

No. 9930

(Sense-of-the-Assembly Resolution)

PROMOTING THE SAFETY AND NURTURE OF CHILDREN

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Background Information

While our two nations have been shocked and outraged by the recent acts of violence that have taken place in our public schools, violence against children is by no means a new or isolated problem in North American society.

- " No fewer than 12 children and youth in the United States continue to be killed by firearms every day.
- " 6 children commit suicide every day.
- " 13 children are victims of homicide every day.
- " 280 children are arrested for violent crimes every day.
- " 8,470 children are reported abused and neglected every day.

This escalating violence cannot be separated from other negative conditions that impact the lives of children. Though we are a nation of prosperity, there are still far too many families with little or no access to quality childcare, health benefits and adequate housing. Every day in the United States, 14.5 million children live in poverty and many of these families have at least one adult member gainfully employed (*The State of America's Children, Yearbook, 1998*).

WHEREAS, Jesus said that "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5) and that "it is to such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs" (Mark 10:14 b.); and

WHEREAS, Scripture affirms that every child is a loved and treasured child of God created in God's image; and

WHEREAS, it is well established that many children in North America are dying from violence and many children suffer the effects of violence; and

WHEREAS, many children are living in poverty, are hungry, ill, homeless; and many children suffer from physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse; and

WHEREAS, all children need to grow up in safe communities with parents and other trusted adults who provide needed protection, instruction, discipline, support and affirmation; and

WHEREAS, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations are called to the mission imperative of sharing the Good News by "...emphasizing ministry with children, youth, young adults, and families" and "...engaging in ministries of reconciliation, compassion, unity and justice." (Mission Imperative of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for 1996-2000); and

WHEREAS, all communities of faith are called to love and care for all children; and to be places for prayer and the breaking of bread, for learning the scriptures, and for fellowship that includes all generations:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio October 8-12, 1999 call upon all manifestations of the church to proclaim the year 2000 the year for "Welcoming Each Child in the Name of Jesus," and to give priority concern to issues related to the impact of violence on children throughout this year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Office of Family and Children's Ministries in the Division of Homeland Ministries provide materials to congregations for use during this year, including

- " a prayer for each month that lifts up to God our concern for the safety of all children;
- " litanies and other worship materials that focus on strengthening families and the whole congregation in the nurturing of children;
- " legislative updates that offer information regarding national legislation, in both the United States and Canada, that could affect the lives of children, with a hope that congregations will support such legislation nationally and locally;
- " educational materials for adults that focus on issues related to children and violence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Office of Family and Children's Ministries urge all congregations to assess the needs of children in their particular community and to share information with the Office of Family and Children's Ministries regarding programs that promote the safety of children in order that these may be shared with the wider church.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Division of Homeland Ministries convene a task force with representatives from all manifestations of the church in order to formulate a comprehensive and long-range strategy for "Welcoming Each Child in the Name of Jesus;" and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that congregations, regions and general units explore avenues of communication and relationship with children and youth to more fully understand the world in which children and youth live and find their ministry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that members of congregations pray regularly for every child or young person whom they encounter in their world.