

**No. 9719****(Reflection and Research)****A CALL FOR REFLECTION ON THE PARTICIPATION OF GAY AND LESBIAN PERSONS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

ACCEPTED by the General Assembly

**Background Information:**

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has historically affirmed that all persons who are baptized and make the "Good Confession" that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God are members of his body, the Church. Thus, there can be no exclusion of persons from the church on the basis of sexual orientation. Over the years the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has also made pronouncements in support of civil rights for gay and lesbian persons (Business Items 7747 and 9334).

The Church, however, continues to struggle with regard to: 1) what it means to affirm the full participation of gay and lesbian persons in the Church and 2) the inclusion of gay and lesbian persons in positions of Church leadership. The General Assembly, in its response to resolution 9141, requested study of the issue of homosexuality, scripture and the church. Such concerns also have been raised in regions and congregations. While these steps have brought new insights and understandings of the varying stances on the issue, agonizing divisions continue within the Church, the body of Christ.

General Minister and President, Richard Hamm, has called for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to work toward the marks of a faithful church: deep spirituality, true community, and a passion for justice. These marks have implications with regard to the relationship of any person or group to the Church. This is an issue about which the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) needs to engage in theological/Biblical reflection, an issue about which the Church needs to seek and discern God's direction.

**Proposal for Reflection and Research**

The General Assembly recommends that the Administrative Committee and the General Minister and President submit this item to a process of discernment. This process would engage the Church in reflection, research and prayer in the next biennium and beyond. This process would be accountable by report to the Administrative Committee, the General Board, and the 1999 General Assembly.

The General Assembly, meeting in Denver, July 25-29, 1997, commits itself to the intention of the 1991 General Assembly by continuing the process of research and reflection concerning the participation of gay and lesbian persons in the full life and ministry of the Church.