cor 9:7

eat a meal, have warm safe place to stay, be comforted or be made well – it does stir deep joy from within us!

There is confidence in giving because God provides, says Paul. You can give believing that, if sometime you have a need, God will provide for you in the same way that you are providing for others. This giving is based on God's trustworthiness, and when the gift is given there is a sense of doxology. "You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us."<sup>68</sup> In the thanksgiving of those who receive the gift, God is praised. In an age of full basements and storage units that we never visit but that we cling to because we might need that stuff someday, we are assured that we can let it go and we will be okay. God does provide, whether it is a ram in the thicket or the unexpected kindness of a good Samaritan. We can trust the future when we live on God's terms of a community that shares and practices generosity.

Paul sees the work of generosity as an extension of the gospel proclamation and a manifestation of God's grace. The economic partnership (koinonia) being forged on behalf of the Jerusalem saints by disparate people and cultures affirms a unity in Christ transcendent of those differences (what could be more different than Corinth and Jerusalem in the first century CE!).

For Paul, the manifestation of generosity is a fruit of the spirit.<sup>69</sup> It is part of the evidence that an individual is alive in the faith. Extravagant generosity is a Spiritual gift which contributes to the benefit of the whole body of Christ.<sup>70</sup> Contributing to the needs of the saints is among one of many virtues Paul encourages as a mark of the faithful disciple.<sup>71</sup> This is true for the church in every age.

Generosity is celebrated in a host of ways in the biblical witness. Joseph of Cyprus, who was also known as Barnabas, is reported to have sold a piece of property and given the entire proceeds to the early church. He is named as one among many who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, sold land and houses and laid the gifts at the feet of the apostles, the result of which was "that there was not a needy person among them."<sup>72</sup> The generosity of the community sustained the community and it propelled the witness of the gospel.

The Book of Acts also tells the resurrection story of the disciple Tabitha.<sup>73</sup> That she was "dedicated to good works and acts of charity" should not escape our notice. When Tabitha dies, it creates a crisis in the church at Joppa and the apostle Peter is summoned with urgency. Peter arrives to find the grieving widows, whom Tabitha had helped in her lifetime, gathered around her lifeless body, now prepared for burial. They display the garments she had woven for them, as she was a lifeline in a culture that had no direct

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68 2 Cor 9:11

69 Gal 5:22

70 Rom 12:8

71 Rom 12:12

72 Acts 4:34-37

73 Acts 9:36-43

support for the vulnerable, save their own families or the generosity of others. The story reaches its climax as Peter, after having everyone leave the room, prays and then looks at the body of Tabitha and says, “Tabitha get up” – and she does!

As careful readers of scripture, we know that Luke (the author of Acts) wants to make it clear that while Jesus has physically left the building (ascended into heaven), his life-giving power remains present via the Holy Spirit. But beyond that, we also see an intentional affirmation of the vocation of charitable work. It could have been anyone who died and whose being raised to life proclaimed the power of Jesus at work in the apostles – but it was not just anyone. It was Tabitha, one whose life was dedicated to helping others, reminding the church that we cannot be the church without this same work. Generosity is life-giving.

Recent studies have shown that generosity increases happiness, health, and a sense of purpose in those who practice it. There is a correlation between generous behavior and a personal sense of well-being, according to research conducted by Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson.<sup>74</sup> They point out the truth found in the proverb, “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly but ends up impoverished.”<sup>75</sup> Generosity is good for you.

To look at Jesus is to see generosity incarnate. From the soaring prose of John 1 to the magnificent hymn of Philippians 2, the Second Testament affirms that to see Jesus is to in some way catch a glimpse of God. The nature of God is abundance and generosity, and that is on display in the ministry of Jesus. In the presence of Jesus, there is always enough. The gospels present a ministry of Jesus that has enough power to overcome illness, enough grace to overcome alienation, enough compassion to provide comfort, and enough love to overcome death itself. If we believe this to be true and we believe that Jesus is still present in the church, this should lower our anxiety about having enough resources to do the mission we have been called by God to do.

In the Gospel of John, there is a familiar story of Jesus at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. We recognize that all stories in this gospel have layers of meaning and that, primarily, the changing of water into wine is a miracle meant to reveal the Divine character of Jesus and to point toward his glorification in death and resurrection. However, one cannot dismiss the volume of the wine produced! It is more than enough for the situation at hand – it is an abundance beyond what is necessary.

All four evangelists record the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. Here, in the face of need, Jesus provides more than what is required so that there are baskets full of left-overs. What is important here for the church to recognize, beyond the provision itself, is that Jesus, when confronted about the need for food, looks at the disciples<sup>76</sup> and says “You give them something to eat.”<sup>77</sup> While there are many aspects of this story that

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74 The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose, Christian Smith & Hilary Davidson, Oxford Press, 2014.

75 Prov 11:24-25

76 When Jesus addresses the disciples in the gospels, it is understood that he is likewise addressing the church.

77 Matt 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6: 5-15

can be lifted up, we choose two: 1) Jesus expects the disciples [and thus, the church] to accomplish fulfilling the need at hand; 2) when the disciples place into the hands of Jesus what resources they have (however insufficient they may appear), it becomes more than enough. Generosity and abundance. A Divine human partnership that changes the world.

There is also generosity that is offered in response to generosity received. While elements of the story are somewhat unclear relative to who she is or what her motivation might have been, all four gospels tell the story of a woman who anoints Jesus with a fragrant ointment. Details are lacking about number of things, but all four writers are certain that the value of the perfume is great – worth an entire year’s salary. The act appears to be out of gratitude. The gesture expresses extravagant generosity. It prompts a question to the reader – to what would you give a year’s salary and what could possibly motivate you do so? A serious reflection about the depth of our own gratitude for Jesus calls us to consider the nature of our own generosity. Grateful people are generous people. God’s people have a reason to be thankful!

Gratitude is a part of our stewardship response, centered in the belief that all we have come to possess is, at its core, a gift. When Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to participate in the offering for the Jerusalem saints, he makes it clear that the gift they are giving is not one of obligation. At the same time, he underscores the reality that knowing all they have received from God in Jesus Christ, how could they be anything but generous? Throughout scripture, there is an urging to rejoice and give thanks to God. Whether it is the humble return of a cleansed leper,<sup>78</sup> the fresh obedience of a penitent sinner, or the saying of grace at the evening supper table, gratitude is the seedbed for generosity.

A favorite story for many a stewardship sermon is that of the widow’s mite.<sup>79</sup> At face value, it is a tremendous story of generosity and faith, her giving two copper coins – all that she possessed – to the temple offering. Told in both the gospels of Mark and Luke, this story tells us that Jesus, who has been observing the gifts that people have been making to the temple treasury, sees her gift and calls attention to its true value. Her contribution was not out of what she could spare, but was all she had to secure her sustenance. Stated as such, it is indeed an extravagant offering which displays great trust in God to provide. The gifts of the wealthy, though considerably larger in amount, pale in comparison. Would, that however impractical it seems to us, we could give so freely!

However, there is a caveat in reading that text with regard to its placement within each gospel. The passage which immediately precedes the story in both Mark and Luke warns about the religious class – those who love the trappings of piety and privilege. “They devour widow’s houses” Jesus says. “They will receive the greater condemnation.”<sup>80</sup> The church cannot prey upon the generous, nor can it ignore the needs of those in its

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78 Luke 17:15

79 Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

80 *ibid*

midst by catering to the desires of the wealthy. While needing to encourage generosity among its members, it must also practice it on their behalf and in their best interest.

**Stewardship and Judgment:** Stewardship-related themes are also to be found in stories about judgment, as our choices to act or not to act faithfully have consequences. In a story given to us only by Luke, we see the harsh punishment that awaits a rich man who has ignored the beggar at his gate.<sup>81</sup> It is a narrative of stark contrasts, as the wealthy one is dressed in purple (a sign of significant wealth) and who dines sumptuously every day. The poor man (named Lazarus – which means “God helps”) sits at the gate begging for scraps off the table and is covered in sores which the dogs come and lick. It is unlikely that the rich man was unaware of Lazarus in his daily denial of the poor man’s plight.

The nature of their situation is highlighted further when you consider that in the ancient world, the poor had bread, the middle class had bread and sauces/vegetables, the rich had bread and sauces and meats, and that the very wealthy had such an excess of bread they could use it like a napkin to cleans their hands. Lazarus desires what is essentially just the napkin of rich man to stave off his hunger!

As Jesus tells the story, both men die, and in the afterlife, Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham while the rich man is in Hades suffering torment. The great reversal, so prevalent in Luke, governs their fate in the afterlife. The rich man now seeks comfort from Lazarus, who is unable to provide it. In great concern for his five brothers left behind, the rich man appeals to Abraham to send Lazarus to warn them of the fate they, too, will suffer if they do not change and consider the poor. Abraham responds that they have Moses and the prophets, and if they have not listened to them, why would they be convinced if someone returned from the dead?

To reflect on this story is to wonder what their fate would have been (specifically the rich man) in the afterlife had there not been such an unmitigated disparity of their circumstances while in this life? If the rich man had extended generosity toward Lazarus, would his punishment have been so extreme? There is a change coming. For people who have both the “law and the prophets” and “one who has returned from the dead,” it would be hard to deny we have not be warned.

In a word about the final judgment in Matthew’s gospel, we hear a story with a similar refrain. Known to many as the parable of the sheep and goats (or the Judgement of the Nations), the scene is set as the final reckoning and adjudication between those who will see the Realm of God and those who will not. The distinction between the fates is clear, once again affirming the power of choice related to our employment of resources, our compassion, and our sense of justice. “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”<sup>82</sup>

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81 Luke 16:19-31

82 Matt 25:34-37

Here, in what is the essentially the longest discourse in the Second Testament about the criteria that qualifies one for entrance into heaven, what matters most is seemingly not doctrine or right belief, but it is having assured the basic human needs for others.<sup>83</sup> The failure to do so warrants eternal separation from God. “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they will answer, ‘Lord when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’”

The text needs little commentary. Part of our stewardship is the care for one another. In seeing to the needs of the least of these, we bear evidence of and participate in the coming Realm that is both present and yet to be fulfilled.

When it comes to judgment, we must also address the honesty and integrity of our approach to giving and being in community. Immediately following the magnanimous gift of Barnabas in Acts 4 comes the story in Chapter 5 of Ananias and Sapphira. They also make a gift from the sale of land; however, they conspire together to withhold a portion of the proceeds for themselves. When this is revealed by Peter, he tells Ananias that he [Ananias] was not compelled to sell the land or to give the entire proceeds from the sale to the community. Instead he [Ananias] has lied, claiming the gift to be more generous than it was, and by so doing has not lied only to the church but to God. Upon hearing this truth - Ananias falls down and dies! Further, when Sapphira shows up hours later and she is questioned, she too lies (not yet having learned of her husband’s fate) and she also falls down and dies!

Hard as it might be to accept that God would strike down these two for lying about their gift, there is a deeper message here for the church to consider. The fact that they lied about the proceeds reveals that their entire heart was not dedicated to God. While saying otherwise, their actions demonstrate that they were not fully invested in the work of the Holy Spirit within the community. They simply were not “all in.” Faithful stewardship is about being “all in” on what God is doing in the world and being an agent of the Realm so that the world as we know it is transformed into the world as God desires it to be.

Stewardship may be considered a life-and-death issue when we examine what is at stake regarding the impact of our whole-life discipline of practicing it, and the difference such a commitment makes to the world in which we live. When teaching discipleship – what it means to follow Jesus - we must be honest about what such a decision demands. “No one who has put their hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God.”<sup>84</sup>

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83 While there is some indication in the Greek that would suggest that this applies specifically to the community of the church, there is no stated restriction that would keep such a practice from being extended to the entire community. The tradition in Deuteronomy, as an **example**, includes all in who are in the land related to issues of justice, care for the poor, and Sabbath observance.

84 Luke 9:62

In the Book of Revelation there is a similar warning issued to the church at Laodicea: “I know your works; you are neither cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”<sup>85</sup> To be a true disciple is to be truly committed.

**Stewardship and the Tithe:** It may surprise the average person to know that the tithe (when compared to money in general) is seldom addressed in the Bible, aside from the instructions for its collection by the priests in Numbers and Leviticus. The first mention of the tithe is in Genesis 14 when, following a successful battle, Abram is blessed by King Melchizedek and Abram offers him 1/10 of everything.<sup>86</sup>

The most detailed discussions of the tithe are found in Deuteronomy, and it may not sound like what you thought you remembered! “Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. In the presence of the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose as the dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.”<sup>87</sup> This is a potluck supper celebration! The tithe is brought in and the people rejoice that earth has produced once again for their benefit.

Whether you have a little or a lot, you bring in 10% of what you do have and the entire community benefits. This serves as a reminder as to the source of the blessing. “So that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always” takes us back to the assertion in Genesis 1 that we are the created, not the Creator. This offering proclaims that God is the source of the abundance that sustains us. It has not come simply from our own endeavors, however good our farming and animal husbandry skills might be – it begins with God. We can plant the seed, but only God can make it grow!

The text goes on to speak of what to do if the journey is too far to take your produce. You can turn it into cash and when you arrive at the Temple, purchase whatever party supplies you want (including wine and strong drink!). The tithe is about gratitude and honoring God for what we have. And it is to be shared – shared within the community and with the priests (who do not have an allotment of land) and [every third year] with the sojourner [resident alien], the orphans and the widows. They [those in need] are to eat their fill – because there is plenty enough for all.

In Deuteronomy 26, the tithe is detailed again, and this time the focus is on the liturgy related to the making of the offering.<sup>88</sup> At the center of the liturgy is both God and the Land. When the gift is placed on the altar, the following statement is to be made: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and

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85 Revelation 3:15-16 Here “cold or hot” is not so much a matter of enthusiasm as it is a level of commitment.

86 Gen 14:17-20

87 Deut 14:22-24

88 Deut 26:1-15

an outstretched arm, with terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me. <sup>89</sup>

This liturgy is the rehearsal of Israel's salvation story. It acknowledges, at an even deeper level than the previous text, that God is the source of every blessing. It is not just what the land produces, but the fact that they are in the promised land itself. Their freedom to live in the land has happened by the providential action of God. It is a prayer of great thanksgiving, not unlike the moment of the Eucharist for the church, where the main actor is God and those Divine actions on our behalf are remembered with awe and gratitude. To apply this to the church, it would be like repeating our confession of faith when we make an offering. "I believe..." and so I respond. To make an offering is to worship God, and the ground of that worship is thanksgiving.

Here again, the inclusive nature of the gift and its recipients is repeated. "Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and your house."<sup>90</sup> There is enough for everyone to share because of God's abundance. Hospitality is extended beyond the normal boundaries of tribe and race because there is sufficient supply. This is not simply a nice thing to do, but a command of God.

When the question is raised about the tithe and its value for the church, these understandings should not be overlooked. The tithe establishes a community norm that is viewed as obtainable by all. Church members often wonder what is an acceptable gift? "How much should I give as an offering?" The tithe sets a benchmark; it is a starting place.<sup>91</sup> The tithe, when understood as worship, creates a moment to remember the source of blessings, our own salvation history, and an opportunity to respond to the grace we have received.

In some circles there is debate about whether a tithe should be made "on the net" or "on the gross." For Israel, there was only "the gross." However, if God's people would do either with faithfulness, there would be plenty of resources so as to make such a question moot! When the tithe is discussed, others want to maintain that we pay taxes that support many programs for the poor and thus "our share" should be adjusted accordingly. It is good to recall that beyond the tithe, which was done annually on the total produce of the land, that each male was to come with an offering [different from the tithe] three times a year. No one was to come empty-handed! This offering was made at the festival of unleavened bread, the festival of weeks, and the festival of booths. The size of the gift was determined as each was able to give based on how they had been blessed.<sup>92</sup> On top of this expectation was the practice of alms-giving.<sup>93</sup> These

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89 Deut 26:5-10

90 Deut 26:11

91 We say a starting place because it is clear, that at least within ancient Israel, multiple offerings were made beyond the tithe. This would make the tithe "the floor" rather than the ceiling! At the same time, 10% may seem to great a sum for people not in the regular practice of giving. In such a case, the tithe becomes a "first goal" toward which one might grow, perhaps a percent or two at a time.

92 Deut 16:16-17

93 Alms giving is referred to in the deuterocanonical books of Tobit and Sirach, as well as being mentioned in Matthew,

were gifts that did not count in either the tithe or the offerings, which suddenly makes 10% instead of seeming like too much, look like a bargain! Generosity was/is expected of God's people.

- Is the tithe (which is viewed by some as "under the Law") required by the church (which views itself as living "under grace")? Nowhere does the Second Testament suggest that we are to do anything less in our giving than what was required prior to the arrival of Jesus. Paul advises in giving to the Jerusalem offering, each one should give according to how they have been blessed (reminiscent of the three annual offerings mentioned above), but nowhere do we read that this replaced the tithe. To consider the tithe "law" is to not fully appreciate its intention (provision for the entire community) or recorded practice (celebration and gratitude). We do not serve our cause well if we equate expectations with burdens, demands, or obligations. That in many congregations we have established low expectations regarding giving, worship attendance, education, or other forms of participation and investment may well be related to an experience of decline in those same communities of faith. While the tithe cannot be fully argued as being required of the church via Second Testament citation, the benefits of teaching the tithe seem to out-weigh any potential liabilities.<sup>94</sup>

**Stewardship and the "Prosperity Gospel":** The tithe is also mentioned in the book of Malachi. Here the prophet, on behalf of God asks the question: "Would a man rob God?"<sup>95</sup> The prophet answers that indeed the people are robbing God by their failure to give the "whole tithe." The indictment is followed with this promise: "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the lord of hosts: see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing."<sup>96</sup>

We understand this to be a specific statement to address a particular situation. During a time of famine, the people (out of fear) withheld their full tithe offering, creating a self-imposed shortage in the very system that was designed to assure their sustenance. The problem (the presence of locusts) was not that God did not love them or care about them, but that they had failed to trust God, choosing instead to cling tightly to what they individually possessed. Rather than establishing a quid pro quo [give and you will get], the statement "test me" is a call to action to give the full tithe – the result of doing so will be that there will be enough for all of the people. Indeed, there will be an abundance so that no one is without. The "test" is to trust the system God established of the tithe, which, when faithfully practiced, assures provision for all.

However, this passage has been used by some to suggest that the "test" is to give in such a way so as to entice God into giving more to the giver as a reward for giving. By giving, the individual is assuring wealth and prosperity for themselves. We see this as a difficult rendering of the Malachi passage and challenge the church to explore whether such

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Luke, and Acts.

94 For further reflection on the potential resources created by teaching and practicing the tithe, see *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money*; Smith, Emerson, Snell. Oxford Press, 2008.

95 Mal 3:8 (KJV)

96 Mal 3:9-10

an understanding is appropriate. Given both the communal nature that pervades the biblical texts regarding blessing and salvation as well as the understanding that it is God's nature to give without provocation or human endeavor, we find this approach fraught with difficulty.

There has been a growing movement since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, primarily within certain Evangelical and Pentecostal streams of Protestantism, which seeks to use this text as foundation for understanding giving as a way of getting more.<sup>97</sup> Best identified as "the gospel of wealth" or "the prosperity gospel,"<sup>98</sup> a key component of this theological position is that it is God's will to be physically well and financially well-off. Further, proponents believe that such wellness and increase of wealth can be secured by strong faith (right belief), positive thinking/speech, and giving to religious causes.

Poverty and illness are understood within this school of thought to be the result of sin and/or spiritual forces. Because of the cross, the belief is that there is no reason to be sick or poor. The Bible is viewed almost as a contract that implies if a person does certain things certain ways (such as to tithe), God has to bless that person with health and prosperity. While an over-simplification, the point becomes clear – within the prosperity gospel there is a quid pro quo: do this, then God will do that. Give and God will bless you with greater wealth. Giving in this belief system is not based on gratitude or response, but is motivated by a desire to increase personal [not communal] power or position.

We would not dispute that to give is to be blessed! The very fact that one has something from which to give is a sign of God's provision. Further we can affirm that it is the nature of God's economy that in giving, we do intrinsically receive more than what we have offered. However, to suggest that God's actions to bless are to be mandated based on our activities denies the very sovereignty of the Divine. We cannot accept a position that teaches a collection of "magic words" or finding the "exact formula" of dollars to be given to charity that will cause God to bless any individual at the expense or in place of another. Additionally, we take exception to the restriction of God's blessing to be seen only in the physical act of healing or via the increase in material goods. The church should be suspicious of a belief system that seems to sanction the acquisitiveness of the culture and which places achieving material success ahead of service to others.

It creates tremendous theological issues as to what exactly is the nature of a god who would personally see to it that one can live in a mansion and drive a Rolls Royce while the neighbor goes without shelter or food. We don't deny the reality that this happens, just the belief that God sanctions it to be so. It is inconsistent with the gospel and antithetical to the way the early church lived out its faith by seeing that no one among them had any need.

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97 Additional texts often cited include Luke 6:38; Luke 11:9; James 1:5, among others.

98 It can also be named the "health and wealth gospel" or "gospel of success". Earliest proponents can be traced back into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the more prominent purveyors of this ideology arose during the 1950s within the Pentecostal healing traditions. Oral Roberts, Rev. Ike, A.A. Allen, and Jim Bakker were key figures in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Joel Osteen, Bruce Wilkinson, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Bishop Eddie Long, Joyce Meyer, and Creflo Dollar are among many names that have risen to prominent association with this theology. Leaders of this movement have even been the subject of a congressional investigation regarding a possible conflict between their lavish lifestyles and the organization's tax exempt status.

We affirm that our giving is a response to having already received. In much the same way that the author of 1 John states that “We love, because God first loved us,”<sup>99</sup> we give because God first gave to us. We understand our giving is not an attempt to manipulate God to act in our favor, but rather an acknowledgement that God has already acted in our favor [for the whole of creation], and we are grateful. Further, as disciples who hope to see the Realm of God break deeper into our world, we see our giving as an agent of change and transformation – a sign of the spirit of God at work within us.

That God desires wholeness for all of creation is a given. That the death and resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate testimony to God overcoming the power of death and conquering evil is unquestioned.<sup>100</sup> However, the Realm of God, while revealed, is not yet fully manifest among us. Powers contrary to the work and will of God still hold influence in individuals and within structures that abuse and misuse material and human resources. Systemic racism, for example, continues to oppress an entire class of people based on the color of their skin, denying opportunity and locking generations into crushing poverty and oppression. It is not for their own lack of faith that people of color suffer in this system. It is not because they fail to practice generosity that resources do not flow into their lives and neighborhoods. This is where the “gospel of wealth” ultimately fails and where a different understanding of what it means to be a steward is needed for not only the sake of the church, but the world. Stewardship is related to justice, as its faithful practice moves resources to promote and enable systemic changes toward that which affirms and secures human dignity.

**Stewardship as Transformation:** We affirm that it is God’s good intention to bless the earth and all that is within it. God’s desire is for all of creation to flourish and the human creatures have been entrusted with the responsibility to make it and keep it so. When we have failed at this task, God has held us accountable through the admonitions of the prophets – and those same prophetic voices have simultaneously continued to hold out a vision of how the world is supposed to be. The reward for living in the world on God’s terms is the very blessing we desire and God seeks to bring us abundance. The consequences of choosing our own terms results in the brokenness and scarcity we fear most.

Our world is broken – but we also believe that it does not need to stay that way. We believe that in the power of Jesus Christ, the in-breaking of the Realm of God has begun and cannot be turned away by any power or principality. The question is, will we choose to be participants in its coming to fullness? That God is at work on behalf of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized is without exception. Luke proclaims, while Jesus is still in the womb, that through his ministry, “His [God’s] mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.”<sup>101</sup> The way things are is not the way they are supposed

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99 1 John 4:19

100 Col 1:20

101 Luke 1:50-53

to be and - because of Jesus - they are not going to stay that way!

God's intention is going to be fulfilled. When John's disciples come to Jesus with their inquiry on behalf of their imprisoned teacher, Jesus answers their question as to whether or not he [Jesus] is the one or should they look for another with a simple statement: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news preached to them."<sup>102</sup> The transformation is not just a promise for some distant time – in the ministry of Jesus it is becoming reality now.

In each of the synoptic gospels, Jesus commissions the disciples to do these same things.<sup>103</sup> John's gospel tells us that Jesus promised his followers would "do even greater things."<sup>104</sup> The work of the disciples, and thus the work of the church in any age, is the work of Jesus. By our actions, the Realm is further revealed and comes closer. The Books of Acts demonstrates the ideal vision of the church operating under the full influence of the Holy Spirit. A group that could best be described as fearing for their lives suddenly becomes emboldened by the Spirit on Pentecost, and they find their voices to proclaim the gospel (an act of stewardship). Those who hear and respond to the message, now powered by the Spirit, forge an egalitarian community in which the worship of God, the adherence to the apostles teaching, the breaking of bread, and prayer are the hallmarks of their new life together.

The community demonstrates the presence of Jesus, both by the signs and wonders done by the apostles and by their "holding all things in common." Most importantly, they share from their resources: ...they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.<sup>105</sup>

This is a word of encouragement to the church as it pertains to stewardship. When the church proclaims the gospel and engages in sharing of its resources for the benefit of all, the church grows! In a time when the church is seeking to find its place in a shifting culture, reclaiming stewardship may be the best way to find our footing going forward. We can point people beyond the mere acquisitiveness of self-indulgence endorsed by our society to instead use their resources to transform not only their own lives, but the world in which they live.

### **After Thoughts**

Sources vary in their count, but most agree that the bible talks about money and related financial terms/issues about 2,300 times! Many Second Testament scholars suggest that Jesus talks about money (and uses related financial terms/issues/examples) over

102 Luke 7:22-23

103 Matt 10:5-15; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6

104 John 14:12 We should note that this does not necessarily mean they would be more powerful than Jesus, but rather by the sheer multitude of "realm agents" turned loose by the multiplication of disciples, more [greater] work would be accomplished.

105 Acts 2:45-47

60% of the time. To say that this topic is important within the Canon is no doubt an understatement. To believe that we can cover this topic thoroughly in this document is wishful thinking. We have attempted however, to give broad coverage, spanning both Testaments, from which we can draw some solid conclusions and offer direction for the church.

Because of the sheer volume of texts that relate to this topic, it may seem odd that the church in the last 50 or more years has attempted to keep the conversation about money and faith in separate, seemingly unrelated domains. Beyond that, in yet another arena of taboo, the church has also intentionally segregated the necessary political ramifications of these teachings and their raw, unsettling power as they interface with empire and impact community.

Our faith tradition has long practiced a “confession of faith” in Jesus Christ that is an intimate expression of our aspiration to be in a reconciled relationship with God, and God’s provision in Jesus Christ to affect such a desire. We in no way dispute, disparage, or disregard the nature of a personal relationship with Jesus! However, a faith that is solely privatized is contrary to the actual biblical portrayal of faith as practiced within community in both the First and Second Testament, and seems to be the antitheses of the early church as described in the Book of Acts. Private faith must still have public expression and significance beyond the individual.

The Christian faith of the contemporary Western world has, in some places, been distilled to a very individual and personal experience, disconnected from communal accountability, rendered devoid of any social welfare responsibility (which we might refer to as the “common good”), and segregated from certain material aspects of life. This is counter-intuitive to the practice of stewardship, which sees the individual as a part of a larger network of relationships. For the Christian steward, the world is viewed through the wide-angle lens of “the whole” and the tangible benefit of community.

The church should consider the value of reemphasizing the communal nature of the faith that we share. We recall that in both Testaments, salvation and blessing generally come not to individuals, but to communities. The prayer of Jesus repeated every Sunday in most of our congregations makes this distinction. “Our Father...Give us this day our daily bread...Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us...Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” The hope for the Realm to come and the petitions for sustenance, faithfulness, and protection belong to the collective whole, not just the individual. Whether it is the promise made to Abram that “...in you all the families of the earth will be blessed”<sup>106</sup> or the cosmic Christological claim in Colossians “...and through him [Jesus] God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross,”<sup>107</sup> the workings of God benefit individuals by their association with/in/through communities.

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<sup>106</sup> Gen 12:3

<sup>107</sup> Col 1:20

There may be substantial benefit for both the local congregation and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to think more clearly about ways to articulate and claim the necessity of being “members of one another” for authentic discipleship and true spirituality. As we see worship participation shrinking in the beginning of the century and the definition of “regular” church attendance dropping from nearly four Sundays a month to less than two Sundays a month, we are clearly at risk of being less connected within congregations and across our covenantal relationships. Are there ways we can encourage more interaction between members across our communities of faith?

### **Stated Assumptions**

Stewardship is a spiritual discipline, not a religious-sanctioned shorthand term for fundraising. It is as essential to the process of faith development as study, worship, prayer, and service to others. The biblical understanding of stewardship is that it touches every aspect of our lives and is grounded in the abundant love and provision of God.

Stewardship is about choices, many but not all of which have financial implications and a connection to our possessions. It is also about living in gratitude, understanding that all we have come to possess, share, and know is ultimately a gift from beyond our own individual capacity or agency. Stewardship embraces the concept that life itself is a gift and measure of grace.

Understanding oneself as a steward is fundamental to Christian discipleship, indispensable to the creation of healthy communities, and necessary for fulfilling the practical command to love both self and neighbor. Expressions of stewardship may be found in the intentional care for creation, the observance of Sabbath, the loving attention to our minds and bodies, the sharing of the gospel, and the appropriate management of our material resources. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather instructive and an entry point into deeper dialogue.

A church body that can only embrace a narrow view of stewardship as it relates to funding budgets, maintaining church property, and the operation/survival of the organization/institution will be self-focused, less able to freely share, and thus hindered in its efforts to fully love the neighbor, welcome the stranger, advocate for (and share with) the poor, and not as likely to break away from cultural norms that may diminish others. Such a community is driven by the anxiety of scarcity, which often leads to hoarding and withdrawal from the neighbor and the stranger for fear of not having “enough” for itself. Its prophetic witness is moderated by the risk of alienating its members [contributors], who may find varying levels of comfort in the current culture and have investment (knowingly or unknowingly) in maintaining the status quo.

In contrast, a church body that is committed to the holistic practice of stewardship will, as a fruit of that devotion, not only be a careful manager of its resources, but also will be a witness to justice, a builder of community with the neighbor, a gracious place of welcome, an advocate for the poor and disenfranchised, and by nature, will find itself opposed to culturally-imposed definitions that delineate any human being as something less than a child of God. Such a corporate body acts with confidence in speaking truth

into the culture because it believes in the abundance and provision of God without the fear of scarcity. It boldly lives out its mission and ministry.

It should not surprise us to learn that many recent studies confirm that within the marks of growing, healthy, and thriving religious communities the focus of ministry is directed “outward,” toward the neighborhood and larger circle surrounding the congregation’s context.<sup>108</sup> Likewise, one consistent characteristic of struggling communities of faith is that their focus is almost entirely “inward” and self-serving (not necessarily with malice or intent) within the literal walls of the specific congregation or organization with an eye toward survival. We ignore this correlation at our own peril.

It follows that churches and communities of faith who understand and live into a holistic sense of stewardship, including the practice of confident generosity, are likely to have resources for the mission that God has called them to perform. They will also have the capacity to share resources (human and financial) with their covenantal partners across all expressions of the church to jointly enact the larger vision that God has given all of us: To be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

#### For Consideration:

1. We should not be afraid to have high expectations about what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. The church must take seriously the study of holistic stewardship and teaching stewardship as an act of discipleship to its leaders, its members, and its affiliated partners.
2. Pastors, elders, and elected officers should commit to growth in the personal practice of generosity, to lead by example and with integrity.
3. The church, in all its expressions, should engage in an audit of its practices as they relate to environmental concerns. Consumption of energy, water, the use of renewable resources, the practice of “reduce, reuse, and recycle,” and efforts to tread more lightly upon the earth should be evaluated, and conservation measures put into place. Congregations modeling such practices can then more effectively teach their members to do the same.
4. The church should be encouraged to reflect about the acquisitive nature of our culture and the consequences of continuing to consume resources in ways that are not sustainable, and, in some cases, harmful to the environment and our brothers and sisters. How might we change our own expectations and behaviors around what is “enough”? What is our prophetic responsibility to give voice to this issue in this time and place?
5. Congregations should commit to a practice of generosity, and consider establishing a minimum goal of 10% of operational receipts to be invested beyond the immediate needs of the congregation. If we are going to teach the tithe, we must also practice it.
6. Understanding that clarity of mission is essential to enlisting successful resource support, congregations and related organizations are encouraged to establish or reevaluate current plans for ministry to be certain they are still applicable to the congregation’s capacity and context. People give their time and money to organizations that they believe are making a difference and are responsible with their finances.

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108 Barbara Lynn Fullerton, *Growing Generosity: Identity as Stewards in the United Church of Canada*, May 2009.

7. As a matter of achieving financial wellness (and creating an environment of trust), congregations and related ministries of the church should invest in understanding industry-agreed-upon standards for the handling of money and financial resources. Known as “best practices,” issues of transparency, internal controls, audits, the creation of budgets, and the published reporting of all assets, liabilities, and fiscal policy should be followed and periodically reviewed (regardless of the size of the congregation or its annual receipts/expenses!).
8. Because money often creates anxiety that impacts individuals and family systems, congregations should consider providing personal finance classes that teach the effective management of money and increase the capacity to practice generosity.
9. The church should actively engage in teaching children, youth, and young adults about the power, proper use, beneficial aspects, detrimental risks, and effective management of money, as one portion of a deeper commitment to teaching biblical stewardship as a critical part of the faith development curriculum. This is a mission for the entire church, as the proper use of our resources (natural, human, and economic) is essential to the long-term health and well-being of the earth and all parts of God’s creation that call it home.
10. Congregations might consider a year-round method to the stewardship conversation. Rather than seeing the annual campaign as a three-week sprint (and the only time the word stewardship is often mentioned), a more circumspect approach that keeps all aspects of stewardship in play over time may prove to be more effective.
11. Communities of faith should consider the importance of having discussions with members about the importance of having a will and the congregation should have clear policies in place that would make receiving a testamentary gift a true blessing rather than a point of contention! Teaching stewardship, including stewardship at the end of life, could make receiving such gifts the norm rather than a surprise or rare occurrence. Such gifts can expand the ministry and mission of the congregation or church-related institution well into the future. Until Jesus comes again, there will always be a need for the gospel and its related ministries of care and compassion.
12. Congregations and other church-related organizations who hold assets should consider their own legacy plans and have clear policies in place as to how their mission and ministry will continue, should it become necessary to cease its visible presence.
13. Prayerful reflection is needed on what it means to be a covenantal partner in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), with attention to the financial support of these common ministries we share that extend from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth. What is the nature of our relationship and how do we support each other so that our shared witness can reach its fullest expression?
14. Mission and ministry priorities should drive financial decisions. Budgets should serve the church, not the other way around. All organizational structures with fiduciary responsibilities across the church should be encouraged to adopt this as an operational policy and cultural practice.

### **Practical Applications of Stewardship in Our Time and Place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

A Broad Perspective of Stewardship in Context: Recent shifts in the socio-political spectrum draw attention to the need for holistic understandings of stewardship as the church seeks to negotiate its way in this changing landscape of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The rise of separatism in Western Europe, incursions by governments into the south

China Sea, and the trend toward a political climate of nationalism in the United States all suggest global trends toward more isolating and greater privileged positions (economic power) being sought by nation states in competition (rather than cooperation) with each other. This ultimately undermines values witnessed to in both Testaments as signs of the presence of the Realm of God because: a) it is contrary to the radical welcome of hospitality (because nationalism raises the fear of the stranger from outside our boundaries), and; b) the sharing of economic gain by the whole community is abrogated due to a concentration of wealth to be controlled within a nation's government and/or powerful elite.

Historical perspective suggests that as nations become more parochial and less cooperative across real and ideological boundaries regarding resources and the control of economic factors, the risk of conflict is heightened. These circumstances often marshal resources toward non-life-giving purposes and, in escalated conflict, lead to the loss of life and damage to the environment. Whether the conflict is "cold" or develops into a fully-waged war, such conditions usually impact the poor and the marginalized in disproportionate ways.<sup>109</sup> "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."<sup>110</sup>

If biblical stewardship suggests (and we believe it does) an alternative reality relative to the establishment of the beloved community, as well as the proper use of possessions for the sharing of wealth generated by the earth's resources so that none are in need, then the church is necessarily an interested party with a needed voice in this context.

A Specific Example of Engaging a Social-political Issue Based on Stewardship Concerns: Potential impact to both the environment and the further overt concentration of wealth within the United States exists, as evidenced by a subtle rule change to the Congressional Budget that was passed with little public notice on January 3, 2017. The rule relates to reporting the cost of transferring federal lands to local control. This seemingly innocuous piece of procedural legislation, while not doing so directly, makes it possible for future legislation that can place lands (currently held in the public trust as a legacy for all United States citizens) for sale to developers and to industry, creating privatized access and the potential for the land's resources to be exploited for private gain.<sup>111</sup> The church that is concerned about stewardship both as care for the earth and as proper management of resources for the common good will be compelled to speak to this issue. It is one example how streams of stewardship issues converge - in this case, economic interests and care for the earth<sup>112</sup> - and how they have political implications.

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109 At the most basic level, resource allocation to the military/industrial complex in times of international conflict directs resources away from meeting basic social needs of the poor including nutrition support, health care, and housing. But it is not only the poor. This redistribution of economic priorities also impacts those things that enrich life for the mainstream of the country including parks and recreation, the arts, general infrastructure, investment in non-military research, and education. When the conflict becomes a war, those civilians caught in the wake of battle as "collateral damage" are left homeless, without basic resources, and become refugees, often at the mercy of foreign governments to provide aid and comfort.

110 Attributed to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34<sup>th</sup> president of the United States.

111 David Horsey, The Los Angeles Times, January 5, 2017.

112 This is further exacerbated in a political context that seeks environmental deregulation in mining, forestry, and other heavy industry because it is perceived to increase cost and limit production.

These are two simple ways that suggest practical applications regarding the relevance of stewardship in this time and place. The number of examples that may be cited is legion. We offer these in the broad and narrow sense as a starting place for a future conversation within local, regional, and general expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Final Comment: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) seems to be uniquely fitted for this time and place, especially as we seek to reach “the next generation.” Study after study suggests that those who make up the generations we refer to as Millennials and Gen X have been turned off by religions that they see as banal, bigoted, and boring. Our method of reading scripture implies you don’t have to have bad science to have good religion. Our assertion of the radical welcome of God at the Table speaks boldly to a generation that wishes to rise above bigotry and the marginalization of people based on what they believe are tired and irrelevant social classifications. Our structure, as one that is covenantal, fits with generations seeking authentic relationships over and against joining institutions. Our freedoms, as expressed in local autonomy give rise to worship, spiritual formation, and mission that fit contexts in the unique communities in which congregations are located. At our best, we can be relevant and adaptive.

The truth of the matter is that we should be growing in this century, and we assume one of the reasons we are not doing so is the failure to effectively invite others into our story. We are hiding our light under a bushel! Along with teaching the importance of faithful financial generosity to sustain the Church’s mission of reconciliation, in the 21st century we must rediscover our evangelistic zeal and fully embrace what it means to be a steward of the gospel. This seems particularly important in a time of deep cultural division, which is where the church finds itself now when this document is presented for consideration. We possess a great treasure of hope that calls people beyond anything that might separate us from the truth that we belong to God and thus to one another.

This vision of the prophet Isaiah (Chapter 55) is offered as a closing reflection:

*Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.*

<sup>2</sup> *Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.*

<sup>3</sup> *Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.*

*I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.*

<sup>4</sup> *See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.*

<sup>5</sup> *See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,*

*because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
 for he has glorified you.  
<sup>6</sup> Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
 call upon him while he is near;  
<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way,  
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
 let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,  
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.  
<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
 nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.  
<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
 so are my ways higher than your ways  
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
<sup>10</sup> For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
 and do not return there until they have watered the earth,  
 making it bring forth and sprout,  
 giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
<sup>11</sup> so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
 it shall not return to me empty,  
 but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
 and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.  
<sup>12</sup> For you shall go out in joy,  
 and be led back in peace;  
 the mountains and the hills before you  
 shall burst into song,  
 and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.  
<sup>13</sup> Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;  
 instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;  
 and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,  
 for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.<sup>113</sup>*

**GA-1733**  
**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**CHANGE IN REGIONAL BOUNDARIES:**  
**SOUTHWEST AND KANSAS**  
**adopted**

WHEREAS, First Christian Church, Liberal, Kansas, is geographically closer to congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Kansas region; and

WHEREAS, The Design states:

22. Regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) perform within their established boundaries the function of the church related to their two-fold purpose of mission and nurture:

27. Identifiable geographic, cultural, sociological, and political factors provide boundaries, which the church may use to establish its own regional structures

- (1) by which the church carries out regionally its ministry of mission and nurture;
- (2) in which congregations and ministers find their primary relationships of mutual support and encouragement;
- 3) which provide opportunities for regional fellowship, worship, and assembly for the consideration of matters of mutual concern;
- (4) which help to relate the three expressions of the church - congregational, regional, and general - to one another in the functioning of the whole church; and

WHEREAS, the official board and congregation of First Christian Church, Liberal, Kansas, voted to affiliate with the Kansas Region; and

WHEREAS, the regions of the Southwest and Kansas have voted in agreement with the congregation to release and accept the congregation; and

WHEREAS, The Design also states:

29. In the development of any new regional boundaries, existing regional organizations shall remain intact, subject to modification by mutual consent of the regions involved, in the light of the corporate judgment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as expressed through the General Assembly. The process of reshaping regional boundaries (even if only one congregation is affected) includes the participation and approval of the parties involved, the Administrative Committee, the General Board, and the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, this request was presented to and affirmed by the General Board at its meeting February 25-28, 2017;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Indianapolis, IN, July 8-12, 2017, affirms that regional boundaries of the Southwest Region and the Kansas Region shift such that Liberal, Kansas, be included in the Kansas Region.

The General Board in consultation  
with First Christian Church, Liberal Kansas,  
the Southwest Region and the Kansas Region

**GA-1734**  
**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**ELECTION OF THE GENERAL MINISTER AND PRESIDENT**  
**adopted**

WHEREAS, the Administrative Committee of the General Board has complied with the procedures and requirements set forth in The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Standing Rules of the General Board, in the nomination of Teresa Hord Owens for election as General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with those procedures, the General Board has voted “to forward the name;”

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 8-12, 2017, elects Teresa Hord Owens as General Minister and President for a term of six years beginning July 13, 2017.

General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

**(Operational, Policy and Organizational)**

**GENERAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT FOR  
OFFICERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
adopted**

**First Vice Moderator**

Rev. Beau Underwood has served as the Senior Minister of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Jefferson City, MO since February of 2015. Prior to moving to Missouri's state capitol, he was the Senior Director of Advocacy and Communications at Sojourners in Washington, DC and an Assistant Minister at National City Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). A lifelong Disciple, he is a 2003 graduate of Eureka College and a 2010 graduate of both the Divinity School and the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, where he was also a Disciples Divinity House Scholar. He is currently taking doctoral classes at the University of Missouri's Truman School of Public Policy. In addition to his ministry as a local church pastor, Rev. Underwood serves on the Board of Directors for Higher Educational and Leadership Ministries (HELM) and the Mid-America Region. He is also a member of the Alumni Council for the Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago. His partner in life and in serving God's people is his wife, Casey, who leads an educational outreach unit at the University of Missouri.

**Second Vice Moderator**

Rev. Timothy Lee Timothy S. Lee is an ordained minister and a historian of Christianity. He currently serves as Associate Professor of the History of Christianity and Director of Asian (Korean) Church Studies at Brite Divinity School (Texas Christian University). His research focuses on the history of Christianity in Asia and Asian America, especially Korea, and Asians and Asian-North Americans in the Stone Campbell Movement. He attended the University of Illinois (Urbana), where he earned a B.A. in history; and the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he earned an A.M. in Religious Studies, a Certificate in Ministerial Studies, and a PhD in the History of Christianity. He is a recipient of the Edward Scribner Ames Scholarship of the Disciples Divinity House in Chicago and the David T. Kagiwada Scholarship of North American Pacific/Asian Disciples (NAPAD). His ordination occurred in 1996, at Chicago Christian Church (DOC), under the mentorship of the late Rev. Soongook Choi. In 2010, he served as moderator of NAPAD's inaugural board of directors. He has also been a member of the following boards or organizations: the General Reconciliation Committee, the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, the Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, the Mission Alignment Coordinating Council, the Council on Christian Unity, and the Association of Disciples for Theological Discussion. He and his wife Yeahwa are members of University Christian Church (DOC) in Fort Worth, Texas

**Moderator-Elect**

The Reverend Belva Brown Jordan serves as the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Assessment, associate professor of the practice of ministry at Claremont School of Theology; and Dean of Disciples Seminary Foundation (Claremont). Rev. Jordan’s ministry and service with the church, and in higher education, spans thirty-plus years. She began her ministerial career as a denominational executive for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with the Division of Homeland Ministry (Indianapolis, IN) as the director of racial/ethnic ministry. Before making the transition to theological education, she also served as the denomination’s director of youth ministry focusing on leader development with youth. Jordan’s first full-time faculty appointment was with Lancaster Theological Seminary (Lancaster, PA). Field Education and the practice of ministry were her primary areas of responsibility. After eight years at Lancaster, having earned tenure and served as dean of the faculty for one year, she moved on to Harvard University Divinity School (Cambridge, MA). For seven years Rev. Jordan served as the assistant dean for student life at Harvard Divinity, always seeking to build a bridge of support for students beyond the classroom. When the opportunity presented itself to serve in a Disciples of Christ affiliated seminary, Rev. Jordan became the associate dean for admissions and student services at Phillips Theological Seminary (Tulsa, OK). During the summer of 2013, Jordan made the move to Claremont, CA to join the academic administrative team at Claremont School of Theology.

Reverend Jordan’s vocation as “church person” extends beyond her professional experience. Over the years she has served on a number of Disciples of Christ boards and committees, in various leadership roles. (dates are approximate)

Disciples Peace Fellowship (late 80s), National Convocation Board (mid-90s), General Board, National Benevolent Association (2005-2014), General Commission on Ministry (2014-present), Bethany Fellows (Board and Leadership Team)

Bethany West Fellows (2013-present)

**For membership on the General Board  
2018 - 2021  
(Nominated from the General Nominating Committee)**

**General Board Class of 2021:**

Kristen Alstott (W, L, F, 23-29, UMW)

Shanell Bowden (B, L, F, 23-29, IL/WI)

Matthew Hudman (W, C, M, 30-39, SW)

Kaeli Sweigard (W, L, F, 23-29, CAN)

Candis Wilson (B, L, F, 30-39, OH)

Eula Pagdilao (A, L, F, 23-29, PSW)

Katie Hays (W, C, F, 40-49, SW)

6 females, 1 male; 5 lay leaders, 2 clergy;

2 African Americans, 1 Asian American, and 4 Caucasian

Ages: 23-29 (4), 30-39 (2), 40-49 (1)

**Continuing GNC General Board Class of 2019:**

Jackie Bunch (B, L, F 60+ OH)

Jeanetta Cotman (B, C, F, 60+, MI)

Alison Ruari (API, C, F, 30-39 IN)

Sarah Himaya (API, L, F, 18-22 CAN)

Angela Kaufman (W, C, F 40-49 SW)

Serbando Peralez (H, C, M 50-59 SW)

Bernice Rivera-Martinez (H, L, F 50-59 OR)

6 females, 1 male; 3 lay leaders, 4 clergy;

2 African Americans, 2 Asian Pacific Islanders, 2 Hispanics, and 1 Caucasian

Ages: 23U (1), 30-39 (1), 40-49 (1), 50-59 (2), 60+ (2)

**NEW MEMBERS FOR THE GENERAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE**  
**Nominated from the Administrative Committee of the General Board**  
**For election through the 2021 General Assembly**

Arnold Hayes (B, L, M, 60+, TN)

Jong Kook Hong (A, C, M, 60+, NW)

Dean Phelps (W, C, M, 50-59, CRM)

Bere Gil Soto (H, L, F, 30-39, IN)

Diane Watkins (W, L, F, 50-59, KS)

2 females, 3 males; 3 lay leader, 2 clergy;

1 African American, 2 Caucasians, and 1 Asian American, 1 Hispanic

**Continuing members of the General Nominating Committee through the 2019 General Assembly include:**

Andrea Brownlee (W, C, F, 30-39, UMW)

Vera Burton (B, L, F, 60+, OH)

Danny Gulden (W, C, M, 40-49, GA)

Cheryl Jackson (B, L, F, 40-49, IL/WI)

Vacancy

Of the five-person class of 2019:  
3 females, 1 male; 2 lay leader, 2 clergy;  
2 African American, 2 Caucasians, and 1 Vacancy  
Ages: 30-39 (1), 40-49 (2), 60+ (1)

In keeping with The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the members of the Corporation of the Division of Disciples Home Missions and the Corporation of the Division of Overseas Ministries were elected by the General Board at its February 2017 meeting. They are reported here to comply with the Bylaws of the two ministries:

**Disciples Home Missions**

**The General Board elected the following persons**

Xochitl Alvizo (L, F, H, 30-39, NoE)

Beverly Bell (L, F, B, 60-69, TN)

Candye Black-Wells (L, F, B, 30-39, NoE)

Tim Campbell (L, M, W, 20-29, CAN)

Rhonda Cole-Green (L, F, B, 40-49, SC)

Tom Cooley (L, M, W, 40-49, SW)

Chimiste Doriscar (C, M, B, 50-59, IN)

Jennifer Larson (L, F, W, 40-59, VA)

Sandy Messick (C, F, W, 50-59, NW)

Derrick Perkins (C, M, B, 30-39, MID-AM)

Katherine Raley (C, F, W, 25-29, CRM)

Juan Rodriguez (C, M, H, 60-69, FL)

Reuben Sancken-Marx (C, M, W, 23-29, IN)

Jeremy Skaggs (C, M, W, 40-49, SW)

Charles Chuck Tooley (L, M, W, 60-69, MT)

## DIVISION OF OVERSEAS MINISTRIES

### The General Board elected the following persons

Stephanie Buckhannon Crowder (C, F, B, 40-49, IL-WI)  
Ismael Sanchez (C, M, H, 50-59, NoE)  
Diana Brown (L, F, C, 60-69, OK)  
Phyllis Ann Hallman (L, F, C, 70+, AZ)  
John R. Kleinschmidt, III (L, M, C, 30-39, KY)  
Zenobia Mayo (L, F, B, 60-69, OK)  
Marilyn Whittaker (L, F, B, 60-69, VA)

Dale Braxton Sr (C, M, B, 50-59, AL-NW FL)  
Heechang Kang (C, M, A, 30-39, IL-WI)  
Cyndy Twedell (C, F, C, 50-59, SW)  
Ryan Cullumber (L, M, C, 40-49, PSW)  
Nancy Lear (L, F, C, 60-69, GKC)  
Selina Reyes-Martinez (C, F, H, 40-49, FL)  
Richard Spleth (C, M, C, 60-69, IN)  
Deborah Swift-Dewitt (L, F, B, 60-69, TN)

**REPORT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FUTURING TASK FORCE**

*(no action required)*

**Background**

At the direction of the General Assembly, the Administrative Committee created a Task Force to make a recommendation regarding the future of General Assemblies. Due to declining attendance, declining revenue for the event and thus an operating loss, it was not deemed fiscally responsible to authorize the Office of General Minister and President to begin executing contracts for the 2019 General Assembly with the city of Des Moines, until a review of our current assembly model has been completed and alternatives explored.

Active Committee Members: Glen Miles, Chair, Julia Brown Karimu, Gary Kidwell, Patricia Payuyo, Bernice Rivera Martinez, Stacy Shelton, Bill Spangler-Dunning and Sharon Coleman, Staff.

The General Assembly Futuring Task Force accomplished its work via conference calls. We reviewed the background and history of General Assemblies, including materials submitted from the GMP Advisory Committee of the General Board. The GMP Advisory committee conducted a church-wide survey in 2012 to gather input. They had a 22% response rate to the initial survey request (1902 responses from 8832 requests). Some conclusions of the survey were:

- The General Assembly should remain on a two-year rotation.
- The purpose of General Assembly is to increase the community of Disciples who own the whole mission of the church.
- The addition of a new position of moderator-elect to the moderator team.
- Cost is an issue related to attendance and must be addressed.
- The program and purpose of GA must continually be evaluated in order to be of maximum value to participants.
- The survey also indicated that “business” is less appealing than worship and equipping for mission as reasons to attend.

The team also reviewed a survey conducted by the Professional Convention Management Association and other national convention organizations. The Decision to Attend Study — Phase One, published late January 2015, is designed as a desktop reference and is the first in a series of reports that focus on the myriad of behavioral and societal factors that comprise the reasons individuals decide to attend — or not attend — conventions & exhibitions. It takes responses from 7,171 prospective or current attendees of conventions and establishes a baseline from which to continually measure the influencers and barriers to attending.

The summary indicated key drivers for attendance are as follows, in order of importance:

- Relevant and current education.
- Networking opportunities (most important for Millennials who are just starting to build their networks).
- Location (over ½ of respondents said they would extend their stay and bring

someone with them if the location was a good one – most true of Millennials - 85% - location must have very good digital information about other sites and things to do).

- Social Interaction (Face to face valued greater than social media in all four generations)
- Key drivers for attendance barriers are as follows, in order of importance:
- Cost (This was true both for people who pay their own way and for those who must 'get approval' to attend)
- Time (Both difficulty getting away and timing were mentioned)
- Location

## **Recommendations**

### **Hopes for New General Assembly**

- Lower cost to encourage more people to attend.
- Create more places for specific ministries, groups, events to occur in a “festival like setting” to widen the reasons for a larger percentage of church members to attend.
- Create a stronger pathway for vibrant congregational and regional ministries to be shared and validated with the whole church.
- Create an environment that promotes more interaction with the whole church through multiple experiences/events in one space as well as intentional opportunity for common worship and relationship building.
- Create an event that brings together the best of the Whole Body of who we are into one space/time with the abiding hope that this will encourage organic connections and relationships.
- Create an event/environment that young families will find inviting and worthy to attend.
- Create an event that enhances the “Reunion” feeling while also creating other entry points for new people to make connections.
- Create an overall path that builds participation toward the General Assembly by encouraging Regional Assemblies to gather and encourage their best ministries. Encourage multiple events/groups to meet as part of a Regional Assembly. This would create less of a Regional Meeting and more of a Gathering of the Ministries of the Region.
- Ensure every component of the event, including evening worship, celebrate and highlight mission in its various forms throughout the life of the church.

The goal is to give more members more reasons to attend. There's a need to refocus the attention of the programming so that it includes personal growth for all attendees as well as an opportunity for the General Church ministries to do their work. The assembly has done this in recent years by offering continuing education units. How can we continue to improve the quality of the education by including other certification tracks for clergy, lay leaders and guests while at the same time improving the opportunities for networking? There's also a growing need for networking. The new formation seeks to provide intentional opportunities for networking or access to experts who address burning issues that attendees are facing.

### **Create a road map to assemblies for congregations**

- Encourage local congregations to network together annually or biennially.
- Encourage regional assemblies to organize their assemblies as “celebratory” events. The regional assembly will host as many “typical” regional events as possible. This will allow for less travel for members and will increase attendance at regional assemblies.
  - One component of the regional assembly can be a Mission Fest where congregations/ministries share ideas that are new, exciting and effective. Each regional assembly will select one congregation/ministry to forward to the General Assembly to share with the larger church.
  - Youth will also be encouraged to participate at the regional and national level.

### **Equipping the Saints**

Quality education and learning opportunities are expected at the assembly. To achieve this, the task force recommends that each entity listed below be invited to submit proposals for education at the assembly. We also suggest that each group assist with the promotion of the assembly and their education event. The General Assembly planning committee will receive and approve education proposals. We suggest submitting, reviewing and approval of proposals 18 months before an assembly. The goal is to equip attendees to prepare them for lifelong work in their local congregation, region and community.

- Regions – Regional ministers collaborate to present the best of their regions to the General Assembly. This could be achieved by selecting the best presentation from their regional big tent event or as determined by the College of Regional Ministers. The regions would be responsible for managing this offering at each assembly. By discerning the needs of congregations and what ministry in vibrant congregations looks like, regional leaders will present the best of the best to the assembly.
  - Center of the exhibit hall will be a Mission Fest at each assembly. This will place an emphasis on mission and its importance in the life of the denomination.
- General Ministries – the Cabinet (to include the Racial and Ethnic leaders) are aware of the needs of their constituencies and the church at large. Using this knowledge and evaluating the trends in current society, the general ministry leaders or their designated staff will present a proposal for each assembly. The General Ministry group will work together to develop the educational offerings in their section of the event. Racial and Ethnic ministry leaders would create offerings which would serve their constituency in a way that enriches the body of the church.
  - The task force suggests that current and new events hosted by general ministries can be offered at the assembly. (i.e. DOM/Global Ministries Missionworks conference, Children’s Welcome Conference, Across the Generations Faith Formation Gathering, etc.). By offering these events as a part of the General Assembly there could be a cost saving for

attendees.

- ICYF – each assembly, youth from around the life of the church are invited to attend this event under the big tent. The focus will be equipping youth to be leaders of the church. A component can include a college fair as well as learning opportunities for youth to equip them to be Christian leaders every day. The region where the assembly is held will lead the youth programming and provide support.
- Associations/affinity groups (1 ½ day retreats). This can include men's groups, ICWF, ADM, Bethany Fellows, etc.

The task force believes that we should anticipate and expect gifts of leadership to come from everywhere and anywhere throughout the church. Because of this, we recommend that assembly be open to all applications to lead retreats, experiences, and/or educational experiences that may arise.

Members of congregations need to be encouraged to share their experiences and ministry ideas at both the Regional and General Assembly events. Until congregations feel they are deeply valued and needed by the general church, there is not a driving incentive for congregations to attend. By simply creating a multi-directional flow of sharing we believe that the General Assembly will grow both in numbers and increase the strength and health of the whole church.

### **Impacting the cost of the event**

- Instruct the Office of General Minister and President's staff to pursue corporate sponsors to help reduce the cost to attendees. The staff will work with a team of 1-3 General Ministry Presidents, or others as necessary, to ensure that the sponsoring organizations/companies are not in direct conflict with the theology, mission or vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- Instruct the Office of General Minister and President's staff to find a way to reduce the overall cost of the event by:
  - Considering multiyear agreements with cities to have greater negotiating power.
  - Considering second and third tier cities. These cities should have access to an international airport and low cost airline carriers.
- Instruct the Office of General Minister and President's staff to research and publish lower cost housing options.
- To end the General Assembly at noon on the closing day. This will save attendees one-night hotel stay.

### **Promotion & Marketing**

The assembly needs increased visibility in the life of the church. The General Assembly office is instructed to create a team that include representatives from each expression in the life of the church to create a communication plan for each General Assembly. This step is crucial to the growth of the assembly.

This plan should detail:

- the steps necessary to educate members on the assembly;

- a process to reach and add new attendees to the event each biennium;
- a method of tracking and identifying areas of growth;
- the execution of the plan for the next assembly should begin on the last day of the current assembly.

**Next Steps**

To recommend that the General Assembly planning group manage this process in partnership with other ministries, groups and associations beginning in 2019.

**EMERGENCY RESOLUTION GA-1739**  
**(Sense-of-the-Assembly)**

**CONCERNING EXECUTIVE ORDER 13780 AND RESULTING ADVERSE EFFECT ON  
REFUGEES SEEKING SAFETY IN THE US AND RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES**  
**adopted**

WHEREAS, Executive Order 13780 (EO 13780) limits the number of refugees to be resettled in the United States in fiscal year 2017 (FY17) to 50,000 individuals, a reduction from the 110,000 individuals slated for resettlement in FY17; bars resettlement to the United States for refugees for 120 days; and bars indefinitely resettlement from six named countries;<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS, the ruling of the Supreme Court on June 26, 2017, partially lifted a lower court halt on the implementation of EO 13780, allowing the ban on travel or resettlement to go into effect for any foreign national who cannot prove a “bona fide relationship with any person or entity in the United States;”<sup>2</sup> and WHEREAS, the United States Department of State’s definition of a “bona fide relationship” excludes relatives such as grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews without consideration for cultural definitions of family or for the realities many refugees face, and also excludes the established relationship between refugees and the United States agencies contracted to resettle them; and

WHEREAS, while more than seventy-percent of refugees are estimated to have some kind of family tie with relatives in the US,<sup>3</sup> far fewer are able to meet the narrow definition of a “bona fide relationship,” and the ability to obtain documentation of such relationships is made extraordinarily difficult since, by definition, refugees have fled persecution, war, and violence, and often experience the separation of families;<sup>4</sup> and

WHEREAS, relationships between refugees and U.S. resettlement agencies are established and well documented, including through the process of allocations and assurances, by which each agency affirms with signed documentation that they will resettle each refugee by name; and

<sup>1</sup>WHEREAS, EO 13780 will function to dismantle the entire refugee resettlement program that has been built by Americans of faith and goodwill across generations; and

WHEREAS, Disciples leaders and ministries have made numerous statements in print,

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1 Executive Order 13780: “Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States,” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/06/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states>

2 Supreme Court Ruling, June 26, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/26/politics/travel-ban-supreme-court-ruling/index.html>

3 U.S. Department of State, “Background Briefing on the Implementation of Executive Order 13780 Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States,” June 29, 2017, p. 8.

4 “UNHCR Guidelines on Reunification of Refugee Families,” July 1983

5 See list of public statements in “Background”

6 See list of public statements in “Background”

through press conferences, through amici briefs, and in congregations concerning EO 13780 and in support of refugees, inspired by scriptures such as Romans 10:12-13, which declares “no difference between Jew and Gentile;”<sup>5</sup> and

WHEREAS, ecumenical partners, the National Councils of Churches in the United States, and the Canadian Council of Churches have issued statements in support of refugees and the refugee resettlement programs of the United States and Canada, and the Canadian Council of Churches have likewise called the U.S. to accountability to offer safety to refugees seeking to claim asylum at our border per the Safe Third Country Agreement;<sup>6</sup> and

WHEREAS, global ecumenical partners are urging our partnership in welcoming refugees; and

WHEREAS, scripture includes the stories of persons who are displaced as exiles and refugees (Genesis 42:43; Exodus 2:15-22; Ruth 1; Psalm 137; Acts 11), including the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:13-15); and the witness of scripture exhorts us to love our neighbors (Luke 10:25-28; John 13:34; 1 John 4:7), care for strangers and foreigners (Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 24:22; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Jeremiah 22:3-5), show hospitality (Genesis 18:1-8; Luke 10:25-37; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2), and meet the needs of others (Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Matthew 25:35-46; Luke 18:18-22);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 8-12, 2017, calls on members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to pray for refugees, for an end to the global conflicts, economic injustices, and impacts of climate change that displace people from their homes, and for welcome for refugees in all nations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly calls on members and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to learn about and engage in the refugee resettlement process and the effects of EO 13780 and similar refugee policies, including through volunteering and relationships with refugee resettlement agencies, including our long term partner Church World Service;<sup>7</sup> and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly calls on the United States government to revise the functioning definition of a “bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” to include refugee resettlement agencies as well as grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews, and friends, and requests the General Minister and President and the Presidents of Disciples Home Missions and the Division of Overseas Ministries with Refugee and Immigration Ministries to communicate this request to Secretary Rex Tillerson, Secretary John Kelly, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages ministers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to include in their preaching and teaching the stories of refugees and the Christian call to offer hospitality and compassion to refugees,

and to celebrate the gifts and contributions of refugees through “Refugee Welcome Sundays;” and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages members and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to communicate to their elected representatives--at local, state, and federal levels--concern for refugees, support of the United States refugee resettlement program, desire for increased numbers of refugees resettled in the United States, and opposition to any reduction in refugee admissions and to discrimination against refugees;<sup>8</sup> and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly affirms and celebrates the work of partner organizations providing humanitarian aid to refugees and refugee resettlement in the United States and Canada; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2017 General Assembly encourages members and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to connect with their nearest refugee resettlement agency and to support local refugee communities, initial refugee resettlement, and ongoing multi-cultural and inter-faith partnerships with refugee communities.<sup>9</sup>

Rev. Cyd Cowgill, First Christian Church, Lynchburg, VA  
Rev. Nancy Carol Stahl, First Christian Church, Charlotte, NC  
Rev. John Bain, First Christian Church, Stillwater, OK  
Rev. Jennifer Riggs, Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN  
Rev. Bob Perry, First Christian Church, Falls Church, VA  
Rev. Dr. Stephen Gentle, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.  
Rev. Miriam Gentle, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.  
Rev. William Lee, Loudon Ave Christian Church, Roanoke, VA  
Andra Moran, Woodmont Christian Church, Nashville, TN  
Bishop Valerie Melvin, First Christian Church, Reidsville, NC and North Carolina Region  
Rev. Sandy Messick, Northwest Regional Christian Church  
Jennifer Larson, Westside Christian Church, Portsmouth, VA  
Deb Perry, Chevy Chase Christian Church, Chevy Chase, MD  
Judi Frost, Arlington Heights Christian Church, Arlington Heights, IL  
Sara Simons, Woodlands Christian Church, The Woodlands, TX  
Stephen Michael King, Woodmont Christian Church, Nashville, TN  
Chrissy Stonebraker-Martinez, Franklin Circle Christian Church, OH

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7 Information about refugee policies and legislation can be found on the “Advocacy” page of the Refugee and Immigration Ministries website.

8 Contact Refugee and Immigration Ministries for regularly updated resources for visits with your elected leaders. 9 To find refugee resettlement offices in your area, go to: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580e4274e58c624696efadc6/t/595a92019de4bbb650b10ec0/1499107841341/Public+Affiliate+Directory+7-3-17.pdf>. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) partners most closely with Church World Service. If they are not in your area, we encourage you to link with your local agency.

## BACKGROUND

### Summary of the Development of EO 13780

On January 27, 2017 President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 13769, which suspended for 120 days entry of all refugees, suspended for 90 days the entry of travelers from 6 majority Muslim countries, and suspended indefinitely entry of travelers and refugees from Syria. Almost immediately upon implementation, mass protests began at airports and ports of entry across the country. Several federal courts blocked implementation of parts of EO 13769 until a US District Court blocked the ban nationwide on February 3, 2017. The US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the District Court decision.

On March 6, 2017, The President issued Executive Order 13780, which superseded the January order. Two federal appeals courts (the Courts of Appeals in 4th and 9th Circuits) blocked implementation of EO 13780 (<http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/25/politics/read-travel-ban-ruling/index.html> and <http://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/general/2017/04/20/17-15589%20Interfaith%20Group%20Amicus.pdf>). The Trump administration appealed the two cases to the Supreme Court, requesting a stay of the lower court decisions until such time as the Supreme Court would hear the full case. On June ##, The Supreme Court partially granted the administration’s request, allowing limited implementation of EO 13780 (<http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/26/politics/travel-ban-supreme-court-ruling/index.html>). The Supreme Court will review both cases in full in October.

The Supreme Court Ruling restricted implementation of EO 13780 to those travelers who could not prove a “bona fide relationship with any person or entity in the United States.” On June 28 the United States Department of State issued guidelines for interpreting the Supreme Court restrictions ([http://live.reuters.com/Event/Live\\_US\\_Politics/989297085](http://live.reuters.com/Event/Live_US_Politics/989297085)). As of conference calls with press and resettlement agencies on June 29, 2017 the State Department was unable to provide a rationale for the narrowness of the definition applied to “bona fide relationships,” specifically why the definition excludes grandparents, aunts and uncles, and refugee resettlement agencies.

The historically low refugee admissions number and refugee travel ban in EO 13780 are harming refugees who should be arriving now, as well as those who are unable to continue through the process. The policy changes in EO 13780 are causing many time-sensitive refugee vetting steps to expire, necessitating expensive re-testing that has not occurred as of yet. Furthermore, the suspension of refugee resettlement to the United States is effectively dismantling resettlement organizations both overseas and in the

United States, resulting in cuts to staff and services, as well as office closures among resettlement partners.

### Refugee and Resettlement Facts:<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR: "The Global Refugee Crisis at a Glance," <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>, June 19, 2017

"Refugee Resettlement Facts," United Nations High Commission on Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/resettlement-in-the-united-states.html>

- The global refugee crisis has reached an unprecedented number of 65.6 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, including 22.5 million refugees
- More than half of all refugees are women and children
- 56% of refugees are being hosted in the regions of the Middle East and Africa
- Refugees undergo extensive security screening, often over a period of 18-24 months
- Screenings for refugees resettled to the United States involve eight U.S. federal government agencies, six different security databases, a minimum of five separate background checks, four biometric security checks, three separate in-person interviews, and two inter-agency checks
- Less than 1% of all refugees will be permanently resettled; the vast majority will live for decades in camps or temporary accommodations
- Resettlement agencies receive funding based on the number of people resettled in a fiscal year. The drastic reduction in the resettlement ceiling limits resettlement office funding, resulting in reductions in staff and services, and, in some cases, office closures. This adversely affects refugees currently in process as well as those who have been resettled recently.
- Global refugee principles since their outset have proclaimed that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State;"<sup>11</sup>

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### Public Statements from Disciples Ministries and Ecumenical Partners

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has been active in resettling refugees since World War II. Many Disciples congregations have sponsored refugee families, collected supplies or funds to assist with resettlement, and welcomed refugees into their congregations and communities. Support of refugees through resettlement, humanitarian aid for refugees both nationally and internationally, public advocacy for welcome, and legal assistance are integral commitments within various ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), including Week of Compassion, Refugee and Immigration Ministries and Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel within Disciples Home Missions, and Global Ministries. Examples of recent statements in support of refugee welcoming include:

- "Disciples Statement in Response to Supreme Court Ruling," <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Disciples-Statement-in-Re->

<sup>11</sup> "UNHCR Guidelines on Reunification of Refugee Families," July 1983, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/global-consult/3bd0378f4/unhcr-guidelines-reunification-refugee-families.html> See, in particular, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 and the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.

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- “Brief for Interfaith Group of Religious and Interreligious Organizations as Amici Curiae Supporting Affirmance” to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, No. 17-15589, April 20, 2017,
- Disciples Home Missions signed onto this brief, as did our longstanding partner, Church World Service. Pp. 27-28 document losses of CWS staffing at the Resettlement Support Center in Kenya, cutback by Episcopal Migration Ministries of more than 20% of its national staff and affiliates, and World Relief’s closure in February 2017 of five offices and layoff of 140 staff members after the first Executive Order suspending refugee resettlement.
- “Brief for Interfaith Group of Religious and Interreligious Organizations as Amici Curiae Supporting Plaintiffs-Appellees” to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, No. 17- 1351, April 19, 2017.,
- Disciples Home Missions signed onto this brief, as did our longstanding partner, Church World Service.
- “Ecumenical Declaration: Protecting Welcome; Restoring Hope,” <https://greateras1.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Ecumenical-Declaration-Protecting-Welcome-Restoring-Hope.pdf>
- “Welcoming Refugees,” The Canadian Council of Churches <https://www.councilofchurches.ca/whats-new/welcoming-refugees/>
- “NCC Urges Hospitality, Care Toward Refugees,” National Council of Churches in the United States <http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/ncc-urges-hospitality-care-toward-refugees/>
- “Legal Challenge of Safe Third Country Agreement Launched,” Canadian Council of Churches, July 5, 2017, <http://ccrweb.ca/en/media/legal-challenge-safe-third-country>
- “Letter from the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) to Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),” July 3, 2017, [http://www.globalministries.org/appeal\\_from\\_fcei\\_on\\_migration\\_to\\_italy\\_and\\_european\\_migration\\_policies](http://www.globalministries.org/appeal_from_fcei_on_migration_to_italy_and_european_migration_policies)

#### Relevant News

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- Kinglsey, Patrick and Karam Shoumali (2017, July 1). “For Abused, Gay Iraqi in Turkey, U.S. Refugee Freeze is Cruellest Hit.” New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/01/world/europe/turkey-iraq-refugee.html>
- Smith, Samuel (2017, June 30). “Trump Travel Ban Guideline Incorrectly Interprets Supreme Court Order, Refugee Advocates Say.” The Christian Post. <http://www.christianpost.com/news/trump-travel-ban-guideline-incorrectly-interprets-supreme-court-order-refugee-190298/>
- (2017, June 29). “Refugee Advocates Prepare For New Challenges Under Travel Ban” All Things Considered. NPR. <http://www.npr.org/2017/06/29/534915970/refugee-advocates-prepare-for-new-challenges-under-travel-ban>

**EMERGENCY RESOLUTION GA-1740  
(Sense-of-the-ssembly)**

**CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR “THE NEW POOR PEOPLES’S CAMPAIGN:  
NATIONAL CALL FOR A MORAL REVIVAL”  
adopted**

WHEREAS, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world; and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., along with many other affected people and moral leaders in the Poor People’s Campaign of 1967/68, began an effort to build a broad, fusion coalition that would audit America, demanding an accounting of promissory notes that had been returned marked “insufficient funds.” We have not finished their work; and

WHEREAS, we are a people of the Book and see the Bible as the foundation of our prophetic ministry today. The prophet Micah calls us “to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with the Lord” (Micah 6:8). Jesus inaugurates his ministry through quoting the prophet Isaiah:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.” (Luke 4:18)*

As Disciples of Christ, we seek to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. As the Gospel of Matthew states that “when we have done it unto the least of these we have done it unto me,” Disciples stand in solidarity with the poor and oppressed; and

WHEREAS, while we as Disciples open our hands to the poor and engage in direct service, we need to question the policies and practices that keep the poor in poverty; and

WHEREAS, “The New Poor People’s Campaign: National Call for a Moral Revival”, led by the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, launched in April 2017, invites people of conscience and faith to 40 days of action for the moral redemption of our country in 2018; and

WHEREAS, we are a pro-reconciliation anti-racist church with a long history of working for racial and economic justice, exemplified by the work of those such as the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, a fifth-generation Disciple rekindling the prophetic moral vision for justice and we recognize that,

“[O]ur struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2017 General Assembly meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana July 8-12, 2017, calls on the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada as people of deep faith and moral courage to endorse

“The New Poor People’s Campaign: National Call for a Moral Revival,” being led by the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage all expressions of the church to support the New Poor People’s Campaign: National Call for a Moral Revival in 2018; and through our ministries of prayer and spirit-inspired action, designating resources to fund training, mobilize communities, activate our moral voices in the public square and to continue to serve in the struggle for justice through transformation nationally in both the United States and Canada, and in our local communities; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED THAT as a people of the Book we, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), affirm that:

*“The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and shall be like a water garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.*

*Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.” (Isaiah 58:11-12)*

Rev. Sydney Advent, Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY  
Rev. Eddie Anderson, McCarty Memorial Christian Church, Los Angeles, CA  
Heidi Barham, Ledgewood Christian Church, OH  
Dave Boger, Compton Heights Christian Church, Saint Louis, MO  
Rev. Nathaniel Cook, South Hills Christian Church, Fort Worth, TX  
Toni Bond Leonard, Downey Memorial Christian Church, Downey, CA  
Rev. Darlene Brewer, Wyndholme Christian Church, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada  
Saundra Bryant, All Peoples Christian Church, Los Angeles, CA  
Rev. Dr. Lawrence A. Burnley, University of Dayton, Dayton, OH  
David Coatsworth, Saguaro Christian Church, Tucson, AZ  
Alexander Cook, South Hills Christian Church, Fort Worth, TX  
Rev. Tiffany Curtis, First Christian Church of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM  
Dan Dalstra, First Christian Church, El Paso, TX  
Rev. Alan Dicken, Carthage Christian Church, Novelty, OH  
Rev. Wilson Dickinson, First Christian Church, Georgetown, KY  
Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker, National Benevolent Association  
Rev. Kaji Douša, Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY  
Rev. Laurie Feille, First Christian Church, Minneapolis, MN  
Rev. Dr. Jacquelyn Foster, Compton Heights Christian Church, Saint Louis, MO  
Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN  
Ann Frazer Heltzel, First Christian Church, Vicksburg, MS  
Rev. Dr. Peter Goodwin Heltzel, Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY  
Rev. Mary Anne Glover, Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY  
Rev. Shannon Smith Greenhaw, First Christian Church, Slidell, LA  
Alanna Hunter-Grump, Cairn Christian Church, Lafayette, CO

Charisa Hunter-Grump, Cairn Christian Church, Lafayette, CO  
 Rev. Dr. Alvin O'Neal Jackson, Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY  
 Rev. Nora Jacob, UrbanMission, Pomona, CA  
 Rev. Sandhya Jha, Oakland Peace Center, Oakland, CA  
 Rev. April Johnson, Reconciliation Ministry  
 Rev. Verity Jones, Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN  
 Rev. Steve Knight, Open Hearts Gathering  
 Rev. Virzola Jo-Nan Law, Lindenwood Christian Church, Memphis, TN  
 Rev. Ken Booker Langston, Michigan Park Christian Church, Washington DC  
 Dr. Dara Cobb Lewis, Agape Christian Church, Columbia, SC  
 Rev. Rebecca Littlejohn, Vista La Mesa Christian Church, Vista La Mesa Christian  
 Rev. Sotello Long, Regional Minister, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in South  
 Carolina Rev. Al Lopez, UrbanMission, Pomona, CA  
 Rev. Linda M. McCrae, Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN  
 Rev. Valerie J. Melvin, First Christian Church, Reidsville, NC  
 Rev. Chantilly Mers, Park Avenue Christian Church, New York, NY  
 Cheri Metier, University Christian Church, San Diego, CA  
 Candace Davis Murphy, All Peoples Christian Church, Los Angeles, CA  
 Rev. Dr. Timothy Murphy, All Peoples Christian Church, Los Angeles, CA  
 Rev. Chesla Nickelson, Disciples Women, Indianapolis, IN  
 Rev. Cisa Payuyo, All Peoples Christian Church, Los Angeles, CA  
 Rev. Derrick L. Perkins, Sr., Centennial Christian Church, St. Louis, MO  
 Rev. Gabriel Pfefer, Shepherdsville Christian Church, Shepherdsville, KY  
 Grayson Rankin, First Christian Church, Vicksburg, MS  
 Rev. Dr. Rosetta Robinson, North Chevy Chase Christian Church, Chevy Chase, MD  
 Justin Schwartz, Hillcrest Christian Church, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
 Rev. James Shenko, First Christian Church, Livingston, TN  
 Rev. Jeffrey Spencer, Niles Discovery Church, Freemont, CA  
 Chrissy Stonebraker Martinez, Franklin Circle Christian Church, Cleveland, OH  
 Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr., First Christian Church, Findlay, OH  
 Rev. Stephen Tickner, Central Christian Church, Danbury, CT  
 Joann W. Williams, Mt. Pleasant Christian Church, Greensboro, NC  
 Claretta Witherspoon, Mt. Pleasant Christian Church, Greensboro, NC



