

No. 9714

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)

**RESOLUTION REAFFIRMING THE MULTILINGUAL NATURE OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

WHEREAS, the people of the United States and Canada come from many lands, many cultures and many language backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, from its inception, the United States has been a multilingual nation, including at the nation's founding as many as twenty languages (e.g.: Dutch, French, German and numerous Native American languages). Indeed, the nation's Articles of Confederation were printed in German as well as English; and

WHEREAS, during the 19th and 20th centuries the nation's linguistic diversity has expanded as more immigrants from Europe, Asia, Latin America, and other parts of the world continue to come to our shores: people who, as the original European immigrants, struggle to maintain their integrity, culture and language; and

WHEREAS, in response to the challenge represented by the diversity of language, in recent years there has been a reemergence of a movement that seeks the establishment of English as the nation's official language, including recommendations to promote the enactment of legislation that restricts or prohibits the use of languages other than English by government agencies and, in some cases, by private businesses; and

WHEREAS, similar attempts were rejected in the past, as early as 1780, when John Adams proposed to the Continental Congress that an official academy be created to "purify, develop and dictate usage of English"; a rejection based on the fact that it was considered undemocratic and a threat to individual liberty; and

WHEREAS, the attempts of this movement are already seriously threatening many Hispanic and other ethnic communities in the United States including the Hispanic constituency of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); creating anxiety and distress by harassment in the workplace and schools for speaking their native languages, or being passed over for jobs for which they are highly qualified based solely on the fact that they speak English with a heavy accent; abridging the rights of individuals who are not proficient in English; perpetuating false stereotypes of immigrants and non-English speakers; and violating the spirit of tolerance and diversity embodied in the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 8754, adopted by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Louisville, Kentucky, declared its opposition to the English Only movement

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, meeting in General Assembly in Denver, Colorado, July 25-29, 1997, reaffirms its opposition to English Only laws;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly reaffirms the multilingual nature of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), calls upon all its manifestations to articulate this spirit in their programs, projects and procedures, and encourages all Disciples to oppose English Only propositions.