

**No. 9716**

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

**THE CRISIS OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN URBAN AMERICA TODAY  
AND ITS EFFECT ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN**

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

WHEREAS, the Biblical vision of human life is of a balanced whole of work and leisure, vast numbers of people in our urban centers--and especially African-American men--never know that rhythm of alternation between rest and work. Their enforced leisure leaves them without dignity and without self-respect; and

WHEREAS, the problem of unemployment partly is a result of a declining tax base, persons being graduated without having learned to read or handle simple math at a level which enables them to function in the working world and the shift of available jobs from the cities to the suburbs. Add to these factors the "alternative economy of drugs" and its decimation of whole communities. Finally as the economy has declined, the family has changed. Women have in many cases become the primary supporters of families.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Denver, Colorado, July 25-29, 1997 calls on its congregations--in the city, in the suburbs, as well as in rural areas--to recognize the unity of the body of Christ and to heed the admonition of the Apostle Paul: "If one member suffers, all suffer with it." (1 Cor. 12:26) To paraphrase Paul, the suburb cannot say, "Because I am not in the city, I am not part of the same body as those who live in the ghetto." Nor can the rural church say to the city church, "I have no need of you"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Regions and suburban and rural congregations support the efforts of African-American inner city churches by engaging directly in one or more of the following:

1. arrange car and van pools for city-dwellers to get to work in the suburbs
2. establish job centers, through urban-suburban church partnership, where city dwellers can learn about and apply for jobs which are in the suburbs
3. set up job clubs where urban men can learn how to apply for jobs, support one another in the search of work, travel together, enhance their

skills, and develop a work ethos

4. find ways to relate to men being released from prison to assist them in their readjustment to society, help them find work, and assist them with work shoes or special equipment
5. build one-on-one relationships to strengthen families
6. develop job training programs and mentoring and apprenticeship relationships between church members with jobs in a given field and men seeking employment in that field
7. challenge the consumerism which parades before impressionable African-American-- and white-- young people through the media materialistic lifestyles which lift up things rather than truly human values; and
8. develop meaningful programs for boys, including but not limited to: mentoring programs which bring older African-American men to relate to boys as positive role models and assist them in character development, midnight basketball and other sports programs, Bible teaching, junior deacons, and summer camps;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that congregations are also called upon to address the crisis of unemployment in concert with community organizations and others to do the following:

1. advocate for adjustments of mass transit systems to take people without transportation from the city to the suburbs for work
2. support the retention of affirmative action programs
3. encourage corporations to develop after school and summer internships where African-American high school students will have paid real-life work experiences. Here the lead can be taken by members of congregations who are employed by such corporations
4. encourage unions to include young African-Americans in apprenticeships
5. advocate for improved technical school training and education
6. advocate for the development of meaningful, socially beneficial jobs programs where local and state governments, as well as non-profit community corporations, employ the unemployed.

The General Assembly, in adopting this resolution, asks the Office of the General Minister and

President to utilize the communications capacity of the church to share this resolution with the churches, asking them--as well as the Regions--to respond to the resolution by indicating which specific action-steps they will individually take to bring it to realization, and requests that the Office report back to the 1999 General Assembly.