

No. 9722

(Operational Business Item)

NEW CONGREGATION ESTABLISHMENT (NCE)

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Background Information

In the Great Commission, Christ challenges us as Disciples of Christ to go and make disciples. It is a call to reach out to those who are unchurched with a message of hope and relevance for their lives.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has a long and illustrious history of new congregation establishment. As the population moved westward and as small towns grew into cities around the turn of this century, Disciples were establishing as many as 300 congregations annually.

Although the rate of establishment has slowed, there will always be significant need for new faith communities.

Since 1993, there has been a crisis of funding for New Congregation Establishment within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that has impacted the establishment of new communities of faith. In the early 1990's, we launched Embrace The Future, a church wide capital campaign, which included provision for new congregation establishment. However, only 30% of the needed resources to support new congregation establishment were collected. Regional and general NCE ministries have been severely impacted and the number of new congregations has decreased. Therefore, new sources of funding are needed and the following resolution is offered.

WHEREAS, in 1995, the General Assembly approved Resolution No. 9523 which declared that the whole Church should "financially support New Congregation Establishment by underwriting the immediate financial shortfall in the general level program through the year 2000 by all means possible while continuing to explore additional funding alternatives for New Congregation Establishment;" and

WHEREAS, the Church's Mission Imperatives (which were also approved by the 1995 Assembly) names New Congregation Establishment (NCE) as an important and primary mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and

WHEREAS, establishing new communities of faith where people can be put in touch with God's love in Jesus Christ has historically proven to be one of the most effective and efficient ways to fulfill the Great Commission of Matthew 28: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."; and

WHEREAS, history has shown that although there are many ways to start a new church, the task is done most effectively when lay people and clergy alike have a passion for fulfilling the Great Commission by establishing new communities of faith; and

WHEREAS, 108 new congregations have been started within 27 regions this decade; 92 of the 108 congregations are still involved in active ministry, and of those 92, 10 are African-American, 20 are American-Asian, 28 are Caucasian, 31 are Hispanic, 1 is Native-American, and 2 are Multicultural; and

WHEREAS, a Church wide Funding Task Force has recommended ways the church might best meet the current shortfall of funds for NCE as well as provide future funding and explore alternative means of funding into the 21st century;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ):

1. Rekindle in its membership the desire to connect people with God's love in Jesus Christ by engaging the whole church in a study of Scripture as it relates to new congregation establishment, and particularly, a study of the Great Commission of Matthew 28.
2. Create a community of persons called Vision Builders who will be committed to celebrating the power of Christ by investing in new faith communities. This group will be developed and promoted in partnership with existing regional builders' clubs so that both are strengthened. Funds raised through Vision Builders shall be shared by regions and general units to support new congregation establishment. A special recognition of these builders' club members will be developed to occur annually in each manifestation of the church (general, regional, and congregational).
3. Encourage individuals to remember new congregation establishment in their estate planning. Encourage regions to invite congregations contemplating ending their ministry to contribute their assets for establishment of new congregations. In recognition of the way the prophet handed his mantle on to a successor, this program shall be called THE ELIJAH LEGACY.
4. Continue the development of alternative ways for existing congregations, regions and the General Church to start new congregations; for regions to start congregations not only within their own boundaries, but in partnership with other regions; and for congregations to give assistance to new congregations in distant regions and to otherwise be linked for establishing new faith communities.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian

Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Denver, July 25-29, 1997, celebrates and recognizes the following congregations which have been established and/or received since the 1995 Pittsburgh General Assembly:

AL/NW FL	Birmingham, AL	Imani Christian Church
AZ	Surprise, AZ	Mesa de Cristo Christian Church
GA	Marietta, GA	Roswell Christian Church
KS	Hays, KS	Celebration Community Church
LA	New Orleans, LA	Vietnamese Alliance Church
MID-AM	St. Peters, MO	Celebration Church
NCAL/NV	Foster City, CA	Chalice Christian Church
	Oakland, CA	First Korean Christian Church
	San Jose, CA	San Jose Korean Christian Church
NW	Lynnwood, WA	Mannam Christian Church
SC	Walterboro, SC	New Beginning Outreach
SW	Bulverde, TX	Hill Country Christian Church
	Corpus Christi, TX	Iglesia Cristiana Betania
	Houston, TX	Harvest Fields Christian Church
VA	Newport News, VA	Hilton Korean Christian Church